



7 Iraq warns of 'collapse' if Trump blocks oil cash



9 Pak court revokes Musharraf death sentence, guilty verdict



20 'Hollywood' reigns at Critics' Choice Awards; 'Joker' leads Oscar nods



27 Real beat Atletico on penalties to win 11th Spanish Super Cup



Iran denies 'cover-up' as anger mounting over downed airliner

Police ordered to show 'restraint' as protests rage



TEHRAN: An Iranian woman holds a placard reading in Farsi "Your mistake was unintentional, your lie was intentional" during a demonstration outside Amir Kabir University on Jan 11, 2020. — AFP

TEHRAN: Iran denied a "cover-up" yesterday after taking days to reveal an airliner was accidentally shot down last week, a disaster that sparked demonstrations and calls for a fully transparent investigation. The Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 was brought down by a missile shortly after taking off Wednesday from Tehran, killing all 176 passengers and crew on board. The Kiev-bound plane was knocked out of the sky hours after Tehran had launched a wave of missiles at US troops in Iraq in retaliation for the killing of a top Iranian general.

The Islamic republic initially denied Western claims based on US intelligence that the airliner had been struck by a missile before acknowledging it on Saturday. Its handling of the matter saw a memorial at a Tehran university turn into a demonstration on Saturday evening before it was dispersed by police.

Demonstrations were also held in the capital on Sunday night, according to unverified videos shared online, but it was difficult to assess how many people attended. "I don't know why they didn't cancel the flights that night," a Tehrani named Hamid told AFP. Protesters chanted "Death to dictator" and against the Revolutionary Guards, Fars news agency said, a rare move for a country where media usually refer to demonstrators as "rioters" and refrain from publishing such slogans.

Video from inside Iran yesterday showed students yesterday chanting slogans including "Clerics get lost!" outside universities in the city of Isfahan and in Tehran, where riot police were filmed taking out positions on the streets. Images from the previous two days of protests showed wounded people being carried and pools of blood on the ground. Gunshots could be heard, although the police denied opening fire.

Scores, possibly hundreds, of protesters were videoed at sites in Tehran and Isfahan, a major city south of the capital. "They killed our elites and replaced them with clerics," they chanted outside a Tehran university, referring to Iranian students returning to studies in Canada who were on the plane. Internet monitor NetBlocks reported a drop in connectivity yesterday at Tehran's Sharif University ahead of any new demonstrations. "In these sorrowful days, many criticisms were directed at relevant officials and authorities," said government spokesman Ali Rabiei. "Some officials were even accused of lying and a cover-up but, in all honesty, that was not the case."

The spokesman said all details provided by officials before Saturday's revelation had been based on the information they had. "All of those who expressed opinions on those days, at the peak of America's

Continued on Page 24

Asian envoy in Kuwait accused of sexual assault

KUWAIT: Sources said an Asian expat has filed a complaint against her country's ambassador in Kuwait, claiming he made sexual advances towards her that she refused, but he lured her to his office and attempted to rape her. She claims the incident took place in mid-November 2018, according to a report in Al-Rai daily yesterday.

Sources said the case is being handled by a criminal court in the capital of their country. The woman (identified as K K) said she has been residing in Kuwait since 2005 and worked as a social specialist at the embassy, following and coordinating social events and affairs of her community, besides working on their problems.

She said she frequently went to the embassy premises and was in direct contact with the ambassador, either in person or over the phone.

Continued on Page 24

Abe warns Iran conflict to have global impact

RIYADH/PARIS: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has warned that military confrontation with Iran will impact global peace and stability, as he visits the Middle East hoping to ease tensions spiked by the US killing of a top Iranian general. His comments came at the start of a five-day Gulf tour that had been thrown into doubt after Tehran responded to the attack on Qasem Soleimani by launching a barrage of missiles at bases hosting American troops in Iraq, prompting fears of all-out war.

But as those concerns receded, the

Japanese premier decided to go ahead with the visit and on Sunday discussed regional tensions during an hour-long meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in northwestern Al-Ula province, according to foreign ministry spokesman Masato Ohtaka. "Any military confrontation in the region that includes a country like Iran will have an impact not only on peace and stability in the region but the peace and stability of the whole world," Abe said, according to Ohtaka.

Abe called "on all relevant countries to engage in diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions", Ohtaka added. The spokesman said the two leaders agreed on working closely on maritime security in the region and discussed Tokyo's decision to send a destroyer for intelligence activities along with two P-3C patrol aircraft to the Middle East.

Continued on Page 24



AL-ULA, Saudi Arabia: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in this town in northwestern Saudi Arabia on Sunday. — AFP

News in brief

Haftar delays ceasefire signing

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday's talks on a ceasefire deal between the warring sides in Libya had made some progress, but strongman Khalifa Haftar asked for more time to study the document. "There has been certain progress" after talks in Moscow with Russia and Turkey lasting some seven hours, Lavrov told journalists in a short statement. He said the head of Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) Fayez Al-Sarraj and head of High Council of State in Tripoli, Khaled Al-Mechri "have just signed" the ceasefire agreement. But Haftar and Aguila Saleh, a Haftar ally, "have asked for a bit more time until morning to make a decision on its signing," Lavrov said, though claiming they also "view the document positively". — AFP

UAE to start nuke reactor in 'months'

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates' first nuclear power plant will start operating within a "few months" after repeated delays to meet safety and regulatory conditions. The first of the four nuclear reactors at the Barakah plant had been due to come online in late 2017, but was delayed several times. Awaidha Al-Marar, chairman of Abu Dhabi's department of energy, told reporters the first nuclear fuel will be loaded within the next few months to prepare the reactor for operation. "To complement our clean energy portfolio, this year in 2020 we will become the first country in the region to deliver safe, commercial and peaceful nuclear power," Chairman and CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Co Sultan Al-Jaber told the opening ceremony of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. — AFP

Queen agrees to 'transition period' for Harry, Meghan

SANDRINGHAM, United Kingdom: Queen Elizabeth II yesterday said Prince Harry and his wife Meghan would be allowed to split their time between Britain and Canada while their future is finalized. The couple said last week they wanted to step back from the royal frontline, catching the family off guard and forcing the monarch to convene crisis talks about the pair's future roles.

The 93-year-old queen, her son and heir Prince Charles, and his two sons princes William and Harry began a family summit at her private Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, yesterday. She

called the discussions "very constructive" and said she and her family were "entirely supportive of Harry and Meghan's desire to create a new life as a young family".

"Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working members of the royal family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family," she added. "Harry and Meghan have made clear that they do not want to be reliant on public funds in their new lives. It has therefore been agreed that there will be a period of transition in which the Sussexes will spend time in Canada and the UK. These are complex matters for my family to resolve, and there is some more work to be done, but I have asked for final decisions to be reached in the coming days."

The queen has previously said she wanted to find "workable solutions" to the crisis, which has dominated the media since the bombshell announcement last week. Harry and Meghan's effective resignation has thrown up a series of questions, including how they can raise

their own finances without compromising the monarchy.

Earlier yesterday, Prince Harry and his brother Prince William put on a united front as they lashed out at a story alleging that William bullied his younger brother, as newspapers speculated on what caused the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to quit their roles in search of a new life. William, 37, and 35-year-old Harry formed a close bond following their mother Diana's death in 1997 but Harry admitted last month they had drifted apart and were now on different paths.

A story in The Times newspaper said yesterday that Harry and Meghan saw themselves as having been "pushed away from the royal family" by William's "bullying" attitude - adding that sources close to the princes had denied this version of events. A statement on behalf of Harry and William said: "Despite clear denials, a false story ran in a UK newspaper today speculating about the relationship between the Duke of

Continued on Page 24

Philippines on alert as volcano spews ash, lava

TALISAY CITY, Philippines: Lava and broad columns of ash illuminated by lightning spewed from a volcano south of the Philippine capital yesterday, grounding hundreds of flights as authorities warned of a possible "explosive eruption". Fine grit weighed down trees and turned roads into muddy messes across the region surrounding the Taal volcano, which burst to life Sunday and has forced over 20,000 people to seek refuge in evacuation centers, a provincial governor said.

Geologists said the volcano remained active, spurting red-hot lava some 500 m into the air from new cracks that have opened in its northern flank, as accompanying earthquakes rattled the area. "We are really scared of what might happen to us... that our house might collapse in a strong earthquake and that we'll all be killed by falling debris," said Bienvenido Musa, aged 56. "Who wouldn't be scared? That's why I decided to send my family to an evacuation center."

Taal is a tourist attraction that sits in a picturesque lake, yet is also one of the most active volcanoes in a nation where earthquakes and eruptions are a frightening and destructive part of life. The Philippines sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide deep

Continued on Page 24



TANAUAN, Philippines: A youth living at the foot of Taal volcano rides an outrigger canoe while the volcano spews ash as seen from this town in Batangas province yesterday. — AFP

Kuwait's National Assembly speaker offers condolences to Omani Sultan



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Said.—KUNA photos



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem in a group photo with his delegation prior to their departure to Oman yesterday.

MUSCAT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem offered condolences to Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Said yesterday on the sad

demise of Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Ghanem had arrived in Muscat earlier, leading a National Assembly delegation including MPs Adnan Abdulsalam, Saadoun Al-

Otaibi, Farraj Al-Arbeed, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Khaled Al-Shatti, Suad Al-Shuwaier and Khalil Abul, in addition to Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari. Oman

announced Saturday the passing away of Sultan Qaboos after ruling the Sultanate for 50 years. He was succeeded by Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Said.—KUNA

Kuwaiti ministers offer condolences at Omani embassy

KUWAIT: Top Kuwaiti officials including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah offered condolences over the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said at the Omani Embassy in Kuwait yesterday. Omani charge d'affaires Hilal Al-

Shanfari received the Foreign Minister, who expressed his deepest sorrow and condolences over the death of Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, and prayed to Allah Almighty that his soul may rest in peace. Late Sultan Qaboos gains great respect by the Kuwaiti people, thanks to his

heroic support to Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion back in 1990, he said. "The Gulf region lost one of its wise and moderate leaders," the Foreign Minister affirmed. The Foreign Minister wished further success for the successor of late Sultan Qaboos, Sultan Haitham Bin

Tareq bin Said, praying to Allah that the new Sultan would meet the aspirations of the Omani people, and that Oman would cherish further progress and prosperity. Foreign ambassadors and other dignitaries paid respects at the Omani Embassy as well.—KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Omani charge d'affaires Hilal Al-Shanfari.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah writes notes in the book of condolences at the embassy.



Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares pays her respects.



Minister of Finance and Acting State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel offers her condolences.



Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri offers condolences.



A woman writes notes in the book of condolences at the Omani embassy.



British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport offers his condolences.



Oman's flag is flown at half-mast at the Omani Embassy building yesterday.



An employee at the Omani Embassy fixes a portrait of Sultan Qaboos.



Kuwaiti actor Abdurrahman Al-Aqi offers condolences.



Omani charge d'affaires Hilal Al-Shanfari receives condolences.



Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri speaks with Omani charge d'affaires Hilal Al-Shanfari.

Local

Be role model to state departments, assembly panel tells finance ministry

Only KD 3 million collected for using state-owned open land plots last year

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The budgets and final statement committee at the National Assembly urged the finance ministry to be a role model for other state departments in terms of controlling the state's financial administration, regulating its accounts and implementing various directives and financial resolutions. In this regard, committee chairman MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the committee met finance ministry representatives to discuss its final statement for the fiscal year 2018-2019 as well as the State Audit Bureau report and remarks. He added that all remarks were repeated and that practical solutions were needed to put an end to related problems.

Abdulsamad also pointed out an agreement between the central bank and the finance ministry that the state treasury would be responsible for the cost of the central bank's monetary policies, which was KD 110.8 million in the fiscal year 2018-2019 with a KD 81 million deficit compared to predictions. Abdulsamad explained that the committee was keen on collecting the government's dues, which have been accumulating for over 15 years. Further, Abdulsamad said the committee noticed that the fees collected for using state-owned open land plots were as low as KD 3 million last year, of which only 36 percent had been collected in 2018-2019. He also noted that the finance ministry had been contracting more consultants "for a fortune," adding that nationals should be trained and qualified in a bid to limit such contracts.



National labor increase in private sector

National labor

The Public Authority for Manpower is scheduled to start implementing new regulations concerning the national labor percentage in non-government bodies next week after the implementation had been repeatedly postponed for study. In this regard, informed sources said the Cabinet's economic committee had postponed the implementation until a final decision was reached. The sources added that some activities, such as farming, had been exempted from the fines and special fees for not respecting the new percentages.

Notably, the Cabinet had issued a decision amending its resolution number 904/2002 pertaining setting a mandatory percentage for citizens in non-governmental bodies, but it was not so far put into practice. According to the amendments, percentages of citizens will be increased to 70 percent in the banking sector, 65 percent in telecom companies, 40 percent in finance and investment and 30 percent in higher education, universities, institutes and petrochemical industries.

Social care

Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri yesterday toured the juveniles social care hostels for boys and girls to inspect the services provided and the presence of employees during the holidays. Aseeri stressed that the juvenile department is a government body aiming to reform young residents according to international



KUWAIT: The National Assembly's building.

treaties rather than punishing them.

PAAET vacancies

Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi announced he had met Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Director Ali Al-Mudaf and agreed on declaring all

vacancies in various colleges within a few days and those in various institutes later, according to standard conditions and regulations. Harbi added that selecting teaching staff members for the vacancies will be done according to set regulations that objectively provide and respect justice and equal opportunities to all candidates.



Coastguard foils drug smuggling bid

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti coastguard foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of drugs into the country via sea yesterday. A boat was spotted moving in a suspicious manner, and it had its navigation lights turned off. The boat was intercept-

ed and coastguard men apprehended two persons who were on board and failed to produce IDs. The suspects were taken for questioning, during which they confessed that they dropped drugs in the Gulf waters, and led security men to the site. Seven bags were lifted, which contained 183 pieces of drugs.



Filipina domestic helpers' complaints dropped to 33%

KUWAIT: Some domestic help offices have closed down temporarily due to their inability to receive applications for new domestic helpers due to the Philippine ban, as the market seems to be suffering from a shortage in housemaids except for those from Sri Lanka, Al-Qabas daily reported yesterday. Although the Philippines has stopped sending domestic help to Kuwait after a maid was killed by her sponsor, official statistics from the domestic help department said workers of this nationality are less likely to face deportation.

Meanwhile, the department's statistics show that the number of complaints lodged by Filipina domestic helpers dropped to 33 percent last year compared to 36 percent of annual complaints in 2018. The statistics showed Filipina workers were filing at least 400 complaints per year in average, and were the largest group com-

pared to 14 other nationalities, but the average dropped to 121 cases among total 3,226 cases filed in 2019.

Separately, Al-Jarida daily quoted sources at the manpower authority who said that about 50 percent of the total violating labor arrested last year were domestic helpers holding article 20 residency permits in violation of law 6/2010, which was issued with regards to work in the private sector. They said after arresting those workers, legal action was taken and they were deported from the country.

The sources said the manpower authority's board of directors will soon discuss views to impose strict punishments against private sector employers who allow domestic helpers to work for them in violation of the law. They said the authority plans to ban violating employers from bringing workers from abroad and even local sponsorship, and will be placed on the blacklist.

Ministry registered 2,211 online trademarks

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry's (MoCI) patent rights department announced receiving 2,211 online applications to register and publish trademarks and brands in

December. MoCI also said 1,076 brand registrations, 560 brand publications and 574 certificates were issued in the same period, in addition to 305 brand registration renewals and 345 name, address and ownership change transactions.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Subscribe or renew your subscription & get K.D 50

1 Coupon FREE

RASANA FITNESS GYM CENTER

FACILITIES

- Professional Coaches
- Weightlifting, aerobics & Cardio equipment
- Aerobics, Aqua Aerobics & Aquarunning classes
- Indoor temperature controlled swimming pool
- Sauna, Jacuzzi & Steam Bath
- Spa & Salon

50 KD

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait | Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7
Fax: 24835620 - 24835621 | E: info@kuwaittimes.net

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Souq Sharq and other Kuwait City landmarks captured at sunset. —Photo by Noura Edhbaya (KUNA)

Planned Kuwait metro to stretch over 160kms and have 68 stations

Kuwait Times
ESTABLISHED 1961
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
E: info@kuwaittimes.net

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Roads and Transport (PART) recently announced its new construction projects plan including the features of the metro project due to be executed in Kuwait. According to the plan, the metro project is targeted to be built in order to provide a rapid means of transport within urban areas, which is due to start from the business center in downtown Kuwait City and head to different directions thereof. PART has not provided a timetable for the project's execution as part of the plan, however.

The Metropolitan Rapid Transit System Project (KMRT) will be built over five phases stretching over 160 kilometers, and will have 68 stations along three lines, according to the plan. The first phase of the project includes a railway stretching 50 kilometers from Kuwait City to Kuwait International Airport, with

27 new stations, 30 percent of which will be underground with two underground stations and a heavy duty maintenance warehouse. The first phase will cover areas in several governorates and include nine stations within Kuwait's business center.

PART added that the project would have a great economic impact as it provides a high capacity transport system, reduces the cost of transport and cuts down the cost and time of each trip by saving much of the time usually wasted in traffic congestions. Socially speaking, the project will provide a reasonably priced, fast and comfortable means of transport that will help urban expansion plans and provide social communication, especially for those with special needs. Environmentally speaking, the metro will use less energy and will thus help reduce polluting emissions such as carbon dioxide, hydrocarbon and others. —Al-Rai



Oil company laments situation of border exit staff

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) employee syndicate Fahd Abdul Hadi Al-Ajmi strongly criticized the situation at Nuwaiseeb land border exit in terms of the strict treatment of KGOC

employees working in the neutral zone. "The same bad treatment had been going on for years now despite repeated meetings with Interior Ministry officials," Ajmi added, criticizing what he described as the 'lack of any coordination' between the interior ministry and the customs department in this regard. Further, Ajmi stressed that KGOC employees suffer most on holidays and vacations when the exit usually witnesses heavy traffic and employees have to spend longer hours following long and tiring working days to be served as regular passengers, although KGOC had donated KD 10 million to the interior ministry to develop this particular exit.

Local

Zain Drone first in region to receive ISO 9001:2015 Certification

Certification to support Zain Drone in measuring services against global benchmarks

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that its Zain Drone subsidiary has received ISO 9001:2015 Certification with respect to its Quality Management System (QMS). This significant achievement makes Zain Drone the first drone services provider in the region to receive the internationally recognized accreditation.

ISO 9001 specifies requirements for a QMS standard reached by organizations to demonstrate the ability to consistently provide services that meet customer and regulatory requirements, and to create operational efficiencies by aligning and streamlining processes throughout the organization.

Zain Drone's certification offers assurances for external parties that the company follows a process-oriented approach for their service delivery standards, risk assessment approaches, and the procedures required to achieve its effective quality management in the organization. The internationally recognized standard helps organizations in implementing a customer-focused approach and an on-going process improvement to achieve efficiency among other benefits.

Commenting further on the development, Zain Drone CEO, Abdul-Aziz Jawad said, "Our ISO 9001:2015 certification is the next step in the company establishing itself as the leading Drone-as-a-Service provider in the Middle East region. The certification makes it clear to stakeholders that we are attentive to our quality management, and to international stakeholders it provides a benchmark of the level of customer-focused approach we need to main-

tain to be able to lead in this field."

Zain Group first announced the launch of its pioneering Zain Drone service in Kuwait in October 2018, with the plan to expand its operation to other markets across its footprint in due course. Since then, Zain Drone has announced several strategic partnership and commercial agreements.

Drone as-a-Service (DaaS) unlocks opportunities in various industries to fast-track growth and help organizations benefit from the Internet of Things (IoT) in an efficient, safer and faster way. The disruptive power of drone solutions bolsters efficiency as it offers state-of-the-art bespoke solutions while providing advanced analytics for governments and businesses.

Among other offerings, Zain Drone facilitates the gathering of image data concerning work advancement through measurement of key parameters, assessing image data to evaluate compliance with original designs and performing automated stock-taking. Furthermore, Zain Drone supports the growing demand to replace physical inspections with digital inspections, reducing physical inspection hours, costs, manual labor, human error and shut-down time for operators.



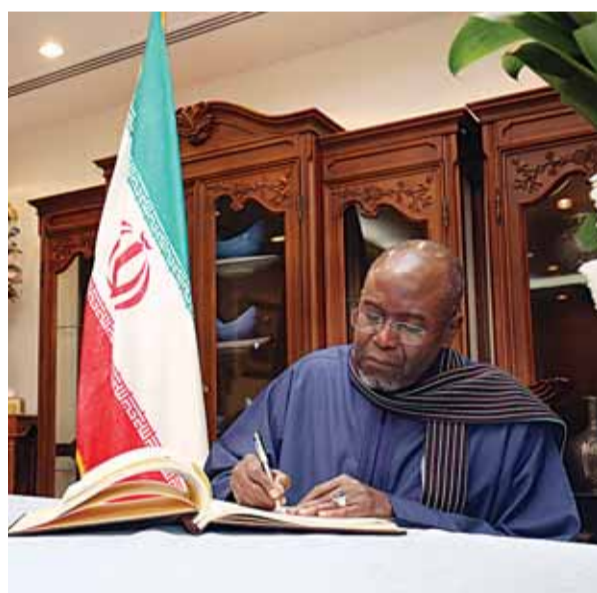
Abdul-Aziz Jawad



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh received yesterday a delegation from the civil workers union at the Interior Ministry. Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun



KUWAIT: The Iranian Embassy in Kuwait opened its doors yesterday to receive condolences for the Ukrainian plane crash victims. Several foreign ambassadors were among those who came over and wrote notes in the book of condolences at the embassy. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



EXPLORE 2020 IN STYLE WITH THE BEST TOYOTA OFFERS.



CALL 1803803



*While Toyota's Service 365 is a great benefit, it does not include towing. The availability of this service is subject to the applicable terms and conditions. ©2019 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.

- Service Package 4 years/50,000 KM* on selected SUV models
- 5 Year Warranty Unlimited Mileage
- Complimentary Registration and 3rd Party Insurance
- Complimentary 24/7 Musaada Roadside Assistance
- Complimentary T-Connect Subscription for 3 years

PUSH YOUR BOUNDARIES



For details call 1803803 or visit toyota.com.kw



International

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2020



Pakistan's High Court annuls death sentence of Musharraf

Page 8

Page 9

Johnson hails N Ireland's 'bright future' after devolution restored



TRIPOLI: A man buys fresh fish from a stall in the Libyan capital Tripoli yesterday. Residents of Libya's capital have received news of a ceasefire with a mix of relief and skepticism after more than nine months of deadly fighting on the edges of Tripoli. —AFP

Libyans react to truce with relief and doubts

Eerie silence on Tripoli's empty streets

TRIPOLI: Residents of Libya's capital have received news of a ceasefire with a mix of relief and skepticism after more than nine months of deadly fighting on the edges of Tripoli. "The truce is welcome, of course. But at what cost? So many lives lost for nothing," said pharmacist Maysa Barakat.

"I don't believe that those who've lost a son, a father, a brother or a husband will just say 'okay, it's over, let's move on,'" she added. "Bloodshed among Libyans has stained our hope for a good and prosperous future for our children." The empty streets of Libya's capital Tripoli were strangely silent yesterday as the head of Libya's UN-recognized government, Fayeze Al-Sarraj, said his government has accepted a ceasefire deal with renegade commander Khalifa Haftar to prevent more bloodshed in the country. The ceasefire called by Turkey and Russia came

into force on Sunday. Badly damaged buildings and overturned cars were evidence of the fighting that has taken place since Haftar launched an offensive to capture Tripoli from the GNA in early April last year.

The heads of Libya's warring factions signed in Moscow a ceasefire deal, after eastern-based military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive last April to seize the capital from a UN-recognized Government of National Accord.

GNA head Fayeze Sarraj, speaking after a ceasefire took effect at midnight Sunday, urged Libyans to "turn the page on the past". Tripoli banker Karima Al-Badri said the truce deal meant she could "breathe a sigh of relief".

"Although we know that this is just the beginning of a long process to come to some sort of a sustainable agreement, at least we

have new hope," she said. But the first day of the ceasefire was marred by several incidents of violence, with each side accusing the other of violations.

Since the fall and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in a 2011 revolt plunged Libya into a complex, violent power struggle, Haftar has spent years building up his power. His troops, renamed the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) from the previously self-styled Libyan National Army, now control much of the country's east and south.

But their offensive against pro-GNA armed groups in Tripoli last spring quickly became bogged down on the outskirts of the capital. Fatima Al-Taher, a lecturer at the University of Tripoli, voiced doubts that the ceasefire would hold. "My fear would be retaliation from both sides. The problem is that the East has fought so hard for so long

that, unless Haftar (wins a) leading position where he would have some sort of power, he will not stop," she said.

Haftar, whose rivals accuse him of wanting to establish a military dictatorship, says his aim is to oust "terrorist groups" from the capital. The battle for Tripoli has killed more than 280 civilians and 2,000 fighters as well as displacing tens of thousands, according to the UN.

Mahmoud al-Kahili, who fled his home with his wife and two-year-old son as Haftar's forces approached and has been staying with his brother in the capital's eastern district of Tajoura, remains pessimistic. He did not hide his pessimism about returning to live there any time soon, but hoped the pause in fighting would allow him to go home and gather his belongings.

"I don't trust that the ceasefire will last

long," he said. "Both sides have accepted, but neither is convinced that they can reach a solution through dialogue."

"The fighting has paused temporarily but they will regroup their forces and the fighting will start again, even more intensely than before." Salem el-Haddar, a father of five, was another of those forced to flee his home early on in the offensive. "We have waited so long for this ceasefire, which shows the despair on both sides," he said.

Salem shares a two-storey house with a friend in Enjila, a town near Janzour (15 kilometres or nine miles west of Tripoli), where hundreds of displaced families have sought refuge. "We're hoping politicians will quickly reach a political solution to bring an end to the crisis so we can safely go home," he said. "We're tired... and our savings have totally run out." —Agencies

Hardline Hindus protest huge Jesus statue in India

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of Hindu activists affiliated to India's ruling party rallied yesterday to protest a planned Jesus statue that will rival Rio de Janeiro's Christ The Redeemer for size. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has long been accused of intolerance towards other religions and of wanting to remould officially secular India as a Hindu nation, which it denies.

The protests in the southern state of Karnataka were led by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's hardline parent organization, and others clutching saffron flags as around 1,000 police stood by. "We want to stop (the statue), since it goes against the spirit of communal harmony and encourages religious conversions which is rampant carried out by Christian missionaries," Prabhakar Bhat, a top RSS functionary told Indian media. Construction of the white granite statue 114 feet (34.7 meters) high—slightly shorter than the Rio monolith although the base will be bigger—stopped soon



BENGALURU: Hindu activists take part in a demonstration against a large planned statue of Jesus Christ in Ramanagar in India's southern Karnataka state yesterday. —AFP

after it started last month after objections. Many Hindus believe the hill where the statue is set to stand in the Christian-dominated village of Harobe is the abode of a Hindu deity, although no temple exists there.

The BJP-run state government accused the previous administration of the main opposition Congress party of illegally allotting the plot of land. Less than one percent of Karnataka's 65 million people are Christian, compared to around two percent in Hindu-majority India as a whole.

The state witnessed a wave of attacks on Christians and churches by Hindu radicals in 2008 over allegations of seeking to convert Hindus, including with cash. Last year six mem-

bers of a Hindu group were arrested for attacking a group of Christian pilgrims in the state. The state government has been routinely accused of discrimination. It banned a festival to commemorate a Muslim king who fought the British East India Company.

India has witnessed a surge in crimes against its religious minorities and shrinking of religious freedoms since Modi swept to power in 2014. Last year the US Commission for International Religious Freedom said that religious freedom was on a "downward trend", with a "campaign of violence, intimidation, and harassment against non-Hindu and lower-caste Hindu minorities". —AFP

Myanmar sends 200 Rohingya captured at sea to Rakhine camps

SITTWE, Myanmar: Nearly 200 Rohingya Muslims arrested at sea last month by Myanmar's navy after a voyage of hundreds of kilometers have been sent back to Rakhine state, officials said yesterday. Seasonal calmer waters have seen an increase in the number of Rohingya putting their lives in the hands of traffickers in a desperate bid to reach Malaysia or Indonesia by boat.

But few make it as far as Kawthaung, Myanmar's southern-most tip, where the group of 173 were picked up mid-December. Images taken yesterday showed 17 men, women and children looking exhausted from their ordeal as they climbed down from a wooden boat on to a beach near western Rakhine state's capital, Sittwe. Wearing identification numbers around their necks, they lined up on the sand clutching their meagre belongings before being escorted away by armed police.

They were taken to Thechaung camp, while the remaining 156 were transported further north to Ngakhuya camp in Maungdaw township, Rakhine State minister for security and border affairs

said. Ngakhuya is a processing site for returning refugees on the Bangladeshi border. "I'm not sure whether action will be taken against them or not," Colonel Min Than told AFP by phone, adding that their fate would be decided by the UEHRD, a government department overseeing Rakhine.

A bloody military crackdown in 2017 forced some 740,000 Rohingya to flee over the border to Bangladesh in violence that has seen Myanmar accused of "genocide" at the UN's top court in The Hague. Bangladesh has made life increasingly unbearable in the sprawling camps with barbed-wire fences, an internet blackout and the confiscation of phones.

Meanwhile hundreds of thousands more Rohingya remain in Myanmar's Rakhine in what Amnesty International has branded "apartheid" conditions. They have nearly no freedom of movement and little access to work, education and healthcare. The captured Rohingya came from both sides of the border, Min Than said, although it was unclear how they ended up on the same boat. —AFP

International

Iraq fears economic 'collapse' if Trump blocks oil revenues

US threatens to block Iraq's account at Federal Reserve

BAGHDAD: Iraqi officials fear economic "collapse" if Washington imposes threatened sanctions, including blocking access to a US-based account where Baghdad keeps oil revenues that feed 90 percent of the national budget. US President Donald Trump was outraged by the Iraqi parliament voting on January 5 to oust foreign forces, including some 5,200 American troops, who have helped local soldiers beat back jihadists since 2014.

If troops were asked to leave, he threatened, "we will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before." The US then delivered an extraordinary verbal message directly to Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi's office, two Iraqi officials told AFP. "The PMO got a call threatening that if US troops are kicked out, 'we'-the US-will block your account at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York," one official said. Parliament's vote to oust the troops was triggered by outrage over a US drone strike on Baghdad two days earlier that killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi right-hand-man, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. The Central Bank of Iraq's account at the Fed was established in 2003 following the US-led invasion that toppled ex-dictator Saddam Hussein. Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483, which lifted the crippling global sanctions and oil embargo imposed on Iraq after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, all revenues from Iraqi oil sales would go to the account. Iraq is OPEC's second-biggest crude producer and more than 90 percent of the state budget, which reached \$112 billion in 2019, derives from oil revenues. To this day, revenues are paid in dollars into the Fed account daily, with the balance now sitting at about \$35 billion, Iraqi officials told AFP.

Every month or so, Iraq flies in \$1-\$2 billion in cash from that account for official and commercial transactions. "We're an oil-producing country. Those accounts are in dollars. Cutting off access means totally turning off the tap," the first Iraqi official said.

The second official said it would mean the government could not carry out daily functions or pay salaries

and the Iraqi currency would plummet in value. "It would mean collapse for Iraq," the official said.

Trump 'politicizes everything'

A third senior Iraqi official confirmed the US was considering "restricting" cash access to "about a third of what they would usually send." The Federal Reserve declined to comment on Trump's threat.

A US State Department Official confirmed to AFP that the possibility of restricting access to the Fed account was "raised" with Iraq following the vote. "You can imagine why, if troops were expelled, banks might be nervous about sending lots of... cash to Baghdad," this official said. But the US threat was still highly unusual as the Fed is meant to be independent of foreign policy.

"The attempt to politicize dollar shipments has the Bank worried because it affects its prestige and integrity in dealing with clients," the State Department official added. "Trump is obviously willing to politicize everything." Washington has considered the measure for months, with a senior US diplomat at the Baghdad embassy telling AFP in July it was looking at "limiting the cash that comes into Iraq." "That would be the nuclear option," this diplomat added at the time. Just before Iraqi lawmakers voted on the troop ouster, Speaker Mohammad Halbusi warned the world could stop dealing with Iraq's banks in revenge for the move. Blocking the Iraqi central bank's Fed account could be done by blacklisting a government body, which would immediately restrict Baghdad's access to dollars. The US already sanctions Iraqi nationals, armed groups and even banks for links to Tehran, Washington's arch-foe in the region. It had left oil revenues untouched, with officials previously telling AFP such a move would be too damaging to a country considered a US ally.

US would 'lose Iraq'

But ties worsened recently, with the US frustrated by Iraq's alliance with Iran and repeated rocket attacks on



ANBAR: A picture taken yesterday, during a press tour organized by the US-led coalition fighting the remnants of the Islamic State group, shows a view inside Aln Al-Asad military airbase housing US and other foreign troops in the western Iraqi province of Anbar. —AFP

US installations blamed on Iraqi factions. Relations then took a nosedive with the January 3 US drone strike that killed Soleimani and Muhandis, a senior Iraqi paramilitary figure.

Iraq slammed the killings as a violation of its sovereignty and immediately called for the vote on US troops. The US is considering other less inflammatory options too, US and Iraqi officials said. One would be declining to renew a temporary waiver that Washington

granted to Iraq in 2018 that allows Baghdad to import gas from Iran to feed its gutted power grid, despite US sanctions on Tehran's energy sector.

If Washington does not renew the waiver in February, then the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI), which buys the gas, could face secondary sanctions for dealing with blacklisted Iranian entities. Iraqi officials said the US threat to deny access to oil revenues was met with shock, anger and near-disbelief. —AFP

Civilians can flee Idlib via three checkpoints, says Russia

MOSCOW: Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement late on Sunday that civilians could leave what it calls a de-escalation zone in Syria's Idlib Province via three new checkpoints. The ministry said it had received many requests from Syrian civilians in Idlib in areas controlled by armed groups to return to their homes in territory controlled by Syrian government forces. The Russian military warned armed groups to allow people to leave Idlib if they wanted to. Russia and its allies halted air strikes in Idlib on Sunday as a ceasefire

agreed with Turkey came into force, residents, rebels and respondents said, although few were optimistic the truce would hold.

At least two people were killed and three others were wounded on Sunday by a rebel mortar attack on residential areas in Aleppo city of northern Syria, state news agency SANA reported.

Two kids were among the wounded in the attack, according to the report. On Saturday, the rebels fired mortar rounds on the vicinity of the international airport of Aleppo and the military air base of Nayrab. Since recaptured by the Syrian army in 2016, Aleppo has largely remained safe except for mortar shelling by the rebels.

The radical rebels, located in the western and northern countryside of Aleppo, frequently fire mortar shells at the city and government-controlled areas in the countryside of Aleppo Province. —Reuters



Syrian men ride a motorcycle through a damaged neighborhood in Maaret Al-Numan city in Syria's northwestern Idlib province yesterday. —AFP

US Court rebuffs Sudan bid to limit damages over embassy bombings

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court yesterday refused to hear Sudan's bid to avoid paying \$3.8 billion in damages to family members of people killed or injured in Al-Qaeda's 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania after a lower court found Sudan complicit.

Those damages are only a portion of the \$10.2 billion a federal judge awarded to the hundreds of plaintiffs who brought several lawsuits in the litigation that began in 2001. The justices declined to take up Sudan's appeal of a federal appeals court ruling

allowing damages claims by family members - all non-US citizens - who sought compensation for emotional distress they experienced due to the bombings. The appeal is the latest move by Sudan, which in court papers called itself an impoverished nation riven by civil war, to reduce its exposure in the litigation. The Supreme Court already is set to hear arguments in February over a separate bid by Sudan to avoid about \$4.3 billion in punitive damages also awarded to a broader set of plaintiffs. "Sudan is in the midst of a historic transition to a civilian-led democracy, and the vast increase in liability at issue here undermines Sudan's desperately needed economic recovery," attorneys for Sudan said in a court filing.

The damages were imposed by default against Sudan's government because for most of the litigation it did not appear before a lower US court to defend itself against allegations that it harbored and provided support to the Islamist militant group Al-Qaeda, which led to the embassy bombings.

The bombings in Kenya's capital Nairobi as well as Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on Aug. 7, 1998 killed 224 people and marked the first large-scale attack by al Qaeda. Twelve Americans were among the dead, with thousands of other people wounded. Three years later, al Qaeda operatives carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, killing nearly 3,000 people. The plaintiffs sued under the 1976 Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA), which generally bars claims against foreign countries except those designated by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism, as Sudan has been since 1993. They first sued in 2001 in federal court in Washington. Six other lawsuits followed involving more than 700 plaintiffs who were killed or injured in the attacks, or are family members of the victims.

In a separate matter, the Supreme Court last year prevented American sailors who had accused Sudan of complicity in the 2000 Al-Qaeda bombing of the Navy destroyer USS Cole that killed 17 sailors from collecting damages. —Reuters

5-year-old German girl saw 'no daylight for years'

FRANKFURT: German prosecutors yesterday said they had opened an investigation after it emerged that a badly neglected five-year-old girl had reportedly not been exposed to daylight "for years". Social services removed the girl from her family home in the town of Eberswalde, north of Berlin, and transferred her to a hospital on December 20.

She has since been released and is now in state care, as are her two older siblings. The local "Maerkische Oderzeitung" daily reported at the weekend that the girl appeared to have suffered "extreme neglect" and was physically and mentally behind in her development.

"She reportedly saw no daylight for several years and was left to fend for herself for at least the last two years," national news agency DPA reported. The public prosecutor's office in Frankfurt on the Oder said it had opened a probe against persons unknown on suspicion of child abuse.

Daniel Kurth, the head of the Barnim district authority where the family lives, told reporters yesterday that the girl "had not received the care and love of her parents that she needed", citing signs of malnutrition and speech issues. There are no indications the girl's siblings suffered similar neglect, another local official told the same press conference.

The case prompted outrage in Germany, with the top-selling Bild daily asking why the youth welfare office did not inform police even after deciding the girl's situation had deteriorated enough to remove her from the home. According to Kurth, youth welfare workers had been in touch with the family since 2017. The case recalls that of another girl,



The town of Eberswalde where the girl was found.

Jennifer, who was 13 when it emerged in 2009 that her parents had hidden their developmentally disabled daughter from

the outside world for years. Her family lived in the same German state of Brandenburg. —AFP

Jihadists kill 3 teachers in attack on Kenya school

NAIROBI: Suspected Al-Shabaab Islamists killed three teachers and kidnapped another at a primary school in eastern Kenya yesterday, police said, the latest in a spate of attacks in the region.

The assailants also torched a police post and damaged a telecoms mast in the attack in Kamuthe, 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the town of Garissa. At around 2am (2300 GMT Sunday) "suspected armed AS Militia attacked Kamuthe primary school, Kamuthe Police Post, a telecommunications mast and murdered 3 teachers", a police statement said. "The telecommunications mast is partially damaged but operational."

A separate police report on the incidents seen by AFP said the three teachers killed were not from the region, and that a local teacher was abducted. "The assailants spared a nurse as she was a woman."

"They also set fire" to the police post in Kamuthe, a senior police officer who asked not to be identified told AFP. Since the start of the year, the Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab have stepped up their attacks in eastern Kenya, along the Somali border, and Kenyan police have been on high alert.

On January 5, the Islamists stormed onto a US military base in the coastal Lamu region, destroying several aircraft and killing three Americans. Two days later they killed four civilians, including a child, during an attack on a telecommunications mast near Garissa. —AFP

China-bound scorpions seized in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's customs yesterday arrested and fined a Chinese man accused of trying to take 200 venomous scorpions out of the country in his checked-in luggage. The man was suspected of trying to get the scorpions back to China to extract the venom, officials said. The live arachnids were discovered by security officials at Colombo international airport in plastic containers packed in the man's luggage that was to be checked in. "We detained the passenger and launched an investigation," customs spokesman Sunil Jayaratne said. "We have not placed a value on the 200 scorpions, but trafficking in live wildlife has become a lucrative trade."

The suspect was fined 100,000 rupees (\$550) and the scorpions confiscated before the man was allowed to return home, Jayaratne said. Sri Lanka has about 18 species of venomous scorpions, but only one is fatal to humans. It was not known if the confiscated arachnids were deadly.

The island nation has strict laws on wildlife and fauna, but smuggling attempts are increasingly frequent. Three years ago, authorities destroyed 45 kilograms (100 pounds) of China-bound rare bird nests—the main ingredient in soup that is considered a delicacy in China and other Asian countries—that was seized from traffickers. —AFP

International

Johnson hails N Ireland's 'bright future' after devolution restored

Belfast marks reopening of its power-sharing devolved government

BELFAST: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised a "bright future" for Northern Ireland yesterday as he visited Belfast to mark the reopening of its power-sharing devolved government after a three-year hiatus. The British province has been run by officials since the two main parties, the pro-London Democratic Unionists (DUP) and the republican Sinn Fein, fell out in January 2017.

The power vacuum came at a critical time, as Northern Ireland faces uncertainty over its relationship with London and Dublin following Britain's looming exit from the European Union.

"Never mind the hand of history on my shoulder... I see the hand of the future beckoning us all forward," Johnson told reporters after meeting assembly members. "And I hope that with goodwill and compromise and hard work on all sides it will be a very bright future indeed."

At its reopening on Saturday, the assembly chose DUP leader Arlene Foster to be first minister and effective head of the government, while Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill was made her deputy.

After meeting them both, Johnson hailed Northern Ireland's politicians for having "put aside their differences, stepped up to the plate and shown leadership". He said Northern Ireland was "a place of fantastic potential", and that the UK government would work with Belfast to ensure this was delivered.

Brexit checks

Johnson did not confirm reports that London would be giving at least £2 billion (2.34 billion euros, \$2.60 billion) to the province. But he said a priority would be investing in the health service, which has been hit by a wave of nurses' strikes.

Power-sharing was set up under the 1998 Good Friday agreement, which brought peace to Northern Ireland after decades of sectarian violence that killed thousands of people. The devolved government collapsed in January 2017 over a scandal caused by the runaway costs of a renewable energy scheme championed by Foster.

After years of negotiations that led nowhere, the DUP and Sinn Fein last week approved an agreement drawn up by the British and Irish governments. One factor in the breakthrough was the threat of elections if there was no deal. In the UK-wide election last month, the DUP and Sinn Fein both lost votes to smaller parties, in part due to public frustration at the protracted stalemate.

The assembly will also have a future say over Brexit arrangements, which will see Northern Ireland take on a special trading status in order to avoid checks on its land border with EU member Ireland.

Johnson repeated yesterday there was no need for checks on Northern Irish goods going to mainland Britain. Equally, British goods going the other way would only be checked if they were destined for Ireland—and even then, only if London and Brussels failed to agree a free trade deal he was confident of getting later this year.

Legacy issues

Although both sides have endorsed the new deal, some elements may still yet prove controversial, notably the issue of the legacy of Northern Ireland's past. The accord includes a commitment to uphold a 2014 deal setting up a historical investigations unit to investigate deaths during the so-called Troubles.

Some in London are worried about prosecutions



BELFAST: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (second right) meets with Ireland's Prime Minister Leo Varadkar (second left), Ireland's Foreign Minister Simon Coveney (right) and Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith (left) in attendance at the Parliament Buildings, the seat of the of the Northern Ireland Assembly, on the Stormont Estate in Belfast yesterday. —AFP

against British soldiers deployed to the region, and Johnson's Conservatives have promised to end "vexatious" legal claims against the armed forces.

In Belfast, Johnson said there was "a balance between giving people who are in search of the truth the confidence that they need" and in giving veterans

"the confidence and certainty that they need".

Negotiations to revive Stormont had also been stuck on the use of the Irish language and a mechanism giving parties veto rights. The deal would now give the Irish language official recognition and it eliminates the veto mechanism. —AFP

Spain arrests suspect in shooting two police in Britain

MADRID: A man wanted for killing two policemen in Britain has been arrested on Spain's holiday island of Tenerife, Spanish police said yesterday. Police arrested the 39-year-old British man as he left a supermarket in Adeje in southwestern Tenerife where he "lived a completely normal life" and "tried to go unnoticed", police said in a statement.

The man, identified only by his initials J.K., is suspected of entering a police station in Glasgow in 2006 and shooting dead a police officer who was on duty. British authorities also suspect him of having been part of a group that shot dead another police officer in Britain ten years later.

The man, suspected of belonging to a criminal gang, is also under investigation for his possible involvement in six other murders in Britain, according to Spanish police. Spanish authorities opened their investigation last year after receiving a tip from Britain's National Crime Agency that he may be living in Spain. Tenerife, the largest and most populated of Spain's Canary Islands located in the Atlantic Ocean off the Moroccan coast, is home to a sizeable British expat community. —AFP

Two US airmen found dead at Germany base

FRANKFURT AM Main: Two US Air Force airmen were found dead last week in Germany, the base where they were stationed said in a statement yesterday, adding that an investigation into the cause is underway. The men, both aged 20, "were found unresponsive in a dorm room" in the early evening of January 9, the 52nd Fighter Wing based at Spangdahlem airbase in western Germany said in a statement. Efforts to revive them failed and medics pronounced them dead around 20 minutes after the bodies were discovered. "It is always very difficult to lose valued members of our team," 52nd Fighter Wing commander Colonel David Epperson said, offering "sincerest and heartfelt condolences" to the soldiers' families.

The men had served in the maintenance squadron belonging to the fighter wing. Spangdahlem air base also made headlines in October last year, when one of the unit's F-16 fighter jets crashed in western Germany. The pilot in that incident escaped with minor injuries. —AFP

Former Pope Benedict breaks silence on celibacy debate

VATICAN CITY: Former Pope Benedict, in a new book written with a conservative cardinal, defends priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church in what appears to be a strategically timed appeal to Pope Francis

to not change the rules. Benedict wrote the book, "From the Depths of Our Hearts," with Cardinal Robert Sarah, 74, a Guinean prelate who heads the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Excerpts were published on Sunday on the website of the French newspaper Le Figaro. The Vatican had no immediate comment on the book, which is due to be published on Monday.

In October, the final document of an assembly of Roman Catholic bishops, or synod, from the Amazon proposed that married men in the remote area be allowed to be ordained priests, which could lead to a

landmark change in the Church's centuries-old discipline of celibacy. Pope Francis will consider it, along with many other proposals on issues that emerged during the synod, including the environment and the role of women, in a document of his own, known as an Apostolic Exhortation. It is expected to be issued in the next few months.

In 2013, when he became the first pope in 700 years to resign, Benedict, who lives in the Vatican and is now 92 and in failing health, vowed to remain "hidden from the world". But he has given interviews, written articles and contributed to books, in effect breaking that pledge and cheering conservatives, some of whom do not recognise

Francis' legitimacy. Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at Villanova University in the United States, called it "a serious breach" by the former pope, who vowed "unconditional reverence and obedience" to his successor.

In his part of the book, Benedict says celibacy, which became a stable tradition in the Church only about 1,000 years ago, carries "great significance" because it allows a priest to concentrate on his vocation. He says "it doesn't seem possible to realise both vocations (priesthood and marriage) simultaneously." In a joint introduction, both men say they could not remain silent about the October synod, which at times led to clashes between progressive

and conservative Catholic media outlets, underscoring the polarization in the 1.3 billion-member Church.

The proposal calls for older married men who are already deacons in the Church, have a stable family relationship and are proven leaders in their communities to be ordained as priests after adequate formation. This solution to the shortage of priests, backed by many South American bishops, would allow Catholics in isolated areas to attend Mass and receive the sacraments more regularly. For his part, Sarah says making exceptions to the celibacy rule would be a "a lie" that would set a dangerous precedent. —Reuters

Assange needs time to speak to lawyer, court told

LONDON: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is not getting the time he needs with his legal team to discuss his fight against extradition to the United States, causing delays to the case, his lawyer told a British court yesterday.

After skipping bail in Britain, Assange spent seven years holed up in Ecuador's embassy in London before he was dragged out by police in April last year. The United States wants him extradited to face 18 charges including conspiring to hack government computers and violating an espionage law. He could spend decades in prison if convicted.

The 48-year-old Australian appeared for yesterday's hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court

wearing glasses and a dark blazer over a light top. He spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth to the judge and saluted his supporters in the public gallery at the beginning and end of the hearing.

Assange's lawyer Gareth Peirce said difficulty in getting time with Assange had delayed the case, telling the court: "This slippage in the timetable is extremely worrying." Assange is being held in a British jail pending the US extradition case, having served a sentence for skipping bail.

He fled to Ecuador's embassy in 2012 to avoid being sent to Sweden to face sex crimes accusations that were dropped last year. He says the US charges against him are a political attempt to silence journalists and publishers, and that the Swedish allegations were part of a plot to catch him.

Assange made global headlines in early 2010 when WikiLeaks published a classified US military video showing a 2007 attack by Apache helicopters in Baghdad that killed a dozen people, including two Reuters news staff. Judge Vanessa Baraitser said



Julian Assange

Assange could have time yesterday to speak to his lawyers, and would appear in court again later yesterday. Full extradition proceedings are expected to commence in February. —Reuters

Macron and Sahel leaders to review anti-jihad campaign

PAU, France: French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday hosted counterparts from five Sahel countries to reassess their joint fight against a mounting jihadist revolt as France's military role is being questioned in the region.

Tensions between France and officials from Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania could make for a tricky exchange at the talks in Pau, southwest France. The city was home to seven of 13 soldiers killed in a helicopter collision in Mali last month, the deadliest one-day military loss for France in nearly four decades.

The leaders will attend a memorial service for the soldiers before beginning their talks at 4:30 pm (1530 GMT), which will also be attended by UN chief Antonio Guterres as well as the heads of the African Union and the EU Council. A press conference is scheduled afterward, followed by a dinner.

Macron insists the Sahel leaders must use the occasion to publicly reiterate their support for France's military presence by far the largest foreign contribution to the fight against extremists aligned with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Visiting the region last month, Macron complained of a lack of "clear political condemnation of anti-French feelings" on the ground, saying he was loath to send soldiers to countries where their presence was not "clearly wanted."

On Saturday, Defence Minister Florence Parly was blunter: "We need to determine a clear position from political leaders on what they want or not," she told France Inter radio, noting that 41 French soldiers have been killed in the Sahel region since 2013.

Jihadist fighters have recently stepped up their campaign against military and civilian targets, with Guterres warning this month that "terrorist groups are gaining ground."

On Thursday, 89 soldiers are killed in an attack on a military camp at Chingodiar in Niger, near the border with Mali, the worst jihadist attack in its history.

'Down with France'

On Friday, hundreds of people gathered in the Malian capital Bamako to protest the presence of the 4,500 soldiers in France's Barkhane operation, carrying posters reading "Down with France, Barkhane must leave" and "France is a brake on our development." Despite the French presence and a 13,000-member UN peacekeeping force in Mali dubbed MINUSMA, the conflict that erupted in the north of that country in 2012 has since spread to its neighbors, especially Burkina Faso and Niger.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and more than a million displaced, with hundreds of troops dead, including dozens of French ones. Macron has already called to clarify "political and strategic framework" of the Sahel fight in his talks with Mali's Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, Burkina Faso's Roch Marc Christian Kabore, Niger's Mahamadou Issoufou, Mauritania's Mohamed Ould Ghazouani and Chad's Idriss Deby. Mali's Keita has said the sum-



French president Emmanuel Macron and Senegalese counterpart Macky Sall.

mit will be "decisive" and "will allow us to put on the table all the questions, all the grievances, all the solutions".

But he insisted the G5 leaders would demand a "respectable and respectful relationship" with France-Kabore of Burkina Faso described Macron's recent insistences as "lacking in tact".

'All options on the table'

Macron ordered a review of the Barkhane operation after the Mali helicopter disaster, saying "all options are on the table," implying a potential drawdown of French troops. France has long complained that only Britain and the US have provided support for the operation, deploring the lack of significant contributions from EU allies.

Last year, only \$300 million (269 million

euros) of \$400 million pledged by the international community in cash and material support to the Sahel was delivered, according to the French presidency.

France may also be facing the prospect of losing American help, after The New York Times reported in December that the Pentagon would reduce troop levels in Africa, or even withdraw them completely.

NGOs on Friday urged that civilians caught in the crossfire not be forgotten at yesterday's talks.

"The military response in the Sahel is part of the problem," said Maureen Magee of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "Last year, military operations in Mali have pushed more than 80,000 people to flee. Engagement in the Sahel must put the protection of the populations at the heart of the response." —AFP

International

Pakistan's High Court annuls death sentence of Musharraf

Former military ruler currently in Dubai

LAHORE: A Pakistan court yesterday annulled the death sentence handed to former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, ruling that the special court which had found him guilty of treason last year was unconstitutional, a government prosecutor told AFP. The original ruling had marked the first time a former leader of the armed forces had faced such a sentence for treason in Pakistan, where the military maintains strong influence and senior officers are often considered immune from prosecution.

It caused a wave of controversy, with Musharraf-exiled in Dubai-slaming it as a "vendetta" and the military expressing its disappointment. A High Court in the eastern city of Lahore ruled it "illegal" yesterday.

"The filing of the complaint, the constitution of the court, the selection of the prosecution team are illegal, declared to be illegal... And at the end of the day the full judgment has been set aside," the prosecutor representing the government, Ishtiaq A. Khan, told AFP.

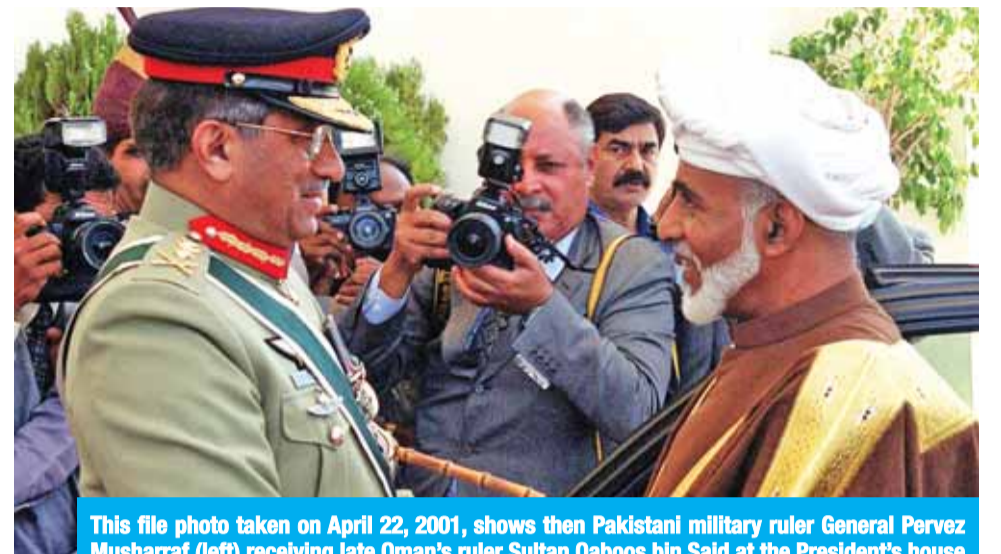
"Yes, he is a free man. Right now there is no judgment against him any longer," Khan added. Musharraf's lawyer, Azhar Siddique, also told media outside the court in Lahore that it has "nullified everything". The prosecution now has the option to file a new case against Musharraf with the approval of the federal Cabinet. The treason trial-which began in 2013 and is just one of several involving Musharraf-centered on his decision to suspend the constitution and impose emergency rule in 2007. Musharraf first took power after ousting prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999.

A cigar-smoking, whisky-drinking moderate, the general became a key US ally in the "war on terror" after the September 11 attacks and escaped at least three Al-Qaeda assassination attempts during his nine years in office. His rule faced no serious challenges until he tried to sack the Supreme Court chief justice in March 2007, sparking nationwide protests

and months of turmoil that led to the imposition of emergency rule. After the December 2007 assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, the national mood plunged further and Musharraf was left increasingly isolated by the crushing losses suffered by his allies in February 2008 elections.

He finally resigned in August 2008 in the face of impeachment proceedings by the new governing coalition and went into exile. Musharraf returned to Pakistan in 2013 in an attempt to contest elections, but was barred from taking part in the polls and from leaving the country as a barrage of legal cases mounted.

The travel ban against him was finally lifted in 2016, and he travelled to Dubai for medical treatment, where he has been ever since. The treason case against him was first launched by his old foe Sharif in 2013. It went on for years with repeated delays until last year's surprise announcement. —AFP



This file photo taken on April 22, 2001, shows then Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf (left) receiving late Oman's ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said at the President's house in the Pakistani capital Islamabad for a formal welcoming ceremony. — AFP

Siemens to remain in Australia mining project

BERLIN: Siemens boss announced Sunday that the German conglomerate has decided to remain involved in a controversial coal mining project in Australia, despite massive environmental criticism as the country faces unprecedented bushfires. The contract for some 18 million euros (\$20 million) calls for Siemens to supply rail infrastructure for the Carmichael mine in Queensland, near the Great Barrier Reef. "We have just finished our special meeting... We have evaluated all the options and have concluded that we must fulfil our contractual obligations," said Siemens CEO Joe Kaeser in a message on his Twitter account.

He also promised that Siemens, which



MUNICH: The headquarters of German industrial giant Siemens is pictured yesterday in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

supports the Paris climate agreement to curb carbon emissions, would create a body to better "manage in the future the

questions of protecting the environment." The proposed Carmichael mine, owned by India's Adani group, has long been con-

troverial but anger over the multi-billion-euro project has been fanned by Australia's catastrophic bushfire season.

Activists from Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion staged demonstrations in a dozen German cities against the mine on Friday, including outside Siemens' Munich headquarters.

The open-cut Carmichael mine is set to become operational next year and produce up to 27 million tons of coal annually. The troubled project, which has been scaled down since it was first announced, has run into repeated delays caused by legal and regulatory hurdles, as well as funding problems.

Supporters say the mine will bring hundreds of much-needed jobs to rural Queensland in eastern Australia. But conservationists say the project threatens local vulnerable species and means coal will have to be shipped from a port near the already-damaged Barrier Reef.

The world's largest coral reef system faces multiple threats to its survival, most notably rising sea temperatures caused by climate change, water pollution and coral-eating starfish. — AFP

No web, no jobs: Kashmiris board 'Internet Express'

SRINAGAR: Braving the snow and cold, Abrar Ahmad, 18, is one of thousands of Kashmiris who regularly spend hours journeying on a packed train just so that they can go online as the region grapples with the longest internet blackout imposed by a democracy. Stepping off the crammed train - dubbed the "Internet Express" by Indian Kashmiris - in the nearby town of Banihal, the passengers make a beeline for cafes where they pay up to 300 rupees (\$4.20) for an hour's broadband.

"I couldn't have afforded to miss this opportunity," Ahmad told the Thomson Reuters Foundation after filling out an online job application at a teeming internet cafe, where dozens of others hit by the 162-day internet shutdown queued behind him. "There is no one else in my family to take care of my three younger siblings and me," he said, adding that his father, a mason, lost his leg in a road accident last year.

Indian-administered Kashmir has been without broadband and mobile data services since Aug. 5 when India's government revoked the special status of its only Muslim-majority state, splitting Jammu and Kashmir in two. Despite a United Nations declaration in 2016 that the internet is a human right, shutdowns have risen in recent years as governments from the Philippines to Yemen said they were necessary for public safety and national security. India said it cut communications to prevent unrest in Kashmir, where a separatist insurgency has killed more than 40,000 people since 1989.

The lockdown has cost Kashmir more than \$2.4 billion since August, with sectors directly dependent on the internet such as e-commerce and information technology worst hit, the region's main trade organization said.

"Doing trade without the internet is unimaginable in the present day world," said Abdul Majeed Mir, vice president of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which estimates nearly 500,000 jobs have been lost. "Irreversible damage has been caused to the economy."

Limited resources

Kashmir's internet ban has impacted everything from relationships to access to healthcare, said Raman Jit Singh Chima, Asia policy director at global digital rights group Access Now. In addition to introducing the democratic world's longest internet clampdown in Kashmir, Access Now said India also accounted for two-thirds of global shutdowns in 2018.

"Punishing an entire population on the basis of saying potential violence or terrorism might occur is extraordinary," said Chima. The home and information ministries did not respond to requests for comment.

At a noisy cyber cafe in Banihal, Danish stepped out to catch his breath as people elbowed past to get on the web. Diesel generator fumes filled the cramped space to keep computers and laptops running during frequent power cuts. "I felt suffocated inside," said Danish, a Kashmir University scholar who declined to give his full name.

"This internet gag is driving me crazy." But he prefers the lengthy trek to Banihal to trying to get online at one of the hundreds of internet kiosks the government has set up in Kashmir, where demand hugely outstrips supply.

New Delhi said the scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir state's special status was necessary to integrate it into the rest of India and spur development. It has done anything but that, say locals. Outside a courier company in Kashmir's main city, Srinagar, two delivery executives chatted idly by a bonfire, saying no internet meant no packages. "We are the only two who still come to the office. Some 50 boys have lost their jobs," said Touseef Ahmad. "If the internet is not restored soon, I can lose my job."

'Dark future'

Tourism - for decades the backbone of the scenic region's economy - has been badly hit. Every year, people from across India flock to Kashmir to enjoy its snow-capped mountains and scenic Dal Lake, home to hundreds of ornately-carved houseboats whose owners rely on tourism.

Bashir Ahmad Sultani, president of Kashmir's Shikara (Boat) Association, said there was no work for more than 4,000 boatmen. "We are going through very bad times. Some of us are not even able to arrange two square meals for our families," said boatman Mohammad Shafi. "We are looking at a dark future." The restriction has served a major blow to tour operators, hoteliers and artisans as well. "I mostly buy things on credit from local shopkeepers," said Ghulam Jeelani, a hotel manager in Srinagar, who feared being laid off with no online bookings or transactions. — Reuters

Thai royal motorcades will no longer shut down Bangkok

BANGKOK: Royal motorcades will no longer completely shut down Bangkok's roads, a rare concession by the unassailable Thai king to public opinion. King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 67, sits at the apex of Thai power and alongside senior royals-is protected by a draconian defamation law, which makes public scrutiny of the family near impossible inside the kingdom.

Police routinely close down major roads when the royal family passes, adding serious delay on the congested streets of Bangkok and heaping frustration onto commuters.

Thais in recent months have taken to Twitter and Facebook to air their irritation over road closures believed to be linked to the royal family's travels. The hashtag #Royalmotorcade trended last year on Thai Twitter, drawing tens of thousands of mentions.

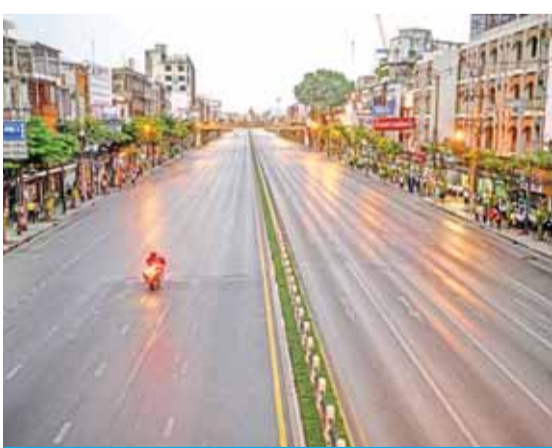
Late Sunday government spokeswoman Narumon Pinyosinwat said on Facebook that the king "has acknowledged the traffic problem and is concerned for the people".

Roads will no longer be completely shut down, according to a police video she posted detailing the changes, with officers ordered to use orange cones instead to designate a pathway for travelling royals. The other side of the road can also be used by motorists and pedestrians.

"Long live the King," she added in her Facebook post. Police did not respond to requests for comment. The new guidelines are "a good sign" of a monarch responding to public concerns, said political analyst Titipol Phakdeewanich.

"It could make people feel more connected to the institution of the monarchy and show that the monarchy is not ignoring them," he added. Vajiralongkorn inherited one of the world's richest monarchies when he ascended the throne in 2016 following the death of his father.

He was officially crowned last May in an elaborate three-day coronation ceremony. —AFP



BANGKOK: A policeman riding on an empty street, blocked due to movements of the royal motorcade transporting Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn in Bangkok. Royal motorcades will no longer completely shut down Bangkok's roads, a rare concession by the unassailable Thai king to public opinion. — AFP

Australian PM's approval rating goes up in flames

MELBOURNE: Public support for Prime Minister Scott Morrison has slumped to its lowest levels amid widespread anger over his government's handling of Australia's bushfire crisis, according to a survey released by Newspoll yesterday.

At least 28 people have been killed in the fires that have destroyed 2,000 homes, and razed 11.2 million hectares (27.7 million acres), nearly half the area of the United Kingdom Morrison has come under attack for being slow to respond to the crisis, even taking a family holiday to Hawaii while fires were burning. He acknowledged during a television interview on Sunday that he had made some mistakes. "We have heard the message loud and clear from the Australian people," Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said yesterday, when asked about the poll result as he announced a A\$50 million (\$34.56 million) wildlife protection fund.

"They want to see a Federal Government adopt a very direct response to these natural and national disasters," Frydenberg said. The Newspoll survey showed Morrison's approval rating dropped 8 percent since the last poll on Dec 8 to stand at 37 percent, scoring lower than opposition Labor leader Anthony Albanese. It is Morrison's worst showing in the poll since he took over leadership of the ruling Liberal Party in August 2018 when a backbench uprising ousted former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull.

No margin of error was provided for the poll, which surveyed 1,505 people from Wednesday to Saturday, although it was about 2.5 percent points in previous Newspolls. The poll was taken after Morrison announced a A\$2 billion bushfire recovery fund and called out 3,000 army reservists to back up state emergency workers - responses that were viewed as belated.

Morrison said on Sunday he would take a proposal to Cabinet to hold a Royal Commission national inquiry into the bushfires, including examining the response to the crisis, the role and powers of the federal government and the impact of climate change. After weeks of raging fires whipped up by erratic winds and temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), conditions eased over the weekend with showers forecast for New South Wales (NSW), the worst hit state, over the next few days. "If this BOM (Bureau of Meteorology) rainfall forecast comes to fruition then this will be all of our Christmas, birthday, engagement, anniversary, wedding and graduation presents rolled into one. Fingers crossed," the NSW Rural Fire Service said on Twitter.

Here are key events in the crisis:

- Australia's pristine 'AAA' sovereign rating is not at "immediate risk" from the fiscal and economic impact of bushfires raging across the country's east coast, S&P said yesterday.
- The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) said on Monday bushfire victims can submit damaged banknote claims to redeem their lost money.
- The Australian government committed A\$50 million to an emergency wildlife recovery program yesterday, calling the bushfires crisis engulfing the country "an ecological disaster" that threatens several species, including koalas and rock wallabies.
- German engineering giant Siemens said it would fulfil its contract to provide signalling for a rail line to a controversial new coal mine being built by India's Adani Group in Australia's outback, drawing criticism from green groups yesterday.
- Frydenberg announced A\$50 million in funding yes-



SARSFIELD: Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison visits a wildflower farm in an area devastated by bushfires in Sarsfield, Victoria state. — AFP

terday for protecting wildlife and restoring damaged habitat, with a focus on threatened species, like koalas, with heartbreaking images of rescues of burned animals having gone viral around the world.

● Since October, thousands of Australians have been subjected to repeat evacuations as huge and unpredictable fires scorched more than 11.2 million hectares (27.7 million acres), an area nearly half the size of the United Kingdom.

● Across New South Wales, 111 fires were still burning late on Sunday, 40 of them not yet contained, but none at emergency level. A number of fires burning in the Snowy Mountains region in New South Wales and into Victoria have merged across more than 600,000 hectares (1.5 million acres) of land. They do not pose a threat, authorities say, despite being in an area hard to reach.

● The government said on Sunday it would provide A\$76 million (\$52 million) for mental health counselling and healthcare consultations to firefighters, emergency workers, individuals and communities.

● Western Australia Department of Fire and Emergency Services said on Sunday an out-of-control and unpredictable fire that is moving slowly in the state's south, poses a possible threat to lives and homes in the area.

● South Australia said on Sunday that more than 32,000 livestock animals, mostly sheep, had died in recent fires on Kangaroo Island, while fire services are working to strengthen containment lines ahead of expected worsening weather conditions on Monday.

● Thousands of Australians took to the streets on Friday to protest against government inaction on climate change, and were supported by protesters in London.

● Australia's wildfires have dwarfed other recent catastrophic blazes, with its burnt terrain more than twice the extent of that ravaged by 2019 fires in Brazil, California and Indonesia combined.

● Westpac estimated total bushfire losses to date at about A\$5 billion, higher than the 2009 bushfires in Victoria but smaller than the Queensland floods in 2010/11. It forecast a hit of 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent on gross domestic product.

● The Insurance Council of Australia increased to more than A\$900 million its estimate of damage claims from the fires, and they are expected to jump further.

● About 100 firefighters from the United States and Canada are helping, with 140 more expected in coming weeks.

● The fires have emitted 400 megatons of carbon dioxide and produced harmful pollutants, the European Union's Copernicus monitoring program said.

● Smoke has drifted across the Pacific, affecting cities in South America, and may have reached the Antarctic, the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization said. — Reuters

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Women step forward in push to nurture climate scientists

As a child, Kenyan meteorologist Saumu Shaka helped out on her parents' small farm growing maize and pigeon pea - and learned how the weather can hold food producers hostage. "Looking back, the yield has declined over the years," said Shaka, 28, who works with the Kenya Meteorological Department. A decade ago, her parents would get 25 sacks of maize from their six hectares in Taita Taveta County, southeast of Nairobi.

Today that has dwindled to five bags at most, because of erratic rainfall that can also spur crop-destroying pests. As climate change fuels extreme weather and threatens harvests, Africa needs more scientific expertise to help small-scale farmers adapt, especially women who tend to be hit worst, said Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, director of Nairobi-based group African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD).

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women represent nearly half of farmers in Africa and produce up to 80 percent of basic food crops. They are also largely responsible for preparing, storing and processing food. But in many cases, the FAO says, they have limited rights, mobility and access to resources, information and decision-making power, making them more vulnerable and less able to adapt to climate change impacts than men.

"This means women's continued underrepresentation in climate change research is no longer acceptable," said Kamau-Rutenberg, noting that few have opportunities in science education. AWARD is leading the One Planet Fellowship, a new initiative that will train 630 African and European scientists to use a gender lens to help African smallholders adapt to climate shifts, unusually offering Africans the opportunity to serve as mentors.

Under-investment in African scientific research capacity means "we still don't even know the specific ways climate change will manifest ... in Africa," said Kamau-Rutenberg. In September, the three-year career development programme welcomed its first cohort of 45 fellows from Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Benin, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Togo, Mali, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso - over half of them female.

The aim is to "set an example and dispel the myth that there are no African women scientists ready to step into leadership", Kamau-Rutenberg added. AWARD collaborates on the initiative, worth nearly \$20 million, with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, France's BNP Paribas Foundation and Agropolis Fondation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre.

'Firsthand experience'

As one of the inaugural fellows, Shaka is seeking home-grown solutions to the challenges faced by farmers like her parents, who are battling to grow enough food on a warming planet. Her research focuses on cost-effective "climate-smart" agribusiness techniques to help young people boost jobs and food security, which she will promote on social media platforms. African scientists "have firsthand experience and solutions that are practical and applicable to their societal set-ups within their individual countries", she said.

Women scientists, moreover, are better able to understand the specific challenges in designing community-tailored solutions to help fellow women, said the senior meteorologist. Droughts and floods, for example, impose a health burden on women, who have to walk long distances in search of water and stay alert to the risk of waterborne diseases, she noted.

Pamela Afokpe, 27, an AWARD fellow from Benin, said "in-continent" experts could relate to the needs of African farmers more easily. Afokpe, a vegetable breeder with East-West Seed International, is working to get more farmers growing indigenous leafy vegetables in West and Central Africa by helping them access high-yielding varieties resistant to pests and diseases.

Up to now, a limited number of African experts have contributed to the landmark scientific assessments published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which synthesises research and guides policymakers. Out of 91 lead authors of the 2018 IPCC special report on limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, only eight were from Africa, as were just a tenth of the 783 contributing authors.

South Africa's Debra Roberts, co-chair of a working group for the IPCC ongoing sixth scientific assessment report and the first female co-chair from Africa, said the panel's work showed tackling climate change required all of society to respond. "Women have different lived experiences and views on the problems and solutions," she said. "We need to hear those voices if we are to be able to identify context-relevant solutions from the scientific literature. There is no one-size-fits-all," she added. Over the IPCC's three decades of operation, there have only been three female co-chairs, two of them on the current report, she noted. — Reuters

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



Thai Future Forward Party's leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit (center) greets supporters during a "Run against Dictatorship" in Bangkok on Sunday. — AFP

Jog for dissent signals new breed of activists

Thai office worker Pinyo Tongleun, 33, once participated in "Yellow Shirt" protests against then-Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who was eventually ousted in a military coup in 2014. But on Sunday, he joined more than 12,000 people in a "Run Against Dictatorship" to express frustration that the coup leader - ex-army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, known by his nickname "Uncle Tu" - is still in power after disputed elections last year.

"I am tired of Uncle Tu. And I want him to return democracy to the country," Pinyo said at the run, held in a park in Bangkok. It was the largest show of dissent since the coup nearly six years ago. Some of the participants shouted "Prayuth, get out!" and "Long live democracy!" while jogging the 2.6-km course.

They are a new breed of activist from the rival protesters who repeatedly paralyzed Bangkok for a decade before the military took over. They describe themselves simply as pro-democracy, in contrast to former "Red Shirt" and "Yellow Shirt" camps who were largely for and against ousted ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and later his sister, Yingluck.

Many of those who ran on Sunday are supporters of the new Future Forward Party, founded by 41-year-old auto parts heir Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit. Some government supporters accused Thanathorn of orchestrating the event, an accusation that both Future Forward and the organizers denied - although Thanathorn did participate in the run. "We want democracy to return. This is the spirit of those who refused to be defeated by dictator-

ship," Thanathorn told reporters as he arrived. Tanawat Wongchai, 21, the main organizer of the Run against Dictatorship, said that he is not a member of any particular political party. "Thais have bitter memories about political protests so we want to be creative in our activism against the government," Tanawat said. A new round of street confrontations seems unlikely, at least in the short term. Leaders of the new movement say they want to avoid street protests but haven't completely ruled out.

Coup-maker in charge

In reality, the activists have few tools to actually oust Prayuth. The prime minister currently leads an unwieldy 18-party coalition government that has a slim but stable majority in the lower House of Representatives. The protesters are united mostly in being fed up with a military-dominated establishment that has sought to demonize any opposition - including laying criminal charges against Thanathorn and moving to disband Future Forward.

Formed in 2018 as an alternative to established parties, Future Forward made a strong showing in the general election last March, coming in third by winning 6.2 million votes. It joined an opposition "democratic front" alliance aimed at undoing the legacy and grip of the military in politics. The "Run Against Dictatorship", which in the Thai language was called "Run to Oust Uncle", received clearance only after the original venue was rejected by authorities. Police also searched participants as they entered the park where it was held. A rival "Walk to Cheer the Uncle"

event, held in another park, to show support for Prayuth, had little security presence. "Overall the situation does not reflect a progress in Thailand's transition towards democracy in any way and shows that the government is firmly in control," said Titipol Phakdeewanich, dean of political science at Ubon Ratchathani University.

'Nation-haters'

While former Red Shirt pro-Thaksin supporters also participated in the "Run Against Dictatorship", one of their leaders, Jatuporn Prompan, said it was clear the focus of the opposition movement had shifted. "This is their time like it was our time 10 to 20 years ago. The Thanathorn phenomenon and the run to oust uncle is for the new generation," Jatuporn said.

Defenders of the government, meanwhile, have heightened rhetoric against the new democracy activists. Where Thaksin and his sister were decried as corrupt, both Thanathorn and his supporters are portrayed as seeking to destroy Thailand's traditional culture, even the constitutional monarchy that is central to Thai identity - though not one at Sunday's event spoke a word against the monarchy.

Warong Dechgitvigrom, a member of the pro-government Action Coalition for Thailand Party, called the new breed of activists "nation-haters". "My group will continue to tell people about the nation-haters because Thanathorn wants to change the country and topple the monarchy," he said. He urged fellow Thais "to be vigilant and keep a close eye on our children". — Reuters

WeWork debacle has unicorn investors seeking cover

In the months since office-sharing startup WeWork's botched public debut, mid- and late-stage investors in big start-ups have been pushing for more safeguards in case their firms fail to go public or sell shares at a lower valuation than pre-IPO financing rounds. Fundraising terms are rarely made public, but more than a dozen Silicon Valley-based lawyers, entrepreneurs and venture-capital investors told Reuters that since WeWork's canceled public offering and other ill-fated IPOs, investors have been securing protections of their original investments in "unicorns" - private companies valued at \$1 billion or more.

Tougher terms are the price to pay for ensuring late-stage funding and sustaining the pipeline of initial public offerings, but also can be detrimental for founders, employees and early-stage investors, which in turn could make M&A deals challenging. A quarterly survey by law firm Fenwick & West, which tracks deal terms of startup clients, showed a sharp rise in those with senior liquidation preferences for later stage funding rounds in the third

quarter, the time when WeWork's IPO plan unraveled. Safeguards include a higher minimum price on shares in an IPO, "ratchets" that give investors more shares if the shares are priced below what they paid, guarantees of a certain return on investments, and rights to block the IPO. "Because many of these unicorn valuations are super high relative to historical IPO values, growth investors are putting in more structure around IPOs," said Ivan Gaviria, a partner at Gunderson Dettmer, a Silicon Valley law firm that works with venture-backed companies and investors.

WeWork's lofty \$47 billion valuation tumbled to less than \$8 billion after it scrapped its IPO in September amid a public shareholder-founder dispute that led to the founder-CEO's ousting and a bailout by SoftBank. The Japanese technology conglomerate, which has invested in several high-profile tech start-ups including Uber Technologies, has been among late-stage investors especially forceful in demanding more safeguards in the event of a failed IPO.

Over the past four months, every SoftBank-led funding discussion for mid-to-late stage Internet startups has involved tougher terms for founders and employees, especially for commitments of \$200 million to \$300 million or more, according to a person familiar with the discussions. For instance, in December when SoftBank was in relatively advanced talks to invest in pharmaceutical delivery startup Alto Pharmacy, the investment partners from its Vision Fund sought price protection

clauses, as well as stronger corporate governance processes at the company, that person said. SoftBank and Alto Pharmacy, which was previously known as ScriptDash, declined to comment.

First in line

An investor with a liquidation preference would get paid first when the company folds or is sold. To be sure, some experts note that the push for greater safeguards preceded the WeWork debacle, but most lawyers and investors Reuters has interviewed said it has intensified after the WeWork flame-out. Some investors are even asking to get back even more money than they put in, said Ed Zimmerman, partner at law firm Lowenstein Sandler, who represents tech companies and investors.

Sandy Miller, general partner at IVP, a later stage venture capital firm which is an investor in Uber, said many firms, including IVP, still prefer "clean term sheets" that put founders and all investors on equal footing. However, an investor may want extra protection if founders push for higher valuations at a time when the market is leveling off. "You may say, well, we can agree to a bit higher valuation, but we're going to need some terms around it."

Shawn Carolan, partner at Menlo Ventures, said investors have also been pushing for more say on certain matters. "It's mostly about compensation, indebtedness, major capital purchases or commitments, and major business agreements," said Carolan, who is the investment lead on Uber, among others. — Reuters

Desperate to defeat Trump, Dems grapple with 'electability'

Kristen Marttila braved sub-freezing temperatures on Saturday to knock on doors in Mason City, Iowa, trying to convince voters to cast their lot with Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren in the state's nominating contest on Feb 3. Time after time, Marttila said, she heard the same message: People loved the senator from Massachusetts but were concerned her liberal stances would not draw enough broad support to defeat US President Donald Trump in November.

"They really like you - they might even like you the best," Marttila, a 39-year-old lawyer from Minneapolis, told Warren at a campaign event later that day. "But they are really scared to vote for who they like the best, because they're worried that not enough people feel the same." With only three weeks until the crucial first-in-the-nation contest in Iowa, the sprawling field of 13 Democratic candidates is still struggling to convince an electorate desperate to oust Trump from office which one of them is best positioned to do so.

The race remains fluid, with the top four contenders -

US Senator Bernie Sanders, Warren, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and former Vice President Joe Biden - dunched between 15 and 20 percentage points in the latest Des Moines Register poll of Iowa Democrats. In interviews this weekend with dozens of Iowa voters, many said they were grappling with the head-or-heart dilemma Marttila outlined - whether to support the candidate who most appeals to them, or the one they imagine will appeal to everyone else.

"I still think she's going to scare off a lot of voters," said Michael Marth, 68, a retired farmer and undecided voter who attended Warren's town hall in Mason City on Saturday. His wife, Leah, was even more blunt, saying she probably likes Warren the most but will likely end up in Biden's camp. "To get rid of Trump," she explained. "If it was any other year, I'd be on her side." The vaguely defined notion of "electability" has dominated the Democratic contest, given the deep distaste for Trump among the party's faithful. The latest Reuters/Ipsos poll this month showed twice as many Democrats as in the fall of 2015 say their top concern is whether a candidate can win the general election.

Some voters argued electability can be shorthand for discrimination against women or minority candidates. "I think a lot of the 'unelectability' thing is just misogyny," said Alex Farrell, a 33-year-old hospital worker who supports Buttigieg but has Warren as a second choice. The issue is particularly acute for Warren and Sanders, whose backing for ambitious policies like Medicare for All has

unnerved moderate Democrats worried that Trump will caricature them as radical socialists.

Independents and unhappy Republicans

Fran Henderson, a retired pharmacist who watched Sanders speak on Saturday in Newton, Iowa, said she liked Sanders' record on issues like the Iraq war but feared policies like Medicare for All and tuition-free college would scare off voters who oppose higher taxes. "I don't think he's going to bring the independents that we need to win," said Henderson, who supports moderate US Senator Amy Klobuchar. "We need the independents and we need the unhappy Republicans."

Biden and Buttigieg, the two leading moderates in the field, have questioned whether more liberal candidates like Sanders and Warren will cost the party in November. Biden in particular has asserted that he can win back the traditionally Democratic white, working-class voters who defected to Trump's side in 2016. In response, Sanders and Warren have emphasized their economic populism, calling for structural changes to address growing income inequality and focusing on the Trump tax cuts that largely benefited the wealthy. "The way you defeat Trump is talk to working people in this country who are so exasperated, so tired of working longer hours for lower wages, so tired of working for 10, 11, 12 bucks an hour and not being able to afford to maintain their family with a dignity that family deserves," Sanders said on Saturday in Davenport, where campaign workers handed out "Bernie beats Trump" placards. — Reuters

Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2020

12 Auto industry cautious as China forecasts a 2% decline in sales**13** French strikes rumble on as PM vows to 'go to end'**14** The Business Year renews partnership with KDIPA

LONDON: In this file photo an aerial view of London's Canary Wharf financial district and the River Thames. Britain's economy has stalled, official data showed yesterday as Brexit and political uncertainty contributed to slashing manufacturing output, heaping pressure on the Bank of England to cut interest rates. —AFP

UK economy stalls as BoE eyes rate cut

Brexit uncertainty hits manufacturing output

LONDON: Britain's economy has stalled, official data showed yesterday, as Brexit and political uncertainty contributed to slashing manufacturing output, heaping pressure on the Bank of England to cut interest rates. Gross domestic product contracted 0.3 percent in November, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. It grew only 0.1 percent in the three months to the end of November, the ONS added.

Manufacturing meanwhile slumped 1.7 percent in November. Speaking ahead of the data a Bank of England policymaker, Gertjan Vlieghe, hinted at a potential vote in favor of a January cut to the BoE's main interest rate, weighing on the pound yesterday.

It followed comments Friday by fellow policymaker Silvana Teneyro, who said she could support a rate cut from the current 0.75-percent level, if the economy did not strengthen. And on Thursday, the bank's outgoing governor, Mark Carney, said the monetary policy committee was looking at the merits of near-term stimulus. As for the latest GDP data, "a poor performance in November was always on the cards given that the uncertainties facing the economy were at a peak with the general

election looming and doubts over what would happen on the Brexit front after it had been delayed again from 31 October", noted Howard Archer, chief economic advisor to financial researchers EY ITEM Club.

"It is clear that businesses were cautious in their behavior while it also appears that consumers were reluctant to spend," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives convincingly won a general election in December that has broken the deadlock over the UK's departure from the European Union. Britain's parliament last week finally approved Brexit, ending years of arguments that toppled two UK governments. "We expect the economy to get a lift in the early months of 2020 from a more settled domestic political environment following the Conservatives substantial win... and an easing of near-term Brexit uncertainties as the UK leaves the EU with Johnson's deal on 31 January," said Archer.

Yesterday's official figures showed the economy in November - before last month's decisive election win for Prime Minister Boris Johnson - was just 0.6 percent larger than a year before, the weakest expansion since June 2012. The November figure represented

a slowdown from annual growth of 1.0 percent in October, after that month's growth pace was revised up from previously reported data. Output in November alone shrank by 0.3 percent, the biggest drop since April. Economists polled by Reuters had expected unchanged output for the month. The weak data, reflected the uncertainty of last autumn about Brexit and the election, said John Hawksworth, chief economist for accountants PwC. "It is too early to say for sure if economic momentum will pick up in the new year now the political situation is clearer, but our latest survey of the financial services sector with the CBI does suggest some boost to optimism since the election," he said. Sterling fell and government bond yields headed lower as financial markets priced in a 50 percent chance the Bank of England will cut interest rates on Jan. 30, after its next meeting. The BoE predicted in November that the economy would eke out limited growth in the fourth quarter, before recovering in 2020.

That forecast assumes progress towards a post-Brexit trade deal and a reduction in US-China trade tensions. In the past week, BoE Governor Mark Carney - who steps down in

March - and two other rate-setters, Silvana Teneyro and Gertjan Vlieghe, said a rate cut could be needed if those assumptions prove over-optimistic. Two more policymakers, Michael Saunders and Jonathan Haskel, already support a rate cut. However, there have been some signs that business confidence has revived since Johnson's Conservatives won an unexpectedly large majority in the Dec. 12 election. That victory put Britain on course to leave the European Union on Jan. 31 with a transition deal. However, Johnson has only given himself 11 months to reach a long-term trade deal with the EU, and some businesses fear they could face tariffs and other obstacles to trade with the EU from 2021. Looking at the three months to November, which smoothes out some volatility, the economy grew by 0.1 percent versus poll forecasts for a 0.1 percent fall, due to unexpected upward revisions to September and October output, which the ONS said reflected late survey returns. "Overall, the economy grew slightly in the latest three months, with growth in construction pulled back by weakening services and another lackluster performance from manufacturing," ONS statistician Rob Kent-Smith said. —Agencies

Indonesia, UAE sign \$23 billion investment deals

JAKARTA: Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates have struck nearly \$23 billion in business deals, including agreements in the energy sector and on infrastructure projects, the Southeast Asian nation said yesterday. The investments will be made through a new Indonesian sovereign wealth fund set to also involve Japan's Softbank and US International Development Finance Corporation, Jakarta said, without elaborating. The figure includes nearly a dozen deals signed after a meeting between Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi over the weekend, Widodo said on social media.

About \$12.6 billion was linked to an agreement between Indonesia's state energy firm Pertamina and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company to develop a petrochemical plant in West Java, according to Indonesia's foreign ministry. Other investments include deals in ports, renewable energy and agriculture. Indonesia's leader has said he will focus his second term on luring more foreign investment to Southeast Asia's biggest economy and keep up a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure drive. Jakarta said the agreements could include investment in Indonesia's planned new capital on the island of Borneo as it moves away from congested Jakarta - one of the fastest sinking cities on Earth.

Zayed was asked to be an advisor for the development of the new capital, said Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Pandjaitan. —AFP

Oil price slides as hedge funds' buying fades

LONDON: Despite the increase in tensions across the Middle East after the killing of an Iranian general by a US air strike, hedge fund managers added only modestly to their bullish position in petroleum last week.

Hedge funds have gambled heavily on an oil price recovery this year, pricing in accelerating global growth, restrictive output policy by Saudi Arabia and continued tension short of war between the United States and Iran.

As a result, the potential to add further bullish positions is more limited than a couple of months ago and prices are vulnerable to a sharp correction if growth disappoints or the threat of open conflict diminishes.

Hedge funds and other money managers increased their

bullish position in the six most important petroleum futures and options contracts by only 19 million barrels in the week to Jan 7. Bullish positions increased by the smallest amount for five weeks, according to position records published by the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission and ICE Futures Europe.

On the eve of the air strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, funds had already amassed a large bullish position in crude and refined fuels such as gasoline and diesel, which may have discouraged further buying. Moreover, the crisis that erupted on Jan 3 already appeared to be contained by Jan 7, probably contributing to the limited rise in bullish positions evident in the weekly records.

Fund managers added slightly last week to existing positions in Brent (+15 million barrels) and WTI (+5 million) but there was little change in US gasoline (+1 million), US diesel (-2 million) or European gasoil (no change). Funds have been net buyers of petroleum futures and options in 11 out of the past 13 weeks, increasing their combined position by a total of 533 million barrels since early October and helping to propel prices higher.

Portfolio managers have anticipated an acceleration in global economic growth and oil consumption during 2020 as well as continued output restraint by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the OPEC+ group of major oil exporters. But the number of bullish positions is now at its highest for 15 months and is already in the 82nd percentile for all weeks since 2013, which may have made fund managers wary about increasing their exposure any further.

Funds' bullish positions outnumbered bearish shorts by a ratio of almost 7:1 last week, which indicated positions were becoming moderately stretched, with the risk of a sharp reversal in prices.

In fact, since peaking on Jan. 8, front-month Brent futures have fallen by almost \$7 a barrel (9.5 percent) as the threat of uncontrolled escalation in the Middle East receded, at least temporarily.

From a positioning perspective, the balance of price risks has shifted to the downside, with funds already holding a lot of bullish positions and vulnerable to disappointing economic news or any easing of tensions around the Gulf. —Reuters

Business

French strikes rumble on as PM vows to 'go to end'

Paris commuters struggle to reach work as strike enters 40th day

PARIS: Paris commuters battled to reach work again yesterday as a 40-day-old strike dragged on and France's premier vowed "to go to the end" with the pension reforms that sparked the action.

There was still major disruption on the Paris metro and the national railway system, even after Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced a major concession to unions at the weekend. But the situation was somewhat improved from previous weeks, with all Paris metro lines now open in peak hours and the trains running slightly more regularly.

"We are going to go to the end" in implementing the pension reforms, Philippe said on France 2 television late Sunday. "Those who incite (workers) to continue the strike are leading them perhaps into a dead end... I think that they need to assume their responsibilities," he said.

"I think you know the phrase — 'you need to know how to end a strike'. We are not far now," he added.

'Not end of the story'

Philippe announced Saturday that he would drop plans to increase the official age for a full pension to 64 from 62, a move welcomed by more moderate trade unions like the CFDT. President Emmanuel Macron, who has sought to stay above the fray throughout the crisis by relying on Philippe to deal with the unions, called the change "a constructive and responsible compromise."

But the more hardline CGT, FO and Solidaires unions were standing firm, calling for the strike and protests to continue, including another major demonstration on Thursday. Demonstrators in the capital on Saturday, some masked and hooded, broke shop windows and set fires along their protest route, and threw projectiles at police in riot gear who responded with tear gas.

The government however is not budging on its overall plan for a universal scheme to rationalize 42 existing pension schemes into a single, points-based system it says will be fairer and more transparent.

"The end of the pivot age does not mean the end of the strike," commented the Le

Parisien daily. Laurent Berger, the head of the moderate CFDT, France's largest union, also struck a cautious note while reaffirming his welcome for the withdrawal of the so-called "pivot age" of 64 as "extremely important." "We are far from being at the end of this story on the universal system for pensions and we will need to keep up the pressure," he told RTL Radio.

The strike has also been observed by other public-service workers affected by the reforms, including staff at the Paris Opera, which on Saturday cancelled its performance of "The Barber of Seville," its first show of 2020.

Lawyers have also been striking, with the first day of the keenly awaited trial of Bernard Preynat, a priest who is charged with abusing dozens of boy scouts in the southeastern Lyon area in the 1980s and 1990s, delayed today from yesterday. "We are aware that this trial is very important but we think it would not be appropriate to give it special treatment," said the head of the Lyon bar association Serge Deygas at the court, accompanied by a dozen striking lawyers. — AFP



PARIS: Striking workers gather at the RATP bus depot of Vitry-sur-Seine, near Paris, yesterday, on the 40th day of a nationwide multi-sector movement against French government pension reform. — AFP

India warns palm oil buyers against Malaysian imports

MUMBAI: Indian palm oil importers have effectively stopped all purchases from Malaysia after the government privately warned them to shun product from the country following a diplomatic spat, industry and government sources said. The warning, issued last week, comes almost in parallel with New Delhi's move to restrict imports of refined palm oil and palmolein after Malaysia's Prime Minister criticized India's actions in Kashmir and its new citizenship law.

Currently, Indian buyers are not making any crude or refined palm oil purchases

from top supplier Malaysia, at least five industry sources familiar with the matter told Reuters. "Officially there is no ban on crude palm oil imports from Malaysia, but nobody's buying due to government's instructions," said a leading refiner, adding that buyers now import from Indonesia despite paying a premium to prices in Malaysia.

India is the world's largest buyer of palm oil and the move to effectively block imports from Malaysia could put pressure on palm oil prices in Malaysia and push up palm oil inventories in the country.

Malaysian prices set the global benchmark for palm oil prices. The move could also benefit Indonesia - the world's largest exporter of crude palm oil (CPO). "We could import CPO from Malaysia, but the government has warned: 'Don't come to us if your shipments get stuck,'" said a Mumbai-based trader, adding "no one

wants to see their shipments get stuck at ports." India's government has not made any public remarks about Malaysian palm oil. The commerce ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

Palm oil accounts for nearly two-thirds of India's total edible oil imports. India buys more than 9 million tons of palm oil annually, mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia. Indian refiners and traders have shifted almost all palm oil purchases to Indonesia, despite having to pay a \$10 per tonne premium over Malaysian prices, four traders told Reuters.

Malaysian crude palm oil for February shipment was available at \$800 a tonne on a free-on-board (FOB) basis, compared to \$810 from Indonesia, traders said. "Like everyone else, we are paying a premium for Indonesian supplies. For a small profit we can't gamble," said a refiner based at Kolkata. — Reuters

UAE agency calls for clean energy investments to double

ABU DHABI: An international agency promoting clean energy called Sunday for investments in renewable energy projects to be more than doubled, redirecting funds from fossil fuels. The Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) also said that electricity output from renewable sources would more than double over the next decade.

"The agency's data shows that annual renewable energy investment needs to double from around \$330 billion today to

close to \$750 billion to deploy renewable energy at the speed required," it said in a report. "Much of the needed investment can be met by redirecting planned fossil fuel investment," IRENA said.

It estimated as much as \$10 trillion worth of investments are planned in non-renewables-related energy projects by 2030, risking failure to meet the goals of fighting global warming.

Some \$2.6 trillion had been invested in renewable energy projects by end 2019, according to the United Nations Environment Program. IRENA director general Francesco La Camera told reporters on the sidelines of its annual assembly in Abu Dhabi that renewable energy programs must be accelerated. If we want to deal "with the consequences of climate change, we have to accelerate our path. It means we have to go and double our investments in renewables", he said. — AFP

Advertisement for the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020. It features a large image of a Kuwait Airways aircraft in flight. Text includes: 'الطيران المدني Civil Aviation', 'معرض الكويت للطيران 2020 KUWAIT AVIATION SHOW 2020', 'Kuwait International Airport 15 to 18 January 2020', and 'Book your Ticket now on our Website www.kuwaitaviationshow.com'. A list of bullet points highlights: 'More than 70 Civil and Military Aircrafts', 'More than 200 Companies Specialized in the World of Aviation', 'More than 35 Participating Countries', and 'Air Shows'.

A detailed grid of logos and text for the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020. It lists various partners and sponsors: 'In Cooperation & Coordination with' (Government of Kuwait, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, etc.), 'The Official Carrier' (Kuwait Airways), 'Exclusive Diamond' (GACA, Qatar Airways, Boeing, etc.), 'Platinum Sponsors' (Zain, etc.), 'Gold Sponsors' (Emirates, Turkish Aerospace, etc.), 'Silver Sponsors' (UK Government, Leonardo, etc.), 'Bronze Sponsors' (Lufthansa, British Airways, etc.), 'Official Catering Partner' (Gourmet by KASCO), 'Official Media Partner' (Dimensions Media FZ LLC), 'Official Legal Consultant' (Al-Jalila Law Firm), 'Organizers' (Sport Aviation, etc.), 'Official Cleaning Services Provider' (Lamac Plus), and 'Logistic Partner' (FCB Logistics).

Business

The Business Year renews its partnership with KDIPA; cooperation enters 5th year

MoU signed in the build-up to publication of The Business Year: Kuwait 2020

KUWAIT: The Business Year has renewed its partnership with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in the build-up to the publication of The Business Year: Kuwait 2020. At an MoU signing ceremony in the offices of KDIPA, Mohammed Yousef Mulla Yaqoub, Assistant Director-General for Business Development, and The Business Year representatives Kristel Molema, Kuwait Country Manager, and Cameron Saunders, the Country Editor, officially agreed to continue its partnership, now entering its fifth year, in its efforts to compile an economic report on the state of the Kuwaiti economy.

This year's publication will investigate all aspects of the Kuwaiti economy, highlighting especially the trend of digitalization, a disruptive technological transformation with far-reaching effects across many sectors of the economy.

"We feel that what is happening here on the ground is truly innovative," commented Molema after the signing. "Kuwait is fast becoming a leader in the digital sphere for the entire GCC region, and we are here today to give account of these impressive developments, whether they be in banking, oil and gas, or logistics. Indeed, digitalization is poised to become a pillar of the new Kuwaiti economy."

This technological transformation will be the subject of an event, Time for Change: Digitalization in Kuwait, that will take place in Kuwait City in early April, 2020.

The Business Year is a business intelligence media platform headquartered in London. Active in thirty-five countries, it investigates economic developments and provides content which is of great use to both investors abroad and to businesspeople at home.



KUWAIT: Mohammed Yousef Mulla Yaqoub (right), Kristel Molema (center) and Cameron Saunders during the signing of the MoU.



KUWAIT: Mohammed Yousef Mulla Yaqoub (right) and Kristel Molema sign the MoU.

The long-awaited Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G arrives to Kuwait

KUWAIT: The long-awaited "King of 5G smartphones" Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G is available for pre-order from 16th January 2020 in unique tones of Emerald Green and a variant with Vegan Leather Orange. Available across Huawei stores, selected retailers and online platforms for a price of KD 299,900.

The Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G is the world's first second generation 5G smartphone, using Kirin 990 5G chipset that allows support for 2G/3G/4G as well as 5G NSA (non-standalone network) and 5G SA (standalone network), which allows users to be prepared for the eventual seamless transition of 5G networks from NSA to the faster and more efficient SA networks. Additionally, the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro 5G also supports (5G+4G) dual SIM in addition to FDD and TDD covering a wide range of 5G frequency bands.

The innovative design also steps away from traditional smartphone displays and brings a curved three-dimensional Huawei Horizon Display for a more immersive viewing experience. Additionally, users can also enjoy AI Gesture Control features that allows them to complete tasks without having to touch their phone. AI Auto Rotate will also ensure that viewing is not interrupted by automatically rotating the screen according to the angle the user is looking at the screen. Users can also use the EMUI 10 powered Multi-Screen Collaboration to wirelessly stream their device to a compatible Huawei MateBook, allowing for easier data transfer and seamless operation between both devices.

The Halo Ring design also features the world's first 40MP dual main camera that provides users with stunning results with every click, be it photos or videos, even in low light. Taking it a step further is the Ultra Low-Light Video, which allows users to record stunning videos in low-light with ISO up to 512,000, the highest ever on smartphone cameras, easily rivaling professional video cameras. Users can also record Ultra Slow-Motion videos at 7680 fps, which was earlier possible only with professional equipment. This is supported by a large 4500 mAh battery with



27W Wireless and 40W Wired Huawei SuperCharge technology. The Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G is also focused on security, with features like AI Private View that hides notifications when extra faces are detected and Trusted Execution Environment (TEE) security to store sensitive biometric information locally on the most secure part of



the chipset. Users can also unlock their device with dual-biometric authentication comprising 3D Face Unlock and In-screen Fingerprint. The new Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G does not pre-install Google Mobile Services, and users will be able to download and enjoy the applications from the Huawei AppGallery preinstalled in the device.

The real price of Occidental's 'costless' oil hedge

NEW YORK: In just 12 days, Occidental Petroleum Corp pulled off one of the biggest hedges against falling oil prices ever placed by a US energy company. It characterized the transaction as "costless" but a Reuters review of regulatory filings, market data and interviews shows that's not the whole story.

The aim of the complex financial maneuver, the company said, was to help preserve Occidental's generous dividend to shareholders as it sought to take over rival Anadarko Petroleum for \$38 billion last summer in the biggest industry deal for years. "With the additional leverage from the Anadarko acquisition, these new hedges will strengthen our 2020 cash flow in a low oil price environment, and provide additional assurance that our dividend is safe, while we are deleveraging," Occidental's Chief Financial Officer Cedric Burgher told an earnings call in August.

However, to secure the hedge swiftly and discreetly and to avoid paying its bankers a fee for arranging it, the company took a bigger potential hit to future revenues with only limited protection against falling oil prices, according to a source with direct knowledge of the transaction. While Occidental disclosed the financial details of the hedge in filings, fulfilling its regulatory obligations, the fact that the

company took on the additional risk to secure the transaction fast and to avoid banker fees has not been previously reported.

Occidental declined to comment for this story. Hedges are used by a variety of companies. Airlines use them to protect against rising fuel prices and energy producers use them to lock in revenue, usually by buying a put option, a type of derivative contract, which gives them the right to sell oil at a predetermined future price.

Occidental used a complex series of transactions for its hedge, which was arranged by Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Citigroup, according to six sources with direct knowledge of the trades. The summer hedge covered nearly 110 million barrels of oil, or 300,000 barrels a day, each for 2020 and 2021, nearly enough to meet the annual oil imports of Australia.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Citigroup declined to comment. The hedge meant the firm could sell the oil at a minimum of \$55 a barrel in 2020, even if crude prices fell below that, to a limit of \$45 a barrel; but the company's selling price was capped at \$74.09, and it would lose out on any revenue earned from oil prices rising beyond that mark.

Occidental capped revenues for 2020 and also 2021 but only got downside protection for 2020 - a lopsided deal sometimes referred to as a naked hedge. Limiting future revenue without getting a guarantee against falling prices is unusual in the energy sector. While Occidental has disclosed the details of the 2020 hedge in regulatory filings, the absence of a hedge against falling oil prices in 2021 was not explicitly mentioned. The company said the 2021 options were meant to increase the maximum selling price it would receive for

2020 sales. "Occidental entered into the 2021 call options to substantially improve the ceiling price that the Company will receive for the contracted commodity volumes in 2020," it said in a filing.

Some analysts said investors should have been given more information about the potential implications of the hedge. "It seems very strange that they left a naked hedge in 2021 which capped upside but offered no downside protection," said David Katz, president and CIO of Matrix Asset Advisors, which owns 0.3 percent of Occidental's shares.

However, other analysts said Occidental needed to secure a hedge quickly to defuse some of the pressure from investors. "Doing this gives Oxy a lot of flexibility in 2020 with cash flow," said Trisha Curtis, President of PetroNerds, an energy analytics and advisory firm specializing in US shale. "You can't have an acquisition that big and then willy-nilly hope that oil prices hold up. Regardless of what it cost them, it was needed for a number of reasons."

Revenue-limiting options

Occidental has said publicly that it does not regularly hedge its oil sales because it does not want to give up potential revenue. The last time the company hedged was in 2005, also following an acquisition. In the summer of 2019, Occidental was under pressure to demonstrate that its dividend was being protected.

Billionaire activist investor Carl Icahn was campaigning against the Anadarko deal and Anadarko itself had issued a regulatory filing on July 29 saying its calculations showed that Occidental, even without an acquisition, would not be able to generate enough cash to pay its dividend for the

next three years. Occidental executives wanted to be able to announce the hedge to reassure investors when they presented second-quarter results on July 31, according to three sources with direct knowledge of the transaction. Bank of America and Citigroup had been advising Occidental on the Anadarko acquisition. Now their traders had about two weeks to complete the hedge.

Acting on Occidental's behalf, Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Citigroup sold two types of derivative contracts, with the intention of using the proceeds from the sales to fund the purchase of a put option locking in Occidental's oil revenues at \$55 a barrel for 2020, according to the six sources. In illiquid private markets, big transactions are more difficult, and therefore more expensive, to execute. If rival traders get wind of a deal before it is fully executed, they could get in first with their own buy or sell orders, pushing up or down the target price.

In the case of Occidental's hedge, the large volume of oil and the tight time frame to insure it meant the banks were not going to be able to raise enough money from selling derivative contracts for 2020 alone to cover the cost of the hedge, the first source said. To fill the gap and avoid having to present Occidental with a large bill, the banks sold similar revenue-limiting options for 2021, the source said.

Selling the 2021 options also increased the amount of money the banks could make because they were selling additional contracts on Occidental's behalf. Derivatives trades require only minimal disclosure and it is unclear how much of a profit the banks made from the Occidental deal. Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Citigroup declined to comment. — Reuters

BAE Systems to exhibit at Kuwait Aviation Show

KUWAIT: BAE Systems is set to be a lead exhibitor at next week's Kuwait Aviation Show 2020, taking place between the 15 and 18 January near Kuwait International Airport. A world-leader in defense technologies, and a long-term partner of the State of Kuwait, BAE Systems is a silver sponsor of the Kuwait Aviation Show. Mr. Mark Simpkins, Regional Vice President Middle East, BAE Systems, said: "BAE Systems is delighted to once again take part in the Kuwait Aviation Show, having exhibited at the inaugural event in 2018.

"At this year's show the company will highlight BAE Systems' continued commitment to supporting the Government's 2035 Vision to transform Kuwait to an international hub for business and commerce. The company will also promote its industrial position in Kuwait and how that is set to be enhanced in the coming years.

"The BAE Systems team looks forward to meeting and engaging with our friends and partners during the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 and showcasing the many ways the company continues to support Kuwaitization, particularly in the air sector." Following the opening of its office in 2008, BAE Systems' presence in Kuwait was underpinned by long term investments and a commitment towards contributing to New Kuwait Vision 2035, especially in the areas of STEM and empowering young Kuwaiti youth.

The company has partnered with several government and private organizations in Kuwait since 2008 to deliver STEM training and workshops to hundreds of Kuwaiti youth. These events provide young people with critical skills that are crucial to the future of Kuwait and achieving its ambitions while inspiring them to pursue further education and careers in different STEM fields. Most recently, BAE Systems partnered with the Ministry of Education in November 2019 to deliver a week-long STEM workshop around Renewable Energy which successfully engaged more than 800 students. For more information about BAE Systems' products and solutions and its presence in Kuwait, please visit us during the Kuwait Aviation Show (stand C9), from 15 to 18 January.

Boeing employees' emails bemoan culture of 'arrogance'

NEW YORK: Contempt for regulators, airlines and their own colleagues coupled with a casual approach to safety: a series of emails by Boeing employees paint an unflattering portrait of a company culture of "arrogance" imbued with a fixation on cost-cutting.

The emails underscore the task awaiting incoming CEO David Calhoun when he takes the company's reins on Monday, under intense pressure to restore public confidence—and that of aviation regulators worldwide—after two fatal crashes of the 737 MAX aircraft.

The emails were contained in some 100 pages of documents dated between 2013 and 2018 and transmitted to US lawmakers by the Seattle-based aviation giant. The messages were seen by AFP after their release Thursday. Often cutting, dismissive, mocking or cavalier, the messages show that Boeing's current difficulties reach far beyond the 737 MAX, shining a light on a level of dysfunction that seems almost unimaginable for a company that helped democratize air travel—and which builds the US president's iconic Air Force One airplane.

The emails show that Boeing tried to play down the role of its MCAS flight-control system in order both to avoid the costs involved in having to train pilots on the system in flight simulators and to speed the federal green-lighting of the MAX plane. Investigators singled out the role of the MCAS (the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System) in the fatal crashes of MAX planes flown by Indonesia's Lion Air (October 29, 2018) and Ethiopian Airlines (March 10, 2019). Those crashes claimed 346 lives and led to the plane's worldwide grounding last March. — AFP

Health & Science

Survivor tells of 20 days in freezing Alaska after cabin burnt down

WASHINGTON: Haggard and traumatized, a young man has told how he survived for more than three weeks in the snowy wilderness of Alaska after his remote cabin burned down when he mistakenly put cardboard in his stove.

Tyson Steele, who was rescued by helicopter on Thursday, said his cabin — located 20 miles (30 kilometers) from the nearest neighbour — was incinerated in mid-December, and his beloved dog Phil died in the blaze.

Steele, 30, dug a snow cave and then built a makeshift shelter, staying warm with just a few sleeping bags and coats, and eating tins of food saved from the fire.

Helicopter footage released by Alaska State Troopers showed Steele waving for help, with SOS marked out in the deep snow, after a rescue effort was launched as he had not called his parents for three weeks.

"The mistake I made, I got hasty and I put a big piece of cardboard in the stove to start the fire," Steele said. "It sent a spark out through the chimney which landed on the roof."

He awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of melting plastic dripping and rushed outside in minus 15 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 26 degrees Celsius) temperatures to find his cabin ablaze.

At first, he thought his six-year-old chocolate Labrador had escaped safely.

"My dog starts howling, right? Inside. And I thought he was not inside... I was hysterical," he said.

"I have no words for what sorrow; it was just a

scream... that's all I could express — just scream. (It felt like I tore my lung out."

Snowed in

Steele described how a box full of ammunition and a propane tank exploded in the roaring fire as he tried to save the cabin by throwing snow on it until dawn.

Eating a long-awaited McDonald's and still wearing some of the same clothes, Steele gave an interview to the State Troopers unit, which described him as appearing "vaguely reminiscent of actor Tom Hanks' character in the movie 'Cast Away'."

Steele told how his phone failed, his snow boots were lost in the flames, and that he made a survival plan hoping that his lack of communication with friends and family would trigger a search mission.

"I figured I had two cans a day for 30 days... The thing was, maybe half of those cans, they've heated up and popped open and the smoke's circulating inside the can. It tastes like my home, just burning."

Steele, who was in good physical condition after his ordeal, said it snowed heavily and that one attempt to walk out of the forested area left him quickly defeated.

He had been living alone at the cabin — originally built by a Vietnam War veteran — in Susitna Valley only since September, and he did not have a map.

Steele said he was going to stay with his parents in Salt Lake City to recover.

"They've got a dog," he said. "And that would be some therapy. 'The worst part of all of this — I can survive 23 days again — but my dog was in there, asleep by my side.'" —AFP



ANCHORAGE: This Alaska State Trooper handout photo obtained January 12, 2020, shows a member of the Alaska State Troopers speaking with Tyson Steele, 30 (left), who was rescued on January 9, 2020 having survived more than 20 days in subzero temperatures after his cabin in a remote area of the Susitna Valley burned down. —AFP

Dazzling and deadly: Five facts about volcanoes

MANILA: The eruption of a volcano near the Philippine capital has delivered a dazzling but highly dangerous spectacle since it began spewing superheated steam on Sunday.

Taal volcano's bursts of lightning and monster clouds of ash have drawn crowds of gaping observers, but also prompted thousands to flee from its fury.

Here are five facts about the mix of beauty and terror that volcanoes produce:

Lightning

Large eruptions sometimes put on a stunning display of lightning strikes that illuminate the massive cloud of ash surrounding them.

This has happened repeatedly above the Taal volcano and been captured in videos shared widely across social media. It is a relatively unusual and difficult to study phenomenon, so there is some scientific dispute about how and why it happens.

One theory posits that particles bashed together in the chaos of the eruption create static electricity which eventually results in lightning.

However, Indriati Retno Palupi, a volcanologist and geologist, told AFP lightning can be created when ashes containing chemical elements react with gasses in the surrounding air.

Tsunamis

A violent eruption could trigger a deadly rush of waves by displacing water with rising magma or an avalanche of debris, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

In fact, the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens in the US state of Washington produced a 780-foot (235-metre) tsunami, according to the International Tsunami Information Center.

The wall of water was unleashed by the partial collapse of the volcano's flank and a fast-moving avalanche of debris.

Million volcanoes?

Around 1,500 potentially active volcanoes are present around the world, many of which are found on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide deep below the earth's surface.

However, around 75 percent of volcanic activity on Earth occurs underwater. Undersea eruptions, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration say, are "a constant process that shapes the features of the ocean". Oregon State University geologists estimate there could be as many as a million called "submarine volcanoes".

Global cooling

The 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) northwest of Manila, was the Philippines' most powerful in recent years and killed more than 800 people.

However, the eruption had worldwide impact. Nearly 20 million tons of sulfur dioxide were shot skyward by Pinatubo, which then drifted globally. "This gas cloud... caused global temperatures to drop temporarily (1991 through 1993) by about 1°F (0.5°C)," according to a US Geological Survey account of the eruption.

On top of the cooler temperatures, the gases and ash sent high in the sky by Pinatubo also caused "brilliant sunsets and sunrises," USGS said.

Indonesia's killer volcanoes

Indonesia is the world's most volcanic area. The Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and islets — and nearly 130 active volcanoes — is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

In 1815, Mount Tambora on the island of Sumbawa exploded in one of the most violent eruptions in recorded history. An estimated 12,000 people died, while a resulting famine killed another 80,000.

The island of Krakatoa was practically wiped off the map in 1883 by a volcanic explosion so powerful that it was heard some 4,500 kilometres (2,800 miles) away. Around 36,000 people were killed in the eruption and the resulting tsunami. A new volcano emerged in 1928 on the same site. —AFP

False alarm sets off nuclear scare in Canada

MONTREAL: An alert signaling an incident at a major nuclear power plant near Toronto in Canada was sent in error to millions of residents Sunday, causing a scare and prompting calls for an investigation. The emergency alert went out shortly before 7:30 am (12:30 GMT). Though intended for residents living within a 10-kilometer (six-mile) radius of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, it went to all residents in Ontario province.

About an hour later, the Ontario Power Generation company that manages the nuclear plant announced on Twitter that the alert was issued by mistake. "There is no active nuclear situation taking place at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station," it said. "The previous alert was issued in error. There is no danger to the public or environment."

The Ontario provincial government apologized, saying the alert was issued during a routine training exercise. "The Government of Ontario sincerely apologizes for raising public concern and has begun a full investigation to determine how this error happened," Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said.

One of the world's largest nuclear power plants, the Pickering facility is located about 50 kilometers east of Toronto, Canada's most populous city, with three million inhabitants. Several local officials, including Pickering mayor Dave Ryan, immediately demanded an explanation of the incident.

"Like many of you, I was very troubled to have received that emergency alert this morning," Ryan said on Twitter. "While I am relieved that there was no actual emergency, I am upset that an error such as this occurred. I have spoken to the province and am demanding that a full investigation take place," he said. Toronto mayor John Tory also called for a probe, saying area residents had been "unnecessarily alarmed by this event." —AFP



MANILA: Residents walk along a muddied road after Taal volcano began spewing ash over Tanauan town, Batangas province south of Manila yesterday. —AFP Photos



MANILA: A worker walks past plants covered with mud and ash after Taal volcano erupted, in Talisay town, Batangas province south of Manila yesterday. Lava and broad columns of ash illuminated by lightning spewed from a volcano south of the Philippine capital.

How to beat S Korea's AI hiring bots and land a job

SEOUL: In cram school-obsessed South Korea, students fork out for classes in everything from K-pop auditions to real estate deals. Now, top Korean firms are rolling out artificial intelligence in hiring — and jobseekers want to learn how to beat the bots.

From his basement office in downtown Gangnam, careers consultant Park Seong-jung is among those in a growing business of offering lessons in handling recruitment screening by computers, not people. Video interviews using facial recognition technology to analyse character are key, according to Park.

"Don't force a smile with your lips," he told students looking for work in a recent session, one of many he said he has conducted for hundreds of people. "Smile with your eyes."

Classes in dealing with AI in hiring, now being used by major South Korean conglomerates like SK Innovation and Hyundai Engineering & Construction, are still a tiny niche in the country's multi-billion dollar cram school industry. But classes are growing fast, operators like Park's People & People consultancy claim, offering a three-hour package for up to 100,000 won (\$86.26).

There's good reason to see potential. As many as

eight out of every 10 South Korean students are estimated to have used cram schools, and rampant youth unemployment in the country — nearly one in four young people are not in the workforce by certain measures, according to Statistics Korea — offers a motive not present in other countries where cram schools are popular, like Japan.

"The AI won't be naturally asking personal questions," said Yoo Wan-jae, a 26-year-old looking for work in the hospitality industry. "That will make it a bit uncomfortable ... I'll need to sign up for cram schools for the AI interview," said Yoo, speaking in Seoul's Noryangjin district, known as 'Exam Village', packed with cram schools and study rooms.

'Fear, joy and gamification'

Businesses around the world are experimenting with increasingly advanced AI techniques for whittling down applicant lists.

But Lee Soo-young, a director of Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) Institute for Artificial Intelligence, told Reuters by telephone the new technology is being more widely embraced in South Korea, where large employers wield much influence in a tightening job market.

According to Korea Economic Research Institute (KERI), nearly a quarter of the top 131 corporations in the country currently use or plan to use AI in hiring.

One AI video system reviewed by Reuters asks candidates to introduce themselves, during which it spots and counts facial expressions including 'fear' and 'joy' and analyses word choices. It then asks questions that can be tough: "You are on a business trip with your boss and you spot him using the com-

pany (credit) card to buy himself a gift. What will you say?"

AI hiring also uses 'gamification' to gauge a candidate's personality and adaptability by putting them through a sequence of tests.

"Through gamification, employers can check 37 different capabilities of an applicant and how well the person fits into a position," said Chris Jung, a chief manager of software firm Midas IT in Pangyo, a tech hub dubbed South Korea's Silicon Valley.

Preparing for such tests doesn't necessarily involve simply memorising answers. "Some games don't even have a 'right answer', as they are aimed to spot the problem-solving attitude of the applicant," Jung said.

At People & People, consultant Park said he gave AI hiring talks to over 700 university students, graduates and lecturers in 2019.

"Students are struggling from the emergence of AI interviews. My goal is to help them be fully prepared for what they will be dealing with," said Park.

In an online chat room monitored by Park, with more than 600 participants, numerous messages indicate thanks for the classes and success in AI interview quests. But elsewhere, some who haven't yet taken lessons have already given up.

Kim Seok-wu, a 22-year-old senior at a top university, recently failed to get beyond an AI interview for a management position at a retail company, and decided to pursue graduate school instead of trying to find a job.

"I think I will feel hopeless if all companies go AI for hiring," Kim said. "The AI interview is too new, so job applicants don't know what to prepare for and any preparations seem meaningless since the AI will read our faces if we make something up." —Reuters

Thailand helps sea turtle swim again with prosthetic flippers

PHUKET: Thai turtle Goody lost her left flipper years ago after she was entangled in a fishing net, leaving her immobile and stressed out in captivity. But now Goody, an endangered olive ridley sea turtle, can swim with ease again, after receiving Thailand's first prosthetic flipper last week.

"She's swimming much better and she's learning to use the two flippers to turn. You can see the difference," said Nantarika Chansue, a veterinarian who took part in the development of Goody's prosthetic flipper.

Over the past year, Thai environment authorities and researchers at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok have been working to develop prostheses for injured sea turtles, following similar projects in Japan and the United States. Sea turtles are often injured or killed by human activities, most commonly by ingesting plastic or getting caught in fishing nets or lines, which can stop blood circulating to their limbs.

Previously, Goody was able to swim only with difficulty using her one right flipper, while living in a confined space with other injured turtles. Another 10 Thai turtles have similar injuries that could benefit from the project.

While the prostheses won't help injured turtles become fit enough to return to the sea, they are aimed at improving their quality of life in captivity, Nantarika said. "We are trying to develop some of the best ones ever created in the world," Nantarika said. —Reuters

Health & Science

Chinese woman with mystery virus quarantined in Thailand

BANGKOK: A Chinese woman has been quarantined in Thailand with a mystery strain of coronavirus just days ahead of the Lunar New Year, when Chinese tourists flock to Thailand, authorities said yesterday, the first time it has been detected outside China.

A 61-year-old man has died from pneumonia in the central Chinese city of Wuhan after an outbreak of the yet to be identified virus while seven were in critical condition, Wuhan health authorities said on Saturday.

Thai authorities are stepping up monitoring at airports ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday when hundreds of thousands of Chinese tourists are expected to visit. Of 12 passengers quarantined since Jan 3, lab results show that a 61-year-old Chinese woman carried a strain of the coronavirus, the Thai Health Ministry said yesterday.

The woman, who was quarantined on Wednesday, had received treatment and was well enough to return home, the ministry said. "Being able to identify a patient shows that there is efficiency in our monitoring system. We are confident that we can manage the situation," Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters.

The Chinese outbreak of pneumonia appeared to be linked to a single seafood market in Wuhan and had not so far spread beyond there, the World Health Organization said on Sunday. WHO officials in Thailand were not immediately available for comment yesterday. Thailand receives about 10 million Chinese tourists each year. The Lunar New Year holiday begins on Jan 25.

This comes less than a day after the World Health Organization had stated on Sunday that the pneumonia outbreak which already infected 40 people in China and appears to be linked to a single seafood market in the central city of Wuhan has not spread beyond there.

The cluster of infections had raised fears of a potential epidemic after China said last week that the virus causing it was a previously unknown type but came from the same family of viruses that caused the SARS and MERS epidemics.

The seafood market in Wuhan - a major domestic and international transport hub - is now closed and no cases have been reported elsewhere in China or internationally, it said. "The evidence is highly suggestive that the outbreak is associated with exposures in one seafood market in Wuhan," the WHO statement said, adding that the market was closed on Jan. 1 "At this stage, there is no infection among healthcare workers, and no clear evidence of human to human transmission."

The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said in a separate statement late on Sunday that four additional patients have been released and that no new cases have been discovered as of Saturday. Another 717 people deemed to be in close contact with the patients remain under medical observation, the authority said.

The WHO said last week that a newly emerging member of the 'coronavirus' family of viruses that caused the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreaks was the likely cause of the outbreak. Coronaviruses can cause infections ranging from the common cold to SARS. Some types cause less serious disease, while others can be far more severe.

Among 41 people confirmed as infected with the new viral pneumonia, one - a 61-year-old man with serious underlying medical conditions - died last week. Seven others are in critical condition, the Wuhan health authorities said. The WHO said preliminary epidemiological investigations had found most cases were in people who either worked at or were frequent visitors to Wuhan's Huanan Seafood



WUHAN, CHINA: A boy reads a book as passengers arrive at a train station in the city of Wuhan in Hubei province on January 12, 2020. — AFP

Wholesale Market. "To date, investigations are still under way to assess the full extent of the outbreak," it added. — Reuters

CLINIC
PAGE

248 33 199

EAR, NOSE & THROAT

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Ear infections
- Dizziness and vertigo
- Nasal obstruction
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Septum deviation
- Eustachian tube dysfunction
- Delayed speech in children
- Nasal fracture
- Allergic rhinitis
- Snoring
- Sinusitis
- Middle ear effusion
- Ventilation tube insertion
- Decreased hearing in elderly patients

180 8088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

EAR, NOSE & THROAT

Prof. Dr. Sameh Ragab
Consultant ENT

Dr. Randa Atwah
Specialist of ENT

Dr. Khaled Al Sayed
ENT Doctor

180 8088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

OPHTHALMOLOGY SERVICES

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Ethamid
Consultant

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Cataract Surgery

Glaucoma

Retina

General Ophthalmology

Follow-Up All Treatments

1828282
WhatsApp Us
+965-6000 2184

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

1888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmcKuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Toraka
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Cardiologist

Dr. P. Seshendra Nath
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA)
Specialized in Neck, Shoulder Hip and Knee

50721507
24551555
www.exircenterkw.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel: 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- 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.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

@Malhajry

DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

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

SHARQ, Ahmad Aliaher st., Building b8, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

Renova BEAUTY & BEYOND

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102
or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

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

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular 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

alsalam.int.hospital

Know your Doctor
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)
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.

alsalam.int.hospital

IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation

- Day case surgeries
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Breast surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

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

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

• Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
• Laparoscopic mini bypass
• Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

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

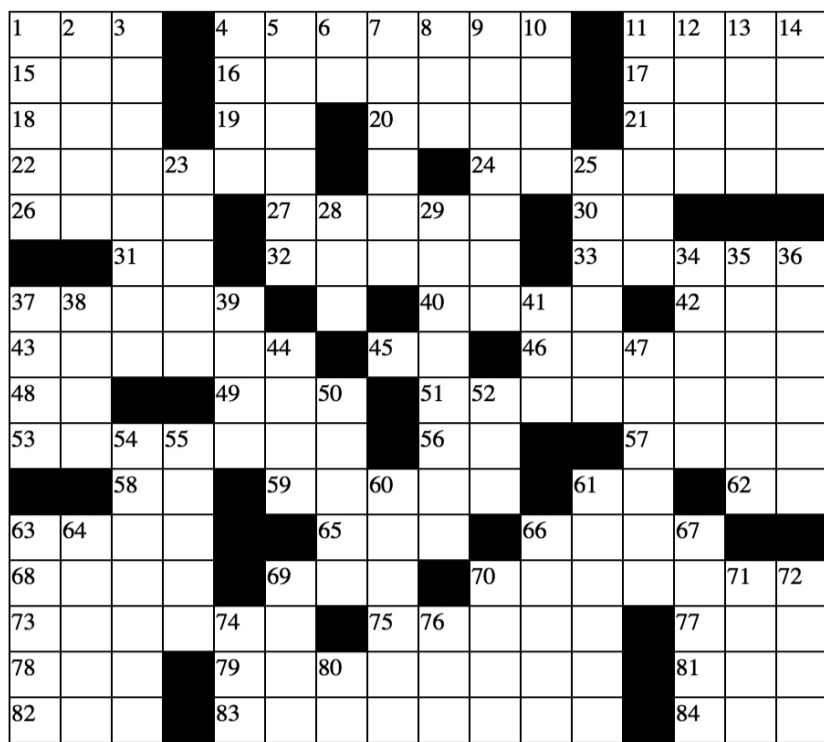
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2409



ACROSS

1. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
4. A member of an Indian people formerly living along the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
11. Flat blade-like projection on the arm of an anchor.
15. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
16. A member of a North American people formerly living in the Colorado river valley in Arizona.
17. Open to or abounding in fresh air.
18. (informal) Uncomplimentary terms for a policeman.
19. The square of a body of any size of type.
20. Cause to go somewhere.
21. Remove with or as if with a ladle.
22. Malevolent aspect of Devi.
24. Showing extreme cupidity.
26. Type genus of the Amiidae.
27. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
30. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
31. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali metal group.
32. Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
33. Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
37. (Greek mythology) The brother of Jocasta and uncle of Antigone who became king of Thebes after the fall of Oedipus.
40. Ice crystals forming a white deposit (especially on objects outside).
42. An Indian unit of length having different values in different localities.
43. Small shrubby tree of eastern North America similar to the Judas tree having usually pink flowers.
45. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
46. The commonest type of solidified lava.
48. A state in midwestern United States.
49. Any of several small ungulate mammals of Africa and Asia with rodent-like incisors and feet with hooflike toes.
51. Deserving blame or censure as being wrong or evil or injurious.
53. A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
56. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
57. The habitation of wild animals.
58. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
59. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
62. Half the width of an em.
63. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
65. An acute febrile highly contagious viral disease.
68. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
73. A member of the Uniat Church.
75. City in Sudan.
77. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
78. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
79. Durable fragrant wood.
81. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
82. A device for creating a current of air by movement of a surface or surfaces.

DOWN

1. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
2. A unit of resistance equal to a billionth of an ohm.
3. Diminished in strength, quality, or utility.
4. Inspired by a feeling of fearful wonderment or reverence.
5. Chipmunks of eastern North America.
6. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
7. The quarter of many North African cities in which the citadel is located.
8. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
9. A member of the majority people of Punjab in northwestern India.
10. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
11. Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
12. The dynasty that ruled much of Manchuria and northeastern China from 947 to 1125.
13. Relating to the Urdu language.
14. Opinion or judgment.
23. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
25. Bright with a steady but subdued shining.
28. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
29. French revolutionary who was prominent in the early days of the French Revolution (1749-1791).
34. Jordan's port.
35. Popular aquarium fish.
36. Stern foremost or backward.
38. Located in or toward the back or rear.
39. Ctenophores lacking tentacles.
41. A master's degree in business.
44. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
47. A deep bow.
50. Snarled or stalled in complete confusion.
52. The syllable naming the sixth (submediant) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
54. Of or relating to the Iberian peninsula or its inhabitants.
55. Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
60. An ore that is the chief source of zinc.
61. (Judaism) A Jewish festival (traditionally 8 days) celebrating the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
64. Large black-and-white herbivorous mammal of bamboo forests of China and Tibet.
66. A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
67. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
69. Not only so, but.
70. Cassava with long tuberous edible roots and soft brittle stems.
71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
72. God of love and erotic desire.
74. Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
76. Informal terms for the mouth.
80. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Some new equipment made available for your use might prove fascinating, Aries, and you're apt to want to learn as much as you can about how it works. Therefore, this is a great day to increase your computer skills. You might also want to try your hand at sound or video recording. Art combined with modern technology could well be a primary focus for today. Learn as much as you can, and have some fun in the process.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today you could find yourself searching for a particular piece of knowledge that you need in order to move on with something you're doing, Taurus. You'll probably find it, perhaps through a friend or colleague. Or else it might show itself suddenly, making you want to shout, "Eureka!" After that, it's smooth sailing all the way. You'll be able to use this information to accomplish whatever you need and be successful. Make good use of it.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you might find yourself working with an exciting group of people, Gemini. Perhaps this involves an opportunity to increase your skills or a new project or even a whole new job. Your mind is quick and especially innovative, so don't be surprised if you're able to contribute far more than you would have expected. Don't think your efforts will go unappreciated. Friends grow closer to you and acquaintances could become friends.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Social events could put you in touch with some exciting new people, Cancer. They may either share a current interest of yours or bring you opportunities to expand your interests. A lot of stimulating discussions could well result. If you're currently romantically involved, expect these developments to bring you closer together. If you aren't, you could well meet someone new and exciting. Whichever it is, by the end of the day your mind is likely to be jumping. Enjoy!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Contacts made through friends or colleagues, perhaps younger people, might bring new ideas for bettering your home life, Leo. Perhaps a new housemate wants to move in, you could install some new equipment, or you might even have the chance to move to a roomier place. These are only ideas to be considered, however. Final decisions should wait for a later day. There are still some facts that you need to learn first.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Discussions with close friends, children, and romantic partners take on an especially exciting aura today, Virgo. New information is likely to be circulated that might make a big difference both in your household and in your community. It also could make a difference to your mind. A new field of interest, a new intellectual search, as well as improved communication with those close to you could enrich your life at this time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Visitors to your home today might engage you in discussions of innovative ways to increase your income, Libra. This may either be through the use of computers or through other forms of modern technology. You might find that you have a talent for such activity that you never realized before. You also might be enticed into going to a meeting or lecture on the subject. Open up your mind, but don't put your money where your mouth is yet!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your mind is sharp, quick, and full of ideas, Scorpio. Discussions with others bring useful information that could well open new doors for you if you make the most of it. Group activities should prove especially stimulating for you at this time. By the end of the day, your brain should be buzzing. Take a walk and clear your head before you go to bed or else you'll never be able to get to sleep.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Newspapers, books, and TV are apt to bring a lot of new, exciting, and useful information your way, Sagittarius. This might set your mind going in such a direction as to bring new ideas for projects or business opportunities your way. Discussions with others who share your interests could contribute even more. Expect an exciting and stimulating day, and by day's end you're likely to have opened up new doors for yourself.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

The opportunity to make a change in your life, which you may have been contemplating for a long time, could finally manifest itself today, Capricorn. This could be a move to a new neighborhood, a return to school for an advanced degree, an entirely new profession, or all of the above. Whichever it is, expect to spend a lot of time throughout the day discussing it with friends and family. Then move ahead with whatever plans you have.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Paperwork involving money could be a real drag today, Aquarius, but someone close to you might just show you a way to get it done quickly and efficiently on computers or via another technological innovation. You might actually find that you like doing it this way. Your mind is especially sharp, so this is just the day to try to expand your intellectual horizons along with your technical skills. Go to it!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your mind always tends to be quick and agile, Pisces, but today you might find it going a thousand miles an hour as a result of intriguing new information received through books, newspapers, television, or the Internet. Discussions with others could also contribute. You might decide to embrace some innovative new concepts that could lead to an expansion of your horizons. At some point, go for a workout. You need to balance the mental with the physical.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Trees

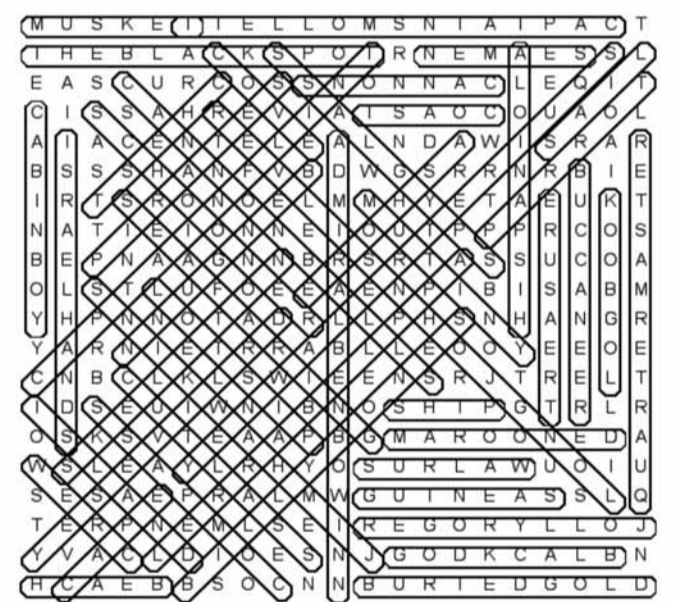
Find and circle all of the Trees that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Greek Proverb.



- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| APPLE | CEDAR | LINDEN | POPLAR |
| APRICOT | CHERRY | LONDON PLANE | REDBUD |
| ASH | CHESTNUT | MAPLE | RUBBER TREE |
| ASPEN | COTTONWOOD | NECTARINE | SEQUOIA |
| ARBORVITAE | ELM | OAK | SPRUCE |
| BALD CYPRESS | FIR | PALM | SYCAMORE |
| BEECH | GINKGO | PEACH | TULIPTREE |
| BIRCH | GOLDENRAIN | PEAR | WALNUT |
| BOXWOOD | HAZELNUT | PECAN | WITCHHAZEL |
| BUCKEYE | HEMLOCK | PLUM | WILLOW |
| BUTTERNUT | HICKORY | PINE | YELLOWWOOD |
| CATALPA | LARCH | | |

Yesterday's Solution

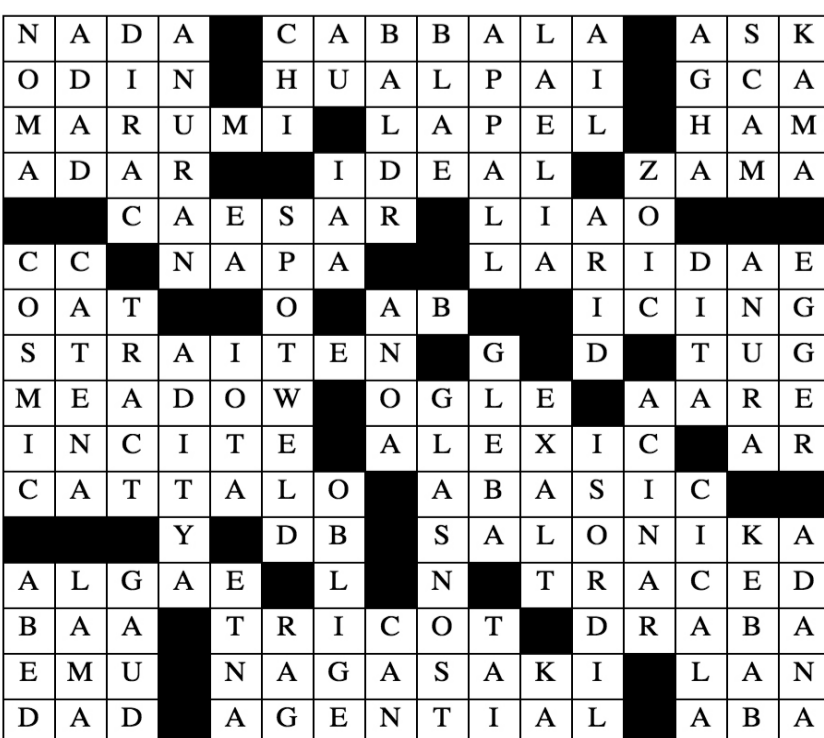
Treasure Island



- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ADMIRAL BENBOW INN | CAPE | ISLAND | QUARTERMASTER |
| APPLE BARREL | CAPTAIN FLINT | ISRAEL HANDS | SAIL |
| ASHORE | CAPTAIN SMOLLETT | JIM HAWKINS | SCHOONER |
| BEACH | CHEST | JOLLY ROGER | SEAFARING |
| BEN GUNN | COAST | LOGBOOK | SEAMEN |
| BILLY BONES | COMPASS | LONG JOHN SILVER | SHIP |
| BLACK DOG | COVE | MAROONED | SKELETON |
| BUCCANEER | CREW | MUSKET | SPY-GLASS |
| BURIED GOLD | CUTLASS | MUTINY | SQUIRE TRELAWNEY |
| CABIN BOY | DR. LIVESEY | PARROT | THE BLACK SPOT |
| CANNON BALLS | GUINEAS | PIRATES | TREASURE |
| CANNONS | HISPANIOLA | PISTOL | WALRUS |

The hidden message is: TREASURE ISLAND WAS WRITTEN BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



very hard

Yesterday's Solution



hard

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2020



Visitors gather outside the Nickelodeon Universe park at the American Dream mall. — AFP photos

Pricey 'American Dream' mall places big bet on retail

Linsey Vonn was among the luminaries on hand last month to christen "Big Snow," North America's first indoor ski facility, part of a new \$5 billion mega-mall in New Jersey. For about \$30, consumers can ski for two hours on a 1,000-foot (300-m) hill of man-made snow, the glare of the sun replaced by a metal ceiling in a venue that will be kept below freezing even in the dog days of August.

Big Snow is a flagship experience at the partially opened "American Dream", an ambitious, long-in-the-making project about 30 km from Manhattan that aims to reboot the shopping mall concept for the Instagram era. The project, which garnered some \$1 billion in state and local incentives, is a bet that modern shoppers will be drawn to Vegas-like attractions plus elite shopping and dining opportunities and not fixate on the project's carbon footprint, which is unknowable at this point.

After numerous delays and fitful construction that spanned more than a decade, American Dream began welcoming visitors in October, its gleaming white edifice beckoning drivers off the New Jersey highway. Besides indoor skiing, visitors can try about two dozen rides at the Nickelodeon Universe theme park or skate on an NHL-size rink. A giant Dreamworks water park is behind schedule, having missed a deadline for November launch. Most shops open in the spring with hotels coming some time later.

"It's just going to get bigger and better and crazier!" developer Don Ghermezian of Triple Five Worldwide said at the Big Snow's launch. Canada-based Triple Five is working to build similar projects in Saudi Arabia and Miami, although some Florida

officials have opposed using public funds for the project.

Instagram-ready

While there will be a fast fashion atrium, much of the retail focus is on the high-end, with developers envisioning Hermes customers being served champagne. American Dream expects 40 to 50 million visitors annually, including a healthy number of international tourists who are being targeted by marketers. The mall plans a "Secret Garden" area with living moss and an aviary with live bunnies, as well as a koi pond.

Such spaces, plus showcase areas for celebrity appearances, are tailor-made for younger generations active on social media, although the overall character of the facility may put off those focused on sustainable shopping. American Dream will use massive amounts of energy and exacerbate air pollution because of extra traffic, said Jeff Tittel, director of the Sierra Club's New Jersey chapter and a long-time foe of the project.

"It's sort of like the Dracula that keeps coming back and each time the mall gets bigger and there's more public money going into it" he added. American Dream declined through a spokesman to comment on whether younger consumers focused on the environment might be turned off.

'Out-of-the-box retail

The project, originally dubbed "Xanadu", dates to 2004, before the financial crisis and long before the e-commerce revolution doomed many retailers and older malls. In 2011, then-governor Chris Christie brought in Triple Five, which owns the Mall

of America in Minneapolis, to revive the project, which was halted because of financial problems facing its earlier developers. Triple Five resumed construction in 2013, revamping the center to appeal to shifting consumer taste.

The company spent the first year or so "ripping out everything and we started essentially fresh", said an American Dream spokeswoman. "We punched out skylights, we widened hallways, we made it feel much more expensive." When the project is finished, it is expected to be 55 percent entertainment and 45 percent retail. Retailers are required by contract to do something "extremely out of the box or experiential" to open in American Dream, the spokeswoman said. For example, sweets shop IT'SUGAR opened what it is calling a "candy department store" on three levels to qualify.

Jim Hughes, a Rutgers University professor specializing in the New Jersey economy, said American Dream has a "positive chance" because of its focus on experiential retail, but that there will be "a lot of skepticism" given the project's checkered history and uncertainty surrounding retail in general. "It's going to take a long time to get everything up and running," Hughes told AFP in an interview.

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail, said the offerings at American Dream were different and promising. But he said due to North New Jersey's bad traffic and the existence of other malls in the area, the location was not ideal. "The honest truth is there's already more than enough retail provision in that area, you don't need a new mall, even if it's fancy and shiny and has lots of interesting things in it," Saunders said. — AFP



People are seen at the Big Snow park inside the American Dream mall located in East Rutherford, New Jersey on Dec 19, 2019.



General view of the "It Sugar" store inside the American Dream mall.



General view of the Dream Works Water park at the American Dream mall.



General view of the Nickelodeon Universe park at the American Dream mall.





(From left) John Davis, Eddie Murphy, Craig Brewer, Keegan-Michael Key, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Ruth E Carter, and Sebastian Maniscalco accept the Best Comedy award for 'Dolemite Is My Name'. — AFP photos



Ava DuVernay and fellow cast and crew of 'When They See Us' accept the Best Limited Series award for 'When They See Us'.

'Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood' reigns at Critics' Choice Awards



Quentin Tarantino accepts the award for Best Picture for 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' onstage at the 25th Annual Critics' Choice Awards at Barker Hangar on Sunday in Santa Monica, California.



Jharrel Jerome accepts the Best Actor in a Movie/Limited Series award for 'When They See Us'.



Phoebe Waller-Bridge accepts the Best Actress in a Comedy Series award for 'Fleabag'.

Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" backed up its Oscars frontrunner status by scooping best picture at the Critics' Choice Awards on Sunday. The high-profile awards in Santa Monica - which also honor the best of television - are seen as a barometer for the all-important Oscars, for which nominations are due out Monday. "I agree with the critics for the very first time," joked Tarantino as he collected Brad Pitt's best supporting actor prize, before returning to the stage for the evening's top award.

Tarantino's love letter to 1960s Tinseltown, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and set against the backdrop of the Manson family murders, also won for best original screenplay and production design. With the Golden Globe best comedy prize already secured, the movie appears well-placed for next month's Oscars. British director Sam Mendes and South Korean auteur Bong Joon-ho shared honors after the closely watched best director category ended in a tie.

Mendes' sweeping World War I odyssey "1917" also took home editing and cinematography awards, while Bong's black comedy "Parasite" was named best foreign-language film. "Today I was just enjoying the vegan burger and trying to enjoy the ceremony," joked Bong as he collected his prize. The awards had emulated last week's Globes by serving a plant-based menu, to boost environmental awareness.

And on the acting front, most of the prizes followed the favorites established by the Globes. Joaquin Phoenix and Renee Zellweger further bolstered their Oscar odds by picking up the top acting gongs for "Joker" and "Judy". Laura Dern and Pitt also continued their supporting actor sweeps, earning further honors for their turns in "Marriage Story" and "Once Upon a Time..." Eddie Murphy received a massive standing ovation as he collected the event's lifetime achievement award, before his blaxploitation biopic "Dolemite Is My Name" won best comedy.

Robert De Niro expressed surprise as he and Al Pacino collected the best acting ensemble prize for "The Irishman". "I wasn't expecting it, frankly, at this point," he said, after the crime epic - an early Oscars frontrunner - was shut out at the Globes and missed out on several anticipated acting nominations elsewhere.

"Fleabag" topped the television awards, collecting three gongs including best comedy to continue its impressive award season run. "Succession" won best drama series. Ava DuVernay thanked Netflix for "letting a black woman do her thing" as "When They See Us", the true story of five ethnic minority teenagers wrongly accused of raping a New York jogger, won best limited series.

"Thank you to the critics for finally letting us take the stage," she added, after the acclaimed show fared poorly at the Emmys and Globes. Jharrel Jerome dedicated his acting win to "the 'Exonerated Five'." The annual event held by the Critics Choice Association at an airplane hangar near Los Angeles was again hosted by actor Taye Diggs. The Oscars will be handed out in Hollywood on Feb 9. — AFP



US-Australian actress Nicole Kidman.



Seth Meyers (center) and fellow crewmembers accept the Best Talk Show award for 'Late Night with Seth Meyers'.



Alex Borstein accepts the Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series award for 'The Marvelous Mrs Maise!'.



Jean Smart accepts the Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series award for 'Watchmen'.



Renee Zellweger accepts the Best Actress award for 'Judy'.

Lifestyle | Awards



Norman Lear accepts the Best Comedy Special for 'Live in Front of a Studio Audience: Norman Lear's 'All in the Family' and 'The Jeffersons'.



Laura Dern accepts the Best Supporting Actress award.



Taye Diggs speaks onstage during the 25th Annual Critics' Choice Awards.



Joaquin Phoenix accepts the Best Actor award for 'Joker'.



Bong Joon-ho accepts the Best Director award for 'Parasite'.

'Joker' leads Oscar nods as women, minorities miss out

Dark comic book tale "Joker" topped the Oscar nominations yesterday, picking up 11 nods including best picture and best director, as women and ethnic minorities were largely shut out once again. The pre-dawn Academy Award announcement capped months of ceaseless campaigning by A-listers and studios, revealing which stars and movies have a shot at Hollywood's ultimate prize next month. Todd Phillips's "Joker", a bleak, arthouse take on the comic book villain starring Joaquin Phoenix, was just ahead of three films.

Quentin Tarantino's 1960s Tinseltown homage "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood", Sam Mendes's World War I odyssey "1917" and Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman" each earned 10 nominations, including best picture and director. South Korean class satire "Parasite", from Bong Joon-ho, secured the final best director slot, meaning once again no women made the shortlist.

Much of the focus so far this award season has been on the lack of women and ethnic minority filmmakers honored. Greta Gerwig's acclaimed "Little Women" adaptation has been notably absent in several award nominations announcements, although it was one of nine films nominated for the best picture Oscar. "Unfortunately there are just five nominees" for best director in an "incredibly strong year," one Academy voter who asked not to be named told AFP, pointing to the revered track records of the likes of Scorsese, Tarantino and Mendes. "I don't think it's a vote against female directors," he added.

In the history of the Oscars, only five women have ever been nominated for best director - including Gerwig, for 2017's "Lady Bird". "Little Women" acting nominee Florence Pugh told Variety she was "happy that everybody is upset" over Gerwig's snub. "Congratulations to those men," actress and writer Issa Rae, co-host of the official Oscars nominations announcement, said pointedly as she presented the nominees. "Bombshell", the female-led drama which depicts the sexual harassment scandal that ousted Fox News co-founder Roger Ailes, was a surprise absence from the best picture list.

#OscarsSoWhite Part II

In an industry criticized for its lack of diversity, the Oscars picked only one non-white acting nominee - British star Cynthia Erivo, who plays US anti-slavery icon Harriet Tubman in "Harriet". Notable snubs included Eddie Murphy for blaxploitation biopic "Dolemite Is My Name," Jennifer Lopez for "Hustlers," Awkwafina for "The Farewell" and Lupita Nyong'o for "Us".

Industry website Deadline called yesterday's nominations "basically #OscarsSoWhite Part 2: #OscarsSoWhiteAndWithMoreMen," referring to a hashtag begun in 2015 in response to the lack of diverse nominees. Last year, three of the four acting Oscars went to non-white performers. But in a possible sign of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' increasingly international outlook, "Parasite" became just the sixth non-English language movie to be nominated for both best foreign-language film and best picture.

And the Academy pointed to a record number of female nominees overall, at 62. The figure includes movie producers and technical categories such as best musical score, where Icelandic maestro Hildur Guðnadóttir became the ninth woman nominated. Meanwhile, Robert De Niro was the biggest star overlooked in the best actor category for "The Irishman," although Martin Scorsese's director nod makes him the living director with the most Oscar nominations, with nine.

"The Irishman" helped Netflix to 24 nominations - the first time it has ever topped the studio count. Renee Zellweger, who has swept the best actress nominations so far during this awards season, headed the best actress Oscar shortlist thanks to her acclaimed turn as showbiz legend Judy Garland in "Judy."

Obamas 'glad'

Voting for Oscar nominees ended last Tuesday, two days after the Golden Globes. But Taron Egerton's Globe-winning turn as Elton John in "Rocketman" was not enough to earn an Oscar nomination in an outrageously competitive best actor field. Frontrunner Phoenix was recognized for his audacious anti-hero turn in "Joker". In the documentary category, "American Factory" - which follows a US Rust Belt factory reopened by a Chinese billionaire - picked up a nomination for its well-known producers.

"It's the kind of story we don't see often enough and it's exactly what Michelle and I hope to achieve," tweeted former president Barack Obama, adding he was "glad" to see the nomination. "Congrats to the incredible filmmakers and entire team!" he wrote. Some 9,000 Academy members vote for the Oscars. Voting for winners - in which all members can vote in every category - begins January 30, closing five days later. The Oscars will be handed out in Hollywood on Feb 9.—AFP



Jennifer Lopez



Al Pacino accepts the Best Acting Ensemble award for 'The Irishman'.



Jeremy Strong accepts the Best Actor in a Drama Series award for 'Succession'.



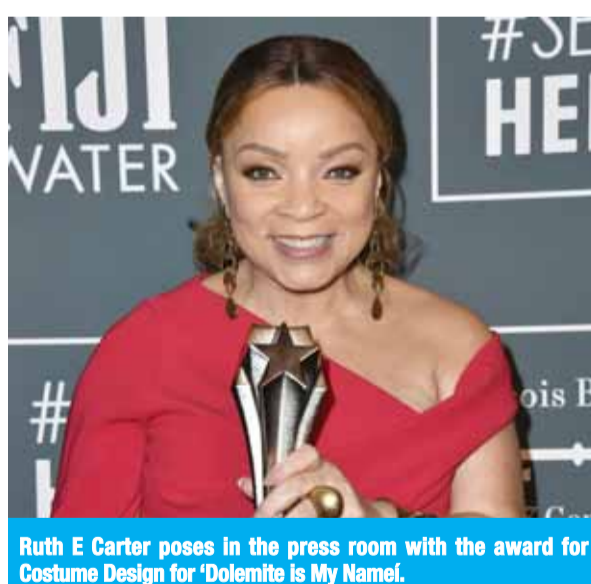
Robert De Niro accepts the Best Acting Ensemble award for 'The Irishman'.



US-South African actress Charlize Theron



Kristen Bell accepts the #SeeHer Award.



Ruth E Carter poses in the press room with the award for Costume Design for 'Dolemite Is My Name'.



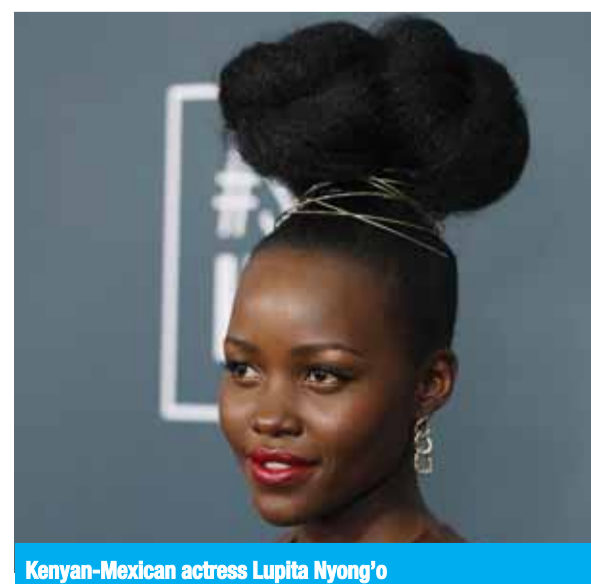
Eddie Murphy accepts the Lifetime Achievement Award.



Andrew Scott accepts the Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series award for 'Fleabag'.



US actor Billy Porter



Kenyan-Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o

Lifestyle | Cocktail

Bye, bye London: British fashion star Green makes his Paris debut

Brexit hasn't happened yet, but the fashion exodus has already begun. Craig Green, the rising star of British fashion who has won menswear designer of the year three out of the last four years, is quitting London to show in Paris for the first time. He is one of four newcomers to a jam-packed Paris men's fashion week, which kicks off today. With 53 runway shows in the official program and just as many presentations outside, the French capital now utterly dominates fashion while Brexit-hit London, Milan and New York fall away in its wake.

The British Fashion Council and Italy's Chamber of Fashion joined forces to bring 10 emerging British designers and three established names to the Italian fashion capital last week as a "bridge between nations" as Britain's January 31 exit from the EU loomed. "It's a political message... Too many frontiers aren't good for the fashion system," said Italy's Carlo Capasa, head of the Italian chamber. Yet there is no disguising that both London and Milan are struggling for relevance in the face of the Parisian steamroller, which gets longer and more crowded every season.

Paris domination

Poaching 34-year-old Green - who has been hailed as a "true genius" - is another coup for Paris. He will show on Sunday, the final day of the menswear shows alongside two other British brands, Dunhill and Paul Smith. Vogue has described the Londoner, who created the costumes for Ridley Scott's 2017 blockbuster "Alien: Covenant", as "without contest, one of the most important designers working in London right now."

Known for his gender-neutral style, he cut his teeth working for the hugely influential Belgian avant-gardist Walter Van Beirendonck, one of the "Antwerp Six", that included such trendsetters as Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester and Martin Margiela. Three other debu-

tants join Green on the official Paris catwalk, led by Botter, run by the Dutch eco-conscious couple Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh, who also designs for the French label, Nina Ricci.

Another French house Rochas will launch its first Paris menswear collection with the punky US brand Rhude the first of the newcomers out of the traps for its show yesterday. But there are also some notable absences, including Demna Gvasalia, who has probably done more to shake up Paris fashion in the last five years than anyone else. He has also stepped back from designing for Vetements, the uber-cool brand he founded before taking the reins at Balenciaga. His rebel spirit and post-Soviet grunge aesthetic so beloved of US stars like Kanye West and Rihanna is likely to live on, as is his brand's penchant for hijacking corporate logos for cutting social comment.

Abloh returns

The hyperactive American designer Virgil Abloh is back, however, for his Off-White and Louis Vuitton shows after being forced to curb his manic globe-trotting schedule in September because of "health considerations". That meant him missing his Off-White women's show in the French capital. But there were no signs that he was slowing up, teasing his new looks to his millions of social media followers, as well an exhibition of his art in a Paris gallery.

A clock motif for Louis Vuitton and a pleated trouser bottom that ends with a webbed-foot fan on two mismatched shoes was liked more than half a million times in a few hours. Over the New Year Abloh predicted the eventual death of streetwear - the fashion sub-genre of which he is one the kings. "I would definitely say it is gonna die," he said. "Its time will be up... how many more T-shirts can we own, how many more hoodies, how many mores sneakers?" But he later sought to clarify his comments, saying: "What



Craig Green

we do is called design, it is not limited to being called 'streetwear'. The moral of the story is beware of whatever box you are labelled as. Challenge it, defy it, do not be defined by it." —AFP

Meghan Markle bugs pontiff for fashion tips in 'The New Pope'

She is at war with the Queen - now the "Pope" is turning on Meghan Markle. The Duchess of Sussex is the butt of a string of catty quips in the new television series, "The New Pope", which premiered on HBO and Sky Atlantic yesterday. The timing of the show - the follow-up to "The Young Pope" - could not be worse for the American actress, whose bombshell announcement that she and Prince Harry were stepping back from frontline royal duties, has rocked the British monarchy.

The cheeky smash-hit Vatican drama that saw Jude Law's dishy American pope struck down by a heart attack in the first series, has Markle bombarding his replacement with demands for fashion advice in the second. "What a nuisance!" barks the fictional Pope John Paul III played by Hollywood star John Malkovich as his butler takes another call supposedly from Markle.

"Wear the yellow Dior because it plays up the contrasts with your complexion," Sir John Brannox, the aristocratic English prelate played by Malkovich tells Markle in one scene. "No, Meghan I am adamant, wear the yellow," he adds. "She calls me 25 times a day for beauty tips. She thinks I'm gay," he later confesses to the Vatican's spin doctor.

Lack of class

While Markle - who wore Dior for the baptism of son Archie in July - does not appear herself, she is a recurring presence in the series' early episodes. "They want to be influencers but they have no idea of color combinations," Malkovich's character adds in one of many takedowns aimed at Markle, who has complained about being persecuted by the British tabloid press. Her husband has branded some of the criticism of the mixed-race former "Suits" star as racist.

In the series, Brannox is voted pope after Law's immediate replacement, Pope Francis II, dies in mysterious circumstances after threatening to give away all the Church's riches. "What will Meghan do without me?" Malkovich sighs after he finally agrees to be pontiff. The American actress - whose feminism and social media savvy has made her an uncomfortable fit for the British royals - is the target of a further jibe about her supposed lack of breeding in the show. Despite its gags at the expense of Markle, "The New Pope" - which also features a "resurrected" Law - is being billed for its feminist take on the inner workings of the Catholic church.

Nuns on strike

As well as a teasing trailer that featured Law's pope walking along the beach in a pair of skimpy white swimming trunks, it has the Vatican's nuns go on strike and actresses Cecile de France and Ludvine Sagnier in key roles. Sharon Stone and Marilyn Manson also play themselves. "The Church is much more sexist than the rest of the world," the series' creator Paolo Sorrentino, the Bafta-winning maker of the 2013 film "La Grande Bellezza", told AFP. "Women absolutely do not have the same rights: they cannot say Mass, they live according to how men want them to. This is a situation that will end," he added.

Sorrentino said that far from being shocked by the sex, corruption and constant back-stabbing that the series portrays, Vatican insiders seemed to enjoy it. He insisted that there was nothing in it that would shock priests "who are listening to sins all day long in the confessional boxes". When he visited the Vatican, "clerics were smiling and winking at me, as if to say they liked it," the Italian added. The series comes at a time of unprecedented interest by Hollywood in the inner workings of the Catholic church, with Jonathan Pryce nominated for an Oscar yesterday for his performance as the real Pope Francis in Netflix's "The Two Popes". —AFP

McQueen slams BAFTA for lack of diversity

Oscar-winning British director Steve McQueen has criticized Britain's top film awards following controversy over the lack of diversity in this year's nominations. McQueen, the first black director to win an Academy Award - for "12 Years A Slave" in 2014 - said the BAFTAs risked being "of no interest to anyone" if they fail to become more inclusive. The criticism came after the shortlist of nominees for top awards released by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts lacked women and people from minority backgrounds.

There are no non-white actors in the four main acting categories while no female filmmakers are up for best director. The backlash at the shortlist prompted BAFTA to announce it will conduct a "careful and detailed review" of its voting system, while insisting gender balance was an "industry-wide problem". But McQueen, who has seen two of his films previously win BAFTAs, called that stance "nonsense". "When these films are being made to critical acclaim, they're not even being recognized," he told The Guardian newspaper yesterday. "After a while you get a bit fed up with

it. Because if the BAFTAs are not supporting British talent... then I don't understand what you are there for."

The Hollywood director, who received a knighthood in Queen Elizabeth II's annual new year's honors list, said without reform the BAFTAs would eventually have "no credibility at all". "They have to change," he added, noting British talent that could have been nominated this year included Marianne Jean-Baptiste for "In Fabric", Cynthia Erivo for "Harriet" and Daniel Kaluuya for "Queen & Slim".

A 2018 report conducted by business psychology firm Pearn Kandola found 94 percent of all Bafta film award nominees have been white. The Oscars has faced similar criticisms in recent years, with all-white lists of acting nominees in both 2015 and 2016. This year's BAFTAs are to be held on Feb 2 in London. Dark comic book drama "Joker," starring Golden Globes winner Joaquin Phoenix, leads the pack with 11 nominations, including for best film. Meanwhile Martin Scorsese's gangster epic "The Irishman" and Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon A Time... In Hollywood", both received 10 nomi-



nations each. In Los Angeles meanwhile, the Netflix blaxploitation biopic "Dolemite Is My Name" starring Eddie Murphy won best comedy at the Critics' Choice Awards Sunday night. —AFP

French 'Spiderman' stages protest climb against pension reform

Adaredevil French climber yesterday made his own contribution to a long-running protest against planned pension reforms, scurrying up a towering skyscraper just outside Paris. "People spend 40 years of their lives slaving away, often in a job they don't even like," Alain Robert told AFP before beginning his climb. "We want people to live decently."

Robert, known worldwide for scaling landmark towers without ropes - and usually without permission - began his ascent of the 187-m Total building in the La Defense business district at around 10:30 am (0930 GMT). Passers-by gaped as he mounted the lattice of metal-framed glass panes, taking 52 minutes to reach the top, where as usual police and security guards were waiting.

"It was quite cold, I couldn't feel the tips of my fingers so it was tricky," Robert said. "And also I'm not in the same shape as I was 20 years ago! I'm 57, so technically not far from retirement. And climbing is the only way I make money," Robert said before being taken away. "Will I have to keep climbing solo until I'm 64? Or even 67?"

Unions have been waging a crippling transport strike against the pension overhaul since Dec 5, disrupting train services and making commutes miserable for millions, especially in the Paris region. The government wants to forge a single system from 42 separate schemes and intended to push back the official age for a full pension to 64 from 62 - a measure it withdrew temporarily under union pressure over the weekend.

"They need to stop telling people to work more and accept less, because that's what this reform is about," Robert said, echoing claims from France's hard-line unions, which are demanding the government withdraw its plan. It is not the first time Robert has climbed to promote a political message. Last August, he unfurled a "peace banner" while racing up the 68 floors of the Cheung Kong Center in Hong Kong as the city was rocked by pro-democracy protests challenging Beijing's authority. And in 2015, Robert scaled the Engie



French skyscraper climber Alain Robert, popularly known as the "French Spiderman", climbs the Total tower in the west of Paris's business district of La Defense yesterday. —AFP

tower in La Defense to draw attention to calls for a more transparent banking system. —AFP



Enjoy the delectable tea in Taiwan

Taiwan is known as the tea lover's paradise, and is Asia's best kept secret as one of the finest tea producers in the world especially in the category of Oolong. As the French have the wine, Taiwan has the tea! Here are some famous teas below for all the tea lovers to visit Taiwan on their next adventure!

High Mountain Oolong Tea: This name refers to any tea that is grown over 1000m elevation, and processed as a lightly oxidized, unroasted Oolong Tea. There are many famous place names within this category that represent geographic growing regions. These include Alishan, Shanlinxi, Lishan, and Dayuling. Virtually all High Mountain Oolong Tea is made with the Qing Xin Oolong cultivar.

Jin Xuan "Milk" Oolong Tea: Jin Xuan, also called Tai Cha #12, is a hybrid cultivar that has become increasingly popular since its inception in 1980's by Taiwan's

Tea Research and Extension Station (TRES). It is a hardy, high yielding strain that is very versatile both in its cultivation and processing. Jin Xuan is mostly grown in Nantou and Chiayi Counties, but it can now be found all over Taiwan and beyond.

Dong Ding Oolong Tea: Dong Ding, or 'Frozen Peak' is the name of a mountain in Lugu Township, and now represents a traditional processing method, using the original Qing Xin Oolong cultivar that migrated from Mainland China. Dong Ding Oolong is the most popular traditionally made tea in Taiwan. Its distinctive qualities result from medium levels of both oxidation and roasting.

Oriental Beauty (Bai Hao Oolong) Tea: Oriental Beauty is the name that was given to this type of tea by the Queen of England, Bai Hao (white fur) Oolong is the name that is locally used to refer to this tea, based on

the harvesting and processing methods.

The leaves are harvested very young, when they still have their protective fur. The fully processed leaves are slightly curled, and multi-colored. The leaves are heavily oxidized, to the point of resembling a Black Tea in character. A true batch of Oriental Beauty is only produced when the new leaf growth has been affected by the Green Leafhopper.

Sun Moon Lake Black Tea: Tea cultivation in the Sun Moon Lake area dates back to the Qing Dynasty (17-1800's) when Chinese settlers began cultivating the naturally occurring wild tea tree. In the early 1900's, the Japanese colonists developed large scale Black Tea production using the Assam strain here, following the British model in India. The pre-existing wild tea strain naturally cross-bred with an Assam strain. Taiwan's TRES spent 50 years refining this hybridization before

it was publicly registered in 1999 as Tai Cha #18. In 2003, was given the name Red Jade at the 100 year anniversary of the TRES, and honoured as a Taiwanese specialty tea.

Four Seasons Spring Oolong Tea: Around 1981, a Muzha tea farmer in Taipei County discovered a naturally occurring hybrid oolong in his tea garden that proved to be particularly suitable to the climate in Taiwan. Since then, it has gained popularity for its prolific produce and unique flavour and character. Now it is cultivated extensively as a signature oolong tea that is unique to the island of Taiwan. The name Four Seasons Spring was chosen for the plant's prolific year-round leaf growth, allowing for at least four harvests annually that produce a fresh, fragrant character of tea that is unique among oolongs.



A driver competes in Stage 8 of Dakar 2020 around Wadi Ad-Dawasir yesterday. — AFP

Hotter temperatures could kill 2,000 more a year in US: Study

PARIS: A rise in temperature of just two degrees Celsius could lead to an additional 2,100 deaths from injuries every year in the United States, researchers said yesterday, highlighting another danger posed by global warming. Most of the extra fatalities would be men aged 15-34 years due to a heightened risk of drowning and road traffic accidents, with alcohol consumption tending to rise in line with temperatures. Researchers from Britain and the US studied the number of deaths from injuries on a state-by-state basis for every year between 1980 and 2017.

The deaths were classed either as accidental - from vehicle crashes, falls, drowning and so on - or intentional, from say assault and suicide. They then tracked unusual temperature changes for each county over the same period and found that deaths from injuries tended to rise during warmer months, particularly in populous southern states such as California, Texas and Florida. The authors of the study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, said the findings indicated a strong link between the risk of dying from injury and rising global temperatures triggered by climate change.

"These new results show how much climate change can affect young people," said Majid Ezzati, senior study author and a professor at Imperial College London. "We need to respond to this threat with better preparedness in terms of emergency services, social support and health warnings." Data from the National Center for Health Statistics analyzed by the team showed that in the 1980-2017 period, 4.1 million boys and men died from injury compared with 1.8 million girls and women.

They found that warmer temperatures increased the risk of dying from drowning and transport accidents, linked to increased swimming, driving and alcohol intake. They used a statistical model to predict the number of additional deaths in a given year depending on whether

temperatures warm 1.5C or 2C. These are the temperature targets that nations agreed to work towards in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

The team found that 1.5C of warming would bring an additional 1,600 deaths each year; 2C of warming would see around 2,100 more. With just 1C of warming since pre-industrial times so far, Earth has already experienced a cascade of deadly climate-related disasters that kill thousands of people and displace millions each year. President Donald Trump plans to formally pull the US from the Paris deal later this year.

On Saturday, experts said 2020 is the most crucial year yet for humanity's plan to dodge the bullet of catastrophic global warming, warning that the narrow path to safety was riddled with pitfalls, from the US election to Brexit. When nations struck the 2015 Paris agreement, which aims to limit temperature rises under 2 degrees Celsius, they agreed on five-year periods in which climate action could be implemented, assessed and boosted.

2020 is the year the landmark deal goes into effect, yet almost three decades of diplomatic wrangling has fallen far short of what science says is needed to avert disastrous climate change. A crucial UN summit at which leaders will finalize their action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is set to open in Glasgow on Nov 9 - just six days after a US general election that could see Trump win a second term.

Trump shocked the world in 2017 when he said the United States - history's largest emitter - was withdrawing from the Paris agreement. It is due to leave the deal on Nov 4. After a year of climate-related disasters, from cyclones and flooding in Africa and southeast Asia to devastating wildfires in Australia and California, nations in December failed to make progress during the annual UN Climate Change Conference COP 25.

More than 100 countries have pledged to redouble their efforts to reduce domestic emissions, but the biggest polluters - China, India, the US and the European Union - have yet to unveil new plans. The Paris deal was dragged partly over the line thanks to more than a year of shuttle diplomacy by host France. Climate negotiations are multilateral and emissions cuts voluntary, so much depends on the skill and tactics of the country in charge of annual COP negotiating sessions. — AFP

engagements. Both of them then went into his office, only for the secretary to leave a few minutes later. The woman was then surprised by the ambassador locking the door and screaming in her face.

When she asked the ambassador why he was angry, he said she had insulted him when she refused his advances. She claims the ambassador then pulled her towards him, forcefully removed her clothes and attempted to rape her. After she resisted and threatened to scream, she said the ambassador threatened to "destroy her future" if she told anyone anything about what had happened.

The woman said that she took her case to her country after she was told she cannot file a complaint in Kuwait because the incident took place inside a foreign embassy, and the alleged suspect has diplomatic immunity. — Al-Rai

The president noted the disaster occurred at a time of heightened tensions in the region after a US drone strike killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad on Jan 3. "We must all join hands to bring security back to the region and allow peace to prevail." Iran has come under mounting international pressure to ensure its investigation into the tragedy is full and transparent.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a memorial event in Edmonton for the 57 Canadians who lost their lives that "this tragedy struck our Iranian-Canadian community". "We want to assure all families and all Canadians that we will not rest until there are answers," the Canadian leader said. "We will not rest until there is justice and accountability." Iran has invited experts from Canada, France, Ukraine and the United States to take part in the probe.

Despite footage from the site of disaster appearing to show bulldozers at work, the Revolutionary Guards' top commander denied evidence had been tampered with. "We didn't touch anything," said Major General Hossein Salami. "We didn't move the wreckage of the aircraft, we didn't change the scene, we didn't move the air defense system, and we didn't (alter) the radar readings."

On the diplomatic front, Britain summoned Iran's ambassador to London after its Tehran envoy was briefly arrested for allegedly attending the demonstration. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said Britain would convey its "strong objections" over Rob Macaire's arrest, calling it an "unacceptable breach" of diplomatic protocol. — Agencies

Abe warns Iran conflict to have...

Continued from Page 1

Japan, however, will not join a US-led coalition in the region. Tokyo has walked a fine line in balancing its key alliance with Washington and its longstanding relations and interests with Tehran. Ohtaka said that Abe stressed the importance of a continuous and stable Saudi oil supply to Japan. The prime minister's tour will also include visits to the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Meanwhile, King Abdullah of Jordan yesterday warned that the Islamic State group was regrouping and was once again on the rise in the Middle East. Months after the ousting of IS last year from their last Syrian holdout, Abdullah said his "major concern is that we have seen over the past year the re-establishment and rise of ISIS", not only in southeastern Syria, but also in western Iraq.

"We have to deal with the reemergence of ISIS," the king added in an interview with TV channel France 24 ahead of talks this week in Brussels, Strasbourg and Paris. He also said many foreign fighters from Syria were now in Libya. "From a European perspective, with Libya being much closer to Europe, this is going to be

Philippines on alert as volcano...

Continued from Page 1

below the Earth's surface. Schools in the region around Taal, some government offices in Manila and the Philippine Stock Exchange were closed as authorities issued warnings against breathing the ash.

Stores quickly sold out of dust masks, which health officials said could help protect against potentially harmful effects of the powder-like soot. "I'll just stay at home and tie a handkerchief around my face. I think that's OK," Manila resident Menchie Claveria said, after attempting to buy a mask.

Limited flight operations resumed mid-yesterday at Manila's main international airport, nearly a day after authorities halted them due to the safety risk volcanic ash poses to planes. However, travellers booked on over 240 cancelled flights still faced delays at Ninoy Aquino International Airport. "I'm disappointed because this (delay) means additional expense for me and it's tiring to wait," said stranded traveller Joan

Queen agrees to 'transition period'...

Continued from Page 1

Sussex and the Duke of Cambridge. For brothers who care so deeply about the issues surrounding mental health, the use of inflammatory language in this way is offensive and potentially harmful."

The Sussexes said Wednesday they wanted to step back as senior royals, divide their time between Britain and North America, rip up long-established ways of working with the media and seek a "progressive" and financially-independent new role. That triggered the queen on Thursday to direct her officials, plus those of Charles, William and Harry, to seek urgent "workable solutions" following the bombshell announcement.

Charles, 71, the heir to the throne, flew back from Oman, where he attended a condolence ceremony Sunday following the death of the late Sultan Qaboos. Meghan, 38, was expected to join the meeting via conference call from Canada as they attempt to work out the "next steps" towards a compromise.

Issues up for debate include how much money the couple will still receive from Charles - who largely bankrolls his sons and their families - the couple's royal titles and how they can raise their own finances without compromising the monarchy. Their plan for a new way of working said they intended to continue to "fully support" Queen Elizabeth and honor their duties to the monarch, the Commonwealth and their patronages.

an important discussion in the next couple of days," Abdullah said. "Several thousand fighters have left Idlib (Syria) through the northern border and have ended up in Libya, that is something that we in the region but also our European friends will have to address in 2020."

Regarding last week's spiking of tensions between Iran and the United States, Abdullah said he hoped that "in the next several months we set the right tone for the region, which is really to bring the temperature down". "So far it looks like de-escalation, we hope that that continues to be the trend. We can't afford instability in our part of the world. "Whatever happens in Tehran will affect Baghdad, Amman, Beirut, the Israeli Palestinian process."

Abdullah added that the recent deployment of Turkish troops in a training capacity to Libya "will only create more confusion" in the country. Both sides in Libya's conflict agreed to a ceasefire from Sunday to end nine months of fighting, following weeks of international diplomacy and calls for a truce by power-brokers Russia and Turkey.

A UN report in November said several countries were violating the arms embargo on Libya in place since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Jordan and the United Arab Emirates have regularly supplied the forces of Libyan military strongman General Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by Turkey's regional rivals - Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE. Jordan, whose stability is seen as vital for the volatile Middle East, hosts some 1.3 million refugees from neighboring war-torn Syria. — Agencies

Diocaras, a 28-year-old Filipino who works in Taiwan. "But there's nothing we can do."

The eruption began with an explosion of superheated steam and rock, but by early yesterday "fountains" of lava had been spotted on Taal, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said. Stunning lightning shows have periodically played out above the volcano in a little-understood phenomenon that has been attributed to static electricity. Authorities raised the volcano alert level to its second-highest on Sunday, saying an "explosive eruption" could happen in "hours to days".

Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum told AFP the lava was evidence of fresh movement in the volcano, but said it was unclear if Taal would "sustain its activity". Apart from the ash, some particles up to 6.4 cm in diameter, larger than a golf ball, had reportedly fallen in areas around the lake, Phivolcs said. Taal's last eruption was in 1977, Solidum said. Two years ago, Mount Mayon displaced tens of thousands of people after spewing millions of tons of ash, rocks and lava in the central Bicol region. The most powerful explosion in recent years was the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo, about 100 km northwest of Manila, which killed more than 800 people. — AFP

However, they want to make 2020 a "transition" year to carve out their new role and launch their new Sussex Royal charitable entity and seek to raise their own sources of income. They also want to keep their newly-renovated Frogmore Cottage home on the queen's Windsor Castle estate as their British base.

The London Evening Standard newspaper said the family was "falling apart, and should try to put itself back together". The Sussexes need to accept they have "caused a lot of upset", while the others must understand that the pair are "deeply unhappy with the role cast for them as minor royals hanging on the purse-strings of their relatives". The way forward must involve the freedom to live abroad and earn money, the daily said.

Harry, now sixth in line to the throne following the birth of William's three children, has been open about his mental health issues in coming to terms with his mother's death in a Paris car crash, when he was just 12. He and Meghan in October admitted to struggling with the spotlight following their wedding at Windsor Castle in May 2018 and son Archie's birth 12 months later.

US former television actress Meghan was widely welcomed as a breath of fresh air for the royal family when their engagement was announced in Nov 2017. But the prince and the ex-"Suits" star have lashed out at negative news coverage since the wedding - some of which Harry says was racist - in light of Meghan's biracial heritage. BBC royal correspondent Jonny Dymond said Harry and Meghan must commit to public service if they are to remain as royals. "A deal will probably be crafted - however the direction of travel is one way. Prince Harry and Meghan are looking for the exit," he said. — Agencies

Asian envoy in Kuwait accused...

Continued from Page 1

She said in the beginning, he used to talk to her about work, but she later noticed he started to call her at midnight while drunk and make lewd propositions, but she always refused them.

She added that on Nov 14, 2018, the ambassador called her to his office to "discuss important matters", but when she arrived, he ordered his office director to cancel all

Iran denies 'cover-up' as...

Continued from Page 1

psychological war... did so based on existing information at the time." Germany called on Iran to allow people to show their grief and "protest peacefully and freely". Its foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Adebahr described as "very worrying" videos reportedly showing security forces cracking down on demonstrators.

Tehran's police chief said officers had been ordered to show "restraint" after Sunday night's gathering at iconic Azadi Square south of the city center. "The police treated the people who had gathered with patience and tolerance," said General Hossein Rahimi. "The police did not shoot at the gatherings at all because a restraint order (had been issued) for police in the capital."

President Hassan Rouhani promised a "thorough investigation" into the disaster in a phone call with Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, his office said. The majority of those on Flight PS752 were Iranians and Canadians, including dual nationals. Others were Ukrainians, Afghans, Britons, seven Swedes and 10 people who resided in the Scandinavian country. "We must strive to ensure that such a shocking incident is not repeated anywhere in the world," Rouhani said.

Sports

Devils snap Lightning's 10-game winning streak with 3-1 victory

Huberdeau makes history as Panthers topple Leafs

NEWARK: Louis Domingue made 26 saves against his former team as the New Jersey Devils snapped Tampa Bay's franchise record-tying 10-game winning streak with a 3-1 victory on Sunday night in Newark, NJ. Andy Greene and Miles Wood each had a goal and an assist, and Travis Zajac also scored for New Jersey, which completed an impressive back-to-back that began Saturday night with a 5-1 victory at Metropolitan Division-leading Washington. Domingue also picked up the win in that one with 33 saves. Tyler Johnson scored for Tampa Bay, which suffered its first loss since a 3-1 setback at Washington on Dec. 21. The Lightning took a 1-0 lead 37 seconds into the second period on Johnson's 11th goal of the season and the 150th of his career. Greene tied it with his first goal of the season, firing a slap shot from the top of the left circle past a screen by Wayne Simmonds and inside the right post. It snapped the Lightning's shutout streak at 169:05, as well as a streak of 13 consecutive goals scored by Tampa Bay that began in the second period of Tuesday's 9-2 victory over Vancouver.

PANTHERS 8, MAPLE LEAFS 4

Jonathan Huberdeau became Florida's all-time leading scorer in the club's best offensive game this season, lifting the Panthers to a rout of Toronto. The Panthers held a 7-1 lead at 12:37 of the second period and withstood three consecutive goals by the Maple Leafs, who lost their fifth straight in South Florida. An All-Star selection, Huberdeau collected a goal and an assist to boost his career point total to a franchise-best 420 — one more than Olli Jokinen. Mike Hoffman potted two goals, Vincent Trocheck and captain Aleksander Barkov each had a goal and two assists and Frank Vatrano had one of each. Defenseman Josh Brown and Mike Matheson also tallied for Florida, which recorded a season-high scoring output.

PENGUINS 4, COYOTES 3 (SO)

Teddy Blueger flipped a shot under the crossbar in the eighth round of the shootout to give visiting Pittsburgh a win over Arizona. Pittsburgh's Bryan Rust and Arizona's Taylor Hall each converted in the third round of the shootout. Blueger scored to give the Penguins the advantage, and goaltender Tristan Jarry sealed the win by stopping Carl Soderberg. Jared McCann, Patric Hornqvist and Brandon Tanev each scored, and Evgeni Malkin notched two assists for Pittsburgh, which finished a road trip with a 3-0-0 record. Jarry finished with 24 saves for the Penguins.

PREDATORS 1, JETS 0

Juuse Saros was outstanding in his first start for new coach John Hynes, registering 28 saves in Nashville's win at Winnipeg. The backup to No. 1 netminder Pekka Rinne, Saros (6-7-4) recorded his first shutout of the season and eighth of his career in front of Hynes, who won for the second time in three games since being hired by Nashville as the franchise's third head coach on Tuesday. Kyle Turris' first-period goal proved to be enough for the Predators, who won their second straight and broke a four-game losing streak against Winnipeg. Yakov Trenin claimed the lone assist, but captain Roman Josi's career-best 12-game point streak came to an end.

CANUCKS 4, WILD 1

Elias Pettersson, Bo Horvat and Troy Stecher each scored in the second period, and Jacob Markstrom made 23 saves as Vancouver beat host Minnesota. Horvat added an empty-net goal in the third period for the Canucks, who have won two straight and nine of their past 11 games to stay in the thick of the top-heavy Pacific Division. Devan Dubnyk made 26 saves for the Wild, who have lost three straight and have just four wins in the past 12 outings (4-7-1).

SABRES 5, RED WINGS 1

Evan Rodrigues scored his first two goals of the season, and Buffalo snapped a six-game road winless streak with an



NEWARK: John Hayden #15 and Kevin Rooney #16 of the New Jersey Devils in action against the Tampa Bay Lightning at Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. The Devils defeated the Lightning 3-1. — AFP

easy victory at Detroit. Rodrigues had gone scoreless in 25 games before his breakthrough performance. The Red Wings had won their previous three home games. — Reuters



HH the Amir's Ninth International Grand Prix opening ceremony

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir will patronize the opening ceremony of HH the Amir's Ninth International Grand Prix. Jahra Governor Nasser Al-Hajraf will represent the Amir. The ceremony was postponed from Saturday to today due to the mourning period of three days following the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman.

Meanwhile, competitions of the fifth day will see the distribution of two gold medals in the 10m air

pistol and rifle for women. On the other hand, Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi chaired a meeting of the Arab Shooting Federation Board, with its premises being at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Al-Otaibi welcomed the delegations in Kuwait, then the agenda was discussed and decision taken in the previous meeting were approved. President and board members thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his support of the sport of shooting in the Arab world, and a letter of thanks will be sent to HH the Amir for organizing an annual tournament that brings in the best shooters from around the world.

Morocco's Minister of Water and Forests, Deputy Chairman of Arab Shooting Federation Abdelazeem Al-Hafi lauded the support of HH the Amir which reflects positively on the shooters levels in various events. He said that the Arab Federation, with the leadership of Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi is going on the right path for the development of the game.



President of Lebanese Shooting and Hunting Federation Butrus Jalakh said the federation has a distinguished schedule of Arab Federation Championships all along the sports season, which is coupled with several courses of refereeing and lauded the high level Kuwait shooters are enjoying.

He also lauded the efforts of President of Arab Shooting Federation Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi who always gives support to Arab federations.

Meanwhile, Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaitheh lauded HH Grand Prix, adding Kuwait shooting is giving the best example by making success after another be it in organization or achievements in all tournaments.

Fulaitheh said he was impressed with the organization and attention to all details and the extensive efforts of the organizing committee.

Fulaitheh said HH the Amir Grand Prix is now on the international agenda and enjoys participation of elite shooters from around the world.

Badminton world No 1 Momota hurt

KUALA LUMPUR: Badminton world number one Kento Momota was injured and his driver was killed in a crash near Kuala Lumpur yesterday just hours after he won the Malaysia Masters.

Police said the Japanese star, 25, suffered a broken nose and cuts to his face when the van carrying him to the city's airport crashed early in the morning, in a blow to his preparations for this year's Tokyo Olympics. The driver was killed at the scene after the vehicle collided with a slow-moving lorry on a highway. An assistant coach, physiotherapist, and badminton official also suffered minor injuries.

The accident came after the dominant Japanese star began his 2020 season in style Sunday with victory over Denmark's Viktor Axelsen in Kuala Lumpur.

"It's truly tragic, especially involving a badminton icon like Momota," Malaysian sports minister Syed Saddiq told reporters, after visiting the injured in hospital south of the capital. But he added those hurt were "recovering well, (and) all four are also in stable condition". The others hurt suffered facial, leg, hand and head injuries, according to the police. — AFP

Alonso second on Dakar stage eight

WADI AD-DAWASIR: Two-time Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso recorded his best result of the Dakar Rally yesterday, finishing second behind Frenchman Mathieu Serradori on stage eight. The stage was shrouded in mourning after the death on Sunday of Portuguese rider Paulo Goncalves. The motorbike and quadbike categories were cancelled for the stage, a 477km loop incorporating straight sections with several chains of dunes to test handling skills.

"I'd like to dedicate this victory to Paulo because I'm a former biker," said Serradori, an amateur who drives an SRT. "It's not easy to get motivated after a day like that and my co-pilot Fabien was there as well. But there are two fighters in the car and I'm very happy with this result."

Serradori finished 4min 4sec ahead of Toyota's Alonso, with Argentinean Mini driver Orlando Terranova in third, at 6:19. Alonso, who had finished four times in the top 10 without having made the podium in a stage, was quick to heap praise on his co-driver/navigator Marc Coma, a five-time Dakar champion on a motorbike.

"Today we had an amazing day," said Alonso. "We had one puncture unfortunately and we lost a little bit of momentum there, but otherwise the stage was nearly perfect and Marc was unbelievable, you know - the dunes, the navigation. In his first Dakar Alonso had limited ambitions ruled out winning a stage but now he believes it is within his grasp. "Initially I thought it was impossible," he said. "But after today, obviously when you are second maybe there is a chance, so we will try."

He said not having motorbikes setting the route had upset the rhythm of the stage. "Having no bikes changed a lot, especially for the first two or three cars," he said. "I benefited from starting from the back... I'm happy to complete the day without any issues. It was a beautiful stage, quite fast with a lot of dunes, so it was good. I think the dunes are harder than tracks, but for whatever reason I feel more comfortable."

"I'm not coming from the dunes at all but it seems that I can get a good rhythm and a good flow in the dunes and I'm enjoying so far this second week of the Dakar."

His second place sees him consolidate his 13th place in the overall standings, more than 3hr 10min off the pace set by Carlos Sainz. The battle continues atop the general classification between the leading trio of two-time winner Sainz, defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah and Stephane Peterhansel, a 13-time winner (seven in cars, six on bikes). Sainz had to open the way on the stage and was swiftly caught by Al-Attiyah and Peterhansel. But the veteran Spaniard then drove his Mini to keep pace with his rivals, meaning he retains the rally lead, 6:40 ahead of the Qatari and 13:09 in front of the Frenchman. — AFP

2020 Dakar Rally returns to desert dunes on Stage 7

RIYAD: The rest day in Riyadh is already a distant memory at the 2020 Dakar Rally as racing resumed today with a mammoth 546-kilometre timed special stage. A high-speed Stage 7 brought the Dakar convoy across the dunes to Wadi Al-Dawasir.

Setting the pace in the car contest was race leader Carlos Sainz (ESP). The Spaniard now has three stage wins in Saudi Arabia and is one of only three drivers in Dakar history to have won stages on three different continents.

"We were flat out for a lot of time crossing the dunes. I caught up with Stephane (Peterhansel) at one part but it was very dusty so I decided to stay behind." - Carlos Sainz

Second place Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) is now exactly 10 minutes behind Sainz in the overall standings. Sainz's fellow Mini Buggy driver Stephane Peterhansel (FRA) is a further nine minutes back at third in the general classification.

"Today it was really fast, faster than the last stage before the Rest Day. It was 550 kilometres in around four hours." - Stephane Peterhansel Giniel De Villiers (ZAF) and Kuba Przygonski (POL) registered the seventh and eighth fastest times respectively on Stage 7 of the car race.

"We were driving almost 90 percent of the stage with full gas, around 180kph. It was a race for the fastest car today." -

Kuba Przygonski

All three of the OT3 by Overdrive machines in the side-by-side race now have stage wins at the 2020 Dakar. Blade Hildebrand (USA) went quickest on Stage 7 by over 11 minutes and was joined in the Top 4 by Red Bull Off-Road Team USA's coaching crew of Cyril Despres (FRA) and Mike Horn (SUI).

"I felt really comfortable right from the get go, just ticking off kilometres and passing people. We had the pace so we just had to steer clear of flats and run a clean stage." - Blade Hildebrand

The third OT3, driven by Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA), was forced to retire from the stage due to technical issues while all three OT3s were running a 1-2-3 at the front of the pack. Fulfilling their role as mentors of the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Program, Despres and Horn will hand over their engine to Guthrie Jr. and co-driver Ola Floene (NOR) to help them reach their goal of finishing the Dakar. The mentors will remain with the team to observe and advise on the stages to come.

"The race ends for us now as we'll give our engine to Mitch (Guthrie Jr.). These are the rules in our team. He is the younger guy and we want him to carry on for as long as possible." - Cyril Despres

Chaleco Lopez (CHI) lost his SxS overall lead on Stage 7 due to a stoppage in the dunes. The defending champion has slipped to second overall, 32 minutes behind new race leader Casey Currie (USA).

Another stage win for truck race front-runner Andrey Karginov (RUS) ensures that he stays top overnight. Karginov's Kamaz team-mates Dmitry Sotnikov (RUS)



Carlos Sainz and Lucas Cruz

and Anton Shibalov (RUS) helped to secure a further 1-2-3 stage result for the Russians. "It was a very fast day without any problems for us. This type of sand is easy for us to cross." - Andrey Karginov

The Dakar's second week has started as the first week finished in the quad contest, with Ignacio Casale (CHI) controlling things from the front. The Chilean now has a lead of over 35 minutes from his closest competitor as he goes for a third Dakar quad win.

However, all racing at the Dakar was overshadowed on Stage 7 by the tragic news that bike competitor Paulo Goncalves (POR) passed away from a fall sustained 276 kilometres into the special stage. 40-year-old Goncalves was taking part in his 13th Dakar bike race. He made his debut in

2006 and had finished four times in the Top 10, including an impressive performance as runner-up to Marc Coma (ESP) in 2015. Goncalves, the 2013 cross-country rallies world champion, was sitting in 46th place overall after Stage 6 of the 2020 Dakar.

As a mark of respect to such a beloved figure in the Dakar bivouac, tomorrow's motorbike and quad stage has been cancelled in order to give riders time to mourn their friend. The entire Dakar caravan extends its sincere condolences to his friends and family.

Tomorrow's stage for cars, trucks and side-by-sides takes them on a 474-kilometre loop stage around the Wadi Al-Dawasir bivouac. The 2020 Dakar finishes on Friday, January 17 in Al-Qiddiya.

Sports

'Hungry' Lewis hits century as West Indies sweep Ireland

Bravo recalled by Windies after three-year T20 exile

ST GEORGE'S: Evin Lewis smashed a dazzling century as West Indies defeated Ireland by five wickets on Sunday to complete a 3-0 sweep of the one-day international series. Opener Lewis hit his third one-day ton off 96 balls with six boundaries and five huge sixes at the National Stadium in Grenada as West Indies reached their rain-revised target of 197 with 64 balls to spare.

The 28-year-old, left-handed Lewis had made an unbeaten 99 in the first game in Barbados which his team won also by five wickets. "All the hard work I've done in the nets has paid off," Trinidadian Lewis said at the trophy presentation.

"This was an opportunity for my first hundred in the Caribbean, and it's great to get a series win. I've been hungry for runs," Lewis had reached his 50 off 41 balls while laying the foundation for a comfortable win thanks to a 100-run partnership with Brandon King (38 off 43 balls) for the third wicket.

He reached his century with a midwicket flourish off medium-pace Craig Young before falling next ball trying for a big drive, caught by Kevin O'Brien. By then the West Indies were only five short of their target which had been revised after a brief rain stoppage.

Young suffered the worst punishment with his nine overs yielding just one wicket for 57 runs. Nicholas Pooran confirmed his stature in the West Indies middle-order with an unbeaten 43 off 44 balls. Earlier, leg-spinner Hayden Walsh took four wickets as Ireland were dismissed for 203.

Walsh, who starred with the bat with an undefeated 46 in Thursday's nail-biting one-wicket win in Barbados, finished with figures of 4-36. Recalled fast bowler Oshane Thomas claimed 3-41. Walsh took the prime wicket of Ireland skipper Andy Balbirnie whose impressive innings of 71 ended when he pushed the ball to point and was caught. For Balbirnie, it was his ninth ODI half-century

while his innings featured six boundaries and two sixes. Andy McBrine was Ireland's second highest scorer with an unbeaten 25. "We've managed to get in but not kick off, we were outclassed today but we can take improvements from the three games," insisted Balbirnie, whose side were playing a series for the first time in six months.

"We don't have the quickest bowlers in the world or the biggest turners, but we can be disciplined. The second game was a big positive, we just didn't have that composure." The two sides now play a three-game T20 series starting at the same Grenada venue tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Dwayne Bravo was recalled to the West Indies squad on Sunday, more than three years after his last appearance as the Caribbean side build up to the defence of their World Twenty20 title.

The 36-year-old all-rounder, a two-time World T20 winner, was named in a 13-man squad for a three-match series against Ireland later this month. However, the West Indies are thinking long-term with the next World Cup in the game's shortest format taking place in Australia in October and November.

Bravo last played for the T20 side against Pakistan in September 2016 before he quit to concentrate on franchise cricket. "Dwayne Bravo was recalled with the specific intention of bolstering our 'death' bowling which was identified as an area that really needs improving," said West Indies chief selector Roger Harper.

"His record in this department speaks for itself. He will also be able to act as a mentor to the other 'death' bowlers and lend his experience wherever needed." Bravo has played 66 T20 internationals for West Indies, taking 52 wickets and scoring 1,142 runs. However, his career has often been controversial.

He played the last of his 40 Tests in 2010 and was dumped as ODI skipper in 2014 after leading a walkout during a tour of India over a pay dispute. Fellow all-



Evin Lewis

rounder Rovman Powell has also been recalled having played 23 T20 internationals.

Jason Holder, the team's regular skipper, is being rested just as he was for the three ODIs against Ireland, a series which ended Sunday.

West Indies T20 squad to face Ireland:

Kieron Pollard (captain), Dwayne Bravo, Sheldon

Cottrell, Shimron Hetmyer, Brandon King, Evin Lewis, Khary Pierre, Nicholas Pooran, Rovman Powell, Sherfane Rutherford, Lendl Simmons, Hayden Walsh, Kesrick Williams

Schedule:

1st T20: Wednesday, Jan 15, Grenada

2nd T20: Saturday, Jan 18, St Kitts

3rd T20: Sunday, Jan 19, St Kitts. — AFP

Mashrafe gives up Bangladesh contract riches

DHAKA: Bangladesh one-day international captain Mashrafe Mortaza has withdrawn from his lucrative national team contract amid growing concern over his form and fitness but has been offered a "grand farewell" match. Mashrafe, 36, stayed as captain even after becoming a member of parliament for the ruling party in 2018. That affected his form as he claimed just one wicket in eight matches in the World Cup in England last year.

He has taken just eight wickets in 12 matches in the Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament but had been expected to be a contracted player despite his poor form. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan told reporters that Mashrafe did not wish to continue as a contracted player. "We have accepted his proposal."

Mashrafe will lose a guaranteed monthly wage of at least \$5,000 as well as lucrative sponsorship deals. The BCB usually put at least 15 players under contract, but has promised to increase the number. The board has also raised Test match fees by 70 percent to \$7,000 dollars a game as part of an accord after players went on strike last year. Bangladesh will organise a farewell match for Mashrafe if he wants it, the president added. The board offered a game against Zimbabwe as a testimonial last September, but he refused.

"We want to give him a grand farewell in a way that no other player got. Now if he agrees, then it's OK. But if he doesn't want it, we have nothing to do," said Hassan. Mashrafe, who has undergone at least half a dozen knee operations, did not mention a retirement plan when he spoke to reporters last week.

"I am just enjoying whatever I am playing now. I don't know whether I will retire from the field, I have not yet decided," he said. "There is a matter of selection. I don't automatically count myself in the team after taking one wicket in eight matches. If the selectors think that they will give me a chance, I will definitely try my best to fulfill their expectations," he added.

Mashrafe enjoys iconic status in Bangladesh after leading the team through its transition from international whipping boys to a respected part of international limited overs competition. — AFP

Sharma, Shami recalled for India's T20 tour of NZ

NEW DELHI: Senior batsman Rohit Sharma and fast bowler Mohammed Shami were recalled to India's Twenty20 squad for the tour of New Zealand after they were rested for the home series against Sri Lanka.

Sharma and Shami come into the 16-man squad for the five T20 internationals starting on January 24 in Auckland. India will also play three ODIs and two Tests in New Zealand. Shami joins a pace attack led by Jasprit Bumrah who returned for the three Sri Lanka T20s, won 2-0 by India after the first game was rained off.

All-rounder Hardik Pandya remains sidelined after a back operation in October, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said on Sunday, adding that his "rehabilitation process is taking longer than expected".

Virat Kohli-led India will play three one-day internationals against Australia starting today in Mumbai before flying off to New Zealand.

T20 squad

Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur. — AFP

Kohli open to day-night Test at Gabba or Perth

MUMBAI: India skipper Virat Kohli said yesterday that his side are ready to play a day-night Test at Australia's formidable Gabba ground or in Perth when they tour Down Under later this year.

Kohli's men played their first day-night Test in Kolkata last year, thrashing Bangladesh in just over two days, and are set to take on Australia in a three-match one-day series starting Tuesday in Mumbai.

Australia have pushed for more day-night Tests and face the hosts again later in the year, with a four-match series starting at the Gabba in Brisbane. India had knocked back overtures to play the format in Adelaide at the end of 2018, but Kohli now appears more at ease with pink ball cricket.

"We played the day-night Test here and were pretty happy with how it went. It's become a very exciting feature of any Test series, so we are absolutely open to play a day-night Test," Kohli told reporters in Mumbai.

"We are ready and up for the challenge. Whether it's Gabba or Perth, doesn't matter to us. We do have the skill sets as a team now to compete against anyone in the world anywhere. In any format of the game, whether it's white ball, red ball, pink ball." India are looking to sharpen their act ahead of the T20 World Cup in October, and the three ODI matches at home will be a key part of the preparation.

'TOUGH CHALLENGE'

Aaron Finch-led Australia edged out hosts India 3-2 last year after losing the opening two games and Kohli believes a new close-fought battle will be fought this week. "It is always 3-2, 2-1 kind of series," Kohli said on the eve of the opening game.

"Having played a lot against each other, we know the

'Superman Saha' not losing sleep over white ball

MUMBAI: Wriddhiman Saha wants to represent India in all formats of the game but the test wicketkeeper is not losing any sleep over his lack of opportunities in limited-overs cricket, the 35-year-old told Reuters in an interview.

Wicketkeepers rarely get much attention purely for their glove work but Saha enjoyed rare acclaim during India's home test matches against South Africa and Bangladesh.

His smart work behind the stumps lent credence to Virat Kohli's "best in the world" assessment and a series of acrobatic catches prompted Twitter users to dub him "Superman Saha".

"It feels nice to read things like 'Superman Saha' and hopefully I can take more such catches," he said by telephone from Kolkata. "There's no secret, it just seems to everyone that I have become more agile. Since the time I started playing cricket for my club, for my state Bengal, I was probably the same."

"I have probably taken many catches in the past similar to those that are being praised currently. The only difference is that people are able to watch the current ones on TV but the ones in the past were not broadcast. People who have played with me would know." While undoubtedly India's first choice in the longest format, Saha has been unable to make an impact with the limited-overs sides, playing the last of his nine one-day internationals in 2014. "I don't think anyone is satisfied playing just one format," Saha said. "It's always more pleasing when you get to represent India in all formats as a player."

"But I want to focus on the opportunities I am currently getting and if I get a chance to play other formats I will definitely give my best to do well in those." After making his debut in 2010, Saha played only three tests until the end of 2014 with his path mostly blocked by then captain and wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

He only fully cemented his place in the Test side in early 2015 after Dhoni abruptly announced his retire-



MUMBAI: India's Virat Kohli (L) interacts with cricket team coach Ravi Shastri (R) during a training session ahead of the first one day international (ODI) cricket match of a three-match series between Australia and India, at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

strengths and weaknesses of either side. So it's always good and a tough challenge playing Australia purely because of the skill set and mindset they bring on to the field." And he warned: "The way they are playing their cricket now after Steve (Smith) and David (Warner) — after ball-tampering bans — have come back, it's pretty intense. "They are challenging every team, they are dominating a few teams as well. So I think, we along with Australia are probably the top two sides in the world as far as balance is concerned." Kohli said India will need a top

performance in every game. "As players we are excited to play a full strength Australia in our conditions, also to test ourselves against the best," said Kohli.

"In the year of the World Cup as many games as we play together as a team, it's going to benefit us, especially the white-ball cricket."

Kohli also said he is open to playing three opening batsmen — KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan and Rohit Sharma — in the same team, even if it means dropping himself down the batting order. — AFP

ment from the format in the middle of a test series in Australia.

SECOND FIDDLE

Saha, who hails from Siliguri in the foothills of the Himalayas in West Bengal, said he kept himself prepared while playing second fiddle to 'Dhoni bhai' — or 'big brother Dhoni' — and was ready to take his chance when it came along.

"I always prepared thinking I am playing the match," he added. "I always knew Dhoni bhai will be the one playing but I still prepared as if I was going to be the one. "I think that worked in my favour. When Dhoni bhai stepped away and I was asked to play I did not suddenly find myself in a situation where I did not know what to do and how to prepare." After playing 29 Tests following Dhoni's retirement, Saha was struck by a succession of injuries. He suffered a hamstring problem in South Africa in early 2018 before undergoing shoulder surgery the same year, keeping him out of the Test team until October 2019 — an absence of 21 months.

Rishabh Pant stepped in to fill the void and scored centuries in England and Australia, prompting calls for India to invest in the 22-year-old. But Saha's experience and superior glove work while keeping on spin-friendly wickets at home worked in his favour and he got the nod ahead of Pant for the three recent Tests against South Africa and then the two against Bangladesh.

The injury bug struck again after he returned, however, Saha having to undergo surgery in November after fracturing a finger against Bangladesh in Kolkata.

Saha expects to be fully fit by the time India start their next Test series on Feb. 21 in New Zealand.

India are then scheduled to play the longest format only in Australia at the end of the year and most of Saha's workload behind the stumps will be provided by his fast bowling colleagues. While most glovesmen find keeping wickets to spinners on turning tracks the biggest challenge, Saha said fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah's unique release point always made life tricky for him.

"Bumrah is the most difficult to keep to because of the angle he bowls from," Saha said. "It's one angle when a batsman plays the ball, and completely another when he doesn't. "For that reason it's important to be focused all the time while keeping to Bumrah." — Reuters



Wriddhiman Saha

S Lanka to play two Tests in Zimbabwe

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's cricket team will leave for Zimbabwe on Thursday to play a two-match Test series — the first since the African host nation's suspension was lifted by the ICC. Both Tests will be held in Harare, the first from Sunday and the second starting on January 27th, Sri Lanka's cricket board said.

The board is yet to announce Sri Lanka's Test squad for the two matches. Zimbabwe last played a Test match in November 2018 when they toured Bangladesh. The country was barred from ICC events in July last year because of political interference but was readmitted by the International Cricket Council three months later.

Political turmoil within the sport and a string of humiliating performances led Zimbabwe to suspend their Test involvement in 2005, although they continued to play one-day internationals and Twenty20 internationals.

They returned to Test cricket in 2011 but are languishing in 11th place in the rankings, one ahead of Ireland. Sixth-ranked Sri Lanka last month became the first nation to tour Pakistan since 2009. — AFP

Sports

Real beat Atletico on penalties to win 11th Spanish Super Cup

Victory maintains Zinedine Zidane's spotless record as coach

JEDDAH: Thibaut Courtois proved the hero on Sunday as Real Madrid beat city rivals Atletico Madrid in a penalty shoot-out in Saudi Arabia to win their 11th Spanish Super Cup. Courtois and Jan Oblak were both imperious during a goalless final in Jeddah but the Belgian came up trumps, saving Thomas Partey's penalty after Saul Niguez had already hit the post.

Sergio Ramos tucked away the winning spot-kick to ensure Real Madrid clinched their first trophy of the season, with La Liga and the Champions League next in their sights. "I went through their takers on the bench," said Courtois. "Saul's surprised me but Thomas' I read, and he's got a very hard shot."

Atletico might have won it in extra-time when Alvaro Morata went through one-on-one but Real's Federico Valverde took a red card in exchange for cynically fouling the striker from behind.

"It was something you shouldn't do and I apologised to Alvaro but it was the only option I had left," said Valverde.

"It was the most important moment of the match," added Atletico coach Diego Simeone.

"If he had gone through it was a goal but I told him that anyone would have done the same in his position."

Victory maintains Zinedine Zidane's spotless record as a coach in finals.

He has now led Madrid to success three times in the Champions League, and two each in the Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup and now Spanish Super Cup.

"I have won many things as a player and now as a coach," said Zidane. "But I congratulate the players. You can achieve anything if you work hard enough."

VENUE CONTROVERSY

Before the final, RFEF president Luis

Rubiales said he was "very happy" with how the format had panned out. "We have to improve things because it is a country that has just started organising these sorts of events," he added. For all the controversy off the pitch, on the pitch, the tournament has delivered.

Real Madrid played brilliantly to beat Valencia on Wednesday while a pulsating 3-2 win for Atletico on Thursday has put Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde on the brink of the sack.

And although the final lacked goals and quality finishing, there was drama until the end and joy on the faces of Real Madrid's players as Ramos hoisted another trophy under the fireworks.

Ramos had been guilty of sloppiness early on and Atletico should have capitalised.

The defender played a pass straight to Joao Felix on the edge of the area but Felix dragged wide and then Ferland Mendy gave the ball away, only for Morata to look for contact from Courtois and a penalty when there was neither.

COURTOIS SAVES THE DAY

Both teams had good chances to win it late on, with Luka Jovic's deflected cross finding Valverde free five yards out but the midfielder's header hit his own knee before drifting harmlessly over.

Then Atletico might have nicked it as Kieran Trippier clipped an excellent pass over the top for Morata, who opted for accuracy rather than power and Courtois was able to push away.

Into extra-time and, with 105 minutes on the clock, Courtois did well to flash out a leg and block Morata's acrobatic effort while Oblak twice denied Real, first a curling shot from Luka Modric and then a follow-up from Mariano Diaz.



JEDDAH: Real Madrid's players celebrate after winning the Spanish Super Cup final between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the King Abdullah Sports City in the Saudi Arabian port city of Jeddah. —AFP

Yet the most dramatic moment was still to come as Saul sent Morata clean through, with only Courtois to beat, before the chasing Valverde scythed him down from behind.

The red card was inevitable but Atletico

only had a free-kick and, for four minutes, a one-man advantage. Trippier hit the free-kick into the wall and Real held on for penalties.

Carvajal found the corner but Saul struck the post, despite sending Courtois the

wrong way. Rodrygo coolly put Real two ahead and Thomas missed, this time Courtois diving right and palming clear.

Modric swept into the corner before Trippier did the same. It was left to Ramos to hit the winning shot. —AFP

Kuwait handball team ready for Asian Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Deputy Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs at the Public Authority for Sports Ali Murwi lauded players' commitments to training, during his visit to the training camp at Kuwait Sport Club Hall as they were getting ready for the Asian Championship to be held at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah indoor halls complex during the period Jan 16th to Jan 27th with the participation of 13 national teams.

He said Kuwait handball team is always able to compete for titles despite the long absence from competition due

to suspension, which may affect the team's performance. He said "despite such difficulties, we have great confidence in the team and its management and we will stand behind it."

Meanwhile, the team's coach Amen Al-Qafsi said qualifying to the finals of the World Cup is the goal the team is aiming for. He said competing for the Asian title is the right of every participating team, but this is not an easy task.

He said a program containing a working strategy of three levels was prepared physical, technical and tactical, which started in Kuwait, then in Germany and concluded in Serbia during which several friendly were played including matches with Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia.

The Kuwait National team supervisor Abdelaziz Al-Zaabi said he is optimistic the team will achieve best results, as indicated by the training camp, which fulfilled its goals, by raising the level of players. He hoped that Kuwait fans will backup their national team starting with the first match next Thursday.



Mahomes sparks Chiefs fightback

LOS ANGELES: Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes and Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers, two of the NFL's top-rated quarterbacks, moved closer to a potential Super Bowl clash with home playoff victories on Sunday.

Mahomes threw for five touchdowns as the Chiefs overturned a 24-point deficit to defeat the Houston Texans 51-31 in a thrilling postseason duel. Mahomes finished with 321 passing yards from 23 of 35 attempts at Arrowhead Stadium to send the Chiefs into a home AFC Championship showdown against the Tennessee Titans next weekend for a place in the Super Bowl.

"We didn't start the way we wanted to," Mahomes said. "All we were preaching was, 'Let's do something special.' 'Everyone is counting us out, let's just keep fighting, one play at a time.'"

Neymar shines but PSG held by Monaco

PARIS: Neymar scored twice and created another goal but leaders Paris Saint-Germain were held to an entertaining 3-3 draw at home on Sunday by a Monaco side playing their first Ligue 1 game under new coach Robert Moreno.

The Brazilian gave PSG the lead after just two minutes at the Parc des Princes but Monaco scored two quick goals through Gelson Martins and Wissam Ben Yedder to move 2-1 ahead inside quarter of an hour.

A Fode Ballo-Toure own goal brought PSG level and Neymar restored their advantage from the penalty spot before half-time after a foul on Kylian Mbappe.

But Monaco, who also host PSG on Wednesday in a rearranged fixture, earned a point when Islam Slimani's goal was controversially awarded after it was initially ruled out for offside.

"We didn't put in our best performance but we tried. It was a good test. Monaco have a good team but we are superior and we must show it on the pitch," Neymar told Canal+.

"If we had played at our best we would have taken the three points. "I think on the third goal, the fact our defender touched the ball wasn't intentional but the decision falls to the referee. They have VAR for that, we can't complain. We weren't perfect tonight either."

It was just the second time PSG have dropped points at home this season — after a shock 2-0 defeat by Reims in September — but the draw represented a positive start for former Spain coach Moreno, who replaced Leonardo Jardim at the end of December.

Rodgers completed 16-of-27 passes for 243 yards and Davante Adams made eight catches for a club play-off record 160 yards as the Packers pulled out a 28-23 triumph over the Seattle Seahawks.

The Packers will travel to California to battle the San Francisco 49ers next Sunday in the NFC Championship. "I am going to enjoy a nice glass of Scotch tonight," said Rodgers. "Then get onto the film of San Francisco and get ready for a tough opponent."

The 49ers walloped the Packers 37-8 at home on November 24. Next Sunday's winners will meet in next month's Super Bowl 54 at Miami. Texans coach Bill O'Brien said his team had not taken anything for granted after racing to an early 24-0 lead.

"24-0 was a really good lead, no doubt about it," O'Brien said. "But I don't think any lead is safe versus these guys. We needed to score 50 points and we weren't able to do that." Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson, meanwhile, finished with 388 yards and two touchdowns in a losing effort.

"We should be very happy. I'm very pleased with my players and I want to congratulate them for a great match," said Moreno. "We played to our strengths on the counter-attack. We think we can beat any team and that's what I tell my players. That's our philosophy." PSG had started the new year in rampant form by scoring six both times in a pair of domestic cup wins and looked on track for a 10th win in a row over Monaco after Neymar controlled a terrific Marco Verratti pass to smash home the opener.

Thomas Tuchel's side came in riding an eight-match winning streak — across which they had scored 34 goals — but concerns remained over the deployment of a prolific four-man attack against stronger opposition.

Monaco hit back almost immediately as Cesc Fabregas threaded a neat ball through for Ben Yedder and although he was chopped down by Keylor Navas, the

rebound rolled into the path of Martins who tapped into an empty net.

The visitors soon exposed PSG again, this time Keita Balde ran at the defence before slipping across to Ben Yedder who applied a composed finish for his league-best 14th goal.

The Monaco duo almost combined to devastating effect once more on the counter, with Navas producing a fine save with his legs to thwart Senegalese forward Balde.

PSG equalised moments later when Neymar received the ball in the box and his snapshot took a couple of deflections — the latter coming off Ballo-Toure for an own goal. Kamil Glik headed against the post on the half-hour but PSG regained the lead on 41 minutes, Neymar converting a spot-kick after Mbappe was brought down by Martins. Monaco made it 3-3 with 20 minutes to go with the help of the video assistant referee system. —AFP

Ronaldo put Juve top of Serie A

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo stretched his goal-scoring streak to six consecutive league games as Juventus took top spot in Serie A on Sunday with a 2-1 win at Roma, whose defeat was made worse by the cruciate ligament injury of rising star Nicolo Zaniolo.

Juventus move two points ahead of Inter Milan, who were held 1-1 by Atalanta at the San Siro on Saturday, after going two goals up in just 10 minutes in Rome. "We were very good for 60 minutes. Then, if you play against Roma, it is almost inevitable to suffer in the end," said Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri.

Turkish defender Merih Demiral found a way through after three minutes when he connected with a Paulo Dybala free-kick. Minutes later Argentine Dybala was hauled down in the box, and Ronaldo stepped up to convert from the spot to make it nine goals in six league games.

"It's tough playing against a team like Juventus and we gave away two early goals," said Roma coach Paulo Fonseca. "We put in a good performance after that, against a great side. But once you go two goals down, it's difficult."

Both sides had casualties in the first half with Demiral limping off with a knee injury not long after scoring his first Juventus goal. And Zaniolo was stretchered off in tears eight minutes before the break after falling victim to what Roma later confirmed was a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee while trying to dribble past Matthijs De Ligt and Adrien Rabiot.

Zaniolo, who is considered one of Italy's most exciting young talents and was a rare bright point for Roma in a torrid first half, will undergo surgery. "I swear to you ... I'll be stronger than before," the 20-year-old later wrote on Instagram.

Roma had their chances with Edin Dzeko hitting the post and Wojciech Szczesny denying Cengiz Under from point-blank range. Diego Perotti pulled a goal back for the hosts from the penalty spot on 68 minutes after an Alex Sandro handball.

However, the capital side drop to fifth, outside the Champions League places, level on 35 points with fourth-placed Atalanta and seven behind local rivals Lazio after their 1-0 win over Napoli on Saturday.

Earlier, Alejandro Berenguer struck the only goal as Torino beat Bologna to climb to seventh. Spaniard Berenguer finished off a cross from captain Andrea Belotti on 11 minutes as Torino move two points off sixth-placed Cagliari, who are in the last Europa League place.

Hellas Verona are two points behind Torino in eighth after snatching a 2-1 win over Genoa in a game which was delayed for 15 minutes in order to redo the uneven lines of the two penalty areas.

A pitch inspection at Verona's Stadio Bentegodi before the home side's win — which also left Genoa in the relegation zone — found that the lines marking the penalty box were visibly not straight.

Genoa's local rivals Sampdoria moved five points clear of the drop zone with veteran striker Fabio Quagliarella scoring a brace in their thumping 5-1 win over Brescia. "We are starting to break away from the quicksand of the relegation zone, but it's still there and we have to keep going," said coach Claudio Ranieri, who next play title-chasing Lazio. —AFP

25 Devils snap Lightning's 10-game winning streak with 3-1 victory



26 'Superman Saha' not losing sleep over white ball



27 Real beat Atletico on penalties to win 11th Spanish Super Cup



Irving shines as Nets blast Hawks



BROOKLYN: Spencer Dinwiddie #8 of the Brooklyn Nets and Brandon Goodwin #0 of the Atlanta Hawks go up for the rebound during the game at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. —AFP

NEW YORK: Kyrie Irving scored 21 points in his first game in nearly two months as the Brooklyn Nets never trailed and cruised to a 108-86 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Sunday night in New York. Irving returned from missing 26 games with right shoulder impingement. In his first game since Nov. 14 at Denver, the All-Star guard made 10 of 11 shots, hit his one 3-point try and had three assists in 20 minutes. After getting 11 points by halftime, Irving went 5-for-5 from the floor in the third before checking out for the rest of the game. He rested over the final 17:54, exiting after the Nets took an 87-50 lead, and the outcome was never in doubt. The Nets, who were 13-13 in Irving's absence, led by as many as 39 and won their second straight game following a seven-game losing streak.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS 105 - TORONTO RAPTORS 104
DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points — 22 in the second half — and visiting San Antonio overcame an 18-point deficit to defeat Toronto. DeRozan, who has scored 20 points in 11 straight games, sank two free throws with nine seconds remaining for what proved to

be the game-winning points after Marco Belinelli's 3-pointer had given the Spurs the lead. Kyle Lowry sank a 3-pointer with five seconds left to pull Toronto within a point. After San Antonio's LaMarcus Aldridge missed two free throws with four seconds showing, Toronto's Pascal Siakam missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

DENVER NUGGETS 114 - LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 104
Nikola Jokic had 20 points and 15 rebounds for his 21st double-double of the season, Jamal Murray scored 10 of his 19 points from the foul line, and host Denver beat Los Angeles. Gary Harris scored 15 points, Michael Porter Jr. 13 and Monte Morris 12 for the Nuggets, who had seven players score in double figures. Kawhi Leonard had 30 points, Lou Williams 26 and Montrezl Harrel 25 for the Clippers, who played without Paul George (hamstring injury). Los Angeles cut a 20-point lead down to six in the final minutes but could not complete the rally.

NEW YORK KNICKS 124 - MIAMI HEAT 121
Taj Gibson's free throw with 1:38 remaining put New

York ahead for good, capping a comeback from a 14-point second-half deficit to beat Miami. Julius Randle scored a game-high 26 points to lead seven players in double figures for the Knicks, who snapped a five-game skid after outscoring the Heat 40-27 in the fourth quarter. Jimmy Butler had 25 points and 10 rebounds for the Heat, who have dropped two straight for their first losing streak of the season.

UTAH JAZZ 127 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 116
Bojan Bogdanovic scored 31 points, and Rudy Gobert added 21 points and 14 rebounds to help Utah beat host Washington for its ninth straight victory. Jordan Clarkson added 23 points off the bench, and Joe Ingles 20 for Utah. Six players scored in double figures to help the Jazz improve to 14-1 in their past 15 games. Bradley Beal scored 25 points to lead the Wizards, and Davis Bertans added 18.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 122 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 102
Jonas Valanciunas scored 15 of his team-high 31

points in the third quarter and added 19 rebounds overall as host Memphis broke open a tight game against Golden State en route to its fifth straight victory. The 31-point total was one off Valanciunas' season high, set in December at Chicago. The 19 rebounds were his most since he pulled down 20 at Phoenix last March. The Warriors led by as many as seven points in the first half and were within 63-62 in the second minute of the third period after a 3-point-er by Glenn Robinson III, before the Grizzlies gradually pulled away.

PHOENIX SUNS 100 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 92
Kelly Oubre Jr. recorded 25 points and 15 rebounds to lead host Phoenix past Charlotte. Deandre Ayton contributed 18 points and nine rebounds off the bench, and Devin Booker added 12 points and nine assists for the Suns, who are 5-3 since a season-worst eight-game slide. Dwayne Bacon scored 24 points off the bench for the Hornets, who have lost four straight games and 10 of their past 12. — Reuters

Bencic advances, injured de Minaur out of Adelaide

ADELAIDE: World number seven Belinda Bencic won her first match of the season yesterday, but there was agony for Alex de Minaur as the men's top seed pulled out of the Adelaide International in Australia.
The Swiss 22-year-old, a wildcard entry who lost her opening match of the year last week in Shenzhen, beat good friend Daria Kasatkina of Russia 6-4, 6-4. Three-time Grand Slam champion Angelique Kerber, promoted to ninth seed when Petra Kvitova withdrew, dominated China's Wang Qiang 6-1, 6-3. Kerber, a former number one who took a long three-month off season, won the tournament in 2018 when it was played in Sydney, defeating Ashleigh Barty in the final. "In the first set I was playing well, but the second

was really tight," the 18th-ranked Kerber said. "This is my first win of the year, I'm happy about that. I hope I can play like today in the next rounds. "I want to win a few more matches before going to Melbourne," the 2016 Australian Open champion added.
Bencic, who lost her last two matches against the qualifier, overcame hot conditions at Memorial Drive as she makes final preparations for next week's Australian Open. She survived a first set against Kasatkina featuring five breaks of serve and secured her second-round place with a break in the final game of the second.
"It was very difficult, but I like the heat and I'm happy to be here for the first time," said Bencic, who soared up the rankings last year and won two titles, in Moscow and Dubai, on her way to a career-best 49 main-draw match wins. "Her game is really tough, it doesn't match up with mine. I had to work hard."
Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, American Danielle Collins and Croat Donna Vekic were among other women to clear the

first hurdle. A devastated de Minaur withdrew due to an abdominal injury, casting doubt over his fitness for the first major of the season.
He was the second seed to pull out of the ATP-WTA event after Novak Djokovic opted to head instead to Melbourne to prepare for his title defence at the opening Grand Slam of the year after leading Serbia to the ATP Cup title in Sydney.
"It's devastating. Adelaide has been part of my schedule for a long time," said de Minaur, who had an intense week leading Australia at the ATP Cup teams event. De Minaur did not mention the Open, which starts on January 20, but gave every indication that he was facing a race to be ready.
"My sole focus is making sure I recover for the next one," added the 18th-ranked player, who helped Australia to the semi-finals at the ATP Cup, winning two of his four singles and pushing world number one Rafael Nadal hard over three sets.
In the men's draw Britain's Dan Evans, also fresh from the ATP Cup, beat Argentinian



Belinda Bencic

Juan Ignacio Londero 6-2, 6-4 while Jeremy Chardy overcame fellow Frenchman Gilles Simon 6-3, 7-5. Australian wild card James Duckworth lined up a match with second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime after defeating

Federico Delbonis 6-4, 6-4.
"He's a great young talent, one of the future stars of our game," the Australian said. "I'm going to have to come out and serve well again." —AFP