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6 University rampage sparks new protests across India



20 '1917' stuns Golden Globes as Tarantino bags most prizes



28 Ronaldo hat-trick puts Juventus top as Ibra returns in Milan stalemate



Speaker receives US, Iranian envoys, urges national unity

Kuwait denies its bases used to attack Soleimani • Damkhi refuses to delay grilling



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Kuwait Larry Memmott (left) and Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani (right) yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held talks yesterday with the US and Iranian envoys in the country in separate meetings in the wake of tensions between Washington and Tehran following the US killing of top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani. Ghanem said the talks covered wide-ranging subjects, adding he will talk about some of them during a special session to be held on Thursday.

The speaker called on the Kuwaiti people to unite around HH the Amir at this stage. Expressing his confidence in HH the Amir's ability to navigate through hardship, Ghanem told reporters it is imperative to keep Kuwait's national unity intact. "It is incumbent upon us at this time to stand by His Highness the Amir as he leads us to safe ground," he said.

Late Sunday, the General Staff of Kuwait's Army categorically denied reports about the usage of the country's military bases to carry out attacks against certain targets in a neighboring country. In a press statement, the General Staff described the reports as untrue, and affirmed that Kuwaiti military bases were not used in

Continued on Page 24

Khamenei in tears as huge crowd mourns Soleimani

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader fought back tears yesterday as a sea of black-clad mourners paid homage to the top commander killed in last week's US drone strike that inflamed tensions across the Middle East. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei choked up as he prayed over the remains of Qasem Soleimani, the slain head of

the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, at Tehran University. The targeted killing of 62-year-old Soleimani ordered by US President Donald Trump saw Iran vow "severe revenge" before it also took a further step back from the already tattered 2015 nuclear accord with world powers.

In an escalating war of words that has heightened international concern and rattled financial markets, Trump threatened yet more "major retaliation" if Tehran hits back, including strikes on Iranian cultural sites. Writing in all-caps yesterday, Trump tweeted: "IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON!"

Continued on Page 24



TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani and other officials pay their respect to slain Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis yesterday. — AFP

Haftar forces take control of Sirte as Turkey sends troops

BENGAZI, Libya: Forces of Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar yesterday said they had taken control of the coastal city of Sirte from factions loyal to the Tripoli government. Sirte, some 450 km east of the capital Tripoli, had been held by forces allied with the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) since

2016. But yesterday, a spokesman for the rival faction, Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), said the city had fallen to his fighters.

"Sirte has been totally liberated... from terrorist groups," Ahmad Al-Mesmari, spokesman for Haftar's forces, said on television following an operation that lasted just hours. The oil-rich North African country has been plunged into chaos since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that killed longstanding dictator Muammar Gaddafi. It is now divided between the GNA based in the capital Tripoli in the west and Haftar's forces which are based in the east and also control most of the country's south.

Continued on Page 24

UAE launches multi-entry visas

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates yesterday introduced a multiple-entry visa scheme valid for five years for all nationalities, with the aim of turning the Gulf state into a tourism hub. "#UAE Cabinet chaired by @HHShkMohd, approves new amendment for tourist visas in #UAE," the government of Dubai Media Office

tweeted, referring to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai.

"The new tourist visa will be valid for 5 years and can be used for multiple entries and is open for all nationalities," the Dubai Media Office wrote. Sheikh Maktoum said on Twitter that the UAE currently attracts 21 million tourists a year. Travellers from Africa, some South American countries, Arab states outside the Gulf, and European states from outside the European Union and former Soviet Union previously needed visas. In October, Dubai is to host Expo 2020, a big-budget global trade fair. — AFP

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Local

Kuwait's Amir receives verbal message from Saudi King Salman

Sheikh Sabah congratulates Kuwait's UN Ambassador on membership's end



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud, the Minister of State and member of the Saudi cabinet. Prince Turki relayed to His Highness the Amir a verbal message from Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. In the message, King Salman hoped to strengthen ties, enhancing and developing them in all fields. His Highness the Amir wished health, wellness and prosperity for King Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Separately, His Highness the Amir received Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Saudi Prince Turki and Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Ghanem.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi on the successful end of the non-perma-

nent membership of Kuwait in the Security Council. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere congratulations on the success and outstanding performance of members of the permanent delegation and support team to the UN in New York. His Highness hailed their sincere efforts, tireless work, active participation in various sessions and deliberations of the Security Council on various issues, also lauding their constructive initiatives and important decisions they made in the record of Kuwaiti diplomacy and for their contributions to defending Arab and Islamic issues. Moreover, His Highness the Amir thanked His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for the good guidance he provided during his assumption of the Foreign Ministry portfolio, and to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah for his support and follow-up. 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 Ambassador Otaibi.

Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem also sent a cable of appreciation to Ambassador Otaibi for

his "outstanding efforts" during Kuwait's two-year non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council. In the cable, Speaker Ghanem commended the "high and honorable performance" of Ambassador Otaibi and the delegate members for their impressive success in addressing many of the regionally and internationally important files that were discussed in the Security Council. He said that the Kuwaiti delegation succeeded with distinction in defending the urgent and important Arab and Islamic issues and was the best representative of the Arab group in the Security Council. He also praised the supportive efforts made by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to the Kuwaiti delegation during his assumption as Foreign Minister and his tireless work in implementing the directives of His Highness the Amir regarding Kuwait's foreign policy. He thanked the employees of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addressed a cable of congratulations yesterday to the newly elected President of Croatia Zoran Milanovic. In his cable, His



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

Highness wished the new President good health, success and further development in the good relations between the two countries. 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 Croatian President. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Poland's President

Andrzej Duda on the fire that erupted in a hospice, south of Poland, that led to numerous casualties. His Highness the Amir expressed deepest condolences for families of those killed in the incident and wished swift recovery for the wounded. 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. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held a luncheon yesterday at Dar Salwa in honor of Prince Turki bin Muhammad bin Fahd Al Saud, Minister of State and Cabinet's Member in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of their visit to the country. —KUNA



Kuwait PM receives Saudi prince

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet member Prince Turki bin Mohammed Al Saud, along with a delegation accompanying him. The Kuwaiti prime minister's meeting with the Saudi prince, who is visiting the country, brought together a number of Kuwaiti ministers and diplomats. Among the attendees were Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the State of Kuwait Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah separately received Prince Turki Al Saud. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to the State of Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud and the State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended the meetings. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud. —KUNA



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud.



Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al Saud.

Local

Economists have faith in Kuwait's 'strong economy' to withstand crises

Strait of Hormuz closure 'almost impossible to happen'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: People in Kuwait are bracing for a potential war or military operations due to the unstable situation in the region after the killing of top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in Iraq by the US. The current situation has impacted various economic sectors in Kuwait, as well as the stock market, and may change the behavior of consumers.

According to economist Hajjaj Abu Khadour, the economic situation of Kuwait is strong. "I don't expect a war to happen, but if serious events take place, they won't last for long - maybe only for a few days. The effect of such operations may last for a month or two, which includes closing the Strait of Hormuz, which also can't last for long," he told Kuwait Times.

The disruptive actions will have a limited effect. "An example is the attacks on Saudi oil facilities three months back. Oil production resumed within two days. Kuwait has oil reserves in China and the US. We have alternative sources to compensate, and oil exports will not stop. If people read history carefully, they will realize that Iran will not take any irrational decisions, as they want to preserve their political regime," Abu Khadour said.

Abu Khadour does not foresee any economic or food problems. "Kuwait has large food stocks. Furthermore, land borders are open, so we don't necessarily need to get them by sea. Moreover, Kuwait has

experience dealing with crises, as we endured the worst experience during the invasion in 1990," he explained.

"People in Kuwait and the GCC region have a culture of consumerism. So the consuming motivation controls decisions. There should be some awareness campaigns in such situations. Also, during the last few years, a 'grumbling' culture has spread among people, who complain about everything," concluded Abu Khadour.

Iran won't take irrational decisions



Another economist, Dr Abdullah Marafi, agreed that Kuwaitis are avid consumers. "We are not used to save, so even if people feel worried about the situation or the future, austerity won't be noticeable. In general, people depend on their salaries for spending, and if their salaries don't change, their spending behavior won't change too," he pointed out.

"The current period is unstable, but we don't know until when it may last - but I think it will be resolved within a few months. I don't expect the situation to reach the danger level. The region is troubled, but people have got used to this situation - this also includes earthquakes and not just political issues," stressed Marafi.

He is optimistic about oil prices. "Currently, the oil price is below the fair price of oil, and I expect it to rise in the coming months. Supply and demand and alternative energy, which is still more expensive, will affect oil prices. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz will cause a



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti trader follows stock prices at Boursa Kuwait stock market in Kuwait City yesterday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

collapse for the whole world, and I think it's almost impossible to happen. International oil tankers pass from there, so even if it is closed, this can't last for long. In case this happens, we will be affected of course," Marafi added.

GCC countries follow regional event with concern

JEDDAH: GCC Secretary General Dr Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Zayani said the Gulf countries were following up with great concern the serious events and developments in Iraq, said a statement. The GCC Secretariat indicated that Dr Zayani called on the concerned parties to calm down, de-escalate and prioritize political solutions to the crises in order to spare the region and its people of any negative repercussions on their security and stability. The Secretary General called on the international community to assume its responsibilities to reduce escalation in this vital region of the world. The Pentagon confirmed last Friday an operation in which Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force Qassem Soleimani was eliminated in Iraq.— KUNA

Ministry takes measures against offending companies

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said yesterday that the department for combating money laundering and terrorism funding issued in December a total of 128 precautionary measures against offending companies, in accordance with Law 106/2013. The ministry said in a press release that the measures included the address of written warnings to 14 realty companies, nine jewelry companies, a single insurance firm and a money exchange company. Up to 49 property companies, 23 jewelry companies and two money exchange ones were compelled to abide by specific measures compatible with the laws.— KUNA

Oil price trends hinge on how crisis is tackled: Experts

KUWAIT: Current geopolitical conditions in the Gulf region namely mounting tension between the United States and Iran are expected to lead to rising oil prices, according to Kuwaiti experts. In interviews with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the experts have pointed out that impact on the crude oil prices largely depends on the manner the current crisis will be addressed; indicating that the crude prices may steady if the issue is tackled with diplomacy.

Ahmad Al-Kouh, a petroleum analyst, said geopolitical impact on oil prices would be direct and for a specific period, noting that the latest round of escalation between Tehran and Washington pushed the oil price high by three dollars. He expressed the belief that a forecast rise of the oil prices would be largely due to psychological factors rather than factual stimulants, noting that navigation via the Gulf waters and crude production in the regional countries have proceeded as regular. Abdulsamee Bahbahani, also an expert in the sector, said oil prices, in shadow of the crisis, have increased rapidly reaching the level of \$70 per barrel

for the Brent in particular. Global oil reserves are currently high, thus the prices fluctuations will be relatively slow on weekly basis, Bahbahani said. He underscored necessity of protecting regional waterways via which GCC countries export 80 percent of their crude output.

Meanwhile, Khaled Boodai, the oil expert at Al-Ofoq Consulting Center, noted that oil prices are, under regular circumstances, are affected with demand and supply, economic growth, crude reserves and geopolitical jitters. Tensions related to the crisis have begun to affect the oil prices amid consumers' tendency to purchase additional amounts of oil to beef up reserves in anticipation of any possible drastic escalation, according to Boodai.

Despite the prevailing bleak picture, Boodai rules out further military escalation between the US and Iran, expecting a political settlement as happened in similar situations in the past. Oil prices in the foreseeable future are expected to wobble between \$70 and 75 pb, he believed.— KUNA



KUWAIT: This file photo shows Kuwait Oil Company employees working at a company site.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with the US Charge d'affaires to the State of Kuwait Larry Memmott. The deputy foreign minister and the American diplomat discussed bilateral relations, developments on the regional and international arenas.—KUNA

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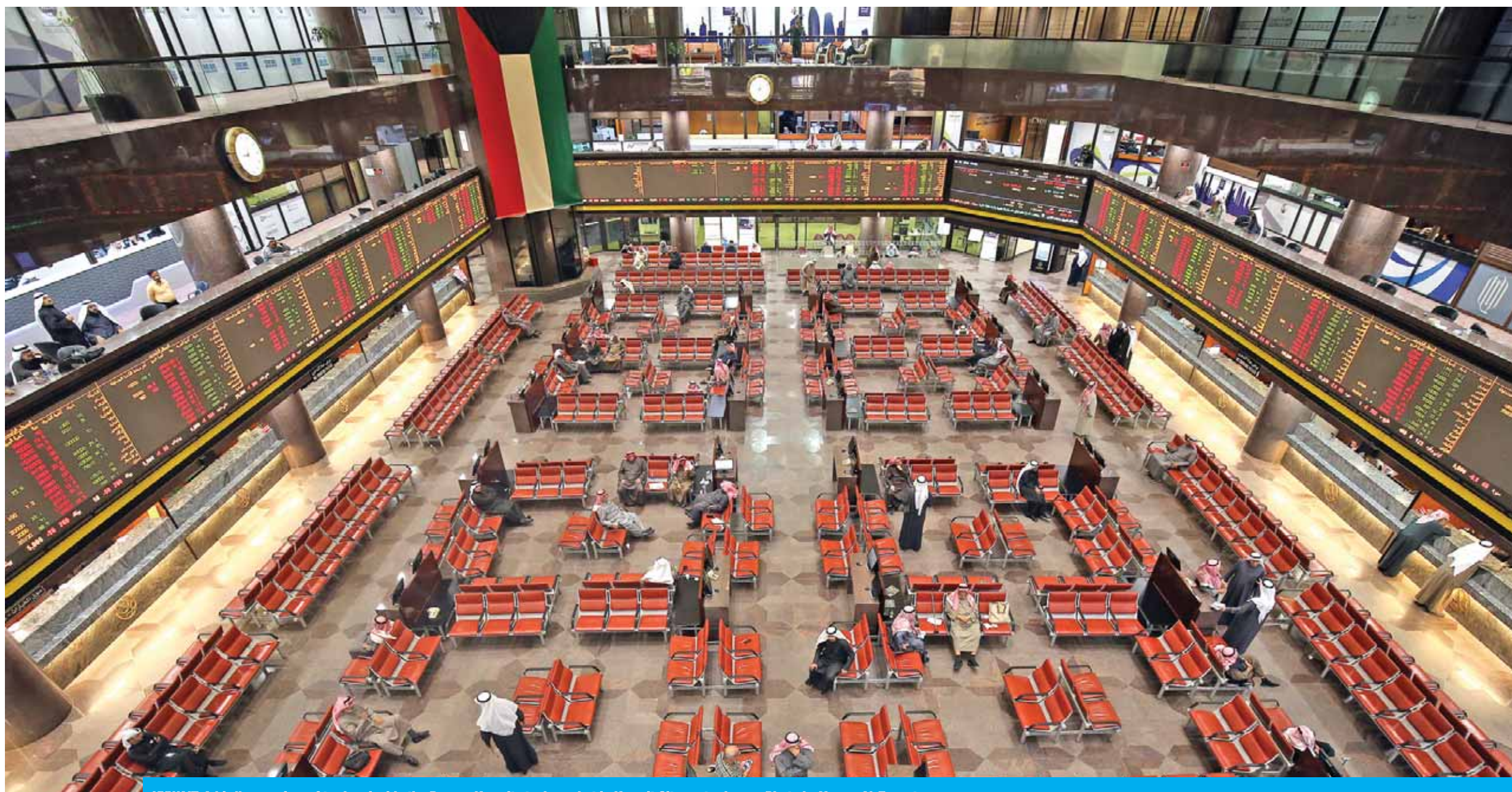
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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A bird's-eye view of traders inside the Boursa Kuwait stock market in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain main sponsor of Kuwait Motor Show 2020

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KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the 9th edition of the Kuwait Motor Show 2020, the biggest show for automobiles, vehicles, and motorcycles in the State of Kuwait. The event, which offers a comprehensive platform for local dealerships to engage with the public, is held from 16 - 25 January at 360 Mall.

Zain's support to the event comes in line with its corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, through which the company - being a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector - is keen on supporting the various innovative efforts that contribute to further pushing the national economy wheel. This is especially true as the event offers car enthusiasts with an opportunity to learn more about the latest innovations from the world's biggest car manufacturers and exclusive offers from local dealerships.

Zain will be present in the Kuwait Motor Show via its own dedicated booth throughout the ten days at 360 Mall, where the company will offer its exclusive offers and latest services to the show's visitors. The company will also offer visitors a free chance to enter the draw of its latest campaign, 'Score with Zain' through its booth.

The Kuwait Motor Show 2020 is considered the biggest event of its kind in Kuwait. The show's last eight seasons witnessed tremendous success, with over 150 vehicles showcased from the world's biggest car manufacturers, numerous exclusive offers from local dealerships, unveiling 24 all-new cars, some of which for the first time in the Middle East, over 312,000 visitors last season, and more.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that contribute to supporting Kuwait's national economy, especially that it is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. Zain's participation at this event further reflects its keenness in developing the various innovative efforts in the community, which bursts with dedicated talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions for the market needs.

Zain's support to this event comes in line with its core objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national economy.



KUWAIT: A group picture taken during the press conference to announce the show.

Hawally municipality removes 952 ads in one month

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced yesterday that its services follow-up department notable progress during November 2019, noting that the rounds made by its inspectors resulted in removing 952 illegal ads from various streets and squares. In this regard, Bader Al-Besais, the municipality's follow-up services manager at Hawally municipality branch, said that inspectors in morning and afternoon shifts had inspected 240 stores and filed 110 citations for operating without having municipality licenses and using unlicensed ads, in addition to removing 952 of those ads from various streets and squares.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Kuwait Municipality employees syndicate and assistant secretary general of Arab and international relation at the Arab Municipalities Union Mohammed Abdullah Al-Aradah said that a delegation from the syndicate had met with

Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem to discuss labor demands.

Aradah stressed that Jassem expressed willingness to meet the municipality employees' demands and protecting their rights. He also noted that the delegation discussed three main demands with the minister, including resuming the payment of transport allowances for employees working in jobs with engineering nature, using the new job title of environmental expert or researcher for employees holding university degrees in environmental sciences, and changing the working hours in border municipality centers.

Further, Aradah said that Jassem approved the three demands and promised to refer them to the Civil Service Commission for approval. Justifying the three demands, Aradah explained that employees in engineering jobs exert endless efforts doing a lot of field work, and that those holding degrees in environmental sciences were "real national assets responsible for the municipality's environmental disasters contingencies plan followed in various projects, as well as setting environmental studies and policies relevant to the municipality activities." In addition, Aradah explained that the third demand suggested changing the working hours for employees in border centers from 24 hours of work and 48 hours off, to 48 hours of work and 96 hours off just like their peers in Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, the customs department and health ministry.

Local

10,000 Filipino helpers bound to Kuwait shift to alternate destinations after ban

Vacationing helpers allowed to return back to Kuwait

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Around 10,000 Filipino household service workers bound for Kuwait during the first quarter of 2020 are now shifting their destinations after the Jan 3 ban implemented by the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Effective 5 pm of Jan 3, 2020, Filipinos seeking employment in Kuwait are no longer allowed to process their documents, said administrator Bernard Olalia during a radio program (Global Pinoy) in Manila.

"We will try to help them get alternate job destinations abroad. We advised them to upgrade their skills so they can be competitive - we have free trainings given by TESDA, like housekeeping, caregiving, etc. We want to upgrade their skills so that they no longer seek employment as domestic helpers. We know how hard it is to work inside a stranger's house, so we want to help our kababayans (countrymen)," Olalia noted.

Olalia once again reminded recruitment agencies of their responsibility to continuously monitor the condi-

tion of their deployed workers, including issuing regular reports on the situation of workers abroad. "At the interview panel before getting the license, we always remind recruitment agencies of their responsibilities to monitor and submit reports of HSWs wherever they are," he added.

Based on governing board resolution 01, series of 2020, the POEA declared a partial ban on the sending of Filipino workers, particularly newly-hired HSWs. The board immediately drafted the provisions of the ban and imposed the decision immediately. Estrelita Hizon of POEA's governing board clarified that the partial deployment ban only covers first-time domestic helpers, who are not allowed to come to Kuwait, and their documents will not be processed after the Jan 3

ban date.

Helpers who are planning to go on vacation and planning to return will be allowed to do so, provided they are coming back to the same employer. Meanwhile, all skilled workers (visa 18) - new and

returning - are allowed to apply and enter Kuwait. "We will be having another round of meetings this coming Friday to further discuss the ban - probably on the coverage of the ban, and confusing points will be clarified too," Hizon said.

Filipinos in Kuwait were confused by the revised rules issued by the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait yesterday, which says domestic helpers planning to go on vacation and return will no longer be issued an Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC), and therefore

cannot return to Kuwait even if they have valid visas and are returning to the same sponsor. "We shall follow the provisions agreed upon in the meeting of the governing board members last Friday," Hizon noted.

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

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



'Visa 18' workers can enter Kuwait

day, which says domestic helpers planning to go on vacation and return will no longer be issued an Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC), and therefore

Minister defends right of expression 'as a citizen'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: As the debate of the grilling motion filed against the Minister Of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri is scheduled for today's parliamentary session, Aseeri placed stumble blocks towards this discussion by requesting explanations and proofs of the items included in the motion. Aseeri's request came ten days after MP Adel Al-Damkhi filed the interpellation, said informed sources, noting that the government is displeased with the motion and deems it absolutely unconstitutional and should be referred to the parliamentary legislative affairs committee. "Unlike rumors that Aseeri intends to resign from office, the government insists on keeping her as a Cabinet member," the sources underlined, noting that the grilling motion's discussion might be annulled if Damkhi fails to present the requested explanations.

In her request filed yesterday, minister Aseeri argued

that the grilling motion is void of explicit facts and proofs, namely those related to allegations that the minister had violated the principles of cooperation between both the legislative and executive authorities without explaining in what way. She added that the motion also accuses her of challenging lawmakers and making fun of them and their voters without listing or explaining the actions or words she said in doing so.

"All in all, the grilling motion does not involve any of my actions as a minister, but rather as a citizen who had used her constitutional right stipulated in article 36 of the constitution which says that 'Freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed and that every person shall have the right to express his opinion by speaking or writing or otherwise,'" Aseeri elaborated, urging Damkhi to define the relation between statements attributed to her as a citizen and the ministerial performance for which she can be politically questioned.



Dr Ghadeer Aseeri

Govt summons Jleeb workers' sponsors

KUWAIT: The joint ministerial committee for following up the situation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh is working on summoning sponsors of expat labor in the area, in order to transfer their residence addresses to that of their sponsors after inspection campaigns revealed that most of these laborers are registered as 'domestic helpers.'

A local daily reported quoted head of the committee, Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi as saying that preliminary reports the committee received from state departments confirm that the work mechanism in the area is progressing well, noting that "half of the first

stage is now completed, as measures continue to close violating shops as planned, in addition to canceling more than 12 government contracts in regards to labor residence in the area." "The municipality is working in preparing solutions for the area in coordination with Public Authority for Civil Information and Public Authority for Manpower," Manfouhi added.

In other news, Al-Rai reported yesterday that the prices of some medicines in Kuwait should witness a drop by the middle of this year. Head of the Medicine Pricing Department of the Drugs Control Sector at the Ministry of Health Pharmacist Hiba Al-Shayji spoke about several factors that the price reduction process relies on, including the expiry of patent, having its price reduced in a certain country, or renewing its registration. "Revision of pharmaceuticals prices is done regularly, and pricing relies on several factors, most importantly the medicine's price in 30 reference countries that are similar to Kuwait as far as population composition and economic levels are concerned," she explained.

Assembly to look into minister's grilling today

KUWAIT: The National Assembly is set to discuss today several issues on its agenda including looking into the interpellation motion submitted against Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri. The grilling, forwarded by MP Dr Adel Al-Damkhi, will focus on the claim that the minister had slacked in her duty to promote cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities in addition to accusation of breaking constitutional oath. MP Damkhi had submitted the interpellation to Deputy Speaker of Parliament Essa Al-Kandari on December 29. The Cabinet said in a statement last week that the government was eager to commit to its oath to serve the interest of the people. Minister Aseeri said during the meeting that MPs' interpellations were guaranteed by the constitution, adding

that she will abide by it within the boundaries of the constitution and in respect of the National Assembly statute. Other items on the agenda of the session include a request by a number of MPs to assign the State Audit Bureau to prepare a report on the state funding derived from future generations' oil reserves. Issues such as the government's handling of fake academic certificates and accreditations, policies towards bedoons (stateless people), forgery of Kuwaiti citizenship documents and others will be discussed during the session. The session will also touch on Kuwait's foreign policy agreements including a military agreement with Ukraine, a commercial accord on maritime navigation with Morocco as well as the issue of establishing a headquarters for the EU in Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A group picture taken during the visit.

NBK Group Human Resources visits KOC

KUWAIT: A staff mission from the Group Human Resources at the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) made a visit to Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) to discuss means to boost strategic partnership between both parties especially in field of development.

During the visit, NBK's staff mission discussed the Group Human Resources' business model, in addition to the bank's development tools, best methods to enhance positive behavior as well as employees' incentive plan. The mission also touched upon methods to bolster the teamwork, productivity, comprehensive quality system in addition to the best digital solutions.

Then, the staff mission comprising Anwar Al-Sabti, Team Leader - Personnel Services; Haneen Al-Mansour, Senior MIS Officer - Group Human Resources; Sarah Al-Rayes, Employee Relations Officer and Faisal Dashti, Manager in Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group, has paid a visit to KOC

Ahmed Al Jaber Oil and Gas Exhibition. This exhibition represents a prominent cultural icon that helps the documentation of the oil history in Kuwait, in addition to the latter's role in the petroleum industry.

NBK continues to play a key role for the oil sector companies, given its strong commitment to KPC and its affiliated units, together with its prominent role in developing the human capital in the state-owned entities, thanks to being the strategic partner to public sector. The NBK is also keen on developing the human capital especially in the state-owned entities in line with its social responsibility framework. The NBK's annual initiatives underline its profound strategy aimed at investing in the human resources, and further echo its primary role in the community service for decades. NBK's programs continue to reflect the leadership role it has undertaken for decades in the local sector.

Last year, the bank's Human Resources completed the second phase of the training program held for employees of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries. The program was aimed at developing the technical skills of KPC employees and covered several business divisions including treasury, finance and accounting.

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Troops deployed across fire-hit Australia after horror weekend

Ex-leftist prime minister wins Croatia presidential election

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NEW DELHI: Supporters, students, media representatives and police force stand outside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) gate in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

Masked goons strike terror in Delhi university

Attacks on JNU students and teachers spark protests across India

NEW DELHI: Protests were held across India yesterday after masked assailants wielding batons and iron rods went on a rampage at a top Delhi university, leaving more than two dozen injured. Controversy over Sunday's violence at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) comes as a new challenge to the government as it confronts major nationwide protests against a new citizenship bill that critics say is anti-Muslim. Meanwhile, New Delhi police are investigating how masked men burst into a leading university and attacked student protesters with sticks and rods, an officer said yesterday.

"Social media and CCTV footage will be part of the investigation," said police official Devendra Arya, adding the violence at the university had prompted police to start a case. Students and some faculty of the Jawaharlal Nehru University have blamed the incident that injured at least 30 people on a students' union tied to Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party that has increasingly picked on the institution.

Students put out pictures of mobs entering university residential halls, their faces covered with cloth, carrying sticks and even sledgehammers. Some shouted slogans, threatening death for traitors.

Students said police had failed to act, leaving them at the mercy of the mob.

Delhi police said they had launched an investigation.

Some students blamed the university attack on right-wing activists, but they also accused police of doing nothing to stop the violence. At least 28 students and teachers were injured, while doctors and nurses from a nearby hospital who went to treat them were also attacked, their union said.

Scores of riot police yesterday patrolled the university—the alma mater of several key ministers in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet-picking their way past shattered glass and broken doors and furniture. They made no immediate arrests, but blamed the violence on "rival student groups". As condemnation of the attacks spread, more than 1,000 people held a vigil in Mumbai. Other demonstrations were held in Bangalore, Kolkata and other major cities.

Student groups blamed

Nobel economy prize winner Abhijeet Banerjee, a former JNU student, said the attacks had "echoes of the years when Germany was moving towards Nazi rule". Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party denied claims by the opposition Congress that it

was responsible, and in turn blamed left-leaning student groups which dominate the university's politics. The government has promised an investigation, while home minister Amit Shah—a close Modi aide—told university administrators and police to maintain order at the campus, which has been tense since protests in November over fee increases.

The unrest comes as nationwide protests continue against a citizenship law passed in December that bars Muslims from a measure granting nationality to minorities from three neighboring Islamic-majority countries. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets across the country, and more than 25 people have been killed. Critics say the legislation goes against India's secular constitution, but Modi says the new law is intended to help "persecuted" minorities. The street protests have further divided a country that gave Modi a landslide return to power in May last year.

Modi's opponents blame his policies for the country's sluggish economy and social unease.

Meanwhile, India's leading trade unions yesterday called for a general strike on January 8 to protest against the govern-

ment's "anti-people" policies. More than 60 student unions have supported the one-day strike. More than 30 people injured were admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Science in the capital, a hospital official said, most of them with lacerations, cuts and bruises.

The protests have persisted, with more demonstrations planned across India yesterday, prompted by the university attack.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the students' wing of the BJP, denied accusations that it was behind the attack, which it blamed instead on rival leftist unions. Authorities faced criticism for failing to rein in the violence on a campus viewed a center of resistance to Modi's policies, including the abolition last year of special status for Muslim-majority Kashmir.

As police watched ...

Amit Thorat, who teaches economics at JNU, said he called the police a little after 7 pm on Sunday but they didn't come until an hour later. Nearly a dozen students Reuters spoke to said police watched as the mob rampaged inside the campus.

"I...hang my head in shame after witnessing video clips of goons merrily entering JNU campus, creating mayhem and

grievously injuring innocent students, damaging public property and then exiting the campus," Rahul Mehra, a lawyer for the Delhi police, said on Twitter.

Even medical teams trying to help the injured were attacked, said Harjit Bhatti, former president of the resident doctors' association at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

"Our team of doctors, nurses & medical volunteers who reached JNU to give first aid to injured students & teachers, was attacked by hundreds of goons," he said in a tweet. "Mob manhandled doctors, nurses & threatened them. Our ambulance's glass & windows broken, this is totally inhuman & insane."

Critics say the Modi administration is trying to crush dissent as it advances a Hindu-first agenda that undermines India's foundations as a secular democracy. The citizenship law lays out a path for Indian nationality for minorities from six religious groups in neighboring countries but excludes Muslims.

The government says the law is meant to tackle the grievances of minorities, such as Christians, Hindus and Sikhs, who face persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. —Agencies

Both Guaido and rival claim to be Venezuela's parliament speaker

CARACAS: Opposition leader Juan Guaido and a rival lawmaker, Luis Parra, both claimed to be Venezuela's parliament speaker on Sunday following two separate votes and accusations of a "parliamentary coup." Guaido was re-elected speaker by opposition lawmakers in a session held at a newspaper office after police blocked him from entering the National Assembly legislature.

In his absence, corruption-tainted Parra proclaimed himself speaker after claiming to have been elected with 81 votes in the 167-member chamber. Guaido, who a year ago declared himself acting president in a challenge to socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, received the votes of around 100 lawmakers, including several forced last year into exile or to take shelter in foreign diplomatic missions due to a regime crackdown. Guaido vowed to "enforce" the constitution in his dual role as parliament speaker and "acting president." But in a televised address, President Maduro gave his backing to Parra as the new speaker, adding that "Guaido was kicked out of the National Assembly by the votes of his own opposition." Venezuela's opposition denounced Parra's move as a "parliamentary coup."

Guaido and around a dozen lawmakers had been prevented from entering the assembly by police claiming to be carrying out a security operation, but deputies from Maduro's party and opposition ones that have rejected Guaido were allowed in. Guaido, 36, attempted to climb over the railing around the National Assembly premises to gain entry, only to be pushed back by police with riot shields.

Images of Parra declaring himself head of the chamber by megaphone were shown on state television channel

VTV. After spending four hours outside parliament, Guaido and allied lawmakers went to the offices of El Nacional newspaper where they held their own session.

US backs Guaido

"This is unprecedented!" Guaido told a member of the security forces with whom he had a heated exchange. "What operation? Who ordered it?" "Those who help to prevent the legitimate installation of the Venezuelan parliament are converting themselves into accomplices of the dictatorship," he wrote on Twitter. Guaido has led the National Assembly for the last year and used that role to declare himself acting president on January 23, 2019 after parliament had branded Maduro a "usurper."

The US congratulated Guaido on being re-elected as speaker and said it condemned "the failed efforts of the former Maduro regime to negate the will of the democratically elected National Assembly."

"The United States and 57 other countries continue to regard (Guaido) as the legitimate leader of the National Assembly and thus the legitimate interim president of Venezuela," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. But ahead of Parra's self-proclamation, opposition deputy Jose Brito spoke to journalists, addressing Guaido: "You could have been the future—now you are and will be the past."

Both Parra and Brito fell out with Guaido last year after being accused of corruption related to the over-pricing of food imported for the Maduro regime.

Parra told reporters 140 lawmakers were present in the session and that his candidacy was approved with 81 votes. But regime deputy, Pedro Carreno, told AFP that the vote took place with 150 deputies present and that Parra received the simple majority of 84 needed to win. The National Assembly has 167 seats, 112 of which are in opposition hands. On Twitter, the National Assembly described Parra's claims as "a violation of the constitution." Brazil's Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo said his country "does not recognize" Parra's claims, while Colombia described Parra's election as "fraudulent, without transparency or guarantees" and said it wouldn't recognize it.



CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition leader and self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido is helped to climb a railing in an attempt to reach the National Assembly building in Caracas, on Sunday. —AFP

Maduro expects

Guaido sprang to prominence a year ago when he declared himself acting president—a move quickly supported by more than 50 countries. The National Assembly has been effectively sidelined since 2017, when the Supreme Court, made up of Maduro loyalists, declared it in contempt. The court has since annulled its every decision. Maduro has said he expects to "regain the National Assembly" in elections later this year. Guaido's challenge to Maduro started brightly in 2019 as he showed ingenuity and skill in rallying sup-

porters to protest and defying Maduro's authority in a number of ways—including flouting a travel ban.

But his momentum petered out over the second half of 2019. Despite intense pressure from the United States, which has imposed sanctions on regime figures, Maduro has retained power thanks to support from the armed forces. Even an economic crisis that has led to shortages of food and medicines, and an inflation rate the IMF said would hit a stunning 200,000 percent for 2019, hasn't dislodged Maduro. —AFP

International

Erdogan says Turkish troops have begun Libya deployment

Top EU diplomat warns of 'imminent' Libya escalation

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday said Turkish soldiers had begun deploying to Libya after parliament approved such a move last week. "Our soldiers' duty there is coordination. They will develop the operation center there. Our soldiers are gradually going right now," he told CNN Turk broadcaster during an interview.

The Turkish parliament passed a bill allowing the government to send troops to Libya aimed at shoring up the UN-recognized government in Tripoli. The Tripoli government has come under sustained attack since military strongman general Khalifa Haftar launched his offensive in April. Haftar is backed by Turkey's regional rivals, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, while the UN-backed government has the support of Ankara and its ally Qatar. Erdogan said Turkey's objective was "not to fight", but "to support the legitimate government and avoid a humanitarian tragedy".

He added that Turkey would not be deploying its own combat forces. "Right now, we will have different units serving as a combatant force," he said, without giving details on who the fighters would be and where they would come from. Senior Turkish military personnel would coordinate the "fighting force", Erdogan explained, sharing their experience and information to support Tripoli.

Turkey's move comes after the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord made a formal request for military support. Libya and Turkey signed security and maritime agreements in November last year, angering Mediterranean countries including Greece and Cyprus who also seek to exploit energy resources in the region.

The European Union's top diplomat meanwhile warned yesterday that more intense fighting could be about to break out around the Libyan capital Tripoli, calling for a political solution to the crisis. "Recent developments in Libya indicate that an escalation of violence around Tripoli could be imminent," said the EU high representative for

foreign affairs, Josep Borrell. The UN Security Council was to meet later on the situation in Libya, where Turkish troops have begun deploying to protect the UN-recognized government from the forces of military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

"Today it is more urgent than ever to work genuinely towards a political solution to the crisis in Libya," he said.

"The European Union calls on all sides to engage in a political process under the leadership of the United Nations. The European Union will continue to deploy all efforts towards finding a peaceful and political solution to this process." The North African country was plunged into chaos with the killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising. It is now divided between the GNA and rival authorities based in the country's east.

More than 280 civilians and more than 2,000 fighters have been killed since the start of Haftar's assault on Tripoli, according to the United Nations. The fighting has displaced some 146,000 people.

Egypt announced yesterday that it will hold a meeting with four European Mediterranean countries about developments in neighboring Libya after Turkey began deploying troops in the war-torn North African nation. The talks to be held in Cairo tomorrow will bring together foreign ministers from France, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, Egypt's foreign ministry said.

The ministers will tackle the "rapid developments" in Libya and "ways to push efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement" between rival administrations there, a statement said. Libya has seen an escalation of the turmoil that has gripped the oil-rich country since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia back strongman general Khalifa Haftar, who launched an offensive in April to capture Tripoli from the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). — AFP



TRIPOLI: Libyan mourners offer condolences to each other during the funeral of army cadets, who were killed in an air strike on a military school, in the Martyrs Square of Libya's capital Tripoli on Sunday. At least 28 people were killed and dozens injured on Saturday in an air strike on a military school in the Libyan capital Tripoli. — AFP

Indonesian jailed for life as UK's most prolific rapist



Indonesian student Reynhard Sinaga, dubbed as Britain's most prolific rapist, was yesterday jailed for life. — AFP

LONDON: An Indonesian student described as Britain's most prolific rapist was jailed for life yesterday for a catalogue of sex offences on unsuspecting men he drugged and assaulted. Manchester Crown Court in northwest England was told Reynhard Sinaga may have attacked as many as 195 men, luring them into his flat with the offer of a place to stay or alcohol.

Judge Suzanne Goddard described the 36-year-old from Indonesia's Jambi province as "an evil sexual predator" who preyed on drunken young men on nights

out. He is thought to have used sedatives to render his victims unconscious before filming the attacks. Most knew nothing about the assaults. He was caught only when one victim woke up.

"One of your victims described you as a monster," Goddard said. "The scale and enormity of your offending confirms this as an accurate description." She recom-

mended he serve at least 30 years behind bars. Sinaga was convicted of 159 offences, including 136 rapes and eight attempted rapes, at four separate trials, according to the Crown Prosecution Service.

The first trial began in June 2018. The last ended last December. None could be reported until restrictions imposed to avoid prejudicing juries were lifted yesterday. The CPS said Sinaga was suspected of attacking "scores" more men since he moved to Britain in 2007, calling him "the worst-known sex offender in the country's history". The deputy chief crown prosecutor for northwest England, Ian Rushton, said: "Reynhard Sinaga is the most prolific rapist in British legal history."

Playing dead

"His extreme sense of sexual entitlement almost defies belief and he would no doubt still be adding to his staggering tally had he not been caught. "Sinaga's unthreatening demeanor duped these

young men—many of whom thanked him for his kindness in offering them a place to stay—into thinking this monster was a Good Samaritan.

"But once back at his flat he used victims as objects purely for his own gratification—then appears to have derived further twisted pleasure from re-watching his films in court and putting victims through the trauma of giving evidence."

Sinaga, a slightly built, young-looking doctorate student, had claimed his mainly heterosexual victims were acting out his sexual fantasy to play dead during intercourse. But four trial juries rejected his defense and a character testimony from a local church he had attended in Manchester. He was arrested in 2017 after the victim who woke up managed to snatch his mobile phone and took it to police. The CPS said detectives discovered 3.29 terabytes of graphic material of the sexual assaults equivalent to 250 DVDs or 300,000 photos. One of the assaults lasted for eight hours. — AFP

Indonesia braces for more rains as toll hits 66

JAKARTA: Indonesians were told yesterday to brace for more heavy downpours after record rains triggered flooding and landslides that authorities said had killed at least 66 people in and around Jakarta. Whole neighborhoods in the capital—a megalopolis home to around 30 million people—were submerged last week by floodwaters that forced tens of thousands into temporary shelters.

Authorities have warned residents to take precautions and safeguard their possessions ahead of more pounding storms over the coming weeks. "There is still potential for mid to heavy rainfall with lightning, thunder and strong winds" in greater Jakarta, Indonesia's weather bureau said in a statement yesterday. Last week's deluge was the heaviest in the capital since record keeping began in the 19th century, the agency said, leading to the city's deadliest flood disaster in years.

Some 377 millimeters (14.8 inches) of rain pounded sections of the vast city, with floodwaters reaching up to the second floor of some buildings after rivers overflowed. At least two people in Jakarta's west were hospitalized yesterday after the collapse of a five-storey building, which Indonesia's search and rescue agency said may have been caused by a build-up of rainwater. Authorities said yesterday the death toll had climbed again to 66 with two more reportedly missing in Lebak, west of the capital.

Flash flooding killed more than half a dozen people in Lebak, including a seven-year-old boy who was reportedly swept away by the water. Thousands remained in cramped Jakarta shelters Monday as authorities pushed to reach isolated communities outside the city affected by the disaster.

A day earlier, health workers and soldiers sprayed ravaged parts of the capital with disinfectant in a bid to prevent disease outbreaks. — AFP

Japan PM Abe 'deeply worried' by Middle East tensions

TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has tried to carve out a role mediating between Washington and Tehran, said yesterday he was "deeply worried" by tensions in the Middle East.

The US assassination of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani last week has raised fears of an all-out conflict, with President Donald Trump threatening "major retaliation" if Tehran makes good on a pledge to avenge the killing. "Middle Eastern tensions are increasing. I'm deeply worried about the current situation," Abe said in his first comments since the killing of Soleimani in Iraq.

"A further escalation in this situation should be avoided and I call for diplomatic efforts by parties concerned." Tokyo and Tehran have maintained diplomatic ties for decades, even though the crisis with the West sparked by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution and subsequent frictions over its nuclear program. In June, as tensions rose over Trump's decision to withdraw from a nuclear deal with Tehran, Abe visited Iran for talks with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

But his visit coincided with a suspected attack on two oil tankers in the Sea of Oman, off the Iranian coast, which again sent tensions in the Gulf soaring. And Khamenei categorically ruled out talks with Trump despite Abe's efforts to smooth a path. Abe later met Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, and in December welcomed the Iranian leader to Japan—the first visit by an Iranian head of state in two decades.

Japan has walked a fine line in balancing its key alliance with Washington and its longstanding relations and interests with Iran. It was formerly a major buyer of Iranian crude but stopped purchases to comply with US sanctions imposed after Washington unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018.

It has opted not to join a US-led coalition patrolling waterways in the Middle East, proposed by Washington after the tanker attack during Abe's Iran visit. But it has said it will send a military vessel and two patrol planes to the region for intelligence activities. The Japanese patrol activities will not, however, be deployed in the Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the global oil trade passes and where the US-led coalition operates. — AFP

Soleimani killing offers chance for Iran rulers to rally support

PARIS: The killing of Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in a US air strike offers a chance for Iran's clerical rulers to rally popular support at an extremely delicate time for the Islamic republic in the wake of unusually fierce protests. Yet while there has been a genuine outpouring of emotion and anti-American sentiment among Iranians after the killing of Soleimani in Baghdad, the economic hardships that prompted last November's protests are still in place, analysts say.

The protests, which came as US sanctions cripple Iran's economy, were seen as one of the biggest challenges for its leaders since the Islamic Revolution that ousted the shah in 1979 and led to a long-term rupture in US ties. People have packed the streets in cities across Iran for ceremonies commemorating Soleimani, the mastermind of Iran's operations in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and seen by some as the de facto number two after supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "There's a rally around the flag within the regime. Soleimani had good relations with many regime officials from all sides of the political spectrum," said Ariane Tabatabai, an associate political scientist at the Rand Corporation, a policy think tank in California. "But within the population, the grievances that led to the November protests are still there," she added, saying Iran's leaders could use it as a "further excuse" to crack down on dissent.

'Deflect the blows'

Western rights groups have said the protests, which began on November 15 in response to a surprise petrol price hike, were quashed with ferocious force. Officials in Iran have yet to issue an overall death toll for the days of unrest, but Amnesty International says more than 300 people were killed in the crackdown. The



TEHRAN: An Iranian mourner carries a picture of slain military commander Qasem Soleimani during a funeral procession in the capital Tehran yesterday. — AFP

IMF estimates the Iranian economy contracted 9.5 percent last year after Washington's pullout from the 2015 deal curtailing Tehran's nuclear program, which was supposed to give sanctions relief. According to Ray Tayeh, senior fellow for Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Iran's economy "has essentially collapsed", with the country now "struggling to meet its domestic budgetary needs". But throughout its four-decade history, the Islamic republic has mobilized support by focusing on the twin elements of consistent revolutionary fervour and confrontation with the United States.

The killing of Soleimani — followed by provocative comments by President Donald Trump that the United States could target Iranian cultural sites if Tehran retaliated — only fuels this narrative. There have been massive turnouts at the ceremonies for Soleimani not just in Tehran but also cities like Ahvaz, which saw major unrest in November. "They (Iran's rulers) have the chance to deflect the blows. Not for a very long time but there will be a popular emotion" said Francois Nicoulaud, a former French ambassador to Tehran. "In the Iranian imagination, he had a great profile as a soldier."

Soleimani was widely popular, famed for suddenly popping up in

Middle East conflict zones and credited within the country for helping defeat Islamic State jihadists in Syria and Iraq. But Tabatabai said that among younger Iranians, Soleimani was the "face of Iranian defense against outside adversaries" but also "the face of an organisation responsible for repression and atrocities".

Moment of truth

His killing also comes at a critical political juncture for President Hassan Rouhani, seen as a more moderate figure, who is under pressure from hardliners just a six weeks ahead of parliamentary elections. "It's now almost guaranteed that the Iranian parliament will fall into the hands of the most hard-line and militant elements within Iran," said Ali Vaez, Iran analyst for the International Crisis Group (ICG). For Tehran, the key challenge is how to carry out its pledge to retaliate against the United States, a move that Khamenei is likely to weigh carefully given its impact at home and abroad. "There will be a moment of introspection. If Iran needs to choose between saving the regime in Tehran versus expanding the regime in the region, I think they will chose saving the regime in Tehran," said Alex Vatanka, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington. "The question is what is their calculation," he added. — AFP

5 Mali soldiers killed by roadside bomb ambush

BAMAKO: Five Malian soldiers were killed yesterday in a roadside bomb attack, a government spokesperson said, in the latest violence to hit the West African country's volatile central region. The troops were travelling in the region of Alatona, near the border with Mauritania, when their convoy hit a homemade bomb and then came under fire. Mali has been struggling to contain an Islamist insurgency that erupted in the north in 2012, and which has claimed thousands of military and civilian lives since. More than 140 Malian soldiers died in jihadist attacks between September and December.

A Malian army refuelling truck that had left the town of Diabaly in the center of the country hit the bomb early yesterday morning, said a non-commissioned officer who was sent in to reinforce the area.

Militants, who were travelling on motorbikes and in cars, also fired on the soldiers. "There were deaths on our side and on the side of the assailants," the officer, who requested to remain anonymous, told AFP. "The reinforcements came in time and we recovered our (dead) bodies and the wounded," the officer said, adding that he was unaware of the total number of victims.

Four vehicles were destroyed in the ambush, according to government spokesperson Yaya Sangare.

Despite some 4,500 French troops in the Sahel region, plus a 13,000-strong UN peacekeeping force in Mali, the conflict has engulfed the center of the country and spread to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. Hiding homemade bombs under well-travelled roads is a frequent means of attack used by jihadists. — AFP

International

Ex-leftist prime minister wins Croatia presidential election

Kitarovic manages to garner 47.3% vote

ZAGREB: Leftist former prime minister Zoran Milanovic, who has pledged to make Croatia a tolerant country turning the page on its wartime past, won Sunday's presidential run-off vote, defeating the incumbent conservative leader. Milanovic took 52.7 percent of the vote while President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, who had tried to unite a fractured right-wing, garnered 47.3 percent, according to results based on vote count at nearly all polling stations released by the electoral commission.

The second-round election was 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. Grabar-Kitarovic campaigned on a slogan promoting "real Croatia", hinting she believes the ruling conservative HDZ party that backed her was the only one who can truly represent the country.

Milanovic, a Social Democratic, called such statements "very dangerous", and advocated for a "normal Croatia" as a liberal democracy which promotes equality for all citizens.

"Four million of us ... are looking for our place in Europe which is, despite all the problems, the nicest place to live, the most peaceful project in which Croatia must find its place and interest," Milanovic told supporters in Zagreb after his victory.

'United in differences'

"Let's be united in (our) differences," the 53-year-old said. In the campaign Milanovic stressed that the "wars are over", referring to Croatia's 1990s independ-

ence war that remains an emotive issue.

Grabar-Kitarovic, 51, the country's first female president, had tried but failed to lure back hardliners who had voted for a nationalist folk singer in the presidential election's first round in December.

She stressed unity, patriotism and references to the 1990s war in her re-election bid. Conceding defeat on Sunday evening Grabar-Kitarovic promised a "civilized transfer" of power to Milanovic.

She stressed that "Croatia needs stability" and unity as "we are the strongest when we are together." Analysts say that Milanovic, who dominated in the cities, also won thanks in part to the split among the right-wingers. The election was viewed as a key test for the ruling HDZ party of moderate Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic ahead of parliamentary elections later this year and Grabar-Kitarovic's loss was seen as a heavy blow. "It will weaken the (HDZ) party" and harms Plenkovic's reputation, political analyst Tihomir Cipek said. The prime minister is also facing the discontent of hardliners within the HDZ over his moderate policies.

Youngsters are leaving

Grabar-Kitarovic presented herself as the "woman of the people" with humble farming roots, and is well known for stunts such as singing in public which her critics deride as embarrassing.

She also came under fire for downplaying the crimes committed by Croatia's World War II pro-Nazi regime. Meanwhile, Milanovic, premier from 2011 until 2016 whose government failed to push through much-needed reforms, sought to make a political comeback and throw off a reputation as arrogant and elitist. He will now take office during Croatia's EU presidency where four main issues are likely to dominate—the bloc's rela-



ZAGREB: Presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia Zoran Milanovic (right) waves flanked by his wife Sanja Music Milanovic on Sunday in Zagreb, as they celebrate winning following initial results in Croatia's presidential election. — AFP

tionship with the UK after Brexit; the membership bids of Western Balkan states; climate change; and the bloc's budget framework for the next decade.

The Adriatic country joined the EU in 2013, but its economy, strongly relying on tourism, remains one of the bloc's weakest.

The EU's open borders also accelerated the exodus

of its people to seek better pay in wealthier member states. Many emigrants also cite corruption, nepotism and poor public services as reasons for leaving. "Politicians are wrangling about the past and insignificant issues while my generation is leaving," said Maja Maric, a 20-year-old economy student. She said she voted for a "lesser evil". — AFP

For Democrats, little recourse over Trump Iran actions

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers have few options for tamping down any escalation by President Donald Trump of tensions with Iran, despite Democrats' outrage over his failure to inform Congress in advance about a strike against a top Iranian military commander.

Members of Congress began to return from their year-end holiday recess yesterday, and Democrats said they will attempt quickly to pass legislation to bar him - or any future US commander-in-chief - from conducting a campaign against Iran without obtaining Congress' approval.

Late on Sunday, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the Democratic-led chamber would introduce and vote this week on a War Powers Resolution that would force Trump to stop military action against Iran within 30 days. But with Trump's fellow Republicans in control of the Senate and showing little inclination to break from their party's leader, there is scant expectation any legislation could win enough support to become law.

Longtime foes Tehran and Washington have been in a war of words since Friday, when Qassem Soleimani was killed in a US drone strike at Baghdad airport. The attack stoked concerns about all-out war if Tehran retaliates. On Sunday, Trump doubled down on his threats to target Iran for any retaliatory attacks and Iran said it was stepping back from commitments to a 2015 nuclear deal with six major powers.

Trump broke precedent by failing to inform congressional leaders before the attack on Soleimani, and by making classified his formal notification to Congress of the attack on Saturday. Under the US War Powers Act, the president must inform Congress within 48 hours of introducing military forces into armed conflict abroad. Those notifications normally detail the justification for the intervention.

The act also bars a president from committing US armed forces from any foreign action lasting more than 60 days without Congress' approval. By making the War Powers notification classified, Trump limited lawmakers' ability to talk about it, and sidestepped the law's goal of keeping Americans informed about military action, some legal experts said.

"It may be in formal compliance with the war powers resolution, but it is inconsistent with the general goal of providing transparency and information to the American people," said Oona Hathaway, a professor at Yale University's law school. Trump took to Twitter on Sunday to say his posts would serve as notification to Congress that the country "will quickly & fully strike back" if Iran strikes any US person or target, and that he had no legal requirement to inform Congress.

Legal experts disagreed, saying the war powers law required a formal report to Congress, and did not allow such a blanket clearance ahead of time, especially not via social media.

The War Powers Act was passed in 1973, largely in response to President Richard Nixon's secret bombing of Cambodia. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and Senator Bob Menendez, ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged Trump to declassify the notification. "An entirely classified notification is simply not appropriate in a democratic society, and there appears to be no legitimate justification for classifying this notification," they wrote in a letter to Trump. Congress' main power over the president is its control of federal spending, and the Democratic-controlled House could pass legislation that would bar Trump from spending any taxpayer dollars on a conflict with Iran. — Reuters

Uganda police arrest pop-star MP Bobi Wine, teargas supporters

KAMPALA: Ugandan police yesterday arrested singer-turned-politician Bobi Wine and sprayed teargas to disperse his supporters as he sought to kick off public meetings ahead of presidential elections next year. Wine, a popular figure among young Ugandans, announced last year he would challenge President Yoweri Museveni in the 2021 elections, and yesterday was scheduled to begin a week-long series of consultations ahead of the vote.

But the first event at a Catholic Church in his constituency in Kampala could not proceed as police deployed before dawn to the site, prompting protests by his supporters, an AFP reporter saw.

Protesters set alight car tires and blocked roads, while police backed by firefighters, armored cars and water cannon used teargas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.

Police spokesman Fred Enanga confirmed that Wine and members of his entourage had been arrested. "We are temporarily holding them in our police station in Kasangati. We shall have to release them at some later stage but we are looking at charges of holding an unlawful assembly and disobedience of lawful orders," Enanga said. Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, has already been detained a number of times. He has had numerous attempts to hold concerts



KAMPALA: Bobi Wine walks handcuffed together with another prisoner before boarding the prison bus leading him to Luzira maximum prison in Kampala yesterday. — AFP

blocked since he was elected as an MP in 2017.

Enanga said Wine planned to exceed what is allowed under Uganda's election laws by "going early and conducting campaigns" as opposed to holding "consultations." Under Uganda's 2000 election law presidential "aspirants" may carry out "nationwide consultation" in the 12 months ahead of their official nomination as candidates. The law requires aspirants to "introduce" themselves to the Electoral Commission (EC) and notify local authorities of events planned in their area.

On December 3 Wine sent a letter to the EC officially introducing himself and outlining his plans,

which he published on social media. In the past, the police have warned opposition politicians that all events must also comply with the Public Order Management Act 2013.

Human Rights Watch has criticized that law as granting the police "wide discretionary powers over the content and management of public meetings."

Wine has built a sizeable following among Uganda's booming urban youth population, many of whom say they are tired of Museveni's long rule. Museveni seized power at the head of a rebel army in 1986 and many observers say they doubt he will ever give up power through democratic elections. — AFP

'Pirates' kill 4 Nigerian navy personnel, kidnap 3

WARRI, Nigeria: Suspected pirates killed four Nigerian navy operatives and abducted three foreign sailors in an attack on a dredging ship last week, security sources said yesterday.

Armed assailants raided the oil dredger MV Ambika as it worked in the volatile waterways of the Niger Delta late on Thursday, an intelligence officer told AFP. "During the incident, a team of naval rescue squad was sent for rescue, however, the hoodlums succeeded in killing four of the naval personnel of the squad during a gun battle," the source said. "Before the arrival of the naval rescue team, the hoodlums had gained access into the vessel and abducted two Russians and one Indian who were part of the eight crew members on board the vessel."

A naval officer stationed nearby confirmed the inci-

dent and said the coffins of the slain sailors had been brought ashore. The waters around Nigeria are among the most dangerous in the world for piracy. In the first nine months of last year the Gulf of Guinea accounted for 82 percent of crew kidnappings around the world, according to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), an organisation monitoring crimes at sea.

Much of the problem originates in the Niger Delta where the region's vast oil wealth has failed to trickle down to local populations and widespread poverty has stirred unrest.

Pirates emerge from the creeks and swamps in high-powered speedboats to raid passing ships, kidnap crews and spirit them back to Nigeria's shores. Maritime security analysts Dryad Global said reports indicated the attack happened three nautical miles (3.5 miles, 5.5 kilometers) from the mouth of the Ramos river. "Incidents within this general area occur with relative regularity however are commonly found within the creeks and rivers," it said.

"The majority of legacy incidents in this area were focused upon the opportune kidnap of locals and personnel involved in the protection and manning of oil and gas infrastructure." — AFP



WARRI, Nigeria: Suspected pirates killed four Nigerian navy operatives and abducted three foreign sailors in an attack on a dredging ship last week, security sources said yesterday.

Armenian held for 'false information' over Iran general

YEREVAN: An Armenian man has been arrested for releasing "false information" on Facebook claiming the country's prime minister had congratulated Donald Trump for killing Iran's top general, the security service said yesterday. "On January 2, the Facebook page 'Diana Arutyunyan' published information according to which Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan congratulated the United States for its actions against a senior Iranian military official," Armenia's SNB security service said in a statement.

This "false information" was picked up by Azerbaijani and Iranian media, causing "major damage to the national security interests of Armenia", it said. Pashinyan, who came to power after a 2018 revolution, himself denied on his Facebook page on Sunday that he had congratulated Trump. He also urged the United States and Iran to exercise restraint while the foreign minister called his Iranian counterpart to express condolences over the assassination.

General Qasem Soleimani, Iran's top military commander, died in a US drone attack at Baghdad airport on Friday, raising tensions in the Middle East. "Diana Arutyunyan" is the pseudonym for a man whose identity has not been revealed.

In a video released with the SNB statement, the man explained that he had created the Facebook page in 2018 to "write political publications" and admitted being the author of the article in question. "I did it because I have political opinions and I believe that it is unjust to keep Robert Kocharyan in prison," he said in the video, referring to the former president who is being held for a "breach of constitutional order". — AFP

International

Troops deployed across fire-hit Australia after horror weekend

Authorities warn another heatwave looms

EDEN, Australia: Reserve troops were deployed to fire-ravaged regions across three Australian states yesterday after a torrid weekend that turned swathes of land into smoldering, blackened hellscapes. The bushfires have now destroyed an area the size of Ireland, according to official figures, and authorities warned the months-long crisis is not over as another heatwave looms.

Firefighters joined by fresh teams from the US and Canada were taking advantage of rainy and cooler conditions to tackle out-of-control blazes ahead of soaring temperatures forecast later this week.

Military teams, in the biggest-ever call up of reserves, fanned out across eastern Australia to help emergency services assess the damage, restore power and deliver supplies of food, water and fuel to cut-off communities. For the first time in Australian history the government also deployed its medical assistance team—normally sent to other nations to lend support in the aftermath of their disasters—to help evacuees.

"There is no room for complacency, especially as we have over 130 fires burning across (New South Wales) state still," New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said early yesterday. Almost five million hectares (50,000 square kilometres) have been razed across the state since late September. New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons added. That took the total amount of land burnt close to eight million hectares—the size of the island of Ireland or South Carolina.

Twenty-four people have lost their lives so far, with over 1,500 homes damaged. Two people are missing in New South Wales, the vast nation's most populous state.

'Creeping disaster'

The chair of the newly established Victoria state's

bushfire appeal fund, Pat McNamara, said this year's summer bushfire season was a "creeping disaster".

"We're still not even into what we would regard as the peak of the fire season," McNamara told national broadcaster ABC. "So we've probably got at least another four to five weeks of this sort of weather and we've got to deal with it."

In the usually picturesque southeastern town of Eden, Holly Spence said she spent more than 12 hours defending her family's farm on Saturday, less than a week after saving it on New Year's Eve.

"If we weren't here the spot fires would have taken all our sheds and the house and everything," the 28-year-old told AFP. "We don't want to go through this for a third time."

Fiona Kennelly, 50, who evacuated with 24 members of her extended family to a motel outside Eden, said she was relieved the easing conditions allowed them to get some respite from the crisis.

"It's good to see daylight at the right time again," she told AFP, adding that the skies had been turning pitch-black in the afternoons. Authorities were also grappling with the health impacts of heavy smoke engulfing cities and towns in or near fire-hit regions, including the country's second-largest city Melbourne and the national capital Canberra.

In Canberra, some government departments were shut as the city's air quality was once-again ranked the poorest in the world, according to independent online air-quality index monitor Air Visual. There has been growing anger in Australia about Prime Minister Scott Morrison conservative government's slow response to the deadly climate-fuelled bushfire crisis, with rallies calling for action planned across major cities on Friday. — AFP



COOMA, Australia: A long exposure picture shows a car commuting on a road as the sky turns red from smoke of the Snowy Valley bushfire on the outskirts of Cooma. — AFP

Ghosh took bullet train to Osaka en route to Lebanon

TOKYO: Former Nissan and Renault boss Carlos Ghosn began his astonishing escape from Japan with a bullet train ride from Tokyo to Osaka, possibly accompanied by several people, Japanese news agency Kyodo reported yesterday. Japanese authorities also said yesterday they may still press for Ghosn's extradition from Lebanon to face multiple charges of financial wrongdoing, even though the country does not normally extradite its nationals.

Security cameras captured Ghosn leaving his home on Dec. 29 at about 2:30 pm (0530 GMT) and arriving some hours later at Tokyo's Shinagawa Station, where he took the train to Shin Osaka Station, Kyodo said, citing a person familiar with the matter. The international fugitive then went by car to a hotel near Osaka's Kansai International Airport, where he boarded a private jet at 11:10 p.m., according to the media report.

Ghosn was forbidden from leaving Japan while awaiting trial on charges of financial misconduct, which he has denied, but he fled at the end of last year to escape what he called a "rigged" justice system.

Prosecutors are now working with police to piece



TOKYO: Japan's Justice Minister Masako Mori speaks during a press conference on former auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn after he fled Japan to avoid a trial, in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

together Ghosn's route and find out who helped him, Kyodo said. In the government's first briefing since Ghosn skipped bail, Justice Minister Masako Mori said yesterday that as a general principle, Tokyo could request the extradition of a suspect from a country with which it has no formal extradition agreement.

Such a request would need to be carefully examined based on the possibility of "guaranteeing reciprocity and the domestic law of the partner country", Mori told reporters in Tokyo.

Arrest warrant

Mori did not say what would guarantee reciprocity - the idea that benefits or penalties extended by one country to citizens of another should be reciprocated. She also did not say if there were any Lebanese nationals in Japan wanted in Lebanon. Mori offered little insight into the events of Ghosn's escape to his ancestral home, repeatedly saying she could not comment on specifics because of an ongoing investigation.

Japanese officials broke days of silence about the Ghosn case on Sunday, saying they would tighten immigration measures and investigate his escape thoroughly. The authorities have also issued an international notice for his arrest. Government offices and most businesses in Japan have been shut for the New Year holidays, which formally ended yesterday. Lebanon has said it received an Interpol arrest warrant for Ghosn and that he entered the country legally. A senior Lebanese security official, meanwhile, has said Lebanon does not extradite its citizens.

Mori also defended Japan's justice system against Ghosn's charges that it was "rigged" and discriminatory. In Japan, suspects who deny charges against them are often detained for long periods and subject to lengthy questioning without a lawyer present, a system critics call "hostage justice". "Various comments about Japan's justice system and this unjust departure are two different things," Mori told reporters, saying criticism of the justice system could not be used to justify Ghosn's escape.

"Departure in an unjust way without proper procedure is tantamount to smuggling, an illegal departure amounting to a crime." — Reuters

Children's death toll at India hospital rises amid outcry

KOTA, Rajasthan: Some 109 children have so far died at a government hospital in northern India since the beginning of December, said a hospital official on Sunday, even as local authorities scrambled to bring in additional staff and equipment amid a rising outcry over poor healthcare facilities in the country.

"The death toll since Dec. 1 stands at 109," Suresh Dulara, the medical superintendent of JK Lon Hospital in Kota, in the northwestern state of Rajasthan, told Reuters on Sunday. The deaths, which have begun to grab national headlines in the last week, have sparked a social media firestorm about the deplorable state of many government healthcare facilities. It has also unleashed a political blame game between the state's ruling Congress party, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party at the centre, after Rajasthan's chief minister defended the situation saying there had been more infant deaths at that hospital, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP was in power in the state.

Roughly three quarters of the deaths have occurred in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit, which treats up to one-month-old babies, said an official directly aware of the matter.

A team appointed by the central health ministry is probing the deaths and will come out with a report soon, said the source who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue. A lack of infrastructure and staff, along with unhygienic conditions may have played a role in some of the deaths, said the source, adding the hospital - the only center with a neonatal intensive care unit in a 200-kilometre radius - is often a hospital that receives critically ill children from elsewhere, contributing to higher mortality rates.

Much of north India has also been hit by a severe cold wave since late in December, and officials at the hospital have now rushed to provide blankets, bed-sheets and heaters, said patients at the hospital.

On Saturday, the National Human Rights Commission sent a notice to the state government stating the situation raises some serious concerns. "The state is duty bound to provide basic necessary medical care to its citizens," the commission said. Separately, local media reported on Sunday that 219 infants had died in December at two government hospitals in the western state of Gujarat - a BJP-ruled state, which is the home state of Modi. — Reuters

Hard-fought Delhi election set for Feb 8

NEW DELHI: New Delhi will hold elections next month, officials said yesterday, in a key popularity test for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party as it reels from nationwide protests over a new citizenship law. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party swept to a second term last year in national elections but the Indian capital has been governed since 2013 by the left-wing grass-roots Common Man Party (AAP).

Under pressure from a weak economy, the BJP has also fared badly in a string of recent regional elections, most recently in Maharashtra, home to Mumbai, and in Jharkhand in the east. New legislation loosening citizenship rules for persecuted minorities, but not if they are Muslim, has sparked almost a month of protests and violence that has killed more than 25 people.

Islamic groups and critics at home and abroad charge that this forms part of Modi's aim to remold India as a Hindu nation and render its 200 million Muslims second-class citizens, something he denies.

More than 14 million voters in the sprawling, polluted city state of New Delhi will be eligible to cast ballots in the February 8 polls, with results expected three days later, the election commission said. The AAP, led by Arvind Kejriwal, a former tax inspector who has modeled himself as a crusader for the underprivileged, won 67 out of 70 seats on offer in Delhi's last election in 2015. — AFP



MUMBAI: Protesters and students shout slogans as they protest against the violent clashes at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus in New Delhi a day before, in Mumbai yesterday. Protests were held across India yesterday after masked assailants wielding batons and iron rods went on a rampage at a top Delhi university, leaving more than two dozen injured. — AFP



DHAKA: Dhaka University students take part in a rally to demand punishment for the people involved in the rape case of a female student of Dhaka University, in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

Student's rape triggers protests in Dhaka

DHAKA: The sexual assault of a student at a top university in Bangladesh triggered angry protests in Bangladesh yesterday, with demonstrators urging the death penalty for convicted rapists.

The South Asian nation has seen a doubling of reported rape cases in the last year, according to activists, triggering spasms of public anger directed at the glacial response of police and the justice system. "Rape is an unforgivable offence. In Bangladesh, the punishment for rape is very slow," said demonstrator Shahela, who like the 21-year-old victim of Sunday's attack is a student at the prestigious Dhaka University in the capital. "We want quick executions for the perpetrators so that others are deterred from committing such crimes."

Demonstrators linked arms and marched along key roads in Dhaka, halting traffic to demand the perpetrator's arrest within 24 hours. "We are working to arrest him," senior police official Sazzadur Rahman told AFP. Police said around 1,500 students joined the protests, which remained peaceful. An AFP correspondent at the scene estimated that twice as many people joined the rally.

The victim in Sunday's attack was travelling to a friend's home when she was gagged, taken to a remote area in Dhaka's outskirts and sexually assaulted. Local rights group Ain O Salish Kendra said that there were 1,413 reported rape cases in Bangladesh last year, double the number recorded in 2018. Dozens of victims were killed while 10 committed suicide after they were attacked.

Nationwide protests gripped Bangladesh in April after a 19-year-old student who accused her seminary's head teacher of sexual harassment was doused in kerosene and set on fire. Sixteen people were later sentenced to death over the attack, including the teacher. — AFP

Family of dead Franco-Irish teen sue Malaysian resort

KUALA LUMPUR: The family of a Franco-Irish teenager whose body was found in the Malaysian jungle are suing the resort from where she disappeared for allegedly failing to provide adequate security.

The unclothed body of 15-year-old Nora Quoirin was discovered in August after a massive hunt through dense rainforest, not far from the resort where the London-based family had been on holiday.

Her parents say they believe there was a "criminal element" in the case as the teen had learning difficulties and would not have wandered off alone, but Malaysian police insist there was no sign of foul play. The family's lawyers have filed a civil suit against the Dusun Resort, not far from the capital Kuala Lumpur, seeking at least 182,000 ringgit (\$45,000) in damages, according to court documents seen by AFP yesterday.

The couple, Meabh and Sebastian Quoirin, claim the entrance gate to their jungle cottage was left open at all times, no guards were stationed outside and there was no CCTV installed at the premises. They also say the latch of a window was broken and it could be easily opened by anyone from outside. — AFP

Analysis

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Zimbabwe's parched Bulawayo rations to save dwindling water

Families in the southern Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo are going up to four days without running water as drought dries the dams the city depends on, city council officials said. The city has since late November imposed 96-hour dry periods for residential water customers, though industrial and business users have continued to receive service, according to the Bulawayo City Council. An extended drought has reduced supplies of stored water, forcing the city to decommission two of its major supply dams, said Nesisa Mpfu, a spokeswoman for the council.

Shortages of hydropower-produced electricity also have affected the city's ability to pump water from the dams, she said. "Out of six dams, Bulawayo now remains with four water sources," she said. The four-day water outages - up from three days previously - have spurred widespread local efforts to store more water and to find alternative sources.

Arnold Batirai, a councillor for Nketa, a suburb of Bulawayo, said many residents in his area had access to alternative water sources such as wells or water supply trucks provided by the council. But he acknowledged that not all borehole wells were still functioning, while shortages of fuel had affected water truck deliveries in some areas. "Despite these challenges, we do encourage residents to conserve water and report burst pipes or water leakages," he said.

Many residents now keep buckets or other containers of water in their homes, sometimes filled at their place of work. "I carry a 25-litre container to work, where I fetch water from the bathroom, mindful of colleagues who may report me to my superiors," said Siphathisiwe Ndimande, a mother of three who lives in Nketa.

Affluent residents in some suburbs have dug new deep wells in response to dry taps and installed large tanks that store thousands of litres of water. Other parched residents, such as 71-year-old Mildred Mkwandla, have installed water harvesting systems on their homes, to catch what rain falls. "Residents don't harvest rainwater but watch it flow away," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "My household is unaffected by the shedding because our main source of water is underground water, while I also harvest rainwater from the roof (and) that's connected to the taps," she said. Mkwandla said her household had installed a 46,000-litre (12,000-gallon) water tank to store rainwater, and now does not rely on city water - or pay bills for it.

Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndlovu, Zimbabwe's Minister of Environment, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, said several years of drought had created serious problems for Zimbabwe's water supply. "We are still recovering from a devastating drought that occurred (in 2018) due to El Nino. Under normal circumstances during this time of the year, the country would have recorded significant amounts of rainfall with impact to our dams," he said.

'Water for all'

Zimbabwe has seen rain in recent weeks - including violent storms that destroyed roofs and washed away bridges - but water reserves overall remain low. Ndlovu said families had been advised to try to harvest rainwater and to plant early maturing crops, which require a shorter period of rainfall to grow. "My ministry is looking at how best to assist communities," he said. But some Bulawayo residents said the national government had done too little to help the city.

"Government has done nothing to solve Bulawayo's water crisis," complained Sinothando Mathe, who lives in Pumula North, a poor western suburb. Faced with struggling residents, Raji Modi, a Bulawayo South legislator and the country's deputy minister of industry, in November initiated his own "free water for all program".

Water trucks he has hired now deliver water to neighborhoods without it, drawn from his own borehole wells. "I have a sustainable water plant and decided to assist residents who go for days without due to water cuts," he said, noting the cost of the effort was mainly fuel for the trucks. Modi suggested pumping and storing more groundwater could be one way to help Bulawayo deal with its worsening water shortages.

"We need to invest in modern technology and effectively use underground water. Countries in the Middle East don't have much water yet don't have a crisis because they invest in technologies," he said. "We need to adopt the same because water is the foundation for industrialization and development," he said.

Bulawayo City Council officials said they remain optimistic Bulawayo will not face a "Day Zero" where taps run completely dry despite rationing and restrictions. Cape Town, in neighboring South Africa, avoided such a situation in 2018 by making widespread reductions in water use. Many of those restrictions still remain in place, in recognition of long-term climate-driven drying in the region. For now, Bulawayo officials have pinned their hopes on divine help. "Despite interventions in place, we pray it rains," said Sikhululekile Moyo, a councillor for Pumula North. — Reuters

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Protesters hold pictures of Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani during a demonstration outside the US consulate in Istanbul on Sunday. — AFP

Meant to cripple Iran clout, US strike unites its allies

The US killing of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani was meant to cripple Tehran's clout in the Middle East, but analysts see the allies of the Islamic Republic closing rank instead. As the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, Soleimani oversaw Tehran's interventions in regional power struggles from Lebanon and Iraq to Syria and Yemen. Washington had hoped his killing in a Baghdad drone strike Friday would deal a blow to Iran and its network of proxies-but the plan appears to have backfired by uniting pro-Iran factions under an "axis of resistance".

"The strike unified the resistance forces and made combatting the United States a priority," said Qassem Qassar, a Lebanese expert in Islamic movements. "The assassination was a strategic mistake, and the response will be across the region - not just limited to Iraq," said Qassar. Indeed, pro-Iran factions in Iraq have seized on the strike to secure a political and popular revival.

Kataeb Hezbollah, a vehemently anti-American armed faction in Iraq, said the strike was "the beginning of the end of the US presence in the region". Iraqi populist cleric Moqtada Sadr swiftly reactivated his Mahdi Army, the notorious militia that fought US troops after the American invasion of 2003. "The Iraqi factions of the resistance must hold an immediate meeting to form the International Resistance Regiments," he tweeted, telling his fighters to "be ready".

'Turn the skies to hell'

Qais Al-Khazali, a paramilitary leader and bitter rival of Sadr's, echoed his calls for fighting units to mobilize following the strike on Soleimani. Khazali also threatened US troops who have been stationed across Iraq since 2014 as part of the global coalition battling the Islamic State group. On Sunday, Iraq's parliament voted in favour of ousting US troops although the decision rests with the government. "If you don't leave, or if you procrastinate in leaving, you will find a strong Iraqi response that will shake the ground beneath your feet and turn the skies above you into hell," Khazali warned.

Even Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq's highest Shiite authority, broke with standard protocol to mourn Soleimani. In a first, Sistani sent a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to offer his condolences. Further afield in Lebanon, Iran-backed Hezbollah said the strike represented a threat to "all the movements, leaders and

Iran nuclear deal hangs by thin thread

The Iran nuclear deal was already in tatters before the country announced the latest rollback of its commitments under the 2015 accord following the US assassination of a top general. But Iran has not said it wants to quit the agreement, leaving some room for the deal's remaining parties - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - to try to save it, according to analysts.

What is the impact?

Iran had been expected to announce a new step back from its commitments under the deal following a series of measures since May last year in response to the US pulling out of the accord in 2018 and reinstating sanctions. The latest decision - to forego the limit on the number of centrifuges used in uranium enrichment - was in line with Iran's previous announcements, according to a diplomat. "There is nothing enormously new," the diplomat who is familiar with the matter told AFP, adding it was a "relief" the Islamic republic did not go even further.

Iran is "politically very careful... They are not saying we are leaving the deal," said Robert Kelley, a former inspections chief at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which monitors the deal's implementation. Friday's US killing of a top Iranian commander, Qasem Soleimani, in Baghdad in a drone strike has added to geopolitical tensions, while the 2015 accord - known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - had already been shaky.

The JCPOA offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for scaling back its nuclear program, but remaining parties to the deal have so far been unable to find an efficient way to skirt reimposed US sanctions. "Iran's decision to put



An Iraqi woman holds a placard during the funeral of Soleimani, Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and eight others in Baghdad's district of Al-Jadriya on Jan 4, 2020. — AFP

countries of the axis of resistance". The killing of "Qasem Soleimani is not an Iranian issue. It concerns the axis of resistance - it concerns the Muslim world," said the movement's influential head Hassan Nasrallah.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, meanwhile, called for "direct and swift reprisals" to the strike. Palestinian movement Hamas slammed it as an "American rampage", and its head Ismail Haniya travelled to Tehran for Soleimani's funeral. And the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also urged "a coordinated, comprehensive and continuous response from resistance forces".

'Closing of rank'

"There could be a closing of rank and a reinforcement of the confessionalism," said Karim Bitar of the Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. He said Iran's allies in the region would set economic or political goals aside to prioritize the "emergency security situa-

aside the cap on the number of centrifuges as its fifth step away from its JCPOA commitments is less harsh than the initially feared resumption of 20 percent enrichment," Ali Vaez of International Crisis Group tweeted.

The accord capped Iran's uranium enrichment at 3.67 percent, sufficient for power generation but far below the more than 90 percent level required for a nuclear weapon. Iran has already broken that limit with enrichment reaching 4.5 percent by November - still below the 20 percent level it had previously operated. It has always denied any military dimension to its nuclear program. On Sunday, Tehran also stressed it would continue to work with the UN's nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, which sends inspectors to Iran to monitor its activities. "The JCPOA may be a zombie, but it is not dead yet," Richard Johnson of the Washington-based organization Nuclear Threat Initiative tweeted.

Centrifuges explained?

Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium. Under the nuclear deal, Iran agreed to slash their number to 5,060 from more than 19,000, and to maintain that level for a decade. It also agreed to use only less efficient, first-generation centrifuges. In September, the IAEA said Iran had started using advanced centrifuges to enrich uranium at its Natanz plant. Two months later, Tehran said it had resumed uranium enrichment at the underground Fordo plant south of the Iranian capital.

It remains to be seen how Iran will expand uranium enrichment after its latest declaration. "We will enter a period of waiting where we will see what is happening on the ground," the diplomat said, adding "technical details provided to the IAEA by Iran would give an idea" of the extent of the latest move. Analyst Kelsey Davenport of the Arms Control Association said "production rates and how quickly Iran's stockpile grows" depended on how many more centrifuges and what types Iran would install and use.

Why is time of the essence?

The 2015 accord aimed to secure at least one year of

tion" triggered by Soleimani's death. "Soon enough, this decision by (US President) Donald Trump will be seen as counter-productive," Bitar predicted.

Trump has threatened Iran with "major retaliation" if it responds to the strike, openly warning in a tweet on Sunday that US action may even be "disproportionate". He had already threatened to bomb 52 unspecified targets in Iran if Tehran attacks US interests in the region. "Tehran has the sword of Damocles hanging over its head," Bitar told AFP. "But the threat of foreign intervention will reunite Iranians of all social classes, both opponents and supporters of the regime," he said.

Indeed, unprecedented crowds have turned out in Iran to mourn Soleimani and the four other Revolutionary Guards killed in the US strike. Ultimately, the assassination could end up bolstering the Iranian government, which will benefit from a phenomenon of "rallying around the flag", Bitar said. — AFP



Handout file picture provided on Nov 4, 2019 shows IR-8 centrifuges at Natanz nuclear power plant, some 300 km south of Tehran. — AFP

the so-called "breakout time" - the period needed to produce weapons-grade material for a bomb - though Iran has always denied this was its aim. Davenport said that timeframe was "slightly less" after Iran's steps in 2019. If Tehran was to step up uranium enrichment to 20 percent combined with an increase in the number and efficiency of its centrifuges, this would shrink further.

"Iran's nuclear program no longer faces any limitation in the operational field," the government said on Sunday. This extended to Iran's capacity for enriching uranium, the level of enrichment carried out, the amount enriched, and other research and development, it said. However, Tehran underlined again that any steps would be reversible should US sanctions be lifted. Current tensions make the lifting of sanctions highly unlikely, but according to Kelley, Iran was "playing the game until the very, very end, so that they can say, 'We never quit the deal.'" — AFP

Business

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KUWAIT: Faisal Mansour Sarkhou announces the completion of KAMCO's merger process with Global Investment House and the new identity yesterday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kamco Invest: A new identity, a new era

Merger with Global creates a larger and more competitive entity in Kuwait and region

KUWAIT: Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public), a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced its new identity, "Kamco Invest", after completing the legal, operational and integration merger processes with Global Investment House (Global) marking the beginning of a new era in implementing the Company's strategy.

During the press conference held to announce the end of the merger process and the new identity, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, emphasized that the merger comes as a crucial phase in Kamco's implementation of its growth and expansion strategy which was initiated back in 2014. The strategy was put into effect with an aim of expanding the Company's client base while building long-lasting relationships through a wider range of offerings and investment solutions.

Sarkhou said, "Today we are in the second phase of implementing our strategy as we become a more competitive investment company in the local and regional markets. Kamco Invest will offer clients an integrated set of investment solutions, a wealth of expertise and advanced systems that are in line with the best international standards within this sector."

He added, "What differentiates this merger is the integration of combined years of knowledge operating in the investment sector, coupled with a range of progressively developed products and services that support Kamco Invest's competitive position. The Company today offers a diverse range of solutions that meet and exceed each client's expectations, also catering to their unique risk-appetites, both locally, and throughout the region. These solutions include asset man-

agement, investment banking, brokerage and lending."

The Company's assets under management stands at approximately \$13.7 billion invested in various asset classes and jurisdictions. In a recent asset management report issued last September by Moody's, Kamco Invest was ranked as the fifth largest asset manager in the GCC region.

Kamco Invest's strong presence in the regional debt and equity markets, coupled with its extensive networks and relationships with clients, led to the successful conclusion of numerous transactions for key players in the market. With investment banking credentials exceed \$21 billion, Kamco Invest is one of the most active asset managers and investment banking firms in the region. The Company has managed/co-managed around \$8.4 billion in Equity finance, arranged around \$6.8 billion in conventional and Islamic debt, and advised M&A mandates worth over \$5.2 billion.

Organizational structure

Commenting on the new organizational structure, Sarkhou said, "The recently announced organizational structure has been developed in cooperation with the human resources consultancy firm, "Mercer", with an objective to strategically streamline operations to increase efficiency across the organization."

The organizational structure was created after applying an in-depth and scientific approach to collect information, measure performance and evaluate employees based on the Company's mission, vision and core values. The complex and effective process was carried out in multiple phases and different forms of studies in line with the best global practices to cultivate and

sustain a diverse workforce, which are ultimately the Company's greatest asset.

Sarkhou added, "Kamco Invest's new workforce includes highly skilled individuals who specialize in various fields and hold a record of achievements that adds great value to the company. Our goal is to utilize their expertise and knowledge while maximizing their potential in order to provide our clients with customized and innovative offerings with the highest quality of service."

The executive management team includes Faisal Mansour Sarkhou in the role of Chief Executive Officer, Sulaiman M Al-Rubaie as Managing Director - Investment Management, Nawal Mulla-Hussain as Managing Director - Support Operations, and Mohammed Abdullah Al-Hubail as Managing Director - Corporate Affairs and Admin.

Strategic goals

Since 1998, the year the Company was established, the board of directors and executive management have been keen on developing a sustainable development strategy for the business. The strategic plan was mapped out to diversify the investment solutions offered by the Company and implement various income generating streams to enhance the overall client experience while progressively growing the business that will benefit all stakeholders.

Over the years, the Company has gone through a series of periodic development stages, the last of which was the acquisition of a majority stake in Global and the merger that followed. Today, with the combined decades worth of experience in the asset management, investment banking, brokerage and lending fields, Kamco Invest is a

stronger and more diversified entity that delivers a wider range of offerings to its clients. Kamco Invest will continue to build on its strategy, focusing on further developing its core business functions and increasing its market share both in Kuwait and throughout the region. This strategy will not only focus on revenue growth but enhancing the quality of the revenue by focusing on fee-based income generating business functions.

Developing our business as we move forward

Commenting on the Company's future business activities, Sarkhou mentioned that with its wealth of expertise, Kamco Invest is well positioned to play a pivotal role in the market not only in Kuwait, but throughout the region. The Company will support its operations outside of Kuwait to ultimately add value to clients and serve as a major revenue contributor.

In terms of asset management, Kamco Invest provides a variety of asset management solutions that cover equities and fixed income, private equity, real estate, third party solutions and special situations. The team utilizes the latest in-house research and market updates to provide a disciplined and flexible approach while placing each client's interests first. The Company will also continue to grow the size of its assets under management while benefiting from the positive market growth witnessed by both the local and regional markets. The asset management team is also working on launching new products and services during the upcoming period in line with local and regional capital markets developments.

On the investment banking side, Kamco Invest serves its clients by arranging or participating in lucrative investment oppor-

tunities throughout the GCC and the MENA region. The Company leverages its geographical presence to provide local clients with a diverse range of regional offerings and the capability to arrange cross-border deals.

Sarkhou added, "Our focus will be to capture investment opportunities for our clients in the countries we operate in, as well as cross-border deals, in equity capital markets, debt capital markets, and mergers and acquisitions. Kamco Invest is also keen to contribute to the privatization mandates after its successful role in the privatization process of Boursa Kuwait."

Following Boursa Kuwait's recent upgrade to Emerging Markets, the Company plans on taking advantage of the projected substantial foreign investment inflows, improved liquidity and greater investor confidence expected during the first half of this year. Oula Wasta, Kamco Invest's brokerage arm, has developed its strategy throughout the past few years to primarily focus on both individual and corporate clients. Today, the brokerage arm has built a loyal client base that utilize the Company's platform as a gateway to access emerging markets.

Sarkhou concluded by expressing his gratitude and appreciation towards the Capital Markets Authority, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Central Bank of Kuwait, Boursa Kuwait, as well as other regulatory authorities for their ongoing support and cooperation throughout this process. He also thanked the boards of directors and Kamco Invest's team for their contribution to the successful outcome of this transaction. Sarkhou also thanked clients and shareholders for their trust assuring them of Kamco Invest's commitment to create value for all stakeholders.

Business

Major technology show kicks off; record spending expected in US

Organizers expect \$422bn in sales of some 300 kinds of consumer tech products

LAS VEGAS: Consumer technology spending is getting a boost from wearables, smart devices and streaming media services and should hit record levels in the United States this year, organizers of a major tech gathering said Sunday. Kicking off the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, organizers said they expect \$422 billion in sales of some 300 kinds of consumer tech products and services in the US market, a gain of four percent from last year.

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA), which organizes the annual gathering, said popularity of streaming services and wireless earbuds and the promise of new devices using superfast 5G connectivity and artificial intelligence is driving consumer interest. "More and more consumers are embracing the faster connectivity, advanced intelligence and seemingly infinite content that technology offers today—pushing consumer technology industry revenues toward another record-setting year in 2020," said Gary Shapiro, the association's president and chief executive.

"We'll see advancements in 5G connectivity and AI play out across the CES 2020 show floor this week—from digital health to self-driving vehicles and smart homes—vital technologies that are changing our lives for the better." The show opens today 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.

CTA's forecast shows strong consumer interest in a number of sectors including digital health—a broad category including smartwatches, fitness trackers and connected health monitoring devices—with sales of around \$10 billion. For streaming—including video, music and gaming—the group expects 11 percent growth in spending to \$81 billion.

CTA said it is seeing consumer interest in new kinds of wireless earbuds, led by those from Apple and Samsung, with expected sales of 67 million units worth \$8.2 billion in revenue.

The forecast suggests smartphone sales will break out of their torpor with a two percent increase in sales, helped by new 5G handsets. But 5G handset growth is likely to be slow at first, and it will be 2020 before the faster technology accounts for two-thirds of US handset sales, according to Lesley Rohrbaugh, director of market research at the association.

Rohrbaugh said however that new chip technology is making possible many more kinds of devices, such as those for the home, infused with artificial intelligence using object detection and voice recognition. "Voice is going into everything. And it's not just our mobile devices. It's not just our speakers, it's every product and like those smart appliances," she said. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Attendees listen to a discussion of streaming services during the 2020 Tech Trends to Watch press conference at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Sunday. —AFP

Ailing Eskom's new CEO takes helm with power shake-up on agenda

JOHANNESBURG: Eskom's new chief executive took charge of the struggling state-owned utility yesterday, embarking on the mammoth task of fixing South Africa's power deficit and restructuring a debt pile that has crippled the national economy. Andre de Ruyter, appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in November, will oversee a government plan to split Eskom into three units for generation, transmission and distribution in an attempt to make it more efficient.

Ramaphosa is trying to revive growth in Africa's most advanced economy and attract more investments. Eskom, which generates more than 90 percent of the country's power, is widely regarded as the most serious risk to an economy on the brink of recession. Saddled with unreliable coal-fired power stations, Eskom has struggled to meet the country's power demand since 2007, with several bouts of severe power cuts since then. Outages last year dented economic output and shook investor confidence in Ramaphosa's administration. The country experienced further outages at the weekend, with Eskom cutting up to 2,000 megawatts (MW) from the national grid on Saturday and Sunday due to a shortage of generating capacity.

In a previous role as CEO of Nampak de Ruyter steered the packaging firm through financial difficulties, and part of his new brief is to restructure Eskom's 450 billion rand (\$31 billion) debt pile. De Ruyter's predecessor at Eskom, Phakamani Hadebe, stepped down in July, citing health reasons. Sources told Reuters at the time that another reason was that he felt frustrated at being excluded from important decisions affecting the utility. Eskom said in a statement yesterday that roughly 13,000 megawatts (MW) of its 44,000 MW nominal capacity were offline because of plant breakdowns.

It said it didn't expect "load-shedding" — a local term for power cuts — yesterday but that the system was "constrained and vulnerable". —Reuters

Bosch unveils smart virtual sun visor for cars at tech show

LAS VEGAS: Bosch Sunday unveiled a virtual visor inspired by LCD televisions which uses AI to block the glare of the sun from a driver's eyes, a major cause of road accidents. The Virtual Visor uses algorithms and a camera to analyze what the driver is seeing through its liquid crystal display and darkens the section through which the sunlight is hitting their eyes, the German engineering giant said at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

The rest of the display remains transparent, blocking the sun without obscuring a large section of the driver's field of vision. "You could be driving right toward the sun and you would still be able to see adequately," said Jason Zink,

one of the engineers on the project, as the company unveiled the product at the show that hosts around 4,500 exhibitors pitching designs to 175,000 attendees searching for innovations of the future.

Bosch cited studies including one from the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicating sun glare is responsible for thousands of accidents each year. Another study indicated the risk of a car crash is 16 percent higher when the sun is shining brightly. Bosch said traditional sun visors were inadequate because they blocked a large area from the field of vision to remove glare.

"We discovered early in the development that users adjust their traditional sun visors to always cast a shadow on their own eyes," said Zink. Ryan Todd, another Bosch engineer, said he thought of the idea "while driving east to work one morning" and thinking about television sets which control the brightness of LCD technology.

A Bosch spokesman said the company was in "active discussions" on commercializing the new visor but offered no details. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Ryan Todd of Bosch North America demonstrates a smart sun visor which uses artificial intelligence to block glare at the media preview of the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada on Sunday. —AFP

Fed faces new trade-offs, hunts for new model, in low-rate world

SAN DIEGO: An unprecedented combination of low US unemployment, weak inflation and low interest rates has the US Federal Reserve grappling with how to fight the next recession, as experts debate new approaches to financial regulation as well as a fuller overhaul of Fed strategy.

At a three-day conference in San Diego on an array of economic topics, one stood out: The textbook view of central banking, where low unemployment produces unwanted inflation that monetary policymakers can counter with interest-rate hikes, is at least badly hobbled if not fully broken.

Not only are low unemployment and weak inflation co-existing but global interest rates are stuck at such low levels, and are considered so unlikely to rise, that the Fed and other central banks may enter

the next recession with little room to cut rates before hitting zero and having to decide on other strategies. "These factors are basically the hand that we are dealt," New York Fed President John Williams said, expressing a resignation shared by other central bankers and academic researchers gathered for the American Economic Association annual conference.

The Fed is in the middle of a broad review of its approach to monetary policy that is due to conclude later this year. The economy is currently felt to be functioning well, with a recession unlikely in the near term — an apt time, officials feel, to make any changes. The conference produced a flourish of ideas, including a call from former Fed Chair Ben Bernanke to make once-unconventional monetary policy tools like bond-buying a permanent part of the central bank's arsenal — in effect making the tactics he used to counter the 2007-09 financial crisis a staple part of Fed recession-fighting.

With a Federal Funds target rate unlikely to rise much beyond 2 to 3 percent, and currently set lower than that, the Fed would not have enough "firepower" otherwise to battle the next downturn, he said.

On Sunday, former Fed Chair Janet Yellen called for better tools for financial regulation, arguing the Fed could safely leave interest rates at low levels, boosting job and wage growth, if it was confident

other methods could be used to ensure that an ongoing era of easy money did not lead to a credit crash — and ultimately to worse outcomes overall. Although it would be politically touchy in the United States, other countries have put stricter limits on mortgage credit, for example, to prevent low interest rates from encouraging risky borrowing.

"Such tools are needed here to free monetary policy to focus on" the Fed's core objectives of maximum employment and stable prices, Yellen said.

Cleveland Fed President Loretta Mester told Reuters on the sidelines of the meeting that if Fed policymakers are trying to resolve one question in their minds right now, it is how much financial risk they are willing to push into the future in return for the benefits workers are seeing today.

"Some people ... say: 'I am willing to take the risk of a very low interest rate now,' and others say the problem with that is, if you do end up with a financial stability problem, the very people you are trying to help are going to be the ones that are hurt worse ... That is kind of the issue. It may be about a time-frame question." Concern that low borrowing costs could fuel such financial excesses were among arguments that some Fed policymakers made last year against the central bank's three interest rate cuts. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.812
Indian Rupees	4.237
Pakistani Rupees	1.970
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.672
Nepali Rupees	2.641
Singapore Dollar	227.210
Hongkong Dollar	39.067
Bangladesh Taka	3.551
Philippine Peso	5.958
Thai Baht	10.193
Malaysian Ringgit	77.724

GCC COUNTRIES

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

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	22.200
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.965
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221
Tunisian Dinar	114.680
Jordanian Dinar	428.900
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.193

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	303.900
Euro	342.800
Sterling Pound	401.450
Canadian dollar	236.040
Turkish lira	52.040
Swiss Franc	316.400
US Dollar Buying	296.550

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.550
Canadian Dollar	234.610
Sterling Pound	398.670
Euro	340.480
Swiss Franc	297.440
Bahraini Dinar	807.250
UAE Dirhams	83.050
Qatari Riyals	84.285
Saudi Riyals	81.840
Jordanian Dinar	429.420
Egyptian Pound	18.955
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.674
Indian Rupees	4.213
Pakistani Rupees	1.957
Bangladesh Taka	3.546
Philippines Peso	5.929
Cyprus pound	18.060
Japanese Yen	3.810
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.655
Malaysian Ringgit	74.760

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.995
Thai Bhat	11.055
Turkish Lira	51.280
Singapore dollars	224.556

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.390177	0.404077
Czech Korune	0.005351	0.014651
Danish Krone	0.041292	0.046292
Euro	0.331523	0.345223
Georgian Lari	0.105461	0.105461
Hungarian	0.000937	0.001127
Norwegian Krone	0.030270	0.035470
Romanian Leu	0.054115	0.070965
Russian Ruble	0.004878	0.004878
Slovakia	0.009076	0.019076
Swedish Krona	0.028166	0.033166
Swiss Franc	0.306239	0.317239
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.202421	0.214421
New Zealand Dollar	0.195704	0.205204
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.228653	0.237653
US Dollars	0.299800	0.304350
US Dollars Mint	0.300300	0.304350
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002925	0.003726

Chinese Yuan	0.042220	0.045720
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036990	0.039740
Indian Rupee	0.003577	0.004349
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002726	0.002906
Korean Won	0.000249	0.000264
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070314	0.076314
Nepalese Rupee	0.002620	0.002960
Pakistani Rupee	0.001314	0.002084
Philippine Peso	0.005841	0.006141
Singapore Dollar	0.219509	0.229509
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001316	0.001896
Taiwan	0.009976	0.010156
Thai Baht	0.009742	0.010292
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.799959	0.807999
Egyptian Pound	0.018906	0.021647
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.423725	0.432725
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021137	0.045137
Omani Riyal	0.784227	0.792109
Qatar Riyal	0.082819	0.083651
Saudi Riyal	0.079953	0.081253
Syrian Pound	0.001288	0.001508
Tunisian Dinar	0.104855	0.112855
Turkish Lira	0.044565	0.054410
UAE Dirhams	0.082108	0.082934
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

Business

Markaz: Kuwait ended the year as the best performing GCC market in 2019

S&P GCC index registers yearly gains of 8.3%

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" recently released its Monthly Markets Review report. Markaz report stated that Kuwait ended the year as the best performing GCC market in 2019, posting its best yearly returns since 2014.

The strong rally in Kuwait equities during the year stemmed from MSCI's decision to include Kuwait in its emerging market indices from next year. Kuwait markets witnessed sharp yearly gains with its All Share Index gaining 23.7 percent and its Premier market Index gaining 32.4 percent. MSCI's confirmation in December provided the impetus for Kuwaiti stocks to close the year on a high. With an estimated weightage of 0.69 percent in the MSCI Emerging Market index, Kuwait can expect sizeable passive and active foreign inflows into its equity markets next year.

Banking stocks were the biggest gainers among sectors, rising by 35.7 percent for the year. All of Kuwait's Blue Chip companies registered sizeable gains during the year, with the market's two largest stocks Kuwait Finance House and National Bank of Kuwait emerging as the biggest gainers among Blue Chips, rising by 46.0 percent and 34.7 percent respectively.

Markaz report added that the year 2019 ended on a positive note for GCC markets as a whole. The S&P GCC index registering yearly gains of 8.3 percent, with all markets barring Oman posting positive returns. Bahrain was the second biggest gainer among GCC markets, rising by 20.4 percent in 2019, after a flat performance in the previous year.

Dubai, which was the worst performer among GCC markets in 2018, rebounded this year to post gains of 9.3 percent. On the contrary, Qatar, which was the best performer in the previous year, remained flat with mild gains of 1.2 percent in 2019. Despite the announcement of a stimulus package to boost Abu Dhabi's economy in late 2018, its market witnessed only slight uptick of 3.3 percent in 2019. Meanwhile, Oman's equity market remained weak,

falling for the second consecutive year, down by 7.9 percent in 2019. GCC's largest market Saudi Arabia had a top-sy-turvy year, ending up with gains of only 7.2 percent despite its MSCI emerging market inclusion. As investor sentiment was affected by the escalation of geopolitical tensions, Saudi market's gains were modest. However, 2019 would be remembered as a milestone year for Saudi Arabia as the stock exchange successfully oversaw the World's largest IPO. Saudi Aramco's record IPO concluded in December, with the stock touching the coveted \$2 trillion valuation in the first few days of trading before investors locked in some profits.

Markaz report also stated that among the GCC Blue Chip companies outside Kuwait, Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company was the top gainer during the year, with its stock price rising by 67.0 percent. Emirates NBD ranked second among gainers posting an increase of 51.7 percent.

Global equity markets were buoyant in 2019 despite concerns surrounding the US-China Trade War. Several global markets closed the year with its main equity indices closing at record highs. The MSCI World Index rose by 25.2 percent, its best yearly performance since 2014. Similarly, US equities had a stellar year, with the S&P 500 posting yearly gains of 28.9 percent. Three rate cuts by the US Fed, strong economic fundamentals and the agreement of an interim trade deal with China supported the rally in US equities as the country entered the 11th consecutive year of economic expansion. Risks of a recession seemed to die down as the US sovereign yield curve steepened in December 2019, with the spread between the 2-year and 10-year treasury yields reaching its highest since November 2018. Despite Brexit uncertainties and a political shakeup during the year, UK markets (FTSE 100) stood strong with yearly gains of 12.1 percent. Emerging Market equities were also on the rise, with the MSCI EM Index posting closing the year 15.4 percent higher.

Regional Market Trends – December 2019

Equity	Last close	December %	2019 %
S&P GCC	116	5.9	8.3
Saudi Arabia (TASI)	8,389	6.7	7.2
Qatar (QE Index)	10,426	2.7	1.2
Abu Dhabi (ADI)	5,076	0.9	3.3
Kuwait (All Share PR Index)	6,282	6.0	23.7
Dubai (DFMGI)	2,765	3.2	9.3
Bahrain (BAX)	1,610	5.5	20.4
Oman (Muscat SM)	3,981	-2.0	-7.9
Commodities			
IPE Brent(\$)	66.0	5.7	22.7
Gold(\$)	1,466	3.6	18.3

Source: Reuters

Oil prices closed at \$66.0 per barrel in 2019, which would translate to a gain of 22.7 percent compared to the end of previous year. Supply side disruptions and the deepening of production cuts by OPEC balanced concerns from the demand side, as Oil prices stabilized in the last

quarter of 2019. With fears of recession raising concerns among global investors, Gold prices witnessed a rally during the year, with its YTD gains peaking at 21.1 percent during September 2019 before settling down 18.3 percent at the end of the year.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 5th January 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 29 December 2019 - 2 January 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

Fathiyah Sulaiman Dawood Mohammad
Ajay Kumar Goel
Moiz Abdulkayyum Kapasi
Mohammad Fadel Abbas Alamdar
Nisreen hamade

Gulf Bank's final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event. Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2018, have been added to their 2019 chances, and the same process will take place in 2020, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Crude and gold extend gains, stocks sink on fear of war

LONDON: Oil prices jumped, gold hit a 6.5-year high and most equities tumbled yesterday after the US assassination last week of a top Iranian general continued to fuel fears of a major conflict in the Middle East, dealers said. The leaders of Germany, France and Britain have agreed to work towards bringing about de-escalation in the Middle East amid heightened tensions following the US drone strike that killed Qasem Soleimani.

US President Donald Trump has however warned of a "major retaliation" against Tehran after it threatened revenge for Friday's killing of the Iranian commander, which sparked a sell-off in stocks and a spike in crude. Oil extended those gains yesterday and gold shone brightly to touch \$1,588.13 per ounce—a level last seen in April 2013 — as investors flocked to the safe-haven precious metal.

Asian and European stock markets meanwhile continued to tank, having wobbled before the weekend as the assassination news flashed across traders' screens.

"Today's ... losses extend the stock market weakness that began on Friday when a US airstrike killed Iran's top Military Commander Qasem Soleimani," said London Capital Group analyst Jasper Lawler. "The prospect of Iran avenging the killing of Soleimani and then a retaliation from the US is keeping de-escalation hopes at bay. "We would expect the impact of these Middle Eastern tensions to be more durable in commodities markets than in equities." Iran announced on Sunday a further rollback of its commitments to its nuclear accord, while Iraq's parliament demanded the departure of US troops from the country as fallout from the attack spread. — AFP

Jazeera Airways brings more choices and services to passengers in 2020

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, yesterday announced a series of new services and fare categories applicable from 2020 that aim to give passengers more choices to customize their itinerary as per their needs and budget when travelling to the Middle East, Europe or Asia. Speaking of the change in the airline's fares and services for 2020, Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "As we continue to expand and offer our customers more places to visit, we are focusing as well on enabling them to choose how they want to travel. Our new fare categories and services have been designed to make their journey with Jazeera Airways all the more personalized and enjoyable. We will be the first airline in the Middle East to offer a Priority Service they can pre-purchase online."

Starting from January 8, 2020 (tomorrow), Jazeera Airways passengers will be able to choose from three fare categories in Economy Class: Light, Value or Extra, each providing them with a set of services to meet their needs. Passengers of Economy Class Light, the lowest fare category, are allowed a carry-on and a small bag, and can add on the services they require for their travel itinerary. Passengers of Economy Class Value are additionally allowed 20 kilograms in checked-in baggage allowance, while passengers of Economy Class Extra are allowed 30 kilograms in checked-in baggage allowance, priority

France urges US to 'come to its senses' on digital tax

PARIS: Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire urged the United States yesterday to renounce threatened sanctions on France in a dispute over taxation of tech giants, and warned of possible EU retaliation.

"This trade war is in no one's interest and I call on our American friends to display wisdom, to return to their senses," Le Maire told France Inter radio as the US government moves towards imposing sanctions. President Donald Trump last month threatened to punish Paris for a new tax on tech giants such as Netflix and Amazon, unveiling sky-high retaliatory duties on \$2.4 billion of French wines, makeup and leather handbags.

US trade officials were accepting written comments until yesterday and they would hold a public hearing today to allow individuals and companies to comment on the punitive measures. Le Maire issued a warning that it would respond if the tariffs are put into place. "If the Americans decide to go through with it, to put into place sanctions against the tech tax when they are for such a tax... in that case we will retaliate," he said, adding he plans to speak with his US counterpart Steven Mnuchin later in the day.

Le Maire said that he would also meet with EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan on Tuesday and "we'll study the possibility of commercial retaliation". Finally, Le Maire wrote to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to urge him to not impose sanctions on France. "I insist that our tax is not discriminatory against US companies," said the letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

Virtual economy, real tax

France last year approved a new levy on tech firms as international efforts dragged on to find a new model to tax their revenues earned via online sales and advertising. Tech companies often pay little in many countries owing to their lack of physical presence. The levy will see such firms paying up to three percent of their revenues earned in France. Washington says that US companies such as Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon have been singled out by the French tax.

In August, France agreed to refund any taxes 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. The Trump administration could impose duties of up to 100 percent of the value of French imports including such emblematic goods as champagne and camembert.

Le Maire called on the United States to seek a global solution to the problem of firms generating massive revenue with online sales and paying little in taxes via negotiations underway at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. After blocking the OECD talks for several years, the US relaunched them last year only to make proposals in December which France has rejected and have cast doubt on the goal of reaching a global deal this year. Le Maire urged Washington "to work towards a compromise at the OECD to avoid extreme situations that benefit no one."

If the United States follows through with its threat it will be the second time that France has been hit as in mid-October Washington imposed sanctions following a long legal battle over European subsidies to aircraft manufacturer Airbus. The sanctions saw 10 percent punitive tariffs imposed on EU aircraft and 25 percent on a variety of food products including French wine. — AFP



check-in and the ability to choose from the Preferred Seats located on rows 4 to 10.

The new Priority Service provides passengers with a faster travel experience: access to Priority Check-in, Priority Baggage and Priority Boarding. Charges will be KD10 one-way and will be available at all airports. Passengers on connecting flights will pay KD15 for the one-way service for both flights.

When planning or managing their booking, passengers can choose a seat of their preference from a variety of options. Should they not reserve a seat ahead of the flight, a standard seat will be assigned to them at check-in. Having moved to an all-Economy fleet configuration (except on Cairo flights), the new Seat Selection starts with Premium Seats located on rows 1 to 3, which provides generous legroom with a 33-inch seat pitch. Passengers of these rows also have a first selection from the Jazeera Cafe

menu. As for the Preferred Seats, they are located on rows 4 to 10 where they provide a 31-inch seat pitch and Economy Class Extra passengers can reserve it for free. The Extra Legroom Seats are located on rows 11 and 12, giving passengers the maximum legroom in the 35 to 38-inch seat pitch. The Standard Seats with 28-30-inch seat pitch are located on rows 13 to 28 / 29 and are designed for the best comfort at great value.

Passengers can also add on excess baggage whether at check-in and upon availability for Light travelers, or ahead of time for both Value and Extra travelers. They can also add on access to the Jazeera Business Lounge and a meal from Jazeera Cafe.

Ramachandran concluded: "Our customers can today enjoy great flexibility about the way they travel. They also have the choice to change their mind at the last minute and add on the service that best suits their needs."

Announcing Nominations For Candidacy to the election of the Board

Kuwait Financial Centre KPSC ("Markaz") announces the start of candidacy for election to the Board of Directors for a period of two weeks from the date of this announcement.

Anyone who wishes to nominate themselves for the position of a member of the Board of Directors, may apply by filling the CMA's Nomination Form, provided they meet the requirements of the Fit and Proper rules per CMA Law No. 7 of 2010, the Companies Law and the Articles of Association of the Company.

The Nomination Form should be submitted along with the required supporting documents to the Company at the following address:

Kuwait Financial Centre KPSC ("Markaz")
Sharq – Ahmad Al-Jaber Street – Universal Tower – 9th floor.
8:00 AM until 3:00 PM
From 7th January 2020 until 21st January 2020

The Nomination Form including the requirements is available on the Company's website www.markaz.com

For further inquiries, please contact the Board Secretariat office at 2224 8036.

Board of Directors

+965 2224 8000 | markaz.com

Business

KFH offers comprehensive services for buying, selling and leasing of vehicles

Bank participates in Kuwait Motor Show 2020

KUWAIT: As part of its participation in the 2020 Kuwait Motor Show that kicked off at 360 Mall, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) offers distinguished financing services and promotions on buying, selling and leasing new and used cars and vehicles. This confirms KFH's keenness to provide financing solutions, serving customers and highlighting its contributions to the motor market.

With the participation of famous car brands, the event will present the latest models of 2020 of which some are exclusively revealed at the show for the first time in Kuwait. Aahed Al-Essa, Executive Manager Cars and Leasing Products at KFH said that through partnerships with auto dealerships in Kuwait, KFH offers the best deals as well as a package of distinguished financing solutions and facilities as per the terms and conditions.

He pointed out the high demand on KFH's e-platform, kfh.com/auto after it has been completely redesigned to become more comprehensive, user-friendly and to include motorcycle, boat and marine equipment. Al-Essa explained that the new e-platform allows customers to learn about the latest offers of KFH, including financing new and used cars, leasing with maintenance, leasing to own, in addition to marine equipment and motorcycles.

He pointed out that KFH allows customers to finance cars, boats and motorcycles in return for a collateral of

deposit against debt obligations. It also offers Car Financing Abroad service which allows customers to take delivery of their cars in any of the following four countries: USA, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. He added that "KFH Auto" is the largest and latest automotive showroom in the Middle East with a total area of 38,000 square meters. The 17,000 square meters showroom accommodates up to 200 cars, providing for more than 20 car dealerships and 30 car motorcycle and boat brands. As an integrated city, customers can also sell and purchase new and used cars at "KFH Auto". Car rental, valuation, traffic and insurance services are also offered at the showroom. In line with intelligent building systems, "KFH Auto" includes charging station for electric vehicles and special section for ladies.

Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh said: "We are pleased to participate in the Kuwait Motor Show 2020, especially as KFH has been keen to be present in this important annual event since its launch, reflecting its goal to serve customers and society."

He confirmed KFH's commitment to sponsoring and supporting the initiatives that add value to economy and society, contributing to the success of various customer-focused events. "Kuwait Motor Show 2020 is the largest exhibition of its kind in Kuwait which brings together KFH customers, car-fans, auto makers and experts around the world." He added.



Al-Ruwaieh and Al-Essa at the press conference

Al-Ruwaieh said: "KFH is proud to be partners in success for Kuwaiti youth initiatives and enterprises. The Kuwait Motor Show is a Kuwaiti successful youth project as it has become a destination for car fans." He

stressed that KFH is working to maintain its leadership in strengthening the strategy of social responsibility and sustainable development with its participation in Kuwait Motor Show confirming this pioneering role.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for 6 months with Rate of Return at 2.875%.

Defying gravity? What could bring US stocks down to earth

NEW YORK: The US stock market's relentless drive higher has caused some nail-biting on Wall Street that the rally is about to end. Geopolitical risks - such as the latest escalation of US tensions with Iran - are just one on a list of worries for 2020. Stocks ended 2019 with their best year since 2013, with the benchmark S&P 500 rising nearly 29 percent. That's put the S&P index at just under the 3,260 level that a Reuters poll forecast the index would achieve at the end of 2020.

Some investors are now increasingly nervous that the year-end "melt-up" in shares will turn into a scary melt-down. Here are some of the risks pre-occupying Wall Street as the 2020 gets under way:

Promised profit rebound flails

The stock market's stunning 2019 gains came despite a lackluster year for corporate profit growth, but performance may suffer if earnings lag in 2020. Fourth-quarter reporting season starts in the coming days and results are expected to be anemic, with S&P 500 earnings seen down 0.3 percent, according to Refinitiv data.

But analysts expect S&P 500 earnings to rise 9.7 percent in 2020. There are some skeptics, notes Chuck Carlson, chief executive at Horizon Investment Services in Hammond, Indiana, who said bears are "still having some negative thinking that corporate profits aren't going to be all that great (in 2020) because the economy is probably going to be a little softer." Indeed, data on Friday showed the US manufacturing sector contracted in December by the most in more than a decade.

US-China relations sour

An initial US-China trade agreement provided a year-end boost for stocks, but any hitch in the Phase 1 deal between the world's two largest economies could rattle markets. "The rivalry between the US and China hasn't gone away," Mark Haeefe, chief investment officer at UBS Global Wealth Management, said in a recent note.

"Investors will be alert for any sign that tensions are re-emerging, or either side is dissatisfied with the implementation of the Phase 1 agreement," Haeefe said.

Less Fed support

Some point to the Federal Reserve as a trigger. "When the Fed injects money, funds generally flow to the best-returning market," said analysts at Bianco Research in a recent note. "The big question is, what happens when the Fed ends T-bill purchases and repo support?" said Bianco.

In October, the Fed announced that it would start buying about \$60 billion per month in Treasury bills to ensure "ample reserves" in the banking system, a program that would continue at least until the second quarter. The Fed would also continue to support the short-term lending markets by offering daily operations in the market for repurchase agreements, or repo. —Reuters

Enjoy your favorite tunes with Huawei FreeBuds 3

KUWAIT: Huawei's newly launched Huawei FreeBuds 3 is the pinnacle of audio engineering and it makes listening to your favorite music simply better. But how does it do this? It is quite simple really, by bringing together intelligent solutions for better audio quality and customer focused open-fit design for wearing comfort, listening to your favorite tunes on the Huawei FreeBuds 3 is an experience like no other.

To make sure you enjoy your music at its very best, Huawei has incorporated an active noise cancellation technology that is designed to tune out ambient noise, while also providing a comfortable hearing experience. Capable of identifying and tuning out ambient noise from the background, these earphones ensure that you will hear only what you want to. By simply double tapping the left ear-

phone, the active noise cancellation is turned on, closing the door on unwanted noise and allowing for a more immersive audio experience. This is complemented by other innovative technologies such as Bone Voice ID and an aerodynamic wind tunnel design that enhances call quality by distinguishing the user's voice from background noise and by reducing wind noise even in the windiest situations respectively.

However, to truly enjoy your audio experience, the earphones must also be comfortable to wear, especially if you are planning on wearing it for an extended periods of music and entertainment. This is where the Huawei FreeBuds 3's open-fit design comes into play. Thanks to this stylish and functional approach, the Huawei FreeBuds 3 sits comfortably and securely in your ear, without adding any extra pressure, making it perfect for long periods of use. In addition to this, the custom made architecture and components also contribute towards balancing out tremble, middle and bass for a premium audio experience akin to listening live at a studio.

Abrupt disconnections, latency levels and a short battery life can always be a thorn to your music experience. Huawei solves these issues by incorporating the



Kirin AI chipset that uses intelligent innovations to secure fast and stable connections for an uninterrupted music experience. It also reduces latency, which means now your audio and video will be perfectly synced without any lag, a feature of utmost importance to mobile gamers as well. Speaking of battery life, you can get 4 full hours of playback on a single charge, which can go up to 20 hours if used with the case. Recharging options include both wired and wireless as well as support for

reverse wireless charging, which allows you to recharge with a compatible Huawei smartphone.

Looking to step up your audio experience or want to simply enjoy your music in the best way possible? Then the Huawei FreeBuds 3 with its wide range of intelligent and innovative technologies is what you need. With its premium noise cancellation experience, comfortable fit for all day use and stable connections, the Huawei FreeBuds 3 is perfect for any audiophile or entertainment lover.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Afrah Abdullah Mohammad as the lucky winner of the draw prize of Al-Thuraya Salary Accounts monthly draw. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win KD 10,000 every month. Each account holder has one chance to enter the draw.

The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Sterling soars, helped by surveys and weaker dollar

LONDON: Sterling rebounded yesterday as investors who had sold the currency for safe havens after the United States assassinated an Iranian general returned to the pound. Analysts said an upward revision to a business survey probably helped the pound, while the focus for investors now shifts to a parliamentary debate on Brexit legislation today. "We've got some better than expected PMIs, but some of it (the move higher in sterling) has been sentiment driven," said Morten Lund, an analyst at Nordea. "It's a bit surprising, but I think some of it is positioning."

The Purchasing Managers Index survey

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.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

for Britain's services for December came in with a final reading of 50, better than the 49.1 reading forecast by economists polled by Reuters. Optimism among companies has improved markedly since the election, although the economy continues to stagnate, the PMI survey showed.

Investors have remained cautious about the pound since Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives won the Dec. 12 general election. They worry about more political uncertainty as Britain prepares to leave the European Union and the two sides begin negotiations over their future trading relationship. RBC Capital Markets currency strategist Adam Cole noted that "the provisional PMIs for January (out Jan 24) will be more interesting as they will shed some light on the potential for a rebound in activity early in 2020 as political uncertainty cleared following the election."

The UK parliament returns today and will debate the Brexit bill, which includes a clause ruling out any extension of the transition period for trade talks beyond December 2020.

Eurozone Dec business activity close to stagnation

LONDON: Eurozone business activity remained close to stagnation at the end of last year, a survey showed yesterday, as an upturn in services activity only partially offset a continued decline in the bloc's manufacturing industry.

IHS Markit's final euro zone composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), seen as a good indicator of economic health, nudged up to 50.9 in December from November's 50.6. That beat a preliminary estimate which suggested no change from the previous month but remained close to the 50 mark separating growth from contraction.

"Another month of subdued business activity in December rounded off the euro zone's worst quarter since

2013. The PMI data suggest the euro area will struggle to have grown by more than 0.1 percent in the closing three months of 2019," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

That is worse than the 0.2 percent growth predicted in a December Reuters poll.

A PMI for the bloc's dominant services industry bounced to 52.8 from November's 51.9, above a preliminary reading of 52.4. But a manufacturing PMI out last week showed factory activity contracted for an 11th straight month in December. The upturn in services meant firms were at their most optimistic about the year ahead since May. A composite future output PMI jumped to 59.4 from 57.9.

Indicating services activity may remain resilient, firms in the sector were unable to match demand last month for the first time since July. The backlogs of work index climbed to 51.0 from 49.7. - Detailed PMI data are only available under licence from IHS Markit and customers need to apply for a license. —Reuters



The pound rose 0.7 percent to as high as \$1.3163 yesterday but remains below last week's \$1.32. Sterling fell on Friday after the US assassinated the Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, panicking investors and boosting demand for safe-haven currencies, including

the dollar. The pound was also higher against the euro yesterday, rising 0.4 percent to 85.065 pence. The British currency still remains some way off its more than three-year high of 82.78 pence per euro reached last month. —Reuters

Health & Science

Drug developers take fresh aim at 'guided-missile' cancer drugs

FRANKFURT/ZURICH: Dozens of drugmakers are conducting human trials for a record 89 therapies that pair antibodies with toxic agents to fight cancer, evidence of renewed confidence in an approach that has long fallen short of its promise, an analysis compiled for Reuters shows.

These antibody-drug conjugates, or ADCs, from companies including AstraZeneca and GlaxoSmithKline, are described by researchers as "guided missiles" packing a powerful anti-cancer punch.

They are engineered to zero in on tumours and then release cytotoxins that deliver up to 10,000 times the potency of standard chemotherapy, while minimizing damage to healthy tissue.

The approach has for decades been a major biotech industry focus. Many experimental ADCs, however, failed due to the complexity of pairing the right antibody with the appropriate toxic agent. Some were abandoned as too weak; others were too harmful.

From 2000 to 2018, only five ADCs won approval. Just one, Roche's Kadcyla, approved in 2013 for breast cancer, has surpassed \$1 billion in annual sales after data last year showed it boosted disease-free survival for some patients compared with the standard treatment, Roche's Herceptin.

Over time, however, scientists devised better ways to connect payloads and antibodies and more precisely reach tumours. There is a growing understanding, too, of how to design ADCs to kill even surrounding cancer cells that previously evaded destruction.

"What we're seeing now are the benefits of the science becoming mature," said ADC pioneer Chris Martin, CEO of Switzerland's ADC Therapeutics. "It took at least a decade, probably more like 15 years, to really begin to turn the art into a science."

In 2019, U.S. regulators approved three ADCs, the most ever in a single year, as last-ditch treatments based on studies showing they helped patients whose survival outlook was bleak.

They include AstraZeneca's and Daiichi Sankyo's breast cancer drug, Enhertu, which was shown to help patients who had failed numerous previous treatments survive a median of more than 16 months before their disease worsened.

Astellas' and Seattle Genetics' bladder cancer drug, Padcev, also received expedited approval in December, based on evidence that 44% of patients who had failed immunotherapy showed improvement, and in some cases, no evidence of cancer, when they were assessed after treatment.

Roche's Polivy was green-lighted against lymphoma in June after producing complete response rates, with no signs of disease, in 40% of patients when combined with two other therapies.

NEW RECORD

While all three drugs must prove their mettle in further studies, the industry is growing optimistic that ADCs' time may have arrived.



STEVENAGE: File photo shows a scientist studies cancer cells inside white blood cells through a microscope at the GSK research centre in Stevenage.

The number of ADC drug candidates is at unprecedented levels, according to data from consultancy Beacon Targeted Therapies compiled for Reuters, based on a review of companies' pipelines. Dozens more ADC prospects are in pre-clinical review.

London-based Beacon advises drugmakers on targeted therapies, helping them decide whether to pursue prospective drugs or redirect efforts, based on industry trends.

Current ADC projects include GlaxoSmithKline testing its belantamab mafodotin against multiple myeloma.

ADC Therapeutics, part-owned by private equity firm Auen Therapeutics, has several studies on experimental drugs, including with Danish partner Genmab, on blood cancers and solid tumours.

U.S. biotech Immunomedics' market capitalization gained more than 60% to \$4.3 billion in the last six months, ahead of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's late-December decision to review its ADC against triple-negative breast cancer, which is hard to treat and has poor prognosis.

Massachusetts-based ImmunoGen, hit by past trial failures, got a lift in December for its ADC against ovarian cancer when the FDA indicated it may become a candidate for accelerated approval.

The surge in ADC investment has been fueled, in part, by improvements in the so-called "linker" technology that binds the antibody to its cancer-killing toxins, keeping them stable in the circulatory system until the poison can

be unleashed on the targeted tumour.

ADCs are generally delivered via repeated infusions, similar to chemotherapy.

"There is a revival again because there is a new generation of molecules in which the linker is more efficient," Giuseppe Curigliano, clinical director of early drug development at Milan's European Institute of Oncology, told Reuters.

BETTING ON GROWTH

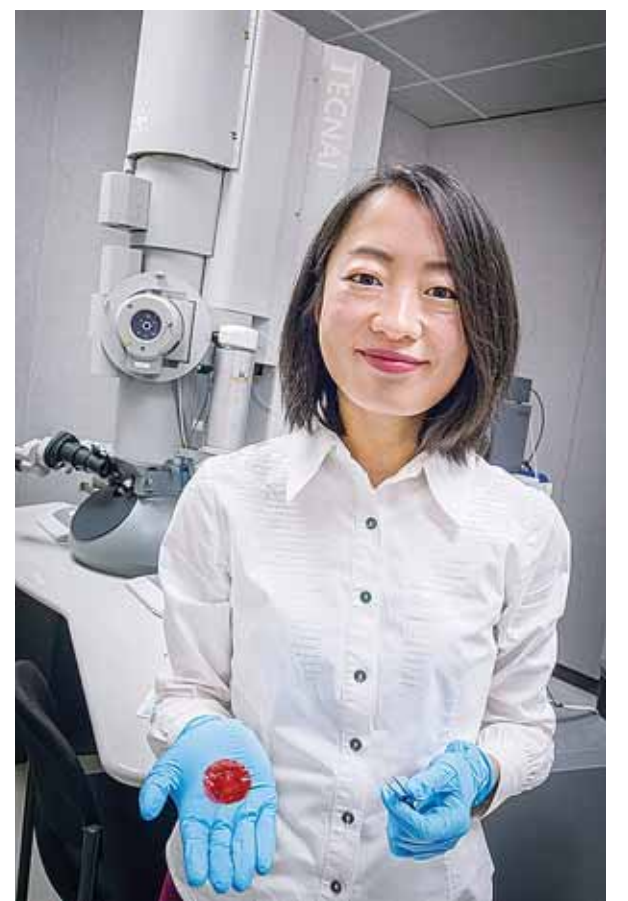
This optimism has contract manufacturers like Merck KGaA and Lonza ramping up facilities, in hopes drugmakers will farm out complex ADC production.

Merck expects the overall ADC market to grow by more than 20% in coming years, boosting its business, which includes manufacturing of monoclonal antibodies, linkers and cytotoxic agents.

Rival Lonza, which helps make Roche's two ADCs and sees annual 9% growth for the so-called bioconjugates market, is investing millions of dollars in its Swiss site, where it produces ADCs for other drugmakers.

"What we see over time at Lonza is a good request for capacity," said Iwan Bertholjotti, Lonza's bioconjugate commercial development head. "That's a good sign that the market is booming." Still, enthusiasm is not universal.

AbbVie in August abandoned its ADC candidate Rovalpitavir after flunking a lung cancer trial and wrote off most of the \$5.8 billion it paid for the drug's developer, Stemcentrx, in 2016.



BERKELEY: Chelsea Chen, a postdoctoral researcher at Berkeley Lab, holds a sample of a polymer membrane material that turned red when it soaked up a chemotherapy drug. The material is designed to bind the drug, based on its electric charge, after the drug targets tumors and before it circulates throughout the body.

Roche, which helped pioneer ADCs with Kadcyla and Polivy, has also backed off. In 2013, the Basel-based company had about a dozen experimental ADCs. Today, only one remains, and it is being developed for Staph infections, not cancer.

"We have shifted our technology priorities," Roche CEO Severin Schwan told Reuters. "Maybe others will be luckier, but we failed to master the complexity." AstraZeneca aims to do just that.

In March, the Cambridge, England-based drugmaker struck a \$7 billion deal with Japan's Daiichi Sankyo for rights to Enhertu, getting \$1.35 billion up-front, and more if it challenges Roche drugs' dominance in breast cancer.

Some industry analysts see Enhertu sales eventually reaching up to \$7 billion annually.

"Our plan is to expand the number of studies in different tumour types," said Gilles Gallant, head of oncology R&D at Daiichi Sankyo. "This agent has potential." —Reuters

Switzerland grapples with assisted suicide for prisoners

GENEVA: A request by a convict behind bars for life is testing Switzerland's support for assisted suicide, raising complex questions over whether ill prisoners can seek help to end their own lives.

The unprecedented case has exposed a legal vacuum in the country which has long been at the forefront of the global right-to-die debate and an official decision is due in the coming months.

"It is natural that one would rather commit suicide than be buried alive for years to come," prisoner Peter Vogt said, in a written response to questions submitted by AFP.

The 69-year-old, convicted for sexual assault and rape against multiple girls and women ranging in age from 10 to 56, says he is suffering from serious kidney and heart conditions, among other ailments.

He has also been diagnosed with several psychological disorders.

Although Vogt's most recent sentence was a 10-year term handed down in 1996, he is imprisoned for life at Bostadel prison in northern Switzerland as he is still considered dangerous.

This follows a decision in 2004 when Swiss voters approved a popular initia-

tive allowing the indefinite detention of people with established sexual delinquencies who posed a public risk.

The authorities have repeatedly determined that Vogt remains a threat despite years of treatment.

"It would be better to be dead than to be left to vegetate behind these walls," he said. In July 2018, Vogt contacted Exit Switzerland, an organisation that supports assisted suicide under specific conditions. He argues that he should be able to benefit from Switzerland's liberal assisted suicide laws too.

"We told him that his particular case needed to be clarified," Juerg Wiler, its vice president, told AFP.

'Unbearable suffering'

Swiss law generally allows assisted suicide if the person commits the lethal act themselves — meaning doctors cannot administer deadly injections, for example — and the person consistently and independently articulates a wish to die.

Organisations that support assisted suicide also apply their own procedures, which are more robust than the legal requirements.

The authorities, aiming to take a position on the matter in the coming months, have asked the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Prison and Probation, a publicly funded foundation, to provide guidance following Vogt's request.

In October, the experts at the foundation advised that assisted suicide rights should apply to prisoners under certain conditions, noting that in cases of mental

illness two independent specialists should be consulted.

Any detainee possessing discernment should, in principle, have assisted suicide rights if they have "a physical or mental illness resulting in unbearable suffering," Barbara Rohner, lead author of the foundation's report, told AFP.

The foundation also recommended that authorities responsible for the prisoner's welfare must ensure the suicide request is not the result of a short-term emotional crisis.

Vogt insisted that he wanted to die because of the "unbearable" deterioration in his quality of life, along with the fact that he can no longer see his gravely ill mother, who lives in Austria.

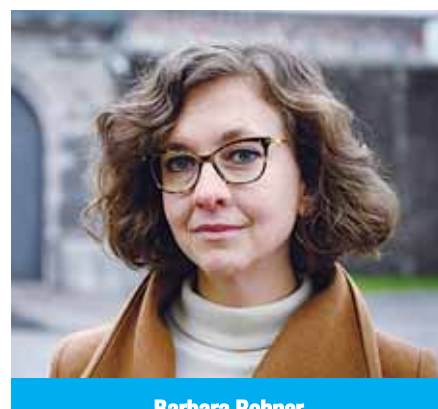
He told the Blick newspaper that he wants to end his life on August 13, his 70th birthday.

More requests coming?

Rohner said that while Vogt's case



Prisoner Peter Vogt



Barbara Rohner

may be exceptional, similar situations could increasingly arise.

"There will be more and more elderly and sick prisoners in detention because of the ageing of the prison population," she said.

According to the Swiss National Science Foundation, a research institute, the number of prisoners over 50 years old doubled to 600 between 2005 and 2016.

Vogt told AFP that he knows of another inmate interested in assisted suicide, adding: "Nobody should have to commit suicide in his cell alone."

Some have raised concern that assisted suicide requests could be used by convicts as a negotiating tactic to demand better conditions in prison.

For Christine Bussat, founder of the Swiss chapter of the Marche Blanche victims' rights groups, decisions on a convict's right to die should rest with their victims. —AFP

Years of drought threaten S Africa's wildlife industry

STRYDENBURG/GROBLERSHOOP: A severe drought is threatening South Africa's wildlife industry, with game farmers keeping fewer animals and tourists visiting game lodges in smaller numbers.

Parts of the country have been affected by consecutive years of abnormally hot weather and below average rainfall that have scorched grazing lands and dried up watering holes since 2015, the driest year on record. Industry body Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA) estimates the Northern Cape province

has lost more than two-thirds of its game over the last three years. It is conducting a nationwide survey to determine the scale of animal losses and the financial impact on the country's more than 9,000 wildlife ranches.

"It's been an extraordinary drought," said WRSA chief Adri Kitshoff-Botha. "It's not a one-year or two-year drought. In some areas we've seen it has been going now for six years."

The wildlife industry generates revenue for South Africa through tourism, hunting, breeding and meat production. Trophy hunting alone generated 2 billion rand (\$140 million) in 2016, according to research carried out for the environment ministry.

Southern Africa's temperatures are rising at twice the global average rate, according to the International Panel on

Climate Change, and in much of South Africa the level of water in reservoirs is dwindling. For Burger Schoeman, manager at Northern Cape game farm Thuru Lodge, the withered vegetation and parched ground are a serious concern for the sector.

Once home to around 4,500 wild animals - including 35 different species, from antelope to rhino - the lodge has lost around 1,000 animals due to drought. Carcasses are piling up in abandoned mines on the edge of the property. "At this stage we are quite stretched. All the money you get from selling the animals, meat and all of that, gets put straight back into the property to look after the rest of the animals," Schoeman said.

The lodge has seen costs rise as it buys in additional feed for the animals,

but hunters are paying less and fewer tourists are coming as the animals are in worse condition.

At the 48,000-hectare Karreekloof Safari Lodge in the same province, rangers come across carcasses every week.

"Nobody wants to buy the game, because they also (are experiencing) ... the same drought," said farm manager Gideon Watts, adding that his farm received a quarter of its usual rainfall this season.

The industry has seen a decline of around 20% in tourist numbers over the past year, said WRSA's Kitshoff-Botha.

The drought has also hit the rest of the region, with Botswana, home to almost a third of Africa's elephants, seeing more than 100 of the creatures die in two months last year. —Reuters

Water harvesting has added benefit for Kenya

MUKURWEINI: In parts of Kenya along the Tana River, heavy rainfall has long brought inundation, landslides and losses of homes and property.

But last year's heavy rains brought less destruction for an unexpected reason: Drought-hit areas further upstream have improved their water storage capacity, and are now capturing more of what once rushed downstream.

"Water harvesting actually helps reduce the impacts of flooding, saving the communities from unexpected risks," said Hussein Idhoro, drought coordinator for upstream Tharaka Nithi County.

In the catchment of the Tana River, the partially government-funded Upper Tana Natural Resources Management Project has since 2012 given financial and technical support for the construction of rainwater harvesting dams that today hold up to 100 million litres of water.

The project also has established nearly 325 roof-top water harvesting systems at schools and farms within the catchment, said James Maina, a sub-regional manager at the national Water Resources Management Authority.

The Mukurweini Technical Training Institute, for instance, in early 2019 constructed a small reservoir capable of storing 3,000 cubic metres of water for sanitary use and for irrigation of farm plots on its campus. In past years, "we had constant conflicts with our neighbours living downstream as the floodwaters swept their homes and property", said the institution's principal, Patrick Muchemi.

But these days the school's water storage capacity has reduced that problem, and also cut erosion from flowing water on the campus' own land.

Fredrick Wamae, a neighbour of the school, said he now sleeps in peace during heavy downpours, confident the area won't flood. "Most of my fears have now been eroded and every time we experience heavy downpours I get to relax," he said.

The school has almost halved its water costs by using its own harvested water for many purposes, though it still buys drinking water and top-up water from the local utility, Muchemi said.

Solar panels power the harvested water through a piping system, "saving the institution much in terms of cost", the principal said. Farmers in the area also have constructed small reservoirs to catch excess rain and hold it to irrigate crops through drought periods. Terra Mathenge Nderitu, 70, of Nyeri County, even has rigged a system to direct water from his home's roof to a water pan he constructed. —Reuters

Health & Science

Free handouts of cannabis oil at Bangkok medical marijuana clinic

BANGKOK: A medical clinic in Bangkok opened yesterday offering free cannabis oil to hundreds of Thais seeking relief from cancer, insomnia and muscle pain as the government drives home the economic and health benefits of their gamble of marijuana.

Thailand in 2018 became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalize medical marijuana, although many Thais have long used the herb in traditional medicine. The government is eager to harvest the multi-billion-dollar potential of weed, investing in tech to extract, distill and market cannabis oils.

"Today marks the beginning," Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said at the launch of the Bangkok clinic. "We are fighting for the better health of Thai people and fighting for a better economy," he told AFP, standing next to a marijuana leaf mascot wearing a doctor's coat.

Hundreds of mostly elderly Thais waited to receive the 5-10 mg vials of oil for muscle aches, though some came bearing more serious ailments — like Natjuta, born with cerebral palsy and confined to a wheelchair. Her mother Supatra Ulapatorn said cannabis oil helps her daughter to sleep better and stay calmer. "She does not sleep well which causes me not to sleep either," said the 60-year-old. "She is more calm now, so I think it works."

Anutin, a construction tycoon-turned-minister whose Bhumjaitai party rode a pro-marijuana platform in last year's elections to become a major player in parliament, has promised an economic bonanza to his rural constituents. He added that the drug has been "de-stigmatized" in Thailand. "If we talk about cannabis extraction, I have a sense people view it as medication rather than it being a narcotic," he said. Still, a knot of rules



BANGKOK: Patients wait to register for cannabidiol (CBD) oil treatment during the opening of a cannabis (marijuana) clinic at the Department of Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine in Bangkok yesterday.



Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul touches a cannabis plant during the opening of a cannabis (marijuana) clinic at the Department of Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP photos

govern who can grow marijuana plants and extract cannabis oil, and critics say legislation will limit opportunities for small farmers and likely benefit big agro-industrial firms.

Medical research has shown that cannabis oil can help ease the pain of patients suffering from conditions such as multiple sclerosis and epilepsy, but the science is out on its impact on other serious diseases including

different forms of cancers. Recreational use and trade of marijuana is still illegal and could land anyone caught with a joint with severe penalties of up to 10 years in prison. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE







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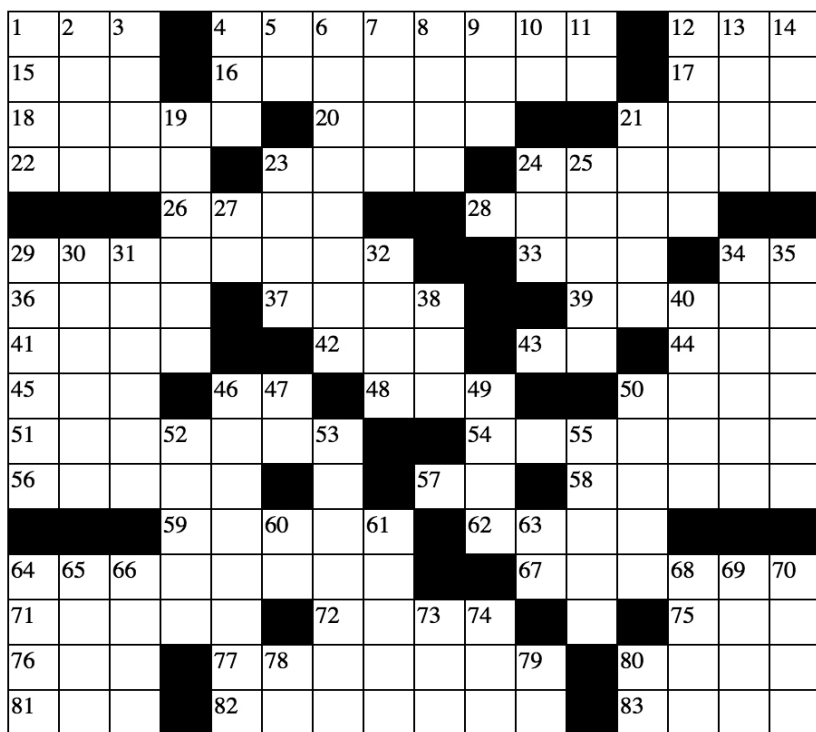
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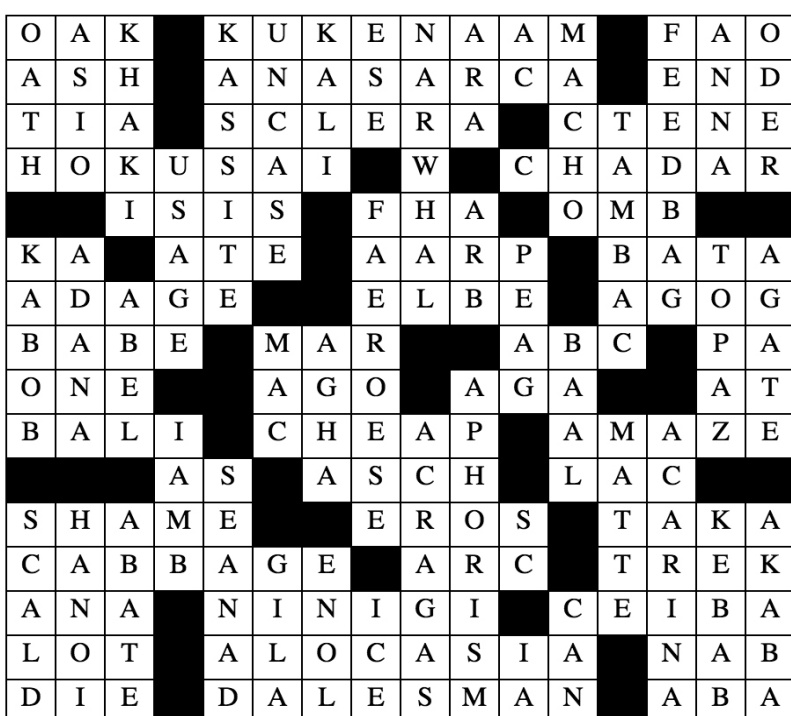
ACROSS

- ACROSS
1. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
 4. A royal German family that provided rulers for several European states and wore the crown of the Holy Roman Empire from 1440 to 1806.
 12. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
 15. The month following March and preceding May.
 16. Called forth from a latent or potential state by stimulation.
 17. Gear (including necessary machinery) for a particular enterprise.
 18. The form of the theological rationalism that believes in God on the basis of reason without reference to revelation.
 20. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
 22. Not only so, but.
 26. A European river.
 28. A person who keeps watch over something or someone.
 29. The appendage to an object that is designed to be held in order to use or move it.
 33. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
 36. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
 37. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
 39. The first Hindu calendar month (corresponding to March or April in the Gregorian calendar).
 41. (informal terms) "gave me a cockamamie reason for not going".
 42. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
 43. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
 44. A magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
 45. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
 48. An associate degree in applied science.
 51. Arousing or provoking laughter.
 54. English prelate and statesman.
 56. The friend of Phintias who pledged his life that Phintias would return (4th century BC).
 57. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
 58. Any plant of the genus *Erica*.
 59. A genus of bee.
 62. A small cake leavened with yeast.
 64. Showing or feeling admiration.
 67. Summer cypress.
 71. A woman of refinement.
 72. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir and avenger of Balder.
 75. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
 76. European cave-dwelling aquatic salamander with permanent external gills.
 77. Of or relating to the ancient Aramaic languages.
 81. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
 82. A university town in southeast Wyoming.
 83. A thrusting blow with a knife.

DOWN

- DOWN
1. A polite name for any woman.
 2. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
 3. An elaborate song for solo voice.
 4. Lap that forms a cloth border doubled back and stitched down v 1.
 5. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 6. Term used in some classifications as nearly equivalent to the order Coraciiformes.
 7. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
 8. Dwell (archaic).
 9. A member of the Shoshonean people of Utah and Colorado and New Mexico.
 10. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
 11. A ductile silvery-white ductile ferromagnetic trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
 12. An honorary arts degree.
 13. Being three more than fifty.
 14. A city in northern India.
 19. Cheap and shoddy.
 21. (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.
 23. A large mass of ice floating at sea.
 24. The month following July and preceding September.
 25. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
 27. /10 gram.
 30. A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
 31. A genetic abnormality resulting in short stature.
 32. Having nine hinged bands of bony plates.
 34. A member of the Algonquian people formerly inhabiting the Maritime Provinces of Canada.
 35. The dense colorless framework of a chloroplast.
 38. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
 40. A genus of Indridae.
 46. Not normal.
 47. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
 49. Implement consisting of a small piece of cotton that is used to apply medication or cleanse a wound or obtain a specimen of a secretion.
 50. One of the often brightly colored and branching hornlike structures on the back of the nudibranch (and other related mollusks) that serve as gills.
 52. Region of western Asia Minor colonized by Ancient Greeks.
 53. Elinvar is a trademark for a kind of nickel-chromium steel used for watch springs because its elasticity is constant over a wide range of temperatures.
 55. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 60. Destruction of heart tissue resulting from obstruction of the blood supply to the heart muscle.
 61. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
 63. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
 65. (British) An open river valley (in a hilly area).
 66. Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
 68. Containing or filled with salt.
 69. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
 70. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
 73. A rapid escape (as by criminals).
 74. Being one more than two.
 78. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
 79. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
 80. A mouth or mouthlike opening.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You have heightened sensitivity right now, Aries, and you know just how to use it. While it can be difficult to be so needed by others, right now it is your place to give help where it's needed. You are uniquely suited to the task at hand, so why not give of yourself wholeheartedly? In the end, you will reap huge rewards for your altruistic efforts. In the meantime, you can feel great about all the good you're doing.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There is no question about it, Taurus, change is in the air! Perhaps you can't feel it because you have allowed yourself to become bogged down in disappointment. You can't help but wonder if you will ever attain your goals. Well, take heart. The times they are a'changing, as Bob Dylan says. You just need to wait a bit longer. In the end, it doesn't matter how long it took to get there, only that you arrived!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

All living things benefit from your gifts, Gemini. Nurturing has always been part of your nature, and is especially so today. But sometimes you lavish more attention on others than you do on yourself, and this benefits no one. You will find that you'll have even more of yourself to give when you take the time to fill your own emotional well. Some time off from good works will ultimately be to everyone's benefit, yours especially.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

At some point, popularity becomes a burden rather than a blessing. Your bulletin board is cluttered with invitations to lectures and parties, Cancer, but your eyes begin to glaze over at the thought of attending all these events. Just how many chicken dinners is one expected to consume in a lifetime? It may be time for you to reassess your priorities. Rather than trying to say yes to everything in order to please everyone, why not start saying no in order to please yourself?



Leo (July 23-August 22)

It's another fortuitous day for finances, Leo, so be sure to take advantage of any opportunities that come your way. Though, in your usual analytical style, you will be careful first to do a thorough review of the pluses and minuses of the proposal. Much as you benefit from being at your desk today, don't forget to get outside to clear your mind. Be especially aware of any thoughts or ideas that come to you seemingly from out of the blue.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are seeing a new side of yourself today, Virgo, and what a lovely side it is! Normally so conservative, today you find yourself considering purchasing clothes with stylish details and expensive fabrics. And why not? You only live once, after all. And romance is definitely in the air today, so any sexy or sensuous purchases you make are bound to find an audience.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

We are all gullible to a certain extent. And you are no exception. You can expect to receive some financial offers today. They may come via the mail or an in-person sales pitch. Trust your instincts here. Some of what is being offered may really be too good to be true. However, on the home front, what is being offered is genuine through and through. There is passion in the air to go along with all this integrity!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have heightened sensitivity right now, Scorpio, and you know just how to use it. While it can be difficult to be so needed by others, right now it is your place to give help where it's needed. You are uniquely suited to the task at hand, so why not give of yourself wholeheartedly? In the end, you will reap huge rewards for your altruistic efforts. In the meantime, you can feel great about all the good you're doing.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your warmth and good nature draw people to you like a magnet today, Sagittarius. Of course, you're used to this occurring, but today these aspects of your character are especially enhanced. You will find that encounters with other people leave you feeling full and satisfied. After all, it is our loved ones who truly make life worth living. The time is ripe for romantic encounters.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There's no question, this has been a long time coming. But today the change you have been hoping for so long is likely to occur, Capricorn. The enormity of the change may not be obvious, at least at first. But over time, you will look back on the events of today and see just how pivotal they were. Keep your wits about you today, and seize any intriguing opportunity that comes along.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is a time to take care of yourself in the truest sense of the word, Aquarius. This doesn't mean indulging in excesses, but rather just the opposite. Make an extra effort with your clothes and grooming today. Shout down those voices inside that say you don't look as good as you should. You look just fine, and after your care today you will look even better!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

It's another potentially anxious day ahead, Pisces. But you have the power to soothe your ruffled feathers. Physical activity of any sort will calm you down considerably. Even a quick walk around the block will be of benefit. A calmer disposition in the afternoon makes it easier for you to handle favors and requests with your customary grace. If you need to, you can "disappear" for a few hours early in the afternoon and take in a movie.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Thanksgiving (U.S.)

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 26 letters spell a popular Thanksgiving Day event.

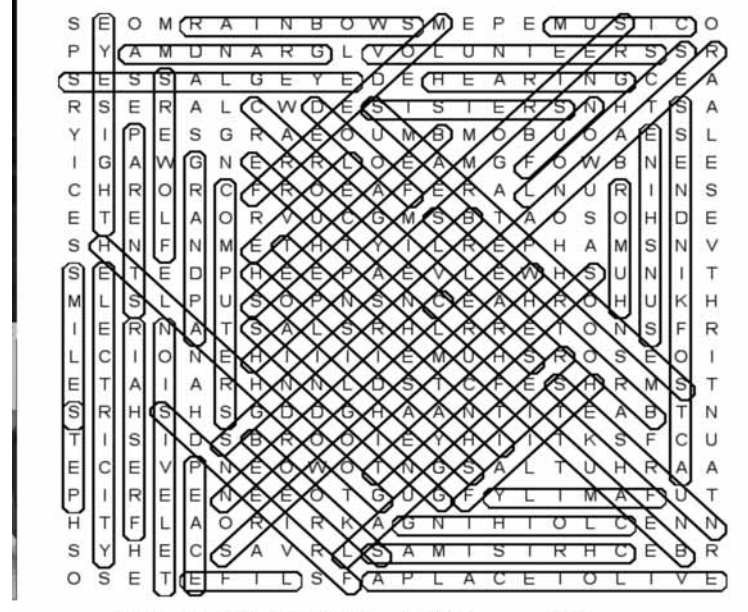


- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ANNUAL | GRAVY | RELATIVES |
| AUTUMN | HARVEST | REUNION |
| CELEBRATION | HOLIDAY | SQUASH |
| CORN | LONG WEEKEND | STUFFING |
| CRANBERRY | MASHED POTATOES | SWEET POTATO |
| FAMILY | MEAL | THURSDAY |
| FEAST | NOVEMBER | TRADITION |
| FESTIVAL | PARADE | TRAVEL |
| FOOD | PILGRIMS | TURKEY |
| FOOTBALL | PLYMOUTH | WAMPANOAG |
| FRIENDS | PUMPKIN PIE | YAMS |
| GATHERING | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Thankful For...

This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



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

The hidden message is: SOME PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS GRUMBLING BECAUSE ROSES HAVE THORNS; I AM THANKFUL THAT THORNS HAVE ROSES.

Daily SuDoku



very hard

Yesterday's Solution



easy

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020



Joey King

US actress Jennifer Lopez arrives for the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards on Sunday at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos

Hollywood stars shine on Globes red carpet

Hollywood's brightest stars sparkled Sunday on the red carpet at the Golden Globes, the first showbiz awards gala of 2020. Under sunny skies, the best and brightest of film and television gathered at the Beverly Hilton in their finest for the ceremony, hosted by British comedian Ricky Gervais. Here is a look at some of the trends spotted on the red carpet:

Black and white

Tinseltown's A-list wants to make a good impression on the first major red carpet of the year, and how better to do that than in classic black and white, a fashion staple. Style icon Billy Porter, a nominee for best actor in a TV drama for his work on "Pose," wowed fans in an all-white Alex Vinash tuxedo with a coat featuring a giant feather train - that zips off, he explained to E! television.

Nominated actress Joey King ("The Act") created a daring carpet moment in a sculptural black and white Iris van Herpen dress with a mind-boggling wavy detail and bare shoulders. Actress-filmmaker Greta Gerwig - whose "Little Women" was in contention but who was notably snubbed in the best director category - turned heads in a black Proenza Schouler dress with a notable side slit and a white off the shoulder neckline.

Nominee Cynthia Erivo ("Harriet") rocked a similar look - a custom Thom Browne number with flowers embroidered in the inner lining of her dress. And Awkwafina, who took home the award for best comedy film actress for her starring role in "The Farewell", sported a sleek Dior tuxedo with a ruffled collar blouse and a long ball skirt.

Midnight (mid-afternoon?) blues

The stars hit the red carpet in the middle of the afternoon in Los Angeles, but midnight blue was all the rage. Ana de Armas, a nominee for best comedy actress for the murder mystery "Knives Out," said she was "a little bit of a mess" at her first Globes but looked like a million bucks in a glittering, strapless Ralph & Russo gown with a full skirt. Beanie Feldstein, a nominee in the same



Billy Porter

category for "Booksmart", beamed in her strapless blue Oscar de la Renta gown and matching headband.

Ladies in red

A red dress is the stuff of Hollywood legends, and some of Hollywood's biggest stars delivered. Nicole Kidman, who stars in the Fox News harassment scandal flick "Bombshell" as Gretchen Carlson, went strapless - a big trend on the night - in a crimson Versace gown with a train and strappy stilettos. Scarlett Johansson, who starred in the searing Netflix divorce drama "Marriage Story", upped the va-va-voom factor in a plunging strapless Vera Wang



Olivia Colman

gown in a hue that matched her name. And Olivia Colman, a winner on Sunday for her turn as Queen Elizabeth II in Netflix's "The Crown", opted for a red Emilia Wickstead gown with dramatic puff sleeves and an Empire waist.

Shades of green

Charlize Theron, who plays journalist Megyn Kelly in "Bombshell", looked stunning in an off-the-shoulder vibrant green Dior gown with a black corset bodice. "Killing Eve" star Jodie Comer channeled her eccentric assassin character Villanelle in a full emerald green gown with puff sleeves and a canary yellow clutch.

Jennifer Lopez is 50 and fabulous, and has earned lots of praise for her Globe-nominat-



Scarlett Johansson

ed performance as a veteran stripper with a plan in "Hustlers". Her red carpet moments are sometimes the stuff of legend, like her iconic green Versace dress at the 2000 Grammys. But on Sunday, her Valentino look - topped with a giant green and gold bow - was... less than universally loved. "Jennifer Lopez has come as a giant present. I thought we were past that," New York Times fashion critic Vanessa Friedman tweeted. — AFP



Nicole Kidman



Awkwafina



Greta Gerwig



Cynthia Erivo



Beanie Feldstein



Charlize Theron



Director Sam Mendes (second left) poses with cast and crew in the press room with the awards for Best Motion Picture - Drama and Best Director - Motion Picture during the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards on Sunday at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



US actress Awkwafina poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.



US actress Renee Zellweger poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Drama.

'1917' stuns Golden Globes as Tarantino bags most prizes

War epic "1917" shocked the Golden Globes on Sunday by claiming the top prize for best drama film, while Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" won the most honors, massively boosting their prospects for next month's Oscars. "Once Upon a Time..." - a homage to 1960s Tinseltown - won three prizes including best comedy, but Martin Scorsese's much-vaunted Netflix crime saga "The Irishman" went home empty-handed.

The Globes are the first major awards gala of the year, in a packed season that ends with the Academy Awards in just over a month's time, so Sunday's winners will hope to capitalize on some much-needed momentum. "1917" follows two British soldiers through the trenches in World War I, and is filmed to look like one continuous, two-hour-long shot.

"Goodness me, that is a big surprise," said stunned filmmaker Sam Mendes, who bested Scorsese and Tarantino in the crowded best director category. Dedicating the film to his grandfather who signed up to fight aged just 17, Mendes added: "I hope he's looking down on us and I fervently hope it never happens again."

The film's lead actor George MacKay - a 27-year-old relative unknown in Hollywood - told AFP he was "just thrilled, proper thrilled" when the announcement was made. "It's a wonderful thing. It's truly just so brilliant for the film and everyone involved. It's the biggest team effort ever." Tarantino won the best screenplay award, and Brad Pitt took home best supporting actor honors for his role as a loyal stuntman to Leonardo DiCaprio's character in "Once Upon a Time..." "I also have to thank my partner in crime, LDC," said Pitt. "I wouldn't be here without you, man... I would have shared the raft, though," he added, referring to the closing scene of "Titanic."

Phoenix, Zellweger win big

"Rocketman," the Elton John musical biopic, was the other big winner on the night, scooping best actor for



Actor Taron Egerton poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.



US film director Quentin Tarantino (center) and actors Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio pose with other members of the cast and crew in the press room after winning the award for Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.

Taron Egerton and best original song for John, who was heavily involved in the movie. "I'm overjoyed - it's incredible," Egerton told AFP. "It's been the best experience of my life, and winning this is just such a lovely crystallization of all of that." The top films clearly resonated with the 90-odd members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), which doles out the prizes, but front-runners in the acting categories also made their mark.

Joaquin Phoenix cemented his Oscar favorite status by winning the best drama actor prize for his radical turn in "Joker", a dark and controversial take on the comic book super-villain. He thanked director Todd Phillips, saying: "You convinced me to do this movie and you encouraged me to give everything and to be sincere. And I'm such a pain in the a**."

Like several A-listers, Phoenix also used his speech to address climate change and the Australian wildfires. Renee Zellweger burnished her Oscar credentials with an expected win for biopic "Judy," portraying Judy Garland in her later years. South Korean black comedy "Parasite" bagged the award for best foreign language film, as widely expected, while Awkwafina became the first actress of Asian descent to win the best comedy actress prize for "The Farewell". Oscar nominations voting is



US actor Brad Pitt poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture.



US actress Laura Dern poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture.



South Korean film director Bong Joon Ho poses in the press room with the award for Best Motion Picture - Foreign Language.



US actor Joaquin Phoenix poses in the press room after winning the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Drama.



British film director Sam Mendes poses in the press room with the awards for Best Director - Motion Picture and Best Motion Picture - Drama.



US film director Quentin Tarantino poses in the press room with the award for Best Screenplay - Motion Picture.

already under way, but does not close until today - meaning the Globes results could be a factor.

Gervais roasts Hollywood

British comic Ricky Gervais greeted the stars at the booze-soaked banquet with his signature cutting one-liners. "Let's go out with a bang, let's have a laugh at your expense, shall we?" joked Gervais, hosting the awards for the fifth and final time. Gervais unleashed a no-holds-barred monologue that touched on topics haunting the industry including #MeToo, lack of diversity and the effect streaming giants are having on traditional film studios. An off-color joke about British actress Judi Dench and the critically slammed film "Cats" was bleeped out by censors.

Netflix flops

Netflix - which has disrupted the film industry in recent years - began the night far ahead of the traditional Hollywood studios with 17 Globe movie nominations. "This show should just be me coming out, (saying) 'You win everything, Netflix, good night,'" joked Gervais. But the streaming giant, which has spent billions to lure the industry's top filmmaking talent, flopped to end with just one movie win.

Laura Dern won for her supporting turn in "Marriage Story", a heart-wrenching divorce saga starring Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver, which began the night with the most nods at six. "The Irishman", a favorite to win best picture that cost Netflix \$160 million to make, did not convert any of its five nominations. — AFP



Director Chris Butler and producer Arianne Sutner pose in the press room with the award for Best Motion Picture - Animated.

List of key Golden Globe winners

Here are the winners in key categories for the 77th Golden Globe Awards, which were handed out in Beverly Hills on Sunday. Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon A Time... in Hollywood" took home three awards including best comedy/musical film honors, best screenplay and a best supporting actor prize for Brad Pitt. War epic "1917" took home best drama film honors and a surprise best director trophy for Sam Mendes.

FILM

- Best film, drama: "1917"
- Best film, musical or comedy: "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood"
- Best actor, drama: Joaquin Phoenix, "Joker"
- Best actress, drama: Renee Zellweger, "Judy"
- Best actor, musical or comedy: Taron Egerton, "Rocketman"
- Best actress, musical or comedy: Awkwafina, "The Farewell"
- Best supporting actor: Brad Pitt, "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood"
- Best supporting actress: Laura Dern, "Marriage Story"
- Best director: Sam Mendes, "1917"
- Best screenplay: Quentin Tarantino, "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood"
- Best foreign language film: "Parasite"
- Best animated feature: "Missing Link"

TELEVISION

- Best drama series: "Succession"
- Best drama actor: Brian Cox, "Succession"
- Best drama actress: Olivia Colman, "The Crown"
- Best musical or comedy series: "Fleabag"
- Best musical or comedy actor: Ramy Youssef, "Ramy"
- Best musical or comedy actress: Phoebe Waller-Bridge, "Fleabag"
- Best limited series or TV movie: "Chernobyl"
- Best limited series or TV movie actor: Russell Crowe, "The Loudest Voice"
- Best limited series or TV movie actress: Michelle Williams, "Fosse/Verdon"
- Best limited series or TV movie supporting actor: Stellan Skarsgard, "Chernobyl"
- Best limited series or TV movie supporting actress: Patricia Arquette, "The Act"

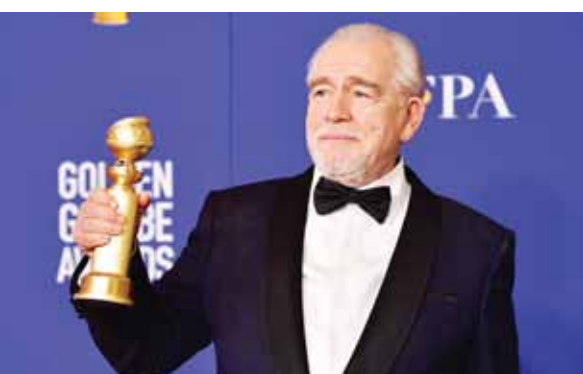
'Succession,' 'Fleabag' top TV winners at Golden Globes



Actress Sarah Snook (center), Alan Ruck (right), Brian Cox (second right), Nicholas Braun (third left), creator Jesse Armstrong and Jeremy Strong (left) pose in the press room with the award for Best Television Series - Drama.



Members of the cast of "Fleabag" pose in the press room with the award for Best Television Series - Musical or Comedy.



Scottish actor Brian Cox poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Drama.



British actress Olivia Colman poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Drama.

The television awards at the Golden Globes are often somewhat overlooked - after all, the industry handed out the Emmys just a few months ago. But at Sunday's boozy Globes gala, the winners in the small screen categories - including the stars behind breakout British comedy "Fleabag" and the darkly humorous drama "Succession" - got some laughs and got political.

Phoebe Waller-Bridge accepted the trophy for best musical or comedy series for "Fleabag" - which follows the antics, sex life and tribulations of a dry-witted 30-something woman in London - with a line of thanks for none other than Barack Obama for putting the show on his Best Of 2019 list. "Personally, I would like to also thank Obama for putting us on his list - as some of you may know, he's always been on mine," she said, drawing peals of laughter for her reference to a scene in season one.

Waller-Bridge also snagged a Globe for best comedy actress, adding it to her collection of Emmys for the critically acclaimed BBC series, which has grown into a phenomenon in the US after being acquired by Amazon. HBO's "Succession" - centered on a powerful media family's wrangling for control of its company - scored the award for best drama series. It fended off Netflix's flagship "The Crown", whose new cast is led by Oscar winner Olivia Colman. She won the night's Globe for best drama actress.

"Succession" star Brian Cox took home the best drama actor prize for his role as the family's husky, growling patriarch. "Chernobyl" - about the catastrophic 1986 nuclear accident - went home with the award for best limited series or TV movie, and Stellan Skarsgard won for best supporting actor. Netflix had secured 17 nods in the television categories, where it led the pack, ahead of HBO which had 15. But HBO won four awards to Netflix's one.

Political bent

Michelle Williams accepted the award for best



British producer Jane Featherstone (second right), alongside cast and crew, poses in the press room with the award for Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for "Chernobyl".

actress in a limited TV series or movie for her portrayal of Broadway legend Gwen Verdon in "Fosse/Verdon". She made a moving call to women to vote "in your own self-interest," emphasizing support for a woman's right to choose. Australian actor Russell Crowe was not present to accept his Globe for best limited series or TV movie actor for his portrayal of Fox News founder Roger Ailes in "The Loudest Voice" - but nevertheless urged action on climate change as his home country reels from devastating wildfires.

"Make no mistake, the tragedy unfolding in Australia is climate change-based," he said in a letter read aloud at

the gala. "We need to act based on science, move our global workforce to renewable energy and respect our planet for the unique and amazing place it is."

Actor and comedian Ramy Youssef won for best musical or comedy actor for his series "Ramy", in which he plays a version of himself, navigating life with immigrant parents and reconciling his Muslim faith with secular life. Patricia Arquette meanwhile won her third Globe for her supporting role in "The Act", and urged Americans to vote in this year's presidential election in accepting the award. — AFP



US actress Michelle Williams poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television.



British actress Phoebe Waller-Bridge poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy.



US comedian Ramy Youssef poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy.



Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgard poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television.



US actress Patricia Arquette poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television.

Lifestyle | Awards

From 'Allahu Akbar' to Australia fires: **Best Golden Globe moments**

Hollywood's Golden Globes ceremony lived up to its reputation on Sunday, with plenty of memorable moments served up to its A-list audience as they guzzled champagne at the Beverly Hilton. Here are some of the key moments:

Gervais strikes out

British comic Ricky Gervais used his fifth and final stint as host to fire off one-liners on a slew of topics haunting the entertainment sector including #MeToo, lack of diversity and the streaming wars. "Look, talking of all you perverts, it was a big year - 'Surviving R Kelly', 'Leaving Neverland', 'Two Popes'," Gervais joked, referring to two documentaries about sexual abuse and one of this year's best drama contenders.

Nominee Leonardo DiCaprio - and his string of young model girlfriends - was another target for Gervais. "'Once upon a Time... In Hollywood' - nearly three hours long. Leonardo DiCaprio attended the preview and by the end, his date was too old for him," said the host. And he poked fun at tech giant Apple, noting: "Apple roared into the TV game with 'The Morning Show', a superb drama about the importance of dignity and doing the right thing made by a company that runs sweatshops in China." But his performance drew criticism, with Deadline calling him "weakly cheeky" and Variety labelling it a "a tame, mildly political outing".

'We need to act'

Russell Crowe used his win at the Golden Globes to send a powerful message about the devastating fires in Australia and climate change - despite not being in the room. Crowe stayed in his home country "protecting his family from the devastating bushfires," presenter Jennifer Aniston explained, before reading his message. "Make no mistake, the tragedy unfolding in Australia is climate change-based," wrote the actor, who won for Showtime's "The Loudest Voice" about Fox News founder Roger Ailes. "We need to act based on science, move our global workforce to renewable energy and respect our planet... That way, we all have a future." Pierce Brosnan, Laura Dern and Patricia Arquette also addressed climate change, at a gala when organizers chose to serve only vegan food.

'Allahu Akbar'

Egyptian-American actor Rami Youssef doubtlessly raised a few eyebrows as he took to the stage after winning the first Golden Globe of the night for best actor in a comedy series for "Ramy". "I would like to thank my God. Allahu Akbar. Thank you, God," the Muslim actor said. The phrase, which means "God is Greatest", is an everyday expression in the Muslim world, but for some in the West, it has been twisted and is associated with extremist attacks.

Gervais skewers Hollywood A-list as Globes host

British comedian and actor Ricky Gervais returned to host the Golden Globe awards on Sunday, cracking scathing jokes about Hollywood's elite that got both laughs and disapproving looks from the A-list audience. Gervais, known for his no-holds-barred style of comedy, joked about Hollywood's lack of diversity, film producer Harvey Weinstein, who has been accused by more than 80 women of sexual misconduct, and the suicide of financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"Let's have a laugh at your expense," Gervais said at the start of his opening monologue, in which he vowed that the ceremony would be his last time hosting. "Remember we're all gonna die soon. And there's no sequel." Gervais last hosted the Globes four years ago, before the #MeToo and #OscarsSoWhite movements shined a spotlight on the underrepresentation of women and minorities in Hollywood.

He said the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which hands out the Golden Globes, had planned to have a segment honoring celebrities who died in 2019,

Bong Joon-ho: South Korea's biting film satirist

South Korea's Bong Joon-ho is an acclaimed filmmaker known for dark and genre-hopping thrillers, and his Golden Globe-winning "Parasite" - a vicious satire about the widening gap between rich and poor - features all of his trademarks. With a series of critical and commercial hits behind him, Bong is one of South Korea's best-known faces, claiming multiple prizes at home and making inroads into Hollywood - a rarity for an Asian auteur filmmaker.

The movie's Golden Globe win for best foreign language film is the first award for a Korean in any category at the gala, and comes after the 100th anniversary of Korean cinema in 2019. "Once you overcome the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films," the 50-year-old Bong said through a translator as he accepted the award at the gala in Beverly Hills. "I think we use only just one language - the cinema." "Parasite" also took the Palme d'Or at Cannes last year, and this latest accolade will intensify the Oscar buzz it has been generating as awards season heats up.

Provocative films

Once likened by Quentin Tarantino to "Steven Spielberg in his prime", Bong was among the first wave of South Korean filmmakers to blossom after the country's full democratization in the late 1980s, which opened the door for a cultural renaissance. His "Memories of Murder" - a 2003 feature film based on real-life serial killings that rattled the nation in the 1980s - was seen as a metaphor for the repressive society of military rule.

Bong's 2006 monster blockbuster "The Host" portrayed an incompetent government left helpless in the wake of a disaster. In 2014, parallels were drawn between the film and the Seoul ferry sinking that killed 300, mostly schoolchildren. "Mother" - a 2009 thriller about the overprotective mother of a mentally disabled boy suspected of murder - was also a huge success.

His 2013 film "Snowpiercer" depicted a dystopian future in which the last humans on Earth - who survived a failed attempt to stop global warming - travel endlessly on a train separated by class,

and the lower class revolts. Tilda Swinton, who was in "Snowpiercer", also starred in Bong's Netflix-produced 2017 sci-fi action-adventure "Okja" about a country girl trying to save a genetically-engineered beast from a greedy multinational firm. It missed out on a Cannes prize but raised debates about factory farming and animal exploitation.

"Bong's films come at seminal moments

for the Korean film industry," Jason Bechervaise, a professor at Korea Soongsil Cyber University, told AFP. The unprecedented worldwide acclaim for his latest work, he said, was driven by the fact that "there's a great deal of political rage out there exacerbated by a tangible sense of widening social equality, and 'Parasite' feeds into this very effectively". — AFP



Jennifer Aniston, Glenn Close and Sandra Bullock attend the Netflix 2020 Golden Globes After Party at The Beverly Hilton hotel. — AFP photos



British compose Bernie Taupin (left) and British musician Elton John pose in the press room with the award for Best Original Song - Motion Picture.

'Go out and vote'

Michelle Williams urged women to go out and vote in this year's US presidential election as she accepted a Golden Globe for best actress in a limited series or television movie. "As women and as girls, things can happen



US actor Leonardo DiCaprio arrives for the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards on Sunday.

to our bodies that are not our choice," the "Fosse/Verdon" star told the audience. "So women, 18 to 118, when it is time to vote, please do so in your own self-interest... It is what men have been doing for years, which is why the world looks so much like them," she added.

television series produced by major tech and media corporations.

"You say you're woke, but the companies you work for - I mean, unbelievable - Apple, Amazon, Disney. If ISIS started a streaming service, you'd call your agent, wouldn't ya?," he asked. "So if you do win an award tonight, don't use it as a platform to make a political speech. You are in no position to lecture the public about anything. You know nothing about the real world. Most of you spent less time in school than Greta Thunberg. "So if you win, right? Come up, accept your little award, thank your agent and your God" and leave the stage, he concluded, using an expletive.

Gervais' jokes prompted nervous laughter from the audience at the Beverly Hilton hotel. Actor Tom Hanks, who received a lifetime achievement award at the ceremony, was caught giving a disapproving look during Gervais' monologue that went viral on Twitter. Safer subjects, such as the US college admissions scandal and long movies, also provided Gervais with irresistible fodder.

Gervais said he "came here in a limo tonight and the license plate was made by Felicity Huffman", referring to the "Desperate Housewives" actress, who served nearly all of a 14-day prison sentence last year for her role in the admissions scandal. The comedian also said Leonardo DiCaprio, the star of Quentin Tarantino's two-hour-and-40-minute-long film "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood," "attended the premier and by the end his date was too old for him". — Reuters



(From left) Lee Jung Eun, Bong Joon-ho and Song Kang-ho pose in the press room with award for Best Motion Picture - Foreign Language for "Parasite" during the 77th Annual Golden Globe Awards. — AFP



US-Irish actor Pierce Brosnan arrives for the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards.

"Don't forget we are the largest voting body in this country. Let's make it look more like us."

'On the brink of war'

Arquette also used her moment in the spotlight to decry heightened tensions between the United States and Iran, after the US strike that killed a top Iranian military commander. When future generations "look back on this night in the history books, we will see a country on the brink of war," Arquette said, accepting her award for "The Act". "The United States of America, a president tweeting out a threat of 52 bombs including cultural sites... People not knowing if bombs are going to drop on their kids' heads - and the continent of Australia on fire." She also ended her speech appealing to viewers to vote in the upcoming November election.

'52-year-old marriage'

Bernie Taupin described his songwriting career with legendary singer Elton John as a "52-year-old marriage," as the duo won a Golden Globe for best original song for "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again" from the biopic "Rocketman". "This is a song we wrote for a movie which deals with our relationship and it's a relationship that doesn't happen very much in this town - it's a 52-year-old marriage," Taupin said to applause. John added that winning with Taupin was "one of the most emotional moments of my life." —AFP

Hanks honored with lifetime award at Golden Globes

US actor Tom Hanks poses in the press room with the Cecil B DeMille award during the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards.

Tom Hanks, regarded as one of the nicest men in show business, was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the Golden Globes on Sunday to mark his 30-year movie career. The boyish-looking Hanks, now 63, was presented with the Cecil B DeMille award at a ceremony where he also was nominated in the best supporting actor race for his role as the late, beloved US children's television presenter Mister Rogers in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood".

Hanks began his acceptance speech by joking about his early career stint on the 1970s TV comedy "The Love Boat" and saying that he had a bad cold that had made him particularly emotional. He thanked his wife, Rita Wilson, and five children before acknowledging a long list of actors and directors who he said had contributed to his long success. "You're a dope if you don't steal from everybody you have every worked with," Hanks said, naming Meryl Streep, Meg Ryan, Denzel Washington, and Charlize Theron, among others.

Hanks made his movie breakthrough in "Big" in 1988, playing a teenager who wakes up to find himself in the body of an adult. He went on to win back-to-back Oscars and Golden Globes in 1994 and 1995 for his roles in AIDS drama "Philadelphia" and comedy "Forrest Gump". Genial and dependable, he has become known as "America's Dad" thanks to performances in more than 70 movies, including romantic comedy "Sleepless in Seattle," war movie "Saving Private Ryan," action film "Sully" and the voice of friendly cowboy Woody in the "Toy Story" animated franchise.

Hanks attributed some of his success in the movies to a lesson he learned while working at a Shakespeare theater festival when he was a young actor: Being on time. "Showing up on time is one of the greatest liberating acts you can give yourself in a movie," he said. The Cecil B DeMille award is given annually by Golden Globe organizers the Hollywood Foreign Press Association to an actor, director or producer who has made a lasting impact on the film industry. Past recipients include Steven Spielberg, Meryl Streep, Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bridges and Harrison Ford. — Reuters

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BY DAY: Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

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

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
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KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	06 °C			
ABDALY	20 °C	07 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	20 °C	09 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	19 °C	14 °C			
AHMADI	18 °C	14 °C			
NUWAISIB	21 °C	10 °C			
WAFRA	20 °C	07 °C			
SALMY	18 °C	06 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	01/07	Fair	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	01/08	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	22 °C	09 °C	SE-NW	15 - 40 km/h
Thursday	01/09	Rather cold	19 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	01/10	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	20 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		
Fajr		05:19
Sunrise		06:43
Zuhr		11:54
Asr		14:46
Sunset		17:04
Isha		18:26

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	10 °C
MAX. RH	91 %
MIN. RH	36 %
MAX. Wind	N 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sunil Kuttijil George (Kuttijil Geo Vila, Chandanappally P.O., Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin: 689648) holder of Indian Passport No. T5332157 issued at Kuwait on 07-07-2019, presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given Name: Sunil Kuttijil Surname: George
 Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

I, Shibi Joseph (Kuttijil Geo Vila, Chandanappally P.O., Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin: 689648) holder of Indian Passport No. R8270784 issued at Kuwait on 13-08-2017, presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given Name: Shibi Surname: Joseph
 Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

I, Sunil Kuttijil George, father of Ansa Leya Sunil holder of Indian Passport No. S2391456 issued at Kuwait on 15-01-2018, Permanent address of Kuttijil Geo Vila, Chandanappally P.O., Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my daughter's Given Name as: Ansa Leya Surname: Sunil
 Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

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I, Sunil Kuttijil George, father of Kripa Anna Sunil holder of Indian Passport No. T8211186 issued at Kuwait on 07-11-2019, Permanent address of Kuttijil Geo Vila, Chandanappally P.O., Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my daughter's Given Name as: Kripa Anna Surname: Sunil
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Old name: Jummal Mustafakhan Hamzakhan, new name: Jummal Mustafa Hamzakhan. Passport No. Z2402486. (C 5601)

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

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British Airways	22425635
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Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 7/1/ 2020				Departure Flights on Tuesday 7/1/ 2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
KAC	102	London	01:25	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	IGO	1765	Jeddah	16:00
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KLM	446	Amsterdam	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	16:20
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	THY	765	Istanbul	16:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1087	Doha	16:30
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	16:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	MSR	613	Cairo	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	621	Doha	16:45
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	PGT	861	Istanbul	16:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	713	Sohag	17:00
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	LMU	511	Cairo	17:35
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	IGO	1752	Chennai	17:35
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	QTR	1077	Doha	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	17:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	101	Bahrain	17:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	THY	771	Istanbul	17:55
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	JZR	121	Dubai	18:00
GEL	500	Baku	05:30	RJA	643	Amman	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	FDB	070	Dubai	18:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	FEQ	442	Asyut	18:10
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	UAE	874	Dubai	18:20
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	18:35
KAC	106	London	06:00	KAC	171	Frankfurt	18:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	IGO	1767	Mumbai	18:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	165	Rome	18:55
FEQ	341	Sohag	06:05	FDB	054	Dubai	18:55
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	JZR	001	LGW	19:20
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	19:20
JZR	120	Dubai	07:00	KAC	163	MXF	19:30
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	501	Beirut	19:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	BAW	156	London	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	157	Istanbul	19:55
KAC	5514	BRU	07:30	JZR	731	Cairo	19:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	691	Muscat	20:05
JZR	212D	Jeddah	08:00	QTR	1085	Doha	20:05
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	545	Cairo	20:10
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	KAC	601	Baku	20:15
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	KAC	671	Dubai	20:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ABY	126	Sharjah	20:35
THY	6376	ISL	08:35	KAC	101	London	20:40
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	561	Amman	20:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR	151	Mashhad	20:55
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	UAE	856	Dubai	21:00
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	117	New York	21:00
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	KAC	613	Bahrain	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	JZR	301	Istanbul	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	773	Riyadh	21:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KAC	155	Istanbul	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	056	Dubai	21:25
NIA	361	Alexandria	10:00	KAC	617	Doha	21:30
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	THY	6376	Dubai/ISL	21:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	21:40
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	10:40	IRA	674	Lar	21:45
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	JZR	211	Jeddah	21:50
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	JZR	211D	Jeddah	21:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	NIA	362	Alexandria	21:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1071	Doha	22:00
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	SVA	513	Riyadh	22:00
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	741	Dammam	22:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	GFA	214	Bahrain	22:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	JZR	221	Riyadh	22:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JZR	213	Jeddah	22:00
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	515	Tehran	22:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50				



This aerial view shows a pedestrian walking across a parking lot in a residential area after snow fell in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

Prospect of US-Iran conflict threatens Gulf economies

DUBAI: Gulf economies, already strained by years of low oil prices, face a double-edged sword with the prospect of conflict with Iran increasing oil prices while also threatening exports. If the US killing of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani on Friday leads to conflict between Washington and Tehran, oil facilities could be targeted in Gulf states, which also host US military bases, including the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

Observers say such a conflict might send oil prices above \$100 a barrel but could also lead to a massive disruption of exports if Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway which serves as the main artery for Middle East oil. "With Iran vowing to retaliate, there is an increased risk of attacks on oil facilities and other targets," in the Gulf states, said M R Raghu, head of research at Kuwait Financial Centre. "However, high oil prices may not translate into higher revenues as over 20 percent of global oil supply is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran threatened to block in September."

Drone and missile attacks on Saudi Aramco oil facilities in September, blamed on Iran, slashed crude production from the world's top oil exporter by almost half. And a string of attacks on vessels in the troubled waters of the Gulf last year, which Washington and its allies blamed on Iran, also stoked fears for the security of global supply. A major new disruption that led to lower production and exports, and consequently lower revenues, could cripple oil-dependent regional economies.

Gloomy outlook

The oil price crash of mid-2014 cost Gulf economies hundreds of billions of dollars, with Saudi suffering the most. Since then, they have increased borrowing amid persistent budget deficits, weak

economic growth and lower foreign investment inflows. In October, the International Monetary Fund cut its forecasts for Gulf economic growth in 2019 to just 0.7 percent, down from 2.0 percent the previous year. Saudi Arabia was pared to a meagre 0.2 percent over low oil prices, production cuts and geopolitical tensions.

Oil and gas income make up at least 70 percent of public revenues for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. London-based Capital Economics predicted that if Iran succeeded in closing the Strait of Hormuz "Brent crude would jump to \$150 a barrel."

It said however that the impact on other countries in the Middle East and North Africa "would ultimately depend on whether they get directly caught up in the conflict". Many Gulf countries emerged relatively unscathed and recorded rapid growth during and after the First Gulf War in 1990-91, when oil exports were not disrupted.

Given the variables, the outlook for oil is difficult to pinpoint. Edward Bell, director of commodities research at Emirates NBD, UAE's second-largest bank, believes oil prices over \$100 a barrel are unlikely. "Moving from a sort of \$60-70 range to \$70-80 a barrel range will be much more likely," Bell told AFP. Even if the Strait of Hormuz was closed, some Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and UAE, have alternative export routes on the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. Oman lies outside Hormuz.

But the Saudi East-West pipeline, with a capacity to transport five million barrels a day to the Red Sea, was hit by drones flown by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthis in the summer, causing disruption for several days. Saudi economist Fadhil Al-Bouenain said a US-Iran war would further dampen economic growth in



TEHRAN: Mourners gather to pay homage to slain Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani (image on banner), Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis and other victims of a US attack in the capital yesterday. — AFP

GCC states, just as many of them are attempting to diversify towards a post-oil future. "Any restrictions to Gulf countries' ability to export oil would lead to a drop in their economic growth... This will not be offset by higher oil prices," Bouenain told AFP.

A conflict would increase risk premiums, hit foreign

direct investment flow into the region and make raising debt from overseas more expensive, said Raghu from Kuwait Financial Centre. If the Strait of Hormuz was blocked even for a few days, it could decrease the ratings of GCC banks and sovereigns and dampen investor confidence, S&P Ratings said in July. —AFP

Haftar forces take control of Sirte as...

Continued from Page 1

Haftar's LNA earlier yesterday said on social media they were "steadily advancing towards the heart of Sirte" after seizing control of Ghardabiya airport on the city's outskirts. The statement said the operation aimed to "purge Sirte of armed militias". The airport, located in an air force base, fell into LNA hands after "forces tasked with protecting it surrendered completely with their equipment" to Haftar's self-styled army, the statement added. "Clashes are underway" in the southern part of Sirte and in its coastal area, the statement said, adding that some enemy fighters had fled while others were captured by the advancing LNA forces.

Forces loyal to the UN-recognised GNA confirmed they had come under attack in Sirte. "We are dealing

with Haftar's terrorist militias," they said in a statement on Facebook, adding that "mercenaries" from Chad were fighting alongside Haftar's forces. The UN-recognized government has recently sought help from its ally Turkey. Last week the Turkish parliament passed a bill approving a military deployment to Libya to shore up the GNA. On Sunday, Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdogan said soldiers had begun deploying in Libya.

Tensions escalated in Libya when Haftar launched an operation in January 2019 to "purge" southern Libya "of terrorist groups and criminals" and seized several towns after security support from local tribes. Haftar then set his eyes on Tripoli, launching an offensive on the capital in April to unseat the GNA. Haftar's LNA has received material and military support from countries including the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt, according to UN experts and diplomats. Sirte was at one stage a bastion of the Islamic State group which moved into Libya amid the chaos that followed Gaddafi's ouster. IS controlled Sirte from early 2015 but the GNA, backed by US airstrikes, evicted the militants in a seven-month battle that cost hundreds of lives. — Agencies

MP Adel Al-Damkhi, who filed the grilling, rejected requests to delay the grilling in light of grave security developments in the region. Damkhi said he believes the minister will be forced to quit sooner rather than later, adding that those who asked him to delay the grilling raised sectarian concerns amid US-Iran tensions. He however insisted that the minister is a liberal and such sectarian concerns should not be raised.

The grilling accuses the minister of undermining MPs and their electorate after ridiculing statements they made about her following her inclusion in the Cabinet. Several Islamist MPs had demanded that Aseeri be dismissed because she had tweeted in support of the 2011 Bahraini protests against the government. Yesterday, Aseeri demanded an explanation over the charges listed in the grilling, saying that parts of the grilling were not clear. She also said that she is being grilled as a citizen and not for actions she did as a minister. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain tweeted that Soleimani was killed by Americans in Iraq and urged Kuwaitis to stay away from sectarian issues.

Meanwhile, MP Safa Al-Hashem yesterday questioned why and how the Anti-Corruption Authority signed a cooperation agreement with the Egyptian anti-corruption body. She asked if the Kuwaiti authorities have attempted to sign such cooperation agreements with other countries.

Khamenei in tears as huge crowd...

Continued from Page 1

Iraq's parliament has meanwhile demanded the government expel the 5,200 American troops stationed in the country in response to the drone attack in Baghdad which also killed top Iraqi military figure Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Trump has warned a forced departure of US troops would prompt sanctions against Iraq that would "make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame".

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned Iran must avoid "further violence and provocations" after the alliance held emergency talks on the crisis. "At our meeting today, allies called for restraint and de-escalation. A new conflict would be in no-one's interest," he said. The European Union, whose foreign ministers will hold emergency talks about the crisis Friday, said it was in both Iran and Iraq's interests to "take the path of sobriety and not the path of escalation".

Saudi Arabia - an oil-rich US ally seen as vulnerable to Iranian counter strikes - also appealed for calm after a "very dangerous" escalation. The EU's diplomatic chief Josep Borrell said he "deeply regrets" Iran's latest step back from the nuclear deal. The agreement had offered Tehran relief from sanctions in return for curbs to prevent it acquiring nuclear weapons - but Trump's withdrawal from it in 2018 dramatically weakened the agreement.

Despite its latest step, Iran insisted it will continue to fully cooperate with the UN agency overseeing its atomic program. The European leaders also pleaded with all parties to not jeopardize the ongoing battle against the Islamic State group, which has lost its self-proclaimed "caliphate" but whose militants remain active. Amid the geopolitical tensions in the oil-rich region, crude prices surged and most equities tumbled while the safe-haven commodity gold hit a more than six-year high.

Trump's adviser Kellyanne Conway said yesterday that Trump was still confident he could renegotiate a new nuclear agreement "if Iran wants to start behaving like a normal country". Tehran has said Washington must return to the existing nuclear pact and lift sanctions before any talks can take place.

Trump stood by remarks that cultural sites were potential targets, despite criticism from US politicians that this amounted to a threat to commit war crimes. "They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump said.

The raw emotions sparked by the US killing of Soleimani were on full display in Tehran, where mourners formed a sea of black, dotted with red Shiite flags and white signs, in what state television said was a "several million-strong" turnout. "The last time I remember such a crowd was at Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral 30 years ago," said journalist Maziar Khosravi. As they marched down a main artery of the Iranian capital, the mourners chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel".

Khamenei's voice cracked and he appeared to weep briefly as he prayed over the flag-draped coffins containing the remains of Soleimani and five other "martyrs" killed in the strike. The supreme leader was flanked by President Hassan Rouhani and other top political and military figures as well as the slain general's replacement as Quds commander, Esmail Qaani. "We must give a crushing response," a 61-year-old named Alkhami said. "We must target whatever military base they have in the region."

Soleimani's daughter Zeinab and the leader of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, Ismail Haniya, also delivered rousing speeches. Zeinab said: "Stupid Trump - a symbol of stupidity and a toy in the hand of Zionism - don't think that with the martyrdom of my father everything is over." The procession made its way to Tehran's Azadi Square, before Soleimani's remains were flown to the holy city of Qom for a ceremony.

A tribute was also paid to Soleimani and Muhandis at a mosque in Baghdad where people trampled on a large portrait of Trump and the US and Israeli flags. In Yemen, hundreds vented their anger over the assassination in a protest called by Tehran-backed Houthi rebels. "We come together with free men around the world to face down the American Satan," an announcer told the crowd in Sana'a's old town. Soleimani was one of Iran's most popular public figures, seen as a hero of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. The general will be laid to rest in his hometown Kerman today, in a martyrs' cemetery next to a war veteran he used to fight alongside with. — Agencies

Speaker receives US, Iranian envoys...

Continued from Page 1

such operations. It urged publishers of such fabricated reports to pursue credibility and accuracy and stop publishing or circulating such reports.

Ghanem said it had been agreed with the government to hold a special session on Thursday to debate the agreement signed with Saudi Arabia on the neutral zone and the traffic chaos. He said this part will be open to the public, while the other part of the session will be held behind closed doors to discuss regional security developments.

Ghanem also said he discussed with the Iranian ambassador the issue of receiving a man said to be an opponent of the Iranian government, adding that the man was received in the personal capacity of a researcher and not an activist from Ahvaz. The speaker said the grilling of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri is listed on the agenda of today's session, but the debate could be delayed if the minister asks for it.

Sports

Eller's overtime goal nets Caps' wild win over Sharks

Panthers, Driedger put Penguins' streak on ice

WASHINGTON: Washington scored twice in a 32-second span late in the third period and Lars Eller tallied 2:01 into overtime to lift the Capitals to a 5-4 victory over the visiting San Jose Sharks on Sunday afternoon. The Capitals had to overcome a second-period hat trick from San Jose's Evander Kane and a late 4-2 deficit. Captain Logan Couture seemed to seal it for the Sharks on an empty-net goal for that two-goal edge with one minute left in the third period. Washington, however, trimmed the deficit after Jakub Vrana's second of the game with 47 seconds left before T.J. Oshie tallied with 15 seconds left. Goalie Braden Holtby then stopped two breakaways in overtime and made a pass that started the rush on Eller's goal. Eller took a cross-ice feed from defenseman John Carlson and fired a high shot past goalie Martin Jones. The assist was Holtby's first of the season.

FLAMES 5, WILD 4 (SO)

Mark Giordano tied the game with less than six minutes left in the third period and Dillon Dube recorded the shootout winner as Calgary beat Minnesota in St. Paul, Minn. Calgary, which also got goals from Milan Lucic, Travis Hamonic and Michael Stone, has won back-to-back contests for the first time since a seven-game run from Nov. 27-Dec. 12. The Flames' David Rittich stopped 30 shots and six of seven in the shootout. Marcus Foligno scored twice for Minnesota, which has lost three of four.

LIGHTNING 3, HURRICANES 1

Goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy won his fifth straight decision by stopping 28 shots as Tampa Bay pushed its winning streak to seven games with a victory against host Carolina in Raleigh, N.C. Mitchell Stephens, Steven

Stamkos and Brayden Point scored as the Lightning completed a perfect four-game road swing. Nikita Kucherov notched two assists, and Stamkos also had an assist. The Hurricanes, who were playing the first game after the midway mark of their schedule, have lost five of their last seven games. They have three games remaining on a seven-game homestand.

PANTHERS 4, PENGUINS 1

Frank Vatrano and Mike Hoffman each had a goal and an assist Sunday as visiting Florida topped Pittsburgh. Brett Connolly and Evgenii Dadonov also scored for Florida, and goaltender Chris Driedger made 31 saves for the Panthers, who have won seven of 10 and finished a road trip 2-2-0. Jared McCann scored for Pittsburgh, which had its five-game point streak (4-0-1) snapped. The Penguins failed to improve on their NHL-best 16 home wins. They also had won eight in a row at home against Florida.

DUCKS 5, PREDATORS 4 (SO)

Ryan Getzlaf scored the deciding goal in the fifth round of a shootout and added three assists as host Anaheim ended a three-game losing streak by edging Nashville. Adam Henrique posted two goals and an assist, while Cam Fowler and Daniel Sprong also scored, as the Ducks took a season-high 47 shots and picked up their third victory in their last four home games. Goalie John Gibson made three saves in the shootout and 22 in the game. Craig Smith scored two goals and Austin Watson and Rocco Grimaldi one each for the Predators, who lost for the fourth time in their last five games and went 1-1 in a quick trip to Southern California with games on consecutive nights. Juuse Saros made 43 saves for the Predators.

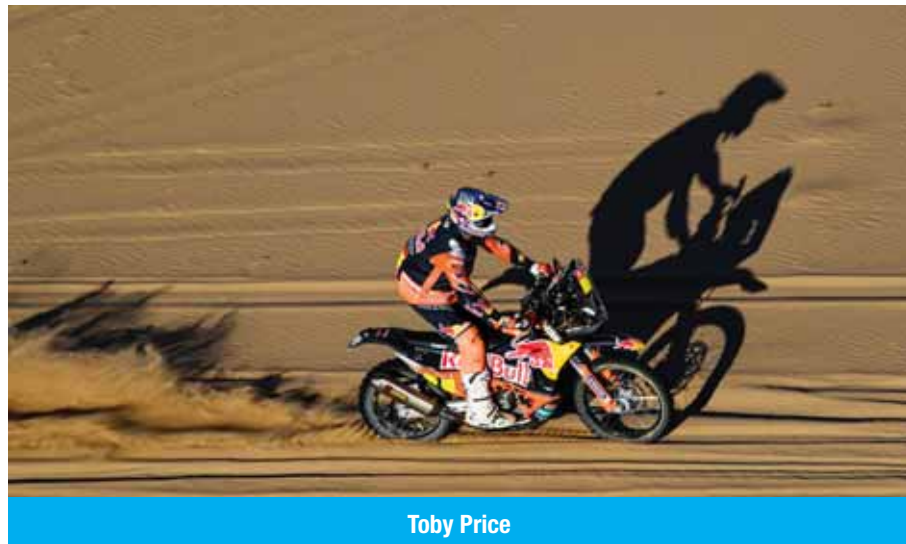


MINNESOTA: Ryan Hartman #38 of the Minnesota Wild takes the puck as teammate Jordan Greenway #18 pins Sam Bennett #93 and Travis Hamonic #24 of the Calgary Flames to the boards during the first period of the game at Xcel Energy Center in St Paul, Minnesota. The Flames defeated the Wild 5-4 in a shootout.— AFP

BLACKHAWKS 4, RED WINGS 2

Adam Boqvist scored the go-ahead goal with 10:13 remaining in the third period and goaltender Corey Crawford stopped 19 of 21 shots to rally host Chicago past Detroit. Making his first start in nearly two weeks, Crawford earned his first victory since Dec. 6 as he

spelled Robin Lehner, who is day-to-day with a right knee injury after making the past four starts for Chicago. The Blackhawks have won four of five and six of eight. The Red Wings, who lost for the eighth time in nine games, also lost defenseman Trevor Daley, as he left the ice after taking a shot to his ankle.— Reuters



Toby Price



Dmitry Sotnikov

First ever Dakar stage in Saudi

JEDDAH: The 2020 Dakar Rally has burst into life with an opening stage that gave competitors a stern wake up call - 319 kilometres against the clock. The first ever Dakar stage in Saudi Arabia represented a new start for all 342 vehicles entered into the rally.

The opening bike stage win went to reigning champion Toby Price (AUS). Despite his roadbook locking up on him, and then tearing completely, he was still able to post the fastest time of day. Just five seconds back from Price is Ricky Brabec (USA), followed 35 seconds later by Matthias Walkner (AUT).

"Once the roadbook has gone you're pretty much driving blind," - Toby Price Price and Walkner's fellow Red Bull KTM Factory Team riders, Sam Sunderland (GBR) and Luciano Benavides (ARG), are also well placed within the Top 10 after the first day of racing. If the team are going to extend their remarkable record of 18 consecutive Dakar wins, they'll need one of this foursome in top spot after stage 12.

The surprise winner on the opening day of the car race is Vaidotas Zala (LTU) who led home a star-studded field of offroad competitors. While Zala holds the overnight lead he will be aware of 13-time winner Stephane Peterhansel (FRA) breathing down his neck in second overall.

In third place is Peterhansel's fellow MINI Buggy driver Carlos Sainz (ESP), just one place ahead of defending car class champion Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT). Al-Attiyah led the stage for most of the day before a succession of punctures plagued his Toyota Hilux late in the stage. "We had three punctures to stop and fix. We had to stop every two or three kilometres to fix a rear wheel, very strange." - Nasser Al-Attiyah.

Aron Domzala (POL) is the first side-by-side driver to register a stage win at the 2020 Dakar. However, defending SxS champion Chaleco Lopez (CHI) is less than seven minutes behind in fourth place. It was a mixed opening SxS stage for the members of Red Bull Off-Road Team USA. Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA) scored a Top 10 on his first ever Dakar stage while his team-mate Blade Hildebrand (USA) is looking to claw back 35 minutes on Domzala and

the other frontrunners on the coming stages. "This was my very first Dakar stage and it feels great to just get over the line." - Mitch Guthrie Jr.

The coaching crew of Cyril Despres (FRA) and Mike Horn (SUI) were placed in the Top 5 of the SxS race in their 1000cc OT3 buggy up until kilometre 254 of the stage. For the final 60 kilometres of the stage their progress was hampered by overheating issues, but they battled on to cross the finish line.

Over in the truck race it hasn't taken long for Team Kamaz Master to scale the leaderboard. Anton Shibalov (RUS) leads the race with his three fellow Kamaz drivers all well positioned to assert their dominance over the early rounds of this first Saudi Arabian Dakar. There looks to be a battle Royale shaping up in the quad category. Two-time winner Ignacio Casale (CHI) took the opening stage and leads another former champ Rafae Sonik (POL) by 5m36s at the summit.

After an overnight stay in the Al Wajh bivouac, the Dakar moves off to Neom in northwestern Saudi Arabia. The timed special stage of 367 kilometres will offer the riders spectacular views of the Red Sea as well as plenty of navigational challenges along the way.

The 2020 Dakar Rally has burst into life with an opening stage that gave competitors a stern wake up call - 319 kilometres against the clock. The first ever Dakar stage to be held in Saudi Arabia represented a new start for all 342 vehicles entered into the rally. As well as a few familiar faces taking early leads, we also have a crop of intriguing newcomers to keep an eye on.

It was a pre-sunrise start for the Dakar convoy after Saturday night's Start Podium in the city of Jeddah. The bikes set off first on the desert route to Al Wajh, followed by the quads, cars, side-by-sides and finally the trucks. The opening bike stage win went to reigning champion Toby Price (AUS). Despite his roadbook locking up on him, and then tearing completely, he was still able to post the fastest time of day. Just five seconds back from Price is Ricky Brabec (USA), followed 35 seconds later by Matthias Walkner (AUT).

including by getting lookalikes of athletes to provide the samples.

The undercover team also filmed Thailand's Olympic bronze medallist Rattikan Gulnoi admitting to using steroids when she was 18 years old — something that could see her stripped of her prize.

Christian Baumgartner, who heads the German federation, told ARD the IWF's chief was to blame.

"Ajan stands for a system that has established doping in weightlifting over decades and that has gone off the rails for decades," Baumgartner charged, adding that "a culture of corruption has spread".

Beyond doping, the ARD report also cited documents allegedly showing at least \$5 million in funding flowing

from the International Olympic Committee to the IWF were transferred into two Swiss accounts of which only Ajan had oversight.

Hungarian national Ajan, 80, has been in the IWF's management since 1970, taking over as president of the federation in 2000.

In a statement to AFP later Sunday, the IWF said it was examining the allegations made in the broadcast.

"Amid a number of apparent falsehoods, unsubstantiated allegations and disproven rumours dating back to as far as 2008, there does seem to be some fresh information included in the programme which may be of use to the IWF's efforts to promote clean weightlifting and protect clean sport," said the statement.—AFP

Thomas win Tournament of Champions in playoff

LOS ANGELES: Justin Thomas said he "got very lucky" after botching the last hole in regulation but holding on to win the Tournament of Champions in a playoff on Sunday, edging Patrick Reed and Xander Schauffele for his 12th US PGA Tour title.

The 26-year-old American birdied the third extra hole to beat Reed after defending champion Schauffele had been eliminated with a three-putt par on the first playoff green.

World number four Thomas stuck his third shot three feet from the pin at the par-five 18th on the Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii, to set up an easy birdie and watched as Reed missed his seven-foot putt to extend the playoff.

All three had finished 72 holes with 14-under par totals of 278 after Thomas, who enjoyed a two-shot lead with three to play, bogeyed two of the last three holes.

He fell back to 15-under at the 16th before his three-wood second shot at 18 found the high-high grass in a penalty area on his way to a bogey in a four-under-par final round of 69.

Playing partner Schauffele, the world number eight, reached the green in two, but missed a seven-foot birdie putt for victory, carding a three-under par 70.

Reed, ranked 11, was already in the clubhouse on 14-under after capping a bogey-free seven-under 66 with a 20-foot birdie putt at the 72nd hole. Reed, the 2018 US Masters champion, had putts to win on each of the first two playoff holes but was unable to get efforts from 30 feet and 12 feet to drop.

"For some reason I was supposed to win this week," Thomas said. "I got very, very lucky to have that putt. "But I also stuck to my process," said Thomas, who like the entire field in the winners-only event dealt with challenging, gusty winds for a fourth straight day.

"I truly felt like through 15 holes it was one of the best rounds I ever played," said Thomas who started the day one stroke off Schauffele's lead and pulled level with a birdie at the eighth where Schauffele bogeyed.

He kept the accelerator down with birdies at nine, 10 and 11, and added two more at 14 and 15 — where his putt through the fringe circled the cup before rattling in. "I was in such control tee to green, I was putting it beautifully, my irons were awesome," Thomas said. "I hit a really good drive on 16, just the wind took it more. "Eighteen," he admitted, "was just a disaster.

"But it worked out, so I guess I can't complain," Thomas concluded. Schauffele said Thomas's run of six birdies in eight holes was astonishing, especially given the windy conditions. "He was hitting ridiculous shots, making good putts in the wind, and he deserved the lead he got," said Schauffele.

But he was disappointed that he didn't take advantage of his own opportunity. "I should have won the tournament," Schauffele said. "I mean, JT was right there, but with the circumstances given I should have closed it up and I didn't." —AFP

'Corruption, doping cover-up' at IWF

BERLIN: The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) and its long-time chief Tamas Ajan have been accused of establishing a "culture of corruption" and doping cover-ups over decades in a German documentary to be aired Sunday.

Prominent weightlifters were rarely subject to tests, while some doping controllers were allegedly taking cash to accept manipulated urine samples, claimed the report by journalists at German broadcaster ARD including Hajo Seppel, who broke the story on Russia's state doping scandal.

Dorin Balmus, doctor of the Moldovan national weightlifting team, was caught on hidden camera explaining how urine samples could be manipulated —

Sports

Lyon roars as Australia crush New Zealand to sweep series

Taylor becomes N Zealand's top Test run scorer

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fourth day of the third Test against 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 256* (G. Phillips 52, T. Latham 49; N. Lyon 5-68)
*Includes five-run penalty from Australia's 2nd innings

Australia 2nd innings (overnight 40-0)

D. Warner not out 111
J. Burns lbw b Astle 40
M. Labuschagne c Latham b Henry 59
Extras (b3, lb3, w1) 7
Total (2 wks declared: 52 overs) 217
Fall of wickets: 1-107 (Burns), 2-217 (Labuschagne)
Bowling: Henry 12-2-54-1 (1w), de Grandhomme 13-1-43-0, Wagner 9-1-37-0, Somerville 10-0-36-0, Astle 8-1-41-1.

New Zealand 2nd innings

T. Latham lbw b Starc 1
T. Blundell c Lyon b Starc 2
J. Raval c Paine b Lyon 12
R. Taylor b Cummins 22
G. Phillips c Paine b Lyon 0
B.J. Watling c Cummins b Lyon 19
C. de Grandhomme c Burns b Lyon 52
T. Astle c Pattinson b Lyon 17
W. Somerville b Starc 7
N. Wagner not out 0
M. Henry did not bat (injured) 0
Extras (b3, lb1) 4
Total (9 wks: 47.5 overs) 136
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Blundell), 2-4 (Latham), 3-22 (Raval), 4-22 (Phillips), 5-38 (Taylor), 6-107 (de Grandhomme), 7-128 (Astle), 8-136 (Somerville), 9-136 (Watling)
Bowling: Starc 9-3-25-3, Cummins 11-3-29-1, Pattinson 6-3-8-0, Lyon 16.5-4-50-5, Labuschagne 5-0-20-0.
Australia won by 279 runs
Australia win series 3-0
Man of the match: Marnus Labuschagne (AUS)

SYDNEY: Nathan Lyon captured five for 50 and 10 match wickets as Australia crushed New Zealand by 279 runs yesterday, capping a golden domestic summer as they swept the three-Test series. The off-spinner led the powerful Australian bowling attack to dismiss the Kiwis for 136 and seal another heavy win over the Black Caps after similar victories in Perth and Melbourne.

Australia have been unbeatable this season, winning all five Tests at home — two against Pakistan and three against New Zealand — after retaining the Ashes by drawing the series 2-2 in England. "It's been a great summer for the Australian Test side," Lyon said. "It's pretty special to be part of it, we have been impressive, pretty clinical, the batters have done well and given us bowlers plenty of time." Australia declared their second innings at 217 for two with David Warner scoring an unbeaten century, leaving the Black Caps with a revised 416-run target in the fourth innings on a wearing Sydney Cricket Ground pitch.

But the Kiwis buckled under the pressure of Australia's superior bowling attack with Mitchell Starc taking three for 25 to support the wiles of spinner Lyon. "They were clinical in all areas and after the first match they put us under pressure session after session," said skipper Kane Williamson, who missed the Test with a virus. New Zealand were reeling early at 27-4 and never recovered after Starc and Lyon took two wickets each in the middle session to put the Kiwis under the tourists. Starc removed both openers, Tom Latham and Tom Blundell, in the first five overs.

Blundell fell to a stunning catch by a diving Lyon at point for two and stand-in skipper Latham lost a review for leg before wicket. Jeet Raval was out in a review to the faintest of edges on 'Snicko' in Lyon's first over for 12. First-innings top-scorer Glenn Phillips went for a duck after technology detected a faint outside edge to wicket-keeper Paine off Lyon.

Ross Taylor became the leading all-time Kiwi batsman, going past Stephen Fleming (7,172) before he was bowled by Pat Cummins for 22 to take his Test aggregate to 7,174. Big-hitting Colin de Grandhomme smacked Lyon for six to bring up his fifty but went next ball hoicked to Joe Burns at deep mid-wicket for 52.



SYDNEY: The Australian team poses with the Trans-Tasman Trophy after winning the series on the fourth day of the third cricket Test match between Australia and New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

Todd Astle was out to a superb diving catch by James Pattinson in the outfield for 17. Starc yorked William Somerville's middle stump for seven and B.J. Watling was the last to fall, caught at backward square leg by Pat Cummins for 19. Earlier, Warner completed his 24th Test century and remained unbeaten when skipper Paine declared upon the dismissal of Marnus Labuschagne. "You know you're capable of doing so," Warner said, when asked about how he had bounced back from his disastrous Ashes campaign in England last year.

"I was in the nets hitting the ball well and had the skipper backing me. To be able to play with freedom helped me. It's all paying off." Labuschagne, who was dropped on four in a regulation caught-and-bowled chance by leg-spinner Astle, was caught at long on off

Matt Henry for 59 — his seventh score over 50 in eight innings this domestic summer. Labuschagne finished the home five-Test season with a stunning aggregate of 896 runs, made up of his 215 in the first innings, three other centuries and three half-centuries in eight innings.

There was drama late in the Australian innings when Warner was given an official warning by umpire Aleem Dar for running down the middle of the pitch in scampering a single. It resulted in five penalty runs being added to New Zealand's first innings total meaning their target was revised down from 421 to 416.

The Test was played against the backdrop of one of Australia's most devastating bushfire seasons with at least 24 people losing their lives in blazes raging across the country, including on the outskirts of Sydney. — AFP

South Africa defiant after Stokes show

CAPE TOWN: Ben Stokes launched an astonishing assault which enabled England to give themselves plenty of time to push for victory, but the tourists had to work hard to take two South African wickets before the close on the fourth day of the second Test at Newlands yesterday.

Set to make a world record 438 to win, South Africa were 126 for two at the close. They used up 56 overs yesterday but will need to bat out another 90 on Tuesday to prevent England from levelling the four-match series.

Opening batsman Pieter Malan, making his Test debut, scored 63 not out and shared half-century partnerships with Dean Elgar (34) and Zubayr Hamza, who was caught behind off James Anderson in the penultimate over of the day for 18. Stokes slammed 72 off 47 balls to overshadow a maiden Test century by Dominic Sibley, who continued his sedate progress as he took his overnight score of 85 to 133 not out. He reached his hundred off 269 balls and faced 311 deliveries in his innings.

England's batting on Monday was in dramatic contrast to their effort on Sunday when they ground their way to 218 for four off 79 overs. Sparked by Stokes they added another 157 runs off only 32 overs before declaring five overs after lunch on 391 for eight.

While Sibley continued to play the anchor role, Stokes went on the attack against every bowler he faced. He survived a chance on 38 when an attempted pull against Kagiso Rabada could not be held by a diving Quinton de Kock after the wicketkeeper ran about 35 metres in trying to take the catch.

Stokes was caught at long-on off left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj after an innings which included three sixes and seven fours and had a large English contingent in the crowd roaring their approval.

Ollie Pope fell quickly but Jos Buttler continued the attack, hitting 23 off 18 balls as the lead went beyond 400.

South African captain Faf du Plessis chose not to take the second new ball when it was due after a maiden over by Dwaine Pretorius at the start of play. He perhaps reasoned that Maharaj had a chance of dismissing Stokes early in his innings.

The tactic backfired, however, as 28 runs were added in five overs before the new ball was taken, including sixes by Stokes off Pretorius and Maharaj.

Malan, out for five in the first innings, survived a review for leg before wicket against Stuart Broad when he was on four but then batted with patience to notch a patient maid-

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of play on the fourth day of the second Test between South Africa and England at Newlands yesterday:

England, first innings, 269
South Africa, first innings, 223
England, second innings (overnight 218-4)
Z. Crawley c De Kock b Rabada 25
D. Sibley not out 133
J. Denly c Pretorius b Nortje 31
J. Root c Du Plessis b Pretorius 61
D. Bess c De Kock b Nortje 0
B. Stokes c Van der Dussen b Maharaj 72
O. Pope b Rabada 3
J. Buttler c De Kock b Nortje 23
S. Curran c Hamza b Maharaj 13
S. Broad not out 8
Extras (b18, lb3, w1) 22
Total (8 wks dec, 111 overs) 391
Fall of wickets: 1-28 (Crawley), 2-101 (Denly), 3-217 (Root), 4-218 (Bess), 5-310 (Stokes), 6-315 (Pope), 7-356 (Buttler), 8-375

(Curran)
Bowling: Rabada 20-3-69-2, Philander 14-7-24-0, Nortje 18-2-61-3 (1w), Pretorius 16-4-56-1, Maharaj 43-9-160-2.

South Africa, second innings

P. Malan not out 63
D. Elgar c Buttler b Denly 34
Z. Hamza c Buttler b Anderson 18
K. Maharaj not out 2
Extras (b4, lb1, nb3, w1) 9
Total (2 wks, 56 overs) 126
Fall of wicket: 1-71 (Elgar), 2-123 (Hamza)
Bowling: Anderson 9-4-18-1, Broad 9-2-20-0, Bess 12-3-29-0, Curran 8-2-13-0 (1w), Denly 8-0-26-1, Root 3-0-7-0, Stokes 7-3-8-0 (2nb)
Match situation: South Africa need 312 runs to win with eight wickets remaining.



CAPE TOWN: South Africa's Pieter Malan (2ndL) prepares to play a shot during the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the Newlands stadium in Cape Town yesterday. — AFP

en Test fifty off 144 balls which included only two fours. England's first success was a first Test wicket for Joe Denly, who troubled the left-handed Elgar with his leg-

spinners into the rough outside the left-hander's off stump, eventually having him caught behind off an edge so faint that Elgar unsuccessfully sought a review. — AFP

Vikings upset Saints, Seahawks oust Eagles in NFL playoffs

WASHINGTON: Minnesota's Kirk Cousins threw a 4-yard touchdown pass to Kyle Rudolph 4:20 into overtime Sunday and the Vikings upset New Orleans 26-20 to reach the second round of the NFL playoffs.

The Vikings quarterback achieved his first career playoff victory by marching Minnesota 75 yards in nine plays, sparked by his 43-yard completion to Adam Thielen to the Saints 2-yard line three plays before the winning touchdown throw.

"Just happy we won. It was a great game. It was a great team win," said Cousins after his 14th career game-winning late drive. Minnesota's Dalvin Cook ran 28 times for 94 yards and two touchdowns for the visiting Vikings, who will travel to National Conference top seed San Francisco next Saturday.

Seattle defeated host Philadelphia 17-9 in Sunday's other first-round playoff game to book a date next Sunday at National Conference second seed Green Bay. "Anticipating snow. Anticipating a great game," Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson said of Green Bay. "It'll be a great matchup."

Next weekend's American Conference games find Tennessee at top seed Baltimore on Saturday and Houston at second seed Kansas City on Sunday. Next week's hosts had first-round byes. New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees, 10 days shy of his 41st birthday, completed 26-of-33 passes for 208 yards and a touchdown but costly turnovers foiled the favored Saints.

"I'm so proud of the way we fought," Rudolph said. "Nobody gave us a chance to win today but us."

Cook's 1-yard touchdown run with 3:23 remaining in the third quarter capped an eight-play, 64-yard march to give Minnesota a 20-10 lead. But the Saints answered with an 85-yard drive in eight plays, which ended on a 20-yard Brees touchdown pass to Taysom Hill with 10:31 remaining, pulling New Orleans within 20-17. Brees went 5-for-5 passing for 71 yards in the scoring march.

Brees moved the Saints downfield again but Jamaican-born Danielle Hunter of the Vikings knocked loose a fumble, Brees's first of the season, and Minnesota's Jalyn Holmes recovered with 4:18 remaining. Saints defender A.J. Klein appeared to have recovered a Cook fumble and returned it for a touchdown on the next Vikings possession, but a video review overturned the play, ruling Cook was down before losing the ball, keeping Minnesota ahead.

New Orleans had a final chance in regulation time and Wil Lutz kicked a 49-yard field goal with two seconds remaining to pull the Saints level at 20-20 and force overtime.

Cook's 5-yard touchdown run with 23 seconds remaining in the second quarter gave the Vikings a 13-10 half-time lead. Alvin Kamara had a 4-yard touchdown run for New Orleans. Lutz had kicked a 29-yard field goal and Minnesota's Dan Bailey had field goals of 43 and 21 yards.

At Philadelphia, the Eagles suffered a major setback when quarterback Carson Wentz went out in the first quarter after taking a helmet-to-helmet hit from Seattle's Jadeveon Clowney. — AFP

India will find Australia a different proposition: Paine

SYDNEY: Australia have developed a ruthless streak in their home series sweeps against Pakistan and New Zealand and will present much stiffer opposition when India tour next year, captain Tim Paine said yesterday.

Paine's side wrapped up a 3-0 series triumph over the Black Caps by romping to 279-run victory at the Sydney Cricket Ground to make it five comprehensive wins out of five matches for the home summer.

"I came into this summer expecting to win all five Tests," Paine told reporters. "I think now we've got a team together that is really consistent, we've got a number of match-winners with both bat and ball and our lesser players have improved a hell of a lot over the last 12 months."

"We've probably become more ruthless which was something we wanted to be ... We've got great quality

throughout our side and it's a very exciting team to be part of." Next up for Australia in Test cricket is a tour of Bangladesh in June and July followed by what Paine described as a "mouthwatering" series at home to Virat Kohli's India.

India last visited in the 2018-19 season and, with Steve Smith and David Warner suspended after the ball-tampering scandal, earned their first series triumph on Australian soil. "We're certainly a different side than what they played against last year," Paine added. "There's (also) Test championship points at stake and I think both India and Australia are eyeing off that final so every point is going to be critical. "If we can continue our upward trend, you're potentially talking about the top two teams in the world so it's going to be an awesome series."

The victory over New Zealand brought Australia (296) closer to India (360) at the top of the World Test Championship table with the two nations occupying the positions which will earn places in the final at Lord's in 2021.

Paine said the way Australia approached the key moments in matches had changed since India last toured, resulting in the clinical displays against Pakistan and New Zealand.

"Every team wants to be ruthless," he said. "(But) I think there were probably periods in the Test series against India we should have capitalised on, but through wanting it too much, or trying too hard, or putting too much pressure on ourselves, we let it slip," Paine added. "When those big moments come now, we just focus on executing our roles." — Reuters

Sports

Sixth-tier minnows pay big penalty as PSG cruise in French Cup

Superstars Neymar and Kylian Mbappe rested

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain rested superstars Neymar and Kylian Mbappe before defeating sixth-tier Linas-Montlhery 6-0 in the French Cup on Sunday as the amateur side were left to rue a missed penalty when trailing just 1-0.

The part-timers, whose budget is 2,000-times smaller than the Qatari-backed Parisian giants, trailed to a goal on the half-hour by teenager Adil Aouchiche. However, they were then awarded a penalty after Colin Dagba brought down Issa Cisse.

Up stepped Idrissa Kanoute but his tame spot kick was well-saved by Sergio Rico in the PSG goal. Less than a minute later, Uruguayan star Edinson Cavani, named captain for the match, tucked away PSG's second and the game was up.

Cavani, starting a game for the first time in two months, added his second just on the hour mark before Pablo Sarabia (63rd and 70th minutes) and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (87th) completed the rout.

"We played seriously and with humility," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel. "We deserved to win, it was a good match for the team and the club and a good start to 2020." Tuchel was also full of praise for Cavani who has been linked with a winter transfer window move to Atletico Madrid in Spain. "Edi' is there to score, that's what we ask him to do. This will give him confidence, that's the best thing."

Andre Villas-Boas' Marseille needed penalties to win away to fourth-tier Trellisac in their last 64 tie. Lassana Diakhaby and Ange Gnaleko missed the crucial spot kicks for the minnows as the 10-time former winners

avoided a second straight cup exit to a side from National 2.

Abdoulaye Diaby scored for the hosts after 20 seconds following a goalkeeping howler by Yann Pele and France midfielder Dimitri Payet equalised after 20 minutes for the visitors who had Japan right-back Hiroki Sakai sent off in the closing stages of normal time. "In your worst dreams you don't need to suffer in that way," Villas-Boas said. "If we had been knocked-out without Sakai and with a humiliation like that, it would have been tough to take," he added.

Pele made up for his early mistake by saving Diakhaby and Gnaleko's efforts before Lucas Perrin slotted the winning penalty. Marseille were knocked out of the competition by Andrezieux at the same stage last season.

JS Saint-Pierroise on Saturday became only the second overseas-based team to win a French Cup knockout tie and it was achieved playing more than 9,000km from home. The club, based on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion, and which once boasted the talents of current Marseille star Payet, defeated second-division Niort 2-1. An overseas side has only once before achieved a similar feat when Geldar FC of French Guiana made the round of 16 in the 1988-1989 season. Saint-Pierroise's goals were scored by Gerard Hubert and Ryan Ponti, both in the second half.

The home team's reply also came courtesy of a visiting player when Gervais Randrianarisoa put through his own goal just after the hour mark in the game played at Niort, which sits to the north of Bordeaux. — AFP



BONDOUFLE: Linas-Montlhery's goalkeeper Sergio Rico Gonzalez (R) vies with Paris Saint-Germain's Uruguayan forward Edinson Cavani during the French Cup football match between Linas-Montlhery and Paris Saint-Germain at the Stade Bobin in Bondoufle, south of Paris. — AFP

Lakers' 20 blocks subdue Pistons

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis recorded 24 points, 11 rebounds and a season-best eight blocked shots to help the Los Angeles Lakers register a 106-99 victory over the visiting Detroit Pistons on Sunday night. LeBron James added 21 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists for his ninth triple-double of the season as the Lakers won their fifth consecutive game. Los Angeles blocked 20 shots, one shy of the franchise mark set against the Denver Nuggets on April 9, 1982. Alex Caruso scored 13 points, Dwight Howard added 11 points, nine rebounds and five blocked shots and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 10 for the Lakers. JaVale McGee swatted away six shots for Los Angeles, which shot 45.7 percent from the field and was 6 of 20 from 3-point range. Derrick Rose scored 28 points and reserve Sviatoslav Mykhailiuk added 14 points for the Pistons, who lost for the ninth time in the past 11 games. Langston Galloway tallied 13 points, Andre Drummond had 12 points, 18 rebounds and four blocked shots, and Sekou Doumbouya and Christian Wood added 11 points apiece.

MIAMI HEAT 122 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 111
Reserve point guard Goran Dragic had his first dou-

ble-double of the season — 29 points and 13 assists — as Miami ran its home record to 17-1 at the expense of Portland. Blazers point guard Damian Lillard scored a game-high 34 points and added 12 assists. Portland center Hassan Whiteside, playing his first game in Miami since the Heat traded him to the Blazers in July, had 21 points, a game-high 18 rebounds and two blocks. Miami, which never trailed and improved to 10-0 following a loss, also got 20 points from Bam Adebayo, 19 from Derrick Jones and 14 from Kendrick Nunn.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 135 - NEW YORK KNICKS 132
Montrezl Harrell scored 34 points, and Paul George and Lou Williams had 32 apiece as host Los Angeles defeated New York while having three players score at least 30 points in a game for the first time in franchise history. Williams connected on 6 of 10 3-pointers and recorded nine assists for the Clippers. Marcus Morris Sr. led the Knicks with 38 points, hitting 6 of 7 3-pointers. RJ Barrett had 24 points, while Julius Randle added 16 points and eight rebounds. George, who returned after missing Saturday's defeat to the Memphis Grizzlies with a tight left hamstring, converted 5 of 6 3-pointers and 9 of 14 shots in 26 minutes. He fouled out with 7:06 remaining.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 121 - PHOENIX SUNS 114
Jonas Valanciunas had eight of his team-high 30

points in a third-quarter runaway as Memphis took a big lead and held off a frantic finish by Devin Booker for a victory over host Phoenix. Booker finished with 40 points, including 14 in the final 5:28, during which the Suns rallied from a 14-point deficit to get as close as 115-112 with still 52.6 seconds to play. Valanciunas' 30 points came on 12-for-16 shooting, as the Grizzlies shot 54.2 percent from the field. He also grabbed eight rebounds, tying Jaren Jackson Jr. for team-high honors.

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 118 - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 103
Gorgui Dieng collected 22 points and 13 rebounds as visiting Minnesota overcame squandering a 25-point lead to defeat Cleveland. Shabazz Napier finished with 21 points, like Dieng hitting 8 of 10 shots from the floor. Andrew Wiggins returned from a four-game absence due to illness to match Robert Covington with 15 points for the Timberwolves, who have won four of six on the heels of an 11-game losing streak. Dante Exum scored 24 of his career-high 28 points in the second half for the Cavaliers, who dropped their fourth straight game. Cavaliers disgruntled forward Kevin Love was held out of Sunday's game against his former team for rest purposes, one day after his verbal altercation with general manager Koby Altman. — Reuters

Spanish Super Cup jets off to Saudi

JEDDAH: Spanish football crosses new horizons when its re-booted Super Cup competition begins tomorrow in Saudi Arabia, a move that will significantly boost the national federation's coffers but has angered human rights groups and local supporters.

Real Madrid and Valencia meet in the first semi-final in Jeddah tomorrow before Barcelona take on Atletico Madrid 24 hours later for a place in Sunday's final.

The Super Cup was a two-legged tie between the league champions and Copa del Rey holders but federation chief Luis Rubiales oversaw a dramatic shake-up last November, striking a three-year deal to play the tournament in Saudi Arabia.

The federation has not confirmed financial details but Spanish media reports say the deal is worth around 40 million euros annually.

The Spanish Super Cup is the latest high-profile sporting event to be held in Saudi Arabia, which recently hosted the Anthony Joshua-Andy Ruiz Jr heavyweight boxing bout as well as the Italian Super Cup and a Brazil-Argentina friendly.

But the choice of the conservative Muslim kingdom — where women's rights and human rights remain an issue — was condemned by high profile figures in Spanish women's football and Amnesty International.

The event was also shunned by state network RTVE on human rights grounds and other prominent networks before Movistar bought the broadcasting rights.

A ban on women attending matches in Saudi Arabia was lifted in 2018 although some restrictions still apply, but Rubiales has said they will be able to attend the Super Cup freely.

Saudi sports minister Abdulaziz Bin Turki added: "My country is not like 10 years ago, we've changed many things. We have preserved our private culture but want to advance towards being a more modern country."

Transplanting the tournament to Saudi Arabia has also been met with a backlash from Spanish fans. "A festival of football where the four best teams compete should not exclude their supporters," said umbrella fan group Aficiones Unidas (Supporters United).

Newspaper El Mundo reported that 9% of 12,000 tickets available to Spanish fans have been distributed, with Valencia fans taking up only 26 tickets and Atletico picking up 50.

Organisers Sela Sports, however, say the majority of tickets have been snapped up by Saudi nationals and predict all three matches at the 62,000-capacity King Abdullah Sport City Stadium will be well attended. Valencia is the only team to criticise the changes, airing their disapproval at earning two million euros from the competition compared to the six million euros Barca and Real will receive and the three million euros Atletico will pocket. —Reuters

Germany WCup 'ghost-goal' keeper Tilkowski dead

BERLIN: Former Germany goalkeeper Hans Tilkowski, who conceded a controversial Geoff Hurst 'ghost-goal' at the 1966 World Cup final, has died at the age of 84, his family told AFP subsidiary SID yesterday.

During the England v West Germany final at Wembley, Tilkowski, who made 39 international appearances, was beaten by Hurst's shot which hit the cross bar and was adjudged to have crossed the line during extra-time before England went on to lift the trophy 4-2.

The incident continues to leave a mark on German football where the term "Wembley-goal" is used to describe goal efforts which are difficult to validate. In English, "Russian linesman" is a term sometimes used to describe controversial refereeing decisions after Azeri Tofik Bahkramov gave the green light to goal.

"I will die with the certitude that the ball didn't cross the line," Tilkowski said of the incident. Hurst, who had been informed of Tilkowski's death by the family, paid tribute to the former keeper as a 'terrific player' and 'fine man.'

"Very sad to receive a call earlier to let me know that Germany's goalkeeper from 66 World Cup, Hans Tilkowski, has died," Hurst tweeted. "Terrific player for his club, Borussia Dortmund, and country and a very fine man, I very much enjoyed the time we spent together over the years."

Tilkowski won the German Cup with Borussia Dortmund in 1965 before clinching the European Cup Winners' Cup a year later. —AFP



PERTH: Rafael Nadal of Spain hits a return against Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay during their eighth session men's singles match on day four of the ATP Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

Nadal flawless as Djokovic made to sweat

SYDNEY: An ominous Rafael Nadal was in cruise control for Spain at the ATP Cup yesterday but Serbia's Novak Djokovic was forced to sweat through brutal conditions for his second win in a row. The Spanish world number one swept past Uruguay's experienced Pablo Cuevas 6-2, 6-1 in just 73 minutes in Perth to ensure his country won their second consecutive tie at the inaugural 24-team event and moved closer to the quarter-finals.

He came on court after teammate and world number 10 Roberto Bautista Agut made short work of Franco Roncadelli 6-1, 6-2. "A great match. I played better than the other day. It was a very positive victory against an opponent for who I have a lot of respect," said 19-time Grand Slam winner Nadal. "I'm super happy."

Djokovic was given a testing workout in his opening clash in Brisbane on Saturday by big-serving South African Kevin Anderson, who took him to two tiebreakers. He was back to his dominant best against France's Gael Monfils, but the sapping heat and humidity made the 6-3, 6-2

win harder than the score suggested. "It was definitely one of the most humid conditions that I have ever had in my career. Tonight was brutal," said the world number two, who extended his record over Monfils to 16-0, dating back 15 years.

"Obviously playing Gael, you know you are going to have a lot of exchanges, a lot of rallies. He is a great fighter and a great friend of mine. Tough luck today."

Eight of the 24 nations will make the quarter-finals in Sydney from the round robin — six group winners and two best runners up. Other winners yesterday included Japan, Croatia, South Africa and Austria. World number four Dominic Thiem bounced back from a shock loss in his opening match to beat tenacious Diego Schwartzman in two tough sets to steer Austria to victory over Argentina in Sydney.

Earlier, Dennis Novak showed battling qualities to upset world number 25 Guido Pella after losing the first set 6-0. It kept Austria alive in Group E after they lost their opening tie to Croatia.

The unbeaten Croats are sitting pretty, spearheaded by former US Open champion Marin Cilic who eased past Poland's Kacper Zuk in straight sets — his second victory in a row.

"I felt that the level was quite good. I was being aggressive," said Cilic, a losing Australian Open finalist in 2018. "I had to stay mentally in the match, really focused."

One of the biggest surprises has been Japan, which has won both its ties — against Uruguay and Georgia — despite being without injured stars Kei Nishikori and Yasutaka Uchiyama, their third best player.

Yoshihito Nishioka has stepped up, beating world number 26 Nikoloz Basilashvili in straight sets in Perth after thrashing world number 45 Pablo Cuevas on Saturday. "I think I played my best tennis and very happy about this," he said of his win against the Georgian where his pinpoint accuracy rattled Basilashvili. South Africa, spearheaded by Anderson, remain in contention after clean-sweeping Chile 3-0 in Brisbane. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP			
Manchester United v Manchester City	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 2			
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Real Zaragoza v Sporting Gijon	23:00		
beIN Sports			

25 Eller's overtime goal nets Caps' wild win over Sharks



26 Lyon roars as Australia crush New Zealand to sweep series



27 Nadal flawless as Djokovic made to sweat



Ronaldo hat-trick lifts Juventus

Ibrahimovic fails to fire Milan



TURIN: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo outruns defenders during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Cagliari yesterday at the Juventus Allianz stadium in Turin. — AFP

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored his first Serie A hat-trick to lift Juventus top of the table with a 4-0 win over Cagliari yesterday as Zlatan Ibrahimovic was not enough for AC Milan as he made his debut in a goalless draw against Sampdoria.

Portugal forward Ronaldo struck for the fifth consecutive league game to move the champions back above Inter Milan in their first match since the Italian SuperCup defeat to Lazio in Saudi Arabia last month. "I'm happy with this first hat-trick. But the important thing is the team, which played very well," said Ronaldo.

"We had to win to go ahead and put Inter under pressure." Maurizio Sarri's side had been pegged back in the first half by the sixth-placed Sardinians

who have been pushing for a spot in the Champions League places this season but fell to their third consecutive defeat.

The second-half was all one-way traffic with 34-year-old Ronaldo breaking the deadlock just after the interval. He added a second from the penalty spot on 67 minutes then set up Gonzalo Higuain who came off the bench to strike a third on 81 minutes, before Ronaldo completed his hat-trick a minute later. Juve are three points ahead of Inter in the table with Antonio Conte's side travelling to Napoli later on Monday, looking to keep pace with the eight-time reigning champions.

Ronaldo's heroics overshadowed Swedish star Ibrahimovic's debut for Milan as he came off the

bench after 55 minutes against Sampdoria. The 38-year-old came on for Poland striker Krzysztof Piatek to deafening applause from the 58,000 crowd in his first appearance after rejoining the club last week.

But there was little else to cheer for the hosts who extended their winless run to three games and remain 12th in the table. "The disastrous defeat in Bergamo has remained within us," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli after the 5-0 loss to Atalanta last time out.

"It is a shame not to have won. Ibra's impact was absolutely positive. "He immediately gave support, but the team is not yet used to his presence, we could look to him more. "His physical prowess gives us some more solutions, but we lacked quality from

everyone."

Atalanta continued their fine form, closing to within a point of fourth-placed Roma, who lost 2-0 to Torino on Sunday, with another 5-0 rout, this time of seventh-placed Parma. The side from Bergamo were already three goals up before the break thanks to Alejandro Gomez, Remo Freuler and Robin Gosens, with Josip Ilicic adding a double in a nine minute second-half spell. New Fiorentina coach Giuseppe Iachini had to settle for a 1-1 draw against Bologna in his first game after taking over from Vincenzo Montella. The Tuscany side had lead for most of the game after Marco Benassi volleyed in on 27 minutes but Riccardo Orsolini grabbed a point for Bologna deep into injury time. — AFP

De Villiers wins Dakar second stage

NEOM: South African driver Giniel De Villiers won the second stage of the Dakar Rally yesterday while former Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso was "glad to be able to continue" after dropping two-and-a-half hours when losing a wheel.

Alonso suffered his first major problem in his maiden Dakar appearance when he ground to a halt when his near front wheel "completely ripped off". "He said sorry to us, I think he knew it was his fault," Toyota Overdrive boss Jean-Marc Fortin said.

"He had the necessary (equipment) to repair it but he first had to find the wheel because it had careered off into the dis-

ance," Fortin reported. "When they found it, it wasn't round but oval."

The 38-year-old Spaniard had downplayed his prospects of creating history by becoming the first F1 world champion to win the Dakar in the run up to Sunday's start of the 42nd edition. And realistically his chances now of reaching the podium look remote after just two days of the gruelling 7,500 kilometre desert odyssey.

When he finally made it across the finish line Alonso cut a relaxed figure, despite the wheel drama which he put down to being blinded by dust thrown up by cars ahead of him. "When you come on the Dakar you come for all the hazards it entails, today was one of them. I'm glad to be here and to be able to continue the rally," said the 2005 and 2006 F1 champion.

His Toyota teammate De Villiers, who lost 23 minutes when he finished 14th in Sunday's opening stage, bounced back strongly over the 401 kilometre-route, of which 367km were a special between Al-Wajh and Neom.

Many drivers had navigational problems and De Villiers took advantage of a mistake by long time stage leader Yazeed Al-Rajhi to guide his Toyota home in 3hrs 37mins 20secs. The 47-year-old crossed the line 3mins 57secs ahead of Orlando Terranova who now heads the overall standings in his Mini. The Argentinian, who was sixth in the opening stage, is almost five minutes ahead of fellow Mini driver Carlos Sainz.

Defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah came in fifth on stage two and is six minutes off the lead while 13-time champion Stephane Peterhansel already trails by 13 minutes after a problem with his car's steering column.

On the motorcycles, Ross Branch won his first stage on the Dakar after a perfectly controlled day's riding. The Botswanan finished 1min 24secs ahead of 2017 winner Sam Sunderland who now leads the bikes category, 1min 18secs ahead of Pablo Quintanilla. Today, the rally heads out on a 489 km round trip which starts and ends in Neom. — AFP



NEOM: A helicopter flies as Toyota's driver Fernando Alonso of Spain and co-driver Marc Coma of Spain compete during the Stage 2 of the Dakar 2020 between Al Wajh and Neom, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. — AFP