

# China confirms new SARS-like coronavirus strain is contagious

## Fears of major outbreak as millions travel for Lunar New Year holiday

### Criticism of finance minister intensifies over wages, taxes

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Lawmakers yesterday intensified their criticism of Finance Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel for saying there is a need to revise the wages of civil servants and consider imposing taxes and charges. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain disputed the figures provided by the minister while presenting the new budget for 2020/2021, saying there is always a difference of more than one billion dinars between actual and government figures. He also disputed what the minister said, that government departments demanded KD 27 billion and that the ministry reduced the figure to KD 22.5 billion, doubting this huge figure could be right.

Babtain said that touching the wages of Kuwaitis is a red line, adding that "don't think about borrowing  
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**BEIJING:** A SARS-like virus that has spread across China and reached three other Asian nations is contagious between humans, a government expert said yesterday, fuelling fears of a major outbreak as millions travel for the Lunar New Year holiday. The new coronavirus strain, first discovered in the central city of Wuhan, has caused alarm because of its connection to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

The total number of people diagnosed with the virus rose to 218, as Beijing and Shanghai confirmed their first cases yesterday while more than a dozen more emerged in southern Guangdong province and 136 new ones were found over the weekend in Wuhan, according to state broadcaster CCTV. A third person died in Wuhan, the local health commission said.

Scientists have scrambled to determine the mode of transmission, with a seafood market in Wuhan believed to be the center of the outbreak. But Zhong Nanshan, a renowned scientist at the National Health Commission who helped expose the scale of the SARS outbreak, said patients could contract the new virus without having visited the city. "Currently, it can be said it is affirmative that there is the phenomenon of  
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WUHAN, China: Medical staff members carry a patient into the Jinyintan Hospital, where patients infected by a mysterious SARS-like virus are being treated on Jan 18, 2020. — zAFP

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## Local

# Kuwait's Amir receives message from Qatar's Amir on bilateral ties

## Sheikh Sabah congratulates accolade-winning oncologist on success



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in a group photo with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences officials.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Tanzania to Kuwait Aisha Salim Amour.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Masato Takaoka.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Syed Sajjad Haider.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani who conveyed to His Highness the Amir a message from Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. The message contained long-standing relations that unite the two countries and ways of supporting and developing them in all fields as well as issues of common concern. In return, His Highness the Amir wished health and prosperity to Qatar's Amir

and Qatari people. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received newly appointed Ambassadors to Kuwait. His Highness received the credentials of Ambassador of Tanzania Aisha Salim Amour, Ambassador of Japan Masato Takaoka and Pakistan's Ambassador Syed Sajjad Haider. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad, Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak

Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Undersecretary and His Highness the Amir's Chief of Staff Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, and Head of Amiri Protocols Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah attended the meetings. His Highness the Amir also received the visiting Lebanese head of a religious institution Sayyed Ali Mohammad Hussein Fadhlallah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir headed the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences' (KFAS) meeting.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday congratulated his

compatriot Dr Wadah Al-Refai after he was named the best surgical oncologist in the US state of Washington last year. His Highness the Amir expressed his warm sentiments in a cable he sent to the Kuwaiti physician, who was installed as the John Dillon Chair in Surgical Oncology at Georgetown University, an achievement that garnered him the adulation of the Kuwaiti leadership. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Kuwaiti surgeon. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Lebanese head of a religious institution Sayyed Ali Mohammad Hussein Fadhlallah.

## Crown Prince meets governor, diplomats

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday the Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received the newly appointed Ambassadors of European Union to Kuwait Cristian Tudor and Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulmalek Buhduo. His Highness the Crown Prince also received newly appointed Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci. Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the head of protocol at the Crown Prince Diwan, attended the meetings. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassadors of European Union to Kuwait Cristian Tudor. - KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulmalek Buhduo.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci.

## Kuwaiti PM welcomes Qatari FM

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the visiting Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and his

accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister of the GCC affairs, Ambassador Nasser Hajji Al-Muzain and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi. Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah also held talks yesterday with his Qatari counterpart. The talks, attended by a number of Kuwaiti and Qatari diplomats, revolved around ties between the two Gulf countries, in addition to the latest happenings around the world. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti Defense Minister meets Iraqi counterpart

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah discussed yesterday bilateral ties with the visiting Iraqi Defense Minister Najah Al-Shammari. In a statement released by the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations following the meeting yesterday, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour stressed the importance of these meetings for the benefit of both sides. The meeting also tackled issues that contribute to bringing views and unifying efforts of the political leadership in the two coun-

tries, the statement said. It also touched on issues of common concern in addition to ways to enhance cooperation and work. Kuwait's Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Khodhr, Kuwait Army Deputy Chief of Staff Lt Gen Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, a number of senior army officials and Iraqi Charge d'Affaires in the country Mohammad Al-Husseini also attended the meeting.

Kuwait's National Security Bureau chief Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah also discussed issues of mutual importance with visiting Iraqi Defense Minister yesterday. The officials tackled means for cooperation, bilateral relations and regional and international affairs of mutual concern, a statement by the bureau said. In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem yesterday received the visiting Iraqi Defense Minister and his accompanying delegation. MP Essa Al-Kandari attended the meeting. Separately, Ghanem received the newly appointed Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carli Baldocci. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah holds talks with Iraqi Defense Minister Najah Al-Shammari. —KUNA

## Local

# Total or temporary labor deployment ban? Filipinos in Kuwait in state of confusion

## Philippines told Kuwait not pursuing ban for skilled, unskilled workers

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Confusion overshadowed the Philippine labor deployment ban to Kuwait when visiting Philippine Special Envoy to the Middle East Abdullah Mamao announced late Sunday during a Filipino community meeting that Senator Bong Go has agreed to implement a temporary ban instead of a total deployment ban.

"I have been in constant communication with the office of the president through Senator Bong Go; he advised me that as far as the earlier decision (to implement a total ban) is concerned, it has now changed to a temporary ban. Skilled and semi-skilled workers can now be deployed to Kuwait. I am waiting for the final announcement of this new development from the office of the president, as we are not pursuing the ban for skilled and unskilled workers, including professionals. I hope there will be changes because I relayed this information to Kuwait," Mamao told several Filipino community leaders at the embassy.

However, in an interview on government radio in Manila, Philippines Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Silvestre Bello III said he is not in favor of a temporary ban since the implementation of the total ban was based on the autopsy of the gruesome murder of Filipina housemaid Jeanelyn Villavende.

"I spoke to Secretary Mamao and told him about my decision with regards to our earlier resolution by the governing board of the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) that we implemented on January 15. It was a total deployment ban and it will stay. It covers all workers, including skilled, semi-skilled and professionals. No more deployment - we are only allowing returning skilled workers and professionals to go back to Kuwait if they are vacationing here. They can go back to their workplaces, but we won't allow domestic helpers to return, including semi-skilled workers," he said.

Bello was asked if he had spoken to Mamao regarding his announcement in Kuwait late Sunday. "Yes, I spoke to him and explained to him why the total ban was implemented. He told me that the total ban should be implemented only for domestic helpers. But I replied that we should study his proposal first,

because the total deployment ban was a result of a gruesome murder of our fellow countrywoman in Kuwait and the alleged cover-up done in the autopsy of the body of Jeanelyn Villavende. It wasn't the real result, as shown in the autopsy of the body by our National Bureau of Investigation," Bello argued.

"Thirdly, the president in 2018 had declared a total deployment ban to Kuwait because of the death of Joana Demafeles (whose body was found

in the freezer of her employer). It was only lifted after the Kuwaiti government agreed to sign a memorandum of agreement with the Philippine government. In that agreement, we specifically cited that we should have our own standard employment contract to be signed by the employers, our workers and the foreign recruitment agency including the Philippine employment agency. Till now it is not being implemented, among others. So that we can be assured of the welfare of our countrymen, we have to agree on that and implement it once and for all. I told Secretary Mamao that I am ready to talk to them so we can give total protection to our workers," Bello said.

On Jan 15, DOLE together with POEA decided to impose a total ban on the deployment of newly-hired workers to Kuwait, including domestic helpers and skilled and unskilled laborers. However, returning skilled workers and professionals are exempted from the ban, but domestic helpers and semi-skilled workers who are on vacation will not be allowed to return to their sponsors. Manila had implemented a partial ban on domestic helpers bound to Kuwait on Jan 3 as its immediate response to the killing of Villavende by her sponsor.

The killing of Villavende is the latest in a series of abuses faced by Filipino workers in the Middle East, the main destination for about 3,000 Filipinos who leave the country daily on temporary foreign work permits. Women tend to work as domestic workers while men are mostly employed in construction and other sectors. Around 10 million Filipinos are migrant workers overseas and their remittances account for more than 10 percent of the country's GDP.

### News in brief

#### Ministry wants 'printing' vans removed

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality received a letter from the commerce ministry with regards to mobile vans that offer printing services and operate in front of government departments, saying this phenomenon is on the rise, as they are operating without a license from the minister or the municipality. It said these carts are an eyesore, as many of them are using vital public roads. The letter said removing those vans is the responsibility of the Municipality, so concerned authorities must be informed to remove violations. — Al-Qabas

#### Subsidized hamour?

**KUWAIT:** Informed sources said the ministry of commerce and industry is contemplating the inclusion of certain types of fish in ration supplies of subsidized foods, most notably hamour, adding the move will not cost public funds any additional monies. They said providing it on the ration card guarantees that it goes to citizens and those who benefit from the card at the lowest prices. — Al-Rai

#### Hospital operational costs

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said 15 percent of Jaber Hospital is operating to serve South Surra residents, with the operational sections equipped at a cost of KD 19 million. The minister, in an answer to a parliamentary question, said legal procedures were followed in signing hospital equipment contracts, adding there were no change in orders of medical equipment supplies. — Al-Rai

## Kuwait, Ethiopia to discuss lifting maids' ban

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** An Ethiopian labor delegation is due to arrive in Kuwait by the end of this month to discuss the mechanism of sending Ethiopian domestic helpers to work in the Gulf state according to conditions to be set and accepted by both countries, said informed sources. The sources added that the delegation briefed Kuwaiti officials about their conditions including a minimum monthly salary of KD 100, a weekly day off, ensuring human rights in terms of living conditions and good treatment, compensation in case of harm, free flight tickets for vacations and a one-way ticket on terminating the contract.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti side conditioned that maids be qualified for the job and be free of any health or psychological disorders, which had caused problems for some Kuwaiti families, including assaults. Further, the sources said both sides might agree on using certain domestic labor agencies or Al-Durra company to recruit the Ethiopian maids after subjecting them to medical tests in Ethiopia under the supervision of Kuwait's embassy there. "Ethiopia stressed that it has organized special training courses for laborers wishing to work abroad," the sources added, noting that the ban on Ethiopian maids could be lifted by the middle of this year if both sides manage to reach an agreement.

#### Iran holds fishermen

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards have detained three Kuwaiti fishing boats with 11 fishermen on board over charges of entering Iranian national waters, said Anadolu News Agency. According to the agency, the three boats approached the coast of Mahshahr in Khuzestan province, where the fishermen were arrested and referred to courts after interrogation. In this regard, Kuwaiti diplomatic sources stressed that none of the fishermen is Kuwaiti and that they are all Asians. "Procedures are ongoing according to norms in such cases and both the fishermen and boats will be

released soon," the sources underlined.

#### 'Unified' break

Minister of Education Saud Al-Harbi ordered forming a special committee to study synchronizing the midterm vacation for students of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Kuwait University (KU) and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). The committee headed by Harbi himself includes elements from MoE, KU and PAAET to study the possibility of rescheduling vacations in a bid to facilitate matters for families and help all family members enjoy the 'spring vacation' together regardless of the stage of education of their children. Notably, Harbi's decision comes in response to public and parliamentary criticism for the current holiday schedule, which disrupts family plans to enjoy the vacation together.

#### MEW budget

Chairman of the parliamentary budgets and final statement committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the largest number of remarks made by the State Audit Bureau reports involve the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW). "Most remarks involve public funds and the ministry has to form special committee to investigate these violations" he said, adding that MEW had not been properly cooperating with the Audit Bureau.

Abdulsamad explained that the committee discussed MEW's final statement for the fiscal year 2018-2019, which indicated that the ministry's total spending was KD 2.5 billion, while revenues were only KD 382 million. "The committee found that MEW still did not assess its real estate assets despite previous directives demanding so," Abdulsamad said, noting that the Audit Bureau made 129 remarks about MEW. "Most remarks involved the ministry's tenders and projects contracts and the ministry has to protect its rights by fining contractors falling behind schedule," Abdulsamad added, noting that MEW's uncollected debts are KD 323 million resulting from inaccurate readings of power consumption meters.

## Disabled woman rescued from Ahmadi fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A disabled woman was rescued from a fire in an Ahmadi area house yesterday. Ahmadi and Fahheel fire stations' men responded to an emergency call, and found out the fire had started in the bedroom. The house was evacuated, and the disabled woman was

taken out and handed to paramedics, before the fire was put out. In a separate case, a ranch in Kabd caught fire, so Kabd fire station men responded and found out the blaze started in a warehouse containing air conditioners. The fire was contained and put out. Investigations were opened to reveal the causes of the fires.



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## Local

# Kuwait govt trusts minister's arguments against grilling

## Minister's stand versus interpellation unquestionably sound: Cabinet

**KUWAIT:** Restating grilling as a constitutional right, the Kuwaiti Cabinet yesterday voiced utter confidence in the ability of Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri to address a grilling at parliament today. The Cabinet also said it totally backs the minister, reassuring that her stand versus the aspects of the interpellation is unquestionably sound. The Cabinet made the remark in a press statement following its customary weekly meeting presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The minister of social affairs made a briefing during the meeting on all the points and facts of the query motion, filed by MP Adel Al-Damkhi.

At the onset of the weekly meeting, the Cabinet approved a draft decree pertinent to an air service agreement between Kuwait and Rwanda, in addition to a draft decree bearing on the extended term of Kuwaiti representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) advisory body for three years. Internationally, the Kuwaiti Cabinet congratulated Guatemala President Alejandro Giammattei on his recent inauguration, wishing

him the best of luck and the people of Guatemala more progress and welfare. It also congratulated Croatian President Zoran Milanovic on victory in the recent presidential election.

The Cabinet further voiced sympathy with the Philippine government over the impacts of a volcano that hit Manila recently, while emphatically condemned a recent terrorist attack in Somalia, which left dozens of military personnel and civilians either dead or injured. The Kuwaiti ministers denounced a recent ballistic attack by Yemen Houthi militia on a military camp in the eastern Yemeni city of Marib, which caused heavy casualties. In this regard, the ministers vehemently denounced such a criminal act that reflected the determination of Houthis group to pursue disrupting Yemen's security and stability and intimidating innocents. It called on the international community to move earnestly to put an end to these criminal acts and the protracted conflict in Yemen. Finally, the Cabinet voiced sympathy with Algeria and Czech over the victims of a vehicle accident and a fire that took place there respectively. — KUNA

### Ministers condemn Houthi attack



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Ministers Mariam Al-Aqeel (right) and Saud Al-Harbi sign the memo of understanding. — KUNA

## Memo signed to send Kuwaitis on PhD scholarships

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Secretariat General of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development yesterday signed a memo of understanding with the ministry of higher education to dispatch Kuwaiti students on scholarships to get PhDs in cognitive economics and knowledge and creativity management as part of the National Knowledge Economy Center's programs.

The memo was signed by Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel and Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi in the presence of the secretary general of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi. Aqeel said that the memo was signed because the

supreme council's secretariat general supervises the 'Kuwait Knowledge Seat' within the activities of the NKEC and the ministry of higher education. Aqeel added that according to the memo, students meeting the set conditions would be dispatched on four-year scholarships to get PhD degrees in cognitive economics and knowledge and creativity management. She pointed out that the Kuwait Knowledge Seat is an NKEC program that targets investment in national manpower, giving them access to scientific research resources to improve the productivity of scientific research within Kuwait.

Aqeel added as one of the leading projects in the region, the search engine project is one specialized in cognitive economics that aims at enabling national scientific researchers to produce more scientific researches through access to international scientific journal and periodical websites. Harbi said the agreement enhances communal partnership, namely in the field of cognitive economics, which already need substantial leaps to help Kuwait face the challenge of exploring new economic opportunities and put an end to relying on one source of income. "Therefore, cognitive economics are an integral part of a national vision and an educational necessity," he

underlined. Mahdi also expressed his joy on signing the memo and explained that the program ensures dispatching scholarships upon coordination with the ministry of higher education. He also noted that special committees would be formed to set the selection conditions.

### Municipality allowances

Head of the Kuwait Municipality employees' syndicate Mohammed Abdullah Al-Aradah said the municipality had contacted the Civil Services Commission (CSC) on Jan 19 concerning the payment of hazard, pollution and noise allowances for gravediggers, undertakers and drivers working at the funeral department. Aradah added that according to the Civil Services Commission resolution number 13/2012, allowances demanded are KD 35 for each of the above categories. Separately, the Capital municipality inspection team conducted a field tour to inspect all violations of state property and those committed by stores and various installations. In this regard, team leader Zaid Al-Enezi said the campaign resulted in filing five citations for unlicensed ads, issuing four warning notices for public property violations and dealing with eight complaints reported through the team's hotline.

## Zain continues partnership with Kuwait Food Bank

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the continuation of its support to the humanitarian efforts exerted by the Kuwait Food Bank. Zain's continuous support comes as part of its strategic partnership with the bank, which organizes many relief campaigns inside and outside of Kuwait.

Zain spares no efforts to achieve its comprehensive corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy that closely focuses on supporting humanitarian initiatives. The company strongly believes that launching and supporting humanitarian initiatives helps to infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, and help support those who are in need of help.

Zain recently allocated the entire proceeds of this year's Waqf to the humanitarian efforts and campaigns of the Kuwait Food Bank, including the distribution of food baskets and essential winter needs to underprivileged individuals and families. This has led The Kuwait Awqaf Public

Foundation (KAPF) to recognize Zain last month. Zain expressed its pride in this recognition from KAPF, which further highlights the company's commitment in enriching the culture of giving and social contribution through launching humanitarian campaigns and supporting initiatives adopted by leading non-profit organizations inside and outside of Kuwait. Zain prides itself on the long track of records and contributions it has put in philanthropic areas over the years, being one of the leading companies in the private sector.

The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation recognized Zain in 2018 for its role as one of the first Kuwaiti companies to dedicate a KD 1 million Waqf at KAPF since 1996 as endorsed by the Board of Directors, where all of the Waqf's annual proceeds are dedicated for various charity programs every year. Last year's entire proceeds were dedicated to the humanitarian efforts of the Kuwait Food Bank both inside and outside of Kuwait. Such efforts included distributing meals, holding iftar banquets, offering food baskets, as well as conducting relief campaigns all year round.

Zain is proud of its long list of programs and contributions that serve noble causes through strategically partnering with entities that adopt humanitarian work, including non-profit organizations, governmental institutions, and global entities.



**KUWAIT:** Zain and Kuwait Food Bank officials during the preparation of winter essentials.

## Arab ministers meet on preventing hate speech

**KUWAIT:** An Arab committee of experts including the councils of interior and justice ministers came to a close on Sunday issuing a guiding bill on preventing hate speech. Kuwait's Ministry of Justice said in a statement that the meeting held late Wednesday and Thursday approved the recommendation and referred it to the executive offices of the two councils to take appropriate

decisions in this matter. The bill, which was prepared by Kuwait's Ministry of Justice, includes a definition of hate speech, words stirring sectarian seditions or ideas calling for discrimination between groups and individuals. The draft law contains also a meaning of discrimination consistent in its contents with international definitions with the aim of combating all forms of hate speech of which discrimination is often an important reason. The definition calls for combating all discrimination, exclusion, restriction or preference in all areas of life. The second chapter of the bill criminalizes all audio, visual or electronic means used in hate speech. The draft law punishes the legal person if he or she commits crimes stipulated in this law. The law also urges educational and religious institutions to spread the culture of tolerance, reject hate speech and promote dialogue. — KUNA

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Local

# Kuwait seeks major private sector contribution in development plan

## Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition opens at Kuwait International Fairground



KUWAIT: Officials inaugurate the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Main guests attend the exhibition.

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Under the patronage of Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition opened yesterday at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref with the participation of a number of specialized companies in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment, including many international brands interested in the Kuwaiti and Gulf markets. The ninth edition of Horeca Kuwait is organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company.

During the opening ceremony, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi said that the Horeca exhibition has been successful for nine years and contributes to the growth of a number of the most vital sectors for people's lives and their food security, health, welfare and

prosperity.

He stressed that the exhibition is in line with the development plan inspired by the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which focuses on mobilizing all efforts to transform Kuwait into a leading regional financial, commercial and cultural hub by 2035. "The Kuwait Vision 2035 also stresses the necessity of creating an investment attracting environment, encouraging the private sector to lead development, providing it with the suitable business environment, diversifying the production base and developing national tourism. However, all these require sufficient flourishing of activities," he added.

Mahdi noted that tourism is one of the non-oil revenue-creating sectors, and is bound to improve with time according to the projections of the World Travel and Tourism Council, which predicts a 4.8 percent annual growth until 2028. He explained that this rate will be enhanced with the

transformation of the country into a financial and commercial hub, and with the Silk Road project in cooperation with China out of the strategic partnership in the framework of the Belt and Road initiative.

"The development we believe in and pursue aims to eventually improve the standard of living and welfare of our people. We are well aware that the flourishing of the economy, the entertainment and hospitality services and other ambitions in 'New Kuwait' will reflect positively on the improvement of the quality of life for all citizens," Mahdi said. In conclusion, he added that Kuwait is rich in the potential of its strong-willed youth who comprise more than 70 percent of the population.

Nabila Al Anjari, Head of Horeca Kuwait's organizing committee and General Manager of Leaders Group for Consulting and Development Company, said in her speech, "Today, we celebrate achieving record and comprehensive success indicators in terms of the number and categories

of sponsors, participants, contestants in the cooking competitions and online applications to visit the exhibition. There has been a marked increase in outside interest, not just through the participation of international brands and products, but also through the participation for the first time of several foreign business councils."

"Horeca Kuwait has made a qualitative and quantitative leap and defied many obstacles," she indicated. "This leap is more valuable because it was achieved at a time when tourism in Kuwait, unlike all countries in the region and the world, was not receiving sufficient attention."

"As a result, the contribution of tourism in Kuwait, which affects hospitality in general, remains limited at 2.8 percent in 2018 and under KD 1 billion, while the percentage is much higher in other GCC countries," she added. "UAE topped the global rate with tourism and travel contributing over 12 percent of GDP, while Saudi Arabia has gone a long way towards implementing its

strategy of raising tourism contribution from three to 10 percent in 10 years with the creation of 1.5 million jobs mostly for the youth. Meanwhile, this percentage is up 10 percent in Bahrain and Qatar. Likewise, Oman is implementing its strategy of increasing the contribution of tourism and travel from under six percent in 2017 to nine percent in the next few years."

"Statistics and figures confirm that we are witnessing global and regional trends from which Kuwait cannot remain isolated," she proclaimed. "They also reflect that tourism, travel, hospitality and entertainment in the more advanced, growing and rich countries provide major contribution to economic, social and cultural development." She also urged Kuwait to keep up with the growth and development of the tourism and travel industry in the region as studies expect the direct contribution of tourism in the GCC region to increase from \$58 million in 2018 to \$120 million in 2027.



Officials tour the exhibition.



Judges of the cooking competition.



Food displayed at the exhibition.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry officials meet with members of a UK trade delegation yesterday. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait Chamber of Commerce sees upside to Brexit



Dr Dharar Al-Ghanem



Michael Davenport

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry said yesterday that Britain's impending withdrawal from the European Union (EU) is a "viable" opportunity for better trade ties with the UK. Kuwait has made palpable progress over introducing more simplified business procedures, which would prove instrumental in improving the country's ties with the UK, according to chamber member Dr Dharar Al-Ghanem. Kuwait and Britain have witnessed a

milestone in their historic relationship, having recently marked the 120th anniversary of the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of 1899, which was the catalyst for stronger bilateral ties, he said amid a meeting with a UK trade delegation headed by British Ambassador Michael Davenport. Britain views Kuwait as an important trade partner, said the envoy, who heaped praise on the country for the meteoric growth it has recently achieved. — KUNA

## Kuwait partakes in UN Int'l Day of Education

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait, represented by Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, a leading social-educational activist, will partake in the United Nations Day of Education, due at the UN headquarters in New York, on January 24, 2020. Sheikha Intisar said, in press remarks yesterday, that her planned participation in the international event would be in response to an invitation from President of 74th session of United Nations General Assembly, Dr Tijjani Muhammad Bande. This invitation came after Bande's visit to Kuwait in December 2019, Sheikha Intisar said.

Sheikha Intisar will participate in the UN

Informal Interactive Dialogue on celebrating the International Day of Education. She will discuss experience of applying 'Bareeq' and 'Boomerang' educational programs in public and private schools in Kuwait. The forthcoming event will shed light at the good, comprehensive education harmonization with sustainable development aims, which would be a great opportunity to exchange expertise and ideas among participants, she said. The UN great interest offered to good education comes out of the 26th article of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which indicates that "Everyone has the right to education," she added.

Kuwait is distinguished and developed in applying sustainable development objectives, and comes at the top among nations in free education for citizens, she affirmed. Moreover, Sheikha Intisar will tackle targets of 'Al-Nuwar' education program during her participation, as it works on boosting good and comprehensive education in Kuwait and will look at its positive impact on students' manners. She also men-

tioned that 'Bareeq' program is applied in 49 public schools, including more than 11,000 students and 500 teachers and is included in the country's 2035 development plan.

Meanwhile, 'Boomerang' educational program is applied on 15,100 students in 33 schools through theatrical shows that spread awareness against bullying. The program trains 76 teachers on kindness methods and means of spreading this value in schools, she added. Sheikha Intisar endorsed the UN's distinguished efforts to decrease the number of children unable to continue education as there are 262 million children outside schools' walls worldwide. She expressed her deepest thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, notably Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, for supporting non-profit institutions including Al-Nuwar institution. She also thanked the UN Secretary General Representative and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh for the care he offers to Al-Nuwar Institution. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti imaging center earns European certificate

**KUWAIT:** Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Molecular Imaging Center (JAC), one of the centers of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), announced receiving the European Association of Nuclear Medicine Research Ltd (EARL) certificate in molecular imaging, after meeting the European positron imaging quality standards. Director of JAC Dr Fahad Marafi said that the EARL certificate showed the level and efficiency of medical imaging. JAC was the only center in Kuwait specialized in producing unique radioactive materials, according to internationally accredited terms, for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), certified and approved by the Ministry of Health (MofH), Marafi

said. Meanwhile, Head of JAC's Nuclear Medicine Department Dr Mahmoud Alfeeli, confirmed that they are keen on bringing their health services to international levels. This comes in line with MoH's plan to provide the best medical services to patients, conforming to worldwide standards, Alfeeli added. In turn, Head of the Nuclear Medicine Physics Unit at JAC Hanan Al-Dosari said that they conducted the necessary tests to obtain this certificate for a full year. JAC finally began producing the latest radioactive positron material to film the division of cancerous tumors, to be the first medical center in the Middle East to produce this substance, while being GMP certified. — KUNA





India's ruling party picks new president as challenges mount

## UK PM raises visas in pitch for post-Brexit trade with Africa



KOLKATA, West Bengal: Members of the Christian community along with social activists take part in a rally to protests against the Indian government's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) yesterday. —AFP

## Indian Christians protest against 'anti-Muslim' law

### Sharp slowdown in India a drag on world economy: IMF

**KOLKATA:** More than 8,000 people from the Christian community took to the streets in eastern India yesterday to protest against a citizenship law that critics say discriminates against Muslims. Hindu-majority India has been gripped by widespread street demonstrations that have sometimes turned deadly, with the march in West Bengal state's capital Kolkata believed to be one of the biggest rallies by Christians.

Carrying banners calling for the citizenship law and proposed nationwide "register of citizens" to be ditched, the demonstrators marched for several kilometres from a church to a life-sized statue of Indian independence hero Mahatma Gandhi. One of the protest organizers, Herod Mullick from the Bangiya Christiya Parishad, said the new legislation was

"divisive." "We want to express our solidarity with the people who are protesting against CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) and NRC (National Register of Citizens) in different parts of India."

Police estimated that more than 8,000 people took part in the march. The new law makes it easier for persecuted religious minorities from three neighboring countries to obtain citizenship, but not if they are Muslim. Combined with a mooted national register of citizens, it has stoked fears that India's 200 million Muslims will be marginalized.

Meanwhile, easing US-China trade tensions have lessened uncertainty and the world economy may have hit bottom but a sharp slowdown in India is creating a drag worldwide, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday. In the latest update

to its World Economic Outlook, the IMF cut the global growth estimate for 2020 to 3.3 percent, 0.1 percent lower than in the prior report released in October. It lowered the 2021 forecast by 0.2 percent, to 3.4 percent.

The sharp drop for India "accounts for the lion's share of the downward revisions", the IMF said. IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva pointed to India's struggles with declining consumption and investments, budget deficits and delays in making structural reforms.

"After a synchronized slowdown in 2019, we expect a moderate pick-up in global growth this year and next," Georgieva told a news conference on the eve of the 50th World Economic Forum in Davos, the annual gathering of business and political elites. "We are already seeing

some tentative signs of stabilization but we have not reached a turning point yet," she cautioned.

However, the IMF once again slashed expected GDP growth in India, by 1.2 percentage points this year and 0.9 point in 2021 compared to the October forecasts. While growth remains relatively robust at 5.8 percent and 6.5 percent for the two years, respectively, it is not enough to continue to reduce poverty in the growing South Asian economy.

India has for years been a major engine of global expansion along with China, while advanced economies have bumped along at far slower rates. But it had already been downgraded in October due to a bigger-than-expected decline in domestic demand amid growing stress in the financial sector. —Agencies

## Viral video reunites Bangladeshi with family after 48 years



SYLHET, Bangladesh: In this photograph taken on Jan 17, 2020, former businessman Habibur Rahman looks on as he lies in a bed at a hospital. —AFP

**DHAKA:** An ailing Bangladeshi who went missing almost half a century ago has been reunited with his family after a video appeal on Facebook seeking help for his treatment went viral. Habibur Rahman was a 30-year-old businessman and father-of-four in the north-eastern city of Sylhet when he disappeared in 1972 after travelling for work to the port city of Chittagong, his family said. His family, most of whom now live abroad, searched for him for years without success - until the wife of one of his grandsons in the United States spotted him in the video uploaded this month.

Rahman became an itinerant living in Sufi shrines in Moulvibazar district according to his caregiver Rajiya Begum, who has been looking after him for the past five years. He was admitted to a local hospital earlier this month after breaking his arm. Unable to pay for his surgery, Begum asked another patient in the hospital to film a video of Rahman's plight and post it on Facebook on his behalf. The footage was shared and re-uploaded by other users and viewed at least a million times.

"She notified us and we rushed to the hospital and found my grandfather alive," Kefayat Hussain, one of Rahman's 13 grandchildren and who lives in Sylhet, told AFP on Monday his sister-in-law's discovery. The 20-year-old said Rahman confirmed his late wife's and other family members' names. "He could not recognize us at first but when he saw my father's elder cousins, he right away knew it was us. He wept like a baby," Hussain said. "He kept asking questions about my grandma and uncles who live abroad." —AFP

## Malaysia says won't be 'garbage dump' as it returns waste

**BUTTERWORTH, Malaysia:** Malaysia has sent back 150 shipping containers of plastic waste to mostly wealthier nations, with the Southeast Asian country saying yesterday it would not be the world's "garbage dump". The region has been flooded with plastic from more developed economies such as the United States and Britain since 2018, after China - which previously boasted a massive recycling industry - ordered a halt to most imports.

Many Chinese recycling businesses moved to Malaysia after the ban took effect, leading to huge quantities of plastic being shipped in without permits and flooding small communities. Governments across the region are now sending back illegally imported plastic, and Environment Minister Yeo Bee Yin said Malaysia had returned 150 shipping containers carrying 3,737 metric tons to places including France, Britain and the United States. Officials hope to send back another 110 containers in the near future, 60 of which came from the US, Yeo said. Authorities "will take the necessary steps to ensure that Malaysia does not become the garbage dump of the world", she added. The environment ministry "will continue to wage war against pollution, including plastic waste", she told reporters in the northern city of Butterworth, home to a major port from where some containers were sent back.

## Millions go hungry in wealthy Canada - and some die young

**ROME:** Canadians who cannot afford regular meals are more likely to die early, according to a study released yesterday, showing that people are dying from hunger even in wealthy countries. The study of more than half a million Canadian adults found that hunger was linked to raised mortality from all causes of death except cancer. But infectious diseases, unintentional injuries and suicide were twice as likely to kill those who faced severe problems finding enough food as those who do not, said the paper, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

"It's like we found third-world causes in a first-world country," lead author Fei Men, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Toronto, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Food insecure people in Canada are facing problems like infections and drug poisoning that we would expect people from developing countries to be facing," he said. "The results are pretty striking to us as



BUTTERWORTH, Malaysia: Malaysian Environment Minister Yeo Bee Yin and officials inspect a container containing plastic waste shipment yesterday before sending it back to the countries of origin. —AFP

The exporting countries and shipping lines covered the cost of returning the containers. "We don't want to pay a single cent," the minister said. "People dump their rubbish into your country, we are not supposed to pay them to send it back." The containers were sent to 13 countries, with 43 returned to France, 42 to Britain, 17 to the US and 11 to Canada. Several Southeast Asian countries have sent back unwanted waste in recent months. Indonesia has returned hundreds of containers to their countries of origin and the Philippines returned a huge shipment of garbage to Canada. —AFP

well. In the developed world such as Canada, food insecurity can still cause deaths," Men added.

More than 4 million people in Canada struggle to get enough to eat, official data show, a problem that ranges from running out of food or skipping meals to compromising on quantity and quality. Not having enough to eat leads to both "material deprivation and psychological distress" which in turn results in chronic inflammation and malnutrition, it said. They are also less able to manage chronic conditions, Men said in a phone interview. "(If they have) diabetes, they are more likely to not adhere to their treatment and drugs so it might have much bigger and harmful effect on them."

A 2019 study looking at the relationship between hunger and mortality among US adults also found similar that not having enough food was linked to deaths from all causes. Globally, more than 2 billion people lack access to adequate healthy food, putting them at risk of health problems, including 8 percent of people in North America or Europe, according to the latest data from the United Nations. Researchers in the Canada study looked at data on more than half a million adults, of whom more than 25,000 died before the average age of 82. The findings show public health efforts to prevent and treat diseases and injuries should take into account people's access to adequate food, the authors said. —Reuters

## Indian 'Rapunzel' remains a cut above with longest teen hair

**AHMEDABAD, India:** A 17-year-old Indian girl has retained her crown as the teen with the world's longest hair more than a decade after she stopped getting her tresses cut following a bad experience at a salon. Nilanshi Patel, from the small town of Modasa in Gujarat state, remains a cut above the rest according to the Guinness World Records having bettered her record of 170.5 cm set in Dec 2018 with a new length of 190 cm.

Her proud father said his only child's locks had turned her from a local celebrity into an international one. Nicknamed "Rapunzel" by her friends and schoolmates after the long, flowing hair of the princess in the Brothers Grimm fairytale, Patel said she has not visited a hairdresser for 11 years after a hair-raising ordeal. "At six, I had a very bad experience at a local salon," she told AFP. "Since then I have been apprehensive about cutting my hair. My parents accepted my wishes and now my locks have become my lucky charm."

Patel has to wear high-heeled shoes if she does not want her hair to touch the ground. Apart from that, Patel said she cares for her hair like every other teenager - but with help from her mother. "I do what every teenager does. Wash the hair every week and oil it once or twice a week," the aspiring engineer said, adding that she dries it by sitting in the sun or with a hairdryer. "Mostly I keep a braid, but while playing or for some occasions, I tie the hair into a bun. The only time I have trouble is while swimming." —AFP



MODASA, India: Nilanshi Patel, 17, poses for picture with the 2018 and 2019 Guinness World Record certificates for the longest hair in the teenager category on Sunday. —AFP

## International

## Lebanon vows to deter 'infiltrator' attacks after weekend violence

## President presides over crisis talks with security agencies

BEIRUT: Security officials in protest-hit Lebanon yesterday vowed to take measures to deter attacks against security forces during crisis talks following rare violence over the weekend that left hundreds wounded. Lebanon has been rocked by mostly peaceful anti-government rallies since October 17 but the protests turned violent over the weekend amid deepening economic and political crises. On Saturday and Sunday night demonstrators, who had called for a "week of rage", lobbed stones, firecrackers and street signs at riot police, who fired tear gas and rubber bullets to clear a road leading to parliament.

The escalation saw more than 540 people on the two sides wounded and came as wrangling delayed the formation of a new government to replace that of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who quit last year in the face of street protests. Yesterday afternoon, President Michel Aoun presided over crisis talks on the violence between the caretaker interior and defense ministers as well as the chiefs of the military and security agencies.

Participants accused "infiltrators" of attacking security forces and vandalizing property, and discussed security measures to "deter" further offences and protect peaceful protesters, a government source said after the meeting. The source made the comments in a statement to media, but did not disclose what measures would be taken.

In a show of defiance, demonstrators who said they took part in the weekend protests responded online using the Arabic hashtag "The Infiltrator Is Me", disclosing their full personal details. They also accused security forces of firing rubber bullets at the eyes of protesters in other Twitter posts, as rights groups and the UN criticized police over the crackdown.

**'Brutal force'**

More than 540 people, including protesters and security forces, were wounded in the weekend violence in central Beirut, according to a toll compiled by

AFP from figures provided by the Red Cross and Civil Defense. It included people who suffered "breathing difficulties" or "light injuries", the civil defense said. Lawyers and rights groups have condemned "excessive" and "brutal" use of force by security forces, who they said hit protesters on the head, face and genitals.

Human Rights Watch accused riot police of "launching tear gas canisters at protesters' heads, firing rubber bullets in their eyes and attacking people at hospitals and a mosque". The violence also drew condemnation from the United Nations, which called the crackdown "unacceptable". A 22-year-old protester, who asked not to be named for security reasons, said he was severely beaten by security forces until he was bleeding in the head.

"Four of them were beating me with batons," said the man, who has been in the hospital since Saturday. "Then they dragged me on the ground before they started kicking me," he told AFP. "One of them slammed the base of a tear gas launcher against my mouth, another jabbed my face."

**'Cycle of collapse'**

Protesters had called for a week of "anger" over the political leadership's failure to form a new government even as the debt-ridden country sinks deeper into a financial crisis. Lebanon has been without a government since prime minister Hariri resigned on Oct 29 in the face of popular pressure. Political factions agreed on December 19 to appoint former education minister Hassan Diab as the new premier but have since squabbled over ministerial posts and portfolios.

"The ruling elite is going back to its traditional bickering over their shares in government" said Bachar El-Halabi a researcher at the American University of Beirut. "This has laid the foundation for a more violent approach by initially peaceful protesters." Hariri yesterday said that there was an "urgent need" for a government that could steer Lebanon out of its "cycle of



BEIRUT: Lebanese protesters take cover as riot police spray them with water from behind a barricaded road leading to parliament on Sunday amid ongoing anti-government demonstrations. —AFP

collapse". "The country is heading towards the unknown and the team responsible for forming a government is taking its time," he said on Twitter.

Protesters have demanded a new government be comprised solely of independent experts, excluding all

established political parties - a demand analysts say is a tall order. The political impasse is worsening an already-dire economic crisis that the World Bank says may see the number of people living in poverty climb from a third to half the population. —AFP

## How 'Africa's richest woman' stole fortune

LONDON: An award-winning investigative team published a trove of files Sunday allegedly showing how Africa's richest woman syphoned hundreds of millions of dollars of public money into offshore accounts. The New York-based International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) worked with newspapers such as Munich's Sueddeutsche Zeitung to reveal the "Panama Papers" tax haven scandal in 2016.

Its latest series called "Luanda Leaks" zeros in on Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of former Angola president Jose Eduardo dos Santos. Angola's prosecutors last month froze the bank accounts and assets owned by the 46-year-old businesswoman and her Congolese husband Sindika Dokolo, which she described as a groundless political vendetta.

"Based on a trove of more than

715,000 files, our investigation highlights a broken international regulatory system that allows professional services firms to serve the powerful with almost no questions asked," the ICIJ wrote. The group said its team of 120 reporters in 20 countries was able to trace "how an army of Western financial firms, lawyers, accountants, government officials and management companies helped (dos Santos and Dokolo) hide assets from tax authorities".

Dos Santos took to Twitter to refute the claims, launching a salvo of around 30 tweets in Portuguese and English, and accusing journalists involved in the investigation of telling "lies". "My fortune is built on my character, my intelligence, education, capacity for work, perseverance," she wrote. She also blasted "the racism and prejudice" of SIC-Expresso, a Portuguese TV station and newspaper, and member of the ICIJ, "that recall the colonial era when an African could never be considered equal to a European".

Dos Santos's lawyer dismissed the ICIJ findings as a "highly coordinated attack" orchestrated by Angola's current rulers, in a statement quoted by The

Guardian newspaper. Dos Santos herself told BBC Africa the file dump was part of a "witch hunt" meant to discredit her and her father. The former president's daughter headed Angola's national oil company Sonangol. Forbes magazine last year estimated her net worth at \$2.2 billion. Her father's successor Joao Lourenco forced her out of the oil company after becoming president in 2017. Dos Santos said on Wednesday that she would consider running for president in the next election in 2022.

**Western consultants**

The ICIJ investigation said Western consulting firms such as PwC and Boston Consulting Group were "apparently ignoring red flags" while helping her stash away public assets. "Regulators around the globe have virtually ignored the key role Western professionals play in maintaining an offshore industry that drives money laundering and drains trillions from public coffers," the report said.

Its document trove included redacted letters allegedly showing how consultants sought out ways to open non-transparent bank accounts. One confidential document allegedly drafted by



Isabel dos Santos

Boston Consulting in September 2015 outlined a complex scheme for the oil company to move its money offshore. The investigation also published a similar 99-page presentation from KPMG. None of the companies named issued immediate statements in response to the investigation. —AFP

## Morocco's House of Memory spotlights Jewish-Muslim ties

ESSAOUIRA, Morocco: In the old Jewish quarter of Morocco's coastal city of Essaouira, a newly-opened "House of Memory" has been dedicated to the historic coexistence of its Jewish and Muslim communities. Nestled in a narrow alleyway among labyrinthine lanes, Bayt Dakira (House of Memory) is situated in a former family home of wealthy traders, who added a small synagogue decorated with woodwork and carved furnishings.

The restored building "testifies to a period when Islam and Judaism had an exceptional closeness, complicity and intimacy", said Andre Azoulay, an adviser to King Mohammed VI. Azoulay, himself a member of Essaouira's Jewish community, launched the project in partnership with Morocco's culture ministry. "We said to ourselves: We're going to let our patrimony speak, and protect what was the art of living together in mutual respect," he said. His daughter Audrey Azoulay, who is director-general of the UN cultural agency UNESCO, was also present last Wednesday when the king made an official visit to the center.

**Countering 'amnesia'**

Bayt Dakira showcases objects donated by local families alongside stories of members of the Jewish community from the southwestern city on the Atlantic.

They include Leslie Belisha (1893-1957), who was Britain's minister of finance, transport and war, and David Yulee Levy (1810-1986), the "first Jew elected in United States history". A panel lists Jewish royal advisers from Essaouira, including Azoulay who was called to the palace in 1991 by Hassan II, the late father of Mohammed.

Bayt Dakira also houses old photographs, archive footage, musical recordings, traditional dress and religious objects. Upstairs will house a research center. At the time of Sultan Mohamed III, who in the 18th century transformed the small port into a diplomatic and commercial hub, Essaouira was "the only city in the Islamic world with a majority Jewish population", the 78-year-old royal adviser says. Azoulay's goal is to turn his city's history into a symbol of "the art of the possible", and push back against what he calls "amnesia, regression and archaism". At one point, Essaouira had 37 synagogues, but most have fallen into ruin.

**Ancient community**

The Jewish community has been present in Morocco since antiquity and grew over the centuries, particularly with the arrival of Jews expelled from Spain by the Catholic kings after 1492. At the end of the 1940s, Jewish Moroccans numbered about 250,000 - some 10 percent of the population. Many left after the creation of Israel in 1948, and the community now numbers around 3,000, still the largest in North Africa.

Essaouira was largely forgotten during the French protectorate (1912-1956), but has experienced a gradual rebirth since the early 1990s, turning into a tourist destination and cultural beacon. It is not the only city to



ESSAOUIRA, Morocco: Andre Azoulay, adviser to the Moroccan king, poses for a picture at the "Bayt Dakira" (House of Memory) Jewish museum, in this Atlantic coastal city on Dec 14, 2019. —AFP

house a memorial to the country's Judeo-Moroccan heritage, something which the king often highlights. Cemeteries, synagogues and historic Jewish quarters are also being restored.

Since 1997, Casablanca has housed a Moroccan Jewish Museum, the only one of its kind in the Arab world. And in Fez, the country's spiritual capital, a museum dedicated to the Jewish memory is under construction. While the kingdom doesn't have official ties with Israel, thousands of Jews of Moroccan descent visit every year - including from the Jewish state. They come to rediscover the land of their ancestors, celebrate religious events or make pilgrimages. —AFP

## News in brief

## Egypt extends state of emergency

CAIRO: Egypt's state of emergency is set to reach the three-year mark by April after the government announced it would extend it by another three months from Monday next week. The North African country has been under a state of emergency since April 2017 bombings of two Coptic churches by an Islamic State group affiliate that killed more than 40 people. The extension comes nine years after the Jan 2011 uprising that toppled former president Hosni Mubarak, who had also ruled for decades under a state of emergency. "The president of Egypt ordered the extension of the state of emergency nationwide for three months starting Monday, January 27," said the official gazette on Sunday. Under a state of emergency, police powers such as arresting and holding citizens are extended and constitutional rights such as freedom of speech and assembly are curtailed. —AFP

## Port Sudan school kids march

KHARTOUM: Crowds of school pupils protested in Sudan's main port city yesterday over spiralling food prices, witnesses said, as the country's economy languishes under a foreign currency crunch. "Stop this hunger, we want food prices to fall," the pupils chanted as they headed towards government headquarters in Port Sudan, a key site of protests during the uprising that led to the ouster of former leader Omar Al-Bashir last April. Witnesses said groups of pupils planned to demonstrate in front of the governorate of Port Sudan, the capital of Red Sea state. In Dec 2018, rising food prices including an overnight tripling in the cost of bread, along with general economic woes, triggered the uprising against Bashir which finally led to his ouster by the army in April. —AFP

## Lion dies in Sudan park

KHARTOUM: One of five sick and malnourished lions held at a park in the Sudanese capital died yesterday, an official said, amid a growing online campaign to save the animals. The lioness received intravenous fluids for several days but died early on Monday, Brigadier Essameldine Hajjar, a manager of Al-Qureshi Park in Khartoum told AFP. "One of the two sick lionesses died today... Yesterday the doctor gave the two some medicines after which they were given food," Hajjar said. "One recovered but the other died. We are now diagnosing the cause of death." Park officials said the conditions of the five creatures had deteriorated in recent weeks, with some losing almost two-thirds of their body weight. The five lions suffered from a shortage of food and medicine for weeks, the officials said. Hajjar told AFP on Sunday that park officials often paid for food for the lions with their own money. —AFP

## Iran may pull out of nuke treaty over Europe dispute

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it will consider withdrawing from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if a dispute over its atomic program goes before the UN Security Council. Britain, France and

Germany launched a process last week charging Iran with failing to observe the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal, a move that could eventually see the Security Council reimpose international sanctions on the country.

Iran has accused the three EU member states of inaction over sanctions the United States reimposed on it after unilaterally withdrawing from the landmark accord in 2018. The European move "has no legal basis" and if they take further measures "Iran's withdrawal from the NPT will be considered,"

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was quoted as saying by the Iranian parliament's website.

The landmark 2015 deal reached with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program. Since the US pullout, Iran has progressively rolled back its commitments to the accord - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - in retaliation.

It has hit out at the three European

nations that remain party to the JCPOA for failing to live up to their promises to ease the impact of US sanctions on its oil-based economy. "If the Europeans return to the commitments, Iran will also stop reducing its commitments, but if the Europeans continue as they have been... we have different options," said Zarif.

The foreign minister said Iran's President Hassan Rouhani had warned former EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini about such consequences in three letters sent in

2018. "It was stated in the president's letter that if this issue is referred to the Security Council, Iran's withdrawal from the NPT will be discussed but before that we can consider other (options)," he said.

European officials have made it clear that the decision to trigger the dispute resolution mechanism was made in a bid to bring Iran back into compliance and save the accord. But Iran's foreign ministry yesterday warned more measures could be taken in retaliation for the European move. —AFP

## International

## Evacuation crackdown ordered as Philippine volcano 'recharges'

## Scientists warn of another powerful explosion

**TANAUAN, Philippines:** Philippine authorities ordered a crackdown yesterday on evacuees' daily visits to their homes in the danger zone around Taal volcano as scientists warned it could be "recharging" for a more powerful explosion. More than 110,000 people have taken refuge in evacuation centres since Taal burst to life a week ago, but many hard-hit towns have let residents back for hours each day to fetch items, feed livestock and clean up their houses.

"We are directing DRRMCs (civil defense officers)... not to allow anyone to enter the danger zone," said Epimaco Densing, undersecretary for the Department of Interior. "It's dangerous, that's why we have imposed a lockdown," he told reporters. The volcano shot ash 15 kilometers (nine miles) high in the January 12 eruption, which crushed scores of homes and killed livestock as well as crops. However, seismologists have warned the volcano could imminently unleash a much bigger eruption, posing a deadly risk to anyone in the 14-kilometre radius "danger zone" that surrounds it.

Continued earthquakes and an increase in the volcano's emission of sulfur dioxide gas were possible indications of a "recharge" of magma, which would drive a major blast, a top scientist said.

"We consider these are signs that there's a re-supply of magma which could possibly... cause an eruption that

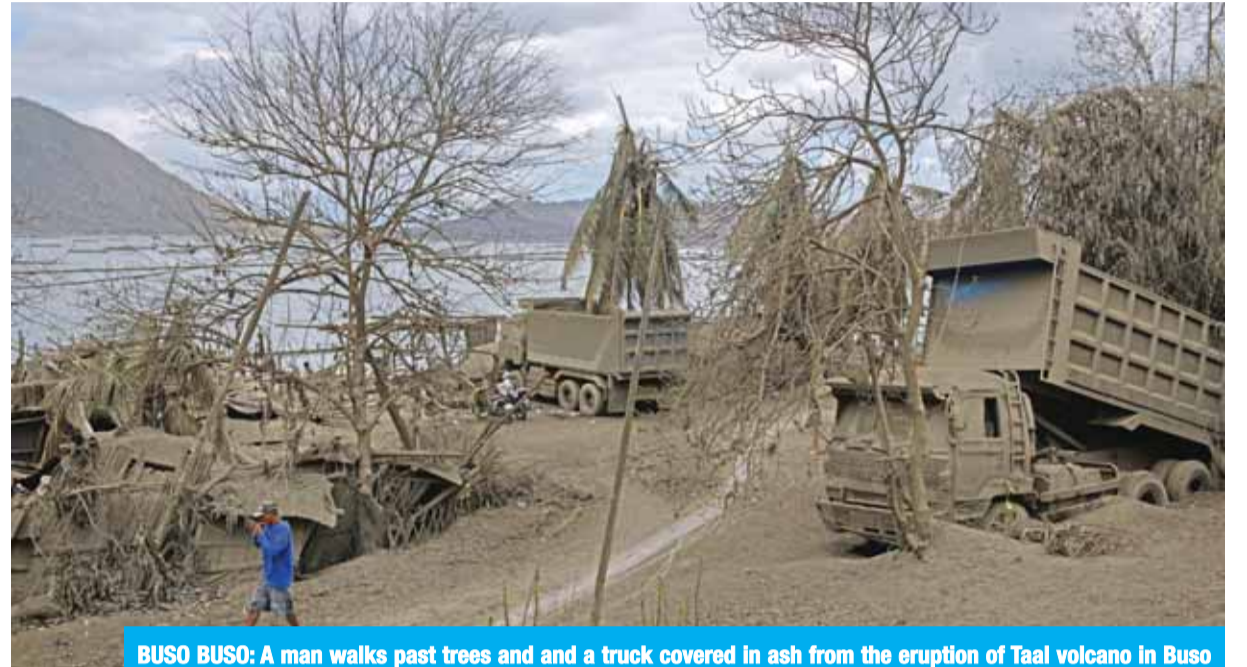
could be strong," Renato Solidum, head of the Philippines' seismological agency, told a local radio station. Until experts deem the threat has passed, evacuees will need the shelters spread across some 400 sites that range from school campuses to covered basketball courts.

Conditions vary between sites, but several evacuees told AFP they were getting food and a place to sleep, but that bathrooms were in high demand. "It's really difficult to take a bath or use the toilet because of the sheer numbers (of evacuees), but we can take it," said Sonia Awitan, 55. "What is important is we have a place to shelter and sleep in," she added.

Authorities say they have so far been able to provide fundamental services to the evacuees, but are concerned about the longer term.

"We can handle the (current evacuee numbers). The issue is how are we going to sustain resources over the longer term," Alex Masiglat, spokesman for disaster relief in the ground zero Calabarzon region. "Our concern is how are we going to sustain a long term evacuation period," he added.

Though no people have been reported killed in the eruption, it has wrought havoc on agriculture and tourism. Taal is set in the middle of a picturesque lake that is a popular draw for tourists, especially since it is just 60 kilometers south of the hot and crowded—capital Manila.—AFP



**BUSO BUSO:** A man walks past trees and a truck covered in ash from the eruption of Taal volcano in Buso yesterday. — AFP

## Trump backers, critics clash as impeachment trial nears

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump's defenders and supporters skirmished over the airwaves on Sunday a day after the US president's legal team dismissed his impeachment trial as unconstitutional and dangerous. Coming two days before Trump's trial opens in the Senate, the clashing arguments offered an early taste of the historic drama to play out in coming weeks.

Beginning today, the chamber will meet six hours a day for six days a week in only the third impeachment trial of a US president, with lofty constitutional issues brushing up against raw partisan politics. It will be a "grueling exercise," Republican Senator John Cornyn said on CBS.

Celebrity attorney Alan Dershowitz, a recent addition to Trump's legal team, argued Sunday that even if every charge sent by the House to the Senate for the president's trial were accepted as true, it would not rise to the level of impeachable behavior.

"The (House) vote was to impeach on abuse of power, which is not within the constitutional criteria for impeachment, and obstruction of Congress," Dershowitz, a Harvard law professor emeritus, said on ABC. A politically motivated impeachment, he added, was the "greatest nightmare" of the country's founders.

Adam Schiff, the California lawmaker chosen by House Democrats as lead manager of the impeachment trial, dismissed the notion that abuse of power was not impeachable.

## 'Arrant nonsense'

"That's an argument you have to make if the facts are so dead set against you," he said on ABC. Another House impeachment manager, Jerrold Nadler, called Dershowitz's argument "arrant nonsense."

The House impeached Trump on charges that he abused his office by pressuring Ukraine to dig up dirt on Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden by withholding military aid and dangling a White House meeting with the Ukrainian president. He was also charged with obstructing Congress. For Republicans to argue that such behavior is not impeachable, Schiff said, "would have appalled the founders, who were worried about exactly that kind of solicitation of foreign interference in an election for personal benefit."

The two sides have been publicly fencing over whether the trial will be conducted quickly, perhaps in as little as two weeks—Trump's clear preference—or whether witnesses can be called and new evidence introduced—as Democrats insist is needed for a full and fair trial.

The president has said he would like the Senate to almost immediately dismiss the charges, but Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump confidant, told Fox News: "That is not going to happen. We don't have the votes for that."

## Possible delays

Dershowitz said Sunday, however, that calling witnesses would introduce major delays. "The trial will take a much longer time, because the Democrats will call (former national security advisor) John Bolton, and the president will invoke executive privilege and it will have to go to the courts," he said on CNN.

Republicans say the House erred by not taking the time during its hearings to secure the testimony of key witnesses like Bolton before sending articles of impeachment to the Senate. Schiff said that would have meant "endless months or even years of litigation." He added, "What the president is threatening to do is cheat in the next election. You cannot wait months and years to be able to remove that threat from office."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has yet to announce the rules for the trial, but has said he is cooperating with the White House and wants it done quickly.

Cornyn said he expected to see essentially the same rules as during the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton in 1998. That would have both sides lay out their arguments before a possible vote by senators on whether to allow witnesses. Underscoring the stark divide running through the Senate, Cornyn said Trump was being impeached "for a non-crime for events that never occurred," while Nadler said "any jury would convict him in three minutes flat." — AFP



**Handout picture released by Paraguay's ABC TV showing the end of the tunnel through which 76 inmates allegedly escaped from the prison in Pedro Juan Caballero, 500 kilometers northeast of Asuncion, on Sunday. — AFP**

## Nearly 80 'highly dangerous' inmates escape Paraguay prison

**ASUNCION, Paraguay:** Nearly 80 prisoners, many of them members of a Brazilian drug- and arms-trafficking gang and described as "highly dangerous," have escaped from a Paraguayan prison near the border, police said. The escapees, Brazilians and Paraguayans, made their getaway through a tunnel from the prison in the border city of Pedro Juan Caballero, police spokeswoman Elena Andrada said. "Our best men have gone to the border to attempt to recapture the prisoners," she said.

The number of escapees totaled 76, including 40 Brazilians and 36 Paraguayans, officials said. Justice Minister Cecilia Perez issued a sharp condemnation, telling reporters that it must have taken prisoners "several weeks" to build the tunnel and adding, "It is evident that the staff knew nothing and did nothing." The prison's warden was dismissed and dozens of guards were arrested. Most of the escapees belong to a criminal gang known as

First Capital Command, one of Brazil's most powerful criminal enterprises. Andrada said the burning hulks of five vans used in the escape were found in Ponta Pora, a Brazilian city separated from Pedro Juan Caballero only by an avenue. Pedro Juan Caballero lies about 300 miles (500 kilometers) northeast of the capital, Asuncion. Perez voiced "a strong suspicion that officials are involved in this corrupt scheme" and said that the escapees are considered "highly dangerous."

The escapees included men who had taken part in a massacre last June at the San Pedro prison, Andrada said. She said the inmates had dug a tunnel "like we see in the movies, complete with internal lighting."

Investigators have also found hundreds of sandbags. Brazil meanwhile moved to tighten security in the border area to help recapture the inmates, Antonio Carlos Videira, Mato Grosso do Sul state's justice and public safety secretary, told reporters.

The Department of Border Operations, the Military Highway Police and other security troops backed by a helicopter have been mobilized, he said, according to Anuncion's ABC daily. Brazilian Justice Minister Sergio Moro echoed the offer of support in recapturing the prisoners: "If they return to Brazil, they get one-way tickets to federal prison," he tweeted.

Paraguay's Interior Minister Euclides Acevedo said police special ops staff were combing the area of the escape, backed by helicopters. — AFP

## UK PM raises visas in pitch for post-Brexit trade with Africa

**LONDRES, United Kingdom:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson told African leaders yesterday that Britain would be more open to migrants from their continent after Brexit as he hosted a summit intended to boost trading ties.

He also promised an end to direct UK state investment in thermal coal mining or coal power plants overseas, saying London would focus on supporting a switch to low-carbon energy sources.

Johnson was speaking at the start of the first UK-Africa Investment Summit in London, a clear pitch for business less than two weeks before Britain leaves the European Union. He told leaders including presidents Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt and Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya that he wanted to make Britain their "investment partner of choice".

After highlighting all that Britain has to offer, he said Brexit would mean an end to preferential treatment for EU migrants. "Our (immigration) system is becoming fairer and more equal between all our global friends and partners, treating people the same, wherever they come from," he said.

"By putting people before passports we will be able to attract the best talent from around the world, wherever they may be," Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, who also attended the summit, said Brexit offered

an opportunity for increased free trade across the Commonwealth—and said visas were a key issue.

"While many in the African diaspora enjoy considerable benefits from life in the West, they do not always feel at the heart of the community," he wrote in an article for The Times yesterday. "A renewed sense that there are ties that bind us through the Commonwealth, and a concerted effort to grow those links through trade, could act as a spur to encourage togetherness and the certainty of belonging."

## Breathe the same air

Johnson, whose country hosts the next UN climate change summit in Glasgow later this year, also announced a shift in investment strategy to help combat global warming. Sub-Saharan African faces a number of environmental challenges, particularly the effects of climate change, water and air pollution, desertification, deforestation and over-fishing. On fossil fuels, Johnson said: "There's no point in the UK reducing the amount of coal we burn, if we then trundle over to Africa and line our pockets by encouraging African states to use more of it, is there?"

"We all breathe the same air, we live beneath the same sky. We all suffer when carbon emissions rise and the planet warms." He added: "Not another penny of UK taxpayers money will be directly invested in digging up coal or burning it for electricity.

"Instead, we're going to focus on supporting the transition to lower and zero carbon alternatives."

The British government's export agency reports providing £2 billion (\$2.6 billion) in financing for UK company exports to Africa in the past two years. — AFP



**LONDON:** Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (right) poses with Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari during their bilateral meeting at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in London yesterday. — AFP

## Ex-Catalan police chief goes on trial for rebellion

**SAN FERNANDO DE HENARES, Spain:** The former police chief of Catalonia went on trial yesterday over his role in the region's failed 2017 independence bid in a move that risks fanning tensions with Catalan separatists. Josep Lluís Trapero, former head of the Mossos d'Esquadra regional police force, is in the dock on charges of rebellion with prosecutors seeking an 11-year jail sentence.

During the October 1 independence referendum, which was banned by Madrid, prosecutors say the Mossos demonstrated "total passivity" under Trapero's watch while Spanish national police led a violent crackdown, using batons and firing rubber bullets in a bid to stop voters.

The trial of the career police officer comes three months after Spain's Supreme Court sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to long prison terms, prompting weeks of protests which sometimes turned violent across the wealthy northeastern region. It got underway just before 10:30 am (0930 GMT) at a court in an industrial zone in San Fernando de Henares on the outskirts of Madrid.

Another senior police officer and a former official with the Catalan interior ministry are on trial alongside Trapero facing charges of rebellion while a fourth person, a Mossos officer, faces the lesser charge of sedition. The trial, which is expected to run until March 19, will focus on the Mossos' role in enforcing a court ban on the referendum, which was followed several weeks later by a short-lived declaration of independence.

Several of the jailed Catalan leaders have been called to testify. In a tweet, the head of Catalonia's separatist regional government, Quim Torra, expressed "all his support" for the accused and predicted that "justice will eventually impose itself over revenge".

## Rebellion vs sedition

In a precedent which may help Trapero, the Supreme Court in October dismissed the charge of rebellion against the nine separatist leaders, finding them guilty of sedition, which carries a shorter prison term. By definition, rebellion is "rising up in a violent and public manner" to, among other things, "declare independence for part of the (Spanish) territory".

Sedition, however, is "rising up publicly and in turbulent fashion" to "prevent by force or in an illegal way" the law from being applied, or the application of an administrative or legal decision.

Trapero appeared at the separatists' trial as a witness, defending his performance as police chief and saying the Mossos "had no intention of facilitating the referendum". He also said his officers would have been ready to arrest then Catalan president Carles Puigdemont had they been asked. Puigdemont fled Spain to avoid prosecution. Shortly after the Catalan parliament issued a short-lived declaration of independence, Madrid sacked Trapero, dismissed the regional government and temporarily took over Catalonia's regional affairs.

His dismissal came just two months after he was praised for capturing those behind a summer van attack that killed 14 people in Barcelona and was claimed by Islamic State extremists.

## New government tone

The trial takes place just a week after Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's new leftwing coalition government took office in a move that was facilitated by the support of a Catalan separatist party.

In exchange, Sanchez promised to open talks with Catalonia's separatist regional government over a solution to the "political conflict". He also promised to stop systematically challenging separatist initiatives as had been the case with previous administrations in Madrid.

In another development, Sanchez nominated former justice minister Dolores Delgado as prosecutor-general last week in a move that drew criticism for blurring the lines between the executive and the judiciary. The role could influence future legal cases involving Catalan separatists, as well as how quickly those leaders who were jailed in October could obtain parole. — AFP



## International

## India's ruling party picks new president as challenges mount

## Nadda a long-time associate of Modi

**NEW DELHI:** India's Hindu nationalist ruling party yesterday elevated a veteran lawmaker and long-time associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to become its president ahead of a string of state elections. Jagat Prakash Nadda, who rose through the ranks after cutting his teeth as a student leader in the 1970s, will become the new president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), replacing Amit Shah, currently India's Home Minister.

Nadda was elected unopposed, the party said. Led by Modi and Shah, the BJP returned to power, winning a general election in 2019 by a landslide majority, but the party has failed to keep its hold on a number of key Indian states amid growing criticism over some of its recent moves. Since late 2018, the BJP has lost control of the western states of Rajasthan and Maharashtra, Jharkhand in the east and Chhattisgarh in central India - shrinking its national footprint, even though Modi's popularity seems largely undiminished.

A wave of countrywide protests over a new citizenship law that has continued for more than four weeks has also caught the party on the wrong foot, adding to concerns about a flagging economy and rising inflation.

With some of India's largest states going to the polls in the next two years, Nadda will have to balance the outsized influence of Modi and Shah alongside crafting

an electoral strategy to improve the BJP's performance. "Electoral, the BJP is going to have a tough cycle," said Rahul Verma, a fellow at New Delhi think-tank Centre for Policy Research. Next month, Delhi elects a new state assembly and the BJP is widely seen to be trailing behind an incumbent local group headed by a feisty leader.

Nadda first joined the student wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - the nationalist group that spawned the BJP - before moving into electoral politics in the 1980s, and subsequently working alongside Modi in the early 1990s. During Modi's first term, Nadda served as the federal health minister. He was then left out of Modi's cabinet, after the prime minister returned to power, and moved back to the party full-time as its working president last June.

Since then, Modi's government has moved quickly to fulfil a number of electoral promises, including removing special provisions on the disputed Kashmir region, gaining legal approval for building a temple at a contested site in the northern city of Ayodhya, and introducing a new citizenship law.

But the moves have hardened opposition against the party, with many Indians, including a section of Muslims, accusing Modi of pushing a Hindu-first agenda. — Reuters



**NEW DELHI:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) new president Jagat Prakash Nadda (right) shakes hand with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an event at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP



**SUNCHEON:** Family members of Chang Hwan-bong, who was among hundreds of people who were accused of helping left-leaning soldiers in an armed uprising against the South Korean government in the southwestern cities of Yeosu and Suncheon in 1948, speak to reporters after the trial at the Suncheon branch of the Gwangju District Court in Suncheon yesterday. — AFP

## South Korean court acquits man executed in 1948

**SEOUL:** A South Korean court yesterday posthumously exonerated a man executed more than 70 years ago for assisting rebel forces, saying he had been wrongly convicted.

Chang Hwan-bong, then 29, was among hundreds of people who were accused of helping left-leaning soldiers in an armed uprising against the government in the southwestern cities of Yeosu and Suncheon in 1948. They were sentenced to death just 22 days after their arrest for rebellion and were executed immediately. But in 2009, a government truth panel found that around 438 civilians-including Chang-had been unjustly con-

victed and killed for collaborating with the rebel troops. Historical issues often remain contentious in South Korea, which emerged from the turmoil of the Korean War and where politics are deeply divided between left and right.

Chang's daughter filed for a retrial in 2013, which was approved by the Supreme Court in March last year. The Suncheon branch of the Gwangju District Court acquitted Chang on Monday, saying that the facts of his crimes cited in 1948 had not been proven.

"As a member of the judiciary, I want to make it clear that the execution of the ruling was by illegal power of the government and I make a deep apology," said Judge Kim Jung-ah.

The dead man's daughter Chang Kyung-ja said afterwards: "I am happy that my father's undeserved death has been proven." Yesterday's decision was the first acquittal for civilians convicted in the 1948 incident, according to local reports. The Committee for the Retrial of the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident-an activist group campaigning for the victims-welcomed the "historic ruling", saying it was "only the beginning" and as many as 5,000 civilians had been wrongly convicted. — AFP

## Chinese travellers unfazed as SARS-like virus spreads

**BEIJING:** An outbreak of a mysterious virus has not deterred millions of people in China from packing into crowded trains as they head home for the Lunar New Year-but some are donning masks as a precaution. The world's biggest annual travel rush comes as a SARS-like coronavirus has spread from the central city of Wuhan to Beijing, southern Guangdong province and three Asian countries, with more than 200 people stricken including three fatalities.

Scientists have yet to determine if the disease can be transmitted from human to human, which would raise the risk of more people getting sick as they sit next to each other on long rides to their hometowns. But going back to the countryside or other parts of the country to gather with family is an annual ritual that is impossible to miss-the country will come to a grinding halt from Friday until Thursday next week as it celebrates the incoming Year of the Rat.

More than 100 million train trips have already been taken since the mass migration began about 10 days ago, the national railway operator said Sunday.

Lines formed yesterday at ticket booths outside Beijing Railway Station, where commuters-young and old-gathered with their luggage and souvenirs. Li Yang, 28, an account manager from northern Inner Mongolia region, said it had been five to six years since she returned to her hometown from Beijing. "It's hard to guard against such viruses," she told AFP.

"Watching the news, I do feel a little worried. But I haven't taken precautionary measures beyond wearing regular masks," she added. "Even if I remained in Beijing, I would have to visit public spaces."

A worker in the finance sector surnamed Guo added that she and her friends had been reminding each other to wear masks as a precaution.

"We're not sure how else we can protect ourselves, but I am generally vigilant," said the 26-year-old. "What else can we do? We still have to go home over the Spring Festival." President Xi Jinping weighed in yesterday, instructing authorities to contain the spread of the virus, release information on the epidemic "in a timely manner", and "ensure that the masses have a stable and peaceful Spring Festival".

## 'Avoid public places'

The new coronavirus has caused alarm because of its connection to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

Authorities in Wuhan, a city of 11 million people that also serves as a major transport hub, said Monday a third person was confirmed to have died and 136 new cases were found over the weekend.

A Wuhan seafood market is believed to be the epicentre of the virus, and the World Health Organization said an animal source seemed most likely to be the "primary" culprit. In Hong Kong, 106 people were being monitored with authorities keeping a close eye on developments-especially given the proximity of Guangdong to the densely packed financial hub.

Passengers arriving at the city's airport and high-speed train terminals have been subject to increased monitoring, including temperature checks. Health officials said yesterday they were expanding their enhanced checks to include anyone coming in from Hubei province, not just Wuhan. All passengers flying in from Wuhan will also be asked to fill out a health declaration form.

At Shanghai's busy Hongqiao Railway Station, some in the crowd wore masks, but not significantly more than usually seen in the eastern city. No flu screening stations or signs were seen.

A 25-year-old woman surnamed Jiang, who works for a medical device company, was heading to her hometown in Hubei, the province where Wuhan is located. "Previously, I had many plans in Wuhan, like hanging around for one to two days. But now I think I will just transfer there instead of staying," she said.

A woman surnamed Xia, a 29-year-old auto industry employee, was wearing a mask because she was heading home to Wuhan. She said one cousin who lives in southern China was "very worried" about the virus and "doesn't dare go back to Wuhan".

"I think the pneumonia situation is controllable," Xia said. "But after I go home, I'll avoid public places, seafood and live poultry." — AFP

## Top Pakistani activist says prevented from leaving country

**LAHORE:** Pakistani authorities refused to let a top human rights lawyer leave the country, citing her "anti-state activities", she told AFP yesterday, in what appeared to be the latest example of an ongoing rights crackdown.

Jalila Haider, who last year featured on a BBC list of 100 inspiring and influential women for her work defending women's rights in Pakistan, was briefly detained by immigration officials in Lahore as she tried to fly to Britain to attend a workshop on women's issues. They released her after several hours, she said, but barred her from leaving the country, telling her that her name was on a no-fly list. "One of the immigration officials told me that my name was placed on the ECL (Exit Control List) as I am involved in anti-state activities. I have no idea what anti-state activities he was referring to," Haider said.

"I address the issues related to women, minorities, enforced disappearances and problems Balochistan is facing today," the

32-year-old said, adding that authorities confiscated her passport and national identification card. Pakistan has a history of enforced disappearances over the past decade-mainly confined to conflict zones near the Afghanistan border or to restive southwestern Balochistan province, where Haider lives and works.

The military routinely denies being involved, and criticism of the powerful security forces, including over such disappearances, is largely seen as a "red line" in the country. Pakistan's interior ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment by AFP. The incident fuelled fears around an ongoing crackdown on rights and freedom of speech in Pakistan.

"Yet another #humanrightsdefender placed on Pakistan's mysterious no-fly list," tweeted Rabia Mehmood, a Pakistan researcher for Amnesty International. "@Advjalila is a fierce defender of the rights of the marginalized, her name must be immediately removed from the Exit Control List. #standwithjalila". Haider's lawyer Asad Jamal, who said he was not allowed to meet her while she was being detained, called it "an act of harassment". In addition to her work on women's rights, Haider is a member of Pakistan's persecuted Hazara community, who are often targeted by sectarian militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 2018 she went on a hunger strike demanding protection for the Hazara community. — AFP

## Papuan activists on trial in Indonesia ordered to remove gourds

**JAKARTA:** Two Papuan activists on trial for treason in Indonesia's capital denied what they described as "racism" after the court yesterday ordered them to remove traditional penis gourds.

The Jakarta hearing descended into a standoff as the panel refused to proceed until the men put on pants-the second time their native garb led to delays in the trial of a total of six activists. After several hours of negotiations, the pair-also wearing Papuan headgear with their faces painted and the words "monkey" scrawled on their bodies-grudgingly agreed to put on trousers. One activist, Ambrosius Mulait, said the outfit was "part of my identity".

"We have been the victims of racism outside the court and now we have fallen victim to racism inside the court," he said. Papua has seen several spasms of violence in recent months, including deadly unrest partly linked to a fresh push for independence and racism against Papuans, who have been called monkeys and other slurs.

Ethnically Melanesian, most Papuans are Christians who have few cultural links

to Muslim-majority Indonesia. The half-dozen defendants were arrested in August after participating in a demonstration at the presidential palace in Jakarta where Papua's Morning Star flag was raised.

The flag, a symbol of independence, is illegal in Indonesia. Last month, Indonesia's supreme court increased the jail term for a Polish man convicted over links to separatist guerrillas in Papua. Jakarta is deeply sensitive about its easternmost region, where a low-level insurgency has simmered for years. A former Dutch colony, Papua came under Indonesian control in the 1960s after a self-determination vote widely viewed as a sham. Nine people drowned and another was missing after a bridge collapsed on Indonesia's Sumatra island, the disaster agency said yesterday. Some 30 people, mostly students, were on the bridge Sunday afternoon in the town of Kaur when the newly built crossing suddenly collapsed, hurling some teens into the water below while others clutched on to the railing.

The water level in the river below the bridge was higher than usual with strong currents after torrential downpours pounded the Bengkulu region at the southern end of Sumatra. "Some managed to save themselves but 10 others could not fight against the current and drowned, they were swept away" Ujang Syafiri, head of the disaster mitigation agency, told AFP, adding that the bridge may have collapsed due to excessive weight. A search and rescue team scoured a 20-kilometre radius to find a teenager who is still missing, he said. — AFP



**POKHARA:** Rescue workers prepare to go on the avalanche site in Annapurna mountain region for searching the missing trekkers in Pokhara, some 200km west of Kathmandu yesterday. — AFP

## Guide saw wall of snow carry away Korean trekking team

**POKHARA, Nepal:** Rescuers intensified an increasingly desperate hunt yesterday for four South Korean trekkers and three Nepalis swept away by an avalanche in the Himalayas as a guide told how he saw people carried off by the snow.

Krishna Hari Subedi was helping a Chinese trekker on the trail near the Annapurna base camp when the wall of snow hit on Friday. "We were descending when an avalanche came rumbling down. Three people were swept down by it in front of my eyes," Subedi told AFP.

"I ducked down and my guest followed, we were safe. If we had moved forward, there was a cliff edge, we would have been swept down," Subedi said he saw three people carried away but did not know how many others had been hit in the line of trekkers on the route.

"When we began heading down again, we heard a cry for help," he added. "One of them survived and was walking up. It was nearly 300 meters down. When he saw us, he fainted... he was taken to a hospital." The fate of the other two remains uncertain.

## Families' anxious wait

Soldiers have joined a team using drones and helicopters and digging in deep snow at 3,230 meters (10,600 feet) where the avalanche struck. Small helicopters

were being used to drop rescuers at the site, Shanta Bir Lama, president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, told AFP. "The narrowness of the area makes the search difficult," explained Lama.

"There is also a lot of snow. But teams today will try to remove the snow and search. Devices are also being used," he added. A nine-member army team has joined the operation while the South Korean embassy also sent an official to assist. "The snow from the avalanche is piled four to five meters (13 to 16 feet) deep at the site. No signs of the missing have been reported as of Monday," an official of the South's foreign ministry said. Experts say there is a very low chance of survival for those buried in an avalanche for more than two hours.

Relatives of the missing Koreans who arrived in Kathmandu on Saturday have also visited the avalanche area. Six of the missing were part of the same expedition, while one Nepali porter was escorting a different group.

The four foreigners-two men and two women-were part of an 11-member South Korean team. Others have safely descended. Education officials in Seoul said they were part of a team of volunteer teachers working with children in Nepal. Helicopters were sent out on Saturday to rescue about 200 people stranded around Annapurna and other nearby mountains after the avalanche.

Annapurna is an avalanche-prone and technically difficult mountain range with a higher death rate than Everest, the world's highest peak. Thousands of trekkers visit the route every year for its stunning views of the Himalayas.

A snowstorm killed about 40 people on the circuit in 2014, in one of the biggest trekking tragedies to hit Nepal. — AFP

## Analysis

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## Leaders face limits

From rumors that Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen was lesbian to coordinated videos and website comments and a show of force with an aircraft carrier, China's government appeared to be pulling out all the stops when it came to influencing Taiwan's election early this month. It was, it seems, a complete failure. Taiwanese voters rejected Beijing's local political allies, reinstalling the current government with a heavily beefed-up mandate.

For Chinese President Xi Jinping, the result - coming after an equally resounding rejection of pro-Beijing parties in last year's Hong Kong legislative elections - was a significant defeat. It was also a stark reminder that while authoritarian leaders might not face the kind of electoral dangers faced by counterparts in established democracies, they cannot ignore them altogether.

While Xi faces little in the way of true democratic opposition or accountability within mainland China itself, Russian leader Vladimir Putin is not quite so lucky. Such concerns were clearly top of his agenda last week, dismissing effectively the entire government, installing a new prime minister and seemingly paving the way for another nimble piece of constitutional footwork to avoid Russia's inconvenient limit on presidents serving more than two consecutive terms.

Putin's reforms - which will ultimately strip back the powers of the presidency while boosting those of the prime minister and head of the state council - appear to open the door for his assuming one of those roles once he leaves the top job in 2024. That he is doing so at all will surprise some, who had expected Russia's most powerful leader since Stalin to abolish term limits altogether. Kremlin critics condemned the move as another attempt to keep Putin in power, but protests in Moscow this weekend failed to get much traction.

While credible opposition parties have usually found themselves banned from elections and their leaders arrested, Putin has relied on significant voter turnout for his United Russia and allied parties. How he will play this new dynamic is not yet clear - but by dismissing the outgoing government and its leaders, he may hope to make them the scapegoats for perceived economic failures.

## Challenges

In many respects, both Putin and Xi face similar, or at least overlapping, challenges. Aged 67 and 66 respectively, they have both effectively seen off any rivals of their own or, so far, any other generation. But they cannot do so forever. Nor, ultimately, can they ensure their various efforts to avoid a democratic backlash will succeed forever. Indeed, both leaders have already faced them, both inside their borders and around their periphery.

For China, the greatest challenge clearly remains Hong Kong, with months of protest showing no signs of abating and voters showing every sign of being pushed further towards anti-Beijing candidates. The crackdown in the territory, in turn, was arguably the greatest single factor in the Taiwan election result, with Taiwanese looking at events in Hong Kong and concluding they have no desire whatsoever to allow Beijing to grow its influence on the island.

The failure of both repression and aggressive messaging to deliver the desired result in Hong Kong and Taiwan will concern leaders in Beijing, who are essentially betting the farm on their ability to use the same techniques in mainland China. Russia saw similar failures in its inability to prevent so-called "color revolutions" earlier this century in Georgia and Ukraine, seeing both - as China does - as Western-backed plots to limit Moscow's influence. Some in Moscow and Beijing see a broader US-led strategy to damage their domestic economies as well - although in reality, many of these problems stem from their own home turf. US President Donald Trump's interim trade deal with China may have reduced some of the short-term economic worries for Beijing, but in the long run it faces serious questions over its ability to sustain strong economic growth. As with most countries, both Russia and China have a growing urban-rural divide, while diversification away from fossil fuels will particularly hurt Moscow's bottom line.

When it comes to tackling discontent at home, both Putin and Xi have used a broadly similar playbook - particularly when it comes to targeting and jailing unpopular but often hugely wealthy oligarchs and other senior officials and business people. Putin's appointment of former tax service chief Mikhail Mishustin to the premiership may indicate another round of that is in the offing. The largely unknown official has been credited with reforming Russia's antiquated tax collection system, but has also faced questions over how his family became incredibly wealthy as he did so. Ultimately, both the Russian and Chinese leaders face the same twin challenges. Neither is immortal, and both will face the choice of whether to hand off power to a successor or cling grimly on until they die in office. In comments this weekend, Putin suggested he did not wish to emulate Soviet leaders in the eighties, Yuri Andropov, Leonid Brezhnev and Konstantin Chernenko who simply stayed. — Reuters

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



In this file photo taken on June 20, 2019, Turkish police officers patrol next to the drilling ship 'Yavuz' scheduled to search for oil and gas off Cyprus, at the port of Dilovasi outside Istanbul. — AFP

## Cyprus 'weakest link' in Turkish dominance bid

Striving to extend its influence in the eastern Mediterranean where tensions revolve around energy resources, Turkey sees Cyprus as the weakest link in a regional alliance buffering Ankara's ambitions, analysts told AFP. The bid comes as Turkey flexes its muscle across the Mediterranean from Libya to Syria, where Ankara has taken on diplomatic and military roles. Although Turkish military action is not expected against Cyprus, analysts warn Ankara will increase pressure on Nicosia to deter it from completing its energy exploration plans.

"Since this has become an issue of national prestige for all parties concerned, Turkey will not back down," said Hubert Faustmann, a University of Nicosia professor and Cyprus director of the Bonn-based Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. Cyprus has aligned itself with Greece, Israel and Italy in planning an ambitious 2,000-km eastern Mediterranean gas pipeline to Europe despite Turkey's hostility to the deal.

It has also joined forces with Greece, Israel, Egypt and France in condemning a maritime and security accord that Turkey signed with Libya's UN-recognized government. The moves come amid growing tensions with Turkey over its activities in the region, with Ankara expanding its claims over a large gas-rich area which Cyprus says includes its territorial waters.

Faustmann said Turkey has a "spoiler capacity" in delivering on its claim that the hydrocarbon exploitation by Cyprus, Greece, Egypt and Israel will not be possible without the inclusion of Ankara. "Turkey will not lose this

confrontation because it is prepared to go further than all the other countries involved in the dispute," he told AFP.

Cyprus is divided between the Greek Cypriot-run south - an EU member state - and the Turkish Cypriot north, where Ankara has stationed tens of thousands of troops since its 1974 invasion following an Athens-engineered coup. "Turkey's strategy is to create grey zones and disputed territories within the economic exclusive zones claimed by Cyprus and also Greece," said Faustmann.

He said Turkey's agreement with Libya signed in November was likely to at least delay the multibillion-dollar EastMed pipeline project since the pipeline would cross maritime zones claimed by Ankara. "The pipeline will in all likelihood never be built. The biggest irony is that the most economically viable exploitation of Cypriot gas is by exporting it to Turkey," said Faustmann.

## Turkey holds key

The EastMed project would make Cyprus, Greece and Israel vital links in Europe's energy supply chain. "By putting pressure or even increasing pressure on the Cypriot front, Turkey still holds the key to the EastMed's future," said energy analyst Cyril Widdershoven, founder of consultancy firm Verocy. He said Turkey "can block any agreement currently in place for offshore development" by boosting its military, navy and air force capabilities in northern Cyprus. "Such moves are not really costly but threatening," Widdershoven said.

In December, Turkey dispatched a surveillance and reconnaissance drone to the island's breakaway north amid tensions over offshore oil and gas exploration. Turkish media have also reported that Ankara plans to build a naval base in north Cyprus. In its dispute with Cyprus over energy resources, Ankara has deployed two drillships in what Cyprus claims as its exclusive economic zone.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed Thursday that Ankara would start search and gas drilling in the eastern Mediterranean "as soon as possible" this year. The next day, Ankara said a drillship would return to waters off Cyprus, prompting Cypriot accusations that Turkey had turned into "a pirate state" which ignored calls from the international community.

Turkey already faces European Union sanctions over ships searching for oil and gas off Cyprus, whose government in Nicosia is not recognized by Ankara. Atlantic Council senior associate Charles Ellinas doubted the row would degenerate into military action. "I do not believe that Turkey will escalate military moves in Cyprus. It has nothing to gain from such actions - so far it is achieving its ends without this," he said. Turkey insists the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus - recognized only by Ankara - has the right to explore in the island's waters. UN-backed talks on reunifying the island as a bizonal, bi-communal federation collapsed in July 2017 and have not resumed, in part because of deep divisions over offshore gas. — AFP

## Iranian celebrities lend their star power to protests

Iranian artists, athletes and media personalities have lent their voices to anti-government protests in the Islamic republic over the accidental downing of a passenger plane that killed 176 people. Among them have been actors vowing to boycott a film festival, a star volleyball player who said he saw "no light in the future", and a former state TV presenter who apologized "for 13 years of lying" to her viewers. The latest demonstrations broke out after the armed forces admitted they had accidentally shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet on Jan 8 amid high tensions with arch foe the United States.

The acknowledgement, after days of denial by the government, was met with an outpouring of grief over the loss of life and anger at the breach of trust, with demonstrators calling their rulers "liars". They were soon joined by a string of high-profile figures from the worlds of arts, sports and media. A slew of actors and others withdrew from April's Fajr International Film festival, which is held each year to mark the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic

Revolution. Over three million people within days watched a clip posted by one actor, Navid Mohammadzadeh, which also garnered plaudits from other Iranian stars. The short take from his 2018 film "Sheep" touches on a tough choice many dissidents face: stay and push for change despite the risks, or leave and join Iran's chronic brain drain. "Now you see that I haven't left this wreck of a place," Mohammadzadeh's character tells his abusive father in the short video. "I have stayed and will blacken your life. I stayed to get my rights."

## 'Desperate and sad'

One high-profile flight from the country drew headlines around the time of the protests. On Jan 11, taekwondo athlete Kimia Alizadeh, Iran's only female Olympic medalist, announced she had permanently left Iran, citing the "hypocrisy" of a system she claimed humiliates athletes while using them for political ends. "I am one of the millions of oppressed women in Iran with whom they have been playing for years," the 21-year-old wrote on Instagram.

Iranian parliamentarian Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh demanded answers, accusing "incompetent officials" of allowing Iran's "human capital to flee" the country. Another star athlete, national volleyball captain Said Marouf, posted a message on Jan 12 that was somber in tone despite the fact the team had just earned a spot at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "Today, in our desperate and

sad mood, we can't celebrate this victory and achievement of a dream that we have worked toward for years," he said. "Our despair and sadness are not only because our fellow citizens are mourning, but because we see no light in the future."

And, just days ago, Iranian chess referee Shohreh Bayat, who drew fire on accusations she violated Iran's Islamic dress code while at a world championship in Russia, also reportedly said she now plans to stay away from her homeland.

For days after the aircraft tragedy, state media toed the line that a mechanical failure had caused it to crash. So the admission that a missile operator had fired at the Ukraine International Airlines plane mistaking it for an American cruise missile sent ripples through the media arena. In a rare move, state-run TV acknowledged that "anti-regime" protests were being held, only months after November's much larger nationwide protests were bloodily put down amid a near-total internet blackout.

Several state television employees announced on social media that they were quitting, and former state TV lifestyle show presenter Gelare Jabbari went a step further. "Forgive me for 13 years of lying to you on Iran television," she wrote on Instagram, only to delete the post later after it had spread widely and then asking that her comments not be "misused" by anyone. Another state TV personality, Zahra Khatami Rad, also quit on Instagram, vowing to "never work in television again". — AFP

## Davos matures beyond corporate 'speed dating'

Like others approaching middle age, the World Economic Forum turns 50 insisting it has matured, that it has moved on from hard partying and wants more meaningful relationships. The focus for this week's annual meeting in Davos will be as much on hearing from climate change activists as on rapid-fire corporate deal-making in a succession of cocktail-fuelled soirees, organizers insist.

Guests will include Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and Micah White, co-creator of the anti-finance movement Occupy Wall Street, alongside the more traditional parade of chief executives, celebrities and politicians such as US President Donald Trump. White conceded that "attending Davos will most likely be reputational suicide". Nonetheless, he argued for a "difficult alliance" between activists and members of the economic and social elite.

That much is required if the WEF wants to live up to its slogan of "improving the state of the world", a lofty progression since it began in 1971 as a cosy Alpine get-together for European businessmen under the guidance of German economist Klaus Schwab. Schwab is now 81 and remains very much in charge of an organization that doesn't come cheap. Fees for joining or partnering with the WEF range from 60,000 to 600,000 Swiss francs

(\$62,000-\$620,000). From a symposium first devoted to bringing US-style best practice to Europe, the forum has evolved into "some sort of speed dating" for economic and political leaders, former European commissioner Pierre Moscovici told AFP. Schwab's attempts to broaden the agenda, to include issues such as climate change and income inequality, are a "sincere" attempt to enhance the dialogue, Moscovici said.

Privately, company CEOs are gushing in their praise of Davos as an unparalleled opportunity to hobnob with their peers and forge contracts. Critics say that many of those CEOs will undercut the WEF's commitments on the environment by jetting to Switzerland aboard private jets. The forum stresses its actions to counter that, such as carbon offsets. Whatever the gap between rhetoric and reality, some appreciate the potential to do good.

## 'Middle-aged white men'

Winnie Byanyima, formerly head of Oxfam International who is now executive director at the UNAIDS agency, said she goes to Davos "to speak truth to power". In 2005, actress Sharon Stone strong-armed the audience of a headline conference and came up with pledges worth more than \$1 million to buy mosquito nets for children in Africa. Thunberg will be hoping for the same kind of impact when she speaks to the well-heeled crowd to urge them to abandon investments in fossil fuels.

Mohamed El-Erian, former head of the giant investment fund Pimco, has called for a "rethink" of the forum so participants go not only "to see and be seen" but also for a deeper discussion. Such appeals have mounted as globalization has accelerated, forcing organizations like the WEF to look beyond their founding goals. In the years since



A sign is seen inside the Congress center ahead of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) yesterday in Davos. — AFP

1971, the Earth's population has more than doubled to 7.7 billion people. Average global temperatures have risen by one degree Celsius, China's share of global economic output has leapt more than five-fold, and the Cold War has given way to a fragile new order. From 1971, for many years, "Davos Man" ruled the roost, most often the head of a sizeable company. He was typically white. Today, a measure of diversity has crept in as the WEF looks to enhance representation by women and developing countries. Byanyima, a Ugandan, first attended in 1996. She said she was struck that "the meeting rooms were full of middle-aged white men". "That has changed to some extent", but not too much, she said, while stressing: "Davos is exactly the place where we should be challenging the global elite." — AFP

# Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020

**12** Boubyan Bank's profits hit KD 62.7 million in 2019



**13** MAKFM Automotive launches Haval SUV brand in Kuwait



**14** Gulf Air opens 70th anniversary museum



## NBK reports 2019 net profit of KD 401.3m

BoD proposes cash dividend of 35 fils per share, and 5% bonus shares

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait ("NBK", the "Bank" or the "Group"), yesterday announced its financial results for the year ended 31 December 2019. The Group delivered strong annual performance with net profit of KD 401.3 million (\$1.3 billion) compared with KD 370.7 million (\$1.2 billion) in 2018, increasing by 8.2 percent year-on-year.

Total assets in 2019 stood at KD 29.3 billion (\$96.6 billion), increasing by 6.7 percent, with customer deposits increasing by 10.7 percent to reach KD 15.9 billion (\$52.6 billion) and customer loans and advances growing by 6.8 percent to KD 16.6 billion (\$54.6 billion). NBK's Board of Directors has proposed the distribution of a cash dividend of 35 fils per share, representing 56.4 percent of net profit, in addition to 5 percent bonus shares.

The proposed dividend is subject to shareholders' approval at the Annual General Meeting. Earnings per share (EPS) stood at 60 fils, as compared to 55 fils in 2018, and equity attributable to shareholders increased by 8.8 percent to KD 3.21 billion (\$10.6 billion).

Nasser MUSAED Abdulla Al-Sayer, NBK Group Chairman, commented: "2019 was another strong year as we delivered healthy



Nasser MUSAED Abdulla Al-Sayer



Isam J Al-Sager

profitability while maintaining a robust balance sheet - demonstrating the quality and diversity of both our operations and earnings. The Bank remains firmly committed to New Kuwait 2035 and is taking confident steps towards supporting its delivery. These financial results are driven by the execution of our strategy for growth and innovation, while contributing to the country's socioeconomic development.

A highlight of the year was the heavy over-subscription of our \$750 million perpetual tier-1 capital securities issuance, which was well-received by global fixed income investors and reflects solid investor confidence in NBK. Net operating income grew by 1.4 percent to KD 895.5 million (\$3.0 billion), while non-interest income increased by 7.0 percent to KD 206.3 million (\$680.7 million). Our international operations continued to play an

important role in mitigating Group-level risk and diversifying income from across geographies. The total bottom line contribution of international operations accounted for 28 percent of the Group's net profit in 2019.

Isam J Al-Sager, NBK's Group Chief Executive Officer, said: "Despite operating conditions remaining below expectations, with a volatile oil prices environment, NBK recorded another set of strong results, as the breadth of its operations and the scale of its international footprint mitigated risks and ensured consistent profitability. Non-oil GDP growth in Kuwait is projected to reach 2.5 percent in 2020, and the pipeline of scheduled project awards is healthy. There is a broad expectation that the year will bring positive operating conditions, as the government continues to stimulate economic activity and the appetite for credit improves. NBK is deeply committed to its digitalization strategy, in an effort to develop an established foothold in its regional markets. In 2019 we were proud to launch our in-house Digital Factory, which is playing a vital role in driving the progress of our digital roadmap. This will soon become a unique competitive advantage in the region."

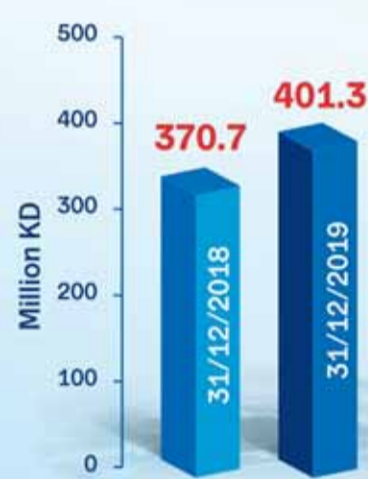
NBK's asset quality metrics remained strong with the ratio of non-performing loans to gross loans at 1.10 percent, compared with 1.38 percent in 2018, and an NPL coverage ratio of 272.2 percent, compared with 228.1 percent in 2018. The Bank maintained healthy levels of capitalization, with a capital adequacy ratio of 17.8 percent at year-end, compared with 17.2 percent in 2018. This level of capitalization is aligned with the Group's risk appetite and in excess of the Central Bank of Kuwait's requirements. Al-Sager concluded: "NBK's strategy for 2020 will not deviate from its current trajectory. The Group will continue to increase the diversity of its income across geographies and segments, with the primary objective of achieving superior returns and offering exceptional service to customers."

In 2019, NBK was recognized by Global Finance and The Banker as the Best Bank in Kuwait, as well as ranking in the World's 50 Safest Banks list by Global Finance for the 14th consecutive time. The awards are evidence of NBK's strong financial position, market leadership and of its ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its customers.

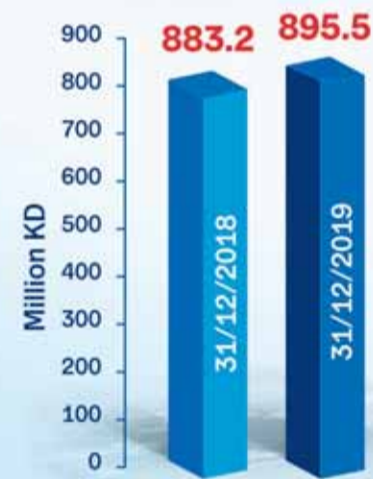


# 401.3

## Million KD Net Profit for Year 2019



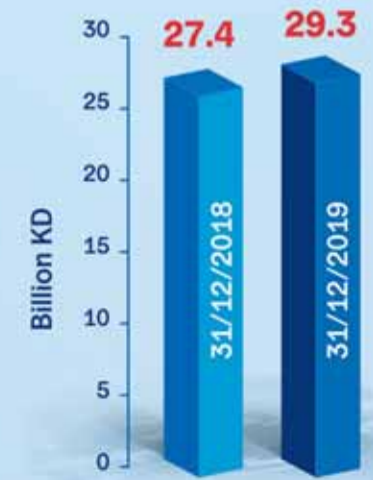
+8.2% Net Profit



+1.4% Net Operating Income



+8.8% Shareholders' Equity



+6.7% Total Assets



# MAKFM Automotive Company launches Haval SUV brand in Kuwait

New dedicated showroom inaugurated in Shuwaikh



- Haval ranked as the best-selling SUV brand in China for the past 14 years
- Launch of the brand coincides with the unveiling of dedicated 1000m2 new showroom
- Dedicated service and parts storage facility with an area of 1300 m2
- Every Haval SUV will come with 15 years warranty and three years' service

**KUWAIT:** MAKFM Automotive Company, a member of Ali Alghanim and Sons Group of Companies, has officially launched the Haval SUV brand in Kuwait with the inauguration of a dedicated new showroom in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area.

Haval is a wholly owned subsidiary of Great Wall Motors Co. (GWM), China's largest manufacturer of SUVs and pickups. It has also been China's best-selling SUV brand for well over a decade, with sales bolstered by models such as the Haval H6, China's most popular SUV, and its flagship, the Haval H9.

Speaking at the launch, Mohammed Alghanim, Group General Manager for MAKFM Automotive Company, said: "It gives us great pleasure to introduce Haval, China's most successful SUV brand, to the Kuwaiti market. Offering exceptional levels of comfort, safety and

driving pleasure, it is easy to see why Haval has been China's best-selling SUV brand for 14 years. We look forward to achieving similar levels of success for the brand here in Kuwait by offering high quality vehicles supported by a strong aftersales service network."

Further commenting on the launch of Haval in Kuwait, Nader Al-Zarif, General Manager of Haval & GWM, said: "The success of Haval in China and its increasing popularity around the world is built on GWM's substantial investment in research and development at its innovation centers around the world. GWM places an emphasis on maximizing the quality of its vehicles and to demonstrate our unflinching trust and confidence in these products, every vehicle will be sold with a 15 years warranty to offer peace-of-mind to our customers."

The new showroom will boast a floorspace of 1000sq m, with a viewing gallery capable of showcasing up to 13 Haval SUVs. The dedicated service area boasts advanced workshop equipment and a spare parts facility to ensure availability of parts at all times.

The brand will launch in Kuwait with a line-up of three impressive models:

• Haval H2 - The compact and sporty Haval H2 is the most affordable SUV in the range, but makes no compromises on comfort and safety, with features including keyless entry and push-button ignition, dual-zone automatic climate control, tyre pressure monitoring system and all-round curtain airbags.

• Haval H6 - The stylish Haval H6 is China's best-selling SUV for good reason. Stylish, comfortable and compact, the latest generation of the Haval H6 is

absolutely packed with technological features such as lane departure assist, semi-automatic parking, 360-degree view parking cameras, blind spot monitoring system and more.

• Haval H9 - The flagship of the range, the Haval H9 is the brand's most luxurious and capable model to date. Boasting ample space for seven adults to travel in absolute comfort, the H9 spoils its occupants with features such as multi-terrain selector, Infinity 10-speaker premium sound system, leather massage seats and panoramic sunroof, in addition to a host of industry-leading safety features.

The new Haval showroom is located in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, Zone 1, Street 7, Plot 99. The showroom's opening hours are from 8am to 8:30pm, Saturday to Thursday.



## Business

# Gulf Air opens 70th anniversary museum

## Museum showcases the airline's rich history since its take-off in 1950



**MANAMA:** Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, yesterday celebrated the opening of its temporary museum at the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall which marks the start of a series of 70th anniversary celebrations in 2020. The official opening was under the patronage of Gulf Air's Chairman of Board of Directors Zayed R Alzayani who cut the ribbon and launched the project in presence of the airline's board members, executive management and members of the Bahraini media.

The Gulf Air 70th anniversary museum celebrates 70 years of aviation in the Kingdom of Bahrain and showcases the airline's rich history since its take-off in 1950. It features exclusive and rare photography and memorabilia items from different decades of the airline's journey.

Moreover, various aircraft models and Gulf Air's uniforms from different eras will be on display to highlight the evolution of the brand over the years. Other than celebrating history, the museum will also display the latest Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner Falcon Gold seat to highlight the future of Gulf Air. The museum will be open for the public for a limited period of time and will exclusively attract the local and regional footfall of the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall.

At the official opening, Gulf Air's Chairman of Board of Directors Zayed R Alzayani said: "Today we



start our 70th anniversary celebrations with the opening of this museum. Gulf Air's history is very rich and it has touched the lives of every Bahraini if not every GCC national. The exhibited items represent various decades of our history and showcase the evolution of the brand and the business. I invite everyone to come and visit the museum and go back in time on a journey from 1950 until today".

Gulf Air will continue its fleet modernization program in 2020 and will receive the final three Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners of the 10-aircraft order and will take deliveries of the brand new Airbus 321neo aircraft



which will be dominantly deployed on the European long-haul routes. The airline recently announced its 2020 expansion plans with a number of European destinations: Milan as year-round with daily flights and Mykonos, Munich, Malaga and Nice as seasonal

destinations - all starting from summer 2020. Moreover, on the Eastern side of Gulf Air's hub, Kuala Lumpur will be launched in July 2020 with daily flights operated by the Dreamliner and Salalah, seasonally, in the summer.

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 19th January 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 12 - 16 January 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

### The winners this week are:

Said Mohamed Zaman Nakowi Said Wajed Hussain Nakowi, Shrouq Ali Mohamed Alherz, Adnan Khalifah Rashed Al-Rashed, Wafaa Wasfi Albahrah, Maha Ali Asghar Zargar Talabi.

Gulf Bank announced that Al-Danah is now bigger, and that the prize of the annual draw will be KD1,500,000 as of 2020. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to participate by depositing in the Al-Danah account will be on 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

## Markaz consolidates market leadership with prestigious award wins in 2019

**KUWAIT:** Further cementing its preeminent position in the asset management and investment banking industry, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" added three coveted honors to its growing trophy cabinet in 2019. The company's exceptional performance and commitment to excellence were recognized by Global Finance magazine as well as at Global Investor MENA Awards 2019 and MENA Fund Manager Awards. Commenting on the indigenous recognitions, Manaf A Al-Hajeri, Markaz Chief Executive Officer, said: "It brings us great pride at "Markaz" to have our efforts recognized with more than 50 prestigious awards over the years, which we consider a testament to the trust and confidence we continue to gain from investment and finance experts in the region. These awards also reflect Markaz's leading position in the asset management and banking industry, and reaffirms our clear understanding of our clients' needs and how to address them effectively and efficiently. We truly believe our success is owed to research-based investment policy we have adopted, which takes into account factors such as local, regional and global market changes and trends, prior to making any investment decision. That, coupled with our commitment to attaining the best results for our clients will continue to fuel us moving forward".

Setting a new record, Markaz was named the 'Best Investment Bank in Kuwait' for the eighth time in nine years by the annual survey of Global Finance magazine on the 'World's Best Investment Banks.' The prestigious ranking is regarded as a trusted standard of excellence for the global financial community. An esteemed judging panel comprising the magazine's editors and industry experts considered a series of criteria, including market share, number and size of deals, advisory and financial service, structuring capabilities, distribution network, efforts to address market conditions, innovation, pricing, after-market performance of underwritings and market reputation, for the ranking of the top performers among banks and other providers of financial services. Commenting on the ranking, Ali H Khalil, Chief Operating

Officer, Markaz, said: "Setting new industry benchmarks in service excellence and delivering superior performance, Markaz has firmly established its leadership position in Kuwait's investment banking sector and yet another recognition from Global Finance further reinforced our reputation, regionally and globally. We have continued to deliver steady growth in 2019 despite challenging global market conditions and this achievement underlines our strength and resilience underpinned by our solid market presence, large customer base, and strong investment product offering. On the back of a positive economic outlook for the region in 2020, we are looking forward to another year of growth and success."

At the Global Investor MENA Awards 2019 ceremony held in November in Dubai, Markaz took home the 'Kuwait Asset Manager of the Year' category. The highly anticipated awards celebrate outstanding achievements of organizations specializing in asset management, custody, fund administration and wealth management across the region. In addition, Markaz Fund for Investment and Development "MIDAF" was recognized with "Best Equity Fund in Kuwait for the year 2019" at the "MENA Fund Manager" Awards held in January in Dubai. These prestigious awards celebrate fund and asset management institutions in the MENA region that have outperformed their peers over the past 12 months. Speaking on the award, Amani I. Al-Omani, Executive Vice President, MENA Equities, Markaz, stated: "At Markaz, we have always remained keen on delivering competitive returns for investors by combining our prudent investment policies, unmatched industry expertise, and diversified products and services. The 'Kuwait Asset Manager of the Year' award at the Global Investor MENA Awards recognizes Markaz's multiple asset classes, the stable performance of its investment products, and the balance between prudent risk management and achieving the best possible returns for our customers." Al-Omani added: "Building on the stellar industry reputation and customer trust Markaz has built over more than four decades, our MIDAF product has positioned itself as one of the most attractive equity solutions in the region. A team of experienced professionals determined to maximize value for our clients is the driving force behind the success of the Fund. We remain committed to continue providing innovative investment solutions that will meet and exceed the expectation of our customers."

Markaz has a long history of gathering industry awards and recognitions. The company won the 'Most Innovative Financial Institution in Middle East', 'Best Local Investment Bank in Kuwait' and 'Best Asset Manager' categories at EMEA Finance's Middle East Banking Awards 2018.

## Eyes on ECB for hints on strategy rethink

**FRANKFURT:** European Central Bank watchers will eye the institution closely Thursday for hints about its first "strategic review" in two decades, with no change expected in its ultra-loose monetary policy settings.

"The governing council is sure to leave the main policy settings unchanged," predicted Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics. Those key parameters were last updated in September, when former ECB chief Mario Draghi lowered a key interest rate and relaunched "quantitative easing" (QE) bond-buying in the face of fierce resistance.

Since taking over in November, new boss Christine Lagarde has patched up some of the wounds torn open during that meeting and its aftermath. But the lack of immediate movement on policy places all the more focus on the much-hyped review.

The last such exercise dates back to 2003, before the financial crisis shook the eurozone economy and pushed the ECB into unprecedented interventions to keep the show on the road. Nevertheless, "expectations that the bank will unveil a detailed scope and timetable for its monetary strategy review... may be disappointed," economist Kenningham said. What's more, as the probe is set to last for all of 2020, there is little foreseeable impact on policy.

### Seeking climate role

Lagarde raised hopes as she took office that climate change could become a key element in the ECB's thinking. But she has also sought to temper expectations, recalling that "the central bank's priority mandate is price stability".

Areas where the bank could act include "greening" its QE asset purchases, which have so far amounted to more than 2.6 trillion euros (\$2.9 trillion) since 2015. Buying bonds certified as fulfilling environmental standards could pose policy challenges. "Given Germany has reduced carbon output less than other countries, would the ECB buy smaller quantities of its bonds?" asked Bruno Cavalier, economist at Oddo BHF.

Until now, the ECB has bought bonds in proportion to member countries' share in its capital. What's more "what happens to 'green QE' when monetary policy is tightened?" he asked. In the long term, policy tightening would mean the ECB not only ending purchases but winding down its stock of assets.

If the bank were to become a large holder of green debt in the meantime, that could sharply disrupt markets for the instruments. The long timeframe for the review will allow Lagarde to kick such questions into touch for now, although she may offer hungry reporters some procedural details Thursday. In the meantime, the ECB's lodestar will remain price stability—which it defines as inflation close to, but below two percent.

### Breathing room

With eurozone inflation on the rise in December, to 1.3 percent, and political risks from abroad clearing slightly, the ECB may be able to afford a spell of navel-gazing. A US-China trade truce and clarity on the next steps in the Brexit process have dulled two of the most acute threats to the bloc.

Meanwhile at home, there are signs that the manufacturing recession that has plagued the single currency area in recent months may be bottoming out. —AFP

## Holistic-Prometeia partnership to support Kuwait financial sector

**KUWAIT:** Kicking off 2020, Holistic Development & Consulting, a financial consulting company from Kuwait founded and managed by two Kuwaiti partners, and Prometeia, a global leader in risk management consulting and software solutions, announced their strategic partnership with the intention of providing all-inclusive support to banks and investment companies in Kuwait.

"We believe our collaboration with Prometeia will expand the range of our offerings to banks and investment institutions in Kuwait. By working with a global specialist team and having a strong local knowledge we will develop solutions tailored to Kuwait market's needs. At Holistic we believe it is our responsibility to help our economy grow and prosper," stated Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Holistic Development & Consulting

Abdulrahman Al-Duajj.

The aim of joining both parties is to provide Kuwait's major economic players focused and all-encompassing risk management services and products for all their needs.

Also, Holistic's team aims to contribute to 'Kuwait's Vision 2035' towards a prosperous and sustainable future. Kuwait is taking a confident approach towards an optimistic future with the promising Vision 2035 aimed to develop a diversified economy to reduce the country's dependence on oil export revenues and transform Kuwait into a financial and trade hub to encourage foreign investors. Through these collaborative efforts, Holistic's team strives to introduce globally recognized services and products that will promote advancements in the areas of Risk Advisory as well as automation and software technology.

Serhat Yucel, Partner and Regional Manager for the Middle East at Prometeia: "Our partnership with Holistic Development & Consulting solidifies Prometeia's presence in the Enterprise Risk Management space in the GCC. Our collaboration with Holistic will extend our offering to banks and investment institutions in Kuwait, through a team of financial



specialists with deep experience in risk management."

Prometeia is a leading provider of consulting services, software solutions and economic research focused on Risk Management. Prometeia, is a top vendor in the Mediterranean Region in the Risk and Performance space, with over 100 projects successfully completed in the last three years in EMEA to support business process and regulatory compliance. They serve the Risk Finance, Treasury, Credit,

Compliance departments of small banks and major international banking groups and small banks, both in Europe and emerging markets.

Abdulaziz Al-Houqal, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Holistic Development & Consulting added, "Our team is proud to be the exclusive partners with Prometeia. We are looking forward to seeing the fruits of this partnership reflected in Kuwait's economy at large and its contribution to Kuwait's vision 2035."

## Business

# KFH explains technical, legal aspects of AUB acquisition and its benefits

## Ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meetings approve all items on agenda

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has convened the ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meeting at Sheraton Hotel with a 79.156 percent quorum, followed by a press conference to discuss the acquisition of Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (AUB) as per the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) requirements. During the meeting, all the items on the assembly's agenda were approved.

Attended by KFH's Board of Directors, the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board, the executive management, analysts, economists and representatives of media and press, KFH explained various technical and legal aspects, the legal framework of the acquisition and its effects on KFH, its shareholders and customers as well as the banking system and the national economy. It also discussed the expected quantitative and qualitative benefits of acquisition, with a review of financial safety indicators of capital adequacy, asset quality, profitability, liquidity, challenges, fundamental risks and process of conversion of Sharia non-compliant assets.

### The deal supports the national economy and the banking sector

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, said: "Given KFH's ongoing aspiration to grow its business, maximize the returns for its shareholders, the continuous quest for more favorable opportunities that are able to diversify investments and income and expand KFH's activities, the Board of Directors holds this meeting to discuss the acquisition of Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (AUB), and explain the most prominent aspects of the deal and the expected returns from the new entity."

He added: "In the last five years, KFH has witnessed a major transformation in its activities and effectiveness. Thankfully, we managed to translate the vision and mission of 'KFH' seeking to lead the global development of Islamic financial services, which was reflected in positive indicators, both in terms of profitability or asset quality."

Al-Marzouq explained: "Beside the trust that the Board of Directors receives from the General Assembly, it is responsible for exploring the future of KFH and the banking sector, focusing on sustainable growth by examining the possibility of expanding the bank's activities, taking into account the limited markets in which the bank operates and the related risks. In addition, the Board tackles restructuring the quality of revenues by relying on stable operating revenues instead of fluctuating investment revenues. Based on the foregoing, KFH's board of directors appointed three international consultants three years ago to study achieving this vision and the above-mentioned goals. The studies recommended the strategic expansion either through acquisition or merger as this activity is one of the most important ways to create a global giant entity out of the narrowness of the local market. Furthermore, the local and international neutral consultants have studied the financial positions for many local and regional banks that may achieve the above vision and enable KFH to provide stronger resources and create more stable entity. This may be achieved through an exchange of the best expertise and capabilities, building more efficient ability to meet customer needs, raising KFH's share in the local and global markets and ensuring its long-term growth. According to the consultants' recommendation, AUB was the best option. It should be noted that some major shareholders such as Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) also carried out their own studies through mandating independent international consultants. Their studies were also consistent with the same result as that of the KFH consultants."

He emphasized that this strategic step is in line with global trends towards giant entities, as the global economy recorded \$ 4.1 trillion M&A deals during 2018. This was not limited to the major banks and financial institutions, but M&As were a pivotal element in various sectors and areas. At the regional level, there have been more than a dozen banking cases heading towards consolidation.

"As a historic step, the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Central Bank of Bahrain agreed to start the process of the KFH's acquisition of 'AUB', according to the determinants after completing the due diligence process. This acquisition represents a powerful engine for growth and prosperity in the future of KFH, providing access to many new markets in Britain, UAE, Oman, Iraq and Egypt and strengthening the position of KFH in its current markets. The deal will give the bank an opportunity to access regional markets with a population of over 430 million people and a median annual per capita income of approximately \$42,000 on the basis of purchasing power parity. The deal also would turn KFH into a direct investment and banking destination, reduc-



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq (third from left) addresses the meeting.



**Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq (right) and Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh**

ing group costs across its markets, enhancing the efficiency of resources allocation and increasing profitability." Al-Marzouq added.

He further explained: "In the early stages of the process, KFH established a logical framework for the research, study and evaluation through studying the deal's feasibility in collaboration with major international and local consulting houses. During the General Assembly meeting, the results and assessments will be presented which confirm the feasibility of the deal. The Central Bank of Kuwait also appointed McKinsey International Company, which carried out extensive analyses of cash flows, risk calculation, pressure tests, acquisition risk assessment to ensure that a dividend is achieved for shareholders. There were field visits to KFH and AUB. Moreover, McKinsey reviewed the studies carried out by the Kuwait Finance House and the plans for the transfer of Sharia non-compliant assets."

"KFH's acquisition of AUB brings many benefits in terms of improving profitability. Studies prepared by consultants have shown that the expected increase in future earnings per share as a result of this acquisition (EPS Accretion) will be the highest compared to the acquisition deals in the Gulf region and the Middle East. In addition, the merger will have positive effects for KFH shareholders due to the expected increase in profits and dividends," Al-Marzouq said.

Furthermore, Al-Marzouq confirmed that the acquisition will improve the quality of the new entity's assets, high capital base, liquidity levels, and capital efficiency at rates that exceed the regulatory requirements. The deal will also generate the largest Islamic banking entity in the world in terms of assets, as KFH will occupy leading position with a value of assets of about \$101 billion, and shareholders' equity of \$10.5 billion as of the end of September 2019. Being the largest Islamic bank in the world, KFH's ability to finance development projects will increase thanks to its financial resources that foster innovation and development in the Islamic banking industry, as well as the increase in national manpower after the acquisition. In this regard, KFH's policies are totally committed to preserving and developing existing national manpower, whether in Kuwait or Bahrain.

He said: "I am pleased to present to you, within the agenda items, a set of reports on the acquisition deal prepared by global and local consultants in addition to the report of the auditor on capital increase and the report of the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board on the acquisition. All these reports are supported by facts and confirmed numbers to ensure the integrity of the acquisition."

Al-Marzouq thanked colleagues at KFH and all the advisors and bodies that supported the success of the deal and thanked the scholars and members of the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board, who discussed the project in all its aspects in the light of its solid historical experience and practical supervision of the transformation of Bank of Sharjah into an Islamic bank and the role of its former members in the transformation of Ahli United - Kuwait and KIB. The esteemed body approved the deal, emphasizing its legal integrity, adopting steps and mechanisms of approach to converting traditional

assets in line with Sharia principles, expanding the circle of Sharia transactions and providing a more robust Sharia alternative to the shareholders, depositors, customers and all societies in which the group operates.

### Kuwait Vision 2035

Al-Marzouq also thanked all the regulatory authorities that supported the deal in Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain, foremost of which is the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Central Bank of Bahrain.

He said: "I hope that Allah Almighty will crown our steps and endeavors for the good of the country, in a way that achieves the insightful vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to turn Kuwait into a distinct financial hub and to maximize Kuwait's leadership locally and globally in leading the Islamic finance industry and pushing it forward."

Al-Marzouq added that KFH appointed Al-Shall Consulting Company to act as a local financial and economic consultant and analyze the strategic goals of KFH. As a result, Al-Shall concluded that the acquisition of AUB will achieve macroeconomic benefits, support Kuwait's Vision of 2035 and improve its competitiveness as a financial hub. Consequently, Kuwait will be the headquarters of the largest Islamic bank in the world, in addition to its global presence and spread which will contribute positively to achieving the vision of Kuwait, apart from being a turning point in the Islamic finance industry.

He explained that this contributes to improving the entity's revenues from external sources and goes ahead in developing Islamic banking given its ability to employ the best talents and spending on research and development, adding that the financial safety indicators for the new entity are within the safe range along with profitability, liquidity, capital adequacy and market risks.

"Kuwait has two huge development projects, the first is a New Kuwait for 2035, while the second is related to increasing the production capacity of the oil sector to 4 million barrels per day. Since both projects require significant financing resources, major banking units can play a leading role in providing the funding required for these projects. Among them is the new entity which will be one of the most prominent funders and supporters of national development projects," Al-Marzouq added.

### The first digital bank in Kuwait

In order to achieve KFH's digital transformation strategy, improve its services and products, while enhancing its role as a global leader in innovation, the new entity is able to boost KFH's leadership in terms of innovation in digital banking services, and to convert AUB Kuwait into a fully digital bank as directed by CBK. Thus, efforts would be focused on offering innovative digital services and banking products, Al-Marzouq said.

He emphasized that KFH places great importance on digital transformation in light of the high expected returns. Given the high cost of the digital transformation in banks, the acquisition would reduce costs and help overcome any obstacles to this project. Recent studies and experiences have proven that the digital transformation is in the inter-

est of the customer, achieving a distinguished banking experience for customers, and enabling the new entity to gain higher returns in the future.

He added that through the customer-centric approach, the new entity will be able to ensure high benefits for its customers, while providing more banking services and establishing healthy competition within the Group. Furthermore, the acquisition brings accumulative value and benefits to shareholders and employees of both banks.

### High Kuwaitization efforts

On the other hand, studies that KFH commissioned local and international institutions to prepare confirmed that the new entity would enhance the local capabilities and capacities that KFH possesses and help the Kuwaitization efforts, while opening job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth locally, regionally and internationally. Moreover, Al-Marzouq stated that the percentage of the national manpower in the merged entity will rise to reach about 76.2 percent, which exceeds the Kuwaitization percentage required by the regulatory authorities indicating that the bigger and more widespread the entity is, the more national manpower it will need.

### High profitability and liquidity levels

Al-Marzouq said that the share of "KFH" shareholder in the combined entity according to the share exchange ratio between the two entities is 64.7 percent, while KFH's share of profits for the fiscal year 2018 reached about 53.1 percent, which means an immediate increase for KFH's share owner by about 21.8 percent.

He stated that the annual compound growth ratio of KFH profitability for the past ten years (2008-2018) was about 3.8 percent whereas that of AUB for the same period was about 11.1 percent despite the fact that the volume of its assets to the total by the end of September 2019 was about 38.2 percent of the assets' volume of both banks.

He further pointed out that the increased liquidity of the share is, from one aspect, a means for measuring Boursa dealers' acceptance of the acquisition project, from a second aspect, it supports the capital value of the merged entity and, from a third aspect, it is a privilege for the shareholder due to the facility it provides for easily disposing the share by mortgage or sale.

"The liquidity of 'KFH' and 'AUB' shares has been constantly risen since the start of 2018. Along with the start of the practical procedures of the acquisition process in 2019, the liquidity of both shares has been enhanced whereas KFH has achieved an increase by about 96.5 percent while capital gains rose in one year by about 46 percent, which is the highest gains of Kuwaiti banks," Al-Marzouq added.

### Due diligence and compliance

As part of KFH's keenness to adhere to the instructions of the regulatory authorities and the codes of professional banking behavior, Al-Marzouq emphasized coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Central Bank of Bahrain regarding the acquisition studies, consultations and due diligence process.

Al-Marzouq stated further that the institutions that were officially assigned to study the acquisition project and perform a thorough examination thereof have all ended in an outcome, which is the feasibility of the acquisition. Such institutions include Ernst & Young, Goldman, Sachs, Alshall Consulting, Credit Suisse, HSBC, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Freshfields Bruckhaus, KPMG and Link Liters. In turn, McKinsey worked as a consultant for the Central Bank of Kuwait and its consultations covered all pivots studied by other consultants and it ended in favoring the feasibility of acquisition and expected that it will lead to not only a bigger but also a better banking entity. Moreover, the Central Bank of Kuwait stated also in a press release in October 2019 that out of his passion for verifying the feasibility of the project and its added value for KFH, the

banking sector and the national economy, it has entrusted McKinsey, which is specialized in acquisitions and mergers, with studying the proposed acquisition process in parallel with the studies conducted by KFH.

Added to that, Al-Marzouq has presented what was mentioned by the Central Bank of Kuwait after reviewing all studies that covered the acquisition project, the most prominent of which is that of McKinsey assigned by CBK. This consulting entity has conducted the required study in a sufficient detail in cooperation with CBK team and over about 30 weeks, during which it analyzed extensive data of both respective banks and their subsidiaries. Further, an on-site and off-site inspection of the files of a great percentage of financing operations has been made in order to verify the quality of assets.

Further, other professional institutions have given opinions that support the acquisition project. Such professional institutions include, but not limited to, the two global credit rating agencies: Moody's and Fitch, which mentioned that the acquisition will be positive in favor of KFH, enhance its business, increase its diversity, support its profitability and the total credit quality, provide privileges from the potential economies of scale and increase credit granting opportunities. In addition, there are other specialized financial entities; e.g. EFG Hermes, which indicated the feasibility of acquisition.

### Healthy and balanced competition

Regarding local competition, he pointed out that the new entity acquires 31 percent of the market share at the level of the banking sector with its two conventional and Islamic divisions against 26 percent by KFH before the acquisition. This remains within the acceptable limits that do not adversely impact the state of competition. Given the portion of the new entity in the Islamic division would increase from 51 percent for KFH before acquisition to 66 percent in the new entity, CBK directed KFH to keep the entity of AUB-Kuwait separate so that it can be a digital bank.

### The General Assembly meeting

The ordinary General Assembly agenda items have been approved. The agenda comprised the following items. First: Hearing the Sharia Fatwa and Control Committee report on the acquisition of Al-Ahli United Bank and transformation of its business activities to sharia compliant business including subsidiaries. Second: review and approve Board of Directors report on the acquisition of Al-Ahli United Bank; Third: Approve the assets evaluation report prepared by global consultants Credit Suisse and HSBC and approve the fair swap price of shares i.e. 2.325581 of Al-Ahli United Bank shares for 1 KFH share. Fourth: approve tangible assets appraisal conducted by one of Capital Markets Authority's approved appraisers. Fifth: sanction Kuwait Finance House listing in the Bahrain Stock Exchange and authorize the board of directors or its nominees to determine the execution date of the decision and adopt all necessary procedures in this respect.

Furthermore, the Extraordinary General Assembly agenda items have been approved, comprising, first: approve Board of Directors recommendation concerning Kuwait Finance House full acquisition of Al-Ahli United Bank shares through the exchange of shares with a swap ratio 2.325581 of Al-Ahli United bank shares for 1 KFH share. The said decision shall be subject to the approval of Al-Ahli United Bank extraordinary general assembly on the full acquisition of Al-Ahli United Bank shares based on the determined ratio and authorize the Board of Directors or its nominees to introduce the acquisition presentation and fulfill the requirements of the regulatory authorities in Kuwait and Bahrain, third: approve the Board of Directors recommendation to increase Kuwait Finance House authorized capital to KD1,117,648,920/200 (one thousand one hundred seventeen million six hundred forty eight thousand nine hundred and twenty dinars and two hundred fifty) by issuing 4,200,000,000 (four thousand and two hundred million shares) and authorize the board of directors to dispose share fractions. Shares shall be allocated to shareholders registered in Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait shareholders register on the date set for the execution of the acquisition based on the exchange price of 2.325581 of AUB shares against each KFH share, and authorize the board of directors to determine the execution date, issue capital increase shares, take all necessary procedures to execute the capital increase procedures based on the determined acquisition execution date, fourth: approve the amendment of Article 8 of the Memorandum of Association and Article 7 of the Articles of Association.

Health & Science

# ENGIE, Taiba Hospital partner to introduce new Integrated Facilities Management model to Kuwait



Tareq Mishari Al-Bahar, Executive Director and partner at Al-Dhow Engineering and Lama Al-Fadala, CEO, Taiba Hospital.



Taiba hospital honors Marie Masdupuy, the Ambassador of France to Kuwait.

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Taiba Hospital announced the signing of an agreement for the delivery of Integrated Facility Management with ENGIE Services Kuwait, a leader in the low carbon transition and part of the global ENGIE Group, during an event held in Kuwait.

On the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Kuwait Times spoke with Tomas Greenwood, General Manager at ENGIE services in Kuwait, about the services that will be provided to Taiba Hospital. Greenwood's primary focus is to identify key prospects: secure large contracts for Integrated Facility Management that includes hard

services, soft services and energy efficiency. The contract also involves overseeing site deliverables to maintain ENGIE's high standards as a true differentiator in the Kuwaiti marketplace.

Commenting on the agreement, Greenwood said: "We are pleased to partner with Taiba Hospital for this Integrated Facilities Management contract, with a duration of five years. This partnership is the first of its kind within Kuwait's healthcare sector, as it is a key performance indicator contract which measures a set of targets and objectives that will achieve a high standard in service delivery. It does this by using innovation and best practices from across the global ENGIE Group, as well as our industry, to

achieve a high standard of efficiency." He noted that many benefits will follow as a result of this partnership with Taiba Hospital. "ENGIE Services Kuwait will enable the hospital to focus on its core business in healthcare, looking after patients while ENGIE manages the engineering, cleaning, security, portage, waste and laundry service lines," he explained. "Our partnership takes away the numerous invoices and management of several different specialist subcontractors, while self-delivering others to provide a best in class value-added service."

"ENGIE is providing a one stop shop solution for Taiba Hospital, with one point of contact and one invoice," he pointed out. "ENGIE will manage the rest. Another key

point of this partnership is around compliance and safety. With ENGIE's experience as a global player, we are well used to working in the healthcare environment and can guarantee a fully compliant safe solution that is completely legal and safe for all staff and patients, thereby helping them to achieve the Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation."

Greenwood expressed ENGIE's excitement to be in Kuwait at a time when the marketplace is evolving. "ENGIE is ahead of the curve as the market shifts away from the old manpower supply format, with KPI contracts of this nature positioning us favorably as leaders in this sector," he said.

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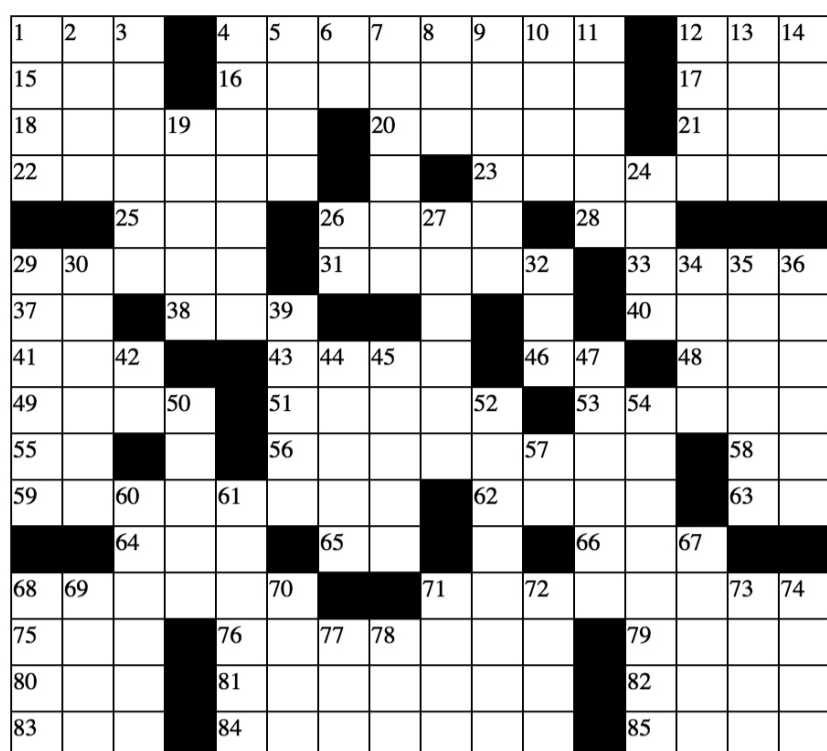
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ACROSS

- The syllable naming the fifth (dominant) note of any musical scale in solmization.
- Semisweet golden-colored table or dessert wine from around Bordeaux in France.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
- Relating to abdominal delivery.
- An ugly evil-looking old woman.
- One of a family of granular intrusive rocks.
- Molten rock in the earth's crust.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- Archaic name for England or Great Britain.
- Capable of being attained or accomplished.
- The universal time coordinated when an event is received on Earth.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- South African plant widely cultivated for its showy pure white spathe and yellow spadix.
- Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- An extension at the end and at right angles to the main building.
- Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
- Your general store of remembered information.
- A notice of someone's death.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- (computer science) Memory whose contents can be accessed and read but cannot be changed.
- A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
- Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
- Jordan's port.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A desert in southwestern Africa - largely Botswana.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- (Greek mythology) Fire-breathing she-monster with a lion's head and a goat's body and a serpent's tail.
- Similar or related in quality or character.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
- Diabetes caused by a relative or absolute deficiency of insulin and characterized by polyuria.
- Of southern Europe.
- A game played with rackets by two or four players who hit a ball back and forth over a net that divides the court.
- A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
- A path over which electrical signals can pass.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of capacity equal to 10 baths or 10 ephahs.
- The outermost region of the sun's atmosphere.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- Any of a group of enzymes (trade name Lactaid) that hydrolyze lactose to glucose and

DOWN

- An narrative telling the adventures of a hero or a family.
- A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
- German dramatist (1813-1863).
- Relating to or having or lying within a scrotum.
- (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
- A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- Popular music originating in the West Indies.
- A language unit by which a person or thing is known.
- Related on the mother's side.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Round object that is hit or thrown or kicked in games.
- American novelist (1909-1955).
- Cause a floating log to rotate by treading.
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- Any tropical African shrub of the genus Protea having alternate rigid leaves and dense colorful flower heads resembling cones.
- Cause to be attached.
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
- A city in northern India.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- A large fleet.
- English empiricist philosopher who believed that all knowledge is derived from sensory experience (1632-1704).
- A unit of information equal to one million (1,048,576) bytes.
- A committee having supervisory powers.
- Muslims collectively and their civilization.
- A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
- Someone whose business is advertising.
- Official routes of communication.
- The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Congo river opposite Brazzaville.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- Refuse to acknowledge.
- Situated at an apex.
- Type genus of the Percidae.
- Very dark black.
- Any branch of Shinto other than Kokka.
- Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
- On or toward the lee.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- A French abbot.
- Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
- Remaining after all deductions.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your level of physical and mental energy should be very high today, Aries, and so you could feel restless throughout the morning. As a result, you might spend your afternoon and evening out and about, shopping, paying visits, or attending classes or lectures. Some stimulating discussions could take place. At some point, you might find yourself admiring a park or garden. Don't try to do too much, and enjoy your day.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your level of imagination and inspiration should be operating at a very high level today, Taurus, so if you've been planning to start a new artistic project, this is the day to do it. You're also likely to be feeling quite intuitive, so don't be surprised if you find yourself tuning acutely in to the thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires of others, even strangers. Your higher mind is very close to your conscious mind. Make the most of it!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A group with which you're affiliated could ask you to take care of a few tasks. This might involve making phone calls, running errands, or both. Your energy and enthusiasm are high, Gemini, so this is a good day to prove how valuable your work is and how efficient you are. Make sure that you don't take on too much, however. You won't be helping anyone if you tire yourself out.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Important projects, either job related or personal, might need to be completed today in order to meet a deadline or fulfill a promise. This could require a lot of mental and physical effort on your part, Cancer, which could prove somewhat stressful. Others might lend a hand, however. It's very important for you to remember to pace yourself. If you work when you're exhausted, you might not like the results.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A long-awaited vacation may be coming up soon for you, Leo. The study of travel books might be on your agenda for today. You could spend much of your day making the necessary arrangements, making phone calls, completing paperwork, and running errands. You might need to set up the care of pets or plants for your absence. Excitement runs high and so does enthusiasm. You have a lot to look forward to, so go out and celebrate! Have fun!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This could prove to be a very busy day, Virgo. Someone close to you might come to you for advice on how to manage their resources, perhaps because of successes you've had in the past. This might take up more time than you'd planned for, but you'll enjoy helping your friend. Information received from TV or newspapers could bring a new interest into your life and spur you on to do some research on the subject.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Social events, probably family related, could take up a lot of your time today, Libra. They might involve outings, perhaps to parks or other recreational areas. You'll enjoy it, but your mind may be on other matters, possibly projects you're involved with. Some stimulating conversations with someone close to you could take place. By day's end, your mind could be going a thousand miles an hour. Be sure to get a little exercise so you can sleep.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your home today could be like Grand Central Station, with lots of people coming and going and a lot of activity taking place within the house itself. The phone could be also ringing off the hook, Scorpio. You might wonder if your sanity will remain intact, but you'll make it through without going nuts. The problem is that there could be so much stimulation that you'll be too geared up to sleep. Take a walk before going to bed.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is probably going to shape up to be a busy and rather chaotic day. You might find yourself spending a lot of time out and about, Sagittarius. You may need to run a lot of errands and see a number of people. A friend might accompany you. Phone calls might need to be made in order to make arrangements for future events, and someone might take up too much of your time calling to chat. Pace yourself!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you should be feeling very energetic, Capricorn, both physically and mentally, and you're likely to feel rather anxious for some physical activity. Go for a workout if you have time or for a short walk if you don't. A lot of your time is likely to be spent working on challenging tasks that keep your mind active. You should be pretty keyed up by the evening. Unwind by having a glass of wine and watching a favorite video.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A lot of physical and mental energy could be channeled today into artistic projects of some kind, Aquarius. Your intuition is running rather high, so you might know instinctively what friends, lovers, and children are feeling before they tell you. You could also pick up a lot of their anxieties as well. You'll need to relax a little. Go for a workout and then attend a concert or sporting event. You deserve a little fun!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Some boring paperwork regarding money, which you may have been putting off, might need to be executed today. Bills may need to be paid, deposits put in the bank, and new accounts opened. You could spend some time formulating new plans for the future. This probably will take up a lot of your time, Pisces, but there will still be enough for you to go shopping and make a few necessary purchases. Friends might accompany you. Enjoy!

Wordsearch Puzzle

Volleyball

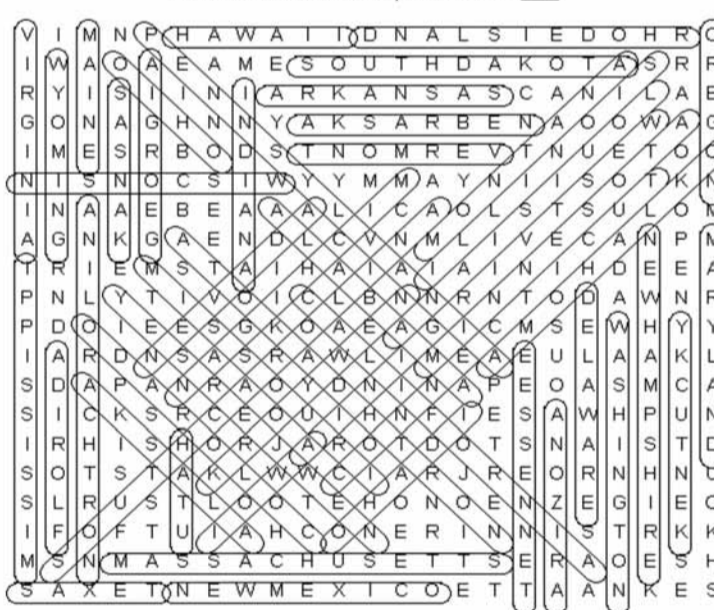
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 39 letters spell a secret message.



- APPROACH ASSIST ATTACK BLOCKING BUMP CAPTAIN COACH COURT DEFENCE DOUBLE HIT DUMP FAULT FLOATER
- FOOTWORK FORMATIONS FOUL GAME HITTER KILL KNEE PADS LIBERO MATCH OFFENCE PASS PLAYERS POINTS
- QUICK HIT REFEREE ROTATION SAVE SCORE SERVE SETS SETTER SHANK SHOT SIDELINES SIDE OUT
- SKY BALL SLIDE SPIKING SPORT SUBSTITUTION TANDEM TEAMS TOPSPIN TRAJECTORY VERTICAL JUMP WEAK SIDE WIPE

USA States

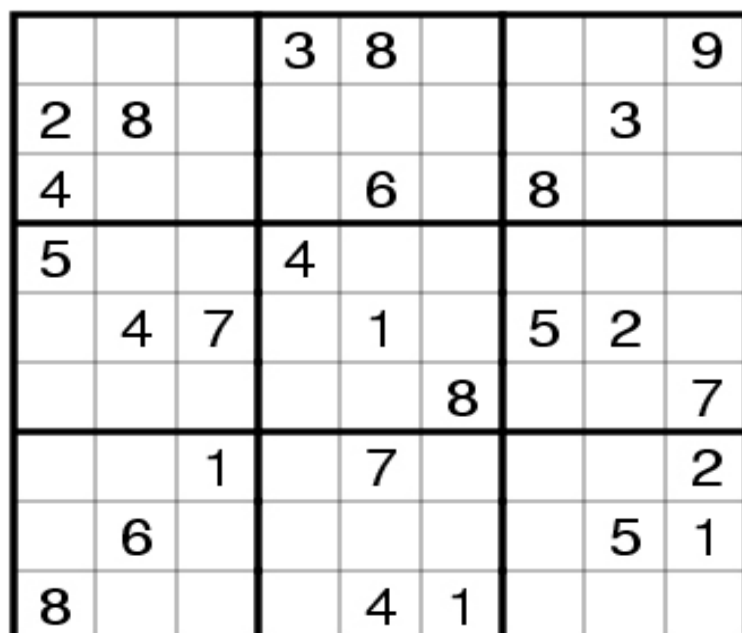
This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



- ALABAMA ALASKA ARIZONA ARKANSAS CALIFORNIA COLORADO CONNECTICUT DELAWARE FLORIDA GEORGIA HAWAII IDAHO ILLINOIS
- INDIANA IOWA KANSAS KENTUCKY LOUISIANA MAINE MARYLAND MASSACHUSETTS MICHIGAN MINNESOTA MISSISSIPPI MISSOURI MONTANA
- NEBRASKA NEVADA NEW HAMPSHIRE NEW JERSEY NEW MEXICO NEW YORK NORTH CAROLINA NORTH DAKOTA OHIO OKLAHOMA OREGON PENNSYLVANIA RHODE ISLAND
- SOUTH CAROLINA SOUTH DAKOTA TENNESSEE TEXAS UTAH VERMONT VIRGINIA WASHINGTON WEST VIRGINIA WISCONSIN WYOMING

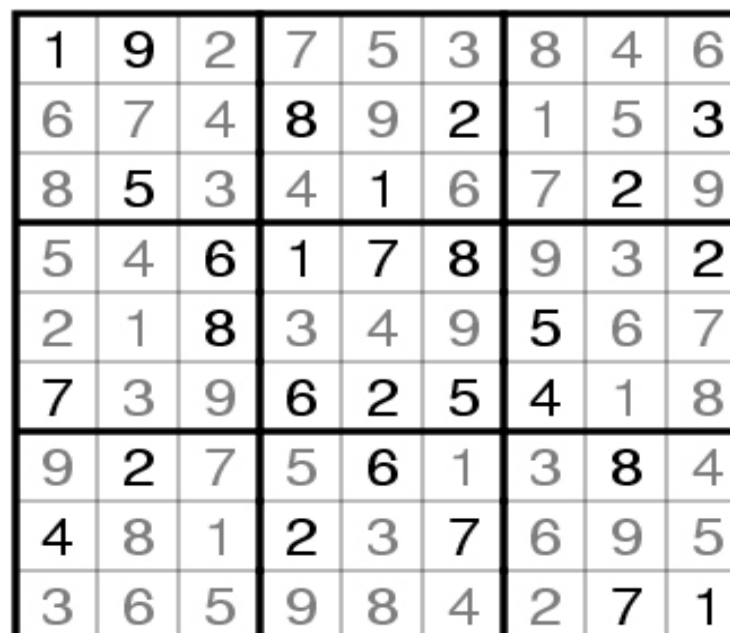
The hidden sentence is: IN AMERICA ANY BOY MAY BECOME PRESIDENT AND I SUPPOSE IT'S JUST ONE OF THE RISKS HE TAKES

Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



very hard

# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020



Models present creations by Craig Green, during the men's Fall/Winter 2020/2021 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

## Lebanese artists highlight importance of waste management



Lebanese artists have used different kinds of wastes to create pieces of art, conveying a message on importance of recycling to preserve the environment. An Exhibition, "A revolution against waste mismanagement," was held in Beirut to shed light on health impacts of waste, and how managing waste could have economic benefits. Lebanon spent over USD two billion on waste cleaning projects between 1996 and 2015, and the country has 941 dumping locations but are not properly distributed. — KUNA



## 'Crazy' Cuban jazz musician Fonseca putting home fans first

Roberto Fonseca has been enchanting jazz fans in Havana since he was 15. As the prodigious pianist once again heads a list of stars at the 35th edition of the Havana Jazz Festival, he spoke to AFP about his new—and ninth—album. "Music is like water: it's indispensable for life," Fonseca said as he took a break from practicing in a cramped apartment in Havana. "Aggua"—a misspelled word meaning water—is one of the tracks on his new album, "Yesun." The album's name is a recognition of his African roots, combining the words Yemaya—the Yoruba goddess of the seas—with Oshun—a river deity venerated by many Afro-descendants in Cuba who practice the Santería faith. "Santería is very present in my album because it's part of me. Through my music I try to show and share my experiences, so the public can see where the themes come from. "And the best way to do so is to explain it through music." Wearing a black hat—a sort of badge for jazz musicians—Fonseca refuses to be put in a box. "Once, Miles Davis was asked about

his style and he said: 'give it the name you want.' That's how I am, that's how I feel."

### 'Crazy, passionate, romantic'

"I consider myself a crazy, passionate, romantic musician whose piano is an extension of his body, with which he transmits his feelings," said Fonseca, a former member of the Buena Vista Social Club. He was born into a musical family: his father was a drummer and his mother a dancer at the Tropicana cabaret before becoming a bolero singer. "There was always a lot of music in the house and ... there were different styles from classical music to rock," said Fonseca. "In the way I compose you can sense there's a lot of classical music, there's rumba, there's montuno sound, there's hip-hop, there's jungle ... there's everything." He began playing the drums at four years old before switching to the piano.

After enthraling crowds on his Havana Jazz Festival debut in 1991, he recorded his first album in 1998 and three years later joined the Buena Vista Social Club, the



Cuban jazz musician Roberto Fonseca plays the piano during a rehearsal in Havana.

famous group of Cuban veteran musicians. Now 44, Fonseca is due to share a stage with Omara Portuondo—a fellow Buena Vista Social Club member—in a concert in October to celebrate the singer-dancer's 90th birthday.

### 'Public approval'

Although he used to present his albums



People queue at the entrance of La Zorra y el Cuervo Jazz Club to see a show of Cuban jazz musician Roberto Fonseca (on billboard, left) in Havana. — AFP photos

first abroad, he changed tact for Yesun. "This time I wanted to do it differently. I wanted the first concert to be in Cuba to get the approval of my public," Fonseca said. The idea was given to him by Portuondo and the late singer Ibrahim Ferrer, a fellow Buena Vista member and Santería practitioner who died in 2005.

"They always told me not to forget where I'm from" but also "that I was free, that I was always daring." One of the 12 songs on Yesun called "Kachucha" includes the line: I'm from Cuba. The album mixes traditional Cuban sounds with electronic music and the piano, which Fonseca plays in an almost trance-like state on stage. — AFP



South Korean film director Bong Joon Ho (center) and the cast of "Parasite" accept the award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture during the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards show at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. — AFP photos



"Parasite" cast (from left to right) Song Kang-ho, Cho Yeo-jeong, director Bong Joon-ho, Lee Jung-eun, Choi Woo-shik, and Lee Sun-kyun pose with the trophy for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture in the press room during the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

# 'Parasite' invades Oscars race with stunning **SAG award** win

"Parasite" shocked the Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday by landing the night's top prize, a historic win which thrusts the South Korean black comedy into Oscars contention. The critical smash hit film overcame the language barrier to win outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture, the SAG equivalent of a best film Academy Award. "I'm a little embarrassed feeling like we're the parasites of Hollywood now," joked actor Lee Sun-Kyun.

Director Bong Joon-Ho admitted that "it is true that the momentum is building" for the Oscars. The film, which merges comedy, drama and horror genres, follows a poor family as it infiltrates a wealthier household, and tackles the widening class gulf. "Although the title is 'Parasite,' I think the film is about coexistence and how we can all live together," said star Song Kang-ho, collecting the award. The much-hyped movie had missed out on main prizes at the Golden Globes and Saturday's Producers Guild Awards.

But Sunday's win underlines the breakout movie's extraordinary popularity in Hollywood. It beat "Bombshell", "The Irishman", "Jojo Rabbit" and "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the star-studded ceremony in Los Angeles. In contrast to the stunning victory for "Parasite", the four Oscars acting favorites all cemented their frontrunner statuses by piling on further trophies. Joaquin Phoenix won best actor for "Joker", a dark origin story of the Batman villain, adding to his Golden Globe win.

He said he was "standing here on the shoulders of my favorite actor Heath Ledger," who posthumously won an Oscar playing the same character in 2008's "The Dark Knight". Renee Zellweger compounded her relentless awards sweep playing Judy Garland in "Judy", which recounts the showbiz legend's difficult final days. Zellweger praised her "extraordinary sisters" in the acting community-in a year during which controversy over Hollywood's female representation has raged.



Michelle Williams, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries for 'Fosse/Verdon'.

### 'A big stretch'

Oscar favorite Brad Pitt added another supporting actor gong for playing an ageing stuntman in Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood". "Let's be honest, it was a difficult part-a guy who gets high, takes his shirt off and doesn't get along with his wife," said Pitt. "It was a big stretch," he joked to an audience that included his first wife Jennifer Aniston. And Laura Dern added a further supporting actress movie awards for her portrayal of a feisty divorce lawyer in "Marriage Story".

Robert De Niro, star of Oscars contender "The Irishman", received the guild's life achievement award.

"I'm grateful we could get the cast we wanted, and Marty (Scorsese) directing us," he told AFP of the crime epic, which was more than a decade in the making. "We got to a point where everybody made themselves available-that's one of the reasons it took so long to get it done... We'll see what happens (at the Oscars)."

### Aniston triumphs

The awards also honor television, where Aniston won for best actress in a drama. She plays a news anchor whose co-star is accused of sexual harassment in Apple TV+'s #MeToo series "The Morning Show". Peter Dinklage added a final best actor SAG to Game of Thrones' historic trophy haul for his portrayal of Tyrion Lannister. But the fantasy series-whose final season was widely derided-missed out on the ensemble honor to Netflix's royal drama "The Crown". Phoebe Waller-Bridge added to her bulging trophy cabinet with best actress in a comedy.

But awards juggernaut "Fleabag" surprisingly missed out on the ensemble prize to last year's winner "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel", for which Tony Shalhoub won best actor. Sam Rockwell and Michelle Williams swept the limited series awards for "Fosse/Verdon". The SAG



US actor Leonardo DiCaprio (right) presents to US actor Robert De Niro the SAG Life Achievement Award.



Sam Rockwell accepts the Male Actor in a TV Movie or Limited Series award for "Fosse/Verdon" onstage.



US actor Tony Shalhoub poses with the trophy for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series and Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series.



US actor Peter Dinklage accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series.



Robert De Niro, winner of the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award, poses in the press room.



US actor Joaquin Phoenix accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role.



(From left) Helena Bonham Carter, Erin Doherty, and Josh O'Connor, winners of Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series for 'The Crown'.



US actress Jennifer Aniston accepts the awards for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series.

Lifestyle | Awards



"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" cast (not in order) Caroline Aaron, Alex Borstein, Rachel Brosnahan, Marin Hinkle, Stephanie Hsu, Joel Johnstone, Jane Lynch, Leroy McClain, Kevin Pollak, Tony Shalhoub, Matilda Szydagis, Brian Tarantina, Michael Zegen pose with the trophy for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series.



Scarlett Johansson attends the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards.



Laura Dern, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role for 'Marriage Story'.



US actress Renee Zellweger accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role.



British actress Phoebe Waller-Bridge pose with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy.



Jennifer Lopez attends 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards.



US actor Brad Pitt accepts the awards for best Male actor in a supporting role.



Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston attend the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards.

List of winners:

- Television Awards**
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries: Sam Rockwell, "Fosse/Verdon"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries: Michelle Williams, "Fosse/Verdon"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series: Peter Dinklage, "Game of Thrones"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series: Jennifer Aniston, "The Morning Show"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series: Tony Shalhoub, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Comedy Series: Phoebe Waller-Bridge, "Fleabag"
  - Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series: "The Crown"
  - Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series: "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
  - Outstanding Action Performance by a Stunt Ensemble in a Comedy or Drama Series: "Game of Thrones"

- Motion Picture Awards**
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role: Joaquin Phoenix, "Joker"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role: Renée Zellweger, "Judy"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role: Brad Pitt, "Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role: Laura Dern, "Marriage Story"
  - Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture: "Parasite"
  - Outstanding Action Performance by a Stunt Ensemble in a Motion Picture: "Avengers: Endgame"
  - SAG Life Achievement Award: Robert De Niro

French Oscars nod stirs local pride in hard-pressed housing project

A quarter of a century ago, as France was gripped by mass strikes over pension reforms, a gritty black-and-white film set in the high-rise housing projects north of Paris burst onto global cinema screens. Mathieu Kassovitz's thriller "La Haine," about the tensions between police and youths in a predominantly immigrant housing estate, was the first box-office hit to be made in the notorious French "banlieues" and remained the gold standard of the genre for a generation. Fast-forward 25 years, with Paris again paralysed by strikes over pension reforms, and a new film set in its tinderbox suburbs is again the toast of the town after being nominated for an Oscar.

Unlike Kassovitz, however, the 40-year-old director of "Les Misérables," Ladj Ly, is a son of the suburbs. At a street market this week in his suburb of Clichy-Montfermeil, residents expressed their pride over the success of his film, with its warts-and-all portrayal of the powerful forces pulling local youths in different directions. "It's proper payback-for him and all the inhabitants of the 93," a 44-year-old shopper who gave her name as Rahma told AFP, referring to the northeast of Paris by its post-code. Cyril, a 29-year-old social worker, said he was "very moved" by the film, which takes its name from Victor Hugo's 19th-century novel, part of which is set in Montfermeil. "I recognized the suburb I know," he said.

Youth rage

"Les Misérables" begins with scenes of rejoicing in an appar-

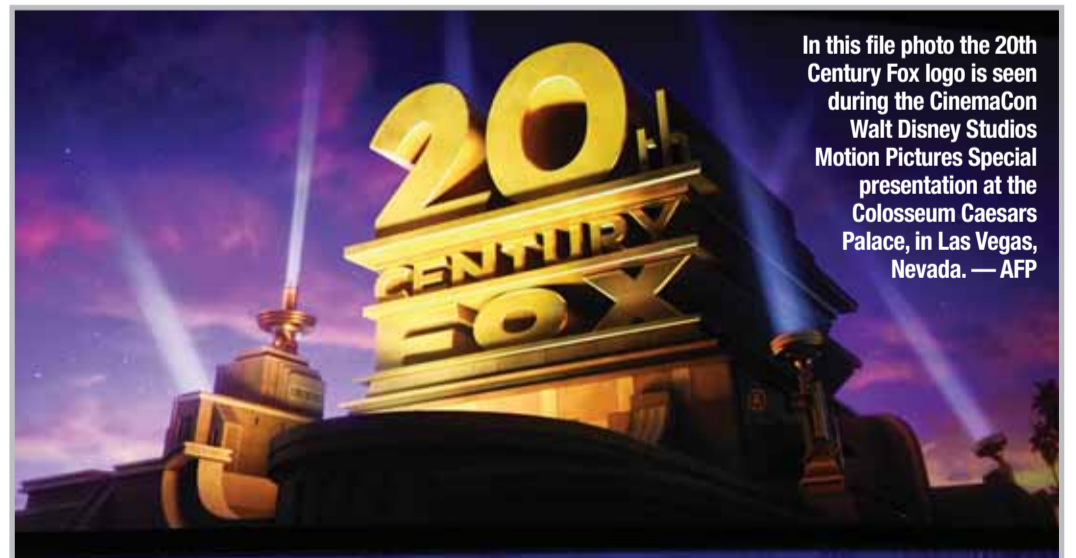
ently united Paris as France lifts the 2018 World Cup. But the deep rifts in French society are quickly laid bare, with youngsters growing up in the ghettos that ring the French capital left to fend for themselves in a world teeming with unscrupulous police officers, drug dealers and Islamists. Ly, who covertly filmed an act of police brutality in 2008 that led to officers being suspended, said he drew on his own experiences in making the film, which depicts the fury unleashed by a wrongful police shooting.

"There's not just violence here, but it's true that some young people in the banlieue live in a state of rage," Cyril said. Many in France remember Clichy-Montfermeil as the place where riots broke out in 2005 after two youths, one black, the other of Arab origin, were electrocuted and killed in an electrical substation where they hid while fleeing the police. Ly, whose parents are Malian, made his first documentary during the three weeks of unrest that ripped through the suburbs.

Fifteen years and countless government action plans later, a gleaming tram line now links Clichy-Montfermeil to other suburbs, and some of the more neglected housing blocks have been torn down. The next few years will bring a metro station, as part of the Grand Paris scheme that aims to push back the capital's frontiers to include more outlying areas. For Clement, a 35-year-old resident who has a walk-on part in "Les Misérables," the urban renewal is welcome. "But it's not enough," he said, adding that what France's poorest "département," or administrative region, needed most was jobs.

Rallying cry

Despite making for at-times uncomfortable viewing, "Les Misérables" has been a hit with French critics and audiences alike, with half a million people flocking to see it during its first week. While one longtime Clichy-Montfermeil resident told AFP she found the film, which won one of the top prizes at the Cannes film festival, "too negative," most said they felt inspired by the film's success. "Now, the Americans know where to find us!" Clement joked. Speaking after his Academy Award nomination, Ly said his experience showed "that you can start out with nothing, at the bottom of the ladder, like me, and wind up at the Oscars." — AFP



In this file photo the 20th Century Fox logo is seen during the CinemaCon Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures Special presentation at the Colosseum Caesars Palace, in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Disney drops 'Fox' name from 20th Century film studio

Disney will rename 20th Century Fox to distance its legendary film studio from the assets of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, US media reported Friday. The entertainment conglomerate last year acquired most of the assets of 21st Century Fox group, including the film house, while former owner Murdoch and his shareholders kept several TV channels, including Fox News. Variety magazine reported that the entertainment giant decided to rename its subsidiary to remove all links with Fox due to the ultra-conservative image of Murdoch and his Fox News channel—the pre-

ferred news source of President Donald Trump. Disney's decision is a symbolic step for one of Hollywood's founding studios, which began production in 1914 and merged with 20th Century Pictures in 1935. The Fox Searchlight studio, 20th Century Fox's younger sibling, will also be rebranded as Searchlight Pictures. Disney has yet to decide on the fate of television studios 20th Century Fox Television and Fox 21 Television, according to Variety. Disney did not respond to AFP's request for comment. — AFP



A visitor walks through an art installation by Jeddah-based architects and brothers Turki and Abdulrahman Gazzaz entitled *Absolem*, at the pedestrian entrance of Alserkal Avenue in Dubai. — AFP photos



Works by Zimbabwean sculptor Dominic Benhura are shown in an exhibition entitled *'Between Me and the Stone'* at a gallery inside Dubai's Alserkal Avenue.



A visitor gazes at a work by the late American artist Alexander Calder during an exhibition entitled *'Tales of Thread'*.



A picture shows the entrance of Cinema Akil at Alserkal Avenue in Dubai.



Prints are sold at The KAVE cafe at Alserkal Avenue.

## Warehouses host glitzy Dubai's 'hipster' scene

In the glitzy city of Dubai, known for its mega-projects, futuristic skyscrapers and ostentatious malls, Dana Alhammedi sat in a cozy cafe learning how to make natural beauty products. The "environmentally conscious" workshop at the KAVE cafe is part of an emerging cultural scene in a city which after years of breakneck development is exploring its alternative side. If Dubai has a hipster center, it is Alserkal Avenue, an industrial area full of warehouses large and small that in 2008 became a hub for art galleries, start-up businesses, and quirky retail outlets. "It's really nice to know how to get something natural and to stop using a lot of chemicals," Alhammedi, dressed in a traditional full-length abaya, told AFP.

She was mixing bicarbonate of soda with coconut oil to make a back-to-basics deodorant, jazz legend Nina Simone audible in the background. "I'm happy that they started such activities and workshops here in the United Arab Emirates," Alhammedi said. Home to more than nine million expatriates from well over 100 countries, making up 90 percent of the population, the UAE prides itself on being a melting pot. Like other Gulf countries, it uses culture, media and sports events to win global recognition and push its soft power.

It has spent billions of dollars on high-profile museums and mega events, such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Dubai Expo 2020 trade fair. The oil-rich country also hosts a range of cultural events, ranging from jazz and film festivals to fashion week.

### 'A culture economy'

With the discovery of oil in the mid-20th century, the UAE transformed from a tiny economy dependent on the pearl and fishing industries to a regional powerhouse and hub for trade and tourism. Many tourists are drawn by the headline attractions: malls packed with high-end brands, luxury resorts, man-made islands and an indoor ski slope. But Dubai's ultra-rapid rise resulted in what some see as a lack of cultural authenticity that in other capitals develops organically over time.

Alserkal, which hosts about 500 events a year, generally free of charge, is intended to create that cultural texture. The project's director Vilma Jurkute said the community supports 70 projects by young men and women from different nationalities, attracting half a million visitors each year. "It's essentially a community of thought leaders in literature, films, theatre, and community development that formed a key pillar of a culture economy for the city of Dubai (and) for the region," the Lithuanian expatriate said.

Located in a light industrial district and embracing warehouse buildings that range from the sleek to the shabby, Alserkal represents an alternative to what Dubai is best known for, Jurkute added. "We really are part of the city and we have been for the past decade," she said. One of Alserkal's most prominent attractions is its Cinema Akil, the first and only art cinema in the Gulf, offering audiences a different film experience, according to the theatre's deputy director Luz Villamil.

Every night independent films are played in the

cinema, whose red armchairs and sofas, posters of old Arab classics and a cosy cafe help it to stand out from Dubai's usual blockbuster multiplexes. Recent screenings have included "Papicha" by Algeria's Mounia Meddour and "Capernaum" by Lebanese director Nadine Labaki. Next month, Akil will show "You Will Die At Twenty" by Sudanese filmmaker Amjad Abu Alala.

Sometimes, the screenings are followed by debates in the small theatre. Before it opened there was almost no choice for audiences interested in something other than Hollywood or Bollywood blockbusters, Villamil told AFP. "The most important thing for us is to show films that highlight voices that perhaps we feel... don't get represented very much, including Arab cinema and women-focused films."

### 'Human interaction'

This more inclusive and lesser-known side of Dubai is what drew French-Tunisian Arabic calligraphy artist "eL Seed" to set up shop in Alserkal Avenue. "I decided to have my space here to allow visitors the same experience as they would have on the streets... to just push the door and come in," he said. His calligraphy is an art form Arabs can enjoy amid the overwhelming dominance of English as the UAE's most commonly spoken and written language. "Calligraphy linked to graffiti is a language that speaks to many people and allows them to reconcile with their Arab identity," said eL Seed, who lives between Paris, Tunis and Dubai. "What interests me is human interaction," he said. —AFP

## Toy Story: Hong Kong protest models become major hit

Intricately detailed Hong Kong protester figurines have become the latest must-have collectables as toy stores recreate the pro-democracy movement's street battles with police in their shop displays. Stacked on shelves next to comic book superheroes, the models come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some holding makeshift shields and flags, others extinguishing tear gas rounds or playing instruments in protest orchestras. A local figurine enthusiast and his friend designed dozens of characters based on their own experiences of attending months of protests.

Among their 1:6 scale figures are white-collar workers who hold regular lunchtime rallies outside their offices, elderly "silver-haired" protesters and a demonstrator wearing an oversized Pepe the Frog mask. "We hope the figurines can reconstruct the situation with authenticity," said Charlie, a 30-year-old freelance photographer by day, who asked to use a pseudonym. Their models boast many features of the street protests, which have upended Hong Kong for the last seven months in the most serious challenge to Beijing's rule since the city's 1997 handover.

Slogans have been painstakingly painted onto small helmets and some models have cling-film wrapped around their arms—a method protesters use to defend against police pepper spray. Others have scrapes on their legs from street skirmishes and almost all have removable gas masks that have become ubiquitous during the protests. "We want to make them as detailed as possible so that they can evoke empathy in people," Charlie said.

### 'Self-censorship'

Some of the parts came from the duo's own



This picture shows a 1:6 scale action figures depicting Pepe the Frog, a character used by pro-democracy activists as a symbol of their struggle in the Hong Kong protests, in Hong Kong.



This picture shows 1:6 scale face masks for action figures depicting characters involved in the Hong Kong protests, in Hong Kong.

military toy collections or were made with 3D printers. Other elements were built from scratch. For a reporter figurine, the pair hand-stitched a tiny camera bag while popsicle sticks have been transformed into wooden shields used by hardcore activists. Two of their frontline figure characters—named after the lyrics of the protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong"—have gone into mass production after the pair became a hit online. "I want to raise peoples' awareness within the movement and hopefully the figurines will allow more people to know what has happened in Hong Kong," Charlie said.

Priced at about HK\$900 (US\$116) per set, the different parts of their products had to be manufactured in seven countries to avoid political

sensitivities—especially in mainland China. "A water bottle or a helmet is not sensitive by itself. But after this movement began, they are seen as sensitive... This is self-censorship," said Charlie. One manufacturer, he said, suddenly refused to make yellow raincoats, a symbol of the movement which has adopted the color.

"When that happens, we have to start all over again," he said. Hong Kong's protests were sparked by a now-abandoned proposal to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland, where the opaque legal system answers to the Communist Party. It soon morphed into a wider movement calling for greater freedoms and police accountability. Among key protester demands are an independent inquiry into the police, an amnesty for the thousands arrested and fully free elections. But Beijing and local leaders have refused further concessions.

### Subway station clash

The frequency and ferocity of the protests have died down over the last month, but signs of the political unrest are everywhere, from graffiti daubed on walls to huge fences surrounding government buildings. In some of the city's toy-shops, the protest figurines are selling like hotcakes. At one shop in Wanchai district, the owner has created an action-packed diorama of a clash outside a subway station, complete with ranks of riot police and protesters smashing up a taxi. "People play with toys in pursuit of happiness, especially during hard times," said the shop owner, who asked for anonymity fearing reprisals in the febrile political atmosphere. —AFP



This picture shows 1:6 scale action figures depicting characters involved in the Hong Kong protests, in Hong Kong.



This picture shows 1:6 scale action figures depicting characters involved in the Hong Kong protests, in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



This picture shows figurine enthusiast Charlie, who asked to use a pseudonym, posing with 1:6 scale action figures depicting characters involved in the Hong Kong protests.



This picture shows 1:6 scale action figures depicting characters involved in the Hong Kong protests, in Hong Kong.

# Classifieds

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

**Kuwait Times**

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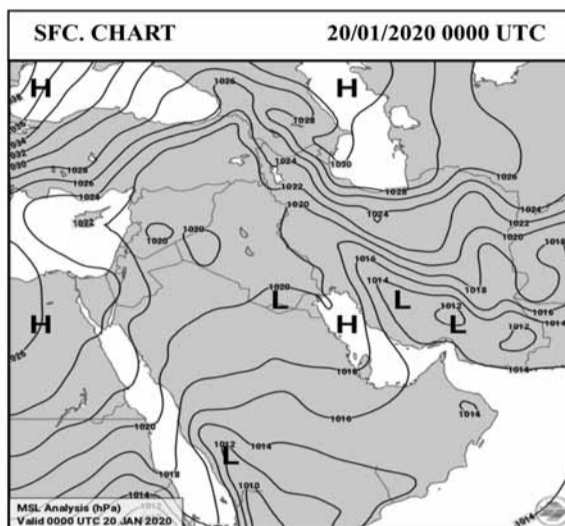
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	15 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	08 °C
ABDALY	24 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	20 °C	11 °C
JAHRA	23 °C	11 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	18 °C	15 °C
AHMADI	18 °C	16 °C
NUWAISIB	21 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	09 °C
SALMY	22 °C	09 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	01/21	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	01/22	Unstable with rising dust and a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	21 °C	10 °C	SE-SW	25 - 55 km/h
Thursday	01/23	Rather cold and some scattered clouds will appear	17 °C	05 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h
Friday	01/24	Rather cool and some scattered clouds will appear	19 °C	04 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	14:56
Sunset	17:16
Isha	18:36

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	80 %
MIN. RH	42 %
MAX. Wind	N 28 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

**I, Mohamed** Zuhara (given name) Zuhara Mohamed Palathara (surname), holder of Indian Passport No. T1938866, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Zuhara Mohamed and surname: Palathara. (C 5618)

**I, Hussaini** Shakir, Arwa holder of Indian Passport No. J3963226 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Dungepur Rajasthan, India and presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is Arwa Hussaini and surname is Shakir. (C 5490) 21-1-2020

**I, Mohammad** Rahmat Ali holding Indian Passport No. K8033943 residing at Mahbala Kuwait, need to change my name as Mohammad Rahmat. (C 5615)

**I, Mohd** Mushtaq S/o Sainf Ali R/o Khadrian, Tehsil Kalakote District Rajouri do hereby declare that my name is wrongly written in my Passport (J1801610) as Mustaq Ahmed instead of correct name Mohd Mushtaq and also my father name was wrongly written in same Passport Sanifo instead of Sainf Ali, I want to correct my name in Passport. (C 5616)

**I have** changed my son's name from Pritesh to Pritesh Nilesh Neve, son of Mr. Nilesh Ashok Neve. Here in after all his documents will be known by name Pritesh Nilesh Neve. His Passport No. 50930833. (C 5617) 20-1-2020

**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

### 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

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## Flight Schedule

**DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 21/1/ 2020				Departure Flights on Tuesday 21/1/ 2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	ME	405	Beirut	12:55
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
KAC	102	London	01:25	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OGO	1765	Jeddah	16:00
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	ETH	621	Jeddah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KLM	854	Amman	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	UAE	446	Amsterdam	16:20
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	OMA	644	Muscat	16:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	THY	765	Istanbul	16:25
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	QTR	1087	Doha	16:30
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	MSR	613	Cairo	16:35
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	621	Doha	16:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	PGT	861	Istanbul	16:50
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	JZR	713	Sohag	17:00
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	LMU	511	Cairo	17:00
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	IGO	1752	Chennai	17:35
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	QTR	1077	Doha	17:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	17:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	101	Bahrain	17:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	THY	771	Istanbul	17:55
GEL	500	Baku	05:30	JZR	121	Dubai	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	RJA	643	Amman	18:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	FDB	070	Dubai	18:10
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	FEQ	442	Cairo	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:20
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	UAE	874	Dubai	18:35
KAC	106	London	06:00	KAC	167	Paris	18:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:00	KAC	171	Frankfurt	18:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	IGO	1767	Mumbai	18:45
FEQ	341	Sohag	06:05	KAC	165	Rome	18:55
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	FDB	054	Dubai	18:55
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	JZR	001	LGW	19:20
JZR	120	Dubai	07:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	163	MXP	19:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	501	Beirut	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	BAW	156	London	19:30
KAC	5514	BRU	07:30	KAC	157	Istanbul	19:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	731	Cairo	20:05
JZR	212D	Jeddah	08:00	KAC	691	Muscat	20:05
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	QTR	1085	Doha	20:25
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	KAC	545	Cairo	20:30
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	KAC	601	Baku	20:35
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	671	Dubai	20:40
THY	6376	ISL	08:35	ABY	126	Sharjah	20:45
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	101	London	20:55
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	561	Amman	21:10
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	21:20
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	JZR	151	Mashhad	21:20
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	UAE	856	Dubai	21:30
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	KAC	117	New York	21:30
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	613	Bahrain	21:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	301	Istanbul	21:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KAC	773	Riyadh	21:50
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	155	Istanbul	21:55
NIA	361	Alexandria	10:00	FDB	056	Dubai	22:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	617	Doha	22:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	THY	6376	Dubai/ISL	22:00
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	10:40	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	22:00
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	IRA	674	Lar	22:05
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	JZR	211	Jeddah	22:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	JZR	211D	Jeddah	22:25
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	NIA	362	Alexandria	22:30
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	QTR	1071	Dubai	22:50
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	SVA	513	Riyadh	23:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	741	Dammam	23:05
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	23:10
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JZR	221	Riyadh	23:15
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	JZR	213	Jeddah	23:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	515	Tehran	23:40

# 3 Iraq protesters killed as anger boils over govt 'procrastination'

**BAGHDAD:** Three Iraqi protesters were killed in the capital as thousands of anti-government demonstrators sought to shut streets across the country yesterday, their deadline for authorities to implement long-awaited reforms. Rallies have rocked Iraq since October but fearing they would lose momentum amid spiralling regional tensions protesters last Monday told the government it had one week to meet their demands or they would escalate their demonstrations.

Protesters sought to ramp up pressure on the government yesterday with pop-up rallies away from their main gathering place in Baghdad's iconic Tahrir (Liberation) Square. Hundreds descended on nearby Tayaran Square, where they clashed with security forces who fired tear gas and live rounds to disperse them, an AFP journalist said. Three protesters were killed, medics told AFP, two of them by live rounds and the third by a tear gas canister that pierced his neck. More than 50 other people were wounded, the medics said.

Young men wearing helmets and gas masks in an attempt to protect themselves from flying gas canisters erected barricades to try to push riot police back. Protesters have called for early elections under a new voting law, an independent prime minister to replace outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi and for all corrupt officials to be held accountable.

Late Sunday young protesters began sealing off highways and bridges across the capital Baghdad and Iraq's south, torching tyres and setting up makeshift barricades. They tried to do the same early yesterday in the capital but security forces acted fast, with the military saying it had reopened a major Baghdad thoroughfare and arrested nine young men who had attempted to seal it off.

Fearing widespread rallies, provincial authorities across southern Iraq announced an official holiday yesterday. But young people hit the streets in the southern cities of Kut, Nasiriyah, Baqubah, Amara and the holy city of Najaf, setting tyres on fire. In the protest hotspot of Diwaniyah, they shut key roads both inside and leading out of the city. "The procrastination of the government and the political class for more than three months now has prompted us to take escalatory steps to pressure them to meet our demands," Mohammad Faeq, a 28-year-old protester, told AFP.

Since October, around 460 people have lost their lives to protest-related violence and another 25,000 have been wounded, according to an AFP count. Authorities do not provide updated casualty figures. Demonstrators have feared their movement would be eclipsed by the geopolitical storm brewing between neighboring Iran and the United States, both close partners of Iraq.

A US drone strike near Baghdad's airport on January 3 killed top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, prompt-



**NAJAF:** An anti-government protester waves a national flag as he stands before flaming tyres at a makeshift roadblock during a demonstration in this central Iraqi holy shrine city yesterday. — AFP

ing Iranian rocket strikes on an Iraqi base housing US troops and triggering fears of a wider conflict. Iraqi political figures have since ramped up their calls for foreign forces - including some 5,200 US troops - to leave the country. Yesterday, the United Nations' top official in Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said ignoring the demands of protesters would only fuel "anger and distrust". "Any steps taken so far to address the people's concerns will remain hollow, if they are not completed," she said in a statement.

"Domestic unity, cohesion and determination are urgently necessary to build resilience against narrow partisan interests, foreign interference and/or criminal elements which actively seek to hinder Iraq's stability," she added.

Protesters also worry that a mass rally to be organized Friday by firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr to demand the ouster of US troops could drown them out. Last week, Sadr urged Iraqis to hold "a million-strong, peaceful, unified demonstration to condemn the American presence

and its violations". While protesters have criticized the US, they have directly accused Iran of hindering Iraq politically and economically.

Tehran holds major sway in Iraq, building up close ties with a variety of political and military players over decades. Protesters say Iran's overreach has contributed to rampant corruption and poor services. The World Bank says one in five people lives below the poverty line in Iraq, which is OPEC's second-biggest crude producer. — AFP

## Experts warn Pyrenees glaciers are 'doomed'

**TOULOUSE, France:** Glaciers nestled in the lofty crags of the Pyrenees mountains separating France and Spain could disappear within 30 years as temperatures rise, upending ecosystems while putting local economies at risk, scientists say. "We can't set a precise date but the Pyrenees glaciers are doomed," Pierre Rene, a glaciologist with the region's Moraine glacier study association, told AFP. He estimates the end will come by 2050, based on the group's measurements of nine of the 15 glaciers on the French side over the past 18 years.

The United Nations has said the past decade has been the hottest on record and warned that persistent greenhouse gas emissions were expected to push average global temperatures even higher, leading to retreating ice cover, rising sea levels and increasingly extreme weather. It also confirmed that 2019 was the second hottest year on record, after 2016. Surveys, core samples and GPS tracking of the Pyrenees glaciers all point to the same conclusions already noted at glaciers in the Alps and elsewhere: Warmer and drier winters appear to be inexorably shrinking and thinning the ice fields.

The total surface area of the nine glaciers tracked by Moraine now stands at 79 hectares compared with 140 hectares just 17 years ago, Rene said. That is just a small fraction of the 450 hectares they covered in the middle of the 19th century - and the pace of decline is accelerating. Since 2002, the nine glaciers have lost 3.6 hectares every year, the equivalent of five soccer pitches, Moraine says in its report on the 2019 season. Last year was no exception, with the bottom edge of five glaciers tracked by Moraine retreating by 8.1 m on average last summer, up from 7.9 m recorded in previous years, it said.

Scientists also warn of the hit to high-altitude ecosystems and biodiversity, with consequences that will ripple well beyond the mountainous zones. Glaciers and the cold rivers they feed harbor bacteria and fungi that have

adapted to the harsh conditions, including the near-absence of light, said Sophie Cauvy-Fraunie, a researcher at the INRAE agricultural and environmental institute. Microscopic algae also provides a first link in the food chain of glacier environments, sustaining glacial fleas and other insects.

As temperatures rise and more ground is exposed as the glaciers retreat, the landscape will become vulnerable to colonisation from plants and animals that currently can survive only at lower altitudes. "If native species in the Pyrenees depend on glacial influences, you can imagine that they are going to be wiped off the map," Cauvy-Fraunie said.

The regional OPCC climate observatory estimated in a 2018 report that average maximum temperatures across the Pyrenees could rise by 1.4 to 3.3 degrees Celsius (2.5 to 4 Fahrenheit) by the middle of this century. The increase has been even more dramatic at higher altitudes, where shrinking glaciers are seen as a harbinger of dire consequences across the range. On the 2,870-m Midi de Bigorre peak above the La Mongie ski resort - favored by French President Emmanuel Macron - the average temperature has risen by 1.7 degrees since 1880, compared with a global average of 0.85 degrees, Moraine says.

That could spell disaster for the roughly three dozen ski resorts on both the French and Spanish sides, as well as the popular stations in Andorra. Already this year, around half of French resorts had to push back their scheduled openings before the Christmas holidays because of warm winds sweeping up from the south. That came after a 2018-2019 season that saw the lowest snowfalls since regular measurements began 22 years earlier, according to the Meteo France weather service.

It took a heavy toll on tourism as lift ticket sales and hotel reservations plunged, with many skiers heading to higher slopes in the French Alps. Already several glaciers have been reduced to little more than year-round snow packs, which will also impact the summer tourist season. Rene said climbers will lose their "stepladders" for ascents to the highest peaks, "making their routes to the top more difficult". And for hikers at lower elevations, the retreat will destabilize the newly exposed slopes, heightening the risk of rock falls or even avalanches. — AFP

while KD 20 billion of profits are "seized" by a number of state establishments, and there is KD 1.3 billion in state debt that should be collected, adding that foreign aid was set at KD 100 million but ballooned to KD 600 million. Babin said the cost of the Eurofighter jets and Caracal helicopters is KD 6 billion, and "if we add to them the scale of corruption at the interior ministry...and other embezzlements of public funds, the total will be KD 13.19 billion, and this will be more than enough to meet the deficit".

MP Saleh Ashour said that the chapter for wages and others covers nine items and the item for wages is KD 5.5 billion only, or just 25 percent of spending. MP Ali Al-Deqbasi sent a series of questions to the finance minister asking why the minister had raised the issue of amending wages without previously consulting the National Assembly.

Meanwhile, the Assembly will debate today a grilling against Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri over violating the constitution and undermining the status of MPs. The minister said she is ready to debate the grilling and will not ask for another delay. Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Assembly is set for the debate and called for a high-level debate, adding that he will not allow anyone to disrupt the session.

## World's 22 richest men have more than all women in Africa

**DAVOS, Switzerland:** The number of billionaires has doubled in the past decade and the world's 22 richest men now have more wealth than all the women in Africa, Oxfam said yesterday in an appeal to the Davos elite to get serious about inequality. "Our broken economies are lining the pockets of billionaires and big business at the expense of ordinary men and women. No wonder people are starting to question whether billionaires should even exist," Oxfam's India head Amitabh Behar said.

"Women and girls are among those who benefit least from today's economic system," Behar said ahead of the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, where he will represent Oxfam. There will be at least 119 billionaires worth about \$500 billion attending Davos this year, Bloomberg reported, with the highest contingents coming from the United States, India and Russia.

"The very top of the economic pyramid sees trillions of dollars of wealth in the hands of a very small group of people, predominantly men," the Oxfam report said. "Their wealth is already extreme, and our broken economy concentrates more and more wealth into these few

## China confirms new SARS-like...

Continued from Page 1

human-to-human transmission," he said in an interview with CCTV. In Guangdong, two patients were infected by family members who visited Wuhan, Zhong explained.

Fourteen medical personnel helping with coronavirus patients have also been infected, he said, though he added that more than 95 of the total cases were related to Wuhan. The World Health Organization said earlier an animal source seemed to be "the most likely primary source" with "some limited human-to-human transmission occurring between close contacts".

Wuhan has 11 million inhabitants and serves as a major transport hub, including during the annual Lunar New Year holiday which begins later this week and sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel across the country to visit family. Weighing in on the matter for the first time, President Xi Jinping said yesterday that safeguarding people's lives should be given "top priority" and that the spread of the epidemic "should be resolutely contained", according to CCTV.

Xi said it was necessary to "release information on the epidemic in a timely manner and deepen international cooperation," and ensure people have a "stable and peaceful Spring Festival", the broadcaster said. Five cases were reported in Beijing while in Shanghai a 56-year-old woman who had come from Wuhan was hospitalized and in stable condition, local health authorities said. South Korea yesterday also reported its first case - a 35-year-old woman who flew in from Wuhan. Thailand and Japan have previously confirmed a total of three cases - all of whom had visited the Chinese city.

There are also six suspected cases in Shanghai and

hands," it said. The report said women and girls put in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day, estimated to be worth at least \$10.8 trillion a year. Oxfam's annual report on global inequality is traditionally released just before the forum opens today in the Swiss Alpine resort.

It had some astonishing statistics. If the world's richest one percent paid just 0.5 percent extra tax on their wealth for 10 years, it would equal the investment needed to create 117 million new jobs in elderly and child care, education and health, Oxfam said. Oxfam's figures are based on data from Forbes magazine and Swiss bank Credit Suisse, but they are disputed by some economists. The numbers show that 2,153 billionaires now have more wealth than the 4.6 billion poorest people on the planet.

Women and girls are burdened in particular because they are most often care givers that keep "the wheels of our economies, businesses and societies moving," Behar said. They "often have little time to get an education, earn a decent living or have a say in how our societies are run," and "are therefore trapped at the bottom of the economy," he added. "Across the globe, 42 percent of women cannot get jobs because they are responsible for all the caregiving, compared to just six percent of men," Oxfam figures showed. The report called on world governments to "build a human economy that is feminist and values what truly matters to society, rather than fuelling an endless pursuit of profit and wealth". — AFP

four provinces and regions in the east, south and southwest of the country. The National Health Commission said Sunday that experts believe the epidemic "can still be controlled". The virus did not slow down the annual holiday travel rush, though some travellers wore masks at crowded railway stations in Beijing and Shanghai. "Watching the news, I do feel a little worried. But I haven't taken precautionary measures beyond wearing regular masks," said Li Yang, a 28-year-old account manager who was heading home to the northern region of Inner Mongolia for the Lunar New Year.

The WHO said the new cases in China were the result of "increased searching and testing for (the virus) among people sick with respiratory illness". Scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College in London warned in a paper published Friday that the number of cases in Wuhan was likely to be closer to 1,700, much higher than the official figure. Wuhan authorities said they have installed infrared thermometers at airports and railway and coach stations across the city. Passengers with fever were being registered, given masks and taken to medical institutions.

State TV footage showed medical staff working inside an isolation ward at a Wuhan hospital in hazmat suits. In Hong Kong, health officials said they were expanding enhanced checks on arrivals to include anyone coming in from Hubei province, not just its capital Wuhan. More than 100 people are being monitored in the city. Passengers are also being screened at some airports in Thailand and the United States.

In Wuhan, 170 people are still being treated at hospital, including nine in critical condition, the city's health commission said. Chinese state media moved to calm the mood as discussion about the coronavirus spreading to other Chinese cities swelled on social media. Nationalist tabloid Global Times called for better handling of the new virus than that of the 2003 SARS outbreak. — AFP

## Criticism of finance minister intensifies...

Continued from Page 1

or imposing taxes or (reducing) salaries of Kuwaitis, and if you are incapable of avoiding these, you should resign". He said that in the 2016/17 fiscal year, the projected deficit was the highest ever at KD 9.6 billion, but the minister said next year's projected deficit of KD 9.2 billion was a record high in order to scare the people, adding that it is still an estimate and not an actual deficit. He said the minister also failed to mention the returns on Kuwait's massive investments.

The lawmaker warned that any step by the minister to reconsider wages will force MPs to reconsider their positions toward her, saying that in the last budget, wages accounted for just KD 7.2 billion and not as mentioned. Babin challenged Aqeel to make public the actual figures about Kuwait's investments abroad and the value of the sovereign wealth fund.

He said the minister claims there is a budget deficit,



## Sports

# Penguins come back from an early three-goal deficit to beat Bruins

## Bjorkstrand scores late to lift Blue Jackets over Rangers

**PITTSBURGH:** Bryan Rust's tiebreaking goal in the third period capped the Pittsburgh Penguins' comeback from an early three-goal deficit Sunday to give them a 4-3 victory over the visiting Boston Bruins. At 12:35 of the third period, Rust, from 12 feet, converted a pass from behind the net from Evgeni Malkin, who picked up his 50th point on the assist. Dominik Simon, Teddy Blueger and Jack Johnson also scored, and Sidney Crosby had two assists for Pittsburgh, which picked up its NHL-leading 18th home win while playing in front of the 600th consecutive home sellout, including playoffs. Penguins goaltender Matt Murray made 34 saves. David Pastrnak had a goal and an assist, and Patrice Bergeron and Anders Bjork also scored, all in the first period, for the Bruins, who have lost three of four. The lone victory in the stretch was a 4-1 decision against the Penguins on Thursday at home. Goalie Jaroslav Halak made 18 saves for Boston.

### BLUE JACKETS 2, RANGERS 1

Oliver Bjorkstrand scored his second goal of the game with 27 seconds remaining as visiting Columbus rallied for a victory over New York at Madison Square Garden. The Blue Jackets tied a season high with their fifth straight win thanks to Bjorkstrand, who returned after missing nearly a month due to a back injury. Bjorkstrand recorded his seventh career two-goal game as the Blue Jackets also posted their sixth victory when trailing after two periods. Bjorkstrand's clutch third-period goals helped Mattias Kivlenieks win his NHL debut. Kivlenieks made 31 saves, including 14 in the final 20 minutes. His best save of the night occurred about midway through the second, when he slid across

the crease to make a stick save on former Blue Jacket Artemi Panarin.

### HURRICANES 2, ISLANDERS 1 (SO)

Justin Williams made a storybook return to the lineup by scoring in the eighth round of the shootout to give Carolina a victory against visiting New York. Williams, the former team captain, was making his season debut. The 38-year-old signed 11 days earlier as a free agent, ending an abbreviated retirement that began last summer after he helped the Hurricanes reach the Eastern Conference finals. Andrei Svechnikov and Teuvo Teravainen also produced in the shootout for the Hurricanes, while New York's Mathew Barzal and Anthony Beauvillier were good for the Islanders.

### BLACKHAWKS 5, JETS 2

Patrick Kane recorded a late assist for his 1,000th career point, helping Chicago to a season-high fifth consecutive victory with a win over visiting Winnipeg. Kane, in his 13th season, became the 90th player in NHL history to reach the milestone. It came when he dished a pass from behind the net to Ryan Carpenter, who delivered the puck across the slot to Brandon Saad for a goal with 5:46 left in the game to give Chicago a 4-2 lead. With the assist, Kane extended his point streak to 10 games (four goals, 11 assists) for the Blackhawks, who also got a goal and assist each from Alex Nylander and defenseman Erik Gustafsson. David Kampf also scored. Dominik Kubalik added an empty-netter and Robin Lehner made 36 saves for his third straight win as Chicago won for the 11th time in 15 games to draw even on points (54) with Winnipeg. — Reuters



**NEW YORK:** Mattias Kivlenieks #80 of the Columbus Blue Jackets tends net in his first NHL game against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The Blue Jackets defeated the Rangers 2-1. — AFP

## Kuwait, S Korea to clash in handball championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait national team will face South Korea in its second match of the second round of the Asian championship, meanwhile Qatar will play Iran at 6 pm. The first group will see Bahrain against Japan at 2 pm, while Saudi Arabia will play UAE at 4 pm.

Kuwait national team played many decisive matches with S Korea as both teams are respected by many due to their previous performances, and are in continuous competition for Asia championship, except when Kuwait sport was internationally suspended.

The Korean team relies on speed in the center and score through shooting from a far or penetration and can reach the goal through all positions, and have a strong talented goal keeper.

Kuwait defenders must concentrate very well to keep the Koreans from scoring particularly from the middle of the circle, which is the favorite spot for them.

Kuwait Assistant Coach Mohammad

Mubarak said the team is ready for the second round matches, adding the team had the full mark in the preliminaries and this gives it a good incentive to have a strong performance despite the group's difficulty which includes S Korea, Iran and Qatar.

He said the team is competing for the championship and wants the title besides qualifying for the World Cup in 2021 in Egypt.

He said all teams that moved to the second round are strong and was confident Kuwait players will execute the plans very well. Vice-president of the International Handball Federation Bader Theyab lauded Kuwait hosting of the 19th Asian Handball Championship with the participation of an elite group of teams.

He said we are happy with the launch of the championship in Kuwait at the current hall. He said everyone is exerting great effort to ensure the success of the event.

Meanwhile, Iraq defeated China in the consolation rounds of places 9-13, by the score of 38-31, giving Iraq the first two



**UAE and Bahrain team in action.**

points in this round. Meanwhile, Iraq coach expected Kuwait to get into the final four and qualify for the World Cup in 2021, despite the difficulty to reach the final match due to technical matters that lean in favor of other Asian teams.

He said Kuwait's weakness is in the slowness of its players and will suffer defensively. Sahib expected Qatar to reach the final match, and Bahrain has a good match to meet it. "Bahrain defeated UAE with the score of 29-18," details will be later.

## Billy Vunipola to miss Six Nations

**TWICKENHAM:** England star Billy Vunipola is set to miss the Six Nations after breaking an arm for the fourth time in two years, Premiership club Saracens announced yesterday.

His injury heaped more misery on the English champions, who on Saturday had been told they would be relegated at the end of the season for salary cap breaches. The 27-year-old No 8 suffered the injury early in Saracens' 27-24 victory over French side Racing 92 on Sunday, which kept their hopes alive of a successful European Champions Cup title defence.

"Billy Vunipola has suffered a broken arm," read a club statement. "He will see a consultant over the coming days to determine the full extent of the injury before undergoing rehabilitation." The 51-times capped Australia-born forward has broken his right arm twice and his left once.

Saracens' statement was released just hours before England coach Eddie Jones announced a 34-man squad for the upcoming Six Nations Championship, although he opted against calling up specialist cover for Vunipola.

Powerful wing Jack Nowell and veteran prop Dan Cole were the most high-profile of the 10 absentees from the squad that took England all the way to November's World Cup final in Japan, where Jones's men were well beaten 32-12 by South Africa.

Wasps fly-half Jacob Umaga, the nephew of former New Zealand captain Tana, was among eight uncapped players in a squad that will travel to Portugal on Thursday for a pre-tournament training camp.

England, runners-up in last season's Six Nations, begin their 2020 title quest away to France in Paris on February 2. "It is always about winning the next game so we have picked the best squad available," Jones said in a Rugby Football Union statement.

"At the same time we wanted to bring some young players in because we need to keep building our depth so for those new players it's an exciting opportunity for them." Earlier, England announced that Steve Borthwick, Jones's long-serving assistant, would leave his post at the end of the season, with Jason Ryles replacing him in November.

Former England captain Borthwick was also alongside Jones when the latter was in charge of Japan. "I have had a great seven years with Steve," said Jones. "He is a loyal, hard-working and analytical coach but I understand he needs now to get out on his own following this campaign." — AFP



**LA QUINTA:** Andrew Landry poses with the trophy on the 18th green during the final round of The American Express tournament at the Stadium Course at PGA West in La Quinta, California. — AFP

## Landry survives scare to win PGA La Quinta crown

**LOS ANGELES:** Andrew Landry squandered a six-shot back-nine lead on Sunday but finished with back-to-back birdies to win the PGA Tour American Express in La Quinta, California, by two shots. Landry fired a five-under-par 67 on the PGA West Stadium Course for a 26-under-par total of 262.

He appeared to be cruising toward his second PGA Tour title when he nabbed three birdies on the front nine and opened the back with birdies at 10, 11 and 12. But Landry, who lost the 2018 title in the California desert in a playoff against Spain's Jon Rahm, bogeyed three straight to open the door to Mexico's Abraham Ancer, who powered up the leaderboard with a 63 for 264.

Landry arrived at the 17th tee tied for the lead. In what he called the "biggest shot of the tournament" he landed an eight-iron six feet from the pin on the dangerous island green. He followed that birdie with a birdie at 18, where he split the fairway and hit his approach to six feet.

"I've been swinging it well all week and putting it well

all week," Landry said as he discussed how he maintained his poise after blowing his big lead. "That putt on 15, I don't know how that ball didn't go in. Then I hit another great putt on 16. So I was, like, 'Hey, look, I'm stroking the ball well.'" "I had good swing thoughts." Nevertheless, the memory of the 2018 playoff loss was also prominent, making for an emotional moment when he'd secured the win and toddler son Brooks ran onto the 18th green for a hug. "It's good to finally be able to get the job done again," said Landry, who has endured his share of struggles since his only other tour victory in the 2018 Texas Open.

Coming into the week Landry had missed five straight cuts, and seven of eight since the 2019-20 campaign began. Ancer notched another solid result with his fourth top-four finish, but remains in search of his first PGA Tour title. "I knew I had to make a lot of birdies, the guys were out there pretty far ahead," he said of his aggressive mindset heading into Sunday six shots off the lead shared by Landry and Scottie Scheffler. He was five-under on the front nine and picked up four more birdies coming in — rolling in a 26-footer at the par-three 17th.

"I'm proud of how I played today," he said. Scheffler was even through the first nine with three birdies and three bogeys and drained a six-foot eagle putt at the par-five 16th to finish with a two-under 70 and sole possession of third place on 265. Rickie Fowler, who started the day four off the lead, settled for a one-under 71 that left him tied for 10th. — AFP

## Lyles, many top sprinters skipping indoor season

**NEW YORK:** Even with outstanding hurdles races at US indoor meetings and talented field event competitions in Europe, international athletics is continuing to be impacted by the long 2019 outdoor season.

Many top sprinters are skipping or limiting their indoor season, often because the 2019 world outdoor championships extended into October, more than a month later than usual, managers and coaches told Reuters. Even the lure of an indoor world championship in China has not pulled world outdoor champions Noah Lyles (U.S.) and Dina Asher-Smith (Britain) and medalists Justin Gatlin (US), Andre De Grasse (Canada) and Shaunae Miller-Uibo (Bahamas) to the winter circuit.

World 100m champion Christian Coleman may also join them. "Coleman is still deciding if he will compete," manager Emanuel Hudson said of the 60m world indoor record holder and 2019 world 100m gold medalist.

But it was a definite "no way" from Mark Wetmore, manager of U.S. world 200m champion Lyles, who will sit out the indoor season. "Athletes were exceptionally tired after Doha as a class. It was so long," said Wetmore.

Wetmore and Paul Doyle, agent for Canadian Olympic and world double sprint medalist De Grasse, also mentioned the shorter than normal downtime between the world championships and the Tokyo Olympics, which will be held from July 24 to Aug. 9.

That gap of less than 10 months is much shorter than the nearly one year time frame between the 2015 world championships, which concluded in late August, and the 2016 Olympics, which opened in early August.

"The timing doesn't make a lot of sense," said Lance Brauman, who coaches Lyles and Olympic 400m champion Miller-Uibo. No matter how short the break, though, Caribbean sprinters Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Steven Gardiner will be running at least once indoors.

"She will be doing Glasgow," said agent Adrian Laidlaw of Jamaican world 100m champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. The Feb. 15 Glasgow event is part of the seven-meeting World Athletics Indoor Tour. Bahamian Gardiner's competitions will be even more low key with a couple of 300m races. "Every year we do this just to see how training is going," said coach Gary Evans. There will be nothing low key about U.S. hurdles races, though.

Olympic gold medalist Brianna McNeal and world champion Nia Ali will clash over the 60m hurdles at the Boston Indoor Grand Prix on Jan. 25 to open the World Athletics Indoor Tour and in New York, the Millrose Games hurdles race on Feb. 8 will match Olympic champion Omar McLeod of Jamaica, world gold medalist Grant Holloway and US outdoor winner Daniel Roberts.

The New York meeting also will feature a shot put duel between Olympic gold medalist Ryan Crouser and world champion Joe Kovacs, key races involving world 800m winner Donovan Brazier and women's 800m medalist Aje Wilson and a special appearance in the 60m by 13-times world champion sprinter Allyson Felix who will be seeking to make her fifth US Olympic team this summer.

Meanwhile in Europe, the three pole vault medalists from Doha — American Sam Kendrick, Swede Mondo Duplantis and Poland's Piotr Lisek — will feature in Dusseldorf's Feb. 4 World Tour meeting. But the cycle for top sprinters running all out indoors is several years away, coach Brauman believes.

"Some will run next year (2021) because it fits their schedule and you have a bigger break between the Games and the next world championships," Brauman said. "But to be honest with you, the next big indoor season for pros won't be until 2022." — Reuters

## Sports

# Root hails 'brilliant' England after crushing win over South Africa

## Partnership between Maharaj, Paterson was easily S Africa's best of the match

### SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the fifth 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, 209**

**South Africa, second innings (overnight 102-6)**

P. Malan lbw b Root	12
D. Elgar b Wood	15
Z. Hamza c Buttler b Wood	2
F. du Plessis c Pope b Root	36
H. van der Dussen c Pope b Root	10
Q. de Kock c Wood b Root	3
V. Philander c Pope b Broad	13
K. Maharaj run out (Curran)	71
K. Rabada c Broad b Wood	16
A. Nortje b Bess	5
D. Paterson not out	39
Extras (b12, lb1, nb1, w1)	15
Total (88.5 overs)	237
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-18 (Elgar), 2-22 (Hamza), 3-44 (Malan), 4-66 (Van der Dussen), 5-74 (De Kock), 6-83 (Du Plessis), 7-102 (Philander), 8-128 (Rabada), 9-138 (Nortje)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Broad 10-5-14-1 (1nb), Curran 6-0-46-0, Wood 16.5-6-32-3 (1w), Bess 22-11-36-1, Stokes 5-2-9-0, Root 29-13-87-4.	
<b>Result:</b> England won by an innings and 53 runs	
<b>Series:</b> England lead the four-match series 2-1	
<b>Man of the match:</b> Ollie Pope (ENG)	

**PORT ELIZABETH:** England captain Joe Root yesterday hailed a complete performance by his team after they beat South Africa by an innings and 53 runs on the fifth day of the third Test at St George's Park, taking an unbeatable 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

"It was a brilliant template for us moving forward as a team," said Root. "Big first innings runs and then we really drove the game from that point forward." Root said the solid start by young opening batsmen Zak Crawley and Dom Sibley had laid the foundation for a double century partnership by Ben Stokes (120) and man of the match Ollie Pope which enabled England to make 499 for nine declared before bowling out South Africa for 209 and 237.

Root said Pope, whose 135 not out marked a maiden Test hundred, and fellow 22-year-old, off-spinner Dom Bess, who took the first five wickets in the first innings, had made "massive contributions". "It's exactly what we are after in terms of our development as a team moving forward. It fills the whole group with a massive amount of confidence."

Root said England, who lost a two-Test series to New Zealand before Christmas, were not yet the finished article. "But we're heading in the right direction. We've got a group of players who are willing to learn and we're very clear on how we want to play."

England were held up by a last wicket stand of 99 between Keshav Maharaj (71) and Dane Paterson (39 not out) and it needed a direct-hit run-out by Sam Curran from mid-on to clinch the result shortly before lunch after South Africa added 135 runs in losing their last four wickets. The partnership between Maharaj and Paterson was easily South Africa's best of the match and showed up an otherwise poor batting performance by the hosts.

### SOUTH AFRICA STRUGGLE

South African captain Faf du Plessis said being bowled out cheaply in the first innings had been a crucial factor. "I think we are doing well as a bowling unit but from a batting point of view England are showing us how to apply yourself, how to get yourself in and how to score runs. I think that is the only difference between the teams."

It was South Africa's seventh defeat in their last eight



**PORT ELIZABETH:** South Africa's Dane Paterson plays a shot as England's Jos Buttler (2ndL), England's Dom Sibley (L) and England's Joe Denly (R) looks on during the fifth 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

Tests, the only exception being their win in the first Test against England when it seemed that radical changes in the team management, including the appointment of Mark Boucher as head coach, might have heralded a new dawn.

"We made huge strides in that first Test match, mostly from a confidence point of view," said Du Plessis. "I felt like we turned a corner. I feel like we are taking a step backwards in this Test, especially from a batting point of view."

Du Plessis said he was determined that South Africa should put up a better performance in the fourth and final Test, starting in Johannesburg on Friday, which could be his final home Test appearance.

"It is one massive Test where we need everyone to

be as strong as possible to try to draw the series."

But Du Plessis admitted that the loss of fast bowler Kagiso Rabada through suspension had unsettled the team. "It's frustration," he said. "Now we go into a seriously important Test without our best bowler."

The win extended England's unbeaten run in Test series in South Africa, going back to 1999/2000 when Nasser Hussain's team were beaten by a side led by Hansie Cronje.

That series ended with England gaining a consolation win in a contrived finish to a Test in Centurion which was later revealed to have been orchestrated by Cronje in collaboration with a bookmaker. Since then England have won two series in South Africa and shared one. — AFP

## Simmons blasts 10 sixes as Windies rout Ireland

**BASSETTERRE:** Opening batsman Lendl Simmons blasted 10 sixes in an undefeated 91 as West Indies routed Ireland by nine wickets in the third and final Twenty20 International at Warner Park on Sunday.

Simmons, the nephew of West Indies coach Phil Simmons, also hit five boundaries in his 40-ball blitz. It was his highest score in the format and came just five days before his 35th birthday. Chasing a modest 139 to win, Simmons won the match in style with a six over midwicket off spinner Simi Singh whose three overs cost 41 runs.

Fellow opener Evin Lewis made 46 with four boundaries and three sixes as West Indies raced to victory with 54 balls remaining. "It was a proper batting surface with the ball coming onto the bat nicely," said Simmons whose ambition is to help West

Indies defend their World T20 title in Australia later this year.

"I missed out on the last World Cup because of injury but I am looking forward to the one this year." The three-match series ended 1-1 after Ireland edged a first-game thriller by four runs in Grenada before Saturday's match at Warner Park was abandoned due to rain.

Earlier, veteran all-rounders Kieron Pollard and Dwayne Bravo shared six wickets as West Indies restricted Ireland to 138 all out. Captain Pollard, who produced the best bowling spell by a West Indian in T20 internationals (4-25) in Saturday's abandoned game, claimed 3-17.

Bravo finished with 3-19 to become the West Indies' leading all-time wicket-taker in the format with 57 victims in his 69th game. That beat the previous best of 54 by leg-spinner Samuel Badree. "We need to get early wickets, we cannot have teams get to 40, 50 in no time. I think we need to improve in that area," admitted man of the series Pollard.

On Simmons, he added: "We love to see him in that mindset, he's a little guy but he packs a punch." Put into bat, Ireland raced to 50-0 off just 3.3 overs with openers Kevin O'Brien (top scoring with 36) and Paul Stirling again getting their team off to a

SCOREBOARD
Brief scores in the third and final Twenty20 International between West Indies and Ireland at Warner Park:
Ireland 138 all out in 19.1 overs (K. O'Brien 36; K. Pollard 3-17, D. Bravo 3-19)
West Indies 140-1 in 11 overs (L. Simmons 91 not out, E. Lewis 46)
<b>Result:</b> West Indies won by nine wickets
<b>Series:</b> 1-1 (2nd match abandoned due to rain).

storming start.

However, Pollard dismissed O'Brien after the Irishman hit his runs off only 18 balls with Bravo then accounting for Stirling (11). Stirling had made a career-best 95 in Grenada after sharing an opening stand of 154 with O'Brien.

Ireland were still well-placed at 74-2 but lost their last eight wickets for just 64 runs despite the efforts of skipper Andy Balbirnie who made 28 from 23 balls. "We were out-classed today but if you lose wickets in clusters, that doesn't help," said Balbirnie. "We will take positive from this series. The guys will learn from it ahead of the World Cup." —AFP



**PORT ELIZABETH:** South Africa's captain Faf du Plessis (2ndR) plays on the drum of an entertainer before the start of the second day of the third Test cricket match between South Africa and England, — AFP

## Du Plessis denies retirement

**PORT ELIZABETH:** South African captain Faf du Plessis denied rumours of retirement yesterday saying he would continue to lead the struggling team despite an innings defeat to England.

"There are a lot of rumours about retirement," he said after South Africa lost the third Test against England by an innings and 53 runs — their seventh defeat in eight Test matches.

"I think I have been pretty clear that I have committed myself to Cricket South Africa until the T20 World Cup (in Australia in October and November)."

"Definitely," he said when asked whether he was under more pressure than at any other time of his career, adding "I'm not a robot."

"It's a tough time but there's no running away from it," he said. "There's no escape. I'm the leader of the team. It (pressure) comes with the job descrip-

tion. "There was a time when it was nice and easy and everything was going our way as a team. We had a strong team and a high success ratio."

"Now we are on the bottom side of that wave. We've got to go back to the office and work again."

However, he said his Test career could come to an end later this year after the fourth Test against England, starting at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Friday, and a two-Test tour of the West Indies in July and August. "I want to be the strongest leader I can be for the team and for now that's committing to this series," he said.

"The worst thing a leader can do is pull the plug mid-series and say, 'Sorry boys, I'm out, I've had enough'. I don't think that is what leadership is about. You have to stick through the tough times as well." — AFP

## Tougher India learn to convert toss losses to match wins

**BANGALORE:** India's one-day side have learned to be tougher when they lose the toss following the heartbreak of a World Cup semi-final defeat, said captain Virat Kohli said after winning the one-day series against Australia.

Kohli lost all three tosses to Australia's Aaron Finch but the hosts bounced back from a 10-wicket hammering in the opener to clinch the series 2-1 on Sunday. India comfortably defended 340 in the second match and chased down 287 in the decider.

Kohli said the World Cup semi-final loss to New Zealand last year after losing the toss and failing to chase down a moderate target had made them stronger. "We spoke after the World Cup the way we exited, you can't always look for a situation that should go your way at the toss," Kohli told reporters.

"We've literally taken the toss out of context, and we're as prepared as possible to do something the opposition asks us to do. "The last six or eight months have been a revelation and the younger guys stepping up is a very good sign for Indian cricket."

India were due to fly to New Zealand later today for a tour that will start with the first of five Twenty20 internationals in Auckland on Friday. They will be followed by three one-day internationals and two Tests. Kohli said the team



Aaron Finch

would be confident after a 4-1 ODI series win in New Zealand a year ago.

"We were very positive in how we played, very sure of what we wanted to do," said Kohli. "The thing about playing away is if you're able to put the home team under pressure, you can enjoy your cricket."

"That's what we did last year, squeezed them in the middle overs, picked up wickets, the spinners were outstanding," Kohli said the two wins over Australia had been a perfect tonic after being criticised for the heavy defeat in the first game. "The last two games were tough wins, it boosts your confidence which we're carrying forward," said Kohli. Australia skipper Aaron Finch said India had been "exceptional" and praised man-of-the-series Kohli, who hit 79 and

89 respectively in the second and third matches, and prolific opener Rohit Sharma, who made 119 in the decider.

"They've got Virat who is probably the greatest ODI player of all-time, and Rohit who'd probably be in the top five batters of all-time," Finch said. "They're exceptional, and the thing with the Indian side at the moment is their experienced players are getting the job done in the big games." India are fretting however over batsman Shikhar Dhawan who went off the field during the Australian innings Sunday after hurting his shoulder. Dhawan, part of India's T20 squad, watched the rest of the game wearing a sling on his left arm after been taken for an X-ray. The team said the scans were being assessed. — AFP

## Bangladesh can do well in Pakistan despite security fears: Coach

**DHAKA:** Coach Russell Domingo said Bangladesh would perform well in Pakistan despite security concerns overshadowing the tour starting later this month, with several players and coaching staff refusing to make the trip.

Bangladesh will tour Pakistan for three Twenty20s, a one-day international and two Tests spread across three visits. International cricket has gradually returned to Pakistan in the last four years after it was suspended following an Islamic militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009.

The players are expected to train amid heavy security, but Domingo said the situation would strengthen the bond between them rather than hamper preparations. "I do not think it will be tough for the boys (to focus)," Domingo told reporters late Sunday as the team started preparations for the tour.

"When you are facing a bowler there is nothing else to think about except a ball or when you are bowling there is nothing else to think except landing the ball in the right area." "It (the heavy security) can galvanise the team as well. It can get the team working together and connecting well."

Bangladesh agreed to the Pakistan tour after a long debate over security concerns that nearly led to the cancellation of the series. The Tigers will play three T20Is in Lahore from January 24-27 before returning to Pakistan for the first Test from February 7-11 in Rawalpindi.

They will visit again to play a one-day international in Karachi on April 3 and the second Test from April 5-9. "Where we go and when we go is not our decision. Obviously it would be nice to go once and finish in three weeks but they think it's best to do it in one-week blocks. I am fine with it," Domingo added. — AFP



**25** Landry survives scare to win PGA La Quinta crown



**26** Root hails 'brilliant' England after crushing win over South Africa



**27** A year on, Sala's death continues to haunt football, fuel disputes



## Chiefs, 49ers in Super Bowl showdown



SANTA CLARA: Raheem Mostert #31 of the San Francisco 49ers scores a touchdown in the third quarter against the Green Bay Packers during the NFC Championship game at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. —AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** Patrick Mahomes ended the Kansas City Chiefs' 50-year wait for a return to the Super Bowl on Sunday as the San Francisco 49ers routed the Green Bay Packers to advance to next month's NFL showpiece.

Mahomes helped the Chiefs overturn a 10-point deficit to complete a convincing 35-24 win over the Tennessee Titans to take the American Football Conference Championship at Arrowhead Stadium. The reigning NFL MVP threw for three touchdowns and danced into the end zone for a superb individual score as the Chiefs successfully neutralised the threat posed by Titans running back Derrick Henry.

It is the first time the Chiefs have advanced to the Super Bowl since their victory over the Minnesota Vikings in 1970. "I'm lucky to be a part of this team with all these guys - it makes my job a lot easier," said Mahomes, who finished with 294 passing yards and 23 completions.

The win came one year after the Chiefs suffered an agonising home overtime loss to the New England Patriots at the same stage of the playoffs. "It's amazing, to be here to do it at Arrowhead, these people deserve it. We're not done yet," Mahomes added. "We're going to get it."

Mahomes said the Chiefs — who had fought back from 24-0 down to rout the Houston Texans in the divisional round last week — had kept their cool after falling behind early on against the Titans.

"We just stayed with the process. It was like last week, we just stuck with the game plan and knew it was going to work out," he said. The Titans had reached the brink of the Super Bowl after a giant-killing playoff run which included wins over the New England Patriots and the top-seeded Baltimore Ravens.

### 'Great game plan'

But despite starting strongly the Titans

ran out of ideas once the Chiefs defense contained powerhouse rusher Henry, who helped Tennessee forge early leads of 10-0 and 17-7 before the Chiefs rallied.

Henry had few complaints after being restricted to a relatively paltry 69 yards and one touchdown after 19 carries. "They just had a great game plan, man," Henry said after the defeat.

"They were coming off the ball, those guys were being physical. They played a great game today on defense and you know their offense, we know the type of offense that is: explosive, can score at any moment."

"We just came up short. All the credit to them and good luck to them." In Santa Clara, meanwhile, the 49ers clinched the National Football Conference Championship with a 37-20 rout of the Green Bay Packers that was more one-sided than the scoreline suggested.

Niners running back Raheem Mostert

rushed for four touchdowns and a whopping 220 yards as the run-oriented San Francisco offense punched hole after hole through a porous Packers defense.

The game was effectively over by halftime with Mostert crossing for three of his four touchdowns — a record in an NFC championship game — in the opening two quarters as San Francisco opened up a 27-0 lead by halftime. "I just woke up like it was any other game," Mostert said of his stellar display. "It was just one of those games where once we all got in the groove we were like 'Hey, let's keep it riding, keep it rolling' and that's what we did."

But it was another disappointing outing for Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who once again fell short in his pursuit of a second career Super Bowl title. Rodgers, regarded by many as one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history, finished with 326 passing yards from 31-of-39 attempts but also had two interceptions and was

sacked three times.

Niners counterpart Jimmy Garoppolo meanwhile was barely called upon as the San Francisco run game took over, making just eight passes throughout the entire game for 77 yards. Rodgers later acknowledged that Sunday's defeat had stung as he faces up to the realisation that at 36, he may have only a limited number of opportunities to reach the Super Bowl again.

"It's a little raw right now for sure," the Packers quarterback said. "It definitely hurts than earlier in your career just because you realise how difficult it is to get to this spot. "With all the changes this off season, to get to this point, with a new coach and a new offensive system, you felt like it was something special. It felt like it was meant to be almost. So it's kind of disappointing. I don't have the same number of years ahead of me as I do behind me. So yeah, it's disappointing." —AFP

## Djokovic survives scare as rain causes chaos

**MELBOURNE:** Novak Djokovic survived a scare to join Roger Federer and Serena Williams in the Australian Open second round as heavy downpours caused chaos yestrday, forcing organisers to postpone a swathe of matches.

Defending champion Djokovic was made to sweat before beating Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff in four sets on the first day, when fears over air pollution were replaced by disruption caused by rain. While play continued at the three stadiums with retractable roofs, half of the 64 scheduled matches were postponed, ensuring a big backlog for today.

Wet conditions are unusual for the Australian Open,

which is more used to extreme heat and was plagued by smog from bushfires during qualifying, when players suffered coughing fits and breathing problems.

Air quality was rated 'good' as the first round started yesterday but about four hours later play was suspended on outside courts when the heavens opened in Melbourne. World number three Federer was briefly hauled off court while the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena before returning to complete a routine 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over American Steve Johnson.

Williams, on the hunt for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, won the first set against Anastasia Potapova in just 19 minutes as she cruised to a 6-0, 6-3 win in less than an hour. "I feel like I can still improve and get better throughout this tournament, for sure. This is a good stepping stone for right now," Williams said. However, Williams' elder sister Venus was ousted in stunning fashion by 15-year-old Coco Gauff, who won 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in a repeat of her first-round upset at Wimbledon last year.

In the late match, defending champion Djokovic dropped his first set since 2006 in the opening round

before recovering to beat Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1. "There is a lot of pressure and a lot of different emotions involved. I definitely try to remind myself to stay present and really enjoy," said the seventh-time Melbourne winner, who brought up his 900th Tour-level victory.

Former US Open champion Sloane Stephens was the biggest women's casualty on day one when she crashed out in three sets to Zhang Shuai of China — her fourth first-round exit in Melbourne.

### SHAPOVALOV RACQUET ROW

Defending champion Naomi Osaka was done well before the downpour as she dismissed Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-4 in 80 minutes, smashing one powerful serve that broke a net fastener.

"It was really tough for me trying to control my nerves," said Osaka. "It's tough to play someone you've never played before in the first round of a Grand Slam." Later on the covered centre court, Australian world number one Ashleigh Barty recovered strongly from a set down to beat Lesia Tsurenko 5-7, 6-1, 6-1.

In the men's draw, Greek sixth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who beat Federer en route to last year's semis, crushed Salvatore Caruso 6-0, 6-2, 6-3. Player anger over smog dominated the final days before the tournament, which is taking place after bushfires ravaged large parts of Australia, destroying thousands of homes and killing 29 people.

Tournament officials are closely monitoring pollution and will halt play and close the three main stadiums' roofs if particulate matter suspended in the air hits PM2.5 200.

In other results, Canadian 13th seed Denis Shapovalov argued furiously with the umpire over a code violation for throwing his racquet as he lost in four sets to Marton Fucsovics.

Croatian 25th seed Borna Coric was another first-round loser as he went down to experienced American Sam Querrey, while Australia's Sam Stosur bombed out against Caty McNally.

But former champion Caroline Wozniacki, playing her last tournament before retiring, safely reached the second round as she beat Kristie Ahn 6-1, 6-3. — AFP