

6 Indian govt woos Bollywood stars as citizenship law protests rage on



11 Aramco sinks as Gulf bourses rocked by Iran-US tensions



19 Overload on the train to Kashmir's Internet oasis



28 Alonso survives first Dakar stage dominated by Mini



Iraq calls to expel US troops as Iranians mourn Soleimani

Tehran slams Trump as 'terrorist in a suit' • US army to 'pay price': Hezbollah



AHVAZ, Iran: Large crowds surround the coffins of slain Iranian top commander Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis as they are transported atop a vehicle after their arrival at Ahvaz International Airport yesterday. — AFP

BAGHDAD/TEHRAN: Iraq's parliament called yesterday for US and other foreign military forces to leave amid a growing backlash against the US killing of a top Iranian military commander that has heightened fears of a wider Middle East conflict. In a war of words between Iran and the United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington would target any Iranian decision-makers it chose if there were further attacks on US interests by Iranian forces or their proxies.

Qasem Soleimani was killed on Friday in a US drone strike on his convoy at Baghdad airport, an attack that took US-Iranian hostilities into uncharted waters and stoked concern about a major conflagration. As Washington and Tehran, longtime foes, assailed each other with threats and counter-threats, the European Union, Britain and Oman urged them to make diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis.

The Iraqi parliament passed a resolution calling on the government to work to end all foreign troop presence, reflecting the concern of many in Iraq that the strike could engulf them in a major war between two

bigger powers long at odds in Iraq and across the region. "The Iraqi government must work to end the presence of any foreign troops on Iraqi soil and prohibit them from using its land, air space or water for any reason," it said.

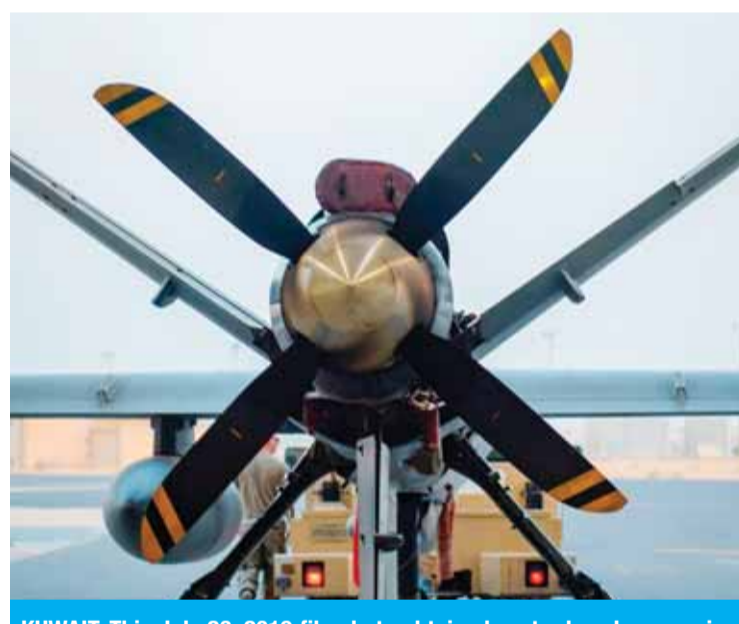
Parliamentary resolutions, unlike laws, are non-binding to the government. But this one is likely to be heeded: Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, who heads a Shiite-led government, had earlier called on parliament to end foreign troop presence as soon as possible. Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis was also killed in Friday's strike. Some 5,000 US troops remain in Iraq, most in an advisory role.

The resolution was passed by overwhelmingly Shiite lawmakers, as the special session was boycotted by most Sunni Muslim and Kurdish lawmakers. One Sunni member of parliament told Reuters that both groups feared that kicking out US-led coalition forces would leave Iraq vulnerable to an insurgency, undermine security and heighten the power of Iranian-backed Shiite militias.

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KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a high-level security meeting yesterday. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This July 23, 2019 file photo obtained yesterday shows maintainers towing a US air force MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft into position at Ali Al Salem Air Base. — AFP

Iraq militias claim killer drone took off from Kuwait

KUWAIT: Two former MPs yesterday said some Iraqi militia groups have charged that the US drone used to kill powerful Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani had taken off from Kuwait. Former MP Abdulhameed Dashti, who fled Kuwait to escape lengthy jail terms, advised Kuwait to send its foreign minister to Tehran to discuss the sensitive charges against Kuwait. Former Islamist MP Osama Al-Munawer warned the prime minister to remain vigilant towards the highly grave situation in the region, after an Iraqi militia directly accused Kuwait of involvement in the killing of Soleimani.

Meanwhile, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday instructed coordination with sisterly and friendly countries over the recent regional developments, inviting military and

Continued on Page 24

Panel rejects 10% health insurance based on salary

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's health and labor committee yesterday rejected a proposal calling to make the health insurance fee 10 percent of expatriates' salaries as stated in the official labor contract. The proposal was first submitted by former MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and later adopted by MP Mohammad Hayef. Regardless of the amount of the salaries of expatriates, the proposal calls to fix the annual health insurance fee at 10 percent of the salary in a bid to help low-paid workers.

At present, expatriates pay around KD 50 annually in health insurance, in addition to additional charges for various medical services. According to reports, the government is planning to raise this amount to KD 130 per year. Rapporteur of the manpower resources committee MP Osama Al-Shaheen called for an urgent legislative intervention by the Assembly to impose definitive percentages of employment for Kuwaitis and make it mandatory on the government to facilitate the replacement of expats in public jobs with Kuwaitis.

Shaheen said the issue should not be left at the government's discretion, adding that an expatriate community has reached one million, while two others together make up that figure. He called for a fair distribution of foreign communities, saying that MPs must intervene in this issue because government measures have been very slow. The lawmaker said the panel will in the coming meetings invite government bodies concerned with replacement and Kuwaitization, like the Civil Service Commission, Supreme Planning Council, the manpower authority and others to discuss government plans for creating jobs for Kuwaiti graduates.

Kuwait signs deal to import gas from Qatar

KUWAIT: State-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corp yesterday signed a long-term contract with Qatar Petroleum to purchase three million tons of liquefied natural gas per year, a statement said. Kuwait, which is rich in oil but falls short in gas production, is currently importing 2.5 million tonnes of LNG per year from BP, Shell and Qatar Petroleum.

The new agreement will run for 15 years starting in 2022 when the new \$3 billion LNG receiving terminal at Al-Zour Port, in the south of Kuwait,

becomes operational, a statement issued by the two companies said. Kuwait, a key OPEC producer pumping some 2.7 million barrels of crude oil per day, uses natural gas imports for power generation and petrochemicals industry.

"This agreement extends Qatar's long-standing LNG supply relationship with Kuwait well into the 2030s and highlights our commitment to meeting Kuwait's LNG requirements," Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad Al-Kaabi said after signing the deal with his Kuwaiti counterpart. Kuwaiti Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel said the country was "embarking on an ambitious path of economic growth, which requires cleaner energy sources such as natural gas that will contribute to reducing emissions and improving local air quality". — AFP (See Page 5)

\$25m raised as Australia reels from fire fury

EDEN, Australia: A global appeal to help Australian firefighters tackling catastrophic bushfires raised almost Aus\$25 million yesterday, as swathes of the country suffered extensive damage and the death toll from the long-running crisis hit 24. East coast seaside towns were plunged into darkness, ash rained down on rural communities and major cities were again cloaked in choking smoke, even as stunned Australians tried to regroup amid a wave of cooler air and light rain.

The weekend marked some of the worst days in the country's deadly bushfire crisis, with hundreds more properties destroyed and the overall death toll climbing to 24, including a man who died Saturday trying to save a friend's home. Comedian Celeste Barber used her international social media fame to launch a Facebook

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel (right) and Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad Al-Kaabi are seen at the signing ceremony yesterday. — KUNA



BEMBOKA, Australia: Residents commute on a road through thick smoke from bushfires in New South Wales state yesterday. — AFP

Local

Amir receives senior Kuwaiti officials, visiting Qatari minister

Sheikh Sabah condoles with Indonesia President on flood victims



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



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: 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.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chief Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and the President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in a group photo during his meeting with Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and the President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi.

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 Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad 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 Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa. His Highness also received the visiting Qatar's Minister

of State for Energy Affairs and the President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi. The meeting was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, expressing sincere grief over the victims of floods and landslides triggered by torrential rains in the capital Jakarta. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished mercy for the deceased and speedy recovery for

the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Indonesian president, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent a condolence cable to Speaker of the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia Puan Maharani.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his deepest sympathies over the victims killed when a car plowed into a group of tourists as they crossed a road in northern

Italy. His Highness the Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Italy's President Sergio Mattarella, saying he was distraught over the tragic loss of life caused by the act of a man who appeared to have driven under the influence. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Italy's president, while Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Ali-Ghanem sent a couple of cables to Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies Roberto Fico and President of the Italian Senate Maria Casellati. —KUNA

Crown Prince meets state officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA photos



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



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

Kuwaiti PM receives Qatar's Energy Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the visiting Qatari Energy Minister, Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi and his accompanying delegation. Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Sayyid Hashem attended the meeting. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Qatari Energy Minister, Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in a group photo during his meeting with the visiting Qatari Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi.

Local

Regional developments on Kuwaiti Cabinet meeting's agenda today

Ministers to discuss food, medicine reserves, securing vital sites

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Cabinet meeting's agenda today has two major issues besides discussing economic laws such as bankruptcy, conflict of interests and charity laws, which need to be referred to the parliament for approval this term.

In this regard, government sources said the Cabinet will discuss Kuwait's preparations over the regional developments in the aftermath of the assassination of the Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and exchanged threats by US and Iran. "Kuwait is located where it should be ready for any security-threatening emergencies, especially in view of the presence of a US military base within reach of Iranian threats among other targets in the GCC," the sources explained.

The source added that the government will discuss various issues including food and medicine reserves, securing various important locations such as oil sites and ports and enhancing security measures around US and foreign sites that can be potential targets of those threats. Further, the sources said every government body will be asked to prepare precautionary measures and emergency plans within a week, and that the media will launch a national public awareness campaign to boost and enhance patriotism and national unity and avoid sectarianism and hatred.

In addition, the sources stressed that the government will confirm that Kuwait is not taking any sides

in this issue and calls for peaceful reactions to avoid acceleration. "No offensives will be launched against any side from Kuwait," the sources asserted, denying some Iranians allegations that the drones involved in assassinating Soleimani had been launched from Kuwait.

Moreover, the sources said the second main issue on today's Cabinet meeting agenda will be the grilling motion filed against Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri to be discussed tomorrow in parliament, adding that the government plans to refer the motion to the legislative committee to investigate its constitutionality, especially since Aseeri had been only appointed minister for a week when the motion was filed.



Kuwait Airways suspends Najaf flights

Flights suspended

Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) stressed that on coordination with relevant government bodies, its flights to Najaf in Iraq have been suspended for four weeks. KAC added that the suspension will remain in effect until security is restored in Najaf, the only KAC destination in Iraq.

Wanted for slander

The criminal court yesterday ordered summoning Dr Abdullah Al-Nafisi to court in a case filed against him in response to statements he made during the 'Black Box' TV show, in which he is accused of slandering certain people while talking about the Iraqi aggression on Kuwait.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah chairs a Cabinet meeting in this file photo. — KUNA

Power maintenance

The Ministry of Electricity and Water started replacing seven 1,000 kilovolt secondary power transformers with new ones with a capacity of 1,250 KV each, said informed sources, noting that the project will take three years to replace transformers that had been in service for over 35 years. These had been designed to withstand maximum temperatures of 42 degrees, while the new transformers can operate in temperatures up to 55 degrees.

Performance evaluation

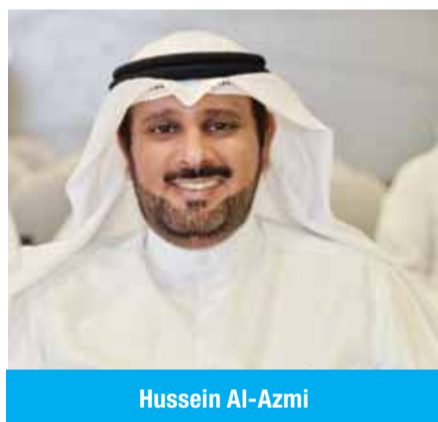
The administrative affairs sector at the ministry of social affairs started preparations to conduct the annual employees' performance evaluation, said informed sources,

adding that the process that started at the beginning of January will be automated this year to save time and effort. "An employee performance assessment can be done in two minutes compared to seven minutes in the old manual system," the sources explained, noting that Civil Service Commission (CSC) regulations will be strictly followed in terms of allocating 70 percent of the grade to performance and 30 percent for showing up to work according to the fingerprint system. In another concern, the sources stressed that the ministry is going ahead with nationalizing its workforce and gradually laying off expats to replace them with citizens. "The ministry currently has the least number of expats amongst other ministries," the sources stressed, noting that expats form only 2 percent of the ministry's manpower.

Trade unions call for unity amid regional developments

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti trade union movement is closely watching the latest regional developments and calls for combining efforts and uniting under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Chairman of the union of the public sector employees' syndicates Hussein Sabeel Al-Azmi said yesterday. Azmi urged all political movements, trade unions, NGOs and citizens to protect national unity and avoid sectarian statements, as Kuwait cannot afford any disagreements in view of the regional political situations.



Hussein Al-Azmi

Urgent matters

MP Khaled Al-Otaibi hailed the government's letters to the National Assembly in which it requested allocating two hours per month to discuss urgent matters related to public works, roads, housing welfare, health and education. "Though it is a step towards the right path, it came late and the government should have brought it up in the first term," he remarked.

Otaibi added that the two hours should not be taken from the session's original timings, which means adding two extra hours to end the session at four or five instead of the usual time at 2 pm, provided that the original session time be actually allocated to discussing the fully-loaded agenda and issues on the waiting list. Further, Otaibi objected to limiting the issues to be discussed to those suggested by the government, adding that far many more issues ought to be discussed with the parliament and exchange views about them.

KD 1 million

Ahmadi municipal safety inspectors inspected a number of companies in southern areas to check the validity of their licenses and unlawful utilization of public property. Ahmadi safety manager Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi said the tour resulted in filing five citations worth KD 1 million for expired storage licenses and using public property.

Doctors' slander

Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) Chairman Dr Ahmad Thuwaini Al-Enezi slammed campaigns slandering doctors from time to time on social media and stressed that doctors are highly respected in other societies, as medicine is a noble humanitarian profession dedicated to treating patients and saving lives. Enezi also noted that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah fully supported medicine and appreciated the role played by doctors in a meeting with the KMA board last year. Strongly condemning medical errors, Enezi pointed out that they happen worldwide, including in the US and Western European countries. "Compared to those countries, they are not increasing in Kuwait," he added, noting once any mishap takes place, doctors are held accountable only after concluding related investigations without scandalizing them simply because of lack of knowledge of minute medical details. "Statistically, 90 percent of medical error allegations have proved to be false, and what happened was possible complications beyond doctors' will," Enezi added, noting that life expectancy in Kuwait is on the rise, which indicates the high level of medical services people receive.

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Arab League calls for avoiding escalation in region

CAIRO: Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit has underlined the need for calmness not escalation to help stop regional conflicts and avoid igniting or sustaining them. In a press statement yesterday, he expressed growing concerns about the rapid developments in Iraq since January 2. "The events of the past days revealed the size of foreign interference in Arab affairs and its high political, economic and security cost," he argued. He hoped Arab countries would move to end these interventions and preserve their sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Omani Foreign Ministry

said that his country follows with great concern the recent regrettable developments, tension and escalation between the US and Iran. According to the Oman News Agency (ONA), the Sultanate urged the US and Iran to seek dialogue and resort to diplomacy to resolve disagreements amid increased tensions between Washington and Tehran. It called for intensifying international efforts to establish stability in the region, the statement added. The Pentagon confirmed last Friday that head of the Iranian Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani was eliminated in a US airstrike in Iraq. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's skyline during sunset. — Photo by Nadirsyah Ramli (KUNA)

Man escapes arrest after breaking into vehicles in Mubarak Al-Kabeer

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Police are searching for a man who escaped after breaking into parked vehicles in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, but managed to arrest a person who enabled him to run away. Officers had headed to the parking lot of a local co-op society after receiving reports about a person who broke into vehicles parked there and stole items their owners left inside. Police grew suspicious of a person at the site, so they

approached him and asked for his ID, but he could not produce one. The suspect was then asked to get into the patrol vehicle, but he refused to cooperate and instead jumped on top of the patrol car's roof. This led to a gathering of people on the site, during which a person came in and enabled the suspect to escape, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Investigations are ongoing in search for the suspect, while the man who helped him escape was sent to the proper authorities for further action.



Man stabbed after resisting thieves in Doha

KUWAIT: Police responded to an emergency call in which a Kuwaiti man said he was attacked by three persons in Doha. The man was found with a stab wound on his shoulder, and was taken to Sabah Hospital. A police source said the victim told police that he was driving in the area when three persons forced him to pull over and got him out of his car. When he attempted to defend himself and keep them from stealing his vehicle, one of the suspects stabbed

him before they drove off in the car, he said. Detectives are investigating.

'Hysterical' husband

A woman and her children called police for help as the woman said that her husband became hysterical. The man attempted to resist arrest, but was brought under control and taken to the police station. A case was filed for investigations.

Nine stitches

Police arrested five Egyptian men for beating a bedoon (stateless) man due to a financial dispute. Police found out the bedoon sustained injuries in various parts of his body, including the head, so he was taken to Mubarak Hospital where he received nine stitches in the head. The suspects were taken to the proper authorities for further action. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

'Commercial reasons' behind fever reducers shortage in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Private sector pharmacies in Kuwait are suffering from shortages in important pain killers and fever reducers for children as alternative treatments are being given to patients at the moment, a local daily reported yesterday. Meanwhile, the public sector does not suffer from a similar shortage, Al-Rai reported yesterday quoting health sources who noted that there are other types of fever reducers that are being dispensed for patients "until the problem is solved."

Though the reasons behind the problem remain unknown, some officials said there are 'commercial rea-



sons' behind it. "[Some pharmacies] rushed to cover the shortage by importing meds from Oman, but the imported quantity ran out fast," the sources said, adding that the health ministry has expressed readiness to support the private sector, starting with private hospitals' pharmacies, by providing supplies from its strategic reserve if needed.

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Local

Kuwait's LNG import deal part of efforts to secure cleaner energy sources: Minister

Al-Zour Port to receive LNG in 2022 as part of 15-year agreement

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Qatar Petroleum entered into a long term Sale and Purchase Agreement for the supply of up to three million tons per annum of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the State of Kuwait. In a press statement, the agreement was signed by Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, the Minister of Oil and the Minister of Electricity and Water and the Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), and Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum, during a special ceremony held in Kuwait City. Under the 15-year agreement, LNG deliveries to Kuwait's new world class LNG receiving terminal at Al-Zour Port will commence in 2022 to support meeting Kuwait's growing energy needs and demand, particularly in the power generation sector.

"The state of Kuwait is embarking on an ambitious path of economic growth, which requires cleaner energy sources such as natural gas that will contribute to reducing emissions and improving local air quality. Whilst KPC is working towards

increasing local natural gas production, there remains a pressing need to secure imports of natural gas supplies," Dr Fadhel said. Meanwhile, Kaabi welcomed the signing of the agreement and said, "We are pleased and proud to join hands with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and we look forward to providing reliable LNG supplies to our brothers in the State of Kuwait for decades to come."



Meeting Kuwait's growing energy demand

"This agreement extends Qatar's long standing LNG supply relationship with Kuwait well into the 2030's and highlights our commitment to meeting Kuwait's LNG requirements. We are confident that the exceptional reliability of our LNG supplies will provide KPC with the required flexibility and supply security to fuel the State of Kuwait's impressive growth," Kaabi concluded.

KPC was established in 1980 as an umbrella under which all activities of the Kuwaiti oil sector belong and are fully owned by the state. Its activities include exploration, production and refining operations inside and outside Kuwait, marketing, petro-



KUWAIT: Officials from the two companies on the sidelines of the ceremony. —KUNA

chemicals and maritime transport. Qatar Petroleum is an integrated national oil company that stands at the forefront of efforts to develop and exploit oil and gas resources in Qatar in the long term. Its activities cover the various stages of the oil and gas industry locally, regionally and internationally. — KUNA

Kuwait Internal Auditors Association launched

KUWAIT: Kuwait Internal Auditors Association and IIA Kuwait Chapter announced the launch and initiation of membership registration for the internal audit professionals in Kuwait in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Association has been setup as a platform to support and enhance the professions of internal audit, risk, governance and compliance in Kuwait. The launch event was sponsored by Protiviti Member Firm for the MENA region, in the presence of host of dignitaries and audit professionals across various sectors.

With the launch, Kuwait Internal Auditors Association joins a network of more than 100 international affiliates across 170+ countries with more than 185,000 members worldwide. It is expected to provide an opportunity to network with fellow Internal Audit professionals and other related professions. The Chairman of the Board Mansour Shashtari, along with the Board members presented the mission and objectives of the Association and emphasized the importance of this body to the Kuwait economy and the profession.

Furthermore, he stated "This is indeed a very significant milestone for us as we formally announce the Kuwait Internal Auditors Association. I would like to thank all our colleagues and the Ministry of Social Affairs for taking an active interest and providing us with all the support in making this a possibility. He added: "The association will work towards advancement of internal auditors and dynamically promote, develop and elevate the profession and related professions of Control, Risk management, Governance and Compliance in Kuwait."

Further, Kuwait Internal Auditors Association's chairman invites everyone to join the association and participate in its future activities. The association is open to be sponsored by any consultancy firm in its upcoming events. Speaking at the occasion, Sanjay Rajagopalan, Managing Director - Protiviti responsible for Internal Audit and Financial Advisory Services for the MENA region, stated: "We are delighted to be the sponsors in the launch of this Association and look forward to the elevation of the Internal Audit profession in the State of Kuwait. We will continue our support and work together with all the members and sectors in Kuwait for enhancing corporate governance practices".

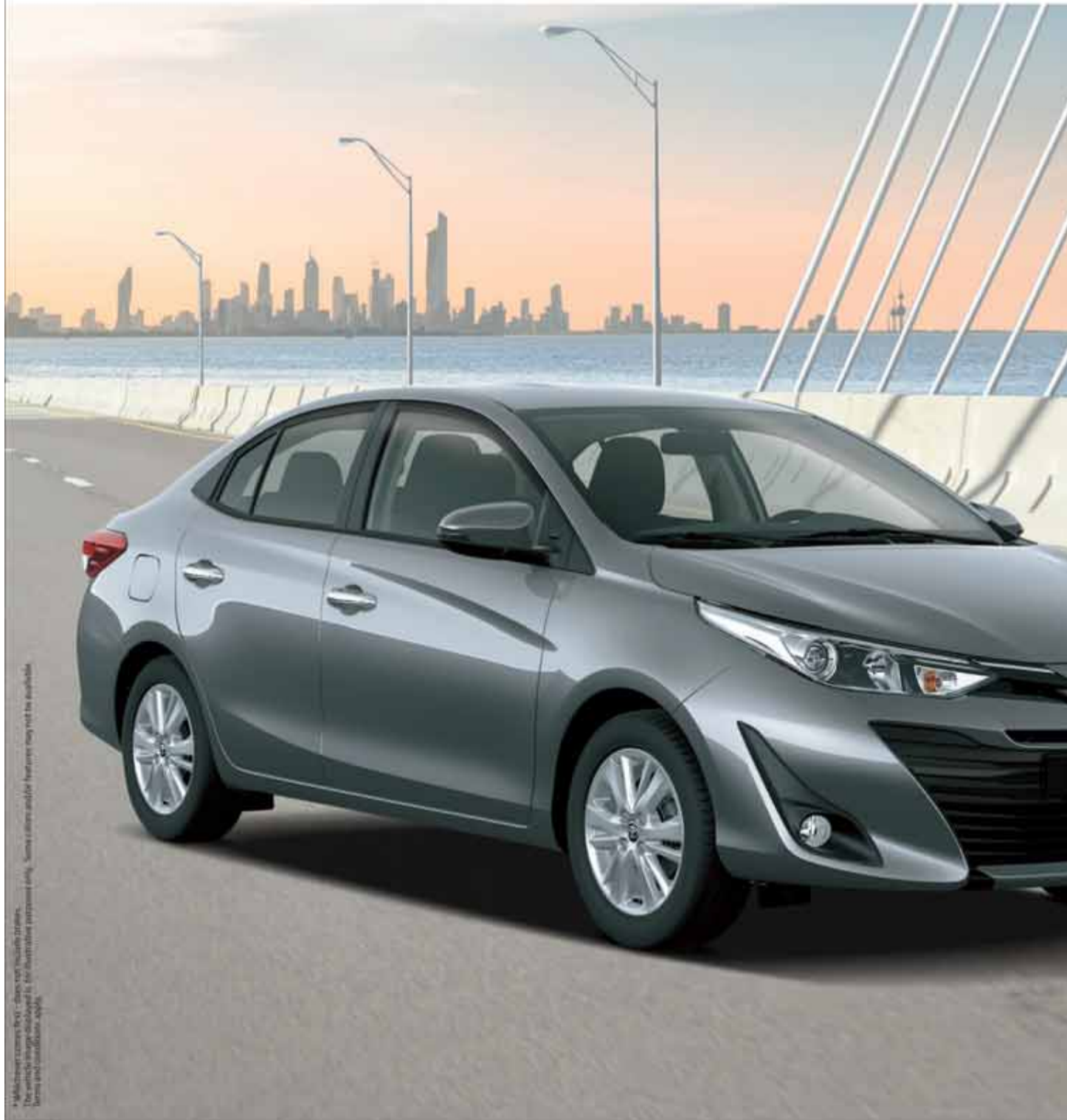
Kuwait Internal Auditors Association (IIA Kuwait Chapter) aims to:

- Meet and communicate with professionals working in the related regulatory professions to exchange experiences.
 - Support and emphasize the auditing professions in general and the internal audit profession in particular in the State of Kuwait.
 - Develop these professions by all means in order to increase their effectiveness and efficiency in the State of Kuwait while applying international standards.
- Furthermore, the association aims to promote best practices in corporate governance, risk management and internal control through:
- Refine members' experiences and urge them to follow global best practices.
 - Help and Support members to obtain international professional certificates through developing training materials and cooperating with local, Arab and international scientific and professional bodies in this regard.
 - Contribute to spread awareness by providing regular training, organizing workshops, seminars, annual conferences and attracting prominent speakers from different parts of the world to exchange experiences and knowledge in order to enhance the profession within the business community.
 - Support the official authorities in reviewing laws' drafts related to the profession and studying the current laws in the country and making proposals and recommendations on them in accordance with international standards and best practices.
 - * Establish alliances with the relevant authorities, institutes and bodies. Furthermore, cooperate and coordinate with similar Arab and international associations and relevant bodies to exchange knowledge related to the profession and develop the profession.

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After Indonesia's deadly floods, few hear climate 'wake-up call'

Croatian president faces leftist challenge in an uncertain vote

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MOGADISHU: In this file photo, Somali soldiers and people stand and look at the bodies of three suspected fighters of the radical Islamist Al-Shabaab group lying on the road outside The Nasahablood Hotel in Mogadishu. Jihadists from Somalia's Al-Shabaab group yesterday stormed a military base used by US forces in Kenya's coastal Lamu region, destroying several aircraft and military vehicles.—AFP

Somali jihadists attack Kenya military base

Several US aircraft and military vehicles destroyed in Al-Shabaab attack

NAIROBI: Jihadists from Somalia's Al-Shabaab group yesterday stormed a military base used by US forces in Kenya's coastal Lamu region, destroying several aircraft and military vehicles, according to Kenyan police and army officials. Attackers breached heavy security at Camp Simba at dawn but were repelled and four jihadists were killed, said army spokesman Colonel Paul Njuguna.

Al-Shabaab has launched regular cross-border raids since Kenya sent troops into Somalia in 2011 as part of an African Union force protecting the internationally backed government—which the jihadists have been trying to overthrow for more than a decade. The Lamu region, which includes popular tourist beach destination Lamu Island, lies close to the Somali frontier and has suffered frequent attacks, often carried

out with roadside bombs.

Njuguna said "an attempt was made to breach security at Manda Air Strip" at 5:30am but it was repulsed. "Four terrorists' bodies have so far been found. The airstrip is safe," he said, adding that a fire had broken out but had since been dealt with.

Kenya's Inspector General of Police Hilary Mutiyambai said officers were "on high alert" after the attack.

Al-Shabaab 'lying'

An internal police report seen by AFP said two aircraft, two American helicopters and "multiple American vehicles" were destroyed at the airstrip. The type of aircraft involved was not immediately clear. Local government official Irungu Macharia said five people had been arrested near the camp and were being interrogated. It was

not yet known if there were casualties among Kenyan or American troops.

US military officials confirmed the attack and said US and Kenyan forces had repelled the Al-Shabaab fighters. "Working alongside our Kenyan partners, the airfield is cleared and still in the process of being fully secured," said the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in a statement.

The nearby civilian airport at Manda Bay, which brings tourists visiting Lamu Island—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—was closed for several hours after the incident, according to the civil aviation authority. Al-Shabaab said in a statement it had "successfully stormed the heavily fortified military base and have now taken effective control of part of the base".

AFRICOM accused Al-Shabaab of lying in order to create false headlines.

US military network

The Somali jihadists have staged several large-scale attacks inside Kenya in retaliation for Nairobi sending troops into Somalia as well as to target foreign interests. The group has been fighting to overthrow an internationally-backed government in Mogadishu since 2006, staging regular attacks on government buildings, hotels, security checkpoints and military bases in the country.

Despite years of costly efforts to fight Al-Shabaab, the group on December 28 managed to detonate a vehicle packed with explosives in Mogadishu, killing 81 people. The spate of attacks highlights the group's resilience and capacity to inflict mass casualties at home and in the region, despite losing control of major urban areas in Somalia.

In a November report, a UN panel of experts on Somalia noted an "unprecedented number" of homemade bombs and other attacks across the Kenya-Somalia border in June and July last year.

On Thursday, at least three people were killed when suspected Al-Shabaab gunmen ambushed a bus travelling in the area. According to the Institute for Security Studies, the United States has 34 known military bases in Africa, from where it conducts "drone operations, training, military exercises, direct action and humanitarian activities". US military strikes in Somalia surged after President Donald Trump declared the south of the country an "area of active hostilities". AFRICOM said in April it had killed more than 800 people in 110 strikes in Somalia since April 2017. —AFP

Six Germans die as drunk driver hits pedestrians in Italian Alps

ROME: A drunk driver ploughed into pedestrians in an Italian Alpine village yesterday, killing six German tourists and injuring 11 other people, emergency services said. The accident happened at around 1:15 am (0015 GMT) in the village of Lutago near the Austrian border in an area popular with skiers.

A group of German tourists had left a nightclub shortly before the car slammed into them at high speed-throwing some of them dozens of meters. Six Germans were killed, a fire service official in Lutago told AFP. Eleven other people were injured-two of whom were seriously hurt and flown by helicopter to a hospital in Innsbruck in Austria.

The local head of Italy's paramilitary carabinieri police force told AFP the driver had between 1.9 and 2.0 grams of alcohol per litre in his blood, about four times the maximum allowed level.

The driver, a 27-year-old local, was charged with murder and put in hospital under police guard.

'A terrible scene'

Roughly 160 emergency workers went at the scene and a field hospital was set up by the road. "A terrible scene, people on the ground, cries and pain, a tragedy - we don't have the words," a hotel receptionist told the Corriere della Sera newspaper. "We have asked several times for a



Firefighters attend to the scene where a male driver of a car hit a group of German tourists, killing six in Lutago, Italy, yesterday. —Reuters

radar on this road as drivers speed up as soon as they leave Lutago and here, one kilometer from the centre, they go at 100 kilometers an hour."

"The New Year has begun with a tragedy," South Tyrol governor Arno Kompatscher told reporters.

South Tyrol is a largely German-speaking province with a high degree of autonomy, known in particular for the Dolomites mountain chain. The German foreign ministry in Berlin said its consulate in Milan was "in close touch with the Italian authorities who are proceeding with the identification of the victims, assisting those who

have been affected". Lutago, in the picturesque Aurina valley, is popular with tourists who ski at Klausberg and Speikboden.

The village of about 800 residents is the location for a popular Italian television series "Un Passo dal Cielo" ("One Step from Heaven"). Last week, three Germans - a woman and two girls, one of them aged seven - were killed in an avalanche in South Tyrol. Italy has also suffered several high-profile road accidents in recent months, one in December when the son of a well-known film director hit and killed two 16-year-old girls in Rome. —AFP

Indian govt seeks to woo Bollywood stars as citizenship law protests rage on

MUMBAI: The Indian government invited numerous Bollywood stars and film industry personalities to a private gathering yesterday in an effort to garner support for a new citizenship law that has triggered weeks of sometimes violent protests nationwide. At least 25 people have been killed so far in clashes with the police during five weeks of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which eases the path for non-Muslims in the neighbouring Muslim-majority nations of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to gain Indian citizenship.

If combined with a proposed national register of citizens, critics of the CAA fear it will discriminate against India's Muslim minority and chip away at its secular constitution. Two industry sources told Reuters they had received invites to Sunday's gathering at a five-star hotel in Mumbai. Roughly 20 to 25 people from both the Hindi and Marathi film industry are expected to attend the event, one of the sources said.

An invitation seen by Reuters said the event hosted by two senior leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) aimed to "facilitate a discussion on myths and realities pertaining to the (CAA)". Wooing Bollywood stars, who have a huge social media following among Indians of all faiths, could help the BJP alter some of the negative narrative around the new law. The law, and the outrage it has prompted, pose a dilemma for a film industry that has some big-name Muslim personalities, but caters predominantly to India's majority Hindu population. A handful of Bollywood figures have condemned the CAA, while some others have faced criticism for not weighing in on the issue. —Reuters

International

Over 30 killed, 33 wounded in Libya military academy attack

GNA alleges 'aerial bombing' launched by eastern rivals

TRIPOLI: At least 30 people were killed and 33 others wounded in an attack on a military academy in the Libyan capital late on Saturday, the health ministry of the Tripoli-based government said in a statement yesterday.

Tripoli, controlled by the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), is facing an offensive by military commander Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) that began in April.

There has been an increase in air strikes and shelling around Tripoli in recent weeks, with fears that fighting could escalate further after Turkey's parliament voted to allow a troop deployment in support of the GNA. Forces allied with the GNA described Saturday's attack on the military camp at Al-Hadba as "an aerial bombing" launched by their eastern rivals. An LNA spokesman denied involvement.

GNA Health Minister Hamid bin Omar told Reuters earlier in a phone call that the number of dead and wounded was still rising. Tripoli ambulance service spokesman Osama Ali said some body parts could not be immediately counted by forensic experts. Earlier, the ambulance service appealed for a temporary ceasefire to allow its crews to retrieve the bodies of five civilians killed on As Sidra Road in southern Tripoli and to evacuate families.

Emergency teams withdrew after coming under fire while trying to access the area on Saturday, it said.

The GNA Foreign Ministry called for referring Haftar and his aides to the International Criminal Court on charges of committing "crimes against humanity", adding that it will call for an emergency UN Security Council meeting to discuss the alleged crimes. Qatar, which supports GNA, said on Saturday that the attack "may amount to a war crime and crimes against humanity". Ankara, which last week passed a bill approving a troop deployment in Libya to support Tripoli, also condemned the attack and said the international community needs to take steps to achieve a ceasefire.

"It is crucial for the international community to urgently take necessary steps to halt external support for the pro-Haftar army and its attacks and establish a



TRIPOLI: Bodies are seen in the back of ambulances killed from an air strike earlier in the day on a Military College in Al-Hadba Al-Khadra, at the Green Hospital in the capital Tripoli on Saturday. (Right) Damage on the concrete and clothing, from an air strike earlier in the day, is seen at a Military College in Al-Hadaba region in Tripoli —AFP Photos

ceasefire in Libya," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) condemned the attack saying that "rising escalation... further complicates the situation in Libya and threatens the chances of returning to the political process".

In response to the attack, GNA allied forces have targeted the LNA air base of Al-Wattia in an air strike, around 159 km southwest of Tripoli, a spokesman said in a statement. Two sources in Haftar

forces said four fighters were killed in a drone strike early on Sunday.

An increase in air strikes and shelling in and around Tripoli has caused the deaths of at least 11 civilians since early December and shut down health facilities and schools, the U.N. mission in Libya said on Friday.

Rockets and shelling also shut down Tripoli's only functioning airport on Friday. On Friday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres renewed his call for an immediate ceasefire in Libya.



Iraqi protesters denounce twin 'occupiers' US and Iran

DIWANIYAH: Iraqi protesters flooded the streets yesterday to denounce both Iran and the US as "occupiers", angry that fears of war between the rivals was derailing their anti-government movement. For three months, youth-dominated rallies in the capital and Shiite-majority south have condemned Iraq's ruling class as corrupt, inept and beholden to Iran.

Following a US strike on Baghdad Friday that killed top Iranian and Iraqi commanders, Iraqi lawmakers urged the government yesterday to oust thousands of US troops deployed across the country.

For protesters who were hitting the streets, Iran was also a target for blame. "No to Iran, no to America!" chanted hundreds of young Iraqis as they marched through the southern protest hotspot of Diwaniyah.

Young children present carried posters in the shape of Iraq and waved

their country's tri-color.

"We're taking a stance against the two occupiers: Iran and the US," one demonstrator told AFP. Nearby, a teenage girl held a handwritten signing reading: "Peace be on the land created to live in peace, but which has yet to see a single peaceful day." Iraqi helicopters circled above, surveying the scene.

Relations between Tehran and Washington have been deteriorating since the US abandoned a landmark nuclear deal with Iran in 2018 and reimposed crippling economic sanctions. But tensions boiled over during the last week, culminating in a US drone strike outside Baghdad Airport that killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and several Iraqi paramilitary leaders.

'Don't ignore our demands'

Some protesters initially rejoiced, having blamed Soleimani for propping up the government they have been trying to bring down since early October. But joy swiftly turned to worry, as protesters realized pounding war drums would drown out their calls for peaceful reform of Iraq's government.

In a bold move, young protesters in the southern city of Nasiriyah blocked a mourning procession for Soleimani and top Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu



KARBALA: Iraqi students take part in ongoing anti-government demonstrations in the central Iraqi city of Karbala, yesterday. —AFP

Mahdi al-Muhanadis from reaching their protest camp. Outraged pro-Iran mourners fired on the protesters, wounding three, medical sources told AFP. "We refuse a proxy war on Iraqi territory and the creation of crisis after crisis," said student Raad Ismail.

"We're warning them: don't ignore our demands, whatever the excuse," he

said. The demonstrators are calling for early parliamentary voting based on a new electoral law. They hope this would bring transparent and independent lawmakers to parliament. They have also demanded Iran-their large eastern neighbour which holds sway among Iraqi politicians and military figures-reduce its interventions in Iraq. —AFP

Syrian regime attacks kill 10 civilians in Idlib

IDLIB, Iraq: At least 10 civilians were killed, 20 others injured yesterday in Syrian regime's intensified attacks on settlement areas in Idlib de-escalation zone, according to initial reports.

Regime forces consisting of the Bashar al-Assad army and Iran-backed foreign terrorist groups continue air and land attacks on Maarat Al-Numan, Saraqib and Ariha districts and surrounding rural areas in southern Idlib, as well as the village of Barna located west of Aleppo since early morning. The initial reports suggest that seven civilians in Ariha, one in Saraqib and two in the village of Barna were killed, while over 20 were injured in the attacks.

"There are so many displaced civilians here coming from Maarat Al Numan,

Ghouta, Homs, Daraa, Aleppo, and all across Syria. However, today four air attacks hit the district when Ariha residents were at home protecting themselves from cold," said an official from the White Helmets civil defense agency. "One of the attacks targeted this building and the other hit a kindergarten, where there were children aged between 3-5. The other air attack targeted a primary school that was full of kids, which left many wounded people. We cannot give certain numbers of casualties as we still continue the search and rescue work in the region. The attacks targeted the civilian places," he said.

While the attacks are ongoing, civilians continue to escape to areas near Turkish border. 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, over 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.



IDLIB: Syrian rescuers known as the White Helmets walk amidst the rubble scattered across a street following a reported regime air strike in the town of Ariha in the Idlib province yesterday. —AFP

More than 1 million Syrians have moved near the Turkish border due to the intense attacks over the last year. —Reuters

Soleimani inflamed tensions in the region. Britain's defense minister, Ben Wallace, ordered the HMS Montrose and HMS Defender to prepare to return to escort duties in the major oil shipping route as Prime Minister Boris Johnson came in for criticism for his silence over the killing.

Media reports have said Johnson is on holiday in the Caribbean. "The government will take all necessary steps to protect our ships and citizens at this time," Wallace said in a statement.

Britain was forced to defend its ships through the world's most important shipping route last year after Iranian commandos seized a British-flagged tanker in the Strait. British forces had previously captured an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar that was accused of violating sanc-

tions on Syria. The killing of Soleimani has raised fears that tankers could be targeted again. Wallace said he had spoken to his US counterpart, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and urged restraint on all sides.

"Under international law, the United States is entitled to defend itself against those posing an imminent threat to their citizens," he added. Jeremy Corbyn, the outgoing leader of the opposition Labor Party, said he had written to the British prime minister to ask what was being done to protect UK nationals and others in the region.

"Boris Johnson should have immediately cut short his holiday to deal with an issue that could have grave consequences for the UK and the world," he said in a statement. —Reuters

Greek PM on White House trip amid Turkey tension

ATHENS: Six months into his term, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis heads to his first White House visit on January 7 amidst tense relations with NATO ally and regional rival Turkey.

Athens is keen to enlist US investors for the growth spurt envisioned by the Greek conservative government-but the visit comes as tensions escalate with Turkey over migration, energy exploration and territorial disputes. "Greece and the United States are closer than ever," Mitsotakis said in a December 29 interview with the weekly, To Vima.

"Greece is a reliable ally and I expect this to be confirmed with deeds, not just words," he said.

The US has traditionally maintained a difficult balancing act between Greece and Turkey over the past six decades, with the Clinton administration actually stepping in to prevent hostilities over an uninhabited Aegean islet group in 1996. But Trump has often struck a dissonant tone in his administration's foreign policy, preferring to forge personal bonds even with the leaders of countries whose policies have on occasion been rebuked by the US State Department or Congress. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is one of them. "It goes without saying that the political unpredictability of the American president creates a foggy scenery," says Spyridon Litsas, professor of international relations at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki. "Mitsotakis travels to Washington in order to demonstrate to American political and economic elites that besides Turkish unreliability in the eastern Mediterranean, there is also Greece, a pivotal state for the balance of power in the region, a fundamental actor regarding the re-shaping of the regional energy map, and a fertile ground for investment," Litsas told AFP. —AFP

Saudis slams Turkish approval of Libya deployment

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday condemned the Turkish parliament's approval of a military deployment to Libya, which is aimed at shoring up the UN recognized government in Tripoli.

Turkey's parliament approved the deployment on Thursday following a request for assistance by the beleaguered Government of National Accord. "Saudi Arabia expresses its rejection and condemnation of Turkey's latest escalation in the Libyan issue," the official Saudi Press Agency said, citing the foreign ministry. The GNA has been under sustained attack since April by eastern Libyan strongman General Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar is backed by Turkey's regional rivals-Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. "This Turkish escalation forms a threat to security and stability in Libya as well as to Arab security and regional security as it is interference in the internal affairs of an Arab country in flagrant violation of all relevant international covenants and principles," the SPA said. —AFP

Britain's navy to escort UK-flagged ships through Strait of Hormuz

LONDON: Britain's navy will accompany UK-flagged ships through the Strait of Hormuz to provide protection after the US killing of Iranian military commander Qassem

International

Croatian president faces leftist challenge in an uncertain vote

Croatians go to the polls in crucial election

ZAGREB: Croatians went to the polls yesterday to elect a new president in an uncertain vote where the conservative incumbent-trying to unite a fractured right wing-faces a serious challenge from a leftist former prime minister. Some 3.8 million people are eligible to vote in a poll that is being held just days after Croatia took over the European Union's helm for a six-month period, which will be dominated by Brexit and the bloc's enlargement.

At the same time, the EU's newest member is struggling with a mass exodus of its people, corruption and a lackluster economy at home. Centre-right incumbent, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, is campaigning on a "real Croatia" ticket, and Zoran Milanovic, a former Social Democratic premier, is promising a "normal" liberal democracy of equal citizens.

The outcome of the vote for the largely ceremonial post is uncertain, with the latest survey by Ipsos agency giving Milanovic a three-percentage-point lead over Grabar-Kitarovic. The latter, backed by the ruling HDZ party, will have to lure back hardliners who voted for a nationalist folk singer in the election's first round in December. Dominating in cities, Milanovic led the first round with around a third of the vote, thanks in part to that split among

the right-wingers.

Analysts said the first-round results showed an increase in support for hardliners, a trend seen in other European countries such as Poland or Hungary.

'Croatia that unifies'

If Grabar-Kitarovic fails to win the presidency, it would deal a heavy blow to the HDZ, whose moderate Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic faces parliamentary elections later this year. "I am a Croatia that unifies," Grabar-Kitarovic, 51, said during a TV election debate with her rival. Unity, patriotism and references to the 1990s independence war that remains an emotive issue, were the key points her re-election bid. "We should come together as in 1990", before the country declared independence from Yugoslavia, Croatia's first female president told her supporters in Zagreb.

Meanwhile, Milanovic insisted that the "wars are over" and Croatia should now fight for its place in Europe. "There is no 'real Croatia'... rather a Croatian republic for all, equal citizens," the 53-year-old told a campaign rally in his native Zagreb.

Accelerated exodus

Presenting herself as the "woman of the people" with humble farming roots,

Grabar-Kitarovic is well known for stunts such as singing in public which her critics deride as embarrassing.

She has also come under fire for downplaying the crimes committed by Croatia's World War II pro-Nazi regime. Meanwhile, Milanovic is trying to make a political comeback and throw off a reputation as arrogant and elitist. Premier from 2011 until 2016, he was welcomed at the time as a bright, young politician clean of the corruption tainting the rival HDZ. But the excitement waned after his government failed to push through much-needed reforms.

The ruling HDZ hopes to keep Grabar-Kitarovic in office during the country's EU presidency where four main issues are likely to dominate—the bloc's relationship with the UK after Brexit; the membership bids of Western Balkan states; climate change; and the bloc's budget framework for the next decade.

Croatia joined the EU in 2013, but its economy, strongly relying on tourism on its Adriatic coast, remains one of the bloc's weakest. EU's open borders also accelerated the exodus of its people to seek better pay in wealthier member states. "Our youngsters are leaving, that is the biggest problem" while politicians are only "insult-



ZAGREB: A man shouts against former Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic (center) as he leaves a polling station during the presidential elections yesterday. — AFP

ing each other", Stjepan Golub, a 70-year-old man from Zagreb, said.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 am

(0600 GMT) and close 12 hours later, with first results are expected around 1900 GMT. — AFP

News in brief

Cyber-attack in Austria ministry

VIENNA: Austria's foreign ministry has been targeted by a "serious cyber attack", officials said, warning another country could be responsible. The attack, which began Saturday, continued yesterday and "experts say it could last several days," a foreign ministry spokesman told AFP. The interior and foreign ministries issued a statement about the attack which started shortly before 11.00 pm (2200 GMT) on Saturday. "Due to the gravity and nature of the attack, it cannot be excluded that it is a targeted attack by a state actor," the statement said. "In the past, other European countries have been the target of similar attacks. Immediate measures have been taken and a "coordination committee" set up, the statement said. The attack came as Austria's Greens on Saturday gave the go-ahead to a coalition with the country's conservatives at a party congress in Salzburg, removing the last obstacle to the unprecedented alliance. —AFP

1,000 stranded in French Alps

PARIS: Nearly 1,000 tourists, mostly British, were stuck in the French Alps on Saturday night after their flights were cancelled due to bad weather, authorities said. Heavy fog covered the ski slopes around Chambéry on Saturday, leading to the cancellation of seven flights out of the local airport and delays of several others. Some 535 holiday-makers bedded down for the night at the conference centre in the town of Aix-les-Bains, 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Chambéry, while 450 others were bussed to hotels, the region's administrative authority, the Savoie prefecture, told AFP yesterday. "The passengers will be able to take off today from Lyon, Grenoble and Geneva airports," the prefecture said, adding that more buses had been chartered to cover the various airports. —AFP

Venezuela's 'acting president' confident of re-election

CARACAS: Opposition leader Juan Guaido is confident he will be re-elected as Venezuela's parliament speaker yesterday, even though he says opponents offered bribes to lawmakers to vote against him. Guaido, 36, issued a statement on Friday addressed to the "international community" announcing that his leadership "will be ratified."

Yesterday's election comes after a tumultuous year in which Guaido declared himself acting president and at times seemed close to toppling socialist President Nicolas Maduro.

While the first half of 2019 was full of drama, tension, an abortive military uprising, arbitrary detentions, US sanctions and a political tug-of-war, by the end of the year Guaido's push seemed to have run out of steam. Maduro appears firmly entrenched in the presidential palace, thanks primarily to the support of the armed forces, and Guaido is merely attempting to hold onto his primary role, as speaker of the National Assembly. He needs a simple majority of 84 in the 167-seat assembly, which should be a foregone conclusion because opposition lawmakers won 112 seats in legislative elections in 2015.

However, since then the opposition has been fractured and around 30 lawmakers have been forced into exile or to seek refuge in foreign diplomatic missions. Guaido's wider popularity has also nosedived from a high of 63 percent to just 39 percent in December, according to the pollster Datanalisis.

And then there's been the accusations of bribery. Maduro has already let it be known he expects to "regain the National Assembly" later this year in parliamentary elections.

concert inside Colombia organized by Richard Branson.

The next day, clashes break out at the border with Brazil when the Venezuelan military stops aid from entering. Four people are killed.

Uprising fails

On April 30 Guaido releases a video of himself with a small group of soldiers, for the first time claiming to have support from inside the military and calling for others to join them. Thousands of his supporters gather nearby and riots erupt in other cities. The government denounces an "attempted military coup". But the insurrection quickly peters out and 25 rebel soldiers seek refuge in the Brazilian embassy. On May 2 the army publicly pledges loyalty to Maduro. At least five people are killed in the days of unrest.

Talks open but stall

Delegations from the rival sides meet face-to-face in Oslo for the first time in late May for talks under Norwegian auspices. The meetings end without agreement besides a commitment to continue talking.

On June 8, Maduro orders the reopening of the border with Colombia where international aid has amassed. Thousands of Venezuelans rush to collect food and medicine. On July 5, a United Nations Human Rights Council report alleges that nearly 7,000 people had been killed in 18 months of security force operations. Trump, on August 6, orders a freeze on all Venezuelan government assets in the United States. In response, Maduro cancels a new round of talks with Guaido's team.

Low turnout at Guaido rally

On October 17, Venezuela wins a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, which a month before had voted to investigate alleged violations in the country. Caracas's critics are outraged. On November 16, about 5,000 Guaido supporters demonstrate against Maduro in the opposition's biggest rally since May, but with turnout far lower than expected. — AFP



CARACAS: Members of the Bolivarian National Guard and National Police stand guard outside of the National Assembly in Caracas, yesterday. — AFP

Technological help

Despite what he considers an attempt by Maduro's ruling party to "dismember the National Assembly and look for a conflict," Datanalisis director Luis Vicente Leon says Guaido should be successfully re-elected. Yet although the 36-year-old opposition leader said previously "we have more votes than we need," to do so has required the help of technology.

On December 17, parliament approved a reform allowing for the "virtual participation" of absent lawmakers. Deputy Melva Paredes said in a television interview that "means that there aren't enough votes" amongst those physically present to re-elect Guaido. But Paredes is from the Cambiemos party, an opposition group that has distanced itself from Guaido and opted for dialogue with Maduro instead.

Re-election would be an important step for Guaido to continue his power struggle with Maduro after declaring himself acting president on January 23, 2019 — a move acknowledged by more than 50 countries, including the United States.

He claimed the right to do so after parliament declared Maduro's 2018 re-election fraudulent, and insisted the constitution authorized his ascension to the presidency. Even if Guaido is re-elected National Assembly speaker, not much will change on Venezuela's political landscape, according to Peter Hakim, president emeritus at the Inter-American Dialogue think tank.

"I would guess Maduro keeps hold of the government with the support of the military, while Guaido heads an opposition that remains divided on issues and strategy," Hakim told AFP. —AFP

Venezuela: A year of power struggle

CARACAS: A power struggle broke out in oil-rich Venezuela nearly a year ago when National Assembly speaker Juan Guaido declared himself acting president in a bid to remove President Nicolas Maduro. With the Assembly expected to vote on January 5 to extend Guaido's term, here is an overview of the past year.

Guaido 'acting president'

Tensions build after Maduro is sworn in for a second term on January 10, claiming to have won May 2018 elections boycotted by the opposition and internationally dismissed as fraudulent. At a massive rally in Caracas on January 23, Guaido-head of the opposition-dominated National Assembly-declares himself acting president until new elections.

He immediately receives the support of US President Donald Trump, Canada and major Latin American powers. Eventually more than 50 countries will acknowledge him as interim president while traditional allies such as China, Cuba and Russia remain behind Maduro, as does the military.

On January 28, Washington orders sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA and hands control of its US bank accounts to Guaido.

Maduro closes borders

Trucks loaded with international supplies for impoverished Venezuela begin arriving on the Colombian side of the Tienditas border bridge on February 7. But Venezuelan troops prevent them from entering and Maduro slams "fake humanitarian aid" as a ploy for a US military "invasion."

He orders the closure of land frontiers with Brazil and Colombia, as well sea and air links with Curacao in the Caribbean. Defying a ban on leaving the country, Guaido attends on February 22 a Venezuelan aid

American strike in Iraq prompts anti-war protests in US cities

WASHINGTON: Groups of protesters took to the streets in Washington and other US cities on Saturday to condemn the air strike in Iraq ordered by President Donald Trump that killed Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani and Trump's decision to send about 3,000 more troops to the Middle East.

"No justice, no peace. US out of the Middle East," hundreds of demonstrators chanted outside the White House before marching to the Trump International Hotel a few blocks away.

Similar protests were held in New York, Chicago and other cities. Organizers at Code Pink, a women-led anti-war group, said protests were scheduled on Saturday in numerous US cities and towns. Protesters in Washington held signs that read "No war or sanctions on Iran!" and "US troops out of Iraq!"

Speakers at the Washington event included actress and activist Jane Fonda, who last year was arrested at a climate change protest on the steps of the US Capitol. "The younger people here should know that all of the wars fought since you were born have been fought over oil," Fonda, 82, told the crowd, adding that "we can't anymore lose lives and kill people and ruin an environment because of oil."

"Going to a march doesn't do a lot, but at least I can come out and say something; that I'm opposed to this stuff," said protestor Steve Lane of Bethesda, Maryland. "And maybe if enough people do the same thing, he (Trump) will listen." Soleimani, regarded as the second most powerful figure in Iran, was killed in the

U.S. strike on his convoy at Baghdad airport on Friday in a dramatic escalation of hostilities in the Middle East between Iran and the United States and its allies.

Public opinion polls show Americans in general have been opposed to US military interventions overseas. A survey last year by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found 27 percent of Americans believe military interventions make the United States safer, and nearly half said they make the country less safe. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: Anti-war activists protest in front of the White House on Saturday. — AFP

International

After Indonesia's deadly floods, few hear climate 'wake-up call'

60 perish in floods after torrential rainfall

JAKARTA: Floods that killed 60 people in Indonesia's capital after the biggest rainfall since records began should be a wake-up call to climate change in one of the world's biggest carbon emitters, environmental groups said. But, despite the catastrophe in Southeast Asia's biggest city, authorities see no greater impetus for more cuts to planned carbon dioxide emission reductions or other measures to address climate change.

The floods "should serve as a strong reminder to the government that things can't be business as usual," said Yuyun Harmono, a campaign manager at the Indonesian Forum for the Environment, the country's biggest green group. With one of the world's longest coastlines Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, is extremely vulnerable to climate change. The metropolitan region of the capital Jakarta is home to 30 million people and parts of the city near the coast are sinking just as sea levels are rising.

However, the country is the world's fifth-largest emitter of the greenhouse gases that are blamed for causing the climate crisis. It is also the world's top exporter of both thermal coal and palm oil, whose cultivation has reduced the amount of carbon dioxide absorbing forests. At least 60 people were killed after the rains on New Year's Day, Indonesian authorities said on Saturday evening. Nearly 100,000 people remain evacuated from their homes. Indonesia's meteorological department said it was the heaviest one-day rainfall since Dutch colonists began keeping records in 1866 and squarely blamed rising global temperatures. "The impact of a one degree increase can be severe," Dwikorita Karnawati, the head of the agency, told a news conference on Friday. "Among that is these floods."

The floods were "a big wake up call," said Hidayah

Hamzah, a research analyst at the World Resources environmental group in Jakarta.

"We don't care about the environment"

Social media users criticized the government for not doing enough on climate change after the flooding. Twitter user @wolficoconut said: "Indonesia is a country that is prone to disaster but we don't care about the environment." But the green lobby has little sway in Indonesia.

Some 18 percent of Indonesians believe there is no link between human activity and climate change, one of the highest percentages among the world's 23 biggest countries, according to the 2019 YouGov-Cambridge Globalism Project. When asked if the government would do more on climate issues after the floods, the Ministry of the Environment and Forest's Climate Adaptation Director Sri Tantri Arundhati said on Friday there are no plans to change policy or shift the targets for cutting carbon dioxide output it agreed under the Paris Accord.

Rida Mulyana, director general for electricity at the energy ministry, said the government would stick to a plan for moving to renewables that means more than half of power generation will still rely on coal for the next decade. Part of the government's solution for Jakarta's regular floods, which are not usually as bad as the recent ones, is to move the capital to the island of Borneo by 2023, a plan environmentalists fear will exacerbate deforestation.

Plans to improve Jakarta's flood defenses include building two dams and works on the city's biggest river. "There aren't a lot of people who realize the impact of climate change," said Nirwono Joga, a researcher at the Urban Studies Center in Jakarta. "When the flood recedes and people get back to their homes and resume normal activities, flood management or concrete actions to combat climate change will be forgotten too." — Reuters



This aerial handout picture shows a landslide area at Pasir Madang village in Bogor, after torrential rains began to hit the area on December 31. Indonesian rescue teams flew helicopters stuffed with food to remote flood-hit communities on Saturday as the death toll from the disaster jumped to 60 and fears grew about the possibility of more torrential rain. — AFP

Japan tightens immigration procedures as Ghosn flees

TOKYO: Japan yesterday said it would tighten immigration measures after former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn fled the country while on bail, its first official response to an astonishing escape that has transformed the executive into an international fugitive.

Authorities have remained quiet after Ghosn revealed on Tuesday that he had fled to his childhood home of Lebanon to escape a "rigged" justice system in Japan. All government offices and most businesses in Japan have been shut for the new year holidays. The former Nissan Motor and Renault chairman was arrested in Tokyo in November 2018 and faced multiple charges of financial wrongdoing, which he denies.

Ghosn's escape from Japan is "unjustifiable" and he is thought to have left the country using "illegal methods", the Japanese justice minister said yesterday, in the first official public comments on the case. The 65-year-old former Nissan boss skipped bail and fled Japan where he was awaiting trial over multiple counts of financial misconduct that he denies.

It was the latest twist in a saga that has gripped the business world and his escape from Japan has left authorities there red-faced and scrambling to defend their justice system from fierce international criticism. "Our country's criminal justice system



BEIRUT: A woman walks in front of the underground parking of a house said to belong to former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn in a wealthy neighborhood of the Lebanese capital Beirut on Saturday. — AFP

sets out appropriate procedures to clarify the truth of cases and is administered appropriately, while guaranteeing basic individual human rights. The flight by a defendant on bail is unjustifiable," said Masako Mori. "It is clear that we do not have records of the defendant Ghosn departing Japan. It is believed that he used some wrongful methods to illegally leave the country. It is extremely regrettable that we have come to this situation," added the minister.

She confirmed Ghosn's bail has already been cancelled and that an Interpol "red notice" had been issued. In separate comments, the public prosecutors' office deemed Ghosn's flight a "crime" and said the tycoon had "knowingly flouted" the

country's judicial procedures. In their first remarks since Ghosn's dramatic flight just before the New Year, prosecutors said the escape vindicated their argument that he should have been kept in custody.

"The defendant Ghosn had abundant financial power and multiple foreign bases. It was easy for him to flee," the statement said. He had "significant influence" inside Japan and globally, and there was a "realistic danger" he would destroy evidence related to the case, they added.

The Ghosn case put the international spotlight on Japan's justice system, which came under heavy fire for authorities' ability to hold suspects almost indefinitely pending trial. Ghosn twice won bail by per-

suading the court he was not a flight risk—decisions seen as controversial at the time. Prosecutors argue that the lengthy detention is required to prove guilt beyond doubt and they are unwilling to charge a suspect if their case is not iron-clad. The court is fair and will only find people guilty beyond reasonable doubt, they said in their statement. "Therefore it was necessary and unavoidable to detain the defendant Ghosn in order to continue fair and appropriate criminal proceedings," they said.

'Refused to obey'

Ghosn himself did appear once in court, under a little-used procedure to ask why he was still being detained. At this appearance, he said he was eager to defend himself at a court trial and clear his name. However, the prosecutors said that by fleeing Japan, he had "violated that oath" and "refused to obey the judgment of our nation's court." "He wanted to escape punishment for his own crime. There is no way to justify this act," they added. Ghosn himself has said he left Japan because he was no longer willing to be "held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system." Amid fanciful accounts of a Houdini-like escape from Japan, he appears to have simply walked out of his house, according to security camera footage seen by Japanese public broadcaster NHK before boarding a private jet to Beirut via Istanbul.

Japan has launched a probe into the humiliating security lapse and prosecutors said they would "coordinate with the relevant agencies to swiftly and appropriately investigate the matter." The 65-year-old former Nissan boss has vowed to give his own account at a hotly awaited press conference in Beirut this week. —Agencies

Bangladesh orders arrest of 'fugitive' ex-chief justice

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court ordered the arrest yesterday of former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha and 10 others on charges alleging they embezzled nearly half a million dollars, a prosecutor said.

"All of them are fugitives from justice," prosecutor Khurshid Alam Khan said, adding Sinha was accused of embezzling money and laundering it from one bank account to another. Sinha headed the South Asian nation's Supreme Court for a landmark verdict on judicial independence that went against the government, but fled Bangladesh in late 2017 amid allegations he had been forced to step aside.

Opposition groups and rights activists said the departure of Sinha, a Hindu, was a blow to the credibility of the judiciary in the Muslim-majority country. Sinha, 68, now lives in North America.

He was the first Hindu to be made chief justice of the officially secular Muslim-majority nation of 168 million since its independence from Pakistan in 1971.

Sinha's departure came after a rare statement from the Supreme Court in October 2017 said other judges had accused him of graft and refused to sit with him on the top bench. Just months earlier, Sinha had led the Supreme Court in a decision that scrapped parliament's power to sack top judges.

The ruling overturned a 2014 constitutional change introduced by authoritarian Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In a written statement issued before he left the country, Sinha expressed dismay over criticism he had faced from the government over the ruling, saying he was "worried about the independence of the judiciary".

He later wrote a book titled "A Broken Dream: Rule of Law, Human Rights & Democracy", detailing the saga, saying he had been forced to resign and flee after being threatened by a military security agency. — AFP

Britain urges Iran to come in from the cold

LONDON: Britain yesterday urged Iran to "do the right thing" and seize the opportunity to come in from the cold by de-escalating tensions with the United States. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said a war was in no one's interest as he described Iran's assassinated top general Qasem Soleimani as a "regional menace".

Britain is preparing to deploy the Royal Navy to escort UK-flagged commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. The US on Friday killed Soleimani in a drone strike near Baghdad international airport that raised fears of a new war in the Middle East.

"The US will take their own operational judgment call but they've got the right of self defence," Raab told Sky News television. Raab said he spoke to Iraq's President Barham Saleh on Saturday and Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi yesterday.

"We want to see de-escalation, we're going to do everything we can to protect the UK diplomatic missions and we're going about that business," he said.

Raab said there needed to be "a route through this which allows Iran to come in from the international cold and that opportunity is there for them if they do the right thing". Raab also confirmed that he has a meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo next week.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Defence said late Saturday that the frigate HMS Montrose and HMS Defender, a destroyer, "will resume accompaniments of UK-flagged commercial vessels" in the Strait. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "I have instructed preparations for HMS Montrose and HMS Defender to return to accompanying duties of Red Ensign shipping. The government will take all necessary steps to protect our ships and citizens at this time." The practice of escorting ships in the Strait of Hormuz was stood down in November, after being used during the fall-out from the seizure of the British-flagged Stena Impero tanker by Iran in July. — AFP



HANOI: Rescue personnel carry a body from the site where an under-construction building collapsed on Friday in southern Cambodia's coastal Kep province yesterday. — AFP

Cambodia building collapse kills 36, injures 23

PHNOM PENH: Thirty-six people were killed and 23 more injured when a tourist guesthouse under construction in Cambodia collapsed, trapping workers under rubble, officials said yesterday.

Officials said rescue operations ended two days after the seven-storey concrete building collapsed on Friday in the coastal town of Kep, about 160 km (100 miles) southwest of the capital Phnom Penh. The 36 dead included six

children and 14 women, officials said in a statement that did not detail why children were at the construction site.

Kep Governor Ken Satha said that the owners of the building, a Cambodian couple, had been detained for questioning.

However, Prime Minister Hun Sen defended the government response and said that no officials in Kep province would be fired. "Building collapses don't only happen in Cambodia ... they happen elsewhere ... including in the United States," Hun Sen said in a news briefing. Cambodia is undergoing a construction boom to serve growing crowds of Chinese tourists and investors. The Kep building collapse came six months after 28 people were killed when a Chinese-owned construction site collapsed in Preah Sihanouk province. Seven people were charged with involuntary manslaughter and Hun Sen fired a disaster management official over that accident. — Reuters

Sri Lanka oppn MP cries foul over gun arrest

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan police on Saturday arrested an opposition legislator over an alleged gun offence, but the outspoken MP claimed he was being targeted for speaking out against corruption in politics. Ranjan Ramanayake was the third member of the United National Party—which lost a November presidential election in a landslide win for Gotabaya Rajapaksa—to be arrested in as many weeks.

Police seized what they said was an unlicensed handgun, 127 rounds of live ammunition and unspecified documents from the home of Ramanayake, who livestreamed the search and arrest. "I have not done any crime... I am ready to face any repercussions for speaking the truth," he said shortly before being taken into custody to give a statement.

Fellow UNP lawmaker Eran Wickramaratne said the arrest was politically motivated. "The continuing trend of using police force to further a political agenda is abhorrent and must be stopped," Wickramaratne said on Twitter. Ramanayake was the third UNP lawmaker arrested since mid-December.

Former minister Patali Ranawaka was arrested on December 18 in connection with a 2016 traffic accident in which a motorcyclist was seriously injured. Another former minister, Rajitha Senarathne, was arrested on December 27 and accused of violating election laws by holding a press conference ahead of the November 16 vote, among other charges. Both Senarathne and Ranawaka have since been released on bail.

All three lawmakers are vocal opponents of Rajapaksa, who has said he wants to hold early parliamentary elections, possibly in late April or early May. — AFP

Analysis

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Digging up dirt: Can soil contain answer to food shortages?

As water shortages, high temperatures and rising greenhouse gas emissions threaten food production, countries around the world are looking somewhere new for solutions - the soil. For decades, farmers wanting to boost their yields have focused their attention on fertilizers, technology and new seed varieties. Instead, they should be looking under their feet, according to experts, who warn that years of erosion and degradation of the soil through intensive farming have created the conditions for a global food production crisis.

"Data suggests that if we do not restore global soil health, it is highly likely the consequences within 10 years will be many, many millions facing food and water insecurity," British soil expert John Crawford told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. This could lead to "civil unrest, mass migration, radicalization and violence on an unprecedented scale," said Crawford, until recently a science director at the world's oldest agricultural research institute, Rothamsted Research.

Much of the problem is caused by erosion, which strips away the highly fertile top layer of soil. An area of soil the size of a soccer pitch is eroded every five seconds, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). While soil erosion occurs naturally, human activities such as intensive agriculture, deforestation and urban sprawl have significantly increased the rate at which it is happening.

Nearly a third of Earth's soil is already degraded. At current rates, that will increase to 90% by 2050, the FAO forecasts, warning that pollution from human activity such as mining and manufacturing as well as erosion are to blame. There are signs the world is beginning to wake up to the issue, which Crawford said it had only about 10 to 15 years to sort out. Soil is "one of the most important regulators of global climate" because it stores more carbon than the planet's atmosphere and vegetation combined, he said.

"If you fix soil, you mitigate a whole bunch of other risks," added Crawford, now professor of technology and strategy at the Adam Smith Business School in Glasgow. Whole Foods, the upscale U.S. retailer that made its name selling organic food, has put "regenerative agriculture" - farming that focuses on soil health - at the top of its trends for 2020.

Low-cost testing

From Iowa to the Ayeyarwady delta region of Myanmar - known as the country's rice bowl - farmers are trying to figure out how to make their soil healthier and more productive. In a remote village in the Ayeyarwady delta recently, a group of farmers sat cross-legged on a wooden floor and discussed why their once-thriving farms had become less productive. The men had started testing their soil for the first time with the help of Proximity Designs, a business that designs low-cost farming products.

The company only began offering low-cost soil testing services in Myanmar in 2018 and by last October it had already sold more than 7,600 tests at \$17 each, highlighting farmer interest. "We didn't have anyone to teach us (about soil). We followed suggestions from others, thinking they might work," said Win Zaw, 44, who grows rice twice a year on his six-acre farm. "We knew something was wrong, but didn't know what to do," he said, looking down at neatly-typed sheets of paper detailing the levels of nitrogen, phosphate, potassium, acidity and organic matter in the soil.

All the farms were showing very low organic matter, which is produced by decomposing plants and is key to good soil health. Proximity Designs' agronomists said this was likely due partly to the warm climate, which degrades organic matter more quickly, and partly to local farming practices. Their recommendations were relatively simple: Leave crop residues after the harvest to retain the moisture in the soil, or sow cover crops - those planted to protect the soil between rice plantings rather than for commercial reasons.

When it came to fertilizer use, the recommended amount was much lower than what the farmers were using. "Applying farming practices without knowing what's happening in the soil can lead to crop failures, soil degradation, environmental damage and ecosystem breakdown," said Proximity founder Debbie Aung Din.

In Iowa, a state in the US Midwest known for its cornfields, farmers are increasingly seeking to improve soil health, said Richard Cruse, a professor at Iowa State University's agronomy department. "We see increasing numbers of cover crops that are being planted. We're increasing the rate of no-till adoption," he said, referring to a method of farming without tilling the soil that is said to reduce erosion. "I've talked to several (farmers) in my area who are saying, 'We have to do something different.'" But many lack the expertise and skills, while farmers who rent say it is not worth investing in land that they do not own. "In Iowa, more than half of the farmland is managed by farmers that don't own the land," said Cruse. — Reuters

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Iranians burn an Israeli and a US flag during an anti-US protest in Tehran on Saturday over the killings during a US air strike of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. — AFP

US killing catapults Iraq back to 2003 invasion

Iraqi factions threatening to oust US troops, officials denouncing American "violations" and fears of a new Gulf war: A US strike has catapulted Iraq back to the tumultuous aftermath of the 2003 invasion. The precision drone strike outside Baghdad airport on Friday killed top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi right-hand-man, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Within hours, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres urged leaders to exercise restraint. "The world cannot afford another war in the Gulf," he said.

The US attack was the most dramatic escalation yet in a feared proxy war between Iran and the US on Iraqi soil. It also opened the door to fierce criticism of the US, harkening back to the years following the American-led invasion that toppled ex-dictator Saddam Hussein. "The narrative of anti-Americanism is coming back," said Renad Mansour of the London-based Chatham House. "America hasn't done something this aggressive in a while, so it has brought back memories of the American military occupation of Iraq, as well as the same language and discourse," he told AFP.

Iraq's premier, Adel Abdel Mahdi, condemned the strike as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and of the US military's mandate in the country. Around 5,200 American forces are deployed across Iraq to train and advise local troops targeting the remnants of the Islamic State group. Pro-Iran factions had for months been urging parliament to revoke the bilateral agreement allowing US troops in Iraq, and Mansour said the strike could bolster their argument. "They tried to use anti-Americanism before but no one really bought it. Now, it feels like they have more ammunition and justification to make anti-Americanism a bigger narrative," he told AFP.

'Compulsory solidarity'

Indeed, top officials in the Hashed al-Shaabi, a network of mostly pro-Iran groups incorporated into the state, swiftly began calling for the departure of US forces. Leading Hashed member Hadi al-Ameri urged lawmakers "to take a bold decision to oust foreign troops from Iraq, because their presence has become a threat for Iraqis". Firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr swiftly reactivated his Mahdi Army, the notorious militia that fought US troops after the invasion but which was dissolved nearly a decade ago.

Qais Al-Khazali, a US-sanctioned paramilitary leader, also called on his fighters to "be ready" following the strike. And Kataeb Hezbollah, a hardline Hashed faction, predicted that the deadly raid would ring in "the beginning of the end for the US presence in Iraq and the region". Less than a week earlier, the US had killed 25 Kataeb Hezbollah fighters in retaliatory bombings for the death of an American contractor in northern Iraq.

In response, streams of Hashed supporters laid siege to the US embassy in Baghdad this week. Even Iraqi figures known not to back the Hashed, including top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and President Barham Saleh, condemned the strike publicly. "Some think today's hit clips Iran's wings in Iraq. The opposite is more likely," wrote Fanar Haddad of Singapore University's Middle East Centre. "Iraqi political classes are likely to align more strongly with Iran due to compulsory solidarity and some indignation," he said.

The Iraqi premier said Muhandis - who was deputy head of Hashed and therefore a government official - would be mourned in an official funeral procession on Saturday. Iraqi state television reported a further US strike

in Baghdad on Saturday morning, targeting a convoy belonging to the Hashed al-Shaabi.

US 'neither cares nor matters'

Analyst Nick Heras said targeting the Hashed could have "significant ramifications" for US-Iraqi ties. "It means that the United States is engaged in a conflict with a component of the state-sanctioned Iraqi security forces," he warned. Pro-Iran factions "now have a political and government wing, media outlets, money, relations, experience, arms, human resources and a supportive public", said specialist Hisham Al-Hashemi. As a result, Washington felt it was "no longer the most powerful actor in Iraq" and sought to regain leverage through the "adventurous policy" of the Soleimani strike, he said.

Ramzy Mardini of the US Institute of Peace said the crisis may have been caused by a "miscalculation" on both sides, with the US overestimating the threat to its embassy. "Tehran did not appreciate that the threat of another Iranian hostage crisis would change the rules of American engagement," Mardini said, referring to the 1979 storming of the US embassy in Tehran.

The US action also frustrated traditional allies as it was launched with little coordination or advance warning, according to diplomatic sources in Baghdad. Iraq's parliament was to hold an emergency session yesterday, with lawmakers threatening to call for the ouster of US troops. "Iraqis realize that the US isn't a long-term ally - it neither cares nor matters," said Mansour. They see a US administration without a cohesive objective while Iran's policy is more fixed. "There used to be a debate about who has influence, the US or Iran? Now no one is even asking - Iran has the clear advantage." — AFP

Turkish intervention risks Syria scenario for Libya: Experts

PARIS: Turkey's decision to approve the deployment of troops to Libya risks plunging the North African nation deeper into a Syrian-style proxy war between regional powers including Russia, experts warn. Libya has been mired in conflict since a NATO-backed uprising in 2011 toppled dictator Muammar Gaddafi, with rival administrations in the east and the west battling for supremacy.

Turkey and Qatar have taken the side of the UN-recognized government of national accord (GNA) in the capital Tripoli, which has been under sustained attack since April from the forces of eastern-based military strongman General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar, who has superior air power, is backed by Turkey's regional rivals - Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

On Thursday, Turkish MPs passed a bill approving a military deployment in Libya to bolster the beleaguered GNA. No date was given for the potential troop deployment, which would draw Ankara deeper into a conflict in which Haftar's forces, who oppose Islamist movements close to Ankara, have the upper hand. Ankara has already

sent the GNA drones, according to the United Nations.

Some reports have suggested that Ankara has sent in some of the Syrian rebels that led a Turkish intervention against a Kurdish militia in northeast Syria in October. Haftar's army, meanwhile, has reportedly received backing from hundreds of Russian mercenaries from private military group Wagner, believed to be controlled by an ally of President Vladimir Putin.

Russia, whose military intervention in Syria helped turn the tide of that conflict in President Bashar al-Assad's favour in 2015, has denied sending mercenaries to Libya. But the UN's Libya envoy, Ghassan Salame, has said himself that Russian mercenaries are indeed operating on the ground and has accused several countries of violating a 2011 UN arms embargo on Libya.

'Arms from everywhere'

Salame has slammed the foreign interference in a conflict that has turned Libya into a haven for jihadists and migrant smugglers. "Arms are coming in from everywhere," he told AFP in an interview in late November, accusing unnamed "external parties" of causing increased civilian casualties through drone strikes. Like the Syrian conflict, the Libyan war has developed into a "very complex" power play between Ankara and Moscow who are not allies but whose interests sometimes converge. Jalel Harchaoui, a researcher on Libya at Dutch think-tank Clingendael Institute, told AFP.

Russia and Turkey support opposing sides in the

Saudi uses sports 'soft power' as lever of influence

Saudi Arabia's hosting of the Dakar Rally is just the latest international sporting event to take place in the kingdom as part of a multibillion-dollar push to boost its battered global image. In recent months the ultraconservative kingdom - under fire over human rights abuses - has accelerated investment in sports, mirroring a long-standing strategy adopted by regional powers, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Saudi Arabia is seeking to use glitzy sporting extravaganzas as an instrument of soft power in its push for regional supremacy as well as to project a moderate image of a country long seen as an exporter of jihadist ideology. In 2019 the kingdom hosted a heavyweight boxing rematch between Anthony Joshua and Andy Ruiz, a Formula E motor race and a tennis exhibition tournament. Women's wrestling, somewhat toned down from its usual razzmatazz, also made its debut in a nation where such events were once unthinkable.

In December, Cristiano Ronaldo and his Juventus teammates took to the pitch at the King Saud University

Stadium in Riyadh for the Italian Super Cup. And in January, a Barcelona side featuring Lionel Messi will appear in the Spanish Super Cup, two months after the Argentine superstar played his first match on Saudi soil in a friendly encounter against Brazil. But one of the biggest events is the coveted Dakar Rally, one of motor racing's most gruelling adventure rallies which started in the kingdom yesterday and lasts until Jan 17. After more than a decade in South America, the rally is set to remain in the Arabian peninsula for at least five years.

'Sports diplomacy'

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sports push stems partly from an economic motive to lure international tourists and boost domestic spending as the OPEC kingpin seeks to diversify its oil-reliant economy. But in a country where two-thirds of the population is under 30, critics say glitzy sporting events are aimed at blunting public frustration over an economic downturn and soaring youth unemployment. Activists also accuse authorities of "sportswashing", using such events as a tool to soften their international image. The brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul in 2018, the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen and a sweeping crackdown on dissent have tarnished the kingdom's reputation. Saudi Arabia executed at least 187 people on death row in 2019, according to a tally based on official data, the highest since 1995 when 195 people were executed.

And while Saudi women now have the right to drive,

Syrian civil war but together launched peace talks with Iran that effectively killed off UN-sponsored talks in Geneva. Moscow also initially stood back while Ankara intervened against Kurdish rebels in northeast Syria in October, allowing Ankara to carve out a buffer zone along its border before negotiating a ceasefire. "Could something similar happen in Libya? My answer is yes," Salame told France's Le Monde newspaper in a recent interview. Harchaoui noted that there had "never been a direct clash between Turks and Russians on Syrian soil" and predicted that they would also avoid direct confrontation in Libya. Underpinning the strategies of both countries was "the same anti-European, post-American logic," he said.

Europe, meanwhile, has been relegated to the role of onlookers, in a war which has facilitated the smuggling of migrants across the Mediterranean from Libya to Europe. Attempts by French President Emmanuel Macron to broker a peace deal by inviting Haftar to talks in Paris with the GNA in 2017, have come to naught. As France scales back its mediation attempts following criticism of its perceived pro-Haftar bias, Germany has stepped in to try fill the void. Berlin has invited regional players to a UN-backed conference in Berlin planned for January. "The West isn't leading the way in Libya. The Russians and Turks will do their own Yalta on Libya," Harchaoui predicted, in an allusion to the conference at which the US, USSR and Britain decided on the post-war order in Europe in 1945. — AFP



Toyota's Hilux Gazoo racing driver Frenando Alonso of Spain and co-driver Marc Coma of Spain compete during the Stage 1 of the Dakar 2020 between Jeddah and Al Wajh yesterday. — AFP

campaigners say jailed driving activists have faced sexual harassment and torture in detention. The kingdom is using "sports diplomacy" as part of Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030 reform program to diversify its economy, Carole Gomez, a researcher at the Institute of International and Strategic Relations, told AFP. Saudi officials expect events such as the Dakar Rally will help boost tourism, one of the centrepieces of Vision 2030. Saudi Arabia began offering tourist visas for the first time last September. — AFP

Business

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KUWAIT: A woman checks share prices at the Boursa Kuwait in this file photo. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Gulf markets plunge on US-Iran tensions

Kuwait stocks slip 4.1%, Aramco at lowest since IPO

DUBAI: Kuwaiti and Saudi stocks led Gulf stocks sharply lower in late afternoon trade yesterday in the wake of a US drone strike in Baghdad that killed Iran's military commander. Shares of oil giant Saudi Aramco fell 1.7 percent to their lowest level since listing last month in a record initial public offering (IPO). Aramco shares dropped to 34.55 riyals a share, the lowest level since it started trading last month. Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani, the architect of Tehran's overseas military operations was killed on Friday in a US drone strike on his convoy at Baghdad airport. The Kuwaiti index, the best performer in the region in 2019, was down nearly 4.1 percent, while Saudi stocks plunged 2.2 percent.

Dubai stocks were down 3.1 percent with property firm Emaar Properties falling 3.7 percent. The Abu Dhabi index fell 1.41 percent. Banks also took a beating, with Al Rajhi

Bank down 2 percent and Samba Financial Group down nearly 3 percent.

"A U.S.-Iran war could shave 0.5 percentage points or more off global GDP, mainly due to a collapse in Iran's economy, but also due to the impact from a surge in oil prices," Jason Tuvey, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, said in a note last week. Saudi credit default swaps, which investors buy as protection against default, rose by more than 13 percent on Friday following Soleimani's killing, Refinitiv data showed.

Regional bond spreads are expected to widen today, when international debt markets open, because of increased political risk, a debt banker said.

Oil prices surged as much as \$3 a barrel as gold, the yen and safe-haven bonds all rallied on Friday after the US killing of Iran's top commander. The most dramatic moves were in the oil markets, with Brent crude futures

leaping as much 4.5 percent to \$69.20 a barrel, the highest level since Saudi crude facilities were attacked in September.

The impact hit almost every asset class. MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe declined 0.52 percent, while its emerging markets index lost 0.40 percent. Europe's broad STOXX 600 index fell as much as 1 percent, but pared losses to close down 0.33 percent, while shares on Wall Street fell around 0.8 percent as New Year optimism, which had pushed equity markets to record highs, evaporated. The yen rose half a percent against the dollar to a two-month high, the Swiss franc hit its highest level against the euro since September and gold prices climbed to a four-month peak, racing past the key \$1,550 an ounce level. "Geopolitics has come back to the table, and this is something that could have major cross-asset implications," said Salman Ahmed, Lombard

Odier's chief investment strategist.

"What is critical is how it pans out in the next few days," Ahmed said. "Whether it turns into a theme depends on Iran's reaction and then the US response."

Iran promised harsh revenge. The Quds Force and its paramilitary proxies have ample means to mount a response.

In September, US officials blamed Iran for attacking the oil installations of Saudi Aramco, the state energy giant and the world's largest oil exporter. Iran has denied responsibility for the strikes and accused Washington of warmongering. The Trump administration then did not respond, beyond heated rhetoric and threats, and markets settled down within a week after Brent surged 14.6 percent, its biggest one-day percentage gain since at least 1988, on Sept. 16.

Yields on German Bunds and US Treasuries - the world's benchmark govern-

ment bonds that are typically seen as the safest assets - fell sharply. The 10-year Bund yield fell 7 basis points to a two-week low of -0.299 percent, while Bund futures were up 0.62 percent at 172.33 euros. Benchmark 10-year Treasury notes rose 26/32 in price to yield 1.7916 percent, from 1.882 percent late on Thursday.

Spot gold prices hit a high of \$1,553.20 an ounce. US gold futures settled 1.5 percent higher at \$1,552.40. The dollar index rose 0.05 percent, with the euro down 0.09 percent to \$1.116. The Japanese yen strengthened 0.41 percent versus the greenback at 108.13 per dollar.

The focus on geopolitics meant markets paid little attention to stronger-than-expected data from France, where inflation rose 1.6 percent year-on-year in December, beating analysts' expectations for a 1.4 percent rise. —Reuters

Amid tech turmoil, celebration at global electronics show

LAS VEGAS: The Consumer Electronics Show opening today offers a chance to showcase the newest and shiniest gadgetry, looking past the turmoil engulfing the global technology industry. The annual Las Vegas gathering with more than 4,500 exhibitors brings out about 175,000 attendees searching for innovations of the future. For an industry facing unprecedented turbulence, the hope is that what happens in Vegas does not stay in Vegas after it closes on Friday, but filters into the world where consumers can adopt new technologies for health, communication, transportation, the home and lifestyles.

The show opens against the backdrop of mounting concerns on how data gathered from connected devices can be exploited by marketers, governments and hackers. There has also been a wave of attacks from politicians and activists against dominant tech platforms, as well as intense trade frictions between the world's economic and technology powers, the United States and China.

Roger Kay, an analyst with Endpoint Technologies Associates, said consumers are slowly coming to terms with the digital world and its privacy tradeoffs, and still appear to be driven toward new gadgetry. "People always want to see a shiny new object," Kay said. "I think people are going to adjust to this world and adopt the technology that comes along that suits them."

CES 2020 will feature devices infused with artificial intelligence for cars, homes, smart cities and for personal health, with many gadgets embracing voice assistants from Amazon, Google and others. "We will see AI and apps being used to make people's

lives easier, such as speech recognition and object recognition," said Sarah Brown of the Consumer Technology Association, which organizes the show that includes media previews today.

"You will see that across the entire CES-AI embedded in all these technologies." Trade and industry attendees will see wearables offering more precise health monitoring, for both athletes and seniors; cars with better computer vision to avoid accidents; televisions designed as smart home hubs; and robots with features to help understand or express emotion.

A series of panel discussions will also explore questions around consumer privacy, the importance of 5G wireless, technology for travel and tourism, the promise of quantum computing and how lifestyles will change in "smart cities."

Emotional issues

Some of the new CES gadgets will collect and analyze data such as facial expressions and tone of voice-creating the opportunity for more personalized services, but with risks as well. This could mean a robot might be a better personal companion for the elderly, and a vehicle may adapt to signs of driver fatigue or impairment. According to a report by the consulting firm Accenture, emotional data "is reaching a tipping point of opportunity" for firms which can decode human emotions for marketing, market research and political polling purposes.

"Emotional data will challenge companies because reading people's emotions is a delicate business," an Accenture report said. "Emotions are highly personal, and users will have concerns about privacy invasion, security breaches, emotional manipulation, and bias."

US-China row on display

Although CES is not about politics, it takes place while US-China tensions simmer over trade, tariffs, industrial espionage and national security. But China will still represent the largest non-US delegation at CES, with hundreds of exhibitors including Huawei,



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo taken on Jan 10, 2019, attendees walk through the hall at the Sands Expo Convention Center during CES 2019 consumer electronics show. —AFP

the smartphone and infrastructure giant which has been blacklisted by Washington over national security concerns.

"In terms of exhibit space, Chinese space is down slightly from last year, but most of the major exhibitors are returning and

some even upping size of presence," Brown said. Simon Bryant of Futuresource Consulting said Chinese firms see the show as an important opportunity to demonstrate their ability to compete globally with Silicon Valley. —AFP

Business

NBK announces winner of KD 250,000 prize in Al-Jawhara's quarterly draw

Al-Janah: We seek to reward our customers with a wide-range of prizes

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the KD 250,000 prize in Al-Jawhara Account's quarterly draw for the month of December 2019. The name of the winner Amnah Abdullateef Mohammad Abduljader was announced live on FM 88.8 Kuwait Pulse, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as representatives from NBK. Al Jawhara monthly and quarterly draws are supervised and audited by Deloitte.

Al-Jawhara Account customers are automatically entered in Al-Jawhara's weekly, monthly and quarterly draws, giving them the chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD125,000 monthly and the grand

prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Every KD 50 deposited in the Al-Jawhara Account gives customers one entry into the draw. The minimum opening amount for the account is KD 400 while the maximum amount that can be held is KD 500,000. Customers' chances of entering the draws double for every KD 50 when no debits are done for a given period of time.

"We seek to reward our customers, especially Al-Jawhara Account clients, with a diversified package of prizes throughout the year, in line with their interests. We also provide them with the safest and the most innovative banking services," stated Bader Al-Janah, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, while

commenting on the quarterly draw. "We are committed to develop the money-saving culture among the different categories of the retail clients, which will reflect positively on our products and services. Al Jawhara Account is one of the key tools that boost the money-saving culture," Al-Janah added. In addition to the draws, Al-Jawhara Account gives customers access to many features and benefits which include a free NBK Visa Debit Card that can be used anywhere around the world.

Since 2012, NBK has rewarded loyal customers with prizes worth a total of up to KD 2,200,000 annually through its weekly, monthly and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws. In addition to its attractive



Bader Al-Janah and most innovative and safe products and services, NBK is committed to providing customers with ongoing offers and rewards in line with the needs and lifestyles of its customers.



CBK announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Amani Al-Hurajji.

The results of the draw were as follows:

- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Fadhel Saleh Al-Mashmoum.
- The "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign prize of KD 1,000 and was for the share of Hasan Baroun Abdullah Abdurrahman.

The Bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy. The announcement of the winner will be held in Murouj Complex on Friday 10/1/2020 at 7 pm.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000.

Australia bushfires ravage tourism industry

SYDNEY: Pillars of fire and smoke from bushfires are tarnishing Australia's reputation for pristine vistas abounding in wildlife and wreaking havoc on tourism, operators say, as authorities are forced to cancel concerts, close parks and evacuate towns.

The smoke has shrouded entire cities and driven air quality to unhealthy levels, with at least 10 people dying in the fires in the past week, while colonies of animals such as koalas and flying foxes have been destroyed. "Seeing all the images of fires on television and social media is not going to help, it puts a dent in Australia's reputation as a safe tourist destination," said Shane Oliver, chief economist at AMP Capital.

"It's come at a time when the economy was already fragile," he added, ranking tourism as Australia's fourth biggest export whose strength officials had been counting on to help offset a domestic reluctance to spend. Bushfires burning for weeks near the world heritage site of the Blue Mountains west of Sydney in the southeastern state of New South Wales have driven away tourists.

As visitors take to social media to warn others to steer clear, the number of busloads of tourists each day has fallen to about four from 15 or 20, said Stacey Reynolds, a receptionist at the Blue Mountains Backpacker Hostel in

Katoomba. "They told people not to come in and it's affected everything, from restaurants to motels to backpackers to cafes," she added. "The streets are empty."

Although there is no published nationwide data on tourism since the fires took hold in late spring, Australia attracted 2.71 million holiday makers last summer, up 3.2 percent from the previous year, as many fled the northern hemisphere winter.

Hotels in the largest city of Sydney saw a fall of 10 percent in guest numbers in December, the Accommodation Association of Australia said. "The fires and the smoke have had a real brand and reputational damage in Sydney," added its chief executive, Dean Long.

The train and cable network of Scenic World in the Blue Mountains had 50,000 fewer visitors in December, down 50 percent from last year, Chief Experience Officer Amanda Byrne said.

Scenic World was open, but the hotels around the area are having more cancellations than bookings, she said. Government agency Tourism Australia, which released a new advertisement last month to lure Britons to beautiful beaches and stunning scenery, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The scorching temperatures and bushfires, which have also burnt vineyards in South Australia and warmed the usually cool island state of Tasmania, will hit the sector hard, said Judith Mair, who studies tourism, environment and consumer behavior. "It will be in stages - immediately with evacuations, dislocations and cancellations, but also in the longer term, because tourists buy holidays based on the image of a destination and Australia's is being badly affected," said Mair, a professor at the University



SYDNEY: Sunbathers are seen on Bondi Beach as temperatures soar in Sydney, Australia this week experienced its hottest day on record and the heatwave is expected to worsen, exacerbating an already unprecedented bushfire season, authorities said. —AFP

Chile economic activity down 3.3% in November as mining slumps

SANTIAGO: Chile's economic activity dropped 3.3 percent in November, led by a slump in mining activity, the central bank said and officials predicted low growth for the coming year as the country reels from anti-government unrest. Protests have rocked Chile, the world's top copper producer, for two months, leaving 26 dead and causing billions in losses for private businesses and public infrastructure. Demonstrations and sometimes violent

riots and looting prompted the central bank in December to slash forecasts for growth, investment and demand through 2020. The IMACEC economic activity index reported last week encompasses about 90 percent of the economy that gross domestic product covers. Finance Minister Ignacio Briones said the bad news was largely expected, but bode poorly for the coming months.

"The October and November IMACECs are among the worst since the sub-prime crisis," Briones said. "In 2020 we expect to have a year of low growth." Mining activity measured in GDP terms plunged 5.1 percent in November, the bank said, dragging overall growth downwards and marking an early sign that the protests may have had a knock-on effect on the main economic driver.

Chile's vast copper mines-the country produces nearly a third of the world's copper-had largely maintained production and operated normally through early November at the height of the unrest, though some mining companies had warned that protests, strikes

and road blockades were taking a toll.

Non-mining activity also fell 3.1 percent, the central bank said, led by a fall in both commerce and the services. The bank highlighted sharp declines in transportation and tourism. Much of the capital Santiago, with a population of 6 million, was shut for a period near the end of October as riots and looting closed streets, central squares and many small businesses, hotels and restaurants. Despite dire predictions, unemployment through November fell slightly, the government said earlier this week. Analysts and economists have said since that an increase in job losses would likely be felt in subsequent months, as unemployment lags behind falling economic growth.

Chile's finance minister said in mid-November that as many as 300,000 jobs could be lost as a result of the protests. On Thursday, he told reporters he hesitated to make further predictions, but said he was "worried" about the impact of slumping economic growth on unemployment. —Reuters

of Queensland Business School.

Hundreds of national parks in the southeastern states of New South Wales and Victoria, thronged by 100 million visitors a year, have closed. With fires burning nearby, Christopher Warren, co-proprietor of a bed and breakfast in Kangaroo Valley in New South Wales, said he had to evacuate his guests.

"The worst-case scenario is that we would be hit by a fire and our business would be destroyed," said Warren, who saw the best case as a loss of income exceeding A\$80,000 (\$56,048), through the disruption of three of his busiest months. Paul Mackie, who uses Airbnb to rent out an apartment on Sydney's Bondi Beach to British and European tourists in the peak summer holiday period was hit by last-minute cancellations. "I had bookings for the whole of this period going for the next couple of months, but a lot have cancelled because they said they saw the news of the fires," Mackie added.

AirBnB declined to comment. A Sydney airport spokesman said it did not have recent statistics on whether the fires were hitting arrival. A Qantas spokeswoman declined to comment on whether the wildfires had hurt bookings. The fires have spotlighted Australia's environment policies, criticized most recently at a UN summit in Madrid, said Susanne Becken, a professor of sustainable tourism at Griffith University in Queensland. "The government's response to the climate crisis does not bode well...and this is not good for tourism," Becken said. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES			
Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.			
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES			
US Dollar Transfer	303.900	Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.995
Euro	342.800	Thai Bhat	11.055
Sterling Pound	401.450	Turkish Lira	51.365
Canadian dollar	236.040	Singapore dollars	224.556
Turkish lira	52.040	BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL	
Swiss Franc	316.400	CURRENCY BUY SELL	
US Dollar Buying	296.550	Europe	
ASIAN COUNTRIES			
Japanese Yen	2.812	British Pound	0.391602 0.405502
Indian Rupees	4.237	Czech Korune	0.005385 0.014685
Pakistani Rupees	1.970	Danish Krone	0.041365 0.046365
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.670	Euro	0.332432 0.346132
Nepali Rupees	2.648	Georgian Lari	0.113985 0.113985
Singapore Dollar	227.210	Hungarian	0.001145 0.001335
Hongkong Dollar	39.067	Norwegian Krone	0.030497 0.035697
Bangladesh Taka	3.551	Romanian Leu	0.065096 0.081946
Philippine Peso	5.958	Russian Ruble	0.004914 0.004914
Thai Baht	10.193	Slovakia	0.009076 0.019076
Malaysian Ringgit	77.724	Swedish Krona	0.028439 0.033439
GCC COUNTRIES			
Saudi Riyal	81.094	Swiss Franc	0.306416 0.317416
Qatari Riyal	83.523	Australasia	
UAE Dirham	807.490	Australian Dollar	0.203482 0.215482
ARAB COUNTRIES			
Egyptian Pound - Cash	22.200	New Zealand Dollar	0.198689 0.206189
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.965	America	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221	Canadian Dollar	0.228680 0.237680
Tunisian Dinar	114.680	US Dollars	0.299800 0.304350
Jordanian Dinar	428.900	US Dollars Mint	0.300300 0.304350
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203	Asia	
Syrian Lira	0.000	Bangladesh Taka	0.002940 0.003741
Morocco Dirham	32.193	Arab	
Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd			
Rate for Transfer		Selling Rate	
US Dollar	303.550	Bahraini Dinar	0.799959 0.807999
Canadian Dollar	234.240	Egyptian Pound	0.018906 0.021647
Sterling Pound	398.620	Iranian Rial	0.000084 0.000086
Euro	340.280	Iraqi Dinar	0.000199 0.000259
Swiss Frank	297.840	Jordanian Dinar	0.423725 0.432725
Bahrain Dinar	807.250	Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000 1.000000
UAE Dirhams	83.050	Lebanese Pound	0.000103 0.000253
Qatari Riyals	84.285	Moroccan Dirhams	0.021137 0.045137
Saudi Riyals	81.840	Omani Riyal	0.784227 0.792109
Jordanian Dinar	429.420	Qatar Riyal	0.082819 0.083651
Egyptian Pound	18.943	Saudi Riyal	0.079953 0.081253
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.673	Syrian Pound	0.001288 0.001508
Indian Rupees	4.226	Tunisian Dinar	0.104855 0.112855
Pakistani Rupees	1.957	Turkish Lira	0.044652 0.054497
Bangladesh Taka	3.546	UAE Dirhams	0.082108 0.082934
Philippines Peso	5.957	Yemeni Riyal	0.000988 0.001068
Cyprus pound	18.060		
Japanese Yen	3.805		
Syrian Pound	1.590		
Nepalese Rupees	2.657		
Malaysian Ringgit	74.940		

Business

Can nations prosper by putting well-being before GDP in 2020?

Your money or your life? Widening inequality throws up questions

BANGKOK: With protests from Chile to Hong Kong last year over widening inequality, violence against women, and climate change, more policymakers and campaigners started to openly debate potential shifts away from an economic model that relies on growth.

New Zealand became the first nation to introduce a Wellbeing Budget that requires all new spending to go to five priority areas including mental health, child well-being, indigenous people and a low-carbon-emission economy. The idea of going beyond gross domestic product (GDP) as the main measure of success is not new. Bhutan coined the term "gross national happiness" in the 1970s, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development has released an annual well-being index since 2011, while the United Nations' annual happiness report started in 2012. But can nations prosper by putting well-being ahead of GDP in 2020? The Thomson Reuters Foundation asked nine experts:

Abdul Abiad, director, macroeconomic research division - Asian Development Bank:

"A focus on sustained economic growth has helped raise hundreds of millions of Asians out of poverty over the last few decades. Continued GDP growth will be critical to pulling up the remaining 326 million who still struggle in extreme poverty. But developing Asia is now largely middle-income, and people and policymakers are looking beyond progress only in income. An increasing focus on environmental sustainability, liveable cities, holistic health, and fairness and opportunities for all will be a hallmark of economic development in the coming years. It is not an either-or proposition: these are growth sectors that have the potential to drive the region's GDP."

Gemma Corrigan, lead, sustainable markets - World Economic Forum:

"In order to create a more equitable and sustainable world, we need to factor into our

decision-making the consequences of our actions not only for financial and physical capital but for human, social and natural capital. This means measuring the impact of growth on living standards as well as future generations and the environment. We can already do this: the next generation of measurements will also be able to take into account concepts like well-being so that we ensure our economic system is truly aligned with societal goals."

Katherine Trebeck, policy & knowledge lead, Wellbeing Economy Alliance:

"The question of our time is not whether nations can prosper putting well-being ahead of GDP, but how they can possibly continue to put GDP ahead of well-being and expect to prosper. How can they stick to an outdated recipe in the face of evidence that GDP-orientated notions of prosperity are not only harming people and planet, but that the benefits of GDP in terms of social progress tail off after the work of growth is done? How can they refuse to embrace a new agenda, when there are thousands of examples of businesses, cities, communities and politicians who are striving towards a goal not of faster GDP or short-term profit, but returns for people and planet?"

Katrin Jakobsdottir, Prime Minister of Iceland:

"The climate crisis underlines the urgent need of thinking beyond GDP while measuring economic success. Prosperity without sustainability is no prosperity. The wellbeing economy initiative demands new thinking, putting people and the planet first. We have no choice but to rethink our economies to tackle the largest crises of our times: climate change and inequality."

Matt Mayer, director, Economy for the Common Good:

"The current economic system, which measures success solely in financial terms, is no longer fit for purpose. The focus on GDP just-

ifies the maximization of profit above any competing interest, thereby exacerbating the very issues we so urgently need to address, like social inequality, global warming and environmental degradation. Only by putting well-being, the health and happiness of people within the boundaries of a sustainable ecosystem ahead of GDP, can we hope to maintain the foundations of prosperity in the long run. We need to measure what matters. That way we can make what matters the very criteria by which to tax business-as-usual and by which to incentivize the kind of businesses we want to see."

Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Prize laureate & microfinance pioneer:

"Economic growth is a means, it is not an end. The end is the world or society we want to build. If we want to build a world of, say, three zeros - zero poverty, zero unemployment, and net-zero carbon emissions - we have to craft the framework of economics and measurements to assess its successes and failures in achieving these goals. GDP and the economic framework which leads to it are not designed to achieving these goals."

Nicola Sturgeon, first minister of Scotland:

"Traditional measures like GDP are limited in what they can tell us about the distribution of income and wealth across society and whether it is sustainable for future generations. As a government we recognise that economic growth is hugely important, but it must be matched by improvements in our environment, in people's quality of life, in the opportunities available to people and the public services they have access to. Wellbeing economy aims to deliver growth in a way that enhances the quality of life for all of our citizens and which is compatible with a net-zero emissions economy. When we focus on wellbeing we start a conversation that provokes profound and fundamental questions on what really matters to us in our lives - what kind of country and society we want to live in."



THIMPU: School children react to the camera through the window of their classroom in a school in Thimphu. —Reuters

Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg, chief economist, World Bank:

"Higher GDP is not the goal, well-being is! Research suggests that people in wealthier countries are on average happier than those in poorer ones. Yet it is becoming clear that these citizens care about more than average growth. They value clean air and water, time with family, quality of work and life, and a more equitable distribution of income and wealth. Often in low-income countries, the pursuit of traditional prosperity through economic growth is still the priority. But focusing on short-run growth, even in developing countries, may compromise long-run prosperity and well-being, as people suffer the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change."

Pedro Conceicao, director, Human Development Report office, UN Development Programme:

"GDP was never designed to measure well-being. It is simply a metric of how much income is generated in an economy in any given year. Of course, income is important - it provides many of life's essentials, propels investment, pays for social services and public goods. But there is more to life. Is a nation truly "prospering" if it is wrecking the environment or its citizens are not able to live dignified lives? Pursuing genuine wellbeing, including but also going beyond income, recognizes this. The Human Development Index (HDI) - updated in December - adds health and education achievements to portray a broader measure of a nation's prosperity." — Reuters

Dollar gets reprieve ahead of key US factory survey

SYDNEY: The dollar shook off recent weakness on Friday as dismal economic news from Europe and the UK weighed on major rivals, while figures due later in the session are expected to point to some improvement in US manufacturing.

Against a basket of currencies, the dollar snapped a six-session losing streak overnight to stand at 96.747, up slightly from the recent six-month low around 96.355. It got a lift when surveys showed British factory output fell in December at the fastest rate since 2012, while the German manufacturing sector stayed deep in contraction.

That took the shine off the pound, which eased to \$1.3154, from a \$1.3266 top on Thursday. The euro slipped to \$1.1173, from a peak of \$1.1225, backing away from major chart resistance around \$1.1249.

Manager at Turkish jet operator helped Ghosn escape because of threats

ISTANBUL: A manager at Turkish jet operator MNG Jet has told authorities that he assisted unwittingly in the escape of ex-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn from Japan because he had been threatened by a former acquaintance, Hurriyet newspaper reported on Saturday.

Turkish authorities have arrested five suspects, including MNG Jet operations manager Okan Kosemen, on charges of migrant smuggling as part of an investigation into Ghosn's transit through Turkey en route to Lebanon. Hurriyet said Kosemen told authorities that a former acquaintance from Beirut had asked him for assistance on what he called a matter of "international significance" and had told him that his family would be harmed if he refused.

The paper did not name the acquaintance who allegedly made the threat. "I was scared. I took a man from one jet and put him into the other one at the airport. I did not know who he was," Hurriyet quoted Kosemen as saying in his statement to authorities.

Reuters could not immediately verify the statement. Officials from MNG Jet and the prosecutor's office were not immediately available for comment. A lawyer for Kosemen has said he will not make any statement about the issue at the moment.

The private jet operator said on Friday



NEW YORK: In this file photo, a monitor displays numbers ahead of the closing bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — AFP

"It might be a bit too early to put a tombstone over the dollar just yet, especially against the EUR and GBP," said Stephen Innes, chief Asia market strategist at AxiTrader. Of key importance will be if the Chinese yuan continued its recent rally against the dollar, he added.

"Every interbank trader I know is look-

ing for the dollar to weaken into the election year, and with most views now pivoting to a stronger yuan, short dollars is probably a good position to be."

The dollar was flat at 6.9593 yuan in offshore trading having trended lower for much of the past four weeks. It was also restrained against the Japanese yen at

108.41, testing the December lows and major support under 108.40.

An index of US manufacturing activity due later is expected to show a slight uptick to 49.0 in December, from 48.1 the month before. Figures out Thursday showed jobless claims edged lower last week in a positive signal for the US labor market. The resilience of employment is a major reason the Federal Reserve has signalled no more rate cuts will be needed in this cycle, leading markets to sharply scale back expectations of further policy easing.

Several Fed officials are speaking on Friday including Governor Lael Brainard and the heads of the San Francisco, Chicago, Richmond and Dallas banks. Analysts expect they will remain upbeat on the economic outlook and reiterate a steady outlook for rates. The dollar had benefited from US economic outperformance for much of 2019, though the recent easing in Sino-US trade concerns has boosted optimism that this year could favor other major nations. So far on Friday, there had been no repeat of the "flash crash" of Jan 3 last year when massive stop-loss selling swept through an illiquid holiday-hit market. Regulators have been on alert for any signs of strain and trade was thin but orderly. — Reuters

Eurozone bond yields tumble after US killing of Iran commander

LONDON: Government bond yields across the euro area fell on Friday after a US air strike killed a top Iranian commander, marking a dramatic escalation in a "shadow war" in the Middle East between Iran and the United States and its allies. Germany's 10-year safe-haven Bund yields slid to two-week lows, Spanish yields hit their lowest in almost two months and borrowing costs in Italy tumbled almost 10 basis points at one point in holiday-thinned trade.

The overnight attack in Baghdad on Qassem Soleimani, Tehran's most prominent military commander, was authorized by US President Donald Trump. Iran on Friday threatened to hit back hard.

Unease rippled across world markets, with oil prices soaring almost \$3 and safe-haven assets such as the Swiss franc, Japanese yen and US Treasuries rallying.

"Markets still remain quite thin after the holidays, but even in a regular session we would have seen a similar reaction," said Christian Lenk, a rates strategist at DZ Bank in Frankfurt. "The repercussions from the air strike are not clearly forecastable and tensions remain high in the region."

Yields on German bonds, regarded as one of the safest assets in the world, were sharply lower across the curve. The 10-year Bund yield fell 7 basis points to a two-week low of -0.30 percent, almost 15 bps below seven-month highs hit just a day ago. Across the eurozone, 10-year bond yields were down 6-7 bps in late trade. US 10-year Treasury yields hit their lowest in three weeks at around 1.80 percent.

The focus on geopolitics meant markets paid little attention to stronger-than-expected inflation data from France and Germany. French inflation rose 1.6 percent year-on-year in December, beating analyst expectations for a 1.4 percent rise.

German inflation rose by 1.5 percent year-on-year after posting a 1.2 percent increase in the previous month, higher than forecast but still well below the European Central Bank's near 2 percent target.

Signs that economic indicators are bottoming out, and US-China trade tensions are easing, have boosted hopes for growth and inflation in the eurozone. They had pushed euro zone yields to multi-month highs on Thursday. "Even if you take geopolitics out, most of the positive news is there (in the price)," said Salman Ahmed, chief investment strategist at Lombard Odier.

"But for me, there is a natural boundary in how much interest rates can move higher - we are not expecting a major ramp-up in growth or inflation, inflation is way below target." Investors received a reminder of just how fragile the global economy is from US Institute for Supply Management (ISM) data that showed manufacturing in the United States contracting by the most in more than a decade.

Spain's 10-year bond yield fell to its lowest in almost two months at 0.37 percent following news that a Catalan separatist party plans to abstain during parliament's upcoming vote to confirm Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez as prime minister. The move could end prolonged political deadlock that left Spain without a proper government for most of 2019. — Reuters



This file photo former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn (right) being escorted as he walks out of the Tokyo Detention House following his release on bail in Tokyo. — AFP

ture from Japan. He entered Lebanon legally on a French passport, one source has told Reuters.

A Turkish private jet operator said on Friday that Ghosn used two of its planes illegally in his escape from Japan, with an employee falsifying lease records to exclude his name from the documents.

Ghosn has said he will speak publicly about his escape on Jan. 8. Takashi Takano, who is also one of Ghosn's lawyers, wrote in his blog on Saturday that he felt infuriated and betrayed when he found out about Ghosn's escape from Japan but that he felt some understanding. "I was betrayed. But it is not Carlos Ghosn who betrayed me," he wrote in his blog.

Takano said Ghosn was not allowed to communicate with his wife Carole without

permission and the ex-Nissan boss was also concerned about his chances of getting a fair trial.

On Dec. 24, Ghosn and his wife held a one-hour video call, which required a lawyer's presence, and they talked about their children, relatives and friends, Takano wrote. Takano was present during the video call. Few people would have been able to escape as Ghosn did, but if they had the means and contacts, they certainly might try or at least consider trying, Takano wrote.

Ghosn was first arrested in Tokyo in November 2018, shortly after his private jet touched down at the airport. He faces four charges - which he denies - including hiding income and enriching himself through payments to dealerships in the Middle East. — Reuters

Business

Boubyan, Al-Hisba ink strategic real estate market analysis agreement

Al-Tuwaijri: Partnership opens new horizons for Boubyan customers, confirms tech excellence

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has recently signed a strategic agreement with Al-Hisba Real Estate Company "Al-Hisba" whereby the bank provides special services for its customers using top notch modern technological solutions to facilitate easy access to Kuwait real estate market information, data and analysis.

In this regard, Boubyan Bank's Deputy CEO, Abdulla Al-Tuwaijri, said: "The bank always aspires to provide its customers with new and innovative technological solutions. This strategic partnership between the bank and Al-Hisba Real Estate Company will open new horizons for Boubyan Bank's customers." He added: "We constantly endeavor to make our customers' lives easier emanating from Boubyan Bank's motto of 'Life Style'. The bank's relationship with customers is not limited to mere banking transactions; rather, it goes beyond to cover all that is related to their everyday life." On his part, Al-Hisba General Manager, Khaled Essam Al-Otaibi explained that "Al-Hisba App is a new leap in the world of real estate technology; now, it became possible to value a real estate in a matter of seconds, which means easy availability of 'impartial technical opinion' for everyone at any time."

Ahmed Abdullatif Al-Lehaib, the real estate valuator, stated: "Al-Hisba App

depends on algorithms created and reviewed by seasoned real estate valuers, which, in terms of mechanism, make it the first-of-its-kind."

Al-Lehaib went on to add: "The App uses one of the internationally approved real estate valuation methods performed by certified valuers where all elements affecting the real estate are factored in, taking into consideration the characteristics and highlights of each property and excluding non-identical elements to assess the value of the property that is consistent with the prevailing market condition and circumstances."

The App Advantages

Al-Hisba App was one of those introduced to the Kuwaiti market last December. It offers a number of specialized real estate services in the State of Kuwait including instant valuation for private residential properties; a service that enables users to value private residential properties within seconds in accordance with current market data, using a methodology that fully complies with international valuation standards.

The App further provides valuation for residential and investment apartments rents, official valuation for all types of real estate, construction cost estimation and covers real estate auctions held in Kuwait



Al-Tuwaijri and Al-Otaibi after signing the agreement



شراكة مميزة بين بنك بوبيان وشركة الحسبة العقارية

including those organized by both government entities and private sector companies.

It also includes an archive arranged in a chronicle order for real estate auctions held since 2017 in addition to official sale deals. Al-Hisba App displays the official sales' deals published by the Ministry of

Justice with the possibility of looking up old deals made from 2010 until today. It further enables the user to filter deals and rearrange them as per the search requirements in addition to other features such as sale, purchase and rental ads, real estate loan installments calculator as well as all

the news related to the real estate sector in Kuwait coupled with a selection of articles related to the real estate and construction sectors. Al-Hisba is also preparing to launch new services in the near future such as investment and industrial valuation service and 'My Budget' service.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Nabeela Hussain Ali Al-Hashash
2. Haleemah Yaqoub Yousef Mohammad
3. Shereen Jamal Mohammad Bastami

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks which include Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and fully owned Burgan Bank - Turkey, (collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group"). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has presence in the UAE through its corporate office ("Burgan Financial Services Limited") which had helped the bank to participate in multiple financing opportunities in the UAE.

Meet Huawei nova 5T: Next level in smartphone photography

KUWAIT: The Huawei nova 5T brings a new level of capability and precision to smartphone photography with 5 AI powered cameras and flagship, lag free performance for games and multimedia entertainment.

Huawei has pioneered premium grade camera technology throughout the nova series and that trend continues with the new Huawei nova 5T. Whether something catches your eye during a walk along a beach or you want to capture that special moment during a family get together, the Huawei nova 5T boasts powerful camera technology that means you will never miss a thing thanks to its 5 AI cameras. This combined with the Kirin 980 processor and Android allows users to take the perfect photo in an instant while enjoying all their favorite apps and multimedia entertainment with smooth performance.

Stunning images without the guesswork

There can be a lot of trial and error involved with taking that one perfect photograph. Sometimes you just can't get the lighting quite right or the object that you want a snap of isn't in focus. You grab your phone, stumble around in the camera settings to find the right mode or setting to take the perfect shot but the moment is lost. The Huawei nova 5T takes care of this dilemma with 5 AI powered cameras and all you have to do is point and click.

The AI Quad-Camera setup on the back houses a 48MP HD lens, 16MP wide-angle lens, 2MP macro lens and

2MP bokeh lens, ensuring that you get the shots you want in any scenario. Now you can take stunning photos and shoot gorgeous videos with a simple tap of a button, be it in low-light while enjoying an evening walk outdoors, a wide-angle of the landscape, a detailed close-up shot or even a portrait complete with rich bokeh effects.

A night out with family needs good lighting, a day at the seaside requires better stabilization and stunning vistas witnessed during an exotic holiday, need different settings for that perfect panoramic shot. With most of us not having the technical know-how to figure this out, it is a relief that Huawei nova 5T's powerful AI comes to the rescue. Thanks to the powerful camera system and smart AI, you get stunning images every time.

Simply find the subject you want to take a photo of, point the smartphone in that direction and the on-board AI will handle the rest. The AI system is intuitive enough to recognize whether it is a gorgeous sunset or your pet dog running across a field, it adjusts accordingly to ensure the shot is the best it can be.

From group pictures to solo photos, the Huawei nova 5T has you covered. Selfies are as popular as ever and the aptly named 32MP AI Selfie Superstar camera up front makes it easy to take the best snaps. Complemented by super smart AI, selfies taken on the Huawei nova 5T appear sharp, crisp and well-lit. Taking portraits has never been easier or fun either. Powerful hardware like the 2MP bokeh lens and complex AI algorithms, work together to produce professional portrait shots with a beautiful blur effect.

Flagship performance without the premium price

Packed with premium hardware, the Huawei nova 5T ensures smooth and efficient performance even during extended use, a great plus for those



smartphone gamers.

At the heart of the device is the Kirin 980, supported by 8GB of RAM with 128GB of storage space. It runs on Huawei's EMUI 9.1, which has its own array of smart features that make it more user-friendly. It ensures you get flagship grade performance, no matter how long you have them running for. The Huawei Nova 5T is also powered by Android pre-installed with popular applications. This premium level power is tailored for all your entertainment needs, be it streaming movies to browsing social media and even mobile gaming. Thanks to GPU Turbo 3.0, gaming is enhanced and much more immersive than before.

Next level entertainment hardware

The dulls of grainy video playback and loud sound are long gone thanks to the Huawei nova 5T's 6.26-inch Huawei Punch FullView Display, which features an FHD+ resolution of 2340 x 1090 with an aspect ratio of 19.5:9. This allows for stunning viewing experience with vivid high definition movies. This coupled with the Huawei HiSTEN 6.0, Huawei's third

generation headset 3D audio technology that supports 9.1 channels and delivers a 3D audio experience, boosting audio and in turn your movie watching experience to the next level.

A stylish look for all seasons

The modern savvy young consumer expects their devices to not just pack the latest technology but be intuitively designed and capable of raising envious looks when whipped out. The Huawei nova 5T meets this requirement and then some. Available in three color variants. The classy and elegant Black, a soothing Crush Blue reminiscent of the sea with its shades of blue and green and the brash Midsummer Purple, complete with a new and unique nova branding. Thanks to the design engineering, the Huawei nova 5T boasts a multi-layered 3D effect on a flat surface for a more enhanced texture with a unique reflective design, making it stand out from everyone else. This fits into the thin 7.87mm body with a fingerprint sensor on the side, allowing for not just a slim profile, but for an overall fashionable look to the device, that complements its user.

NBK Money Markets Report

2019 a mixed bag of events for money markets

KUWAIT: The year 2019 was what one would call a mixed bag of events. Central banks cut interest rates in order to deal with the slowdown in economy, while Brexit continued to divide the British public to end with a decisive win for Boris Johnson. The House of Representatives voted to impeach Donald Trump, while Wall Street powered through the year with record highs.

President Donald Trump wanted to end the year on a high note, when he said on Tuesday that he will sign a "phase one" trade deal at the White House on January 15 in the presence of high-level representatives from China. The US president also said in a tweet that he will travel to Beijing at a later date to begin "phase two" talks. A limited agreement was reached between Washington and Beijing on December 13 to pause the trade war between the two economies, in which more than half a trillion dollars of goods have been hit with new tariffs. The US agreed not to impose fresh levies on \$156bn of Chinese consumer goods and agreed to halve tariffs on \$120 billion of imports that were introduced in September. China on the other hand have pledged to increase imports from the US such as agricultural purchases, and promised better protections of

intellectual property rights.

The exact terms of the 86-page agreement have not been made public and are being translated and reviewed by the two sides. White House advisor Peter Navarro indicated that the "phase one" agreement was near, saying "That's a deal, put that one in the bag." He said in an interview with Fox News that the details of the agreement would be released "as quickly as possible."

US-Iran tension

Markets were disrupted on Friday following a US attack that killed Iran's top military leader in a targeted air strike at Baghdad airport. The attack saw oil prices and safe haven assets rally; with the international benchmark Brent crude jumping 4 percent to \$70.96 a barrel, while US marker West Texas Intermediate rose 3.4 percent to \$63.30. Gold followed suit and climbed 0.9 percent to \$1,542 an ounce and nearing a four month high. The US Treasury yields, which move inversely to the price of American sovereign debt, fell 0.05 percentage points to 1.835 percent, their lowest level in three weeks. The US dollar also rallied with the index moving up 0.32 percent and closing at 96.896, while the safe haven Japanese yen gained 0.40 percent.

Stock markets responded in declines after the record highs clocked on the first trading day of the year, where the S&P closed 0.8 percent higher at a record 3,257.85, and Nasdaq saw a 1.3 percent rise also hitting a record high while the Dow Jones industrial average climbed 1.2 percent. The equity market has posted an impressive year in which the S&P 500 rose

28.9 percent and the Dow climbed 22.3 percent, while Nasdaq skyrocketed more than 35 percent. The strength did not seem to bode well in front of the recent developments and saw all of the main indices losing some of their gains.

UK manufacturing

In the UK, manufacturing activity took a turn for the worse at the end of 2019, with the sharpest deterioration in output in more than seven years as political uncertainty continued to weigh on orders. December saw the IHS Markit manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index sinking to 47.5 down from 48.9 in November, although marginally higher than the initial flash estimate of 47.4. The figure indicated a majority of businesses reporting deteriorating activity as it marks the eighth consecutive month with a reading below 50. Both domestic and foreign orders contracted with respondents linking the lower new business to concerns surrounding the economic, global trade and political outlooks. The main driver of the industrial downturn in the UK was driven by producers of intermediate and investment goods, while manufacturers of consumer goods reported a weak expansion.

The weight of Brexit-related uncertainty was confirmed on Thursday by a Bank of England survey of nearly 3,000 chief financial officers from small, medium and large UK businesses. 53 percent of companies reported that Brexit was one of their top three sources of uncertainty during December, while other concerns were left unspecified.

It seems like Brexit fears are still looming over man-

ufactures and traders alike, who saw the Sterling begin the new decade on the back foot as strategists expected torturous months of trade negotiations with the EU. After it rallied as much as 1.1 percent on December 31st, reaching a high of \$1.3283 and achieving the biggest increase since December 13th following the elections, the pound shed 1.55 percent of its value closing the week at 1.3077. The drop came due to a mixed bag of factors including the tough year ahead for Brexit, and the stronger dollar following the US attacks.

China's economy stabilizes

China's official Purchasing Managers' Index for manufacturing came in at 50.2 for the month of December, near expectations of 50.1. On the downside, non-manufacturing fell to 53.5 from 54.4. The latest figure provides some evidence that the world's second largest economy is stabilizing. The figure marks the second straight month of expansion for manufacturing. Food and beverage, clothing, medicine, and automobiles were the sectors that saw robust expansion. On December 13th, the US and China announced they had reached a phase one trade deal which included tariff relief, increased agricultural purchases, and structural changes to intellectual property and technology issues. China's economy appears to be at the bottom of a cyclical slowdown as 2019 ends, aided by the prospect of the trade deal and domestic stimulus ranging from tariff cuts to support for infrastructure spending.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD opened at 0.30305 yesterday morning.

Travel



World's most visited countries

According to a report published by the World Tourism Organization, France received more visitors than any other country in the world in 2018. More than 89 million visitors came to France to see such world-famous attractions as the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, Versailles, and the Arc de Triomphe. Many of these major attractions are located in the capital city of France, Paris, which is also among the largest cities in Europe by population. Spain, the United States, and China also topped the list of the world's most visited countries.

10. United Kingdom - 36 million visitors
With a long and interesting history, as well as rich culture and top-class tourism facilities and infrastructure, the United Kingdom ranks as the 10th most visited country in the world. Tourists in the United Kingdom generate an income of around USD 17.2 billion for the country. The majority of visitors arrive from other parts of Europe while tourists from the United States and Canada form the second largest group of foreign visitors to the UK. The domestic tourism industry in the country is also thriving. London is the most visited city, and the Tower of London is the most popular attraction in the entire country.

9. Thailand - 38 million visitors
With its sunny, sandy beaches, tropical islands, rich wildlife, archaeological sites, temples and monasteries, Thailand is a global tourist hot spot. The vibrant and lively festivals of the country, the thriving nightlife, world-class shopping facilities, and delectable Thai cuisine, are all major tourist attractions. It is estimated that directly and indirectly, tourism generated revenue contributes nearly 20.2% of the national GDP of the country. It is also assumed that by 2032, Thailand will be receiving around 100 million visitors.

8. Germany - 39 million visitors
Germany receives a high number of tourists from all across the globe as well as from within the country. The tourism industry in Germany is estimated to contribute 4.5% towards the national GDP and 2 million employment opportunities are created based on travel and tourism-related job requirements. Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg are among the most-visited cities in the country. Visitation to Germany for educational and business purposes is also quite common. Several protected areas within Germany, such as the Saxon Switzerland

National Park, the Western Pomerania Lagoon Area National Park, and the Jasmund National Park, also attract millions of tourists every year.

7. Mexico - 41 million visitors
Mexico, a large country found in North America, is well-known for its pristine beaches and world-class resorts. In recent decades, the tourism industry in the country has experienced a whirlwind of substantial growth. With its wealth of culture and UNESCO World Heritage sites, it is no wonder why travelers love Mexico. The vast majority of visitors come from its neighbors to the north, Canada and the United States, although an increasing number of travelers from Europe and Asia also pay a visit to the country.

6. Turkey - 46 million visitors
Turkey is a well-known tourist destination for its many seaside resorts with coastlines on both the Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea. The country also has a variety of historical sites including ancient monasteries and ruined cities. The city of Antalya is considered to be the country's tourism capital, although Istanbul is also popular for its many museums, bazaars, and historical sites. Although Turkey reached 41.2 million visitors in 2014, the tourism sector dropped substantially in the following years. Due to intense advertising, tourist numbers began to rise again in 2017.

5. Italy - 62 million visitors
For many, Italy is one of the dream destinations of their life. With 50 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, innumerable cultural artifacts, buildings, and archaeological sites from the Roman Empire and the Renaissance periods, along with the quaint Alpine villages and towns in the north of the country and fascinating Mediterranean coasts to the south, Italy is justifiably the 5th most visited country in the world. Some of its most visited cities include Rome, Venice, Florence, and Milan, each with their unique attractions, history, culture, and cuisine. Italy consistently ranks amongst the world's most-visited countries.

4. China - 63 million visitors
The land of the Great Wall of China, the Five Sacred Mountains, the Shaolin Temple, the Huangguoshu Waterfall, the Forbidden City, the Three Gorges, and other natural, culturally and historically important sites, China is indeed one of the most coveted tourist destinations in the world. The coun-



try received 55.6 million foreign visitors in 2014 and profited from a foreign exchange income of USD 45.8 in 2010. China's tourist numbers are estimated to increase rapidly in the coming years with the World Trade Organization (WTO) estimating that by 2020 the country will rank number one in the worldwide tourism sector.

3. United States - 80 million visitors
The United States is a vast country serving a large number of attractions to global travelers. Many of the U.S. cities like New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas thrive with tourists all year round. Major natural

attractions in the country include the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park, the Alaskan subarctic wonders, Hawaiian beaches and more. In 29 states of the country, the tourism industry is among the first three industries generating the maximum number of employment opportunities. The US receives the greatest number of foreign tourists from Mexico, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and its domestic tourism industry is also highly active.

2. Spain - 83 million visitors
Tourism is a major industry in Spain, contributing nearly 11% to the national

GDP of the country. The majority of visitors to Spain come from European countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany. Spain is a hotspot of tourist attractions. It has historical cities and towns like Barcelona and Madrid and world-class resorts at the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. Popular festivals like the Carnival are held in Spain. The country also has 15 national parks, well-developed winter tourism facilities, and a bustling nightlife. 13 Spanish cities are also regarded as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, attracting foreign visitors with their unique charm and significance.

1. France - 89 million visitors
France leads the world in the field of tourism. France hosts a variety of places of tourist interest. France has cities of cultural interest such as Paris, Lyon, and Strasbourg. It has Alpine mountains, ski resorts, beaches, picturesque French villages, spectacular gardens, parks, and more. The country is home to a whopping 37 UNESCO World Heritage Sites which are well recognized globally for their outstanding universal value. In France, 9.7% of the GDP is contributed by the travel and tourism sector. 30% of the revenue generated by tourism is obtained from foreign tourists, while the remaining 70% is derived from domestic tourism. Much like France is the most visited of the world's countries, its capital city of Paris is the most visited city in the world.



Health & Science

AI beats human breast cancer diagnosis

PARIS: A computer program can identify breast cancer from routine scans with greater accuracy than human experts, researchers said in what they hoped could prove a breakthrough in the fight against the global killer.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women, with more than two million new diagnoses last year alone. Regular screening is vital in detecting the earliest signs of the disease in patients who show no obvious symptoms.

In Britain, women over 50 are advised to get a mammogram every three years, the results of which are analysed by two independent experts. But interpreting the scans leaves room for error, and a small percentage of all mammograms either return a false positive — misdiagnosing a healthy patient as having cancer — or false negative — missing the disease as it spreads.

Now researchers at Google Health have trained an artificial intelligence model to detect cancer in breast scans from thousands of women in Britain and the United States. The images had already been reviewed by doctors in real life but unlike in a clinical setting, the machine had no patient history to inform its diagnoses.

The team found that their AI model could predict breast cancer from the scans with a similar accuracy level to expert radiographers. Further, the AI showed a reduction in the proportion of cases where cancer was incorrectly identified — 5.7 percent in the US and 1.2 percent in Britain, respectively.

It also reduced the percentage of missed diagnoses by 9.4 percent among US patients and by 2.7 percent in Britain. "The earlier you identify a breast cancer the better it is for the

patient," Dominic King, UK lead at Google Health, told AFP. "We think about this technology in a way that supports and enables an expert, or a patient ultimately, to get the best outcome from whatever diagnostics they've had."

Computer 'second opinion'

In Britain all mammograms are reviewed by two radiologists, a necessary but labor-intensive process. The team at Google Health also conducted experiments comparing the computer's decision with that of the first human scan reader.

If the two diagnoses agreed, the case was marked as resolved. Only with discordant outcomes was the machine then asked to compare with the second reader's decision. The study by King and his team, published in Nature, showed that using AI to verify the first human expert reviewer's diagnosis could save up to 88 percent of the workload for the second clinician. "Find me a country where you can find a nurse or doctor that isn't busy," said King. "There's the opportunity for this technology to support the existing excellent service of the (human) reviewers."

Ken Young, a doctor who manages mammogram collection for Cancer Research UK, contributed to the study. He said it was unique for its use of real-life diagnosis scenarios from nearly 30,000 scans. "We have a sample that is representative of all the women that might come through breast screening," he said. "It includes easy cases, difficult cases and everything in between." The team said further research was needed but they hoped that the technology could one day act as a "second opinion" for cancer diagnoses. — AFP

Ethical veganism is a protected belief: UK judge

LONDON: A British judge ruled recently that ethical veganism is a philosophical belief and is protected under anti-discrimination laws. The ruling came as part of an employment tribunal being heard in Norwich, eastern England, between Jordi

Casamitjana and his former employers the League Against Cruel Sports, a group that campaigns against blood sports such as recreational hunting. The decision "will influence the life of many vegans," said Casamitjana, who declined to discuss the rest of the ongoing case for legal reasons.

Judge Robin Postle determined that ethical veganism meets the tests required to be a philosophical belief and is therefore protected under the Equality Act 2010. Ethical vegans follow a vegan diet but also exclude animal-derived products such as wool and leather from their daily lives. They also try to abstain from using items such as cosmetics

that underwent animal testing. Spanish-born Casamitjana, 55, says he was fired from an animal welfare charity for raising concerns about its pension fund's alleged investment in companies that use animal testing. He claims he was unfairly disciplined for making this disclosure and that his dismissal by the League Against Cruel Sports was due to his vegan beliefs.

The league says he was dismissed for gross misconduct. Following the court's decision, the tribunal will go on to determine whether the League Against Cruel Sports treated Casamitjana less favourably due to his belief in ethical veganism. — AFP

Hong Kong steps up response to China pneumonia outbreak

HONG KONG: Hospital officials in Hong Kong raised their alert level to "serious" on Saturday as a mystery viral pneumonia outbreak in mainland China continued to spread. The infection was first reported on December 24 in Wuhan, a central Chinese city with a population of over 11 million — leading to online speculation about a resurgence of the flu-like SARS virus that killed hundreds of people in 2002-2003.

The number of reported cases has now risen from 27 to 44, with 11 people listed in serious condition, according to China's public health watchdog. The outbreak sparked fears in Hong Kong when a woman who travelled to Wuhan during the Christmas holiday was admitted to hospital on Thursday for treatment of respiratory infections.

By mid-day Saturday, Hong Kong's Hospital Authority had reported a

total of eight cases to the city's health department. Three are being treated under isolation conditions in a public hospital, while the other five have been discharged. Officials in the international financial hub also implemented enhanced monitoring and infection control in public hospitals and clinics.

In mainland China, authorities reported that the major cluster of recent infections have centered around a wet market in Wuhan where wild animals were sold. They were still in the process of identifying the cause, but have determined that common respiratory diseases such as influenza, bird flu and adenovirus infection are not to blame.

So far, Chinese officials say there has been no human-to-human transmission, but Ho Pak-leung, director of the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Infection, advised the city to brace for that possibility. "Preventive measures should be as stringent as possible," Ho told Hong Kong's public broadcaster RTHK, urging the mainland government to provide real-time updates. Additional thermal imaging systems were put in place on Friday at Hong Kong's international airport to check the body temperature of travellers arriving from Wuhan. In Singapore, the health ministry also announced Friday that all travellers arriving from Wuhan would be subject to temperature checks. In 2002-2003, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome killed hundreds of people around the world, with most of the fatalities registered in China and Hong Kong. — AFP

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Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of international journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

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- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- o Body & Face Contouring.
- o Injectable Fillers & Botox.

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
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Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Specialist

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- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the Eurpean Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

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- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
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- ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant
http://www.international-clinic.com
Tel: 1886677
ic_kwt

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single-Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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

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Consultant Pediatrician

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

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

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

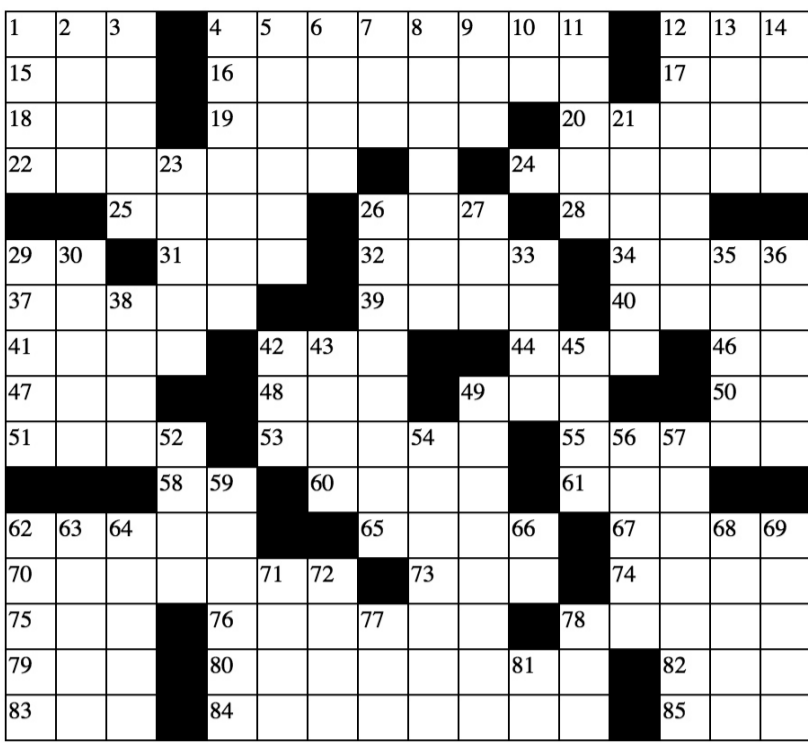
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2402



ACROSS

1. Consisting of or made of wood of the oak tree.
4. A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
12. The United Nations agency concerned with the international organization of food and agriculture.
15. The residue that remains when something is burned.
16. Generalized edema with accumulation of serum in subcutaneous connective tissue.
17. Either extremity of something that has length.
18. Brief episode in which the brain gets insufficient blood supply.
19. Whitish fibrous membrane (albuginea) that with the cornea forms the outer covering of the eyeball.
20. Comb-plate or locomotor organ consisting of a row of strong cilia whose bases are fused.
22. Japanese painter whose work influenced the impressionists (1760-1849).
24. A cloth used as a head covering (and veil and shawl) by Muslim and Hindu women.
25. Goddess of fertility.
28. The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
29. Unknown god.
31. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
32. An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
34. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
37. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
39. A river in central Europe that arises in north-western Czechoslovakia and flows northward through Germany to empty into the North Sea.
40. Highly excited.
41. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
44. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
46. An informal term for a father.
47. Used of a single unit or thing.
48. Gone by.
50. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
51. An island in Indonesia east of Java.
53. Relatively low in price or charging low prices.
55. Affect with wonder.
58. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
60. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
61. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
62. A painful emotion resulting from an awareness of inadequacy or guilt.
65. (Greek mythology) God of love.
67. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
70. Any of various types of cabbage.
73. Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
74. (South African) A journey by ox wagon (especially an organized migration by a group of settlers).
75. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
76. Grandson of Amaterasu and first ruler of Japan.
79. (often followed by 'of') A large number or amount or extent.
80. Any plant of the genus *Alcacia* having large showy basal leaves and boat-shaped spathe and reddish berries.
82. Tag the base runner to get him out.
83. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.

DOWN

84. A person who lives in the dales of Northern England.
85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
1. Profane or obscene expression usually of surprise or anger.
2. A genus of European owls.
3. Of a yellowish brown color similar to olive drab n.
4. A member of an ancient people who ruled Babylonia between 1600 and 1200 BC.
5. Get undressed.
6. Bushy plant of Old World salt marshes and sea beaches having prickly leaves.
7. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
8. Small arctic whale the male having a long spiral ivory tusk.
9. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
10. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
11. Used of men.
12. A canvas bag that is used to feed an animal (such as a horse).
13. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
14. A European river.
21. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
23. The act of using.
26. A Scandinavian language (closely related to Icelandic) that is spoken on the Faroe Islands.
27. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
30. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
33. Small beads made from polished shells and formerly used as money by native Americans.
35. A yellow quartz.
36. An impure form of quartz consisting of banded chalcidony.
38. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
42. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
43. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
45. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
49. A short pithy instructive saying.
52. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
54. A town in Italy in southwestern Sicily near the coast.
56. Not reflecting light.
57. Mites and ticks.
59. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
63. The capital city of Vietnam.
64. Make less active or intense.
66. A white trivalent metallic element.
68. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
69. Jordan's port.
71. A river that rises in western New Mexico and flows westward through southern Arizona to become a tributary of the Colorado River.
72. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
77. Water frozen in the solid state.
78. Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc.
81. A state in midwestern United States.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today you might host a gathering of people interested in psychic or metaphysical matters, Aries. A very special guest could give a talk or lead a discussion group. This could be fascinating for everyone present. You'll gain a reputation as a wonderful host, even though all you really do is pass out cookies and pour the coffee. You, above all, should have a great time and enjoy talking with your friends. Have fun!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Writing may be one of your main focuses for today, Taurus. You have a lot of information to impart to anyone who might be interested in what you have to say. You could try your hand at a magazine article or perhaps fiction or poetry. However, even if all you write at this time is a letter to your cousin, what you say will undoubtedly be bright, gripping, and certainly very interesting. Go to it!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Professional interests continue to expand, Gemini, and you're managing to keep very busy. Your income is rising, and you could be achieving a certain prominence in your field. Nonetheless, you could be looking for new opportunities. The field you're in now may not be one that you want to continue for the next 20 years. This is therefore a good day to put out a few feelers and test the waters. You might be surprised at the opportunities out there.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Travel in the company of a close companion might be looming over the horizon, Cancer. In fact, you might be leaving pretty soon, and you're probably growing excited. Some surprising developments could come up during the course of this journey, and thus it's likely to shape up to be more than a simple vacation. Make sure you look your best, don't hold back on what you want to do, and have fun.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

An unexpected lucky break could come your way today, Leo - something you would never have expected in a hundred years. It could seem like a dream come true, yet it could disrupt your life in some way. You might find yourself facing a choice: go for it and change your entire way of life or let it go and take the risk that another great opportunity might never appear. Who said life was easy? Think about it!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

If you aren't currently romantically involved, Virgo, today you could meet someone who shows a lot of promise. Work might be involved in some way, and it's also possible that this person has been living in your neighborhood for a long time. A friend could introduce you to each other. You'll probably spend at least an hour talking, and will probably make arrangements to meet again.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Some kind of unexpected shakeup could take place today, Libra, and you could find yourself suddenly being offered more money or responsibilities. This might be just the break you've been waiting for, but it could take you so much by surprise that you might ask for time to think about it. Don't think for too long, however, because they might give the break to someone else!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today you might attend at least one festive social occasion, Scorpio, and therefore you may meet some very interesting people in unusual professions, such as film or TV. Expect to hear some bizarre stories, some of them true, others that are clearly exaggerated. Out of all this friendly banter and tale telling, however, you could acquire some useful information. Make a note of it so you'll be able to remember it later.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your level of health and physical well-being is likely to be very high, Sagittarius, and thus you're probably glowing. As a result, you might find that those around you pay more attention to what you're saying than they usually do. You'll also find that your mind is especially sharp, and you're apt to be exceptionally quick on the uptake. Therefore, you might absorb a lot more from what you hear than you normally do. Make a note of it!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You might be feeling especially adventurous today, Capricorn. The same old streets and buildings in the same old town might suddenly seem to be closing in on you. Therefore, you might just grab a close friend or significant other, hop in the car, and take off for the mountains or the ocean. You probably need a break. You've been working very hard and probably could benefit from some time in open country. Go for it!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

An intense dream or vision could result in a spiritual breakthrough of some kind, Aquarius, and you might spend much of the day in a bit of a daze, trying to make sense of it. You might see if you can find a few books on the subject, because all signs suggest that reading could bring a lot of useful information your way today. You might also want to write down an account of your experience.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You're apt to be in a very joyous mood today, Pisces, and it's going to show on your face. This isn't going to go unnoticed by the people you meet. You could make some new friends, and, if you aren't currently romantically involved, you might actually meet an interesting potential love partner. This person is apt to be very polite and polished, not to mention smart! Be cordial, be nice, and enjoy your day.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Thankful For...

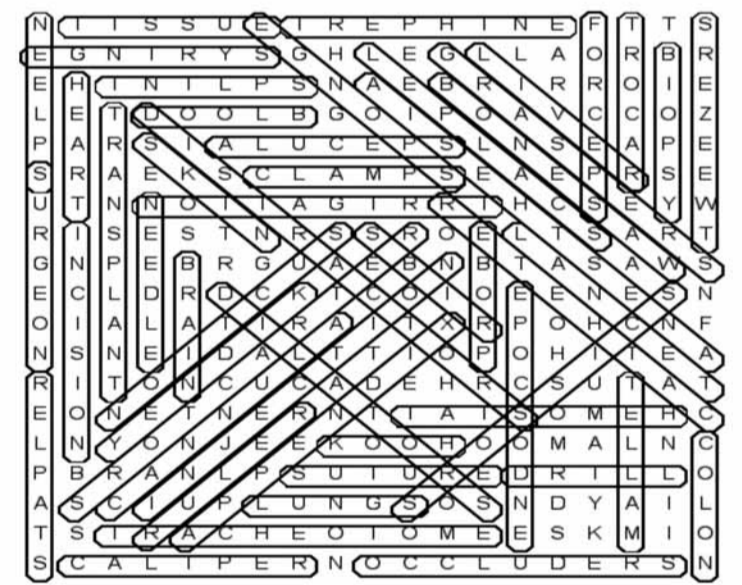
Find and circle all of the people and things to be thankful for. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ACTS OF KINDNESS
- A PLACE TO LIVE
- BEACHES
- BEAUTIFUL NATURE
- BLESSINGS
- BOOKS
- BROTHERS
- CARE GIVERS
- CHILDREN
- CHRISTMAS
- CLEAN WATER
- CLOTHING
- COMPUTERS
- ELECTRICITY
- EYEGLASSES
- EYESIGHT
- FAITH
- FAMILY
- FLOWERS
- FOOD
- FREEDOM
- FRESH AIR
- FRIENDS
- FUN
- GOOD HEALTH
- GRANDMA
- GRANDPA
- HAPPY MEMORIES
- HEARING
- HOLIDAYS
- HUMOR
- INTERNET
- LAUGHTER
- LIFE
- LOVE
- MUSIC
- NURSES
- PARENTS
- PEACE
- PETS
- RAINBOWS
- SCHOOL
- SINGING
- SISTERS
- SMART PHONES
- SMILES
- SUNSHINE
- TEACHERS
- TELEVISION
- VOLUNTEERS
- WARM SHOWERS

Yesterday's Solution

Surgery



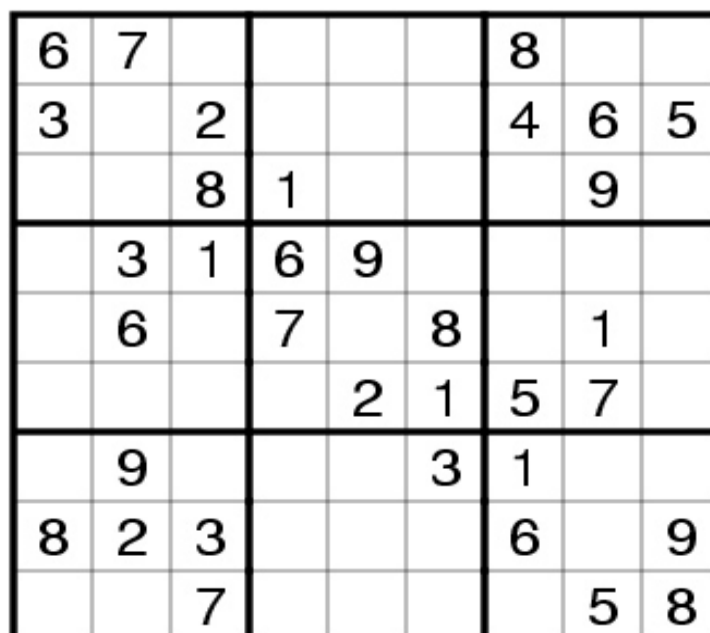
- ANESTHESIA
- APPENDIX
- BLOOD
- BONE SAW
- BRAIN
- CALIPER
- CANNULA
- CATHETER
- CLAMPS
- COLON
- DILATORS
- DISTRACTORS
- DRILL
- ENDOSCOPE
- FORCEPS
- GRASPERS
- HEART
- HEMOSTAT
- HOOK
- INCISION
- INJECTION
- IRRIGATION
- KIDNEY
- LANCET
- LIVER
- LUNGS
- MALLET
- NEEDLE
- OCCLUDERS
- PROBE
- RETRACTORS
- RIBS
- RULER
- SCALPEL
- SCISSORS
- SKIN
- SPECULA
- SPLEEN
- SPLINT
- SPONGE
- STAPLER
- SUCTION
- SURGEON
- SUTURE
- SYRINGE
- TISSUE
- TRACHEOTOME
- TRANSPLANT
- TREPINE
- TROCAR
- TWEEZERS

The hidden message is: THE LARGEST ORGAN OF THE HUMAN BODY IS SKIN

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



easy

Yesterday's Solution



hard

Lifestyle

MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020



In this picture taken on Dec 21, 2019, students Bhat Musaddiq Reyaz and Aqeel Mukhtar along with others walk towards the train station in Banihal. — AFP photos

Overload on train to Kashmir's Internet oasis

Every day the train to Kashmir's remote cyber oasis Banihal is packed as people travel for hours to get online in the disputed region where internet has been cut for five months. The mountain town of fewer than 4,000 people has six Internet cafes, which are booming due to a security clamp-down by the Indian government. "The speed is very slow," admitted Irfan, manager of one of the cafes where customers pay up to 3,000 rupees (\$40) an hour to link their laptop to the snail's-pace broadband. "Scores of Kashmiris, mostly students and income tax professionals, come visiting every day," said Irfan, who only gave one name.

In early August New Delhi made a sudden move to axe Kashmir's semi-autonomous status, shutting down communications and sending tens of thousands of extra troops into what was already one of the world's most militarized zones. While phone calls and very limited text messages are now possible, the Internet is still down.

Forcing people offline has crippled the economy and made it impossible to pay utility bills, make applications or just send a message to family outside the stricken zone. Some Kashmiris make special trips to New Delhi or Jammu city - an eight-hour drive from the regional capital Srinagar - to connect. Banihal, a two-hour train ride from Srinagar, is the nearest town with any access.

Internet trek

The government said it cut phones and the Internet to prevent unrest in Kashmir, where an insurgency in the past three decades has left tens of thousands dead. India blames Pakistan, which also claims Kashmir, for the troubles. To get to Banihal, students Bhat Musaddiq Reyaz and Aqeel Mukhtar fought their way onto a train at Awantipora - a town more than 100 km



Reyaz uses his computer in an Internet cafe in Banihal.

away, south of Srinagar in the Kashmir valley.

"I tried getting Internet at a government kiosk set up in my district but I waited for two hours on two different days and never got a turn," said Reyaz as he waited for the train. The 19-year-old wanted to register for exams to gain access to a graduate medicine course. Mukhtar, 25, recently completed a degree in education and wanted to apply online for scholarships. "It is a complete hassle to have to travel so much just to send applications online," said Mukhtar.

The two students took two hours on one train and then had to change to another which was another 90-minute standing trip to Banihal. They waited in the snow for a bus to take them from the station to the town and its prized Internet cafes in a crowded lane. Reyaz was able to complete his task. But when the

pair returned to the railway station for the long trip home they were told the last train had been cancelled due to snow on the tracks.

No taxis would take them but after a few hours, a truck driver heading to the Kashmir valley finally offered a lift. The truck also became stuck in the snow and the students had to sleep there for the night. Traffic was still halted the next day and the students had to walk 10 km past stranded cars and trucks to get back to Banihal railway station. There, they waited seven hours for the only train that left that day. Reyaz called his trek to make his application "unbelievable". "Something that would take me half an hour at home, took me two gruelling days," he said. "I will never do this ever again in my life," added Mukhtar. — AFP



Reyaz stands in a crowded carriage of a passenger train on his way back to Kashmir from Banihal.



A boy plays with snow as he looks on during a cold day on the outskirts of Srinagar on Jan 3, 2020.



A Kashmiri man carries straw stubble for cattle during a cold day.



Women carry water pitchers on their head after a water pipe got frozen due to sub-zero temperatures on the outskirts of Srinagar.



Fishermen catch fish with harpoons near a frozen portion of Anchar Lake on the outskirts of Srinagar on Jan 2, 2020.

Tech show offers big and flashy, up-close and (very) personal



In this file photo taken on Jan 9, 2019, people watch an immersive video introduction to Qualcomm 5G technology at the Las Vegas Convention Center during CES 2019 in Las Vegas. — AFP photos



The CES logo is seen inside the Las Vegas Convention Center during CES 2019.

The screens will be bigger and bolder, the cars will be smarter and some of the technology will be up-close and personal - even intimate. The 2020 Consumer Electronics Show opening in Las Vegas will be crammed with the latest in connected devices, from light bulbs to underwear, along with the newest technology for automobiles, health and wellness, smart homes, retailing and more.

One of the world's biggest trade shows, the gathering features 4,500 exhibitors, an estimated 175,000 attendees, and 1,000 speakers in exhibit areas equivalent to more than 50 football fields. The CES runs from January 7 to 10. Small startups and large tech firms from dozens of countries will be angling for a slice of the trillion-dollar-plus global consumer electronics marketplace.

The show, organized by the Consumer Technology Association, will see a large presence from tech giants such as Google and Amazon, vying for leadership in providing the "brains" or digital assistants for many smart products. With improvements in artificial intelligence (AI), digital voice assistants are becoming smarter and more like humans, opening up new possibilities, said Simon Forrest of Futuresource Consulting.

"We can see devices that can now sound happy if your favorite football team has won and... dejected if your mother is at the door," Forrest said. While the long-sought goal of "emotional intelligence" in computing is still far from reality, he said, advances are allowing more computing power to be packed into smaller spaces including smart eyeglasses, in-ear "hearables" and other devices. "We can imagine the voice assistant in the ear which can do a lot more than it does today," Forrest said. "Maybe the restaurant across the street can read you their menu, or you can get turn-by-turn directions in your car."

Big and small screens

Manufacturers including South Korea's LG are expected to unveil new televisions with the latest ultra-high definition standard known as 8K, even if little or no content is now available in the format. Analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights & Strategy said he expects to see "higher-resolution, lower-price 8K televisions", extending a trend. Innovation around the small screen may lead to more folding smartphones and other adaptations. "Imagine an iPad device you can fold and carry around with you - I think we will see a lot more of those," Moorhead said.



Mookkie, a smart pet feeder which recognizes individual animals, is displayed during a press event for CES 2019 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas.



In this file photo taken on Jan 8, 2018, the newest generation of the Aibo robot, which uses artificial intelligence, is demonstrated on the eve of CES in Las Vegas.

Reality check for self-driving

Fully self-driving vehicles may not be ready to go mainstream, but that is not stopping innovation. "There's a deepening understanding that the companies have a big hill to climb" before deploying fully autonomous cars, said Gartner analyst Michael Ramsey. Accenture analyst Juergen Reers said CES is increasingly important for the transport sector because "most of the innovation is happening in software and services" rather than in vehicles themselves.

Reers said the industry is changing because "consumers are looking at mobility as a service, rather than simply buying a vehicle". China-based Futurus Technology says it will launch what it claims is the first "mixed reality interactive windshield" to give motorists real-time information about a vehicle's status, performance and surroundings. Others will use 5G technology and artificial intelligence to help cars detect pedestrians, bicycles and other vehicles.

California's Xperi is unveiling an in-cabin system using iris identification, facial recognition and other biometrics to unlock vehicles and detect driver fatigue. Amazon is revving up its auto efforts with a booth showcasing its cloud-computing AWS division aimed at "intelligent, personalized products and services". And a new Fisker Ocean electric car is set

to be unveiled, in one of the latest challenges to segment leader Tesla.

Smarter homes

In the smart-home space, more devices will connect to digital assistants like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, or their rivals. These will include smart screen command centers, smart mirrors, and kitchen gadgets and appliances. Avi Greengart of the consultancy Techspontential expects more smart home devices like security-focused video doorbells, but says the integrated smart home is not yet here. "It isn't exactly clear people want to live in the Jetsons' home," he said, referring to the cartoon series about a futuristic family.

Wearable everywhere

Wearables are reaching more of the human body in the quest for improved health and connectivity. German-based Bosch will be showcasing smart glasses designed to help motorists with heads-up navigation assistance, with other smart eyewear to be revealed. "Hearables" represent another emerging category including advanced earbuds, translators and AI-boosted hearing aids.

Ear-worn devices are among the fastest-growing wearables, capturing 47 percent of the segment in the second quarter of 2019, according to market intelligence firm IDC. The textile computing firm Myant will be showing smart clothing - starting with connected underwear - with sensors that monitor a wearer's heart and breathing rates, temperature, movement, posture and sleep. "It is time for technology to morph around people as opposed to the other way around," Myant founder Tony Chahine said.

Et cetera

Other CES exhibitors will be showing robots for health and security, artificial intelligence for food, airborne devices including a "flying gondola", and technology aimed at improving the retail experience. Sex tech will be officially part of the show, a year after a flap over the disqualification of one innovation award winner. A sexual wellness marketplace promises products that show organizers said "must be innovative and include new or emerging tech to qualify". — AFP



An Alpha Mini robot that uses artificial intelligence dances at the Las Vegas Convention Center during CES 2019.



Attendees wearing RealMax 100 Augmented Reality glasses grasp at objects in an AR game on the last day of CES 2019.



An exhibitor demonstrates the Pegasi Smart Sleep Glasses during CES 2018.



Argentinian funeral home owner Eduardo Tapia uses a duster to clean a coffin in Buenos Aires on Dec 3, 2019. — AFP photos



Human remains are seen at a damaged niche of the Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires on Nov 26, 2019.



Tourists visit Argentinian former First Lady (1946-1952) Eva Peron's family niche at the Recoleta Cemetery on Nov 22, 2019.

Dying has become a luxury in crisis-ridden Argentina



View of tombs at the Recoleta Cemetery.



Aerial view of the Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires is seen on Nov 22, 2019.

No one can escape Argentina's biggest economic crisis in almost two decades - not even the dead. The cost of buying, renting and maintaining graves and tombs is so high that many people opt to cremate their loved ones instead. Juan Tapia runs the Cocheria Tacuari undertakers in Buenos Aires, which has been operating for 60 years. "It's an economic problem. People don't have enough money to pay for a service. Family members help each other, ask for loans; some come and pay with US dollars that they've saved or kept under the mattress," he told AFP.

Undertakers are constantly forced to drop their prices "because unfortunately people don't have the same spending power of a few years ago". Paying for a funeral "means, for a family, that they might not eat this month," said Tapia. The cheapest service

offered by Cocheria Tacuari is a cremation without a wake, which costs 25,000 pesos (\$415) - almost 50 percent more than the minimum wage of 16,875 pesos a month. More expensive options can cost up to 180,000 pesos, but few are interested in those.

"Almost 90 percent ask for cremation. Young people want nothing to do either with graves, niches (cubbies for storing remains urns) or tombs," said Tapia. His estimations are not far off from official statistics. In 2018, 78.5 percent of corpses in Buenos Aires were cremated, according to an AFP count of public records. That's the highest proportion over the last decade. "To lease a niche in the cemetery, you have to pay a huge amount every year, and many don't want to and can't do it, so they opt for a cremation," said Tapia.

Rents at public cemeteries in Buenos Aires, including maintenance, range from 400-2,000 pesos a month. In the private sector, plots sell for a minimum of 55,000 pesos with monthly maintenance from 500 pesos. Cremation, on the other hand, does not incur long-term expenses. As a result, dead bodies are often taken straight from the hospital to the crematorium in simple poplar wood coffins.

Niche for sale

Three months ago, Patricia Alvarez, an English translator and make-up artist, advertised on the internet a niche that her family had bought in the Chacarita public cemetery in Buenos Aires. "I'm selling it because there's no sense" in keeping it, she told AFP when contacted about her advert - the only response she's had. "It doesn't cost much, 500 pesos a month, but when it builds up, it's annoying, and it adds to a mountain of other expenses I already have," she said.

The Alvarez's niche looks to be in good condition, but others in the cemetery are in a sorry state, with notes attached to them ask-



Detail of an old funerary urn is seen at the Chacarita Cemetery.

ing the owners or leasers to "go and see the administration". Many tombs have been abandoned and overgrown with vegetation. Some have broken statues, and there are niches that have been completely destroyed. In some, the bones inside are visible.

Standing beside her mother's tomb, gloves and pruning shears in her hands, Maria has decided to stop paying the cemetery's maintenance fees. "I don't think I'll pay the 1,500 pesos a month any more to trim the vegetation - it's a lot!" she told AFP, preferring not to give her surname for fear of reprisals by the site's maintenance personnel. "For this money, it's better that I come and do it myself."

But according to Jorge Bonacorsi, president of the Argentine funerary services federation, cost is not the only thing deterring Argentines from traditional burials. He says the rise in cremations is a global trend. "What prevails now is a certain sentimental practicality: people want to get rid of the problem," he said. — AFP

As Trump tariffs loom, US luxe lovers battle tech giants

American importers of French cheese, bubbly and porcelain are raising their voices in Washington, hoping against hope they can outweigh Silicon Valley giants in a battle over tariffs on luxury items from France. President Donald Trump last month threatened to punish Paris for a new tax on tech giants like Netflix and Amazon, unveiling sky-high retaliatory duties on about \$2.4 billion in French wines, makeup and leather handbags.

US trade officials on Tuesday are due to hold a public hearing to allow individuals and companies to comment on the punitive measure. But already complaints have poured in from mom-and-pop outlets across the United States warning of layoffs, lost business and damage to innocent bystanders. The new US import duties are designed to pinch some of France's most emblematic and politically sensitive industries - adding to the pain already hitting the country from \$7.5 billion in tariffs Trump slapped on European Union exports in October in a clash over subsidies to aircraft maker Airbus.

Jobs at stake

The latest battle pits the interests of globe-spanning American tech behemoths against local retailers and middlemen who eke out small margins supplying bars, restaurants, shops and department stores. "The tariff will effectively shut down the access Americans have to European wines (and many other artisanal products) and as a result, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people will lose their jobs," California wine merchants Kermit Lynch and F. Dixon Brooke said last month in a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

Washington has urged other countries to follow the example France set in July when it unilaterally announced a tax on the gross revenues of large tech companies. The actual profits of such companies are frequently not disclosed on a country-by-country basis, frustrating local governments. The US instead

urged countries to wait for a negotiated multi-lateral solution. But Canada in December became the latest country to say it was considering such a measure.

Pounding the table

Silicon Valley's powerful lobbyists have attacked the French tax, pouncing on public statements from Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire in particular to argue that US industry is unfairly being singled out. The Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA), whose members include Facebook, Amazon and Google-parent Alphabet, said in August it "does not take a position on whether the use of tariffs is appropriate" in the case of France's digital services tax. But "it appears that there are limited options left to address this dispute in a timely manner," the organization said.

The French tax imposes a three percent levy on the revenues - often from online advertising and other services - earned by technology firms within the country's borders. In August, France agreed to refund any taxes



In this file photo taken on Feb 18, 2013, French actress Catherine Deneuve visits a booth of French porcelain manufacturer Raynaud at the consumer good trade fair 'Ambiente' in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP photos

collected in excess of the yet-to-be-decided international formula. But as proposals for digital services taxation gain popularity around the world, Washington has been left to pound the table ever harder.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin early last month warned of a "proliferation of

unilateral measures" and urged "all countries to suspend digital services tax initiatives," allowing the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to complete a study on an international tax on the digital giants. — AFP



In this file photo taken on April 13, 2013, importers and supporters offer samples of French cheese Mimolette to pedestrians during an event to support the import in the US of the 17th century-old cheese in New York.



In this file photo taken on Sept 06, 2006, workers collect chardonnay grapes in a Montgenost vineyard in the Champagne area in eastern France.



The Netflix logo is seen on a phone in this photo illustration in Washington.



The logo of online retailer Amazon is displayed on computer screens in London.



Mahouts line up their elephants in front of fruits and vegetables during the Chitwan Elephant Festival in Sauraha Chitwan, some 150 km southwest of Kathmandu on Jan 1, 2020. — AFP photos

Nepal elephant fest scrutinized for beauty and bruises



Hundreds cheered as the three beauty contest finalists strolled out into the middle of the grounds and raised their painted trunks to the judges - symbols of all that is admired and denounced at Nepal's annual elephant festival. With her toe nails painted red and a lotus on her



Mahouts decorate an elephant.

trunk, 35-year-old Buffkali took the trophy at the end of the nine-day festival that ended Friday.

But while elephants were judged on how well they were decorated and groomed, officials were also meant to check their heads and ears for signs of beatings. Many outsiders were also looking for signs of abuse at the festival, which has been held in the Chitwan district, home to Nepal's most important conservation area and a lucrative tourist destination, since 2004.

Elephants are worshipped as the Hindu god Ganesh in Nepal and big crowds attended the festival - where over 25 of the creatures took part in football, polo and races, as well as the beauty pageant and a picnic where they were served bananas and sugarcane.

Deepak Bhattarai, chairman of the local hotel association that organizes the festival, told AFP the event aims to highlight elephants' "relationship with humans" and to become more "elephant friendly" every year. "It is exciting. I brought my son here to watch the elephants, you don't get to see them like this every day," said one visitor Sheetal Karki.

But the festival has also come under fire for abuse, with mahouts using sticks or bullhooks to force the elephants to play.



Mahouts guide their elephants during an elephant beauty pageant.



Mahouts wait with their elephants before an elephant football match.

Surajan Shrestha of the local Animal Rights Club said activists have been working with organizers to ease concerns and had eliminated the use of bullhooks during games this year. "But we can still see abuse off the field ... I hope our campaign will pressure the organisers to take steps to improve (the festival)," he said.

"It's 2020 - the Chitwan authorities need to stop treating elephants like it's 1820," said Jason Baker, a vice president

of PETA in a statement on Thursday. "They should focus tourism on the amazing local culture and leave animals alone," he added. "It's impossible to ride elephants and force them to play these meaningless 'games' without abuse." Another popular event in Nepal, elephant polo championships, were halted in 2016 with organizers feeling pressure over treatment of the animals. — AFP

Once unloved, threatened storks given new hope in Indian zoo

The hatching of two storks on a bamboo platform in a remote Indian zoo has raised hopes that one of the world's most threatened bird species can be saved, experts say. The two Greater Adjutant chicks have gone on display at Assam State Zoo weeks after they hatched in the northeast Indian state. The Greater Adjutant, standing 1.5 m tall with a 2.5-m wingspan, is on the red list of threatened species kept by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

With the gradual destruction of their forest and wetland breeding habitat, there are believed to be only about 1,000 of the storks left in India and Cambodia. "We do not have any report that this endangered bird has bred (before) in any zoo or in captivity," said Assam zoo chief Tejas Mariswamy. "This success will lead to similar experiment elsewhere in the world and will help conserve and protect the birds," added Bibhab Talukdar, head of the Aaranyak conservation group that worked with the zoo to help breeding.



This picture taken on Jan 1, 2020 shows a Greater Adjutant stork and its chick on an artificial platform in an enclosure at Assam State Zoo/Botanical Garden in Guwahati. — AFP

The storks, known as "hargilla" (bone swallower) in the Assamese language, were shunned before because of their smelly droppings, noisy calls and messy eating habits. But the Aaranyak project led a campaign to rehabilitate the species and its reputation in recent years. It assembled an award-winning brigade of village women conservationists to protect their nesting grounds, and set up the breeding platforms with Assam zoo in 2017.

"Finally we found success on November 26, 2019 when the first chick hatched," said Purnima

Devi Barman, who leads the project. A second followed 10 days later. Two three-metre high bamboo platforms were erected in the zoo. The platform was about a metre wide, the size of the stork's natural nest. Nesting materials used by the birds in the wild were brought in for the Greater Adjutants to find. Their food supply was also carefully prepared. "The commotion created by zoo visitors was also monitored and care was taken so that the birds did not suffer from disturbance," said Mariswamy. — AFP

2, took a bite from a slice of her big birthday cake. "Tasty," she said with a smile. "I want some more."

Tanaka was last year confirmed as the oldest living person, aged 116 years 66 days old as of March 9, according to Guinness World Records. Tanaka's record age is symbolic of Japan's fast-ageing population, which coupled with its falling birthrate is raising concerns about labor shortages and prospects for future economic growth.

The number of babies born in Japan fell an estimated 5.9 percent last year to fewer than 900,000 for the first time since the government started compiling data in 1899, according to Japan's welfare ministry. Tanaka was born prematurely in 1903 and married Hideo Tanaka in 1922, Guinness World Records said. The couple had four children and adopted a fifth. — Reuters

Japanese woman turns 117, extends record as world's oldest person

Kane Tanaka has extended her record as the world's oldest person by celebrating her 117th birthday at a nursing home in Fukuoka in southern Japan. Tanaka marked her birthday with a party yesterday along with staff and friends at the nursing home, television footage from local broadcaster TVQ Kyushu Broadcasting Co showed. Tanaka, whose birthday was on Jan



Kane Tanaka

Fans of K-pop's Blackpink superstar Lisa pummel Thai cafe



A "closed" sign is seen on the door of the popular MQQN retro cafe in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

A Bangkok cafe drew the wrath of thousands of fans of K-pop girl group Blackpink, following "inappropriate" comments posted by the owner about a visit from Thai superstar member Lalisa Manoban. Referred to as "Lisa" by fans, the Thai member of South Korean pop group Blackpink shared pictures on Instagram from a photoshoot at MQQN Cafe in Bangkok on Thursday to her more than 28.1 million followers. Her post, which showed her posing on the yellow seats of the retro-themed diner, drew more than 3.5 million likes and 20,500 comments.

But what should have been a New Year's boon to the cafe quickly turned sour after the owner made lewd comments about her visit, attempting to sell the furniture she sat on and the cutlery she used. His posts on Facebook - which have now been taken down - went viral as Thai fans accused him of sexual harassment, and he swiftly apol-

ogized for his "inappropriate post." "I accept all criticisms... I am deeply sorry for what happened," said the owner, whose Facebook page has now been hidden.

MQQN cafe was shuttered yesterday, with a "closed" sign tucked behind its silver doors. The furore spilled onto the cafe's Facebook page, drawing negative one-star reviews from fans demanding "respect" for Lisa and promising to boycott the establishment. "How stupid he is to turn an opportunity into a crisis," said a commenter, who urged the boycott.

Formed in 2016, Blackpink - made up of Thailand-born Lisa, two South Korean members, and one from New Zealand - has helped to raise K-pop's global profile with tens of millions of fans worldwide. It was named in TIME Magazine's "100 Next" most influential in 2019, and was also the first female K-pop group invited to perform at the Coachella music festival. — AFP

Classifieds

Monday, January 6, 2020

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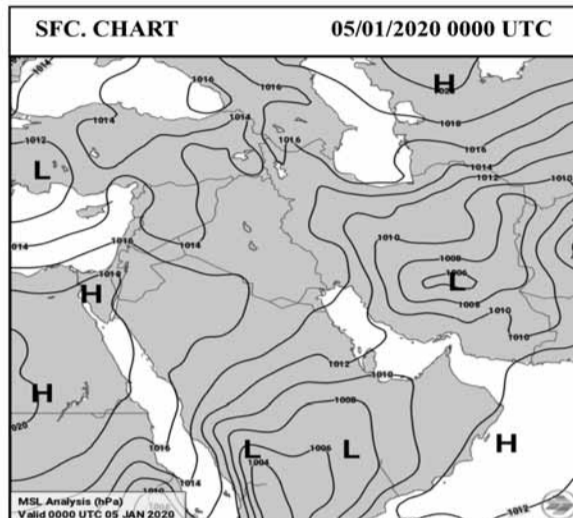
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind to wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	14 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	10 °C
ABDALY	20 °C	09 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	21 °C	11 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	21 °C	15 °C
AHMADI	21 °C	15 °C
NUWAISIB	21 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	20 °C	10 °C
SALMY	19 °C	07 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	01/06	Fair	20 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	01/07	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear later on	20 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	01/08	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery	21 °C	10 °C	SE-NW	18 - 50 km/h
Thursday	01/09	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	18 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	14:45
Sunset	17:04
Isha	18:26

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	100 %
MIN. RH	29 %
MAX. Wind	N 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	1.53mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME
 Adoor, Pathanamthitta, Kerala and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Bennett Abraham. Surname: Jayan (C 5602) 1-1-2020

SHARING ACCOMMODATION
 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, 55571873. 1-1-2020

EMERGENCY 112



Airlines	Number
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 6/1/2020				Departure Flights on Monday 6/1/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
PIA	239	Sialkot	00:05	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
JZR	716	Sohag	00:25	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	PIA	240	Sialkot	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
KAC	102	London	00:55	JZR	111	Doha	01:55
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	677	Dubai	02:10
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	JZR	119	Dubai	02:25
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	417	Manila	02:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	OMA	644	Muscat	04:00
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	621	Doha	04:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	707	Luxor	04:40
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:50
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	113	Doha	06:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	RJA	643	Amman	06:55
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	UAE	874	Dubai	07:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:30
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	RBG	214	Sohag	07:50
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	173	Munich	08:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	JZR	001	LGW	08:40
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00
RBG	213	Sohag	07:10	JZR	539	KTM	09:05
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	BAW	156	London	09:10
JZR	120	Dubai	07:35	KAC	545	Cairo	09:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1085	Doha	09:30
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	671	Dubai	09:35
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:25	KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	KAC	561	Amman	09:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	JZR	151	Masghad	09:55
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KAC	117	New York	10:00
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	IRA	666	Esfahan	10:00
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20
QTR	8511	Doha	09:40	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	KAC	741	Dammam	11:05
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	JZR	305	Istanbul	11:10
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	QTR	8512	Doha	11:25
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	515	Tehran	12:10
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35				
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50				



Iranians march behind a vehicle carrying the coffins of slain major general Qassem Soleimani and others as they pay homage in the northeastern city of Mashhad yesterday. — AFP

Iraq calls to expel US troops as...

Continued from Page 1

Earlier yesterday, Iran lambasted Donald Trump after the US president threatened to hit 52 Iranian sites hard if Tehran attacks Americans or US assets in retaliation for Soleimani's death. "Like ISIS, Like Hitler, Like Genghis! They all hate cultures. Trump is a terrorist in a suit. He will learn history very soon that NOBODY can defeat the Great Iranian Nation & Culture," Information and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi tweeted.

Soleimani masterminded Iran's clandestine and military operations abroad as head of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, creating an arc of Shiite power with the help of proxy militias confronting the regional might of United States and Israel. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei promised on Friday that Iran would seek harsh revenge for his death.

Hundreds of thousands of mourners, many chanting, beating their chests and wailing in grief, turned out across Iran to show their respects after Soleimani's body was returned home to a hero's welcome. "Iran's wearing black, revenge, revenge," black-clad mourners chanted in Iran's second city Mashhad yesterday as darkness fell and they followed a truck carrying Soleimani's coffin towards the floodlit Imam Reza shrine. The mourners threw scarves onto the roof of the truck so that they could be blessed by the "blood of the martyr".

Soleimani's remains had been returned before dawn to the southwestern city of Ahvaz, where the air resonated with Shiite chants and shouts of "Death to America" during a procession. People held aloft portraits of Soleimani, one of the country's most popular public figures who is seen as a hero of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. The "million-man" turnout in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, forced the cancellation of a night ceremony in Tehran yesterday, said the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who urged citizens instead to attend a memorial today at Tehran University.

In Tehran, deputies chanted "Death to America" for a few minutes during a regular session of parliament. "Trump, this is the voice of the Iranian nation, listen," said speaker Ali Larjani. Soleimani's remains and those of five other Iranians - all Guards members - killed in the US drone strike had arrived at Ahvaz airport before dawn, semi-official news agency ISNA said. With them were the remains of Muhandis.

Pompeo rejected suggestions that the intelligence assessment that led to the strike on Soleimani was thin and said there was no doubt Iran had absorbed the message from Washington. "The intelligence assessment made clear that no action - allowing Soleimani to continue his plotting and his planning, his terror campaign - created more risk than taking the action that we took last week," he said on ABC's "This Week" show.

Democratic critics of the Republican president have called the strike that Trump authorized reckless, saying it risked more bloodshed in a dangerous region. The top Democrat in the Senate, Chuck Schumer, said on ABC's "This Week": "We do not need this president either stumbling or impulsively getting us into a major war."

US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said in a statement that information given to Congress by Trump

"prompts serious and urgent questions about the timing, manner and justification of" the strike. "The Trump Administration's provocative, escalatory and disproportionate military engagement continues to put service members, diplomats and citizens of America and our allies in danger," said Pelosi. Another prominent Democrat, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, called the president a "monster", for "threatening to target and kill innocent families, women and children". In a tweet, she said: "This is a war crime."

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon's powerful, Iran-allied Hezbollah movement, said the US military in the Middle East would pay the price for Soleimani's death and US soldiers and officers would return home in coffins. "The American army killed them and it will pay the price. The only just punishment is (to target) American military presence in the region: US military bases, US warships, each and every officer and soldier in the region," Nasrallah said.

He added however that American civilians such as "businessmen, engineers, journalists and doctors" should be spared. "When the coffins of American soldiers and officers... start to return to the United States, (US President Donald) Trump and his administration will realize they have lost the region," he said.

Nasrallah's speech was beamed to black-clad supporters who gathered in southern Beirut, waving Hezbollah's yellow flag or holding up portraits of Soleimani and Muhandis. Nasrallah also called on Iraq to free itself of the American "occupation". "Our demand, our hope from our brothers in the Iraqi parliament is... to adopt a law that demands American forces withdraw from Iraq," he said.

In his speech, Nasrallah said he had last seen Soleimani when the Iranian general visited him on New Year's Day on Wednesday, without specifying where the meeting took place. He said the general had flown out of the Damascus airport on Thursday night to Baghdad, where he was welcomed by Muhandis. Earlier yesterday, Hezbollah news outlet Al-Manar published undated photos of Nasrallah and Soleimani, including one in which the Iranian commander kisses Nasrallah's forehead.

Trump tweeted on Saturday that Iran "is talking very boldly about targeting certain USA assets". He said the United States has "targeted 52 Iranian sites", some "at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture, and those targets, and Iran itself, WILL BE HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD".

In remarks to Fox News yesterday, Pompeo said Trump had not threatened to target Iranian cultural sites. Iran summoned the Swiss envoy representing US interests in Tehran yesterday to protest at "Trump's hostile remarks", according to Iranian state television. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell urged Iran's foreign minister by phone to work to de-escalate the situation and invited him to Brussels to discuss ways of preserving world powers' 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

It was Trump's withdrawal of the United States from the deal in 2018 and reimposition of sanctions on Iran that touched off a new spiral of tensions after a brief thaw following the accord. Iran was to decide yesterday about its next step to further roll back its commitments to the nuclear containment deal, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi was quoted as saying. "Considering the recent threats (by America) it should be underlined that in politics, all developments and threats are linked to each other," state news agency IRNA quoted him as saying. — Agencies

security meeting held in the context of the government's response to the latest situation in the region.

During the meeting, the ministers addressed the aftershocks of the recent regional happenings and weighed the current situation, the spokesman said, noting that the meeting is part of official meetings held over the past couple of days. Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and senior security officials attended the meeting.

Saudi 'not consulted' over US strike that killed Iran general

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia was not consulted by its ally Washington over a US drone strike that killed a top Iranian general, an official said yesterday, as the kingdom sought to defuse soaring regional tensions. Saudi Arabia is vulnerable to possible Iranian reprisals after Tehran vowed "revenge" following the strike on Friday that killed powerful commander Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. "The kingdom of Saudi Arabia was not consulted regarding the US strike," a Saudi official told AFP, requesting anonymity.

"In light of the rapid developments, the kingdom stresses the importance of exercising restraint to guard against all acts that may lead to escalation, with severe consequences," the official added. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry made a similar call for restraint at the weekend and King Salman emphasized the need for measures to defuse tensions in a phone call on Saturday with Iraqi President Barham Saleh.

In a separate phone call with Iraq's Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stressed "the need to make efforts to calm the situation and de-escalate tensions", the official Saudi Press Agency reported. The crown prince has instructed Prince Khalid bin Salman, his younger brother and deputy defence minister, to travel to Washington and London in the next few days to urge restraint, the pan-Arab Asharq al-Awsat newspaper reported.

Prince Khalid will meet White House and US defense officials, the paper said, citing unnamed sources. The killing of Soleimani, seen as the second most powerful man in Iran, is the most dramatic escalation yet in spiralling tensions between Washington and Tehran and has prompted

fears of a major conflagration in the Middle East. US President Donald Trump, who ordered the drone strike, has warned that Washington will hit Iran "very fast and very hard" if the Islamic republic attacks American personnel or assets.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both allies of Washington, are also vulnerable to Iranian counter strikes. The American embassy in Riyadh yesterday warned its citizens living close to military bases and oil and gas installations in the kingdom of a "heightened risk of missile and drone attacks". A string of attacks blamed on Iran has caused anxiety in recent months, as Riyadh and Washington deliberated over how to react.

In particular, devastating strikes against Saudi oil installations last September led Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to adopt a more conciliatory approach aimed at avoiding confrontation with Tehran. Analysts warn that pro-Iran groups have the capacity to carry out attacks on US bases in Gulf states as well as against shipping in the Strait of Hormuz - the strategic waterway that Tehran could close at will.

"Expect Iranian reprisals (directly or through partner groups in Iraq, Lebanon or elsewhere) to target US partners in the region including Saudi Arabia," said Thomas Juneau, an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa. "Given the climate in the US, where support for Saudi in the media and Congress is at an all-time low, it will be difficult for Trump to commit significant resources to come to its aid."

Yemen's pro-Iran Houthi rebels, locked in a five-year conflict with a Saudi-led military coalition, have also called for swift reprisals for Soleimani's killing. "The aggression... will not go without a response," said Houthi political council member Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti. "How the response is going to be, when and where will be determined by Iraq and Iran, and we will stand with them as a hub for the resistance." It was unclear if the Houthi warning was directed in part at Saudi Arabia, which has stepped up efforts to end Yemen's conflict amid a lull in Houthi attacks on the kingdom. — AFP

\$25m raised as Australia reels...

Continued from Page 1

fundraiser for firefighters that almost reached its Aus\$25 million (\$17 million) target in just two days with donations from all over the globe.

American pop star Pink said she would donate US\$500,000 to the firefighters, a donation matched by Australian actress Nicole Kidman. World number one Ash Barty pledged to hand over all her winnings from this week's Brisbane International tennis tournament - potentially US\$250,000 - to the Red Cross. Around 200 fires continued to burn yesterday, many out of control, although only a handful prompted emergency warnings as temperatures dipped.

Everywhere, millions of beleaguered residents struggled to come to grips with a catastrophe that has taken place on a near-continental scale, unfurled over months and altered daily life. "We're in uncharted territory," New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said. "We can't pretend that this is something that we have experienced before. It's not." Authorities have struggled to keep pace with the severity of the crisis - which has now scorched an area almost the size of Ireland. While bushfires are common in Australia's dry summers, climate change has pushed up land and sea temperatures and led to more extremely hot days and severe fire seasons.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Saturday announced the largest military call-up in living memory, mobilizing up to 3,000 reservists to assist exhausted volunteer firefighters. Warships and combat helicopters have already been repurposed to help with the largest maritime evacuation in Australia since World War II - moving some of the 4,000 people trapped for days on the foreshore of Mallecoota to safety.

Up and down the coast, thousands of people remained displaced and many more weighed an uncertain future. Noreen Ralston-Birchaw, 75, lost her home

in Mogo on New Year's Eve and said she was unsure what to do. "At this very moment, I don't want to go back and see my house laying burnt on the ground," she told AFP. "I don't want to rebuild there." Morrison also announced the establishment of a Bushfire Recovery Agency, that will run for at least two years and help survivors get back on their feet, a signal that the path ahead will be long and difficult.

Even for those not in the fires' direct path, the crisis has put Australia's much-admired outdoor lifestyle on hold: barbecues have been barred under blanket fire bans, top sporting events have been called off and beach trips cancelled. The country's distinctive flora and fauna will take years or decades to recover - countless thousands of gum trees have been lost and experts on Kangaroo Island said half the koala population has been wiped out. Queen Elizabeth II yesterday said she was "deeply saddened" by the fires, and thanked the emergency services "who put their own lives in danger" to help communities.

Yesterday brought milder conditions including some rainfall in New South Wales and neighboring Victoria state but some communities were still under threat from out-of-control blazes, particularly in and around the town of Eden in New South Wales near the Victorian border. "The sky is still red," said John Steele, 73, who was evacuated with his wife from their rural property north of Eden late Saturday. "We're not out of the woods yet."

In Cooma, in inland southern New South Wales, the fire crisis turned into a flood disaster when a large tower carrying 4.5 million litres of water swept away cars and filled homes with mud. "First bushfire and now flood, back-to-back disasters," a shaken resident who asked not to be named told AFP.

Australia's capital Canberra was ranked as the city with the poorest air quality in the world yesterday by Air Visual, an independent online air quality index monitor, amid a severe haze caused by the fires. Flights were cancelled, galleries were closed to safeguard public health and a large consignment of facemasks was being brought in. In some rural areas, police patrolled the streets amid reports of looting and break-ins in bushfire-affected areas. — AFP

Iraq militias claim killer drone took...

Continued from Page 1

security chiefs to a Cabinet meeting today. This came in a press statement given by the Head of the Center for Government Communication (CGC) and government spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem following a high-level

Sports

Brady-led NFL champion Patriots dethroned by upstart Titans

Houston beat Bills in overtime thriller

WASHINGTON: Reigning champion New England was dumped from the NFL playoffs by upstart Tennessee on Saturday, the Titans taking a 20-13 road victory that could spell the end of six-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady's career.

NFL rushing leader Derrick Henry ran 34 times for 182 yards and a touchdown on his 26th birthday and former Patriot Logan Ryan returned an interception of Brady nine yards for a touchdown with nine seconds remaining for the final points to seal New England's fate. "We were just locked in," Henry said. "We wanted it. It's a great win against a great team in a hostile environment. I'm just happy we could advance. A great team win."

Brady, a 42-year-old quarterback who is now a free agent, could not guide the Patriots to a second-half score against a Titans defensive unit overseen by Tennessee coach Mike Vrabel, a linebacker on three Super Bowl champions with New England.

After completing 20-of-37 passes for 209 yards, Brady said it was "pretty unlikely" he would retire even though he turns 43 before next season opens.

"Who knows what the future holds. Let's leave it at that," Brady said. "I don't know what the future looks like. I'm not going to predict it."

The Titans advanced to a second-round matchup next Saturday at American Conference top seed Baltimore while Houston will travel to second seed Kansas City next Sunday. Both hosts had first-round byes. Houston quarterback Deshaun Watson ran for one touchdown, threw for another and made a stunning play to set up Ka'imi Fairbairn game-winning 28-yard field goal 11:40 into over-time as the Texans beat visiting Buffalo 22-19.

The National Football Conference playoffs begin Sunday with Minnesota at New Orleans and Seattle at Philadelphia, with top seed San Francisco and second

seed Green Bay waiting to see who they will entertain next weekend.

Henry scored on a 1-yard run with 38 seconds remaining in the second quarter as the Titans edged ahead 14-13 at half-time, a margin they maintained until the final seconds as the game hung on a knife's edge. Tennessee erased eight minutes of the fourth quarter with a failed drive then stopped the Pats on only four plays before forcing a punt and pinning New England at the 1-yard line with 15 seconds remaining, setting the stage for the pivotal pickoff score.

New England's Nick Folk opened the scoring with a 36-yard field goal but the Titans answered with a 75-yard drive capped by Ryan Tannehill's 12-yard touchdown pass to Anthony Firkser.

Brady responded by moving New England 75 yards in 10 plays, the Patriots retaking the lead 10-7 thanks to Julian Edelman's 5-yard touchdown run on the first play of the second quarter.

New England drove to the Tennessee 1 but Titan defenders forced the hosts to settle for a 21-yard Folk field goal 2:16 before half-time.

TEXANS RALLY TO WIN

At Houston, Watson escaped two Bills defenders and flipped a short pass to Taiwan Jones, who ran 34 yards to the Buffalo 10-yard line on the play before Fairbairn's game winner. "Will, guts, grit — everything. They got to me but I stayed up," Watson said.

"Man, just never quit, honestly. I just told myself to stay up. It's do or die right now. All the work I put in in the off-season, I had to get it done."

Watson was sacked seven times but completed 20-of-25 passes for 247 yards, ran 14 times for 55 yards and rallied the Texans from a 16-0 deficit, the first time in 23 tries under coach Bill O'Brien that Houston had escaped so huge a hole to win.



FOXBOROUGH: Tom Brady #12 of the New England Patriots throws a pass against the Tennessee Titans in the AFC Wild Card Playoff game at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. The Titans won 20-13. — AFP

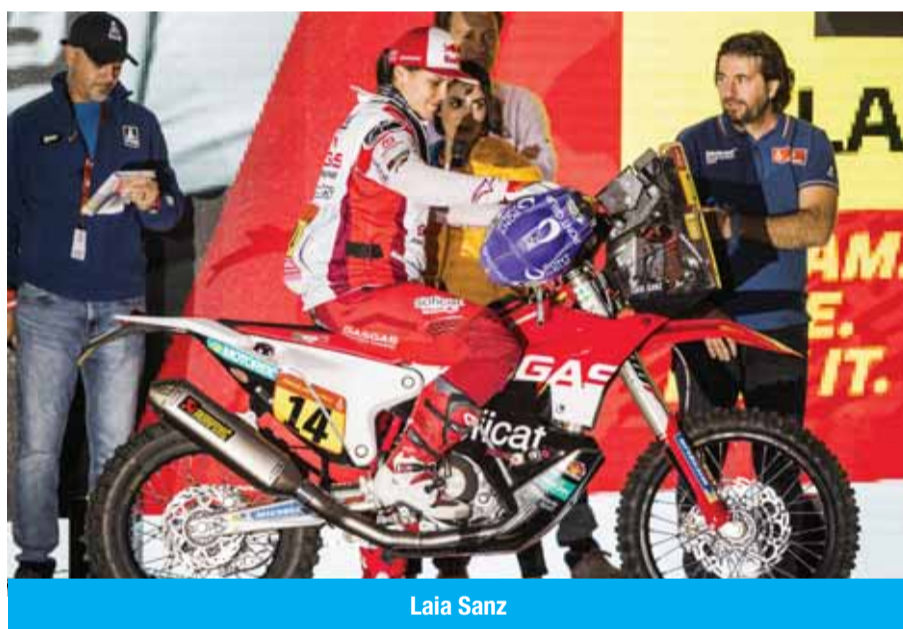
"I knew somebody had to be great. I said, 'Why not me?'" Watson said. "We never quit. Whatever it takes to get the win, we keep fighting and we will always give our best." Buffalo's Stephen Hauschka kicked his fourth field goal of the day from 47 yards with five seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to pull the Bills level at 19-19 and set up over-time.

The Bills seized a 13-0 half-time edge, highlighted by quarterback Josh Allen catching a 16-yard touch-

down pass on a trick play on Buffalo's opening drive, but could not capture their first playoff victory since 1995. Buffalo led 16-0 but Fairbairn kicked a field goal off a turnover and Watson scored on a 20-yard touchdown run, dragging two defenders the last six yards, and flipped a 5-yard touchdown pass to Carlos Hyde. Watson threw and ran for 2-point conversions after each touchdown and Houston led until Hauschka forced over-time. — AFP



Nasser Al-Attiyah



Laia Sanz

The race is on at 2020 Dakar Rally in S Arabia

JEDDAH: The excitement in Jeddah since the Dakar Rally arrived has been non-stop. From the pre-race technical checks at the impressive King Abdulaziz Stadium to the party atmosphere of the Saturday night Start Podium at the Dakar Village on the shores of the Red Sea.

The Dakar has come to the Middle East from its first home in Africa, via a magical decade in South America. This third chapter of motorsports' ultimate test of endurance has invigorated everybody - from multiple champions to rookie racers.

Now offroaders in 83 cars, 144 bikes, 46 side-by-sides, 46 trucks and 23 quads will tackle perilous terrain and test their skills to the limit. All of this will happen in a new country, as Saudi Arabia becomes the 30th nation to host the truly international Dakar Rally. The 2020 Dakar started on January 5 in Jeddah and finishes 9,000km later on Friday, January 17 in Al-Qiddiya.

CAR COMPETITORS

Nasser Al-Attiyah #300: "I would like to thank everybody who has made it possible to bring the Dakar to the Middle East. I've now won the Dakar three times and I'll be going all out to win a fourth. It has long been a dream of mine to see the Dakar come to this region. I hope everybody will enjoy this race."

Stephane Peterhansel #302: "25 years ago I came to Saudi Arabia for a motorcycle race and I remember beautiful landscapes. I also came back here last year for a two-day Baja race and the open desert was really impressive. I have no doubt we will have a very interesting race here in Saudi Arabia."

Kuba Przygonski #303: "Timo (Gottschalk, co-driver) and myself are ready for these new roadbooks that are coming. Sometimes we will not get these roadbooks until shortly before the stage. This means that in some parts we could be driving blind. My experience racing bikes at the Dakar will help with this."

Giniel De Villiers #304: "It's always exciting when you're about to discover new deserts in a new country. Nobody really knows what to expect and we'll have to adjust as we go along. Our car is feeling good, the team is strong and we're really looking forward to getting out there."

Carlos Sainz #305: "It's true that I'm among the oldest drivers here, but I have

lost none of the passion I have for this rally. There is very strong competition in the race this year and I'm looking forward to the challenge of trying to set the pace."

BIKE COMPETITORS

Toby Price #1: "Last year was a big challenge, we started the event with a broken scaphoid bone in the wrist. To carry on and get the win took everything. This time we're coming in healthy which is great, but also adds pressure. We won with a broken wrist, so now we're injury-free people expect us to win again."

Matthias Walkner #2: "I'm feeling quite OK, all my injuries have more or less healed up to 90 percent. The preparation has gone pretty well and now it's all about a new year, a new challenge and a new country. It's going to be tough and it's going to be long, but it's great to be here." Sam Sunderland #3: "As racers we always think about how our form has been in the last few rallies we've done. I've had a solid 12 months leading into this Dakar and won the World Championship, now I want to carry on that form at the Dakar."

Laia Sanz #14: "For sure it will be difficult for me to finish inside the Top 10, but I will try. I'm excited to ride with my new Gas Gas team and if everything works perfectly for us then I'm sure we'll get a result we can all be proud of." Luciano Benavides #16: "I'm feeling really good right now, really motivated to ride the first stage. I miss the rally being in South America, but I'm also excited to discover Saudi Arabia. Everything here has been like a dream for me so far." Daniel Nosioglia #21: "The past Dakar has been very nice for me and I want to repeat that experience here in Saudi Arabia. It's an honour for me to be racing with Honda and the aim is to finish inside the Top 10."

Mohammed Balooshi #36: "I'm very happy to be part of this big change for the Dakar. Maybe if the rally was in South America this year I wouldn't go, but when it is here I have no excuse not to race. We have 13 tough days ahead of us. To finish each stage will be its own milestone and I'll take things day by day."

CS Santosh #50: "The first time I went to Dakar, I had no idea what I was doing. This is actually the first time I'm excited because I've been more prepared. This is my first year when I have



Red Bull off-road team

ridden almost pain-free, finally my body is in a good state."

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPETITORS.

Chaleco Lopez #400: "It was great to return to the Dakar last year and win the side-by-side class. This year the level of competition will be even tougher so I'll need to race a perfect rally if I am going to defend my title."

Cyril Despres #403: Mike (Horn, co-driver) and me are not junior riders anymore, but I've been at the beginning of the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Program project. It's another change for me, after racing bikes and cars. Now I'm a coach who is also in the race. I'm going to do my best to share with these guys what the Dakar Rally is all about." Mike Horn #403: "I'm a professional explorer so to be here competing in the most famous and prestigious rally-raid in the world feels great. To be here with the young guys has created a great atmosphere in the team. The moment you stop learning is the moment you become too old. We are here to learn, to compete and to share our experiences with the others." Blade Hildebrand #409: "I was on my way home from a race in Reno when I got a call inviting me to test the new OT3 in Morocco. Back then there wasn't too much information on the car or Red Bull Off-Road Team USA. Now we're here and it's all come

together, it's a great feeling."

Mitch Guthrie Jr. #412: "One of the biggest things about Red Bull Off-Road Team USA is that it's helping to spread news about the Dakar back in the States. Even on the racing scene back home we don't really know about the ins and outs of the Dakar. Raising awareness of this great race is something I'm happy to be involved with."

TRUCK COMPETITORS

Eduard Nikolaev #500: "We are in a new country this year, and this means new challenges to meet on each stage. I'm not here to chase any personal glory, everything we do is to help the team be successful. A win for Kamaz is a win for all of us."

Dmitry Sotnikov #501: "For this Dakar all of our trucks are equipped with automatic transmission. We see serious advantages with this modification, automatic transmission is gaining popularity among all contestants at the rally. We're always trying to improve our race truck."

QUAD COMPETITORS

Ignacio Casale #250: "After my win in 2018, I was really tired of the quad. I didn't want anything to do with it. But 16 months ago, I already wanted to come back. The desire returned. Yamaha sent me a quad, I went to the dunes and I realised that it is still my thing."

Defending champ Schauffele leads US PGA Tournament of Champions

LOS ANGELES: Xander Schauffele will take a one-shot lead over Justin Thomas into the final round of the US PGA Tournament of Champions, where he'll try to become the first repeat winner in a decade.

Schauffele, who fired a final-round 62 on the Plantation Course at Kapalua last year to erase a five-shot deficit and win, had four birdies in a two-under par 71 on Saturday for an 11-under par total of 208.

That put him one in front of Thomas, who had five of his six birdies on the front nine but cooled off coming in on the way to a four-under 69 and a 10-under total of 209. US Open champion Gary Woodland, who led heading into the final round last year but was eclipsed by Schauffele, was alone in third after a 69 for 211.

Joaquin Niemann of Chile and former Masters champion Patrick Reed, who both started the day one shot behind Schauffele, were among seven players sharing fourth on 212 after another wind-whipped day on the par-73 course in Hawaii.

"It was sort of the day I thought it would be, and (I'm) happy to still have a one-shot lead," said Schauffele, who is trying to become the first player since Australian Geoff Ogilvy in 2009-10 to win two straight editions of the tournament.

"With this wind and the golf course the condition it's in, you kind of have to take what it gives you," Schauffele, who has come from behind in all four of his PGA Tour victories, acknowledged that sleeping on the 54-hole lead was a "new-ish realm" for him, but his plan for Sunday was to maintain the same mindset that had put him atop the leaderboard.

"Just roll with the shots," he said of what would be required. "Tomorrow is going to be even windier, I saw in the forecast. 'I'm sure it might rain, even though it says it's not going to. I'll just go with the flow.'"

Schauffele was even for the day with two birdies and two bogeys when he grabbed back-to-back birdies at 14 and 15. He parred his way in, no mean feat in the demanding conditions.

Wind was a factor in Thomas's bogey at 17, where he missed a six-footer for par. "It's very tough to putt in this wind," Thomas said, adding that he was "pretty disappointed" with his finish. "I easily could be at 14- or 15-under right now and to only be at 10- is a little bit of a bummer," he said.

"I got off to such a great start on that front nine and the back nine, which I usually play well, I struggled on today," Woodland, meanwhile, gained momentum with a birdie at 18, one of six on the day to offset a double-bogey at the seventh.

"I played really well," Woodland said. "Made an unfortunate double there in the middle of the round but outside that I played great, gave myself a lot of chances." — AFP

Sports

Aussies take control of N Zealand in third Test after Lyon takes five

Blackcaps batted through the final session without losing a wicket

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard after the third day of the third Test between Australia and New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday:

Australia 1st innings 454 (M. Labuschagne 215, S. Smith 63; N. Wagner 3-66, C. de Grandhomme 3-78)

New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 63-0)

T. Latham c Starc b Cummins	49
T. Blundell b Lyon	34
J. Raval lbw Lyon	31
R. Taylor lbw Cummins	22
G. Phillips b Cummins	52
B. Watling b Starc	9
C de Grandhomme run out (Wade/Paine)	20
T. Astle not out	25
W. Somerville b Lyon	0
N. Wagner b Lyon	0
M. Henry st Paine b Lyon	3
Extras (b1, lb4, nb1)	6
Total (all out; 95.4 overs)	251
Fall of wickets: 1-68 (Blundell), 2-117 (Raval), 3-117 (Latham), 4-145 (Taylor), 5-163 (Watling), 6-195 (de Grandhomme), 7-235 (Phillips), 8-237 (Somerville), 9-237 (Wagner), 10-251 (Henry)	
Bowling: Starc 21-1-57-1, Cummins 22-6-44-3, Pattinson 16-3-58-0 (1nb), Lyon 30.4-10-68-5, Labuschagne 4-0-8-0, Head 2-0-1-0.	

Australia 2nd innings

D. Warner not out	23
J. Burns not out	16
Extras (lb)	1
Total (0 wkt; 16 overs)	40
Bowling: Henry 5-2-11-0, de Grandhomme 3-1-9-0, Wagner 4-1-12-0, Somerville 4-0-7-0.	

SYDNEY: Australia took a commanding 243-run lead over plucky New Zealand in the third Test in Sydney yesterday, looking set for a clean sweep of the series. The Australians dismissed the Black Caps for 251 to lead by 203 runs on the first innings before batting a second time in a bid to build an overwhelming total with two days remaining.

At stumps on day three, the hosts were 40 without loss with David Warner on 23 and Joe Burns not out 16, and were expected to bat on for some time on the fourth day. Off-spinner Nathan Lyon captured five for 68 to lead the Australian bowling attack, with Kiwi Test debutant Glenn Phillips top-scoring with a charmed knock of 52. "We're in a very good position here," said Lyon, who has now taken a career 385 Test wickets. "A lot of work to do in the morning and we have to see what lead we the batsmen want to get to.

"It is pretty special to play here in front of your home crowd, in front of your family and friends. Nice to go up on the honours board." Phillips, who only flew in on the eve of the Test as cover for a team weakened by a virus outbreak, was dropped twice and given a reprieve when caught off a no-ball.

Lyon put down the two caught-and-bowled chances when Phillips was on two and 17. The Kiwi batsman dodged another bullet on 28 when he was caught by Travis Head at deep midwicket only to be recalled when James Pattinson was found to have over-stepped for a no-ball. Phillips hit a cracking pull shot off Pat Cummins to raise his debut half-century before Cummins got him two balls later, ripping through his defences to take off-stump for 52. Lyon bowled Will Somerville and Neil Wagner for ducks and fast bowler Matt Henry came out to bat despite fracturing his left hand earlier in the match. Henry ducked out of the way of a couple of Mitchell Starc thunderbolts directed at his body before he was stumped off Lyon's bowling to end the New Zealand innings. It was the longest innings of a disastrous lost series for the Kiwis, bettering the 71 overs they faced in the second innings of the second Test in Melbourne. The Black Caps lost three wickets in the middle session with the experienced Ross Taylor out lbw to Cummins for 22 in the second over after lunch.



SYDNEY: Australia's Nathan Lyon bowls (R) as New Zealand's Colin de Grandhomme looks on (L) during the third day of the third cricket Test match between Australia and New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

Taylor remains 20 runs away from becoming the highest-scoring New Zealand batsman in Tests, behind Stephen Fleming (7,172). Wicketkeeper BJ Watling chopped a wide Starc delivery on to his stumps for nine off 30 balls to put his team under more pressure.

Colin de Grandhomme was needlessly run out for 20, taking on Matthew Wade's throw from the deep to wicketkeeper Tim Paine while attempting a second run. Lyon grabbed two key wickets in the morning session, removing Melbourne Test centurion Tom Blundell and recalled Jeet Raval.

Raval, who was dropped after twin batting failures as an opener in the first Test in Perth, batted positively at number three before he was leg before wicket to Lyon for 31 off 58 balls.

Tom Latham was out two balls later in the next over from Cummins, done by a fuller delivery and chipping straight to Starc at mid-on. The new skipper, deputising for the sidelined Kane Williamson, was denied a deserved half-century on 49 in his 133-ball vigil.

Blundell fell in the day's fifth over, bowled by Lyon for 34. The Sydney Test is being played against the backdrop of one of Australia's most devastating bush-fire seasons, with at least 24 people losing their lives in blazes raging across the country, including on the outskirts of Sydney.

Play will be suspended in the match at the umpire's discretion, should smoke significantly affect air quality or visibility, but the sky above the ground has remained largely clear so far. — AFP

Racing's Thomas stakes claim for France Six Nations place

PARIS: Winger Teddy Thomas staked a claim for inclusion in France's Six Nations squad in a try-scoring display in Racing 92's 27-19 victory over Clermont in the French Top 14 on Saturday. Thomas, 26, who made the last of his 16 Test appearances in November 2018, got the better of Alivereti Rakai, a rival for a spot in Fabien Galthie's 42-man group to be named on Wednesday, in the first half at La Defense Arena. "From what he has shown us for a while, I think he'll be there," Racing coach Laurent Travers said. "Teddy proposed something positive, he went looking for the ball, which is something he didn't use to do," Travers added.

The Parisians are fourth in the table before welcoming Munster in the European Champions Cup pool stages next Sunday. Clermont, losing Top 14 finalists last season, are down in eighth place ahead of hosting Ulster next weekend.

The hosts led 10-0 after less than a quarter of an hour as Tonga prop Ben Tameifuna, on his 100th appearance for Racing, crashed over and scrum-half Teddy Iribaren kicked a conversion and a penalty goal. Greig Laidlaw responded with his own three points before Thomas's moment of magic on 27 minutes. He received the ball on the right flank after Virimi Vakatawa's superb break before side-stepping Raka with ease to stroll over in the corner for his 10th try of the campaign and a 17-3 lead.

Eight minutes later Thomas claimed the defensive upper hand by ripping the ball from Raka's possession with the Fijian-born winger in full flight with the tryline in his sight. Retired Scotland scrum-half Laidlaw slotted three penalties to make it 17-12 after 44 minutes.

Captain Iribaren claimed his side's second try of the day, beating Laidlaw down the blindside to extend his side's lead to 24-12. Clermont's France winger Damian Penaud closed the advantage to five points with 25 minutes to play before Iribaren maintained his perfect performance from the boot with his second three-pointer to take the score to 27-19.

Bordeaux-Begles stay top after a 22-3 win over Bayonne and are three points ahead of Lyon who had taken temporary possession of top spot earlier Saturday with a 13-12 win against Agen.

All of Bordeaux's points came in the first half with French centres Jean-Baptiste Dubie and Remie Lamerat and Australian international lock Kane Douglas all scoring.

La Rochelle crushed Pau with a five-try bonus-point 44-13 victory in a game where international fly-half Jules Plisson played a major role as his team moved into third place at the halfway stage of the regular season.

Plisson set up second-rower Thomas Lavaull for the first try and then scored himself after a brilliantly executed interception of Antoine Hastoy's intended pass to Charlie Malie.

Montpellier are fifth after a narrow 29-26 win over Brive with South Africa's World Cup winner Handre Pollard kicking 19 points. On Sunday, champions Toulouse head to bottom side Stade Francais in French rugby's Classico as World Cup winner Cheslin Kolbe makes an injury comeback. — AFP



CAPE TOWN: England's Joe Root (R) watches the ball after playing a shot as South Africa's Quinton de Kock (L) looks on during the third day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the Newlands stadium in Cape Town yesterday. — AFP

Sibley, Root put England in command

CAPE TOWN: Opener Dominic Sibley struck a career-best unbeaten 85 as England seized control of the second test against South Africa at the close of the third day at Newlands yesterday, grinding down their hosts ahead of a fourth innings victory charge.

The tourists reached 218 for four at stumps, a lead of 264 that already looks substantial on a wearing wicket and with two full days remaining, providing an excellent chance to level the four-match series.

Sibley put on 116 for the third wicket with captain Joe Root (61), before the latter steered Dwaine Pretorius to Faf du Plessis at slip late on. Nightwatchman Dominic Bess gloved a leg-side delivery from Anrich Nortje (2-36) to end the day.

Sibley will seek to take the game further away from South Africa with Ben Stokes on day four with England's travelling fans in full voice in Cape Town. Sibley's previous best in tests was 29 and he showed impressive patience and concentration to see off the new ball and then accumulate his runs by waiting for the right opportunities to score.

He took 140 balls to reach his 50 and batted for almost the full day, which allowed Root to score more

freely at the other end. South Africa's other two wickets in England's second innings were that of Zak Crawley (25), who edged Kagiso Rabada to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock, and Joe Denly (31), caught at long leg attempting a hook off Nortje.

It was, at times, a war of attrition that the visiting side won with risk-free, smart cricket. South Africa's bowling attack were unable to find the movement and pace off the wicket that England enjoyed as they bowled them out for 223 early on the third day.

Seamer James Anderson took five wickets and Ben Stokes an England record five catches as they made short work of wrapping up the South African first innings.

Anderson (5-40) knocked over Rabada (0) with the first ball of the day and completed his England record 28th test five-wicket haul when Nortje (4) edged to Stokes at slip for the all-rounder to take his fifth catch of the innings.

It is the joint most by any player in Test cricket and the 12th time a fielder had taken five catches in an innings, but a first for England. South Africa won the first test in Pretoria by 107 runs. — Reuters

Stoinis fined for homophobic slur

MELBOURNE: Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis was yesterday slapped with a hefty fine after directing a homophobic slur at Kane Richardson during a domestic Twenty20 Big Bash League game.

The Melbourne Stars player apologised after being found guilty of breaching Cricket Australia's code of conduct and penalised Aus\$7,500 (US\$5,200).

"I got caught in the moment and took it too far," Stoinis said of the incident during the clash with cross-town rivals Melbourne Renegades on Saturday. "I realised immediately I was in the wrong and I apologise to Kane and to the umpires. "I did the wrong thing and

accept responsibility for my actions. The standards are there for a reason and I accept the penalty."

The incident comes six weeks after fast bowler James Pattinson, currently playing for Australia in the third Test against New Zealand in Sydney, was banned for player abuse, also reportedly a homophobic slur. His penalty — a one-match suspension which ruled him out of the first Test against Pakistan — was harsher as it was his third code of conduct breach in the past 18 months.

"The behaviour in this matter falls short of the standards we expect and we have acted accordingly," Sean Carroll, Cricket Australia's head of integrity and security said of the Stoinis fine.

He only referred to the matter as "personal abuse of a player", although the Cricket Australia website characterised it as a homophobic slur. "There is no place for it in the game," added Carroll. — AFP

S Lanka's sacked cricket coach demands \$5m compensation

COLOMBO: Sacked coach Chandika Hathurusingha has demanded \$5 million in compensation from Sri Lanka Cricket over the premature termination of his contract, an official said yesterday. The former Sri Lankan Test star and coach made the claim after the two sides failed to agree the terms of his termination last summer.

"He has sent a letter of demand asking for \$5 million," board secretary Mohan de Silva told AFP. Details were not immediately available, but the Sunday Island newspaper said Hathurusingha had sought his full salary for the remaining 18 months of his contract which amounted to just over a million dollars. He has also claimed that his reputation as an international coach suffered as a result of what he called the wrongful termination.

His claim of \$5 million includes damages as well as the wages he says are due to him. The board had been willing to pay only six months' salary as compensation, the Island said, adding that the coach was in receipt of a take-home salary of \$60,000 a month at the time of termination. Following Sri Lanka's disappointing World Cup, where they finished in sixth place, Hathurusingha and his assistants were shown the door. The then sports minister Harin Fernando insisted that Hathurusingha was overpaid and accused him of failing to produce results. Fernando said Sri Lanka could have hired a foreign coach at half the price paid to Hathurusingha. Sri Lanka has since carried out a major revamp of the national team by appointing South African Mickey Arthur as head coach in December.

Former Zimbabwe Test player Grant Flower has been appointed the new national batting coach, Australian David Saker was made bowling coach while Shane McDermott was placed in charge of fielding training. The board has not discussed the terms of their two-year contracts. — AFP

Canterbury's Carter enters record books

CHRISTCHURCH: Canterbury Kings batsman Leo Carter emulated the likes of Gary Sobers and Yuvraj Singh by smashing six sixes in an over during a Super Smash Twenty20 match in Christchurch yesterday.

Left-handed batsman Carter scored 36 runs against spinner Anton Devcich, bowling for Northern Districts, in the 16th over with some powerful leg-side hitting. "I basically just stepped across and swung as hard as I could," the 25-year-old told broadcaster Sky Sport.

"I'm not so sure I got many off the middle, but pretty short boundary there, so they just carried over. I was pretty thankful for that." Carter finished with an unbeaten 70 off 29 balls as Canterbury chased down an imposing target of 220 with seven balls to spare.

It is the first time a New Zealander has hit six sixes in an over, and just the seventh time in history at a top domestic level or higher. The other players to achieve the feat include Sobers (1968) and Ravi Shastri (1985) doing so in first-class games, Herschelle Gibbs (2007) in a one-dayer, Yuvraj Singh (2007) in a T20I, and Ross Whiteley (2017) and Hazratullah Zazai (2018) in domestic T20 games. — Reuters

Sports

Immobile double lifts Lazio after insulted Balotelli scores for Brescia

Inter Milan to recommence title battle with Juventus today

MILAN: Mario Balotelli warded off the insults from travelling Lazio fans to strike the first goal of the decade in Italy but the title-chasers hit back with a Ciro Immobile double to snatch a late win at ten-man Brescia yesterday.

Simone Inzaghi's side stretched their winning streak to nine consecutive league games and with a game in hand are three points behind leaders Inter Milan and Juventus who play today. Immobile struck the winner after 91 minutes having also converted from the penalty spot before the break.

"People expect more from us with all these wins and two trophies," said Inzaghi, whose side beat Juventus to lift the Italian SuperCup trophy last month after winning the Italian Cup in May. "We won a very important game. We'll try to continue like this. We absolutely want to hit the Champions League."

Felipe Caicedo had the ball in the back of the net early for Lazio from an Immobile cross but it was ruled offside. But Italian international Balotelli picked up where he left off before the winter break opening the scoring after 18 minutes for the promoted side.

The 29-year-old pulled clear of Luiz Felipe to volley in his first home goal for Brescia and first of the decade. He also scored the first goal of the previous decade in January 2010 with Inter Milan.

BALOTELLI INSULTS

The former Manchester City and Liverpool player was however targeted by insulting chants from Lazio fans, every time he got the ball. "It's already the sec-

ond time," Balotelli was heard telling referee Gianluca Manganiello after half an hour, with the latter replying: "Now I'll take care of it".

Inzaghi gestured wildly on front of the Lazio fans to stop the chanting, as an announcement was read over the stadium speakers reminding fans that play would be suspended and their club penalised if they continued.

Brescia fans tried to drown out the insults with whistles and cheering which Balotelli applauded. "Lazio fans that were today at the stadium SHAME ON YOU! #saynotoracism," Balotelli posted on Instagram after the game.

In November, Balotelli was the subject of monkey chants at Verona while Brescia president Massimo Cellino also came under fire after describing Balotelli's difficult situation at the promoted Serie A club as "black".

Relegation-threatened Brescia were reduced to 10 men when Andrea Cistana was sent off for a second yellow card after bringing down Caicedo after 39 minutes. Serie A top scorer Immobile pulled Lazio back on level terms from the penalty spot three minutes later.

Lazio dominated the second half with Immobile bringing his league tally to 19 goals connecting with a Caicedo cross to fire in the injury time winner.

It was the 12th time this season that the team have scored a late winner. Inzaghi meanwhile equals Sven Goran Eriksson's record of nine consecutive league wins set in the 1998-99 season. The Swedish coach



BRESCIA: Brescia's Italian forward Mario Balotelli fights for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Brescia vs Lazio yesterday at the Mario-Rigamonti stadium in Brescia. —AFP

led Lazio to their last Serie A title in 2000.

City rivals Roma, now four points behind in fourth, host Torino later. Inter Milan recommence the title

battle with Juventus today, with both sides level on 42 points after 17 games. Antonio Conte's side travel to Napoli with Juventus at home against Cagliari.

Kuwait ready for Amir's 9th Annual International Shooting Grand Prix

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, Secretary General of the Asian Shooting Confederation Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi said more than 40 countries confirmed their participation with nearly 360 athletes of their best shooters in IHH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah 9th Annual International Shooting Grand Prix to be held from Jan 10 until Jan 17, 2020 at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi who chairs the Higher Organization Committee of the Championship held a press conference at Crowne Plaza hotel to speak about the latest developments in regards to this event in the presence of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Secretary General Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi, Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba, Treasurer Essa Al-Buti Butaiban Board Member Tareq Hamada in addition to shooters Mansour Al-Rashidi and Abdelrahman Al-Faihan who qualified for Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Al-Otaibi said the strongest countries in the shooting sport including Italy, Spain and Kazakhstan will participate in this annual event that carries the name of IHH the Amir, adding "the championship is a major one with the name it carries, and the aim is not the prizes as much as having the honor to participate and win the title, and "this is our goal behind having this championship that became among the strongest on the agenda



KUWAIT: Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi, Obaid Al-Osaimi and other officials at the press conference.

of ISSF and major countries are keen to participate in."

He said the opening ceremony will be held at Martyr Fahad Al-Ahmad Hall at the Olympic Complex Saturday evening in the presence of diplomats, athletes and dignitaries, as delegations began arriving, as the club is totally ready for the event.

He said the championship will include all Olympic games in the shotgun, rifle, pistol and archery.

Al-Otaibi said Kuwait will have a large delegation including 20 shooters in the trap event alone, as well as the four who qualified for Tokyo 2020: Mansour Al-Turqi, Talal Al-Rashidi, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan and

Bledsoe added 21 as host Milwaukee continued its record-breaking season with a win over San Antonio in the first of back-to-back, home-and-away games between the two teams. They will meet in San Antonio on Monday. It was Antetokounmpo's 19th game this season with 30 points or more, and the Bucks won their fifth game in a row and eighth in their past nine outings. The Bucks (32-5) are off to the best 37-game start in franchise history. Khris Middleton added 20 points, Robin Lopez had 14, Ersan Ilyasova scored 11 points and Brook Lopez contributed 10 points for the Bucks. DeMar DeRozan led the Spurs with 26 points while LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 points and 10 rebounds. Rudy Gay added 15 points, Patty Mills scored 11 and Trey Lyles grabbed a game-high 14 rebounds for San Antonio (14-20).

TORONTO RAPTORS 121 - BROOKLYN NETS 102

Fred VanVleet scored 22 of his 29 points after halftime as Toronto rallied from a 16-point deficit and continued its domination over Brooklyn with a victory in New York. The Raptors beat the Nets for the 17th time in the past 18 meetings, with the one loss being a one-point overtime defeat in December 2018. VanVleet shot 11 of 19 and tied a season best with five 3-pointers after shooting 3 of 16 and missing 10 of 11 3-point tries in Thursday's 84-78 loss at Miami. Spencer Dinwiddie scored 23 points for the Nets, whose losing streak reached a season-high five games. The Nets also dropped to 12-11 without Kyrie Irving (right shoulder impingement), who before the game acknowledged he might need surgery on a shoulder that also has bursitis.

UTAH JAZZ 109 - ORLANDO MAGIC 96

Donovan Mitchell scored 32 points, and visiting Utah used a 22-8 run over the first half of the fourth quarter to beat Orlando. Mitchell's effort, which included 14-for-21 shooting from the floor and six assists, paced the Utah offense. He made the first of four straight Jazz 3-pointers in a stretch to open the final quarter. Terrence Ross (24 points) led the Magic in scoring for the second consecutive night on their back-to-back, which began Friday with a 105-85 rout of Miami.

ATLANTA HAWKS 116 - INDIANA PACERS 111

Trae Young scored 41 points, the fifth time he's scored 40 or more this season, and Atlanta hung on to beat visiting Indiana. Young scored 30 in the first half, and his basket with 1:22 left gave the Hawks a 113-109 lead it never relinquished. Young made 3 of 4 free throws, sandwiched around a steal, in the final 4.5 seconds to seal the win. He became the first Atlanta player with a 30-point first half since Stephen Jackson in 2004. Indiana was led by Domantas Sabonis with 25 points

and 11 rebounds. Justin Holiday added 18 points.

BOSTON CELTICS 111 - CHICAGO BULLS 104

Jayson Tatum scored 28 points and Gordon Hayward added 24 as Boston held off host Chicago for its eighth win in nine games. Tatum rebounded from a 2-for-16 performance from the floor in Friday's 109-106 win over the Atlanta Hawks by making 12 of 15 on Saturday for the Celtics. Eastern Conference Player of the Week Jaylen Brown scored 19 points and Enes Kanter recorded a double-double off the bench with 17 points and 12 rebounds. Chicago's Zach LaVine scored 13 of his 35 points in the first quarter and finished with five 3-pointers, however he struggled from the free-throw line (8 of 14).

WASHINGTON WIZARDS 128 - DENVER NUGGETS 114

Ish Smith scored a career-high 32 points and added eight assists, Troy Brown Jr. had 25 points and 14 rebounds, and host Washington beat Denver. Isaac Bonga had 15 points, Anzejs Pasecniks scored 13 and Johnathan Williams added 12 for the Wizards. Washington's bench, led by Smith and Brown, scored 92 points to lead the Wizards. Williams and Jordan McRae (11 points) were the only starters in double figures for Washington. Jamal Murray led Denver with 39 points, 20 coming in the third quarter when he hit all six of his field-goal attempts. Nikola Jokic had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Paul Millsap scored 12 for the Nuggets, who fell to 1-2 on their five-game road trip.

DETROIT PISTONS 111 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 104

Derrick Rose scored 22 points off the bench, and visiting Detroit ended a three-game losing streak with a victory over Golden State in San Francisco. Rookie Sekou Doumbouya supplied a career-high 16 points and 10 rebounds in his second career start. Andre Drummond had 14 points and 18 rebounds before fouling out. Alec Burks had 27 points, seven rebounds and five assists for the Warriors. Omari Spellman tossed in 23 points with five rebounds and four steals. Damion Lee added 14 points and five rebounds.

OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 121 - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 106

Dennis Schroder continued his hot shooting of late, scoring 22 points to lift Oklahoma City to a win at Cleveland. The Thunder have won a season-best five consecutive games and nine of their last 10. Oklahoma City lost its first six games on the road this season but has won seven of its last nine away from home. Schroder was 9 of 15 from the floor, making 2 of 3 from 3-point range and scoring at least 17 for the 17th straight game. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 20 points for the Thunder, while Steven Adams had 10 points and 16 rebounds. —Reuters

China's Wu Lei strikes late as Espanyol hold 10-man Barcelona

MADRID: Barcelona were pegged back by La Liga's bottom club Espanyol on Saturday as Wu Lei struck late to secure a dramatic 2-2 draw in a thrilling Catalan derby. Luis Suarez appeared to have inspired another turnaround at the RCDE Stadium after he cancelled out David Lopez's opener with a deft half-volley before digging out an exquisite pass for substitute Arturo Vidal to finish.

But a red card for Frenkie de Jong with 16 minutes left gave Espanyol renewed hope and Chinese forward Wu emerged the hero, firing past stand-in goalkeeper Neto to rescue a point in Abelardo Fernandez's first game in charge. "De Jong's sending off hurt us," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. "We could have scored a third and then in one play we conceded. We had the game under control. The red card unsettled us a little."

Barcelona remain top of the table but only on goal difference, their two-point advantage removed after Real Madrid earlier clinched an impressive 3-0 win away at Getafe. Atletico Madrid moved up to third after beating Levante 2-1. Espanyol have not beaten their local rivals in the league since 2009 and are still four points from safety, yet this performance should do wonders for morale.

They will be hoping for another rescue mission from new coach Abelardo, who took over Alaves with six points from 13 games in 2018 and led them to 14th. "This can be a turning-point," he said. "But we have to compete just like today because it won't be easy."

Barca now switch their attention to the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia next week, where a Clasico final awaits if Real Madrid beat Valencia in the last four and they can overcome Atletico.

But Valverde will have much to ponder after defensive problems again undermined his team against the league's bluntest attack. Lopez was unmarked as he headed in Marc Roca's cross in the 23rd minute while at the other end chances were few and far between, with Lionel Messi going closest with a header at the back post.

Vidal came on at half-time for Ivan Rakitic and Suarez worked his magic, angling his foot perfectly to divert Jordi Alba's cross inside the near post before picking out Vidal to make it 2-1 nine minutes later.

De Jong received a second yellow card for pulling Jonathan Calleri's shirt but Barcelona were in command until the 88th minute when Wu struck. Freed by an excellent reverse pass by Matias Vargas, the 28-year-old shot across Neto and into the far corner.

Espanyol might even have won it in injury-time as Calleri raced clear, only to fire over with two team-mates free inside him.

Real Madrid made a more impressive start to their year as they picked apart a robust Getafe side, even without the suspended Sergio Ramos and injured Eden Hazard.

Raphael Varane was the instigator of two goals at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez, first pressuring Getafe's David Soria into a missed punch and an own-goal, before himself heading home a cross from Toni Kroos.

"I'm happy with his performance but it's especially important when Sergio Ramos isn't there, to have another leader," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane. —AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
Bologna FC v ACF Fiorentina	14:30
beIN Sports	
Atalanta v Parma Calcio 1913	17:00
beIN Sports	
Juventus FC v Cagliari Calcio	17:00
beIN Sports HD 4	
AC Milan v UC Sampdoria	17:00
beIN Sports	
US Lecce v Udinese Calcio	20:00
beIN Sports	
SSC Napoli v Internazionale Milano	22:45
beIN Sports HD 4	

Hornets survive Doncic, Mavs in OT

DALLAS: Terry Rozier scored 29 points, and Devonte' Graham added 27 as the visiting Charlotte Hornets opened a 20-point first-half lead and still had to rally for a 123-120 overtime victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Saturday night. PJ Washington added 19 points as the Hornets came back from a 12-point deficit in the fourth quarter to win consecutive road games following a six-game losing streak. Rozier tied it at 103 with 19 seconds left in regulation, then scored seven points in the extra period for the victory. Luka Doncic scored 39 points, and Maxi Kleber added a career-high 24 as the Mavericks lost for the third time in their last four games. Doncic added 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his team-record 10th triple-double of the season. The Mavericks are now 1-1 at the start of their season-long six-game homestand.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 140 - LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 104

Jae Crowder scored 27 points and grabbed eight rebounds, and visiting Memphis coasted past Los Angeles. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 24 points and four blocks, while Ja Morant and Dillon Brooks added 22 points apiece. Jonas Valanciunas had 12 rebounds and nine points, all in the second half. It was the most points the Clippers have given up to an opponent this season. Los Angeles played without star forward Paul George. Montrezl Harrell had 28 points on 11-for-16 shooting and nine rebounds for the Clippers. Lou Williams and Kawhi Leonard had 24 points apiece. Leonard, though, misfired on 16 of 24 attempts from the floor. He also had eight rebounds.

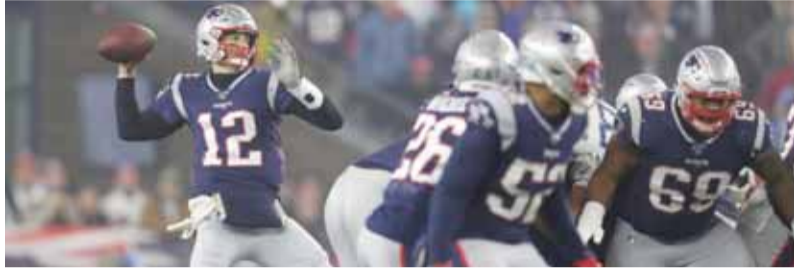
NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 117 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 115

JJ Redick drove for the decisive layup, a floater that kissed high off the glass, with 1.1 seconds left to give New Orleans a victory at Sacramento. Lonzo Ball recorded 24 points, 10 assists and six rebounds to help the Pelicans win for the sixth time in the past eight games. Jrue Holiday added 19 points and seven assists. Harrison Barnes matched his season high of 30 points but couldn't prevent Sacramento from losing for the ninth time in 10 games. The Kings had managed a miraculous tie when Nemanja Bjelica banked in a 3-pointer and was fouled by New Orleans' Brandon Ingram with 4.2 seconds left. He hit the free throw to tie the score at 115 before the late heroics by Redick, who finished with 18 points.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 127 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 118

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 32 points and Eric

25 Brady-led NFL champion Patriots dethroned by upstart Titans



26 Aussies take control of N Zealand in third Test after Lyon takes five



27 Immobile double lifts Lazio after insulted Balotelli scores for Brescia



Liverpool teenagers sink Everton

Lucas rescues Spurs, Chelsea cruise to a 2-0 win over Nottingham Forest



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Spanish goalkeeper Adrian (C) punches the ball clear during the English FA Cup third round football match between Liverpool and Everton at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

LONDON: Liverpool inflicted fresh misery on Merseyside rivals Everton as a superb strike from teenager Curtis Jones sealed a 1-0 win in the FA Cup third round yesterday. Jones' second half curler sent Anfield in ecstasy as the club's youth academy graduates handed Everton an embarrassing derby defeat.

The 18-year-old Liverpool-born midfielder was making only his fifth appearance and his memorable match winner was his first senior goal. Jones is the youngest goalscorer for Liverpool in a Merseyside derby since Robbie Fowler.

Without a win over their rivals in any competition since 2010 and thrashed 5-2 at Anfield in the Premier League earlier this season, Everton will feel the pain from this defeat against their under-strength neighbours for some while.

Hit by injuries that left him with 12 fit senior outfield players, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp had made nine changes, selecting Nat Phillips, 22, and teenage trio Neco Williams, Harvey Elliott and Jones.

In contrast, Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti made just two changes, fielding a strong team as the visitors chased a first win at Anfield since 1999. Liverpool's injury problems mounted within 10 minutes when James Milner limped off to be replaced by another teenager Yasser Larouci.

Ancelotti's side threatened early on when Dominic Calvert-Lewin's strike was pushed away from Adrian, who then repelled Mason Holgate's header and Richarlison's shot. Liverpool's youngsters had been thrashed by Aston Villa while the senior stars were away at the Club World Cup in December.

But they acquitted themselves much better this time and Japan striker Takumi Minamino, making his debut after joining from Salzburg, glanced a header narrowly off-target before Divock Origi's low drive was brilliantly saved by Jordan Pickford.

Jones' moment of magic came in the 71st minute when he played a chipped pass to Origi, took the return ball and curled a stunning effort into the top corner.

Elsewhere yesterday, Lucas Moura kept Tottenham's FA Cup hopes alive with the equaliser in their 1-1 draw at second tier Middlesbrough, while Callum Hudson-Odoi got back in the groove as Chelsea cruised to a 2-0 win over Nottingham Forest.

Tottenham haven't lifted a major trophy since 2008 when current Middlesbrough manager Jonathan Woodgate scored the League Cup winner against Chelsea. Woodgate was on course to dent Tottenham's bid to end that wretched run when Ashley Fletcher put Middlesbrough ahead in the second half at the Riverside Stadium.

But Brazilian winger Lucas headed the equaliser to send the tie to a replay in north London later in January. "When we were losing 1-0, at that moment I had the feeling of 'we are in trouble'," Tottenham boss Jose Mourinho said. "We could be out like a few other Premier League teams. But then everyone reacted. I reacted. The boys reacted." At Stamford Bridge, there were signs that Hudson-Odoi might be emerging from his sophomore

slump. He opened the scoring against the second tier side in the sixth minute, just his second goal of the season and his first since September. Blues boss Frank Lampard had made nine changes, but Chelsea doubled their lead in the 33rd minute when Hudson-Odoi's shot was parried straight to Ross Barkley and the midfielder poked home at the back post.

"I was particularly pleased for Callum, he has had a bad injury, is getting himself fit and getting sharper. His goal was an early settler for us," Lampard said. Crystal Palace became the third Premier League club to be knocked out this weekend as second tier Derby won 1-0 at Selhurst Park. Jayden Bogle fizzed a cross to the far post and Chris Martin tapped into the net in the 32nd minute. In a VAR first in England, referee Michael Oliver used the pitch-side monitor to change a decision, sending off Luka Milivojevic after initially booking the Palace midfielder for kicking out at Tom Huddlestone in the 63rd minute. Sheffield United avoided a non-league upset with a 2-1 win against AFC Fylde at Bramall Lane. —AFP

Alonso survives first Dakar stage

AL WAJH: Dakar Rally debutant Fernando Alonso avoided any first stage pitfalls as the 2020 edition of motorsport's gruelling 7,500 kilometre marathon began in Saudi Arabia yesterday. Alonso, trying to make history as the first Formula One champion to win the event, completed the drive from Jeddah to Al Wajh in his Toyota in 11th place.

The 38-year-old Spaniard, with five-time Dakar bike champion Marc Coma navigating, was over quarter of an hour behind surprise stage winner Vaidotas Zala. The Lithuanian led home a 1-2-3 for Mini, 2mins 14sec clear of teammates Stephane Peterhansel, the 13-time Dakar champion, and Carlos Sainz.

"Mr Dakar", as France's Peterhansel is affectionately known, struggled with a language barrier with his new co-driver Paulo Fiuza. "In 21 editions of the Dakar, I've never had a co-driver talk to me in English, so I need to

get used to it," he said.

Reflecting on a solid first day's drive Peterhansel added: "There were dunes, sandy plateaus and rocky sectors where we had to walk on eggshells. We're good at adapting to these conditions, we're nimble!"

Last year's winner Nasser Al-Attiyah led the way for over 200km but he had to settle for fourth place after problems with his Toyota. "It was a hard day, we had three punctures in 10 kilometres, I have no clue what went wrong, it's rather strange," reported the Qatari, over five minutes adrift.

One driver facing an early flight home was France's two-time Le Mans 24 Hour winner Romain Dumas, who could only watch from a safe distance as flames engulfed his car after only 65km.

Defending motorbike champion Toby Price won yesterday's first bike stage, despite losing his roadbook. "Once the road book is gone, then you're pretty much driving blind," said the 32-year-old Australian. The KTM rider completed the 752km route over two minutes clear of American Ricky Brabec on a Honda with Austrian Matthias Walkner on another KTM in third. Today's second stage is 401km to Neom, a planned futuristic city being built on the Red Sea. —AFP



AL WAJH: Toyota's Gazoo Racing driver Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar and his co-driver Mathieu Baumel of France compete during the Stage 1 of the Dakar 2020 between Jeddah and Al Wajh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. — AFP