



2 Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 ends, over 60,000 people visit expo



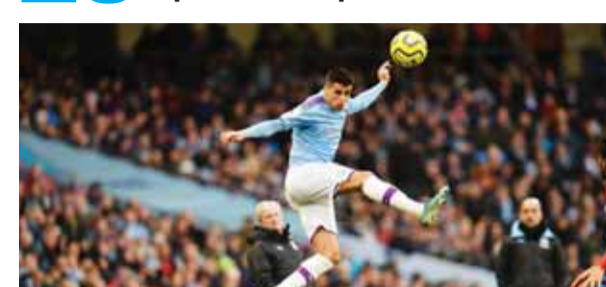
6 Taliban say open to ten-day ceasefire



15 Gulf Bank announces AI-Danah Millionaire: Jassim Issa Abbas!



28 Palace snatch point, Spurs' euro hopes dented



S&P affirms Kuwait's credit rating at 'AA'; outlook stable

Investment returns on KIA assets bolstering country's surpluses

KUWAIT: Standard and Poor's (S&P) on Friday kept Kuwait's credit rating at "AA" with stable outlook. S&P released a report about the credit rating of the State of Kuwait regarding rationale behind the rating. It said Kuwait's economy remained dependent on oil which accounts for 90 percent of exports, expecting muted economic growth given a recent OPEC+ decision to extend the oil cut production agreement until 2020, in addition to ongoing regional geopolitical tensions. OPEC+ is an agreement between OPEC and non-OPEC countries to cut production by over 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) to push prices higher. S&P said Kuwait has substantial savings of over 400 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accumulated within the sovereign wealth fund. It forecast Kuwait's net general government asset position to reach 420 percent of GDP by end of 2019, considered the highest ratio of all rated sovereigns.

Kuwaiti government surpluses were set to continue even with lower oil prices ahead, bolstered by investment returns on the sovereign wealth fund assets, the global rating agency said. It said Kuwait currency, dinar, would remain pegged to a US dollar-dominated currency basket. "The stable outlook reflects our



expectation that Kuwait's public and external balance-sheets will remain strong over the next two years, primarily underpinned by sizable foreign assets accumulated in the country's sovereign wealth fund," it said. "This should partly offset risks related to Kuwait's undiversified oil-dependent economy. We could raise the ratings if wide-ranging political and economic reforms enhanced institutional effectiveness and improved long-term economic diversification, although we think such a scenario is unlikely over the forecast horizon to 2023. We could lower the ratings on Kuwait if we observed a sustained decline in economic wealth,

for example due to a fall in oil prices beyond our current expectations or materially weaker rates of economic growth. We could also lower the ratings if Kuwait's domestic political stability deteriorated, or if regional geopolitical risks were to significantly escalate," it added.

The rating agency said that ratings on Kuwait remain supported by the country's high levels of accumulated fiscal and external buffers. The ratings are constrained by the concentrated nature of the economy and relatively weak institutional settings compared with those of non-regional peers in the same rating category. Kuwait derives about 50 percent of GDP, more than 90 percent of exports, and about 90 percent of fiscal receipts from hydrocarbon products. Given this high reliance on the oil sector, we view Kuwait's economy as undiversified.

The December 2019 OPEC+ decision to further cut oil production constrains short-term growth while the recent escalation of US-Iran tensions poses risks. Kuwait's economy remains almost entirely dependent on oil, which accounts for an estimated 90 percent of exports and government revenue. The oil sector directly comprises close to 50 percent of the country's GDP,

although if other related activities are taken into account, that proportion is even higher, it noted. As of 2018, Kuwait was estimated to be the world's eighth-largest crude oil producer, with the ninth-largest oil reserves. Assuming current production levels, Kuwait's total proven oil reserves are equivalent to about 100 years while the cost of production is among the lowest globally, it added. Given this high concentration, Kuwait's economic performance will remain largely determined by oil industry trends. It estimated that real GDP increased by 0.5 percent in 2019, held back by the OPEC+ decision to cut oil production. OPEC+ initially implemented that agreement in January 2019 for a period of six months, but it expanded the agreement in December 2019 with additional cuts of 500,000 barrels per day (bpd). "Consequently, we expect Kuwaiti oil production will average about 2.65 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2020 compared to the 2.8 mbpd originally planned and included in the 2019-2020 fiscal year government budget. As a result, we project the overall economy will expand by a modest 0.5 percent this year, similar to 2019. We assume Brent oil prices will average \$60 per barrel (/bbl) over 2020 before reducing to

Continued on Page 24

Manila reimposes ban on workers deploying to Kuwait

MANILA: The Philippines said Friday it was reimposing a ban on its citizens going to work in Kuwait after a Filipina was allegedly killed by her employer, echoing a 2018 row between the two countries.

President Rodrigo Duterte approved the ban as his government accused the emirate of covering up the killing of a maid, one of about 240,000 Filipinos working in the Gulf state. They are among the millions of its

citizens the Philippines has sent to work abroad, seeking salaries they cannot get at home.

The money they send back accounts for about 10 percent of the Philippine economy. Duterte's government briefly banned Filipinos deploying for work in Kuwait two years ago amid a diplomatic row that began with the discovery of the remains of a murdered Filipina maid in her employers' freezer.

"The result of the (Philippine) re-autopsy... indicates that overseas Filipino worker Jeanelyn Villavende was sexually abused," Duterte spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement, referring to the woman at the center of the new ban. Labour Secretary Silvestre Bello alleged Thursday that an earlier autopsy in Kuwait had concluded that Villavende died from heart failure arising from physical injuries. — AFP (See Page 3)

Libya oil exports blocked; Berlin summit at stake

BERLIN: Forces loyal to Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar blocked oil exports from the war-ravaged country's main ports yesterday, raising the stakes on the eve of an international summit aimed at bringing peace to the North African nation.

The move to cripple the country's main income

source was a protest against Turkey's decision to send troops to shore up Haftar's rival, the head of Tripoli's UN-recognized government Fayez Al-Sarraj.

It comes ahead of a conference in Berlin today that will see the United Nations try to extract a pledge from world leaders to stop meddling in the Libyan conflict-be it through supplying troops, weapons or financing. "All foreign interference can provide some aspirin effect in the short term, but Libya needs all foreign interference to stop. That's one of the objectives of this conference," Ghassan Salame told AFP in an interview. Leaders of Russia, Turkey and France are due to join the talks, held under the auspices of the UN.

Continued on Page 24



BEIRUT: A Lebanese anti-government demonstrator raises his arms as he walks through a screen of tear gas fired by security forces and light from laser beams used by fellow protesters during clashes in the downtown district of the capital Beirut, near the country's parliament building yesterday. — AFP

Lebanon protesters lob traffic signs, branches at police

BEIRUT: Tensions flared in Lebanon's capital yesterday as angry protesters flung stones, traffic signs and tree branches at security forces, who responded with water canons and tear gas.

The protest movement rocking Lebanon since October 17 has revived this week, over delays in forming a new cabinet to address the country's growing economic crisis. No progress appears to have been made

towards a final lineup, which protesters demand be comprised of independent experts and exclude all traditional political parties. Yesterday afternoon, demonstrators set out from various spots in Beirut in a march towards the city centre under the slogan "We won't pay the price". But before they all converged near the road leading to parliament, dozens of protesters flung rocks and plant pots filled with earth at the police guarding the institution, local television channels showed.

Security forces sprayed young men with two water cannons and lobbed tear gas over a metal fence to disperse remaining protesters on the wet tarmac. "A direct and violent confrontation is taking place with anti-riot police at one of the entrances to parliament," the Internal Security Forces said on Twitter.

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Local

Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 'huge success' with over 60,000 visitors

Next event to be held on January 19, 2022



KUWAIT: Al-Fursan, the United Arab Emirates Air Force display team, paints the sky with MB339 aircrafts during the Kuwait Aviation Show in Kuwait City on January 18, 2020. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: With over 60,000 visitors, the Kuwait Aviation Show concluded yesterday. On that occasion, the show's organizing committee announced that the third version of the Kuwait Aviation Show will be held on January 19, 2022.

Head of the organizing committee Ismail Behbehani said that the success of the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 signifies that Kuwait became a main competitor in the region's aviation market. "The patronage of HH

the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for this important event signifies the interest of His Highness in the development of the civil and military aviation industry in the region in particular and in the world in general," he pointed out.

The four-day event was very successful, according to the organizers. "The organizing committee will evaluate the results of the aviation show to meet the needs of participants after the conclusion of the event. The air shows presented by all of the Kuwaiti Air Force, the Saudi Hawks team, the Emirati cavalry team,

Italian Air Force Flight, the US and British Air Force, in addition to Qatar's Skydive team were great, and I appreciate the efforts of all the participants who made this event successful," stressed Behbehani. "The great number of participants in this year's event reflects the trust that Kuwait gained on the international level. Also, this even serves the national economy in addition to refreshing different sectors including transportation, tourism, telecommunications, and others," he further said.

According to Behbehani, the event received a wide

participation this year from specialized international companies, making the venue an attractive platform for everything related to the aviation industry and airport requirements. "The main goal of the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 is to place Kuwait on the international agenda of the countries organizing exhibitions that attract the world's largest airlines. This year's show was attended by a huge number of international companies from the commercial and military fields, in addition to many VIPs from GCC and Arab countries," concluded Behbehani.

local spotlight

Budget deficit

By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

Last week's statements of Kuwait's Minister of Finance Mariam Al-Aqeel of a fiscal deficit in the next budget of up to KD 9 billion has indeed caused an uproar among Kuwaitis amid public concerns about the possibility of imposing taxes or reducing salaries.

The views that were mentioned by the Minister of Finance on how to address the financial deficit have instigated public fears. Meanwhile, it was also unfortunate that some people received the information, re-published it or commented on it on social media as if it was good news. This is what I personally saw as a misjudgment of the situation, and it came with a negative results as it provoked public anger and came with backfire. Government proponents blame salaries and subsidies for the deficit, and not the mismanagement and expenditure which could help reduce the pressure on the budget of salaries. There was a public consensus to refuse compromising salaries, which was expected.

I think the complaint about the increasing numbers of employees in the public sector stems from the lack of support by the government to Kuwaitis entering in the private sector; whose numbers are very small. Out of an estimated 1.3 million jobs in the private sector, only 70,000 are occupied by Kuwaitis, knowing that the private sector does not pay tax, nor has it faced any government pressure to employ citizens.

It is common in the Arab world for governments to threaten citizens of imposing taxes and reducing subsidies for goods due to a deficit in the state's general budget. It is sad because reducing salaries can lead to social and perhaps political unrest. I think salary cuts should be brought up only when government plans contribute to lowering prices and inflation, and providing real job opportunities in the private sector.

Also, no one wonders why the threat of salary cuts is being brought up to address a government financial deficit that has not been caused by people. It is worthy of the Ministry of Finance to lay out a new plan to develop new methods of increasing revenues and developing public budget management.

The Kuwaiti Cabinet had approved the general budget 2020/2021 and asked government agencies not to take any measures or decisions that would add additional financial burdens on the state's budget. I think that is required now, but I wonder if it is compulsory?

There is no doubt that there is no popular acceptance of increasing fees or reducing salaries. Such proposals are never approved by the public, especially in Arab countries, because originally Arab citizens have a lot of anxiety to deal with, whether in dealing with services or the cost of living. They are already under the pressure of limited income and can't afford more.

Kuwait's initiative to protect Greater Spotted Eagle

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), in collaboration with the Environment Public Authority (EPA), launched an environmental initiative, the first of its kind in the region, aimed to monitor and track the Greater Spotted Eagles, during their annual pass in Kuwait, to protect these birds from extinction. Speaking to the press yesterday, KFAS Scientific Culture Director Dr Salam Al-Ablani said that within this initiative, the Kuwaiti Environment Lens in cooperation with the Health Consultant Dr Michael McGrady, put the first tracking device on one of the eagles and launched it in Kuwait, with the aim of tracking the bird during migration — which was sponsored by the Foundation. The purpose

was also to study this species of eagle and collect information about it, maintaining the ecological balance, especially since there are warnings witnessed by humanity concerning the sixth wave of extinction of living organisms, he added.

Ablani explained that EPA participated by tracking migratory birds in Kuwait, adding that in an extensive study, Kuwait was one of the first countries to seek regionally in tracking down this eagle. This study focuses on identifying the movement of this bird, calculating the daily range, their preferred areas and environments, as well as the breeding grounds, he mentioned. KFAS' strategy for the years 2017-2021 depended on promoting scientific development in various fields through local and international initiatives, along with funding programs, aiming to raise awareness to society to support scientific research, he noted. This type of project falls under the escalating trend of what is known as citizen science, to encourage academic researchers, the public and voluntary groups, to promote scientific principles, he said. The Greater Spotted Eagle was threatened with extinction, according to the International



The Greater Spotted Eagle

Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list, which migrated to Kuwait in the fall and stayed there until spring, when the climate is suitable for it. —KUNA

ACK honors Huawei ICT Skill Competition winners

KUWAIT: The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) held a ceremony to honor the three students and alumni who won high positions in the national Huawei Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Skill Competition. The ceremony, which was prepared jointly by the School of Engineering and the Alumni and Career Placement Center, was attended by ACK members including Prof Isam Zabalawi - President of ACK, Dr Mohamad Abdul Niby - Dean of the School of Engineering, and Dr Zeina Nehme - Manager of the Alumni and Career Placement Center.

The three winners were 1st place winner Mariam Al Qallaf - Alumna, 3rd place winner Afsah Abdullah - Student, and 5th place winner Emad Kebeish - Alumnus. They were honored with medals and certificates provided by Huawei. 1st place winner Mariam was also selected to go to China to compete internationally and represent Kuwait in the Regional Huawei ICT Competition.



The winners expressed their positive feedback regarding the competition and what they learned from it. Afsah Abdullah said that "I really enjoyed the experience. I received immense knowledge about coding from Huawei". Emad commented that "I learned many things when it came to networks, it was a wonderful experience and I loved the field as a hobby". Mariam added that "I learned that I don't have to be only constricted by my major. I am an electrical engineer, while the competition was specific to ICT. I was proud to have been able to achieve 1st place while competing in a field different than my own".

Dr Nehme expressed her pride in the

students for their hard work and efforts, and also expressed gratitude for Huawei for providing such a wonderful opportunity for students to challenge themselves. "It was very beneficial for our students and fresh graduates to be able to take part in this competition. As an Alumni and Career Placement Center we are very proud that the competition was won by ACK Alumni" said Dr Nehme.

Dr Abdul Niby congratulated the students for this great achievement and encouraged them to keep investing in the knowledge, competencies and skills that they acquired during their study at ACK. He also thanked the faculty members at the School of Engineering

whose support and advices for the students were crucial for this big success. He particularly thanked Dr Hassan Salti - Head of Electrical Engineering, Dr Mohamed Omar - Head of Petroleum Engineering, and Mohammad Zaki - Senior Instructor of Electrical Engineering.

Furthermore, in recognition of their efforts, ACK received the Excellent Academy Award from Huawei this year for the second year in a row. Also, a collaborative project with Huawei is currently being explored to further improve the performance of ACK students in the ICT sector and is expected to be made official very soon.

Horeca Kuwait 2020 kicks off tomorrow

KUWAIT: Under auspices of Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel and with the presence of the secretary general of the supreme council of planning and development Dr Khaled Mahdi, the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition opens tomorrow at Kuwait International Fair Grounds in Mishref. The three-day event, organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company, features participation of companies specialized in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment.

In this regard, Leaders Group stressed that Horeca is unique in terms of its type and size in Kuwait, adding that the opening ceremony would be held at hall number 8 starting with a speech

by Dr Khaled Mahdi tackling the progress in Kuwait's development plan and the significance of the hospitality sector. The following speaker will be Leaders Group general manager and head of the organizing committee Nabila Al-Anjeri, before she accompanies all guests on a tour around the exhibition.

The organizing group also noted that the opening ceremony will be attended by heads of diplomatic, commercial and touristic missions designated in Kuwait, public sector officials, heads of boards of directors, experts and heads of chef unions in a number of European, Arab and Asian countries, who would take part in cooking competitions to be held at the exhibition's sidelines.

Moreover, the organizing committee explained that in view of the huge number of participants in this year's cooking competitions, it decided to actually begin the competition tomorrow morning starting with the pasta, food basket, pastry, chocolate carving, wedding cake and ceremonial cake competitions followed by Kuwaiti desserts and dishes, bed making, Asian culinary and sandwich competitions, then distributing the first day awards.

The first day will also include a seminar at 5 pm on "Growing Tendencies in Food and Beverages," which is intended to shed light on how and when to invest in Kuwait. The speakers on this



Mariam Al-Aqeel



Khaled Mahdi

seminar will be Ventri Group founding partner and CEO Khaled Al-Baqer, Seazen Group general manager Mohammed Al-Wehaib, Frank Bordonio from Al-Shaya Group, and Qout Market founding partner Nawaf Al-Husseini. Finally, the organizing committee said that Australian ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert, the French ambassador Marie Masdupuy and Crowne Plaza Hotel would throw special dinners to honor the cooking competitions' jury panel and Horeca organizing committee.

Local

Philippine labor ban includes semi skilled workers returning to Kuwait

Filipinos bound to Kuwait stranded at Manila, Clark airport's immigration

By Ben Garcia and Agencies

KUWAIT: The total ban the Philippines imposed on laborers seeking to work in Kuwait has been expanded to include even vacationing Filipino semi-skilled workers, who can no longer return to their employers. Hundreds of vacationers who were heading back to Kuwait after they had just concluded their Christmas break are being held back in Manila by immigration officers. "I have the papers and certificate of employment in Kuwait. I have been with the company for 12 years. I have a good salary and I do not have any problem with my employer. They are treating us pretty well. Why am I now being included in the ban," asked Roland Gaspar David, who was supposed to be back to work as a line cook at a chain restaurant in Kuwait. David was supposed to fly back via Qatar Airways from Clark International Airport in Pampanga, north of Manila on Friday when he was offloaded from the flight. "I was advised by my boss to go to the main office of the POEA in Manila and ask for exemption. I hope they will listen to me. My boss is also Filipino," he said. David took his annual leave from his work as chef to take advantage of the Christmas break. "If I was able to fly back to Kuwait, I am expected to return to work by January 19. But now, I am here and helpless," he told Kuwait Times via phone. David said he was with three more workers who were all heading to Kuwait from Clark International Airport but were all stopped by immigration officers last Friday. One was a hotel worker; another was a sales lady and the third a salon worker, he said.

Last Friday, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte gave the green light to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to impose a total deployment ban of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to Kuwait.

DOLE imposed total ban for the deployment of newly-hired workers to Kuwait, including domestic helpers and skilled and unskilled laborers. The decision was based on the results of an autopsy conducted on the remains of Filipina maid Jeanelyn Villavende indicating she was not just heavily tortured, but also sexually abused, which is contrary to the brief autopsy report of the Kuwaiti health ministry, a POEA decision said.

Vulnerable workers

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Estrelita Hizon explained why the balik mangagawa (returning OFWs) semi-skilled workers were included. "They are also classified as vulnerable workers, so we decided to include them as well in the ban. If their job category is included in the list, I suggest the only way is to make a request and if the administrator of the POEA will grant them permit, they can leave for work again in Kuwait; but again, no new hires will be permitted to leave from all work categories, including semi-skilled and skilled professionals," Hizon explained. Asked for the grounds for them to be permitted to go back to their sponsors after spending vacation, he said: "If they were able to present to the Administrator (of the POEA) their case pretty well, maybe they will be permitted to leave for work again in Kuwait," he said.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said Filipinos are now officially barred from seeking jobs in the Gulf state, following the killing of Filipino domestic worker Jeanelyn Padernal Villavende.

"The Palace wishes to inform the public that President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has approved the recommendation of Labor and Employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III on the total deployment ban of

Filipino workers in Kuwait. The ban includes skilled workers," Panelo said. Panelo also issued the statement after the DOLE sought the total ban on the deployment of OFWs to Kuwait in the wake of Villavende's murder and the Arab state's supposed attempt to cover up the case.

The announcement came after Duterte recently announced that he was not keen on ordering the repatriation of Filipino workers from Kuwait. Results of the National Bureau of Investigation's examination of Villavende's remains showed signs of sexual abuse on the victim. There were also "old healed wounds" which indicate that Villavende had been battered weeks prior to her killing. Panelo said it seemed that the Kuwaiti government is trying to conceal the truth.

"The result of the re-autopsy conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) indicates that overseas Filipino worker Jeanelyn Villavende was sexually abused and sodomized," he said. "The Kuwaiti government was attempting to hide the said circumstance when it gave us a general autopsy report that the cause of death was trauma and bruises all over her body," he added.

Panelo said the total deployment ban would not be lifted unless Kuwait honors the 2018 labor deal with the Philippines. He was referring to the memorandum of agreement on the protection of OFWs in the Arab country signed by the two countries on May 11, 2018.

"PRRD (President Rodrigo Roa Duterte) is for a total ban until the memorandum of agreement between the two countries is fully implemented and the terms contained therein are incorporated in every labor contract with our OFWs," he said. The labor pact between the Philippines and Kuwait was seen as a solution to end the persistent human rights violations committed by Kuwaiti employers against

their Filipino workers.

Kuwait dismayed

Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Ambassador Samie Al-Hamad had on Thursday voiced Kuwait's dismay at a Philippine government decision to impose a total ban on the deployment of workers to Kuwait. The Philippine move came in spite of the legal action taken by concerned Kuwaiti authorities in the aftermath of the killing of a Filipino in Kuwait, Hamad said in a press statement. "As we express our extreme sorrow at this appalling crime, which is uncommon in the Kuwaiti society and even against our Islamic values, the legal action taken against the culprits - including arresting them and filing a case with the Public Prosecution - reflects Kuwait's keenness on applying the law and ensuring justice to guarantee the safety and protection of all those living on its soil, and that's why it is a favorable destination for people of different nationalities, including Filipinos who are nearly a quarter million workers in number," he said. Hamad wondered why Philippine officials handle this case through mass media, rather than official methods, consultations and meetings, which Kuwait has always called for, and has even helped both sides overcome many obstacles and led to the signing of an agreement on domestic workers in 2018. The Kuwaiti official considered that such meetings are the optimum way to address the problems of workers, revamp agreements and assess measures taken, thus averting any decisions or stances that could undermine bilateral relations. He concluded by offering heartfelt condolences and sincere solace to the family of the victim, restating that meetings between both countries' officials are essential to resolving these problems.

List of semi-skilled workers banned from working in Kuwait

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Aerobic instructress | 23. Public work, worker |
| 2. Attendants (gasoline station, food) | 24. Restaurant workers, amusement park worker |
| 3. Baker | 25. Sales representative |
| 4. Beader, embroider, dressmaker, sewer, cutter, seamstress | 26. Saleslady, supermarket worker |
| 5. Beautician, beauty consultants, make-up artists, medicinal, manicurist, hair-dresser, hairstylist, nail technician | 27. Sandwich maker, sweet maker |
| 6. Cashier | 28. Secretary |
| 7. Chambermaid | 29. Service crew |
| 8. Checker | 30. Skin care specialist |
| 9. Clerk | 31. Storekeeper |
| 10. Cook | 32. Telephone operator |
| 11. Customer service assistant | 33. Waitress |
| 12. Dishwasher | |
| 13. Flower arranger (florist) | Low semi-skilled male workers |
| 14. Guest relations officer (GRO), receptionist | 1. Bartender |
| 15. Helper | 2. Butcher |
| 16. Janitress, cleaner | 3. Carpenter |
| 17. Kitchen helper | 4. Liaison officer |
| 18. Laundry woman | 5. Machine operator |
| 19. Masseuse, reflexologist | 6. Mason |
| 20. Merchandiser | 7. Master cutter |
| 21. Poultry worker | 8. Painter |
| 22. Printer, canvasser | 9. Plumber |
| | 10. Room boy |
| | 11. Tailor |

Jaber Causeway only for cyclists on Fridays

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Jaber Causeway will be closed from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm on Fridays on the side heading to Subbiya as the road will be allocated for bicycles' use only. Public Authority for Roads and Transportation's Official Spokesperson Abdullah Al-Ajmi announced yesterday. This weekly closure will be temporary until

a legislation is passed to allocate special paths for cyclists, Ajmi added.

In other news, Al-Kout municipality emergency team recently filed two citations for not showing prices of displayed items during a recent tour in Fahaheel, which included the fish market. In a similar inspection tour in Farwaniya, Al-Saddiq team filed eight different citations.

KPC recruitment probe panel meets today

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The committee entrusted to investigate suspected violations in Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) appointments and promotions will meet today, said informed sources, noting that KPC CEO Hashem Hashem, executives, their deputies and managers of subsidiary companies have been invited to attend the meeting.

The sources added that the committee would discuss the mechanism of appointment and promotion followed at KPC and its subsidiaries during the period starting from the fiscal year 2015-2016 to the fiscal year 2019-2020. The committee will also discuss the related audit bureau remarks concerning administrative and financial violations, the sources added.

Educational supervisors

Ministry of Education's assistant under-secretary for public education affairs Osama Al-Sultan announced finishing the interviews with applicants to fill in the position of primary and intermediate stage supervisors, adding that the results would be declared soon. Sultan added that similar interviews would be made by the beginning of February

for the secondary stage, and noted that those interviews had been rescheduled to avoid holding them during the midterm break.

New students

Kuwait University's admission and registration dean Dr Ali Faisal Al-Mutairi announced that the total number of students registered for the second semester due to start next Sunday is 33,916 including 1,849 new recruits. Mutairi added that 2,105 had graduated in the first semester. Furthermore, Mutairi urged students to make sure they selected at least 12 units to avoid problems, adding that those choosing only 12 units would not be able to drop any with the first six-week grace

Road maintenance

The Ministry of Public Works explained that the roads and yards' maintenance contract of Subahiya include surveying the rain drainage grid, digging trenches and setting concrete-covered rain drainage lines, and burying the lines. It also noted that 100 percent of these tasks have been completed by replacing 12,640 meters of rain lines, repairing 15,000 meters of other lines, as well as replacing and making 315 manholes.



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Local

Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, top Kuwaiti arts, culture venue

Over 250 cultural events featuring more than 6,000 artists

KUWAIT: As a remarkable piece of architecture with four glistening gigantic buildings, the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) was established with the aim of continuing Kuwait's regional legacy as the custodian state for arts and culture. Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) inaugurated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on October 31, 2016, to become one of the largest cultural projects in Kuwait, witnessing about 1.5 million visitors since opening. JACC theaters and halls also saw more than 250 cultural and artistic events, with the participation of more than 6,000 artists varied between musicians, singers, dancers and lecturers, representing more than 35 countries around the world. During this short period, the center generate revenues for the state that exceed KD 4.5 million.

Head of financial and administrative affairs at the Amiri Diwan, Abdulaziz Saud Ishaq, said Kuwait has always been a forerunner in the field of culture, art and literature, as this civilized project is reflective of Kuwait's identity through modern creative engineering means. JACC an architectural masterpiece, through its design and implementation, as the center's design inspired by the distinctive Islamic architecture, and with its location on the Gulf Road that gave tourism importance to the center, he said. The building's unique design reflected, in the most literal terms, light all over the area, making the center one of the most visually amusing attractions in the country. The credit for the idea of establishing the JACC attributed to the engineering department of the Amiri Diwan, that was drawn from Kuwait's history, present and future, Ishaq said.

Four buildings

The JACC consisted of four building with one housing the main stage, which accommodates some 2,000 attendees. Drama theaters and rehearsals spaces could house some 900 people. The second, third, and fourth buildings consisted of a 1,800-capacity musical facility, a 1,072-capacity cinema and multi-purpose space, and a 354-seats conference hall and parking for 3,200 cars. With its amazing colors and lighting JACC fountains becoming an additional attraction to this touristic site. The exterior of the JACC's headquarters-constructed on an area of 52,000 square meters-was built from titanium and reinforced concrete. Some 10,000 workers helped build the JACC. The JACC won many prizes for creativity in design: in 2017 it won International Property Award of the Arabia and Africa for best project and best interior design. In August 2017, it has also won Merit Award for the best international projects offered by INR US specialized magazine in the field of architectural engineering. JACC has also earned MEED magazine's award as the best cultural landmark in the Arabian Gulf in 2018. The center had announced the open-

ing of a Music School for Children to develop their musical skills, as part of the center officials' efforts to sponsor talent, creativity and arts.

Learning music

The educational curriculum in the school taught by professional teachers from various countries to provide children, aged six to 12, the opportunity to learn music. It offers Western, Arabic music and multi-level programs for training on Western instruments such as violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet and piano, in addition to Middle Eastern takht, oud, ney, and Middle Eastern violin. The music school would embrace children's musical talents, introducing contemporary and effective musical styles. The Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center aims to nurture the musical scene as well as establishing children's orchestra to highlight Kuwait's music scene. The first scholastic year started



KD 4.5 million generated in revenues

on September 15-19, 2019 as the second year will be on January 12-24, 2020. About the center's activities for the third season 2019-2020 that started on September 24, 2019 and to continue until April 19, 2020, as the center announced submitting more than 100 activities during its third season. The third season will be more innovative, diversified and artistic, compared to the previous seasons, as the center started its season with (The Ruins) show, an operatic concert celebrating the legend Umm Kulthum as never seen before. The concert presented three of Umm Kulthum's most famous songs, performed by May Farouq and conducted by maestro Emad Ashour. The first part of the show had a classic feel, very similar to Umm Kulthum's original stage set, and the second part presented the song Al Atfal in an innovative style, with the latest and most creative uses of theatre technologies, to transform the classic song into something modern, sophisticated, and both visually and vocally stunning.

The center attracts in its third season an elite of most important performances and international arts that were presented in the largest international theaters, including (Circus 1903) the best-selling magic show in the world,



KUWAIT: The Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. — Amiri Diwan photos

and Giselle by Teatro alla Scala Ballet Company on January 2020. JACC also hosted PKF-Prague Philharmonia on November 19-20, 2019 most recognized orchestras in the world, that included three classical evenings for music lovers, featuring a selection of classical pieces and Kuwaiti composed pieces on the first two nights, and a selection of film gala scores on the third night, the Kuwaiti 10-year old pianist Rawan BahBahni who won the hearts of the audience for her professional manner of playing piano behind the lead performer, French national Emanuel Vioum. This season also included four plays. Kids play 'Julnar and the Firebird' and 'New Jibla' written by Saud Al-Sanousi, and performed by a group of actors. On January 2020 the center in collaboration with Gulf Theater, will play 'The Price' written by American playwright Arthur Miller, the Kuwaiti playwright Abdulaziz Al-Surayyie adapted Miller's work in 1987. On March 2020, JACC will present a new cultural work for internationally renowned Kuwaiti playwright and director Sulayman Al-Bassam, 'Media Medea', drawing inspiration from ancient Medea Greek tragedy written by Euripides.

JACC will witness and exceptional show on March, 2020 Kuwait Calling, a first-of-its kind international co-production with dance company Rambert, with its inspiration firmly rooted in traditional music and dance, Kuwait Calling will transport audiences on a fast-moving time-travelling journey from the desert origins of Kuwaiti culture to the sea and back to the city, reflecting on the ingenuity that allowed Arabic astronomers and scientists to

harness the knowledge of the heavens to further human understanding and development.

Monday talks

After two successful seasons of JACC weekly Monday talks events, the season will be back with 26 different event and new names including, Sudanese writer Hammour Ziada, and the Egyptian Ahmad Murad, in addition to Kuwaiti actress Jassem Al-Nabhan, Kuwaiti author Khalifah Al-Wugayan. As a part of its activities that had a great turnout, JACC music band performed a variety of musical events during the current season, started with a special night for Kuwaiti melodist Youssef Al-Muhamma, who during his career presented more than 400 songs. The Kuwait Notebook with Khalid Al-Shaikh will be on JACC schedule for January 2020 and the JACC Orchestra presents (Without a Microphone) for classical Arabic music lovers with prominent singer Jahida Wahbe. The season will be concluded with An Evening with Abdulhussain, Abdulhussain Abdulredha is a legendary comedy actor from Kuwait, his influence on Kuwaiti and Arab pop culture, comedy in TV and theatre, and music is unmatched. This biographical work is set to explore themes from his life that made him who he is. We will be telling the personal story of Abdulhussain and what affected him rather than just going through a catalogue of his work. This project aims to unveil what life events helped create this icon and lead to some of the most memorable works the Arab World got to see from him. — KUNA

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A classical Arabic music concert held at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



A pianist performs during a concert held at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



Ballerinas perform during a show held at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



The opera hall at the center.



The center's interior design which was inspired by Islamic architecture.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, civilized beacon in Kuwait

Over 580,000 visitors generating around KD 1.750 million income



KUWAIT: Panoramic evening view of the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. — Amiri Diwan photos



Panoramic bird's eye view of the center.

KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center (ASCC) has been attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors since its establishment two years ago, solidifying the cultural movement in Kuwait and becoming one of the country's scientific and cultural monuments. ASCC, which opened in February 2018 in a ceremony attended and patronized by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, has so far attracted over 580,000 visitors generating around KD 1.750 million income, promoted the civilized development to be a cultural, intellectual and educational beacon. A statement by head of the Amiri Diwan's Financial and Administrative Affairs Abdulaziz Ishaq said that the Center has organized 88 activities, which ranged from exhibitions, lectures and workshops to festivals, camps and plays, touching on interests of different segments of the society. Ishaq — also chairman of the executive committee for the Establishment and Management of Cultural Centers — added that around 500 international organizations visited ASCC, which was also keen on establishing partnerships with embassies and similar international agencies.

ASCC held cultural and scientific workshops about rocks, recycling, plants and energy sources among others,

portive of the cultural and intellectual movements.

Eight buildings

ASCC, occupying 127,000 square meters with a parking lot for 1,231 cars, consists of eight buildings, six museums and one conference hall and documents' facility. The Center, which has 25 water fountains scattered in the vicinity, comprises 22 display halls with over 1,100 pieces. ASCC, built in 20 months, consists many facilities like theaters, green areas, gift shops, restaurants, coffee shops and outdoor sitting areas. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Theater houses local and international events, in addition to specialized conferences and exhibitions. The Theater is designed to trigger inspiration for exhibitors, artists and students. Visitors will roam through the six family-friendly exhibitions, exploring historic, cultural, intellectual, scientific and technological worlds. The Ecosystems exhibition takes visitors back in time to gain a unique insight into the natural world — both past and present — understand the importance of ecosystems and how they influenced the development of biodiversity of in the planet over millions of years. The exhibition enables visitors to explore Southeast Asia's rainforests and see how mangroves help the ecology.

Visitors will be able to dive into an underwater wonderland and witness the wildlife. They will get to know more about Kuwait's extraordinary wildlife: how do creatures live in extreme environments? What is the link between trade and our natural habitat? The visitors can also test their skills in the exhibition's interactive displays and learn about how humans can keep the coastal community alive and help sustain the planet. In the "Our Earth" museum, the visitors are welcomed into the world of the dinosaurs. They see the amazing reptiles and mammals that lived on earth up to 65 million years ago and also be bedazzled at the size of the huge creatures that inhabited Kuwait's prehistoric seas, how did they sound? What did they eat? The exhibition allows visitors to become paleontologists for the day in the Dino Lab and try to unearth their own dinosaur. Visitors will see the world of geology and geography come alive as they delve below the earth's crust to its fiery core. How does Kuwait's industry and climate affect the world and how can we affect changes in the environment, at home and in the community to ensure a cleaner, greener planet? The Transportation and Robots museum display how through centuries transportation has taken people from elementary hot air balloons to jet engines, horse-drawn carriages to cars and small boats to oil tankers. Learn about Kuwait's maritime heritage and its long history of boat building.

Also in the exhibition, visitors could meet the resident Giant Robot and discover the latest ways robotic technology is assisting humans. Visitors are welcomed to the demo' area to learn about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and interact with robots, or learn about basic scientific processes in the Experiment Gallery. Innovators will enjoy the Maker Space where creative ideas and scientific innovation is encouraged. Visitors can get acquainted, at the Human Body and Mind museum, with how human body and mind work, their secrets and will realize how the brain act as super-computers with encapsulating exhibits explain how the brain and body work in tandem. The importance of health becomes clear when visitors learn how human bodies are tested when under attack. Through a 4D show, the interactive character Kashaf enlightens audiences to the marvels of the body's indefatigable defense mechanisms.

Islam's Golden Age

On the other hand, the Arabic and Islamic Science museum focuses on the Golden Age of Islam and the innumerable scientific, cultural and artistic contributions of Muslims and Arabs to modern day science. The Arabic Islamic Science Museum highlighted the scientists' groundbreaking work and accomplishments allowing visitors to

proudly reconnect with the inspirational message of Islam, which actively encouraged scientific discovery. The museum recognizes the work of Arab and Islamic scholars in the fields of exploration, medicine, astronomy and engineering; and sees how scientific discoveries contributed to the architectural wonders of the Islamic world. Lastly, this exhibition offers the spectacular opportunity to converse with ancient polymaths Al-Khwarizmi and Al-Biruni who appear to have been brought to life in a uniquely entertaining exhibit.

Meanwhile, the study of space and the universe has always evoked mystery and inspiration. The Center's Space exhibit gives audiences an unprecedented opportunity to explore the wonders of this unknown universe. Visitors can observe the galaxies and the vast cosmos and get a glimpse of some of the most important discoveries in the history of space exploration. Some of the most important discoveries in particle physics are due to the work undertaken at the Large Hadron Collider, (LHC) — a giant particle collider based near Geneva, which is the most complex experimental facility ever built. Visitors have a rare chance to see for themselves why this gargantuan scientific experiment is so

important. The ASCC is also promoting culture of tolerance, respecting of human rights and peace among youth. It offers scientific programs like Coded, which teach boys and girls principles of coding, as well as a Bricks for Kids program in which participants learn scientific and mathematical skills through Lego Bricks.

ASCC has six rooms for training and workshops, a Fine Arts Center comprising galleries, exhibition spaces, library, and artist studios. The Fine Arts Center offers impressive programs of high quality exhibitions, and collaborative shows for local artists, supporting them through communicating with international artists and professionals. Aimed at renovating the fine arts platform in Kuwait, it also hosts fairs, festivals, workshops, and conferences. Artist in Residence is one of the program offered by the Fine Arts Center. This program offers professional space for artists to develop their research and creative practices, and explore new ideas. The Library connects all museums with the Fine Arts Center, aimed at educating the young generation. ASCC organizes regular gatherings between artists and the public to discuss creative ideas in a casual setting. — KUNA



Nature displayed in Ecology Museum.



The Arabic and Islamic Science museum.

a camp for children during Ramadan, summer camps, space academy, Eid festivals and events in the Planetarium. ASCC participated in two events abroad, the first was in Venice, Italy, in 2019 and the second was last October in Berlin, Germany. The center won the prestigious ABB LEAF award as the Public Building of the year 2018, as well as four international awards. ASCC, named after late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, overlooks at the Arabian Gulf and was built in the same place of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem High School, one of Kuwait's first government schools. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, addressing the inauguration of ASCC that was attended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah, said the Kuwaiti leadership has always been sup-



A show performed at the ASCC theater.

Jordan
Amman

WE DEVELOP
TOGETHER

Request for Expression of Interest (EOIs) for the Development of Prime Real Estate Assets

The Greater Municipality of Amman (GAM), and the Amman Vision Investment and Development (AVID), a wholly owned subsidiary of GAM, would like to invite investors and real estate developers to submit their interest on selected real estate properties (7 lots of land), defined in the Information Memorandum, attached via web link to this publication. The concept is to develop these unutilized real estate properties via the private sector under some form of public private partnership including all options from pure lease agreements to full PPPs. GAM and AVID would like to receive the expressions of interest by February 19th, 2020. The contents and requirements of the expression of interest are included in the submission form included in the Information Memorandum.

1. Background

GAM created in 2018, Amman Vision Investment and Development (AVID) as private corporation to act as its development arm that has launched today. The corporation has as its key objective improving the performance of GAM's assets, in particularly developing unutilized real estate assets that could bring some additional cash flow revenues into the municipality and boost the national economy. AVID is considered the main master developer in Amman. A preliminary selection of seven unutilized real estate assets (plots of land within GAM) has been done with preliminary project ideas according to the city needs. More detailed information on these assets is available in an Information Memorandum developed by AVID. The Information Memorandum could be downloaded from the following web link: www.ammanvision.jo/informationmemorandum.pdf or scanning the QR code at the bottom

2. Scope of Investment Opportunities

These seven real estate properties are today vacant and under the ownership of GAM. The concept is to develop these real estate properties via the construction and operation of individual projects in accordance to the land use options available in such properties (e.g., commercial buildings, tourism and entertainment activities, housing, services, etc.). The Information Memorandum includes the potential land uses for each of the properties under consideration. However, interested parties should feel free to propose new development concepts or additions to the proposed concepts.

3. Contact and Communications

For additional information and or clarifications to this request for expressions of interest, please contact directly the following AVID Officer:

Investor Relations Manager
marketing@ammanvision.jo
+962 6 5102800
+962 79 7299972 (mobile)



We Develop Together...



China, Myanmar 'stand together' despite Rohingya backlash

Gibraltar eyes joining Schengen to ease post-Brexit border fears

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KANDAHAR: (FILES) In this file photo taken on June 17, 2018, Afghan Taliban militants and residents stand on an armoured Humvee vehicle of the Afghan National Army (ANA) as they celebrate a ceasefire on the third day of Eid in Maiwand district of Kandahar province. The Taliban have offered a brief ceasefire to their US counterparts in Doha, two insurgent sources said, a move which could allow the resumption of talks seeking a deal for Washington to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

Pakistan warns on US troops withdrawal

Taliban open to 10-day ceasefire with US

KABUL/PESHAWAR: The Taliban will implement a 10-day ceasefire with US troops, a reduction in violence with Afghan forces and discussions with Afghan government officials if it reaches a deal with US negotiators in talks in Doha, two sources have said.

If an agreement is sealed, it could revive hopes for a long-term solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Taliban and US negotiators met on Wednesday and Thursday to discuss the signing of a peace deal, according to a spokesman for the Taliban office in Qatar. The talks were "useful" and would continue for a few days, the spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, said on Twitter early on Friday.

US President Donald Trump had called off

the stop-start talks to end the 18-year war in September after an US soldier was killed in an attack by the militant group. They resumed but were interrupted again in December after the Taliban launched a suicide attack on a US base outside Kabul killing two civilians.

Two sources close to the matter told Reuters on Wednesday that the Taliban's top leadership had now agreed to implement a 10-day ceasefire with US troops once a deal was signed in Doha, and to "reduce" attacks against the Afghan government.

A senior Taliban commander said: "The US wanted us to announce a ceasefire during the peace talks which we had rejected. Our shura (council) has agreed to a ceasefire the day the

peace accord is signed." Once an agreement is in place, the Taliban and Afghan government could meet face to face in Germany, said the commander. Previously, the Taliban had refused to engage in talks with the Afghan government. The US team in Doha had demanded a ceasefire "which we had declined due to some issues," the Taliban commander said. "Now most of our reservations have been addressed." Another source close to the talks confirmed the commander's version of events.

A signing date has not been fixed, but the Taliban commander said he expected it to be "very soon." Both sources asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. A US State Department spokeswoman declined to

comment and the Pentagon referred queries to the State Department.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who was visiting top US officials in Washington, said Islamabad had been facilitating the dialogue and had played its role in helping get the negotiations getting this far.

Qureshi noted that the Taliban ultimately sought the withdrawal of the roughly 13,000 American troops from Afghanistan in any agreement. Qureshi stressed that Pakistan, which fears greater instability in neighbouring Afghanistan, did not want a precipitous US withdrawal. "The Taliban want withdrawal of foreign forces. What we are saying is, yes, they should be withdrawn, but the withdrawal should be a responsible one,"

Qureshi said. "Let's not forget that there are forces, there are elements in Afghanistan that can take advantage if there is anarchy ... if there is some kind of civil war." An Afghan presidency spokesman said a ceasefire was the only way to achieve sustainable and dignified peace. "Any plan which proposes a ceasefire as a basic step will be acceptable for the government," Sediqi Sediqqi tweeted on Friday.

Violence in Afghanistan rose after the breakdown of talks in September. The Taliban's readiness to reduce violence revives odds of the peace process moving forward before the militant group launches what is usually an annual spring offensive around early April. —Reuters

Rabat kept Belgian-Moroccan for years in 'abusive solitary'

RABAT: Human Rights Watch on Friday accused Morocco of holding a dual Belgian-Moroccan citizen in "inhuman" and "abusive solitary detention" for more than three years following his 2009 life sentence on terrorism charges.

Abdelkader Belliraj was the alleged mastermind of a terrorist network of 35 people dismantled by Moroccan authorities in 2008, and was convicted in a trial criticised for rights violations.

His wife told Human Rights Watch (HRW) that since 2016, Belliraj had been confined to a cell for 23 hours a day and deprived of contact with other inmates, which the watchdog said would contravene United Nations standards on the treatment of prisoners.

The Moroccan prison authority, DGAPR, insisted that Belliraj was allowed to exercise his rights as a prisoner and was able to take walks, had access to a canteen, and received visits and telephone calls from his family.

He was "accommodated in a room that fulfils all the criteria regarding light and ventilation," the authority said in a statement, but did not specify whether he was being kept in solitary detention.

The DGAPR accused HRW of making "false

allegations" and presenting a "false image of human rights in Morocco." The New York-based rights group said it contacted Morocco's Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Human Rights in November but received no substantive response from it or prison authorities.

Belliraj, whose sentence was confirmed on appeal in 2010, was also accused of committing six murders in Belgium in the 1980s and 1990s, which he has denied. His wife Rachida Hatti lives in Belgium and is allowed to speak to him regularly on the phone.

He was arrested in February 2008 with a number of other people, allegedly in possession of a large arsenal of firearms. Despite protestations of innocence, Belliraj was convicted in a mass trial alongside 34 co-accused, among them political leaders of moderate Islamist parties.

Some of their sentences were later reduced on appeal and eight — including six moderate Islamists — were later pardoned by the king. HRW said eight of the convicted men are still serving their sentences.

The 2009 trial was criticised for violating the rights of the accused. According to HRW, Belliraj's conviction was based on confessions that he and his co-defendants said were obtained under torture. "It is bad enough when a man gets a life sentence as the result of a miscarriage of justice, but keeping him in inhuman prison conditions for years is like twisting the knife," said HRW's acting Middle East and North Africa director Eric Goldstein.

"Belliraj and all prisoners in Morocco should be treated humanely, and that includes having daily contact with other human beings." —AFP

Liberia souring on George Weah at two-year mark

MONROVIA: Dominic Kpadeh heaves a hammer over his head to crack a half-tonne rock in a northern suburb of Liberia's capital Monrovia, knowing his hard labour earns him far less than a year ago.

Kpadeh and his colleagues used to go home with \$1,000 (900 euros) a month between them crushing rocks for the construction industry. Now, he says, they're lucky to get \$250 (225 euros).

Stories such as Kpadeh's are common in Liberia, where rampant inflation has left many people struggling and increasingly turning their anger on President George Weah.

"I do this in order to feed the family," says Kpadeh, a 45-year old father of four, bent double from the effort. "People are no longer building like before. Even those who are coming for crushed rock want to buy it very cheap."

A former football icon whose goals for AC Milan and Paris St Germain dazzled fans, Weah came to power in January 2018, promising to invest in education and create jobs.

His election win was a watershed moment for Liberia's poor, many of whom idolised the man who rose from Monrovia's slums to football stardom, and the nation's highest office.

Weah, 53, has since launched popular road-building projects and abolished undergraduate tuition fees.

But two years into his presidency, many complain he is failing in his economic stewardship.

People struggle to get bank notes from ATMs, civil

servants regularly go unpaid and inflation soaring to around 30 percent has eroded purchasing power.

About half of Liberia's 4.8 million people live on less than \$1.90 (1.69 euros) a day, according to the most recent World Bank data, dating from 2016.

"We saw George Weah as one of us because he came from a poor family," said university student Andrew Seiwon. "But for the past two years everything has been promises."

Weah, who seldom gives interviews, admitted there was "still lots of work to be done" in his New Year's speech. "I am confident that 2020 will be a year of economic recovery," he said.

Weah's spokesman Solo Kelgbeh, highlighting central bank reforms, said the former footballer "is doing everything to make sure the economy is resuscitated".

Ebola nightmare

Weah took office in a country already decimated by back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003, which claimed 250,000 lives.

More than 4,800 Liberians also died during the 2014-2016 West African Ebola crisis, and the country is still feeling the aftermath.

The IMF's representative in Liberia, Geoffrey Oestreicher, told AFP that — in a "perverse effect" — key inflows of foreign currency were lost as aid funding declined after Ebola, which drove inflation.

"Poor people are the ones suffering," he said, noting that Weah was nonetheless trying to address Liberia's deep-rooted problems.

The United Nations was Liberia's second-largest employer, Kelgbeh said, underscoring the impact of the departure of aid workers.

"To go in the coffers and get things that were not budgeted, things that the international community left undone, is a huge financial burden," he said. —AFP

International

Gibraltar eyes joining Schengen to ease post-Brexit border fears

Britain is one of six EU nations that are not part of Schengen

GIBRALTAR: Gibraltar is considering becoming part of the Schengen zone as a way of ensuring fluidity of movement on its border with Spain after Britain leaves the European Union, its Chief Minister Fabian Picardo has said.

His remarks, made in an interview with AFP on Friday, came just two weeks before Britain and Gibraltar formerly leave the bloc and enter into an 11-month period of intense negotiations to thrash out the details of their future relationship.

And for Gibraltar, a tiny British enclave at the southernmost tip of Spain, arrangements along its lone border post — which counts more than 28,000 crossings every day — will be central to talks when the so-called transition period begins on February 1.

"We talked about this issue before Brexit... about Gibraltar becoming part of the Schengen zone," Picardo said, referring to a passport-free zone where people can move freely across the internal borders of the 26 member states, four of whom are not part of the EU.

Britain is one of six EU nations that are not part of Schengen, but if Gibraltar were to join, it would be "a positive step", Picardo said. "Does it make sense for the EU that 2.5 square miles (6.2 square kilometres) at the southernmost tip of Iberia should not be accessible to EU citizens? I don't think it does.

A strategic port on at the mouth of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar provides a lifeline for some 14,000 workers who cross in and out every day, the vast majority from the impoverished Spanish city of La Linea which flanks the enclave.

That number also includes around 2,500 British nationals who live in Spain where property is cheaper. "We need to look very carefully at how we calibrate that going forward," he said, stressing the crucial importance of having a "fluid frontier" Gibraltar and the rest of the bloc.

"If you look at other microstates in Europe, they

take the benefit of common travel areas with Schengen, even if they're not entirely part of the Schengen information system," he said in an apparent reference to Lichtenstein, which is one of the four non-EU member states.

"There is the ability to move fluidly between the territories of the EU and these microstates," Picardo said. "All of these things will be considered in the context of the negotiations going forward."

A sensitive pressure point

Picardo also dismissed concerns that Spain would have the upper hand if it wanted to exert political pressure by stepping up checks and choking the border after Brexit, when neither Britain nor Gibraltar could rely on EU intervention.

In 2013, a dispute over an artificial reef in waters claimed by both sides sparked a war of words that triggered months of gridlock at the border after Spain intensified checks, which only ended when Brussels stepped in. "Any EU citizen crossing the border will still have recourse to the Commission or the European court if there are disproportionate delays," Picardo insisted. "Management of that frontier, which is in the hands of Spain, must be in keeping with European rules because this is... access to the European Schengen zone."

Although Spain ceded Gibraltar to Britain in 1713, Madrid has long wanted it back in a thorny dispute that has for decades involved pressure on the frontier. Tensions peaked in 1969 when the regime of dictator Francisco Franco shut down the border which did not fully reopen until 1985.

"If you think where we were in our relationship with Spain 100 years ago, we were in a better place perhaps than we are today," Picardo remarked, saying that Franco had repeatedly used the border as a pressure point and successive Spanish governments had traditionally done the same.



GIBRALTAR: Chief Minister of Gibraltar Fabian Picardo speaks during an interview with AFP in Gibraltar. —AFP

"Putting pressure at the frontier does not tend to persuade the people of Gibraltar that we've ever been wrong about wanting to remain entirely British."

In recent years, notably since Britain's shock vote to leave the EU in 2016, there had been "a shift in the traditional position" of Spain regarding Gibraltar, Picardo said, expressing optimism about the prospect of dealing with the new leftwing coalition government in Madrid.

One of a number of "very positive" developments was a remark by Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez who expressed a desire "to look beyond the eternal issue of sovereignty to understand how we could improve the economics of the region".

Gibraltar plays an important role in the economy of the adjacent area of Spain known as "El Campo de Gibraltar", which has one of the European Union's highest jobless rates. —AFP

Honduras waiting for Israeli reciprocity for embassy move

HONDURAS: Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernandez said on Friday that his government would transfer its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem once Israel opens an embassy in Tegucigalpa.

Right-wing leader Hernandez announced the embassy move in August and a month later opened a commercial office in Jerusalem as an extension to Honduras' Tel Aviv-based embassy.

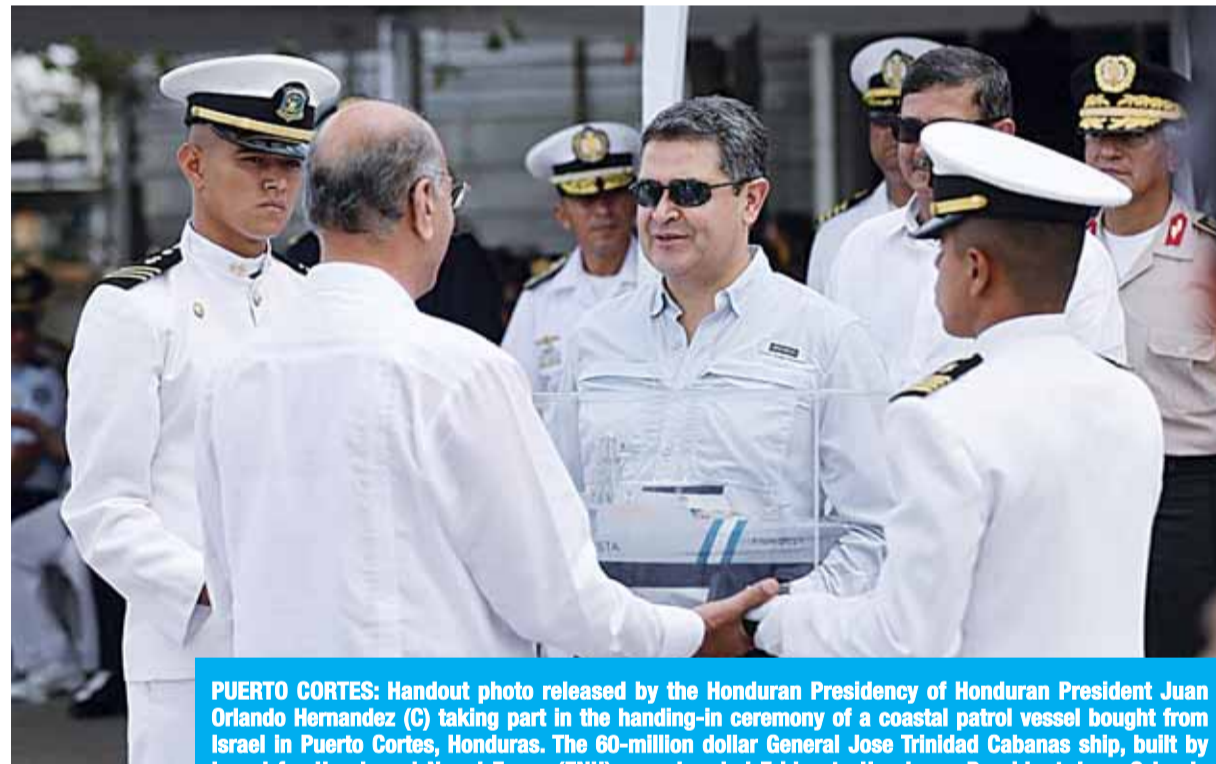
Moving an embassy to Jerusalem is highly contentious. Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital, while Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

"We're just waiting for the State of Israel, reciprocally as is appropriate diplomatically, to open its office in Tegucigalpa and we'll be transferring our embassy to Jerusalem," said Hernandez.

Traditionally, most diplomatic missions in Israel have been in Tel Aviv as countries maintained a neutral stance over the status of Jerusalem.

Israel is currently represented in Honduras by its Guatemala embassy.

Guatemala was one of the first countries to follow



PUERTO CORTES: Handout photo released by the Honduran Presidency of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez (C) taking part in the handing-in ceremony of a coastal patrol vessel bought from Israel in Puerto Cortes, Honduras. The 60-million dollar General Jose Trinidad Cabanas ship, built by Israel for Honduras' Naval Force (FNH), was handed Friday to Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez. —AFP

the lead of US President Donald Trump when he moved his country's embassy to Jerusalem, sparking a rift between Washington and the Palestinian authorities.

Hernandez's statement came as Honduras took possession of a warship worth more than \$50 million bought from Israel. —AFP

US woman jailed for killing husband with eye drops

WASHINGTON: A South Carolina woman was sentenced to 25 years in jail after she admitted poisoning her husband by putting eye drops in his drinking water. In a plea deal, Lana Sue Clayton, 53, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in the death of Steven Clayton, 64, at their home in Clover, near

Charlotte, CBS-affiliate WBTV reported.

She was accused of poisoning her husband by lacing his drinking water with eye drops between July 19 and 21, 2018. Her husband was initially thought to have died of natural causes but an autopsy toxicology report showed poisonous levels of tetrahydrozoline, which is found in eye drops.

"The coroner found a level of tetrahydrozoline in his system and that's when we opened the case because that was very unusual for us," York County Sheriff's Office public information officer Trent Faris said, according to WBTV.

Prosecutors said in 2016 she also shot her husband in back of the head with a crossbow, ABC-affiliate WSOC-TV reported. At the time the incident was

put down as an accident. Speaking at her sentencing, she admitted poisoning her husband but claimed he had abused her.

"I did impulsively put the Visine in Stephen's drink and I did it with the intent to make him sick and uncomfortable. I was upset about the abuse and just wanted him to leave me alone," Clayton, wearing an orange prison jumpsuit, told the court, WBTV video showed. "I never thought it would kill him."

Clayton, a former Veterans Affairs Department nurse, said she got the idea of using eye drops, which are tasteless, colorless and odorless, from watching movies but thought they would cause diarrhea. Prosecutors however said she killed her husband for money, throwing his cell phone in a lake so he could not

call for help and burning his will afterwards. "She fooled one of the most brilliant men I've ever known in my life," Steven Clayton's sister Rosemarie Clayton-Leslie told ABC's Good Morning America. "My brother died a horrific death. I think my brother was screaming for his life."

Clayton was arrested in August 2018 and charged with murder. "Of the many homicide cases I've handled, this one probably takes the cake as far as being bizarre," South Carolina Circuit Court Judge Paul Burch said. While it is unusual, it is not the first time eye drops have featured in a homicide case. In December 2019 a North Carolina man was charged with murdering his wife using eye drops, WSOC said. —AFP

from polio as a child, chooses his words carefully and delivers them in the slow, southern drawl of his native Alabama.

Where the pair find common cause is on advancing a conservative agenda, notably by packing the courts with judges who share their philosophy.

'Pretty weak stuff'

Appointing scores of conservative judges is "the most long-lasting contribution that Donald Trump and Senate Republicans have made for the country," McConnell told Fox News recently.

It was a court appointment that perhaps more than anything else earned McConnell his reputation as a hard-nosed political operator and a master of the Senate chess game. Following the February 2016 death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, McConnell blocked the appointment of Scalia's successor by then-President Barack Obama on the grounds it was an election year. McConnell brazenly refused to hold Senate hearings or a vote to confirm Obama's choice, earning him the everlasting fury of many Democrats. The Supreme Court vacancy was eventually filled by Trump, who appointed a conser-

vative judge, Neil Gorsuch, to the seat.

McConnell has been equally ruthless when it comes to Democratic legislation making its way from the House to the Senate, where Republicans hold 53 seats to the Democrat's 47. "Think of me as the Grim Reaper," he once said, smiling slyly beneath his round, wire-rimmed glasses. "None of that stuff is going to pass. None of it." McConnell sells "Grim Reaper" T-shirts on his campaign website describing himself as "the guy who is going to make sure that socialism doesn't land on the president's desk." McConnell, the patient and skilled backroom negotiator whose recently published memoir is titled "The Long Game," and the voluble Trump got off to a rocky start. Two years ago, when the Senate failed to repeal Obamacare, Trump aimed a barrage of insulting tweets at McConnell and questioned whether he should remain in the Senate leadership post he obtained in 2014.

The grey-haired veteran politician shrugged off the criticism calling Trump a "new president" who "has not been in this line of work before." "I think he had excessive expectations about how quickly things happen in the democratic process," he said. —AFP

US census to kick off in remote Alaska village

ANCHORAGE: This year's once-a-decade official US national population count will start in a small Alaska Native village perched on the tundra overlooking the Bering Sea. Daytime temperatures will be well below freezing.

The 2020 US census is due to launch on Tuesday in Toksook Bay, a Yup'ik hamlet about 500 miles (800 km) west of Anchorage, the state's largest city. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham himself is scheduled to conduct the first in-home interview, with an elder chosen by the local tribe.

The Census Bureau has a long tradition of kicking off the count in rural Alaska months before it gets under way in the Lower 48 states. There are good reasons for that tradition, Dillingham told a Friday news conference in Anchorage.

"Counting those who are in hard-to-reach villages has been a challenge for the Census Bureau every decade since 1870," Dillingham said, referring to the first count after Alaska became a U.S. territory. Alaska's geography is vast, much of it lacking road connections, and ground transportation depends on seasonally frozen conditions, he said. Getting a head start in remote Alaska also ensures that census takers can properly account for those who migrate with the change of seasons.

"We must make sure we count residents who may leave before the spring thaw, when they go back to either fish or hunt or take maybe warm-weather jobs," Dillingham said.

Toksook Bay, where forecasts call for a daytime high temperature of just 13 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 10 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday, has a population of 683, according to state data, and depends on commercial fishing and traditional harvests of wild foods. For the village, the status as first to be counted is an honor, said tribal leader Robert Pitka, administrator of the Nunakauyak Traditional Council.

"I have no words to explain how special it is," he said. The visiting census workers and the accompanying crowd of journalists chronicling their effort will be greeted by Alaska Native dancers and a feast of traditional foods, Pitka said.

Pitka said he hopes the visitors will learn about Yup'ik culture. "They will see the lifestyle that we have. It's remote. We don't have roads," Pitka said. Festivities aside, the census is serious business for Alaska Natives in Toksook Bay and elsewhere.

Mandated by the US Constitution and now conducted largely by telephone and internet, except in remote areas, the census is used to set legislative districts. It also determines funding for a wide array of social programs ranging from education to transportation and housing assistance.

But census undercounting is a chronic problem for the nation's indigenous residents, many living in remote locales without street addresses. The Census Bureau has estimated its 2010 census missed 4.9 percent of Native Americans living on reservations. Undercount estimates for Alaska Natives, who do not live on reservations, range as high as 8 percent. Pitka said he is one of those who might have been skipped when census takers last visited Alaska. "I don't recall it taking place 10 years ago," he said. "I don't know if I was even counted." To improve its count, the Census Bureau is increasing its efforts to communicate in indigenous languages. —Reuters

Mitch McConnell, the 'Grim Reaper' of the US Senate

WASHINGTON: Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader of the US Senate, takes pride in calling himself the "Grim Reaper," doling out death to the hopes of Democratic lawmakers.

The wily six-term senator from Kentucky now holds the fate of a Republican in his hands — that of President Donald Trump, no less.

Although Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts will preside over Trump's impeachment trial in the Senate, it will be the 77-year-old Majority Leader who actually calls the shots.

Trump, a brash political neophyte, and McConnell, who was first elected to the Senate in 1984, come from vastly different backgrounds and have not always been on the same page. While Trump is a fast-talking New Yorker born of privilege, the low-key McConnell suffered

International

Ahead of tinder box Virginia gun rally, Trump says Constitution under attack

Gun-control activists reported growing number of online death threats

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump took aim at Virginia Democrats and their push to stiffen the state's gun laws, saying that the US Constitution was under attack just as thousands of armed militia members began arriving in Richmond for tomorrow's gun rally.

Trump doubled down with his support of gun enthusiasts in the state, which Hillary Clinton won in 2016 and where Democrats took full control of the state legislature for the first time in a generation in November, as candidates made passing stronger gun control laws a central campaign theme.

"Your 2nd Amendment is under very serious attack in the Great Commonwealth of Virginia," Trump wrote in a post on Twitter Friday night, referring to the amendment in the Bill of Rights that gives Americans the right to keep and bear firearms. "That's what happens when you vote for Democrats, they will take your guns away."

The Virginia Senate late on Thursday passed bills to require background checks on all firearms sales, limit handgun purchases to one a month, and restore local governments' right to ban weapons from public buildings and other venues.

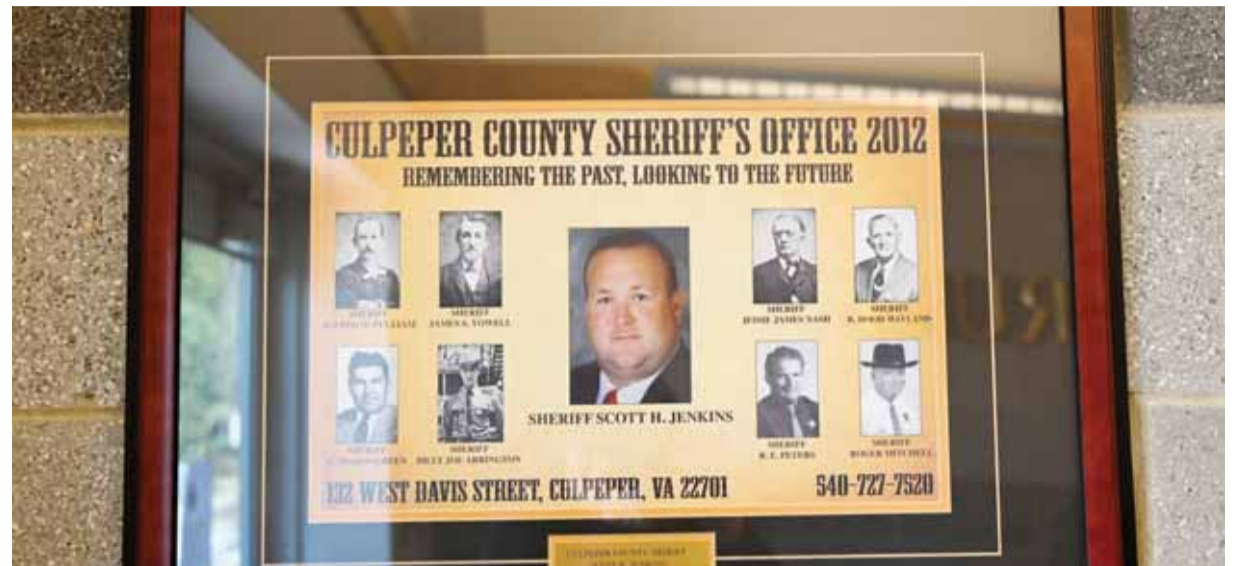
Gun-control activists have reported a growing number of online death threats as the lawmakers press on and ahead of a rally by arms enthusiasts tomorrow in

Richmond, the state capital, which authorities are trying to keep from becoming violent.

Both Virginia legislative houses are expected to pass the new laws including universal background checks, a ban on assault rifles, and "red flag" laws that would allow courts and local law enforcement to remove guns from people deemed a risk to communities, among other measures. Supporters say more restrictive laws would help decrease the number of people killed by guns each year. Gun-rights activists assert that the constitution guarantees their right to possess any firearm.

Militias, neo-Nazis and other groups have vowed to swarm the capital and police are expecting several thousand people at the pro-gun rally tomorrow. On Thursday, the FBI arrested three members of a small neo-Nazi group who authorities said hoped to ignite a race war through violent acts at the rally, reminiscent of a 2017 white supremacist rally in nearby Charlottesville.

That rally proved a critical moment in the rise of the "alt-right," a loose alignment of fringe groups centered on white nationalism and emboldened by Trump's 2016 election. Trump was criticized from the left and right for initially saying there were "fine people on both sides" of the dispute between neo-Nazis and their opponents at the rally. — Reuters



WARRENTON: A frame displays a portrait of Culpeper County Sheriff Scott Jenkins at the Sheriff's Office in Culpeper, Virginia, a Second Amendment sanctuary some 75 miles (120 kilometers) from Washington, DC on January 16, 2020. — AFP

Children cannot sue US government over climate change

WASHINGTON: A US federal appeals court on Friday threw out a lawsuit by children and young adults who claimed they had a constitutional right to be protected from climate change, in a major setback to efforts to spur the US government to address the issue.

In a 2-1 decision, the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals said the plaintiffs, who were between the ages of 8 and 19 when the lawsuit began in 2015, lacked legal standing to sue the United States. Circuit Judge Andrew Hurwitz said the majority reached its conclusion "reluctantly," given "compelling" evidence the government had long promoted fossil fuels despite knowing they could cause catastrophic climate change, and that failing to change policies could hasten an "environmental apocalypse."

Our Children's Trust, an Oregon-based non-profit behind the lawsuit, said in a statement that it would seek an 11-judge panel of the court to review the decision. The ruling had "catastrophic implications," said Julia Olson, the group's executive director. A Department of Justice spokesman said the government was pleased with the outcome.

The 21 children and young adults had accused federal officials and oil industry executives of violating their due process right to a "climate system capable of sustaining human life," by knowing for decades that carbon pollution poisons the environment but doing nothing about it. The government argued that neither US law or history supported the young people's claim of a fundamental right to a "livable climate." It also called the lawsuit an unconstitutional attempt to control the entire country's climate and energy policy through a single court.

Hurwitz said the case left "little basis for denying that climate change is occurring at an increasingly rapid pace," but that addressing it required "complex policy decisions entrusted, for better or worse, to the wisdom and discretion" of the White House and Congress.

"That the other branches may have abdicated their responsibility to remediate the problem does not confer on Article III courts, no matter how well-intentioned, the ability to step into their shoes," he wrote.

The dissenting judge, US District Judge Josephine Staton, said the Constitution did not "condone the Nation's willful destruction" through climate change, likening government inaction to shutting down all defenses to an asteroid barreling toward Earth. —Reuters

Pompeo to probe possible surveillance of Ukraine envoy

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo promised Friday to investigate whether the ousted ambassador to Ukraine was being spied on by President Donald Trump's supporters but said he was unaware if so.

House Democrats, who cited Trump's dismissal of ambassador Marie Yovanovitch as they impeached him, released documents this week that suggested that the envoy was under private surveillance. After days of the State Department not commenting, Pompeo said in two interviews with conservative media that he had not previously heard of any surveillance of Yovanovitch. "We do our best to make sure that no harm will come to anyone," he told radio host Tony Katz. "We will do everything we need to do to evaluate whether there was something that took place there."

"I suspect that much of what's been reported will ultimately prove wrong, but our obligation — my obligation as secretary of state — is to make sure that we evaluate, investigate," he said. Pompeo said he has never met Lev Parnas, a Ukrainian-born American who was working with Trump's personal lawyer, former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani.

The documents released by House Democrats detailed exchanges in which Yovanovitch's location was discussed, indicating that she may be under watch. Ukraine earlier announced a probe amid indications that officials joined the alleged surveillance effort. Trump last year removed Yovanovitch as ambassador and later denounced her in a call with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky that triggered his impeachment. — AFP

After feud with Warren, Sanders airs ad aimed at women

WASHINGTON: Democratic presidential contender Bernie Sanders, stung by a feud with progressive ally Elizabeth Warren over gender and electability, released an ad aimed at women voters in New Hampshire on Friday touting his support for women's rights.

Ahead of a weekend trip to the state that votes second in the Democratic presidential nominating race next month, the ad highlights Sanders' support for equal pay, abortion rights, paid family leave and affordable child care.

"Bernie Sanders is on our side and always has been," the female narrator says in the ad, which the campaign said would air in New Hampshire along with a second video touting Sanders' ambitious goals such as universal healthcare and affordable college.

"Women do not need 80 cents on the

dollar. They need the whole damn dollar," Sanders says in the television spot, which also aired on Monday in Iowa, the state that kicks off the Democratic presidential voting on Feb 3.

Sanders, a US senator from Vermont, has been on the defensive this week after Warren accused him of telling her in a 2018 meeting that a woman could not win the White House in 2020. Sanders has denied saying it.

The feud between the two old friends and leading liberals was fanned when a microphone caught Warren, who represents Massachusetts in the US Senate, telling Sanders after Tuesday's debate in Iowa that he had accused her of lying on national television.

The spat threatens to sidetrack Sanders' recent momentum just as he had begun to rise in opinion polls of the Democratic race to find a challenger to Republican President Donald Trump. New Hampshire will vote in the state-by-state race on Feb 11.

Sanders is battling Warren, former US Vice President Joe Biden and Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, in a tight race for the top in both states. Some polls show Sanders, who has strong support among young and liberal voters, trailing his top rivals among women. A Monmouth University poll in New Hampshire from

earlier this month found him slightly trailing all three leading rivals among likely women voters.

Sanders plans to campaign in New Hampshire during the weekend, with a

quick trip to South Carolina and Iowa tomorrow before returning to Washington next week for the start of Trump's impeachment trial in the US Senate. — Reuters



DES MOINES, IOWA: Sen Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Sen Bernie Sanders (I-VT) speak as Tom Steyer looks on after the Democratic presidential primary debate at Drake University on January 14, 2020 in Des Moines, Iowa. — AFP

Supreme Court takes up US presidential Electoral College dispute

WASHINGTON: As the 2020 race heats up, the Supreme Court agreed on Friday to hear a dispute involving the complex US presidential election system focusing on whether Electoral College electors are free to break their pledges to back the candidate who wins their state's popular vote, an act that could upend an election.

The Supreme Court will take up appeals in two cases - from Washington state and Colorado - involving electors who decided to vote in the Electoral College process for someone other than Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016 even though she won the popular vote in their states.

The justices will determine if such so-called faithless electors have the discretion to cast Electoral College votes as they see fit or whether states can impose restrictions including with penalties. The case is expected to be argued in April and decided by the end of June.

President Donald Trump is seeking re-election on Nov 3, with a field of Democrats seeking their party's nomination to challenge him. His administration did not take a side in either case. "We are glad the Supreme Court has recognized the paramount importance of clearly determining the rules of the road for presidential electors for the upcoming election and all future elections," said Lawrence Lessig, a lawyer for the faithless electors sanctioned in Washington and Colorado. Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold, a Democrat, said she hopes the justices will let states

enforce their laws. "Unelected and unaccountable presidential electors should not be allowed to decide the presidential election without regard to voters' choices and state law," Griswold said. The dispute involves the US presidential election system set out in the US Constitution in which the winner is determined not by amassing a majority of the national popular vote but by securing a majority of the electoral votes that are allotted to the 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

Individuals who serve as Electoral College electors - typically party loyalists - cast these votes. All states, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska, have a winner-takes-all system awarding all electors to the presidential candidate who wins the state's popular vote.

The number of electors in each state is the sum of its two US senators and its number of members in the House of Representatives, based on population size. The District of Columbia, which is not a state, is allotted three electors.

Typically an overlooked formality, the Electoral College took on greater importance after the 2016 election, when 10 electors cast ballots for someone other than their party's candidate. That was an unusually high number of faithless electors and could have changed the outcome in five of the 58 prior US presidential elections, according to legal papers in one of the appeals filed at the Supreme Court.

Trump defeated Democratic rival Hillary Clinton by a margin of 304 to 227 Electoral College votes despite losing the popular vote nationally by about 3 million votes. Faithless electors could change the outcome of presidential elections with thinner Electoral College margins.

Electors pledge to vote for their party's candidate if that person wins the state's popular vote. At issue in the cases are laws requiring that electors follow through on those pledges. While 32 states and the District of Columbia have such laws, a handful enforce them by removing and replacing faithless electors, or in some cases, imposing fines. — Reuters

Pentagon denies trying to underplay injuries from Iran attack

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon said on Friday there had been no effort to play down or delay the release of information on concussive injuries from Iran's Jan 8 attack on a base hosting US forces in Iraq, saying the public learned just hours after the defense secretary.

US President Donald Trump, Defense Secretary Mark Esper and others throughout the US government for a week had said that Iran's attack on bases in Iraq, in retaliation for the killing of an Iranian general, had not killed or injured any US servicemembers.

That is no longer true, the Pentagon now acknowledges. But US military leadership in Washington only became aware on Thursday that 11 US service members were flown out of Iraq due to concussive symptoms, Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said. "This idea that there was an effort to de-emphasize injuries for some sort of amorphous political agenda doesn't hold water," Hoffman said.

But the disclosure of the concussive symptoms late on Thursday, more than a week after the attack itself, is likely at a minimum to open a debate about the Pentagon's longstanding treatment of brain injury as a different class of wounds that it says do not require immediate reporting up the chain of command.

US military has to immediately report incidents threatening life, limb or eyesight. But suspected brain injury, which can take time to manifest and diagnose, does not have that urgent requirement. Esper was only informed on Thursday that the service members were flown out of Iraq to receive additional screening and treatment in bases in Kuwait and Germany, the Pentagon said.

The first US service member was flown out of Iraq on Jan. 10 for further evaluation, while others were flown out on Jan 15. "They were under their own power, on aircraft and on their way," Hoffman said. He noted that top Pentagon officials have not sought to minimize Iran's attack and instead repeatedly said Iran tried to kill US troops when it fired 16 short-range ballistic missiles at two Iraqi bases from at least three locations inside Iran.

In his first Friday prayers sermon in eight years, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told worshippers chanting "Death to America" that the elite Guards could take their fight beyond Iran's borders after the US killing of a top Iranian commander. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump walk across the South Lawn toward Marine One at the White House on January 17, 2020 in Washington, DC. — AFP

International

China, Myanmar 'stand together' despite Rohingya backlash

Dozens of 'mammoth' deals signed in two leaders' meeting

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar: China and Myanmar inked dozens of mammoth infrastructure and trade deals after a meeting yesterday between President Xi Jinping and fallen rights icon Aung San Suu Kyi, as Beijing doubles down on its support for a government under fire for its treatment of Rohingya Muslims.

The Chinese leader's two-day state visit to Myanmar's purpose-built capital comes as Western investors cast a wide berth around the country due to the Rohingya crisis. A 2017 military crackdown on the Muslim minority, which UN investigators have called genocide, forced some 740,000 people over the border into Bangladesh.

Beijing has stood strongly beside Myanmar and the Asian giant is now the country's largest investor even as distrust of its ambitions lingers among the public. More than 30 agreements were signed Saturday on Xi's final day of his visit — with Suu Kyi and Xi seated across from each other on long tables alongside related ministers.

Details on the amount of the package were scant but among the 33 deals was a concession and shareholders agreement on the \$1.3 billion-dollar Kyaukse deep-sea port and economic zone. There was also a letter of intent for "new urban development" in Myanmar's biggest city Yangon and feasibility studies for rail links.

The aim is to carve out a so-called "China-

Myanmar Economic Corridor" — a path of infrastructure from China's landlocked south to Myanmar's western Rakhine state which would serve as Beijing's long-awaited gateway to the Indian Ocean. The elaborate signing ceremony came between sit-down meet-



China-Myanmar economic corridor

ings with Suu Kyi and powerful army chief Min Aung Hlaing, who stands accused of masterminding the Rohingya crackdown.

'Stand Together'

After arriving Friday Xi called the visit a "historical moment" for relations between the two neighbors, according to state-run newspaper the Global New Light of Myanmar. He also touched on the "unfairness and inequality in international relations" in what could be seen as a slight against the United States, which has sanctioned the army chief.

Myanmar leader Suu Kyi — whose reputation lays in tatters in the West's eyes due to her defense of the army over the Rohingya crisis — said the country will always be at China's side. "It goes without saying that a neighboring country has no other choice, but to stand together till the end of the world," she said during a celebration late Friday. China remains an indispensable ally for its Southeast Asian neighbor, wielding a protective veto vote at the UN Security Council. The stakes are heightening as the UN's top court prepares to rule next week on whether "emergency measures" should be taken against Myanmar as part of a genocide complaint in The Hague.

But widespread suspicion of Beijing's influence in the country persists among those who are skeptical the economic benefits will trickle down to the masses and of ties to rebel groups fighting the state in border areas.

"This is a big problem for our country... they believe that China has been taking advantage," said Thu Wai, leader of the Democratic Party, one of the 17 political parties at Friday's celebration. That anger will be on full display in a planned protest Saturday afternoon in Yangon, where demonstrators are to rally against any reinstatement of a controversial Chinese-backed mega-dam.

The \$3.6 billion 6,000 megawatt Myitsone project was suspended in 2011 in the face of



NAYPYIDAW: Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) and Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi shake hands before a bilateral meeting at the Presidential Palace in Naypyidaw yesterday. — AFP

vociferous criticism across the country. This is who signed the deal with Myanmar's then-military junta as vice president in 2009. — AFP

Filipinos turn volcano's ash, plastic trash into bricks

BINAN: Ash spewed by a Philippine volcano is being mixed with plastic waste to make bricks in an inventive response to the country's persistent problems of pollution and frequent natural disasters. The Taal volcano burst into life nearly a week ago, sending towering dust columns into the sky and leaving nearby Binan city coated in fine grey powder.

Environment officials did not just clean up the mess but decided to combine the ash with sand, cement and discarded plastic to form about 5,000 bricks per day for local building projects. "Instead of just piling up the ashfall

somewhere, we are able to turn it into something useful. And it includes plastics, too," said city environmental officer Rodelio Lee.

The Philippines faces a waste crisis, with a report last year saying it uses a "shocking" amount of single-use plastic, including nearly 60 billion throwaway sachets per year. It is also plagued by some 20 major storms annually and regular, powerful earthquakes which together kill hundreds of people each year.

Due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" zone of seismic activity, it also has periodic volcanic eruptions. Taal's jets of lava and 15-kilometer (nine-mile) walls of ash have sent more than 70,000 people into evacuation centers and prompted warnings that a far bigger eruption could happen at any time. With volcanic ash and plastic both in plentiful supply, the officials in Binan see their project as a silver lining. "During these times, our creativity becomes apparent," said the mayor of Binan, Arman Dimaguila. — AFP



TAGAYTAY: People take photos and selfies at a viewpoint overlooking the Taal volcano, in Tagaytay yesterday. — AFP

Two missing, 3,000 in shelters as Cyclone Tino hits Fiji

SUVA, Fiji: Tropical Cyclone Tino strengthened to a Category Three storm yesterday as it closed in on Tonga after battering Fiji where two people were missing and more than 3,000 fled to emergency shelters. The Fiji Meteorological Service said the wind gusts from Tino had increased to 180 kilometers per hour (110 mph) and would likely have its biggest impact in the northern areas of Tonga when it hits overnight. The Pacific kingdom is still recovering from the devastation of Cyclone Gina two years ago which caused widespread devastation, destroying houses and crops.

"The sea is very high and I'm sure beaches are being washed away in the more exposed places and the outer islands," Tupoutu'a Tonoumu told AFP from northern Vava'u. "It's been bucketing down for about three days, the soil is waterlogged and I'm hearing trees are down in the village."

In Fiji, the National Disaster Management Office said 3,115 sought emergency shelter at the height of the storm, but most had since returned home with damage not as severe as first feared. "We know for sure most of them went to the ECs (evacuation centers) to take shelter because of the big rains we were receiving and also because of the warnings," Uraia Rainima, a senior government official in the northern region, said. "We have received information that most of them are moving back to their houses." The island of Taveuni, with a population of around 19,000 people, was without power, Rainima said. Police, meanwhile, continued the search for a father and his daughter who were swept away when they tried to cross a swollen river on Thursday evening, and said there were no other casualties. — AFP

Blizzard slams Canadian province' emergency declared

OTTAWA: A winter blizzard hammered Canada's Atlantic coast on Friday packing wind gusts of more than 120 km/h (75 mph) and dumping more than 60 cm (2 feet) in some areas, prompting several towns in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to declare a state of emergency.

The mayor of St John's, the provincial capital, ordered all businesses to close and told people to stay home. Later in the day the conditions grew so poor that snow plows were taken off the roads. Videos and pictures on social media were dramatic, with white-out conditions and snowdrifts burying cars and piling up to entirely cover the doors and windows in homes. "To everyone in (Newfoundland and Labrador) affected by the storm, please listen to your local authorities," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Twitter. — Reuters

Floods, road closures in Australia as storms lash bushfire-hit regions

MELBOURNE: Parts of Australia's east coast were hit by severe storms yesterday, dousing some of the bushfires that have devastated the region for months but causing road closures and flash flooding. Fears of smoke from the fires disrupting the Australian Open tennis receded in Melbourne, where the main tournament was due to start yesterday.

Despite the heavy rain, authorities were still battling nearly 100 blazes — part of the bushfires that have killed 29 people since September, destroyed more than 2,500 homes and scorched an area nearly one-third the size of Germany. Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, three of the states most hit by drought and bushfires, are now dealing with rain bucketing down in several areas.

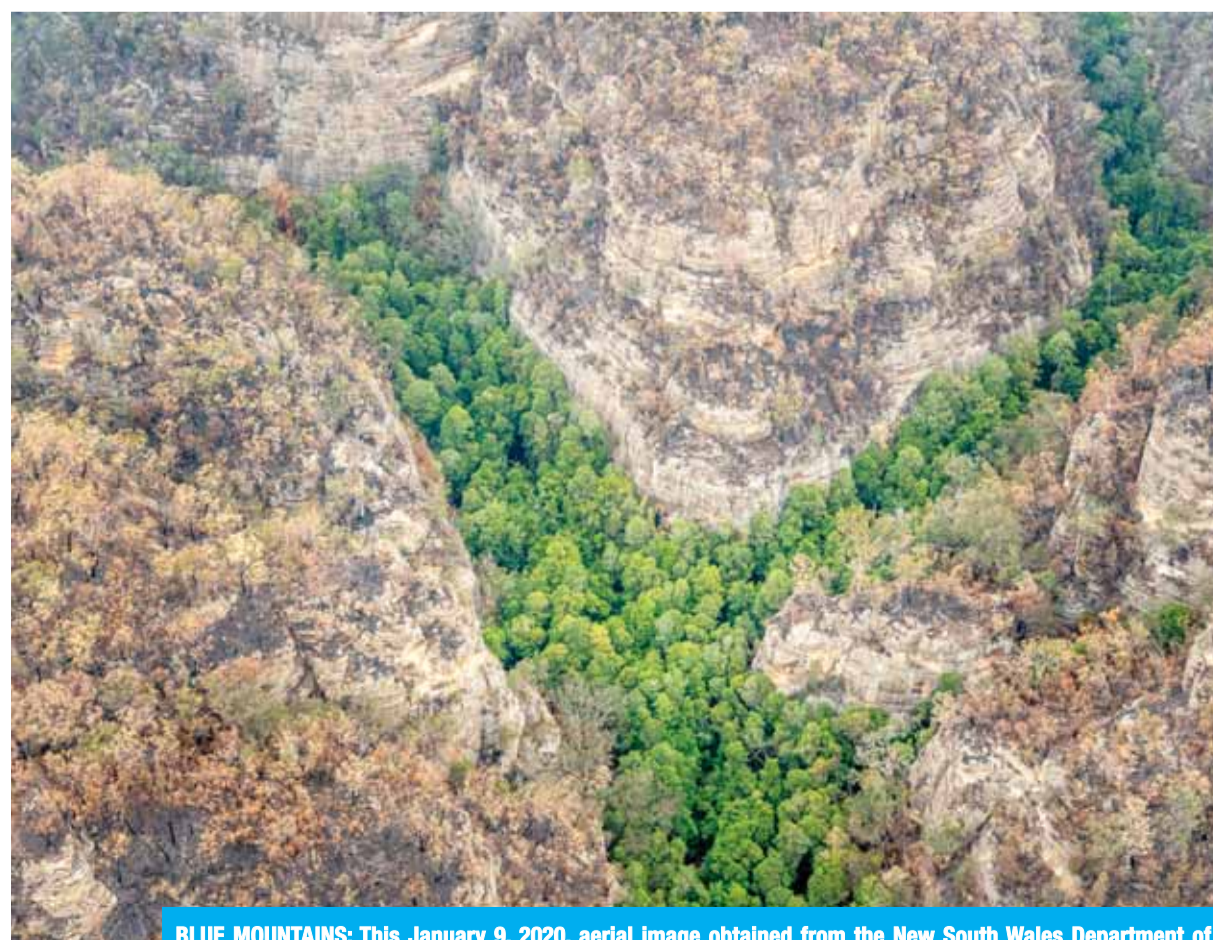
Major highways were closed in Queensland yesterday, with the state getting some of the heaviest rain Australia has seen for months, while power was cut in parts of New South Wales after a stormy night. "Heavy, intense rainfall

has eased, but showers and thunderstorms still possible through the weekend," the Bureau of Meteorology in Queensland said on Twitter yesterday. "Take care on the roads — if it's flooded, forget it."

Parts of Queensland's south saw triple the monthly rainfall overnight. No major damage has been reported, although some residential areas were flooded and many of the state's parks and tourist attractions were closed. New South Wales fire services welcomed the rain, which they said on Twitter would help to control the 75 fires burning in the state, of which 25 are yet to be contained. But, they also said that some foregrounds have not seen any rain yet. More benign storms were forecast for Victoria over the weekend, which has been hit this week already by severe storms and unhealthy smoke from the bushfires.

Skies were clear in Melbourne, however, for the final round of qualifying for the Australian Open, the year's first Grand Slam, and Victoria's Environmental Protection rated the air quality as "good", after an earlier forecast of unhealthy air for the weekend.

There were still more than a dozen fires burning in Victoria yesterday, with firefighters battling to contain a big blaze in the state's mountain region, fifteen times the size of Manhattan. Victoria's emergency service also issued an evacuation warning due to a bushfire yesterday for French Island, the state's largest coastal island with a small population of just above 100 people. — Reuters



BLUE MOUNTAINS: This January 9, 2020, aerial image obtained from the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment shows a gorge of Wollemi Pines in the Blue Mountains of Australia. — AFP

North Korean foreign minister replaced: Report

SEOUL: North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho has been replaced, Seoul-based NK News reported yesterday. Ri's replacement has not been identified but Pyongyang is set to reveal his successor about next Thursday, the report said, citing unnamed sources. South Korea's unification ministry, which is in charge of North Korea affairs, has said that any change in Ri's status should be assessed cautiously.

Born in 1956, Ri is the son of Ri Myong Je, former deputy director of the Organization and Guidance Department (OGD), a shadowy body within the ruling Workers' Party that oversees the appointment of management positions within the state, according to the South Korean unification ministry.

His father was also an editor at the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the state media body that publishes Pyongyang's propaganda statements. A fluent English speaker who studied at Pyongyang's prestigious University of Foreign Languages, Ri has for years held a number of high-level posts dealing with the West.

From 2003 to 2007, he was North Korea's ambassador in London and served as vice foreign minister, representing North Korea at six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program. Ri did not attend the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations in September. He had attended the high-level meeting in New York for three years from 2016 to 2018. — Reuters

South Koreans among seven missing in Himalayan avalanche

KATHMANDU: Four South Koreans and three Nepalese are missing and about 200 people have been rescued after an avalanche hit trekkers on Annapurna, one of the highest mountains in the Himalayas, officials said yesterday. South Korea was to send an emergency team to Nepal to help in a desperate search operation.

The incident occurred at an altitude of about 3,230 meters (10,600 feet) close to Annapurna base camp following heavy snowfall on Friday. Six of the missing are from one trekking expedition while one Nepali porter is from a different group. "A search operation is underway for the seven out of contact," Mira Acharya of Nepal's tourism department said.

About 200 people have been rescued from the avalanche-hit zone as well as other trekking routes after the weather eased to let helicopters fly in. Sandesh Pandey of Jangbogo Tour Nepal, which helped organize the trek, said the four were part of an 11-member team from South Korea. "They were descending yesterday after heavy snowfall stopped them from going higher. The remaining five from the team are moving down safely. The other two did not go up in the trek," Pandey said.

Annapurna is avalanche-prone and technically difficult with a higher death rate than Everest, the world's highest peak. Education officials in South Korea said the four were part of a team of volunteer teachers working with children in Nepal.

South Korea's foreign ministry said an emergency team would be sent to Nepal and that the families of those missing had been informed. The volunteers were from Chungcheong province. Thousands of trekkers visit the Annapurna region every year for its stunning views of the Himalayas. In 2014, a snowstorm killed about 40 people on the popular circuit, in one of the biggest trekking tragedies to hit Nepal. — AFP

Analysis

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Hit by jihadist attacks, African states eye more say in Libya crisis

Victims of increasing jihadist attacks, African states bordering Libya are pushing for more say in efforts to end the crisis in their northern neighbor whose conflict risks becoming a growing source of regional instability. European powers, Turkey and Russia will join a Libya peace conference in Berlin this weekend, the latest international effort to end fighting between eastern commander Khalifa Haftar and the UN-recognized government in Tripoli.

African Union Chairman Moussa Faki will also join the Berlin talks hoping to bring a focus on the continent's perspective, but it will not be an easy mission.

"The neighboring countries like Chad, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, fellow AU members and beyond are suffering the consequences" of the crisis, said Ebba Kalondo, Faki's spokeswoman.

"The AU has consistently asked for a more central role in the processes underway, but has consistently been ignored." Sahel and African nations have long been at the sharp end of Libya's crisis.

After the NATO-backed rebellion ousted and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya collapsed into a conflict of competing armed factions vying for control. In the chaos, Islamist militants and migrant smugglers expanded their influence. Libya's security vacuum allowed the spread of fighters, arms and explosives across its borders into Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, which face increasing jihadist violence despite a regional campaign to counter Islamist militancy.

The North African state remains in chaos, mostly split now between Haftar's forces in the east and the UN-recognized government in Tripoli. Haftar's forces launched an offensive on the capital in April.

"The international community is responsible for what is happening to us through its disastrous decision to intervene in Libya," Niger President Mahamadou Issoufou said in December, referring to the 2011 NATO campaign. "Libya is African, we cannot solve the Libyan problem by keeping the AU on the sidelines," he told AFP.

Chad President Idriss Deby said solving Sahel violence was directly linked to ending Libya's instability.

"Libya's chaos... remains the main source of destabilization for the whole of the Sahel," he said in Rome in December. In 2019, jihadist attacks killed 4,000 people in Burkina, Mali and Niger, despite the presence of several thousand French troops, a UN peacekeeping mission in Mali and the G5 Sahel cooperation among the armies of five regional nations. "Africa is looking to get more of a hearing now with the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel," a Western diplomat said.

'Counter-productive'

One sign of possible increasing African involvement is that the African Union's Libya committee, inactive for months, has been back in session in recent weeks led by Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso. "Libya is an African country and the victims are essentially in Africa. So any strategy to end the Libya crisis that marginalizes the African continent would be ineffective and counter-productive," Sassou Nguesso said earlier this month.

An emissary of the Congolese head of state this month travelled to Algeria, a key country in negotiations between Libyan rivals, to discuss how to "energize" the peace process, the Algerian presidency said. The Algeria talks also discussed the role of AU on reviving Libya's peace process. Algiers has been long been involved in negotiations with Libyan factions. But the UN is organizing the Berlin talks and takes a central role in negotiations.

"This is and remains a process that is in UN hands and under UN leadership. So this has meant that the AU has been sidelined," said Claudia Gazzini at International Crisis Group. "The UN does not necessarily see the AU as a decisive voice in the process."

The AU push for more say comes as Libya's conflict has already split North African and Middle Eastern states between those who back Haftar's forces who control the east near Egypt and the government of Faye Al-Sarraj, recognized by the UN and based in Tripoli. But the AU is also "divided" over how to handle Libya, one Niger official source said. "Egypt does not want the AU to take charge of this," as it backs Haftar as sees Libya as part of its domestic security border, the source said.

That situation has been further complicated by the entry of new international players. Russia backs Haftar while Turkey, an ally of the Tripoli government, recently agreed to send Turkish soldiers to Libya to support Sarraj. Haftar's offensive on Tripoli since April is just the latest wave of fighting to wrack Libya since 2011. More than 280 civilians and 2,000 combatants have been killed since Haftar's assault began, according to the UN. Some 146,000 Libyans had to flee the fighting. A cessation of hostilities has been in effect since Sunday. — AFP

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ATHENS: Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias (left) and Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar leave after talks in Athens, on Friday days ahead of a peace conference in Berlin which he and the head of Tripoli's UN-recognized government are expected to attend. — AFP

Peace in Libya: EU faces a diplomatic dilemma

After war broke out again in Libya early last year, a special team of EU diplomats in Tripoli was forced back to neighboring Tunisia to do what they had been doing for several years: wait. As Germany holds a UN summit today 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 neighbors 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 Faye Al-Sarraj, while France favored 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.

'European approach'

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 US 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 UN 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 counter-

parts. 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 January amid fears of a Middle East conflagration after the US drone strike in Iraq.

Top EU officials held talks with Sarraj 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.

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 US 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

Washington Watch

Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

By Dr James J Zogby

Thirty-two years ago this month, I was arrested sitting-in and blocking the entrance of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC. The Embassy was hosting an event that evening in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Looking back at what we did that day, I'm confident that it was the right way to remember Dr. King's legacy.

There were a number of concerns that prompted our protest. In the first place, we were in the beginnings of the first Palestinian Intifada - the mass protest movement which witnessed tens of thousands of young Palestinians, armed with nothing more than stones, confronting Israeli military occupation forces. In response to this youth protest and the nationwide Palestinian boycott of Israeli products that accompanied it, then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin cracked down using, what he termed, an "Iron Fist." He imposed crippling curfews, demolished homes, expelled dozens of

Palestinians, and ordered his troops to "break the arms" of the protesters "to teach them a lesson."

It was confounding that despite carrying out this brutal repression, the Israeli Embassy, nevertheless, saw fit to celebrate Martin Luther King Day together with making an announcement that, in Israel, they were dedicating a Martin Luther King Street in Jerusalem. What rubbed salt into that wound was when, shortly before the event, I was informed by Israel Shahak, head of the Israeli League for Civil and Human Rights, that the century old olive trees that Israel had planted along this street had been uprooted and stolen from Palestinian landowners by the Israeli occupation authorities. That was too much to bear.

Because, at that time, I was serving as an appointed member of the Washington, DC, Martin Luther King Holiday Commission, I took my concerns to my fellow Commissioners and asked them to join me in a protest against what a number of them agreed was an Israeli insult to the legacy of Dr. King and not in keeping with the meaning of the day. Three other Commissioners demonstrated and were arrested with me. The banner we carried read, "Dr. King Taught Non-Violence and Justice, Not Occupation and Repression." After blocking the front gate of the Embassy for a time, we were arrested, brought before a judge, charged and released. (Later the charges were dropped, since our demonstration was determined to be a legitimate expression



Martin Luther King Jr

of political speech.) I mention this story and my pride in choosing this way to commemorate Dr. King's holiday because, like many others who fought for King's birthday to be celebrated as a national holiday, I have been concerned that almost from the first year, our celebrations didn't do justice to the day, the man, or his legacy. Instead of honoring the fierce fighter for racial and economic justice, the critic of US militarism and the corruption and greed of our economic/political order, the King we have come to remember is a fuzzy and benign shadow of the original.

It's important to note that well over one-half of all Americans were not alive or living in the US during King's lifetime. They have no recollection of segregated lunch counters, of dogs and fire hoses being turned on children simply protesting for equality. And they don't remember the disgusting racist rhetoric used by senators, governors, and others seeking to

maintain the old segregated order that King and his colleagues sought to tear down.

What we hoped for then, and still hope for, is that King's Day can be one in which we recall our racist history, recall the sacrifices Dr. King and so many others made in their efforts to bring needed change, and commit ourselves to using, if necessary, the non-violent tools he used to fight injustice, poverty, and war.

And surely King and his legacy are not to be abused by those who practice the very policies he gave his life fighting to end. That's why I was proud of what we did 32 years ago today and why I believe that Dr. King would have been proud of us too.

So this year, on Martin Luther King Day, here are some things to do. First make an effort to learn more about America back in the 1950's - the world which King gave his life fighting to change. It would also be important to try to understand what has changed and what has not - and to assess the danger that we may be back-sliding in areas of racial and economic justice. Then look at the broader world and American foreign policy and understand how King would have dealt with the many challenges we are facing. And then finally pick one issue of economic, social, racial, environmental injustice and resolve to spend the year fighting to bring justice where it is lacking. That, I believe, is the way to honor King.

Note: Dr James J Zogby is President of Arab American Institute

US sheriff vows to protect gun ownership rights

When Sheriff Scott Jenkins swore to protect the US Constitution, he swore to protect the Second Amendment—even from new laws in Virginia that he says threaten to deprive citizens of their right to bear arms. Since December, he has become a key figure in a pro-Second Amendment protest movement that has organized a protest in Richmond, the state capital, on Monday. At least 10,000 supporters plan on attending, according to media reports. "The Constitution is very clear: the Second Amendment

grants every citizen to bear arms, specifically against a tyrannical government," said the officer from Culpeper County, a rural region about 60 miles (100 kilometers) southwest of Washington, Virginia, which has traditionally leaned conservative, flipped in November and passed into Democratic hands. State Democrats promised to tackle what they considered the laxity surrounding carrying laws, particularly after a May 2019 shooting in Virginia Beach that left 12 dead.

The Second Amendment, which states that "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," has proved controversial over the years and has been subject to many different interpretations. The Supreme Court has ruled that individuals have the right to keep firearms in their households, but left it to states to determine how the weapons could be transported. New laws under consideration in Virginia would prohibit magazines with more than 10 rounds, the purchase of more than one weapon per

month, and permit judges to seize weapons from individuals deemed dangerous.

A draft ban on the sale of semi-automatic rifles, however, has been abandoned. "We have good enough laws already on the book that do a fine job of restricting dangerous weapons, and there is no need for further restrictions," said Jenkins. The imposing sheriff, who believes in the right to self-defense, said that limiting residents' right to own firearms would allow potential criminals to do even more harm.

Throughout the state of Virginia, more than 100 counties and localities—including Culpeper—have proclaimed themselves as sanctuaries, threatening not to apply the new laws. Jenkins, who prefers the term "constitutional county," promised that if the bills were adopted, he would deputize anyone who wanted to do so, and who fit the conditions, allowing them to legally keep their weapons. He said he already has several thousand candidates from all over the state. — AFP

Business

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BATLOW, Australia: Farmers burying animals killed during bushfires in Batlow, in Australia's New South Wales state. Batlow has become one of the faces of the destruction wrought by the unprecedented disaster, which also hit areas usually untouched with Australia's summer fires, when shocking images of dead livestock along a road was shared by the national broadcaster ABC. — AFP

Australia farmers count cost after bushfires

'Apocalyptic' blazes wipe out livestock, raze 10 million hectares of land

KANGAROO ISLAND, Australia: In the wake of ferocious bushfires that tore through Kangaroo Island, local farmer Rick Morris has endured the gruelling task of burying 400 sheep killed when most of his sprawling property went up in flames. "It puts it in perspective to say that we're one of the lucky ones," he said.

Australia is reeling from bushfires that since September have claimed 28 lives, including two on Kangaroo Island, and razed 10 million hectares (25 million acres) of land—an area larger than South Korea or Portugal. Vast swathes of the burned land were used for grazing cattle and sheep, and officials believe the livestock toll exceeds 100,000 across Australia—including at least 43,000 on Kangaroo Island alone, where farmers like Morris endured three blazes in just 10 days.

"We faced the full wrath of Mother Nature," he told AFP at his 930-hectare (2,300-acre) farm.

"The fire (swept) from the south side to the north side of the island and took no prisoners between... I'm amazed there were not more people killed."

Faced with the scale of the disaster, Australia's army has deployed 3,000 soldiers to assist in bushfire-affected areas. Here, the defense force flew in firefighters from the mainland and dropped bales of hay from helicopters to farmers isolated by fires in the island's western reaches. Brigadier Damian Cantwell, the joint bushfire task force commander for South Australia state, said he foresaw a "long road ahead" for Kangaroo Island.

"I've seen a level of destruction which is still surprising me now," he said. "There's a

lot of farmers that are in distress, a lot of community members are struggling, some families have lost everything, and they're struggling to find out where they can move forward from here," he said.

"There's no end date assigned to this mission, and it's very important that there's no sense of anyone... thinking about when this is going to end."

Pushed 'to the brink'

Kangaroo Island's agriculture industry is worth Aus\$150 million (US\$100 million), and farming is the island's biggest employer. Local agronomist Daniel Pledge said farmers would need to buy extra feed for their livestock, pasture seed to restore burned paddocks and animals would be likely to conceive at lower rates due to stress-causing lasting impacts from the fires. "It's a

snowball effect that we can't measure and we're very concerned for our local economy, to be honest," he told AFP. "And these effects could flow on for up to five years, for certain individuals. And that is a long time."

The country's farmers had already been battered by a prolonged drought that has crippled water supplies in rural areas across the vast and arid continent's southeast.

National Farmers' Federation president Fiona Simpson said they were increasingly under pressure across the country. "Whether it's the drought or the recent bushfires, dry conditions are pushing many of our farming communities to the brink," she said.

"It's a situation that grows graver each day, and shows no signs of abating." In response, the government has promised immediate support payments of

Aus\$75,000 to aid in farmers' recovery, which will be drawn from a Aus\$2.0 billion bushfire relief package. Morris, who is also the chairman of Kangaroo Island's agriculture industry body, said the financial support would be welcomed on the island. For now, though, he is keeping his remaining 4,500-strong flock close until the bushfire threat passes.

"We're hand-feeding them for all their nutrient needs, and that'll be the case until April (or) May when it rains, hopefully," he said. The mental and financial toll on farmers is likely to claim some of the island's agriculture businesses, but many are already starting to look to the future. Morris, for one, is optimistic. "When this fire settles down, we'll be able to regroup... and move forward as a whole community," he said. "We've been burnt—we're not broken." —AFP

Financial sector must reduce inequality: IMF

WASHINGTON: The world's financial sector should take rapid steps to address record or near-record inequality levels within countries that new research shows could be a harbinger of a new financial crisis, the head of the International Monetary Fund said Friday.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva issued what she termed a "call to action", urging a shift to facilitate more lending to small and women-led businesses, which in turn would help bolster resilience in the event of a future crisis. "Our new research shows that inequality tends to increase before a financial crisis, signaling a strong link between inequality and financial stability," she said, citing parallels to 1920s boom years that led to the Great Depression.

A report by IMF staff released Friday shows that expanding financial services to more low-income households, women and small businesses could serve as a powerful lever in creating a more inclusive society, but the increasing complexity of the financial sector often wound up benefitting mainly the wealthy.

"If we act, and act together, we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the 1920s in the 2020s," Georgieva told an event at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. The Fund would apply the lessons of the new research to its assessment and surveillance of financial sector stability, while focusing on bolstered financial literacy among less "sophisticated" populations, she added.

Georgieva, who served as the World Bank's chief executive officer before moving to the IMF in October, has made reversing inequalities one of her top priorities. In her speech on Friday, she said it was important to maintain high lending standards and good supervision, but work was needed to reverse widening gaps between rich and poor.

Unlike the 1920s, climate change was a huge factor exacerbating inequality today, she said, citing a World Bank estimate that 100 million people could be living in extreme poverty by 2030 if current policies were not changed. The Fund in November called for central banks to develop stress tests for climate risks, and Georgieva said it would seek to incorporate them into its assessment instruments this calendar year. Devaluing climate-related stranded assets could result in costs of \$4 trillion to \$20 trillion. Governments should continue using fiscal policies to address growing rates of inequality, she said, and avert the populism and political upheaval it could spawn.

But the financial sector also had a key role to play, she said, citing research by IMF staff that showed a 2-to-3-percentage point difference in longer-term gross domestic product (GDP) growth between financially inclusive countries and their less inclusive peers. — Reuters

India's Reliance claims record quarterly profits

MUMBAI: Indian oil-to-telecoms giant Reliance Industries reported record quarterly net profits on Friday, boosted by strong growth in its retail businesses despite falling refining margins. The Mumbai-based company owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani said its consolidated net profit for the quarter-ended December rose 13.5 percent to 116 billion rupees (\$1.63 billion) from 102 billion rupees reported for the same quarter a year earlier.

"The third quarter results for our energy business reflects the weak global economic environment and volatility in energy markets," Reliance chairman Ambani said in a statement. The company said its gross refining margin, the profit earned from each barrel of crude, was down to \$9.2 in the December quarter from \$9.4 in the previous quarter. Refining margins are a key profitability gauge for Reliance, which operates the world's biggest refining complex in

India's Gujarat state.

The company said profits for its telecom arm Jio jumped 62 percent to 13.5 billion rupees for the quarter, with a total 370 million subscribers. On Thursday Jio became India's top operator in terms of subscribers and revenue, three years after its launch, official data showed.

The announcement came as Jio's chief competitors, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, lost an appeal against paying a combined \$7 billion in past spectrum and license fees as ordered by the Supreme Court last year. Jio, which escaped with a relatively light \$1.8 billion bill, is seen as the only beneficiary of the November decision. Ambani had launched Jio with much fanfare in September 2016, offering free services up to March 2017 and sparking intense price wars that saw consolidation in the Indian telecom sector.

Reliance is expected to roll out its e-commerce initiative later this year and has been conducting trials with mom-and-pop stores to test its payment devices, with the aim of connecting small shops with consumers. Reliance is India's most valuable company with a market capitalization of over 10 trillion rupees. Shares of Reliance Industries were up almost 3 percent in Mumbai as the markets closed Friday ahead of the announcement. —AFP

Business

Gulf Air showcases its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner at Kuwait Aviation Show

Airline reaches 50 destinations, improves more in 2020: Al-Alawi



Captain Waleed Abdulhameed Al-Alawi



KUWAIT: Gulf Air's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner retro livery aircraft on display at Kuwait Aviation Show. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Many international and regional airlines participated at Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 and Gulf Air was one of the airlines that had the opportunity to showcase its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner retro livery aircraft at Kuwait Aviation Show 2020.

On the sidelines of the show, Captain Waleed Abdulhameed Al-Alawi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Air, expressed his excitement to participate in the 2nd Kuwait Aviation show. "We are proud to participate in this show. It is a great event." He told Kuwait Times that Gulf Air chooses this aircraft to be showcased because it represents their history, adding that its special 70th-anniversary livery showcases the airline's iconic vintage design from the last century with a revamped look.

"The aviation sector is very difficult; lots of airlines

come up and struggle so we are so proud that we served for 70 years. We have served the whole area before any airlines started," he said.

Al-Alawi revealed that Gulf Air launched its new corporate strategy in 2018 and in 2019 it announced its new boutique business model concept which will reinforce its focus on product and customer experience "This approach will give the airline a competitive advantage that will offer new fleet, new Falcon Gold class, new destinations."

He stated "Gulf Air has ordered 10 Dreamliners, we received seven so far and we will receive three more in 2020. Also, we have ordered 29 aircraft from Airbus: 12 A320neo and 17 A321neo. We have already received five A320neo and this year we will start receiving the A321neo aircraft. The fleet modernization program will continue until 2023."

Al-Alawi said that the airline keeps growing, wherein 2017 they were operating to around 43 destinations and

now they reached 50 destinations. "We have improved the connectivity through Bahrain from east to west and west to east and with the new expected terminal opening in Bahrain, it will help with our boutique concept. It will be a huge achievement and a forward step for us."

He said that Gulf Air announced new destinations to Munich, Mykonos, Milan, Nice, Kuala Lumpur and Erbil, adding that the airline has 13 Gulf Air codeshare partners including Egypt Air, Philippine Airlines, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Thai Airways, American Airlines, Oman Air, Turkish Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Aegean Airlines, Etihad Airways, SriLankan Airlines, and Middle East Airline.

Al-Alawi invited Kuwaiti people to enjoy the new destinations as well as the current popular destinations for Gulf Air in the Summer. "Kuwaiti passengers are welcomed to fly with us to Malaga that will be available in June 2020, Mykonos and Nice in July 2020. We also operate 5 weekly

flights to the Maldives." The Bahrain-based airline turned a lot of heads when it unveiled the new business class "Falcon Gold". Al-Alawi said that the premium class cabin takes service to the next level, offering the luxury of first class, adding that also the economy in the same plane is very roomy and light with big in-flight entertainment screens; he states they received positive feedback from passengers for such features.

"These Dreamliners are replacing the Airbus A330 which is a great move for Gulf Air for replacing the older fleet with new ones. With the new deal with Airbus, we are going to renew the whole narrow body fleet for short-medium haul to long-range. We have received so far five A320neos and soon the first A321neo to be received. With the new fleet, the airline will benefit from low operating costs, optimum fuel efficiency and seamless, best-in-class passenger comfort of any single-aisle aircraft."

CBK honors its employees who graduated from KIBS programs

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently celebrated the graduation of a new batch of 61 of its employees who had successfully passed the professional programs held in collaboration with Kuwait Institute for Banking Studies (KIBS) and accredited by the British Banking Studies Institute in the fields of credit management, advanced credit management, branch manager, assistant branch manager, risk management, investment basics, professional sale skills, strategic performance management and education needs assessment.

A special ceremony was held on the occasion at Kuwait Chamber of



Commerce and Industry in the presence of CBK CEO, Elham Mahfouz, the bank executives and other bankers.

Speaking on the occasion, CBK's human resources manager, Sadeq Abdullah said that CBK believes in the significance of investing in human resources and that the bank strategy focuses on employees with the aim of

providing qualified manpower.

"One of the training methods followed by CBK is enrolling employees in different professional training courses to gain the needed skills and expertise that would positively be echoed on their performance", Abdullah added noting that such training courses focus on encouraging national elements and preparing

them for leading positions in the future.

CBK's CEO Elham Mahfouz said bank's capability to expand and grow largely relies on well-trained and competent manpower and that this makes the bank exert more efforts to maintain high level of training and good reputation through constant training and development.

Rwanda GDP to grow 8% in 2020: IMF

KIGALI: Rwanda's economy is expected to grow by 8 percent this year and in 2021 versus an estimated 8.5 percent in 2019, boosted by private investment and trade, the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) said. The small East African nation's economy relies largely on agriculture, tourism and mining. The government also forecasts it will grow 8.5 percent in 2019.

It grew 11.9 percent in third quarter versus 7.7 percent in the third quarter of 2018, reflecting an improved performance in manufacturing, construction and services. "Upside risks (to growth) are a continuation of strong private investment, more regional trade, and growth pay-offs from large public investment projects," the IMF said.

Factors that could slow growth include high fuel prices, unpredictable weather and regional issues, the

IMF said in a statement late on Friday. It did not elaborate on those regional issues.

Early last year, Rwanda closed its main border crossing with neighboring Uganda. It was briefly reopened to cargo trucks in June but then closed again. Rwandans were banned from travelling to Uganda, which has accused Rwanda of effectively imposing a trade embargo. In August, the two countries' presidents signed a pact agreeing the two sides would respect each other's sovereignty, refrain from action that destabilizes the other's territory, and resume cross-border activities. — Reuters

UK's Javid aims to double growth after Brexit

LONDON: Finance minister Sajid Javid is aiming to roughly double Britain's underlying rate of economic growth after it leaves the European Union, but will not champion big manufacturing sectors that want to stick to EU rules. In an interview with the Financial Times before he travels to meet business leaders in Davos, Switzerland, Javid said Britain would not commit to sticking to EU rules in post-Brexit trade talks - something many businesses want to ease cross-border checks.

"There will not be alignment, we will not be a rule-taker, we will not be in the single market and we will not be in the customs union - and we will do this by the end of the year," he said. The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said businesses were willing to be pragmatic about this approach to Brexit but added that the government needed to be clear about its plans.

"Uncertainty around the extent of divergence risks firms moving their production elsewhere," BCC co-executive director Claire Walker said. The opposition Labour Party said Javid's plans amounted to right-wing ideology overriding common sense and that jobs in the motor industry and manufacturing were under threat.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said there will be no extension to an 11-month window in which he hopes to negotiate a long-term trade agreement with the EU after Britain leaves on Jan. 31, despite the EU saying this is unrealistic. The Financial Times reported that Javid wanted to boost annual economic growth rates to the 2.75 percent level seen in the second half of the 20th century through greater investment in skills training and physical infrastructure. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.762
Indian Rupees	4.285
Pakistani Rupees	1.964
SriLankan Rupees	1.675
Nepali Rupees	2.674
Singapore Dollar	228.290
Hongkong Dollar	39.153
Bangladesh Taka	3.542
Philippine Peso	5.981
Thai Baht	10.035
Malaysian Ringgit	77.801

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.174
Qatari Riyal	83.606
UAE Dirham	790.643
Bahraini Dinar	808.290
UAE Dirham	82.877

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.850
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.224
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	114.790
Jordanian Dinar	429.330
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.327

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.200
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Euro	342.070
Sterling Pound	400.630
Canadian dollar	235.450
Turkish lira	52.900
Swiss Franc	319.200
US Dollar Buying	296.850

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.850
Canadian Dollar	233.640
Sterling Pound	398.000
Euro	340.410
Swiss Frank	295.675
Bahrain Dinar	808.050
UAE Dirhams	83.130
Qatari Riyals	84.365
Saudi Riyals	81.920
Jordanian Dinar	429.845
Egyptian Pound	19.189
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.674
Indian Rupees	4.287
Pakistani Rupees	1.961
Bangladesh Taka	3.547
Philippines Pessso	5.999
Cyprus pound	18.080
Japanese Yen	3.760
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.682
Malaysian Ringgit	75.560
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.610

Thai Bhat	11.020
Turkish Lira	52.110
Singapore dollars	224.778

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
EUROPE		
British Pound	0.389568	0.403468
Czech Korune	0.005451	0.014751
Danish Krone	0.041261	0.046261
Euro	0.330492	0.344192
Georgian Lari	0.114098	0.114098
Hungarian	0.001147	0.001337
Norwegian Krone	0.030179	0.035379
Romanian Leu	0.065177	0.082027
Russian Ruble	0.004975	0.004975
Slovakia	0.009090	0.019090
Swedish Krona	0.028020	0.033020
Swiss Franc	0.308182	0.319182
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.201263	0.213263
New Zealand Dollar	0.195372	0.204872
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.227656	0.236656
US Dollars	0.300100	0.304650
US Dollars Mint	0.300600	0.304650
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002914	0.003715

Chinese Yuan	0.042936	0.046436
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037212	0.039962
Indian Rupee	0.003664	0.004436
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002678	0.002858
Korean Won	0.000252	0.000267
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071310	0.077310
Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Pakistan Rupee	0.001293	0.002063
Philippine Peso	0.005900	0.006200
Singapore Dollar	0.220651	0.230651
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001317	0.001897
Taiwan	0.010119	0.010299
Thai Baht	0.009684	0.010234
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800751	0.808799
Egyptian Pound	0.019078	0.021819
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.424149	0.433149
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000103	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020989	0.044989
Omani Riyal	0.785003	0.792893
Qatar Riyal	0.082900	0.083734
Saudi Riyal	0.080033	0.081333
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.103977	0.111977
Turkish Lira	0.045058	0.054903
UAE Dirhams	0.082190	0.083016
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

Qatar Airways announces 8 new destinations for 2020

Airline wins many accolades in 2019, passenger numbers reach 29 million



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Akbar Al-Baker with other officials of Qatar Airways' chalet during the Kuwait Aviation Show. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Qatar Airways has announced the launch of eight new destinations at the Kuwait Aviation show 2020. In an interview on the sidelines of the air show, Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al-Baker said that these eight new destinations are scheduled to open this year, starting from the end of March to mid-November.

The new destinations, according to Al-Baker, are "Nur Sultan and Almaty in Kazakhstan, Accra in Ghana, Cebu in the Philippines, Lyon in France, Trabzon in Turkey, Luanda in Angola, and Siem Reap in Cambodia."

CEO of Qatar Airways reviewed the airline's accomplishments during the past year, where it won many prestigious awards, as well as the number of passengers on Qatar Airways reached 29 million passengers according to its financial year report in March 2019.

He stressed that Qatar Airways was able to shrink the loss although of the blockade that was imposed on

Qatar "The impact of the blockade on Qatar Airways is zero and we are continuing to grow and to implement our strategy. The only impact that it made a profitable airline get a negative area by starting to lose not because of the blockade but because of our operating costs since more than 750 departures and arrivals in Qatar airways on average we are flying 25 minutes extra. The airlines have margins of loss estimated between 3 percent to 8 percent, and despite that our losses came in less than half of our expectations, and we achieved a growth rate in revenue it reached 20 percent."

Baker expected Qatar Airways to return to profits in the fiscal year (2021-2022) even under siege, stressing that the Qatar Airways depends only on its revenues and the returns of its investments in other airlines and hotels.

He noted that Qatar and Kuwait have strong bilateral relations at all levels, and the flights between Doha and Kuwait witness great demand, with 84 flights a week between Hamad International Airport and Kuwait International Airport, adding "We are

proud to enable our Kuwaiti travelers to visit more than 160 destinations worldwide on our modern aircraft via Doha."

Meanwhile, CEO of Qatar Airways revealed that the Airways Group is seeking to buy the largest possible stake in the Indian airline "IndiGo", given the importance of the Indian market and as a popular destination for travelers.

As for the accident of the Ukrainian plane crash in Iran and its impact on Qatar Airways flights, he confirmed that the Qatar safety record is very strong, and the airline has not suffered from any cancellations due to the tragic accident, which reflects the confidence of travelers in the company, stressing the continuation of Qatar Airways flights to Iran, where according to him "Iran is an important country for us, it is our neighbor and we would like to continue to serve Iranian travelers."

Qatar Airways wowed the crowds on the opening day of the Kuwait Aviation Show, showcasing two of the newest aircraft in its fleet alongside announcing new destination plans for 2020.

Al-Baker, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive and Engineer Badr Al-Meer, Chief Operating Officer, Hamad International Airport Operating Officer, Hamad International Airport, hosted a number of dignitaries at the carrier's chalet, including Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Deputy Amiri Diwan Minister in the State of Kuwait and Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Director-General, General Directorate of Civil Aviation - Kuwait.

Al-Baker, said: "The Kuwait Aviation Show is the perfect platform for us to kick start the New Year and unveil some of our exciting plans for 2020."

"Eight new destinations will be joining our network this year in addition to the recently announced gateways of Santorini, Greece; Dubrovnik, Croatia; and Osaka, Japan. With these new routes, our operations will expand to 177 destinations around the world, reinforcing our position as one of the world's most connected airlines. This ensures we can continue to provide our passengers more options and flexibility when planning their business and leisure travel," he added.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah with KFH officials at the Bank's booth

KFH participates in Kuwait Motor Show 2020 ribbon cutting ceremony

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the opening ceremony of the Kuwait Motor Show 2020 that kicked off at 360 Mall. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah cut the ribbon marking the opening of the exhibition for the period between 16th-25th of January.

Present at the event were officials from KFH in addition to several officials from different ministries, ambassadors, and representatives of car dealerships and international auto factories.

KFH's participation comes as part of its ongoing efforts to offer distinguished financing services and promotions on buying, selling and leasing new and used cars and vehicles. This confirms

KFH's keenness to provide financing solutions, serving customers and highlighting its contributions to the motor market. With the participation of famous car brands, the event presents the latest models of 2020 of which some are exclusively revealed at the show for the first time in Kuwait.

Through partnerships with auto dealerships in Kuwait, KFH offers the best deals as well as a package of distinguished financing solutions and facilities as per the terms and conditions.

KFH's e-platform, kfh.com/auto has become more comprehensive, user-friendly and includes motorcycle, boat and marine equipment.

This new e-platform allows customers to learn about the latest offers of KFH, including financing new and used cars, leasing with maintenance, leasing to own, in addition to marine equipment and motorcycles. KFH allows customers to finance cars, boats and motorcycles in return for a collateral of deposit against debt obligations. It also offers Car Financing Abroad service which allows customers to take delivery of their cars



in any of the following four countries: USA, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey.

"KFH Auto" showroom is the largest and latest automotive showroom in the Middle East with a total area of 38,000 square meters. The 17,000 square meters showroom accommodates up to 200 cars, providing for more than 20 car dealerships and 30 car motorcycle

and boat brands. As an integrated city, customers can also sell and purchase new and used cars at "KFH Auto". Car rental, valuation, traffic and insurance services are also offered at the showroom. In line with intelligent building systems, "KFH Auto" includes charging station for electric vehicles and special section for ladies.

Burgan Bank partners with Farfetch for loyalty program

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced its latest partnership with Farfetch, the global technology platform for luxury fashion whereby its customers will be offered an exclusive privilege on purchases made through their platform using any of Burgan Bank's cards.

Ensuring its loyal customers are rewarded with access to the best offers, they can now enjoy shopping from the world's best brands, boutiques and department stores through Farfetch.com - delivering a truly unique shopping experience. Providing optimal convenience Burgan Bank customers can avail the offer by applying a promo code before finalizing the order in the last step. Terms and Conditions apply.

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

Al Danah is now 'Bigger': Grand prize now a whopping KD 1.5 million



The minute of announcing the Al-Danah Millionaire.



The audience engaging with the live activities.

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has started 2020 with one of their biggest announcements yet, joining a long list of exciting prizes and new services available to customers year-round. In keeping with their spirit of innovation and excellence, Gulf Bank announced its annual grand prize for the Al-Danah account has increased to KD 1.5 million starting in 2020, becoming one of the biggest prizes associated with a bank account worldwide. The "bigger" grand prize is one of multiple benefits enjoyed by Al-Danah accountholders, as winners receive their cash rewards in one lump sum payment. Furthermore, the Al-Danah account rewards accountholders for their loyalty with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year.

As such, loyalty chances for existing Al-Danah clients from 2019 (January 1 to December 31, 2019) have been added to the 2020 raffles, provided that accountholders qualify for the raffles and their balances do not drop at any time from 2020 to below KD 200.

To increase their chances of winning, accountholders must either keep their account with a minimum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their Al-Danah savings - the more deposits into an account, the

more chances accumulated over time. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah accountholders also have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long through weekly, quarterly and annual draws.

To enter the upcoming Al-Danah draws, clients can open an Al-Danah account today with only KD 200. To open an Al-Danah account, existing Gulf Bank customers can simply apply through their mobile/ online banking accounts or visit their nearest Gulf Bank branch. Non-Gulf Bank customers can also open an Al-Danah account by visiting their nearest Gulf Bank branch.

More deposits mean more chances to win!

With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is easier and more secure than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts through the following channels: Online/Mobile Banking App which includes the ePay (Self-Pay) service, all of Gulf Bank's 58 branches, ATMs and ITMs, the Customer Contact Center at 1805805 which is available 24/7, in addition to the free standing order service from other Gulf Bank accounts.

Additional features:

All Al-Danah customers will receive a special Al Danah ATM card for deposits, ideal for depositing money anytime. Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center is available on WhatsApp around the clock for any inquiries at 65805805. Al Danah accountholders are eligible for free SMS alerts for all transactions. Customers can now calculate their chances using the Al Danah Calculator, available at Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

Important notes:

If a customer's account balance drops below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account on a monthly basis until the minimum account balance is increased again to a minimum of KD 200.

If no transactions are made on an Al-Danah account for a 48-month period, the account will become dormant. However, this will not affect your chances, and you will still be eligible to enter all draws.

With Al Danah, accountholders have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long! The Al Danah raffles and their draw dates are listed in the following table:

Al Danah Account Prizes for 2020

Prize	# Winners	Draw Date	Last Date to Deposit & Qualify
KD1,000	5	Weekly	2 days before the draw
KD250,000	1	April 16, 2020	January 31, 2020
KD250,000	1	July 16, 2020	March 31, 2020
KD250,000	1	October 15, 2020	June 30, 2020
KD1,500,000	1	January 14, 2021	September 30, 2020

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Business

Gulf Bank reveals Al-Danah Millionaire of 2019: Jassim Mohammed Issa Abbas!

Al-Danah is now 'bigger'! Starting this year, the grand prize is KD 1,500,000



Gulf Bank CEO Tony Daher with the employees.

KUWAIT: After a week-long celebration event at The Avenues, Gulf Bank revealed the name of the lucky Al-Danah Millionaire for the year 2019: Jassim Mohammed Issa Abbas.

Gulf Bank's annual Al-Danah draw event, titled "Al-Danah Is Here," kicked off earlier this week on Sunday at The Avenues near the Cheesecake Factory. The week-long celebration included a variety of exciting activities and prizes, including a Luster Wall in which attendees could take a selfie or picture to post on their social media channels. Their images appeared as part of a larger mosaic that spelled out a hidden message whose meaning was unveiled on Thursday night: Al-Danah is bigger!

A week-long celebration

Throughout the week, Gulf Bank's stage area at The Avenues hosted a variety of entertainment activities, giving mall-goers multiple options to choose from and compete for the chance to win valuable cash prizes. Everyone was welcome to participate, and choose from activities that include a Pin & Win map, a Luster Wall, an arcade claw game, vending machine, and more.

Competitive games on stage

Thursday's draw took place on stage in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Ernst & Young, Ossama Fouada and Ahmad Al-Matari, an employee at Gulf Bank. Ossama Fouada led participants through a variety of exciting activities on stage on Thursday, with a competitive twist. Participants tried their luck against others at the safe combination game, in which they had to find the correct safe combination in the fastest amount of time. Participants also got a chance to play the darts money collector and collect cash prizes - the closer to the bulls-eye, the more valuable the prize! Finally, participants also tried their luck at a variety of digital gaming competitions, competing with others for the chance to take home cash prizes. On Thursday evening, after the reveal of Al Danah Millionaire, attendees were also treated to a live musical performance from Abdulaziz Al-Dhuwaili.

Al-Danah is bigger!

In an exciting reveal at the draw event, Gulf Bank also announced the Al-Danah account's grand prize now bigger than ever before. Starting in 2020, the grand prize for the Al-Danah account is now a whopping KD 1.5 million, becoming one of the biggest prizes associated with a bank account worldwide. The "bigger" grand prize is one of multiple benefits enjoyed by Al-Danah accountholders, as it is the only account in Kuwait that rewards accountholders for their loyalty with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah accountholders also have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long through weekly, quarterly and annual draws.

Commenting on the event, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant



Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank.



Mohamaad Al-Qattan and Ahmad Al-Amir (left)



External Communications team at the bank

General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "What a beautiful and exciting evening we all had, in which we all got a chance to celebrate our newest Al-Danah millionaire, Jassim Mohammed Issa Abbas, who was lucky enough to win the Al-Danah account's KD 1million grand prize. After a long week of exciting activities, we also really enjoyed revealing our biggest surprise yet: the Al-Danah account's annual grand prize is now bigger than ever, with next year's winner having the chance to take home KD 1.5 million! Much like our esteemed Al-Danah clients have grown with us throughout the years, so, too, has our beloved Al-Danah account. In appreciation of the loyalty and trust that our clients have given us, we have increased the value of the Al-Danah account grand prize, which is paid in one lump sum cash amount to the winner. We invite everyone to seize this opportunity and start saving with an Al-Danah account, as it is the only account in Kuwait that rewards you for your loyalty, going so far as to convert your chances of winning from last year to the following year. Loyalty is truly rewarded when you are a Gulf Bank client."

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 upcoming weekly, quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to cus-



Minutes before the activities started

tomers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2018, have been added

to their 2019 chances, and the same process will take place in 2020, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

To learn more about Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of the Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to www.e-gulfbank.com. Customers can also contact the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 or place queries through the WhatsApp service on 65805805 for assistance and guidance. In addition, customers are welcome to visit the dedicated Al-Danah website www.e-gulfbank.com/aldanahwinners to learn more about the account and the winners.



Volunteers from the bank



Mohamaad Al-Qattan and Al-Amir with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and EY

Health & Science

Experts warn over scale of China virus as US airports start screening

CHINA: The true scale of the outbreak of a mysterious SARS-like virus in China is likely far bigger than officially reported, scientists have warned, as countries ramp up measures to prevent the disease from spreading. Fears that the virus will spread are growing ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday, when hundreds of millions of Chinese move around the country and many others host or visit extended family members living overseas.

Authorities in China say two people have died and at least 45 have been infected, with the outbreak centered around a seafood market in the central city of Wuhan, a city of 11 million inhabitants that serves as a major transport hub. But a paper published Friday by scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College in London said the number of cases in the city was likely closer to 1,700.

The researchers said their estimate was largely based on the fact that cases had been reported overseas—two in Thailand and one in Japan. The virus—a new strain of coronavirus that humans can contract—has caused alarm because of its connection to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

China has not announced any travel restrictions, but authorities in Hong Kong

have already stepped up detection measures, including rigorous temperature checkpoints for inbound travellers from the Chinese mainland.

The US said from Friday it would begin screening flights arriving from Wuhan at San Francisco airport and New York's JFK—which both receive direct flights—as well as Los Angeles, where many flights connect. And Thailand said it was already screening passengers arriving in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket and would soon introduce similar controls in the beach resort of Krabi.

Two deaths

No human-to-human transmission has been confirmed so far, but Wuhan's health commission has said the possibility "cannot be excluded". A World Health Organization doctor said it would not be surprising if there was "some limited human-to-human transmission, especially among families who have close contact with one another". Scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis—which advises bodies including the World Health Organization—said they estimated a "total of 1,723" people in Wuhan would have been infected as of January 12.

"For Wuhan to have exported three cases to other countries would imply there would have to be many more cases than have been reported," Professor Neil



CHINA: Medical staff members carry a patient into the Jinyintan hospital, where patients infected by a mysterious SARS-like virus are being treated, in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province yesterday. — AFP

Ferguson, one of the authors of the report, told the BBC. "I am substantially more concerned than I was a week ago," he said, while adding that it was "too early to be alarmist". "People should be considering the possibility of substantial human-to-human transmission more seriously than they have so far," he continued, saying it was "unlikely" that animal exposure was the sole source of infection.

Local authorities in Wuhan said a 69-year-old man died on Wednesday, becoming the second fatal case, with the disease causing pulmonary tuberculosis and damage to multiple organ functions. After the death was

reported, online discussion spread in China over the severity of the Wuhan coronavirus and how much information the government may be hiding from the public.

Several complained about censorship of online posts, while others made comparisons to 2003, when Beijing drew criticism from the WHO for underreporting the number of SARS cases. "It's so strange," wrote a web user on the social media platform Weibo, citing the overseas cases in Japan and Thailand. "They all have Wuhan pneumonia cases but (in China) we don't have any infections outside of Wuhan—is that scientific?" — AFP

Czechs detect bird flu as new Europe outbreak fear

PRAGUE: A highly contagious bird flu has been confirmed at a Czech farm, officials said yesterday after a French farm union warned of the risk of a new outbreak in Europe. Czech official Petr Vorlicek said "the highly pathogenic H5N8 subtype lethal for birds" was found at a small farm 150 kilometers (94 miles) south-east of the capital Prague. Vorlicek, spokesman for the State Veterinary Administration (SVS), said the infection at the farm in Stepanov nad Svratkou was most likely imported by wild water birds.

The SVS, which says the H5N8 has never been reported to have spread to humans, said the farm bred three ducks and 12 hens, of which six infected with the virus died within two days. The remaining animals at the farm were culled yesterday, veterinarians said. "We will create... a ten-kilometer (six-mile) protected area around the farm," SVS head Zbynek Semerad said. The French farm union, Coordination rurale, said Friday that H5N8 has been detected in recent weeks in farms in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania as well as among wild birds in Poland. It warned authorities to urgently stop shipments from the infected countries and alert customs agents to the risk. — AFP

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- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

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

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

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates - Training

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

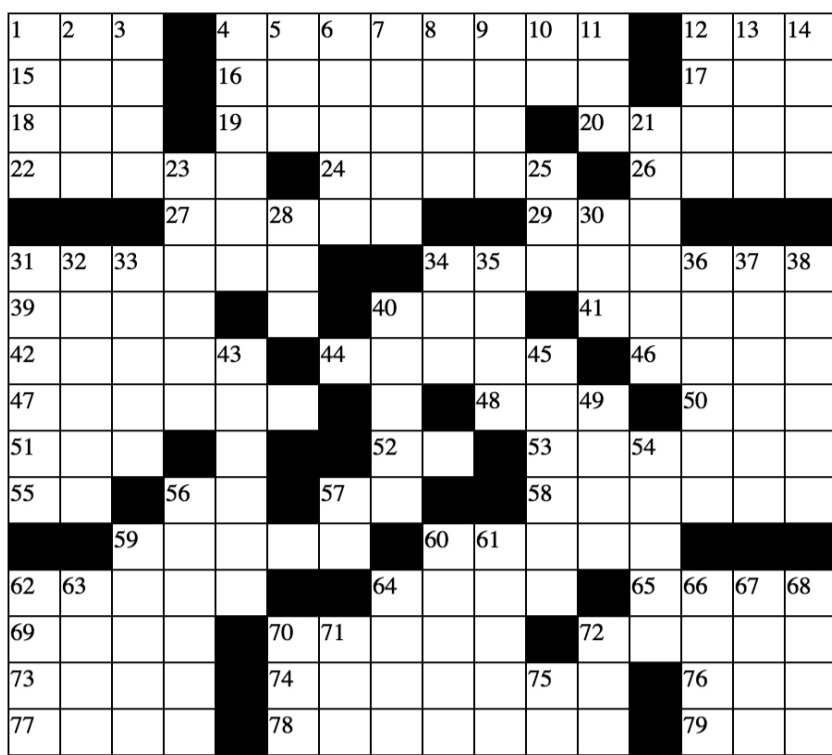
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2413



ACROSS

- 1. Gone by.
4. Has cams attached to it.
12. 10 grams.
15. A tight-fitting headdress.
16. One of four subclasses or superorder of Monocotyledones.
17. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
18. Step on it.
19. A lake in northwestern Russia north of St. Petersburg.
20. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
22. An expensive vessel propelled by sail or power and used for cruising or racing.
24. Leave or strike out, as of vowels.
26. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
27. Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
29. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
31. Make a high-pitched, screeching noise, as of a door.
39. A complex red organic pigment containing iron and other atoms to which oxygen binds.
41. A repetitive song in which as many syllables as necessary are assigned to a single tone v 1.
42. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
44. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
46. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
47. A document listing the alternatives that is used in voting.
48. A light touch or stroke.
50. A small drink.
51. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
52. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
53. A period of 10 years.
55. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
58. A large commercial and industrial city in northeastern Texas.
62. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
65. Of or relating to or characteristic of the Republic of Chad or its people or language.
69. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
73. A share of money or food or clothing that has been charitably given.
74. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
76. A spacecraft that carries astronauts from the command module to the surface of the moon and back.
77. German naturalist whose speculations that plants and animals are made up of tiny living 'infusoria' led to the cell theory (1779-1851).
78. A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
79. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
21. To agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
4. A genus of Caltha.
5. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
6. (Greek mythology) A princess of Colchis who aided Jason in taking the Golden Fleece from her father.
7. Someone (especially a woman) who annoys people by constantly finding fault.
8. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
9. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
10. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
11. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
12. No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
13. God of love and erotic desire.
14. A metric unit of weight equal to one thousandth of a kilogram.
21. A Japanese woman trained to entertain men with conversation and singing and dancing.
23. Relating to the blood vessels or blood.
25. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
28. A graphical recording of the cardiac cycle produced by an electrocardiograph.
30. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
32. Melon having yellowish rind and whitish flesh.
33. A domain in which something is dominant.
34. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
35. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
36. Of or relating to or near the tarsus of the foot.
37. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
38. The stirrup-shaped ossicle that transmits sound from the incus to the cochlea.
40. A small faint zodiacal constellation in the southern hemisphere.
43. (anatomy) A structure that resembles a shell in shape.
45. An attendant who carries the golf clubs for a player.
49. (informal) Very tired.
54. A sharp abrupt noise as if two objects hit together.
56. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
57. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
59. An ordered reference standard.
60. Brightest star in Centaurus.
61. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
63. In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
64. An informal term for a father.
66. Consisting of one of two equivalent parts in value or quantity.
67. In bed.
68. Fallow deer.
70. A corporation's first offer to sell stock to the public.
71. The number that is represented as a one followed by 6 zeros.
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
75. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

DOWN

- 1. Causing a dull and steady pain.
2. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
3. An organization of countries formed in 1961

Friday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today begins an exciting period in your personal life, Aries. It's time for new beginnings in your relationship. You may be ready to make the changes you and your partner have been considering for quite some time.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you have been having problems in your relationship or love life in general, Taurus, don't expect things to get any better today. The people around you might find you extremely irritable!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This could be a very studious day for you, Gemini; actually, it might be better to call it laborious. But you love to work, and you will get all the work you can handle today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You probably pay a great deal of attention to what other people think of you, Cancer. It may often be hard for you to make decisions in delicate situations for fear of being misjudged, even if you know you must.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You probably enjoy exploring the innermost recesses of your own human nature, Leo. Yet today you may need to be a bit more rational. In your personal life, you may feel as if you've been beaten at your own game and this has weakened you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

On days like today it's important to take time out to reflect upon the events of the past few days, Virgo. Is it possible you've decided to change certain things about yourself and your behavior?



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Over the last few weeks, you may have made some good progress in learning to express your emotions, Libra. The great thing is that you probably didn't even notice! But if you aren't careful, there may be some bullheaded person around you today who may try and destroy all the progress you've made.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There's no need to go pounding your head against a wall, Scorpio, your day will be challenging, but it's nothing you can't handle. The planetary configurations today will push you to lay the foundation for the projects you've been planning over the last six months.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today, you may find you have a certain gift for productivity. Everything you touch turns to gold, yet you may be under the impression that you can't provide everything you need for yourself. So what do you do? You start buying everything in sight!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today the people around you could seem much more serious than usual, Capricorn. You could even decide to get away from them and go hide out just for the day, for example, in a movie theater watching an afternoon film.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You could find the atmosphere today a bit oppressive, Aquarius. The time has come to deal with some of the important questions you may have been avoiding for quite some time. It could be especially important to take a look at your life at home and see what you can do change the negative atmosphere that has come into your life over the past few weeks.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may be a specialist at manipulating concepts and ideas and using your analytical skills to understand any problem that comes your way. If this is true, Pisces, people have probably already told you that thinking is fine, but there is a moment when you have to put all that thinking into practice!

Wordsearch Puzzle

USA State Capitals

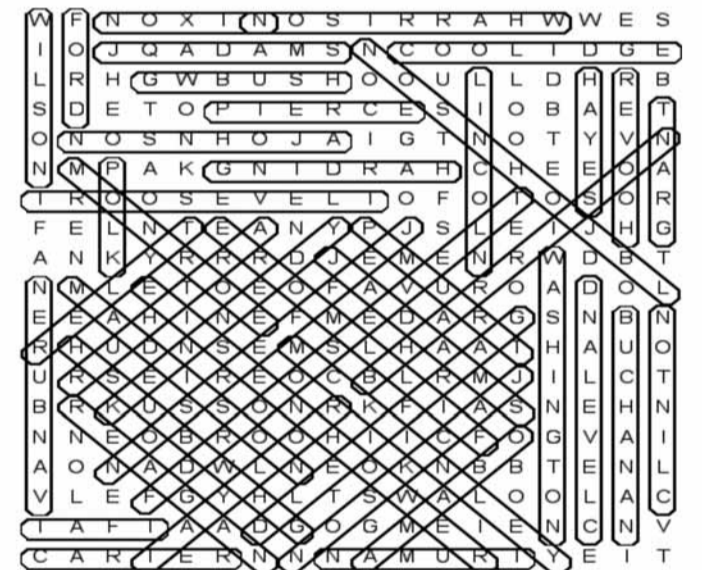
Find and circle all of the state capitals. The remaining letters spell a quote by Theodore Roosevelt.

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

- ALBANY (New York)
ANNAPOLIS (Maryland)
ATLANTA (Georgia)
AUGUSTA (Maine)
AUSTIN (Texas)
BATON ROUGE (Louisiana)
BISMARCK (North Dakota)
BOISE (Idaho)
BOSTON (Massachusetts)
CARSON CITY (Nevada)
CHARLESTON (West Virginia)
CHEYENNE (Wyoming)
COLUMBIA (South Carolina)
COLUMBUS (Ohio)
CONCORD (New Hampshire)
DENVER (Colorado)
DES MOINES (Iowa)
DOVER (Delaware)
FRANKFORT (Kentucky)
HARRISBURG (Pennsylvania)
HARTFORD (Connecticut)
HELENA (Montana)
HONOLULU (Hawaii)
INDIANAPOLIS (Indiana)
JACKSON (Mississippi)
JEFFERSON CITY (Missouri)
JUNEAU (Alaska)
LANSING (Michigan)
LINCOLN (Nebraska)
LITTLE ROCK (Arkansas)
MADISON (Wisconsin)
MONTGOMERY (Alabama)
MONTPELIER (Vermont)
NASHVILLE (Tennessee)
OKLAHOMA CITY (Oklahoma)
OLYMPIA (Washington)
PHOENIX (Arizona)
PIERRE (South Dakota)
PROVIDENCE (Rhode Island)
RALEIGH (North Carolina)
RICHMOND (Virginia)
SACRAMENTO (California)
SALEM (Oregon)
SALT LAKE CITY (Utah)
SANTA FE (New Mexico)
SPRINGFIELD (Illinois)
ST. PAUL (Minnesota)
TALLAHASSEE (Florida)
TOPEKA (Kansas)
TRENTON (New Jersey)

Friday's Solution

USA Presidents



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

The hidden sentence is: WE SHOULD BE TOO BIG TO TAKE OFFENSE AND TOO NOBLE TO GIVE IT.

Daily SuDoku

6x6 grid for Daily SuDoku with numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

hard

Friday's Solution

9x9 grid for Friday's Solution with numbers 1-9.

medium

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2020



Panda cubs born in 2019 play next to decorations to celebrate the upcoming Lunar New Year of the Rat, which falls on January 25 this year, at the Shenshuping breeding base of Wolong National Nature Reserve in Wenchuan, China's southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP

Art blooms in gritty Dakar neighborhood

Mamadou Boye Diallo, an art curator with a penchant for heart-shaped glasses, calls Dakar's working-class Medina neighborhood an open-air museum. Flitting on rollerblades between colorful murals in this part of the West African metropolis, Diallo, who is also a guide to the area, points to works by artists from all over the world. He heads an association which aims to use murals to save fading colonial-era buildings from destruction and to make art accessible to all—not just “guys in suits and ties”. The result is beautiful, if jarring. Swirling tableaux of geometrical or animal motifs enliven the walls in the otherwise nondescript cityscape.

One mural features a fist raised against a hypnotic-blue background, for example. Underneath it, carpenters work steadily at wood pallets. Another mural has two mysterious women set against brilliant indigos and azures staring into the distance. A real-life cow rummages on the ground at their feet. Diallo and some associates started the association Yataal Art—which means “expand art” in the Wolof language—in 2010.

They were initially asking artists to decorate walls. But now artists are coming to them, says Melodie Petit, the association's vice-president. She adds that artists approach families and ask permission before painting, often offering them dinner in return. “It's not a contract with a motorway company or a commercial sign. It's really a human contact,” Petit said.

‘Started little by little’

The group is also seeking to protect Medina's old colonial-era buildings from a construction boom that is transforming the face of Dakar. The neighborhood has its roots in Senegal's colonial past, when in 1914 French authorities moved black people from central Dakar's Plateau neighborhood, according to historian Ibrahima Thioub. Since then, the tight-knit community has nurtured artists across generations and has retained its identity even as new migrants moved in from the countryside. “While the Plateau was sleeping at night, Medina was waking up,” Thioub said.

World-renowned Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour is from Medina, for example, and painter Kre M'Baye kept his studio there. But change is coming to Medina, as rents skyrocket and large retailers set up shop. Sociologist Djiby Diakhate says residents at one time all knew one another and



Artist Haby Diallo gestures next to her work during the Tambambalou exhibition in the Madina District of Dakar. — AFP photos



Mamadou Boye Diallo (left), the founder of the Yataal Art fair, speaks with a friend during the Tambambalou exhibition in the Madina District of Dakar.

shared strong values. “Nostalgic people can't find their way around now,” he said. Guide Diallo wants to save the soul of the neighborhood from “certain groups of elitists” who come as developers.

Painting the walls of old colonial buildings is meant to save them. “We started little by little, now there are nearly 90 murals,” Diallo says. In many settings, murals are likely to cause hostility as well as popularity, but in this case, the majority of local people interviewed by AFP said they liked the art. Abdoulaye Bop, 34, a postman whose uncle owns an eatery in the

neighborhood, said that “everyone here likes the art, even if not everyone understands it”. Nidiawar Kan, 47, a carpenter who himself lives in an old Medina house, agreed. “It's very pretty,” he said. “It's better than dirty walls. And it brings changes to the neighborhood. We see foreigners taking photos,” he added, speaking in a mixture of French and Wolof. More and more tourists are visiting now, he says, but their presence is not entirely trusted either. “We want to keep our originality,” Diallo adds. “We are not on TripAdvisor.” — AFP

‘Maman Dion,’ mother of singer Celine, dies at 92

Therese Dion, the mother of “Titanic” singer Celine and affectionately known as “Maman Dion” has died at the age of 92, the performer said Friday. “Maman, we love you so much... We dedicate tonight's show to you and I'll sing to you with all my heart,” said the singer, who was to perform later in Miami. The star also posted on social media an old black and white family photo showing the matriarch surrounded by her husband and their 14 children. “Maman Dion died peacefully at home, last night, surrounded by her family,” said Productions Feeling, which manages Celine Dion's career.

Therese Dion was the wife of Adhemar Dion, who died after a long illness in 2003, and the mother of 14 children, the youngest of whom, Celine, has sold almost 250 million albums. She launched her 12-year-old daughter's career when she sent a cassette recording of her singing to Canadian music producer Rene Angelil in January 1981. He was impressed by her voice, and took her on. They later married, in 1994. Therese Dion hosted a cooking show on television for many

years, launching her own line of dishes called “Pates de Maman Dion.”

She also launched a foundation to provide school clothes and supplies to underprivileged children in Quebec. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau offered his condolences to her family, saying on Twitter that the elder Dion “has a special place in our hearts—she was an icon in her own right and a generous philanthropist.” Quebec Premier Francois Legault paid tribute to “a remarkable woman, so generous, so loving, who devoted her entire life to the well-being of her family.”

“Our greater Quebec family weeps at her departure,” he added. “We have only one mom, and the one who raised and supported one of the biggest voices in the world died. All my condolences to the Dion family,” Canada's heritage minister Steven Guilbeault said. A grandmother of 32, Dion had 48 great-grandchildren and was great-great-grandmother to six others, the Canadian channel TVA said. Celine Dion is currently on her first international tour in a decade, promoting her album “Courage.” — AFP



In this file photo Celine Dion and Therese Tanguay Dion attend the premiere of Celine: Through The Eyes of The World presented by Piaget at Regal South Beach Cinema in Miami Beach, Florida. —AFP



In this file photo taken on May 7, 2018 Madonna (left) and Jean Paul Gaultier arrive for the 2018 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on October 4, 2005 US model Crystal Renn presents a creation by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier during the Spring/Summer 2006 Ready-to-Wear collections in Paris.



In this file photo taken on October 02, 2010 British singer Beth Ditto sings as part of the Spring/Summer 2011 ready-to-wear collection show of French designer Jean Paul Gaultier in Paris.



In this file photo taken on January 27, 2003 a model presents a creation by French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier in Paris during the presentation of Gaultier's Men Fall-Winter 2003 ready-to-wear collection.

Style legend **Jean-Paul Gaultier** retires from fashion

French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier shocked the fashion world Friday by saying his next Paris haute couture show will be his last. The flamboyant creator said he would be bowing out Wednesday with "a big party" to mark his 50 years in the business after his latest collection hits the catwalk. His brand told AFP that his high-end



In this file photo taken on July 8, 2001 a model presents an outfit for Jean Paul Gaultier in Paris during the Autumn-Winter 2001/2002 haute couture collections.



In this file photo taken on July 4, 2012 a model presents a creation by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier during the Haute Couture Fall-Winter 2012-2013 collections shows in Paris.



In this file photo taken on July 7, 2006 a model presents a creation by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier during the Fall/Winter 2006-07 Haute Couture collections in Paris.



In this file photo taken on January 24, 2018 Dutch model Anna Cleveland presents a creation by Jean-Paul Gaultier during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



In this file photo taken on July 8, 2015 Dutch model Anna Cleveland presents a creation by Jean Paul Gaultier during the 2015-2016 fall/winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.

fashion and perfume business would live on, but that 67-year-old Gaultier was stepping back from designing clothes himself. "Rest assured, haute couture will continue with a new concept," said the designer, who made pop history by putting Madonna in a conical bra, invented the "man skirt" and brought body diversity to the runway.

American singer Beth Ditto and the bearded Austrian drag queen Conchita Wurst were among the atypical models whom he charmed into his party-like shows. The eternal enfant terrible dropped his bombshell in a typically jokey video message, shot as if he was giving an exclusive interview to a reporter over the phone.



In this file photo taken on July 3, 2019 a model presents a creation by Jean Paul Gaultier during the Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.

Reclining on a chaise longue, Gaultier whispered, "Now I am going to give you a scoop. It will be my last couture show. You have to come, you can't miss that... but, but, but, I assure you, Gaultier Paris will go on, the haute couture will continue.

"I have a new concept. I will tell you about it later, all the little secrets. To be con-



In this file photo taken on June 5, 2004 French fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier poses with a sculpture of one of his dresses made of bread by French bakers for an exhibition at the Cartier Fondation in Paris.



In this file photo taken on January 26, 2011 US model Lindsey Wixson presents a creation by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier during the Spring-Summer 2011 Haute Couture Collection Show in Paris.

tinued! Kisses!" Farida Khelfa, the first supermodel of North African origin, whose career Gaultier launched, was among the first to react to the news. "Thank you maestro," she wrote on Instagram next to a picture of them arm-in-arm on the catwalk, a rose between her teeth.

'Fiesta of fabric and flesh'

Gaultier stopped designing ready-to-wear clothes in 2015 to concentrate on haute couture-extravagant handmade clothes which only the world's richest women can afford. But as late as last year, the maverick insisted that he had no intention of hanging up his scissors-although he despaired of animal rights activists pressuring him to stop using furs. "I really like the feel of fur," he told AFP, as he confessed that he was wavering about dropping furs from his shows. "I have a charming little pussy, and I love animals, though I draw the line at crocodiles," he said. While his couture business owned by the Catalan luxury group Puig was never a huge money maker, his perfumes-often featuring his impossibly handsome sailor boys-continue to be bestsellers.

A child fashion prodigy, Gaultier said he started by making showgirl outfits for his



In this file photo taken on January 28, 2009 a model presents a creation by French designer Jean Paul Gaultier during a Spring/Summer 2009 Haute Couture collection show in Paris.



In this file photo taken on March 19, 2019 Spanish actress Rossy de Palma poses with an outfit designed by French fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier for his upcoming "Fashion Freak Show" starting March 21 at the 'Folies Bergere' theatre with de Palma as a guest star at the Jean-Paul Gaultier workshop in Paris.

teddy bear. He was personal assistant to French fashion magnate Pierre Cardin at 18, and rose to fame in the 1980s alongside designers like Thierry Mugler when the Paris fashion scene was at its most decadent. From the start he challenged gender stereotypes and conventional ideas of beauty, once placing an advert for "atypical" models. "The facially disfigured should not refrain from applying," he added. — AFP

Men in skirts, Madonna in cones and lots of sailors: The Gaultier style

When Jean-Paul Gaultier walks away from fashion design, he will leave behind a rich legacy of men in skirts, Madonna in a conical bra and lots of sailor stripes. The famous French fashion designer said he will be bowing out Wednesday with a big party to mark his 50 years in the business after his final haute couture collection hits the catwalk. AFP looks back at Gaultier's signature style.

Madonna's iconic cones

One of his grandmother's old corsets fascinated Gaultier as a child. He went on to buy such restrictive undergarments in second-hand shops and decorate them with military crosses. When music star and fashion icon Madonna asked him to create her wardrobe for her 1990 "Blond Ambition" tour, one of the pieces he created for her was a pink corset with a conical bustier, which swiftly became the most famous piece of clothing in pop history.

The sailor boy/girl

Gaultier has been inspired by the clothes of his youth. The sailor's stripes were turned into a unisex staple, adoring everything

from T-shirts to long gowns. The French artists known as Pierre et Gilles immortalized Gaultier in his signature blue and white stripes with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. His fragrance for men "Le Male", which came out in 1995, has a bottle with both the form and the colors of his idealized sailor boy.

Men in skirts

A slayer of gender-based clothing traditions, Gaultier caused a sensation in 1984 when he included skirts in his collection "And God created Man". For him, "a man doesn't wear his masculinity on his clothes. His virility is in his head." He has used different fabrics to unpick the codes of masculine and feminine couture. The tartan of a Scottish kilt would also be used, playfully inviting us all to join in breaking down the boundaries.

Different models

Gaultier has embraced diversity and finds beauty everywhere. In the 1980s he ran a small ad in the French Liberation daily seeking "Atypical models. The facially disfigured should not refrain from applying".

Breaking with the traditional tenets of beauty for fashion models, he sent overweight, elderly and non-white models down his runways. It was Gaultier who launched the career of Farida Khelfa, the first prominent model of North African origin, as well as the generously proportioned American singer Beth Ditto and the bearded Austrian singer-drag queen Conchita Wurst.

The Fifth Element

Gaultier's inventiveness was not restricted to fashion shows. His designs made their way to stage and screen. He had a winning partnership with Spanish film director Pedro Almodovar, working on his films "Kika" and "The City of Lost Children". He also created designs for French director Luc Besson's 1997 sci-fi action film "The Fifth Element". In that film, which has become a classic of French cinema, he dressed Ukrainian-born actress Milla Jovovitch with a minimalist jumpsuit, made of just a few strips of white fabric. Her orange hair in the film is echoed in the outfits of co-star Bruce Willis and the uniforms of McDonald's employees. — AFP

All is dandy: Dior goes English aristo chic in Paris men's show

Kim Jones injected a spot of English aristocratic insouciance into the DNA of Dior Friday, with a starry men's Paris fashion week show that riffed on British upper class eccentricity. This was the fabled French label at its most dandyish and decadent, with top coats with velvet collars, trompe l'oeil grey minks and a staggering silver-embroidered opera coat which will retail for 75,000 euros (\$83,000). Jones dedicated the show to his friend Judy Blame, the British stylist and punk and New Romantic iconoclast who died two years ago.

Several of Blame's jewelry designs were included in the show, including a chain with a coin bearing his head, as well as his signature pearl-encrusted opera gloves. "The world is a bit depressing at the moment and I wanted to do something celebratory" as a tribute to Blame's genius, Jones told AFP. "It's really upscale and decadent and terribly couture, with luxurious materials like vicuna and beautiful cashmere coats imitating sealskin."

The British-born creator said he "always loved that London twist on Parisian chic couture", with leather trousers, natty re-imagined Chelsea boots and bomber jackets that zipped into two and could be mixed and matched. "I like the thought that some of it looks like it has been handed down through an aristocratic family," Jones added. — AFP



Models present creations for Dior Homme during the men's Fall/Winter 2020/2021 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

GNTB 'Discover Beethoven' campaign kicks off



The German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is launching its worldwide "Discover Beethoven" theme campaign just in time for the start of the anniversary year marking Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday.

"With 21.8 million cultural travelers, we are the number one cultural destination in Europe," explains Petra Hedorfer, Chairwoman of the GNTB Executive Board. "To strengthen Germany's outstanding position as a nation of music, we are setting further digital priorities with the Beethoven campaign. In addition to the central points of interest in the Bonn region, the campaign will also include activities throughout Germany to strengthen the demand for cultural tourism in general, and the basic theme 'Musikland Deutschland' in particular. Because of the anniversary, Lonely Planet has ranked Beethoven's birthplace, Bonn, number 5 among the cities worldwide to be visited in 2020.

Cooperation with Beethoven Anniversary Society

The GNTB has signed a cooperation agreement with the Beethoven Jubiläums Gesellschaft mbH (Beethoven Anniversary Society) to market the anniversary abroad jointly. The subsidiary of the Beethoven House Foundation is responsible for organizing, promoting, and coordinating the anniversary year as an event with international appeal and regional roots. By integrating the GNTB's global networks, the joint activity is going to be communicated even more efficiently internationally and will open up new markets.

Exploring opportunities in high-potential source markets

As part of the theme campaign, the GNTB places relevant content in over 50

markets worldwide. Besides, there are in-depth activities in defined key markets: In the USA, China, and Japan, for example, B2B events will be held at the beginning of the 2020 theme year. Already at the beginning of December, a press highlight trip was conducted, culminating in the attendance of the opening concert in Bonn. The GNTB will be implementing further B2B events and press highlights in European TOP markets for German incoming tourism during the entire year.

A modern interpretation of classic heritage

In all source markets, the GNTB uses modern digital forms of communication to present Beethoven's classical heritage in a contemporary way. A virtual reality application, for example, offers international guests at GNTB events a unique opportunity to "play" Beethoven excerpts from the 9th Symphony live on piano with four hands. Also, an augmented reality application produces "live photos" with Beethoven. A microsite in German, English, French, Chinese, and Japanese bundles information on the anniversary and cultural tourism offers. The GNTB also organizes social media campaigns and influencer trips worldwide. Five films in the "Great Big Story" series are produced with the international media partner CNN and played out in the worldwide Turner network.

Based on market and benchmark analyses, the GNTB develops more than 200 campaigns each year to promote the brand core of Germany as a travel destination. Annual highlight themes, which are event- or event-related, draw attention to previously unknown facets of Germany as a travel destination and complement the brand communication.



This file photo Eminem walking on stage to accept the Video of the Year Award at the MTV Video Music Awards in New York. — AFP

Eminem album urges gun control, sparks anger over bomb lyric

Guess who's back?... Rapper Eminem surprised fans Friday by dropping a new album featuring a strong anti-gun violence theme but also stoking the kind of controversy that brought him fame. On the album, one track called "Darkness" tells the story of a loner going on a shooting spree, while another song, "Unaccommodating," has triggered outcry and muddled the veteran singer's call for gun control. The song references the 2017 deadly bombing at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, Britain, which left 22 people dead.

"But I'm contemplating yelling 'bombs away' on the game like I'm outside of an Ariana Grande concert waiting," the 47-year-old artist, born Marshall Mathers, raps on the track. The lyric was met with scorn on social media, with some users dubbing it "disgusting" and "trash."

The new album, called "Music to Be Murdered By," features appearances from the late rapper Juice WRLD, along with Q-Tip, Ed Sheeran, Anderson .Paak and regular collaborator singer Skylar Grey. Dr. Dre is credited throughout as a producer. Eminem released his last album "Kamikaze" in 2018 in a similar sudden fashion. That album included several attacks on President Donald Trump. The rapper also released Friday a video for "Darkness" that featured audio and footage from the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, the deadliest US gun massacre carried about by an individual in modern history. It ends urging viewers to register to vote: "Make your voice heard and help change gun laws in America," closing text reads. —AFP

Michelin strips star from French culinary beacon Bocuse



Paul Bocuse's restaurant "L'auberge du Pont de Collonges" is pictured on January 17, 2020 in Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or near Lyon, southeastern France. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on November 9, 2012 French chef Paul Bocuse, at Collonges au Mont d'Or, works in l'Auberged Pont de Collonges kitchen, during a culinary work shop, in Mont d'Or.

Two years after the death of renowned French chef Paul Bocuse, the Michelin Guide has stripped his flagship restaurant of the coveted three-star ranking it held for half a century, prompting anger and dismay from his culinary peers. The Auberge du Pont de Collonges, near food-obsessed Lyon in southeast France, was the oldest three-starred restaurant in the world, having held the accolade since 1965. The Michelin Guide told AFP on Friday that the establishment "remained excellent but no longer at the level of three stars" and will have only two in the 2020 edition of the famous red book dubbed the "bible" of French cuisine.

"Michelin stars have to be earned, not inherited," Michelin Guide boss Gwendal Poullennec told RTL broadcaster. Bocuse's family and restaurant team said they were "upset" by the decision, and celebrity chef Marc Veyrat, who recently sued the Michelin Guide over a lost third star, described the move as "pathetic". The Bocuse d'Or organization, which manages the annual cooking competition he created, also greeted the announcement with "sadness" and expressed its "unwavering support" for the restaurant.

"Monsieur Paul", as Bocuse was known, died aged 91 on January 20, 2018, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Nicknamed the "pope" of French cuisine, he was one of the country's most celebrated chefs, helping shake up the food world in the 1970s with the lighter fare of the Nouvelle Cuisine revolution, and introduce the notion of culinary celebrity.

'I love butter'

Even before Bocuse's death, some critics had commented that the restaurant was no longer quite up to scratch. But Michelin's decision, a year after controversially stripping Veyrat of his third star, immediately stirred discontent. Food critic Perico Legasse told BFM news channel the guide had committed an "irreparable" error in what he called its quest to create media hype. Veyrat said he had "lost faith" in a new generation of Michelin editors he accuses of trying to make a name for themselves by taking down the giants of French cuisine.

"I am sad for the team that took up the torch at Collonges," tweeted three-starred chef Georges Blanc, while Lyon Mayor Gerard Collomb spoke of his "immense disappointment". Two other Lyon restaurants each lost a Michelin star in 2019. The setback for the Auberge du Pont de Collonges comes despite efforts to modernize its look and menu, pursuing a philosophy management describes as "tradition in motion". "The chefs have reworked the dishes. They have been refining them for more than a year, evolving them while retaining their original DNA and taste," manager Vincent Le Roux recently told a regional newspaper. The restaurant is scheduled to reopen on January 24 after three weeks of renovations. Bocuse was himself a devotee of traditional cuisine. "I love butter, cream, wine" he once said, "not peas cut into quarters".

Three-star pressure

Gastronomy publication Atabula was a lone voice in supporting the Michelin move, which it described as a much-needed "revolution" in an industry held back by decades of inertia. According to Michelin, restaurants are selected on four criteria: the quality of the products, the expertise of the chef, the originality of the dishes and consistency throughout the meal and across seasons. But critics say the process has rendered Michelin stars untenable as more and more diners balk at spending a fortune on a meal.

France's Michelin, the go-to guide on fine dining

France's prestigious Michelin Guide is among the world's most influential references on gourmet dining, its star ratings highly coveted and sometimes controversial. Amid shock in France after it dropped one of the three stars held by the restaurant of the late world-renowned chef Paul Bocuse for 55 years, here is some background.

120 years old

French tyre manufacturer Michelin brought out a travel guide in 1900, the early days of the automobile, to encourage motorists to take to the road and so boost its business. The free, red guidebook included maps, a how-to on changing tyres and lists of mechanics and hotels along the route. The first run of 35,000 copies was such a success that guides for Belgium, Germany, Portugal and Spain followed.

Star rating

The guide included restaurant listings from 1920, when it started charging for the publication. It began sending out undercover inspectors, and from the early 1930s introduced its famous star ratings. Michelin says it issues up to three stars based on the quality of the ingredients used; mastery of flavor and cooking techniques; the personality of the chef in his cuisine; value for money; and consistency between visits.

One star indicates "High quality cooking, worth a stop"; two stars is for "Excellent cooking, worth a detour"; and three rates "Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey". Of about 20,000 international restaurants listed, only around 130 have attained the highest distinction.

Michelin goes global

In 2005 the Michelin Guide branched out of

A handful of French restaurateurs have in recent years relinquished their prized three-star status because of the stress of being judged by Michelin inspectors. In 2018, the guide allowed, for the first time, a restaurant to withdraw from its listings after Sebastien Bras, the chef at Le Suquet, said he no longer wished to cook under that type of pressure. The 2003 suicide of three-star chef Bernard Loiseau was linked, among other reasons, to speculation that his restaurant was about to lose three-star status. —AFP

Europe with a New York guide, followed in 2007 by editions for San Francisco then Las Vegas and Los Angeles. It moved to Asia with a Tokyo version in 2008 when 90,000 copies, in English and Japanese, flew off the shelves in 48 hours. Michelin published its first Shanghai guide in 2016 and today there are versions for several Asian cities, with Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo also covered.

Having long been criticized as biased towards formal dining, the guide in 2016 awarded a star to a Singapore street food outlet known for a braised chicken dish. A famed Tokyo sushi restaurant, where Barack Obama is said to have enjoyed the best sushi of his life, was meanwhile dropped from the 2020 edition after it stopped accepting reservations from the general public.

A lot of pressure

A handful of French restaurateurs have relinquished their Michelin status because of the stress of being judged by its inspectors, including Joel Robuchon (1996), Alain Senderens (2005), Olivier Roellinger (2008) and Sebastien Bras (2017).

The 2003 suicide of three-star chef Bernard Loiseau was linked, among other reasons, to hints that his restaurant was about to lose its three stars. Star Swiss chef Benoit Violier took his life in 2016, a day ahead of the release of the Michelin Guide, although his restaurant maintains its three-star rating. The guide was taken to court for the first time in 2019 when celebrity chef Marc Veyrat sued it for stripping one of his restaurants of a third star and suggesting—wrongly, he insists—that he had used cheddar cheese in a soufflé. His lawsuit was rejected. —AFP

'Simpsons' actor says he'll no longer voice Apu after controversy



Hank Azaria of "Brockmire" speaks during the IFC segment of the 2020 Winter TCA Press Tour at The Langham Huntington, Pasadena. — AFP

"Simpsons" actor Hank Azaria will no longer voice the Indian character Apu, US media reported, more than two years after accusations of racism marred the long-running animated series. Apu Nahasapeemapetilon is the manager of the show's Kwik-E-Mart convenience store and a mainstay of the TV comedy, which recently celebrated its 30th year on air. He is voiced by white actor Azaria, whose marked accent for the role has been criticized by viewers, who have also accused writers of using Indian stereotypes in their treatment of the character. "What they're going to do with the character is their call," Azaria told US film news website SlashFilm on Friday. "It's up to them and they haven't sorted it out yet. All we've agreed on is I won't do the voice anymore."

Creators of "The Simpsons" found themselves under fire in late 2017 with the release of a documentary by comedian Hari Kondabolu, who interviewed fellow entertainers of Indian and South Asian origin to document their feelings about the character. Both Azaria and "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening refused to appear in the documentary to answer questions. But Azaria later told a reporter from the TMZ celebrity website that Kondabolu "made some really interesting points" and "gave us a lot at 'The Simpsons' to think about."

"The Simpsons" stars Homer, the family patriarch working for a nuclear power station, his wife and voice of reason Marge, and children Bart, Lisa and Maggie. Since it first aired in 1989, the show has won more than 30 Emmys. In its early years, the animated comedy regularly pulled in more than 15 million viewers and had double that — 33 million—for its most-watched episode in 1990. It became so popular that references to the show have formed part of pop culture. Declining audience figures had led to fears that it would not be renewed, but Fox committed to continue "The Simpsons" until at least a 32nd season in 2021. — AFP

Classifieds

Sunday, January 19, 2020

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 50 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			Fresh wind		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 18/01/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	18 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	24 °C	16 °C			
ABDALY	23 °C	17 °C			
BUBYAN	22 °C	16 °C			
JAHRA	23 °C	16 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	23 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	23 °C	17 °C			
NUWAISIB	23 °C	16 °C			
WAFRA	23 °C	14 °C			
SALMY	22 °C	14 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	01/19	Fair	22 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Monday	01/20	Fair and some high clouds will appear	22 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	01/21	Fair and Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	01/22	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	21 °C	12 °C	SE-NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:54
Sunset	17:14
Isha	18:35

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	91 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	S 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

ALAUDEEN S/o SHAIK BABA, holder of Indian Passport No. P1094143 & Civil ID No. 274071201684 has changed my name from ALAUDEEN to SHEIK ALAUDEEN (Given Name). (C 5614) 19-1-2020

I Anmolika My Passport 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)

I Abdullah S/o Muhammed Umar Tanwar holder of Indian Passport No. M1802552 & Civil ID No. 293011803513 has changed my name from Abdullah to Abdullah (given name) Tanwar (surname) hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Abdullah Tanwar. (C 5606) 17-1-2020

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

Add Naigaon Christian 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 vasal. (C 5611)

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

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

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

Airlines

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

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 19/1/2020				Departure Flights on Sunday 19/1/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05
FEG	241	Alexandria	00:30	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
NIA	561	Asyut	00:45	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:45
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
KAC	102	London	00:55	FEG	342	Sohag	01:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:55	NIA	364	Alexandria	01:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JZR	119	Dubai	01:55
ETH	3424	Addis Ababa/Bahrain	01:30	KAC	677	Dubai	01:55
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	JZR	111	Doha	01:55
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00
PGT	840	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20
IGO	002	LGW	01:55	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30
UAE	1759	Delhi	01:55	KAC	417	Manila	02:30
ETH	620	Dubai	02:15	PGT	841	Istanbul	02:50
RBG	551	Addis Ababa	02:25	ETH	3425	Addis Ababa	02:55
KLM	446	Alexandria	02:30	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
QTR	1086	Bahrain	02:40	RBG	552	Alexandria	03:05
OMA	643	Doha	02:55	UAE	854	Cairo	03:40
RJA	648	Muscat	03:05	KAC	621	Doha	03:50
PGT	860	Amman	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
ETD	305	Istanbul	03:05	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
MSR	612	Abu Dhabi	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:00
KAC	414	Cairo	03:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
LMU	510	Bangkok	04:00	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
QTR	1076	Cairo	04:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25
IGO	1751	Doha	04:00	JZR	713	Sohag	04:30
KAC	418	Chennai	04:10	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:35
OHY	352	Dubai	04:25	JZR	707	Luxor	04:40
KAC	302	Istanbul	04:30	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	406	Mumbai	04:40	KAC	103	London	05:00
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	THY	721	Istanbul	06:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	113	Doha	06:40
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	JZR	001D	LGW	06:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	RJA	649	Amman	06:55
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
QTR	8511	Dammam	05:45	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	QTR	8512	Doha	07:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
JZR	120	Dubai	06:50	KAC	165	Rome	08:15
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	161	Geneva	08:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	BAW	156	London	09:00
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	163	MXP	09:00
KAC	622	Doha	08:00	JZR	539	KTM	09:05
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	671	Dubai	09:25
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	QTR	1085	Doha	09:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	561	Amman	09:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KAC	117	New York	10:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	791	Madinah	10:00
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20
QTR	122	Dubai	11:15	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
JZR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	JZR	611	Tbilisi	10:45
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	KAC	741	Dammam	11:05

Iran downplays protests, says foes exploiting plane tragedy

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader said Friday that demonstrations at home over the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner were unrepresentative of the Iranian people and accused the country's enemies of exploiting the disaster for propaganda purposes.

Leading the main weekly Muslim prayers in Tehran for the first time since 2012, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the January 8 incident was a "bitter" tragedy but should not be allowed to overshadow the "sacrifice" of one of Iran's most storied commanders, assassinated in a US drone strike.

His sermon came after a traumatic month for Iran in which it approached the brink of war with the United States and mistakenly shot down the Ukrainian jet, killing all 176 people on board. "The plane crash was a bitter accident, it burned through our heart," Khamenei said in an address punctuated by cries of "Death to America" from the congregation.

"But some tried to... portray it in a way to forget the great martyrdom and sacrifice" of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the head of the foreign operations arm of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards who was assassinated in Baghdad on January 3. Khamenei said Iran's enemies had tried to use the plane tragedy to undermine the Islamic republic. "Our enemies were as happy about the plane crash as we were sad," he said.

"The spokesmen of the vicious American government keep repeating that we stand with the people of Iran. You're lying," Khamenei said. He also slammed Britain, France and Germany, which on Tuesday decided to trigger a dispute mechanism in the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, following US threats to impose tariffs on European cars. "It has been proven now, after about a year, that they are, in the true sense of the word, America's lackeys," he said. President Donald Trump reacted by tweeting that Khamenei should watch his words.

"The so-called 'Supreme Leader' of Iran, who has not been so Supreme lately, had some nasty things to say about the United States and Europe," Trump tweeted. "Their economy is crashing, and their people are

suffering. He should be very careful with his words!"

The air disaster triggered scattered protests in Tehran and other cities, but they appeared smaller than nationwide demonstrations in November in which Amnesty International said at least 300 people died. On Friday, anti-riot police staged a massive deployment in Tehran, an AFP correspondent said.

Khamenei said the protesters were unrepresentative of the Iranian people, who had turned out in their hundreds of thousands in what he called a "million-strong crowd" for Soleimani's funeral.

Praising the slain general, Khamenei said his actions beyond Iran's borders were in the service of the "security" of the nation and that the people support "resistance" against its enemies. It was people like Soleimani, not the protesters, who had devoted their lives to Iran, Khamenei told thousands of worshippers who crammed into the mosque and spilled into the snowy streets outside.

'Divine help'

Khamenei's sermon came at a tumultuous moment for Iran, which had seemed headed for conflict earlier in January after Soleimani was killed on January 3 outside Baghdad airport, prompting retaliatory strikes against Iraqi bases housing US troops. Khamenei hailed the strikes as a "sign of divine help". "It was a strike to their reputation, to America's might. This cannot be compensated by anything... sanctions cannot return the lost prestige of America," he said. The animosity between Washington and Tehran has soared since US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposed biting sanctions. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday urged a "de-escalation" of the tensions and an end to the "constant threats". The plane tragedy "is a very serious red flag and signal to start working on de-escalation and not on constant threats and combat aviation flights in this region", Lavrov said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Friday he had met his Canadian counterpart Francois-

black boxes were being sent to Kiev at the request of Ukrainian experts in Tehran and that they would not be inspected in Iran.

The US-built Boeing 737-800 was en route from Tehran to the Ukrainian capital. Most of those on board were Iranians or dual nationals. Canada had 57 citizens on board. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has been pressing for a full investigation into the plane downing, said on Friday Iran should send the black boxes to France.

France was one of the few countries with the ability to read the flight and cockpit data recorders from the jet, he told a news conference, adding they were badly damaged. Canada's Foreign Ministry and the prime minister's office had no immediate comment on the move to send the black boxes to Ukraine. The French Foreign Ministry had no immediate comment and a spokesman for the France's air accident agency, BEA, said it was awaiting an official request for assistance. Ukraine has previously said it expected Iran to hand over the black boxes to Ukraine. The foreign minister also expects Iranian representatives to travel to Kiev next week. Canada, alongside Ukraine, Sweden, Afghanistan and Britain, which also had citizens on the flight, have called for a thorough investigation and compensation for the families.

The plane was brought down in the tense hours after Iran launched missiles at US targets in Iraq in response to the US killing of an Iranian commander in a drone strike on Jan. 3 in Baghdad. Iran's foreign ministry urged those involved in the crash to avoid making it an "excuse for political gestures". — Reuters

GDP over the medium term. This is primarily due to substantial investment returns generated through managing the existing stock of KIA assets. We do not expect any debt issuance for now because parliament has not yet passed the new debt law," it said. Consequently, the government will continue to rely on asset drawdowns from the GRF to finance deficits at the central government level.

"Continued unchecked reliance on GRF assets to fund deficits at the central government level could ultimately lead to the GRF's depletion, although we understand this is more a medium-term risk rather than an immediate one. Our baseline expectation is that parliament will finally pass the amended debt law within the next two to three years, authorizing the government to borrow. The Finance Ministry has recently amended this new draft debt law but is yet to submit it to parliament. The global rating agency expected Kuwait's current account to remain in surplus in 2020, largely mirroring its fiscal performance, turning to only modest deficits from 2021 onward. Although it expected oil prices to moderate over the medium term, Kuwait's plans to expand production will support its external position. At the same time, growing domestic consumption at fixed exchange rates of the Kuwaiti dinar means imports will also rise, eroding current account surpluses. Kuwait's exchange rate is pegged to an undisclosed basket of currencies. This basket is dominated by the US dollar, the currency in which the majority of Kuwaiti exports are priced and transacted.

"In our view, Kuwait's foreign exchange regime is somewhat more flexible than those in most other GCC countries that maintain a peg to the dollar alone. For example, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) decided to cut the key interest rate only once in 2019 by 25bps to 2.75 percent, while ignoring rate cuts by the Federal Reserve in July and September," it said. It believed that some degree of monetary-policy divergence between the Federal Reserve and the CBK is possible, in part due to the limited amount of portfolio flows between Kuwait and the rest of the world. Despite the challenging operating environment, the Kuwaiti banking sector remains resilient with stable profitability and improved asset quality. In our view, concentration in the commercial real estate segment remains a key credit risk for banks. —KUNA



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday shows a general view of crowds of worshippers as Khamenei leads Friday prayers during a ceremony at the capital Tehran's Grand Mosallah (mosque). — AFP

Philippe Champagne in Oman to discuss cooperation among nations affected by the disaster.

The Boeing 737 was carrying 63 Canadians among other nationalities when it was shot down. "Politicization of this tragedy must be rejected. Focus on victims' families," Zarif tweeted.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urged Iran to hand the plane's black boxes to France, saying it has one of the few laboratories capable of properly

examining them. In June 2019, Iran and the United States had also appeared to be on the brink of direct military confrontation after Tehran shot down a US drone it said had violated its airspace. Trump said he called off retaliatory strikes at the last minute. President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that Iran was "working daily to prevent military confrontation or war", and maintained that a dialogue with the world was still "possible". — AFP

Iran to send black boxes of downed plane to Ukraine

DUBAI: Iran said yesterday it was sending to Ukraine the black boxes from a Ukrainian passenger plane that the Iranian military shot down this month, an accident that sparked unrest at home and added to pressure on Tehran abroad. Iran's Tasnim news agency also reported the authorities were prepared for experts from France, Canada and the United States to examine information from the data and voice recorders of the Ukraine International Airlines plane that came down on Jan. 8.

The plane disaster, in which all 176 aboard were killed, has added to international pressure on Iran as it grapples with a long running row with the United States over its nuclear program that briefly erupted into open conflict this month. The plane was shot down in error at a time when Iran was on high alert for a US attack. But the military took days to admit they had brought it down, a delay that sparked protests. Hassan Rezaifar, a director in charge of accident investigations at Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, said the aim was to read the information on the recorders "with the use of the expertise of the countries of France, Canada and America". "If this effort is unsuccessful then the black box will be sent to France," he said, according to Tasnim, adding that

S&P affirms Kuwait's credit...

Continued from Page 1

\$55/bbl thereafter," it said. Beyond 2020, growth rates are forecast to accelerate to an average of 2.5 percent over 2021-2023, basing this on an expectation of OPEC+ oil production cuts ultimately being discontinued and Kuwait's planned expansion of oil output and refining capacity, including via the restart of production within the Partitioned Neutral Zone (PNZ) between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

We understand that the two countries have reached an agreement to resume production, following years of PNZ inactivity. Oil production from the PNZ could amount to 0.5 mbpd once operational, although actual output will remain lower in the short term, partly because Kuwait will continue to comply with the new OPEC+ agreed cuts," it noted. Despite somewhat stronger institutional arrangements, Kuwait's structural reform efforts have generally lagged behind other regional economies in recent years. Unlike Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, Kuwait still has not introduced value-added tax.

Without the debt law, the government is not able to issue new debt and thus continues to rely on large asset drawdowns to fund deficits at the central government level, it suggested. A significant escalation of regional tensions could have a detrimental impact on Kuwait's economy if trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz are disrupted, it said.

On flexibility and performance, it said strongest net general government asset position of all rated sovereigns Kuwait's formidable government assets, as a percentage of GDP, remain a key ratings strength. These result from historical savings of oil profits and are accumulated in the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the sovereign wealth fund. "Despite our forecast of a reduction in the oil price to \$55 in 2021 from an average price of \$60 that we project for 2020, we still expect Kuwait will continue to post headline general government surpluses averaging 8 percent of

Trump gives vivid account of Soleimani's last minutes

PALM BEACH, Fla: US President Donald Trump gave a minute-to-minute account of the US drone strikes that killed Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani in remarks to a Republican fund-raising dinner on Friday night, according to audio obtained by CNN. With his typical dramatic flourish, Trump recounted the scene as he monitored the strikes from the White House Situation Room when Soleimani was killed.

The president spoke in a ballroom at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, at a Republican event that raised \$10 million for Trump's 2020 re-election campaign and for the Republican National Committee. Reporters were not allowed in for the event. CNN said it obtained an audio recording of Trump's remarks. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Jan 3 killing of Soleimani at Baghdad airport

Lebanon protesters lob traffic signs...

Continued from Page 1

"We ask peaceful protesters to keep away from the site of the rioting for their safety."

An AFP photographer saw young men uproot parking meters. He also saw around 10 people faint from the tear gas. A female protester named Maya, 23, said she was attending the protest because politicians still seemed to be ignoring demands for an overhaul of the old political class. "I'm here because after more than 90 days in the streets,

Libya oil exports blocked; Berlin...

Continued from Page 1

Both Haftar and Sarraj are also expected at the gathering, the first of such scale on the conflict since 2018. After months of combat, which has killed more than 2,000 people, a ceasefire took effect on January 12 backed by both Ankara and Moscow, which is accused of supporting Haftar. But yesterday's blockade raised fears over the conflict. The disruption to oil exports is expected to more than halve the country's daily crude production, to 500,000 barrels from 1.3 million barrels, translating to losses of \$55 million a day, warned Libya's National Oil Company.

"Our line at the UN is clear. Don't play with petrol because it's the livelihood of the Libyans," warned Salame just hours before the blockade. "Don't play with petrol, be it by turning it into a weapon of war or a way to cause divisions or as a bidding tool."

The oil-rich North African country has been torn by fighting between rival armed factions since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi and toppled his regime. More recently, Haftar's forces launched an assault in April on Sarraj's troops in Tripoli.

Although Sarraj's government is recognized by the UN, some powerful players have broken away to stand behind Haftar—turning a domestic conflict into what is essentially a proxy war with international powers jostling to secure their own interests from global influence to oil and migration. Alarm grew internationally when Ankara ordered in troops early January to help shore up Sarraj, while Moscow is suspected of providing weapons, financing and mercenaries to Haftar—something Russia has denied.

"We must end this vicious cycle of Libyans calling for the help of foreign powers. Their intervention deep-

prompted Iran to retaliate with missile strikes against US forces in Iraq days later and almost triggered a broad war between the two countries.

"They're together sir," Trump said military officials told him. "Sir, they have two minutes and 11 seconds. No emotion. Two minutes and 11 seconds to live, sir. They're in the car, they're in an armored vehicle. Sir, they have approximately one minute to live, sir. Thirty seconds. Ten, 9, 8..."

"Then all of a sudden, boom," he said. "They're gone, sir. Cutting off."

"I said, where is this guy?" Trump continued. "That was the last I heard from him."

It was the most detailed account that Trump has given of the drone strike, which has drawn criticism from some US lawmakers because neither the president nor his advisers have provided public information to back up their statements that Soleimani presented an "imminent" threat to Americans in the region. CNN said that in the audio, Trump did not repeat that Soleimani was an imminent threat. Trump said Soleimani was "saying bad things about our country" before the strike, which led to his decision to authorize his killing. "How much of this shit do we have to listen to?" Trump asked in the audio. "How much are we going to listen to?" — Reuters

they're still squabbling over their shares in government... It's as if they didn't see our movement," she said. "Popular anger is the solution," the young protester said. Forming a new cabinet is often convoluted in Lebanon, where a complex system seeks to maintain balance between the country's many political parties and religious confessions.

But protesters say they want to scrap the old system, and demand only impartial technocrats staff a new government to address their growing economic woes, including a severe liquidity crisis.

The last government stepped down under pressure from the street on October 29, but has remained in a caretaker capacity until a new cabinet takes shape. The World Bank has warned that the poverty rate in Lebanon could rise from a third to a half if the political crisis is not remedied fast. —AFP

ens the divisions among the Libyans," said Salame, noting that the place of international players should be to "help Libyans develop themselves". The UN envoy said today's meeting will also seek to "consolidate" the shaky ceasefire.

"Today we only have a truce. We want to transform it into a real ceasefire with monitoring, separation (of rival camps), repositioning of heavy weapons" outside urban zones, he said. The UN had sought on multiple attempts to bid for peace, but talks have repeatedly collapsed.

Erdogan issues warning

On the eve of the Berlin talks, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Europe to stand united behind Sarraj's government, as Tripoli's fall could leave "fertile ground" for jihadist groups like IS or Al-Qaeda "to get back on their feet". Erdogan said the EU's failure to adequately support the Government of National Accord (GNA) would be "a betrayal of its own core values, including democracy and human rights".

"Terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, which suffered a military defeat in Syria and Iraq, will find a fertile ground to get back on their feet." A furious Erdogan has accused Haftar of fleeing Moscow and said he would "teach (him) a lesson" if he resumed fighting.

Erdogan's government backs Sarraj and the Turkish parliament earlier this month approved the deployment of troops to Libya after the signing of controversial security and maritime deals between Tripoli and Ankara. "To leave Libya at the mercy of a warlord would be a mistake of historic proportions," he said in a veiled reference to Haftar.

France has denied it was backing Haftar. But a diplomatic source noted that the fact that the commander already controls 80 percent of Libya needed to be taken into account. The European Union is watching with growing alarm at the escalating strife on its doorstep as it counts on Libya as a gatekeeper deterring migrants from crossing the Mediterranean. — AFP

Sports

Another big night for Doncic, lifts Mavericks past Blazers

Huerter lifts Hawks over Spurs for second straight win

DALLAS: Luka Doncic made a career-best eight 3-pointers and recorded 35 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to lead the Dallas Mavericks to a 120-112 victory over the visiting Portland Trail Blazers on Friday night. Tim Hardaway Jr. made five 3-pointers while scoring 29 points, and Seth Curry tallied 16 points off the bench as the Mavericks won their fourth straight game. Jalen Brunson added 13 points and Maxi Kleber scored 10 for Dallas. Portland's Damian Lillard registered 34 points and 10 assists in his clash with Doncic. Carmelo Anthony scored 22 points, Hassan Whiteside had 21 points, 18 rebounds and five blocked shots for the Trail Blazers. Anthony became the 18th player in NBA history to top 26,000 points. His total sits at 26,014. Portland guard CJ McCollum departed the game in the second quarter due to a sprained left ankle. He had four points in 12 minutes before exiting.

ATLANTA HAWKS 121 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 120
Kevin Huerter poured in the decisive 3-pointer with seven seconds to play and Trae Young scored 31 points as Atlanta rallied in the final two minutes to stun host San Antonio. The Spurs led by 11 points after a huge third quarter, but Atlanta clawed back to within 120-118 on a basket by Young with 48 seconds to play, setting up Huerter's game-winner. DeMar DeRozan had a chance to win the game for San Antonio but missed a last-second fadeaway jumper, allowing the Hawks to win their second straight game but just their fourth in their past 19 outings. DeRozan scored 25 points on 9-of-18 shooting from the floor to stretch his streak of scoring 20 or more points and shooting 50 percent or better from the floor to 13 straight, breaking a tie with Michael Jordan for the most such games in a row in the last 35 seasons.

INDIANA PACERS 116 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 114
Malcolm Brogdon nailed a tiebreaking 15-footer with 18.7 seconds left, and T.J. Warren scored a game-high 28 points as Indiana spoiled the return of Karl-Anthony Towns in beating Minnesota in Indianapolis. The win allowed Indiana to sweep a tightly contested home-and-home

series. The Pacers won 104-99 at Minnesota on Wednesday in a game Towns missed with an illness to continue a string of 15 straight absences after earlier having sustained a knee injury. Towns scored a team-high 27 points Friday. The Timberwolves had a chance to tie after Brogdon's clutch hoop, but Shabazz Napier misfired with nine seconds remaining. The Wolves' Robert Covington managed to tie up Warren for a jump ball, but the Pacers were able to run out the clock after Warren controlled the tap.

MIAMI HEAT 115 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 108
Kendrick Nunn scored 22 points to lead visiting Miami over Oklahoma City, holding off a late charge after once leading by 22 in the final quarter. Bam Adebayo finished with 21 points, eight rebounds and five assists while going 7 of 11 from the field for Miami, and Jimmy Butler finished with 14 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists. Seven players scored in double figures for the Heat. Oklahoma City hit a season-high 18 3-pointers, including seven from Danilo Gallinari, who scored a team-high 27 points. His 3-point total was a season high. The loss was the Thunder's second in a row and third in four games.

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 100 - CHICAGO BULLS 89
Furkan Korkmaz scored a career-high 24 points, hitting a career-best six 3-pointers, and Ben Simmons posted a double-double to lift host Philadelphia past Chicago. Simmons finished 20 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists as the Sixers improved to 20-2 at home. Al Horford scored 20 points and Tobias Harris had 13 for the Sixers, who played without All-Star center Joel Embiid for the 12th time this season. The Sixers are 6-6 without Embiid, who remains out with a torn ligament in a finger on his left hand. Zach LaVine missed all seven of his 3-point attempts but led the Bulls with 23 points while Coby White added 14. Luke Kornet contributed 13 and Lauri Markkanen had 12.

TORONTO RAPTORS 140 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 111
Norman Powell scored 28 points and grabbed five rebounds off the bench, and host Toronto defeated Washington for the seventh straight time, including two



DALLAS: Dwight Powell #7 of the Dallas Mavericks squares off against Hassan Whiteside #21 of the Portland Trail Blazers to start the first quarter at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

meetings this season. Terence Davis scored 23 points and Marc Gasol added 20 points as the Raptors hit their season high for points in a game and won their second straight game. Troy Brown Jr. had 22 points for the Wizards, who have lost three straight. Isaac Bonga added 17 points and 10 rebounds. Toronto outshot Washington from the field 57.1 percent to 44.9 percent.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 113 - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 109
Dillon Brooks scored 26 points, and host

Memphis recorded its season-best seventh straight victory by beating Cleveland. Brooks made 9 of 16 shots from the field, and rookie Ja Morant added 16 points for the Grizzlies, who extended their string of consecutive games with at least 110 points to 13. The last time the Grizzlies failed to reach that mark was a 114-107 setback in Cleveland on Dec. 20. Collin Sexton scored 28 points and Kevin Love added 19 for the Cavaliers, who have lost eight of their past 10 games. —Reuters

Kuwait bags two gold as Amir shooting grand prix concludes



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait maintained the title of HH the Amir Ninth International Shooting Grand Prix which concluded on Friday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, as Kuwaiti shooters dominated the shooting competition and took the top three places after shooting at 100 targets.

Khalifa Shlash won the gold medal by hitting 177 targets over 8 rounds in two days, while the silver medal was won by Ghazi Al-Daihani who hit 171, and the bronze went to Muath Al-Rashid with 169 targets following a shot off with Abdallah Al-Rashidi after hitting the same number of target.

There was also an entertaining round for the pioneers of shooting, who enjoyed being in the range and remembered their past.

A simple ceremony concluded the tournament during which President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, who lauded the sporting competition in which Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Russia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE participated. He said sporting competition differ from other shooting events, but the organizing committee decided to have it coincide with Grand Prix.

President of the Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah appreciated the efforts of the Higher Organizing Committee of HH the Amir's Ninth International Grand Prix, to bring it out in the ideal manner and reach the required level that fits Kuwait shooting reputation.

Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud, who attended the sporting event, added shooters of both genders had a major role in ensuring the success of the tournament due to strong competition, as everyone was keen to win a

medal. Sheikh Salman also commended the organization and attention to the smallest of details by all sub-committees.

He finally thanked all referees who exerted extra effort in order to ensure fair play, and the refereeing department gained the respect of all those participants in the Grand Prix.

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng. Duaij Al-Otaibi said results of Kuwait's shooters were satisfactory, and that they reached the finals in the trap and skeet event with Mansour Al-Rashidi winning the skeet bronze, despite the strong competition by Italian, Czech and Kazakhstan shooters, and this confirms that Kuwait shooting is on the right path to make more achievements.

Al-Otaibi said the Grand Prix received praise from the International Shooting Sport

Federation (ISSF) and officials who attended the tournament, as he thanked HH the Amir for the unlimited and continued support for the Grand Prix and shooting in general.

Final Medals Tally

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Kuwait	2	2	3
Serbia	2	1	1
Italy	1	3	1
Kazakhstan	1	2	3
UAE	1	0	0
Greece	1	0	0
Bulgaria	0	1	0
Pakistan	0	1	0
Armenia	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	0	1



Navigation challenges come thick and fast on Stage 10 at Dakar Rally



HARADH: The 2020 Dakar Rally once again proved itself the toughest motorsports race out there on day 10 as it waved competitors off for a two-part marathon stage. The first leg of the marathon took place between Haradh and Shubayta, taking the convoy over the perilous dunes of Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter.

Things had started to get a little uncomfortable for car race leader Carlos Sainz (ESP) during the Dakar's second week. His lead of 10 minutes had been cut to just 24 seconds. However, on Stage 10 the Spaniard was once again able to increase his advantage at the front of the race.

"One waypoint was difficult but somehow we managed to get it. Everything worked fine for us." - Carlos Sainz

Sainz's lead now stands at over 18 minutes with Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) still lodged in second overall. After Al-Attiyah comes Stéphane Peterhansel (FRA), just 16 seconds behind the reigning champion in third overall. Al-Attiyah and Peterhansel are both left to ponder if today's navigation mistakes have cost them the win at the first Dakar held in the Middle East.

"We took a wrong turn which gave us 20 kilometres extra to drive. We lost 19 minutes on Carlos (Sainz) but this is how it goes. We still have a long day tomorrow and everything is still possible." - Nasser Al-Attiyah

Joining stage winner Sainz on the day 10 podium was Kuba Przygonski (POL) in second and Giniel De Villiers (ZAF) in third. "There were a lot of drops and it was hard to understand which dunes are sharp and which are rounded. We did a good job, kept a strong rhythm and we're happy to finish this stage." - Kuba Przygonski

Racing on Stage 10 was halted at the 345-kilometre mark as a safety precaution due to extremely high winds on the track. As a consequence there were no major gains in the bike race, with leader Ricky Brabec (USA) protecting a lead of 25 minutes with two stages remaining.

Red Bull KTM Factory Team trio Toby Price (AUS), Matthias Walkner (AUT) and Luciano Benavides (ARG) will look to make a late charge for the lead on Stage 11, the second part of the marathon stage. Price, Walkner and Benavides are fourth, sixth and seventh respectively in the general classification. "It was really fast in the broken dunes at the beginning. Then we came to a section that was tough navigation, very tricky. Many people got lost here, but I

managed to do well." - Luciano Benavides

Top placed female Laia Sanz (ESP) stays 17th overall at the midway point of the marathon stage.

"I'm happy to be here safe and I'm looking forward to getting to the finish line." - Laia Sanz

The side-by-side stage was once again dominated by Red Bull Off-Road Team USA as they picked up a second consecutive 1-2 result. This time it was Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA) winning the stage, the third of his debut Dakar. "We went 1-2 again so it's another successful day. It's a marathon stage so tonight we'll be prepping the cars for tomorrow." - Mitch Guthrie Jr.

Blade Hildebrand (USA) followed home his team-mate Guthrie Jr. in second as the pair continue to get the most out of racing in the Dakar Experience class. In the SxS general classification it looks as though a Stage 10 wheel change has cost defending champion Chaleco Lopez (CHI) the chance of collecting back-to-back titles.

Stage 10 even delivered drama in the quad race where Ignacio Casale (CHI) saw his lead cut by nearly half an hour. Two-time Dakar champion Casale's advantage now stands at just over 16 minutes, with Simon Vitse (FRA) on a mission to chase him down. "It was a stage to forget. After 200 kilometres, I got lost for around 40 minutes. I made a mistake that I shouldn't have made. It's very serious because it could have cost me victory on the rally." - Ignacio Casale

Things were a lot more straightforward for Team Kamaz Master as they look to win the first Dakar truck race hosted in Saudi Arabia. All four Kamaz race trucks placed in the Top 5 on Stage 10 and Andrey Karginov (RUS) still looks very well placed to pick up his second Dakar title. Karginov's team-mate Anton Shibalov (RUS) is second overall. "It was an interesting stage with some dangerous parts where the dunes dropped sharply. With the weather conditions how they were the race organisers decided it was not possible to finish the stage." - Anton Shibalov

The competitors left in the Dakar are on their own tonight in Shubayta, denied the assistance of their mechanics. They'll need to fix any problems on their machines themselves before racing 379 kilometres back to Haradh tomorrow on Stage 11. The 2020 Dakar finished on Friday in Al-Qiddiya.

Sports

Bess spins England closer to series lead in spite of de Kock resistance

Poor weather forecast for the next two days

SCOREBOARD

Scores at close of play on the third day of the third Test between South Africa and England at St George's Park yesterday.

England, first innings, 499-9 declared

South Africa, first innings (overnight 60-2)

D. Elgar c Pope b Bess	35
P. Malan c and b Bess	18
Z. Hamza c Pope b Bess	10
A. Nortje c Root b Stokes	18
F. du Plessis c Pope b Bess	8
H. van der Dussen b Bess	24
Q. de Kock not out	63
V. Philander not out	27
Extras (b4, w1)	5
Total (6 wkts, 82 overs)	208
Fall of wickets: 1-50 (Malan), 2-60 (Hamza), 3-63 (Elgar), 4-71 (Du Plessis), 5-109 (Van der Dussen), 6-154 (Nortje)	
Bowling: Broad 11-4-30-0, Curran 9-1-31-0, Bess 31-12-51-5, Wood 11-4-31-0 (1w), Denly 4-1-10-0, Root 11-4-25-0, Stokes 5-1-26-1	
To bat: K. Maharaj, K. Rabada, D. Paterson	
Match situation: South Africa trail by 291 runs with four wickets remaining in the first innings.	

PORT ELIZABETH: Rookie off-spinner Dom Bess claimed his first Test five-wicket haul as England moved into a strong position on the third day of the third Test against South Africa at St George's Park yesterday.

Bess took the first five wickets as South Africa struggled to 208 for six in reply to England's 499 for nine declared, still 291 runs in arrears - and 92 short of avoiding the follow-on. Joe Root's side would have been in an even stronger position had it not been for a lengthy rain interruption which wiped out the afternoon session and some defiant South African resistance, notably from Quentin de Kock, unbeaten on 63 and dropped three times by Ben Stokes, and nightwatchman Anrich Nortje.

The 22-year-old Bess, playing in his fourth Test after being called up as cover for his sick Somerset teammate Jack Leach who has since flown home, finished the day with five for 51.

He might have had more as Root dropped a regulation slip catch to reprieve the stubborn Nortje who bravely defied the hostility of Mark Wood and the guile of Bess. He had batted for 193 minutes and faced 136 balls when he edged a ball from Ben Stokes to Root at second slip. This time the England captain held on.

De Kock showed the familiar muscularity which brought him half-centuries in the first two Tests, clubbing nine fours in his 63. He had added 54 for the seventh wicket with Vernon Philander, 27 not out, when stumps were drawn. In spite of the poor weather forecast for the next two days, England remain well-placed to take a 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

The second new ball was taken for the last three balls of the day, bowled by Bess at a time when fading light allowed only spinners to be used. It will be available for the fast bowlers at the start of play on Sunday and if the tourists are able to wrap up the innings quickly they will probably enforce the follow-on because of the possibility of more rain on the remaining two days.

SIMPLY THE BESS

Bess took all his wickets in an unchanged 23-over spell from the northern, Duck Pond end, from late on Friday, when he took his first two wickets, until after lunch yesterday. Following Ollie Pope's century on the second day, it was the second breakthrough performance by a 22-year-old for England. Bess had taken a total of five wickets in



PORT ELIZABETH: South Africa's Quinton de Kock (C) watches the ball after playing a shot as England's Jos Buttler (L) looks on during the third day of the third Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the St George's Park Cricket Ground in Port Elizabeth yesterday. — AFP

his previous three Tests at a cost of 48 runs each. He was the first England spin bowler to take the first five wickets in an innings since Derek Underwood claimed the first seven against Australia in Adelaide in 1974/75. Pope aided his fellow young team-mate by taking three catches off Bess's bowling, two at short leg and one at silly point.

Stokes was not brought into the attack until the 61st over. He claimed Nortje's wicket with his tenth delivery. But England's talisman dropped three slip catches off De Kock. The first two, when de Kock was on 30 and 56, were off Root with the third in the penultimate over came off

Joe Denly's leg-spin.

Bess struck in the fourth over of the day when Dean Elgar was caught for 35 off bat and pad at silly point by Pope. Proteas' captain Faf du Plessis used his feet to off-drive fours off the third and fourth balls he faced from Bess, who switched from round the wicket to over the wicket and two balls later had Du Plessis caught by Pope at short leg, again off bat and pad.

Rassie van der Dussen made 24 before chopping an attempted cut off Bess into his stumps, one over after hitting 11 runs off the spinner. — AFP

Zimbabwe 'have to enjoy' first home Test since 2017

HARARE: Wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva says that Zimbabwe "have to enjoy" their first home Test since 2017 as the African nation return to five-day action against Sri Lanka after their recent suspension by the International Cricket Council.

The two-Test tour was only announced by the Sri Lankan cricket board earlier this week, with the first match to start in Harare today. Zimbabwe were readmitted as an ICC member last October following a three-month suspension over political interference.

The Sri Lanka games will be their first Tests since a 1-1 series draw in Bangladesh in November 2018. "It's always tough, going for that long between playing Tests, because you always want to play as often and as regularly as possible," Chakabva told *cricketbuzz.com*.

"But unfortunately we haven't had that privilege really, so we just have to accept what is there and as tough as it is, when the next one comes you always have to enjoy it."

"I think for any youngster who's starting off and aspiring they definitely want to be involved (in Tests) at some point in their career," Mickey Arthur's Sri Lanka arrive in Zimbabwe after a 1-0 defeat in a two-Test series in Pakistan, although that came after the side showed signs of a revival in a shock 2-0 series victory in South Africa and drawn series against New Zealand.

But the tourists have left out fast-scoring batsman Kusal Perera, who scored a match-winning 153 not out against South Africa last February, with Lahiru Thirimanne preferred despite having an average of only 22.64 from 35 Tests.

"Yes, Kusal can make 150s, but we needed someone who can occupy the crease, which is why we chose Thirimanne," said Sri Lanka's chairman of selectors Anantha de Mel. "Thirimanne can also bat in the top order or as an opener."

Zimbabwe have named all-rounder Sean Williams as captain for the series, with batsmen PJ Moor and Ryan Burl both surprisingly left out. A third of the hosts' 15-man squad are yet to make their Test debuts, with Victor Nyachwaya and Charlton Tshuma hoping to fill the void left by injured fast bowler Tendai Chatara.

Zimbabwe last played a Test at home against the West Indies in October 2017.

Squads

Zimbabwe: Sean Williams (capt), Sikandar Raza, Regis Chakabva (wkt), Craig Ervine, Kyle Jarvis, Kevin Kasuza, Timycen Maruma, Prince Masvaure, Brian Mudzinganyama, Carl Mumba, Ainsley Ndlovu, Victor Nyachwaya, Brendan Taylor, Donald Tiripano, Charlton Tshuma

Sri Lanka: Dimuth Karunaratne (capt), Oshada Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Dinesh Chandimal, Lahiru Thirimanne, Dhananjaya de Silva, Niroshan Dickwella (wkt), Dilruwan Perera, Lasith Embuldeniya, Lahiru Kumara, Vishwa Fernando, Kasun Rajitha, Lakshan Sandakan, Suranga Lakmal. — AFP

Don't panic: Kohli says India ready for Australia showdown

BANGALORE: After overcoming "panic" among fans, Indian captain Virat Kohli has tried to assure supporters it will be service as normal when his side take on Australia in a tense deciding match in their one-day series today.

Many Indian fans had a near seizure after Australia hammered their side by 10 wickets in the first 50 over game on Tuesday. But Kohli's team dominated Friday's second match and won by 36 runs, with opener Shikhar Dhawan hitting 96 and KL Rahul smashing 80 off 52 balls. That helped to settle nerves and Kohli looked calm after the win in which he also made 78 in

India's 340-6. "We live in the days of social media and a panic button being pressed too early," Kohli said after the game in Rajkot.

"We know exactly what we're doing in the change room. On the outside there's a lot of panic that we don't really focus on." There are worries though as Dhawan did not return to field after being hit on the rib cage by a Pat Cummins bouncer during his 90-ball knock.

Vice captain Rohit Sharma also walked off after injuring his arm diving to prevent a boundary. "It's that left shoulder that has popped out a few times. There's no tear so hopefully he should be back for the next game," Kohli said.

India experimented with the batting order in Mumbai but stuck with two traditional openers with Kohli at three as they saved the series. Steve Smith stood out for Australia with his defiant 98 and stood guard with his team's new-look middle-order before chopping a Kuldeep Yadav delivery on to the stumps.

He put on a threatening 96-run third-wicket stand



DETROIT: Dylan Larkin #71 of the Detroit Red Wings tries to get around the stick of Dominik Simon #12 of the Pittsburgh Penguins during the second period at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. Pittsburgh won the game 2-1. — AFP

Crosby's OT goal lifts Penguins

DETROIT: Sidney Crosby scored on a tip-in during an overtime power play, and the visiting Pittsburgh Penguins edged the Detroit Red Wings 2-1. Crosby redirected an Evgeni Malkin shot for his third goal in as many games. Bryan Rust had a goal and an assist for the Penguins, and Matt Murray made 28 saves. Malkin was credited with a team-high six shots and assisted on both goals. Pittsburgh bounced back from a 4-1 loss at Boston on Thursday in which it was silenced after Crosby scored in the first minute. The Penguins earned their fifth win in six games on Friday. Jimmy Howard stopped 35 shots for Detroit, and rookie Filip Zadina had the Red Wings' lone goal.

Lightning 7, Jets 1

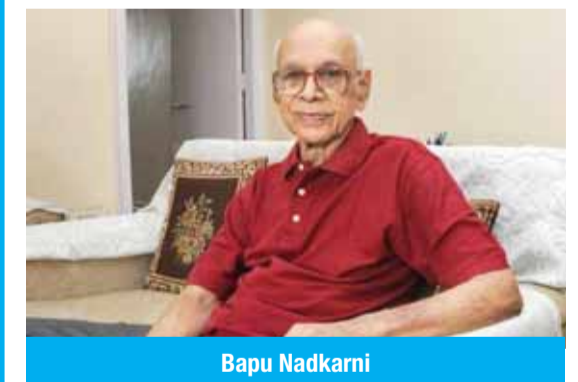
Anthony Cirelli collected his first career hat trick, and Nikita Kucherov scored twice to lead visiting Tampa Bay

to a one-sided win over Winnipeg. Goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy made 30 saves to claim his 10th consecutive win for Tampa Bay, while Ondrej Palat collected three assists and Brayden Point and Steven Stamkos had two-point games. The win came at a cost for the Lightning, though. Forward Cedric Paquette left in the second period after appearing to injure his ankle. Jack Roslovic scored for the Jets, who pulled Connor Hellebuyck after he allowed five goals on 12 shots. Laurent Brossoit entered and saved 12 of the 14 shots he faced.

Ducks 2, Hurricanes 1 (OT)

Sam Steel scored 1:36 into overtime as Anaheim won its second game in a row for the first time in more than two months, this time defeating Carolina in Raleigh, N.C. Steel's fourth goal of the season was set up off a turnover from Carolina forward Andrei Svechnikov. Jakob Silfverberg and Hampus Lindholm notched assists on the winning goal. Erik Gudbranson provided the first goal for the Ducks, and goalie Ryan Miller made 25 saves, improving his record to 5-5-2. Sebastian Aho scored his team-leading 24th goal for the Hurricanes, who lost their third game in a row (0-2-1). Carolina goalie James Reimer stopped 35 shots in defeat. — Reuters

India's bowling miser Nadkarni dies at 86



Babu Nadkarni

MUMBAI: India's most economic bowler Babu Nadkarni, who also held England at bay as a batsman in a landmark Test series has died at the age of 86. "Indian cricket has lost a real champion," said batting legend Sunil Gavaskar after learning of Nadkarni's death in Mumbai.

The all-rounder conceded just 2,559 runs from 9,165 balls bowled with his left-arm spin in 41 Tests for India between 1955 and 1968. He was also a team manager for India and chief selector for a while. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) hailed Nadkarni's "miserly" Test record in its tribute.

It highlighted a landmark home series against England in 1964. "In one of the best displays of frugal bowling, Nadkarni bowled 21 maiden overs during the first Test against England at Madras." "In the fifth and final Test of the same series, he scored 52 not out in the first innings and batted for 418 minutes and remained unbeaten on 122 when India were made to follow on." India held out for a draw.

"I grew up hearing about the record of him bowling 21 consecutive maiden overs in a Test. My condolences to his family and dear ones. Rest in Peace Sir," India's batting hero Sachin Tendulkar wrote on Twitter. Gavaskar said: "He was a gritty cricketer despite playing in the days when gloves and thigh pads were not very good." — AFP

Sports

Madrid go top above Barca after scrappy win over Sevilla

Barca can reclaim first place as they face Granada

MADRID: Real Madrid climbed above Barcelona to top La Liga yesterday as Casemiro scored twice in a gritty 2-1 win over Sevilla.

Casemiro's double proved the difference amid a three-goal flurry early in the second half, with Luuk de Jong briefly drawing Sevilla level.

Madrid were underwhelming at the Santiago Bernabeu, at times reverting back to the stodgy days of last season when the team struggled for goals under Julen Lopetegui, who is now in charge of Sevilla.

Yet with Eden Hazard, Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema and Sergio Ramos all missing from their starting line-up, this might be the kind of victory that could prove crucial to their hopes of winning the title in May.

Sevilla stay fourth, eight points off the top.

Barca can reclaim first place today when they face Granada at Camp Nou, where Quique Setien will be overseeing his first game since being appointed early last week. Setien has said he will not be happy if his team win while playing badly but Zinedine Zidane is likely to be less choosy.

His Madrid side are now 17 games unbeaten, a streak that has included them winning the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia last weekend. Ramos, who is still recovering from an ankle injury, paraded the club's latest trophy on the pitch before kick-off.

Benzema came on in the second half after shaking off a dead leg but Bale's absence was more mysterious. The Welshman missed the trip to Jeddah through illness but had returned to training on Tuesday.

Lopetegui was back at the Santiago Bernabeu for the first time since he was sacked by Madrid last season, 138 days after they appointed him, and his Sevilla

side arguably deserved more.

Converting impetus into goals has been their problem all season, and so it proved again. After an even start, they gradually took charge and as the home crowd grew frustrated, Sevilla grew in confidence too.

De Jong thought he had scored when he was given a suspicious amount of space in the area to head in from a corner and VAR showed his marker Eder Militao had been blocked albeit only by a small, but seemingly deliberate, step from Nemanja Gudelj. Marcelo was lucky not to concede a penalty for a shirt-pull.

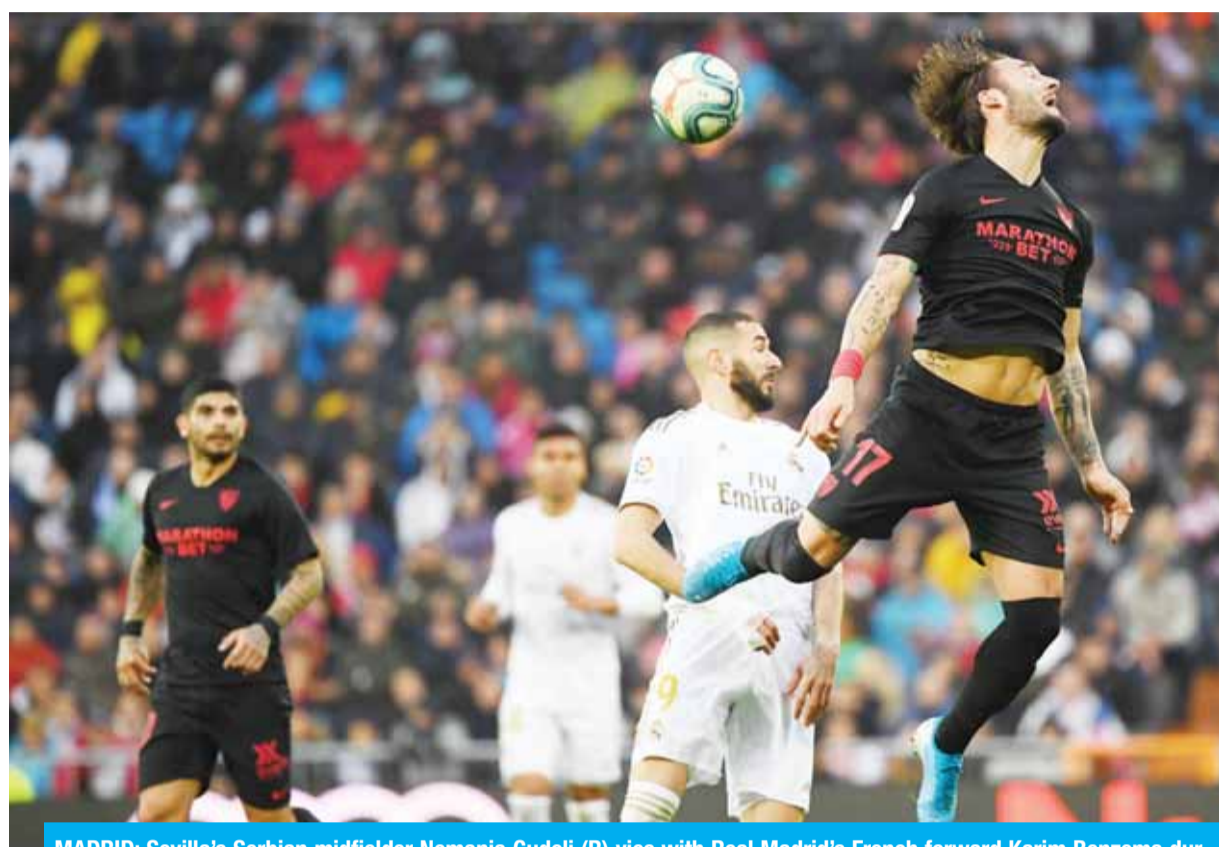
Sevilla were controlling the midfield and denying their opponents routes through to the front three. Yet 12 minutes into the second half, some creative brilliance saw Madrid take the lead.

Sergio Reguilon, bought by Sevilla from Madrid last summer, scuffed his clearance and after Casemiro muscled through on the edge of the area, Jovic found him again with a deft backheel. Casemiro chipped the ball in and pointed at Jovic in celebration.

Sevilla could have wilted but instead they equalised, only to concede again five minutes later.

First, Raphael Varane, Casemiro and Marcelo all missed tackles and after Munir El Haddadi stumbled, De Jong took over, banging the ball into the far, bottom corner. Yet parity was short-lived as Casemiro nodded in Lucas Vazquez's cross from a standing start after being given too much space by Jules Kounde.

Toni Kroos might have added a third for Madrid late on after a racing run by Vinicius Junior but Vazquez almost gifted Sevilla an equaliser after a dreadful back-pass. Youssef En-Nesyri, signed from Leganes on Friday, flashed wide. — AFP



MADRID: Sevilla's Serbian midfielder Nemanja Gudelj (R) vies with Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and Sevilla FC at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

Haaland bags 20-minute hat-trick on Dortmund debut

BERLIN: Norwegian rising star Erling Braut Haaland came off the bench to claim a hat-trick inside 20 minutes on his Borussia Dortmund debut and inspire a 5-3 comeback win at Augsburg in the Bundesliga yesterday.

The 19-year-old showed why Dortmund paid Salzburg 20 million euros (\$22 million) for him last month when he came on in the 56th minute with his new team 3-1 down.

"I am pretty relaxed about it... I don't really know why," said Haaland. "I'm at a fantastic club with great team-mates and good people around me. I came here to score goals and it was a good debut for me."

Dortmund's victory left them fourth in the Bundesliga table, level on points with defending champions Bayern Munich and Schalke, four points behind leaders RB Leipzig, who host Union Berlin later. Having already scored 28 goals in 22 games for Salzburg this season, Haaland needed just 183 seconds to open his Dortmund account, then added two more in quick succession for his sixth hat-trick of the campaign.

"He is still young and we would advise against expecting too much, but he brings us a lot of strength and has an incredible mentality," said Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc.

'HUGE POTENTIAL'

Following Haaland's stunning entrance, Dortmund scored two goals in as many minutes as he fired in off the post, before England winger Jadon Sancho netted from a tight angle to equalise.

Haaland put Dortmund ahead for the first time with 18 minutes left when he tapped home after Thorgan Hazard got in behind the Augsburg defence, with the goal awarded despite a VAR review for offside.

Haaland completed his treble when captain Marco Reus played him into the area, slamming the ball home to make it 5-3. It had been a vastly different game until Haaland's stunning entrance.

Augsburg deserved to be in control, taking advantage of poor Dortmund defending with the opening goal from striker Florian Niederlechner before Marco Richter's stunning long-range strike 20 seconds into the second half.

The shock of falling two goals down woke up the Dortmund attack as Germany winger Julian Brandt fired home their first goal off the crossbar just four minutes into the second half.

The game became an end-to-end affair and Niederlechner grabbed Augsburg's third by tapping in. But it was one-way traffic thereafter as Dortmund coach Lucien Favre brought on Haaland for defender Lukasz Piszczek.

"He moves well between the lines, gives us more attacking possibilities and at 19 years old, he has a huge potential for improvement, that's the most important thing," said Favre. However, he warned Haaland is not fit enough yet to play a full match.

"He hardly trained over Christmas with a knee injury, so he is not yet ready to play 90 minutes." Elsewhere, South Korean Kwon Chang-Hoon and Nils Petersen scored Freiburg's goals in a 2-1 win at Mainz which moved their side sixth.

Werder Bremen kept a clean sheet for the first time this season as an own goal by Florian Kastenmeier secured a 1-0 win at Fortuna Duesseeldorf. Colombian striker Jhon Cordoba scored twice as Cologne pulled further away from the bottom three with a 3-1 win at home to Wolfsburg.

US international Timothy Chandler scored the winner as mid-table Eintracht Frankfurt won 2-1 at Hoffenheim. — AFP

Kuwait thrash Hong Kong in 19th Asian handball tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Handball team qualified to the second round of the 19th Asian Handball Championship, being held in Kuwait with the participation of 16 teams and will continue until January 27, after beating Hong Kong with the score of 42-18 during the match held on Friday in the fourth group at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah hall in Sabah Al-Salem, as Kuwait beat Iraq 20-19 in their first match.

Kuwait's team did not need much effort to go past Hong Kong team, when the coach started with the outstanding play maker Mahdi Al-Qallaf who dazzled with his decisive passes and shooting from outside the 9 meters zone long with Nawaf Al-Shimmari, Khalid Al-Gharaballi (Mohammad Amir). The role of wingers Saleh Al-Musawi and Abdallah Al-Khamis was clear as they took advantage of their position with a positive movement of the circle player Abdelrahman Al-Baloul, creating the opportunity for the team to go forward and have a good scoring margin. The coach sent in goalkeeper Mohammad Bu-Yabis in the second half and he contributed to widening the points margin by blocking more than 10 goal scoring attempts.

President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah thanked Kuwait Government and the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) for hosting the championship and providing all requirements for that purpose.

He also thanked the games International Federation for organizing the tournament in Kuwait and provided all technical refereeing and administrative aspects to ensure its success, and congratulated all athletes on the occasion of opening Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah indoor Halls Complex. Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser thanked HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for patronizing and attending as well as his



KUWAIT: Kuwait's handball team in action against Hong Kong.

unlimited support to hold the championship.

President of Saudi Handball Federation Khalid Al-Rashid said his team looks towards reaching the world finals in Egypt through the current championship, despite adverse circumstances and the team's missing key injured players. Al-Rashid who was embraced with Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah Complex, thanked Kuwait Federation for the reception and hospitality, as well as the outstanding opening ceremony.

Former handball player Jassim Al-Thiyab expected tough competition in the second stage adding "chances of Kuwait team are good so far after its surprise win against Iraq, adding the team played under tremendous pressure by fans, but was able to go through a difficult stop. Thiyab said Qatar may be the first team to qualify for the World Cup. Saudi Arabia guaranteed to be on top of the third group after defeating South Korea 29-27 in the third and match of the first round to get four points, two for Korea and nothing for Australia.

The first half saw equal performance despite Korea's score of 15-13, as it varied its defenses, while Saudi Arabia relied on deep penetration despite Korea's advanced defense. The second half saw the Saudis take advantage of their opponent's mistakes and ended the match in their favor.

Bowling training camp



KUWAIT: Twenty six bowling players aged 8 years to 16 went to join a training camp, as part of the bowling club strategy to care for the juniors base, which is considered a true nucleus of national teams, as the board of directors chaired by Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to continue development of the game and take it to the level of competing strongly at the continental and international levels.

The games development moved towards European

countries to provide good preparation, exchange experiences, and have strong contacts with world champions, as Kuwait's Jassim Al-Saqer, Mustafa Al-Musawi, Saleh Habib and Salman Shuaib are participating in international tournaments held in Sweden, and Finland with more than 600 players participating, which will have a strong effect in qualifying players at the world level, and be ready for the championship hosted by Kuwait.

Live		
Matches on TV		
(Local Timings)		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Burnley FC v Leicester City	17:00	beIN Sports
Liverpool v Manchester United	19:30	beIN Sports HD 2
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Real Mallorca v Valencia C.F	14:00	beIN Sports
Real Betis v Real Sociedad	16:00	beIN Sports
Villarreal CF v RCD Espanyol	18:00	beIN Sports
Athletic de Bilbao v Celta de Vigo	20:30	beIN Sports
FC Barcelona v Granada CF	23:00	beIN Sports HD 3
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
AC Milan v Udinese Calcio	14:30	beIN Sports
Bologna FC v Hellas Verona FC	17:00	beIN Sports
Brescia v Cagliari Calcio	17:00	beIN Sports
US Lecce v Internazionale Milano	17:00	beIN Sports
Genoa CFC v AS Roma	20:00	beIN Sports
Juventus FC v Parma Calcio 1913	22:45	beIN Sports HD 4
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
Hertha Berlin v Bayern Munich	17:30	beIN Sports HD 5
SC Paderborn 07 v Bayer 04 Leverkusen	20:00	beIN Sports

Iran banned from hosting international football

TEHRAN: Iran's football federation said Friday it has been banned from hosting international matches inside the country. The "federation received a letter today from the Asian Football Confederation... announcing the decision to hold AFC Champions League matches hosted by Iranian teams in neutral countries," said a statement on the federation's website.

An extraordinary meeting was immediately held to address the situation and the managers of the four clubs representing Iran in the tournament will be consulted on Saturday, it added.

Those teams are Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan and Shahr Khodro.

"The final position of Iranian clubs and the federation will be announced in the following days".

The federation did not state the reason for the ban. The federation's spokesman said Iran is prepared to host foreign teams and has guaranteed match security to the AFC, calling on the organisation to stand against any accusations stating otherwise. "Iran has the full readiness to host teams and has proven this repeatedly in recent years," said Amir Mehdi Alavi on the federation's website.

He pointed to last year's AFC Champion's League finals held in Tehran and said "the sports minister has given the AFC the needed security assurances regarding hosting" teams. — AFP

25 Kuwait bags two gold as Amir shooting grand prix concludes

26 India's bowling miser Nadkarni dies at 86

27 Madrid go top above Barca after scrappy win over Sevilla



Palace snatch point, Spurs' euro hopes dented



MANCHESTER: Crystal Palace's English defender Gary Cahill (R) tackles Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Crystal Palace at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. —AFP

LONDON: Pep Guardiola's 49th birthday celebrations went flat as Fernandinho's late own goal forced Manchester City to settle for a 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace, while Tottenham's hopes of finishing in the top four were dented by a goalless stalemate at Watford yesterday.

On a busy day of top-flight action, the pitchside VAR monitor was used in the Premier League for the first time at Norwich and Arsenal were held to a 1-1 draw by Sheffield United.

It was the drama at the Etihad Stadium that took the spotlight as Fernandinho's last-gasp blunder left Guardiola in no mood to party after City's faint hopes of retaining the title suffered another hammer blow.

The champions trail Liverpool by 13 points ahead of the runaway leaders' clash with rivals Manchester United today.

"It was a tight game. It's difficult to analyse when they shoot from one corner

and have no more chances," Guardiola said. "I told them to put more balls into the box and try to control Zaha on the counter-attack. We had many chances, unfortunately we could not win."

Cenk Tosun marked his first league start since his loan move from Everton with his maiden goal for the Eagles, the Turkish striker netting a close-range strike from Martin Kelly's flick in the 39th minute.

Sergio Aguero appeared to have turned the game on its head in the 82nd minute when the Argentinian striker bagged his 250th goal in 360 games for the club.

Aguero put City ahead in the 87th minute with a typically predatory header from Benjamin Mendy's cross.

But there was a sting in the tale for Guardiola as Fernandinho turned Wilfried Zaha's cross into his own net in the 90th minute to end second-placed City's run of three successive league wins.

At Vicarage Road, Troy Deeney's 70th-minute spot-kick was saved by Paulo Gazzaniga before Tottenham's Erik Lamela was denied a last-gasp winner by Ignacio Pussetto's goal-line clearance.

With England captain Harry Kane sidelined after hamstring surgery, Tottenham have gone three league games without scoring.

TOOTHLESS TOTTENHAM

Jose Mourinho's side are without a win in four league matches since December 26 and sit eight points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, who visit Newcastle in Saturday's late game. Toothless Tottenham thought they had stolen the points in stoppage-time when Lamela flicked Serge Aurier's cross towards goal, but Watford's new signing Pussetto cleared off the line, with goal-line technology showing just 10.04mm of the ball had not gone over.

"I know it was only a couple of millimetres but goal-line technology does not make mistakes like VAR. We have to accept it was not a goal," Mourinho said.

Arsenal are 10 points adrift of the top four after the Blades continued their superb first season back in the Premier League.

Gabriel Martinelli broke the deadlock in first-half stoppage-time at the Emirates Stadium. The 18-year-old Brazilian striker claimed his ninth goal of the season with a clinical finish from Bukayo Saka's cross.

But Chris Wilder's side snatched an 83rd-minute equaliser when John Fleck lashed home after Arsenal failed to clear.

Bottom of the table Norwich's vital 1-0 win over fellow strugglers Bournemouth saw the pitchside monitor finally used to decide a red card call.

Norwich took the lead when Bournemouth defender Steve Cook was sent off after flinging himself across the

goal to block Teemu Pukki's shot with his hand. Pukki fired home the resulting penalty in the 33rd minute, but the Canaries had to survive a tense finish after Ben Godfrey was sent off in the 76th minute.

Godfrey's foul on Callum Wilson was ruled a red card by referee Paul Tierney after he checked with the monitor, a move that followed advice to officials from Premier League chiefs this week to use the screen more often.

Wolves climbed to sixth after a thrilling fightback in their 3-2 win at Southampton, with Pedro Neto starting a second-half revival that saw Raul Jimenez's brace seal the points.

Everton drew 1-1 at West Ham after Dominic Calvert-Lewin cancelled out Issa Diop's opener for the hosts.

Aston Villa's Jack Grealish rescued a 1-1 draw at Brighton, who had taken the lead through Leandro Trossard.

Barty fights to title victory at Adelaide

ADELAIDE: Ashleigh Barty ended a nine-year Australian home title drought yesterday with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska at the Adelaide International. The world number one became the first Aussie woman to lift a trophy on a home court since Jarmila Wolfe won Hobart in 2011.

Barty beat 24th-ranked teenager Yastremska in 87 minutes at Memorial Drive to gain a boatload of confidence heading into Monday's start of the Australian Open in Melbourne, where she is top seed.

She was presented the carved wood trophy by a painted Aboriginal elder who

blessed with a chant it before it was handed over. "The best part about this week is I fought and scrapped my way through and got better and better in each situation, in each match," Barty said.

"I just put myself in the position to play for another title, which is really exciting. It's been incredible to play at home... I can't wait to get started in Melbourne next week."

Barty will take to the court at Rod Laver Arena on Monday night. "It's going to be exciting and a fresh tournament... I have to start with my clean slate for the Australian Open, I'm looking forward to that first round," she said.

Barty won the opening set against her 19-year-old opponent, losing just two points on serve and breaking three times. After starting the second set with a break, the Australian momentarily lost her edge, dropping serve for two all.

But Barty kept up the pressure, earning three break points in the 11th game. One was

enough after Yastremska put a backhand wide. The next game Barty earned three match points and took the title when her opponent sent a return long over the baseline.

In the men's draw, Andrey Rublev set a record of his own as the Russian crushed South African qualifier Lloyd Harris 6-3, 6-0 in 57 minutes. Rublev, who lifted the Doha trophy last weekend, is the first man since Dominik Hrbaty in 2004 to win two titles in the first two weeks of a season.

The Russian has not lost a match since November — 12 in a row — and stands 8-0 this season. "I don't how I've done this," Rublev said of his back-to-back double. "It seems amazing to me. I'm so happy with who I've been playing these two weeks, I've really enjoyed my tennis a lot," he added.

"Lloyd and I are the same age but we never played in juniors, so this was our first time. I know how much he also wanted to win. I knew this match would be really tough and I'm so happy I won." — AFP



ADELAIDE: Winner Ashleigh Barty of Australia (L) and runner-up Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine pose after their women's final singles match at the Adelaide International tennis tournament in Adelaide yesterday. — AFP