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How to get married by a 'malaach' in Kuwait



Qatar eases restrictions on migrant workers' exit



Peterhansel sneaks 11th stage win in Dakar rally





Local

Kuwait and Oman



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai muna@kuwaittimes.net

In the past few days, and after the announcement of the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman, the world expressed condolences and regret for the loss and praised his achievements and hard work for many years for the interest and future of the sultanate. In Kuwait, HH the Amir personally visited Oman for condolences and all business in public and private sectors were shut for a full three days from Saturday to Monday, which means that the state was in a complete mourning, as Kuwait and Oman enjoy historical ties.

Kuwait has been associated with Oman by a strong and solid relationship forged by brotherhood, religion, history, geographical location and social relations between families. The death of the sultan left us all with many lessons to recall and learn from. The first was the amazing transfer of power that took place in astonishing transparency to the new Sultan, Haitham bin Tariq. This issue is a sensitive and delicate matter. But in Oman it was applied with utmost lucidity and calmness without chaos or confusion, and this is something we rarely see in the Arab world.



Another achievement is that Oman has reached the highest global increase in the Corruption Perceptions Index. All efforts were exerted to fight this scourge. I believe this is due to Oman's concern to create and improve the business environment in support of the national economy and contribute to building national capabilities in the field of enhancing competitiveness, along with measuring and following up the assessment of the sultanate at the national, regional and international levels. In the Arab world, we need such lessons.

The late sultan was the architect of modern Oman, as the media called him. He worked all his life for the good of his people and his country. Therefore, all the people of Oman were in a state of great sadness over the loss of a man who devoted his life for his country and lived up to the principles of the Omani constitution until his death.

Preserving the constitution and its principles are important, so upholding it must not be a subject of negotiation or changes to please anyone.

What also distinguishes Oman is that there is no room for militancy and extremism that does not lead to good. Oman is a country that is open to all for business, investment, livelihood and tourism. I believe that Oman today is far from the vicissitudes of politics in the Arab world and is outstanding, but this did not come without work and effort. Oman has always enjoyed a flexible policy of dialogue with everyone, and it represents a lesson in real diplomacy that we need.

I am sorry for the demise of Sultan Qaboos bin Said, but I am confident that Oman is in safe hands under its new leader Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

GCC heritage show reflects historical depth: NCCAL chief



NCCAL Secretary-General Dr. Tahani Al-Adwani opens the show. — KUNA photos

The sixth GCC heritage exhibition contains relics that reflect the historical depth of member states, Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Tahani Al-Adwani said on Wednesday. Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of opening the event held at Kuwait National Museum, Adwani said the show, which is held on a rotating basis in GCC states, mirrors historical and civilized unity as well as cultural diversity.

NCCAL's director of the department of antiquities and museums Sultan Al-Duwaish said in a similar statement to KUNA that the month-long exhibition highlights GCC archeological discoveries made between the Stone Age and the Islamic era. He noted that the Gulf region has a common history and its nations share identical hopes and aspirations.

Meanwhile, historian Farhan Al-Farhan expressed his delight over the show, which is displaying examples of monuments existing in GCC countries and civilization of the Arab nation. The event shows the cohesion and unity of GCC member states, he pointed out. The first edition of the exhibition was hosted by the UAE in 2006, while the following editions were held in Saudi Arabia in 2009, Qatar in 2011, Bahrain in 2013 and Oman in 2015. — KUNA



An historical headstone.



A pot dates back to 1st century (UAE).



A set of jars that date back to the Bronze Age.







Kuwait Times

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Local
Friday, January 17, 2020



The Italian Air Force is one of the participants in this event and the air shows. With 623 aircraft ordered, the Eurofighter Typhoon is considered the most advanced swingrole combat aircraft currently available on the world market

"The Typhoon is able to provide a wide variety of operating capabilities and a great mission effectiveness," said Major Domenico. "The Swing Role capacity of the aircraft is well established within the Italian Air Force. We are



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trained to put it to good use and the aircraft responded aptly in all the operations it took part in. This is proved by the current deployment in Kuwait, under the aegis of operation Inherent Resolve/Prima Parthica, that sanctioned internationally the F-2000's capacity to operate both in the air-to-air and in the air-to-ground role or, more precisely, as a reconnaissance aircraft," explained the Eurofighter pilot.

"Recent Eurofighter deployments in Kuwait and in NATO air policing operations, in different environments, such as in Romania, Iceland, Bulgaria and Baltic Republics, showed also outstanding operational results out of country" he said

try," he said.

"During the training, pilots acquire the qualification on the aircraft in accordance with a newly designed training program, that includes both air defense and air-to-ground missions," explained Major Domenico. "In the course, we acquire the skills needed to join seamlessly the operational wings and accomplish every kind of mission that the Italian Eurofighter community already performs," said the Italian Air Force pilot.

Kuwait's fleet of Eurofighter Typhoons

The first Eurofighter combat aircraft configured for Kuwait made its maiden flight in late December. Instrumented Series Production Aircraft (ISPA 6), equipped with the Kuwait Air Force configuration, departed the Flight Test Centre of Leonardo Aircraft Division in Turin-

Caselle on 23 December 2019, Eurofighter tweeted on 9 January.

As noted by Eurofighter, ISPA 6 is the most advanced iteration of the aircraft to date, and while other elements have previously been flight tested, this is the first time that all of the enhancements have been brought together.

ISPA 6 is the first to fly the Captor E-Scan Radar with Phase Enhancement 3 b (P3Eb), for which Kuwait is to be the launch customer. Other enhancements for Kuwait include the Lockheed Martin Sniper advanced targeting pod, the introduction of the DRS-Cubic ACMI P5 combat training pod and an enhanced Very High Frequency (VHF) Omni-Directional Range (VOR) navigation aid. The Kuwait Air Force will also have the option to employ the MBDA Storm Shadow cruise missile, MBDA Meteor beyondvisual-range air-to-air missile, and the MBDA Brimstone low-yield air-to-surface missile.

In 2018, Kuwait inked an \$8.7 billion contract to purchase 28 Eurofighter Typhoons from Finmeccanica, the Italian defense company. Kuwait will receive 22 single-seat and six twin-seat aircraft. Saudi Arabia and Oman have also bought Eurofighters. Kuwaiti pilots are also training in Italy in preparation and took part in maneuvers in Oman and Egypt. The Kuwait contract includes the building of infrastructure at Al-Salem airbase, training services for pilots and initial support services for three years, according to Al Nanline



Local

How to get married 'by malach' in Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

It is possible for couples in Kuwait to officially get married and register the marriage contract by a "malaach" or "maathoun" in their homes. This service is available for Muslims of all nationalities. Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Dawood Binessa, Professor of Islamic Law and Comparative Jurisprudence, who has been working as a malaach since 2003. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: Why did you choose this job?

Dr Dawood Binessa: It's a voluntary job under the supervision of the ministry of justice. This work is without pay, but it is a prestigious job and builds relations. The benefits of this work depend on the way of dealing with people.

The malaach does not get paid by the



Dr Dawood Binessa

not get paid by the ministry for his work, nor is he allowed to demand any fees or charges from people using his services. But since the malaach goes to their homes, which takes time and effort, people take this into consideration and give him gifts or cash. In fact the malaach is not obliged to go to

their place, as the rule is that they come to him. So when he does this favor, they usually give him something.

KT: How many marriages can a malaach register per day, week or month?

Binessa: This depends on his personality, performance and dealings with people. Some malaaches have relations with many people, so they are in demand. Other malaaches strictly respect their appointments, and have other qualities such as special performance, comfortable appearance and way of speaking and good knowledge of law and sharia matters. Also, the handwriting of the malaach can affect the choice of people, as their marriage contract will be written by him. All these aspects show the differences between them. So some register a marriage daily, while others do so weekly, monthly or twice a year. Some don't even register any and they just keep the marriage book for prestige.

KT: How do people know you?

Binessa: The ministry of justice has a list of malaaches, and one is appointed for each area. But a malaach can also register marriages in other areas. For instance, I'm assigned for Yarmouk, but I can perform in any other area. People can search for



There are some periods when the rate of marriages is higher, such as the beginning or end of the month

malaaches on Google or at the ministry of justice, where they can find the malaach of their area. Some people want a particular malaach, especially if the person getting married doesn't speak Arabic, as not all malaaches speak English - I do. Also, people shoot pictures and videos that are then circulated on social media, so people get to know me or other malaaches.

I have made a video for newly-married couples with 10 pieces of advice for them, and I send them a link to this video. This makes parents feel more comfortable as they know that their son or daughter will receive suitable advice. This also helps more people learn about me. I also hand out my business cards.

KT: Can expats get married in this way in their homes?

Binessa: Yes. They should visit the documentation department at the ministry of justice with their original ID cards and fill an application for the permission of holding a marriage by a malaach outside the department (at their house for instance). So the malaach goes to their house and registers the marriage. They then take the marriage contract to the court for attestation, exactly like Kuwaitis.

KT: How many copies of the marriage

certificate are given?

Binessa: The malaach makes three copies of the contract, including the serial number, for which he is responsible. One copy stays with the malaach, one with the husband and one with the wife. The couple will attest their copies at the ministry, and I as the malaach will pass my copy to the ministry to keep it in their register. In case they lose their contract, they can find it at the court in the file of the malaach and get a replacement copy.

KT: What are the conditions to become a malaach?

Binessa: He should be a university graduate, usually in sharia. Presently, only a Kuwaiti can become a malaach, but there are around five non-Kuwaitis who still have the license from a long time ago before this rule. They are old - all are above 60 years I guess - as this rule was applied around 20 years back.

KT: How many malaaches are there in Kuwait? Is there a shortage?

Binessa: There are over 150 malaaches. With each new area built, a new malaach is appointed to it. The number differs in each area. For instance in Yarmouk, there is only one malaach, while in Jahra, there are about six or seven. The shortage depends on the performance of the malaach. So if all work

properly, their number will be enough. We can say there is a shortage if all malaaches are busy.

KT: What are the requirements or documents couples need for registering the marriage contract?

Binessa: Before going to their house, I first ask on the phone if they have all the necessary documents according to the requirements of the ministry of justice. In the event of a missing document, I will not go to their house. Sometimes I go to them and the documents are not complete, so I leave. I'm responsible for this marriage and there is a special committee at the ministry controlling the work of malaaches.

KT: Are there high seasons for marriages?

Binessa: Marriages don't stop - people get married throughout the year. Only during the holy month of Ramadan marriages almost stop. This is the low season. There are some periods when the rate of marriages is higher, such as the beginning or end of the month, as this is the time of salaries, while it is lower during the middle of the month. Also, the period of final exams of high schools is a low season as families are busy with the exams.

Then there is a trend - not only in Kuwait but around the world in general - choosing a special date for marriage. For instance, 1/1 is the most demanded, while 20/2/2020 is also in high demand. Valentine's Day is also much demanded. Once I heard on TV that the most people who got married on 7/7/2007 were in Russia. Also, some people like to get married on their birthday. The highest number of marriages that I experienced was on 12/12/2012.

KT: What is the most interesting thing that happened with you?

Binessa: Once I was disappointed when a groom called me to register his marriage, but shortly after I arrived and after people already saw me, the groom apologized for not using my services as his father had already brought his friend, who is a malaach. Also, once I went to a faraway area and the weather was very cold, but the marriage was not completed as the father of the bride set new conditions, so the groom didn't agree to complete this marriage.

During the 17 years of my work as a malaach, I have faced many different situations. Once a case was transferred to the general prosecutor as the groom committed a crime. He lied to me that he only had three wives, and got married to a fifth wife, as in fact he already had four wives. He lied to me about the number of his wives, as we couldn't know this before the marriage. But after investigations, we found this out. So his last marriage was annulled and he was jailed.









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Local

Industrial activities are vital to keep pace with the times

Roudhan: Govt keen to support factories by rewarding them

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday affirmed the need to develop new industrial activities to keep pace with times and establish Kuwaiti industry that can compete in regional and international markets. "We have confidence in the ability of Kuwaitis to succeed and achieve leadership," Roudhan said in his speech during the fifth edition of the HH the Amir Award for Outstanding Factories. He explained that numerous factories took the initiative to develop their products and adhere to quality standards in various aspects of the industry, which gave consumer confidence and security for the export of their products and increase their competitiveness in global markets.

The government is keen to support national industrial establishments by rewarding them for their achievements, he added. In addition, Roudhan expressed his goal to increase the participation of the industrial sector in the local economy. The new industrial revolution requires a comprehensive development of all sectors to

keep pace with the global stakes in investment in new industries based on knowledge, innovation and sustainability, he pointed out.

Roudhan expressed his appreciation to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his continuous support to the national industry and his patronage of this award. The award is important nationwide in a framework of objective competition and its role in highlighting improvement in the performance of industrial companies by raising their production efficiency and providing job opportunities for national labor, he added.

Roudhan stated that the award is looking to achieve two main goals - the first is to spread the culture of institutional excellence in the industrial sector in Kuwait, while the other goal urges lagging factories to win the award to improve their performance by highlighting their weaknesses. HH the Amir Award for Outstanding Factories was launched in 2002 and achieved success during its past four editions, he noted. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan addresses the fifth edition of the HH the Amir Award for Outstanding Factories. — KUNA

KFAED Vietnam project serves 3m people



HANOI: The Van Dinh waterlogging control project executed by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) serves about three million people in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, said project deputy manager Doug Tring. The project, launched in 1987, protects farming lands against natural disasters and provides clean drinking water to the residents, Tring told KUNA in a statement yesterday during a visit by outstanding Kuwaiti students to the project site, organized by KFAED in cooperation with the ministry of education.

The project worth KD four million (\$13 million) contributes to the production of about five million cubic meters of gallons per day, covering 28,000 hectares of land in Hanoi, he noted. He thanked Kuwait and KFAED for the efforts to develop life in Vietnam and improve the country's economy.

Meanwhile, the students said they were



proud of Kuwait's efforts to aid other countries in need and the fund's prominent role in executing development projects around the world. KFAED is funding several agri-

cultural, health and electricity development ventures in Vietnam. The fund has provided about 15 loans worth KD 54 million (\$178 million) to the country. — KUNA

Tunisia commends Kuwait's efforts during UNSC tenure



NEW YORK: The Tunisian delegation honors the Kuwaiti delegation at the UN.—KUNA

NEW YORK: Tunisian Ambassador to the UN Muncef Baati commended Kuwait's efforts during its non-permanent Security Council's membership and its staunch support of Arab causes, foremost the Palestinian question. Baati, during a reception to honor Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and members of the Kuwait mission, said Kuwait's humanitarian diplomacy and its policies contributed to improving work of the UNSC to be more effective and transparent.

Kuwait was a non-permanent UNSC member in 2018-19. Otaibi said Kuwait believed its support to the Arab causes throughout its UNSC membership was a duty towards its Arab brothers. He hoped Arab causes will witness a breakthrough during Tunisia's 2020-21 UNSC membership. —KUNA

Local

Kuwait marks 29th anniversary of liberation war's first strike

Kuwaiti air force played heroic role

KUWAIT: Kuwait will mark the 29th anniversary of the first air strikes of operation "Desert Storm" launched by international coalition forces to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi Invasion today. Then US President George Bush made the decision to start the military operation on Jan 15, 1991, after a meeting with his senior national security advisers concluded that implementation of the operation should take place after the failure of all diplomatic means to persuade Iraq to withdraw troops.

In the morning of Jan 17, 1991 after the end of the ultimatum set by the UN Security Council, air raids were launched, with the participation of 1,800 warplanes from the US, UK, Saudi and Kuwait. The fighter jets took off from the Red Sea and Incirlik air base in Turkey, and other air bases in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. On the first day, the raids lasted 240 intermittent minutes, in which 400 warplanes participated. The coalition jets conducted 1,200 operations, including 302 by Saudi and Kuwaiti aircraft, destroying almost half of the Iraqi airpower.

Various types of warplanes participated in this operation, under the guidance of AWACS aircraft. The US aircraft carriers fired 100 Tomahawk missiles against Iraqi targets in Iraq and Kuwait. Jaguar warplanes participated in a major role in directing the attacking planes and jamming the counter devices and radars. F-117s warplanes had a primary role in the first strike to destroy and bomb targets in Baghdad, and Iraqi air defense could not shoot down any of them. The Kuwaiti air force played a heroic role in the war of liberation, striking targets inside Kuwait in order to preserve Kuwaiti properties, in addition to striking airports and Iraqi artillery positions and enemy gatherings. The coalition countries contributed \$53 billion for these military operations, with Germany accounting for \$6.572 billion, Japan \$10.72 billion, South Korea \$355 million, Kuwait \$16 billion, Saudi Arabia \$16.839 billion, UAE \$4.88 billion and other countries \$30 million.

More than $750,\!000$ soldiers participated, including $500,\!000$

First air strikes of operation "Desert Storm"—KUNA

Americans representing ground forces, marines, and air force, 30,000 Britons, and 13,000 French, in addition to some 200,000 troops who made up Arab units that joined the coalition. On Feb 24, coalition forces entered at dawn into Kuwaiti and Iraqi territories. The ground forces were divided into three main groups: The first went to liberate Kuwait City, the second to surround the wing of the Iraqi army west of Kuwait, while the third group was tasked with moving in the far west and entering the south of Iraqi territory to cut off all supplies to the army. On Feb 26, 1991, the Iraqi army withdrew from Kuwait after setting fire to Kuwait's oilfields. President Bush announced on Feb 27 the liberation of Kuwait, 100 hours after the launch of the ground operations, saying his famous phrase "Kuwait today is free". — KUNA

Apartment buildings: Option for rising demand for housing

KUWAIT: Living in spacious apartment buildings has been touted as a viable option for Kuwaiti citizens as the demand for housing continues to grow. While the option is virtually available for all citizens willing to live within the boundaries of an apartment, the decision is still governed by personal preferences as well as social status and financial capabilities. The 1993–established Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) is encouraging citizens to live in apartment buildings by displaying the many perks of a spacious apartment with facilities and services catering to the needs of each Kuwaiti family.

Recently, PAHW - which implements government-housing policies - prioritized requests for apartments in Jaber Al-Ahmad City within the 2019-20 budget and this included requests submitted until Dec 31 of last year. Requests for government apartments are on the rise, said PAWH spokesman Ibrahim Al-Nashi in a statement to KUNA. He added that requests for apartments were increasing, especially in Jaber Al-Ahmad City and northwest Sulaibikhat. For example, he indicated that in Jaber Al-Ahmad, there are 520 apartments, while around 610 citizens submitted housing requests.

The cost of a 400-sq-m apartment varies between KD 60,000 and 70,000 (about \$198,000 and \$230,000), with citizens paying back the government in monthly installments of KD 60 (\$198), said Nashi. As PAHW is trying to sell the idea of spacious apartment buildings to citizens, reactions varies amongst Kuwaitis, with some preferring to wait their turn for a government house while others are

seriously contemplating the idea.

Head of the youth voluntary team for housing projects quality Khaled Al-Otaibi claimed that Kuwaitis are not too eager to live in apartment buildings, citing the 1980s' Sawaber apartment project as an example of failure to gain social acceptance. Privacy is a major obstacle to overcome with apartment buildings, said Otaibi, adding this would be the main concern for those trying to sell the solution to the masses.

Ahmad Al-Enezi seconded Otaibi, saying apartments are a fixed deal with no room for improvements construction-wise if residents decided that in the future. Most citizens have increasing needs, whether it is welcoming newborns or trying to expand the space for the sake of expanding, and apartments lack that no matter how good the idea is, he added. Enezi said that with the lack of outdoor spaces and probably noise from neighbors, he failed to see the advantages of apartment buildings.

Enezi's thoughts are also shared by Bader Al-Nasser, who indicated that most citizens would rather wait for housing or land allocated by the government than live in an apartment building. The only way Nasser saw apartment buildings being successful is that if the government made such structures closer to the center of the city and residential areas and more private for families.

In contrast, Sumayya Aİ-Ali said apartment buildings are interesting for those unwilling to wait for years to acquire a house, noting that reasonable installment rates paid back to the government and short waiting period are better than high rents in private apartments. Ali added that apartment buildings are adequate to her familial needs at the moment, saying that she did not rule out the possibility of taking this option. Hashem Al-Mane, also an advocate of apartment buildings, affirmed that the solution was realistic for citizens, saying that units cater to the specific needs of five to six individuals within a family. He also noted that each apartment was built to address the private needs for each family, adding that the idea itself was successful in his eyes. —KUNA

News in brief

Nafisi receives death threat

KUWAIT: Lawyer Adel Abdelhadi said political analyst and writer Abdullah Al-Nafisi has received a death threat. "I received a warning about an assassination attempt against my client Dr Abdullah Al-Nafisi by placing an explosive device in his car. The threat came in a message posted on the Al-Qabas website of the company that produced the 'Black Box' program," he said. Abdelhadi said this matter will not be taken lightly, especially since his client had received earlier threats, but this time it was directly against his life. Nafisi is accused of slandering certain people while talking about the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait during an episode of the 'Black Box' show. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

Cafe shisha ban rejected

KUWAIT: State Minister for Municipal Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem rejected a Municipal Council decision to approve a proposal by councilmember Ahmad Al-Hadyan to separate restaurant licensing from that of cafes and ban shisha in cafes. — Meshaal Al-Enezi



Maj Gen Khaled Al-Sabah promoted

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti army yesterday announced promoting Maj Gen Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah as deputy chairperson of the army chairmanship of staff with the rank of Lieutenant General. The army said in a statement that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulated the lieutenant general on the occasion for the confidence accorded to him by HH the Amir. —KUNA

Unstable weather forecast

KUWAIT: Meteorologist Abdelaziz Al-Qarawi said the country will experience unstable weather and strong winds with a chance of thunderstorms. Qarawi expected today's weather to be moderate and partially cloudy with southeasterly winds, while temperature will be between 21 to 23 degree Celsius. He said today evening will be cool and cloudy with a chance of scattered rains and a minimum temperature of 12-14 degree C. — A Saleh

International

Lebanon anti-bank protests rock Beirut for second night

Putin's new PM promises 'real changes' for Russians

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DOHA: The Kefala system required for all foreign workers to obtain their employers' consent to travel has been scrapped by qatar. — AFP

Qatar eases restrictions on workers' exit

DUBAI: Qatar said yesterday it had scrapped restrictions on leaving the country for nearly all migrant workers as part of reforms answering accusations of exploitation especially in the runup to the 2022 World Cup.

The measure removes exit visas for hundreds of thousands of domestic workers left out of earlier reforms - mainly from Asian nations like Nepal, India and the Philippines - whom rights groups said were left open to abuse by being excluded.

Unions and activists have documented labour exploitation, dangerous conditions and deaths of workers building stadiums and infrastructure for both the 2018 World Cup in Russia and the upcoming event in Oatar.

The Gulf state, which hopes the 2022 World Cup will boost its economy and development, is eager to show it is creating a modern system that protects all expatriate workers. "The removal of exit permits is an important milestone in the government's labour reform agenda," said Houtan Homayounpour, head of the International Organization for Labour (ILO) office in Qatar, which welcomed the move.

Oatar in 2018 eliminated exit visas for many

foreign migrant workers. But the reform did not apply to domestic workers, government and public institution staff, the oil and gas sector, and workers employed at sea and in agriculture.

Under the new system, exit permit requirements will remain in place for members of the armed forces and for a limited number of workers in key company posts. "Employers have the right to identify a maximum of 5% of their workforce whose exit from Qatar will continue to require prior approval," a government statement said.

A "kafala" sponsorship system for workers is common in Gulf states with large foreign communities. In gas-rich Qatar, it requires workers to obtain employers' consent before changing jobs, which activists say fosters exploitation. Qatar has only 300,000 citizens of its own.

In 2017 the ILO, a United Nations' body, dropped a case against Doha over its treatment of foreign workers after it committed to far-reaching reforms. Qatar has imposed a minimum wage and established dispute resolution committees to fast-track complaints of

It also says work is underway to enable workers to change employers more easily. — Reuters

Iran crown prince predicts regime will collapse

WASHINGTON: The heir of Iran's deposed monarchy predicted Wednesday that the clerical regime will collapse within months and urged Western powers not to negotiate with it. Reza Pahlavi said that major protests which erupted in November and again this month, after the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger jet, reminded him of the uprising that ousted his father in early 1979.

'It's just a matter of time for it to reach its final climax. I think we're in that mode," the former crown prince told a news conference in Washington, which he lives near in exile. "This is weeks or months preceding the ultimate collapse, not dissimilar to the last three months in 1978 before the revolution," he said.

While exiled activists have routinely predicted the fall of the regime, Pahlavi said that Iranians could "smell the opportunity for the first time in 40 years this time." The 59-yearold heir to the Peacock Throne, who has not been to Iran since he was a teenager, cited as evidence what he called an easing of fear among protesters and the growing distancing of self-described reformists from the Islamic regime

In an address to the Hudson Institute, Pahlavi largely supported President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign that has sought to isolate the Iranian regime through severe sanctions, saying that past negotiations have failed.

"It has long been time to recognize that this is not a normal regime and that it will not change its behavior," Pahlavi said. "My compatriots understand that this regime cannot be reformed and must be removed."

Iranians "expect the world to show more than just moral support. They expect not to be thrown under the bus in the name of diplomacy and negotiation." — AFP

International

Seeking peace in Libya and Iran, past inaction haunts EU diplomacy

CAIRO/BRUSSELS: After war broke out again in Libya early last year, a special team of EU diplomats in Tripoli was forced back to neighbouring Tunisia to do what they had been doing for several years: wait.

As Germany holds a UN summit on Sunday for a path to end the conflict in Libya, in turmoil since the 2011 fall of Muammar Gaddafi, European powers believe they can now begin to overcome such inaction and defend interests on their southern doorstep.

But like the bored EU experts tasked with supporting Libyan ministry officers at their temporary mission offices in Tunis over the past five years, EU diplomacy has often arrived too late to make an impact and, in Iran, been left exposed by US President Donald Trump's "America First" policy. "We Europeans, since we don't want to participate in a military solution, we barricade ourselves in the belief there is no military solution," the EU's new foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told the European Parliament this week.

"Nobody will be very happy if, on the Libyan coast, there is a ring of military bases from the Russian and Turkish navies in front of the Italian coast," he said.

The economically powerful EU, once able to boast of a soft power that helped transform communist neighbours into thriving market economies, first sent a mission to Libya to train border guards in 2013 but was reduced to running all its training outside of Libya from 2015, returning

briefly in 2017 and 2019.

With Libya's migration routes close to European shores and its energy supplies in the Mediterranean sought by Turkey, policy towards a country that was an EU priority has instead become a symbol of its divisions.

Former colonial power Italy has supported the Tripoli-based, UN-backed government of Fayez al-Serraj, while France favoured Khalifa Haftar, commander of the eastern Libyan National Army.

Paris and Rome held rival peace conferences, while Russia and Turkey, two countries sometimes at odds with the EU's values of democracy and human rights, sidelined the bloc. First talks on a ceasefire last week took place in Moscow, not Brussels.

Washington, Europe's closest ally, has been largely absent, a far cry from 2011 when the United States and Europe cooperated under NATO in a bombing campaign that backed the rebels who overthrew Gaddafi.

"In the Middle East and North Africa, the EU never had a clear idea of what its objectives are, so it could not be proactive, only reactive. We have let many opportunities pass," said Sven Biscop, an analyst at Belgium's Egmont Institute.

The EU, facing a crisis in Iran over the unravelling of the 2015 nuclear deal, now senses an opportunity in Libya after Moscow failed to reach a ceasefire deal with Haftar.

Shock over the fallout from U.S. drone strike on an Iranian general on

Jan. 3 has galvanized Europeans over Libya, some EU envoys say, settling on a new "European approach".

Britain, France and Germany already this week showed a new determination to pressure Tehran to comply with the Iran accord, triggering a dispute mechanism that could lead to the reimposition of U.N. sanctions.

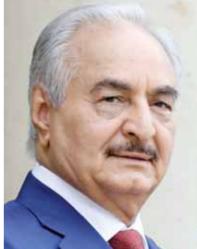
However, with Sunday's conference on Libya approaching, Italy and France have yet to put aside their differences and rally behind the government in Tripoli.

Germany, which sees itself as more neutral than France and Italy, has sought to take the lead, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel investing time in seeking the support from her Russian, Turkish and Egyptian counterparts.

The EU's new leadership in Brussels also wants to be more "geopolitical" and stem the waning of Europe's influence. It launched into a frenzy of diplomacy in early January amid fears of a Middle East conflagration after the U.S. drone strike in Iran.

Top EU officials held talks with Serraj in Brussels, called an emergency meeting of EU foreign ministers, held calls with Iran's president and joined French President Emmanuel Macron at a conference on the Sahel.

"We are not trying to have an aggressive external policy ... but the heads of state need a new mindset to be more assertive," said a senior EU official involved in foreign policy.





BERLIN: (COMBO) This combination of pictures created yesterday shows Libyan National Army's Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar (L, in Paris on May 29, 2018) and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (in Berlin on May 31, 2019). — AFP

Friendly foreign governments do want to see the European Union succeed in the world, officials and diplomats said. Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido has regularly called for EU help to increase pressure on President Nicolas Maduro.

Since Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear accord and reimposed U.S. sanctions, Tehran has repeatedly called on the EU to save a nuclear deal by keeping trade channels open.

But with Britain, one of Europe's two main military powers with France, leaving the European Union, the EU could find it hard to live up to its ambitions. Neither the EU nor NATO have plans to deploy troops in Libya. The EU naval operation, Sofia, which rescued migrants off the Libyan coast and helped enforce an arms embargo, has been taken off the water, and European allies have rejected US calls at NATO to help patrol Gulf shipping lanes.

Sometimes just agreeing statements has proved too divisive. "The positive sign is that everyone now agrees this is unsustainable," said Bruno Macaes, a former Europe minister for Portugal and now a foreign policy consultant. — Reuters

Yemen separatist chief warns against collapse of power-sharing deal

ADEN: The leader of Yemen's southern separatists has warned against the looming collapse of a power-sharing deal, saying the region is menaced by the twin threats of economic catastrophe and Islamist attacks.

The agreement to resolve a battle for control in the south, which was signed in Riyadh last November, was hailed as a step towards ending the wider conflict in Yemen that pits the government against Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

However, analysts have said it is effectively defunct, having failed to meet deadlines for key measures including the formation of a new cabinet with equal representation for southerners, and the reorganisation of military forces.

In an interview with AFP, Aidarous Al-Zoubeidi, who heads the secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC), said he was committed to the deal "under the leadership of Saudi Arabia" which leads a military coalition against the Huthis. Zoubeidi said the agreement, which observers had welcomed as preventing the com-

plete break-up of Yemen, united the south against the Huthis and recognised the STC as a legitimate party. "We consider the Riyadh Agreement an important political step, because we gained regional and international recognition," he said as he sat behind his desk in the main southern city of Aden in front of the flag of the formerly independent south.

'People are suffering'

In August, deadly clashes broke out between the government and STC forces who seized control of Aden, ousting unionist forces who had set up base there when President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi fled the Huthi-held capital Sanaa in February 2015.

While the government and the STC are technically allies in the long war against the Huthis, the secessionists believe the south should be an independent state — as it was before unification in 1990. However, Zoubeidi said they were willing to set aside that goal as the allies focused on

the fight against the Huthi rebels, which had threatened to be derailed by the power struggle in the south. "We do not aspire during this phase for independence, we aspire for partnership... and the right to choose our own fate through democracy," he said.

The troubled rollout of the deal comes against amid what Zoubeidi said was a dire situation in the south of Yemen — a country which the grinding conflict has pushed to the brink of famine. "There is a shortage of food products, the warehouses are empty in the south and there are only reserves to cover the needs of the people for the next 10 days," he said.

"People are also suffering from not getting their salaries," he said, referring to a chronic lack of funds to pay public sector employees.

Zoubeidi said that Yemen's currency was sharply depreciating, and that it was possible that in the next few months the rial would be abandoned in favour of the Saudi or US currencies "because it will have no value".

Threats loom

Zoubeidi said that "many threats" loom large over the Riyadh Agreement, but the most critical was intensified activity by militant groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, which he said was working "under the cover" of the government. The tussle for control of the south, dubbed a "civil war within a civil war", exposed divisions between the coalition partners — Saudi Arabia which backs the government, and the United Arab Emirates which has backed and funded the STC. The UAE, like the STC, has a zero tolerance policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood and Yemen's Brotherhood-influenced Al-Islah party which has representatives in Hadi's government.

"These terrorist organisations threaten the Riyadh Agreement because they are terrorist organisations that will conduct terrorist activities that may lead to the failure of the deal," Zoubeidi said. The Rivadh Agreement set a timetable for the government's return to Aden, the appointment of a new head of security and a governor of the city, and the formation of a new 24-member cabinet with equal representation for southerners. Yemen's Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik returned to the city in December but the two sides have failed to meet the other deadlines. Around 3.3 million people have been displaced by the Yemeni conflict and some 20 million — more than two-thirds of the population - need help to survive what the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. — AFP

International

Lebanon anti-bank protests rock Beirut for second night

BEIRUT: Protesters in crisis-hit Lebanon clashed with security forces in Beirut, a day after demonstrators outraged by restrictions on dollar withdrawals attacked bank branches with metal rods, fire extinguishers and rocks.

Hundreds gathered again outside the central bank on Wednesday evening, moving to a police station where more than 100 people were still detained following clashes between demonstrators and security forces the previous night.

They chanted slogans and demanded the release of their comrades before security forces fired teargas to disperse them. Four months into a protest movement against Lebanon's political class, demonstrators have turned their anger at the banks, most of which have imposed informal capital controls to stave off a liquidity crunch.

That has trapped the savings of ordinary depositors in Lebanon's worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. Protester Yumna Mroue, 22, said the central bank's financial policies had been harming small savers for years. "We're in free-fall now. What happened last night comes from people's real pain and anger,"

'A lot of anger'

After a long day of protests and clashes, security forces released 10 people out of more than 50 who were detained Tuesday night, according to local media and activists.

The Red Cross said a total of 47 people were injured Wednesday night, 37 of whom were taken to nearby hospitals. The ten others were treated on the spot.

A lawyer in the place told local media that 17 protesters were also arrested during Wednesday clashes, the latest since Lebanon's anti-government protests demanding sweeping reform began on October 17.

On Wednesday morning in Hamra, most bank branches were left with smashed windows, destroyed ATMs and graffiti-daubed walls after violent protest the previous night.

Banks opened despite the wreckage, as cleaners scrubbed paint off walls and workers replaced smashed windows.

"There is a lot of anger," Alia, a passerby, told AFP in front a damaged branch. "You have to go to the bank twice to withdraw just \$200."

Deposits 'held hostage'

On Wednesday evening, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in front of the central bank, whose governor Riad Salameh they partly blame for the country's financial crisis.

Security forces meanwhile imposed tight movement restrictions in Hamra, closing the main road to the central bank. The state-run National News Agency reported that some teargas canisters had fallen inside the Russian embassy, near the police station housing the detainees.

Activists said several people including at least one video journalist had been injured in the clashes. Since September, banks have limited the number of dollars customers can withdraw or transfer abroad, in a country where the greenback and the Lebanese pound are used interchangeably.

Although no formal policy is in place, most lenders have limited withdrawals to about \$1,000 a month, while others have imposed tighter curbs. Prompted by a grinding liquidity crisis, the controls are increasingly forcing depositors to deal in the pound.

But the local currency has plunged by over a third against the dollar on the parallel market, hitting almost 2,500 against the US dollar over the past week. The official rate was pegged at 1,507 Lebanese pounds to the greenback in 1997.

Demonstrators accuse banks of holding their deposits hostage while allowing politi-cians, senior civil servants and bank owners to transfer funds abroad. The central bank has announced it is investigating capital flight, saying it wants to standardise and regulate the ad hoc banking restrictions.



BEIRUT: (COMBO) This combination of pictures created yesterday shows riot police dragging a detained protester into the police barracks after Lebanese anti-government protesters gathered to demand the release of detainees who were arrested overnight, in the capital Beirut on January 15, 2020. Lebanon's security forces were holding at least 100 anti-government protesters yesterday, lawyers told AFP, after two nights of demonstrations that turned violent in Beirut. — AFP

'Dangerous chaos'

Compounding the situation, debt-burdened Lebanon has been without a government since Saad Hariri resigned as prime minister on October 29 under pressure from the anti-government protests. Its under-fire politicians have yet to agree on a new cabinet despite the designation last month of Hassan Diab, a professor and former education minister, to replace Hariri. Diab has pledged to form a government of independent experts — a key demand of protesters but said last week that some parties were hin-

dering his attempts. Authorities on Wednesday condemned the night-time attacks and called for perpetrators to be prosecuted. Hariri called the rampage "unacceptable," while parliament speaker Nabih Berri questioned whether the aim as to "destroy the country."

But in a strongly worded statement, United Nations envoy to Lebanon, Jan Kubis, blamed politicians for the turmoil, accusing them of inaction while watching the economy "collapse". "Politicians, don't blame the people, blame yourselves for this dangerous chaos," he said. — AFP

Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan make progress in dam row

WASHINGTON: Ethiopia made progress with Egypt and Sudan in US-brokered talks in easing concerns over a hotly contested mega-dam on the Nile, with a tentative agreement to fill it only

The three countries had set a deadline of Wednesday to reach an accord over the Grand Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia, which Egypt fears could deplete its scarce drinking water.

After three days of talks in Washington, the countries' foreign ministers "noted the progress achieved," a joint statement said.

But they stopped short of announcing a resolution, saying the three countries would meet again in the US capital on January 28-29 to finalize an agreement.

Analysts have feared that the three Nile basin countries could be drawn into a conflict if the dispute is not resolved before the colossal 1.8-kilometer-long dam, under construction since 2011, begins operating.

In a draft deal, Ethiopia agreed that it will fill the dam set to be Africa's largest hydroelectric project — only in the wet season from July to August, or also in September if con-

Ethiopia will aim rapidly to reach the level of 595 meters (1,952 feet) above sea level, with later filling to be determined based on the conditions of the river.

The filling "will be executed in stages and will be undertaken in an adaptive and cooperative manner that takes into consideration the hydrological conditions of the Blue Nile and the potential impact of the filling on downstream reservoirs," said the statement released by the United States.

The three foreign ministers "reaffirmed the importance of transboundary cooperation in the development of the Blue Nile to improve the lives of the people of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, and their shared commitment to concluding an agree-

The draft deal also calls for special mitigation measures for Egypt and Sudan on years that they are especially dry.

In early negotiations, Ethiopia had said it would fill the dam's reservoir in three years while Egypt wanted the process drawn out over 15 years.

Appeals for mediation Ethiopia says the \$4.2 billion hydroelectric barrage would

double its electricity and be indispensable for a growing economy. It is expected to begin generating power by the end of 2020 and be fully operational by 2022.

But Egypt fears disruption in the river that provides 90 percent of its drinking water. Discussions between the three countries broke down, prompting Egypt to call for international

The US Treasury Department agreed to broker talks after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi made a pitch to President Donald Trump, his close ally. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his democratic reforms, promised Sunday to take into consideration the other Nile nations' concerns.

"Ethiopia always believes in a win-win approach with Egypt and Sudan," Abiy said on a visit to South Africa, adding that peace was essential to "realize our vision of development and growth." Abiy also invited South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, the incoming chairperson of the African Union, to help push forward negotiations on the dam. The International Crisis Group, in a report last year, urged the three nations not to see the dam dispute as an "existential conflict" but as a way to improve resource-sharing.

Waiting until the dam is operational — when its impact on downstream countries is clearer — would raise the risk of violent conflict," it warned. — AFP

International

Friday, January 17, 2020

Putin's new PM promises 'real changes' for Russians

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin's new prime minister promised "real changes" yesterday as he was approved by law-makers after the Kremlin announced sweeping reform plans. The lower house State Duma voted overwhelmingly to approve Mikhail Mishustin as premier, less than 24 hours after Russia's political order was shaken by Putin's announcement of constitutional reforms and the resignation of the government.

No MPs voted against his candidacy, although Communist lawmakers abstained. Speaking before his approval, Mishustin called on parliament to work with him to urgently enact Putin's programme.

"People should already now be feeling real changes for the better," Mishustin said. The naming of a new premier was one in a series of bombshell announcements that rocked Russia on Wednesday, when Putin said constitutional reform would change the country's balance of power and his longtime prime minister Dmitry Medvedev resigned along with the cabinet.

Putin's current term as president ends in 2024 and observers say the 67-year-old could be laying the groundwork to assume a new position or remain in a powerful behind-the-scenes role. Mishustin said his priority would be to "increase citizens' real incomes" but also said the government must "restore trust" with the business community and drive innovation, echoing the state-of-the-nation speech on Wednesday when Putin announced the reforms. Mishustin assured lawmakers that Russia can afford salary hikes and social payouts announced by Putin, estimating they will cost about four trillion rubles (\$65 billion) over the next four years.

'Stay number one'

In his state of the nation speech, Putin said he wanted more authority transferred to parliament from the president. He also called for the power of the State Council, an advisory body, to be expanded and enshrined in the constitution — adding to conjecture that Putin could take it over after 2024 to preserve power.

Outlining the proposals, which would be the first significant changes to the country's constitution since it was adopted in 1993, Putin said there was a "demand for change" among Russians.

While his nominee Mishustin was speaking in parliament, Putin met his newly formed working group for amending the constitution. Putin said the amendments "would have no effect on the foundations of the constitution" but would make authorities "more effective" and ensure Russia's development.

He said Russia would remain a presidential republic following the reforms, but it would be parliament not the president who would be picking the government. A list of more than 70 names joining the group published by the Kremlin includes conservative public figures as well as celebrities like actor Vladimir Mashkov and pianist Denis Matsuev. Medvedev, prime minister since 2012, announced the resignation of his government soon after Putin's speech on Wednesday, explaining the move as necessary to remove all constraints from Putin's reform drive. Independent political analyst Maria Lipman said the announcements indicated that Putin wanted to "stay on as number one in the country, without any competitors". She said he could be deliberately weakening the presidency before relinquishing the role. Russia's opposition also said the proposals indicate Putin's desire to stay in power. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Twitter that Putin's only goal was to "remain the sole leader for life".

'Faceless functionary'

Mishustin will have a week to propose a new government and ministers. The former head of an investment group who trained



MOSCOW: Mikhail Mishustin, President Vladimir Putin's nominee for the post of prime minister, speaks to lawmakers during a session of the State Duma lower parliament in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

as an engineer, Mishustin has a PhD in economics and has led Russia's Federal Tax Service since 2010. He shares Putin's love for hockey and has been seen at matches with security services officials. Former opposition lawmaker Gennadiy Gudkov called Mishustin "a new faceless functionary without ambition" who embodies a system that is "detrimental for the economy". Medvedev — who also served as Russian president for four years from 2008 — is expected to stay close to the Russian leader in his new role as deputy head of the Security Council, which Putin chairs. — AFP

Millennials fear nuclear attack in next decade

GENEVA: More than half of millennials fear there will be a nuclear attack somewhere in the world within the next decade, according to a survey by the Red Cross released yesterday. Some 47 percent of respondents to the poll of 16,000 young people also believed it was more likely than not that there would be a third world war in their lifetime.

"Millennials appear to see cataclysmic war as a real likelihood in their lifetime," Peter Maurer, president of the Genevabased International Committee of the Red Cross, said in a foreword to the report.

Adults aged between 20 and 35 took part in the survey — both in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan and Syria and largely peaceful ones like Britain and France. The Red Cross used online panels, face to face interviews and telephone interviews to reach people in 16 countries.

The most striking result came in reply to the question: "In your opinion, how likely or unlikely is it that nuclear weapons will be used in wars or armed conflicts anywhere in the world within the next 10 years?"

Some 54 percent said they felt it was

likely such weapons would be used. The ICRC said the survey also revealed some "worrying trends", such as the answers they received to the question: "In your opinion, is torturing captured enemy combatants acceptable under some circumstances, or is it never acceptable?"

Some 41 percent said they would support torture in some circumstances. And just 54 percent had heard of the Geneva Conventions, agreed in 1949 to protect prisoners of war and civilians in war time in response to the horrors of the Second World War

Maurer said the results also revealed "a worrying acceptance of dehumanising language or actions towards perceived or real 'enemies' that is prevailing in an era of fake news, disinformation and polarised viewpoints".

But there was some optimism, such as the 60 percent of Syrians polled who said they believed the current civil conflict would end within the next five years. Syrians also had the highest support among respondents for showing humanity in war, with 85 percent saying captured combatants should be allowed to contact relatives and 70 percent saying torture was never acceptable.

The highest support for torture of captured enemy combatants was in Israel, Nigeria and the United States. The Red Cross is a humanitarian institution established in 1863 with a mandate to protect the victims of conflict. — AFP

Germany looks to step up coal exit timetable

FRANKFURT: Germany could end electricity generation from coal in 2035, three years earlier than planned, under a pact sealed yesterday as Chancellor Angela Merkel's government faces growing pressure to take climate action.

Merkel and premiers from Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Brandenburg agreed overnight a "shutdown plan" for the country's power plants using the highly polluting fossil fuel, her spokesman Steffen Seibert said in a statement. Until now, Berlin had named 2038 as the latest possible date to power down the final coal-fired generators. Under the new plan, reviews in 2026 and 2029 will examine "whether the moment to shut down the plants can be brought forward by three years," Seibert said.

"Germany is taking big steps on its way out of the fossil fuel age," finance minister Olaf Scholz told reporters in Berlin. For plants set to fall off the grid in the 2020s alone, the government will compensate operators to the tune of 4.35 billion euros (\$4.9 billion), Scholz said. The payouts "will be spread out over the 15 years following the shutdown" and represent an "affordable and in my view good result," Scholz added.

Meanwhile the deal would also spare the Hambach forest, an ancient wood in western Germany threatened by the expansion of a vast open-pit brown coal mine that became the focus of mass protests by environmentalists.

But yesterday's deal did not go far enough for protest group Ende Gelaende, which organised many of the "Hambi stays" demonstrations. "Exiting coal is not a technical challenge, but a question of political will... 2035 is much too late!" the group tweeted.

Costly exit

Ministers now plan to propose a draft law on the exit from coal "in January" and pass it "in the first half of 2020". Germany is under pressure to clarify how it plans to accelerate its "energy transition" away from fossil fuels and towards renewables, with a target to generate 65 percent from carbon-neutral sources by 2030.

Over the same period, Berlin aims to reduce output of greenhouse gases by 55 percent compared with 1990's levels — a goal agreed last year under pressure from demonstrators like the worldwide "Fridays for Future" movement.

But the task has been complicated by Merkel's decision to end nuclear power generation by 2022, leaving coal as the main backstop to renewables during the transition period.

The dirty fuel currently powers around one-third of the country's electricity. "We are the first country to make a binding decision to quit nuclear and coal," environment minister Svenja Schulze said Thursday. "We need a massive build-up of wind and solar energy so that the exit is a real success."

On top of climate and energy supply challenges, Germany must also wrestle with the social consequences for coal-producing regions of dropping the fuel. Much brown coal production in particular is concentrated in economically weak regions in the former communist east and in de-industrialising areas of the west. An "adjustment fund" for workers in black and brown coal plants and brown coal mines is planned to compensate them until 2043, Seibert said. — AFP

International

Trump walking fine line in supporting Iran protesters

Any govt overtures could draw accusations of foreign meddling

Farsi and technological tools to circumvent internet shutdowns, US President Donald Trump might be close to exhausting his options to support Iranian protesters rising up against their rulers. US officials say the administration needs to avoid any overtures that could draw accusations of foreign meddling - like direct financing and increase the chances of a violent crackdown on the people it wants to support.

The day after protests broke out in Tehran and other cities following Iran's admission on Saturday after days of denials that it shot down a Ukrainian airliner, killing all 176 people aboard, Trump sent a tweet in Farsi aimed at Iran's leaders: "DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS." It was retweeted almost 80,000 times. US officials said the intent of Trump's tweet and other voices of support within the administration was to reinforce the message that Washington stands in solidarity with the Iranian people, while helping shine a light on the motivation of the protesters and let the Tehran government know "we are paying attention.'

The demonstrators met a fierce police response in several places during four days of protests. In November, a crackdown on protests caused by fuel price hikes killed hundreds of people.

The Ukraine International Airlines flight from Tehran to Kiev was downed by Iranian air defenses when the armed forces were on high alert for US reprisals, hours after Iran launched missiles against US targets in Iraq in retaliation for a US drone strike that killed top Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 3. Most of those on board were Iranians or dual citizens. "We're not looking for regime change or all-out war," said one US official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We're just telling you (that) you can't have a nuclear weapon and don't shoot protesters." The United States has worked with technology companies to help create tools for the Iranian people to circumvent Tehran's restrictions on the internet, said Brian Hook, US special representative for Iran. During the November protests, tens of thousands of people used those tools to communicate, he added. "We're going to continue to look for technology tools to help the Iranian people circumvent the regime censorship and internet shutdown," Hook told Reuters when asked what tangible efforts Washington could offer to help protesters.

Punishing sanctionsSome see hypocrisy in Trump's show of concern. While the administration emphasizes that it stands by the Iranian people, heavy US sanctions reimposed by Trump have hastened the economy's deterioration and worsened economic conditions for ordinary Iranians, experts say. "His words carry almost no credibility with an Iranian public who saw him just now impose more sanctions," said Aaron David Miller, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"So if you ask me if Trump has a public relations strategy when it comes to supporting these protests, the answer is no. It's all driven by his moods, his political needs and his desire to separate himself from his predecessor." While the United States says its sanctions are laser-focused



to hurt Iran's leaders, many foreign banks and companies are deterred from doing business with the Islamic Republic, even for supplies of food and medicine, which are exempt from sanctions.

Democrats say there is more the White House can do to send a message to the Iranian people, such as lifting the ban on travel by Iranians to the United States. Iran was included in a travel ban Trump launched early in his presidency aimed at stopping the export of what Washington calls

state-sponsored terrorism. There has been no indication yet that Trump is considering doing so. While some analysts believe the United States would not be totally uncomfortable with a regime change, Washington has reason to be wary of overstepping too much. The latest example of foreign diplomats landing in hot water in Iran came last week, when Britain's ambassador to Tehran was briefly detained, accused of attending a protest. — Reuters

Venezuela oppn says govt loyalists fired at them

CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition lawmakers had to abandon plans to hold a session at the legislature on Wednesday after claiming to have been shot at by armed groups loyal to President Nicolas Maduro. Groups of armed civilians known as "colectivos" have an infamous reputation in Venezuela where they have been deployed alongside security forces to suppress protests against Maduro. "Armed colectivos shot at us," wrote lawmaker Delsa Solorzano, a close ally of opposition leader Juan Guaido.

He had been hoping to open a parliamentary session at the National Assembly where armed forces previously prevented him from entering, first for a vote in which we was to be re-elected as the body's president, and then two days later when a rival claimant to the position held his own meeting there.

Guaido has used his position as parliamentary speaker to challenge Maduro's authority and a year ago declared himself acting president. On Twitter, Guaido said the parliamentary session would be held at an amphitheater in eastern Caracas.

AFP reporters heard what sounded like gunshots around the National Assembly, which had been surrounded by armed forces and militias since early morning. "They shot at our car," Solorzano tweeted. Guaido's team shared photos of vehicles with smashed windows while denouncing an "attack." It also shared videos posted by journalists capturing the moments in which they came under attack from young men in civilian dress, identified as "colectivos" by those media. "The dictatorship insists ... on using its re-



CARACAS: A member of the Bolivarian militia holds a Venezuelan flag past a mural depicting Venezuelan late President Hugo Chavez during a march in support of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

pressive organs and paramilitary groups," wrote Guaido on Twitter. On January 5, armed forces prevented Guaido from entering parliament where a vote on his re-election was due to take place. In his absence, Luis Parra-an opposition lawmaker accused of corruption but now backed by Maduro-proclaimed himself par-

Two days later, he held a parliamentary session, attended mostly by regime lawmakers, as armed forces again blocked Guaido. That day the press workers' union said two reporters had been attacked and robbed of their camera equipment by colectivos. Venezuela has been in recession for the last five years amidst a crippling economic crisis that has seen poverty soar. — AFP

Record number of guns found at US airport checkpoints

WASHINGTON, DC: Nearly 4,500 guns were discovered at US airport security checkpoints in 2019, marking a new record, authorities said Wednesday. The number was a five percent uptick from the previous year and was the highest in the 18-year history of the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Of the 4,432 guns, which were found both in carry-on luggage and on passengers themselves, 87 percent were loaded, the TSA said in a statement.

'The continued increase in the number of firearms that travelers bring to airport checkpoints is deeply troubling," said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. The guns were discovered at checkpoints in 278 airports across the nation, with the highest rate occurring in Atlanta (323), Dallas/Fort Worth (217) and Denver (140).

Bringing a weapon to a checkpoint is a crime and can be punished with up to \$13,000 in fines. Guns can, however, be transported in checked luggage if the owner follows proper protocol. In July TSA agents in Baltimore sized a missile launcher that its owner, a member of the US military, wanted to bring back as a souvenir from Kuwait. The weapon was not in working order, the agency said. —AFP

International

Friday, January 17, 2020

US Senate takes up impeachment in a day of ceremony and formality

Impeachment trial to open on Jan 21

WASHINGTON: Articles of impeachment charging President Donald Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress were formally read to the Senate yesterday, setting in motion a historic trial that threatens the US leader with removal from office.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts will then be sworn in to preside over the trial and senators sworn in as jurors, as preparations get underway for an impeachment trial that will open on Tuesday, January 21. Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell said that the articles would be formally read to the chamber at noon (1700 GMT), in an announcement following their delivery to the Senate Wednesday.

"This is a difficult time for our country, but this is precisely the kind of time for which the framers created the Senate," McConnell said, referring to the authors of the US Constitution.

"I'm confident that this body can rise above short-termism and factional fever and serve the long-term best interests of our nation. We can do this, and we must." The two articles of impeachment-one for abuse of power and the other for obstructing the House investigation-were delivered in blue folders in a solemn procession by the newly appointed House managers, seven Democrats who will prosecute the case against the president.

"So sad, so tragic for our country, that the actions taken by the president to undermine our national security, to violate his oath of office and to jeopardize the security of our elections, has taken us to this place," Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said as she signed the articles.

"This president will be held accountable," she said. "No one is above the law." The solemn formalities underscored the grimness of the occasion, Trump becoming only the third US

president in history to be placed on trial in the Senate. "We feel we are carrying out the will of the framers of our constitution, and that's a pretty serious load," said Adam Schiff, the Democratic lawmaker tapped to lead the prosecution team.

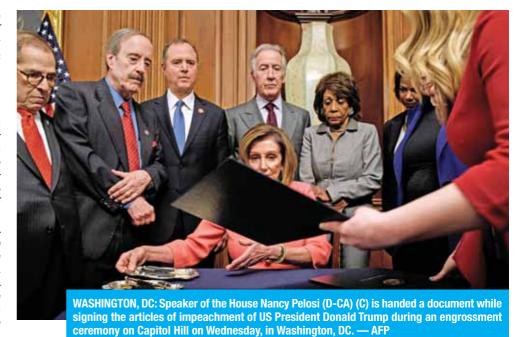
'Two weeks'

Trump is accused of secretly holding up \$391 million in aid to Ukraine between July and September to pressure Kiev to investigate former vice president Joe Biden, the Democratic frontrunner in this year's White House race. The president is also charged with obstruction for holding back witnesses and documents from the House impeachment investigation in defiance of Congressional subpoenas.

He was formally impeached on December 18. But Pelosi held back on delivering the articles to the Senate as she pressured McConnell to agree to subpoena the witnesses and documents that the White House blocked from the House probe. McConnell has refused to commit, saying the issue will only be decided after the trial's opening arguments and questioning, which could take two weeks.

A Trump administration official told reporters Wednesday that they expect the trial to last no longer than two weeks, suggesting McConnell could use his 53-47 Republican majority in the Senate to stifle calls for witnesses and quickly take the charges to a vote. "I think it's extraordinarily unlikely it will be going beyond two weeks," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

With impeachment rules requiring a twothirds super-majority to convict and remove a president, Trump's acquittal is widely expected. Earlier Wednesday Trump ridiculed the investigation and trial, as he has for months.



"Here we go again, another Con Job by the Do Nothing Democrats," he wrote on Twitter.

On Tuesday Democrats released newly acquired files that showed Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani working with Ukrainian-born American Lev Parnas early last year to pressure Kiev to investigate Biden. They also showed the two, working with Ukrainian officials, trying to force out the US ambassador to the country, Marie Yovanovitch, eventually removed by Trump.

In a televised interview that aired Wednesday, Parnas told MSNBC that "President Trump knew exactly what was going on." "He was aware of all of my movements. I wouldn't do anything without the consent of Rudy Giuliani or the president."

Underscoring the high level of politics surrounding the trial, Pelosi was immediately attacked over the ceremony to sign the articles, in which she used multiple pens to distribute to key lawmakers as souvenirs of the occasion. House Republican Liz Cheney attacked Pelosi and Democrats for being "giddy with excitement" about the signing and "making a mockery of their duty to the Constitution." — AFP

US indicts five for aiding Pakistan's weapons program

WASHINGTON: Five men have been indicted in the United States for allegedly running an international network that purchased US products for Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. "The defendants smuggled US origin goods to entities that have been designated for years as threats to US national security for their ties to Pakistan's weapons programs," assistant attorney general John Demers said in a statement.

The five, who live outside the United States and have not been apprehended, were indicted by a grand jury in October, the Justice Department said. The indictment was unsealed on Wednesday and arrest

warrants are pending. The five were accused of operating a front company called "Business World" in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. They were identified as Muhammad Kamran Wali, 41, of Pakistan, Muhammad Ahsan Wali, 48, and Haji Wali Muhammad Sheikh, 82, both of Mississauga, Ontario, Ashraf Khan Muhammad of Hong Kong, and Ahmed Waheed, 52, of Ilford, England.

They were charged with conspiring to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the Export Control Reform Act. "The alleged behavior of these five individuals presented more than a violation of US export laws," said Jason Molina, a special agent with the Department of Homeland Security. "It posed a potential threat to the national security interests of the United States and to the delicate balance of power among nations within the region." According to the indictment, between September 2014 and October 2019, the five procured US goods without export licenses for Pakistan's Advanced Engineering Research Organization and the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.—AFP

Ex-police chief in Philippines indicted for drugs war graft

MANILA: The former chief police enforcer of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly war on drugs will be charged with corruption for allegedly protecting officers linked to the narcotics trade, the justice department said yesterday. Oscar Albayalde resigned in October after serving as Philippine police chief for more than a year, having presided over an anti-narcotics crackdown that left thousands of drug suspects dead.

The episode that led to his sudden fall from grace cast an unwelcome light on a drug war that is immensely popular with Filipinos, but which has faced international criticism over allegations that police were summarily executing suspects. The justice department said prosecutors found "probable cause" to charge Albayalde for not punishing officers accused of failing to account for 163 kilograms (359 pounds)

of drugs and 9.7 million pesos (\$191,000) sized from a drug raid. A justice department statement said 13 other police officers would be charged with drug offences, corruption, and taking bribes for their role in the operation in Pampanga province, north of Manila.

Albayalde has repeatedly denied having protected the officers or profiting from the seized drugs. The charge leveled against him carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison if convicted. The raid took place in November 2013 when Albayalde was Pampanga's police chief. Allegations of police graft and abuse are not rare in the Philippines, with Duterte twice ordering police to stop the anti-narcotics campaign because of allegations of corruption and murder by officers.

The Pampanga controversy, however, went right to the top of the force. Police said last month they had killed 5,552 suspects in anti-drug operations since Duterte came to office in June 2016. Human rights groups allege the real number is four times higher, and say the killings are a crime against humanity. International Criminal Court prosecutors have launched a preliminary probe of the campaign, and the United Nations' top rights body voted in favor of an in-depth review. While overwhelmingly backed by Filipinos, critics allege the drug war targets the poor and leaves the rich and powerful untouched, while reinforcing a culture of impunity. — AFP

International

China reports first death from mystery pneumonia outbreak

Illness believed to have been caused by a new virus from SARS family

WUHAN, China: A 61-year-old man has become the first person to die in China from a respiratory illness believed caused by a new virus from the same family as SARS, which claimed hundreds of lives more than a decade ago, authorities said. Forty-one people with pneumonia-like symptoms have so far been diagnosed with the new virus in Wuhan, with one of the victims dying vesterday, the central Chinese city's health commission said on its website on Saturday. Seven others remained in serious condition, two were discharged from treatment, and the rest were stable, it added.

The episode has caused alarm due to the specter of SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which in 2002-2003 killed 349 people in mainland China and another 299 in Hong Kong, whose economy was hit hard by the epidemic's devastating impact on tourism. The Wuhan health commission said the man who died had purchased goods from a seafood market in the city identified by authorities as the centre of the outbreak. It was closed on January 1.

The man, who also had underlying health issues including chronic liver disease, died in hospital on Thursday of "respiratory failure and severe pneumonia", the commission added.

No new cases have been detected since January 3 nor any "clear evidence of human-tohuman transmission", it said. People in white hazmat suits were seen spraying liquid on the market floor late Saturday, while a number of guards sat outside the perimeter of the facility's

two sections without masks on. Chinese scientists investigating the outbreak said last week they believe the pathogen is a previously unknown type of coronavirus, a broad family ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses like SARS.

Scientists in Hong Kong's Department of Health said Saturday that genetic sequencing of the virus found in one of the Wuhan patients and published online by a Chinese expert indicated it was 80 percent similar to SARS found in bats. Speaking at a news conference in Hong Kong, they said it was too early to conclude definitively that it was a SARS strain, adding that the city needed to stay vigilant.

'We will remain alert as we believe the epidemic will continue to develop," said Wong Kahing, director of the department's Health Protection Centre. Hong Kong authorities have taken a range of precautions including stepping up the disinfection of trains and planes, and checks of passengers.

Travel rush looms

On Saturday evening, there was little sign of alarm in Wuhan outside of the seafood market, which had been cordoned off. Few people at the city's airport wore masks, and no extra monitoring measures were visible at the airport's terminals. A restaurant on the outside of the building housing the seafood market was still open for business.

One man, a dry goods seller at the mar-



ket surnamed Dai, attempted to enter the market around midnight but was turned away by the guards.

He told AFP he was not worried about getting infected. "I haven't heard that this disease is contagious," Dai said, adding that he believed the illness was caused by a fire at the market in mid-November where items including plastic materials and chili peppers were burnt.

The WHO said Thursday it was not recom-

mending any specific measures for travellers or

restrictions on trade with China, and expressed confidence in the ability of Chinese authorities to contain the virus.

China has entered its annual Lunar New Year holiday travel rush, raising concerns about the mass movement of people serving as a vector for the pathogen. In the world's largest annual human migration, hundreds of millions will pack into trains, buses and planes to travel for the festival in late January. China has not announced any travel restrictions. —AFP

New obstacles ahead in China's pollution fight

NEIJING: China's fight against pollution faces new threats from rising levels of harmful ozone gas despite an "impressive" reduction in other airborne particles, according to a report released vesterday.

The country cut its national average level of airborne PM2.5 — tiny particles that can penetrate the lungs and enter the bloodstream-by 27 percent between 2015 and 2019, according to the Finland-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). China also reduced its average sulphur dioxide levels by 55 percent during this period, which CREA said was "very impressive progress". However, levels of ozone gas, which is linked to drops in cognitive performance and educational outcomes, rose 11 percent over this period despite national efforts to fight pollution, the report said.

Ozone, along with nitrogen dioxide, "could be the next frontiers in China's war on pollution", CREA said. China's air quality gains were mostly

achieved through "end of pipe" measures that filter out pollutants right before they enter the environment, CREA lead analyst and the report's author Lauri Myllyvirta said.

In the past few years, "most of the existing coal-fired power plants have been retrofitted to comply with new emissions standards, and currently the focus is on implementing similar retrofits in the iron and steel industry," Myllyvirta said. But "once these retrofits are completed, if coal consumption keeps rising, it will be harder and harder to make progress on air quality"

Ozone and nitrogen dioxide are also "harder to control with filters", according to the report, which said exposure to the two gases caused hundreds of thousands of premature deaths in China every year.

China built enough new coal-fired plants between January 2018 and June 2019 — nearly 43 gigawatts worth of capacity-to cancel out the decrease in the rest of the world, a report in November by US-based Global Energy Monitor found. The country also plans to add an additional 147.7 gigawatts of coal plants, nearly as many as the European Union's entire gigawatts of existing capacity, the report said. In September, Swiss air purification technology company IQAir said Beijing was expected to drop out of the list of the world's 200 most polluted cities in 2019. —AFP

Bull-taming event injures 32 in India

CHENNAI: Thirty-two people were injured as bulls targeted tamers and spectators at massive 'Jallikattu' event in Tamil Nadu's Madurai city on Wednesday. The traditional bull-taming sport event, which was organized as a part of harvest festival Pongal, kicked off on Wednesday. Four of them, who suffered serious injuries, have been shifted to Madurai government hospital, said officials.

More than 2,000 bulls would be brought to the event which will be held in Madurai district over the next two days and several thousand others in the state till January 31. The Supreme Court refused to entertain a petition challenging the Madras High Court order on conducting 'Jallikattu' in various districts of the state. The top court asked the petitioner to approach the Chennai Bench of Madras High Court and dismissed the petition. He had demanded that the event must be conducted under the supervision of the district collector.

In 2014, the top court had banned the



MADURAI, India: Participants try to control bulls during the annual bull taming 'Jallikattu' festival in Palamedu village on the outskirts of Madurai in the southern Indian state of

traditional bull-taming sport after a plea was filed by the Animal Welfare Board of India and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) but the state government insisted that 'Jallikattu' was a crucial part of its culture and identity. The ban was later lifted in January 2017 with an amendment to the law after massive protests in Chennai. Though the state government has put in place systems to check animal cruelty and ensure the safety of spectators and bull tamers following the court orders, animal rights activists allege that animal cruelty still continues.

International

Bangladesh eyes deal with Malaysia to protect migrant workers from abuse

Demand to keep unofficial middlemen out of recruitment system

DHAKA: Cutting recruitment fees for Bangladeshi migrants who move to Malaysia for work under a new deal could curb human trafficking, according to officials, yet activists said Bangladesh's migration system must be revamped in order to protect workers. Malaysia last week said it was considering a zero-cost recruitment agreement with Bangladesh - having banned its migrant workers in September 2018 over concerns that they were being charged excessive fees by labor agencies and brokers.

Bangladesh's current informal recruitment system involves unofficial middlemen - who despite bringing recruiters and rural workers together - often give false promises about jobs and then charge exorbitant fees that trap many workers in debt bondage. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, a senior official at Bangladesh's Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, said that removing or even largely reducing recruitment costs would help prevent migrant workers from being exploited in Malaysia.

"There should be no instance of trafficking under the garb of labor migration," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We feel that any effort to bring down the cost of migration ... will contribute to the prevention of human trafficking," he added. "Both sides should work on this."

More than 250,000 Bangladeshi migrants moved to Malaysia for work between 2016 and 2018 under a previous migration agreement that saw workers charged an official fee of \$1,900 - although middlemen were said to have widely de-

manded far larger sums. It is unclear whether the new arrangement would see the cost for workers - which covers expenses from airfare and visa fees to health check-ups - removed entirely or substantially lowered.

Bangladesh and Malaysia are both on a watchlist in the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, that ranks nations on their anti-trafficking efforts, and are seeking to avoid a downgrade this year that could trigger sanctions. From factories to construction sites and plantations, Malaysia is home to an estimated 4.8 million migrant workers and relies heavily on foreigners for jobs usually shunned by locals. Malaysia struck a deal with Nepal in 2018 to ensure Nepali migrant workers would not pay any fees - after Nepal temporarily suspended sending workers due to concerns about their treatment.

Accountability and oversight

Reducing or removing fees for workers will not protect them from abuse overseas, said Marina Sultana of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit - a migrants rights group. "Migrants always pay more," she said. "No matter what the fee, the government needs to improve its monitoring system." "The middlemen should be made official so that they can be made accountable for what they do. Laborers should also be made more aware and skilled so that they know about their rights."

More than 7.5 million Bangladeshis work outside the country, which is one of the world's most expensive for migrants with some paying up to

Along the south coast of the state, locals who witnessed towns and forests being destroyed in recent weeks expressed cautious hope. "We're thrilled and so relieved to have some dampness in the air because it makes things safe for a little while," Virginia Connor told AFP near the town of Nowra.

"But we need more, we need lots more."

Clear air

Smoke from bushfires choked the southern city of Melbourne from Monday to Wednesday, disrupting the build-up to next week's Australian Open tennis tournament. But thunderstorms late Wednesday cleared the smoke, with the wet weather moving east throughout yesterday towards fires in the southern state of Victoria. "Storms have improved air quality in most parts of the state," the Victorian Environment Protection Agency said. More rain was forecast for Friday and the weekend which, if it does fall, would be the most sustained period of wet weather since the crisis began in September last year.

Still, with January, February and March typically seeing some of the hottest weather in Australia, the bushfire crisis was far from over. "We still have a long way to go," said Robyn Duell, a senior climatologist with the Bureau of Meteorology. "And with higher temperatures, we'll continue to see an elevated risk of bushfires as we move through summer and early autumn." —AFP



\$8,500 to go abroad, the United Nations says.

Shakirul Islam, head of the migrant rights charity Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said Bangladesh should digitize its system so that recruiters can directly contact workers online.

"Workers should also be able to pay money through banks and not middlemen for transparency," he said. Saleheen, the Bangladeshi official, said the government was seeking to improve the way it manages its migrant workers.

"Reducing the fee ... won't solve all the prob-

lems," he said. "We need a holistic approach and we are working on that." Securing a job at a Malaysian plastic factory cost Mohammad Shujon \$4,500 when he moved from Bangladesh's capital in 2016.

Yet Shujon was duped by the labor broker and ended up at a furniture company where he was not legally permitted to work. After two years of working illegally, he was caught and jailed for two months before returning to Dhaka last year. He now works in a shop and is still trying to pay off his debts.—Reuters

Relief as rain falls over Australian bushfires

NOWRA, Australia: Heavy rain fell across parts of fire-ravaged eastern Australia yesterday and more wet weather was forecast, giving some relief following months of catastrophic blazes fuelled by climate change. The fires, unprecedented for Australia in terms of duration and intensity, have claimed 28 lives and killed an estimated billion animals.

Sustained hot weather and rare periods of light rain in the affected areas have deepened the crisis. Downpours yesterday in the state of New South Wales, where many of the worst fires have burnt, offered hope that dozens of blazes could be brought under control. "Relief is here for a number of firefighters working across NSW," the state's Rural Fire Service said in a social media post accompanying footage of rain falling in a burning forest. "Although this rain won't extinguish all fires, it will certainly go a long way towards containment." Before the rains, there were 30 blazes burning out of control in New South Wales.

Pakistan says Taleban to reduce violence

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's foreign minister yesterday said the Taleban has shown "a willingness" to reduce violence in war-torn Afghanistan after more than 18 years fighting the US, sparking speculation that a potential breakthrough in talks with the Americans may be near.

Negotiations between the Taleban and the US have repeatedly stalled, with Washington calling on the insurgent group to reduce violence before they can resume. "Today, positive progress has been made, the Taliban have shown their willingness to reduce the violence, which was a demand... it's a step towards the peace agreement," said Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in a video statement. He gave no further details.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the official Taleban spokesman, told AFP the Taleban was looking into the comments. The Taliban and the US were on the brink of announcing a withdrawal deal in September last year when President Donald Trump abruptly declared the process "dead", citing Taliban violence.

Talks were later restarted between the two sides in December in Qatar, but were paused following an attack near the Bagram military base in Afghanistan. Islamabad has helped facilitate the talks between the militants and Washington in Qatar over the past year, seeking an agreement that would pave the way for a US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in return for various security promises from the insurgents. Pakistan was one of only three countries to recognize the Taleban regime, and its shadowy military establishment-particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) — is widely believed to back the bloody insurgency in Afghanistan.

Islamabad denies the accusation. Any agreement with the Taleban is expected to have two main pillars-an American withdrawal from Afghanistan and a commitment by the insurgents not to offer sanctuary to jihadists. The Taleban's relationship with Al-Qaeda was the main reason cited for the US invasion nearly 18 years ago. The Taleban have until now refused to negotiate with the Afghan government, which they consider an illegitimate regime, raising fears that fighting will continue regardless of any deal ironed out with the Americans. —AFP

International

Philippine volcano shows signs of calming, but danger remains

53,000 residents have abandoned their homes

MANILA: A Philippine volcano that has been spewing ash for days appeared to be calming down yesterday, but seismologists said the danger of an eruption remained high and authorities warned evacuees not to return to their homes. Some residents took advantage of what they perceived as a lull in the activity of Taal, one of country's most active and deadliest volcanoes, to return home even though a 14 km (nine mile) exclusion zone remained in place.

"We are analyzing what this seeming calm of the volcano means," Maria Antonia Bornas, chief science research specialist at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), told reporters. The lake inside Taal has dried up, Bornas said, which was to be expected since it began spewing lava fountains a day after it shot giant clouds of ash miles into the air on Sunday. Phivolcs said volcanic activity had "generally waned to weak emission of steam-laden plumes". Even so, it had recorded more than 100 tremors since Wednesday, meaning magma was still rising.

More than 53,000 residents have abandoned their homes around Taal to take shelter in evacuation centres, but thousands more are refusing to leave or have already drifted back to check on their animals and possessions.

Power has been restored in some areas in nearby Tagaytay city where business owners were cleaning away the ash and preparing to start trading again. Although Taal is one of the world's smallest active volcanoes at only 311 meters (1,020 feet) high, it can be deadly. One eruption killed more than 1,300 people in 1911.

Taal has erupted more than 30 times in the past five centuries, with the most recent in 1977. The Philippines lies on the "Ring of Fire", a belt

of volcanoes circling the Pacific Ocean that is also prone to earthquakes.

At the crack of dawn yesterday, Manolito Malaluan set out with a band of rescuers to ferry to safety two horses trapped on a Philippine island where a volcano has been spewing ash for days. They took a motorboat across a lake, defying official warnings to stay out of a danger zone around the Taal volcano, one of the most active in the southeast Asian nation, as they scrambled to reach the animals. "Both of them were neighing when they saw me," Malaluan, 23, told Reuters, after reaching safer ground with his horses, named Cristina and Bakasan. "They were happy because I came back."

More than 57,000 people have abandoned homes on the volcanic island and its environs, usually thronged by tourists, but many have also drifted back to check on animals and possessions. Authorities have thrown a 14-km (9-mile) exclusion zone around the volcano, with experts warning that an eruption could bring a devastating rain of rocks and magma and unleash a tsunami in the surrounding lake. The horses were among 3,000 living on the island, most earning money for their owners by carrying tourists to the rim of the volcano crater.

Uncertain future

As their sole means of livelihood, many islanders depend on the survival of the animals, but the future looks uncertain. "We won't have food on our tables if not for them," said Jun Despededa, 21, who used water from the lake to scrub volcanic ash from his horse's white coat. "I don't know what I would do now after what happened." About 1,000 horses, as well as cows, goats and pigs were among the animals left be-



MANILA: An elderly woman is helped by a relative at an evacuation centre for families displaced by the eruption of the Taal volcano, at the Dona Tiburcia Carpio Malvar elementary school in Tanauan yesterday. — AFP

hind by residents scurrying to safer areas for fear of a bigger eruption. One horse owner urged authorities to allow the rescue of as many animals as possible, taking advantage of what appeared to be a lull in volcano activity, but was rebuffed by the coast guard patrolling the lake. Horses were among the more than 70 animals brought to safety since Wednesday by another group of rescuers, led by a police maritime unit, but it has since been told to halt its activities, because of the eruption threat.

Many of the horses that had made it out looked

exhausted and hungry, with at least one barely able to stand. While Taal appeared to be calming down on Thursday, seismologists said the danger of an eruption remained high and authorities warned evacuees to stay away. The Philippines lies on the "Ring of Fire," a belt of volcanoes circling the Pacific Ocean that is also prone to earthquakes. One of the world's smallest active volcanoes, Taal has erupted more than 30 times in the past five centuries, most recently in 1977. An eruption in 1911 killed more than 1,300 people and one in 1754 lasted for six months. — Reuters

Time running out on US-S Korea troop talks: Envoy

SEOUL: Washington has compromised in its demands that South Korea should pay billions of dollars towards US troop presence and it was Seoul's turn to reciprocate before time ran out, the American ambassador said yesterday.

The two allies are in a security alliance and Washington stations 28,500 troops in South Korea to defend it from the nuclear-armed North, which invaded in 1950.

They are a key part of US forces' deployment in Asia, but the Trump administration has been insisting Seoul pay more towards their costs. The initial US demand was around \$5 billion a year-a more than fivefold increase on the roughly \$900 million paid in 2019 — provoking consternation in Seoul. The latest round of negotiations concluded without an agreement in

Washington on Wednesday. US negotiators had "adjusted our position, our top line number", said Ambassador Harry Harris. "We are now waiting for the Korean side to do the same." "South Korea as an equal partner in the preservation of peace on the peninsula, and its position as the 12th largest economy in the entire world, can and should do more." Time was "of the essence", he told reporters in a group interview at his residence in the centre of Seoul.

Around 10,000 South Koreans working for United States Forces Korea (USFK) are paid from funds from last year's deal and when they run out, they will have to be put on furlough, he said. "That notice is going to go out soon." Other US allies would face similar demands from Washington in the future, added Harris, a former Navy admiral and commander of US Pacific Command. "Korea just happens to be the first country whose SMA expires," he said. "Japan is next. And then we go around from there." Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have been at a standstill since the Hanoi summit between Trump and leader Kim Jong Un collapsed in February, despite a high-profile meeting between them in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the Korean peninsula. — AFP

In Japan, foreign parents lead charge against child 'abduction'

TOKYO: A growing number of foreigners in Japan are speaking out against what they say is a little-known but entrenched system that allows one parent in a broken relationship to take away the children and block the other from visiting them. The issue of what media in Japan and overseas call parental child "abduction" has regained international attention recently, particularly in Europe where documentaries have been made about European fathers whose children were taken by their Japanese wives.

Japan's judicial system has drawn global attention with the lengthy detention – and subsequent fleeing – of former auto executive Carlos Ghosn in what critics have characterized as a "hostage justice" system. Australian Scott McIntyre was the latest foreigner to raise his voice against the estrangement of separated parents from their

children in Japan. McIntyre was detained for 1-1/2 months in Tokyo for trespassing when he went to his in-laws' apartment to seek information on his two children. He remains married, has no restraining order against him, retains full parental rights, but has not been able to see his children since May, when his wife left with them. "Sitting here today, I don't know if my children are alive or dead," McIntyre told a news conference on Thursday, a day after he received a six-month suspended sentence.

He said he had made numerous requests to the police and his wife's lawyers - the two are going through a divorce mediation - to let him know whether the children are safe, but that those were ignored. The wife's legal representative, Jun Kajita, said he could not go into specifics but there were some facts that were "not consistent" in McIntyre's claims. "This is only going to change when Japanese parents speak out as well," McIntyre said, adding that he had received many letters of support from local parents suffering the same plight. "Children should have access to both parents - it's a fundamental human right."

No official statistics exist on how widespread the issue is. But non-profit organization Kizuna Child-Parent Reunion estimates that roughly 150,000 children lose contact with a parent every year in Japan because of estrangement from the non-custodial parent. — Reuters



Lifestyle | Fashion



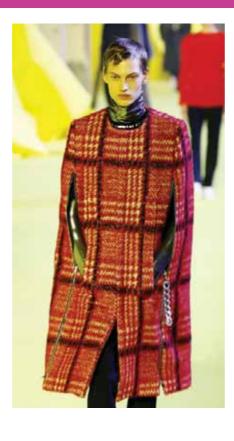
irgil Abloh made headlines last week by predicting the end of streetwear, the trend he has ridden to the top of the fashion tree. His Off-White Paris men's fashion week show Wednesday lived up to his prophecy - the least street that the American designer has produced for his ultra-hip label whose clothes are snapped up by rappers and copied by kids.

The hyperactive architect-artist, who also designs Louis Vuitton's menswear, turned out perhaps his most somber and beautifully tailored collection, led off with decidedly adult chocolate-brown and gun-metal grey double breasted suits. The style wunderkind - who was forced to curb his manic globe-trotting schedule in September for health reasons - marked his return to the fashion circuit with a comparatively muted and poetic show that seemed to channel his new seriousness.

As a hat tip to mortality - or perhaps a comment on his own condition - the invitation for the show featured an ironic mock-gothic painting of a teenage girl fighting off a skeleton, a packet of pills marked "Anything" falling from her jeans.

New Air Jordan 5s

And rather than rush out to greet his army of fans at the end of the show, Abloh cultivated mystery by lingered brooding in the dark with his models in a little curtained-off room in the center of the stage. The 39-year-old de-







Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by Oteyza.

signer, who tends to put trainers with everything, sent out several of his models in shoes - granted sometimes in different colors. He did, however, give a sneak preview of the new Off-White x Air Jordan 5s he has created for Nike, hidden under long billowing trousers.

The show opened with a bravura tap-dancing display by American hoofer Cartier Williams, who wore an Off-White T-shirt with the legend, "I Support Young Black Businesses". A master of little style details that often go viral, Abloh's latest wheeze is little fabric stubs on the cuff of his jackets cut in the same Swiss cheese-like motif as the objects he created for his art and furniture show that opened in a Paris gallery the night before.

"I have been trying to make work that responds to my generation, and it feels like I am getting into a space where that is translating," he told a melee of reporters afterwards. Abloh, whose parents come from Ghana, created something of minor fashion storm last week by telling Dazed magazine that streetwear's days may be numbered.

Belgian brass and decadence

"I would definitely say it is gonna die," he said. "It's time will be up... how many more T-shirts can we own, how many more hoodies, how many mores sneakers?" he asked. But he later clarified his comments, predicting fashion will veer toward vintage. "I think we're gonna hit this really awesome state of expressing your knowledge and personal style with vintage... I think that fashion is gonna go away from buying a boxfresh something. It'll be like, 'Hey I'm gonna go into my archive.'"

Despite Abloh's razzmatazz, it was the rising Belgian Glenn Martens who came come up with the day's most surprising and decadent show. The Y/Project designer immersed fashionistas in a pool of red balloons up to their waists while his models strode around them to the strains of a Flemish carnival brass band. In grim times it was important for fashion to be fun, he insisted. "It's a celebration," Martens told AFP and "every single piece should be fun".

"What we doing is very superficial. My mother's a nurse, she's doing way more important things in her life. We're talking about making clothes that are not even always meant for survival, it's really more for personal happiness and expression and I think we should not forget that."

His compatriot Walter Van Beirendonck took a diametrically opposing view in his show, "War", whose title "reflects what we are living in today" he told AFP with the planet threatened by unthinking consumption. His spikey creations were like armor against an increasingly hostile environment and carried slogans like "Care", "Save Planet Earth", "Stop buying fast fashion" and "Ban banality". "I've always included (slogans) in my work, but I think today" it's even more important than ever to do these kind of statements, so it's a little bit of an overdose this time," he added. — AFP







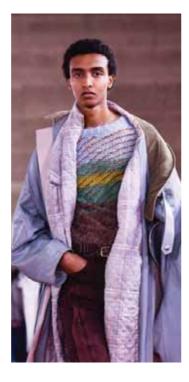








Models present creations by Walter Van Beirendonck.





Models present creations by Y/PROJECT.

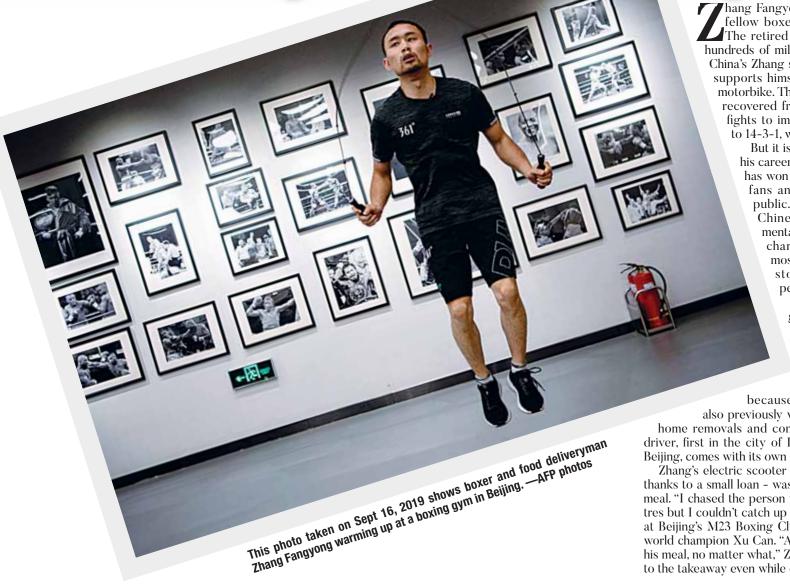


Lifestyle | Feature

Friday, January 17, 2020



China's deliveryman boxer takes long road to recognition



hang Fangyong glances at a photograph of fellow boxer Floyd "Money" Mayweather. The retired American superstar could earn hundreds of millions of dollars from a bout, but China's Zhang sometimes fights for nothing and supports himself by making deliveries on his motorbike. The 26-year-old bantamweight has recovered from losing three of his first four fights to improve his win-loss-draw record to 14-3-1, with three wins by knockout.

But it is Zhang's determination to pursue his career despite numerous obstacles that has won him the hearts of Chinese sports fans and the admiration of the wider public. His story was part of a recent Chinese government-backed documentary film, "Changing China", which charts the progress of the world's most populous country through the stoic battles of ordinary young people trying to get by.

The good-natured Zhang, who grew up in rural poverty, earns so little from the sport that he has taken on an array of menial jobs to keep his boxing dream alive. He was a security guard but was fired after a few days because he was deemed too small. He

also previously worked in a restaurant kitchen, in home removals and construction. His job as a delivery driver, first in the city of Kunming and now in the capital Beijing, comes with its own challenges.

Zhang's electric scooter - bought for 6,000 yuan (\$870) thanks to a small loan - was stolen while he was delivering a meal. "I chased the person wildly for more than two kilometres but I couldn't catch up with him," he said in an interview at Beijing's M23 Boxing Club, home to WBA featherweight world champion Xu Can. "A delivery person always protects his meal, no matter what," Zhang said, adding that he held on to the takeaway even while chasing the thief.



Xu. "Maybe one day my photos will be posted

there too." —AFP

Lifestyle | Travel



A picture taken on Nov 16, 2019 shows tourists walking on the beach with granite rocks on Silhouette Island, the third largest island in Seychelles. — AFP photos

In Seychelles, nature is prized above mass tourism

In a shady patch along a pristine white beach on Mahe Island, a radio spits out reggae and snapper sizzles on the barbecue, as Seychelloise Nareen tops up her rum and coke on time off from her job aboard a luxury yacht. Her family is spending the weekend at the beach where a couple dipping their feet into the turquoise waters off in the distance are the only foreign tourists in sight. "We don't have mass tourism in Seychelles, and that's great. That is how we want it," says Nareen, 32, who asked for her full name not to be published.

Nevertheless, like most citizens, she earns her living from tourism, which makes up more than 60 percent of GDP in the Seychelles, the only country in Africa considered "high income" by the World Bank. The Indian Ocean archipelago, a chain of 115 islands, is a byword for luxury holidays, Instagram-perfect beaches and has gained a reputation as a honeymoon idyll. But it is confronting a tug-of-war over how to keep the economy growing, while protecting its fragile ecosystem. "More tourists means it's better for the economy, but it's not the only thing that comes into play," Nareen says.



Tourists take pictures at the beach of Hilton Labriz, the only resort hotel located on Silhouette Island.

One island, one resort

High-end tourism, from Europe mainly, helped pull the Seychelles from the brink of financial ruin after the 2008 economic crisis. Visitor numbers almost doubled in the decade that followed, to around 360,000 in 2018, nearly four times the country's population. But now the Seychelles is grappling with how many visitors it can realistically accommodate. An official study commissioned into the matter is due to begin soon.

In the meantime, the government placed a moratorium in 2015 on the construction of large resorts on the three main islands of Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. It wanted both to protect the environment and encourage the growth of smaller, locally-run hotels. On further-flung islands, the Seychelles practices a "one island, one resort" policy.

"It's about controlling the number of tourists that come here, through controlling the number of rooms in the hotels that exist," Tourism Minister Didier Dogley told AFP. The Seychelles has 6,000 hotel rooms, but another 3,000 are in the pipeline, having been approved before the moratorium took effect, Dogley said. "We believe that we can go up to 500,000 tourists, that is just an



Seychellois enjoy their family picnic at a beach on Mahe island.



A French couple has their honeymoon pictures taken on a granite rock on Silhouette Island.



Tourists from a cruise ship visit the city center in the capital city Victoria



Fishermen carry fish on Mahe island.

estimate for the time being," he said.

World heritage

Nearly half of the Seychelles 455 sq km are classed as protected areas. By later this year, 30 percent of its 1.3 million square km of marine territory will have protected status too, under a special arrangement in which conservation groups agree in return to pay a small portion of Seychelles' national debt. The country has two UNESCO world heritage sites: The Mai Valley and its indigenous coco de mer palm trees, and the Aldabra Atoll, home to the Seychelles' famed giant tortoises.

With a few exceptions such as the popular Beau Vallon Beach on Mahe or Anse Source d'Argent on La Digue, regularly named one of the world's most beautiful beaches, tranquility reigns on the islands. Most beachside resorts keep a low profile, blending into the jungle backdrop that reaches into the island's interior from the white sands bordering the azure shores. "It all depends on the standards that you want to maintain," said Nirmal Shah, executive director of environmental NGO Nature Sevchelles.

He believes that some of the more popular sites have already reached their full capacity. The Seychelles, he said, "really do not want to become" an eyesore like some beaches in Europe, crowded by umbrellas and edged by concrete.

On Grand Police, in the south of Mahe island, locals have been angered by a Gulf company's plans to build a new resort, approved before the 2015 ban. The project is unpopular over concerns about the health of a local marshland but also because most large resorts are owned by foreign groups. The government has promised to talk to those behind the new resort to explore how the proposal could be dropped. — AFP

Lifestyle | Travel



A picture taken on Nov 21 2019 shows Seychelles warblers on Cousin Island.



A picture taken on Nov 21, 2019, shows Yan Coquet, program coordinator of the conservation boot camp, comforting an Aldabra giant tortoise on Cousin Island.

Tiny Seychelles island coaxes bird back from brink

iant tortoises amble across Cousin Island as rare birds flit above. The scene attests to a stunning success for BirdLife International, a conservation group that bought the tiny Seychelles isle in 1968 to save a songbird from extinction. Thick vegetation smothers ruins that are the only reminder of the coconut and cinnamon plantations that covered the island when the group stepped in to protect the Seychelles Warbler.

Now teeming with flora and fauna and boasting white beaches, Cousin Island is firmly on the tourist map, with managers scrambling to contain visitor numbers and soften their negative environmental impact. More than 16,000 people visited the island in 2018, compared with 12,000 a decade earlier. "Tourism is important for Cousin. That's what allows us to finance the conservation projects we run here. "But 16,000 tourists... that was too much," said Nirmal Shah, director of Nature Seychelles, which is charged with running the special reserve.

Before the island was in private hands, the population of Seychelles Warblers was thought to have shrunk to just 26, barely hanging on in a mangrove swamp after much of their native habitat had been destroyed. Now, they number more than 3,000 and the greenish-brown bird has been reintroduced to four other islands in the archipelago.

The former plantations have transformed into native forests, teeming with lizards, hermit crabs and seabirds, and the island is (IUCN) waxes lyrical about the "unique biodiversity and conservation achievements" of Cousin, "the first island purchased for species conservation", a model since replicated around the world.

Nature first

Tourists have been allowed onto the island since 1972, but the message is clear: Nature comes first. In a well-oiled routine, every morning a handful of luxury sailboats and small motorboats anchor off the island, where their occupants wait for Nature Seychelles to skipper them ashore on their boats. "Tourist boats cannot land directly on the island, the biohazard risk is too big," Shah said. "Nonindigenous animals who may accidently be on board could come to the island and threaten its (ecological) balance."

Too many tourists can also upset this balance. Nature Seychelles in July increased the price of visits from 33 to 40 euros (\$36 to \$44) and removed a free pass for children under 15, resulting in a welcome 10-percent reduction in visitor numbers. 'Something had to be done, there was too much pressure on the environment," said Dailus Laurence, the chief warden of the island. 'When there are too many tourists it can bother nesting birds and



White-tailed tropicbirds on Cousin Island.

turtles who want to come and lay their eggs on the island."

One guide said that some tourists, bothered by the island's ubiquitous mosquitos, would "leave the paths, move away from the group and walk where they are not supposed to", putting fragile habitats at risk. Shah said that if they wanted to increase the number of tourists, it would require hiring more wardens and guides who live on the island, which would also have a negative impact on nature, "Our absolute priority is nature, and it comes before tourists. If we have to take more steps to protect it and reduce the number of tourists, we will," he said. –



Lifestyle | Feature

Friday, January 17, 2020



In this photograph taken on Sept 12, 2019, Asha Charti Karki, who got married at age 16 and mentors young girls on the importance of education, stands with her daughter at their home in Barahataal in Surkhet District, some 520 km west of Kathmandu. — AFP photos



Karki mentors young girls on the importance of education in Barahataal.

Child 'love marriages' in Nepal blight young lives

Seenager Asha Charti Karki told her parents she was going out to study, but instead she ran off to wed her boyfriend - one of a growing number of Nepali teenagers who are marrying young by choice. "There were rumors about us in the village and I had fights at home. I felt I had no choice but to run away," Karki told AFP at her home in the western district of Surkhet. Nepal has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage even though the practice was banned five decades ago and the legal marrying age is 20.

Some 50 percent of Nepali women aged between 25 to 49 were married by their 18th birthday, according the Himalayan nation's 2016 Demographic Health Survey. Marriages in the conservative country were traditionally arranged by parents, with many forcing their children to marry for cultural reasons or out of poverty. Such marriages are declining but child rights activists warn an increasing number of underage couples are eloping for "love marriage" - a term used to describe unions by choice.

A 2014 survey by Girls Not Brides Nepal, which is part of a global network set up to end child marriage, found that one-third of such unions were initiated by young couples, and that the trend was increasing. "This practice is posing a challenge for us and for the government. We can tell the parents but it is hard to convince young boys and girls when they marry by choice," Anand Tamang of Girls Not Brides Nepal told AFP.

'Betraying my future' Tamang said voluntary child marriages, like forced unions, still pose the same risks, including dropping out of school, domestic violence and health problems. Girls in particular lose the support of their families when they elope, he added. Karki was among those who quit school early after getting married, as she struggled to cope with household chores and family responsibilities. Soon after, she found out she was pregnant. "I was only 16, too young to understand what I was getting into," she said, cradling her twoyear-old daughter. "I had lied to my parents and run away, but I was actually betraying myself and my future.'

Her early pregnancy left her with uterine prolapse, a painful condition which sees the uterus or womb descend and protrude out of the vagina. "It is difficult. I often see my friends and wonder where I would be if I had not married," she added. While the Nepali government has implemented a national strategy to end child marriages - punishable by jail terms and a fine - by 2030, it acknowledges the program can only be successful if the roots of the problem are tackled.

'It was a mistake'

Some girls elope to avoid a potential forced marriage, or to escape poverty or chores at home. With teen romances seen as socially unacceptable in much of rural Nepal, young couples feel they have to run away and get married to legitimize their relationships. Others feel pushed to marry if they fall pregnant. Meanwhile, underage love marriages are rarely reported to authorities, with families only seeking legal recourse if they disapprove of unions such as inter-caste marriages.

"(The) main (thing) is education. It is important that they understand that being sexually active does not equate to marriage,' Krishna Prasad Bhusal of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens told AFP. Karki hopes she can help other girls by sharing her experiences with them as part of a program called Sisters for Sisters' Education run by British charity VSO Nepal. "I tell them that they should not have to marry and teach others like me that they should learn from my mistakes now," she said.

In her role as "big sister", Karki persuaded 17-year-old Aradhana Nepal to leave her abusive marriage and return to school. Nepal was only 13 when she eloped with a boy she barely knew. There had been gossip about them and she didn't know what else to do to protect her reputation. It was only after they married that she discovered he was a violent drug addict. She endured beatings for months before she escaped. She recalled: "It was a mistake. Leaving that marriage saved my life."





Child marriage survivor Aradhana Nepal (center) attends school in Barahataal.



Lifestyle | Environment

Friday, January 17, 2020



the world's last stand of Wollemi Pines, a pre-historic species known as "dinosaur trees", from Australia's unprecedented bushfires, officials said. Fewer than 200 of the trees exist in the wild, hidden in a gorge in the World Heritage Blue Mountains, northwest of Sydney, an area hit by one of the biggest bushfires that have ravaged much of Australia for months.

With flames approaching the area late last year, air tankers dropped fire retardant in a protective ring around the trees while specialist firefighters were winched into the gorge to set up an irrigation system to provide moisture for the grove, officials said. Matt Kean, environment minister for New South Wales state where the Blue Mountains lie, described the operation as "an unprecedented environmental protection mission".

While some of the trees were charred by the flames, the grove was saved from the fires, he said in a statement late Wednesday. "The fire did go through there, we had a few days of thick smoke so we couldn't tell if they'd been damaged. We all waited with bated breath," he told ABC radio. "It's just been a phenomenal success story," he added. He said this wildfire season was the first opportunity to monitor the response of the trees to fire in a natural setting, helping the park to refine how it manages the grove.

The Wollemi Pine which grows up to 40-m high is believed to have existed since the Jurassic period 200 million years ago, pre-dating many dinosaurs. They were believed to be extinct, only ever seen in fossils, until their accidental discovery by a park ranger in 1994. The grove's remote location has remained a closely-guarded secret to protect the trees from contamination by visitors. "Illegal visitation remains a significant threat to the Wollemi Pines survival in the wild due to the risk of trampling regenerating plants and introducing diseases which could devastate the remaining populations and their recovery," Kean said.

The trees have been propagated and distributed to botanic gardens around the world to preserve the species, but the Wollemi gorge is the only wild stand. Australia's wildfires have since October claimed 28 lives, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and burned 10 million hectares (100,000 sq km) of land - an area larger than South Korea or Portugal.

About one billion animals may have died in fires which have driven many species closer to extinction, according to environmental groups. The country was enjoying a long-awaited respite yesterday as rainstorms blanketed much of Australia's east, although a return to warm and dry weather was forecast for later in the southern summer. — AFP



A firefighter douses a Wollemi Pine with water.







Lifestyle | Health



This undated image courtesy of Mojo Vision shows the company's smart contact lens. — AFP

'Invisible computing' startup unveils smart contact lens

startup focused on "invisible computing" yesterday unveiled a smart contact lens which delivers an augmented reality display in a user's field of vision. The Mojo Vision contact lens offers a display with information and notifications, and allows the user to interact by focusing on certain points. The rigid contact lens, which the company has been developing in stealth mode for some 10 years, may also be used to help people with visual impairments by using enhanced image overlays, and has obtained US approval for testing it as a medical device.

"Mojo has a vision for invisible computing where you have the information you want when you want it and are not bombarded or distracted by data when you don't," said chief executive Drew Perkins. In a demonstration to an AFP reporter, company executives showed how the contact lens could enable users to see a virtual teleprompter, navigation instructions or other interactions that appear floating in the field of vision by projecting a micro-LED display to the retina.

A user, wearing two lenses which may be fitted with a correction prescription, could "click" by concentrating on an icon - to launch a music player, for example - and turn off by looking away. Mojo said it had no timetable for a commercial launch. But it has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration as a "breakthrough" device to test the contact lens to help people with visual impairments such as macular degeneration or retinitis pigmentosa.

"These are people who are underserved by technology today," said Steve Sinclair, senior vice president of the startup based in Saratoga, California. The company said the contact lens is designed to provide overlays that augment sight for people with "low vision" and may assist in mobility, reading and other functions.

Mojo has raised \$100 million and has executives with experience at Google, Apple and other Silicon Valley firms, with

opticians and ophthalmologists also working on the project. The contact lens aims to enable people to move away from physical devices and interact more naturally with technology. It also could have business applications, allowing workers or specialists access to real-time information in their field of vision without a bulky headset.

A challenge has been to pack into the lens the complex circuitry, image sensor, wireless radio and battery needed for the wearable device. Executives said the current version would transmit and receive information wirelessly through a portable relay box which could be clipped to a belt, but they hope to link directly to smartphones in the future. The company will be testing its vision-enhancing applications with the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Palo Alto, California. — AFP



Scientists find powerhouses that fight tumors from within

urking deep inside some tumors are "factories" full of immune cells that help the body fight a rearguard action against cancer and are key to helping some patients recover, new research has shown. In recent years, doctors have turned to a new treatment for cancer, immunotherapy, which works by leveraging the body's immune system to fight tumors. The technique has largely focused on white blood cells called T-cells, which are "trained" to recognize and attack cancer cells.

But the innovative treatment only works well for around 20 percent of patients, and researchers have been trying to understand why some people respond better than others. Three papers published on Thursday in the journal Nature point the way, identifying a key formation inside some tumors: tertiary lymphoid structures (TLS).

These structures function like "factories or schools" for immune cells that help the body fight cancer, said Wolf H Fridman, a professor emeritus of immunology at the Cordeliers Research Centre of the Paris Descartes University medical school, who helped lead one of the studies. "The cells need to be educated in schools, which are the tertiary lymphoid structures," where they effectively learn to recognize and attack cancer cells, Fridman told AFP.

No longer 'innocent bystanders'

Key to the findings is that T-cells are far from the only immune cells capable of taking the fight to cancer, with researchers finding the TLS were full of B-cells, a kind of immune cell that produces antibodies. "We have been T-cell addicts for 15 years in cancer," Fridman said with a laugh. "We analyzed these sarcomas to see what groups they had and what's striking is that these B-cells appeared."

Beth Helmink, a fellow in surgical oncology at the University of Texas's MD Anderson Cancer Center who worked on a second study, said the research changed perceptions of the role of B-cells in immunotherapy. "Through these studies, we find that B-cells are not just innocent bystanders, but are themselves contributing in a meaningful way to the anti-tumour immune response," she said in a statement issued by the Center.

The discovery is something of a surprise, as an abundance of B-cells in cancer patients has sometimes been seen as a marker for poor prognosis. But the studies found that patients with high levels of B-cells inside TLS in their tumors were more likely to respond well to immunotherapy. "This series of studies are exciting because they represent real progress in the treatment of different types of cancer," said Louisa James, a lecturer in immunology at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London.

"In the short term, these results provide a new tool to help predict which patients are likely to benefit from treatment with immunotherapy and may also pave the way for improved treatments in the future," added James, who was not involved in the studies.

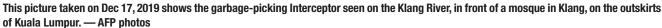
Improving cancer treatment

There are still many unanswered questions, including why the structures form in some tumours and not others. And while it now seems clear that B-cells inside the structures play a key role in the success of immunotherapy, scientists are not sure precisely how. It may be that the B-cells are on the frontlines, producing antibodies that attack cancer cells efficiently. Or they may be bolstering T-cells, or perhaps doing both.

And not all TLS are created equal: the researchers found three categories, but only one type was "mature" enough to churn out cancer-fighting immune cells. The research opens several promising avenues, the authors said. Initially, it could help doctors screen patients to see which are most likely to respond well to immunotherapy. And eventually, the research could mean more patients are successfully treated with the technique, said Goran Jonsson, a professor of oncology and pathology at Lund University in Sweden who worked on a third study. "If we come up with a treatment that could enhance TLS formation, we could combine this with current immunotherapy regimens," he told AFP. "Most likely this would lead to more patients responding to immunotherapy."— AFP

Lifestyle | Science









Solar-powered barge a key 'interceptor' for plastic waste



This picture taken on Dec 17, 2019 shows workers clearing mounds of floating plastic waste from the Klang River.



cooping waste from a Malaysian river to stop it reaching the sea, a solar-powered barge named the "Interceptor" is the latest weapon in a global battle to rid the world's waters of plastic. Trash is being dumped into seas and rivers in enormous quantities, polluting vital habitats, endangering a kaleidoscope of marine life and sullying once pristine tourist spots. Some eight million tons of plastics enter the world's oceans every year, from straws tossed into gutters to mismanaged waste from rapidly growing economies, according to US-based group Ocean Conservancy.

But as governments and environmental protection groups struggle in the face of the growing tide, a Dutch non-profit group - The Ocean Cleanup - has come up with a novel solution in the form of the Interceptor. The 24-m-long vessel resembles a large houseboat and uses a curved barrier to catch waste floating downstream.

The trash, much of it plastic, is directed to the "mouth" of the barge - which operates autonomously and silently - from where it rolls up a conveyor belt and is dropped into dumpsters. The barge can collect up to 50 tons of waste a day. In October an Interceptor was stationed on the Klang River, a heavily polluted, major Malaysian waterway which flows through the capital Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding areas.

Ocean Cleanup is working with local government company Landasan Lumayan, which started cleaning the river in 2016, and says efforts are bearing fruit. "The Klang River was like a floating landfill," said Syaiful Azmen Nordin, managing director of the Malaysian firm. "Boats could not pass through, and there was a lot of plastic. Now you can see the river is generally free from floating debris."

Tyres and teddies

Ocean Cleanup hopes their project will have a major impact in fighting the waste crisis globally, as rivers are one of the greatest sources of plastic flowing into the seas. Some 80 percent of plastic waste that ends up in the sea floats down just 1,000 rivers worldwide, according to the group, which hopes to one day station trash-collecting barges in all these waterways. The Klang River alone sends more than 15,000 tons annually into the sea, a map on their website shows, making it one of the 50 most-polluting rivers across the globe.

"We know the goal of 1,000 rivers is ambitious, but it is a necessary one," said group spokesman Joost Dubois, adding they aimed to have dealt with the problem within five years. But the group has some way to go to turn the tide - they have so far built four Interceptor boats at a cost of 700,000 euros (\$775,000) each, although they expect the price will come down as more are produced.

As well as the barge in Malaysia, one has been stationed in Jakarta, the overcrowded capital of neighboring Indonesia, while two others will be sent to Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Thailand has signed up to put one near Bangkok and an agreement is being negotiated to station a vessel in Los Angeles.

The barge on the 120-km Klang river complements seven existing log barriers placed along the waterway to catch trash. Rubbish taken out of the river is currently sent to a landfill, although efforts have begun to retrieve recyclables. Some 50,000 tons of garbage have been hauled from the water since clean-up work started four years ago, according to Syaiful. "We have (collected) tyres, teddy bears, even dead animals... but generally it is plastic," he said.

While the barges may help, they will only succeed if people do their part and act responsibly by refraining from thoughtlessly tossing plastic away, Syaiful added. "Some people don't see the impact of throwing rubbish. They throw the plastic on the streets and eventually the plastic will flow into the river," he said. "If we change our behavior, we can help our rivers (become) clean." — AFP

Lifestyle | Cocktail



Bollywood star slams Uber after 'scariest experience'

Bollywood star Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has warned Uber users against the ride-hailing app in London after suffering "the scariest experience" with a driver in the British capital. The award-winning actress, 34, daughter of "Slumdog Millionaire" star Anil Kapoor, said her driver was apparently "unstable and was yelling and shouting" during the journey. "I was shaking by the end of it," she tweeted to her 12.8 million followers late Wednesday in London, tagging Uber, which responded with an apparently automated message.

"I tried complaining on your app, and just got multiple disconnected replies by bots. You guys need to update your system. The damage is done. There is nothing more you can do. The best and safest is just to use the local public transportation or cabs," she suggested. Hours later, an Uber spokeswoman in London said the incident was "regrettable and concerning". "What's been described has no place on the Uber app and we're reviewing the matter," she said.

Ride-hailing giant Uber has come under a storm of global criticism over its passenger safety record. The company lost its license in London after transport authorities said it had failed to fix a litany of safety issues - including at least 14,000 cases of drivers handing their permits to unlicensed friends or relatives. It continues to operate in the city pending an appeal.

In 2017, a woman raped by an Uber driver in India filed a US lawsuit accusing the service of invading her privacy and defaming her character. Last month, Uber released a report saying it had tallied nearly 6,000 sexual assaults in the United States - its biggest market - over the past couple of years. That included more than 450 cases of rape.

In France, the firm is under pressure from a viral campaign detailing sexual assault involving its drivers, under the hashtag #UberCestOver (Uber it's over). Ahuja's Uber incident comes a week after she criticized British Airways on social media for allegedly losing her luggage for the second time this month. — AFP

Prince Harry resurfaces but stays silent on royal rumpus

Prince Harry kept silent yesterday about the shock decision he and his wife took last week to quit as full-time royals at his first public appearance since the bombshell announcement. Harry, 35, took part in the draw for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup in an engagement at Buckingham Palace in London, planned long before he and Meghan triggered the still-unresolved royal crisis. He appeared relaxed and jovial despite the tumult surrounding him, with final decisions on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's future due within days.

After struggling in the spotlight, the couple said they wanted to step back as senior royals and split their time between Britain and Canada. They also said they wanted to become financially independent from official royal funding and pull out of the palace's media arrangements. They made the announcement unilaterally on a new website - without first checking with Harry's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Heading inside after meeting school-children playing rugby on the lawns of the queen's official London residence, he said: "Look after the grass though, yeah? Otherwise I'll get in trouble." A reporter shouted out: "How are the discussions going on your future?" but Harry did not reply nor did he say anything on the crisis during the competition draw. He got a laugh as he turned his back to stir the mini-rugby balls with the participating countries' names inside.

A jocular Harry then pretended to stir them as if with a spoon, stopped and said: "This is not a cooking show." A December photograph of the queen with Harry's father Prince Charles, brother Prince William and nephew Prince George - the next three in line to the throne - stirring Christmas puddings at Buckingham Palace was reportedly a factor that led to Harry feeling edged out



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, speaks to children playing rugby league prior to the draw for the Rugby League World Cup 2021 at Buckingham Palace in London yesterday. — AFP

of the institution's future.

Sport 'saving lives'

Harry is patron of the Rugby Football League, the sport's governing body in England. "Not only do I continue to see sport actually changing lives, but it's saving lives as well," he said. Jon Dutton, chief executive of the 16-team tournament, hoped Harry's reduced role in the royal engagements would not affect his involvement with the World Cup, which takes place in October and November next year. "What happens next is for other people," he told Sky News television. "He's made a commitment to the sport and to the event and we very much hope to see him in the future. What that role is, it's probably too early to say."

Harry was summoned to a hastily arranged family meeting on Monday with his grandmother, Charles and William to thrash out a way forward. They said they would have preferred the Sussexes to remain as full-time royals but respected their wish for a more independent life. The final

details of their new roles are set to be determined in the coming days.

Vancouver visits

Harry and Meghan spent six weeks over Christmas on Vancouver Island on Canada's Pacific west coast - the duchess has already returned after briefly coming back to Britain. The couple's son Archie, born in May last year, had stayed in Canada. Meghan, a 38-year-old US former television actress, visited two women's charities in Vancouver on Tuesday, one proving support to women fleeing violence and another which helps teenage girls living in poverty.

Harry is set to remain in Britain for meetings early next week. Queen Elizabeth, 93, is Canada's head of state and Harry is therefore sixth in line to succeed her in that role. Despite Canadians' affection for the royal couple, who married at Windsor Castle in May 2018, a large majority (73 percent) do not wish to foot security or other costs for their relocation, according to polling firm Angus Reid Institute. — AFP

YouTube steering viewers to climate denial videos: Avaaz

VouTube has driven millions of viewers to climate denial videos, a US advocacy group charged yesterday as it called for stopping "free promotion of misinformation" at the platform. In response to the report by US-based online activist group Avaaz, YouTube said it downplays "borderline" video content while spotlighting authoritative sources and displaying information boxes on searches related to climate change and other topics. The Google-owned video sharing platform has remained firm that while it removes content violating its policies against hate, violence, and scams it does not censor ideas expressed in accordance with its rules.

"Our recommendations systems are not designed to filter or demote videos or channels based on specific perspectives," YouTube said in response to an AFP inquiry. The company added that it has "significantly invested in reducing recommendations of borderline content and harmful misinformation, and raising up authoritative voices."

New York-based Avaaz said it scrutinized results of YouTube searches using the terms "global warming," "climate change," and "climate manipulation" to see what was offered by an "up next" feature and as suggestions. Sixteen percent of the top 100 videos

served up in relation to the term "global warming" contained misinformation, with the top 10 of those averaging more than a million views each, according to Avaaz.

The portion of potentially misleading videos climbed to 21 percent for YouTube searches on the team "climate manipulation" but fell to eight percent for searches using the term "climate change," according to Avaaz. "This is not about free speech, this is about the free advertising," Avaaz senior campaigner Julie Deruy said in a release. "YouTube is giving factually inaccurate videos that risk confusing people about one of the biggest crises of our time."

Who to believe?

An AFP search at YouTube using the term "global warming" yielded a results page topped by a box containing a Wikipedia summary of the subject and a link to the page at the online encyclopedia. A list of suggested videos on the topic was dominated by sources such as National Geographic, NASA, TED, and major news organizations including CBS, PBS, Sky News, and AFP. Last year, consumption on "channels" of authoritative news publishers at the platform grew by 60 percent, according to YouTube.

"We prioritize authoritative voices for millions of news and information queries, and surface information panels on topics prone to misinformation – including climate change – to provide users with context alongside their content," YouTube said. Avaaz called on YouTube to yank climate change misinformation videos from its recommendation formula completely, and make certain such content doesn't make money from ads at the platform. — AFP

Comic

Word Search

USA Presidents Word Search

Find and circle all of the United States Presidents that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an Abraham Lincoln quote.

Note: Although Cleveland appears twice in the list, he is only in the puzzle once.

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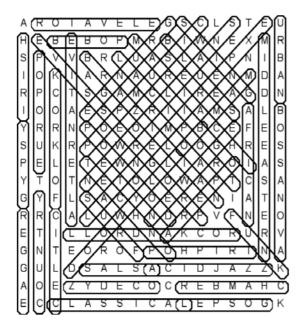
- 4. MADISON
- 5. MONROE 6. J Q ADAMS 7. JACKSON 8. VAN BUREN
- 9. W HARRISON 10. TYLER 11. POLK 12. TAYLOR
- 17. A JOHNSON 18. GRANT 19. HAYES 20. GARFIELD 21. ARTHUR 22. CLEVELAND 23. B HARRISON
- 13. FILLMORE 14. PIERCE 16. BUCHANAN 16. LINCOLN

CARTERNNNAMURTYEI

- 24. Cleveland 25. MCKINLEY 26. T ROOSEVELT 27. TAFT 28. WILSON 29. HARDING 30. COOLIDGE 31. HOOVER 32. F D ROOSEVELT 33. TRUMAN 34. EISENHOWER
- 35. KENNEDY 36. L B JOHNSON 37. NIXON 38. FORD 39. CARTER 40. REAGAN 41. G H W BUSH 42. CLINTON
 - 43. G W BUSH 44. OBAMA 45. TRUMP

Yesterday's Solution

Types of Music 2



ACID JAZZ AFRICAN ALTERNATIVE BEBOR BILLES BOLLYWOOD BOSSA NOVA BRAZILIAN CELTIC

CHAMBER

CLASSICAL COUNTRY DOO WOP ELEVATOR FUROPOR EXPERIMENTAL FOLK ROCK

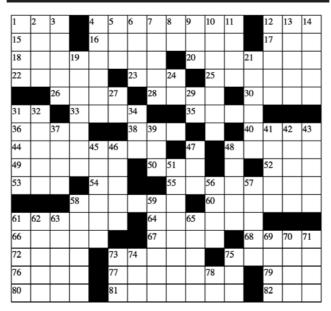
GOSPEL

GYPSY IRISH MAMBO MARIACHI MIDDLE EASTERN NEW ORLEANS POP MUSIC PROGRESSIVE

ROCK AND ROLL SALSA SURF SWING TRIP HOP TROPICAL URBAN ZYDECO

The hidden message is: ALTERNATIVE ROCK

Crossword 2412



- 1. Noisy talk.
- 4. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and
- 12. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
- 15. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or
- 16. Concluding state of pregnancy.
- An acute inflammatory disease occur-ring in the intestines of premature in-
- 18. Testacean rhizopods.
- 20. Not capable of being swayed or diverted from a course.
- 22. (Old Testament) The second patriarch. 23. A doctor's degree in dental medicine.
- 25. Deciduous round-headed Asiatic tree widely grown in mild climates as an ornamental for its heart-shaped leaves and fragrant yellow-green flowers followed by hanging clusters of fleshy orange-red berries.
- 26. A monocotyledonous genus of the family Iridaceae.
- 28. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.

 30. Port city in northwestern Belgium and
- industrial center.
- 31. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- 33. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 35. Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
- 36. Someone who works (or provides

- workers) during a strike. 38. Having undesirable or negative quali-
- 40. A fastener for a door or lid.
- 44. Marked by quiet and caution and se crecy.
- 49. An epic in Latin by Virgil.
- 50. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- 52. A widely distributed system consisting of all the cells able to ingest bacteria or colloidal particles etc, except for certain white blood cells.
- 53. Up to the present time
- 54. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
- 55. The people of your home locality (especially your own family).
- 60. In an open way.
- 61. Made of grain or relating to grain or the plants that produce it. 64. A genus of Caltha. 66. (law) A defense by an accused person
- purporting to show that he or she could not have committed the crime in auestion.
- 67. A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain. 68. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that
- is the top of an extinct volcano. 72. A Loloish language.
- 76. The content of cognition
- 77. A crime that undermines the offender's government. 79. The elementary stages of any subject
- (usually plural).
- 80. Any of numerous flowerless and seedless vascular plants having true roots from a rhizome and fronds that uncurl upward.

81. Having a rasping or grating sound. 82. The cry made by sheep.

DOWN

- 1. Large hairy humanoid creature said to live in the Himalayas.
- (Greek mythology) Greek god of war. 3. A river of southwestern Africa that rises in central Angola and flows east and then north (forming part of the border between Angola and Congo) and continuing northwest through Congo to empty into the Congo River on the bor-der between Congo and Republic of the Congo.
- 4. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
- 5. Psychoactive substance present in mari-
- juana. 6. Bound or secured closely
- 7. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
- 8. Being one hundred more than three hundred
- 9. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- 10. A tricycle (usually propelled by ped-
- alling). 11. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind. 12. Squash bugs.
- 13. Of or relating to or characteristic of Benin or its people.
- 14. The cardinal number that is the sum of
- seven and one.

 19. (of goods or funds) Subject to taxation.
- 21. A unit of resistance equal to one million
- 24. A person forced to flee from home or
- country.

 27. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- 29. An international organization of Euro-pean countries formed after World War Il to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.

- 32. Red pear-shaped tropical fruit with poisonous seeds.

 34. The compass point that is one point
- north of due east.

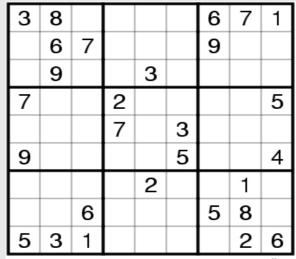
 37. The sister of your father or mother.

- 39. How long something has existed. 41. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934). 42. United States conductor (born in Hun-
- gary) (1897-1970). 43. Causing irritation or annoyance.
- 45. A member of a Caddo people formerly living in north central Texas. 46. Conforming to an ultimate standard of
- perfection or excellence.
 47. The United Nations agency concerned with the international organization of
- food and agriculture. 48. The 1st letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- 51. A family of trees and shrubs of the order Parietales.
- 56. (nontechnical usage) A tiny piece of
- anything. 57. A ceremonial dinner party for many
- people. 58. Inhabitant of the island of Cebu.
- 59. An electronic pulse counter used to count pulses that occur too rapidly to
- be recorded individually.
 62. Leave or strike out, as of vowels
- 63. A person who rises (especially from bed).
- 65. The sacred city of Lamaism.
- 69. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of
- Jezebel (9th century BC). 70. A small cake leavened with yeast.
- 71. Type genus of the family Arcidae. 73. Acute delirium caused by alcohol poi-
- soning. 74. Electrical conduction through a gas in
- an applied electric field. 75. One or some or every or all without specification.
- 78. (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.

Yesterday's Solution

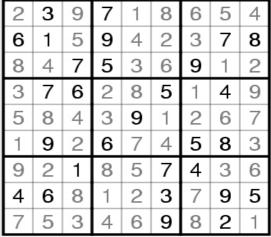
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В	A	A		L	A	N	C	Е	Т		S	Е	P	I	A
A	R	G	0	S		G	A	L	E		Α	С		Α	D
			V	A	D	U	Z		L	I	M	A			
R	A	G	Е			Α	A	R	0	N		R	A	R	E
E	M	Е	R	Y		G	R	A	P	Н		Т	I	Е	R
C	0	R	S	A	G	Е			E	A	G	E	R	L	Y
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			С	A	В	A	L		S	С	Α	В			
M	0	N	Α	С	A	N			С	Е	T	A	С	Е	A
A	Н	Α	В			S	M	E	Α	R		Н	A	N	D
A	I	R		S	P	A	R	E	R	I	В		P	I	A
R	0	C		В	A	S	I	L	I	C	A		E	D	D

Daily SuDoku



medium

Yesterday's Solution



verv hard

Friday Times

TV Listings

MOVIES HIS ACTION

01:30 Bus Driver 02:50 Tsunambee: The Wrath Cometh 04:15 Black Panther

06:30 Men In Black 3 08:30 Beast Of Burden 10:15 Tsunambee: The Wrath

Cometh 11:50 Men In Black 3 13:50 Fahrenheit 451 15:40 Twister

18:00 Judge Dredd 19:50 Gone In Sixty Seconds 22:00 The A-Team



00:00 The Lodgers 01:40 It Comes At Night 03:20 Hollow In The Land 05:00 Real Women Have Curves 06:30 Where Angels Fear To Tread

Tread
08:30 The Wrong Nanny
10:00 The Wedding Stalker
11:30 Murder, She Baked: A
Deadly Recipe
13:00 Deadly Expose
14:30 Game Change
16:30 That Good Night
18:05 Wonder

18:05 Wonder

20:00 Twilight 22:05 Single White Female

OVI MOVIES DISNEW

00:45 My Favorite Martian 02:30 The Lion King 2: Simba's

04:15 Mighty Joe Young 06:15 My Favorite Martian 08:00 George Of The Jungle 09:35 Finding Nemo 11:35 Mighty Joe Young

13:35 Finding Dory 15:25 Peter Pan: Return To Nev-

erland 17:00 Bedtime Stories

19:00 The Rookie21:15 George Of The Jungle22:50 Finding Dory

OM MOVIES HD FIRST

01:30 6 Days 03:10 Searching 04:55 The Wizard Of Lies 07:10 A-X-L

08:55 Getting Grace 10:45 Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween

12:15 Penguins 13:30 White Fang

15:00 Ugly Dolls 16:30 Mortal Engines 18:40 Venom

21:00 Daisy Winters 22:40 Tully



00:35 Honey Honey Bear 02:05 Nur And The Dragon's

Temple 03:15 Victor And The Secret Of Crocodile Mansion

04:55 Treasure Hounds
06:30 Pacific Pirates
08:00 Zodiac: The Race Begins
09:35 Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins

10:50 Boonie Bears & The Hunters 12:20 Honey Honey Bear

14:00 Kurt Turns Evil 15:20 Zodiac: The Race Begins

16:55 Doctor Proctor Bubble In The Bathtub

18:35 Legend Of The Sea 20:00 Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins 21:15 Kurt Turns Evil 22:35 Boonie Bears & The

OM MOVIES HD

00:00 Destiny Turns On The 01:45 The Producers 04:05 Final Recipe 06:00 The Beautician And The 07:55 Shrek Forever After 09:30 Rushmore 11:10 Of Mice And Men 13:05 House Arrest 15:00 Nacho Libre 16:35 Annie 18:40 Think Like A Man Too



00:30 The Internship 02:25 Ace Ventura: When Nature

04:00 Spotlight Spotlight Hollywood On Set 3 04:05

04:40 Hollywood On Set 3 05:05 Spotlight

05:10 Spotlight 05:15 Spotlight

05:20 Hollywood On Set 3 05:45 Hollywood On Set 3 06:15 Spotlight

06:20 Hollywood On Set 3 06:50 A Bundle Of Trouble: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery 08:20 Last Scene Alive: An Au-

rora Teagarden Mystery 09:50 Clue 11:30 Spotlight

11:35 Angus Thongs And Perfect

Snogging 13:15 Three Wishes 15:10 Boys And Girls 16:40 The Internship

18:35 Push 20:25 The Fountain 22:00 Rounders

M-VIES HD

00:38 Ordinary Decent Criminal 02:10 Gangs Of New York 05:00 Spy Kids 06:40 Rust And Bone

08:45 The Zero Theorem 10:40 Ordinary Decent Criminal

12:10 The Assignment 13:50 Ceremony 15:15 Our Kind Of Traitor

17:00 Closed Circuit

18:35 Spy Kids 20:00 The Sea Of Trees The Games Maker 23:40 Promised Land

CENTRAL CANTHO

00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
00:30 Impractical Jokers 00:53 50 Central 01:15 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA 01:45 Inside Amy Schumer 02:10 Friends 02:32 Friends 02:55 Lip Sync Battle 03:20 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA 03:50 Inside Amy Schumer 04:13 The Daily Show With

Trevor Noah 04:40 Lip Sync Battle 05:00 Friends

07:10 Impractical Jokers 08:55 Takeshis Castle Indonesia

Friends Friends 11:55 Friends

12:20 Friends 12:45 Friends

12:45 Friends 13:10 Workaholics 15:15 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA 17:20 Friends

19:30 Martha And Snoop Potluck

Party Challenge
20:00 The New Negros
20:30 50 Central
22:00 The Daily Show With

Trevor Noah 22:30 Jeff Ross Roast Criminals

Live From Brazos Jail 23:30 Alternatino

00:00 E! True Hollywood Story 02:00 Nightly Pop 03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry 05:00 Revenge Body With Khloe

03:00 Revenue Body With Kardashian 07:00 E! News 08:00 Pop Of The Morning 08:55 E! News: Daily Pop

09:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry 10:45 Keeping Up With The Kar-

dashians 12:35 E! News 13:30 Pop Of The Morning 14:25 E! News: Daily Pop

15:20 Keeping Up With The Kar-

16:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian

17:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian 18:05 Very Cavallari 21:00 Revenge Body With Khloe

Kardashian 23:00 Nightly Pop

OM SERIES HID COMEDY

00:20 The Alec Baldwin Show 01:10 Grown-Ish 02:10 Ramy 03:10 Curb Your Enthusiasm

03:40 Late Night With Seth Meyers 04:25 The Tonight Show Starring

Jimmy Fallon 05:15 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 06:15 Ally McBeal 07:15 Late Night With Seth Meyers

08:15 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 09:15 The Tonight Show Starring

Jimmy Fallon 10:15 Bless This Mess

10:45 Last Man Standing 11:15 The Ellen DeGeneres Show

12:15 Ally McBeal

13:15 The Alec Baldwin Show 14:15 Grown-Ish

14:45 Grown-Ish 15:15 Bless This Mess 15:40 Last Man Standing 16:05 The Ellen DeGeneres Show

17:00 Ally McBeal 18:00 The Alec Baldwin Show 19:00 Grown-Ish

20:00 Mixed-Ish 20:30 Black-ish 21:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon

22:00 Ramy 23:05 Curb Your Enthusiasm 23:40 Late Night With Seth Meyers

ON SERIES HD FIRST

00:30 Magnum P.I. 01:20 Stumptown 02:05 Warrior 03:00 Star 03:45 S.W.A.T. 04:30 Siren 05:20 Good Morning America 07:00 The View

08:00 S.W.A.T. 08:50 Stumptown 09:40 Chicago P.D 10:30 Emergence 11:20 Magnum P.I.

12:10 Siren 13:00 The View

14:00 S.W.A.T. 15:00 Live Good Morning America 17:00 Marvel's Cloak & Dagger

17:45 Queen Sugar 18:30 DC's Legends Of Tomor-

19:20 Criminal Minds 20:10 The Resident 21:00 9-1-1 22:00 The New Pope

23:00 Star 23:50 Criminal Minds

OVING HD

00:00 Grand Designs New Zealand 01:00 Beyond The Beaten Path 02:00 Anthony Bourdain: Parts

03:00 My Retreat

03:30 My Retreat 04:00 Top Million Dollar Agent 04:30 Top Million Dollar Agent 05:00 Next Stop 05:30 Next Stop 06:00 Grand Designs New

Zealand 07:00 A Taste Of Travel 07:30 Gino's Italian Escape 08:00 Beyond The Beaten Path 09:00 Anthony Bourdain: Parts

Unknown 10:00 Grand Designs New Zealand 11:00 Top Million Dollar Agent

11:30 Top Million Dollar Agent 12:00 Next Stop 12:30 Next Stop 13:00 Travel Time With Linda

13:30 Travel Time With Linda 14:00 The Renovation King 14:30 The Renovation King 15:00 Beyond The Beaten Path 16:00 Anthony Bourdain: Parts

Unknown 17:00 Rustic Adventures: Italy 17:30 Rustic Adventures: Italy 18:00 My Greek Odyssey

19:00 Crazy Beautiful Weddings 19:30 Crazy Beautiful Weddings 20:00 The Apartment 21:00 Best Laid Plans

22:00 Rustic Adventures: Italy 22:30 Rustic Adventures: Italy 23:00 My Greek Odyssey

crime © &investigation

00:00 The First 48 01:00 Homicide Hunter 02:00 PD Cam 02:50 Ghost Hunters 03:40 It Takes A Killer

04:25 Live PD: Police Patrol 05:10 The First 48

05:50 Homicide Hunter 06:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill 07:25 It Takes A Killer Live PD: Police Patrol 08:25 Homicide Hunter

09:10 Homicide Hunter 09:55 The First 48 10:45 The First 48 11:40 Homicide: Hours To Kill

11:40 Hornicide: Hours to Kill 12:35 The First 48 13:30 Crimes That Shook Britain 14:25 Live PD: Police Patrol 14:55 Live PD: Police Patrol

It Takes A Killer 16:20 Homicide Hunter 17:15 The First 48 18:10 Homicide: Hours To Kill

15:25 It Takes A Killer

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

00:00 People Magazine Investigates 01:00 Betrayed

02:00 Shattered 03:00 The Murder Tapes 05:30 Reasonable Doubt 06:20 Nightmare Next Door

07:10 Who Killed Jane Doe? 08:00 Shadow Of Doubt 08:55 Shadow Of Doubt 09:50 Scene Of The Crime With

Tony Harris 10:45 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris 11:40 Nightmare Next Door

12:35 Reasonable Doubt 14:25 What Lies Beneath 15:20 Pandora's Box: Unleashing

Evil 17:10 Nightmare Next Door 18:05 Never Say Goodbye 20:00 Murder Loves Company

23:00 Dead Silent



01:05 Ripley's Believe It Or Not! 01:50 Savage Builds 02:35

Salvage Hunters Diesel Brothers 04:50 How Do They Do It? Garage Gold

06:00 Salvage Dawgs 06:20 Garage Gold 06:45 Ultimate Survival

07:35 Wheeler Dealers 08:20 Gold Rush 09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier 09:55 Salvage Hunters 10:45 How Do They Do It?

11:30 Diesel Brothers 13:05 Salvage Dawgs 13:30 Garage Gold

13:55 Salvage Hunters 14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier 15:30 Ed Stafford: Left For Dead 16:15 Unique Rides 17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier

17:50 Gold Rush 18:40 How Do They Do It?

19:25 Diesel Brothers 21:00 Wheeler Dealers 21:50 Unique Rides 22:40 Mighty Truckers 23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An

Empire 01:15 Patton 360 02:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files 02:45 Evolve

03:30 The Lost Evidence 04:15 Cities Of The Underworld 05:00 Ancient Aliens 05:45 Deep Sea Salvage

06:30 Battles BC 07:15 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire 08:00 Evolve

08:45 The Lost Evidence

09:30 Cities Of The Underworld 10:15 Ancient Aliens 11:00 Deep Sea Salvage 11:45 Battles BC 12:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An

Empire 13:15 Hangar 1: The UFO Files 14:00 Evolve 14:45 The Lost Evidence

15:30 Cities Of The Underworld 16:15 Ancient Aliens 17:00 Deep Sea Salvage 17:45 Battles BC

18:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire

19:15 Hangar 1: The UFO Files 20:00 Evolve 20:45 The Lost Evidence 21:30 Cities Of The Underworld 22:15 Ancient Aliens

23:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files

23:45 Battles BC

00:10 Evermoor Chronicles 00:35 Binny And The Ghost

01:00 Alex & Co. 01:25 Alex & Co.

01:55 Alex & Co.
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:40 Alex & Co.
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Evermoor Chronicles

04:45 Alex & Co. 05:35 Violetta

05:35 Violetta
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Shake It Up
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:55 Stuck In The Middle
08:45 K.C. Undercover

09:10 Bizaardvark 09:35 Jessie

10:25 Miraculous Tales Of Lady-bug & Cat Noir 11:15 Bizaardvark 11:40 Bizaardvark 12:05 Liv And Maddie

K.C. Undercover 13:45 Bunk'd 14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir

14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Lady-bug & Cat Noir 15:00 Shake It Up 15:50 A.N.T. Farm

16:40 Bizaardvark 17:05 Disney Mickey Mouse 17:10 Amphibia 17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Lady-

bug & Cat Noir 18:00 Raven's Home 18:25 Coop And Cami Ask The

18:50 Sydney To The Max 19:15 Stuck In The Middle 20:05 K.C. Undercover 20:30 Shake It Up

Liv And Maddie 21:20 22:10 Jessie Jessie 23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Lady-

bug & Cat Noir 23:50 Lolirock **NICK HD**

00:12 Breadwinners 00:36 Rabbids Invasion

01:00 Rabbids Invasion 01:24 Sanjay And Craiq 01:48 Sanjay And Craig 02:12 Winx Club 02:36 Winx Club 03:00 Regal Academy

03:24 Regal Academy 03:48 Rabbids Invasion 04:12 Rabbids Invasion Breadwinners

05:00 SpongeBob SquarePants

SpongeBob SquarePants 05:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-06:12 The Loud House 06:36 Motu Patlu 07:00 Motu Patlu

07:24 Chop Chop Ninja 07:36 Chop Chop Ninja 07:48 Winx Club 08:12 44 Cats 08:24 44 Cats

08:36 I Am Frankie 09:00 Henry Danger 09:24 The Bureau Of Magical Thinas

09:48 Game Shakers 10:12 School Of Rock 10:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And

Dawn 11:00 The Thundermans 11:24 The Thundermans 11:48 The Thundermans The Thundermans

12:36 The Thundermans 13:00 All That 13:24 All That

13:48 All That 14:12 All That 14:36 All That 15:00 44 Cats

Stars

Aries (March 21-April 19)

This week might be easier than last week, but you're not quite out of the woods yet. There is still a lingering intensity, and this can relate to a key issue you're dealing with. The sun aligns with sobering Saturn and volcanic Pluto on Monday, and this can bring a greater understanding of the core issues and what you need to do to create the changes you desire. But there is a spiritual component, too, as lovely Venus enters Pisces, and this can encourage you to turn the matter over to a higher power. If it really is too complex for you to handle, hand it over to the force of life, and you may find that help does come in the perfect way at the right time. From midweek, the influence of restless Uranus comes into play, and this could see you craving experiences that take you out of your comfort zone.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

To create the future you want, you might need to let go of whatever is stopping you from getting there. Last week, you may have become aware of what this is, and this week the conjunction of the sun with prudent Saturn and intense Pluto could inspire you further. If you need help from a teacher or life coach, do get it, because it could make a world of difference.

With luscious Venus, your guide planet, moving into Pisces and your social zone on Monday, you might be ready to confide in friends and accept their support. Lively Mercury moves into your sector of career and ambition on Thursday. Its convivial presence here could see you reaching out to others for help and advice. But this is also a good time to network with those who share your goals or are on the same professional wavelength.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

With an intense set of planets in a deeply emotional zone, it would be no surprise if you felt a tad exhausted. And yet, you could feel a sense of relief at letting something go that really needed to leave your life. While you may have fought against this, you now might appreciate the wisdom of this release and the healing that can happen as a result. As the sun links with taskmaster Saturn and radical Pluto on Monday, the awareness that everything is happening for a reason can give you strength and courage. Charming Venus enters your sector of goals and career on Monday, though, and her presence here can help smooth the way when negotiating or doing deals. If you feel motivated to connect socially with certain people, this could be a good move.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Last week's intense energies may continue to linger. However, by the weekend you could feel a little lighter and easier within. The sun's link to cautious Saturn and transformative Pluto on Monday can bring a sense of closure to a relationship issue that has been going on for a while. Although there may be details to finalize and further discussions in the pipeline, there may also be a sense of freedom and release. This doesn't mean that a key bond is going to end, but rather that an issue may be on the verge of being resolved, and this could take things to a new level. Luscious Venus moves into your travel sector, though, so you may feel a yearning to get away from it all. If so, a trip could do you a world of good.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Positive Jupiter is now in your lifestyle sector until late next year, and its presence here can add extra buoyancy and confidence. This is just as well, because last week's intense energies may have left you wondering what your next steps should be. Solar ties at the start of the week could see you assessing your priorities and creating a plan. Be sure to delegate, too, because this can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed when the pressure is on. At the same time, luscious Venus moves into Pisces and a more emotional zone, which could enhance the romance in a key relationship. This can be a call to greater intimacy, and you could grow closer over the coming weeks. Your social life sparkles with promise, too, as upbeat Mercury moves into Aquarius on Thursday, encouraging you to get involved in activities that are a little bit different.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Are you ready to express your creativity? After last week's focused and intense aspects, your perspective on self-expression and creativity may have shifted a little. This week, the sun conjoins sobering Saturn and transformative Pluto early on, encouraging you to find the silver lining to any issues you may have encountered. Whatever disappointments you've had, something can come out of this that benefits you greatly. Do you need to talk things over? As sweet Venus moves into your sector of relating on Monday, her presence here can encourage you to share how you feel with loved ones and friends. If you're usually reserved, this can help unburden you and leave you feeling lighter and brighter. Plus, your social life can sparkle with additional promise. Thoughtful Mercury, your ruler, moves into your lifestyle sector on Thursday, encouraging you to get organized. This is one of the better times to look to your routines and jettison any that no longer work for you.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Last week's intense focus on your domestic sector could linger into this week, but you may feel generally lighter by the weekend. With the sun merging with prudent Saturn and potent Pluto on Monday, an opportunity could arise to resolve a family or domestic difficulty for good. If last week encouraged you to seek change, this week could see you putting this desire into action. And, step by step, you will begin to see a positive shift. Your ruler Venus moves into your lifestyle zone on Monday, and this can be an opportunity for some well-deserved pampering and soothing treatments. If you need a massage or you're eager to enjoy a spa day, go for it. Convivial Mercury's move into your leisure zone on Thursday could see you connecting with others who share your interests. If you enjoy cultural activities, this is a great time to go to exhibitions, concerts, and other similar events.

Sc

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your mind holds the secret to success, and where you place your attention can be the key to moving up the ladder or taking a step back. Last week, the intense focus on your sector of talk and thought may have made you aware of the need to change your mindset. The sun links to taskmaster Saturn and underworld Pluto on Monday, and you may now understand why this is so valuable. Even a small shift in attitude can bring positive results in your experience. Once you get a taste of how this works, you can then master your destiny. Could romance be in the air? With delectable Venus moving into your romance sector on Monday, this dreamy influence could see you eager to break the ice. This sensitive energy can make it easier to connect with others because you can tune in to their moods and feelings and get a sense of what motivates them

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Positive Jupiter, your guide planet, is presently in your money zone and will be until late next year, so you have good fortune on your side. Still, it might not have seemed like this last week if intense energies coincided with a deep realization that something needs to shift. This may have been going on for some while, but now is the time for action rather than reflection. Still, with lovely Venus moving into your home zone on Monday, her presence here could encourage you to nurture yourself and enjoy a little pampering. If you feel like beautifying your surroundings in a creative way, this is very much the time to do so. Chatty Mercury moves into your sector of communication on Thursday, and this can be a call to network and generally connect with those who may be of help to you.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

If you were under intense pressure last week, this can now begin to ease. Still, with the sun linking to practical Saturn, your ruler, and explosive Pluto, reflecting on recent experiences can yield some valuable insights. If you have lost something or had to give up something, you might begin to appreciate why this happened. It may not make it much easier, but it could help you understand it. Lovely Venus moves into your sector of communication on Monday, so this is the ideal time to talk things over. You might be surprised by how supportive others are and the advice they give you. And even if this has left you feeling a little vulnerable, you'll soon be back on track with your sense of purpose renewed. Go easy with spending from Thursday, though, because inquisitive Mercury in your money zone could see you ready to splurge, especially if you spot a bargain on sale.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may appear calm and collected on the outside, but feelings could be bubbling away on the inside. Last week's intense focus may have seen you questioning events in your life and the reasons for them. This week, with the sun merging with careful Saturn and power-broker Pluto, you may gain an even greater understanding of why they occurred. It could be that they shaped your character and nature in certain ways, and your destiny, too. Don't feel bad about treating yourself, because you deserve it. Lovely Venus moves into your money zone on Monday, so it's time to invest in you, especially if recent events have left you drained. Get a massage, enjoy a spa day, or get away for a short break, because any one of these could do you a world of good.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

What are friends for? This is something you might have considered in depth last week when a powerful blend of energies may have brought change to your social life. If you decided to distance yourself from certain toxic relationships, that was a wise move. This week, you may begin to feel the benefits of your actions and realize that this is something you should have done long ago. Still, as delectable Venus enters your sign on Monday, it can encourage a more compasionate stance. Don't think of calling these people up and inviting them back, though, because chances are, you'd find yourself back at square one. Create firm boundaries and keep them in place.

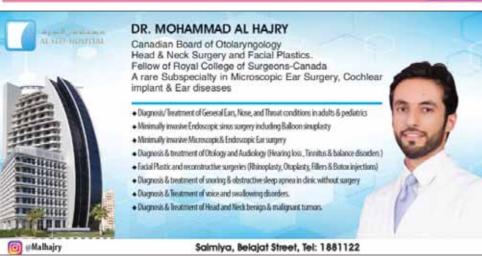
Country Codes

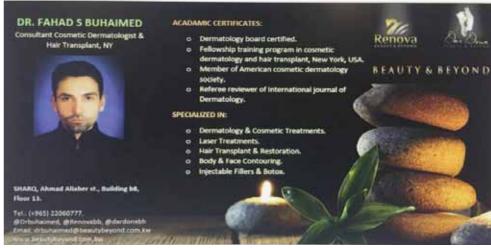
A Code and other	0002	Id	00000
Afghanistan Albania	0093 00355	Jordan Kazakhstan	00962 007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia Australia	00374 0061	Lebanon Liberia	00961 00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00231
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium Belize	0032 00501	Majorca Malawi	0034 00265
Benin	00301	Malaysia	00203
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei Bulgaria	00673 00359	Mauritius Mayotte	00230 00269
Burkina	00333	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands Central African Republic	001345 00236	Morocco Mozambiquo	00212 00258
Chad	00235	Mozambique Myanmar (Burma)	00238
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands Costa Rica	00682 00506	New Zealand	0064 00505
Croatia	00385	Nicaragua Nigar	00303
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark Diogra Carrie	0045 00246	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia Djibouti	00240	Norway Oman	0047 00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	00908
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea Eritrea	00240 00291	Philippines Poland	0063 0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland France	00358 0033	Rwanda Saint Helena	00250 00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049 00233	Samoa West San Marino	00685 00378
Ghana Gibraltar	00255	Sao Tone	00378
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00255
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala Guinea	00502 00224	Singapore Slovakia	0065 00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary Ibiza (Spain)	0036	Spain Sri Lanka	0034 0094
Ibiza (Spain) Iceland	0034 00354	Sri Lanka Sudan	0094
		Suriname	00597
India	0091		
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indian Ocean Indonesia	00873 0062	Sweden	0046
Indian Ocean Indonesia Iran	00873 0062 0098	Sweden Switzerland	0046 0041
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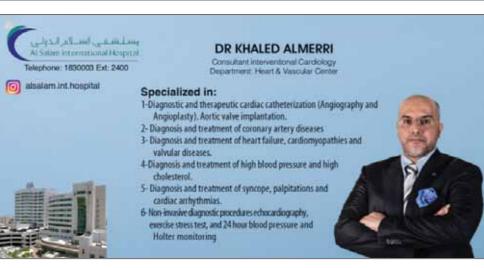


Kuwait - Times 248 33 199

Friday, January 17, 2020

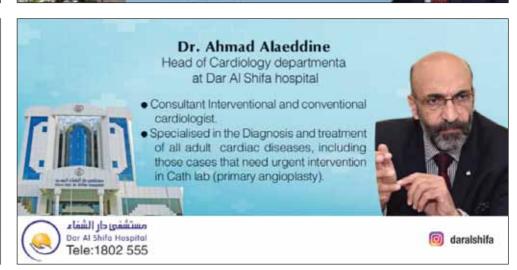














American Board Certified in General Surgery

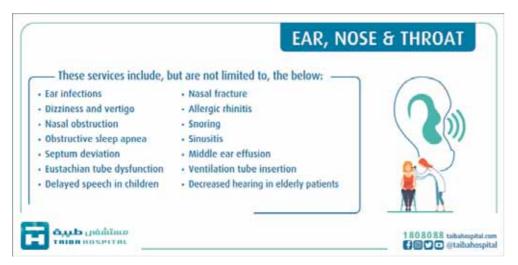
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- ◆ Minor surgeries (Tipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- ◆ Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries

- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass) ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
 - ◆ Cholecystectomy & Japanoscopic appendicectomy
- · Hernia repair Surgery for reflux disease
- http://www.international-clinic.com
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries Tel: 1886677



Health & Science





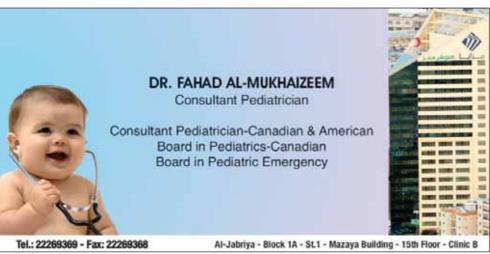














Classification Cimes 1 filed S 1 filed S



REQUIRED SALES EXECUTIVE

Friday, January 17, 2020

Must have valid driving license and experienced in sales

Send CV by WhatsApp: **51506170**

CHANGE OF NAME

I Anmolika My Passpost No: N 9725963 Permanent Address D/o Ranjit Singh R/o H:No 23 VivekaNand Park Nandanpur Maqsuda Distt Jalandhar have changed My Name to Anmolika Singh. (C 5489) 17-1-2020

Request for name correction on my passport Syed Mohammad Ehtesham Haider S/o S. M. Jamal Hyder change to S. M. Ehtsham Hyder, Indian national, Passport number R5452372. (C 5612)

Add Naigaon Christan Wadi Vasdi (W) Dist Palghat 401207) and I hereby declare that henceforth I will be called known and distinguished by my new name L.C. Austin Fullaji Baretto (Gazette No. X-26640) place vasai. (**C 5611**)

I have change my name from Shaikh Aslam Shaika Farid to Shaikh Aslam Shaikh Farid. (C 5613) 16-1-2020

I, Sreedharan Aniyan Kumbalaparambil, holder of Indian Passport No. M9886020 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Koorkanchery, Thrissur, Kerala, India, and presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is Aniyan and surname is Kumbalaparambil Sreedharan. (C 5609)

I, Mohammad Samsad Alam holder of Indian Passport No.
M8779222 & Civil ID No.
286010153306 has changed my name from Mohammad Samsad Alam to Mohammad Shamshad (Given name) Alam (Surname) hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Mohammad Shamshad

(C 5610) 14-1-2020

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. **16-1-2020**

STATE OF KUWAIT

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw



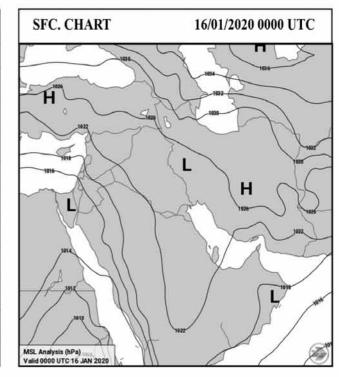
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h.

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

WEATHER WATCH Frost

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	10 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	05 °C
ABDALY	20 °C	06 °C
BUBYAN	19 °C	08 °C
JAHRA	21 °C	08 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	19 °C	13 °C
AHMADI	18 °C	14 °C
NUWAISIB	19 ℃	07 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	05 °C
SALMY	20 °C	05 °C



		4 DAYS FORECA	AST			
			Tempe	ratures		
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	MAX.	MIN.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Friday	01/17	Fair and Partly cloudy	22 °C	08 °C	SE	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	01/18	Cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	23 °C	13 °C	SE-NW	20 - 50 km/h
Sunday	01/19	Fair and some high clouds will appear	21 °C	07 °C	NW	12 - 42 km/h
Monday	01/20	Fair	20 °C	06 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER	TIMES
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:53
Sunset	17:11
Isha	18:33

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT I	KUWAIT AIRPORT
MAX, Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	79 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	NW 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Airlines

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

 PIA
 22421044

 Bangladesh Airlines
 22452977/8

 Oman Air
 22958787

 Turkish Airlines
 22453820/1

Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 2020

US, China sign 'momentous' trade deal



Malaysia talks to India over palm curbs as wider trade dispute looms



Mideast stoked tensions but no shock on oil market: IEA





Sabah, Head of the Show's Organizing Committee Ahmad Bahbahani, Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer of Zain Kuwait Waleed Al-Khashti during the inaugural ceremony of the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020.

Zain platinum sponsor of Kuwait Aviation Show

Show being held under patronage of HH the Amir

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the second edition of the Kuwait Aviation Show. The event, organized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) from 15-18 January 2020 at Kuwait International Airport, comes under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The show's opening ceremony witnessed the attendance of HH the Amir's representative Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Head of the Show's Organizing Committee Ahmad Bahbahani, Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer of Zain Kuwait Waleed Al-Khashti, as well as many ex-

ecutives and officials from both the private and public sectors. Zain's support to this event comes as part of its commitment as a main contributing partner of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad AlJaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035. The company is keen on reflecting its key role as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector, which is considered a strategic partner in the country's developmental goals and one of its main pillars. The Kuwait Aviation Show aims at contributing to achieving one of the Plan's pillars by transforming Kuwait into a regional center that connects the East and West and developing the aviation infrastructure.

Zain takes part in the event through its own dedicated booth, where it showcases the latest

innovations and most advanced services it offers via its Zain Drone subsidiary. Zain Drone's Drone as-a-Service (DaaS) solutions unlock 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.

The Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 is considered one of the biggest international exhibitions dedicated to aviation and air travel services. The event features over 200 exhibitors from 35 countries, over 70 aircrafts on display, as well as thousands of visitors, companies, and aviation enthusiasts.

Zain affirmed its commitment in being present

at the various projects and activities that contribute to pushing the national economy wheel and achieving the various developmental objectives of the country, further reflecting its role as a leading national private sector company that engages with planning initiatives that achieve Kuwait's prosperity on all levels.

The Kuwait Aviation Show 2020, organized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), specializes in civil, military, commercial, and private aviation, as well as airport supplies and aviation services. During the event, airport and aircraft manufacturers showcase their latest commercial and military equipment, services, navigation tools, and more. The show also features products and services related to aircrafts and helicopters for businessmen, emergency services, and more.

Business

US, China sign 'momentous' trade deal

Massive tariffs remain in place, but markets are relieved

WASHINGTON: The United States and China signed a truce in their trade war on Wednesday after nearly two years of tensions, bringing relief to markets but largely leaving massive tariffs in place. The "phase one" deal is also a boon for Donald Trump as he faces an impeachment trial and a tough re-election fight this year, with the US president hailing the agreement as "momentous".

However, with tariffs still in place on twothirds of more than \$500 billion in imports from China, US consumers and businesses will be left to foot the bill. The agreement includes pledges from China to beef up purchases of US agricultural goods and other exports for two years, provides some protections for US technology, and new enforcement mechanisms that allow Washington to quickly impose penalties that Beijing cannot respond to.

Today, we take a momentous step, one that has never been taken before with China", which will ensure "fair and reciprocal trade", Trump said at the White House signing ceremony. "Together, we are righting the wrongs of the past". But as Trump ambled through a lengthy commentary on the deal, major networks switched away from the White House to Congress where articles of impeachment were to be presented to the Senate as the first step towards a trial.

The easing of trade frictions has boosted stock markets worldwide in recent weeks, as it takes the threat of new tariffs off the table for now. On Wall Street, the Dow and S&P 500 ended at new record highs after the signing, while Asian markets were mostly up in the afternoon.

Trump signed the deal with China's Vice Premier Liu He, who has led Beijing's negotiations with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

'Incredible breakthrough' The US president thanked Chinese leader Xi Jinping and said he would visit Beijing in "the not-too-distant future." "Negotiations were tough on us," Trump said, but they led "to this really incredible breakthrough." But he said he will only remove the remaining tariffs "if we're able to do phase two." In a letter to Trump read by Liu, the Chinese president said the deal is "good for China, for the US and for the whole world."

"It also shows that our two countries have the ability to act on the basis of equality and mutual respect", Xi said in the letter to his US counterpart, adding that he would "stay in close touch with you personally". At a later news briefing with Chinese media in Washington, Liu said the pact "considerably addressed the concerns of both sides," according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The agreement "bears both economic and political significance," he said. Chinese state-run newspapers hailed the signing of the "hardfought agreement", but warned that it would "not take much to banjax the deal" and bring tensions to a head again. The American Chamber of Commerce in China said the signing of the deal represented "the start of a new chapter" but warned "significant work remains to address longstanding, structural issues in the commercial and economic relationship."

The most difficult issues remain to be dealt with in "phase two" negotiations, including China's massive subsidies for state industry. And elements of the deal the administration has touted as achievements effectively take the relationship between the two powers back to where it was before Trump took office. "A huge amount of this is a reset," said Chad Bown, a trade expert with the Peterson Institute for In-



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump and Chinese Vice Premier Liu He sign phase 1 of a trade deal between the US and China, in the East Room at the White House, on Wednesday in Washington, DC. — AFP

ternational Economics. "A lot of these elements are locking in things that were already there, or already in train before.

Boost for farmers

The absence of any provision on China's industrial subsidies leaves "a big, giant, gaping hole that has not been addressed," Bown told reporters. After announcing the deal on December 13, the United States canceled a damaging round of new tariffs that were due to kick in two days

later and also promised to slash in half the 15 percent tariffs on \$120 billion imposed September 1 on consumer goods like clothing. That reduction will take effect in 30 days, when the deal enters into force, a senior administration official told reporters.

But Bown noted that the average US tariff on China over the course of the trade war has surged from three percent at the beginning of 2018 to more than 19 percent, even after the new deal. — AFP

Toyota investing \$400m in flying car company

TOKYO: Japanese car giant Toyota said yesterday it is investing nearly \$400 million in a company working on commercializing electric flying cars for "fast, quiet and affordable air transportation services". The investment in Joby Aviation comes as the automaker looks to expand into new sectors as the industry rapidly transforms, with president Akio Toyoda pledging to move the firm "from a car manufacturer to a mobility company".

"Air transportation has been a long-term goal for Toyota, and while we continue our work in the automobile business, this agreement sets our sights to the sky," Toyoda said in a statement announcing the investment. "Through this new and exciting endeavor, we hope to deliver freedom of movement and enjoyment to customers everywhere, on land, and now, in the sky.'

Founded in 2009, Joby Aviation is developing a four-passenger electric aircraft that takes off and lands vertically, like a helicopter, though it has multiple rotors. The firm envisions the aircraft as a mode of commercial transport, rather than for sale to individuals, with its pilots ferrying commuters around. Toyota said it would also offer its "expertise in manufacturing, quality and cost controls for the development and production" of Joby's aircraft. One of its executive vice presidents, Shigeki Tomoyama, will join Joby's board, playing an "active role in setting strategic direction", Toyota said. Joby already has a partnership with ride-sharing firm Uber to develop an "urban air taxi service".

Toyota has ventured into the flying vehicle field elsewhere, investing in the

Japanese SkyDrive project to develop what is intended to be the world's smallest flying car.

It has also branched out into other sectors, announcing at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this month its plans for a "woven city" at the base of Mount Fuji that would be powered by hydrogen fuel cells and include roads for autonomous vehicles as well as smart homes. — AFP

UK housing market gets a boost from election: RICS

LONDON: Britain's housing market got a boost from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's big election win in December, a survey showed yesterday, a pick-up that will be noted by the Bank of England as it considers whether to cut interest rates this month. Agreed home sales rose for the first time since May and expectations of future sales both jumped, according to the report by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). A measure of new buyer inquiries hit its highest level since before the Brexit referendum in 2016.

RICS Chief Economist Simon Rubinsohn said it remained to be seen if the recovery continued, given the uncertainty over whether Britain can strike a trade deal with the European Union before a dead-line at the end of 2020. "However, the sales expectations indicators clearly point to the prospect of more upbeat trend in transactions," Rubinsohn said, noting that potential buyers were increasingly following through on initial inquiries.

The RICS survey echoed other early signs of a pick-up in confidence among consumers and companies since Johnson's Conservatives won the election emphatically on Dec. 12, clearing up some of the uncertainty that has weighed on the economy.

Rate decision

However, several officials from the Bank of England, including Governor Mark Carney, have said interest rates might need to be cut if the overall economy remains weak. The next BoE rate decision is due on Jan. 30. "The marked improvement in the December RICS survey provides further evidence that should persuade the BoE that there has been an upswing in sentiment following the election," Allan Monks, an economist with JP Morgan, said.

He said the main focus of investors now was the preliminary PMI surveys of British businesses in January which are due to be published on Jan. 24. Andy Chaytor, a rates strategist at Nomura, said the housing market was one of the best early indicators of economic activity in Britain and he thought the stronger RICS report would lead to a modest increase in next week's PMIs.

Britain's housing market has slowed along with the broader economy since the Brexit referendum.

But in December, the monthly RICS house price balance rose to -2, its highest since June, from -11 in November. A rebound in the market in London and neighboring southeastern England pushed up new instructions for home sales at a national level. The housing market in the capital has been particularly hard hit by worries about Brexit in recent months, as well as higher taxes on expensive properties.

The RICS survey was conducted between Dec 20 and Jan 9. — Reuters

Business

Malaysia talks to India over palm curbs as wider trade dispute looms

India placed curbs on refined palm oil imports last week

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is talking to the Indian government and trade officials in a bid to resolve concerns over New Delhi's new palm oil import restrictions, a minister in Kuala Lumpur said yesterday amid a trade spat between the countries. India's Hindu nationalist government has repeatedly objected to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad speaking out against recent policies which critics say discriminate against Muslims. Malaysia is a Muslim-majority nation.

India, the world's biggest buyer of edible oils, last week placed curbs on imports of refined palm oil and has informally asked traders to stop importing all kinds of palm oil from Malaysia, the world's second biggest producer and exporter of palm oil. Reuters reported on Wednesday, citing sources, that New Delhi could also restrict imports of petroleum, aluminum ingots, liquefied natural gas, computer parts and microprocessors from Malaysia.

However, India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal yesterday said New Delhi had not imposed any curbs on imports from Malaysia and Turkey, and that the government was not contemplating any restrictions on the two countries. "This year, we foresee more challenges in some of our major markets," Teresa Kok, Malaysia's primary industries minister who is in charge of palm oil, told an industry conference, referring

to India's new palm import rules.

Kok said the Indian high commissioner, the ambassador in Malaysia, was one of the people she was in touch with over the issue. It is "important for us to engage with them further through diplomatic channels and stakeholders," she told reporters on the sidelines of the event. "We will continue to engage." In some good news for Malaysian palm sellers, Bangladesh's farm minister told Reuters his country was open to buying more from Malaysia if it offers competitive rates.

The South Asian country buys mainly from Indonesia, which is expected to be the biggest beneficiary of the Malaysia-India dispute. Mahathir, the 94-year-old premier who is vocal on issues concerning the Muslim world, ignored a question from Reuters on the spat with India on the sidelines of a separate event yesterday. On Tuesday, he said Malaysia was concerned about the palm oil curbs but indicated he would continue to speak out against "wrong things" even if it costs his country financially.

Last month, he criticized India's new religion-based citizenship laws, which critics say discriminate against Muslims, and its policies in Kashmir which is also claimed by Pakistan. India was Malaysia's biggest buyer of palm oil in 2019, buying 4.4 million tons. In 2020, purchases could fall below 1 million tons if relations



do not improve, Indian traders say.

To make up for the potential loss, Malaysian officials say they are trying to sell more to countries such as Pakistan, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. But replacing a massive buyer like India will not be easy, and there have been calls for both countries to

talk it out putting aside any "personal or diplomatic ego".

The other concern for Malaysia is that following the signing of an initial trade deal between the United States and China on Wednesday, China could buy more soyoil from the United States and less Malaysian palm oil.—Reuters

Nestle to invest 2bn Swiss francs in recycled plastics

GENEVA: Swiss food giant Nestle said yesterday it would invest 2.0 billion Swiss francs (1.8 billion euros, \$2.1 billion) over five years to cut its use of virgin plastics in favor of food-grade recycled plastics. The company, whose brands include Nespresso coffee, Vittel water and Smarties chocolates, also plans to invest in new types of sustainable packaging to meet its target of making all its packaging recyclable or reusable by 2025.

Nestle also said in a statement it would reduce its use of virgin plastics by one third over the next five years and would set up a venture fund with 250 million Swiss francs to invest in start-up companies working in the recycling sector. To create a market for recycled plastics, it said it would source up to 2 million metric tons of food-grade recycled plastics and allocated more than 1.5 billion Swiss francs to pay a premium for the material between now and 2025.



"No plastic should end up in landfill or as litter," Nestle chief executive Mark Schneider said in the statement. Major corporations, often criticized by campaigners for putting profit before the environment, are trying to respond to growing pressure from consumers for more responsible practices. Food and cosmetics giant Unilever announced last September that it will cut its use of new plastic in packaging by half by 2025, acknowledging that the move was partly aimed at young, more environmentally conscious customers.

Fast food giant McDonald's pledged in October to speed up moves to minimize the use of plastic in its restaurants in Europe. "Making recycled plastics safe for food is an enormous challenge for our industry. That is why in addition to minimizing plastics use and collecting waste, we want to close the loop and make more plastics infinitely recyclable," said Nestle's Schneider. —AFP

Irish farmers fire election warning shot with Dublin tractor protest

DUBLIN: Irish farmers paralyzed parts of central Dublin for the second time in as many months by parking more than 100 tractors in the streets on Wednesday in a protest against the government on the first day of its re-election campaign. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar launched his party's campaign for the Feb. 8 vote - which he called on Tuesday - near the border with Northern Ireland to focus on his key role in Britain's divorce deal with the European Union.

But in Dublin, farmers arrived on tractors from all over Ireland to protest over low beef prices and government climate-change initiatives they say unfairly target their livelihoods.

Varadkar acknowledged on Tuesday that more had to be done for people to feel the benefit of the booming economy in their own finances, and his re-election could hinge on the attitudes of those whom opposition parties say feel left behind. "(Varadkar's Fine Gael party) will suffer in rural Ireland," said protester Ollie Gargan, 43, who runs

a farm with 30 suckler cattle in the northern county of Cavan. He voted for Fine Gael in the 2016 election but ruled out doing so again. "They are just throwing crumbs from the top table. There's no future for young farmers," Gargan said.

Some farmers who left their tractors to protest at the gates of government buildings could be heard shouting at Varadkar as he greeted EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen outside his office ahead of a meeting between the pair. Farmers staged a similar protest in cordoned-off areas of Dublin in November when, rather than leave at the allotted time, many slept in their vehicles overnight and refused to leave until Agriculture Minister Michael Creed met them.

Creed said on Wednesday the government could not intervene on beef prices but had secured an extra 120 million euros (\$133.88 million) of income support for farmers this year in what he acknowledged was a difficult year for the industry. At the wheel in tractors covered in placards with slogans such as "Stop Farmer Exploitation" and "Help Save Rural Ireland", angry farmers said that was not enough.

"There's been no effort. Zilch," said John Denash, a 50-year-old beef farmer from the western county of Roscommon. The woes farmers face, including potential losses from increased barriers to trade with post-Brexit Britain, may become a battleground in rural districts just as high rents and housing shortage is set to dominate the campaign in urban areas. —Reuters

Business

EU firms see lack of transparency in China's Belt and Road projects

Survey finds fewer companies bid for BRI projects

BEIJING: A lack of information and transparency are top barriers for European companies seeking involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative, according to a survey published yesterday by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China. Only 20 out of 132 firms polled said they have bid for projects related to the BRI, a massive global network of ports, railways, roads and industrial parks spanning Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. The BRI-Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy initiative-has also faced criticism for swaddling poor nations with crippling debt and for being too opaque.

A lack of information on deals and "non-transparent" procurement systems were the biggest barriers identified by European firms in the survey. Of the companies that bid to participate in BRI projects, only 10 percent got wind of the project through publicly available information. "The vast majority were informed either by a partner company or by the Chinese government, meaning that they were essentially hand-picked to participate," the EU Chamber said in the report.

Chamber President Joerg Wuttke said the survey showed that for businesses, gains from the BRI have been "quite insignificant", with European firms tending to fill only niche roles. More than half of the companies that won bids said it was because they had goods or services no Chinese firm could provide, and the most represented industries overall were financial

services, machinery, and logistics or transportation.

Asked about the survey at a regular press briefing yesterday Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said that under the BRI framework, Chinese and foreign enterprises participate in cooperation projects in "an open and transparent manner, in accordance with market rules and fair principles".

Whether or not firms win the bidding process depends on their competitiveness, he added.

Wuttke said the BRI appears to have a "spoke and hub model" with China at its center. The report noted that Chinese companies often provide everything for a project, from the materials to construction services and financing. Such an approach may enable projects to be completed swiftly but it is "profoundly disconcerting" to the European business community as it removes meaningful competition, it said. The lack of transparency and fair procurement mechanism also contributed to low levels of participation from development banks like the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which have strict criteria for investment, said the report.

While about a quarter of respondents said the BRI-which was launched in 2013 — is improving in transparency, quality and fairness, this trend is less evident when it comes to access to projects.

The EU Chamber urged China to take on an



open and transparent procurement system for BRI-related projects as well as perform feasibility and environmental impact studies for them, in line with international standards. It also

recommended that the EU prioritize its "con-

nectivity strategy"-which aims to improve transport, digital and energy links between Europe and Asia while promoting environmental and labor standards-to complement and offer a credible alternative to the BRI.—AFP

Hyundai and Kia bet on London startup for electric cars

LONDON: South Korea's Hyundai and its Kia affiliate announced plans yesterday for a major investment in London-based startup Arrival to produce next-generation electric vehicles that cost less than standard-engine models. The 100-million-euro (\$110 million) bet on the five-year-old technology firm comes as some manufacturers abandon Britain because of uncertainties about how it will trade with EU nations once it leaves the bloc this month.

Arrival is focused on designing and producing so-called Generation 2 electric vehicles, which are environmentally friendly cars made from scratch rather than being retrofitted, standardengine production models. "Generation 2 vehicles are assembled using small footprint micro-factories, located in areas of demand and profitable at thousands of units," the three companies said in a joint statement.

Hyundai and Kia have a shared ownership structure but target slightly different markets and demographics. "The eco-friendly vehicle market in Europe is expected to grow rapidly due to reinforcement of environmental regulations," Hyundai's research and development department head Albert Biermann said. "This strategic partnership will empower our companies to scale Generation 2 electric vehicles globally." Arrival said its models "are priced the same, or less than, current fossil fuel vehicles, making the decision to switch to electric inevitable". — AFP

European auto market grew by 1.2% in 2019

PARIS: The European auto market grew by 1.2 percent last year, with a push in December raising the total number of sales to 15.3 million vehicles, sector association ACEA said yesterday. Regulatory changes were behind a jump of 21.7 percent in December compared with the same month a year earlier, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association said.

Throughout the year Volkswagen cemented its place at the top of EU auto sales, with its figures up 3.1 percent. The group includes the Audi, Porsche, Seat and Skoda marques.

In second place was French automaker PSA, which owns

Goldman Sachs Q4 profits hit as it readies for hefty 1MDB fine

NEW YORK: Goldman Sachs reported a drop in fourth-quarter profits on Wednesday following a mixed performance in its operating businesses as it set aside \$1.1 billion in anticipation of settlements in the 1MDB scandal. Chief Executive David Solomon said the "preponderance" of the \$1.1 billion was related to 1MDB, a scandal-plagued Malaysian investment fund for which the US bank helped raise \$6.5 billion. The Justice Department has said more than \$4.5 billion was stolen from 1MDB

Peugeot, Citroen, DS, Opel and Vauxhall, though it reported a 1.1 percent drop in sales. Its French rival the Renault group that includes the Alpine, Dacia and Lada brands, the third largest by European sales, increased by 1.1 percent for the year as a whole, ACEA data showed. The European market had started the year in decline, "but the last quarter, and the month of December in particular, pushed the annual performance into positive territory", the ACEA, said in a statement. Of the main European markets Germany saw the highest sales increase, up a strong five percent, with France rising 1.9 percent and Italy up 0.3 percent.

On the other hands sales in Spain were down 4.8 percent and in Britain they slid 2.4 percent.

The European market has been "artificially boosted" by the tightening of standards on carbon dioxide emissions, said Flavien Neuvy, director of the Cetelem Observatory, a research unit of BNP Paribas. — AFP

by high-level officials at the fund and their associates between 2009 and 2015.

The scandal has dramatically remade politics in Malaysia and led to US indictments of two ex-Goldman bankers, one of whom pleaded guilty. Settlement talks with US and Malaysian authorities are "progressing and remain active," Solomon told analysts on a conference call. "We are working hard to bring closure to this matter as quickly as possible," he added.

"Over the past several years, we have taken the time to be self-critical and reflective to ensure that our culture of integrity, collaboration and escalation only improves from this experience," he said. "These efforts will continue." The legal charge played a role in Goldman's 25.8 percent drop in fourth-quarter profits to \$1.7 billion, while revenues rose 25.4 percent to \$9.0 billon. In addition to higher legal costs, Goldman spent more on compensation, benefits and technology. — AFP

Business

Friday, January 17, 2020

Mideast stoked tensions but no shock on oil market: IEA

Agency sees ample stocks and continuous production

PARIS: The brief spike in Middle East tensions as the US and Iran faced off has served as a reminder of the havoc disruptions in supply from the key oil producing region could wreak on the global economy, the IEA said yesterday. But it said ample stocks and production elsewhere mean the world is relatively well placed to react to a crisis. Washington and Tehran are currently in a standoff after tit-for-tat military actions over the past two weeks that had sparked fears of a largescale confrontation that could choke off the Strait of Hormuz through which 20 percent of global oil supplies flow.

We cannot know how the geopolitical situation will play out over time, but for now the risk of a major threat to oil supplies appears to have receded," the International Energy Agency said in its latest monthly report on oil markets. It noted that oil prices have receded after jumping \$4 per barrel, much as they did in September when a series of attacks on Saudi oil facilities briefly knocked out part of the production of the key exporter.

"Today's market where non-OPEC pro-

duction is rising strongly and OECD stocks are 9 million barrels above the fiveyear average, provides a solid base from which to react to any escalation in geopolitical tension," said the Paris-based organization, which advises industrial nations that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on energy policy.

"As a back-up resource, the value of strategic stocks has once again been confirmed." The IEA was created in the wake of the 1973 oil shock provoked by an embargo imposed by the OPEC cartel and IEA members now hold strategic reserves worth three months of net imports. The oil market has been driven in recent years by a surge of non-OPEC production that has outstripped demand, with OPEC and its allies moving to restrain production to support prices.

The IEA's forecasts see faster growth in demand for oil this year thanks to expectations that global growth will pick up as trade tensions diminish. However, the 2.1 million barrels per day (mbd) growth in non-OPEC supplies will far outpace the increased de-



mand of 1.2 mbd, putting further pressure on OPEC and its allies to further cut production.

During 2019, falls in OPEC production nearly completely offset a rise in production

from countries outside the cartel. OPEC and allied countries that include Russia agreed in December to curb crude oil production by an additional 0.9 mbd from January. —AFP

US economy continues 'modest' growth: Fed

WASHINGTON: The US economy showed lessthan-stellar growth in final weeks of 2019, but produced solid holiday sales and enters 2020 with a "modestly favorable" outlook, the Federal Reserve said Wednesday. On the day the US and China signed a long awaited partial trade truce after months of conflict, the Fed said tariffs continued to weigh on the economy in some regions.

The Fed's "beige book" survey of conditions nationwide painted a mixed picture, with circumstances improving in the Richmond and Dallas regions but lackluster in the Philadelphia, St. Louis and Kansas City regions. "In many districts, tariffs and trade uncertainty continued to weigh on some businesses," the report said. However, "Expectations for the near-term outlook remained modestly favorable across the nation." President Donald Trump last month relieved some of the pressure on American businesses by canceling a planned round of tariffs on Chinese goods, and slashing some others as part of a partial trade deal with Beijing, ending nearly two years of escalating conflict.

The two sides signed the deal on Wednesday. But many of the China tariffs remain in placecosts borne by US businesses and consumers, which are weighing on investment and growthand Trump also has slapped tariffs on European exports including wine, and threatened to do



more. In the Philadelphia region, the looming wine tariffs "prompted an area merchant to stock up with over 35,000 cases" to beat the sanctions and minimize price hikes, according to the report. Overall economic growth in the area "slowed to a slight pace," it said. Across the United States, "holiday sales were said to be sold" in the crucial annual shopping period, while tourism was "mixed" and manufacturing-a sector hit badly by Trump's trade wars-was "essentially flat" in most areas. Labor remained scarce, with employers struggling to fill open positions, a trend that now dates back more than a year.

But in the manufacturing, transportation and energy sectors, there were job cuts and reduced hiring. The Kansas City region was mixed, with strong retail sales and solid performance in the professional and high-tech services industriesbut manufacturing and transport "continued to decline." Fed policymakers cut interest rates three times in 2019 but said toward the end of the year they did not expect to do so again unless circumstances changed substantially. The beige book report was prepared in advance of the Fed's next policy meeting January 28-29.Markets overwhelmingly expect policymakers to leave interest rates untouched until November at the earliest.—AFP

US uncorks a bottle of wine tariffs on **American firms**

WASHINGTON: Would you pay \$28 for a \$14 glass of French wine? Most people would balk and instead substitute a more reasonably priced option, from Australia or Virginia or California, which means the importer of that French wine, and the warehouse workers who stored it and the truck driver who delivered it all will find their jobs in jeopardy. It's a bad time for the wine industry in the United States. French, Spanish and German wines, with a few exceptions, have been hit by 25 percent US tariffs in a longstanding fight between the United States and the European Union over illegal government subsidies to aircraft manufacturer Airbus. But President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly shown his preference for tough talk and steep tariffs, is threatening to raise those tariffs to 100 percent and remove the exemptions.

One wine importer already has had to lay off staff-including his own son. "I just finished 35 years in business. Over that time I've probably fired eight or 10 people. They all had it coming and most of them were expecting it," said Dan Kravitz, founder of Hand Picked Selections, which specializes in wines from the French Mediterranean and Spain. "I never laid off anybody until October 18," when the tariffs on wine and other European goods took effect. Kravitz said he cut four of 13 full-time employees and two part-timers "and that included my son." Raising the tariff to 100 percent would put him and many others in the industry out of business, he said in an interview. Ironically, he started his wine importing business so that he could spend more time with his young son, shifting gears after years working in restaurants. But in the changing business environment, his son's design skills became

Uncertainty means delayed investment

Unlike Trump's multiple, unilateral trade conflicts-over steel, aluminum, autos and with Chinathe Airbus dispute predates his administration, and the tariffs on \$7.5 billion in products from the European Union were authorized by the World Trade Organization following 15 years of litigation. The tariffs are a bid to hurt European companies to pressure their governments to abide by global trade rules and withdraw the subsidies-which the United States argues allow Airbus to compete unfairly against Boeing. But American businesses argue they are collateral damage in the dispute and many may not survive. "They might be putting a sanction toward the EU but it's going to directly impact the small businesses in America and also the customers," said Shelley Lindgren, wine director and co-owner of A16, an Italian restaurant with locations in San Francisco and Oakland.

'So we're all going to lose big and maybe a lot of businesses will close for something not related to food and wine." The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States said "jobs have been eliminated and hiring halted" due to the tariffs, "and up to 78,600 US jobs could ultimately be lost if these tariffs remain in effect or are increased." -AFP

Sports

Mickelson has Ryder Cup, not senior circuit, in his sights

NEW YORK: Phil Mickelson will be eligible for the PGA Tour's senior circuit this year but the five-times major champion said on Wednesday he has not given it much thought and is focused instead on making the US Ryder Cup team.

Mickelson, who turns 50 in June, feels that a decision he made years ago to have a greater work ethic and commitment to physical health has left him in no rush to tee it up on the PGA Tour Champions with players he idolised as a child.

"It's nice to have the option to move over to another tour, but it's also nice to have the challenge of competing out here," Mickelson told a news conference in La Quinta, California, where he is tournament host for this week's The American Express.

"And I don't often voice too many goals, but one of them is to make the Ryder Cup, it should be a pretty obvious goal so I need to play enough tournaments out here and play well to be able to achieve that particular goal."

In 20 PGA Tour events last season, Mickelson made the cut 12 times and had two top-10 finishes, including a three-shot victory at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am in February.

The left-hander will be in action over the next four weeks with starts at La Quinta followed by the Farmers Insurance Open in San Diego, the Saudi International and then back to Pebble Beach to defend his title. "There's a chance that if I do what I expect then I may end up competing for years out here. And there's a chance that maybe I am misguided in my thinking and that I should move over," said Mickelson, who added that he feels better now than 15 years ago.

"But a lot will be decided or seen in the first six months, because I feel like I'm ready to play."

Apart from aiming for his first major title since the 2013 British Open, Mickelson is eager to earn a spot on Steve Stricker's US squad for the Sept. 25-27 Ryder Cup against Europe at Whistling Straits in

Wisconsin. Mickelson was one of four of Jim Furyk's captain's picks for the 2018 edition of the biennial event and he had an 0-2 record as Europe regained the Ryder Cup.

His overall Ryder Cup record is far from spectacular, having won only 18 of his 47 matches in 12 appearances, but he said he had let Stricker know how badly he wants to be on this year's team.

He does not, however, want to get on by virtue of being a captain's pick. "If I play to the level that I believe I'm capable of I'll make the team. But if not, you've got to give those spots to some younger guys that haven't had the chance to play and compete the way I have," said Mickelson. "So I have six, eight months to get it done and I've got plenty of time, every bit of fair opportunity to go out and prove myself and play some great golf.

"So there's not much he's going to be able to do as a captain because I need to ... earn my way on the team." —Reuters







Amir's 9th Int'l shooting grand prix to conclude today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Competitions of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber 9th International Shooting Grand Prix will be concluded today as the final two gold medals will be given out for the sporting event, by shooting at 100 targets, as competition will start at 9 am.

The competition will include the open category of men and women, and the seniors over 50 years.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's shooters Mansour Al-Rashidi, who qualified for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics won the skeet bronze medal Wednesday, as Serbia maintained its position at the top of the medal table with two gold, one silver and one bronze, followed by Czech Republic with two gold, Italy with one gold, three silver and a bronze, Kazakhstan won one gold, two silver and three bronze, Kuwait one gold, one silver and two bronze, UAE and Greece one gold, Bulgaria and Pakistan one silver, Armenia and Lithuania one bronze.

Mansour Al-Rashidi ended in third place following very stiff competition with Kazakhstan's Alexander Mukhamediyev and Italy's Giancarlo Tozza. Meanwhile, in the women's category Czech Barbora Sumova won the gold medal followed by Kazakh Assem Orynbay in second and her compatriot Anastassiya Molchanova won third place.

President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, President of Higher Organizing Committee Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi said he is happy with the results made in the tournament which was held with the participation of a large number of world champions. He said Kuwait won a bronze medal in the skeet event by Mansour Al-Rashidi who competed with Italian, Czech and Kazakh shooters. Al-Otaibi congratulated all winners, volunteers committees and media for their contribution to the success of the Grand Prix.

Shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi said HH the Amir Grand Prix is one tournament many shooters are keen to participate in, adding that such tournament helps in preparing for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic for those who already qualified. He said competition was very strong, and dedicated his win to HH the Amir.

Kazakh shooter Mukhamediyev on his part agreed that the competition was very tough as elite group of shooters competed and remained very strong until the very end. He said the weather contributed to making it tough, and he gained more experience by his participation. He said his country's shooting federation is keen on participating in HH the Amir of Kuwait



Grand Prix, which has a good reputation.

Czech shooter Barbora Sumova said she expected to win a medal before being able to win the gold medal, adding that she needed high concentration and continued training to be able to win. She said she thanked the officials of the Grand Prix, which added to the sport of shooting in the Middle East and Europe due to the broad participation from various countries.

Sports
Friday, January 17, 2020

Ireland stun world champions Windies by 4 runs in T20 opener

ST GEORGE'S, GRENADA: Ireland rode a career-best 95 from opener Paul Stirling before keeping their nerve in a nail-biting final over to pull off a four-run win over world champions West Indies in the first of a three-match Twenty20 series on Wednesday.

The burly Stirling steered Ireland to 208-7 in their 20 overs. However, the home side appeared comfortably on course for victory — bringing up their hundred inside 10 overs with just two wickets down — until the game was decided in the last over.

Needing 15 to win, all-rounder Josh Little (3-29) got rid of the dangerous Dwayne Bravo, one of two wickets to fall in the last over. With five needed off the last ball and seven wickets down, Hayden Walsh could only wave his bat into thin air in a desperate attempt to win the game.

It was only Ireland's second victory in T20 cricket over the West Indies who went into the game having swept the ODI series 3-0. "Everyone is ecstatic, we came so close in that second ODI (lost by one wicket) and it maybe affected us in that third ODI, so to show the bottle and come out against one of the top teams in T20 cricket and get a win was great for the vibe of the team," said Ireland skipper

Andrew Balbirnie.

For the home side, opener Evin Lewis top scored with 53 off 28 balls with six fours and three sixes. It was Lewis's sixth T20 half-century and followed knocks of 95 and 102 in the one-dayers. West Indian captain Kieron Pollard hit a breezy 31 from 15 balls, threatening to take the game away from Ireland.

But the Irish fielders continued to hold their catches to take the game into the last over. Earlier, Stirling carted six fours and eight sixes in his 47-ball innings for his seventh T20 half-century. He put on 154 for the first wicket with fellow opener Kevin O'Brien (48).

"It was a really good pitch and I think we put a par score on which showed in the end, we felt we were in the game the whole way through," said Stirling. "It was touch and go, but we're enjoying the tight games — we came out the right side this time, so it's a nice feeling."

Ireland made 100 off just 6.3 overs and 150 in the 12th over before the West Indies bowlers applied the brakes after the openers fell within two runs of each other.

Bravo, playing an international match for the first time since September 2016, was taken for 18 runs by Stirling in his first over. But the vet-



GRENADA: Ireland's Paul Stirling smashed eight sixes and six fours in his 95 off 47 balls against the West Indies

eran star recovered to finish with 2-28 off his four overs, clean bowling O'Brien.

Leg-spinner Walsh took 1-25, his sole victim being Stirling caught at deep-midwicket going for the big shot which would have brought him a century. The second and third games in the series take place on Saturday and Sunday in St Kitts.—AFP

India's cricket 'superfan' granny dead

NEW DELHI: India's cricket bosses led nationwide tributes yesterday following the death of the country's wheelchair-bound "superfan" Charulata Patel at the age of 87. The grandmother shot to attention after being spotted in the crowd watching India play Bangladesh at last year's World Cup in England, enthusiastically blowing a vuvuzela and with the Indian tricolour painted on her cheeks.

After the match — which India won — captain Virat Kohli and

deputy captain Rohit Sharma sought out Patel and asked for her blessings for the rest of their campaign. She later featured in a Pepsi advert cheering on the Indian team for the tournament.

Kohli said that she was "one of the most passionate and dedicated fans I've ever seen". The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) paid tribute on Twitter after Patel's family announced her death.

"#TeamIndia's Superfan Charulata Patel-ji will always remain in our hearts and her passion for the game will keep motivating us. May her soul rest in peace," said the BCCI. The family said on Patel's official Instagram account, cricket.daadi (grandmother), that she died on Monday.

They thanked Kohli for making her a social media sensation last year, saying "she loved the attention." Meeting Kohli and Sharma had been "the best day of her life," they added. "She told us this on multiple occasions." —AFP



Finch wary of India fightback in 2nd ODI

NEW DELHI: Australia are braced for an Indian backlash when they meet today in their second one-day international, captain Aaron Finch said.

The hosts suffered a crushing 10-wicket defeat Tuesday in the opening game of the three-match showdown after Finch and opening partner David Warner hit unbeaten centuries in Mumbai.

Finch, who smashed 110, believes the loss will sting India into action in Rajkot today.

"They will fight back, no doubt," Finch told the Cricket Australia website. "They are a great side, got some world-class players."

Left-handed Warner led the rout of the Indian bowlers with a destructive 128 off 112 deliveries in Australia's chase of 256. The openers put on a record 258-run stand — the highest for any wicket in a 50-over game against India — as Australia reached their target with almost 13 overs to spare. Finch said Warner is playing unbelievably well. "I think it's so hard to bowl to him once he gets in," he said.

"His footwork is pretty good, his mental state is unbelievable when he is out in the middle. He is just so clear with his thoughts and his game. He is in top shape."

Australian bowlers also played their part, with pace pair Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins sharing five wickets. Finch lauded his lead bowlers, but hinted paceman Josh Hazlewood could still be involved in the series which ends in Bangalore on Sunday.

"With back-to-back games... and a reasonably heavy Test load, I'm sure Josh will come in for one of them at some point," he said. —AFP

Sports

Ex-captain Dhoni out of India's list of contracted cricketers

NEW DELHI: MS Dhoni was absent from the list of centrally contracted players published by the Indian cricket board yesterday, raising fresh speculation about the 38-year-old warhorse's future.

Dhoni has not appeared for club or country since the World Cup in July and the wicket-keeper-batsman has been expected to announce his retirement for some time.

The former captain of the national side, who serves as an honorary lieutenant colonel in the army reserves, spent part of last year with his unit in strife-torn Kashmir — missing an ODI tour of the West Indies.

He has not featured in any series since and was not named as part of the squad to tour New Zealand later this month.

He quit Test cricket in 2014 but continued to be India's batting mainstay in limited-overs cricket despite passing on the captaincy to Virat Kohli in 2017.

However Dhoni may be eyeing a last hurrah at the Twenty20 World Cup in October and November in Australia.

He is expected to lead the Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL) this April-May.

The Indian selectors have been grooming young stumper Rishabh Pant, 22, to fill Dhoni's gloves. Previously Dhoni was in the A-grade category of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) central list, earning a guaranteed \$715,000.

Pant is among 11 players listed in the A-grade contract with batsman KL Rahul taking Dhoni's place. Kohli, senior batsman Rohit Sharma and paceman Jasprit Bumrah are guaranteed at least \$1 million each in the A-plus category for the period October 2019 to September 2020. — AFP



Injury-hit NZ call up Bennett for India T20

WELLINGTON: New Zealand have called in Hamish Bennett to shore up their attack for the Twenty20 series against India this month, while Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson remain on the injured list.

The 32-year-old Bennett was a regular in the New Zealand one-day international side in 2011 but has played only four ODIs since, the last against Bangladesh in 2017 when several regulars were busy with Indian Premier League commitments.

Although he has not played Twenty20 at international level, Bennett has been a consistent achiever in the domestic league and selector Gavin Larsen said his call-up was a reward for his form and perseverance.

"Over the past few seasons he's consistently been one of the top domestic white-ball bowlers and we've been impressed how he's been able to evolve his game," Larsen said. "We all know he brings good pace and bounce but it's the clever variations he's added that make him such a well-rounded T20 bowler." Bennett is joined in the pace bowling ranks by Tim Southee, Blair Tickner and Scott Kuggeleijn, with Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi the spinners. Boult and Ferguson are still recovering from injuries sustained on the recent Test tour of Australia and were not considered.

Other pace bowlers not considered because of injury included Matt Henry, Doug Bracewell and Adam Milne.

New Zealand squad: Kane Williamson (capt), Hamish Bennett, Tom Bruce, Colin de Grandhomme, Martin Guptill, Scott Kuggeleijn, Daryl Mitchell, Colin Munro, Ross Taylor, Blair Tickner, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee. — AFP

Japan hoping surprise U-19 WCup appearance is just the start

TOKYO: Cricket is barely on the radar in Japan, where baseball, soccer and sumo wrestling dominate the sporting landscape, but all that could be about to change after its under-19 (U-19) team qualified for the World Cup in South Africa

It is early days yet, of course, with the Japanese Cricket Association (JCA) founded in 1984 and made an ICC member only in 1995. The U-19 side was founded in 2017 and took part in 2019's East-Asia Pacific qualifying tournament to get some practice.

After a 170-run win over Samoa in their opener, however, they went undefeated to book their place in the U-19 World Cup, which starts on Friday. The team includes five players of Indian origin and several with mixed heritage, reflecting Japan's slowly increasing cultural diversity.

"Cricket is an international sport and with the changing Japanese domestic demographic, this is what the future is going to be," said JCA chief executive Naoki Alex Miyaji, who has a Japanese father and Scottish mother.

Miyaji pointed to the success of Japan's rugby team at the 2019 World Cup, where a squad featuring 16 players born outside the country reached the quarter-finals for the first time.

"We need to change and see that traditional Japanese thinking is not going to help Japan in the future. Japan needs to open up a bit," Miyaji said.

"We need to learn (from) ... the re-

ally good reception from the Japanese people after the World Cup. Those players ... are Japanese, they speak the language and they represent the values that people can relate to."

In a bid to increase the number of people playing cricket from the current 3,000, the JCA have targeted two "Cities of Cricket" - Sano, which is 80 km (49.71 miles) north of Tokyo, and Akishima, which is to the west of the capital.

"Rather than throw a massive blanket over Tokyo and capture everyone we can, we have gone for a more targeted approach," said the JCA's head of operations, Alan Curr.

"We got cricket into the schools and set up the junior Cricket Blast programme. It is six-a-side, fun cricket where everyone gets a bat, everyone gets a bowl. It is all about being inclusive and having a laugh."

The programme has produced 11 of the 14 players in the under-19s squad including Kazumasa Takahashi, an allrounder who debuted in Japan's senior team the day after his 15th birthday.

Japanese cricket is keen to differentiate itself from the harsh, disciplined approach to training at junior level in baseball and other more popular sports.

"We want to be seen as a Japanese sport, of course, as we are a Japanese organisation ultimately, but there are parts of Japanese sport we aren't particularly fond of," Englishman Curr added. "Kids should be kids."

Curr recently took the squad on a whirlwind 10-day, five-match tour of Australia to prepare for the World Cup and vice-captain Neel Date said he was living the dream.

"Playing international cricket in some form was always a huge dream for me, and the under-19 World Cup is making that dream a reality," the 18-year-old said. Date, who has Indian heritage but has lived in Japan since he was an infant, said his love for cricket had begun to rub off on his Japanese school friends.

"For them, my name has almost become synonymous with cricket," said Date. "They are immensely proud of my pursuits and I know they will be following my cricket in South Africa very eagerly.

"They may be even more excited for the World Cup than I am." Regardless of how they perform in South Africa where they have been drawn in a pool with Sri Lanka, New Zealand and defending champion India - the players hope this is just the beginning for cricket in Japan.

"It will be a matter of utmost joy to see not just expats but also Japanese kids playing cricket in the park like we did when we were 10," said Date. "If I get to see this sight 20 years from now, and know that I contributed a tiny fraction to make the situation of cricket in Japan that way, it would be boundlessly satisfying to experience." —Reuters

Sports

Friday, January 17, 2020

Orlando Magic halt Lakers' nine-game winning streak

LOS ANGELES: Markelle Fultz amassed 21 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, and the visiting Orlando Magic ended the Los Angeles Lakers' nine-game winning streak with a 119-118 victory on Wednesday night. The triple-double was the second of Fultz's career. The other came on April 11, 2018, for the Philadelphia 76ers against the Milwaukee Bucks. Aaron Gordon also scored 21 points for the Magic. Wes Iwundu scored a career-high 19 points, Nikola Vucevic also had 19, and Terrence Ross had 15 off the bench for Orlando, which built a lead as big as 21 before withstanding several late Lakers rallies. Quinn Cook led the Lakers with 22 points while LeBron James finished with 19 points and 19 of the team's 34 assists. Los Angeles forward Anthony Davis missed his fourth consecutive game with a bruised tailbone, and the Lakers also played without reserve point guard Rajon Rondo (fractured finger).

DETROIT PISTONS 116 -BOSTON CELTICS 103

Career nights from Sekou Doumbouya and Svi Mykhailiuk and a vintage performance by Derrick Rose led short-handed Detroit past host Boston. Doumbouya and Mykhailiuk had career bests with 24 and 21 points, respectively, and Rose scored 22 on 11-of-13 shooting. Markieff Morris added 23 points off the bench, and Andre Drummond (13 points, 13 rebounds) chipped in a double-double as the Pistons won for just the fourth time in their past 16 games. Gordon Hayward had 25 points, and Jaylen Brown added 24 points and 12 rebounds as the Celtics lost for the fourth time in their past six. Boston played without forward Jayson Tatum, who was held out due to a knee injury.

TORONTO RAPTORS 130 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 121

Norman Powell had 23 points off the bench to help Toronto beat Oklahoma City on the road. Toronto shot a season-high 61.2 percent from the floor, with Powell going 9 of 11. Toronto has battled injuries that recently left the team without three regular starters. While Fred VanVleet remains sidelined, the Raptors got back Pascal Siakam back Sunday and then Marc Gasol returned to the lineup Wednesday. Siakam scored 21 points on 9-of-15 shooting, while Gasol added 15. Gasol was playing for the first time since Dec. 18. Dennis Schroder scored 25 points off the bench to lead the Thunder. Oklahoma City got 57 points from its reserves.

PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 117 - HOUSTON ROCKETS 107

Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum combined for 49 points as Portland controlled the tempo throughout its victory over host Houston. Lillard posted 25 points, seven rebounds and seven assists while McCollum added 24 points and six assists to lead a Portland attack that featured all five scorers tallying double figures. Anthony, playing in Houston for the first time since the Rockets released him early last season, posted a double-double of 18 points and 12 rebounds. Russell Westbrook produced a triple-double of 31 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists while Eric Gordon scored 20 points off the Houston bench. Ben McLemore added 17 points and Clint Capela had 14 points and 18 rebounds, but with Harden taking just 12 shots, Houston lacked the offensive thrust to keep pace with

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 117 -BROOKLYN NETS 106

Tobias Harris posted 34 points with 10 rebounds and hit three clutch shots in the final 2:20 as Philadelphia continued its home dominance by making all the plays down the stretch in beating Brooklyn. Harris scored 11 of his points in the last 5:07 of the fourth quarter, when the Sixers outscored Brooklyn 31-16. He scored nine of his points in Philadelphia's game-ending, 13-2 run over the final 3 1/2 minutes in Philadelphia's 19th



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball against the Orlando Magic at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

home win in 21 games this season. Ben Simmons also posted 20 points and 11 rebounds for Philadelphia, which shot 51.1 percent from the floor. Kyrie Irving was held to 14 points on 6-of-21 shooting in his third game back from right shoulder impingement.

DENVER NUGGETS 100 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 86

Michael Porter Jr. had 19 points, Mason Plumlee scored 15, and host Denver beat Charlotte. Jerami Grant scored 14, Will Barton had 13 and Nikola Jokic and PJ Dozier produced 12 each for the Nuggets. Denver played the second half without guard Jamal Murray, who sustained a left ankle injury late in the second quarter and did not return. Terry Rozier scored a game-high

20 points and handed out nine assists for the Hornets. Devonte' Graham, P.J. Washington and Miles Bridges had 14 points each, and Cody Zeller finished with 11.

MIAMI HEAT 106 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 100

Kendrick Nunn scored 33 points to lead host Miami over San Antonio. The 24-year-old rookie hit 13 of 18 shots from the field, including 5 of 7 from 3-point range, for the Heat, who snapped their first two-game losing streak of the season and improved to a league-best 18-1 at home. DeMar DeRozan scored 30 points to lead the Spurs. DeRozan, who shot 12 of 14 from the field, has scored 20 or more points in 12 consecutive games.—Reuters

Peterhansel sneaks 11th stage win in Dakar rally

HARADH: Stephane Peterhansel snatched a dramatic 11th stage of the Dakar Rally yesterday when he pipped Nasser Al-Attiyah to the line by just 10 seconds. Frenchman Peterhansel won his fourth stage of this year's race in his Mini ahead of Toyota's Al-Attiyah in Haradh, and finished more than eight minutes ahead of overall leader and teammate Carlos Sainz.

"We fought hard, we pushed all day long and we gained some time, but not enough. Now, if Carlos can bring it home, it'll be great for the team," said Peterhansel. Sainz, 57, remains 10 minutes 23 seconds ahead of Peterhansel, who is third in the overall standings going into Friday's final 374-kilometre stage between Haradh and Qiddiya, and the Spaniard is still on course for his third Dakar victory.

"Just one day to go. I'll keep an eye on the gaps and stay focused for tomorrow," said Sainz.

However 'Mr. Dakar' Peterhansel, who has won the rally 13 times (seven in a car, six on a bike), is just six seconds behind Qatari defending champion Al-Attiyah, who sits second.

On the bikes Pablo Quintanilla won the 11th stage by just nine seconds ahead of Red Bull's Matthias Walkner, significantly closing the gap between him and overall leader Ricky Brabec, who finished the stage 11 minutes 48 seconds back in 10th.

Chilian Quintanilla is however still nearly 14 minutes behind Brabec going into the final stage. "I'm really happy with this stage. It is always a nice feeling to win a stage. It was really difficult and I gave it my 100 percent from the beginning," said Quintanilla.

"I took back a lot of time from Ricky, but there is still a bit difference between us. We still have a few kilometres to push tomorrow." — AFP



HARADH: Mini's driver French Stephane Peterhansel and his co-driver Portuguese Paulo Fiuza compete during the Stage 11 of the Dakar 2020 between Shubaytah and Haradh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Wimbledon champion Halep knocked out in Adelaide quarter-finals

ADELAIDE: Two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep will head into the Australian Open with room for improvement after being upset 6-4, 6-2 by Aryna Sabalenka yestersday at the ATP-WTA Adelaide International.

The reigning Wimbledon champion and former world number one dropped serve five times and was flattened in the second set by her opponent from Belarus. The 71-minute rout leaves Halep standing 1-1 for the season with the first Grand Slam of the year starting on Monday in Melbourne.

Sabalenka will battle Dayana Yastremska on Friday for a place in the final after the Ukrainian 19-year-old beat a second top 20 opponent this week when she put out Croat Donna Vekic 6-4, 6-3.

Sabalenka, ranked 12th to Halep's fourth, won her first match after two losses to the Romanian, coached by Australian Darren Cahill. "It feels great, we had a tough match and she played well," Sabalenka said. "I tried to stay focused on each point. I don't care about the Grand Slam, I'm just playing each match."

"I didn't care about the past, I stayed in the moment, that helped me to win." In the first set, Halep twice lost break advantages, with Sabalenka coming through with a third break of serve in the final game on a double-fault from the seed

In the second, the Belarussian ran away with it — Halep drew applause and raised her arms in mock triumph as she finally won a game while trailing 5-0, but the youngster fired a winning return to seal match point.

Yastremska, ranked 24th, was thrilled to get past Vekic. "It's nice to be in the semi-finals just in the beginning of the year," she said. "I'm not playing my best game, but it's still nice." "I'm just getting my form. I have a big goal for Australia, but I'm going to try to stay really realistic and play match by match. That's all I can think about."

Last year's 2019 Australian Open semi-finalist Danielle Collins crushed fourth seed Belinda Bencic, sending the Swiss out in barely an hour with four breaks of serve. The 27th-ranked American will play either Australian top seed Ashleigh Barty or Marketa Vondrousova next.

In men's play, South African Lloyd Harris beat Spanish fourth seed Pablo Carreno Busta 6-3, 6-3 to book a semi-final berth. He will play a fellow qualifier after Tommy Paul advanced over Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-3, 6-4.

Russian third seed Andrey Rublev won his sixth match of the season, with last weekend's Doha champion defeating Britain's Dan Evans 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, — AFP



ADELAIDE: Simona Halep of Romania hits a return against Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus during their women's singles quarter-final match at the Adelaide International tennis tournament in Adelaide vesterday. — AFP

Shapovalov falls to French qualifier Humbert in Auckland

AUCKLAND: World number 13 Denis Shapovalov crashed out of the ATP Auckland Classic yesterday, beaten in straight sets by French qualifier Ugo Humbert.

There was only one break in each set of the evenly contested clash with Humbert winning 7-5, 6-4, clinching the victory with the Canadian's sixth double fault.

"I'm really, really, happy, it's one of the biggest wins of my career," the 57th-ranked Humbert said as he advanced to a semi-final showdown big-serving American John Isner.

"I tried to play each ball, I tried to stay focused and my plans were working."

Isner survived on his thunderous serve with an impressive 25 aces to overcome Kyle Edmund in the opening quarter-final.

While Edmund had the better of the fourth seed for much of the match, Isner served his way out of trouble when it mattered and the Briton was unable to convert any of his nine break points.

Both sets went to a tiebreak before the American won 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5) and expressed relief at making the final four.

"I know I was a bit fortunate to win today, that's how tennis goes, but I'm happy I'm in the semi-finals," said the two-time Auckland champion who holds the world record for the most aces in a match with 113 against Frenchman Nicolas Mahut at Wimbledon two years

ago. "That match point, I played it very aggressively and very well. Winning a match like this can give me a lot of confidence going forward for the rest of this tournament, the Australian Open and for the rest of the year."

Fifth-seed Benoit Paire battled through his third three-setter in as many matches to beat Australian John Millman.

The Frenchman made a nervous start, dropping his first serve and losing the opening set 6-3.

But once he added a touch of finesse to his power game, drawing Millman forward with delicate drop shots, Paire won the next two sets 6-1, 6-4.

Hubert Hurkacz, the 20-year-old sixth seed from Poland, outlasted the 38-year-old Feliciano Lopez in a titanic three-set battle to determine Paire's semi-final opponent.

After taking the first set 6-4, Hurkacz held three match points at 6/3 in the second set tie break but Lopez, who had knocked out top seed Fabio Fognini in three sets the previous day, refused to quit.

He won three consecutive points to draw level and the pair then went point for point until Lopez triumphed at 13/11.

Hurkacz broke immediately at the start of the deciding set and held the advantage until the end to complete a 6-4, 6-7 (11/13), 6-4 victory. — AFP

Comfortable Australian Open starts for Nadal, Williams

MELBOURNE: World number one Rafael Nadal will take on Bolivian Hugo Dellien in the Australian Open first round next week while Serena Williams faces Anastasia Potapova in her quest for a 24th Grand Slam title.

The Spaniard is attempting to match Roger Federer's record 20 Grand Slam singles titles on his least favourite surface, having won in Melbourne just once, back in 2009. Australian Nick Kyrgios could be waiting for him in the fourth round, the draw revealed yesterday.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic will start his bid to lift a record eighth Australian Open title against Jan-Lennard Struff. The Serb had a fine 2019, winning five titles including at Melbourne Park and Wimbledon on the way to ending the year as number two, behind only Nadal.

Fresh from helping his country win the ATP Cup, he will start his drive to extend his incredible Melbourne run — he holds a 68-8 record — against a German who crashed at the first hurdle last year.

Djokovic could meet Greek young gun Stefanos Tsitsipas in the last eight. The ageless Federer, 38, is up against American Steve Johnson in the third quarter of the men's draw as he targets a seventh Australian Open title, winning his last in 2018.

Williams, who is seeking to match Australian Margaret Court's record 24 major singles titles, gets underway against 90th ranked Russian Potapova with a potential quarter-final against defending champion Naomi Osaka.

Seeded eight, she heads into the tournament on the back of ending a three-year title drought by winning the Auckland Classic. She is gunning for an eighth Australian crown and her first Slam title since Melbourne in 2017.

Her sister Venus has a blockbuster first round clash against exciting young American Coco Gauff, with the winner potentially facing Osaka in the third round. Third seed Osaka starts her title defence against Marie Bouzkova.

World number one Ashleigh Barty opens against Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko, with the French Open champion on a collision course with last year's finalist Petra Kvitova in the last eight. Fourth seed Simona Halep has a tough opening task against Jennifer Brady, who beat Barty and Maria Sharapova at the Brisbane International. Second seed Karolina Pliskova takes on Kristina Mladenovic.—AFP

Sports
Friday, January 17, 2020

Juventus score 'goal of rare beauty' in Italian Cup cruise

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo was too ill to play, while Zlatan Ibrahimovic spent the evening resting on the bench, but even without their biggest stars, Juventus and AC Milan cruised into the last eight of the Italian Cup on Wednesday.

Juventus beat visiting Udinese 4-0 in the late game, after Milan had dispatched SPAL, 3-0. In the first game of the evening, 10-man Fiorentina beat Atalanta 2-1. Ronaldo was sidelined after suffering an attack of sinusitis in the afternoon, but he is not the only ace in the Juventus pack. After 16 minutes, Paulo Dybala carved through Udinese with a series of quick one-twos, finishing with a couple of exchanges with centre forward Gonzalo Higuain. When his Argentine compatriot played a pass one little behind him, Dybala spun and floated the ball onto Higuain's chest and he strode forward and scored.

"That was a goal of rare beauty, to see three or four exchanges like that at high speed. It was worth the price of the ticket," said Juve coach Maurizio Sarri. "I love to see goals like that with fast passing, but they can only work with players of great technical quality."

Ten minutes after the opener, Udinese goal-keeper Nicolas tripped Federico Bernardeschi and Dybala converted the penalty. Dybala scored a in the 58th minute, clipping the ball over Nicolas from the right edge of the box. Two

minutes later Douglas Costa converted Juve's second penalty after Bram Nuytinck handled.

In Milan, Krzysztof Piatek, who is reportedly on the verge of a move to Tottenham Hotspur, outpaced the sluggish SPAL offside trap to give the home team the lead after 20 minutes. Samuel Castillejo curled a precise left-foot shot inside the far post just before half time.

Fullback Theo Hernandez added a third in the 66th minute, surging upfield and smashing home a left-foot shot from just outside the penalty area. In Tuscany, Spaniard Pol Lirola collected Erik Pulgar's long pass before charging towards goal and slotting home his first Fiorentina goal six minutes from time, winning the tie for the hosts despite German Pezzella's sending off 14 minutes earlier. Patrick Cutrone also scored his first goal for the club when he put Fiorentina ahead in the 11th minute of his first start since arriving on loan from Wolverhampton Wanderers last week.

The away side scored a deserved leveller when former Fiorentina man Ilicic turned in a superb Ruslan Malinovskiy cross. But Lirola won the tie to set up a tough match with Serie A title chasers Inter Milan. The winner of that clash face either Lazio or Napoli in the semifinals. On Tuesday, Inter thumped Cagliari 4-1 with Romelu Lukaku scoring twice. Holders Lazio, who are on a club-record run of 10 straight wins in Serie A, made short work of



Mato Jajalo during the Italian Cup (Coppa Italia) round of 16 football match Juventus vs Udinese at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

Cremonese in their 4-0 victory in Rome. Troubled Napoli eased into the quarters with a 2-0 win over Perugia thanks to two Lorenzo Insigne penalties.

In the last eight, AC Milan will face Torino who beat Genoa on penalties last week. Juventus will play the winner of the last tie of the round, Roma at Parma later. — AFP

PSG crush Monaco

PARIS: Paris St Germain secured a convincing 4-1 victory at Monaco in a rescheduled game to open an eight-point lead at the top of the Ligue 1 standings on Wednesday.

Three days after the sides drew 3-3 at the Parc des Princes, Kylian Mbappe scored twice, Neymar netted a penalty and second-half substitute Pablo Sarabia was also on target for PSG, while Tiemoue Bakayoko briefly reduced the arrears for Monaco.

PSG moved to 49 points from 20 games and have clear water between themselves and second-placed Olympique de Marseille on 41. Stade Rennais are five points further adrift in third after the Brittany side beat Nimes 1-0 away courtesy of a second-half Adrien Hunou goal on Wednesday.

Monaco are ninth on 29 points. PSG went ahead in the 24th minute when Mbappe beat the offside trap to collect Angel Di Maria's through-ball and beat Benjamin Lecomte with a low angled shot.

Keeper Keylor Navas preserved PSG's advantage with a fine save to deny Gelson Martins' half-volley four minutes later. Neymar made it 2-0 two minutes into the second half, converting a penalty, after Layvin Kurzawa had been brought down by Kamil Glik, for his ninth goal in his last eight appearances for the capital side.

Sarabia put the result beyond doubt in the 72nd by volleying home from fellow substitute Marco Verratti's pass a minute after the pair had come off the bench. Bakayoko pulled one back for the hosts, poking the ball home from Adrien Silva's free kick in the 87th, only for Mbappe to score again one minute into stoppage time at the end of a sharp counter attack after being set up by Neymar.

Mbappe has now scored 13 goals in 14 games, one fewer than Monaco's Wissam Ben Yedder, the league's top scorer. — Reuters

Man Utd bid to halt Liverpool juggernaut again

LONDON: Manchester United are the only club to take points off runaway leaders Liverpool in the Premier League this season and they will try and do so again in Sunday's match at Anfield.

Even the dreamiest of dreamers from the Old Trafford Theatre of Dreams would recognise, however, that it would be against the odds to come away from Merseyside with another positive result after the 1-1 draw in October.

One of the fiercest rivalries in English football has been onesided of late. Liverpool, the European and world club champions and on course to become Premier League invincibles, have won their last 18 matches at Anfield and not lost at home in the top flight since April 2017.

The Reds have 61 points from a possible 63 and are on a club record 38-match unbeaten run — their last defeat coming in January last year against Manchester City. Juergen Klopp's men have also scored in every league match this campaign, equalling the club's best streak from the start of a season while going 585 minutes without conceding — six successive clean sheets.

United have lost six times this season and are fifth in the league, 27 points adrift of their arch-rivals having played one game more. Klopp, however, is preparing for another tricky challenge. "The rest of the season is still quite long and we have a lot of tough games to play, the next one especially tough, and we have to make sure we are ready for that," he said after Liverpool beat Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 on Sunday.

United striker Marcus Rashford, who scored against Liverpool at Old Trafford, started Wednesday's FA Cup third-round replay against Wolverhampton Wanderers on the bench but he was sent on in the second half and lasted only 15 minutes before leaving the field due to injury. That will be a major concern for manager

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer but better news for him is the likely return of defender Eric Bailly, sidelined since July with a knee injury.

OLD BOSS

Liverpool's city rivals Everton will be in London for a clash at West Ham United on Saturday that pits the Toffees against their old boss David Moyes. The Scot spent more than 11 years at Everton, before moving to Manchester United for a short and unhappy tenure, and guided them to fourth in the league in 2004-05.

Fond memories aside, defeat by Everton would be a serious blow to the 16th-placed Hammers' bid to stay well clear of the relegation zone with only a point separating them from Aston Villa in 18th.

Second-placed Manchester City, the champions, host Crystal Palace on Saturday while Leicester City, third, are at Burnley in Sunday's early kickoff. Jose Mourinho's Tottenham Hotspur travel to Watford, revitalised under new manager Nigel Pearson.

Fourth-placed Chelsea are at Newcastle United while Arsenal, in 10th, host high-flying Sheffield United at the Emirates. Arsenal have top scorer Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang suspended, however, after he collected a red card in the last match against Crystal Palace.

Bournemouth will be hoping to leap clear of the drop zone when they travel to Norwich City for a basement battle between the two bottom sides. — Reuters



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