

# Friday Times

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## Australia catastrophe



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The world is currently occupied with the latest updates on political news and developments in the US-Iranian dispute in the region, and nearly everyone seems to know best. Yet another tragedy is happening which is receiving a lot less global attention. The environmental disaster and forest fires in Australia have affected human lives and innocent animals, with horrific pictures of creatures dying of thirst. This ordeal is making Australia's bushfires the worst in the nation's history.

If you think that the fires of the Amazon or Australian forests do not concern you because they are located far away from Kuwait or your country, then you are wrong, because according to experts, these green areas that are exposed to a catastrophe support our lives on this planet, which we all share. The Amazon rainforest for example produces 20 percent of the oxygen on the planet, and therefore Earth's oxygen is what burns, and it is not a matter of a simple fire.

Forest fires have broken out in Australia after rising temperatures and months of severe drought. But the intensity of the fires increased over the past week, which prompted authorities to evacuate a number of towns. There have been pictures of animals escaping from the heat and fire, including koalas, which are a symbol of Australia.

Of course, experts think the number could reach higher levels when conducting the final inventory of losses and damages, and that the reconstruction of the region with trees and animals requires 40 years. This raises fears of an environmental imbalance in the region in the long run.

News agencies reported that the fires that have ravaged Australia have so far killed 24 people, burned more than 6 million hectares of lands, destroyed more than 2,000 homes, and made air pollution in Australian cities the worst in the world. High temperatures and dry land and trees have a role in the outbreak of fires not only in Australia, but anywhere else on earth, and wind contributes to the fires by friction between dry trees.

In the Australian capital Canberra, air pollution has risen and air quality in the city was the third worst among all major cities in the world last Friday, according to AirVisual quality forecast group based in Switzerland. The fires in Australia are considered a national disaster in the country, after the death of more than half a billion living organisms, many of which are threatened with extinction and live only in Australia, in addition to material losses and properties of the population and pollution reaching to New Zealand, which is considered the only country in the world with very pure air.

I have read many reports about the human factor in dealing with wildfires, and most reports clearly indicate that the human factor is something that cannot be overlooked.

Researchers specializing in plants and climate say climate fluctuations will contribute in the future to intensifying the phenomenon of forest fires if everyone does not move decisively to reduce the factors that cause fires, which have a direct relation to human behaviors and activities. For example, throwing lit cigarette butts on the side of the road or under trees or discarding glass bottles in the woods, as well as high temperatures, droughts and lack of rainfall.

Today, plant and climate experts agree that every effort should be made to work closely to avoid forest fires, because the forest is a reservoir of biodiversity. I hope, like many, that this catastrophe will end quickly. Let us remember that the koala is threatened and on the verge of extinction, so we need to work hard to educate people about the importance of preserving the environment in light of climate change, with a risk of other conflicts, including political ones.

## 26th Al-Qurain Festival underway



KUWAIT: Officials and honored guests pose for a group photo during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah inaugurated the 26th edition of the Al-Qurain Cultural Festival on Wednesday.

"Since its inception in 1994, Al-Qurain Cultural Festival has been a main cultural event showcasing outstanding cultural and artistic works and talents," Jabri, also minister of state for youth affairs, said in his inaugural speech at Abdulhusein Abdulredha Theater in Salmiya. He pointed out that Al-Qurain festival and the Kuwait International Book Fair have also become important events for "showcasing the country's intellectual and cultural production, as well as its openness and effective interaction with other countries and cultures."

Meanwhile, Jabri announced that the organizing committee has chosen renowned Kuwaiti Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain as the main figure of this year's edition in recognition of his role in promoting Arabic language.

The festival commenced with a screening of the first Kuwaiti movie ever produced: 'Al-Asifa' (the storm). This black and white movie was produced by Kuwait TV in 1965, and is 27 minutes long. The movie was screened as a

musical, during which an orchestra band lead by international Maestro Kamaludin Orenfy of the National Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan, and the Kuwaiti folk music band performed. The movie did not feature much dialog, but instead mainly consisted of display of pictures depicting old sea heritage, including sailing and pearl diving. This work was presented on the occasion of the 57th anniversary of producing the first Kuwait feature film.

Different personalities were awarded during the event. Furthermore, the minister honored 'Al-Asifa' film director, the actors who passed away, the author, editor, and the members of the musical band; Hamad Bin Hussein for Marine Arts and the author of this artistic work Dr Sulaiman Al-Dikan.

The 18-day event, which is organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, features a plethora of cultural and artistic activities including music concerts, movies screening, art galleries, theatrical and folklore performances, lectures, workshops, art exhibitions and symposia. All the events are free of charge and will be hold in different locations. The schedule of the events is available on the official account of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters on Instagram : Kw\_nccal or the website: nccal.gov.kw.



An international orchestra and Kuwaiti folk music band perform during the ceremony.

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# Hawally: Historic and bustling



Aged apartment buildings, bustling streets and lack of parking are just a few aspects common to one of Kuwait's oldest commercial and residential areas, Hawally. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

As part of our occasional series exploring various areas of Kuwait, Kuwait Times visited Hawally to learn more about this area. Hawally is part of the heart and spirit of Kuwait - one of the most populated areas with a diversity of residents from a range of nationalities. It is one of the most important commercial areas in the country, located around 7 km from Kuwait City. The area was settled in 1907 after the discovery of a well called Huliya (sweet), because of the sweetness of its water.

Hawally is the hub for most computer and phone-related products in Kuwait, as it has a large number of commercial complexes. The most important complexes in Hawally are Al-Muhallab Complex and Al-Rehab Mall, which is one of the oldest shopping centers in the country. The area is also home to Qadsiya Sports Club, one of the most famous football teams in Kuwait.

Before the 1991 Gulf War, Hawally was known as a Palestinian enclave, though this has changed considerably since the invasion and liberation. Hawally is now home to a variety of nationalities from across the Asian

and Arab worlds.

Ali Hesham, a 22-year-old Egyptian, said Hawally has a lot of positive aspects. Most areas are nearby, which you can reach easily within 30 minutes. "People come to this area to experience the multicultural vibes."

Hesham added that although Hawally has many advantages, it also faces some issues. "Hawally is always crowded and there is no place for parking. There are a lot of schools, so you need to leave very early in the morning because it may take one hour just to reach your destination if you get stuck in traffic. Also, the streets are so bad that your car can get damaged," he said.

Streets are iconic in Hawally. Nearly everyone in the country knows Bin Khalidoun street - computer and mobile phone hub and Tunis street, home of the Hawally park, the Dawar Sadiq roundabout and the white Sabeika masjid. Countless citizens and expats were born in Dar Al Shifa, remember parts of their youth through the hangouts in Hawally malls and going to Bayan Bilingual School.

For Maia Hattab, a 29-year-old Palestinian, Hawally is her birthplace. "This is my area, where I have spent a lifetime. I think it is hard to get used to another place as you can find everything in Hawally." She added that



## Local

Friday, January 10, 2020



Hawally is a good area for those who seek a dynamic place full of life. "Hawally is considered the liveliest area in Kuwait, where you will find everything minutes away. Schools, restaurants, cafes, malls and more are present in the area, but Hawally needs serious care. The roads need better maintenance, healthcare centers need to be developed and buildings should be for families only, as bachelors are everywhere now," she told Kuwait Times.

Abu Bakr Muhammad, a 38-year-old Palestinian who works in a company in Hawally, said traffic jams on all streets have made life harder. "Hawally has many exits, but these are still not enough. It takes me more than an hour to reach the company's headquarters, even though I'm a resident of Hawally - imagine if I live in other areas!" He added that people in Hawally need more outdoor activities. "We need good parks and good running trails to practice sports and spend time with our children outside, especially since the weather is much better now."

# A day in the life of a call center agent



By Nawara Fattahova

**T**alking to a hundred or more different people every day can be annoying or fun depending on your point of view. This is what call center operator Ali Ibrahim does for a living. He loves his work, and finds it easy, although he didn't aspire to work in this profession. Kuwait Times met Ibrahim, who spoke about his job. Some excerpts:

**Kuwait Times: When did you start working at the call center?**

**Ali Ibrahim:** I have been working at the call center of a telecommunication company for a year.

**KT: How many days per week and how many hours per day do you work?**

**Ibrahim:** I work six days a week, eight hours a day.

**KT: Do you work the same shift every day? Or does it change?**

**Ibrahim:** I don't change my working hours. It's the same every day: From 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

**KT: How many calls do you answer daily?**

**Ibrahim:** Approximately a 100 calls every day.

**KT: How long was the longest call you dealt with?**

**Ibrahim:** It was over an hour and a half.

**KT: Have you ever got into trouble or a fight with a customer?**

**Ibrahim:** Yes, many times, and all the fights were over roaming charges, when the customer didn't know that the charges are so high and they were using the roaming service abroad frequently.

**KT: Has any customer filed a complaint against you?**

**Ibrahim:** Yes, it happened once. A customer filed a complaint against me for a mistake of another employee, but I bore the entire responsibility and took the blame.

**KT: Are you happy with your job?**

**Ibrahim:** Yes, I do like my work.

**KT: How did you choose this job and why?**

**Ibrahim:** I was looking for a job after I graduated from high school. One day I saw an ad in the newspaper, so I submitted my CV to the email address mentioned, and a few days later they called me for an interview. I passed and started my career.

**KT: How do you start your day?**

**Ibrahim:** I start the day with a cup of coffee at the office. Then I start receiving phone calls. The calls are mostly complaints and some callers demand information. For technical issues, I transfer their calls to the technical support department. I'm only allowed to take a 5-minute break every hour.

**KT: What problems or obstacles have you faced in your job?**

**Ibrahim:** The most difficult thing in our work is to convince the customer. Customers usually call complaining and think they are right. They usually don't want to listen to our explanation, as they believe in the saying that the 'customer is always right'. So sometimes I have to transfer the call to the manager to deal with difficult customers.

**KT: Do you find your job hard or easy?**

**Ibrahim:** My work is very easy and I enjoy it. I hear my friends working in other professions complaining about their work, but I find my job easy. The most important thing is that when my working



**Customers call to complain. They don't want to listen to our explanation, as they believe in the saying that the 'customer is always right'.**

hours end, I'm done and my work finishes. I don't have to take work home; I don't have to be on standby and receive calls after working hours for any kind of issues, and I don't have to be ready to work overtime or on holidays.

**KT: What do you like the most about your work?**

**Ibrahim:** Besides the abovementioned points, I like the work atmosphere and friendly environment, especially since all my colleagues have become my friends.

**KT: What experiences or skills have you gained from this job?**

**Ibrahim:** I learnt about dealing with the public. I learnt to control my behavior even when I'm angry.

**KT: Can you tell us about a bad or embarrassing situation that happened to you at your workplace?**

**Ibrahim:** I faced a difficult situation when I was dealing with a customer who had serious problems and I wasn't able to resolve it.

**KT: Tell us something funny that happened with you?**

**Ibrahim:** Once a female customer called asking about her bill, which was over KD 1,000. When she gave me the number and I saw her name on the system, I stood up involuntarily as she was a sheikha. She had racked up this huge amount within two weeks only when she was travelling. And she paid the bill immediately. Also, in some situations the customer is serious, but they tell me funny stuff, so I start laughing and it's hard to stop.

**KT: Do you think of changing your job?**

**Ibrahim:** No, I don't.

**KT: What are the benefits of your work?**

**Ibrahim:** I know about all the promotions and good deals, so I can tell my friends about them first. There are some offers that the company does not announce to the public, as they are trying to sell higher-priced bundles. So if the customer doesn't know a promo exists, they won't ask about it and the telemarketing or sales staff won't tell them. I tried this myself and told my friend about the offer, so he activated it, while the staff didn't tell him it exists.

# Kuwait Times

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## Local

# Court sets date for hearing in ports authority funds case

## Snapchat 'legs competition' user sentenced to two years

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The court of appeal yesterday set January 16th as the date for the first appeal hearing of the case against a former minister and businessman and his Russian deputy with regards to embezzling the Kuwait Ports Authority funds. Notably, the criminal court had sentenced both defendants to 15 years in jail. The defendants' lawyer intends to demand releasing both defendants and suspending the criminal court's verdict.

### Snapchat competition

The criminal court yesterday sentenced a citizen to two years in jail with labor and a KD 300 fine over charges of organizing a competition on Snapchat last November in which he encouraged female users to upload pictures of their legs to choose the 'most beautiful' ones among them. Notably, the public prosecution had released the defendant on a KD 500 bail after a six-day detention during which he was investigated on charges of instigating vice. The defendant had

denied the charges and claimed that he has filmed the video and shared it amongst his own followers 'only for fun'. In other news, The criminal court yesterday sentenced a citizen to three years in jail with labor over charges of spreading false news.

### 'Funeral App'

The funeral department manager at Kuwait Municipality Dr Faisal Al-Awadhi announced updating the 'Funeral App' to include daily lists of mortalities with names, burial time and ad-

resses where condolences are held. Awadhi added that the application, which was launched in March 2019 on Apple's App Store and Android's Google Play, also includes guidelines such as related centers, cemeteries' locations, unused and historical cemeteries, photos and brief notes about each of them in addition to news about the department, its achievements and contact numbers. A Fatwa service and the department's publications were added, Awadhi said, adding that they are reachable through the following link: <http://onelink.to/zhv5dd>.

## Expats exemption exhausts state budget, MPs say

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** A parliamentary request was referred to the government demanding the cancellation of exemptions some ministries provide to expats, on the pretext that these exemptions "overburdens the state's budget and negatively affects the services provided to citizens," said official sources.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the sources added that the request came in the form of recommendations the government is urged to adapt, "otherwise lawmakers will turn it into a bill to be passed by parliament and thus become mandating to the government to avoid constitutional inquiries."

Further, the sources explained that the recommendations include reducing the number of expats exempted from paying medical service fees in public hospitals and polyclinics, and restrict the exemption to expatriate children of Kuwaiti women and domestic helpers. "They also demand cancelling exemptions of doctors' families," the source remarked, referring to privileges the government provide to families of expatriate doctors hired in public health facilities. In addition, the recommendations included reducing the categories of expats who have access to public education to only include children of Kuwaiti women, diplomats'

children and scholarship students. "Over 30,000 expat students currently study in public schools, which costs the government over KD 50 million and overburdens the state's treasury," the sources explained.

### First female undersecretary

Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel yesterday issued a ministerial decision to transfer the assistant undersecretary for control centers Mohammed Al-Haddad to the administrative affairs sectors, upon the latter's request.

Fadhel also appointed engineer Maha Al-Assoussi as assistant undersecretary for control centers affairs, making her the first woman to assume the position of an assistant undersecretary in the Ministry of Electricity and Water's history. Meanwhile, the ministry's purchases department announced a reverse auction to supply 1,000 smart electricity consumption meters, because the ministry needs to install them fast. Interested auctioneers will have to pay a fee of KD 10 to purchase the auction documents, in addition to a KD 150 insurance. In this regard, assistant undersecretary for consumers' affairs Meshaan Al-Otaibi said the ministry needs to install the 1,000 smart meters pending offering a major tender to supply and install 200,000 ones at a later date.

## Kuwait's Deputy FM meets Iranian Ambassador



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah and Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani met yesterday, discussing issues pertaining to bilateral relations.

Recent developments in the region and the world were also discussed during the meeting. A number of ministry officials attended the meeting between Jarallah and Irani. — KUNA

## KRCS celebrates 54th anniversary

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) celebrates its 54th anniversary today, as Kuwait's prominent stances granted it a distinguished position in the humanitarian field. KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said yesterday that the Society, since its foundation in 1966, established itself as a pioneer in humanitarian domain. He added that in the field of international activities, the society delivered aid and oversaw and financed projects in more than 91 countries in various regions of the

world, noting that in 2019 KRCS provided relief assistance to India, Tunisia, Comoros, Kenya, Sudan, Iran, and to Syrian refugees, Mauritania, Palestine, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Africa, Somalia, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sayer said that the Society executed many developmental projects outside Kuwait in vital fields such as housing, health and education among other services.—KUNA

## Denmark, Latvia move some troops from Iraq to Kuwait

**COPENHAGEN:** Denmark will temporarily move some of its military personnel from the Al-Asad air base in Iraq that was targeted in an Iranian missile strike on Wednesday, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said. She told reporters that 30 to 40 of Denmark's 130 personnel at the base would remain and the rest would go to Kuwait. They have been at the base as part of the international coalition fighting Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. A contingent of Danish soldiers based in the Iraqi capital Baghdad will also go temporarily to Kuwait, Frederiksen said. Latvia later said it

would move out six soldiers deployed in Iraq as part of the Danish contingent, and that they would also go to Kuwait. "First of all, it (the decision) is connected with the security issues and the second reason is [...] that all the training in Iraq is halted at the moment," Latvian Defence Ministry spokesman Kaspars Galkins said by telephone. Iranian forces fired missiles at military bases housing US troops in Iraq early on Wednesday, saying it was in retaliation for the killing in a US drone strike of powerful Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani on January 3. —Reuters



# Government says no secret clause in neutral zone pact

Closed door session on regional security • MPs want tougher rules for expat driving license



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh attend yesterday's parliament session. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



(From left) MP Salah Khorshed, MP Khaleel al-Saleh, and Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas al-Saleh react during the session.

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The government told the National Assembly that Kuwait has not made any territorial concessions in striking a new border pact with neighboring Saudi Arabia in the divided zone, denying that the deal includes any secret clauses.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah told the assembly that the agreement guarantees complete sovereignty of each country on its side of the divided zone and also guarantees their full share of resources. The minister said that the agreement does not have any secret clauses and stipulate any new border demarcation but it confirmed the previous demarcation and made things very clear. Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel said Kuwait has not conceded any of its rights and there is no loss in revenue from oil, adding that the agreement regulates investments and exploration in the offshore Durra gas-field and other maritime operations.

The agreement stipulates that Saudi Chevron will vacate its offices in Al-Zour within the next five years, adding that the Al-Zour Port is fully under Kuwait's control and is utilized by the joint operations like

the Saudi Khafji Port. He also denied reports that Kuwait will pay \$90 billion in compensation to Chevron.

Almost all MPs who spoke welcomed the agreement, saying it fairly serves the national interests of the two nations. They also praised Kuwait's government negotiating team for making this "historical" achievement. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said that in March last year, he and a group of lawmakers visited Saudi Arabia and met with the king and the crown prince and discussed the issue. The assembly then agreed to send the agreement to its foreign relations committee for reviewing it and submitting a report in order to be ratified. The assembly then moved into closed doors to debate the current regional developments.

## Traffic law discussion

In another discussion in the assembly, lawmakers asked for more stringent rules for issuing driver's licenses to expatriates in a bid to encourage them to use public transport, which effectively means making it even harder for foreigners to get a driver's license in Kuwait. The recommendation came at the end of a passionate debate of "traffic chaos" in the country during which MPs blamed the government, bad roads and reckless driving but still wanted fewer expatriates getting a driver's license.

Tough rules are already in place for expatriates to be able to drive which include high pay, a university degree, being one of a number of elite groups like judges, doctors, engineers, journalists and a like, in addition to having spent at least two years of legal residence in the country. Interior ministry officials present in the session said that Kuwaitis have 640,000 licenses against 765,000 for expats. The officials said that around 100 expatriates were deported from the country for flagrant traffic offenses in the past two years, including 77 in 2019. MPs harshly criticized the interior ministry for failing to organize traffic on the roads and applying the traffic law strictly to prevent what some lawmakers described as a "street war" on roads that result in the death of more than 600 people every year.

Other recommendations approved by the lawmakers included a call on the government to present a new and modern traffic law, amending the penal code to increase penalty for killing in traffic accidents and changing working hours so as to reduce traffic jams.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah attends the session.



Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh speaks with Interior Ministry officials during the session.



Social Affairs Minister Dr Ghadeer Aseeri speaks with MPs.



Ten years after deadly Haiti quake, survivors feel forgotten

## Lebanon bans Ghosn from foreign travel

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KIEV: A man reacts in front of a memorial for the victims of the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737-800 crash in the Iranian capital Tehran, at the Boryspil airport outside Kiev on January 8, 2020. — AFP

## Iran says Ukrainian plane turned back before crashing

**TEHRAN:** Iranian authorities have said a Ukrainian airliner, which crashed outside Tehran with the loss of all 176 people on board, had turned back after suffering a problem, as Ukrainian experts joined the investigation yesterday.

Both Canada and the United States called for a full investigation to determine the cause of Wednesday's crash, which came shortly after Tehran launched missiles at US forces in Iraq in response to the killing of a top Iranian general in a US drone strike in Baghdad.

There was no immediate indication that foul play may have caused the Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) plane to go down soon after take-off, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned against speculating on the crash causes.

"The plane, which was initially headed west to leave the airport zone, turned right following a problem and was headed back to the airport at the moment of the crash," the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization said on its website late Wednesday. "The plane disappeared from radar screens the moment it reached 8,000 feet (2,400 meters). The pilot sent no radio message about the unusual circumstances.

"According to eyewitnesses, a fire was seen

on board the plane which grew in intensity," the organization added, reporting the first findings of its investigation into the crash. The organization said it was considering evidence from the ground as well as reports from a second aircraft



### Canada's Iranian community 'devastated'

which was flying above the Ukrainian Boeing 737 as the disaster unfolded.

#### Santa doll in wreckage

Heartbreaking details started emerging about the victims, most of them from Iran or from the large Iranian diaspora in Canada. Body bags were lined up on the ground, and the passengers' personal items — including luggage, clothes, a Santa Claus doll and a boxing glove — were scattered in the debris. According to

Ukraine, 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans and three Britons were on board, as well as 11 Ukrainians — including nine crew.

About 30 came from the Iranian community around Edmonton, capital of Alberta province in western Canada, where resident Payman Parseyan described the tragedy as "devastating." "Every one of our community members was touched in one way or another," Parseyan told Canada's national broadcaster CBC.

#### Seven scenarios

Some 45 Ukrainian aviation experts and security officials flew to Tehran early Thursday to participate in the investigation, including "deciphering the black boxes" discovered by Iranian authorities at the crash site, the Ukrainian president said. A Ukrainian security official said investigators were considering seven different possible versions of events.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's national security and defence council which is tasked with coordinating the investigation, said the leads being studied included both technical malfunctions and foul play, but told AFP that "there is no priority version" yet.

The leads under consideration include a collision with another airborne object, a rocket from Iran's missile defence system, an engine explosion caused by a technical problem, and an explosion on board the aircraft due to an "act of terror," Danilov said on Facebook. He told AFP that for the moment there was no reason to believe that the airliner had been hit by a missile.

Civil aviation chief, Ali Abedzadeh, said Iran would cooperate with Ukraine, but would not send the black boxes to the United States, with which it has had no diplomatic relations for four decades. According to aviation experts, only a handful of countries are capable of analyzing black boxes — notably Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government would ensure a "thorough investigation" and that "Canadians' questions are answered." Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne spoke by telephone on Thursday with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, Tehran said. Canada is home to a large Iranian diaspora, and UIA offers relatively inexpensive flights between Toronto and Tehran, with a layover in Kiev. It was the ex-Soviet country's privately owned main carrier's first fatal crash. — AFP

## International

# Iraq set for conflict, even if US and Iran de-escalate

**BAGHDAD:** Arch-foes Tehran and Washington may be temporarily calling it even after Iranian missiles targeted US forces in Iraq, but analysts predict violent instability will keep blighting Baghdad. "Iraq will remain a zone of conflict," said Randa Slim of the Washington based Middle East Institute.

Early Wednesday, Iran launched 22 ballistic missiles at bases in Iraq hosting American and other foreign troops, in a calibrated response to the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike last week. Iran warned Iraq about the raids shortly before they happened and in their immediate aftermath, foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tehran had concluded its "proportionate" retaliation.

US President Donald Trump, too, said Iran "appears to be standing down" and even suggested Tehran and Washington could work towards a nuclear deal while cooperating against jihadists. That hinted at a common desire to contain the fallout, but analysts say it would not be enough to spare Iraq.

"Both sides are so mobilized in Iraq, which has become such symbolic terrain for hitting out at the other," said Erica Gaston of the New America Foundation. Indeed, US troops and even the embassy in Baghdad had been hit by more than a dozen rocket attacks in recent months, which have killed one Iraqi soldier and an American contractor.

The attacks went unclaimed but the US blamed hardline elements of the Hashed al-Shaabi, an Iraqi military network incorporated into the state but linked to Tehran. The strike that killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani outside Baghdad international airport on Friday also

killed his top Iraqi aid and Hashed deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

## 'Who is the mediator?'

Just because the US and Iran have struck each other directly does not mean the Hashed would now sit on the sidelines, said Gaston. "The Hashed is closer to the tip of the spear," she said. "There isn't perfect command-and-control in the Hashed, which includes a lot of angry militiamen willing to take revenge on the US," she added. Bolstered by Iran's attack, the Hashed said Wednesday it would take its own steps avenge Muhandis's death. "That is a promise," vowed leading member Qais al-Khazali. Hours later, two rockets slammed into the Iraqi capital's Green Zone, the high-security enclave where the US embassy, other foreign missions and some foreign troops are based.

Hashed factions decided in recent days to unite under a "resistance" coalition to oust US troops from Iraq. The specter of bloodshed was especially worrisome as there is no evident mediator between the parties, said Slim.

In Lebanon, Iran's ally Hezbollah has repeatedly clashed with its sworn enemy Israel but the United Nations' peacekeeping force in the south has usually intervened before the conflict could spin out of control. But "who is the mutually liked mediator?" on Iraqi soil, Slim asked.

Baghdad has long warned that tensions between Tehran and Washington, which began deteriorating significantly in 2018, would bring devastating conflict to the entire region. Iraq's government had tried to strike a balance between the two countries, both of which have close political and military ties to various ele-



**BASRA:** An Iraqi student waves the national flag during an anti-government demonstrations in the southern city of Basra on January 8, 2020, shouting slogans against turning Iraq into a battleground for the conflict between Iran and the US. — AFP

ments of Iraq's elite.

## Balance now 'impossible'

But the stunning developments of the last week — from the killing of Soleimani to Wednesday's pre-dawn strikes — also hugely exacerbated Iraq's political crisis. "It has made a balance impossible and pushed Baghdad squarely into Iran's camp," said Toby Dodge, a professor at the London School of Economics.

Figures like Iraq's President Barham Saleh, who was seen as one of the most senior officials

with close ties to Washington, would likely see their influence dwindle. "If last night was the theatre of retaliation, what today brings is political consolidation and domination of the pro-Iran factions," Toby said. The Hashed's political arm, the Fatah bloc, has already seized on anti-US sentiment over the last week to push for a total ouster of foreign troops from Iraqi territory. Some 5,200 American troops and hundreds more British, French, Canadian and other forces are based in Iraq to help local forces defeat jihadist sleeper cells. — AFP

## Philippines allows citizens to stay in Iran, Lebanon

**MANILA:** The Philippines will no longer require its citizens to leave Iran and Lebanon as worries of a broader conflict in the Middle East eased, but the mandatory evacuation order for workers in Iraq remains in force, officials said yesterday. Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, a retired general named by President Rodrigo Duterte as special envoy to the Middle East, left for Qatar on Thursday to oversee the evacuation effort.

"The situation is unpredictable, sometimes there are some instances of a very surprise missile attack," he told reporters. "They have the option to press the trigger. We have to be ready in case there will be some incidents along the way."

More than two million Philippine citizens live and work in the Middle East, sending home billions of dollars in annual remittances that could be dented by a full-scale conflict. More than 30,000 of these are in Lebanon, and more than 1,000 in Iran, includ-

ing undocumented laborers.

The United States and Iran have backed away from the brink of further conflict in the Middle East. US President Donald Trump responded overnight to an Iranian attack on US forces with sanctions, not violence. Iran offered no immediate signal it would retaliate further over a Jan. 3 US strike that killed one of its senior military commanders.

Eduardo Menez, a spokesman at the Department of Foreign Affairs, said the government is prepared to respond to any changes in the situation in the region and will assist citizens who wish to return home. "Alert levels are constantly reviewed and adjusted as needed," Menez told reporters. The foreign ministry said more than half of the 1,600 Filipinos working in Iraq, were in the Kurdistan region and the rest at US and other foreign facilities in Baghdad and in commercial establishments in Erbil. —Reuters

## Pope warns Iran-US tensions risk 'vaster conflict'

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis called for restraint from the United States and Iran yesterday after a military tit-for-tat that he warned could trigger a "vaster conflict" in the Middle East. "Particularly troubling are the signals coming from the entire region following the heightening of tensions between Iran and the United States," the pope said in his annual speech to Vatican diplomats.

Iraq on Wednesday launched 22 ballistic missiles at bases in Iraq hosting American and other foreign troops, in a calibrated response to the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike last week. The attacks "risk above all compromising the gradual process of rebuilding in Iraq, as well as setting the groundwork for a vaster conflict that all of us would want to avert," Francis said. "I therefore renew my appeal that all the interested parties avoid an escalation of the conflict and keep alive the flame of dialogue and self-restraint, in full respect of international law," he added.

The Argentine also slammed the "general indifference" of the international community towards Yemen, which is suffering "one of the most serious humanitarian crises of recent history", and warned the conflict in Libya created fertile terrain for human trafficking. He called for "far-sighted solu-



**VATICAN:** Pope Francis leaves the Sistine Chapel after meeting with diplomats accredited to the Holy See at the end of the traditional exchange of the New Year greetings, at the Vatican yesterday. —AFP

tions" for war-torn Syria and thanked Jordan and Lebanon for taking in refugees.

Francis cautioned however that the burden of taking care of those fleeing for their lives was provoking tensions among the population in Lebanon and other states, "further endangering the fragile stability of the Middle East." Lebanon, which says it hosts around 1.5 million Syrian refugees, has been rocked by unprecedented anti-government protests since October. — AFP

## International

# Haftar's Sirte seizure major blow to Libya government, analysts say

**TRIPOLI:** Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar's capture of the strategic city of Sirte on Monday was a major setback for Tripoli's UN-recognized government, analysts say. The fresh advance by Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army comes as Turkey deploys troops — 35 so far, in a training capacity — to bolster the beleaguered Government of National Accord.

Diplomatic efforts to contain the spiraling crisis saw Turkey and Russia on Wednesday call for a ceasefire, despite supporting opposing sides of the conflict. But Libya's rival factions have not yet responded.

Sirte was controlled by forces loyal to the GNA after they expelled Islamic State jihadists from the coastal city in 2016. But after a local Salafist militia switched sides, the city fell without fighting to Haftar's Libya Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), which has been fighting to seize Tripoli from the GNA since last April.

The hometown of Moamer Kadhafi, Sirte paid a heavy price after the longstanding dictator was ousted in a 2011 NATO-backed rebellion. Many in Sirte welcomed Haftar's forces as they did not support the GNA — whose forces are mostly former anti-Kadhafi rebels from Misrata, a city between Sirte and Tripoli.

## New front?

Along with undermining the morale of GNA forces, "the loss of Sirte will significantly reduce (their) military and strategic position vis-a-vis" the LAAF, said Jalel Harchaoui, a researcher at the Clingendael Institute.

Since Haftar launched his Tripoli offensive, his troops have also mobilized to block any potential counter attack on Libya's "oil crescent" in the northeast, under Haftar's control since 2016. Haftar feared GNA forces could use Sirte's air-

base to carry out strikes on his eastern stronghold, according to Harchaoui. Threats from Sirte against the LAAF, until recently known as the Libyan National Army, "constituted a kind of sword of Damocles hanging over Haftar," he said. The loss of Sirte also puts pressure on the eastern flank of pro-GNA forces defending the capital in Tripoli's southern suburbs, Harchaoui added. According to Emad Badi of the Middle East Institute, Haftar is looking to turn Misratan forces towards Sirte in order to weaken Tripoli's defenses.

His forces may look to open a new front against Misrata, 200 kilometers (120 miles) east of Tripoli, which previously blocked their advance west, according to Hamish Kinnear, an analyst at Verisk Maplecroft. "Misratan militias will prioritise protecting their home city" if the LAAF advances on it, he said. "This will put enormous pressure on the GNA's war effort in Tripoli itself."

## 'Important setback'

"Strategically, the loss of Sirte makes it much more difficult for GNA-affiliated forces to harass Haftar's supply lines," said Wolfram Lacher, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. The loss of Sirte comes as Turkey is sending troops to support the GNA against Haftar, who is supported by Ankara's rivals the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Russia is also accused of sending fighters to support Haftar, something Moscow denies.

While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made grand pronouncements about supporting Tripoli, in reality he will be forced to proceed slowly, Harchaoui said. Turkey may decide to defend limited territory, such as downtown Tripoli and other enclaves, he said.

But "the loss of Sirte makes Turkish support

States, Canada and Britain, according to UN data. The Stern report said refugees were paying about \$2,500 (2,250 euros) each to get resettled, with the corruption also including fake medical certificates to ease entry.

UNHCR has previously investigated five graft cases involving its personnel in Kenya in 2016-17, which it said had been passed on to national authorities. "We strongly condemn any attempt to undermine the integrity of our resettlement program or to exploit vulnerable refugees," Pouilly said.

The UN agency considered 1.4 million people to have resettlement needs in 2019 alone, but only around 55,000 people departed for resettlement countries last year. The limited number of places "is a factor that weighs heavily in favor of those wishing to exploit the desperation of refugees," Pouilly said.

Since the 2016-17 cases in Kenya, UNHCR said it had raised awareness among refugees that all its services were free. It also strengthened its investigative powers. The agency reported a 60 percent rise in the number of disciplinary actions it had taken between 2017 and 2018, and said 10 staff members were dismissed for corruption. — AFP



**ROME:** This photo taken and handed out on January 8, 2020 by the Palazzo Chigi Press Office shows Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte (left) escorting Libya's military strongman Khalifa Haftar at Palazzo Chigi in downtown Rome upon his arrival for a meeting as part of Europe's accelerating diplomatic efforts to seek ways to ease crisis. — AFP

all the more urgent for the GNA," said Lacher. While Turkish drones have resumed attacking pro-Haftar forces in recent days, the GNA still needs greater air capabilities, Lacher told AFP.

Advisers are already helping GNA troops fly the drones and jam signals from Haftar's unmanned aircraft, experts say. The Turkish deployment may in large part be a propaganda move aimed at halting Haftar's Tripoli offensive,

the analysts believe. Erdogan on Wednesday appeared alongside his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Istanbul to call for a ceasefire in Libya from Sunday. The pair united to issue a joint statement calling for a truce "supported by the necessary measures to be taken for stabilizing the situation on the ground". Haftar meanwhile was in Rome Wednesday for talks with Italian premier Giuseppe Conte. — AFP

## UN refugee agency probing corruption in Uganda, Kenya

**GENEVA:** The UN refugee agency said yesterday it was probing new allegations of fraud in its resettlement program in Kenya and Uganda after a report in German magazine Stern alleging graft. "We can confirm that we have received allegations related to resettlement fraud in Uganda and Kenya," UNHCR spokeswoman Cecile Pouilly said, without elaborating.

Stern reported that an illegal "market" had grown up around the resettlement program in the Ugandan capital Kampala in which intermediaries acted between local UNHCR officials and refugees willing to pay to be resettled.

Under the program, vulnerable refugees are given a home in third countries. The leading host countries for resettled refugees last year were the United

## Turkey-Libya deals 'void': Egypt, France, Greece, Cyprus

**CAIRO:** France, Greece, Egypt and Cyprus on Wednesday declared "null and void" agreements between Ankara and Libya assigning Turkey rights over a vast area of the eastern Mediterranean. A statement issued by the foreign ministers of the four countries — who met in Cairo — said the controversial agreements undermined regional stability. Their Italian counterpart, who also took part in the meeting, did not sign the statement.

The two agreements denounced by the four Mediterranean states are a military pact and a maritime deal, signed in November by the head of Libya's Government of National Accord Fayez al-Sarraj and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Ankara is a key ally of the GNA in its fight against eastern Libya based strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Libya has seen a recent escalation of the tur-

moil that has gripped the oil-rich country since a NATO-backed uprising killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, with Haftar trying to capture Tripoli from the UN-recognized government.

On Wednesday, Erdogan announced that Turkey has deployed 35 soldiers to Libya to support the GNA in a non-fighting capacity against Haftar, who is supported by Ankara's rivals the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

But it is the maritime delimitation agreement that has outraged Greece, Egypt and Cyprus, awarding Turkey exploration rights in a gas-rich area of the Mediterranean where the three states also have significant interests.

The agreement "infringes upon the sovereign rights of third states, does not comply with the law of the sea" and does not have legal enforceability, the ministers said in their statement. The ministers "reiterated the necessity of full respect of the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of all states in their maritime zones in the Mediterranean."

They condemned Turkey's drilling in the exclusive economic zone and territorial waters of the Republic of Cyprus, calling on Ankara to "immediately cease all illegal exploration activities." Cyprus is divided between the south — an EU member state — and the north, which has been occupied by Turkey since 1974 in response to an Athens-engineered Greek Cypriot coup. — AFP

# EU chief defends Iran deal after Trump call to quit

**BRUSSELS:** EU chief Charles Michel defended the crumbling Iran nuclear deal yesterday after US President Donald Trump urged Europe to quit it, but warned Tehran against “irreversible acts” that would sink the accord.

The president of the European Council used a call with Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani to call for a de-escalation of tensions after Tehran carried out missile strikes on US military bases in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of one of its top generals. A White House statement from Trump calmed fears of all-out war erupting, but the US leader demanded that the other parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal follow his lead and withdraw from the pact.

The European parties — Britain, France and

Germany — have led efforts to save the deal, which has been crumbling since Trump pulled out in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, and Michel insisted it remained vital.

“The JCPOA agreement was an important achievement after 10 years of intense international negotiations and remains an important tool for regional stability,” Michel’s office said in its readout of his call with Rouhani.

The statement said Michel had insisted “the EU has its own interests and its vision” — implicitly distancing EU capitals from Washington. But Michel, who heads the European Council grouping the 28 member states, also told Rouhani that Iran must “avoid posing irreversible acts”. The warning follows Tehran’s an-

nouncement of its latest step back from commitments under the 2015 deal, which saw it granted sanctions relief in return for curbs on its atomic program. Europe has seen a flurry of diplomatic activity this week as it seeks to calm two major crises on its periphery — Iran and Libya, where the UN-backed government is under pressure from a rival military strongman.

Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani yesterday to end the confrontation with the United States and underlined Britain’s commitments to Tehran’s nuclear agreement, Downing Street said.

Johnson “called for an end to hostilities” and said Britain viewed the 2015 nuclear deal as “the

best arrangement currently available to deliver on our goal of stopping Iran from having a nuclear weapon”, his spokesman said.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said “the time has come” for Britain, Germany, France, Russia and China to follow Washington’s lead and abandon the 2015 nuclear agreement, which sets limits on Iran’s enrichment levels.

Iran began breaking the deal’s rules once Trump pulled the US out in 2018, resulting in a new wave of tension. The US launched a drone attack in Iraq last week killing Iran’s top military commander. In a 20-minute call, Downing Street said Johnson wanted to “deliver the clear message” to Iran that “there is an urgent need for de-escalation.” — AFP

## Five far-left ministers to serve in new Spain govt

**MADRID:** Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday confirmed Podemos head Pablo Iglesias would serve as a deputy in his new government, which would also include four other far-left ministers. The official statement from his office came just two days after Sanchez won an investiture vote, paving the way for a new government following nearly a year of political deadlock.

Iglesias will serve as one of four deputies, three of whom will be women. Sanchez had earlier confirmed one of them would be his current deputy, Carmen Calvo, as well as the current

economy minister, Nadia Calvino. Fellow Podemos lawmaker Irene Montero, the former party spokeswoman and also Iglesias’ partner in life, would serve as minister of equality.

Two other ministerial posts were handed to members of the far-left Unidas Podemos coalition, with lawyer Yolanda Diaz to serve as labour minister and communist MP Alberto Garzon to hold the consumer affairs portfolio, while sociologist Manuel Castells, who is close to Podemos, will head the universities ministry. The full cabinet lineup will be unveiled “in the coming days”, the statement said.

Sanchez takes over as head of a minority coalition government after winning investiture by a razor-thin margin of just two votes. But with only 155 of the parliament’s 350 seats, the new government will struggle to push through legislation, with its first order of business to pass the long-overdue state budget. It will be Spain’s first coalition government since the 1930s. — AFP

## Russian soldier who shot 8 at base blames hazing ‘hell’

**MOSCOW:** A Russian soldier awaiting trial for killing eight in a shooting at a Siberian military base has said he committed the attack after hazing made his life “hell.” Conscript Ramil Shamsutdinov opened fire on troops at his army base in the Chita region in eastern Siberia last October, killing eight and injuring several.

Officials quickly ruled out hazing, blaming the incident on a possible nervous breakdown. Shamsutdinov, 19, faces life in prison if convicted of mass murder. In an open letter posted on social media yesterday, Shamsutdinov said he was a victim of abuse and had no way of seeking help.

“I regret I was not able to contain myself and opted for a measure of last resort but I had no other choice,” he said in the handwritten letter whose authenticity was con-

firmed by one of his lawyers, Ruslan Nagiyev.

Shamsutdinov said he always wanted to serve in the army and become a professional soldier. “But I did not expect that I’d end up in such hell. There was nowhere to run and complain,” he added. “I could no longer endure abuse.” “Apparently a survival instinct kicked in,” he added. He said he still did not understand how he had lost control and asked his victims’ families to forgive him “if they can.”

“Only now do I begin to comprehend how much grief I have brought to people and that I have ruined my life,” he added. Brutal hazing rituals were a huge problem in the Russian army in the 1990s but this has significantly improved in recent years. Rights groups say however that hazing rituals are still common in Russia. Shamsutdinov’s lawyers said the young man has been bullied and faced death threats including a threat to “drown him in a toilet.”

Nagiyev, a member of the defense team, said that after the incident investigators opened a separate probe into hazing with Shamsutdinov and several others named as victims. The soldier’s supporters have created a page on VKontakte, Russia’s biggest social media network, called “Saving Private Ramil Shamsutdinov.” Military conscription is compulsory in Russia for all male citizens aged between 18 and 27. — AFP



**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) watches the joint drills by the Northern and Black Sea Fleets onboard the cruiser Marshal Ustinov in the Black Sea off the coast of Crimea yesterday. — AFP

## Putin attends massive war games off Crimea

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday observed massive military drills off the coast of Moscow-annexed Crimea that involved test launches of cruise and hypersonic missiles. Russia’s commander-in-chief was on board the cruiser Marshal Ustinov to watch the joint drills by the Northern and Black Sea Fleets, the Kremlin said. He watched test launches of Kalibr (Caliber) cruise missiles and Kinzhal (Dagger) hypersonic missiles among others, the Kremlin said.

Russia annexed the peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, in a move condemned by the

West that was followed by the outbreak of an insurgency in eastern Ukraine. The conflict has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

Exercises in the Black Sea featured frigates and a large anti-submarine ship as well as a submarine, large landing ships and fast attack guided missile craft, while fighter jets and bombers also took part. “A pair of MiG-31K interceptor aircraft fired Kinzhal missiles at a target at one of the test ranges,” the Kremlin said.

Putin has repeatedly touted the Kinzhal missile, which he first unveiled as part of an array of next-generation nuclear weapons during his annual state-of-the-nation address in 2018. In late December, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin that the first Avangard hypersonic missiles had been put into service, in a move hailed as a major coup for Moscow. Analysts have said Russia is the first country to put intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with hypersonic weapons in active service. — AFP

## International

# Ten years after deadly Haiti quake, survivors feel forgotten



PORT-AU-PRINCE: A woman carries bucket of water on the street in Croix des Bouquets, 12.9kms (8 miles) to the northeast of Port-au-Prince, on December 30, 2019. — AFP photos



Boulva Verly, 34, tends to his son Woodyna Verly, 3, at their home in Croix des Bouquets on January 2, 2020.

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** Ten years ago, Herlande Mitile was left disabled by the massive earthquake that devastated Haiti. Today, she uses a wheelchair jury-rigged with a piece of string, which means she cannot go far.

Result: she is trapped in her village outside Port-au-Prince. It was meant to be a model for reconstruction of the country after the disaster. Instead, the 36-year-old Mitile — who once worked in the capital — is dependent on her neighbors to survive.

“The doctor told me that if I went to physical therapy, I might walk again, but you have to go into the city for that. You need money for public transport and I don’t have any,” she explained. “That’s how I have become even more handicapped than I was to begin with,” added Mitile, who has metal plates screwed into her hip and spine.

Before January 12, 2010, she did not know a thing about earthquakes or the damage they can do. But on that Tuesday, more than 200,000 Haitians were killed by the roaring tremor, many of them crushed to death when substandard concrete buildings crumbled on top of them. Mitile was rescued from the debris eight days after the 7.0-magnitude quake. She was alive, but gravely injured.

### Potemkin village

After months in a makeshift camp, hundreds of which dotted the Port-au-Prince landscape after the tragedy, Mitile and her two daughters ended up in Village Lumane Casimir. Named for one of Haiti’s greatest singers, the community — about 20 kilometers (12 miles) outside Port-au-Prince — was created by the government, which offered lodging there to about 50 people disabled in the quake.

The government had hoped it would be an example of urban development for an impoverished country mired in corruption, and which to this day has scant real estate records. The community was to have 3,000 quake-resistant homes, a market, an industrial area, police and fire stations, a school

and a pharmacy. On paper, it was a dream community. But the plans never came to fruition. Like hundreds of other construction sites during the decade when the Petrocaribe program was running, the village was abandoned in 2014 with more than half the buildings undone.

### Scandal and corruption

The ambitious project died in the swirling Petrocaribe corruption controversy that sparked an eruption of public anger in 2018 — anger that remains to this day. Since the middle of that year, the public has regularly demonstrated in Haiti calling for more transparency in how the funds from Venezuela’s Petrocaribe program were handled.

The scheme had allowed struggling Haiti to buy petroleum products more cheaply and on credit, but it was plagued by allegations of misuse of aid money allocated by Caracas. The financial upheaval that resulted from the scandal doomed the village project, and the public administrative office



A laborer works at a construction site in Croix des Bouquets on December 30, 2019

on site to collect rent closed, creating a sort of real estate loophole.

So people kept coming to the complex, because all of a sudden, it was a great deal. “I came to live here because rent had become too high in my old neighborhood,” explained William Saint-Pierre, who simply squatted in one vacant house.

Saint-Pierre pays no rent for his two-room dwelling, and doesn’t pay any taxes on his off-book drinks business. But he also likes the safety of the village with its neatly arranged, brightly colored homes. “In the cities after five or six o’clock, you have to stay inside, and doors have iron gates. Look around us — at my little wooden door, at homes without a security wall,” Saint-Pierre said. “I’m getting too old to hear gunshots at all hours of the day and night,” added the 62-year-old.

### Isolation

Despite some benefits, including the absence of gang violence, Village Lumane Casimir is nev-

ertheless geographically isolated and without any officials to run it. That puts its most vulnerable residents at even higher risk.

Mitile cannot get around so she cannot find a job. She gets no public assistance. So she has to rely on handouts from neighbors. “Sometimes, I’ve wanted to die,” she admits, once her daughters aged 12 and 16 are out of earshot.

“When my neighbors cook, they call my little one and tell her to come get a bowl for me,” she says, tapping nervously on her damaged wheelchair. “Before January 12 (the quake), we got by, but now, I’m worse than a baby.”

In the village, which is effectively run by the residents themselves, those still suffering from injuries sustained in the quake and those who came seeking a better life say they feel forgotten by the government. “If we had to wait for them to make good on their promises, we would be dead,” Mitile says. “There is no government. I am my own government.” — AFP



A boy kicks the ball as he plays football on the street in Croix des Bouquets on January 5, 2020.

## International

## Has Trump deterred Iran? Experts not so sure

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Wednesday that the US strike that killed a top Iranian general had restored credibility to the US threat to Tehran to restrain itself militarily. "I believe that we've restored a level of deterrence with them," he said.

But Washington security analysts say it is far from certain that Tehran has been deterred from further attacks on the United States and its allies, and that it might not be long before it challenges President Donald Trump again.

In the short run tensions could ease after Iran retaliated for Revolutionary Guards Commander Qasem Soleimani's death last week by firing 12 ballistic missiles at two US bases in Iraq, causing damage but killing no one. But that is "just the beginning," said Kaleigh Thomas, a Middle East security analyst at the Center for a New American Security.

Soleimani's death in a US drone strike last Friday "has definitely changed the tone of tensions going forward," she said. "They're going to be planning strategically, investing in ways to inflict pain on the United States."

**'Impulsive decision'**

For effective deterrence, Thomas said, the Trump administration lacks a coherent message that Tehran can make sense of — what response it can expect from the United States to what provocative actions — as well as a back channel to communicate, like previous administrations had. She faulted Trump's inconsistent responses last year after the Revolutionary Guards shot down two US drones, allegedly damaged multiple tankers in the Gulf, and allegedly launched missiles on Saudi oil installations.

In each case the US response was hesitant and minimal, emboldening Tehran. "A lot of de-

terrence ... is this idea of, there are patterns, and that way, everyone's kind of on the same page," said Thomas. "If we're reading two different books, something's going to go wrong."

On the other hand, she said, the "impulsive decision" to kill Soleimani to re-establish deterrence appeared disproportional to Tehran's most recent actions — supporting rocket strikes on US installations in Iraq and backing protestors who stormed the reception building at the US embassy in Baghdad. Tehran might now be tentative about reacting, but is "motivated to act and to find ways to inflict pain upon the United States."

**Hard to deter 'revolutionary' regimes**

Retired General David Petraeus, who once led US forces in the Middle East, said he was optimistic that killing Soleimani delivered a strong message that Tehran will have to heed. It was "a very significant effort to re-establish deterrence, which obviously had not been shored up by the relatively insignificant responses up until now," Petraeus told Foreign Policy magazine.

James Phillips, a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said it was important for the Trump administration to enforce its red lines after having shied from responding for so long. But it is hard to establish credible deterrence against a regime like Iran, where Soleimani's Revolutionary Guards were "willing to sacrifice Iran's national interests in order to advance the regime's more narrow revolutionary interests," Phillips said. "I think, unfortunately, also Tehran may have interpreted the Trump administration's previous restraint as weakness." Former US senior diplomat Nicolas Burns said it was "far too early" to declare success in delivering a credible threat message to Tehran. "Iran has a brutal his-



WASHINGTON: A protestor wearing a stylized mask of President Donald Trump holds up a sign outside of the White House on January 8, 2020 in Washington, DC. — AFP

tory of using proxy forces to attack the US and others," he told AFP. "They could well do that in the coming weeks or months."

**Iran's nuclear threat**

More challenging is Tehran's threat this week to restart its program to develop nuclear weapons by producing weapons-grade uranium. Thomas said the US inability to deter Iran is rooted in Trump's unilateral decision in 2018 to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal which froze that program, and place more sanctions on the country. After that, she said, "I think it was total

confusion about what United States actually wanted from Iran."

Andrea Stricker of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative Washington thinktank, wrote Wednesday that Washington needs urgently to make clear to Iran that it would be willing to bomb the country if it nears such a "nuclear breakout." "The United States should avoid additional kinetic conflict with Iran if possible, but Washington must be willing to employ all instruments of national power against Iran if it appears to be approaching breakout," she wrote Wednesday. — AFP

## Democrats seek to check Trump war power

WASHINGTON: US Democratic lawmakers pressed ahead Wednesday with plans to check President Donald Trump's ability to take military action against Iran, despite Congress breathing a collective sigh of relief at the de-escalation of conflict with the Islamic republic.

Republicans and Democrats alike expressed broad support for the toning down of sabre-rattling rhetoric both by President Donald Trump and Iranian officials, and satisfaction that no Americans were killed in Tehran's missile strike aimed at bases in Iraq housing US troops.

But classified briefings by senior administration officials left many Democrats — and at least one angry Republican — unconvinced about Trump's justification for killing top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani last week while the powerful general was in Iraq, a move that sent tensions soaring.

"Our concerns were not addressed by the president's insufficient War Powers Act notification and by the administration's briefing" by Defense Secretary Mark Esper and other top officials, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

The top Democrat in Congress announced the chamber will vote Thursday on legislation aimed at preventing Trump from waging war with Iran. "The president has made clear that



MIAMI: People sit in a restaurant as President Donald Trump's address to the nation from the White House is seen on a television following Iranian attack on bases in Iraq on January 08, 2020 in Miami, Florida. — AFP

he does not have a coherent strategy to keep the American people safe, achieve de-escalation with Iran and ensure stability in the region," Pelosi said in a statement.

Under the 1973 War Powers Act, the administration needs to notify Congress on major military actions but Trump, unusually, has kept classified his rationale for the strike that killed Soleimani. "We're told it was an imminent threat" by Soleimani's forces against Ameri-

cans, House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Eliot Engel told reporters after being briefed. "I'm not sure I'm convinced about that."

Democratic presidential candidate Senator Elizabeth Warren also expressed doubts about the justification offered for killing Soleimani. "There were so many important questions that they did not answer (and) we did not see a satisfying plan for the future," said Senate Minor-

ity Leader Chuck Schumer, irate that Esper and company "walked out" of the briefing when questioning got tough.

Several Republicans described the briefings as helpful, and said they showed intelligence pointing to Iranian attacks expected within days against Americans. Democrats seethed over Trump's unilateral order to kill Soleimani without congressional consent. But they joined Republicans including Senator Lindsey Graham in taking heart that Washington and Tehran appeared to choose de-escalation rather than war posturing.

"In my view, retaliation for the sake of retaliation is not necessary at this time," tweeted Graham, a hawkish Trump loyalist. But he also lashed out at concerned Democrats, saying "I find this whole idea that somehow the national security team did not have a good basis to hit this guy to be ridiculous."

The briefings left not just Democrats fuming. Senator Mike Lee said it was "insulting" how briefers restricted questions about the appropriateness of military intervention with Iran. Lee called the briefers' behavior "un-American," and announced he would support a Democratic-led war powers resolution.

Tensions between the US and Iran have escalated in recent years, but they spiked when Soleimani was killed. Iran retaliated this week by firing missiles at Iraqi bases where US troops are stationed. Trump said he sought peace and that Iran appeared to be "standing down," while Tehran signaled it did not seek further confrontation. "Both sides have said that that's their objective," senior House Democrat Steny Hoyer said. "Our hope is that that is what happens." — AFP

## International

# China believes new virus behind mystery pneumonia outbreak

**BEIJING:** China believes a mysterious pneumonia outbreak that struck 59 people is caused by a new strain of virus from the same family as SARS, which killed hundreds of people more than a decade ago. Lead scientist Xu Jianguo told the official Xinhua news agency that experts had “preliminarily determined” a new type of coronavirus was behind the outbreak, first confirmed on December 31 in Wuhan, a central Chinese city with a population of over 11 million.

It initially sparked fears of a resurgence of highly contagious Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome, and prompted authorities in Hong Kong — badly hit by SARS in 2002-2003 — to take precautions, including stepping up the disinfection of trains and airplanes, and checks of passengers. China has since ruled out a fresh outbreak of SARS, which killed 349 people in mainland China and another 299 in Hong Kong. “A total of 15 positive results of the new type of coronavirus had been detected” in the lab, through tests on infected blood samples and throat swabs, Xu said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the preliminary discovery of a new

coronavirus in a statement. “Further investigations are also required to determine the source, modes of transmission, extent of infection and countermeasures implemented,” said Gauden Galea, the WHO Representative to China.

Wuhan’s health commission said on Sunday seven of the 59 patients were seriously ill, but none had died. All received treatment in quarantine. Eight patients have recovered and were discharged from hospital on Wednesday, according to Xinhua.

The commission said the infection broke out between December 12 and 29, with some of the patients employed at a city seafood market since closed for disinfection. No obvious evidence of human-to-human transmission has been reported so far.

Footage from January 1 by state broadcaster CCTV showed an official notice at the market saying it had been closed in light of the “current pneumonia situation in our city”, without providing a date for reopening. The outbreak comes just a few weeks before China’s busiest annual travel period, when millions of people take buses, trains and planes

for Lunar New Year.

A Chinese transport ministry official said at a briefing that arrangements were made for “disinfection, monitoring and prevention” focusing on areas with large numbers of passengers, including stations and cargo hubs. Civil aviation and national railway authorities said they had not received any reports of affected patients taking flights or trains, and that they were closely watching the situation.

Wan Xiangdong, chief flight officer of China’s Civil Aviation Administration, said all planes were equipped with emergency medical kits. WHO representative Galea said “people with symptoms of pneumonia and reported travel history to Wuhan have been identified at international airports.” The organization has not recommended any travel restrictions on China.

## Hong Kong, Taiwan fears

In Hong Kong, hospitals have raised their alert level to “serious” and stepped up detection measures — including temperature checkpoints for inbound travellers. Authorities in the financial hub say 38 people have been

hospitalized in recent days after returning from Wuhan and displaying flu-like illnesses, but none were confirmed to have contracted the mystery virus. Some 21 of the 38 patients had been discharged by Wednesday.

City residents worried about the outbreak have rushed to buy face masks from local pharmacies, with many selling out earlier this week. Inbound trains and flights from the mainland are undergoing extra cleaning and disinfection, authorities said.

Additional thermal imaging systems have been set up at the city’s airport, while inbound high-speed rail passengers from the mainland face checks by hand-held infrared thermometers. The coming holiday has prompted concerns in Taiwan, where top officials urged the island’s health and welfare ministry to strengthen quarantine controls at airports.

On Monday, the country’s center for disease control also advised residents planning to travel to or near Wuhan to wear masks and avoid contact with wild animals. The US embassy in China warned on Tuesday that Americans travelling in the country should avoid animals and contact with sick people. —AFP

## Family of tigers poisoned in India’s Goa

**PANAJI:** A tiger and its three cubs have been found dead in Goa after apparently being poisoned by locals angry at the killing of livestock, Indian officials said yesterday. The number of the endangered big cats in India has crept up in recent years, but so have the numbers killed by people as humans increasingly encroach into their territory.

The four carcasses were found in a northern forest region of the western coastal state in recent days not long after a cow and a buffalo had been mauled in the area. “It is a suspected case of poisoning. We suspect the poison was put in the buffalo carcass,” wildlife official Santosh Kumar told AFP.

He said three villagers had been arrested. “The tragic incidents of tiger deaths are shocking and saddening,” Goa’s chief minister Pramod Sawant tweeted. “We will investigate and take stern action against the perpetrators.”

In July last year, the Indian government said that since 2015, the tiger population had increased 30 percent to almost 3,000 — raising hopes for its survival. This compares with an estimated 40,000 tigers in 1947.

More than 60 tigers died or were killed in 2019, according to official figures. In July last year, a tiger was beaten to death by a mob a day after it killed one person and injured eight others. Another tiger and its two cubs were poisoned by villagers a month earlier in June after it killed a cow. Experts say more can be done — not just at the village level but also across government agencies — to educate and increase awareness about tigers. —AFP

## EU spurns ‘guided tour’ of Kashmir

**NEW DELHI:** The European Union refused to take part in a rare diplomatic visit to Indian Kashmir which started yesterday because they will not be allowed to meet detained local politicians, reports said. The two-day foreign diplomatic trip is the first since New Delhi stripped the restive Himalayan region of its autonomy and sent in tens of thousands of extra troops in August.

The security lockdown and communications blackout, still only partially lifted, has drawn international criticism including in Brussels and Washington. “EU envoys don’t want a guided tour of Kashmir. We want to meet people freely of our own choosing,” the NDTV news channel quoted one European diplomatic source as saying.

In particular they wanted to meet three former chief ministers, Farooq and Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, who are still locked up, daily newspaper The Hindu reported. The three have been under house arrest or kept at a government residence since August.

The foreign ministry said that envoys from 15 countries — including the United States, South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina — would take part in the visit to the region, which is also claimed by Pakistan. A diplomatic source told AFP that the EU, which has been pressing for months to access to some of those detained, was still keen to go at a later date. “The EU is interested in going and con-



SRINAGAR: Indian government forces stand guard as a foreign delegation, including representatives of the United States but not the European Union, arrives in Srinagar yesterday. —AFP

tinues to be engaged with the MEA (ministry of external affairs) on timing and elements of the trip,” the source said.

Other Indian newspapers quoted government sources as saying that the EU balked because the visit was at short notice and since it was not possible for all the bloc’s ambassadors to take part. Those going would be “free to interact with people subject to security considerations. No ambassador, however, had specifically asked to meet anyone who was detained,” the Times of India quoted a source as saying.

In October, around 30 European lawmakers — many from far-right parties — visited but without the official blessing of the EU and the Indian government insisted it was a “private” initiative. Critics said that visit was a government’s attempt to give the impression that life has

returned to normal.

Foreign journalists have also not been allowed into the area since August, when Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir state were stripped of its partial autonomy and split into two regions ruled directly from New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the move was to boost the local economy and end decades of violence that has left tens of thousands dead, mostly civilians. There is still barely any internet access and only around half of mobile phones work.

New Delhi says this is to stop militants communicating, who it says are backed by Islamabad. India and Pakistan, who Kashmir was split between at the end of British colonial rule in 1947, have fought two of their three wars over the territory. —AFP



## International

Friday, January 10, 2020

# Lebanon bans Ghosn from foreign travel

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon banned former auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn from travel yesterday and asked Japan to hand over his file on financial misconduct charges, as Tokyo urged the fugitive businessman to return. The 65-year-old businessman—for years venerated in Japan for turning around once-ailing Nissan—fled while awaiting trial on charges including allegedly under-reporting his compensation to the tune of \$85 million. His shock arrival in his native Lebanon last month was the latest twist in a story worthy of a Hollywood plot and prompted outrage from the Japanese government as well as from Nissan.

A day after Ghosn made an impassioned defense in front world media of his decision to jump bail and flee Japan, Ghosn on Thursday morning gave testimony to Lebanese prosecutors over an Interpol “red notice” urging his arrest. “The state prosecution issued a travel ban for Ghosn, and asked for his file from the Japanese authorities,” a judicial source said. A second judicial source said Ghosn had been asked to hand over his French passport and banned from travelling abroad until his judicial file arrived from Japan. “According to what is inside the file, if it appears that the crimes he is accused of in Japan require being pursued in Lebanon, he will be tried,” the source added. “But if it doesn’t require being pursued under Lebanese law, then he will be free.”

## Travel to Israel

At Japan’s request, Lebanon’s judiciary received a “red notice” from Interpol last week urging Ghosn’s arrest. A “red notice” is a request to police across the world to provisionally detain a person pending extradition, surrender or similar

legal action. It is not an arrest warrant.

But Lebanon does not have an extradition agreement with Japan. Ghosn also made a statement to prosecutors yesterday on a report submitted by Lebanese lawyers that he had travelled to neighboring Israel as head of Renault-Nissan, despite a ban on Lebanese visiting the Jewish state. Lebanon and neighboring Israel are technically still at war. In early 2008, Ghosn travelled to Israel to announce the mass production of electric vehicles there with the cooperation of Renault-Nissan. At a press conference in Beirut on Wednesday, Ghosn apologized to the Lebanese people for having visited the country. “I went as a Frenchman because of a contract between Renault and an Israeli company,” said Ghosn, who holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian nationalities. “I always come back to Lebanon and nothing has ever happened before,” he said.

At his first public appearance since his escape to Lebanon, he slammed Japan’s judicial system and said he had been forced to flee because he would not get a fair trial. “There was no way I was going to be treated fairly... this was not about justice,” he told reporters, responding to questions in English, Arabic, French and Portuguese.

## ‘Presumed guilty’

Ghosn said he was “presumed guilty before the eyes of the world and subject to a system whose only objective is to coerce confessions, secure guilty pleas.” The ex-chairman of Nissan-Renault faces four charges of financial misconduct in Tokyo, which he alleges were cooked up by disgruntled executives at Nissan in collusion with Japanese prosecutors.

## Lengthy pre-trial detention

Ghosn spent more than four months in detention over two periods after his shock November 2018 arrest, with the first stint lasting a full 108 days before he finally won bail. He and legal team referred to the extended periods of detention as “hostage justice”, arguing the prosecutors were trying to break his will and force him to confess to financial misconduct charges that he continues to deny. He said he felt “subject to a system whose only objective is to coerce confessions, secure guilty pleas.”

Japan’s legal system allows for long periods of detention before a trial begins, and critics at home and abroad have argued that prosecutors hold suspects before indicting them as a tool to extract confessions. Prosecutors fought hard to keep Ghosn behind bars, arguing that he could flee if released because of his extensive financial means and international contacts. “Ghosn was deemed a high flight risk, which is obvious from the fact that he actually fled and illegally departed the country,” prosecutors said after the tycoon’s Wednesday press conference.

## Detention conditions

Ghosn slammed the conditions he experienced at the Tokyo Detention House in Kosuge, saying he was interrogated around the clock without his lawyer, held in a cell where the lights never went out and only allowed to shower twice a week. Japanese prisons are not usually singled out for criticism by international rights groups, with violence rare and individual cells of about 6.5 square meters (70 square feet) or slightly larger. Officials defend the rules governing interrogations, saying questioning is videotaped and suspects can refuse to answer questions. Those in detention also have the right to meet their lawyers outside of interrogations.



**BEIRUT:** Journalists approach a car as it leaves a house said to belong to former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn in the Lebanese capital Beirut yesterday. —AFP

Japan’s Justice Minister Masako Mori earlier yesterday said the accusations were “baseless” and urged Carlos Ghosn to return and make his case in court. “If defendant Ghosn has anything to say on his criminal case, he should make his argument in a Japanese court and present concrete evidence,” she said.

“If he claims innocence, he should face a trial under the justice system in Japan, where he was doing business, and he should submit evidence to

prove his claims,” Mori said. The businessman was out on bail in Tokyo when he launched his audacious escape plan, and said he decided to flee after his lawyers told him he could wait five years for a verdict. He also accused prosecutors of imposing strict conditions on contacts with his wife Carole in a bid to “break” him. Prosecutors in Tokyo this week obtained an arrest warrant for Carole, who is also in Lebanon, alleging she lied to a Japanese court. —AFP

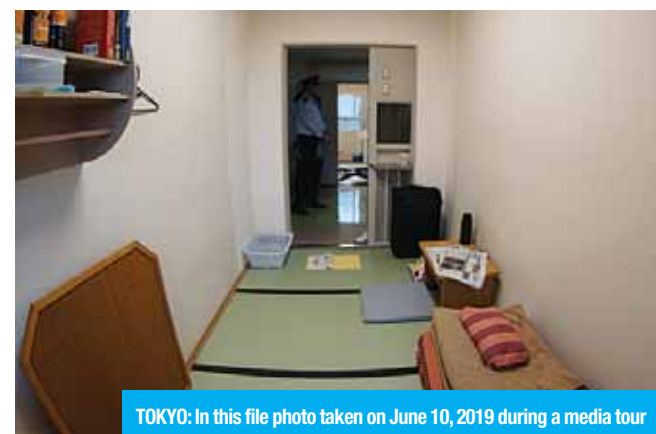
## Japan’s legal system underfire as Ghosn takes aim

**TOKYO:** Japan’s legal system came under the spotlight when Carlos Ghosn launched a vigorous self-defense in his first public appearance since jumping bail and fleeing to Lebanon. The former Renault-Nissan chief slammed everything from the country’s sky-high conviction rate to the conditions he faced during 130 days of pre-trial detention. Here are some of his main criticisms, and how Japanese officials respond:

### 99 percent conviction rate

When it comes to convictions, Japanese prosecutors boast a success rate that their peers around the world might consider enviable. They win more than 99 percent of the cases they bring to trial, and Ghosn cited this astonishing rate as evidence that he would not get a fair hearing. “I was facing a system where the conviction rate is 99.4 percent,” he said, claiming that the rate for foreigners was likely even higher. Japan does not dispute that its prosecutors win almost all of the cases they bring to trial, but says this is simply evidence that they do not start legal action lightly.

Prosecutors “only indict a suspect where there is a high likelihood of a court’s conviction based on sufficient evidence, so as to avoid an innocent person (having) to suffer,” Justice Minister Masako Mori said in response to Ghosn’s criticism. “It is wrong to argue that a person cannot obtain a fair judgment because of the high conviction rate in Japan.”



**TOKYO:** In this file photo taken on June 10, 2019 during a media tour shows a cell for one detainee at the Tokyo Detention House. —AFP

### Strict bail terms

When Ghosn finally won bail for a second time, his release came with strict conditions: surveillance of his home, access to the internet at his lawyer’s office only, and restrictions on his contact with his wife Carole. Prosecutors argued that she was party to one of the charges and the couple could tamper with evidence. Ghosn had to get court permission before contacting her via video conference, which he was able to do just twice.

And they said the strict rules were necessary to prevent him from fleeing the country. Ghosn slammed the conditions as vindictive, saying prosecutors specifically blocked access to Carole to “break” him and that his decision to flee was motivated in large part by the rule. “Maybe for a lot of people it would have been not a punishment not to see their wife, but for me it was,” he joked. —AFP

## International

# Australia bushfires flare as heatwave brings renewed misery

**SYDNEY:** Bushfires flared in southern Australia yesterday as a heatwave expected to bring renewed misery set in, and officials warned some areas are “just at the beginning” of the devastating crisis. Soldiers went door-to-door advising residents to leave the South Australian town of Parndana on Kangaroo Island after a large blaze bore down on the area, with temperatures there soaring to 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit).

That came less than 24 hours after police evacuated the picturesque island’s Vivonne Bay community, which by yesterday afternoon was also being threatened by fires that were expected to burn for days to come. “The conditions are such that it is continuing to present a significant risk to the firefighters who are working hard to control the fires, and to anyone else in the vicinity,” Country Fire Service chief Mark Jones said.

In neighboring Victoria state, officials extended a “state of disaster” declaration for a further 48 hours ahead of scorching temperatures that were due to set today, further stoking massive fires. “It’s a very dangerous and dynamic situation that will confront us over the next 12, 24 and 36 hours,” Victoria Emergency Management commissioner Andrew Crisp said.

The catastrophic bushfires have killed at least 26 people, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched some eight million hectares (80,000 square kilometers) — an area the size of the island of Ireland. Scientists say the drought-fuelled blazes are being worsened by climate change, which is increasing the length and intensity of Australia’s fire season.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews warned residents to brace for further devastation in what has already been a months-long crisis. “We’re

just at the beginning of what will be a really, really challenging summer,” he said.

## ‘Extreme’ danger

Despite cooler weather and rainfall providing some relief in some bushfire-affected areas this week, almost 150 fires were still burning in worst-hit New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, the huge continent’s most populated regions.

Vast tracts of the states are facing “severe” fire danger today, with some areas expected to experience “extreme” conditions. “Don’t get complacent with the rain that we’ve seen,” Victoria police minister Lisa Neville said. “These fires are absolutely still moving, still growing in our landscape and they pose significant risk to communities.”

Firefighters have been taking advantage of this week’s milder weather as they race to contain bushfires ahead of today. They have been clearing vegetation and carrying out controlled burns in an effort to protect areas like the coastal town of Eden, where a large bushfire is burning to the south. “It only takes a spark to get a fire burning, and that’s our concern for tomorrow,” Rural Fire Service superintendent John Cullen told a local council briefing. The Rural Fire Service said a helicopter pilot who had been waterbombing a fire in the area ditched his aircraft into a dam Thursday afternoon, managing to free himself and swim to shore.

## Hottest ever year

In some burnt-out areas people have turned to the painful task of rebuilding their homes and lives, with the process expected to take years. NSW announced yesterday it would spend Aus\$1.2 billion (US\$680 million) on restoring infrastructure in fire-ravaged areas. That comes on



**COOMA:** This handout photo taken on January 7, 2020 and received on January 8 from the Royal Australian Air Force shows smoke and haze over mountains seen from a No 11 Squadron P-8A Poseidon aircraft assessing damage in the area from bushfires, in Cooma in New South Wales. — AFP

top of a separate Aus\$2 billion (\$1.4 billion) national recovery fund earmarked to help devastated communities.

“We are always standing shoulder-to-shoulder with those who have been impacted by the devastating fires, this catastrophe which has come to New South Wales and we are stepping up to make sure we provide that support,” NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

The bushfire toll has not been limited to human losses — the blazes have also wreaked wide-ranging environmental damage. University of Sydney scientists estimate one billion animals

have been killed in the fires. The figure includes mammals, birds and reptiles, but not frogs, insects or invertebrates.

Bushfire smoke has shrouded Australia’s major cities in toxic haze for weeks, causing major public health concerns. The smoke has also travelled more than 12,000 kilometers (7,400 miles) to Brazil and Argentina, according to weather authorities there. Australia experienced its driest and hottest year on record in 2019, with its highest average maximum temperature of 41.9 degrees Celsius (107.4 degrees Fahrenheit) recorded in mid-December. — AFP

## Carbon emissions from Australian blazes near Amazon fire levels

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Climate-heating emissions from Australia’s devastating bushfires are now nearly on a par with those caused by fires in the Amazon rainforest last year, scientists have calculated. Australia’s bushfires, from September to January 6, emitted 370 million tons of carbon dioxide, according to the European Union’s ECMWF Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS).

By comparison, fires from Brazilian states in the Amazon Basin, which sparked global attention, emitted 392 million tons of greenhouse gases from January 1 to November 15 last year. “People are not grasping the carbon consequences,” Joe Fontaine, a lecturer in environmental science at Murdoch University in Perth, said of the Australian fires.

The estimate of their carbon emissions “is sobering and depressing”, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. So far 27 people have been killed, thousands made homeless and thousands more evacuated repeatedly as the monster fires have scorched large swathes of Australia, especially in its southeast.

While media coverage has largely focused on the devastating impacts on people and wildlife, together with air pollution, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has been criticized over apparent at-



**LAKE CONJOLIA:** This handout satellite image taken on December 31, 2019 and received from Planet Labs, Inc. on January 7, 2020 shows smoking rising into the air from bushfires near Lake Conjolia in the Australian state of New South Wales. — AFP

tempts to play down the role of climate change in the crisis.

Most scientists say the fires have been exacerbated by a nationwide three-year drought they link to climate change. Global warming is making extreme events like droughts, heatwaves and bushfires more intense and more likely, said Adam Hodge, a regional information officer with the United Nations Environment Programme in Bangkok.

“Bushfires are normal in Australia as part of the natural cycle, but by some estimates the scale of the current infernos may be the worst on record,” he said. “They are a harbinger of things to

come. These are the effects we are seeing in a world that has warmed 1.1 degrees (Celsius) above the pre-industrial average,” he added. Australia contributes 1.3 percent of global carbon emissions but is the second-largest emitter per capita behind the United States. Brazil is the seventh-largest emitter of heat-trapping gases. Tackling climate change would help prevent catastrophes like the recent fires, Hodge said, adding that “countries are not doing enough to fight climate change.”

## Natural fires

Making comparisons between fire emissions data from Australia and Brazil is complex due to different fire dynamics, such as the type of vegetation and how fires are started, said Mark Parrington, a senior scientist at CAMS in Reading, England.

“A lot of fires across the tropics are started deliberately, often for agriculture,” he said. “There have also been fires related to deforestation in Brazil ... whereas in Australia, it’s a country that has a (natural) fire habitat, so fire is part of the ecosystem.”

Tallying emissions across regions can also politicize the issue and shift the focus to other countries, he said. Despite spikes in areas hit by bushfires, Australia is experiencing an average year for emissions from fires at a national level, a CAMS spokeswoman said, although the last four months of emissions were above average. Since 2010, Australia’s average annual fire-related emissions have been 440 million tons, with the record being 916 million tons in 2011. Globally, the number of fires and related emissions mostly declined over the last several decades, Parrington noted. Fire emissions may also be compensated for by regrowth when the vegetation recovers in burned areas, carbon experts say. — Reuters

# Friday Times Lifestyle

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2020

[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)



*Harry and Meghan step  
back as 'senior' royals*

See Pages 20 & 21



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, react during their visit to Canada House in thanks for the warm Canadian hospitality and support they received during their recent stay in Canada, in London on Jan 7, 2020. — AFP photos



Royal souvenirs featuring images of Prince Harry and his wife Meghan are pictured for sale in a store near Buckingham Palace.



A cut-out of Prince Harry and Meghan is displayed in a window of The Prince Harry pub in Windsor yesterday.

# British royals 'hurt' after Harry and Meghan quit frontline roles

Prince Harry and his celebrity wife Meghan's bombshell resignation from front-line royal duties rocked the British monarchy yesterday, with reports suggesting Queen Elizabeth II had not been informed in advance. The couple said they would now "balance" their time between Britain and North America and rip up long-established relations with the press, in a surprise statement Wednesday that appeared to catch Buckingham Palace off guard.

In a short, terse response a short time later, a palace statement said discussions with Harry and Meghan were "at an early stage". "We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through," the palace said. Media reports said the couple made their shock statement - released on their Instagram account, own website and through Buckingham Palace's email communications system - without notifying either Harry's grandmother, the monarch, or father, the future king Prince Charles.

The mood in the palace was understood to be one of disappointment and even "hurt", according to the BBC, while Thursday's newspapers were full of reports of a family "split" and the queen's "dismay". The decision follows a turbulent year for the pair, who have admitted to struggling in the spotlight and growing apart from Harry's brother Prince William.

They have also complained of negative news coverage and taken several papers to court, another unusual move. "We intend to step back as 'senior' members of the royal family and work to become financially independent, while continuing to fully support Her Majesty The Queen," they said. "We have chosen to make a transition this year in starting to carve out a progressive new role within this institution."

## Struggling in the spotlight

Harry, 35, and Meghan, 38, are among the most senior, core members of the royal family, and, along with William and his wife Kate, seen as embodying the monarchy's future. The pair spent six

weeks over Christmas in Canada after speaking of the pressure of being in the spotlight following their fairytale wedding at Windsor Castle in May 2018 and son Archie's birth 12 months later.

They skipped the royal family's traditional Christmas at Sandringham, the sovereign's private estate in eastern England, spending the festive season instead with Meghan's American mother Doria Ragland. Rumors that all was not well with the Sussexes surfaced in October when Harry, sixth in line to the throne, admitted that he and William were "on different paths" and had good and bad days in their relationship. "We don't see each other as much as we used to," he told ITV television's Tom Bradby, whom Harry and William have grown to trust with interviews over the years.

## 'War of the Windsors'

Asked by Bradby if she was "not really OK" and life had "really been a struggle" becoming a mother while living under intense media scrutiny, Meghan appeared emotional and replied simply: "Yes." Bradby said Wednesday that he sensed he was witnessing "a long, sad farewell to this royal life". "This is a new war of the Windsors - and it's not over yet."

In October, Harry issued a stinging statement about general tabloid coverage and launched the first of a handful of lawsuits against newspaper publishers. Asked if Meghan was facing the same media pressures as his mother Diana, who died in a car crash in Paris in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi, Harry told Bradby: "I will not be bullied into playing a game that killed my mum." On a new website, the couple said they would no longer take part in the royal rota. The rota system is an established arrangement between the palace and the press in which news organizations take turns covering events and then share the pictures, text and video with everyone else, avoiding the mass media scrambles of the past.

Instead the couple will attempt to invite only "specialist", "grass-roots", "credible" and "young, up-and-coming" media to events. Queen Elizabeth's former press secretary Dickie Arbiter told Sky

News television that the couple's approach was "a succession of doing things their own way - which is the wrong way". "Sometimes there's good press; sometimes there's bad press. You take the rough with the smooth." — AFP



In this file photo taken on May 19, 2018, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II looks on during the wedding ceremony of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

# 'Megxit' trumps Brexit and Iran in UK after royal bombshell

The news Prince Harry and his wife Meghan will step back from being "senior royals" knocked the Iran crisis and Brexit from the headlines in Britain yesterday. The pair announced Wednesday evening they were quitting to "carve out a progressive new role within this institution" - but reportedly without the approval of Queen Elizabeth II. That prompted immediate headlines of "Megxit" and palace intrigue.

"Queen's dismay as Harry and Meghan step back from royal life," screamed the Daily Express. Every British newspaper, including the Financial Times, put the news on their front pages - with the country's infamously lurid tabloids getting characteristically creative with their headlines. "Megxit" screamed top-selling The Sun on the day lawmakers will finally approve Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit deal to leave the European Union. Its rival the Daily Mirror went with "They didn't even tell the Queen". The Daily Star opted for "The Royal formerly known as Prince". Broadsheet The Daily Telegraph - purportedly the queen's newspaper of choice - declared "Harry and Meghan quit the Firm", using the nickname sometimes given to the family. The Times said they had quit amid a "palace split".

The right-wing Daily Mail echoed the sentiment: "Queen's fury as Harry and Meghan say: We quit." Even the FT, which typically reserves its front page for the world's leading business and economic news, got in on the act. "Royal couple pull out of public eye in search of financial independence," it headlined.

## 'Commoner life'

Media around the world also covered the story prominently. Germany's most popular daily Bild declared that the announcement had "fallen like a bomb on the royal family". "The exciting question is: will Buckingham Palace hit back?" the tabloid asked. German broadsheets struck a slightly more serious tone, with Sueddeutsche Zeitung drawing the inevitable parallels with

Britain's protracted withdrawal from the EU.

Noting Buckingham Palace's response that the couple's future role "would take time to work through", the Munich-based daily quipped: "It sounds as if Megxit could turn out to be as messy and long-winded as Brexit." In the United States, where the duo may now spend more time, the New York Post mocked Meghan and Harry as heading for a "commoner life". The tabloid's eye-catching front page caricatures them as deadbeats sitting on a drab sofa watching TV, Harry in his underpants wearing a stained white undershirt, drinking cheap beer and eating a microwave meal, while a cigarette-wielding Meghan has her hair in curls.

## 'Petulant grandson'

Back in Britain, royal commentators and prominent personalities flooded the airwaves and social media with their takes. "Wow. What a disgraceful way to treat The Queen. Shame on Harry & Meghan," tweeted morning TV host Piers Morgan, a persistent critic of the duchess. Rachael Bletchly, a columnist for the Daily Mirror, said the shock statement from the queen's "petulant grandson must have hit her in the solar plexus". "Harry has selfishly turned his back on the institution she has fought to modernize and secure for him and his children," she added.

Meanwhile Peter Hunt, a former royal correspondent for the BBC, told Channel 4 News it was "not a good day for the British royal family". "In the 21st century, in a new decade, they have shown they haven't been able to accommodate in the traditional way their first senior royal from a BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) background," he said, referring to Meghan's mixed race heritage. Royal biographer Penny Junor called the decision "very sad". "Harry and Meghan are very much loved and if we're not going to see so much of them I think that's a real tragedy." —AFP



Royal super fan John Loughery holds a copy of a British newspaper as he poses for the media outside Buckingham Palace in London yesterday.



An arrangement of UK daily newspapers photographed as an illustration in London yesterday shows front page headlines.

## Harry & Meghan: Royal fairytale turns grim

Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan announced Wednesday that they were stepping back from major royal duties and would be partially relocating to North America. Here are five major moments in their relationship, which has seen them go from being the royal family's hottest property to their shock announcement in less than two years.

### Love at first sight

Prince Harry was 31 with a few failed relationships and his 10-year army career behind him when they first met, while US actress Meghan Markle was 34 and a divorcee of three years. They were set up by a mutual friend when Meghan was passing through London in July 2016, with the couple later revealing they knew little about each other. The speed of their relationship surprised them both. Both quickly sensed their blind date could blossom into something bigger. Their romance was under cover for the first five or six months, and largely conducted through nights in behind closed doors - and a camping trip to Botswana. Eventually, Harry proposed in Nov 2017 during a night in roasting a chicken.

### Fairytale wedding

The relationship was welcomed by the British press, which saw Meghan as a breath of fresh air for the royal family - a woman who had proved herself with a career of her own, who would project a more modern image. There was also public relief that Harry, who had walked behind his mother Diana's coffin as a 12-year-old boy, had found settled happiness in his life.

The couple tied the knot at Windsor Castle on May 19, 2018 in a ceremony filled with personal touches, mixing British pomp and African-American culture in front of a celebrity-studded congregation and cheering crowds. Meghan began her walk down the aisle alone after falling out with her wayward father, while firebrand US

pastor Michael Curry delivered a full-throttle address invoking slaves and the power of love.

### Baby joy

The couple moved out of their two-bedroom home on the Kensington Palace estate in London and into the much bigger Frogmore Cottage on the Windsor Castle estate in April 2019 ahead of the birth of their son. Born on May 6, they named him Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, eschewing royal titles. "I have the two best guys in the world so I'm really happy," Meghan declared, showing off the baby at Windsor Castle.

### Fall from grace

The goodwill that surrounded their marriage gradually began to ebb away as the couple's shine came off. Critics did not take kindly to what they saw as the couple's right-on causes, complaints at their treatment while living an expensive lifestyle, war on the media, and seeming hypocrisy, preaching on the environment while jetting around on private flights. Rumors swirled that Meghan was difficult to work with, amid reports of staff members quitting one after another.

Announcing that Meghan had gone into labor after the baby was actually born infuriated the British press. Their decision not to let the public know who Archie's godparents were was also seen as petty. They were slated for the £2.4 million cost of refurbishing Frogmore Cottage.

A well-received tour of southern Africa saw their stock rise, but as it concluded in early October last year, the couple overshadowed their own good work by launching a written tirade on the press and legal action against certain newspaper groups. In an ITV television documentary that followed, Harry said he and William were "on different paths" and have "good days" and "bad days" in their relationship - confirming rumors that the couple were diverging from the fold.

### Stepping back

In Wednesday's shock announcement, the couple said they intended to step back from frontline royalty and would attempt to become financially independent. Currently their work and running costs are funded by Harry's father Prince Charles. They said they will continue to support Queen Elizabeth and honor their duties to her, the Commonwealth and their patronages, indicating they are not fully quitting. The couple also said they were going to launch a new charitable entity, and spend much of their time in North America. Harry and Meghan were among the most senior members of the royal family and were expected to take a much bigger role as Queen Elizabeth scales back her duties and Charles eventually becomes king. Their future is now up in the air. — AFP



In this file photo taken on July 10, 2018, Meghan, Harry, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, stand on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to watch a military fly-past to mark the centenary of the Royal Air Force (RAF).



This picture taken on Jan 6, 2020 shows members of an all-female demining team exploring for unexploded ordnance at a landmine site in the Trieu Phong district in Quang Tri province. —AFP photos

# Vietnamese women strive to clear war-era mines

Inching across a field littered with Vietnam war-era bombs, Ngoc leads an all-women demining team clearing unexploded ordnance that has killed tens of thousands of people - including her uncle. "He died in an explosion. I was haunted by memories of him," Le Thi Bich Ngoc tells AFP as she oversees the controlled detonation of a cluster bomb found in a sealed-off site in central Quang Tri province.

More than 6.1 million hectares of land in Vietnam remain blanketed by unexploded munitions - mainly dropped by US bombers - decades after the war ended in 1975. At least 40,000 Vietnamese have since died in related accidents. Victims are often farmers who accidentally trigger explosions, people salvaging scrap metal, or children who mistake bomblets for toys.

Part of the demilitarized zone that once divided the North and South, Quang Tri is among the worst-affected provinces. Ngoc remembers the burnt flesh of her uncle's body when he was killed by a bomb that detonated while he scavenged for scrap metal. For the past 20 years, Ngoc has worked as a deminer with Mines Advisory Group (MAG), funded by the United States, Britain and Japan.

Today the 42-year-old crisscrosses her home province to excavate up to a dozen pieces of unexploded ordnance daily - and she is not alone. Deminer Tran Thi Hanh told AFP her husband was injured by a landmine blast while going to work, and she does not want the same thing to happen to others. "This is what

motivates me to do this job," she said.

## 100 years to clear

Once a site has been cleared the land can be used for agriculture. "Demine, replant, rebuild - we are in the business of peace, the economy of peace," says Heidi Kuhn, founder of NGO Roots of Peace, which has helped 3,000 people to farm pepper on former mine fields. Vietnam is the world's leading producer of black pepper. Double amputee and former soldier Phan Van Ty says growing the crop has given him a new lease on life.

He lost a leg fighting for the southern regime, but after the war lost the other one when he detonated a bomb while searching for scrap metal in a former US weapons warehouse. That explosion is seared in his memory. "I have nightmares of my flesh being scattered in a blast - and then waking to find myself still in one piece but just without legs," he says, pushing his wheelchair past towering columns of pepper vines.

Up to three million pieces of unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions are still buried in Vietnam's soil. Just last month, Ty says he found a grenade in his backyard. Clearing the entire country could take up to 100 years and cost billions of dollars, according to officials. But that has not deterred Ngoc from pressing on with the dangerous work, which is typically undertaken by men in Quang Tri, where women are usually garment workers or farmers. "This job is not about money, it is about making a better place and ensuring a safer land." — AFP



Double amputee and former soldier Phan Van Ty rides a motorbike in the Gio Linh district in Quang Tri province.



A landmine site is seen in Trieu Phong district.



Landmine victim Truong Uu walks home.



Landmine victim Nguyen The Nghia displays his wounds as a result of a munitions explosion when he was younger.

# 'Pre-school Picasso' shakes up German art world

**M**ikail Akar doesn't flinch as the cameras click around him. Born in 2012, the German artistic prodigy has spent half his life in the limelight. With his striped jumper, goofy grin and dreams of becoming a professional footballer, Akar seems just like any other seven-year-old boy. Yet the Cologne-born youngster is actually an expressionist whizz kid who has taken the international art scene by storm. Dubbed the "pre-school Picasso" by German media, Akar's paintings now sell for thousands of euros to buyers from across the world.

## 'Enough action figures'

"At just seven years old, he is established in the art world. There is interest from Germany, France and the USA," his father and manager, Kerem Akar, told AFP. Akar senior discovered Mikail's precocious talent by chance several years ago, when he gifted his son a canvas and some handprint paints for his fourth birthday. "We had already bought him enough cars and action figures, so we had the idea of getting him a canvas," Kerem Akar said. "The first picture looked fantastic, and I thought at first that my wife had painted it." "I thought maybe it was just coincidence, but by the second and third pictures it was clear he had talent."

## Boxing gloves

Akar's talent is visible in his latest collection, a collaboration with Germany and Bayern Munich football star Manuel Neuer. One work in the collection was recently sold for €11,000 (\$12,000), with proceeds going to Neuer's children's charity. An explosion of color reminiscent of Jackson Pollock, the piece is typical of Akar's abstract expressionist style. The seven-year-old tells AFP that his idols include Pollock, Michael Jackson and Jean-Michel Basquiat. He has also developed his own techniques, which include applying paint by punching the canvas with his father's boxing gloves.

At a presentation of Akar's new work at a private gallery in Berlin last month, one visitor said she was "speechless" upon discovering that the artist was a child who was just starting primary school. "The balance and harmony of the composition - I wouldn't expect that from a child," Arina Daehnick, a photographer from Berlin, told AFP. Diana Achtzig, director of the Achtzig Gallery for Contemporary Art in Berlin, said she was impressed by Akar's "imagination and variation". "As long as he has someone supporting him and not exploiting him, then he has a great future ahead of him," she said.

## Football dreams

Akar himself says his dreams for when he has grown up lie elsewhere. "When I'm older I want to be a football player," he said, launching into an excited account of a recent 8-0 victory with his school team. "Painting is quite tiring for me. Sometimes it can take a long time... especially with boxing gloves," he said. His father insists that he and his wife are careful not to push their son too hard and to protect him from the trappings of fame. "If it gets too much for him, we will intervene. We turn down a lot of requests," said the elder Akar. "He only paints when he wants to. Sometimes that is once a week, sometimes once a month."

## Successful brand

Yet Akar senior also admits that his life has changed dramatically since discovering his son's talent, and that he and his wife now "live for art". A former salesman and recruitment agent, the 38-year-old has since switched to managing Mikail full time. He has founded his own agency, and helped to establish his son as a successful brand. At the event in Berlin, young Mikail rummages through a box of freshly ordered baseball caps adorned with his official logo. He now has more than 40,000 followers on Instagram, and will exhibit his work abroad for the first time in the spring. "Our next exhibition is in Cologne," said the boy's father. "After that, we are going to Paris!" —AFP



Seven-year-old German artist Mikail Akar poses in front of a print edition of his "Champi" painting (right) and a print edition of the painting he produced with German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer called "Manus 11", prior to the opening of his "Manus 11" exhibition in Berlin on Dec 13, 2019. —AFP photos



Father of Mikail Akar, Kerem Akar (left) and German art dealer Marcus Schaefer (right) hang a print edition of "Manus 11".



Akar poses in front of a print edition of his "Champi" and "Sonnenblume Mensch" (Sunflower Man) paintings.

# Climate change threatens Afghanistan's crumbling heritage



This photograph taken on Nov 16, 2019 shows a man walking with his cow in front of the empty seat of one of the two Buddha statues destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 in Bamiyan. — AFP photos



This photograph taken on Nov 16, 2019 shows the site of Shahr-e Gholghola on a hilltop overlooking Bamiyan.



This photograph taken on Nov 28, 2019 shows a man loading sand onto his donkey near a cave where he lives with his family in Bamiyan province.

After bearing the brunt of militants' dynamite and looting by thieves, the archaeological treasures of Afghanistan's Bamiyan province are facing a new and possibly more daunting threat: Climate change. Nestled in the heart of the Hindu Kush mountains, the Bamiyan valley's picturesque cliffs - where centuries-old Buddha statues were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 - still contain a network of caves housing temples, monasteries, and Buddhist paintings. The valley is also home to the silk-road era Shahr-e Gholghola fortress and the Shar-e Zohak citadel to the east.

Experts say that a pattern of dry spells followed by heavy rain, and larger than usual spring snowmelts is putting this historic art and architecture at risk of destruction. Afghan officials warned in a 2016 United Nations report that the structures "may collapse and suffer from severe erosion" due to conditions directly linked to climate change. "The erosion processes are much faster, the rains more devastating and the wind erosion stronger, which has an extremely harsh impact on the sites," Philippe Marquis, the director of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, told AFP.

Marquis - who has explored and worked in the region for decades - explains that Afghanistan "is very fragile geologically, especially as vegetation cover



has greatly diminished" due to deforestation. French imaging company Iconem concurred, saying Shar-e Zohak is "very fragile" due to erosion that has increased considerably over the last 30 years.

For Baqe Ghulami, 21, who hails from Saikhand district in northern Bamiyan, climate change has long been a reality residents have had to confront. "The weather is changing, now summers are warmer and winters colder," he says, while overlooking the empty spaces where the two towering Buddha statues once stood. Many of the artifacts predate the arrival of Islam to the region but despite the fact they come from another religion, the residents who spoke

with AFP proudly defended the area's history as their own.

## 'Erosion is increasing'

From the empty caves, visitors can see the Cultural Center, which began construction in 2015 but has yet to be completed. It aims to educate visitors about the urgent need to preserve the area's heritage. "There is no benefit if people just see (the sites) without information," says Ali Reza Mushfiq, 26, director of the Department of Archeology at Bamiyan University, complaining that a dearth of funding has left many in the dark - including his own students who lack access to books.



Lifestyle | Feature

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This photograph taken on Nov 18, 2019 shows remnants of the ancient settlement of Zuhak in a valley on the outskirts of Bamiyan.



This photograph taken on Nov 16, 2019 shows a view of the site where two statues of Buddha stood before being destroyed by the Taliban.

The archaeologist readily admits that “erosion is increasing”, but believes the real danger comes from “human influence at the site”, including looters, who are rampant in Afghanistan. The Shar-e Gholghola Fortress and other key sites are now guarded to protect against such issues. The removal of landmines from the area has seen thousands visit in recent years, but the influx of recent visitors has done little to change the reality on the ground.

“We must start training... (the) local people to teach them how not to destroy the site,” says Mushfiq, adding that some residents continue to store feed and house livestock in the historic sites. A stone’s throw from the cave of the great Buddha, Ammanullah, 37, says he and his family have moved into one of the caves, building a home inside made of odds and ends with plastic sheets for windows. He is not alone, many other poor families have sought shelter next to ancient artifacts and structures. “There are 18 families here... we didn’t have other options,” says Ammanullah. “We would go if we were given a house.”

For Marquis, however, the greatest threat does not come from local residents encroaching on the site or from theft. “Even if it is dramatic, it is much less damaging than the destruction caused by erosion,” he said. Mitigating the impacts of erosion and the effects of climate change would cost billions of dollars in Afghanistan, but the war-torn country has little ability to shoulder such a burden. The Global Adaptation Initiative, run by the University of Notre Dame in the US, currently ranks Afghanistan 173 out of the 181 countries it scored in terms of a nation’s vulnerability to climate change and its ability to adapt. — AFP



This photograph taken on Nov 17, 2019 shows Hazara children in front of caves where they live with their family in Bamiyan.



# The men protecting Philippines' revered Catholic icon



Guards, commonly called "hijos" (sons), ride atop a carriage transporting the statue of the Black Nazarene during the annual religious procession in Manila yesterday. — AFP photos



Devotees follow the carriage transporting the statue of the Black Nazarene.

Frenzied crowds, exhaustion and blazing heat were dangers bearing down on the cadre of guards who shield one of the Philippines' most revered Catholic icons from the believers desperate to touch it. The protectors served as human shields yesterday, as they do every year, during the procession through Manila of the historic statue of Jesus Christ that believers say grants miracles to those who touch it.

"Our safety is at risk here. Some of the devotees are very aggressive," Steve Celestino, one of the Black Nazarene icon's guards, told AFP Tuesday at a warm-up procession. The dangers are not theoretical: During the day-long procession temperatures hover at around 32 degrees Celsius and hundreds of thousands of believers clamber over one another to reach the statue.

In 2015 a guard belonging to one of the groups collectively called "hijos" (sons) suffered a fatal heart attack surrounded by sweaty devotees. Miracles attributed to the Black Nazarene have made it powerfully revered in Asia's bastion of Catholicism, and also engendered a class of admirers desperate to reach it. "There are two types of faithful: One is a devotee and another is a fanatic," guard Romy Roxas, who said he had been protecting the Nazarene from the latter for 30 years, told AFP on Tuesday.

## 'You'll faint in this crowd'

Fanatics, he said, clamber up the metal float carrying the life-size statue hoping to snatch a strand of its hair or a piece of its

maroon cloak in the belief that it has healing powers. Guards have to push off the unruly, including those who cling to the statue's cross for too long and risk damaging the several hundred year old wooden statue. It is a trying job for the hundreds of volunteers, who are stationed on the float a few dozen at a time and for a couple of hours at most due to the brutal conditions.

They are not necessarily security professionals, but rather Catholics in good standing with the Church who offer to help and attend preparatory meetings. In exchange for the pain, they play a privileged role by catching and then wiping the statue with white towels thrown to them by people in the crowd. For believers, those swathes of cloth are just as good as touching the effigy itself, and bear healing or blessing effects.

"Somehow, we feel we serve as a bridge for them to fulfill their devotion," guard Eugenio Jongco told AFP on Tuesday. Jongco, 73, is one of the oldest members of the group and attributed his well-being to his service to the Black Nazarene. "If you are not in good health, you will faint doing this because of the massive crowd," he said. "But I'll do it as long as I can."

The statue is named for its charred appearance and is accompanied by many difficult to prove stories, including that it survived a fire while en route to the Philippines in the 17th century. Critics call the procession a mish-mash of superstition and unnecessary risk for the people who leave home barefoot and cram into the procession route each year. However, officials in the Philippines'



powerful Catholic Church called it a demonstration of participants' "overflowing faith, an expression of their devotion".

Though authorities did not report any specific threat to this year's procession, there was a typically massive presence of thousands of police on Manila's streets. The Philippines is plagued by violent insurgencies, including Islamic State-linked militants that have carried out bombings on civilian targets. — AFP



Thousands of devotees gather as the statue of the Black Nazarene arrives, after hours of procession, at Quiapo church in Manila yesterday.



Devotees move a man on a stretcher to a safe area during the religious procession.



In this photograph taken on Dec 24, 2019, a bride and groom arrive at a marriage hall in Mumbai. — AFP photos



Relatives wait for the bride and groom at a marriage hall outside a family court in Mumbai.

## Big fat Indian wedding goes on a diet as slowdown bites

India's weddings are famously lavish - lasting days and with hundreds if not thousands of guests - but this season many families are cutting costs even if it risks their social standing. It is symptomatic of a sharp slowdown in the world's fifth-largest economy, with Indians spending less on everything from daily essentials to once-in-a-lifetime celebrations. Growth has hit a six-year low and unemployment a four-decade high under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prices are rising too, squeezing spending on everything from shampoo to mobile data.

Chartered accountant Palak Panchamiya, for example, has already slashed the budget on her upcoming Mumbai nuptials by a third, trimming spending on clothing and the guest list. "Initially I chose a dress that cost 73,000 rupees (\$1,000)," Panchamiya told AFP as she picked through outfits at a recent marriage trade fair. "But my partner felt it was too expensive, and so now I am here reworking my options and looking for something cheaper."

India's massive wedding industry is worth an estimated \$40-50 billion a year, according to research firm KPMG. The celebrations can last a week and involve several functions, a dazzling variety of cuisines, music and dance performances, and lots of gifts. Foreigners can even buy tickets to some events. But these days, except for the super-rich - a recent Ambani family wedding

reportedly cost \$100 million - extravagance is out and frugality is in as families prioritize saving. "Earlier Indian weddings were like huge concerts, but now things have changed," said Maninder Sethi, founder of Wedding Asia, which organizes marriage fairs around the country.

Cracks emerged in 2016 when the Indian wedding season, which runs from September to mid-January, was hit by the government's shock withdrawal of vast amounts of banknotes from circulation in a bid to crack down on undeclared earnings. Mumbai-based trousseau maker Sapna Designs Studio shut for months as the economy was turned on its head by Modi's move. "No exhibitions were happening and there were no avenues for us to sell either," said Vishal Hariyani, owner of the clothing studio.

Hopes for a recovery proved short-lived when the cash ban was followed by a botched rollout of a nationwide goods and services tax (GST) in 2017 that saw many small-scale businesses close. Since then, keeping his studio afloat has been a challenge, with consumers increasingly reluctant to spend too much, says Hariyani. "We customize our clothes as per their budgets, and now week-long weddings have been converted to just a 36-hour ceremony," he told AFP. "We have to pay GST, pay workers and even offer discounts to customers," he added.



Floral garlands for brides and grooms are displayed for sale next to a marriage hall in Mumbai.

Analysts say gloomy economic conditions have pushed India's middle class to pile their cash into savings. "The whole economy has slowed down and reduced spending on weddings is a by-product of that. Everyone except the super-rich are affected," Pradip Shah from IndAsia Fund Advisors told AFP. "It is reflective of how somber the mood is," he said. In a country where families traditionally spend heavily on weddings - including taking on debt in some cases - the downturn is also a source of sadness and shame, with elaborate celebrations often seen as a measure of social status. — AFP

## French architects want Notre-Dame roof rebuilt in wood

French architects want the roof of the fire-ravaged Notre-Dame cathedral to be rebuilt in wood and not in metal or concrete. One of the heads of the country's biggest architects' body said reconstructing the roof in anything other than the original wood would be a mistake. The intervention by Eric Wirth of the Guild of French Architects comes amid controversy over French President Emmanuel Macron's wish for the spire of the 13th-century monument to be given a "contemporary" touch.

"The most modern and ecological material today is wood," Wirth said Wednesday, which, as well as being more fire-resistant than the alternatives, also traps carbon, he insisted. His comments come after the army general put in charge of the restoration, Jean-Louis Georgelin, dismissed reports that the massive roof would be redone in oak as nothing more than "lobbying" by the wood industry.

"There will be a study, and all possible options will be examined," he said. But Wirth took him to task, telling French MPs at a parliamentary hearing that "talking about lobbying on a subject like this does not honor the edifice." Price was not an issue, he argued, "the money is there".

### Beware 'brilliant solutions'

So far pledges totalling €922 million (over \$1 billion) have been received, ranging from a single euro offered by an American child to 200 million euros by French luxury goods billionaire Bernard Arnault. Wirth said a wooden roof like the original would also guarantee the structural integrity of the cathedral, which is still threatened by the risk of collapse nine months after the devastating fire last April.

"The cathedral has been there for 800 years. Had it been built in concrete or steel it would not still be there," he added. "Even with



This picture taken on Jan 6, 2020 shows the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, which was partially destroyed when fire broke out beneath the roof on April 15, 2019. — AFP

all the (chemical) protection treatments, given the intensity of the blaze... the steel would have held for half an hour and then it would have twisted, pulling on the walls and everything

would have collapsed. "We have to be skeptical of seemingly brilliant solutions" which involve metal or concrete rafters, Wirth warned, which vaunt their lightness. — AFP



Honda's Augmented Driving Concept is displayed at CES 2020. The concept vehicle is roofless with four seats and is fully autonomous while allowing drivers to also have control if desired. — AFP photos



An attendee takes a selfie as he lifts a 50 lb (22.7 kg) suitcase with the help of the Sarcos Guardian XO exoskeleton arm on Wednesday at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

# From exoskeletons to education at CES

Exoskeletons to give wearers super-human strength and games to playfully teach children software skills for coding - such innovations were on display at the Consumer Electronics Show this week.

## Mechanical muscle

A Guardian XO exoskeleton made in a collaboration between Sarcos Robotics and Delta Air Lines let CES goers easily lift a 50-pound (22.7 kilo) suitcase with one hand with "technology fit for a superhero". The battery-powered body suit carries its own weight and "handles the heavy lifting" for wearers, according to Delta. Workers wearing the suit may be able to lift up to 200 pounds (90.7 kilos) for as long as eight hours straight without strain or effort, according to Delta, which planned to have baggage handlers test the exoskeleton. Meanwhile, Panasonic touted its own "support robot" exoskeletons that will be used by support crews to tote weights and other heavy equipment for competitors at the coming Paralympics in Tokyo.

## Playing at code

My Creativity Box showed off a "Mochi" game that playfully takes children's eyes off screens while teaching them software coding skills. Mochi kits let children create a robotic ride for a plush toy bear and command it according to stories in a book. Subject themes include shapes, colors, animals and numbers. "My three-year-old daughter and I came up with the idea," said Creativity Box technology chief Mihran Vardanyan. "It's a screenless experience, so kids are not getting addicted to screens, plus they learn about coding and other useful subjects."

## 'Frozen' software smarts

Aspiring software savants of any age were invited to "enter the magic coding kingdom" with an online learning scheme created in partnership with Disney. The Disney Codeillusion program freshly launched in the US uses an array of popular Disney film characters to make learning how to write computer code more entertaining. "For example, with 'Frozen' you can learn how to create Elsa's snow magic," Life is Tech USA chief executive Satoshi Miyagawa said while demonstrating the teaching tool.



Italian composer Giorgio Moroder (left) unveils his new sound designed for FPT power trains during the CES.



My Creativity Box technology chief Mihran Vardanyan provides a look at a Mochi game on Jan 7, 2020 at the 2020 CES.



A display advertises Disney Codeillusion, an interactive learning program that teaches users to code with the help of favorite Disney movies such as "Frozen".



Attendees look at a purse with an integrated Royole Flexpai flexible display.

"For 'Zootopia', you create a website to recruit new police officers."

The online courses were created with school age children in mind, but partner Life is Tech caught on that lots of adults are interested in code and want a fun way to learn the skills. "We wanted to build a bridge from kids coding to adult coding, and keep learners motivated," Miyagawa said of the program, which is priced at \$1,900.

**'Sound of the future'**

Oscar winning composer Giorgio Moroder debuted a piece created in a collaboration with FPT Industrial to serve as a sound for silent vehicles, such as electric cars, that are replacing noisy combustion engines. "And now you know the engine is working," Moroder exclaimed after a crowd heard his auto-engine composition for the first time. — AFP



A man dressed in a barista's outfit watches as an LG CLOi CoBot Barista robot makes pour-over coffee at the LG booth.



The Samsung Bot Chef is demonstrated during the CES.



Samsung Sero rotating 4K televisions are shown at the 2020 CES.



The M10 portable Bluetooth speaker featuring Mel the Minion is displayed at the Edifier booth,

## Justin Bieber reveals he has Lyme disease, mono



Justin Bieber waits in the ring after the fight between KSI and Logan Paul at Staples Center on Nov 9, 2019 in Los Angeles.

Pop super star Justin Bieber announced Wednesday that he has Lyme disease. In a post on Instagram, Bieber said he will address his struggle with the illness, which is contracted through a tick bite, in a YouTube documentary. "It's been a rough couple years but getting the right treatment that will help treat this so far incurable disease and I will be back and better than ever," the 25 year old entertainer wrote in the post's caption.

He called out critics who he says have been unfairly commenting on his looks by saying he looks like he is "on meth". "They failed to realize I've been recently diagnosed with Lyme disease, not only that but had a serious case of chronic mono which affected my, skin, brain function, energy, and overall health."

The photo portion of Bieber's post shows a TMZ article reporting that the YouTube documentary is set for a Jan 27 release. "You can learn all that I've been battling and OVERCOMING!!" he wrote on Instagram. He spent much of last year suffering but undiagnosed, TMZ reported, until doctors figured out what was

wrong. The post's photos include pictures said to be taken in September of Bieber appearing to be hooked up to an IV drip. In subsequent Instagram posts and on his Instagram story later in the day, Bieber thanked his fans for supporting his new song "Yummy", released last week. And the Canadian seemed to say he is doing better, posting a meme video of a little girl dancing with the caption, "But now this is how I'm feelin'."

Bieber was discovered by talent scouts as a young teenager after posting videos of himself singing on YouTube and quickly shot to superstardom. He has since won several MTV awards, Billboard Music awards and a Grammy, among others. After an Instagram post from March indicated Bieber would be taking time off music to focus on "my family and my health". Bieber married US model Hailey Baldwin in September. Now he has a new album and tour coming soon, according to TMZ.

In September Bieber opened up about "massive ups and downs" he experienced as he went from beloved teenage heart-

throb to "the most ridiculed, judged and hated person in the world". In a lengthy Instagram post, he reflected on how child stardom triggered depression and a lack of humility that led to drug abuse and his becoming "resentful, disrespectful to women, and angry". "I became distant to everyone who loved me, and I was hiding behind, a shell of a person that I had become," he wrote.

Lyme disease is transmitted to humans through infected ticks, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms can include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, joint aches and a "bull's-eye" rash that occurs in 70 to 80 percent of infections. Most people who are treated with antibiotics early fully recover, according to the CDC, though the infection can become severe or prolonged in some cases. —AFP

## Oscars to go without host for second year

The Oscars will again go without a host next month, repeating a format credited with boosting ratings last year, US network ABC confirmed Wednesday.

"Together with the Academy, we have decided there will be no traditional host, repeating for us what worked last year," ABC entertainment president Karey Burke told a television summit near Los Angeles, according to showbiz website Deadline Hollywood. "[It will have] huge entertainment values, big musical numbers, comedy and star power." An ABC spokeswoman confirmed the report to AFP.

Last year, the Oscars decided to go without a host - the first time in three decades - after their original choice Kevin Hart pulled out when old homophobic tweets of his resurfaced. In the end the event was considered a success and the show enjoyed a year-on-year in-

crease in ratings. The host-less format has not always been so well received, however. The previous time the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences tried it, one of the



most infamous moments in Oscars history was born: An awkward song-and-dance number featuring actor Rob Lowe and... Snow White. The Oscars are handed out on Feb 9. —AFP

## Watchdog raps UK-Jolie plan to end sexual violence in war

A high-profile British initiative backed by US actor Angelina Jolie to tackle sexual violence in war is so focused on short-term fixes it risks failing the women it set out to help, Britain's aid watchdog said yesterday. In a strongly worded assessment of a government program backed at ministerial level, the independent body said the aims of the project were laudable but its execution fell short. "Although we found some promising examples of important achievements...the initiative has not fully delivered on its ambitions, and is at risk of letting survivors down," Tamsyn Barton, head of the watchdog, said in a statement.

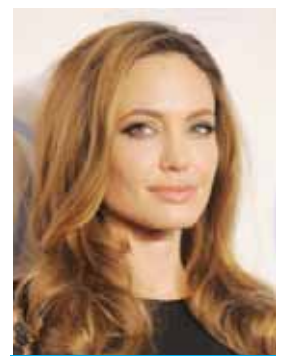
The Independent Commission for Aid Impact blamed a lack of leadership, poor strategy and funding cuts for the failings. "We want to see government strengthen the way the initiative is managed, ensure that survivors' voices are heard, and embed learning - which is crucial to the quality and impact of aid - into all of its activities," said Barton.

The plan kicked off in 2012 with the support of Hollywood's Jolie, who has a long background in

humanitarian issues. In 2001, Jolie traveled to Sierra Leone as a United Nations goodwill ambassador and saw firsthand the impact of years of civil war, when an estimated 60,000 women were raped. Collaboration with Britain followed her 2011 directorial debut "In the Land of Blood and Honey" - set against the 1992-95 Bosnian war in which an estimated 20,000 women were raped.

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative gained worldwide attention in 2014 when Britain held the world's first summit to end sexual violence, hosted by Jolie and then foreign minister William Hague. Attended by some 1,700 politicians, celebrities, survivors and activists, the event gave Britain a big voice on a "vital but often neglected issue" but the government did not deliver on its summit pledges, the review found.

The review included interviews with survivors and their supporters, along with case studies and official documents. The Foreign Office rejected the criticism, saying the review failed to recognize the pivotal role Britain had played in galvanizing world support to help rape victims in war. —Reuters



Angelina Jolie

## Comic

### Word Search

#### Tools

Find and circle all of the Tools that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Henry David Thoreau quotation

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

- |             |           |             |               |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| BAND SAW    | FILE      | POLISHER    | SPRAY GUN     |
| BOLT CUTTER | GRINDER   | PROTRACTOR  | SQUARE        |
| BRUSH       | HAMMER    | PRY BAR     | STAPLE GUN    |
| BUFFER      | HAND SAW  | PUNCH       | STUD FINDER   |
| CALIPER     | HEX KEY   | RASP        | TABLE SAW     |
| CHALK       | JIG SAW   | RATCHET     | TAPE MEASURE  |
| CHISEL      | JOINTER   | ROUTER      | TAPS AND DIES |
| CLAMP       | KNIFE     | SANDER      | TINSNIPS      |
| COPING SAW  | LATHE     | SAWHORSE    | VICE          |
| CROWBAR     | MALLET    | SCREWDRIVER | WOOD RULE     |
| DADO        | MITER BOX | SCROLL SAW  | WRECKING BAR  |
| DIVIDER     | PLANE     | SOCKETS     | WRENCH        |
| DRILL PRESS | PLIER     |             |               |

### Yesterday's Solution

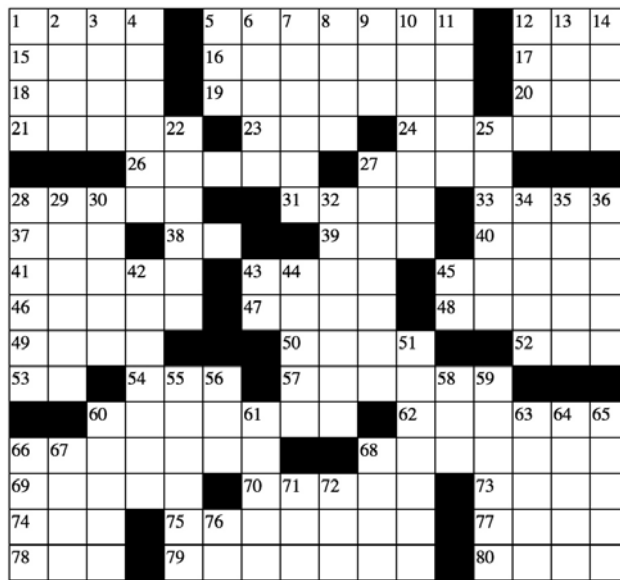
#### The Raven

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

- |           |          |            |           |          |
|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| ANGELS    | DOOR     | GRIM       | NAPPING   | QUOTH    |
| BEAK      | DREAMS   | HEART      | NEPENTHE  | RADIANT  |
| BEGUILING | DREARY   | HORROR     | NEVERMORE | RAPPING  |
| BIRD      | EBONY    | LATTICE    | OMINOUS   | RAVEN    |
| BLACK     | ENTRANCE | LENORE     | PALLAS    | RUSTLING |
| BLEAK     | EYES     | LORE       | PALLID    | SHADOW   |
| BURNING   | FEATHER  | MAIDEN     | PERCHED   | SHUTTER  |
| BUST      | FIEND    | MELANCHOLY | PLACID    | SOUL     |
| CHAMBER   | FLITTING | MIDNIGHT   | PLUME     | TAPPING  |
| CROAKING  | FLUTTER  | MORTAL     | PLUTONIAN | VISITOR  |
| DARKNESS  | FOWL     | MYSTERY    | PROPHET   | WEARY    |
| DECEMBER  | GHASTLY  | NAMELESS   | QUAFF     | WIND     |

Hidden sentence: WITH ME POETRY HAS NOT BEEN A PURPOSE, BUT A PASSION

### Crossword 2406



#### ACROSS

- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- (botany) Producing a well-developed stem above ground.
- A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
- A member of the Athapaskan people of the Trinity River valley in California.
- Any flowerless plant such as a fern (pteridophyte) or moss (bryophyte) in which growth occurs only at the tip of the main stem.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- In bed.
- An awl for making small holes for brads or small screws.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of five and one.
- The compass point midway between northeast and east.
- United States poet and critic (1916-1986).
- A province in north-central China.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Asia or the peoples of Asia or their languages or culture.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- By bad luck.
- The fatty flesh of eel.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
- The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
- The amount a salary is increased.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- United States educator who introduced reforms that significantly altered the system of public education (1796-1859).
- Cud-chewing mammal used as a draft or saddle animal in desert regions.
- A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
- The main organ of photosynthesis and transpiration in higher plants.
- An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
- Half the width of an em.
- A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
- A flourish added after or under your signature (originally to protect against forgery).
- A member of the Wakashan people living on Vancouver Island and in the Cape Flattery region of northwestern Washington.
- Bourbon with bitters and Pernod and sugar served with lemon peel.
- A particular environment or walk of life.
- The unit of measurement for the proportion of gold in an alloy.
- (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
- The capital and largest city of Kenya.
- A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.

#### DOWN

- Title for the former hereditary monarch of Iran.
- A three-dimensional shape with six square or rectangular sides.
- The highest point of something.
- A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
- A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
- Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
- (Greek mythology) God of the heavens.
- A deposit of valuable ore occurring within definite boundaries separating it from surrounding rocks.
- One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- United States astronomer (1835-1909).
- (Sumerian) God of the air and king of the Sumerian gods.
- A person who has lied or who lies repeatedly.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Capital city of the Apulia region on the Adriatic coast.
- Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
- Type genus of the Alaudidae.
- Arranged in or consisting of laminae.
- A man who serves as a sailor.
- A Greek epic poem (attributed to Homer) describing the siege of Troy.
- Of or related to the cornea.
- Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
- An addition that extends a main building.
- A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
- Unlicensed drinking establishment.
- A gray lustrous metallic element of the rare earth group.
- Minute floating marine tunicate having a transparent body with an opening at each end.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- The capital and largest city of Albania in the center of the country.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- (Australian and New Zealand) A disparaging term for English immigrants to Australia or New Zealand.
- Rub elbows with.
- United States conductor (born in Hungary) (1897-1970).
- United States neoclassical architect (1847-1909).
- Small genus of Eurasian aquatic perennial herbs.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
- An elaborate song for solo voice.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

### Yesterday's Solution

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

### Daily SuDoku

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

hard

### Yesterday's Solution

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

very hard

## TV Listings

**AM MOVIES HD**  
**ACTION**

01:25 The Yellow Birds  
03:00 Bad Boys  
05:10 Scorpion King: Book Of Souls  
07:05 Black Butterfly  
08:50 211  
10:30 Scorpion King: Book Of Souls  
12:25 Black Butterfly  
14:10 UFO  
15:50 Paycheck  
17:50 The Chronicles Of Riddick  
20:00 Shanghai Noon  
22:00 Bad Boys II

**AM MOVIES HD** Disney

00:30 Mighty Joe Young  
02:30 Tinker Bell And The Legend Of The NeverBeast  
04:00 The Rocketeer  
06:00 Mighty Joe Young  
08:00 Max Keeble's Big Move  
09:45 Ratatouille  
11:45 The Rocketeer  
13:45 Underdog  
15:15 The Incredibles  
17:15 Bedtime Stories  
19:00 Tuck Everlasting  
20:45 Underdog  
22:15 The Incredibles

**AM MOVIES**  
**FIRST**

01:50 Proud Mary  
03:25 Jurassic School  
04:55 Paterno  
06:45 Love On Safari  
08:30 Winter Love Story  
10:00 A Dog's Way Home  
11:35 Dumplin'  
13:25 Captain Marvel  
15:30 Wonder Park  
17:00 Ralph Breaks The Internet  
19:00 Instant Family  
21:00 Fighting With My Family  
22:50 Jigsaw

**AM MOVIES HD**

00:45 Dinner For Schmucks  
02:45 The King  
04:40 Sherlock Gnomes  
06:20 Road Less Traveled  
07:55 Overdrive  
09:35 Darkest Hour  
11:45 Loch Ness  
13:30 Antz  
14:55 The Out Of Towners  
16:30 Nicholas Nickleby  
18:45 Date Night  
20:30 25th Hour  
22:45 Lost In The Cloud

**Disney HD**

00:10 Evermoor Chronicles  
00:35 Binny And The Ghost  
01:00 Alex & Co.  
01:25 Alex & Co.  
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles  
02:15 Evermoor Chronicles  
02:40 Alex & Co.  
03:05 Binny And The Ghost  
03:30 Binny And The Ghost  
03:55 Evermoor Chronicles  
04:20 Evermoor Chronicles  
04:45 Alex & Co.  
05:10 Alex & Co.  
05:35 Violetta  
06:25 Binny And The Ghost  
06:45 Rolling With The Ronks  
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks  
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
07:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
07:50 Jessie  
08:15 Jessie  
08:40 The Swap  
10:20 Bunk'd  
10:45 Bunk'd

11:10 Bunk'd  
11:35 A.N.T. Farm  
12:00 A.N.T. Farm  
12:25 That's So Raven  
12:50 That's So Raven  
13:15 Raven's Home  
13:40 Raven's Home  
14:05 Stuck In The Middle  
14:30 Stuck In The Middle  
14:55 K.C. Undercover  
15:20 K.C. Undercover  
15:45 Bizaardvark  
16:10 Bizaardvark  
16:35 Sydney To The Max  
17:00 Sydney To The Max  
17:25 Coop And Cami Ask The World  
17:50 Coop And Cami Ask The World  
18:15 Penny On M.A.R.S.  
18:40 Penny On M.A.R.S.  
19:05 Shake It Up  
19:30 Shake It Up  
19:55 Amphibia  
20:20 Descendants Wicked World  
20:25 Amphibia  
20:50 Liv And Maddie  
21:15 Liv And Maddie  
21:40 Fast Layne  
22:05 Disney Mickey Mouse  
22:10 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
22:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
23:50 Lolirock

**Disney JUNIOR**

00:00 PJ Masks  
00:30 The Lion Guard  
01:00 Sofia The First  
01:30 Gigantosaurus  
02:00 PJ Masks  
02:25 PJ Masks  
02:50 Paprika  
03:00 Zou  
03:15 Zou  
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster  
04:20 Paprika  
04:30 Paprika  
04:40 Zou  
04:55 Zou  
05:10 Zou  
05:25 Paprika  
05:35 Paprika  
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:15 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:45 PJ Masks  
07:00 PJ Masks  
07:15 PJ Masks  
07:30 Gigantosaurus  
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
08:00 The Lion Guard  
08:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
09:00 PJ Masks  
09:30 Bluey  
09:40 Bluey  
09:50 Bluey  
10:00 Bluey  
10:10 Bluey  
10:20 Bluey  
10:30 Elena Of Avalor  
11:00 Elena Of Avalor  
11:30 Elena Of Avalor  
12:00 Sofia The First  
12:30 Sofia The First  
13:00 PJ Masks  
13:30 PJ Masks  
14:00 Sofia The First: Forever Royal  
15:15 Vampirina  
15:30 Vampirina  
16:00 Bluey  
16:10 Bluey  
16:20 Bluey  
16:30 T.O.T.S.  
17:00 Elena Of Avalor  
17:30 The Lion Guard  
18:00 T.O.T.S.  
18:30 Bluey  
18:40 Bluey  
18:50 Bluey  
19:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy  
19:30 Vampirina  
20:00 PJ Masks

### nickelodeon

00:12 Breadwinners  
00:36 Rabbids Invasion  
01:00 Rabbids Invasion  
01:24 Sanjay And Craig  
01:48 Sanjay And Craig  
02:12 Winx Club  
02:36 Winx Club  
03:00 Regal Academy  
03:24 Regal Academy  
03:48 Rabbids Invasion  
04:12 Rabbids Invasion  
04:36 Breadwinners  
05:00 Welcome To The Wayne  
05:24 SpongeBob SquarePants  
05:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
06:12 The Loud House  
06:24 The Loud House  
06:36 Motu Patlu  
07:00 Rise Of The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
07:24 Chop Chop Ninja  
07:36 Chop Chop Ninja  
07:48 Winx Club  
08:12 Regal Academy  
08:36 I Am Frankie  
09:00 Henry Danger  
09:24 The Bureau Of Magical Things  
09:48 Game Shakers  
10:12 School Of Rock  
10:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn  
11:00 Henry Danger  
11:24 The Loud House  
11:36 The Loud House  
11:48 Hunter Street  
12:12 Lego City Adventures  
12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
13:00 Motu Patlu  
13:24 The Bureau Of Magical Things  
13:48 Noobees  
14:36 Knight Squad  
15:00 Bixler High Private Eye  
16:12 Blur!  
17:00 Jojo's Follow Your D.R.E.A.M  
17:24 Knight Squad  
17:48 Hunter Street  
18:12 Hunter Street  
18:36 Hunter Street  
19:00 Hunter Street  
19:24 Hunter Street  
19:48 Henry Danger  
20:12 Noobees  
21:00 SpongeBob SquarePants  
21:24 Chop Chop Ninja  
21:36 Chop Chop Ninja  
21:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
22:12 Welcome To The Wayne  
22:36 Sanjay And Craig  
23:00 Regal Academy  
23:24 Winx Club  
23:48 Breadwinners

### nick jr.

00:11 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
00:24 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
00:35 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
00:47 The Loud House  
01:10 The Fairly OddParents  
01:33 Toon Marty  
01:43 Toon Marty  
01:54 SpongeBob SquarePants  
02:16 SpongeBob SquarePants  
02:39 Rainbow Butterfly Unicorn Kitty  
03:00 Welcome To The Wayne  
03:21 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
03:43 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
04:05 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
04:27 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
04:50 SpongeBob SquarePants  
05:14 SpongeBob SquarePants  
05:35 SpongeBob SquarePants  
05:58 The Fairly OddParents

06:19 The Fairly OddParents  
06:31 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
08:19 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
08:43 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
09:07 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
09:30 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
09:53 The Loud House  
10:16 The Loud House  
10:40 SpongeBob SquarePants  
11:02 Breadwinners  
11:25 Breadwinners  
11:47 The Adventures Of Kid Danger  
12:00 Rabbids: Invasion  
12:08 Rabbids: Invasion  
12:15 Rainbow Butterfly Unicorn Kitty  
12:38 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of Awesomeness  
13:00 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of Awesomeness  
13:22 Sanjay & Craig  
13:45 Sanjay & Craig  
14:05 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
14:28 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
14:51 SpongeBob SquarePants  
15:13 SpongeBob SquarePants  
15:37 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
15:49 The Fairly OddParents  
16:11 The Fairly OddParents  
16:35 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of Awesomeness  
17:00 Rise Of The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
17:22 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
17:44 The Penguins Of Madagascar  
17:56 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
18:08 Alvin!!! And The Chipmunks  
18:20 The Loud House  
18:42 SpongeBob SquarePants  
19:05 SpongeBob SquarePants  
19:28 Rainbow Butterfly Unicorn Kitty  
19:50 Breadwinners  
20:13 Breadwinners  
20:35 Welcome To The Wayne  
20:56 The Fairly OddParents  
21:17 The Loud House  
21:40 The Loud House  
22:00 SpongeBob SquarePants  
22:22 SpongeBob SquarePants  
22:44 Avatar: The Legend Of Aang  
23:06 Avatar: The Legend Of Aang  
23:28 Mysticons  
23:49 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of Awesomeness

### crime & investigation network

00:00 The First 48  
01:00 Homicide Hunter  
02:00 PD Cam  
02:25 PD Cam  
02:50 Sex, Fame And Murder  
03:40 It Takes A Killer  
04:05 It Takes A Killer  
04:25 Live PD: Police Patrol  
04:50 Live PD: Police Patrol  
05:10 The First 48  
05:50 Homicide Hunter  
06:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
07:25 It Takes A Killer  
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol  
08:25 Homicide Hunter  
09:10 Homicide Hunter  
09:55 The First 48  
10:45 The First 48  
11:40 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
12:35 The First 48  
13:30 Crimes That Shook Australia  
14:25 Live PD: Police Patrol  
14:55 Live PD: Police Patrol  
15:25 It Takes A Killer  
15:55 It Takes A Killer  
16:20 Homicide Hunter  
17:15 The First 48  
18:10 Homicide: Hours To Kill

19:10 Live PD: Police Patrol  
19:40 Live PD: Police Patrol  
20:05 It Takes A Killer  
20:35 It Takes A Killer  
21:05 The First 48  
22:00 Homicide Hunter  
23:00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol  
23:30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol

### Discovery CHANNEL HD

3:00 No information available  
09:00 No information available  
15:00 No information available  
21:00 No information available  
Nat Geo HD  
00:00 Nazi Megastructures  
00:55 Ultimate Survival WWII  
01:45 Locked Up Abroad  
02:35 Iss: 24/7 On A Space Station  
03:25 Somewhere In China  
04:15 Nazi Megastructures  
05:05 Ultimate Survival WWII  
06:00 Locked Up Abroad  
06:55 Iss: 24/7 On A Space Station  
07:50 Nazi Megastructures  
08:45 Ultimate Survival WWII  
09:40 My Fighting Season  
10:35 Car SOS  
11:30 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey  
12:25 Access 360 World Heritage  
13:20 My Fighting Season  
14:15 Airport Security: First Class  
15:10 Explorer XL  
16:05 Live Free Or Die  
17:00 Supercar Megabuild  
18:00 Access 360 World Heritage  
19:00 Hubble's Amazing Journey  
20:00 Explorer XL  
21:00 Live Free Or Die  
22:00 Airport Security: First Class  
23:00 Hubble's Amazing Journey

### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:30 Animal ER  
01:30 Unlikely Animal Friends  
02:30 Wildlife: The Big Freeze  
03:30 The Hidden Kingdoms Of China  
04:30 Wild Case Files  
05:30 Kingdom Of The White Wolf  
06:30 Animal ER  
07:30 Pond Stars  
08:30 Lion Kingdom  
09:30 World's Deadliest Animals  
10:30 Snakes In The City  
11:30 Pond Stars  
12:30 Lion Kingdom  
13:30 World's Deadliest Animals  
14:30 Snakes In The City  
15:30 Madagascar's Fantastic Creatures  
16:30 World's Deadliest  
17:30 Wild Case Files  
18:30 Kingdom Of The White Wolf  
19:30 World's Deadliest Animals  
20:30 Snakes In The City  
21:30 World's Weirdest Animal Faces  
22:30 World's Deadliest  
23:30 Kingdom Of The White Wolf  
Discovery Science HD  
03:00 No information available  
09:00 No information available  
15:00 No information available  
21:00 No information available

### Paramount A Viacom Company

01:20 Kill Bill Vol. 2  
03:35 Hollywood On Set 3  
04:00 Hollywood On Set 3  
04:25 Hollywood On Set 3  
04:55 Spotlight

05:00 Spotlight  
05:05 Hollywood On Set 3  
05:35 Spotlight  
05:40 Clara's Deadly Secret  
07:10 Her Husband's Betrayal  
08:40 Spotlight  
08:45 Year Of The Dog  
10:20 Milk Money  
12:05 Jersey Girl  
13:45 The Foot Fist Way  
15:10 The Princess Bride  
16:45 Knight And Day  
18:40 Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves  
21:00 Waco  
21:50 Waco  
22:45 Waco  
23:40 Waco

### COMEDY CENTRAL

03:20 Ridiculousness Arabia  
03:45 Inside Amy Schumer  
04:10 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
04:35 Most Ridiculous  
05:00 Impractical Jokers  
05:25 Impractical Jokers  
05:50 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
06:20 Friends  
06:45 Friends  
07:10 Workaholics  
07:35 Impractical Jokers  
08:00 Catch A Contractor  
08:30 Catch A Contractor  
08:55 Impractical Jokers  
09:20 Impractical Jokers  
09:50 Friends  
10:15 Friends  
10:40 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
11:05 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
11:30 Impractical Jokers  
11:55 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team  
12:45 Ridiculousness  
13:10 Catch A Contractor  
13:35 Catch A Contractor  
14:00 Impractical Jokers  
14:30 Impractical Jokers  
15:00 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team  
15:50 Workaholics  
16:15 Catch A Contractor  
16:40 Catch A Contractor  
17:10 Friends  
17:35 Friends  
18:00 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
18:30 Ridiculousness  
19:00 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team  
20:00 Friends  
20:30 Friends  
21:00 Lip Sync Battle  
21:30 The Comedy Jam  
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
22:30 The Jim Jefferies Show  
23:00 Ridiculousness Arabia  
23:30 Inside Amy Schumer

### STAR MOVIES

03:00 Cuckoo  
03:30 Cuckoo  
04:00 Project Runway  
05:00 Grey's Anatomy  
06:00 Wedding Band-†  
07:00 American Beauty Star  
08:00 Cuckoo  
08:30 Cuckoo  
09:00 Project Runway  
10:00 Grey's Anatomy  
11:00 Wedding Band-†  
12:00 American Beauty Star  
13:00 Cuckoo  
13:30 Cuckoo  
14:00 Project Runway  
15:00 Grey's Anatomy  
16:00 Wedding Band-†  
17:00 Cuckoo  
17:30 Cuckoo  
18:00 Project Runway  
19:00 Grey's Anatomy  
20:00 Wedding Band-†  
21:00 American Beauty Star  
22:00 Cuckoo  
22:30 Cuckoo



## Stars



### Aries (March 21-April 19)

While fiery Mars continues its journey through your travel zone, a desire to get away from it all could increase. Still, this week may bring other concerns into the mix as a potent lineup of planets in your sector of goals and ambitions is very much to the fore. With a lunar eclipse in Cancer on Friday acting as a catalyst, the coming days could bring a key issue to a head. And the outcome can vary depending on how you've handled your responsibilities and whether you're doing what you want to do. If you're happy with your current path, you may get a promotion or find your image or reputation enhanced. Or, if you've ignored feelings of discontent and stuck to the tried and trusted, you could be facing a reality check. The cosmos could encourage an ending so that you can get involved in whatever is your passion.



### Taurus (April 20-May 20)

As the first week of 2020 gets underway, it comes with a powerful gift from the cosmos. There's a major focus on your sector of growth and travel, so you might have to let go of the old to embrace the new. Are you eager to explore new opportunities? You might need to expand your beliefs in order to leave your comfort zone. This is a time when you may become aware of old patterns and ways of thinking that have discouraged you from exploring your true potential. This week's powerful lunar eclipse in your communication zone encourages you to take the initiative and connect with a life coach or teacher who can help you move beyond your limits. With cautious Saturn linking to powerful Pluto, this can be a time of stripping back whatever no longer serves you, including outdated thinking. What follows could be the start of a whole new and very exciting phase.



### Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Although Mars in your sector of relating can increase the pace of key interactions and enhance your social life, your focus may be on more pressing issues. With a lunar eclipse across your financial axis, and an intense Saturn-Pluto connection linking with other key planets, money matters could be very much to the fore. You may be questioning your self-worth, as well as the value you give to the things and people in your life, including money. This dynamic focus can bring you face-to-face with your defense mechanisms. If you've resisted getting to the core of any money issues, it's time to dive in and find out more. You might also find that the real reason has nothing to do with money and everything to do with blocked emotions. If you can gently process through this, greater abundance may be yours.



### Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Relationships are very much to the fore this week and for some time to come. But this week is particularly special in that it sees a rare connection between prudent Saturn and volcanic Pluto in your relationship zone. What does this mean for you? It suggests that a key bond could come to a natural end, and that it might be time to turn over a new leaf. It's also possible that a relationship could move to a new level of trust after a period of reflection, and that what follows may be on a far deeper level than ever. With a lunar eclipse in your sign on Friday followed by a powerful Saturn-Pluto conjunction over the weekend, this can be an intense few days. Emotions may reach a peak, so it's probably wise to leave any key decisions until the following week when things are more settled.



### Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your relationship to your work and health could be held up to the light this week, with key influences encouraging a process of change. If you've felt suffocated by your job, this could be a time when you feel ready to try something new. It's also possible that a job could come to an end, and this might inspire you to look for something that engages more of your natural skills and abilities. Friday's lunar eclipse can highlight areas that are causing you stress, and it is these that you'll want to look at. As taskmaster Saturn aligns with power-broker Pluto over the weekend, it's an opportunity to cut out any deadwood from your life so that new shoots can begin to develop.



### Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your domestic zone takes center stage this week with a powerful lineup here. It can mean that an issue that has been ongoing comes to a head, yet this is likely no surprise. And with sobering Saturn linking to powerful Pluto, this may be a time of discovery that enables you to understand something about your history or heritage that proves empowering. With a lunar eclipse in your sector of career on Friday, feelings about your work/life balance could also be particularly strong. You might be ready for a change, but it would be unwise to make any snap decisions. If, however, one job comes to an end, something much better and more suited to you could take its place. As this is likely to be a very emotionally intense week, be sure to look after yourself and get the necessary nurturing and self-care. Don't push yourself. If you feel like you need a break, take one.



### Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your domestic zone takes center stage this week with a powerful lineup here. It can mean that an issue that has been ongoing comes to a head, yet this is likely no surprise. And with sobering Saturn linking to powerful Pluto, this may be a time of discovery that enables you to understand something about your history or heritage that proves empowering. With a lunar eclipse in your sector of career on Friday, feelings about your work/life balance could also be particularly strong. You might be ready for a change, but it would be unwise to make any snap decisions. If, however, one job comes to an end, something much better and more suited to you could take its place. As this is likely to be a very emotionally intense week, be sure to look after yourself and get the necessary nurturing and self-care. Don't push yourself. If you feel like you need a break, take one.



### Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your words might have more power than usual, so it would be wise to be careful about what you say. The intense focus on your sector of communication can be a call to change your mindset, particularly if negative thinking has held you back. With a potent lunar eclipse across your communication access and a transformative Saturn-Pluto merger, it would be unwise to make promises that you can't keep. It's also a good idea to be very careful when it comes to signing important documents or committing to anything major. Make sure that you aren't tied to something that doesn't work in your best interests. At the same time, the presence of dynamic Mars in your money zone could inspire you to sort out any lingering financial issues. And with electric Uranus turning direct in your home zone, you can now take concrete steps to make the changes you have envisioned.



### Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Finances could keep you on your toes over this week because the focus is very much on this sector. Issues of self-worth may come to the surface, and if so, this can give you much food for thought. If you've had difficulties with money matters, it could be that deep down you don't value yourself enough. This week, a powerful Saturn-Pluto merger in this zone could inspire you to do something about this. Working with a life coach or perhaps trying energy healing or EFT tapping can help shift those blocks and get you on the road to success. Having feisty Mars in your sign can help, too, because it can give you the confidence and courage to make a bold move. If you've doubted yourself, then the presence of the red planet can fill you with determination and an ability to leave your comfort zone.



### Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may need to face certain truths this week as sobering Saturn and dynamic Pluto merge in your sign. This can be a time of paring back your goals and ambitions and simplifying them as much as you can. If you've taken on too much, you might have felt the pressure for too long now, and events this week can push you to do something about it. With dwarf planet Ceres involved in the mix, finding a level of activity that inspires and nurtures you can be the key to happiness. In addition, the lunar eclipse across your relationship axis could see you questioning a key bond. This can be an opportunity to clear the air by talking things over. Just avoid overreacting or doing or saying anything that you might come to regret later.



### Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may have been working on your inner game for some time now, and this week things reach a new and empowering stage. The potent blend of prudent Saturn and transformative Pluto can help you uncover your true purpose, making this a very powerful time for you. To do so, you might need to find closure on issues that have kept you hobbled for too long. And with a lunar eclipse in the cards, as well as a potent lineup, it could be essential to get help. Doing it alone might not be an option. This can be deep-seated stuff, and getting professional help could allow you to make a major shift that feels like a rebirth. Such a major change can have an impact on your values and self-worth in a positive way. Once you know who you are and what you're capable of, nothing will be able to hold you back.



### Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Get ready for a shift in your social scene, because powerful influences and aspects this week could change everything. You already have expansive Jupiter moving through this sector opening doors and bringing fresh possibilities your way. This week could see you letting go of so-called "friends" who may not be doing you any favors. And if you've been involved in any toxic associations, you might be ready to jettison these as well. You may be looking for your true tribe of people who nurture you, support your dreams, and keep you feeling good. They are out there, and you may be closer to finding them than ever, if you haven't found them already.

## Country Codes

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

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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Friday, January 10, 2020

**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
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- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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**ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:**

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- Member of American cosmetic dermatology Society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

**SPECIALIZED IN:**

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**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
 Consultant Interventional Cardiology  
 Department: Heart & Vasoukar Center

**Specialized in:**

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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**Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
 ENT Specialist

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

**Specialized in:**

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
- ◆ Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complicated)
- ◆ VAT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Rotoscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
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**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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

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

daralshifa  
 Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

**Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
 Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
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**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates – Training**

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

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

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Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

# Kuwait Times Classifieds

Friday, January 10, 2020

## CHANGE OF NAME

**My son DALTON IMMANUEL SAM JONATHAN DAVID DURAI PANDIAN**, Indian Passport holder N1871481 born on 26.09.2007 residing in Salmiya, Kuwait. Shall henceforth be known as given name: DALTON IMMANUEL, Surname: SAM. (C 5604)

**Old name:** ANMOLIKA, Passport No. N9725963, new name only surname: ANMOLIKA SINGH. (C 5488) 10-1-2020

**I, Nasim Mohammed Ishaque Karjekar**, holder of Indian Passport No. J5393280 issued at Kuwait on 13-03-2011 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare henceforth my name will be read as given name: Nasim Mohammed Ishaque, Surname: Karjekar. Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Enclave Safat Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5603) 9-1-2020

**I, Mustafakhan Hamzakhan Jummal** holder of Indian Passport No. Z2402486, issued at Kuwait on 25-09-2012, permanent address of India A-1148, Jummal Mohalla, Goregaon Raigad, 402103. M.S. and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my name as: Given Name: Mustafa Hamzakhan, Surname: Jummal. (C 5486)

**I, Sultan Ahmed Husain**, holder of Indian Passport number Z2816107, issued at Kuwait on 31/08/2014, presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: Sultan Ahmed, Surname: Husain. Objections if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5487) 8-1-2020

**I, Sunil Kuttiyil George** (Kuttiyil 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 Kuttiyil

Surname: George  
Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

**I, Shibi Joseph** (Kuttiyil 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 Kuttiyil George**, father of Ansa Leya Sunil holder of Indian Passport No. S2391456 issued at Kuwait on 15-01-2018, Permanent address of Kuttiyil 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.

**I, Sunil Kuttiyil George**, father of Kripa Anna Sunil holder of Indian Passport No. T8211186 issued at Kuwait on 07-11-2019, Permanent address of Kuttiyil 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  
Objection if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015. (C 5485) 7-1-2020

## SHARING ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. 7-1-2020

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Rather cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to north easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 09/01/2020 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	13 °C		
ABDALY	22 °C	07 °C		
BUBYAN	21 °C	11 °C		
JAHRA	22 °C	11 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	17 °C		
NUWAISIB	22 °C	14 °C		
WAFRA	21 °C	12 °C		
SALMY	23 °C	07 °C	MSL Analysis (hPa) Valid 0000 UTC 09 JAN 2020	

## 4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	01/10	Rather cool and some scattered clouds will appear	19 °C	06 °C	VRB-N	08 - 40 km/h
Saturday	01/11	Rather cool with a chance for rising dust and some high clouds will appear	18 °C	04 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h
Sunday	01/12	Rather cool with a chance for carried dust	17 °C	04 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Monday	01/13	Rather cool	16 °C	03 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h

## PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:55
Asr	14:48
Sunset	17:07
Isha	18:29

## RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	94 %
MIN. RH	26 %
MAX. Wind	S 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

# Business

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SIGNAL HILL, California: In this Sept 25, 2019 file photo, a pumpjack from California-based energy company Signal Hill Petroleum is seen off Skyline Drive. —AFP

## US oil independence proves elusive

Foreign energy dependence wanes, but Washington still reliant on imports

**NEW YORK:** US President Donald Trump on Wednesday touted America's newfound "energy independence" which means the country is no longer at the mercy of geopolitical upheaval in the region. "We are independent and we do not need Middle East oil," Trump said as he reacted to Iran's retaliation against US troops following Washington's killing of an Iranian general. But while the United States has seen a production boom with exploitation of shale deposits, it still relies on imported oil.

### Is the United States energy independent?

The answer: It depends on what you mean by how "energy independence", said Matt Smith, an oil market specialist for ClipperData. It is true that in the final months of 2019, "the US gradually moved into being a net exporter of crude and products," he said, meaning the country exports more than it imports. That has been thanks to the massive exploitation of shale gas. The United States

became a net exporter of natural gas in 2017 for the first time in 60 years. "But the US is still importing 7 million barrels per day of crude and more than a million barrels of refined products," Smith said. It is still "hugely relying on Canada and other countries, including countries in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait".

### A real evolution

Even if the United States is not yet strictly speaking energy independent, the situation has changed considerably. Since the oil shock of 1973, Washington has aimed to reduce its dependence on imported oil and in 1975 prohibited exports of American crude. New hydraulic fracturing techniques - known as fracking - and horizontal drilling have allowed producers to exploit new deposits and have allowed progress towards this goal. Wells have multiplied in Texas, New Mexico, North Dakota and Pennsylvania.

The country now extracts an average of 12 to 13 million barrels per day, pro-

ducing more than Russia or Saudi Arabia, compared to 5.3 mbd in 2009 for example. That delights Trump, who in 2017 promised not only to achieve energy independence but to lead a drive toward American domination of energy.

### Persistent obstacles

But the United States continues to import massive quantities of crude oil from abroad because many of its refineries are configured to process heavy oil, mainly from Canada and Mexico, while shale oil is considered light. And while production of refined products such as gasoline, heating oil and kerosene have drastically increased, Americans' total energy consumption also is increasing. According to the US Energy Information Agency, consumption in 2018 increased by 4 percent to a new record. In petroleum alone, "total product demand in the US is around 20 million barrels per day, while oil production is 13 million barrels per day," Smith said. —AFP

## Millions pledged in funds for striking French workers

**PARIS:** Supporters of the strikes that have paralyzed public transport in Paris have pledged over 3 million euros in support for workers going without pay over the past month, according to an estimate yesterday. Multiple funds have been launched to help compensate the tens of thousands of workers taking part in the longest transport strike in France in decades.

Yesterday, more than 50,000 people had contributed to around 200 different online funds, which between them have amassed over 3 million euros (\$3.3 million), according to the @caissesdegreve Twitter account, which tracks the

contributions on a daily basis. The biggest fund, set up by France's second largest union, the hardline CGT, has raised nearly 2.2 million euros since the strike over President Emmanuel Macron's proposals for sweeping overhauls to the pension system began on Dec 5.

Unlike France's biggest union, the CFDT, the CGT, which is the biggest at national rail operator SNCF, does not have its own strike war chest funded by members' dues. One of the biggest contributions to its online fund came from a group of gamers, artists and activists who raised over 100,000 euros from viewers through the Twitch live streaming platform. —AFP

## Business

# Global economy faces tenuous recovery beset by risks: WB

## Mideast growth to jump 2.4% after virtually no growth in 2019

WASHINGTON: Recovery in a handful of countries will boost global growth slightly this year but the outlook is riddled with potential pitfalls that could derail this tepid upswing, the World Bank cautioned Wednesday. A renewal of trade tensions, which eased recently with announcement of an initial agreement between the United States and China, would erode the modest progress and could spread quickly beyond the two economic powers.

In its latest Global Economic Prospects report, the World Bank projects the global economy will grow by 2.4 percent this year, just one tenth more than 2019 but slower than the 2020 forecast released in June. Despite the positive spin, the report - titled "Fragile, Handle With Care" - cuts the forecasts for nearly every country except the United States compared to the last edition in June.

And growth is still not fast enough to meet targets for pulling more people out of poverty. Most major economies are poised to see sluggish growth in 2020. The tenuous global rebound relies almost entirely on a few large emerging market economies that are expected to accelerate after a disappointing 2019, or in the case of Argentina, contract at a slower rate.

### Major economies

The United States and China together account for nearly 40 percent of global GDP and nearly a quarter of global trade. But with an improvement in their nearly two-year old trade dispute, they will be less of a drag on growth even as both economies slow. The US economy is projected to grow just 1.8 percent after 2.3 percent growth in 2019, the World Bank said. China's GDP will expand by less than six percent for the first time since 1990, with an expected 5.9 percent growth rate.

"Growth has decelerated more than previously expected amid cooling domestic demand and heightened trade tensions," the report said. The Euro Area, hit by a slowdown in Germany and the threat of Brexit, "has deteriorated significantly," with several economies "on the verge of recession at some point last year." The expansion is set to slow further to just 1.0 percent this year before picking up in 2021. Japan also is "suffering from acute weakness in manufacturing and exports" and the economy will continue to slow with growth of just 0.7 percent expected.

### Emerging markets

Emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) have been the boost to the global economy through the sluggish times but most face their own rocky road with a third are projected to decelerate this year. As a result the global uptick is not broad-based and "is largely predicated on a rebound in a small group of large EMDEs, most of which are emerging from deep recessions or sharp slowdowns," the report said.

"Indeed, about 90 percent of the pickup in EMDE growth in 2020 is accounted for by just eight countries - Argentina, Brazil, India, Iran, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey," it said. "Excluding these eight countries, aggregate EMDE growth would experience almost no acceleration." Argentina, which contracted 3.1 percent in 2019, is projected to slow by 1.9 percent this year while Brazil and Mexico should expand by 2.0 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, far faster than last year. India too is expected to gain traction, with growth of 5.8 percent, while Turkey's 3.0 percent expansion will come after no growth in 2019, the report said. In sub-Saharan Africa, the news is looking up, with a solid



DHAKA: Workers scrub plastic bags used to carry industrial chemicals in the Buriganga River yesterday. — AFP

increase in GDP growth expected this year.

But the World Bank cautions that, even with the improvement, "per capita growth will remain well below long-term averages and far from sufficient to meet poverty alleviation goals". The Middle East is expected to see growth jump to 2.4 percent this year after virtually no growth in 2019.

### Downside risks predominate

The World Bank warns that "downside risks predominate" but since the cutoff for the forecasts was December 20, prior to the recent

outbreak of hostilities between Iran and the United States. So it is too soon to tell what influence that might have. The major concern is the potential for a resurgence of trade tensions between the United States and China. A "renewed disruption to US-China economic ties could result in damage not only to these two economies but to the rest of the world," the report warned. In addition, "record-high debt levels and fragile public finance positions" leave many countries vulnerable to shocks or a sudden increase in interest rates. — AFP

## Sun shining after economy's difficult year: Economist

WASHINGTON: The sun has come out for the global economy, as trade tensions appear to be receding. But whether that leads to a resurgence in investment that can boost growth remains to be seen, a World Bank economist told AFP. Ayhan Kose, who oversees the World Bank's twice-yearly deep dive into the global economy, said the slight acceleration in world growth expected this year but it is not fast enough and the recovery is fragile. In an interview with AFP, he explained the main findings and his main concerns:

**Q: You've cut GDP forecasts from June. Why is this good news?**

**A:** "I think it's fair to say that 2019 was an extremely difficult year for the global economy. Growth last year was the lowest since global financial crisis and trade growth was at the lowest level since the global financial crisis as well. So the good



Ayhan Kose

news for 2020, we expect global growth to pick up, a marginal pickup from 2.4 to 2.5 (percent).

**Q: What are your main concerns about the outlook?**

**A:** "One day of sunshine does not make the summer, so we need to see and analyze incoming data to be convinced about this fragile recovery we are projecting. It's not just the trade tensions' impact on confidence but the bigger impact on investment.

to be reduced... and then you will see you know confidence coming back. We have this change of tone in the context of trade and that is a very positive development."

"We hope it is an inflection point. For the three years in a row we saw weaker growth ... trade-related tensions and elevated policy uncertainty (that) overshadowed activity, and basically you saw this sustained slowdown in trade, in manufacturing, industrial production, and more importantly in investment. Now the hope is that these trade tensions are going

And this investment slowdown has an impact on what we call potential growth, economies' ability to generate growth. So, there is some permanent impact."

"This debt buildup since the crisis has been the largest, the widest and then, of course, fastest build up for emerging market developing economies and we need to be mindful of what will happen if growth remains weak and a sudden increase in interest rates or spreads will trigger challenges for emerging market economies. We shouldn't lose sight of this important issue because at the end the root cause of crisis is always about debt. These countries are definitely less well prepared, relative to where they were."

**Q: Will US tensions with Iran alter the outlook?**

**A:** "I think this recent increase in geopolitical tensions is a cause of concern.... However, when you look at the market reaction so far, market reaction has been muted. We monitor developments in the region very carefully, because these geopolitical tensions could have adverse impacts on activity. The impact of geopolitical tensions tends to be short-lived. We just need to wait and see. We really don't have much data to play with. At the same time, we should all be mindful of the fact that the global economy needs basically lower uncertainty and higher confidence. We are projecting a fragile recovery." — AFP

## Business

# Ukrainian airline crash another challenge for embattled Boeing

## Planemaker still reeling from two MAX crashes that killed 346 people

**NEW YORK:** The latest tragic plane crash involving another Boeing aircraft adds to the travails facing the company after its 737 MAX was grounded nearly a year ago following two deadly crashes. Details were limited Wednesday about the crash of a Ukraine International Airlines plane, a Boeing 737-800, near Tehran that killed 176 people. Yet the latest bad news involving a Boeing plane weighed on company shares, which finished Wednesday's session down 1.8 percent at \$331.37.

The incident could hardly have come at a worse time for Boeing, which is still reeling from two MAX crashes that killed 346 people, causing its best-selling plane to be grounded worldwide and exposing the company to withering criticism over its handling of the crisis. Paul Njoroge of Canada, who lost his family in the Ethiopian Airlines MAX crash, said the UIA crash "brought a chill in my entire body" as he recalled the MAX crash of March 2019.

"The 737-800, the predecessor to the 737-MAX... has been seen to be reliable over the years," Njoroge said in a statement released by his law firm. "However, any in-built technical issues cannot be tolerated. Could the crash be tied to the crippled culture within Boeing? That is a hypothesis that should be analyzed."

### Cause of crash unknown

However, aviation analysts stressed that the two planes are different models and the crashes should

be considered separately. Richard Aboulafia of the Teal Group, a research consultancy focused on aviation and defense, said the UIA crash is "tragic and the optics aren't good" for Boeing but the 737-800 model has an excellent record. The airline said the aircraft involved in the crash was built in 2016 and had been checked only two days before the accident. It was Kiev-based UIA's first fatal crash.

There was no immediate indication of foul play and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned against "speculating" on the cause of the disaster. A statement posted on the website of the Ukrainian embassy in Iran initially said the crash was caused by an engine malfunction and ruled out an act of terror. But it was later edited to say that all information will now be provided by an official commission. Aboulafia said early statements blaming the crash on technical difficulties reflected "an unbelievable degree of unprofessionalism" since they did not have access to the plane's black box or pilot communications. Scott Hamilton of Leeham News said reports linking the UIA crash to the MAX crisis "are irresponsible", adding that the 737-800 model is "a highly reliable aircraft with thousands in service around the world." Hamilton said crash investigations routinely include studying the possibility of pilot error, maintenance error, technical error, outside factors such as weather and terrorism and foreign object ingestion. Citing a 2018 Southwest Airlines incident in which an en-



**TEHRAN:** A handout photo provided on Wednesday shows rescue teams working at the scene of a Ukrainian airliner that crashed shortly after take-off near Imam Khomeini Airport. —AFP

gine exploded, killing a passenger, Hamilton said the plane's engine "has a history of uncontained failures that must be considered."

### Investigation faces roadblocks

Hostilities between Washington and Tehran could impede the probe, which comes as President Donald Trump vowed additional sanctions on Iran

following Iranian missile strikes against US forces in Iraq, which was in retaliation for Washington's killing of an Iranian general. Under a protocol governing international aviation investigations, Iran should lead the review. But the country that manufactured the aircraft and the country of the airline that operated the plane also should have representatives involved in the probe. —AFP

## British Airways owner switches pilot as CEO quits

**LONDON:** Global airline titan IAG yesterday said its chief executive Willie Walsh had quit, after a long stint that saw him oversee the group's creation and rapid expansion, and would be replaced by Luis Gallego, head of Spanish division Iberia. Walsh stands down on March 26 ahead of retirement, the owner of British Airways said in a statement. The announcement brings down the curtain on Walsh's 15-year career with BA and IAG. Starting as BA chief executive, he went on to oversee the 2011 merger of British Airways and Iberia. IAG has since expanded to include Aer Lingus, Level and Vueling.

The Irishman also spearheaded a cost-cutting drive to compete with budget airlines, despite criticism from some quarters that this cheapened the brand of BA — which once called itself the world's favorite airline. Walsh, 58, was originally a pilot at Ireland's Aer Lingus but rose to become chief executive, before taking up the same role at BA in 2005. "Willie has led the merger and successful integration of British Airways and Iberia," IAG chairman Antonio Vazquez said in Thursday's statement. "Under Willie's leadership IAG has become one of the leading global airline groups."

But British Airways suffered major disruption in September when for the first time in its 100-year history pilots employed by the airline went on strike in a long-running pay dispute. "It has been a privilege to have been instrumental in the creation and development of IAG," Walsh said in the statement. "I have had the

pleasure of working with many exceptional people over the past 15 years at British Airways and at IAG.

"Luis has been a core member of the team and has shown true leadership over the years and I have no doubt he will be a great CEO of IAG," Walsh added. In London midday trading, IAG shares gained 1.0 percent to 624.8 pence on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was up half a percentage point overall.

"Willie Walsh leaving BA has been very well telegraphed so the modest rise in IAG shares probably better reflects the overall market mood," said London Capital Group analyst Jasper Lawler. "Iberia has been very much an equal partner in the group with BA in recent years so it makes sense that the Iberia chief Luis Gallego takes the reins." Lawler added that Walsh had navigated other "difficult times, including fuel prices spikes and cut-throat competition from budget airlines".

Iberia has yet to announce Gallego's replacement. "It is a huge honor to lead this great company. It is an exciting time at IAG and I am confident that we can build on the strong foundations created by Willie," Gallego said. As Iberia chief since 2013, Gallego managed to return the airline to profitability after years of losses. He began his professional career in the Spanish Air Force before joining the commercial sector. —AFP



Willie Walsh

## Dark days for Alitalia as options narrow

**MILAN:** The future of Italy's Alitalia looked bleak yesterday after state railway Ferrovie dello Stato and Germany's Lufthansa pulled out of a rescue attempt for the beleaguered carrier. "We are on a narrow and difficult road," Economic Development Minister Stefano Patuanelli told parliament, saying the options to save it were "not endless". The government has been looking for buyers for the heavily-indebted company for years, without success.

Italy's Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) had been attempting to form a consortium to save Alitalia, but said Wednesday it had thrown in the towel after failing to find investors willing to meet the conditions. Those included having a leading airline play a part in the rescue. Talks had been underway with American airline Delta, Lufthansa, and Italy's Atlantia, a major operator of motorways and airports controlled by the Benetton family. But Lufthansa insisted Tuesday that it was not interested in investing in Alitalia without a major restructuring of the company. FS head Gianfranco Battisti said the German

company had "never formally responded to our initiatives". Delta had been ready to invest €100 million and take 10 percent of the capital, which FS said would have resulted in a total investment of €340 million over four years.

Atlantia's participation was "conditional on the resolution of other dossiers", Battisti said. That was a reference to threats by the government to revoke Atlantia's motorways concession following the collapse of a bridge in Genoa in northern Italy in 2018 in which 43 people died. Atlantia has said it is still interested in finding a solution for Alitalia, but Patuanelli said Wednesday it was "absolutely unnecessary" to continue talks.

"Alitalia has been in an alarming situation for many years now," Umberto Bertele, strategy professor at the Politechnic Business School in Milan, told AFP. He said one of its main issues was the "imbalance between the number of employees and the number of flights". The company has faced extremely fierce competition from low cost companies, but is too small to be able to really compete with other traditional companies either.

It flew just 22 million passengers in 2018, compared to 91 million for Easyjet, 142 million for Ryanair and some 180 for Lufthansa and Delta Airlines. In Italy its market share stands at 14 percent, far behind Ryanair's 25 percent, and it loses some €300 million per year. —AFP

## Business

# Crisis-hardened markets learn to look past military flare-ups

## Traders, investors betting on repeated patterns of behavior

**LONDON:** Iran's missile attack on US army bases in Iraq overnight sent gold blasting above \$1,600 an ounce, boosted the Japanese yen by almost 1 percent and oil by \$3 a barrel. But it took just hours for that safe-haven dash to fade and for world equities to resume their climb. It was the second volte face in under a week following a similar pattern of events after the US killing of top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani on Friday. And that mirrored a super-fast roundtrip on markets after Iran-backed rebels attacked Saudi oil facilities in September.

Welcome to the brave new world where it appears that little short of full-fledged world war between nuclear-armed powers would be required to have a durable impact on financial markets. And even then, some begin to wonder. By the European close on Wednesday, Brent crude oil prices had returned back below levels seen before Soleimani's death on Friday and Wall Street's S&P500 equity index rallied to new record highs.

At its most basic level, investors appear to believe that Tehran and Washington will avert a broader conflagration. Regionally-contained military blowups and bursts of conflict have proven in recent years not to have a durable impact on either oil supplies and prices nor global economic activity. Even September's attacks on Saudi oil installations had no lasting effect on crude prices. And beyond the Gulf, years of North Korean nuclear tests and missile launches have not yet escalated nor affected international investment patterns for any significant length of time.

So traders and investors are betting as much on repeated patterns of behavior rather than on amateur geopolitical reasoning. "The market has taken a view based on a decade's worth of experience that this is not going to escalate out of control," said Societe Generale strategist Kit Jukes. "It's the same with the economy. We've had an economic cycle with mini-cycles since 2008 but no recession, we've had trade wars that haven't really turned into real trade wars but keep getting postponed."

And investors who stuck with equities and looked past euro debt crises, North Korean missile tests, Arab Spring revolts, trade wars, Middle East turmoil and unconventional economic policies, have reaped rich returns - world stocks have added more than \$25 trillion in value since 2010. A geopolitical risk index compiled by US Federal Reserve Board researchers Dario Caldara and Matteo Iacoviello rates the Saudi attacks at a rel-



**TOKYO:** A pedestrian walks past a stock indicator displaying share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange yesterday. — AFP

atively high 185 points, but well below the 2003 US invasion of Iraq that scored 545 points.

### Oil clout

For decades, the energy price impact has been the main transmission mechanism from major conflicts - particularly in the Gulf - to the wider economy and world markets. The threat of oil supply disruption has been a shadow on the global economy ever since a quadrupling of oil prices during the 1973 OPEC oil embargo and a 30 percent jump in 1990.

But oil spikes these days tend to be briefer. That partly reflects the changing nature of energy usage and geographical sources of supplies. US shale oil producers can now step up to offset price spikes stemming from Gulf supply disruptions, regardless of local politics or OPEC action, while the rise of renewable energy sources amid fears of climate change is happening at a rapid pace. Paul Donovan of UBS Wealth notes that technology developments mean far less oil is needed to produce a dollar of global GDP today. Donovan also highlighted that back in 1973 energy-producing countries squirreled away extra oil earnings as savings,

causing a net shock to global economic demand as that money drained from oil buyers' pockets. "In 2020, oil sellers spend that money with abandon and so a higher oil price does not mean a big drop, or potentially any sort of drop, in economic demand."

### Learning from the past

Of course, wars and invasions have driven big market shifts in the past, causing mini-panics and safe-asset buying on fears for business confidence, trade and energy prices. But the experience over recent decades has been that, all things equal, markets tend to recover quickly and portfolio managers with the stomach to see through short-term lurches do well, even without expensive hedging. A recent Schroders report identified the 1990 Gulf War, the 2001 9/11 attacks on New York and the 2003 Iraq invasion as the most monumental geopolitical risk events of the past 30 years. In 2003, yields on German government bonds, among the world's most trustworthy assets, tumbled almost 70 basis points between March and June; they fell a similar amount in 1990. "When you look at the last few decades of history, whenever a prolonged war is the more likely outcome, that's when the rush to government bonds takes place," said Rabbani Wahhab, senior portfolio manager at London and Capital. Schroders noted that during periods of extreme risk, a portfolio of "safe" assets comprising bonds and gold usually outperformed "riskier" equities. However, it also found that in all these instances shares recovered within months, suggesting that "if investors are willing or able to ignore volatility, then investing in the risky portfolio represents a better strategy than a safe portfolio."

The market context itself has also changed over the decades - most prominently by years of near-zero interest rates and central bank money printing that have inflated prices of high-quality bonds, reduced benchmark borrowing costs and cut what's available to investors. Shares, meanwhile, have been pumped up by buybacks and abundant private funding that have steadily reduced equity supply over the years. With JPMorgan predicting equity supply to decline by a further \$200 billion this year, many investors have come to view selloffs as a buying opportunity. "The demand-supply nature of markets has completely changed," said Salman Ahmed, chief investment strategist at Lombard Odier. "Central banks have reduced the supply of safe assets and that's rippled out to risky assets. It's a very powerful force." — Reuters

## Equities rally, oil steadies as tensions ease

**LONDON:** Stocks rallied, the dollar jumped and oil prices steadied yesterday as traders saw an easing of tensions between the United States and Iran that weighed on haven investments such as gold and the yen. "Stock markets are strong... as US-Iran tensions have faded," noted David Madden, analyst at CMC Markets UK. "The strong finish in New York last night prompted buying in Asia overnight, so now the bullish sentiment has reached Europe."

"The US and Iran are still at odds with each other, but as long as a conflict doesn't seem to be on the horizon, the feel good factor is likely to last," Madden added. US President Donald Trump on Wednesday pulled back from the brink of war with Iran, saying Tehran ap-

peared to be "standing down" after firing missiles - without causing casualties - at US troops based in Iraq.

The comments cooled what threatened to become an uncontrolled boiling over of tensions after Trump ordered the killing last Friday of a top Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani. Oil prices, which spiked briefly to four-month highs on Wednesday soon after the Iranian attack, dropped back below their start point on the softer tone from both sides. They managed to avoid further losses Thursday, trading virtually unchanged compared with prices late in New York on Wednesday.

On Wall Street, the Nasdaq hit another record high Wednesday while the Dow and S&P 500 indices enjoyed big gains. And the positive mood continued into Asia. Tokyo and Hong Kong rallied around two percent and Shanghai ended with a gain of 0.9 percent. Frankfurt took the lead in Europe, jumping 1.3 percent in midday deals. The rush to riskier investments saw gold, seen as a haven in times of unrest, sink more than one percent, having broken \$1,600 per ounce for the first time in seven years. — AFP

## Christmas gloom casts pall over British retail

**LONDON:** A Christmas crunch inflicted further pain on more British retailers yesterday, with John Lewis warning its staff they may not get a bonus for the first time since 1953 as consumers changed shopping habits and the economy struggled. John Lewis flagged lower profits for its 2019 financial year, while Tesco, Britain's biggest retailer, ground out a 0.1% rise in underlying UK sales over Christmas, and Marks & Spencer said waste in its food business and weak menswear and gift sales held it back.

Industry data showed British shoppers cut back on spending in late 2019, rounding off the worst year since at least the mid-1990s for retail sales amid uncertainty over Brexit, last month's election and slowing wage growth. Instead of buying goods, consumers opted to spend on experiences, data from payment card company Barclaycard showed. Cinema ticket sales were

up 19 percent, while spending in pubs and on takeaway food rose by about 12 percent, the data showed.

Tesco said Prime Minister Boris Johnson's resounding election victory in December, which broke the deadlock over Britain leaving the European Union and lifted financial market sentiment, had not released any pent-up demand. Adding to worries that a pick-up may not materialize, Sainsbury's, Britain's second largest supermarket, said on Wednesday it hadn't seen any change in behavior since the nation went to the polls.

Concerns over the strength of the British economy are being felt more widely and the pound fell to a near two-week low against the US dollar after Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said that there could be a "relatively prompt response" if it looked as though weakness will persist. For employee-owned John Lewis Partnership, which runs the eponymous department stores business and up-market supermarket Waitrose, the prospect of not paying a bonus for the first time since 1953 highlights how tough times are for some retailers. Like rival department stores, John Lewis has been under pressure for some time, and in March last year reported a 45 percent drop in full-year profit, hurt by weak demand and rising costs. — Reuters



## Business

# Chinese firms push ahead at CES despite trade war

## Number of overall Chinese exhibitors was down slightly

**LAS VEGAS:** Chinese makers of televisions, smartphones and much more were very much present at the premier Consumer Electronics Show here, undeterred by their country's trade war with the US. "Companies are all capitalists, and I think everyone is just holding their breath," said analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights and Strategy. "I think nobody wants to burn any bridges right now, and almost everybody is acting like there are not any issues."

Titans such as Huawei, TCL, Skyworth, Hisense and Lenovo once again had eye-catching booths on the show floor where throngs of CES goers checked out their latest innovations. The number of Chinese exhibitors, overall, was down slightly with some smaller companies skipping the show, according to Sarah Brown, communications director of the Consumer Technology Association that runs the annual gadget extravaganza.

### US on roadmap

TCL showed off new 8K televisions, and teased a set of new smartphones, one of them synched to super-fast 5G telecom networks, aimed specifically at the US market. "We can see that the relations between China and US are getting better," TCL overseas business group general manager Harry Wu told AFP. "At the same time we have a supply chain worldwide, no matter Mexico, Vietnam, India or other countries, we have plans to support our sells in US."

Wu held firm that TCL has not changed its

focus or global business plans due to trade tensions between China and the US. TCL has gained ground fast in the US television market, and sees an opportunity to take advantage of growing brand recognition by broadening its line-up of devices, according to senior vice president Chris Larson. "TCL is huge in China but has factories in Mexico, so it ships goods from Mexico factories to get around tariffs," noted Techspontential analyst Avi Greengart.

China-based Skyworth TV has chosen now to enter the US market with rich, big-screen televisions - one an 8K model priced at \$5,999. Skyworth is a well-established TV brand in its home country. "Our high-end products are more mature and more competitive than ever," said Skyworth chief brand officer Leo Tang. "We're confident that with the strength of our brand and the quality of our products, Skyworth can start gaining more traction in the US regardless of external challenges."

### CES bigger than US

Chinese companies were plentiful on the expansive show-floor at CES, which wraps up today. Huawei, which has been disparaged by the US government, had its wares on display as it has done at CES for years. "The fact that we have Chinese companies here is encouraging," said Creative Strategies technology analyst Carolina Milanesi. "So they're not boycotting and they see the opportunity. At the end of the day, for all the brands, it's about reaching the biggest addressable market."



**LAS VEGAS:** The Huawei Mate X foldable smartphone is displayed on Wednesday at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES). —AFP

Analysts noted that CES attracts a global crowd, and even though it takes place in the US alliances or deals made here could be aimed at cultivating business elsewhere. "CES is really a global show, so these companies are sometimes coming to CES but not with the US market in mind," said Brown of the Consumer Technology

Association. Out of an anticipated 170,000 attendees, 60,000 were expected to be from outside the US, according to Brown. "For certain, if you don't show up for this event, and you are from China, your potential for getting future business from the US goes down," said analyst Moorhead. —AFP

## Quibi hopes 'quick bite' TV for phones wins viewers

**LAS VEGAS:** New streaming service Quibi on Wednesday provided a glimpse into its bid to win over smartphone users, vowing to shake up the industry with original programs lasting less than 10 minutes. Quibi founder Jeffrey Katzenberg said it was designed for young lifestyles, offering episodes to be viewed while in a queue or on a break at work. "We aim to give you big stories in quick bites," Katzenberg said at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. He billed Quibi - which launches in April - as a television transformation, taking advantage of smartphone features such as location, time of day, and pivoting from landscape to portrait screens. Katzenberg said all Quibi content - from comedies to documentaries, sports and news - was original and being produced "by the biggest names in Hollywood".

Created by Katzenberg, a longtime Disney executive and co-founder of DreamWorks SKG, the app drew inspiration from Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code", which has more than 100 chapters averaging just five pages each. The idea behind the service that has the entertainment world abuzz is to attract younger viewers who are always on the move.



**LAS VEGAS, Nevada:** Rob Post, Quibi chief technology officer, talks about Quibi's "Turnstyle" at the Quibi keynote address on Wednesday at the 2020 CES. —AFP

Katzenberg said the platform will treat video storytelling like books, with longer stories broken into short chapters. "We are not shrinking TV onto phones," said Quibi chief executive Meg Whitman, a former chief of Hewlett Packard Enterprise. "We are creating the world's first platform for mobile video in quick bites." Major studios have pledged \$1 billion in funding for the service, which has already attracted Hollywood names such as Steven Spielberg, Guillermo Del Toro and Jennifer Lopez. Quibi joins Disney+, HBO Max (AT&T), Peacock (Comcast) and Apple TV+ among the players in a streaming war as Americans increasingly become "cord-cutters" - giving up expensive, often inflexible cable packages for a more a la carte online experience. Rivals also include titans Netflix and Amazon Prime, which spend billions of dollars annually on original shows. Google-owned YouTube also battles for the attention of video-seeking smartphone users. —AFP

## Big Tech helping transform autos into smartphones

**LAS VEGAS:** Technology companies transformed smartphones and televisions into continuous fountains of revenue. Now, big tech wants to work with automakers to do the same thing for your car. With the widespread rollout of autonomous vehicles still years away, the two industries have converged on the idea of cars providing services and features delivered "over the air" - that is, over the same wireless data networks used by smart phones.

Those services - streaming video, vehicle performance upgrades, dashboard commerce - could answer a pressing need for automakers. They need to learn how to milk their hardware for revenue long after vehicles roll off dealers' lots. Tech companies see cars and the time people spend in them as a new frontier for growth. Both auto and tech companies used the big CES technology show here this week to showcase their determination to make the vision of vehicles as connected revenue machines a reality. Cloud computing gi-

ants Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp were in the forefront, chasing the opportunity to manage torrents of data flowing to and from connected vehicles. "It's absolutely huge," General Motors Co President Mark Reuss said in December of the opportunities to generate revenue after a vehicle is sold by providing streamed services and over-the-air upgrades facilitated by GM's new high-capacity onboard electrical system.

The pivot comes at a time when global automakers are looking for fresh revenue sources as sales slow and as rising costs to comply with tougher emissions standards threaten profit margins. Shares of legacy automakers such as Ford Motor Co and GM badly lagged broader market indexes in 2019. The contrast is Tesla Inc, whose market cap on Wednesday for the first time exceeded Ford and GM's combined market values.

Tesla pioneered the model for charging for over-the-air upgrades, now asking customers to pay \$6,000 to turn on the full self-driving option. Other automakers are eager to try their hand at turning cars into upgradeable, revenue-generating gadgets. Chinese carmaker Byton's new M-Byte sedan features a 48-inch screen as a dashboard, as well as a steering-wheel display and a digital tablet for passengers. When parked, the car can be an office, enabling video conference calls, or a roadside cinema. —Reuters

## Sports

# Keep politics out of 2020 Tokyo Games: IOC's Bach

**LAUSANNE:** Politicians and athletes should keep politics out of this year's Tokyo Olympic Games to protect the event's neutrality and its status as a peaceful meeting place, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said yesterday.

The Games have seen both political protests by athletes in the past as well as boycotts of nations and Bach said any infusion of politics into the Games in Tokyo starting on July 24 would not be welcome.

Tensions between the United States and Iran have risen sharply in recent days prompting major concerns across the world, while South Korea has said there is an urgent need to improve ties with North Korea.

China, Japan and South Korea recently agreed to work together to promote dialogue between the United States and reclusive North Korea. "The mission of the Olympics is to unite and not to divide. We are the only event in the world that gets the entire world together in a peaceful competition," Bach told reporters after a meeting with the IOC athletes' commission chief Kirsty Coventry.

"I ask them (politicians and athletes) to respect this mission of the Olympic Games and in order to accomplish this mission we must be politically neutral. "Otherwise we would end up in this divisive and boycott situation. I ask them to respect this

political neutrality by not using them (the Olympics) as a stage for their political purposes."

The Games of 1980 and 1984 were hit by boycotts that did not have any results, Bach said. "The boycotts we had particularly in the 1980s with Moscow and the counter-boycott in Los Angeles which brought the Games to the brink of demise... had no effect whatsoever.

"Sport was a kind of a scapegoat because all the other political divisions were not affected. The Moscow boycott did not change anything in Afghanistan at the time and the counter-boycott in 1984 did nothing to change politically the United States or the foreign policy in the U.S."

More recently, at the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympics, Egyptian judoka Islam El Shehaby was sent home after refusing to shake the hand of Israeli Or Sasson after their bout. In October 2019 Iran's judokas were banned indefinitely from international competitions until it could provide strong guarantees that its athletes would be allowed to face Israelis.

The ban followed a protective suspension imposed on the Iran Judo Federation in September 2019 for putting pressure on one of its fighters to withdraw from the world judo championships to avoid having to face an Israeli opponent. —Reuters



**LAUSANNE:** International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach (L) and Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission Kirsty Coventry attend a press conference closing during an executive board meeting at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne, yesterday. —AFP

## Dressel tipped to dominate Tokyo sprint swimming

**NORTH CAROLINA:** American Caeleb Dressel will become a global superstar by winning more events than any other swimmer at this year's Tokyo Olympics but he is unlikely to rack up gold medals at the same clip as Michael Phelps, predicts Olympic historian Bill Mallon.

Phelps, who retired after the 2016 Rio Games, had a range from the 100 metres up to 400 which enabled him to claim a record haul of 23 gold medals across four Olympics, including eight in Beijing in 2008. Dressel, on the other hand, is a pure sprinter who maxes out at 100 metres. Dressel won six golds at last year's world championships — the 50 and 100 freestyle and butterfly, along with two relays — and was even more prolific two years previously, claiming seven golds. But the sprints have a higher level of unpredictability, Mallon says, citing the need to make a fast start off the blocks, especially in the 50. "I think Dressel will dominate swimming," Mallon said of the 23-year-old in a telephone interview with Reuters.

"I don't think he's going to win eight gold medals. He's much more of a sprinter than Phelps was, and the sprints are always a bit of a crap shoot, a little higher risk." On the women's side, Mallon predicts it will be difficult for American Katie Ledecky to replicate her three individual golds from Rio, where she won the 200, 400 and 800 freestyle races, the latter two in world record times.

"I assumed she would dominate in Rio and she did," he said. "She may dominate in Tokyo but there are people coming after her now and she hasn't improved her times."

In athletics, Mallon cited men's marathon runner Eliud Kipchoge and women's high jumper Mariya Lasitskenskaya as the best bets for gold. Kenyan Kipchoge, the defending champion and world record-holder, has won his past 10 marathons dating back to 2014 and is a hot favourite to follow in the footsteps of African marathon pioneer Abebe Bikila (1960 and 1964) by winning back-to-back. —Reuters

## Amir's 9th International shooting Grand Prix



**KUWAIT:** Obaid Al-Osaimi briefing at running target referees course.

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will patronize His Highness' 9th International Grand Prix. Jahra Governor Nasser Falah Al-Hajraf, will represent HH the Amir at the opening ceremony at Martyr Fahad Al-Ahmad Hall at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Tournament Director, Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Obaid Al-Osaimi expressed appreciation on behalf of KSSC Board of Directors for HH the Amir's support of shooting and shooters.

He said HH the Amir Grand Prix which continues to enjoy success for the 9th consecutive year, is one example of the support HH the Amir extends to the shooting community, which exerts all efforts to continue this success and achievements at all levels.

Al-Osaimi lauded the large number of participants at the tournament making it among the most important tours on the Agenda of International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF). The Grand Prix will have 30 countries represented by 360 shooters in all shotgun, pistol, rifle and Olympic archery events in addition to 100 shooters from Kuwait.

There will be highly recognized shooters from countries like

Italy, Kazakshtan, Czech Republic, Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Iran and Armenia, that in addition to many Arab countries participating including UAE, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria.

The Ninth Grand Prix will start today with unofficial training on 10m pistol and rifle for both men and women while competition starts tomorrow at 9:00 am. Official training on the men's and women's trap event will begin along with archery. The technical meeting of the grand prix will be held at 11:00 am.

Meanwhile, Al-Osaimi opened the running target referees course, organized by Kuwait Shooting Federation, under the patronage of ISSF with the participation of African and Egyptian Shooting Federations President Hazem Hosny and member of ISSF executive committee Pekka Kuusisto as lecturers.

Al-Osaimi welcomed the international lecturers and participants, and stressed the importance of it in enhancing Kuwaiti referees level, as required by ISSF to be able to participate in any event.

Meanwhile, Hazem Hosny said he is happy to be part of the referees training here in Kuwait, and lauded the presence of lecturer Pekka Kuusisto who is highly experienced in the field of running targets.

## Sports

# Finch confident as Australia head to India for ODI series

**SYDNEY:** Australia have the goods to give Virat Kohli's men a run for their money, skipper Aaron Finch said yesterday as he departed for their three-match one-day series. The two sides face each other in Mumbai on January 14 before heading to Rajkot and then Bangalore for what will be Australia's first limited-overs games since the World Cup in England last year.

Both sides made the semi-finals and Finch believes Australia is well-equipped to deal with India on home soil after upsetting them 3-2 there early last year. "It just gives us confidence that our game plan in those conditions is good enough," he told cricket.com.au ahead of his departure.

"What can happen when you play in the sub-continent is you start to doubt your game plan because they're so dominant when they get on top. 'India or Pakistan... or Sri Lanka. They can make you start doubting yourself."

"Knowing that our game plan is good enough and knowing that our skills are good enough to beat India in India. That gives us a lot of confidence going there." Regular coach Justin Langer is giving the tour a miss after an intense summer of Test cricket with the reins handed to his as-

sistant Andrew McDonald.

McDonald has had a rapid rise. He was playing in the Twenty20 Big Bash four years ago before turning to coaching and being appointed Langer's right-hand man in October. "He's got great credentials and he'll keep growing. He's got a really good opportunity," Langer told reporters this week.

"I said to him: 'we're not reinventing the wheel'. I won't ring him, I'll let him go. "He said 'I might ring you'. He'll do a really good job." Australia have radically overhauled their squad for the series with in-form batsman Marnus Labuschagne, fresh from an incredible Test summer against Pakistan and New Zealand, set to make his one-day international debut.

"We know that he's not going to be overawed by the occasion," Finch said of their new star. Spinner Ashton Agar gets another chance 18 months after his last one-dayer and paceman Josh Hazlewood has been recalled after recovering from injury to once again partner Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins.

There was no room for high-profile players such as Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis and Nathan Lyon.



Aaron Finch

Australia squad: Aaron Finch (capt), Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne, Kane Richardson, D'Arcy Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Ashton Turner, David Warner, Adam Zampa. — AFP

## Test cricket debate rages over 5-day format

**LONDON:** Ben Stokes made an emphatic case for the unique drama of five-day Test cricket this week — inspiring England to a series-levelling win against South Africa in the final overs of a dramatic contest.

His match-winning performance in Cape Town on Tuesday came at a time of intensifying debate over the future of the longest form of the game, which has been played since 1877.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will in the coming months discuss reducing Tests to four days as part of structuring the global calendar beyond 2023. For a sport so closely linked with tradition, cricket has shown a remarkable ability to innovate in recent decades, introducing multiple forms of limited-overs cricket that have taken firm root.

But the latest proposal, part of an effort to tackle the crowded international cricket calendar and save on costs, has divided players, many of whom consider Test cricket the gold standard.

The ICC allowed four-day Tests in 2017 and they have been tried in one-off games between South Africa and Zimbabwe and England against Ireland. But they are not allowed in the Test world championship, which is currently led by Virat Kohli's India.

The Cricinfo website said mandatory four-day Tests rather than five-day matches during the current cycle from 2015 to 2023 would have freed up a total of 335 days of scheduled cricket over the period.

The England and Wales Cricket Board has offered "cautious" backing to the suggested new model and Australia and New Zealand said four-day Tests deserved serious consideration.

But a succession of top cricketers have spoken out against the idea and the global players' representative body has warned of "significant player resistance", though others such as Shane Warne have voiced support for a change.

England all-rounder Stokes claimed the last three South Africa wickets at Newlands to earn a 189-run victory for England, who levelled the four-match series at 1-1 on Tuesday.

Afterwards he and England captain Joe Root spoke out in favour of the longer format, which allows the drama and nuances of the game time to play out. "It's why five-day cricket should always be around. It's the best form of the game," said Stokes, England's man of the match.

Root's opposite number, Faf du Plessis, also said he did not support a move towards four-day Test matches, despite a statement by Cricket South Africa that it was official policy to back a reduced format.

England director of men's cricket Ashley Giles said on Wednesday that five-day Tests were "precious". "If we played four-day cricket, I fear we would miss out on a lot of matches like yesterday (England's win)," Giles told the BBC.

"I know a lot of Test matches now don't go to the fifth day — but you know it is precious to me, and I know it is to the players."

### KOHLI OPPOSITION

Kohli spoke earlier this month about his opposition to any move to cut a day from Tests, questioning where it would ultimately lead. With four-day Tests "you are purely only talking about getting numbers in and entertainment, and I think the intent will not be right," said the India skipper.

"Then you will speak of three-day Tests. I mean, where do you end? The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations executive chairman Tony Irish stressed there was "currently a lot of negative sentiment" concerning the proposed changes.

"Until such a time as we and the players are provided with the full picture and compelling reasons for change, we remain supportive of five-day Test cricket, and would expect significant player resistance if a shift to that is imposed on players by the ICC and/or boards," Irish said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Test cricket is a cherished format of the game and it needs player support and buy in to survive. We urge those making decisions to understand that." —AFP

## Anderson out of England's Tests in South Africa

**LONDON:** England pace bowler James Anderson will miss the final two Tests in South Africa after suffering a rib injury during their dramatic victory in Cape Town.

Anderson sustained the problem on the final day of the second Test and MRI scans on Wednesday confirmed he won't be back in action until after the current tour. It is a bitter blow for the 37-year-old, who was just two games into his comeback following the calf injury he endured in last summer's Ashes series.

Anderson, England's record Test wicket taker, spent almost five months working back to full fitness and showed signs of being back to his best with seven wickets in England's series-levelling 189-run win. But he was in visible discomfort on the final day, clutching his side at times and grimacing through two painful overs after tea. "James Anderson has been ruled out of the remainder of the Test series against South Africa after sustaining a left rib injury in England's second Test victory at Newlands," an ECB statement said.

"Anderson felt tightness and discomfort at the end of the morning session on day five and was only able to bowl eight overs during the day. He will return to the UK in the next few days."

Anderson tweeted: "Frustrating to be missing the rest of this series with a broken rib but hopefully will be healed in a few weeks! Will be supporting the boys from home." Anderson's tally of 584 Test scalps makes him the most prolific seamer in Test history, while his appearance in the Boxing Day Test at Centurion saw him become just the ninth man to win 150 Test caps.

England were already giving consideration to sparing Anderson a thankless job on the spin-friendly pitches during their forthcoming tour of Sri Lanka. But the issue has been taken out of the selectors' hands, with a bone-related injury likely to require around two months of recovery work. With that in mind, Anderson may now focus on getting ready for the English season, with a view to becoming just the fourth man in history to take 600 Test wickets after Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne and Anil Kumble. —AFP

## Sports

# Racing, Toulouse face Irish hurdle for Champions Cup quarters spots

**PARIS:** French Top 14 giants Racing 92 and Toulouse can clinch European Champions Cup quarter-final spots with victories over Irish opposition this weekend. Racing, two-time runners up, host Munster in Pool 4 on Sunday while record four-time winners Toulouse head to Connacht in Pool 5 on Saturday in the penultimate round of the group stages.

The Parisians' coach Laurent Labit says John van Graan's men have an advantage as they were able to make 10 changes for last Friday's Pro14 defeat at Ulster. "When you see the team, you see the importance they put on that. Qualifying from their league (for next season), they'll do it," Labit said.

"They haven't got much to fight for and they prepare enormously for the Champions Cup," he added. South African Van Graan will be without Ireland fly-half Joey Carbery who has been ruled out for up to four months with a wrist injury.

With Kiwi Taylor Bleyendaal sidelined due to a neck problem and experienced JJ Hanrahan a doubt for the trip to the French capital Van Graan could be forced to turn to 20-year-old Ben Healy or centre Rory Scannell to wear the number 10 shirt.

"Ben has grown quite a lot over the last

few weeks - he's been part of gameday warm-ups, he's been part of the squad and Rory has trained there," Van Graan said.

## TOULOUSE TO 'FRESHEN UP'

Unlike Labit's side, who are unbeaten in five games, last season's semi-finalists Toulouse have stumbled recently in the league by drawing at home to Toulon and losing convincingly at bottom-side Stade Francais on Sunday.

"For sure we have to change gear, freshen up and start again in a better way," Toulouse back-rower Francois Cros said after the defeat in Paris. "Certainly in the Top 14 we have tripped up but in the European Cup we have four wins so it's up to us not to tarnish those matches," Cros, who was named in France's Six Nations squad this week, added.

Another Top 14 outfit Clermont, can take a step closer to the last eight by beating Ulster at Stade Marcel-Michelin on Saturday before travelling to Harlequins a week later. "It's not a double or quits match. It's not going to knock us out in this pool but what we want is to qualify for a quarter-final and quickly," coach Franck Azema said.

Elsewhere, reigning European champions Saracens, who are a point behind Munster in



**PARIS:** File photo shows Clermont's New Zealand full back Isaia Toeava (L) vies with Racing92's Fijian centre Virimi Vakatawa (R) during the French Top 14 rugby union match between Racing 92 and Clermont on January 4, 2020 at Paris La Defense Arena stadium in Nanterre, near Paris. —AFP

the standings, head to the Ospreys who are without a win in any competition since October. Exeter Chiefs head to Glasgow looking to

tie up a last-eight place and Gloucester host Montpellier needing a victory to keep their hopes of progression alive. —AFP

## Legends and rookies celebrate on Stage four of 2020 Dakar

**JEDDAH:** As the dust settles on a dramatic Stage 4 of the 2020 Dakar Rally, so the leaderboards across all five categories start to take shape. With close to 2,500 kilometres traversed through the stunning landscapes of Saudi Arabia, we're beginning to see who has put themselves in pole position for glory at the first Middle Eastern Dakar.

A battle royale is developing in the car race with Monsieur Dakar himself, Stephane Peterhansel (FRA) winning his first stage in Saudi Arabia. Peterhansel's victory on Stage 4 has propelled him up the rankings to third overall.

"Today was the best day since the beginning of the rally. We didn't do too many mistakes, we were lost for about three minutes in total." - Stephane Peterhansel

Ahead of 13-time Dakar winner Peterhansel is Carlos Sainz (ESP) in the lead, with Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) in second. Less than 12 minutes separate this trio who have won the Dakar 18 times between them. Expect the threesome to all put their foot down on the two stages that remain before the midway Rest Day in Riyadh.

There were also encouraging performances by Giniel De Villiers (ZAF) and Kuba Przygonski (POL) as they attempt to stay in touch with the podium places.

In the side-by-side race there was a first ever Dakar stage win for the debutants of Red Bull Off-Road Team USA. Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA) and his co-driver Ola Floene (NOR) have backed up an impressive start to the Dakar by arriving in Al Ula quickest of all SxS competitors. The result has propelled Guthrie Jr. to sixth overall, just half an hour behind race new leader Jose Antonio Hinojo Lopez (ESP). Chaleco Lopez (CHI) is in second, three minutes off the summit.

"We had no flats or any other problems, we were able to keep it moving all day." - Mitch Guthrie Jr.

A blistering finish to the 453-kilometre special stage by Sam Sunderland (GBR) saw the 2017 Dakar winner set the fastest time of the bike stage. Despite being later penalised with a five-minute penalty for excessive speed, The Red Bull KTM Factory Team rider sits sixth overall - less than 20 minutes behind overall leader Ricky Brabec (USA). Sunderland's team-mate Toby Price (AUS) is fourth overall, 12 minutes back from Brabec.

"We're staying in contention and looking forward to the second week. I'm not looking to bash myself up or bend the bike." - Toby Price

Sunderland and Price are joined in the Top 10 by fellow Red Bull KTM Factory Team riders Luciano Benavides (ARG) and Matthias Walkner (AUT) as they squad chase a 19th consecutive Dakar bike win.

Top placed female biker Laia Sanz (ESP) was pleased with her ride on Stage 4 as she broke in the Top 25 overall.

"It was a long day, but I'm more happy than I was with the last two days. I was able to enjoy the stage and also improve my re-



**Toby Price**

sult today." - Laia Sanz

The overall lead of the truck race has changed hands thanks to a 1-2-3 result for Team Kamaz Master on Stage 4. Anton Shibalov (RUS) led home team-mates Andrey Karginov (RUS) and Dmitry Sotnikov (RUS). 2014 Dakar winner Karginov is now out in front in the truck class, having leapfrogged Siarhei Viazovich (BLR).

"It was a really crazy day today, such a difficult stage. The rocks were so dangerous and we needed to take care to avoid any big problems." - Anton Shibalov

A third stage win from four days of racing has increased the advantage Ignacio Casale (CHI) holds at the head of the quad contest. Casale's closet competitors is now over 20 minutes behind him.

Tomorrow brings with it Stage 5 and those who remain in the Dakar convoy will be plunged deep into the dunes. Huge descents over desert grass will test each and every competitor as they tackle the 353-kilometre timed special stage between Al Ula and Ha'il. The 2020 Dakar finishes on Friday, January 17 in Al-Qiddiya.

## Sports

# Australia, Russia storm into ATP Cup semi-finals

**SYDNEY:** A dynamic Nick Kyrgios and dogged Alex de Minaur powered Australia into the ATP Cup semi-finals yesterday with an epic 2-1 win against the Tim Henman-led Britain, and they were joined by Russia who overpowered Argentina. The home team clinched the tie after an 18-16 third-set tiebreaker in the doubles to set up a potential blockbuster last-four clash against Rafael Nadal's Davis Cup-winning Spain who face Belgium on Friday.

Russia, spearheaded by world number five Daniil Medvedev won both their singles to sweep past Argentina. Their reward is a semi-final against either Novak Djokovic's Serbia, or Canada. Kyrgios crushed Cameron Norrie in the opening singles 6-2, 6-2 before Dan Evans came through a memorable showdown against De Minaur 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 7-6 (7/2) to set up the decisive, winner-takes-all doubles.

Australian captain Lleyton Hewitt took a huge gamble by dropping regular doubles pair John Peers and Chris Guccione in favour of Kyrgios and de Minaur, and it looked a poor decision when they lost the first set 6-3.

But, spurred by Kyrgios' booming serve, they took the next 6-3 before a nailbiting tiebreaker that lasted more than half-an-hour. Jamie Murray and Joe Salisbury had four match points, which were all saved, with Australia finally converting on their fifth match point, sparking jubilant scenes.

"That was incredible tennis. All three matches today everyone gave 100 percent and left it all out on the court," said Hewitt. "Really proud of the boys, the way they were able to turn it

around... it could have gone either way."

In the second quarter-final, Karen Khachanov continued his hot run of form and got the ball rolling for Russia by beating an out-of-sorts Guido Pella 6-2, 7-6 (7/4). The world number 17 has won all four of his matches this season and was in control throughout against the Argentinian, who appeared on the verge of tears in the opening set. Medvedev, also unbeaten, quickly took charge of his showdown with world number 13 Diego Schwartzman, but lost focus in the second and was slapped with a point penalty for twice smashing his racquet into the umpires chair during an argument with the official. He regrouped to race through the third set for a 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 win.

## SKIN OF TEETH

"The second set and third one (of Medvedev's match) was high-class tennis from both sides," Russian captain Marat Safin said, adding that he was "very proud" of his team. "It was important for him to stay mentally strong, maintain his calm and see what's going to come."

The Australia-Britain tie was notable for Evans' clash with world number 18 De Minaur, a three-hour 23-minute contest that is a contender for match of the tournament. After Evans took the opening set in a tense tiebreaker, De Minaur fought back to grab the second.

He went 4-2 behind in a see-saw third, but rallied again as they exchanged service breaks with the Australian showing nerves of steel to save four match points and take it to another tiebreak — which the exhausted Briton finally



**SYDNEY:** Daniil Medvedev of Russia hits a return in his men's singles match against Diego Schwartzman of Argentina at the ATP Cup tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

won. "That's about as good as I've got really and I only got through by the skin of my teeth," admitted Evans, ranked 42. A composed Kyrgios beat world number six Stefanos Tsitsipas on Tuesday and carried that momentum into his clash against Norrie.

The mercurial Australian has been a model of concentration and focus at the ATP Cup, thriving in the team environment. It is partly due to hav-

ing a six-month suspended ban hanging over him, imposed in September for calling an Irish umpire a "potato" and a "tool" in Cincinnati.

He also accused the ATP of being corrupt before backtracking on the allegation. "I love the team event," Kyrgios said. "Rusty (Hewitt) is the best captain, the teammates have been supporting each other, being there for each other and that's paid off," he added. — AFP

## Barty not concerned despite first loss

**BRISBANE:** World number one Ashleigh Barty remains upbeat about her Australian Open preparations despite losing her opening match of the season at the Brisbane International yesterday. American qualifier Jennifer Brady notched up her first ever win over a top 10 player when she beat Barty 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) on Pat Rafter Arena.

It was Barty's first match on home soil since becoming world number one, and came at the venue she trains at and in front of thousands of her adoring home fans. Barty conceded afterwards she had simply been outplayed by Brady, who also beat former world number one Maria Sharapova in the first round. "Jen was in control of the match — she was in the centre of the court being the aggressor and I think you have to give credit where credit's due," Barty, who practised with Brady early this week, said.

"She came through qualifying, but she's got a ranking that's kind of well below what a lot of people give her credit for. "She's playing some exceptional tennis, so I certainly can't take that away from her. She played a

great match today and deserved to win."

Barty grew up in Ipswich on Brisbane's western outskirts and has had hundreds of fans packing outside courts to watch her practice this week.

But when she was asked whether she felt any pressure because of the attention she insisted she didn't feel any different. "I think that's (the pressure) all come you from you guys, if I'm being completely honest," she said. "It doesn't change the way that I practice. It doesn't change the way that my team and I prepare. It doesn't change me as a person. "I think that you guys enjoy the fact that you get something to write about and you have something to talk about. So hopefully I make it interesting for you, but I don't look at it beyond that."

Brady will now play two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, who beat Russian qualifier Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-2. World number two and defending champion had to battle for two hours to avoid the same fate as Barty, eventually beating Australian wildcard Ajla Tomljanovic 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1. — AFP

## Serena reaches Auckland quarters

**AUCKLAND:** Serena Williams rallied from a set down to beat journeywoman Christina McHale at the WTA Auckland Classic yesterday, and said it was just the workout she needed. With her focus on winning a 24th Grand Slam at the Australian Open, Williams said she needs all the court time she can get after a long off-season since losing September's US Open final.

It took the top seed two hours to put away the 27-year-old McHale and advance to a quarter-final with Germany's Laura Siegemund, who ousted teen prodigy Coco Gauff in the second round. Williams was broken three times before losing the first set 3-6 but recovered to take the next two sets 6-2, 6-3 in the all-American affair.

"I really need to play matches like that to get to my goals," said Williams, who is determined to equal the record of 24 Grand Slams held by Australian great Margaret Court. "Tournament time is super-important, match time is good. After losing that first set I'm just glad to be still in the event."

McHale used her speed around the court in extended rallies which often produced unforced errors from the 38-year-old Williams in the early stages. But just as it looked as if Williams was in a slump at 1-4 down after five games, the world number 10 got to grips with the blustery conditions and McHale's agility and began to take control. It was the reverse from Gauff, seen as one of the rising stars of tennis, who started

strongly against Siegemund but faded as the match wore on. The 31-year-old Siegemund, who played her first WTA qualifier in 2003 before Gauff was born, was up 5-4 and serving when the American teen broke twice to take the first set. But from there, she used her considerable experience to ruffle the 15-year-old, forcing her behind the baseline and then drawing her forward with deft drop shots.

"In the first set I had my chances but let it go. So I just tried to keep my level and she started to miss a little bit more, and I guess I just got better and better," Siegemund said.

As Gauff showed signs of being rattled, she lost the steeliness she showed when she burst into the limelight last year with a win over Venus Williams on her way to Wimbledon's fourth round as a qualifier. Against Siegemund, she finished with seven double faults and 49 unforced errors, which she put down to youth and inexperience. "I'm still learning and that's the problem that I have," Gauff said.

"I didn't play the right way and if I lost playing the right way it would have been fine, but I don't think I was playing the right way." Defending champion Julia Goerges cruised through to the final eight with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Jil Teichmann. The German's quarter-final on Friday is against Caroline Wozniacki who survived two service breaks in the final set to overcome 2017 Auckland champion Lauren Davis 6-1, 4-6, 6-4. —AFP

## Sports

## Rockets prevail in Harden-Young duel

**ATLANTA:** James Harden scored 41 points en route to his second triple-double of the season and the visiting Houston Rockets beat the Atlanta Hawks 122-115 on a historic night Wednesday. The Hawks' Trae Young finished with 42 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists — the first 40-point triple-double in Hawks history. It was Young's sixth 40-point game and his second triple-double of the season. The game also marked the first time in NBA history that there were two 40-point triple-doubles in the same game. Harden had a subpar shooting night — making only 9 of 34 — but was 19 of 23 from the line with 10 rebounds and 10 assists. It was Harden's 44th career triple-double and his 15th 40-point triple-double, second-most in NBA history. The Hawks trailed by as many as 23 in the second quarter, but cut the lead to 118-115 with 18 seconds left. Harden made four free throws over the final 10.4 seconds to put the game away. Houston defeated the Hawks for the sixth straight time.

**DENVER NUGGETS 107 -  
DALLAS MAVERICKS 106**

Nikola Jokic scored 33 points, including a go-ahead layup with 7.9 seconds left, and visiting Denver held off Dallas down the stretch for the win. Jokic added seven assists and six rebounds as he won a showdown with Dallas' Luka Doncic, who had 27 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds in a losing cause.

Dallas played its fifth straight game without Kristaps Porzingis (knee), while the Nuggets were without two starters, guard Will Barton (personal reasons) and Paul Millsap (knee).

**SAN ANTONIO SPURS  
129 - BOSTON CELTICS 114**

DeMar DeRozan led the way with 30 points as San Antonio crushed host Boston. Lonnie Walker IV added 19 points in 19 minutes off the bench as the Spurs won for the fourth time in their last six games. San Antonio shot 55.2 percent (48 of 87) as a team to avenge a 135-115 home loss to Boston earlier this season. Gordon Hayward scored 18 points, as the Celtics narrowly avoided their worst loss of the season in just their third defeat at home. Kemba Walker, returning from three games missed with the flu, had six points before getting ejected in the third quarter.

## Ex-Buddhist monk meditating his way to golf's Masters

**HONG KONG:** Thailand's Jazz Janewattanond has something special in his bag as he prepares for the US Masters — the Buddhist meditation techniques learned as a monk that have helped him become the talk of Asian golf.

The 24-year-old is Augusta-bound after a huge year when he won the Asian Tour order of merit, with two tournament victories, and impressed at the PGA Championship at Bethpage. Jazz's victory at the Indonesian Masters in De-

**MIAMI HEAT 122 - INDIANA  
PACERS 108**

Jimmy Butler, who missed the previous game due to a back injury, had 14 points, seven assists and six rebounds to lead Miami to a convincing win in Indianapolis. Miami, which never trailed past the first quarter, had six other players with double-figure points: Tyler Herro (19), Derrick Jones Jr. (18), Bam Adebayo (18), Duncan Robinson (17), Goran Dragic (15) and Kendrick Nunn (15). Adebayo also had a team-high nine rebounds. Indiana, which fell to 15-5 at home, was led by power forward Domantas Sabonis, who had game highs in points (27) and rebounds (14). He also had six assists. The Heat's Justise Winslow returned after missing 15 consecutive games due to a back injury. Winslow, who hadn't played since Dec. 4, played 16 minutes off the bench but did not score. He had two rebounds and one assist.

**MILWAUKEE BUCKS  
107 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 98**

Milwaukee used a stellar defensive effort to overcome poor shooting, struggling past host Golden State. Two days after shooting 15-for-45 on 3-pointers in a 126-104 loss at San Antonio, the Bucks were dreadful from behind the line — 9-for-41 — but still managed a sixth win in their last seven games. Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, and Khris Middleton 21 for the Bucks, who won for the third straight time at Golden State, this time in their first visit to the new Chase Center in San Francisco.

**ORLANDO MAGIC  
123 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 89**

Nikola Vucevic had 29 points and nine rebounds, and Orlando routed visiting Washington. Evan Fournier added 19 points on 7-of-10 shooting for Orlando, which has won four of five. D.J. Augustin added 18 points off the bench. Khem Birch had 11 points and nine rebounds. Reserves Troy Brown Jr. and Admiral Schofield led Washington with 18 points each. Wizards guard Bradley Beal missed his fourth straight game with lower right leg soreness. The Wizards remain without a group of regulars that includes Thomas Bryant, Rui Hachimura and Davis Bertans among others.

**NEW ORLEANS PELICANS  
123 - CHICAGO BULLS 108**

Brandon Ingram and rookie Jaxson Hayes

each had a double-double as host New Orleans defeated Chicago. Ingram had 29 points and 11 assists, falling two rebounds short of his first career triple-double, and Hayes had 14 points and 12 rebounds for his second double-double. Ingram had 16 points as the Pelicans took control by outscoring the Bulls 44-27 in the third quarter. Zach LaVine scored 32, Thaddeus Young had 18, Kris Dunn 15, Lauri Markkanen 14 and Coby White 10 to lead the Bulls, who lost their fifth straight and for the sixth time in seven games.

ember saw him safely inside the world top 50, and secured his place among golf's elite at the Masters in April.

The unassuming Thai is now 40th in the rankings, the second-highest Asian behind South Korea's Im Sung-jae, and he walked off with four 2019 Asian Tour awards including Players' Player of the Year. The former teen prodigy — who goes by the nickname given by his music-loving father — became the youngest player, at 14 years and 71 days, to make the cut at an Asian Tour event in Bangkok in 2010.

But after turning pro at 15, there have been tough moments too and it was after losing his Asian Tour card in 2016 that he spent two weeks living as a Buddhist monk. He shaved his head and wore saffron robes at the monastery in the northern Chiang Rai region, where the strict routine involved fasting, chanting and learning how to meditate. Most young Thai men spend time as a monk and the experience had a profound effect on Jazz, who won his first Asian Tour



**ATLANTA:** PJ Tucker #17 of the Houston Rockets dives for a loose ball against De'Andre Hunter #12 of the Atlanta Hawks in the second half at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. — AFP

event, in Bangladesh, a few months later.

He has since chalked up another five wins on the Tour and sits higher on the rankings than his colourful countryman Kiradech Aphibarnrat, the established US PGA Tour player who he calls his "older brother".

Jazz turned heads during his Major debut at last year's PGA Championship, where he was tied for second behind Brooks Koepka after the third round. The Thai, who stroked a creditable two-under-par 68 at a breezy Fanling in the Hong Kong Open's first round on Thursday, said meditation remains an important tool as he builds his career.

**TORONTO RAPTORS 112 -  
CHARLOTTE HORNETS 110 (OT)**

Serge Ibaka made two free throws with 5.1 seconds remaining in overtime to give visiting Toronto a victory against Charlotte. Ibaka finished with 23 points, matching teammate Terence Davis as the Raptors avoided losses on consecutive nights. OG Anunoby's 19 points and Kyle Lowry's 15 points aided the Raptors, who also received 13 points from Patrick

McCaw. Charlotte's Terry Rozier missed a potential winning 3-point shot at the end. Rozier heated up in the second half and ended up with 27 points, while teammate Miles Bridges had 26. Cody Zeller added 14 points and P.J. Washington had 12.

**UTAH JAZZ 128 - NEW  
YORK KNICKS 104**

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 20 points, and Emmanuel Mudiay added a season-high 20 off the bench to lead host Utah to a win over New York in Salt Lake City. Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 16 rebounds to lead the Jazz. Donovan Mitchell chipped in 16 points, and four others scored at least 11. Utah won for the 12th time in its last 13 games and notched its seventh straight victory overall. Frank Ntilikina led New York with 16 points. Elfrid Payton and Bobby Portis finished with 13 points apiece. The Knicks lost all four games on their Western Conference road trip. Utah outscored New York 60-38 in the paint. — Reuters



**JAKARTA:** File photo taken on December 15, 2019 shows Jazz Janewattanond of Thailand chipping onto the 17th green during the final round of the BNI Indonesian Masters golf tournament at the Royale Jakarta Golf Club in Jakarta. — AFP

"I'm still doing it," he said. "It's not all the time, it is stuff I do when I feel like something is off, or I feel like I need to get back to the peace or something is going crazy." Jazz will need all his peace of mind to overcome his chequered record on the unusual, challenging Fanling layout, where he failed to make the cut on each of his two previous visits. — AFP

# Kroos stunner helps Real Madrid through to Spanish Super Cup final

**JEDDAH:** Toni Kroos scored a wonder goal straight from a corner as Real Madrid beat Valencia 3-1 on Wednesday to reach the final of the controversial Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia. Kroos caught Valencia goalkeeper Jaime Domenech napping with a brilliant, instinctive strike before Isco made it two and Luka Modric added a classy third from a curling finish with the outside of his foot.

After two superb goals, the only shame was more fans were not there to see them given the King Abdullah Sports City stadium appeared only a little more than half full. The official attendance was given as 40,877 out of a capacity of 62,345. Dani Parejo scored a late Valencia penalty but Madrid advance to Sunday's final where they will meet the winner of second semi-final between Barcelona and Atletico Madrid. "I'm happy with the whole performance," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

"For the goal of Isco, because maybe he needed that, the genius of Kroos and then something that only Modric can do. But it is a semi-final, we haven't won anything yet." Barca coach Ernesto Valverde had said earlier on Wednesday that he preferred the traditional format of this competition, that pitted the La Liga champions against the winners of the Copa del Rey in a match in Spain in August.

Under those rules, Real Madrid, who finished third in the league last term and failed to reach the final of the cup would not even have qualified but they now have the chance to win their first trophy of the season, possibly against Barca in a

Clasico final. But it is the new location that has grated most, because of the lack of consideration for Spanish fans and the implications of associating with a country that has been heavily criticised for its treatment of women and record over human rights. In one of the more unusual aspects of the night, a giant banner of the King and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia were hung in the centre of the pitch during half-time.

## LONG UNBEATEN RUN

Either side of the interval, Real Madrid were too strong, extending their unbeaten run to 15 matches with another performance to suggest they are La Liga's form team ahead of the second half of the season.

Valencia had to cope without star player Rodrigo Moreno due to a knee injury while Madrid were also without their own top scorer in Karim Benzema, who has a hamstring strain, as well as Gareth Bale, who has a throat infection.

Zidane did not rule out Bale joining up with the squad for the final but said the Welshman has not trained all week. In their absence, Kroos stepped up with a goal of which both Benzema and Bale would have been proud.

Madrid won the corner in the 15th minute and with Domenech out of his goal, instructing Francis Coquelin, Kroos nipped around the flag and bent the ball towards the net. Domenech saw it coming but too late, and he could only succeed in punching the ball into the inside of his own goal. Valencia wanted a penalty when Casemiro nudged Carlos Soler in the back and Kevin



**JEDDAH:** Valencia's French forward Kevin Gameiro (2nd-R) is marked by Real Madrid's French defender Raphael Varane (2nd-L) during the Spanish Super Cup semi final between Valencia and Real Madrid in Jeddah. — AFP

Gameiro should have done better than blast over after he did well to wriggle through. But Madrid were the dominant force and Isco doubled the lead before the break. Fede Valverde pulled back for Modric and while his shot was blocked, Isco fired in the follow-up. Luka Jovic's struggles continued as he struck the post from close range

before Modric added a final flourish, selling Gabriel Paulista with a stepover left before guiding the ball into the far corner with the outside of his right foot.

Sergio Ramos handballed late on and Parejo scored the penalty but for Valencia the game was already up. — AFP

## PSG overrun Saint-Etienne to reach League Cup s-finals

**PARIS:** Mauro Icardi scored a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain demolished a depleted Saint-Etienne 6-1 on Wednesday to power into the semi-finals of the French League Cup. Icardi struck the opening goal inside two minutes at the Parc des Princes before teenage Saint-Etienne defender Wesley Fofana was dismissed for a second booking on the half-hour.

PSG ruthlessly capitalised on their man advantage as coach Thomas Tuchel elected to field all four members of his fearsome attacking quartet — Icardi, Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria — against a side decimated by injury and illness.

"I am convinced that Icardi and Mbappe love to play together," said Tuchel. "We talk about the four attackers but we are a team with 11 players. Neymar, for example, helps Juan Bernat. "That's the sort of spirit which we need to be dangerous. We have the best players but we also have the best team." Neymar doubled the lead with a nonchalant chipped finish over goalkeeper Jessy Moulin, who scored a comical own goal on the stroke of half-time. Di Maria's low cross was hacked by Timothee Kolodziejczak into the legs of team-mate Loic Perrin, the ball rolling back off the post before hitting Moulin and trickling over the line. The hosts bagged a fourth when Mbappe rounded Moulin and cut back for Icardi to add to his tally, and he completed his hat-trick when the former raced clear before selflessly presenting the Argentine with a tap-in.

The pair reversed roles for the sixth goal, Icardi controlling superbly and sliding across goal for a lunging Mbappe to turn home from close range. Former PSG midfielder Yohan Cabaye hit a consolation goal for Saint-Etienne when he headed in the rebound after his second-half penalty was saved by Sergio Rico. PSG have now scored at least four goals in their past six matches. The record eight-time champions will discover their semi-final opponents when the draw is made on Thursday. Lyon battled into the last four with a 3-1 victory at home to Brest. — AFP

## Spurs pose tricky test for Liverpool

**LONDON:** Spurs manager Jose Mourinho would love to be the one who ends Liverpool's year-long unbeaten run in the Premier League, and tomorrow's game could be closer than the standings suggest. The late match at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium will be the first between Juergen Klopp's men and a Mourinho side since Manchester United dismissed the Portuguese after a 3-1 defeat at Anfield in December 2018.

"Don't sack Mourinho," the crowd chorused mockingly during that 2018 humiliation, so revenge in North London would be sweet. Spurs have been shockingly leaky, and some are expecting a classic demonstration of Mourinho's bus-parking expertise in defence and a few tactical tricks.

"The way Spurs used to play under Mauricio Pochettino, you would have expected them to come out and have a go at us but I can't see that happening under Jose Mourinho," former Liverpool striker John Aldridge wrote in a column for the city's Echo newspaper.

"I am sure they will try to soak up pressure and hit us on the break with Lucas Moura, Son (Heung-Min) and Dele Alli. "They will allow us to have possession and try to break them down, no doubt that is how Mourinho will play because I think he is very intimidated by Liverpool."

The match could still be an awkward trip for the visiting Reds who beat Tottenham in last year's Champions League final and have a near-perfect record of 58 points out of 60 this season to sit 13 points clear at the top.

Mourinho, who replaced the sacked Pochettino at Spurs in November, has only twice been on the winning side against Klopp in their 10 previous games as opponents. To do it again, Tottenham will have to rise to the challenge without injured captain Harry Kane.

## CLEAN SHEETS

Former Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp suggested it could still be a lot closer than the 28-point gap between Liverpool and sixth-placed Spurs, who have kept only two clean sheets this season. "I can't see any other result but Liverpool winning the title, but Tottenham away will be a tough game, make no mistake about that," he told Sky Sports.

"They'll want to break that Liverpool unbeaten run and it will be a tight game for sure — you wouldn't write Tottenham off, they've got outstanding players in the team." Second-placed Leicester City host Southampton on Saturday. The Foxes thrashed the Saints 9-0, the biggest ever top flight away win in English soccer, in the reverse fixture in October but Southampton have tightened up considerably since that humiliation, conceding only 13 goals in 11 games. Four more goals for Leicester would set another record, however, as the most one club has put past another in the league. Leicester have top-scoring striker Jamie Vardy back in action, with the England international turning 33 on Saturday, after he missed three matches with a calf problem but centre-back Wes Morgan is out with a groin injury. — Reuters

Live		MATCHES ON TV
		LOCAL TIMING
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>		
Sheffield United FC v West Ham United	23:00	beIN SPORTS
<b>FRENCH LEAGUE</b>		
Stade Rennais v Olympique Marseille	22:45	beIN SPORTS



BRISBANE: Ashleigh Barty of Australia hits a return against Jennifer Brady of the US during their women's singles match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

## Barty not concerned despite first loss

See Page 45