



10 MPs file no-confidence motion after Aseeri grilling

Minister slams 'police state mentality' • Assembly to ratify neutral zone pact

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Ten opposition lawmakers yesterday filed a no-confidence motion against Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri following a short grilling debate in which the minister denied she violated the constitution. Meanwhile, the Assembly is expected to ratify the new neutral zone pact signed with Saudi Arabia last month in the divided zone after the foreign relations committee approved the agreement. The pact has confirmed Saudi and Kuwaiti rights and resources in the neutral zone, where oil production is divided equally between the two countries. The pact was signed following over four years of negotiations.

Before the debate started, Aseeri charged that the grilling included some unconstitutional material, but she still decided to face it to clarify her position. The grilling debate of Aseeri was one of the shortest to be witnessed by the Assembly, after MP Adel Al-Damkhi accused the minister of violating the constitution and undermining lawmakers and their voter bases.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri (left) and MP Safa Al-Hashem gesture at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Damkhi charged that the minister committed an act of defamation against MPs through a statement she made and later denied she made the statement. He said the minister accused MPs of circulating rumors to appease their voters, which constitutes defamation against the lawmakers and their voters. He said the inclusion of Aseeri in the Cabinet

Continued on Page 24

BNK Automotive empowers women in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, CEO of the BNK Automotive Group, the authorized distributor of Volvo cars in Kuwait, said the Kuwait Motor Show 2020 (KMS 2020) is an important milestone for the company as it constitutes its first official participation and presence in exhibitions and the local auto sector in general.

Speaking in a press statement he made on the sidelines of the opening of KMS 2020 on Thursday, which runs until January 25 at 360 Mall under the auspices and presence of Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Kharafi stressed that the goal of Volvo's participation in the event is to introduce the most important changes the brand had recently made in terms of updating the designs of some models or the entirely new technologies it offers to customers.

50% of Volvo Kuwait employees are women. Kharafi added the Volvo team has been formed and is ready to launch. He also revealed that 50 percent of Volvo employees are



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah with Khalid Al-Falah as Bader Al-Kharafi explains during their visit to Volvo Kuwait pavilion.

women, including mechanics and technicians, which is a completely new and leading undertaking in the local automotive sector. Responding to a question regarding when

the brand would be launched in Kuwait, Kharafi said BNK Automotive has started preparations to launch its first official Volvo showroom on March 3, 2020. (See Page 11)

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Local

Manpower authority prepares study to 'rationalize' national labor allowances

KD 500 million spent annually in allowances to Kuwaitis in the private sector

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the Public Authority for Manpower has prepared a new study that includes procedures and rules related to payment of national labor allowances in the private sector. "The amendments include remedies for several recommendations approved previously by the National Assembly's budgets committee, and also deals with comments by the State Audit Bureau in its accounting reports about the budget of the manpower authority and its annual closing accounts," they said.

The study will be submitted to the Cabinet within days so it can be reviewed and approved by the ministerial economic committee before it receives final approval for implementation, the sources said. They added that the study will rationalize labor support by concentrating on paying actual workers in the private sector and not bogus employees.

"The new rules will make sure any citizen who receives the allowance is in Kuwait and not some-

where else, because it was discovered that there are Kuwaiti employees who work only on paper, but live in other countries whose nationality they have and keep the truth hidden," the sources said.

The sources said the amendments guarantee employment in the private sector through the manpower authority and under its supervision, as it contacts the employer and inspections will be made to make sure that the person is really at work. "This will be repeated many times and not just once," the sources explained.

They said there are plans to stop the national labor support paid to Kuwaitis who work in the private sector with a salary of over KD 5,000, as they are assume senior positions in private companies, receive high salaries and do not meet the true goal

behind approving national labor support, which is to attract Kuwaitis to work in non-government sectors. "This means that those whose salaries are over KD 5,000 will remain in the private sector with or without the allowance," the sources argued.

The sources said the total amount of money spent annually for national labor support in the private sector is more than KD 500 million, adding that this large amount is spent according to certain conditions set by the authority's national labor affairs sector.

Meanwhile, the manpower authority announced there are 150 job vacancies available for Kuwaitis in the private sector in various specialties. The authority said Director of Manpower Affairs Sultan Al-Shaalany will explain the most important steps the authority adopts in the next



150 job vacancies available

ABK employees celebrate graduation from IBS

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently celebrated the graduation of twelve employees who successfully passed professional courses held at the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS). The graduation ceremony took place at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce on the 14th January 2020.

Graduates were from IBS's Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Credit Management (CCM), Advanced Certificate in Credit Management (ACCM), Certified Manager (CM), Association for Talent Development Train the Trainer, and Certified Bank Relationship Manager for High Net Worth Customers (CBRM).

ABK is committed to investing in its employees and ensuring that they have every opportunity to fulfill their career potential. The bank is a keen supporter of IBS's specialized training programs which offer high caliber internationally accredited programs designed to specifically address the needs of Kuwait's banking sector.



News in brief

Kuwait, Ethiopia eye deal on domestic workers

KUWAIT: A joint Kuwaiti-Ethiopian committee convened its inaugural meeting yesterday to hammer out a deal over the recruitment of domestic workers from the African nation, said Kuwait's foreign ministry. Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Sami Al-Hamad led his country's side amid the talks, attended by numerous state bodies, with Ethiopia's Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulfattah Hassan also present. —KUNA

Kuwait Airways' costs

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways said that losses incurred in 2018 were a result of investments made to revamp the state carrier's fleet, improve services and increase its destinations amid an ongoing plan stretching to 2026. In a statement issued in response to social media claims regarding the 2018 financial results, the carrier said cutting costs would limit these losses and achieve profit within a short time span. The airline underlined it was determined to maintain the momentum of carrying out tangible developments in its performance for the Kuwaiti state carrier to be in a leading position. "The company's long-term financial plan envisages an increase in aircraft fleet, increased flight services to profitable sectors and cost optimization with an aim to improve revenue and operational profits," it had earlier said in its full-year statement. The airline, founded in 1953, currently flies to 50 global destinations. —KUNA

Kuwaitis in Jordan

AMMAN: Kuwait has urged its nationals visiting Jordan to be cautious amid a spread of a wave of unsettled weather over the region, in fear of their safety. Authorities in Jordan have raised the emergency level to maximum after the weather conditions reached their most severe last week. People in the country have been told not to approach valleys or flooded areas as the low pressure system continues to sweep the country. Caution was urged particularly in areas witnessing heavy snowfall and rain with Kuwait's Embassy in Amman saying it was ready to offer round-the-clock assistance to nationals, who may be in distress. In the case of emergency, the embassy provided the following hotlines: (+962) 6567-5135- (+962) 6567-5136- (+962) 6567-5137. —KUNA

Kuwait looks into Ukraine's 'enticing' investment laws

KUWAIT: Ukraine possesses "enticing" investment legislation, in addition to an alluring business environment, Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said yesterday. Kuwait and Ukraine's "ever-growing" cooperation encompasses numerous fields, including agriculture, information technology and industry, KCCI's deputy chairman Abdulwahab Al-Wazan said as he met with a Ukrainian trade delegation. Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce encourages nationals to invest in the European nation, he said, while simultaneously urging Ukrainian firms to contribute towards Kuwait's development plans. He went on to say that a "lack of direct flights between Kuwait and Ukraine" is the only impediment to bilateral trade growth, hoping the issue will be sorted out for the good of investors. As "ripe ground" for foreign investment, Ukraine enjoys enduring and solid relations with Kuwait, according to the Oil Ministry's undersecretary Sheikh Nimr Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, chief of a joint Arab and Ukrainian business council said that Kuwait wields much political and economic influence in the Middle East, pointing out that the European nation is eager for better trade ties with Kuwait. Kuwait has established solid international rela-



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

tions thanks to the country's diplomatic prowess, Dr Imad Abualrab said amid a visit to KCCI yesterday. Ukraine views Kuwait as a "launchpad" for a possible foray into business in the region, added the official, revealing that Kuwait was the first Arab nation to open an embassy in Ukraine. On Ukraine's agriculture sector,

he said that Kiev is the fourth largest exporter of corn and barley and the sixth largest exporter of wheat in the world. On the council's primary objective, he said it serves as an advisory for foreign investors in Ukraine, apprising them of the ample business opportunities that await them. —KUNA

Kuwaiti cultural office obtains ISO certificates

CAIRO: The Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Cairo held a ceremony, under the auspices of the Kuwaiti Minister of Education (MoE) Dr Saud Al-Harbi, over being the first Kuwaiti cultural bureau in the Middle East to win three International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certificates. Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs Lamia Al-Mulhem, in a statement on behalf of Harbi Monday night, thanked Head of Cairo's Kuwaiti Cultural Office Dr Ahmad Al-Mutairi and its workers.

Mulhem emphasized that these certificates are only the beginning of doing more for the sake of excellence and contribution to achieving Kuwait's 2035 vision and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the quality of education, which will positively reflect on the labor market's outputs. The concept of high quality goes beyond the traditional notion of work with nonstop improvement, also a futuristic vision that includes supporting the educational system and achieving excellence in institutions of higher education, which was an urgent necessity embodied by the Cultural Office in Cairo.

Meanwhile, Dr Mutairi said he was proud of Egypt's first Office, over winning ISO (9001-2015) on quality management, ISO (45001-2018) on vocational safety and ISO (14001-2015) on environment protection. The development process in the Office was not a result of the moment, but was sought in the office since the end of 2016, indicating that the process of modernization continued throughout that period



CAIRO: The head of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office Dr Ahmad Al-Mutairi receives the ISO certificate. —KUNA

and included all cultural, academic and administrative aspects, he said. He pointed out that the world was shifting attention to a new, complete, major economy in creating wealth, indicating that educational institutions are the basis and essence of this new economy.

In the past, the capital that the nations sought were possession of natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, agriculture and water, Mutairi continued. These wealthy resources, despite their current importance, retreated in front of the new capital, which was the economy of knowledge, based on scholars and advanced educational institutions, searching for innovations, inventions, ideas and values, he said. The first and most important institutions in this new economy were the MoE, Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), universities and research centers that are interested in scientific research, creativity and innovation, he mentioned. He underlined that this was a strategic and not an end goal, but rather a way that was no longer a choice and

just a single option for fearlessness of Kuwait's Vision. He underscored that this quality has become a global demand that is indispensable in all countries and a challenge that mobilizes the collective efforts of various people in higher education systems.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ceremony, Egyptian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Khaled Abdulghaffar said that this success was evidence of the highest academic, technical work and interest in the quality of the educational process to serve students belonging to Kuwait. He admired the cooperation between Kuwait and Egypt in various fields, especially of higher education, mentioning that the largest percentage of international students coming to Egypt were Kuwaiti students. In this context, he pointed to the nonstop communication with the Office to overcome all obstacles facing Kuwaiti students, whether it was during the stage of graduate studies or bachelor's degree. —KUNA

Local

Amir receives invitation to attend Riyadh camel festival



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads an invitation from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, delivered by Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al Saud.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received an invitation from Saudi King Salman bin

Abdulaziz Al Saud to attend the closing ceremony of King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Riyadh next month. Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al Saud handed the invitation to His Highness the Amir. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Ali Al Jarrah Al Sabah attended the meeting. Meanwhile, His Highness the

Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,

expressing his sincere condolences over the demise of Prince Bandar bin Muhammad bin Abdul-Rahman Al Saud. 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-Mubarak Al-Sabah sent similar cables. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Greece to Kuwait Konstantinos Piperigos visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan issues of mutual interest. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at his diwan yesterday Senior British Army officer Lieutenant General Sir John Gordon Lorimer, KCB, DSO, MBE, accompanied by UK Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest, and ways of boosting cooperation especially in training.

GCC political systems follow tolerance policy: Bahraini official

KUWAIT: Bahraini Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Executive Director of Isa Cultural Center, Sheikh Khaled Al-Khalif, said the political system in GCC countries follows a tolerance policy making them distinct of many nations in the region. This came in a statement yesterday on the sideline of his participation at the Civil Culture Forum organized by Women's Institute for Development and Peace under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister, part of events of the 26th Al-Qurain cultural festival.

Khalifa, who is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence in the Kingdom of Bahrain, said tolerance policy has made Gulf States distinct in the region, with accepting and respecting differences of made each group partner in building and developing the country. King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence reflects the real spirit of peaceful coexistence that has been inherited by generations since the found-

ing of the state. The center hold many activities like conferences, exhibitions, lectures, scientific and historical meetings in various countries of the world, he said.

The next conference would be in March at the Italian University of Spianza, to focus on European youth and to respect of other religions, he said. Bahrain's development and modernization policy relied, since its foundation, on attracting scholars and businessmen from various doctrines, he said. He also stressed it cannot enjoy advancement of civilization without accepting diversity, pointing out that this diversity includes cognitive, ethnic, doctrinal, religious and intellectual aspects at all levels. The level of civil culture in any country depends on the degree of diversity and how society accepts the difference, he added. The Kuwaiti society, like the rest of GCC societies welcomed trade of all doctrines in addition to the political system that calls for peaceful coexistence, which was the reason behind the development of Kuwait and GCC. —KUNA



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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A colorful downtown Kuwait City at sunset. — Photo by Babu Neelandan (KUNA)

Kuwaiti Blood Bank organizes donation campaign at KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Central Blood Bank at the Ministry of Health (MoH) organized a blood donation campaign yesterday at the headquarters of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), said a ministry official tasked with blood transfusions. Director of the Department of Blood Transfusion Services at MoH Dr Reem Al-Radhwan said that the campaign aimed to spread the concept of giving, saving the lives of patients while maintaining the strategic stock of blood. The Blood Bank is always organizing

donation events, and the number of donation campaigns in 2019 reached 263 collecting 16,363 blood bags, she said. This year, they aimed to increase the number of donors from previous years, to change the concept of needing to donate since it is vital at all times, she underlined. She thanked government and private institutions for supporting the issue of donation with their dedicated role in these campaigns, contributing to increasing the blood stock. — KUNA



Kuwaiti students conclude 11th KFAED trip to Vietnam

HANOI: A group of outstanding Kuwaiti students on Monday concluded their visit to Vietnam as part of the 11th trip organized by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). The students praised the visit, especially after they visited the Fund's development projects that contributed to promoting development there, as well as visiting tourist attractions, including Hanoi Bay, which is famous for its many islands. Student Saud Al-Otaibi of Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School said that Hanoi Bay is one of the most tourist places in eastern Asia and is famous for the abundance of hundreds of islands formed from limestone topped by green trees. Student Bader Al-Asousi expressed his happiness for visiting this tourist landmark, as it contains stunning

landscapes that combine green forests and lakes to form an artistic portrait of the Almighty's ability. KFAED contributed to the development projects in Vietnam by financing agricultural projects and generating electrical and health energy. The number of loans provided by the fund reached about 15 assignments with a total value of about KD 54 million (about \$177 million).

Meanwhile, a group of Kuwaiti students on Monday continued their tour in Tunisia as part of the 11th trip organized by KFAED. The delegation visited a farm producing olive oil in Beja Governorate, north of Tunisia. The farm ranked fourth internationally in terms of producing olive oil reaching 150,000 tons. The students also paid a visit to Ez-Zitouna Mosque, which hosts one of the first and greatest universities in the history of Islam. The mosque has been a destination to prayer, science and education. They also made a tour at some famous streets in the country, including Habib Bourguiba Avenue, and did shopping. The program titled "be with outstanding students" was an initiative launched by the KFAED in 2010 in recognition of the students' progress and excellence. — KUNA

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Local

More participation expected for 12th Int'l Invention Fair in Mideast

Amir's support helped catapult event to global status

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Science Club (KSC) will be hosting the 12th International Invention Fair in the Middle East from Feb 16-19, 2020. The fair is being held under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the organizers expect even more participants this year.

Secretary General of KSC and member of the organizing committee Dr Yahya Abdaal appreciated the generous sponsorship of HH the Amir of this fair since its first edition in 2007. "This generous support made this fair rank as the second biggest and most popular fair for inventors in the world. Without this support, we wouldn't have reached this success, which is a benefit for the whole country," he said during a press conference held on Monday.

The four-day fair will include various social and scientific activities. "The main purpose of this fair is to support inventors and improve their skills and creativity. Also, some new sponsors are participating this year including Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training and others. We expect to have more countries participating in this fair as well," stressed Abdaal.

Treasurer of KSC Aws Al-Nisef said the main rea-

son for holding the International Invention Fair in the Middle East is to offer an investment and marketing opportunity for inventions to be realized. In the past, Kuwaiti inventors didn't find support or adoption of their inventions to develop into commercial projects, but today they do. This inspired the title of the fair: 'Investors meeting Inventors,' he explained.

"The fair attracts businessmen and industrial and economic bodies, which is considered a support of KSC for the inventors. This fair is the first of its kind to present such huge financial prizes exceeding \$50,000. These prizes were set to encourage and support inventors," Nisef added. "The main prize is \$15,000, KSC's prize is \$10,000, International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva presents a \$5,000 prize and the GCC Patent Office presents 50,000 Saudi riyals, in addition to a prize presented by the World Intellectual Property Organization and another prize by the International Federation of Inventors' Associations," concluded Nisef.

Head of Development and Competitive Programs at KSC Mohammed Al-Saffar said participation in the fair is still open. "Early participation has closed, but late participation is still available and will end in two weeks. Currently, we don't have the exact number of participants as we are still accepting registrations, but we expect the number to be higher than last year. The



KUWAIT: (From left) Mohammed Al-Saffar, Dr Yahya Abdaal and Aws Al-Nisef attend the press conference.

huge attendance in this fair in the past years reflects its success. We started preparing for this event at the end of the previous fair," he pointed out.

"The participation process starts with submitting the invention to the organizing committee, which will then classify the invention into one of the 22 categories of the fair. The invention should have an international patent certificate and it shouldn't have previously par-

ticipated in this fair in the past years," added Saffar.

Participating inventions must adhere to certain criteria. "The judging committee consists of specialists in the field from various institutions and nationalities with long experience. Various criteria will be considered for the inventions, including when they were invented, creativity and ability to be marketed," he explained.



Zel Iscel during the workshop.



KUWAIT: Zel Iscel with Zain employees at ZINC.

Zain strategic partner of W3C Forum for GCC

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership with the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) second Forum for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) 2020. The event, which comes in collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Public Authority for the Disabled, is held on 20-23 January 2019.

Zain's strategic partnership comes as part of its Group-wide 'WE ABLE' initiative, which mainly aims at complementing the

company's gender diversity and inclusion program by enriching disability inclusion in the workplace. The immediate aim of the disability inclusion initiative is to increase the number of people with disabilities within the Zain workforce, ensure all training programs are disability inclusive, guarantee that accessibility across all Zain touchpoints are disability inclusive, and identify innovative and assistive technologies enabling more people with disabilities to join the company and succeed.

Zain hosted a special session and workshop at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, where Usability Testing Expert Zeliha (Zel) Iscel discussed many topics related to enhancing web accessibility to the visually impaired and people with special needs. The session also discussed the latest technologies and tools that are used to make the web more accessible in line with the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) global web standards. The W3C second Forum for the GCC

2020 will also include many special sessions and workshops featuring local and international speakers, including a special session by Zain. The forum will also feature a Hackathon challenge that focuses on developing software tools that allow people with special needs to access the web.

Zain is keen on reinforcing its partnerships with the many local and international entities that cater to people with special needs within the community all year round. The company is proud to have partnered with this initiative

that caters to this valued segment of the society, especially with regards to making the web a more accessible place for them.

Zain constantly shoulders initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare. The company's long-term cooperation with the various private and public entities that cater to people with special needs springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print by supporting and launching initiatives that cater to various interests of the community.



Lujain Al-Qenaei



KUWAIT: The speakers at the second session of the forum.



A view of the audience.

Gulf Bank supports SME tenders forum

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous efforts to support small and medium-sized enterprises, Gulf Bank has announced it is a main sponsor of the Tenders Forum for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. The forum, which took place yesterday in Al-Shaheed Park, was held in the presence of the Secretary General and assistant secretaries of the Central Agency for Public Tenders, and representatives from local government agencies and the National Assembly. The forum welcomed SME owners to attend and participate in the discussion.

One of the main objectives of the forum was to raise awareness about recent amendments on public tenders law, highlighting the rights of SME owners. Speakers at the forum also discussed ways to create opportunities for owners of SMEs to take part in governmental tenders in an effort to consolidate relations and open doors for

collaboration between governmental agencies and smaller companies. The forum also aimed to start a dialogue on legislative solutions that better serve small and medium-sized enterprises, highlighting legal gaps in the current legislation and allowing SME owners to voice their concerns with decision-makers from members of the National Assembly.

As part of its continuous efforts to support small and medium-sized enterprises, Gulf Bank also participated at the forum. The Bank, which views growing companies as a vital pillar for successful economies, continues to provide SMEs with an integrated set of services designed around the needs of growing companies.

As such, Gulf Bank is the one-stop destination for enterprises of all sizes, providing advisory services related to investment banking, corporate finance and advisory. Gulf Bank spares business owners the hassle of dealing with multiple advisors for its various restructuring and growth plans, and offers a number of services all in one place, including business plans, valuation, acquisitions, investments, private placement, asset management, consolidations, and more. As with any service provided by the Bank, Gulf Bank ensures that all needs of the company

are professionally organized, negotiated and managed, allowing clients to focus on what they do best and dedicate more time to their core businesses.

Commenting on the forum, Lujain Al-Qenaei, Assistant Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we consider each of our clients as a long-term business partner. That is why we are proud to offer a comprehensive range of services that aim to broaden our clients' understanding of their companies. We are proud that Gulf Bank's Corporate Banking Group provides the financial services of choice for businessmen in Kuwait. We are also proud of our Bank's heritage, which serves as a constant reminder of the importance of strategic partnerships with our esteemed clients, paving the way for mutual growth and expansion."

Gulf Bank offers a variety of corporate banking solutions, including:

- Business Valuation and Feasibility Studies: Reaching "fair value" is the key to any successful business transaction. Gulf Bank's services provide an independent and scientific approach at valuing businesses. The process involves a comprehensive understanding of the market in which the business operates, developing a financial

model that takes into consideration various indicators and sensitivities in order to arrive at a fair value. In addition, Gulf Bank offers feasibility studies both for new companies and for existing companies with growth and expansion plans.

- Restructuring Advisory: Now more than ever, companies are constantly evolving to adapt to changing market conditions. With a restructuring consultation, Gulf Bank offers clients a diagnostic view of what needs to change in their businesses today in order to ensure sustainable growth for their companies in the future. The advisory process is based on an understanding of financial and operational structural changes, and offers recommendations designed to meet future market conditions. Gulf Bank offers advisory support throughout the restructuring process, continuing until solutions are fully implemented.

- Investment and Growth Advisory: Achieving the optimal financing ratio between stocks and loans is essential to business development. This process includes the creation of a business plan that is supported by the additional debt or/and equity solution that needs to be injected or structured. The consultation process is completed when the financial closing is

achieved, or when required funds are placed or raised.

- Mergers and Acquisitions: Realignment and restructuring are often valuable prerequisites that speed up growth, diversify risk, and stall competition. Gulf Bank's advisory unit takes 'buy side' or 'sell side' mandates on matchmaking or acquisitions, handling the complete process from conceiving ideas to closing out transactions. Due to the Bank's extensive relationships with a large segment of clients, the match-making process has never been easier.

Gulf Bank also provides a range of services designed around the needs of small and medium-sized business owners, including:

- Innovative package of services customized for SMEs, including cash and non-cash facilities, and operational account solutions.
- Tailored services created around a company's specific business cycle requirements, i.e. overdraft facilities, revolving term loans, letters of credit, and letters of guarantee.
- A dedicated team that prides itself on its understanding of the ins and outs of the local market and various industries, developing daily money reports for clients.



Signs of life in 'no-man's land' around volcano

Dutch farm dad 'beat bad spirits out of kids'



SEOUL: South Korean activists hold placards reading "No dispatch to Hormuz!" during a rally near the US embassy yesterday denouncing the government's decision to send troops to the Strait of Hormuz. —AFP

Iran confirms two missiles fired at airliner

Seoul to send vessel to Strait of Hormuz after US pressure

TEHRAN: Iran has confirmed two missiles were fired at a Ukrainian airliner brought down this month, in a catastrophic error that killed all 176 people on board and sparked angry protests. The country's civil aviation authority said it has yet to receive a positive response after requesting technical assistance from France and the United States to decode black boxes from the downed airliner. The Kiev-bound Ukraine International Airlines plane was accidentally shot down shortly after takeoff from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on Jan 8.

Iran has come under mounting international pressure to carry out a full and transparent investigation into the air disaster. "Investigators... discovered that two Tor-MI missiles... were fired at the aircraft," Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said in a preliminary report posted on its website late Monday. It said an investigation was ongoing to assess the bearing their impact had on the accident.

The statement confirms a report in The New York Times which included video footage appearing to show two projectiles being fired at the airliner. The Tor-MI is a short-range surface-to-air missile developed by the former Soviet Union that is designed to target aircraft or cruise missiles.

Iran had for days denied Western claims

based on US intelligence reports that the Boeing 737 had been shot down. It came clean on Jan 11, with the Revolutionary Guards' aerospace commander Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh accepting full responsibility. But he said the missile operator who opened fire had been acting independently.

Black box impasse

The deadly blunder triggered days of student-led protests mainly in the Iranian capital. Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that the demonstrations were unrepresentative of the Iranian people and accused the country's enemies of exploiting the air disaster for propaganda purposes. In its report, the Civil Aviation Organization said it was "impossible" for it to read the flight data and cockpit voice recorders - commonly known as black boxes - because they were so advanced.

But it suggested Iran wants to keep them for now. "If devices are provided, the information (on the black boxes) can be restored and retrieved in a short period of time," it said. The aviation body said it had asked its French and US counterparts, the BEA and NTSB respectively, to provide a list of the equipment required to read the black boxes. It said it had also sought the transfer of

the equipment, but added that neither the BEA nor NTSB had "so far responded positively". It said it had acquired the list nonetheless, without saying how, and hinted it would use it to buy the equipment itself. The report said that based on passports used to board Flight PS752, there were 146 Iranians, 11 Ukrainians including nine crewmembers, 10 Afghans and four Swedes on the ill-fated airliner. Canada, which says 57 of its nationals were on the plane, has repeatedly asked Iran to hand the black boxes over to Ukraine or France for expert analysis.

US-Iran tensions

The 737 was downed when Iran's air defenses had been on high alert hours after its armed forces fired more than 20 ballistic missiles at US troops stationed in Iraq. That was carried out in reprisal for a Jan 3 US drone strike that killed Iran's most prominent military commander, Qasem Soleimani, near Baghdad airport. US President Donald Trump had been poised to retaliate for the missile attack, but refrained after the missiles caused no casualties.

Meanwhile, South Korea will send a naval destroyer and 300 troops to the Strait of Hormuz, its defense ministry said yesterday, after pressure from its ally the US in the face

of tensions between Washington and Tehran. Iran has been blamed for a series of attacks on shipping vessels in the strait, a strategic choke point for the world's oil trade where the US has deployed a naval mission. But the request put Seoul in a dilemma: It has had diplomatic relations with Tehran since the early 1960s and until last year Iran was one of the resource-poor South's key oil suppliers.

The defense ministry said in a statement that Seoul had decided to "temporarily expand" the deployment area of its anti-piracy military unit operating off the coast of Somalia to include the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which are linked by the Strait of Hormuz. It would not be part of the US naval mission, it insisted - although two liaison officers would be sent to the US headquarters for "information sharing".

Seoul and Washington are in a security alliance but their relations have been strained by the Trump administration's demands the South pay billions of dollars more towards the costs of 28,500 US troops stationed in the country to protect it from the nuclear-armed North. US Ambassador Harry Harris last week urged Seoul to join in the naval mission, saying "very few countries have a greater need" to take part as the South "gets 70 percent of its oil supplies from the Middle East". —Agencies

UN: Nearly half billion people lack decent jobs

GENEVA: More than 470 million people worldwide are currently unemployed or underemployed, the UN said on Monday, warning that a lack of access to decent jobs was contributing to social unrest. The global unemployment rate has remained relatively stable over much of the past decade, according to the UN's International Labour Organization. But while the rate - which stood at 5.4 percent last year - is not expected to change much, overall jobless numbers are likely to inch up as slowing economies reduce the number of jobs available to a growing population.

This year, the number of people registered as unemployed is expected to rise to 190.5 million up from 188 million in 2019, ILO said in its annual World Employment and Social Outlook report. At the same time, the UN body stressed that some 285 million people worldwide are considered underemployed, meaning they either work less than they want to, have given up searching for work or otherwise lack access to the labor market. That amounts to nearly half a billion people and represents a full 13 percent of the global labor force, the ILO pointed out.

'Extremely worrying'

"For millions of working people, it is becoming increasingly difficult I think to build better lives through work," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in Geneva. He warned that "persisting and substantial work-related inequalities and exclusion" were preventing many from finding decent work and thereby also creating better futures. "I think that this is an extremely worrying finding," he said, adding that lacking access to decent work appeared to be part of what was spurring growing protest movements and unrest around the world.

"Labor market conditions are contributing to... this erosion of social cohesion in many of our societies," he said, referring to mass demonstrations in places like Lebanon and Chile. According to the ILO's "social unrest index", measuring the frequency of things like demonstrations and strikes, there was an increase both at the global level and in seven out of 11 subregions between 2009 and 2019. The ILO report highlighted that more than 60 percent of the global workforce currently work in the informal economy, often toiling for substandard wages and lacking basic social protections.

And in 2019, more than 630 million people - a fifth of the global working population - lived in so-called working poverty, meaning they made less than \$3.20 per day in purchasing power. At the same time, the ILO report warned of significant income and job access inequality, driven by things like gender, age and geographic location. In particular, it warned that a staggering 267 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in employment, education or training, while many more in this group endure substandard working conditions. —AFP

Iraq protester killed as youth keep up pressure on govt

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi protester was killed in Baghdad yesterday, medics said, as angry young people reignited a three-month-old protest movement by shutting roads to pressure authorities to implement long-awaited reforms. The demonstrator died after being hit by a tear gas canister on one of the main highways in east Baghdad. Protesters had been trying to shut down the road with burning tyres but clashed with security forces, who fired live rounds and tear gas to break up the crowd. Eight protesters were also treated for tear gas inhalation, medics said.

On Monday, three demonstrators were killed in the capital. Security forces have relied heavily on tear gas to confine protesters to Baghdad's Tahrir Square, but human rights groups have accused them of improperly firing the canisters directly into crowds at point-blank range, piercing protesters' skulls and chests. Anti-government rallies have rocked Iraq since October but had thinned out in recent weeks amid spiralling tensions between Baghdad's key allies Tehran and Washington. To regain momentum, protesters had given the government until Monday to address their demands: early elections under a new voting law, an independent prime minister and for corrupt officials to be held accountable. Since the deadline expired, clusters of young protesters have taken to the streets of Baghdad and across the Shiite-majority south every morning.

Yesterday, they set up impromptu roadblocks in the southern cities of Amarah, Basra, Diwaniyah and Kut. In Nasiriyah, central districts were packed with protesters, most of them students carrying Iraqi flags, an AFP correspondent reported. "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice ourselves for you Iraq!" they chanted, as fellow



BAGHDAD: Iraqi protesters carry away the body of a comrade who was hit by a tear gas canister amid clashes with riot police on Mohammad Al-Qasim Road yesterday. —AFP

protesters blocked the main highways north and south. That left hundreds of goods lorries stuck on the road, including some oil tankers.

Tahseen Mohannad, a demonstrator in Nasiriyah, said young people would not be deterred. "We came out today to support the protests that won't stop despite the procrastination of the state and the political parties when it comes to our just demands," he said. "We spilled blood over this and we will do so again, the blood of young people, in order to get rid of the unjust ruling class." Iraq's political parties are locked in negotiations over the choice of a new premier to replace Adel Abdel Mahdi, who stepped down in December but has stayed on in a caretaker role. The stalemate comes amid a continuing wave of rocket attacks on areas where US diplomats and troops are based. Late Monday, three rockets hit near the US embassy in Iraq's high-security Green Zone, security sources told AFP. As usual, there was no claim of responsibility but this time Abdel Mahdi has ordered an investigation into the incident. —AFP

New Islamic State leader identified

LONDON: Intelligence services have identified the new leader of the Islamic State (IS) group as Amir Mohammed Abdul Rahman Al-Mawli Al-Salbi, British newspaper The Guardian reported on Monday. The paper, citing officials from two unnamed spy services, described him as one of the terrorist group's founding members and said he had led the enslavement of the Yazidi minority in Iraq. It said he also oversaw operations around the world.

The organization had named Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashimi Al-Quraishi as its new head just days after its previous leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed in a raid by US special forces in October. The United States State Department added him to its list of most wanted terrorists in August, describing him as a "potential successor" to Baghdadi and offering a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to his capture.

Some analysts have suggested the group was caught off guard by Baghdadi's killing and that the true identity of its new leader remained uncertain. The Guardian said Salbi was selected within hours of the death and that Quraishi was a nom de guerre not recognized by other senior leaders or intelligence agencies. The newspaper described him as "a hardened veteran in the same vein as Baghdadi, unflinching in his loyalty to the extremist group".

It said he was born into an Iraqi Turkmen family in the town of Tal Afar, and is one of the few non-Arabs among the group's leadership. Holding a degree in sharia law from the University of Mosul, he rose through its ranks in part thanks to his background as an Islamic scholar, the paper added. Salbi gave religious rulings that underwrote the attempted genocide of Yazidis by IS, it said.

The US State Department said he was one of IS' "most senior ideologues" who had "helped drive and justify the abduction, slaughter, and trafficking of the Yazidi religious minority in north-west Iraq and is believed to oversee some of the group's global terrorist operations". In 2004 he was detained by US forces in Camp Bucca prison in southern Iraq where he met Baghdadi, according to The Guardian report. —AFP

International

'Really tired': French IS women languish in squalid Syria camp

Paris has so far been reluctant to repatriate its nationals

AL-HOL CAMP, Syria: In an overcrowded desert camp for families linked to the Islamic State group in north-eastern Syria, a French woman begged for another chance so she and her children could go home. In the same settlement, two other French women were more tepid about the prospect of repatriation, with one saying she feared being separated from her child.

In the squalid camp of Al-Hol, the question of return has sparked a divide among the French wives of IS fighters. "We'd like the French government to give us the chance to make it up to them," 30-year-old Umm Mohammad told AFP in French. "I think it's better they repatriate us... We'll be judged in France," said the mother of four from Paris, dressed in a black robe and face veil.

After years of fighting IS, Syria's Kurds hold 4,000 women and 8,000 children from families linked to the extremist organization, mostly in Al-Hol. Inside the camp, a veiled woman pushed a child in a pram, the bottom of her black robe caked in dry mud. Two boys in jackets and rubber boots dragged a cart over a dirt field beyond rows of white tents, a little girl in a pink coat running alongside.

'Never killed'

Umm Mohammad said that among her compatriots in Al-Hol's section for foreigners, "a huge amount want to go home". "There's another half who don't want to go back, but that's their problem," said the widow, who says her French husband was killed in Hajin, once one of the last bastions of the IS "caliphate". France has so far been reluctant to repatriate its nationals, allowing just a handful of children back on a case-by-case basis. But in an apparent U-turn last week, Justice Minister Nicole Belloubet said she saw "no other solution" but to bring back jihadists.

Kurdish-led forces expelled IS from its last patch of territory in eastern Syria in March last year. The militants stand accused of a wide range of crimes during their failed five-year experiment in statehood in parts of Syria and neighboring Iraq. But Umm Mohammad claimed she "did nothing at all" while living under IS. "I never killed anyone," she said. "We're really tired. Our children, we'd like them to go back to school."

In the camp's makeshift market, women dressed in black examined piles of colorful clothes laid out on blankets. A woman carried a tray of white eggs, followed by another balancing a plastic crate of oranges on her head. Away from the bustle, another French woman lamented the living conditions. "I don't want to stay in this camp," said 23-year-old Nour, her brown eyes barely visible through the slit of her face veil. "It's very difficult. We live in tents. It's cold. People are sick."

At least 371 children died in Al-Hol last year, the Kurdish Red Crescent has said, mainly from malnutrition, poor healthcare for newborns and hypothermia. The Kurdish authorities have warned that conditions could deteriorate further after the UN Security Council on Jan 10 voted to restrict cross-border aid. The Yaroubiya crossing on the Iraqi border was a key entry point for UN-funded medical aid reaching the area, including Al-Hol.

'France doesn't want us'

Nour, who said she was from the city of Montpellier in southern France, said she wanted to resume a normal life. "I want to live normally again - with my hijab, my children, my Islam," she said. But she insisted she did not want to be separated from her children. "If they're going to separate us, frankly I don't see the point of repatriating us," she said. She too claimed she had not carried out any crimes. "I stayed at home and educated



AL-HOL CAMP, Syria: A Frenchwoman named Amal, 25, uses crutches to walk at this Kurdish-run camp for the displaced in Hasakeh governorate in northeastern Syria on Jan 14, 2020. —AFP

my children," she said.

A third French woman - who gave her name as Amal - was more reluctant to speak. "I having nothing to say," said the 25-year-old, after slowly gliding around the used clothes market on crutches. She said she was wounded in the leg in Baghouz, a riverside hamlet

where diehard jihadists made their last stand in 2019. She would not reveal the nationality of her late husband and, under her face veil, her brown eyes avoided the camera. "France doesn't want us... doesn't want Daesh," she said, referring to IS members. "I don't want anyone to judge me." —AFP

Russian strikes in Syria kill 13 civilians

BEIRUT: Russian air strikes killed 13 civilians yesterday in northwestern Syria, as renewed violence tightened the noose around the country's last major rebel-held bastion and deepened an already dire humanitarian crisis. Retaliatory rocket attacks blamed on rebels and jihadists killed three more civilians in the government-held city of Aleppo in northern Syria, state news agency SANA said.

The spike in violence in the neighboring provinces of Aleppo and Idlib follow so far unsuccessful diplomatic attempts to reduce hostilities in the flashpoint region, with the latest truce in theory going into effect less than two weeks ago. Most of Idlib and parts of Aleppo province are still controlled by factions opposed to President Bashar al-Assad's regime, including a group that includes onetime members of Al-Qaeda's former Syria franchise.

The Damascus regime, which controls around 70 percent of the country after nearly nine years of war, has repeatedly vowed to recapture the region. Yesterday, air strikes by regime-ally Russia on a rebel-held region in Aleppo's

western countryside killed eight members of the same family sheltering in a house, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Six children were among those killed in the raid on Kfar Taal village, where three girls already died a day earlier in strikes, according to the Britain-based monitor. Three other victims were killed in separate Russian air strikes on western Aleppo on Tuesday, while raids also by Moscow in a southern region of Idlib killed two more people, the Observatory said. "Over the past three days, the bombardment on Idlib and its surroundings, including in western Aleppo, has been exclusively Russian," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. "They want to push rebels and jihadists away from the city of Aleppo and from the motorway linking Aleppo to Damascus," Abdel Rahman said. SANA said rebel rocket fire also killed two women and a child in Aleppo city.

Imminent offensive?

The surge in violence comes despite a ceasefire announced by Russia earlier this month that never really took hold. Russia has thousands of forces deployed across Syria in support of the army, while a contingent of Russian private security personnel also operates on the ground. Moscow's military intervention in 2015, four years into the Syrian conflict, helped keep Assad in power and marked a long, bloody reconquest of territory lost to



KAFR TAAL, Syria: A Syrian boy cries as he sits on the rubble of the house where he lived with his displaced family in this village in Aleppo's western countryside after pro-regime bombardment on Monday. —AFP

rebels in early stages of the war.

Abdul Rahman said the latest spate in air strikes could be a prelude to a land offensive in western Aleppo, as the regime and its allies continue their drive to shrink the last opposition-held pocket. "The regime has massed reinforcements on the outskirts of the city of Aleppo," Abdel Rahman said.

The violence in northern Syria is escalating an already dire humanitarian situation, with aid groups warning of displacement on an unprecedented scale.

Idlib province alone is home to at least three million people, many of whom are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. According to the UN humanitarian coordination agency OCHA, almost 350,000 people have fled their homes since Dec 1, mainly heading northwards from southern Idlib, which has borne the brunt of the air strikes. The International Rescue Committee has warned another 650,000 people, mostly children and women, could be forced from their homes if the violence continues. —AFP

Political row flares as Lebanon struggles to form government

BEIRUT: Tensions between Hezbollah's two main Christian allies flared yesterday when one said the other's "greed" was to blame for holding up the formation of a new Lebanese government that is urgently needed to address a major economic crisis. The comments by Suleiman Frangieh about Gebran Bassil, head of the political party founded by President Michel Aoun, point to deepening complications in the drive to form the government even as

Lebanon's financial emergency deepens. The heavily indebted country has been without effective government since Saad Al-Hariri quit as premier in October due to protests against state corruption and poor governance - the root causes of Lebanon's worst crisis since a 1975-90 civil war. The issue has become increasingly pressing as largely peaceful protests took a violent turn over the weekend, when hundreds were injured in clashes with security forces. Ordinary Lebanese have been hit hard by banks' restrictions on access to cash, a slump in the Lebanese pound, job losses and inflation.

The heavily armed Shiite group Hezbollah and its political allies have been unable to agree the make-up of the cabinet since designating former government minister Hassan Diab as prime minister more than a month ago. Political sources say the main sticking point has been over

the number of seats sought by Bassil, who heads the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and is the son-in-law of President Aoun. Bassil has been at the heart of efforts to broker the formation of a new government.

FPM, the largest Christian party, has been seeking a third of the cabinet's expected seats, according to political sources, a share that would effectively afford it a veto power which it also enjoyed under the previous government. At a news conference yesterday Frangieh, leader of the Christian party Marada, cast blame for the delay squarely on Bassil and the FPM. "His (Bassil's) greed and ambition are obstructing the government ... Let Gebran Bassil form the entire government and may God bless him," said Frangieh, who had sought to nominate two cabinet members but was restricted to one. —Reuters

Tunisia's designated PM vows to tackle economic, social ills

TUNIS: Tunisia's new designated prime minister Elyes Fakhfakh said he would form a smaller cabinet than in previous governments and combat poverty and marginalization of poorer regions. President Kais Saied named the former finance and tourism minister as his choice for premier on Monday, giving him a month to form a government that can win majority support in the deeply fragmented parliament.

Speaking late on Monday, Fakhfakh said his cabinet would try to meet the aspirations of the 2011 revolution that introduced democracy, citing the October election of Saied as evidence Tunisians wanted big change. "We will work... to establish the conditions for a fair and strong state, a state that will reward weaker regions and weaker neighborhoods and end decades of poverty and marginalisation," he said.

The economy has languished since the revolution, with low growth, high state deficits and debt, mounting unem-

ployment and declining public services that have caused many Tunisians to lose faith in politics. "We will focus all our forces on raising the priority challenges, social and economic, and strengthening democracy," he added. Tunisia needs to borrow about \$3 billion internationally in 2020 to meet spending commitments, and faces strong pressure from international lenders to cut spending.

Addressing Fakhfakh in published comments, Saied said: "Remember the martyrs. Heed the cry of the unemployed and the cry of the poor". Saied named the former Total employee after the parliament this month rejected a government proposed by Habib Jemli, who was designated prime minister in November. Jemli was nominated by the moderate Islamist Ennahda party, a member of successive governments since the revolution, after it came first in the October elections with 53 of the 217 seats.

However, he was not able to win enough support from other parties for his proposed cabinet, giving President Saied the opportunity to designate his own choice for premier. His selection of Fakhfakh came despite the wishes of most parties in parliament, which showed more support for two other candidates. He now has a month to form a government and put it to a confidence vote. If he loses, there will be another election. —Reuters



TUNIS: Tunisia's prime minister-designate Elyes Fakhfakh, tasked with forming a government, leaves his office in the capital yesterday. —AFP

Turkey blocks Cyprus from session of world disarmament body

GENEVA: Turkey blocked a request from Cyprus yesterday to participate as an observer at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, amid growing tensions between the two countries. Cyprus was one of a long line of countries to request the right to serve as observers in the first session of the year of the 65-member Geneva-based body. All but one request were accepted by the necessary consensus.

But when the request from Cyprus was raised, Turkey's representative requested the floor. Ankara, he said, has in the past refrained from blocking Cyprus's participation, and had simply voiced its displeasure in a letter at the end of each session. But that has changed, he said, stressing that "Turkey will not support this particular request this year."

The US and EU lamented the Turkish move. "It is unfortunate that Turkey has decided to block Cyprus from participating in the work of the conference," said the US ambassador to the conference, Robert Wood, urging "Turkey to reconsider its objection."

Turkey's objection came amid growing tensions over Ankara expanding its claims over a large gas-rich area which Cyprus says includes its territorial waters. 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. —AFP

Egypt court orders minister to reveal ex-MP's location

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has ordered the country's interior minister to reveal the whereabouts of a missing former parliamentarian believed to be in state custody, his wife told AFP yesterday. Mostafa Al-Naggar, a former opposition lawmaker and key figure in the 2011 revolution that toppled long-time autocrat Hosni Mubarak, was reported missing in Sept 2018. His disappearance for over a year has given rise to accusations that he is in custody, something authorities have previously denied. "We are expecting that they (authorities) will tell us where he is," Shymaa Afifi, his wife told AFP.

Rights groups maintain enforced disappearances of dissidents is a systematic practice that Egyptian authorities have used to muzzle opposition in recent years. The binding decision from the state council court on Saturday will take effect within the next month, compelling Interior Minister Mahmoud Tawfik to reveal Naggar's location, Afifi said. Local rights group Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom, which has advocated for Naggar's release, confirmed the decision in a Facebook post. "Every positive step in trying to find out where he is opens up doors of hope for us," it wrote. Egypt's State Information Service previously denied that Naggar was arrested, later claiming he was a "fugitive willingly evading" a three-year sentence for "insulting the judiciary". Since the military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, authorities have cracked down on freedom of expression, jailing thousands of liberal and secular activists as well as Islamists. Authorities insist the measures are necessary to maintain stability and combat terrorism. —AFP

International

Trump, EU commission chief discuss 'trade deal' in Davos

Democrats blast McConnell's rules for Trump impeachment trial in Senate

DAVOS: US President Donald Trump said at a meeting yesterday in Davos with new EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that they were discussing a trade deal. Trump, accompanied by top economic advisors including Wilbur Ross and Robert Lighthizer, met with von der Leyen on the sidelines of the Davos economic conference. "We're going to talk about a good trade deal. We'll be discussing other things also," he told reporters.

Von der Leyen said she was looking forward to working with Trump, saying Americans and Europeans were "good friends". Trump said he'd heard von der Leyen is "a very tough negotiator". The talks came shortly after Paris announced a truce in its tussle with Washington over plans for taxing US technology companies earning revenue in France. Trump had threatened to hit back with tariffs.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, speaking before a Brussels meeting with EU counterparts, said President Emmanuel Macron and Trump had talked and "agreed to avoid all escalation between the US and France on this digital tax issue." A French diplomatic source said the French and US leaders, who spoke by telephone on Sunday, agreed to give negotiations a chance to avoid "a trade war that will benefit no one".

Meanwhile, Democrats yesterday blasted the top Senate Republican's proposed rules for US President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, saying its failure to guarantee witnesses or that evidence gathered by investigators would be allowed into the record was tantamount to rigging the proceedings.

Trump's trial on charges approved on Dec 18 by the Democratic-led House of Representatives accusing him of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress begins in earnest in the Senate yesterday in a rare use of the consti-

tutional mechanism for ousting a president. On Monday, Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell proposed rules that would execute a potentially quick trial. He unveiled a resolution that would give House Democratic prosecutors and Trump lawyers 48 hours, evenly split, to present their arguments over a maximum of four days.

Under the resolution, lawyers for Trump could move early in the proceedings to ask senators to dismiss all charges, a senior Republican leadership aide said, a motion that would likely fall short of the support needed to succeed. "That is not a fair trial. In fact, it is no trial at all," the seven House Democrats who will set out the case against Trump during the trial said in a statement yesterday.

Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer told CNN that Democrats would seek amendments. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in a statement, said the Republicans' plan would force the trial into the "dark of night" and accused McConnell of choosing "a cover-up for the president, rather than honor his oath to the Constitution."

The proceedings are due to start at around 1 pm EST (1800 GMT) and the trial is expected to continue six days a week, Monday through Saturday, until at least the end of January.

At the heart of the impeachment trial is Trump's request to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a July 25 phone call to investigate a political rival, former Vice President Joe Biden, and his son Hunter.

Democrats accuse Trump of pressuring a vulnerable ally to interfere in US elections at the expense of American national security. Trump's legal team says there was no pressure and that the Democrats' case is based on hearsay. — Agencies



DAVOS: US President Donald Trump shakes hands with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen prior to their meeting at the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday. — AFP

France, US agree to extend talks over digital tax

PARIS: Presidents Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump have agreed to extend negotiations on a dispute over a French tax on digital giants to the end of the year, postponing Washington's threat of sanctions against Paris, French officials said yesterday. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, speaking before a Brussels meeting with EU counterparts, said: "Macron and Trump had a very constructive discussion... and they agreed to avoid all escalation between the US and France on this digital tax issue."

A French diplomatic source said the French and US leaders, who spoke by telephone on Sunday, agreed to give negotiations a chance to "find a solution in an international framework" and avoid "a trade war that will benefit no one".

Macron tweeted Monday that he had had a "great discussion" with Trump on the issue. "We will work together on a good agreement to avoid tariff escalation," he said. "Excellent!" replied Trump on Twitter.

The White House said the two men spoke and "agreed it is important to complete successful negotiations on the digital services tax, and they also discussed other bilateral issues."

The dispute began last year when Paris approved a levy of up to three percent on revenues earned by technology companies in France, as international efforts dragged on to find a new model for taxing revenues earned via online sales and advertising. Tech companies often pay little tax in countries in which they are not physically present. Washington said the tax singled out US companies such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Netflix. It threatened retaliatory duties of up to 100 percent of the value of French imports of such emblematic goods as Champagne and Camembert cheese. The European Union had said it would back France if such tariffs were levied, raising the prospect of a transatlantic trade war.

'Remains a difficult negotiation'

On January 7, Paris and Washington had given themselves 15 days to reach a deal to avert the US threat of duties on up to \$2.4 billion of French goods. Le Maire, who has been conducting intensive negotiations for the last several weeks, had been scheduled to hold crunch talks on the issue with US counterpart Steven Mnuchin at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday.

After confirming the reprieve, Le Maire told journalists in Brussels that he spoke with Mnuchin by telephone on Sunday and "our technical teams are in contact day and night to work on a solution".

He stressed that "this remains a difficult negotiation... A certain number of details need to be worked out, but I believe we're going in the right direction." Le Maire declined, however, to say whether France would suspend its digital tax. "I am not going to get into the details of the negotiation. I prefer that that remains between Mnuchin and myself," he said. Nevertheless, according to concurring sources, France is willing to suspend the tax "to provide some time" to find a solution under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. While the principle of the tax itself was not in question, the collection of payments scheduled for April and November was being suspended "to provide time for negotiations within the framework of the OECD," according to one source.

Another source said that France would suspend collection of the payment scheduled for April, "with the balance to be paid in November by the companies concerned". In Brussels, the industry's lobby group, the Computer & Communications Industry Association, hailed the move. "We welcome the reported French suspension of their digital tax & the renewed focus on achieving global tax reform," CIIA Europe wrote in a tweet.

The French presidency said on Monday that "France is pursuing its objective of fair taxation on digital companies and finding a compromise within the framework of the OECD." — AFP

Dutch farm dad 'beat bad spirits out of kids'

THE HAGUE: A Dutchman isolated six of his children in a remote farmhouse from birth and beat them to drive out "bad spirits," prosecutors told a court yesterday. Gerrit Jan van D., 67, subjected the youngsters who were found on the farm in the village of Ruinerwold in October to "very serious physical punishment" when he thought they had been made "unclean". One child was tied up by his hands and feet as punishment, while another child was forced to spend an entire summer in a doghouse at the farm in northern Drenthe province.

"The children all speak of very serious physical punishment if their father thought there was a 'bad spirit' in them. That happened from a very young age, four or five years," prosecutors said during a procedural hearing in the case. Prosecutors said the youngest six of the man's nine children "lived in seclusion from birth, were kept indoors and had to be quiet so that no one would notice that they existed." They were not registered with Dutch authorities



Gerrit Jan van D., 67, who isolated six of his children in a remote farmhouse from birth and beat them to drive out "bad spirits."

and had never been to school, they said. The family was first discovered in October when the oldest son still living on the farm walked into a local bar in a confused state and raised concern about the welfare of his other siblings.

Police raided the farm and arrested Van D. and an Austrian man identified as Joseph B., 58.

'Unclean'

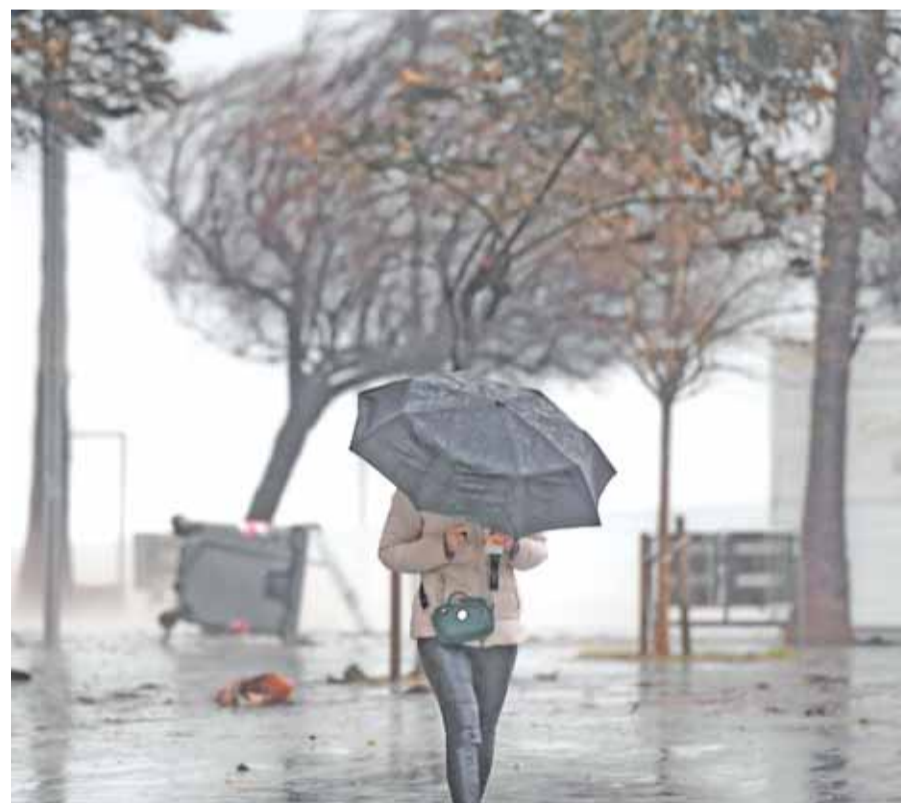
Van D was absent for medical reasons from yesterday's hearing in the town of Assen. He is charged with depriving

the children of their liberty from 2007 to 2019 and "punching, kicking and denying food and drink" to the six children. He is also charged with sexually abusing two of the older three children. Joseph B. is also charged with depriving the children of their liberty and was in court.

"I feel like this is a witch hunt," Joseph B. told the court. "I have a clear conscience... I have not robbed anyone of his freedom." Prosecutors said the three oldest children were not allowed to talk about the existence of their brothers and sisters. Citing diaries kept by the children, prosecutors said they had all spoken of their "conviction that contact with the outside world makes you 'unclean' and about 'bad spirits' that come into bodies. The father determined when a child had a 'bad spirit'."

"This child was isolated, had to pray and the other family members were not allowed to have contact with this child, sometimes not even for months." One of the children was separated from the rest of the family at the age of 12 and made to stay in a caravan on another part of the farm, prosecutors said, adding that "after that he spent a whole summer in a doghouse in a shed." The three oldest of the nine children were allowed to go to school and the "exterior doors were not locked all those years", prosecutors said.

But they said that there was still "unlawful deprivation of liberty for all these years—classically locked up at times, but in a less classic way at other times." Prosecutors said the abuse was a "figurative lock on the door", adding that "no physical lock is required on the door as evidence of unlawful deprivation of liberty or hostage-taking." — AFP



BARCELONA: A woman walks with difficulty due to the strong wind in El Bogatell beach in Barcelona as storm Gloria batters Spanish eastern coast yesterday. Freezing winds, heavy snow and rain lashed parts of Spain yesterday, killing three people, forcing the closure of schools that cancelled classes for nearly 200,000 students and disrupting travel, officials said. — AFP

Deadly storm lashing Spain closes schools, cuts power

BARCELONA: A winter storm which has killed four people lashed much of eastern Spain for a third day yesterday, cutting power, forcing the closure of schools and severing road and rail links. National weather agency Aemet placed most of northeastern Spain on alert because of the storm packing gusts of over 100 kilometers (60 miles) per hour, heavy snowfall, freezing rain and massive waves which smashed into seafront promenades, damaging shops and restaur-

rants. Some 220,000 people lost power for several hours in the province of Girona in the northeastern region of Catalonia, local emergency services said. The AP7 highway linking France and Spain—an important truck route—was cut at the border due to the heavy snowfall as several rail links were interrupted, local authorities said.

Classes were cancelled for some 170,000 students in Catalonia and the eastern region of Valencia yesterday. The storm, which hit Spain on Sunday, has so far claimed the lives of three people, including a 54-year-old homeless woman from Romania who was found dead in a park.

In the northeasterly province of Girona, 220,000 residents were without power, emergency services said, although a breach in the main supply from neighboring France had been repaired. More than 2,600 km (1,600 miles) of roads were covered with snow. — Agencies

Ivory Coast authorities clear 'security risk' shanty town near airport

ABIDJAN: Inhabitants of a shanty town adjoining Ivory Coast's main airport have had to leave their homes, their possessions hastily packed into suitcases, wheelbarrows and bags, after officials decided to bulldoze part of the area as a security measure. Authorities vowed to make a buffer zone around Abidjan airport after an Ivorian boy was found dead in the landing gear of a passenger jet at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport on January 8. Inquiries found the 14-year-old had scaled a fence and grabbed hold of the plane's undercarriage as it was readying for takeoff to Paris.

Adjouffou, a settlement of some 25,000 inhabitants, was partially evacuated on Monday to make way for a security strip of 200 meters (650 feet) around the airport enclosure. The shanty town lies on the airport's right-of-way and all the land belongs to the state. "This is no good. We have nothing. What are we to do now? Look at my Dad," cried Aicha Savadogo, 14, as her father gathered the last things from their home,

made of cardboard and pieces of wood. "When we were young, we crossed the runway to grow cassava or mangoes," said Abdul Ouattara, 41. "We have always been here. There are schools, shops, churches and mosques." Francis Kablan, a truck driver with nine mouths to feed, helped a neighbor to lift the roof off his shack. "I'm here because I don't know where to go. We've stashed our things with my wife's family." He added: "I was born here, lived here for 40 years. There used to be no wall, we could see the aircraft. There was never any problem." The death of young Laurent Barthelemy Ani Guibahi touched many people in Ivory Coast but also triggered alarm over security at the airport.

Ivory Coast is on the periphery of jihadist terror attacks mostly affecting its northern neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso. Sites for those being expelled from their homes are being considered, Hamed Diomande, chief of staff to the minister of transport, said last week. — AFP

KFC apologizes for 'sexist' Australian ad

MELBOURNE: KFC apologized for an advertisement in Australia that shows two young boys staring at a woman's breasts, after calls from a local campaign group to boycott the fast-food giant over the ad it called "sexist", the Australian Associated Press reported. The 15-second ad, which is still on KFC Australia's YouTube channel, shows a woman adjust her breasts as she looks at her reflection in the window of a parked car.

The car's window then rolls down to show two young boys looking at the woman's breasts, before she smiles and says, "did someone say KFC?" "We apologize if anyone was offended by our latest commercial. Our intention was not to

stereotype women and young boys in a negative light." Yum! Brands Inc's KFC said in a statement to the Australian Associated Press.

It was not immediately clear if KFC would take any action on the usage of ad. The video has garnered more than 28,000 views on the company's YouTube channel.

KFC's response came after Collective Shout, a group which campaigns against the objectification of women, condemned the advertisement and said it was a "regression to tired and archaic stereotypes where young women are sexually objectified for male pleasure." "Ads like this reinforce the false idea that we can't expect better from boys. It is another manifestation of the 'boys will be boys' trope, hampering our ability to challenge sexist ideas which contribute to harmful behavior towards women and girls, the group's spokeswoman, Melinda Liszewski, said. While many did not approve of the ad, several others took to Twitter to label the ad "funny" and said there was no need for the company to apologize. — Reuters

International

Myanmar govt panel finds 'war crimes' but no 'genocide' against Rohingya

Rights groups dub report as 'whitewash' days ahead of UN court ruling

YANGON: A government-appointed panel established in Myanmar to probe allegations of abuses in Rakhine state in 2017 that drew global outrage said on Monday they had found no evidence of genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

More than 730,000 Rohingya fled Rakhine state during weeks of brutal violence, during which the United Nations says gang rapes and mass killings were carried out with "genocidal intent". Hundreds of villages were burned to the ground and later razed and scraped.

Although the panel acknowledged "war crimes" had taken place, rights groups and Rohingya leaders dismissed the report as a "whitewash" days ahead of an expected ruling by the UN's highest court on a genocide case against the country.

The commission of inquiry said there were "reasonable grounds" to conclude members of the security forces among "multiple actors" were responsible for possible war crimes and serious human rights violations during a military-led crackdown against the group in 2017.

These included the "killing of innocent villagers and destruction of their homes", it said. But in its statement, issued to mark the finalization of a full report based on interviews with villagers and members of the security forces, the panel blamed Rohingya militants for attacking 30 police posts and "provoking" the crackdown and described the situation as an "internal armed conflict".

"The ICOE has not found any evidence suggesting that these killings or acts of displacement were committed pursuant to an intent or plan to destroy the Muslim or any other community in northern Rakhine State," the panel's statement read.

"There is insufficient evidence to argue, much less conclude, that the crimes committed were undertaken with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic,

racial or religious group, or with any other requisite mental state for the international crime of genocide."

Myanmar President Win Myint said in a statement yesterday the government "concurred" with the findings of the commission and vowed to pursue further investigations, specifically into alleged crimes by civilians and Rohingya militants.

He said he had given the report to the army chief, so that the military might extend ongoing investigations, he said, adding that the executive summary would be made public. The army began a rare trial in November of soldiers and officers from a regiment deployed to Gu Dar Pyin village, the site of an alleged massacre of Rohingya.

Two spokesmen for the military could not be reached for comment by Reuters. In Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled Myanmar have taken refuge, a Rohingya leader, Dil Mohammed, described the report as a whitewash. "We have been persecuted for decades. So many of our people were killed, our women were raped, our children were thrown into fire and our homes were torched. If it is not genocide, what is it?" he said.

The International Court of Justice, the highest UN court, will this week issue a decision on a request for emergency measures in a genocide case against the country. Gambia filed the suit in November alleging Myanmar was committing "an ongoing genocide" against the Rohingya. The commission of enquiry was formed in 2018 as the country faced growing calls for accountability. The government appointed two local and two international members - Filipino diplomat Rosario Manalo and Kenzo Oshima, a former Japanese ambassador to the United Nations. Myanmar says the international efforts violate its sovereignty and has vowed to carry out its own investigations into the allegations. But few have been punished so far. Seven soldiers jailed for 10 years for killing 10



THE HAGUE: In this file photo taken on December 11, 2019, Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi (center) stands before the UN's International Court of Justice next to Abubacarr Tambadou (second left), minister of justice of the Gambia, in the Peace Palace of The Hague, on the second day of her hearing on the Rohingya genocide case. — AFP

Rohingya men and boys in the village of Inn Din were granted early release last November, after serving less than a year in prison. "The problem is, according to Myanmar's constitution, the military is the only institution that can investigate its own members for breaches of mili-

tary discipline," Maung Maung Soe, a political analyst based in the commercial capital of Yangon, told Reuters. "We will be able to solve this problem only if a court martial seriously engages and takes specific actions on those who committed war crimes." — Reuters



Bangladeshi women wearing masks stage a silent protest against rape in Dhaka. — Reuters

Bangladesh court orders govt to tackle rise in rapes

DHAKA: Bangladesh's government will set up a commission to investigate a sharp rise in the number of rapes, the deputy attorney general said on Monday, after the country's top court ordered it to act.

Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al Mahmud said it was clear that the number of rapes had risen as he promised to abide by the court's directive, delivered on Sunday. No official figures are yet available for 2019, but human rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) estimates that the number of rapes doubled to about 1,500 last year. It based the estimate on media reports and the complaints it handled. "You can't deny that the number of rapes has increased," Mahmud told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We have taken this directive on a positive note and the government won't just sit idly. It will try its best to tackle this problem."

Women's rights groups have also

said the incidence of sexual violence is rising, blaming a failure to implement the law that has led to a culture of impunity for such crimes. In addition, many victims never report the crime for fear of being ostracized by their families and wider communities, they say. The High Court's ruling was in response to a private petition filed by a lawyer in response to the rape this month of a student at Dhaka's top university that sparked protests.

The lawyer, Khandoker Kawsar, said he wanted the government to form a commission to identify the drivers and tackle the issue. The court said the commission should be created within a month and should submit a set of recommendations to tackle the problem within six months. "This has become a scary issue. There are times when I am scared to send my own children to school," said Nina Goswami, a director at ASK, calling the court's intervention "a timely initiative". — Reuters

Hostage justice? Japan fights back with an internet FAQ

TOKYO: Japan yesterday published a list defending how it treats people accused of crimes, the latest move in its struggle to counter accusations of "hostage justice" after ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn's dramatic escape to Lebanon. The 3,000-word list of 14 questions and answers on the Justice Ministry's home page, in English and Japanese, addresses Japan's conviction rate of more than 99 percent and why lawyers aren't present during questioning.

Ghosn, who was free on bail, fled over the New Year holidays as he was awaiting trial on charges such as under-reporting income - which he denies. He said he had no choice but to run and that he felt "like the hostage of a country I served for 17 years."

His complaints were echoed by Australian sports journalist Scott McIntyre, who was detained in the same center as Ghosn for 44 days on trespassing charges after he tried to get information on his missing children. McIntyre said the lights were on 24 hours a day, making it impossible to sleep more than an hour each night, and that several of his fellow detainees told him they would confess to crimes they had not committed to shorten their time there.

Both cases have drawn foreign attention to Japan's criminal justice system and put its government on the defensive, with Justice Minister Masako Mori at one point saying Ghosn's accusations were "intolerable." "Japanese detention centers maintain detention rooms appropriately ... The rooms are structured so as to allow sufficient natural light and ensure good

airflow," the Ministry said on its website. "Access to bathing is granted to detainees at least twice a week in order to keep them in good health." In its global report this month, Human Rights Watch criticized what it called Japan's "hostage justice system."

"Criminal suspects are held for long periods in harsh conditions to coerce a confession," it said, adding that the situation received renewed attention after Ghosn's arrest. One of the longest answers on the ministry's website, at 325 words, was a response to "Isn't it fair to describe Japan's justice system as one of 'hostage justice?'"

"To the contrary, the Japanese criminal justice system does not force confessions by unduly holding suspects and defendants in custody. It is therefore not accurate at all to criticize the system as being a 'hostage justice' system," it said. "In Japan, there are strict requirements and procedures stipulated in law with regard to holding suspects and defendants in custody, with due consideration given to the guarantee of human rights." — Reuters

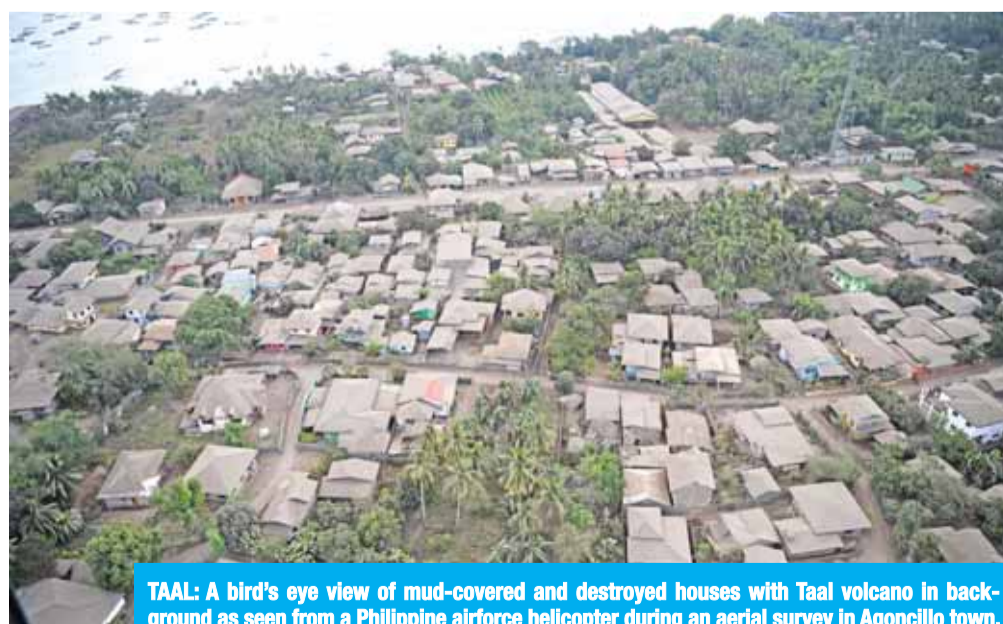
Signs of life at 'no-man's land' around volcano

TAAL, Philippines: A desolate landscape of ash dunes and bare trees left by the eruption of the Philippines' Taal volcano lay in contrast with a few signs of life at ground zero of the disaster yesterday. The island site was buried by massive deposits of ash when Taal erupted last week and remains under a mandatory evacuation order due to a feared bigger blast.

Yet about a dozen white cows milled near dust-blanketed homes, and several brightly colored boats were docked at the shore yesterday, according to an AFP reporter taken on a rare military flight around the area.

Thin plumes of steam rose from the crater. Authorities have said any outward signs of an imminent eruption have been weak over the past several days.

But scientists warn the volcano is still at risk of a major blast, and more than 110,000 people have taken refuge in shelters away from danger. At least 3,000 who lived on the island were ordered out, though many have



TAAL: A bird's eye view of mud-covered and destroyed houses with Taal volcano in background as seen from a Philippine Air Force helicopter during an aerial survey in Agoncillo town, Batangas province, south of Manila yesterday. — AFP

made trips back to rescue livestock or fetch items from their homes.

Houses were flattened or buried under the ash, though AFP saw at least one with a roof swept clean.

Many families previously offered services

catering to the tourists who visited the volcano - a popular attraction in the Philippines despite the risk of eruption. The government has said it is now working on a plan to permanently relocate them, and turn the island into what officials have called a no-man's land. — AFP

Taiwan gay couples urge foreign marriage rights after Tsai win

TAIPEI: Rights groups and gay couples called on Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday to cement the island's reputation as a bastion of LGBT rights by recognizing international same-sex marriages following her landslide re-election victory.

Taiwan is at the vanguard of the burgeoning gay rights movement in Asia and became the first place in the region to legalize gay marriages last year after a bruising political fight.

Nearly 3,000 couples have since wed as of December but rights advocates say the law still contains restrictions not faced by heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples can only wed foreigners from countries where gay marriage is also recognized and can only adopt their partners' biological children.

"I hope President Tsai can see the difficulties international couples face," said Lai Kai-li, whose partner is from conservative Malaysia. "We feel like our futures are in limbo right now and we can't really make any plans," she added. A 26-year-old Hong Konger - who asked to be identi-

fied only as Yan - said she longed for Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party to push further on gay rights.

"Hong Kong doesn't have freedom and human rights now and I think it would never recognize same-sex marriage," she told reporters. Hong Kong's judges have repeatedly ruled in favor of granting more rights to same sex couples but the city's conservative pro-Beijing leadership has resisted legislative changes. "President Tsai said she has achieved marriage equality but we'd like to tell her it's not completed yet and there are still some things to be done," said Chien Chih-chieh, secretary general of Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights.

According to the alliance, more than 200 international same-sex couples are waiting for their unions to be recognized in Taiwan. Tsai was handed a second term earlier this month following a landslide victory that won her a significant mandate. Her party also retained a comfortable majority in the island's single house legislature. — AFP

News in brief

8 Indian tourists die in Nepal hotel

KATHMANDU: Eight Indian tourists including four children died of suspected suffocation in a hotel in Nepal yesterday, police said, after trying to keep warm by using a gas heater during the night. The victims were staying in Daman, a hill resort south of Kathmandu which is known for its panoramic views of the Himalayas. "They had lit a gas heater to keep the room warm and probably suffocated," police official Hobindra Bogati told Reuters. Seven other tourists in the group were unharmed. Tourism is a major source of revenue for Nepal's economy, providing hundreds of thousands of jobs. Last year just over 1 million tourists visited the country, of which the biggest contingent - around a tenth - came from India. — Reuters

Five Indonesian fishermen kidnapped

JAKARTA: Abu Sayyaf militants from the Philippines seized five Indonesian fishermen from a vessel off eastern Borneo, Jakarta officials said yesterday, the latest in a series of abductions in the area. Indonesia's foreign ministry said it was working closely with Malaysian and Philippines authorities to rescue the crew, while urging other fishermen to avoid the area. Eight crew members were aboard the vessel when it was boarded by the militants - who have distant links to the Islamic State organization - but three were allowed to go free. Abu Sayyaf is a group of self-proclaimed Islamic militants based in the southern Philippines who have engaged in bombings as well as kidnappings of Western tourists and missionaries for ransom since the early 1990s.

Hope fades for missing trekkers

POKHARA, Nepal: Rescuers in the search for four South Korean trekkers and three Nepalis said yesterday there was little hope of finding them alive after they were swept away and buried by an avalanche in the Himalayas. The group was descending near Annapurna base camp around 3,230 metres (10,600 feet) above sea level when the avalanche struck on Friday after heavy snowfall. "It has been so many days, so it is hard to be hopeful for survival. With our equipment we found signals on the area when the avalanche landed, confirming that there are bodies buried inside," rescue worker Ang Tashi Sherpa said. Experts say there is a very low chance of survival for those buried in an avalanche for more than two hours.

Analysis

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Ethiopians look for love during Orthodox epiphany celebration

Getahun Fetana spent years admiring Emebet Melaku from a distance before plucking up the nerve to speak to her, taking advantage of a chance encounter during Timkat, the Ethiopian Orthodox celebration of epiphany. Breaking off from his friends, the 37-year-old professor walked over to introduce himself, and the sparks that flew led to their wedding on the very same holiday one year later. "We got married on Timkat because we wanted to remember it as a breakthrough in our relationship," Getahun told AFP. "The day has a special place in our hearts."

It is far from the only Ethiopian love story closely bound up with Timkat, which Orthodox Christians celebrated Monday with feasts and elaborate processions across the country. The holiday, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, was marked this year by the collapse of a wooden seating structure during a pivotal ceremony in the northern Ethiopian city of Gondar, an accident that left at least 10 people dead.

But it is generally a sunny and joyous affair - and one that offers a choice meeting ground for young singles on the hunt for romance. Multiple factors make Timkat ideal for finding a partner, said Aschalew Worku, the top tourism official in Gondar. First, the holiday comes at the height of wedding season, meaning love is already in the air. The fact that it's also the dry season means the country's roads are in good shape, making it easier to travel and meet new people.

Finally, worshippers don their finest traditional clothing on Timkat, including pristine white robes and tunics accented with the greens, reds and yellows of the Ethiopian flag. There's even a saying - "Let a dress not meant for Timkat be shredded" - suggesting that Timkat clothes are the only ones worth keeping. "Everyone is dressed to impress," Aschalew said. "Everyone attends Timkat clean and fresh, and this creates an opportunity for dating."

Courtship customs

The most famous Timkat celebrations take place each year in Gondar, the former seat of the royal empire located 700 km north of the capital, Addis Ababa. Before dawn on Monday, thousands of people gathered at stone baths constructed during the reign of 17th-century Emperor Fasilides. The ceremony during which the seating area collapsed - in which worshippers dive into holy water to recreate Jesus' baptism - was meant to cap a weekend-long traditional celebration that last month was inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

For many young people, though, the main event came the day before, as tens of thousands of Ethiopians and foreign tourists marched alongside priests carrying cloaked tabots - replicas of the Ark of the Covenant - amid a riot of music, dance and prayer. This is when young men and women have typically sparked up conversations that can lead to relationships.

One Timkat custom calls for young men to throw lemons at women they find attractive, aiming for the heart to signal their intentions. But while lemon-throwing is still common in rural areas, it is increasingly out of fashion in Ethiopia's fast-growing cities. A common joke in Gondar is that instead of throwing lemons at their crushes, young men today would do better to throw iPhones.

For Aschalew, the tourism official, this reflects a broader shift away from traditional dating habits, as Ethiopian youth explore new ways to meet partners. "These days there are plenty of platforms for dating. People meet at the workplace or in school, and technological advancements mean they can meet on Facebook," he said. Aschalew described this as an "acceptable" result of modernity, but some Gondar residents told AFP they believed the old customs should be revived. "People who find their spouse on Timkat are getting a gift from God," said Rahel Mola, a 37-year-old Gondar native. — AFP

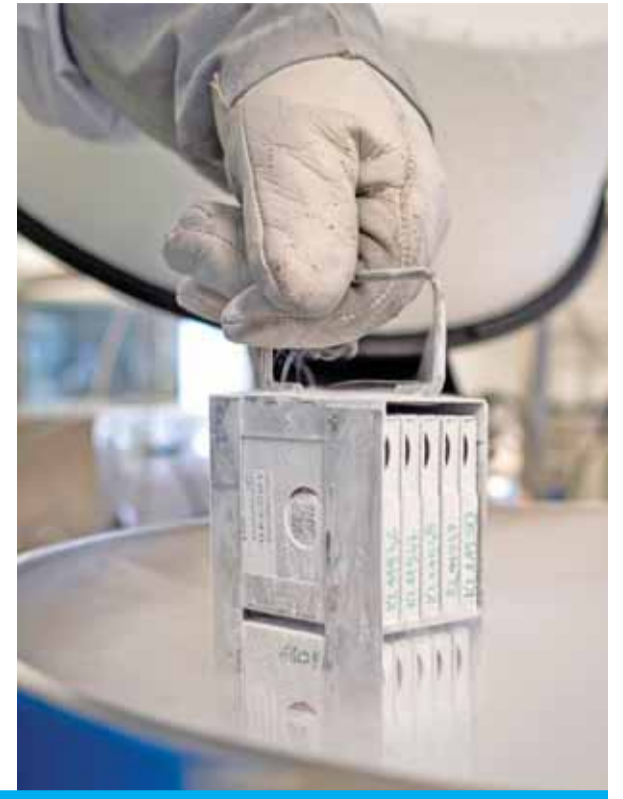


Getahun Fetana and his wife Emebet Melaku pose for a portrait in their home in Gondar, Ethiopia, on Jan 18, 2020. — AFP

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(Left) Umbilical cord blood and cord, collected from hospitals, are prepared for storage at the headquarters of the Polish umbilical cord blood bank PBKM/FamiCord on Nov 26, 2019 in Warsaw. (Right) Biologist Krzysztof Machaj shows stem cell samples stored in large liquid nitrogen freezers. — AFP photos



Europe's guardian of stem cells and hopes

Poland has emerged as Europe's leader in stem cell storage, a billion-dollar global industry that is a key part of a therapy that can treat leukaemias but raises excessive hopes. Submerged in liquid nitrogen vapor at a temperature of minus 175 degrees Celsius, hundreds of thousands of stem cells from all over Europe bide their time in large steel barrels on the outskirts of Warsaw.

Present in blood drawn from the umbilical cord of a newborn baby, stem cells can help cure serious blood-related illnesses like leukaemias and lymphomas, as well as genetic conditions and immune system deficits. Polish umbilical cord blood bank PBKM/FamiCord became the industry's leader in Europe after Swiss firm Cryo-Save went bankrupt early last year.

It is also the fifth largest in the world, according to its management, after two companies in the United States, a Chinese firm and one based in Singapore. Since the first cord blood transplant was performed in France in 1988, the sector has significantly progressed, fuelling hopes.

Health insurance

Mum-of-two Teresa Przeborowska has firsthand experience. At five years old, her son Michal was diagnosed with lymphoblastic leukaemia and needed a bone marrow transplant, the entrepreneur from northern Poland said. The most compatible donor was his younger sister, Magdalena. When she was born, her parents had a bag of her cord blood stored at PBKM.

More than three years later, doctors injected his sister's stem cells into Michal's bloodstream. It was not quite enough for Michal's needs but nicely supplemented harvested bone marrow. As a result, Michal, who is nine, "is now flourishing, both intellectually and physically", his mum told AFP. A cord blood transplant has become an alternative to a bone marrow transplant when there is no donor available, with a lower risk of complications.

Stem cells taken from umbilical cord blood are like those taken from bone marrow, capable of producing all blood cells: Red cells, platelets and immune system cells. When used, stem cells are first concentrated, then injected into the patient. Once transfused, they produce new cells of every kind. At the PBKM laboratory, "each container holds up to 10,000 blood bags... Safe and secure, they wait to be used in the future," its head, Krzysztof Machaj, said.

The bank holds around 440,000 samples, not including those from Cryo-Save, he said. If the need arises, the "blood will be ready to use without the whole process of looking for a compatible donor and running blood tests," the biologist told AFP. For families who have paid an initial nearly A600 (\$675) and then an annual A120 to have the blood taken from their newborns' umbilical cords preserved for around 20 years, it is a kind of health insurance promising faster and more effective treatment if illness strikes. But researchers also warn against unrealistic expectations.

Beauty products

Haematologist Wieslaw Jedrzejczak, a bone marrow pioneer in Poland, describes promoters of the treatment as "sellers of hope", who "make promises that are either impossible to realize in the near future or downright impossible to realize at all for biological reasons". He compares them to makers of beauty products who "swear their cream will rejuvenate the client by 20 years."

Various research is being done on the possibility of using the stem cells to treat other diseases, notably nervous disorders. But the EuroStemCell scientist network warns that the research is not yet conclusive. "There is a list of almost 80 diseases for which stem cells could prove beneficial," US haematologist Roger Mrowiec, who heads the clinical laboratory of the cord blood program Vitalant in New Jersey, told AFP. "But given the present state of medicine, they are

effective only for around a dozen of them, like leukaemia or cerebral palsy," he said. "It's not true, as it's written sometimes, that we can already use them to fight Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease or diabetes."

EuroStemCell also cautions against private blood banks that "advertise services to parents suggesting they should pay to freeze their child's cord blood... in case it's needed later in life". "Studies show it is highly unlikely that the cord blood will ever be used for their child," the network said. It also pointed out that there could be a risk of the child's cells not being useable anyway without reintroducing the same illness. Some countries, such as Belgium and France, are cautious and ban the storage of cord blood for private purposes. Most EU countries however permit it while imposing strict controls.

Rapid growth

In the early 2000s, Swiss company Cryo-Save enjoyed rapid growth. Greeks, Hungarians, Italians, Spaniards and Swiss stored blood from their newborns with the company for 20 years on payment of 2,500 euros upfront. When the firm was forced to close in early 2019, clients were left wondering where their stem cells would end up. Under a kind of back-up agreement, the samples of some 250,000 European families were transferred for storage at PBKM.

The Polish firm, founded in 2002 with two million zlotys (around \$525,000), has also grown quickly. Present under the FamiCord brand in several countries, PBKM has some 35 percent of the European market, excluding Cryo-Save assets. Over the last 15 months, outside investors have contributed 63 million euros to the firm, PBKM's chief executive Jakub Baran told AFP. But the company has not escaped controversy: The Polityka weekly recently published a critical investigative report on several private clinics that offer what was described as expensive treatment involving stem cells held by PBKM. — AFP

China's zero-waste activists fight overconsumption

Parcels piled high at sorting centres and drivers speeding down bike lanes to deliver takeout lunches are ubiquitous sights in urban China, where e-commerce and delivery apps have taken over everyday life. But the growing embrace of consumerism is generating mountains of waste: The nation will produce as much as 500 million tons of waste annually by 2030, the World Bank warns, up from just 30 million in 1980.

There are signs of a fightback against convenience culture - this week the government announced plans to ban plastic bags in major cities and single-use straws from restaurants by the end of this year. The zero-waste movement is also grabbing public attention as its vocal followers try to spread the message of mindful consumption. "Everything is wrapped with plastic, because that's convenient, but actually the cost of convenience is tremendous," says Beijing resident Carrie Yu, who has committed to "zero-waste" living since 2016.

By recycling, repurposing and composting most of their garbage, Yu and her British partner Joe Harvey, are



In this picture taken on Dec 12, 2019, Carrie Yu and Joe Harvey, founders of zero-waste shop The Bulk House, pose with jars containing all of their personal waste collected over three months at their home in Beijing. — AFP

able to fit three months of household waste into just two jars. Nearly every object in the minimalist apartment they share was selected with reusability and low environmental impact in mind. A cardboard egg carton sits on a shelf waiting to be reused multiple times before being recycled.

Cloth make-up remover pads are hung up to dry after washing. Many of Yu's clothes are second-hand or refashioned from worn-out garments. She buys unpackaged groceries at a local market, and makes sure to avoid restaurants that use disposable chopsticks.

French campaigners highlight trawlers' deadly toll on dolphins

Three knocks on the cabin door: "Half past midnight!" It's time for the team from Sea Shepherd, a group dedicated to protecting the world's marine life, to start their nightly patrol. Six volunteers set out in a semi-rigid boat to monitor and film the operations of a nearby fishing fleet. They already know that increasing numbers of dead dolphins are washing up on France's Atlantic beaches. Their mission is to document the damage these vessels are doing to the local dolphin population.

Since Dec 22, Sea Shepherd's Sam Simon, a converted meteorological observation vessel, has been the base for these nightly patrols in the Bay of Biscay off the southwest coast of France. The volunteers can spend hours waiting as the trawlers winch up their enormous nets. But their presence is not welcome. "Bunch of scavengers!" shouts one crew member from a trawler just a few yards away. Although the trawlers are fishing for sea bass, Sea Shepherd wants to record whether dolphins - or other cetaceans - have also been caught in their nets. Earlier in their campaign, they posted a video of two dolphins being hauled aboard a fishing trawler: one had apparently already drowned, but the other, still alive, was struggling to escape the netting.

Dying in record numbers

Operation Dolphin By-Catch aims to warn the public

about the issue - and pressure the authorities to take action. They argue that industrial trawling is devastating the local dolphin population, with hundreds washing up dead on the west coast of France every year. "The problem has been going on for 30 years, but there is a kind of omerta," says Lamy Essemli, President of Sea Shepherd France. And according to the experts, the numbers are rising.

"2019 was the year of all the records," says marine biologist Helene Peltier of the University of La Rochelle on France's west coast. Between January and April, when the toll is highest, 1,200 small cetaceans washed up dead on the beaches of France's west coast - 880 of them common dolphins. Of those they autopsied, 80 percent showed signs of collisions with fishing boats: cuts, broken teeth, battered heads, asphyxia. And because most dead dolphins sink or are carried off to sea, they estimate that in all, 11,300 dolphins died in 2019. "The fishermen go to the zones where there are fish - the dolphins too," says Yves Le Gall, head of the acoustic service at Ifremer, the French oceanographic research institute.

The threat from trawling

A 2016 report by University of La Rochelle's Pelagic Institute warned that fishing threatens the dolphin population in the Bay of Biscay, estimated at 200,000. Peltier says that human activity is already killing more than 1.7 percent of the population - the endangerment threshold. "The animals that are killed accidentally are in good health," she noted. In the first decade of the century, scientists and fishermen collaborated to develop acoustic devices known as "pingers" to warn off dolphins. Although they succeeded in reducing the accidental captures, the pingers were not widely adopted.

Rivers of rubbish

GoZeroWaste, an organisation set up by Beijing-based activist Elsa Tang, has members in 19 cities across China who meet to swap unwanted items and exchange tips on living more sustainably. "If we make more responsible choices, we're not only acting responsibly toward the environment, we're also being responsible for our lives and our health, and can actually make many changes," Tang said.

For decades, Chinese people lived in a planned economy where everyday goods were rationed and imported products were a luxury. Some aspects of zero-waste living, such as reusing packaging, are familiar to older Chinese people. It used to be common for merchants in the country to require packaging deposits for everyday goods like beer and yogurt, said Mao Da, an environmental history professor at Beijing Normal University and member of the China Zero-Waste Alliance. "We used to think frugality was a glorious tradition," Mao told AFP.

In the past, people would catch fish from the rivers and lakes near her village, but "you can see the pristine water right now just full of rubbish," explained Yu, who grew up in rural Hubei province, near Wuhan. Growing incomes and the rise of shopping and delivery apps like Taobao and Meituan have now put impulse shopping and next-day delivery within the reach of millions. Young people who moved away to cities "just bring so many things with packaging" whenever they return to visit, the 28-year-old said. — AFP



Members of marine conservation organization Sea Shepherd Conservation Society hold a banner reading "Thousands of dolphins like this one are massacred each year in France so that you can eat fish", as they stand behind the bodies of two dolphins on the Trocadero esplanade in Paris. — AFP

The 2016 Pelagic Institute report appears to have prompted a greater sense of urgency. "A real dynamic developed, with concrete actions" that galvanised fishermen, says Thomas Rimaud of Pecheurs de Bretagne (Brittany Fishermen). "It's no fun for fishermen, capturing dolphins," says Hubert Carre, head of the National Committee for Maritime Fishing (CNPMEF). Most recently, the fishing ministry has been pushing to have all trawlers in the Bay of Biscay fitted with the pinger devices. France is in talks with the European Union to ensure that all boats, not just French ones, must comply. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020

12 Ooredoo Kuwait and Warba Bank announce strategic partnership



13 Behbehani GMC reveals stunning 2020 line-up at Kuwait Motor Show



14 Al-Sagar: NBK's sustainable profitability growth is driven by solid fundamentals



BNK Automotive empowers women in Kuwait

Bader Al-Kharafi: 50% of Volvo employees are women



Bader Al-Kharafi with BNK Automotive work team, at the show.



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah with Khalid Al-Falah as Bader Al-Kharafi explains during their visit to Volvo Kuwait Pavilion.

The Swedish brand's values correspond with BNK values in terms of empowering women, protecting the environment and the future of transport

KUWAIT: Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, CEO of the BNK Automotive Group, the authorized distributor of Volvo cars in Kuwait, said the Kuwait Motor Show 2020 (KMS 2020) is an important milestone for the company as it constitutes its first official participation and presence in exhibitions and the local auto sector in general.

Speaking in a press statement he made on the sidelines of the opening of KMS 2020 on Thursday, which runs until January 25 at 360 Mall under the auspices and presence of Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Kharafi stressed that the goal of Volvo's participation in the event is to introduce the most important changes the brand had recently made in terms of updating the designs of some models or the entirely new technologies it offers to customers.

50% of Volvo Kuwait employees are women

Kharafi added the Volvo team has been formed and is ready to launch. He also revealed that 50 percent of Volvo employees are women, including mechanics and technicians, which is a completely new and leading undertaking in the local automotive sector.

Responding to a question regarding when the brand would be launched in Kuwait, Kharafi said BNK Automotive has started preparations to launch its first official Volvo showroom on March 3, 2020.

Entering the automotive sector via Volvo

Explaining the reason that prompted him to enter the automotive sector via Volvo, Kharafi pointed out that the global brand's officials had initially contacted



BNK Automotive targeting brand's lovers among youth, families and women

him inquiring about his interest in representing the brand in the Kuwaiti market. He said he requested a grace period to fully consider the matter prior to giving his final response. He also noted that he sought permis-

sion from Ahmad Al-Mutawa, the Chairman and CEO of Al Qurain Automotive Company, the former Volvo agent in Kuwait, to inquire about his acceptance of the agency's transition in order to avoid a problematic

transfer process, indicating that he obtained the latter's approval prior to taking any step.

Kharafi added that following a lengthy and in-depth research of Volvo, he came to the conclusion that the brand had not been duly promoted in the region. He explained that what caught his attention most was the compatibility of both sides' policies, visions and principles adopted by Volvo in terms of safety, technology and environmental preservation by focusing on the future of electric cars, the use of environment-friendly materials, developing technologies, manufacturing smart vehicles and empowering women, which are all important principles that fully match the ones he adopts at Zain Group.

Kharafi added that it was this that encouraged him to take the challenge and decide entering into a partnership to get the Volvo agency in the Kuwaiti market.

Future offers

Kharafi urged the Swedish brand's lovers to look for BNK Automotive offers and promotional campaigns on Volvo cars in the near future, pointing out that BNK Automotive is keen on providing excellent and quality services and maintenance in the local market.

Kharafi also stressed that BNK Automotive is strongly seeking to provide Volvo customers in Kuwait with a new and different experience. He noted that potential customers include youth, families and women, as Volvo cars uniquely provide high safety levels and modern technologies, which will encourage parents to purchase them for their children. These vehicles fully satisfy their aspirations, as they conform to the modern age and all its technological advancements.



Volvo "BNK" Pavilion at Kuwait Automotive Show.



Ooredoo Kuwait and Warba Bank announce strategic partnership



A group photo following the press conference



KUWAIT: Mohammed El Shareef (right), Mijbil Al-Ayoub (center) and Abdulaziz Al-Babtain during the press conference

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait and Warba Bank, Kuwait's leading Islamic Bank announced a strategic partnership with the aim of providing innovative digital services, solutions, and products to their customers.

The signing of the agreement was announced during a press conference held yesterday morning at Ooredoo Kuwait's headquarter in Kuwait City with the presence of all media in addition to the top management and representatives of Ooredoo and Warba Bank.

Exclusivity

This partnership is also the first of its kind in Kuwait which will provide mutual cooperation in providing innovative and smart digital solutions that will satisfy customer needs and provide them with the best and most innovative digital experience.

Exclusive Offers

Based on Ooredoo's vision which focuses on enriching people's digital lives and the vision of Warba Bank which is based on excellence in providing Islamic banking services to companies and offering advanced digital banking services to individuals, this distinguished partnership will aim to provide innovative exclusive offers in the future to both parties in addition to enhancing community participation by promoting joint CSR initiatives and sponsoring and supporting a number of events and activities in Kuwait.

Innovative digital solutions

This strategic partnership will offer promising opportunities towards enabling a more efficient business sector in the country in line with Kuwait's vision (New Kuwait 2035). Both Ooredoo and Warba Bank are keen to enhance their digital capabilities in supporting the work environment and providing innovative solutions to financial technology platforms, and creating direct job opportunities in the business environment.

A positive start to 2020

During the press conference, Mijbil Al-Ayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait welcomed the media and attendees - and before presenting the speakers during the press conference, Al-Ayoub said, "The year 2020 is witness-



Mohammed El Shareef (right) and Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

ing a positive start that we are proud of at Ooredoo today, as we strive to continue creating digital solutions for our customers as we always promised them." The agreement that we announced today aims to provide digital technology services and unique and easy-to-use smart solutions with long-term and convenient benefits for Ooredoo and Warba Bank customers alike. Al-Ayoub also lauded the efforts of team members in the company and the bank who worked together and succeeded in achieving the desired goals, through which we strive to work together with our colleagues in Warba Bank and support the digital transformation process in the telecommunications sector and achieve New Kuwait's vision 2035. "

Strategic partnership

During the press conference, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain stressed, "It is indeed a matter of pride for us to have such a strategic partnership with Warba Bank, one of the leading Islamic banks in Kuwait. Through this strategic partnership, we will be focusing on certain areas for increased cooperation, which will include a range of programs and initiatives. We at Ooredoo are committed to the strategy of expanding our partnerships system with leading banking institutions such as Warba Bank to enable a more efficient business sector in Kuwait. Also, this partnership will pave the way to achieving great benefits for our customers in the future."



KUWAIT: Attendees at the press conference held yesterday at Ooredoo Kuwait's headquarter in Kuwait City

The most advanced Data Center in Kuwait

Al-Babtain stressed that among the terms of the joint agreement between Ooredoo and Warba Bank is the use of Ooredoo's data center which provides all integrated information solutions to customers in various sectors, including the financial sector and E-Commerce. The services provided by the data center include managing client accounts within the technology (CPE) Secure Cloud Solutions through the most advanced network operations center (NOC) in Kuwait. The data center provides 24/7 technical support.

Hosting site

Ooredoo is unique in providing integrated services under the umbrella of the hosting center - the first of its kind in Kuwait which has hosted many government companies and institutions in all sectors and provides the most advanced security systems in Kuwait and the region.

Digital banking services

During the press conference, Chief Strategy and Digital Officer at Warba Bank, Mohammed El Shareef welcomed this strategic agreement, saying, "We aspire to have a long-term partnership with Ooredoo to provide the most innovative digital solutions to our customers. Warba Bank has witnessed in the recent period a radical transformation towards a new developmental and innovative era in strengthening its structure and keeping pace with the spirit of the technologi-

cal age, and the growth in digital banking services, which has become today highly demanded by customers, following digital transformation and various technologies.

Al-Wateen

El-Shareef added, "This partnership with Ooredoo comes from the digital strategy developed by Warba Bank, from which the digital factory was launched, which is the first of its kind at the level of banks in the region and the Kuwaiti banking market under the name "Al-Wateen", is the fruit of the second phase of an ambitious strategy that injects inspiration and digital creativity through which the bank works to develop and innovate. Exclusive digital banking services and products with advantages that would establish a new revolutionary era in the digital banking services sector, in compliance with the bank's development strategy, which is based on the most prominent clauses of considering Warba Bank a pioneer in digital banking services and increasing its market share in this field.

Digital innovation

It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait is constantly aiming to provide a business environment that stimulates digital innovation in addition to concluding digital agreements with major institutions in the country, whether governmental or private, and providing digital products that are the most innovative in the digital communication technology sector in Kuwait.

Taiwan Q4 GDP expands at strongest rate since mid-2018

TAIPEI: Taiwan's economy grew at the fastest pace in one-and-a-half years in the fourth quarter of 2019 as a recovery in electronics demand boosted the island's manufacturers amid easing concerns over a US-China trade war. The outlook for the export-reliant economy has

brightened this year after its two largest trading partners, China and the United States, signed a first phase trade agreement this month after a bruising tariff war that disrupted global supply chains. Stronger demand for high-end smartphones and factory relocations to Taiwan from China have also helped stabilize growth.

Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 3.38 percent in the October-December period from a year earlier, preliminary data showed yesterday, up from 2.99 percent in the third quarter. Growth in the final quarter was the fastest since 3.4 percent in the second quarter of 2018 and surpassed economists forecast of 2.78 percent in a Reuters poll. For the full-year of 2019, growth was 2.73 percent, the statistics agency said. That compared with the government's upwardly revised forecast of 2.64 percent.

In 2018, the economy expanded 2.75 percent, accord-

ing to the latest government data. Analysts expect the growth momentum to continue in 2020 helped by recovering sales for high-end smartphones and rising technology demand driven by new technologies, including fifth-generation (5G) telecommunications technology.

Despite its heavy reliance on exports, Taiwan's economy bucked a regional growth slowdown last year. It was named in a UN study as the largest beneficiary of "trade diversion" from the US-China trade war, as manufacturers moved production from China to Taiwan to avoid higher tariffs. Taiwan has predicted stable growth of 2.72 percent in 2020, citing "positive effects" of factory relocations.

In a further sign of recovering demand, Taiwan's export orders in December rose for the first time in 14 months, boosted by a pick-up in global demand for electronics. Export orders are a leading indicator of actual

shipments from Taiwan and other Asian manufacturing economies in two to three months.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co, the world's largest contract chipmaker, last week forecast that its first-quarter revenue could rise by up to 45 percent and raised its capex plan for the year, betting on robust demand for 5G smartphones. Some analysts, however, remain cautious about Taiwan's growth prospects, especially on the government's pledge to lure manufacturers to move production home from China. Taiwan's government said last month returning investment to Taiwan from China totalled US\$830 billion (\$27.72 billion). "We have doubted the success of this investment policy for several months and are still skeptical of its effectiveness in supporting the Taiwan economy," ING economist Iris Pang wrote in a report earlier this month. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.768
Indian Rupees	4.277
Pakistani Rupees	1.971
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Nepali Rupees	2.673
Singapore Dollar	226.820
Hongkong Dollar	39.194
Bangladesh Taka	3.546
Philippine Peso	5.987
Thai Baht	10.078
Malaysian Ringgit	77.877

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.254
Qatari Riyal	83.688
ani Riyal	791.423
Bahraini Dinar	809.090
UAE Dirham	82.959

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.650
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.304
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	114.470
Jordanian Dinar	429.750
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.359

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.500
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Euro	339.820
Sterling Pound	397.980
Canadian dollar	234.410
Turkish lira	52.050
Swiss Franc	316.860
US Dollar Buying	297.050

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.150
Canadian Dollar	233.620
Sterling Pound	397.380
Euro	339.090
Swiss Frank	297.015
Bahrain Dinar	808.850
UAE Dirhams	83.210
Qatari Riyals	84.450
Saudi Riyals	82.000
Jordanian Dinar	430.270
Egyptian Pound	19.293
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.273
Pakistani Rupees	1.964
Bangladesh Taka	3.550
Philippines Pesto	5.970
Cyprus pound	18.095
Japanese Yen	3.765
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.676
Malaysian Ringgit	75.635
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.590

Thai Bhat	11.010
Turkish Lira	51.810
Singapore dollars	225.000

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
EUROPE		
British Pound	0.388956	0.402856
Czech Korune	0.005434	0.014734
Danish Krone	0.041119	0.046119
Euro	0.330188	0.343888
Georgian Lari	0.105121	0.105121
Hungarian	0.000917	0.001107
Norwegian Krone	0.029967	0.035167
Romanian Leu	0.053705	0.070555
Russian Ruble	0.004930	0.004930
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Swedish Krona	0.027900	0.032900
Swiss Franc	0.307892	0.318892
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.200559	0.212559
New Zealand Dollar	0.194690	0.204190
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.227663	0.236663
US Dollars	0.300400	0.304950
US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.304950
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002917	0.003718

Chinese Yuan	0.042980	0.046480
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037080	0.039830
Indian Rupee	0.003676	0.004448
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002682	0.002862
Korean Won	0.000251	0.000266
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071478	0.077478
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001295	0.002065
Philippine Peso	0.005906	0.006206
Singapore Dollar	0.220221	0.230221
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.010027	0.010207
Thai Baht	0.009701	0.010251
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801542	0.809598
Egyptian Pound	0.019098	0.021839
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.424573	0.433573
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021022	0.045022
Omani Riyal	0.785780	0.793677
Qatar Riyal	0.082983	0.083817
Saudi Riyal	0.080113	0.081413
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.103889	0.111889
Turkish Lira	0.044755	0.054600
UAE Dirhams	0.082271	0.083097
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

Behbehani GMC reveals stunning 2020 line-up at Kuwait Motor Show

‘The New Acadia Denali’ among strongest range of vehicles on display



Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (center), Jasem Behbehani and Adel Behbehani.



Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (right) and Adel Behbehani

KUWAIT: GMC Behbehani, the exclusive dealer for GMC vehicles in Kuwait, yesterday revealed its strongest range of cars at the 2020 Kuwait Motor Show. Running from January 16th until January 25th, the 2020 Kuwait Motor Show is being held under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Al-Diwan Al-Amiri.

Behbehani GMC displayed a line-up of new vehicles including the 2020 Terrain Denali, Sierra Elevation Extended Cab, Sierra Elevation Extended Cab and for the first time in Kuwait, the refreshed Acadia Denali. More versatile than ever, the new range of GMC vehicles offer unprecedented versatility, connectivity and personalization options, and proved to be real head-turners for show visitors.

Adel Behbehani, GMC Director, Behbehani GMC said: “We are excited to bring to our customers the strongest range of new GMC vehicles yet at the 2020 Kuwait Motor Show. The GMC brand has a loyal following in Kuwait and we are proud to present vehicles that boast cutting-edge technology melded with evocative design and remarkable versatility. I am confident that the new line-up will draw visitors to our stand in droves and offer them a chance to own a vehicle that is as unique as they are.”

Daniella D’Souza, Head of Brand at GMC Middle East added: “The Kuwait Motor Show is one of the highlights of the regional automotive calendar and a great opportunity for fans of the brand in Kuwait to get an exclusive look at the evolution of GMC and its exciting future. Our 2020 line-up offers customers myriad options to personalize their vehicles to their taste, affording them the freedom to own a vehicle that perfectly suits their lifestyle. From driving around town or exploring the great outdoors, there is a GMC that perfectly fits our customers’ varying needs.”

2020 Acadia Denali - pushing the bar further

Under the spotlight at the Behbehani GMC stand at the 2020 Kuwait Motor Show is the refreshed 2020 Acadia Denali. Boasting leading-edge technology and exquisite craftsmanship, the all-new Acadia Denali is an intelligent crossover vehicle that elevates the driving and passenger experience across the board.

The flagship Denali model is available with a versatile

seating arrangement for five or seven passengers, giving it remarkable practicality. On the design front, the 2020 Acadia Denali features a new grille, new front fascia and new rear design with GMC’s signature C-shaped lighting.

2020 Acadia - stylish, functional and capable

Adding to the bold line up on the GMC is the new 2020 Acadia. With state-of-the-art technological enhancements now available at the driver’s fingertips and under the hood, the all new Acadia is an intelligent crossover that elevates the driving and passenger experiences on all fronts.

Exceptional design and refinement

The ‘20 Acadia distinguishes itself with a new grille, new front and rear fascias and GMC’s signature C-shaped lighting. An all-new Acadia AT4 expands the reach of GMC’s newest sub-brand. Its bold styling cues, including a black chrome-accented grille, add a rugged, off-road-inspired design to the Acadia range. A 3.6L V-6 engine producing 310 hp and 366 Nm (271 lb-ft) of torque and a twin clutch AWD system are standard to the AT4. Unique 17-inch wheels and all-terrain tires are also standard, with 20-inch wheels available.

Enhancements on the 2020 Acadia include:

- Bolder exterior design with standard LED lighting and signature GMC C-shape lighting, complemented with interior refinements.
- Introduction of the first-ever Acadia AT4 with more aggressive exterior styling and darkened finishes.
- New nine-speed automatic transmission developed to provide a greater balance of performance and efficiency, along with enhanced refinement. The 2020 Acadia is the latest GMC with Electronic Precision Shift, which enables more storage room in the center console by replacing the conventional transmission shifter with an electronically controlled gear selection consisting of intuitive push buttons and pull triggers.
- Enhanced GMC infotainment system that is more intelligent and intuitive, offering new features designed to help improve the user experience and offer more personalization.
- New Head-up Display (late availability).

The new Terrain Denali - upscale design and cutting-edge technology

Offered with available AWD, the top-of-the-line 2020 Terrain Denali is a refined crossover that brings practicality and performance to the table. Terrain Denali

offers a unique grille, 19-inch wheels, exclusive LED headlamps with signature lighting and exclusive tail-lamps with LED signature lighting, as well as specific interior content with leather-trimmed and heated front seats, Denali-logo aluminum sill plates, specific suspension tuning with urethane spring isolators and a standard 2.0L Turbo engine with a nine-speed automatic transmission.

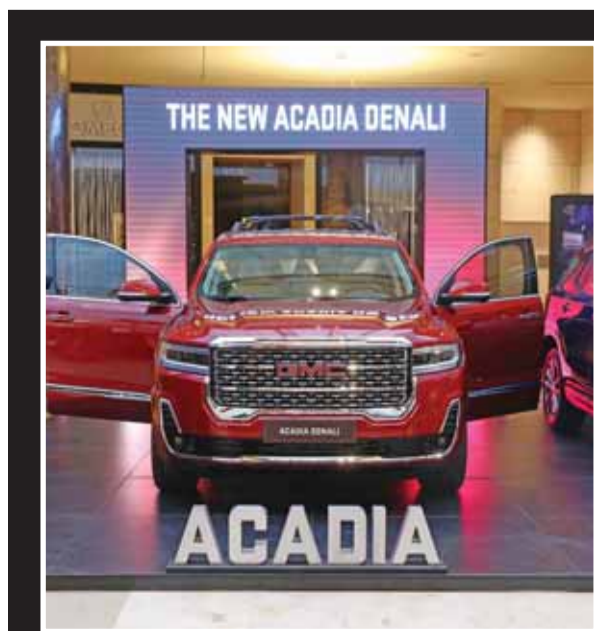
The sculpted exterior design is complemented by a sumptuous cabin that is unrivaled in its class and features a plethora of safety and connectivity features. A GMC infotainment system with 8-inch-diagonal high-definition color touchscreen and connected Navigation, along with Bose premium seven-speaker sound system with amplifier in the center console and wireless charging are standard on 2020 Terrain Denali.

2020 GMC Sierra AT4 Crew Cab Carbon Fiber and Elevation Extended Cab - stronger than ever

Also on display at the show is the all-new re-designed GMC Sierra line-up, the boldest expression ever for the brand’s full-size pickup. Available exclusively in the region, and on display at the show are two new models - the Sierra AT4 Crew Cab and Elevation Extended Cab trims. With a striking new design, capability and advanced connectivity, the 2020 GMC Sierra is equally at home on the road as off it, thanks to its exceptional capability. The imposing looks are accentuated by sculpted fenders and a tall powerful hood, giving it unmistakable road presence.

The Sierra Elevation and AT4 models target customers with active lifestyles, the first-ever AT4 and Elevation combine smart capabilities and innovative technologies with uncompromising off-road prowess. Furthermore, Sierra’s accessories list has been upgraded for 2020 enabling buyers to customize their vehicle for a personalized look and to enhance its functionality and utility.

Last but not least, as a way of saying thank you to its Kuwaiti customers, Behbehani GMC are running two activations at the stand. Visitors can take a photo of the GMC stand for Instagram and enter a competition to win KD 100, while those who register their name at the stand will get an exclusive \$1000 discount on their new GMC.



Al-Sagar: NBK's sustainable profitability growth is driven by solid fundamentals

NBK Group Chief Executive Officer Isam Al-Sager speaks in an interview with Al-Arabiya TV

- NBK is a market leader in financing Kuwait's infrastructure projects, thanks to its sizeable balance sheet and proven track record
- We reached an advanced stage in the implementation of our digital transformation strategy; which will make us a more competitive and dynamic bank
- We have started a diversification strategy, and now it is paying off
- Our expansion strategy is focused on our key growth markets while integrating our operations across all locations to increase the contribution to the group
- Our strategy outside Kuwait focuses on increasing retail operations in Egypt, and growing AUMs for our wealth management business in Saudi Arabia
- NBK's risk-management prudent policy helps eliminate risks in markets
- NBK "optimistic" about government plans to continue with its infrastructure spending and a positive view on credit growth in 2020

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has attributed the sustainable profitability growth to solid fundamentals, based on a strategy implemented over the years and aimed at diversification of income and operations, Al-Arabiya TV has reported, citing Isam Al-Sager, Group Chief Executive Officer of NBK.

"Our international operations accounted for around 30 percent of the Group's net profit in 2019, while our Islamic banking arm, Boubyan Bank, dominated nearly 10 percent of earnings," stated Al-Sager.

Digital transformation

NBK has reached an advanced stage in the implementation of the digital transformation strategy, and hence, it introduced its customers with continuously outstanding banking products and services. "This boosted NBK's competitiveness to be more dynamic bank," Al-Sager said.

NBK's strategy of diversification and digital transformation boosted FY19 financial results. NBK reported net profit of KD 401.3 million, up 8.2 percent year-on-year (YoY), despite operating slowdown in Kuwait; the bank's main market.

FY19 higher profitability was driven by revenue from core banking business portfolio and the gradual decline in provisions' allocation. Net operating revenue stood at KD 895.5 million last year. Loans and advances grew 6.8 percent YoY to KD 16.6 billion by 2019-end, while client deposits rose to 10.7 percent YoY to KD 15.9 billion for the same year.

FY19 profit growth and the healthy balance sheet coincided with the bank maintaining criteria for asset quality as well as capitalization, with the capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 17.8 percent, exceeding the regulatory requirements. The non-performing loans (NPLs) to total loans ratio reached 1.1 percent, with a coverage ratio of 272.2 percent.

Healthy balance-sheet

NBK's net interest margin (NIM) was impacted by the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) decision to cut the discount rate. "The banking sector capitalized on higher discount rates in 2017 and 2018, improving the banks' NIMs. The CBK cut the discount rate - once last year - in Q4 2019; compared to three consecutive cuts by the US Federal Reserve throughout the year. This allowed the CBK to cut its benchmark rates while maintaining the local currency's strength and resilience against the US dollar," Al-Sager added.

"NIMs were pressured by CBK's decision to cut discount rate by 0.25 percent in 2019, compared to flat rates in 2018. However, we seek to offset this through cutting interest cost," Al-Sager noted. NBK has abundant liquidity and a massive deposit base, thanks to its

well-established position, healthy balance sheet, large market share and its competitive advantage.

Credit growth

Al-Sager expressed optimism about improved operating environment in 2020, amid the government's commitment to stimulate the economic activities, which in a way will accelerate the pace of the projects' execution and increase the appetite for credit. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the Kuwaiti non-oil sector is forecast to grow at 2.5 percent in 2020, compared to a significant depression in 2019. Kuwait's estimated budget for 2020/2021, announced last week, unveiled the government's plans to maintain the investment expenditure levels unchanged despite widened budget deficit. Investment spending accounts for 16 percent of total public expenditure; a positive indicator as the state investment spending is the key driver of the economic activities and the credit growth.

NBK maintains a leading position among the local banks, as the key play on the financing arranged for the government projects, thanks to its solid balance sheet, market dominance and its proven track record, thus positioning it as a top financier for public and private sector projects.

"There is still a dire need to approve the new debt law in 2020 amid the mounting pressures on the state revenue, due to volatile oil prices, and the depletion of the General Reserve Fund (GRF).

"In case of approval, the debt law will significantly boost the credit growth rates," Al Sager said.

International operations

NBK currently focuses on bolstering presence in main markets and increasing market share, mainly, in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where the bank made a remarkable progress, capitalizing on the growth of the international operations, the bank's strategy of income diversification and its position as a top provider of digital services. "We seek to increase our retail operations in the Egyptian market - the biggest regional market in terms of population- and boost our services for corporates," Al-Sager said, adding that NBK will continue to pursue expansions in the Saudi market, operate new branches, and expand its assets-under-



NBK Group CEO Isam Al-Sager



management base, in the light of launching Al-Watani Wealth Management Company (NBK Wealth Management).

NBK had taken the lead in overseas expansions, relying on a well-defined strategy aimed at adding value to our shareholders through evaluating the target market and its impact on target integration. This represents the main pillar of NBK's strategy, which will be further applied in case of any available investments going forward.

Prudent policies

NBK's operations in Lebanon record an outstanding performance and play a key role in eliminating risks amid a diversification strategy on geographical and sector levels. NBK-Lebanon, which is 85 percent-owned by the Group, has a little contribution to the Group's assets and net profit.

"NBK adopts prudent risk-management policies in line with international criteria, which eliminates operating risks in its markets," Al-Sager concluded.

NBK digital transformation strategy key driver of growth, profitability: Al-Bahar

High demand for NBK's perpetual securities issuance reflects global investors' confidence in NBK

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) strong growth and profitability in 2019, were mainly driven by its diversification strategy and focus on the core banking business portfolio, Bloomberg has reported, citing Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Deputy Group CEO. NBK's conventional as well as Islamic banking operations in Kuwait recorded robust growth. NBK's Islamic banking subsidiary, Boubyan Bank, also delivered strong growth rates.

"Last year, loans grew at 6.8 percent. Such strong growth was not confined to a single market or business segment. However, we recorded healthy growth rates both in Kuwait and in our main international markets," said Al-Bahar. The group's 8.2 percent earnings increase in 2019 was mainly driven by the core banking business portfolio in Kuwait and NBK's operations in the international markets. Al-Bahar also indicated that international operations accounted for around 30 percent of the group's earnings in 2019, with Boubyan Bank dominating around 10 percent, adding that the income diversification strategy helped the bank sustain earnings growth over the past years.

Global interest rates have significantly impacted banks' performance in the region last year. The global interest rate cuts pressured profit margins. NBK reported relatively higher costs as it continues to invest in developing and enhancing the group's growth onwards. These costs were



NBK Deputy Group CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar

disbursed in several fields that may help bolster the bank's leading position in the main markets where it operates.

"We don't only invest in fields of information technology, back office and process automation, but we seek to explore more modern trends including data analysis and processing in all markets to address and understand the clientele needs in a better way," Al-Bahar added.

"NBK set up a digital technology platform in Kuwait with highly-qualified personnel to represent a boost for the digital transformation strategy and stand as a platform which introduces the best service-

es in NBK's markets," Al-Bahar indicated.

Opportunities in 2020

NBK will continue to build up its client base in Kuwait by enhancing its digital services and offering its customers better services, which will boost its leading position in the retail banking segment.

On the international level, NBK seeks more organic growth in the main regional markets by implementing the digital transformation strategy. The bank focuses on strengthening its presence in the main markets, and it plans to expand operations in Saudi Arabia as well as Egypt, capitalizing on its mega digital investments in these markets.

"We see the retail market as a very promising market segment in Egypt. We have developed a retail-focused strategy for our Egyptian operations and started implementing it late last year. We are highly optimistic about our expansionary plans in Egypt, in the light of the economic reforms implemented in Egypt, coupled with the current political stability as well as the confidence in the Egyptian market," Al-Bahar noted.

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Bahar ensured that the bank is bolstering the position of its recently-incepted wealth management firm, affiliating it with the Global Wealth Management Group. NBK is also working on increasing its commercial banking products in the Saudi market through

adopting new techniques to grow its presence in the Kingdom and increase its contribution to the group's business portfolio.

Strategy of diversification

The digital transformation is a key component of NBK's strategy of diversification. The bank has tailored-made a business model for such transformation, and set a strategy organizational structure. The recently-initiated digital technology platform is the core of the digital transformation strategy as it helps implement plans.

"The platform was established in Kuwait to serve our digital transformation agenda across the entire Group," said Al-Bahar. The bank's across-segment, cross-border, digital initiatives will reflect on the customers' banking experience and will help develop the bank's products and services.

"We will optimally utilize the state-of-the-art data center to better analyze data, cut costs and eliminate risks," stated Al-Bahar. The bank's local market strategy consists of several pillars, namely, maintaining its well-established position in the local market, growing its market share as the top pick for big corporates in addition to expanding coverage to medium enterprises.

The bank will continuously capitalize on the relatively stable operating environment, which unlocks more growth poten-

tial given NBK's leading market position. NBK has so far dominated the lion's share of the project financing segment in Kuwait and helped funding the bulk of the recently-awarded projects. "We expect NBK to maintain a leading position in the local market in terms of project financing, thanks to its sizeable balance sheet, strong credit ratings, in addition to its domestic as well as international relationships," Al-Bahar added.

Technology and digital investments are the main driver of NBK's consumer banking strategy to build up a young clientele. The bank also focuses on growing its product portfolio to better serve that segment.

Global confidence

NBK's \$750 million worth of AT1 perpetual securities issue received an overwhelming response from the international investors, which placed the bank at an unrivaled position when it comes to luring international investments. The Tier 1 capital notes were 3.1 times oversubscribed and raised record flows at \$2.3 billion. The securities were allocated to a diverse base of more than 160 investors including US investors, accounting for 33 percent of the offering, UK controlled around 27 percent, Asia and Pacific 20 percent while Europe as well as MENA investors dominated around 10 percent of the issue.

- We are investing more in data analysis and processing to better understand customers' needs and behaviors
- Our Digital transformation strategy is a key pillar in attracting young clientele
- We will focus on growing our AUMs in Saudi, while targeting retail growth in Egypt
- We aim to maintain our position as the bank of choice for mega corporates, and grow our market penetration in the medium enterprises sector

What's On

International Women's Group hosts Australian Culture

The International Women's Group celebrated the start of 2020 in style with an Australia Day event at the Crowne Plaza. Sunday January 19, in the presence of female ambassadors and wives of ambassadors accredited to the State of Kuwait, IWG members, prominent women within the Kuwait society and international community.

The IWG brings its usual sophisticated event planning to Kuwait with Australian Ambassador Jonathan Gilbert attending the event to present his top ten places to visit in Australia. The event also paid homage to the people of Australia as they face the worst fires the country has ever seen. Ambassador Gilbert made a point of thanking Kuwait for the love and support at this time of great tragedy and pressed that Australia will fight back

and will continue to be the most extraordinary place to visit.

The presentation was accompanied by a quiz and a display of all things Australian including a sumptuous buffet featuring Australian classics such as Lamingtons, Australian lamb and prawns.

The IWG Board and members bid farewell to Mrs Josephine Cole (Wife of the Ambassador of Malta) on the occasion of their departure and the end of their duties in the State of Kuwait. IWG President Anita de Vogel, presided over the event and highlighted with great thanks, the many years of help and support of the outgoing Vice President of IWG. IWG members and guests ended the lovely morning with great raffle prizes and an authentic delicious Australian cuisine.



Horeca 2020 witnesses various activities, delegation visits



The activities of Horeca Kuwait 2020 continued on the second day (Tuesday, Jan 21) in hall number eight at the International Fair Grounds in Mishref where huge numbers of specialized visitors showed up.

Aside from the number of visitors to various hospitality, food industries and hotel equipment company booths and sections, the second day of the exhibition attracted a group of 60 ladies from the International Women Group including spouses of ambassadors designated in Kuwait. Visitors also included a delegation of German women in Kuwait, another from the American women in Kuwait following the visit made by representatives of 15 British companies specialized in food.

In addition, the cooking and bed making competitions continued in a most zealous and competitive atmosphere. The cooking competitions include the 9th pasta, hot and cold appetizers, croissant, the best menu, nutritious dishes, food basket, Sushi and Cordon bleu competitions.

Further, the organizing committee distributed certificates of appreciation to all

participants in a special ceremony held at noon where both the head of the organizing committee and general manager of leaders Group, Nabila Al-Anjeri, Hospitality Services manager, Joumana Dammous and Horeca executive manager, Mohammed Najja handed over the certificates before throwing a lunch banquet in participants' honor.

New trends in restaurants

Notably, on the first day in the evening a seminar was held under the title of 'Rising Food & beverage Trends' and was moderated by Nada Alamuddine, Managing Partner - "Hodem Consulting Services", in which there was a focus on the elements leading investments in food businesses in Kuwait in 2020. The speakers included Khaled Al-Baker; Venti Group founding partner and CEO, Mohammed Al-Debaib; Seazen Group general manager and Nouf Al-Hussein; Qout Market founding partner.

Speaking on the seminar, Al-Bebaid argued that the real success in restaurants is about changing passion into reality and



stressed the importance of adapting new ideas and trends to achieve this success.

On his part, chef Bordoni reviewed his experience in Dubai, Qatar and Bahrain noting that Kuwaiti restaurant market is not yet fully saturated and that customers always seek the best and latest even with traditional cuisine restaurants.

Al-Baker stressed the need to adapt new concepts for each new project and that mega projects and healthy food are

currently trending in Kuwait compared to barbecued food. "It is difficult to understand the reasons behind the success or failure of new restaurants due to several overlapped elements now since Kuwaitis are more proud of national brands and projects", he underlined.

On her part, Nouf Al-Hussein talked about her 11 year career noting that people always aspire to better restaurant atmosphere, genuine experiences

and creativity.

Australian Dinner

On the second day in the evening, the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, Jonathan Gilbert threw an Australian dinner banquet to honor the organizing committee and the jury members which was attended by members of the Australian and European communities in Kuwait and a number of hospitality and hotel officials.

Al-Sayafe Medical and Forsyth Institute organize thanksgiving event

By Faten Omar

Al-Sayafe Medical & Dental Co and Forsyth Institute organized a thanksgiving event on Tuesday at Radisson Blu Hotel. A number of dentists were honored as a reward for their contribution to a program that started in 1982. Dr Pramod Soparker, Senior Clinical Investigator at Forsyth Institute and General Director of the School Oral Health Program, said: "Kuwait is the only country in the world that is taking care of dental needs of children, and Forsyth is very proud to be part of it. There is no other country whose government is taking actions on children's dental health."

He added: "Forsyth is going to introduce new techniques to help children in school and give them the dental help they need". He told Kuwait Times they already have an education and treatment program for children



in schools. Soparker revealed Forsyth is now testing a new technique that will lead to a huge discovery in the dental field. "Forsyth is working to recognize if babies are going to have oral bacteria, so we can prevent it from happening," he explained. He noted this technique will be applied in Kuwait in around two years, which will make Kuwait the first country in the world to try it.

Dr Argia, Director School Oral Health Program, said: "I'm here since 2005 and head a program in cooperation between the health ministry, Al-Sayafe and Cambridge Institute in the US. Today is a thanksgiving

event to celebrate the partnership between Al-Sayafe and Forsyth and to honor contributing members of the school oral health program that started in 1982. It is a very unique program and none of the Gulf countries have a similar one."

The school oral health program in Kuwait is a comprehensive school-based program providing oral health education, prevention and treatment to almost 270,000 Kuwaiti schoolchildren. This program is a joint venture between the ministry of health and Forsyth Research Institute, Boston.

This program was established in 1982 on a pilot basis and expanded later. This is one of the largest and long-standing school oral health programs in the world and the only one of its kind in the Gulf region, where there is a great need for such programs.

Today, the School Oral Health Program-Forsyth operates in all the six governorates of Kuwait and follows the standardized protocol for education, prevention and treatment. The event was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Affairs Dr Yousef Al-Duwairi, officials, dentists and the media.

Pharma firms not making enough progress against superbugs: Report

LONDON: Drug companies are not making progress against the spread of antibiotic resistance at a scale and speed great enough to tackle the global health threat posed by superbugs, a key benchmark analysis found yesterday.

The findings of a second Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Benchmark report showed that while a few pharmaceutical companies are expanding their efforts, change is not happening at the scale needed to radically impact the problem.

Antibiotic and antifungal resistance is estimated to kill 35,900 people in the United States alone each year. In the European Union and European Economic Area, data show that antimicrobial resistance accounts for at least 17 percent of infections, and leads to 33,000 deaths each year. In India, drug resistance exceeds 70 percent for many widespread bacteria, the AMR report said.

Compared to 2018, the pipeline of new drugs in development to combat bacterial and fungal infec-

tions remains small, with only 51 potential treatments in late-stage clinical trials, the 2020 report found. And only a handful more clinical-stage antibiotics are being developed with integral plans to make them available to those who need them most, but only use them wisely and sparingly. "This second benchmark provides a reality check," said Jayasree Iyer, executive director of the Access to Medicine Foundation, which publishes the biennial AMR Benchmark report. "The progress we see is being overshadowed by our increasing reliance on just a handful of companies." Drug resistance is driven by the misuse and overuse of antibiotics and other antimicrobials, which encourages bacteria to evolve to survive by finding new ways to beat the medicines. But the low profitability of antibiotics means that only a dwindling number of pharmaceutical companies still invest in developing and manufacture them.

The 2020 AMR Benchmark report said that since 2018, two more companies - Novartis and

Sanofi - have retreated from new antibiotics research and development (R&D), while two more have filed for bankruptcy.

Tim Jinks, a specialist in drug-resistance at the Wellcome Trust global health charity, said the findings pointed to a "tipping point in the manufacturing of new antibiotics - with progress hanging by a thread." "Drug-resistant infections are one of the greatest global public health threats of our time," he said. "The pace of change does not match the scale of the challenge."

The report identified three drug companies - GSK, Entasis and Cipla - as leaders in antimicrobial R&D, and said they were "followed closely by a few strong performers", including Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson. Iyer warned, however, that the world should not take these firms' commitment for granted. The AMR Benchmark measures 30 companies with interests in the anti-infectives market, including multinational pharma companies, biotechnology firms and generics makers. — Reuters

Posthumous sperm donation should be allowed, say UK experts

LONDON: Men in Britain should be allowed to donate sperm after they die to meet growing demand from couples seeking fertility treatment, medical experts say. Posthumous sperm donation is technically feasible and morally acceptable, the specialists said in a review published in the Journal of Medical Ethics yesterday. They argue it should be seen like organ and other tissue donations as a way of relieving the suffering of others.

While infertility is not life-threatening, said Nathan Hodson of Britain's Leicester University and Joshua Parker of Britain's Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester, it causes great suffering and could be said to be a form of illness.

"If it is morally acceptable that individuals can donate their tissues to relieve the suffering of others in 'life enhancing transplants' for diseases ... we see no reason why this cannot be extended to other forms of suffering like infertility, which may or may not also be considered a disease," they said. Such a

move would raise questions about consent and family permissions for posthumous donations, Parker and Hodson said, and there would also be concerns about anonymity of the donor.

Britain has a shortage of donor sperm, while demand is high, and increasing, the experts said. They cited government data showing that an estimated 4,000 samples are imported to Britain each year from the United States, and 3,000 from Denmark, as well as more from other European Union countries. Sperm can be collected after death either through electrical stimulation of the prostate gland or with surgery. It can then be frozen and stored until required.

Parker and Hodson cited studies showing that sperm harvested from dead men can result in healthy pregnancies and children with normal health and development, even when the sperm is retrieved 48 hours after death. Other medical experts said the analysis raised issues that need to be resolved. — Reuters

No joke: Denmark to cut kids off from laughing gas

COPENHAGEN: Denmark plans to ban sales of laughing gas to minors to prevent them from using the substance — which is used for making whipped cream or filling balloons — to get high, officials said yesterday. "We're going to end too-easy access to laughing gas and prevent the abuse of gas cartridges by young people,"

Industry Minister Simon Kollerup said in a statement.

With nearly universal support among lawmakers, the parliament is expected to pass the legislation that would see sales restricted from May, with adults also to be limited to purchasing two cartridges at a time to discourage abuse.

Nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, was once widely used as an anesthetic to reduce pain, but its euphoric effects have also long made it popular as a recreational drug. Health officials worry that regular use of nitrous oxide can cause nervous system and heart rhythm problems and a loss of memory. — AFP

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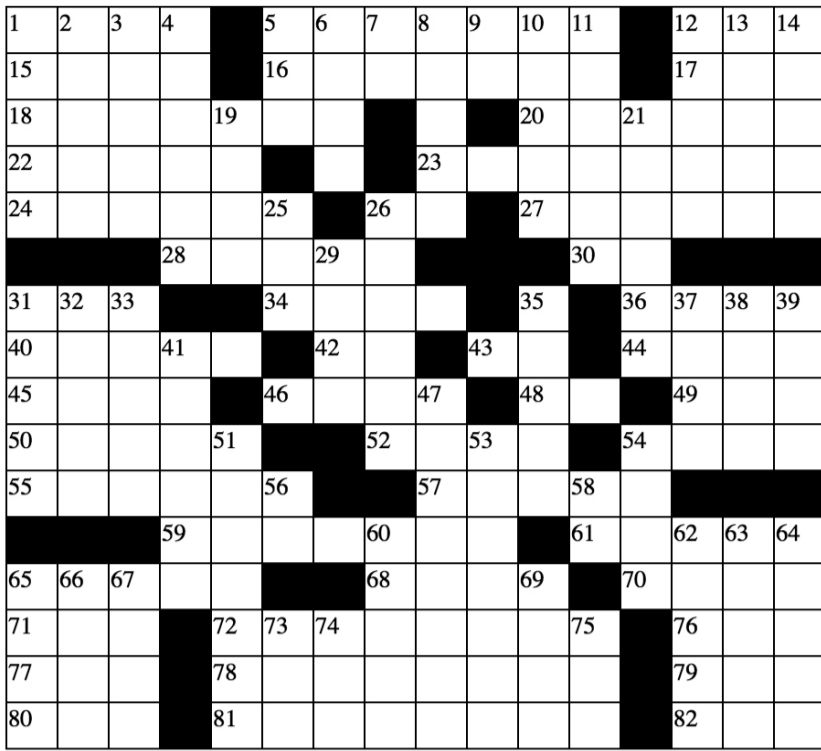
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ACROSS

1. A thrusting blow with a knife.
5. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
12. A proportion multiplied by 100.
15. A one-piece cloak worn by men in ancient Rome.
16. Any of the radiating leaflike spore-producing structures on the underside of the cap of a mushroom or similar fungus.
17. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
18. Of or relating to Iran or its people or language or culture.
20. Garment consisting of a folded cloth drawn up between the legs and fastened at the waist.
22. A person afflicted with leprosy.
23. Put to use.
24. Of or relating to the palm of the hand or to the area at the base of the thumb.
27. In an unnatural eery manner.
28. Jordan's port.
30. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali metal group.
31. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
34. A musical notation written on a staff indicating the pitch of the notes following it.
36. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
40. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
42. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
43. The atomic weight of an element that has the same combining capacity as a given weight of another element.
44. Being the one previously mentioned or spoken of.
45. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
46. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
48. A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
49. Goddess of fate.
50. annoy continually or chronically.
52. Port city that is the capital and largest city of Latvia.
55. Spider monkeys.
57. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
59. A person who drinks alcoholic beverages (especially to excess).
61. A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
65. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
68. On, to, or at the top.
70. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
71. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
72. Impaired by diminution.
76. Take in solid food.
77. Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
78. Wealth as evidenced by sumptuous living.
79. Used of a single unit or thing.
80. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
81. Noteworthy scarcity.
82. An informal term for a father.

DOWN

1. A column of wood or steel or concrete that is driven into the ground to provide support for a structure.
2. The first of three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures comprising the first five books of the Old Testament considered as a unit.
3. (used of eyes) Open and fixed as if in fear or wonder.
4. Any of several tropical and subtropical tree-like herbs of the genus *Musa* having a terminal crown of large entire leaves and usually bearing hanging clusters of elongated fruits.
5. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
6. A vigorous blow.
7. Before noon.
8. A blemish on the skin formed before birth.
9. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
10. A song that was formerly popular.
11. A worker who attaches something by nailing it.
12. Pepsi Cola is a trademarked cola.
13. A wicker basket used by anglers to hold fish.
14. After the expected or usual time.
19. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
21. A subsonic jet airliner operated over short distances.
25. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
26. Conqueror of Gaul and master of Italy (100-44 BC).
29. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
32. A cap with no brim or bill.
33. Lower in esteem.
35. Short and fat.
37. Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
38. The basic unit of money on Malta.
39. Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
41. Any of various deciduous or evergreen ornamental shrubs of the genus *Abelia* having opposite simple leaves and cymes of small white or pink or purplish flowers.
47. Being one more than eighteen.
51. Shaking and vibration at the surface of the earth resulting from underground movement along a fault plane of from volcanic activity.
53. A river that rises in the Pyrenees and flows northwest to the Bay of Biscay.
54. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
56. A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
58. A mouth or mouthlike opening.
60. A city in northwestern Switzerland.
62. Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
63. A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
64. Marked by features of the immediate and usually discounted past.
66. A city in northern India.
67. Immense East Indian fruit resembling breadfruit of.
69. Either of two large muscles of the chest.
73. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
74. A port in southern Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea.
75. A potent estrogen used in medicine and in feed for livestock and poultry.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Family and friends may gather for an intimate get-together at your home or perhaps at the home of a neighbor. At some point, expect an exciting phone call. You should be feeling pretty secure in relationships of all kinds, Aries, from business partnerships to close friends to love partners. Information provided by someone else could give you some ideas as to how to fix up your house in a new and different way.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A close friend or lover could share a secret with you today, Taurus. An older person could be in the news, perhaps an author or politician you particularly admire. You, yourself, could feel inspired to work on a creative project of some kind, although the downside might be that you keep working at it for too long and could well exhaust yourself. Remember to take breaks. You need to relax a little and remember to take time out to eat.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Someone you've known for a long time but haven't seen for a while could suddenly come back into the picture, Gemini. He or she could attend a social event of some kind or actually drop in to visit your family. Friendships and group affiliations could prove supportive and satisfying right now and you should feel pretty secure with them. This is a great time to sign up for classes, particularly those involving the arts.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today you and your family or a group of friends might spend most of the day out and about, Cancer. You might spend the day outdoors, or possibly attend a concert or festival of some kind. This should be a very happy day for you, as you're likely to be feeling especially close to those around you. Your relationships appear to be quite secure, as does your career and financial situation. Enjoy your day.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A class, lecture, or workshop could prove fascinating and stimulating for you today, Leo. Plans for travel to a distant state or foreign country, perhaps in the company of friends or family members, could be confirmed, which should make you feel really good! Your relationships seem warm, supportive, and stable, even those with people who live far away from you. Have fun!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

If you've been thinking of buying a home or otherwise purchasing real estate, Virgo, this is the day to start the ball rolling or finalize the deal, depending on your situation. Investments in property planned at this time should continue to increase steadily in value. However, make sure this is the right investment for you before committing to anything. Otherwise, you might be stuck with something you don't like for a long time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A festive social event could either start or consolidate a love relationship, which could last for a long time. New and interesting people could come into your life, Libra, bringing stimulating conversation and useful information. Someone you haven't seen for a while could also appear on the scene, making for a joyful reunion. A project you've been working on, either job related or personal, could finally be completed. Enjoy your day.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today you should be experiencing a strong feeling of satisfaction and contentment with your life, Scorpio. Business and financial matters continue to go well, and your home life especially appears to be secure and stable. You might be considering investing some of your resources in your home. Any new romantic relationships begun at this time could well last for a long time, so make sure you really like the person before committing!



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Business transactions taking place in your near neighborhood should prove sensible and satisfying today, Sagittarius. You should be feeling pretty financially secure right now, as career and money matters continue to go well for you. Contact with friends, neighbors, and relatives should be open, congenial, and honest. Relationships of all kinds are apt to be pretty stable. In the evening, take a brisk walk near your home.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

If you're into gardening or in any way working with the land, you're likely to spend a lot of time doing it today, Capricorn. A friend or family member could help. Anything planted today is likely to grow and thrive, so don't worry about seeds that don't sprout. You might spend a bit too much time doing it, however. Work only until you're pleasantly tired, then quit for the day; otherwise, you might burn yourself out.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A warm and loving communication could come today from a longtime friend or romantic partner. This could be the high point of your day, Aquarius, especially since a letter or delivery you've been waiting on for a while still might not come. An older relative or neighbor might come to your door wanting advice about something. Children could prove particularly inspiring at this time, as you're especially attuned to them now. Enjoy!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If you've been thinking about starting a garden, this is a great day to do it, since anything relating to the land you begin today is likely to thrive. Doubts about your financial security might be on your mind, Pisces. They're probably misplaced, because you should continue to do well. However, your doubts can serve a purpose in that they could inspire you to take steps to ensure that your situation continues. Go to it!

Wordsearch Puzzle

Martin Luther King Jr.

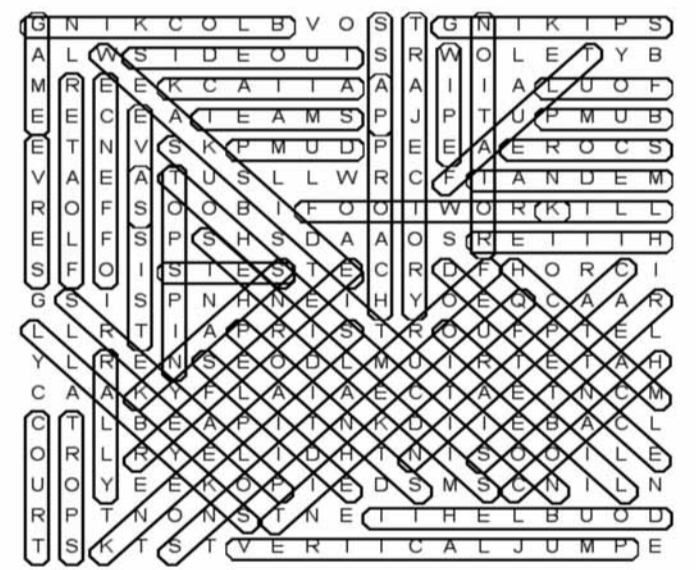
Find and circle all of the words related to Martin Luther King Jr. that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Martin Luther King Jr. quote.

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

- | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| ACTIVIST | CORETTA | INJUSTICES | PASTOR |
| AFRICAN AMERICAN | DESEGREGATION | LEADER | PEACEFUL |
| ASSASSINATED | EQUALITY | LOVE | PROGRESS |
| ATLANTA | FATHER | MARCHES | PROTEST |
| BALCONY | FORGIVE | MEMPHIS | RACISM |
| BAPTIST | HATE | MICHAEL | SELMA |
| BIRMINGHAM | HERO | MONTGOMERY | SPEAKER |
| BOLD | HISTORY | MOVEMENT | SPEECHES |
| BRAVE | HOLIDAY | NOBEL PEACE PRIZE | STRONG |
| BUS BOYCOTT | HOPE | NON VIOLENCE | TRUTH |
| CHALLENGE | HUSBAND | OPRESSED | WASHINGTON |
| CHANGE | I HAVE A DREAM | ORATOR | YOLANDA |
| CIVIL RIGHTS | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Volleyball



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

The hidden message is: VOLLEYBALL WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED MINTONETTE

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020



A Palestinian man stands on a beach during stormy weather by his house at al-Shati camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City. — AFP

China's 'mermaid descendants' weave final garments from skin of fish

You Wenfeng, who belongs to China's tiny Hezhen ethnic group, is one of the few people in her community who can still make clothing from the skin of fish. She was not yet born when her kinsmen were thrown into labour camps during Japan's occupation of Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s. "Many Hezhen clans perished, but my mother survived to pass on her fish-skin knowledge to me," said You, 68.

A Tungusic people native to Siberia and on the Black Dragon river, as the Amur is known in China, the Hezhen rebuilt its population to 5,000 from 300 after World War II. But that hasn't stopped the decline of Hezhen culture, including the tradition of making garments from the skin of carp, pike and salmon. Few in the current generation are interested in learning the craft. Fish-skin clothing is also no longer a regular part of daily Hezhen attire.

Sensing the end, You started to impart her knowledge to some local Han Chinese women in Tongjiang, a quiet city near the northeastern border with Russia where she now lives. Her disciples also learn the Yimakan, a story-telling genre that switches between speech and song in the Hezhen language. The education is arduous, with You's acolytes committing to memory songs of fishing, hunting and ancient tribal conquests through phonetics alone. With little prompting, You burst into song in her studio apartment during a visit by Reuters, singing of a woman's wish to bear a son for her hunter-husband.

Hezhen hunters rode on canoes made from birch, or "swift horses", You said, smiling. Such is their skill on water that legend says the Hezhen descended from mermaids. "When the forests flooded to the treetops, there'd be fish everywhere," she said. "Just throw your spear into the water and there'd be fish." These days, fish are sourced from the marketplace. And instead of tiger bone and deer tendon, embroidery needles and cotton thread are used. A top and a pair of trousers for a woman require 50 fish, and for a man, 56, You said.

She would de-skin the fish and dry the skin. It is then repeatedly passed through the wooden jaws of a rudimentary press to soften it. The process takes a month.



Ethnic Hezhen You Wenfeng's student learns how to make clothes from fish skin clothes at You's studio.



Ethnic Hezhen You Wenfeng poses with her fish skin clothes at a frozen river in Tongjiang, Heilongjiang province, China. — Reuters photos

Sewing requires a further 20 days. Finding commercial functions for fish-skin might save the craft. Fish-leather has inspired some luxury fashion houses such as Dior and Prada to occasionally include it in their garments and accessories, but the fabric is still largely a curiosity. "Look at the criss-cross pattern on the skin," You said. "It's stronger than most skins." — Reuters



You Wenfeng, 68, an ethnic Hezhen woman, poses with her fishskin clothes at her studio in Tongjiang, Heilongjiang province, China.



Vuitton's diamond as big as a tennis ball steals the show in Paris



Picture shows the second world biggest rough diamond named "Sewelo" displayed at place Vendome's Louis Vuitton luxury shop in Paris. — AFP

Louis Vuitton made a splash as it showcased its latest purchase yesterday: the world's second-biggest rough diamond. The LVMH-owned brand, which said last week that it was the new owner of the 1,758-carat Sewelo, displayed the glinting, blackened stone at its Place Vendome store in Paris. The company has not said how much it paid for the diamond. The size of a tennis ball and covered in carbon, it was discovered in Botswana last year and will be cut into gems.

Its name, Sewelo, means "rare find" in Setswana, and the stone will be turned into a collection of fine jewelry, according to Lucara, a Canada-based diamond mining company which is partnering with Vuitton and an Antwerp-based manufacturer to produce the gems, and which owns the mine where it was found. Vuitton, better known for making pricey handbags, only entered fine jewelry in 2012 - where it competes with Bulgari, also owned by LVMH, and Richemont's Cartier.

High-end jewelers are displaying their wares in Paris alongside Haute Couture Week, a showcase of one-of-a-kind outfits by top designers. Pieces in these jewelry collections often cost tens of thousands of dollars. Jewelry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the luxury goods market in recent years, spurring LVMH's \$16.2 billion purchase of US label Tiffany last year. Kering's Gucci label also said last year it would branch into high-end jewelry. — Reuters



In this file photo US artist Judy Chicago poses prior to the start of the Christian Dior Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP



Dior stuns Paris fashion with its divine femininity

Dior staged arguably the most startling show in haute couture history yesterday inside a temple to "The Female Divine", with stars including Uma Thurman and Sigourney Weaver filing into the belly of an enormous reclining mother goddess through her stylised vulva. The 75-metre long (250-foot) installation was created by the veteran American feminist artist Judy



sewn at a women's embroidery school in India, where the art is a male preserve. Dior's designer Maria Grazia Chiuri—the first woman ever to lead the fabled French fashion house—has made female empowerment a pil-



lar of the brand, launching her reign in 2016 with a T-shirt reading "We should all be feminists." "Women's power is not just reproduction, but the power to create," the Italian told AFP as she sent out a breathtaking pantheon of Greek goddesses in shimmering draped diaphanous gold and ivory creations.

A cape fit for Cleopatra

The collection wowed critics who said it harked back to haute couture's halcyon days in the Roaring Twenties, with Vogue hailing "its embarrassment of riches". Inspired by the peplos robes of ancient Greece and the

classical statues, Chiuri used rope and knot motifs to tie her vision of classical "Botticellian beauty" to women who have taken destiny by the lapel. Nothing said that more than the feathered cape fit for Cleopatra herself worn by the Dominican supermodel Lineisy Montero. "We want to celebrate the divine aspect of women and their power," Chiuri said.

Women can create their own role models, she insisted, as she sent her modern Athenas and Artemises down an imperial purple carpet of "one thousand flowers" that Chicago imagined as a tribute to Eleanor of Aquitaine, the medieval ruler of France and England.



"The real problem is that we don't think (as women) that we can dream," Chiuri added. "When I started out in fashion I never thought it would be possible for me to be here, but it can happen. Where does this (blockage) come from?" the designer asked.

"Doing this collaboration with Judy (Chicago) is also a way of telling young women that there are references in art and fashion for them—people who have gone before them. "You can do it—your life is not predetermined to be a mother. I am very happy to be a mother, but it is not the only thing that I am. I am also a creative director, a wife, a friend," Chiuri added.

Goddess on Rodin's lawn

With that in mind, the designer replaced the traditional wedding dress that finishes haute couture shows with a staggering bodiced creation showing a rising moon armored with "a sea of pearl beads". More than 1,500 hours of painstaking work went

Chicago, who told AFP: "We walk in the way we came out." Its womb-like interior was hung with embroidered banners asking what life would be like "if women ruled the world". "Would men and women be equal? Would there be violence? Would old women be revered?" asked the pennants, which were



Models present creations for Dior during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020/2021 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Fashion



into the piece, Chiuri said, with several others woven and fringed with gilded wire to catch and dapple the light taking just as long. Chicago is best known for her epic work "The Dinner Party"—three tables set for 39 great but often forgotten women from history, from the Primordial Goddess to Ishtar, Kali and the novelist Virginia Woolf. The artist said she had dreamed of building her temple to "The Female Divine" since 1977.

Finally being able to make it was "the greatest creative opportunity of a lifetime", the 80-year-old said. The work will be open to the public Tuesday for five days. That Chicago's goddess is parked on the lawn of the Rodin Museum in Paris, which celebrates one of the most macho of sculptors, adds a further frisson. Feminist critics have never

forgiven the French artist for his treatment of the sculptor Camille Claudel, his lover and model, who many argue was his equal artistically. The Dior show kicked off the week of haute couture shows, which are unique to Paris. Regarded as the pinnacle of fashion, some of the world's richest women pay tens of thousands to be dressed by the little more than a dozen designers who are allowed to use the label under French law. — AFP



Models present creations for Dior during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020/2021 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

Paris falls head over heels for **British fashion**

Eels were once a staple dish for working-class Londoners. Now dandies everywhere will be queueing up to wear them after Dunhill's Paris men's fashion week show Sunday went off the scales. Mark Weston—who is known for his cleverly engineered clothes—lit up the catwalk with the ingeniously chic way he used the skin of the sea's most slithery customer. With British designers dominating the final day of the men's show in the French capital, Weston gave an unexpectedly sensual allure to the most unlikely of luxury materials.

In a sleek collection of shimmering and silky blacks and reds inspired by the 1980s New Romantic movement, and The Blitz nightclub in London in particular, the designer gave a dashing new dynamism to the heritage English label. With the rock star sheen he gave it, there is nothing fishy about eel skin, Weston told AFP afterwards. "It is super-fine and delicate to work with and can be a bit papery to start with. But Dunhill is a leather house so we have these capabilities to experiment," he said. "We gave it a bit of a sheen and it takes colors so beautifully and naturally," he said of his suddenly fashionable fish pelts, which had critics and fashion buyers reaching out to touch them.

Eat then wear

"And it's natural," Weston added. "People eat eels all over the world so it's a natural byproduct. I love the fact that they are being repurposed like this." Dunhill was the



second major weekend show to channel the New Romantic movement, with Dior paying tribute to the late Judy Blame—the one-time Duran Duran stylist—in a collection of bravura aristocratic elegance on Friday. While the British veteran Paul Smith must be pleased to see fashion return to the tailoring he has so long championed, the loud-

est cheer for a Brit was for Paris newbie Craig Green, who at 33 is 40 years Smith's junior.

Three times London menswear designer of the year, Green arrived trailing quite a reputation, and the youthful avant-gardist made no compromises with an out-there show based around intimacy and the "packaging of the body and of people". Using a type of polythene and leather for future survival clothes that could have come from Ridley Scott's "Alien: Covenant", for which he designed the costumes, they are unlikely to trouble the high street.

Romancing the Hadids

Yet there was an undeniable poetry and thoughtfulness about the way he transformed throwaway materials like the rubbery meshes used to wrap fruit. And there was a reflective quality too about his closing looks that used colorful blinds as a metaphor for peering out windows, even if the models rather looked like they had been hit by kites. While the debate rages over whether Green is the "true genius" of London hype, Lanvin's even younger star Bruno Sialelli is already clearly the "full package". His joyously romantic collection was based on Corto Maltese, the dashing and erudite naval officer who was the hero of Hugo Pratt's cult graphic novel series.

Having already paid homage to Babar the Elephant in a previous collection for the revived French house, 31-year-old Sialelli again plundered his childhood comic books



for his youthful nostalgic vibe, with jackets modeled after Corto's officer's coat. With the Hadid sisters Bella and Gigi also walking the co-ed show alongside South Sudanese supermodel Adut Akech, there were plenty of echos too of the glamorous women Corto romanced on his swashbuckling adventures around the globe. — AFP



Photos show models presenting Dunhill Men's Fall 2020 in Paris.-wwd.com



Pastry chefs bring the "Cake of Dreams", a 2 meters high reinterpretation of late Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini's favorite dessert: 'Zuppa inglese Fellini 100' by master pastry chef Roberto Rinaldini, during "Fellini 100" celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Fellini. — AFP photos



Costumes are displayed at the exhibition "Fellini 100: Immortal Genius".

Fellini's birthplace Rimini marks centenary of maestro's birth

Italian resort Rimini on Monday marked 100 years since the birth of director Federico Fellini, whose visual dreamscapes revolutionized cinema in a career spanning almost half a century. Dozens of events are being held around the world and in Italy this year to remember Fellini, considered one of the most influential filmmakers of all time. The winner of a record four best foreign language film Oscars, he is famed for films set in Rome such as "La Dolce Vita" (1960), and most of his films were shot in Cinecittà's Studio 5 outside the capital.

But he set his 1973 masterpiece "Amarcord", a semi-autobiographical comedy about an adolescent boy growing up in 1930s fascist Italy, in the Adriatic resort of Rimini where he was born on January 20, 1920. The city is marked the centenary with a special exhibition and open a museum dedicated to Fellini, who died in 1993, by the end of the year. On

Monday the city cut a giant cake in his honor on the main piazza.

"Rimini is everywhere in Fellini's cinema, the countryside in his films is Rimini's countryside, the sea in all Fellini's films is Rimini's sea," said Marco Leonetti of the Rimini Cinematheque which helped put on the exhibition. The show includes some of the more spectacular costumes from his films, as well as frequently erotic extracts from the sketchbooks of his dreams he created for his psychotherapist over a 30-year period.

'Magical and lyrical'

Originally an artist and caricaturist, Fellini paid to watch films as a child at Rimini's Fulgor cinema by drawing caricatures, and his films remain caricatures of society. "If you take Fellini's films, like 'Amarcord', 'La Dolce Vita', 'I Vitelloni', when you watch them all, it's as if you're flicking through a history book, you travel



A general view shows the Castel Sismondo in Rimini.

through the history of our country, the history of Italy, from the 1930s to the 1980s," Leonetti told AFP. Fellini was initially appreciated more abroad than in Italy, where he frequently scandalized the conservative society of the 1950s. — AFP



A detail of the "Cake of Dreams".



Visitors view photographs displayed at the exhibition "Fellini 100: Immortal Genius".



A visitor views sketches from Federico Fellini's "Book of Dreams" (Libro dei Sogni) at the exhibition "Fellini 100: Immortal Genius".

Russia fines director of Cannes winner over snow delay

"Ayka", a gritty low-budget drama about a Central Asian woman living in Moscow, caused a sensation when its star won the best actress prize at Cannes in 2018. But Russia's film funding body has ordered the director to pay the equivalent of 100,000 euros (\$111,000) for releasing it four years behind schedule, a delay he blames on a lack of natural snow for winter scenes.

Sergey Dvortsevoy's film portrays a Kyrgyz single mother, played by Kazakh actress Samal Yeslyamova, struggling for survival in wintry Moscow. Her victory at the Cannes international film festival in June 2018 was a triumph for Kazakhstan, where both Yeslyamova and Dvortsevoy come from.

Russia's state Cinema Fund-whose funding is often make-or-break for productions-gave money towards the film but is angry about its late release, said Dvortsevoy, who was also the film's producer. "The Russian state demands that I pay the equivalent of 100,000 euros for the four-year delay in the film's production," he told AFP on Monday. "I'm in shock, this is auteur cinema and our takings can't cover such a huge fine."

He blamed Moscow's lack of snow cover over two winters for production delays, saying his "quasi-documentary style does not allow the use of fake snow". He also pointed to the film's narrative style, saying "80 per-



In this file photo Russian director Sergey Dvortsevoy poses during a photocall for the film "Ayka (My Little One)" at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

cent of the screenplay was written on the day with the main actress and that's often unpredictable.

"But this is an auteur film, that's treated as a different case for all kinds of penalties," said the filmmaker, who was acting as a producer for the first time. Ayka received 28 million rubles (\$454,601) from the Cinema Fund, just over a quarter of its budget.

It had only a small cinema release in Russia, with just over 8,000 people seeing it and ticket sales of around \$39,000, according to official statistics. However, the director is being fined only for the delay and does not have to pay back the rest. After its Cannes success, "Ayka" was shortlisted for an Oscar nomination in the best foreign language film category, representing Kazakhstan. The film is based on the tragic statistic that migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan left behind 248 babies in Moscow maternity wards in 2010. The director said he is developing a new feature film project set in the far north of the USSR in summer. "I'm already afraid of falling into the same trap," he said, since "the summer is very short in northern Russia." —AFP

Studio Ghibli films to hit Netflix, but US fans miss out

Animated films from Japan's Studio Ghibli, including Oscar winner "Spirited Away", are coming to streaming giant Netflix, delighting many fans but leaving US subscribers disappointed as they will miss out. Twenty-one films from Japan's premier animation studio, co-founded by animator Hayao Miyazaki, will be made available in batches between February and April, Netflix announced this week. The films-which also include "Princess Mononoke", "Arrietty" and "Kiki's Delivery Service"-will be on the service in most places worldwide, from the Asia-Pacific to Europe and Latin America.

But the productions, to be subtitled in 28 languages and dubbed in up to 20, will not be on Netflix in the United States, Canada or Japan. "We've listened to our fans and have made the definitive decision to stream our film catalogue," said Studio Ghibli producer Toshio Suzuki. Aram Yacoubian, director of original animation at Netflix, described the news as a "dream come true for Netflix and millions of our members".

Miyazaki is among the world's most acclaimed animators, with huge followings in Japan and abroad, and "Spirited Away" won the Oscar for best animated feature in 2003. Getting the films is a coup for the world's biggest paid online streaming service, which faces fierce competition from the likes of Disney+ and Apple TV+. And many fans were delighted. —AFP

Queen join Queen Elizabeth on new British coin

Rockers Queen have become the first band to be celebrated on British coinage, joining Queen Elizabeth II on a new coin unveiled Monday by the Royal Mint. The iconic British group are hailed on a coin kicking off a Music Legends series being produced by the official mint. It features Queen Elizabeth on the obverse or "heads" side as usual joined by Queen on the reverse. The coin depicts the instruments played by lead singer Freddie Mercury, guitarist Brian May, drummer Roger Taylor and bass guitarist John Deacon.

It shows Mercury's Bechstein piano and his trademark microphone, May's homemade electric guitar, Taylor's bass drum featuring the band's logo and Deacon's Fender Precision bass guitar. The piano features three keys pressed down, representing notes from the melody of their 1975 landmark hit "Bohemian Rhapsody", when Mercury would cross hands to play a G and an F.

"Here we have the first ever Queen and Queen coin," said May, 72. "To have our band recognized and our music celebrated in this way is very touching, a real honor." Coins are an essential part of the Queen sound: May plays his guitar using old sixpence pieces as a pick. Taylor, 70, joked that with all the fuss, "I feel entirely spent".

Camp theatrics

The coin's designer Chris Facey said he tried to represent the "musical democracy" within the band, in which all four members wrote classic hits. "Freddie was flamboyant and his camp theatrics are a big part of Queen, but the band are more than just a frontman," he said. "To reflect this sense of balance between them I created a design that featured each of their iconic instruments." And by making the instruments the focus, I wanted to convey Queen's skill as musicians as well as their passion for their craft.

With a face value of £5 (\$6.50, 5.85 euros), the collectors' item coin costs £13 in its brilliant uncirculated form. Meanwhile a £100 denomination one ounce gold version costs £2,020. Taylor inadvertently became the first living person other than royalty to appear in a photograph on a British stamp. — AFP



Classifieds

Wednesday, January 22, 2020



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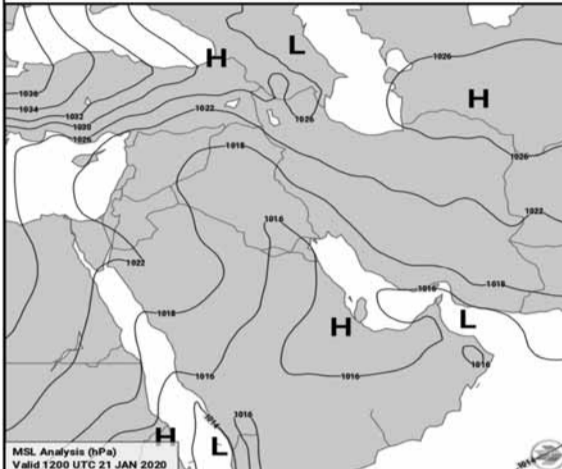


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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Rather cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be

BY DAY: Cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind to south westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 60 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH			Fresh wind	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 21/01/2020 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	24 °C	09 °C		
BUBYAN	18 °C	15 °C		
JAHRA	22 °C	11 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	18 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	15 °C		
NUWAISIB	23 °C	10 °C		
WAFRA	22 °C	09 °C		
SALMY	21 °C	09 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	01/22	Cloudy to partly cloudy causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be	21 °C	14 °C	SE-SW	25 - 60 km/h
Thursday	01/23	Rather cold	17 °C	05 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Friday	01/24	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	19 °C	03 °C	SE-NW	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	01/25	Cold and A significant decrease in temperature	14 °C	01 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	14:57
Sunset	17:17
Isha	18:38

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	88 %
MIN. RH	33 %
MAX. Wind	N 32 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 Mahbola 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. S0930833. (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



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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DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 22/1/ 2020				Departure Flights on Wednesday 22/1/ 2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	00:01	AHY	120	Baku	13:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	105	London	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	102	London	00:55	RBG	218	Asyut	14:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	TBZ	6606	Mashhad	14:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	PVV	730	IGA	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:05
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	CLX	7912	Hanoi	15:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
PGT	284	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	IRA	664	Shiraz	16:40
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
JZR	702	Asyut	04:55	RBG	554	Alexandria	17:10
FDB	069	Jeddah	05:00	KAC	361	Colombo	17:30
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	357	Kochi	17:40
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	405	Dubai	17:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
KAC	284	Dubai	05:35	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	SVA	505	Madinah	18:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	120	Dubai	07:10	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
ABY	129	Sharjah	07:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	RIA	641	Amman	20:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:35	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	MSC	402	Alexandria	21:30
RBG	553	Alexandria	09:50	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	889	Luxor	10:55	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
AWB	129	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
PVV	730	Sharjah	12:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:00
KIS	6032	Mashhad	12:00	OMS	226	Muscat	23:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	JAV	622	Amman	23:15
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:25	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
TBZ	3605	Mashhad	13:40	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	795	Madinah	23:30
CLX	7912	Luxembourg	14:00	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
				GOW	062	CNN	23:55

Trump rejects climate 'prophets of doom' as Thunberg warns Davos

DAVOS: US President Donald Trump tore into environmental "prophets of doom" at the Davos forum yesterday, rejecting fiery warnings from teenage campaigner Greta Thunberg, and lauding the "unprecedented" US economy just hours ahead of his impeachment trial back home. Thunberg was in the audience in the Swiss Alps to hear the typically bullish speech by Trump, delivered shortly before the US Senate was to open the crucial next stage in his trial for abuse of power and obstruction.

The 50th meeting of the World Economic Forum aimed for a strong focus on climate change but Trump made clear he had no time for Thunberg's warning that "our house is still on fire". "We must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse," said Trump, complaining that "they want to see us do badly". He claimed that "alarmists" had been wrong over the decades when predicting population crisis, mass starvation or the end of oil.

Trump branded those warning of out-of-control global warming and other environmental disasters "the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers". The scathing assessment came just after Switzerland's president, Simonetta Sommaruga, made an emotional appeal for saving the health of an ailing planet on the same stage. By contrast, Trump did not even mention global warming, a phenomenon that nearly all climate scientists say is dangerously accelerating, with possibly devastating results for humanity.

Trump was just as unapologetic over his impeachment, which is now kicking into high gear. He said in Davos he was working for American investment, meeting with "the most important people in the world and we're bringing back tremendous business". "The other's just a hoax," he said of the "disgraceful" impeachment trial. The White House spokeswoman, Stephanie Grisham, said Trump "will be briefed by staff periodically" on the drama unfolding in Washington.

Trump campaigns

Large parts of Trump's address sounded like a campaign speech aimed at a domestic audience as much as the Davos gathering of global political and business elites. "Two years ago I told you we had launched the great American comeback," Trump said, referring to his last appearance at the yearly Davos bash. "Today



DAVOS: (Left) US President Donald Trump delivers a speech at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting yesterday. (Right) Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg attends a WEF session yesterday. — AFP



I'm glad to declare the United States is in the midst of a great economic boom the likes of which the world has never seen before."

Over and over, Trump brought up statistics he claimed proved his "unprecedented" success, based on slashing environmental protections and renegotiating trade relationships with China and the United States' two huge neighbors Canada and Mexico. "The American dream is back, bigger better, stronger than ever before," he said. Robin Niblett, director of the Chatham House think tank, called Trump's performance "an almost plain vanilla presidential campaign speech, laying out an unassailable set of statistics that tell the Democrats 'good luck taking me on this, because you won't stand a chance'."

'Just the very beginning'

Earlier, Thunberg underlined the message that has inspired millions around the world, saying "basically nothing has been done" to fight climate change. "It will require much more than this. This is just the very

beginning," the 17-year-old said. Speaking calmly and with a wry smile, Thunberg acknowledged that her campaign, which began with school strikes, had attracted huge attention without yet achieving concrete change.

"There is a difference between being heard to actually leading to something," she said. And despite the focus given by the Davos forum, Greenpeace said in a new report that some of the world's biggest banks, insurers and pension funds have collectively invested \$1.4 trillion in fossil fuel companies since the Paris climate deal in 2016. Trump touted the United States as the "number one producer of oil and natural gas" and said he would not let "radical socialists" attack the lucrative industry.

'Governments continue to fail'

Sustainability is the buzzword at the Davos forum, which began in 1971, with heel crampons handed out to participants to encourage them to walk on the icy streets rather than use cars, and the signage paint

made out of seaweed. "People are paying a lot more attention" to climate, Eurasia Group president Ian Bremmer told AFP at Davos, adding there was "genuine action by some big players", after investment titan BlackRock said it was partially divesting out of coal. "But let's be clear - a big part of this is because we failed for a very long time and governments continue to fail," he added.

Business leaders are likely also to be concerned by the state of the global economy whose prospects, according to the International Monetary Fund, have improved but remain brittle. The IMF cut its global growth estimate for 2020 to 3.3 percent, saying that a recent truce in the trade war between China and the US had brought some stability but that risks remained. Activists meanwhile will be pressing for much more concrete action to fight inequality, after Oxfam issued a report outlining how 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. — AFP

Asia steps up checks as China virus kills 6, infects more than 300

BEIJING: Asian countries yesterday ramped up measures to block the spread of a new virus as the death toll in China rose to six and the number of cases surpassed 300, raising concerns in the middle of a major holiday travel rush. Nations across the Asia-Pacific region stepped up checks of passengers at airports to detect the SARS-like coronavirus, which first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. Fears of a bigger outbreak rose after a prominent expert from China's National Health Commission confirmed late Monday that the virus can be passed between people.

Authorities previously said there was no obvious evidence of person-to-person transmission and animals were suspected to be the source, as a seafood market where live animals were sold in Wuhan was identified as the centre of the outbreak. But the World Health Organization (WHO), which was concluding a fact-finding mission in Wuhan, was still being cautious, saying at a briefing in Geneva that "not enough is known to draw definitive conclusions about how it is transmitted".

Spokesman Tarik Jasarevic warned though that "more cases should be expected" both in China and in other countries. Hundreds of millions of people are crisscrossing China this week in packed buses, trains and planes to celebrate the Lunar New Year with relatives. More than 80 new cases have been confirmed, bringing the total number of people hit by the virus in China to 314, with the vast majority in Hubei, the province where Wuhan lies, according to the National Health Commission (NHC), as well as reports from regional health commissions. Other cases have also been confirmed in cities around the country, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing, plus Guangdong, Zhejiang and Henan provinces.

Meanwhile Wang Guangfa, one of the doctors on the NHC team investigating the epidemic, told Hong Kong TV station iCable News that he was receiving treatment after becoming infected. The first case on the self-ruled island of Taiwan was also confirmed yesterday, with a woman taken to hospital on arrival at the airport from Wuhan. Wuhan mayor Zhou Xianwang told state broadcaster CCTV yesterday that the death toll had risen from four to six.

China said it would attend a special WHO meeting which will determine whether to declare a rare global

public health emergency over the disease, which was also detected in Thailand, Japan and South Korea among four people who had visited Wuhan. The coronavirus has caused alarm because of its genetic similarities to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

At four airports in Thailand, authorities introduced mandatory thermal scans of passengers arriving from high-risk areas of China. Anyone exhibiting signs of fever will be quarantined for 24 hours for monitoring. Around 1,300 passengers are expected each day in Thailand from Wuhan over Chinese New Year, which starts on Friday. In Hong Kong, where memories of SARS still haunt the city, authorities said they were on "extreme high alert", with passengers from Wuhan required to fill out health declarations and face possible jail time if they do not declare symptoms.

Enhanced screening measures have also been set up at airports in Australia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Singapore and the United States. Malaysia and Vietnam have also installed thermal scanners at airports. A man showing symptoms of the disease who had travelled to Wuhan has been put in isolation in Australia as health officials await test results, authorities said yesterday.

In China, the government announced it was classifying the outbreak in the same category as SARS, meaning compulsory isolation for those diagnosed with the disease and the potential to implement quarantine measures on travel. In Wuhan, authorities banned tour groups and police were conducting spot checks for live poultry or wild animals in vehicles leaving and entering the city, state media said. Passengers were being screened for fever at the airport, railway stations and bus terminals. Those with fevers would be registered, handed masks and advised to see a doctor. Chinese train and plane authorities said travellers with tickets to Wuhan could get refunds.

Zhong Nanshan, a renowned scientist at the National Health Commission, raised the alarm when he said on Monday that patients can contract the virus without having visited Wuhan, though he added that it was milder than SARS. Doctors at the University of Hong Kong released a study yesterday estimating that there have been 1,343 cases of the new virus in Wuhan. Scientists at Imperial College in London said last week the number was likely closer to 1,700.

The WHO has only called a global public health emergency a handful of times, including during the H1N1 - or swine flu - pandemic of 2009 and the Ebola epidemic that devastated parts of West Africa from 2014 to 2016. China was accused of covering up the SARS outbreak in 2003 but some foreign experts have praised the swift release of information on this new virus. — AFP

possibility of Kuwait allowing bars under strict laws and regulations. The lawmaker said the minister had made clear positions in the past against the hijab and political Islam.

Aseeri said the timing of the grilling and its unclear language raise some question marks about its goals, adding that the grilling is questioning her about statements she might or might not have made in the past. She strongly denied allegations that she had violated the constitution, adding that the grilling was based on the police state mentality that "the defendant is guilty until proven innocent".

The lawmakers who signed the no-confidence motion include Riyadh Al-Adasani, Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Abdullah Fahhad, Mohammad Hayef, Khaled Al-Otaibi, Mohammad Al-Mutair, Nayef Al-Merdas, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain and Thamer Al-Suwait. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the voting on the grilling will take place on Feb 4.

Harry starts new life with Meghan in Canada

VANCOUVER: Prince Harry was spending the first full day of his new life in Canada yesterday after jetting in from Britain to join his wife Meghan following their shock exit from their royal roles. Harry, 35, landed at Vancouver International Airport on a British Airways flight from London Heathrow shortly after 7:00 pm on Monday. He then took a connecting flight to Victoria on Vancouver Island, where he and Meghan have temporarily set up a home from home, having spent six weeks on the Pacific west coast over Christmas with their baby son Archie.

British newspapers published pictures of Harry, escorted by security, descending from the plane wearing a beanie hat and jeans with a bag slung over his shoulder. Meghan, 38, was earlier spotted with Archie taking their dogs for a walk in the neighborhood. According to local reports, the couple are looking to buy a beachside house in Vancouver, or possibly in Toronto, where US former television actress Meghan spent several years while acting in the legal drama series "Suits". Like Britain, Canada is a Commonwealth realm, meaning Harry's grandmother Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state.

Harry and Meghan are bowing out entirely from representing the monarchy, in a crisis that has shaken the centuries-old institution. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex openly said they have struggled in the spotlight since their wedding in May 2018, and were seeking to step back as frontline royals. Harry said Sunday that they did not want to quit their royal duties but reluctantly accepted there was "no other option" if they wanted to cut loose from public funding and seek their own income in pursuit of a more independent life.

On Monday, Harry, who is sixth in line to the throne, attended the UK-Africa Investment Summit in London. He seemed in good spirits as he met the presidents of Malawi and Mozambique, and the Moroccan prime



LONDON: Britain's Prince Harry (left) talks with Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson during a bilateral meeting at the UK-Africa Investment Summit on Monday. — AFP

minister. He also had an informal 20-minute private meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who hosted the event - which might be one of the prince's final engagements as a working royal.

Under their new arrangement, the Sussexes are free to earn their own commercial income - but can no longer represent Queen Elizabeth or be referred to as their royal highnesses, and must repay taxpayers' money spent on their UK home. They will no longer receive public money - though 95 percent of their annual funding comes from his father Prince Charles' hereditary estate for the heir to the throne. To what extent that will continue, and who will cover their security bill - currently met by the British police - remains to be seen.

The couple intend to raise their own income streams. They have launched their new Sussex Royal website and trademarked the name. However, Queen Elizabeth's senior advisor on heraldry suggested they should not be allowed to use the royal moniker, having relinquished their public duties. — AFP

Iran MP offers \$3m reward for killing Trump

DUBAI: An Iranian lawmaker offered a \$3 million reward to anyone who killed US President Donald Trump and said Iran could avoid threats if it had nuclear arms, ISNA news agency reported yesterday amid Tehran's latest standoff with Washington. US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood dismissed the reward as "ridiculous", telling reporters in Geneva it showed the "terrorist underpinnings" of Iran's establishment.

Tensions have steadily escalated since Trump pulled Washington out of Tehran's nuclear agreement with world powers in 2018 and reimposed US sanctions. The standoff erupted into tit-for-tat military strikes this month. "On behalf of the people of Kerman province, we will pay a \$3 million reward in cash to whoever kills Trump," lawmaker Ahmad Hamzeh told the 290-seat parliament, ISNA reported. He did not say if the reward had any official backing from Iran's clerical rulers.

The city of Kerman, in the province south of the capital, is the hometown of Qassem Soleimani, a prominent Iranian commander whose killing in a drone strike ordered by Trump on Jan 3 in Baghdad prompted Iran to fire missiles at US targets in Iraq. "If we had nuclear weapons today, we would be protected from threats ... We should put the production of long-range missiles

capable of carrying unconventional warheads on our agenda. This is our natural right," he was quoted as saying by ISNA.

The United States and its Western allies have long accused Iran of seeking nuclear weapons. Tehran insists it has never sought nuclear arms and never will, saying its nuclear work is for research and to master the process to generate electricity. The 2015 nuclear agreement overall was designed to increase the time Iran would need to obtain enough fissile material for a nuclear bomb. Parties to the deal believed, at the time, Iran could produce enough material in two to three months if it wanted.

Under the deal, known as the JCPOA, Iran received sanctions relief in return for curbing its nuclear activities. In response to Washington's withdrawal from the pact and pressure from U.S. sanctions, Iran has rolled back its commitments to the deal. This month, Iran announced it was scrapping all limits on its uranium enrichment work, potentially shortening the so-called "breakout time" needed to build a nuclear weapon.

Reports issued by the UN nuclear watchdog have suggested Tehran is still far from sprinting ahead with its work. After Iran's latest step, Britain, France and Germany triggered a dispute mechanism in the nuclear pact, starting a diplomatic process that could lead to reimposing UN sanctions. Iran said on Monday that Tehran would pull out from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if international sanctions were reimposed. The US envoy Wood said Iran's threat to quit the treaty, the foundation of global nuclear arms control since the Cold War, would send a "very, very negative message". — Reuters

10 MPs file no-confidence...

Continued from Page 1

was wrong from the start because she had made comments against a Gulf country and against the Gulf's Peninsula Force, adding that the minister lost credibility after denying statements she was proven to have made.

Damkhi also charged the minister of having said years before her appointment that the government was corrupt, against freedom and "purchased lawmakers through services". He said that the government had in the past scrapped the appointment of two undersecretaries over tweets they wrote that were deemed inappropriate. He also showed a short video showing Aseeri talking about the presence of bars in Dubai and the

Sports

Panthers nip Wild in final seconds for 5th straight win

Kadri, MacKinnon help Avalanche knock off Red Wings

MINNESOTA: Florida's Noel Acciari chipped in the game-winning goal with 5.6 seconds left as the Panthers won for the first time ever in regulation at Minnesota, beating the Wild 5-4 on Monday night in St. Paul, Minn.

Mark Pysyk fired in a long shot in the closing seconds that Aaron Ekblad tipped and then Acciari redirected in for his 18th goal, giving Florida its season-high fifth consecutive victory.

Keith Yandle scored his 99th career goal and assisted on three markers, Aleksander Barkov scored and recorded an assist, and Evgenii Dadonov and Vincent Trocheck netted goals for the Panthers, who are 7-2-0 in January. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 29 shots.

Luke Kunin found the net twice, Jared Spurgeon had a goal and an assist, and Zach Parise potted a goal for the Wild. Joel Eriksson Ek and Ryan Suter posted two assists apiece, and Alex Stalock made 20 saves. Victor Rask played in his 400th NHL game.

Frank Vatrano led a quick breakout for Florida in the first period, then dropped a pass back to Mike Hoffman. The high-scoring winger, known more for his one-timers, found Yandle all alone on the far post for his fifth marker at 4:01.

The helper gave Hoffman a nine-game point streak (five goals, six assists), the longest run by a Panthers player this season.

Florida's Anton Stralman committed a delay-of-game penalty late in the opening period, creating Minnesota's second man advantage. Spurgeon cashed in with 17 seconds remaining before the intermission to tie the game at 1 — the Wild's ninth power-play goal in nine games.

Josh Brown's stretch pass went over half of the length of the ice, sending Barkov in on a breakaway in the second period. The Florida captain skated in and chipped the puck back high over the goalie's glove at

7:28 for a 2-1 lead for the visitors.

Minnesota tied it when Kunin scored just the second short-handed goal of the season against Florida, finishing a cross-ice pass from Eriksson Ek at 10:59 of the middle period for his 11th tally.

The Panthers grabbed their third lead when Dadonov scored his 10th power-play goal (and 22nd overall) by redirecting Yandle's point shot at 2:02 of the third. However, Parise notched his 19th tally on the man advantage just 2:17 later to knot it at 3.

Minnesota took its first lead at 7:06 of the third when Kunin scored his 12th of the season, but Trocheck evened the score at 4 with his seventh at 15:52.

In another match, Nazem Kadri and Nathan MacKinnon each scored twice and rookie defenseman Cale Makar reached another franchise record before the All-Star break as the Colorado Avalanche defeated the visiting Detroit Red Wings 6-3 on Monday afternoon in Denver.

Matt Nieto and Ryan Graves also scored for the Avalanche (28-15-6), who won their third in a row. Goaltender Pavel Francouz made 22 saves.

Tyler Bertuzzi, Dylan Larkin and Givani Smith scored for the Red Wings (12-34-4), who dropped to 0-4-1 in their past five games, during which they've been outscored 25-8.

Goalie Jimmy Howard kept Detroit in the game for two periods before the Avalanche scored four times in the third. Howard, who stopped 40 of 45 shots, dropped to 0-13-2 in his past 15 games and hasn't won since Oct. 29.

Makar, one of the leading contenders for the Calder Trophy as the NHL's Rookie of the Year, had two assists to equal the franchise mark for most points by a first-year defenseman at 37, set by Bruce Bell of the Quebec Nordiques in 1984-85. In Colorado's previous game, Makar broke the team record for most goals by a rookie



DETROIT: File photo shows Filip Zadina #11 of the Detroit Red Wings skates against the Ottawa Senators at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

defender with his 11th of the season, one more than John-Michael Liles had in 2003-04.

Detroit took a 1-0 lead at 2:28 of the first period as Larkin stole the puck behind the Colorado net and fed a backhanded pass out front to Bertuzzi, who slammed it into the open side of the goal.

Colorado got on the board with Kadri's power-play goal at 1:02 of the second, as he deflected a shot from

the point by Makar under Howard's catching glove.

The Avalanche took the lead less than two minutes later, Makar threading a cross-ice pass to MacKinnon at the far post at 2:56.

It remained 2-1 until the third, when Kadri and Nieto scored 53 seconds apart early in the period. MacKinnon scored his 30th of the season with 1 minute remaining. — Reuters



Fans heartbroken as Kuwait loses to Iran in nail biting finish

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Handball team lost its first match in the main draw against Iran with the score of 24-28 during their match Monday in the 19th Asian Championship in the second group of the main draw. Meanwhile, Qatar defeated South Korea 34-27 in the same group. Kuwait national team still have hopes to qualify for the semifinals and World Cup if it beats South Korea, in a late match, and if Iran loses to S Korea, or if Kuwait wins its two remaining matches against Korea and Qatar.

'The blues had a huge match'

Despite the national team's loss, it gave fantastic performance in front of a very strong team that has seven players playing professionally in Europe, and it only was the experience factor that lacked our players, who have been away from competition for a long time, and lack of

the needed physical fitness that led to the drop of the players' performance during the final minutes of the match, as two opportunities for a draw were squandered.

'Relying on three players only'

It was very obvious that Kuwait's team depended on three players for scoring, Mohammad and Abdallah Al-Gharabally from the back line, and left winger Saleh Al-Mousawi, as this trio scored all goals except for two or three, and made it easier for the opponents as three other positions were absent from scoring.

Al-Qafsi: I take responsibility for the loss

Kuwait coach, Tunisian Aamen Al-Qafsi said he bears the responsibility of the loss to Iran and described his players as "heroes", and gave a great performance and followed what they were asked to do, and he apologized to the Kuwaiti fans for what happened.

Al-Qafsi said, the reason behind the loss is little experience of some of the players at the international level, in addition to wasting easy opportunities to score, adding that Kuwait faced and organized and well developed team. He said "we had chances for a comeback on several occasions, but we made mistakes and we will work on avoiding them to keep our hopes to qualify for the semifinals alive. We promise fans to be better and ask them to continue to be present in support of the players and thank them for all

the support they gave us.

Reza Habeeb: We knew how to snatch the win

Iran's coach Ali Reza Habeebi said Kuwait's team lost concentration due to fan's pressure and demands to win especially in the second half, adding that such matters should be dealt with to keep hopes to qualify further. He refused to say that his team is better than Kuwait's adding that Iran played well and knew how to control the situation during the final moments of the match and snatched the win.

In the meantime Iran lost services of its star top scorer Sajjad Astaki who was injured during the match with Kuwait. Astaki is considered one of the best Iranian players and defended the colors of his country in 63 international matches during which he scored 350 goals since 2006.

Joan bin Hamad lauds Qatar's team

President of Qatar Olympic Committee Sheikh Joan bin Hamad lauded the performance of Qatar's team against the Koreans, adding on his twitter account "the Burgundy beat South Korea and takes the most important turn on the way of qualification for the World Cup next year."

In other matches Iraq continued its good performances in the consolation rounds and had its second win, against Australia with the score of 31-26.



Russia, heat cloud Tokyo 2020 Olympics with six months to go

TOKYO: Uncertainty over Russia's participation for the third consecutive Olympics and concerns over the heat hang heavy over Tokyo 2020 preparations, with only six months until the opening ceremony.

The Japanese capital has avoided many of the crises that dogged previous Games — International Olympic Committee (IOC) chief Thomas Bach said the city is the best prepared host city he has seen, with facilities complete well ahead of schedule and tickets massively oversubscribed.

But elements largely out of organisers' control have overshadowed the run-up to the 2020 Games, the second time they will have been held in Tokyo after 1964, when a post-war Japan wowed the world with its technological prowess and economic "miracle". Chief among these is whether Russian athletes will compete after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) imposed a four-year ban from international sporting events over what it views as a state-sponsored doping scheme.

Moscow has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), but sources have told AFP a decision is not expected before May, just weeks before the Games open on July 24.

Bach has urged CAS, the world's highest sports court, to give a decision that "does not leave room for any kind of interpretation", warning of "real, total confusion" if the ruling is not watertight.

Russia's up-in-the-air participation follows confusion at the Rio Games, where the IOC allowed individual federations to decide whether to permit athletes to compete. At the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, the IOC barred the Russian Olympic Committee but allowed clean Russian athletes to take part as neutral competitors.

Even less predictable than Russian participation is the Tokyo weather, which has resulted in the unprecedented moving of the marathon from the host city over safety concerns.

In 1964, the Games were held in October to avoid the hot and humid Tokyo summer where the temperatures can exceed 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

But athletes in 2020 will have no such respite, with some doctors warning there could be deadly emergencies, and concerns have been raised for volunteers, spectators and the competitors.

Test events last summer gave organisers a taste of what could be to come. A French triathlete was hospitalised with suspected heatstroke and several spectators were taken ill at a rowing event.

Tokyo 2020 has rolled out a series of measures designed to counter the heat, including artificial snow, cooling mist sprays, paper fans and towels to cool the neck.

Events have been brought forward earlier to avoid the burning afternoon sun but the most extraordinary change was shifting the marathon and race walk 800 kilometres (500 miles) north to Sapporo on the island of Hokkaido. The move, which apparently caught Tokyo officials off guard when it was announced by the IOC, sparked fury in the capital, with city mayor Yuriko Koike describing it as "a decision without an agreement". Kazunori Asaba — training chief of the Japan Association of Athletics Federations — went further. "It's like the athletes who had been training for many years to climb Everest were told just nine months before they would go to a different mountain," he said. —AFP

Whizkids: Japan's Olympic athletes going for gold

TOKYO: Japan's athletes will be roared on by their home fans as they go for gold at Tokyo 2020. From swimming, where Olympic legends are made, to skateboarding and sport climbing, AFP Sport looks at the host country's top medal hopes:

SWIMMING: DAIYA SETO

In the absence of Japan swim queen Rikako Ikee as she recovers from leukaemia, Seto has emerged as the host country's top gold medal hope in the pool. Seto has shown incredible consistency since bursting onto the scene as a raw teenager and romped to a 200m-400m individual medley double at last year's world championships.

It was the 25-year-old's first 200m IM world title and third over the longer distance, while he also took silver in the 200m butterfly behind Hungarian superstar Kristof Milak. With countryman Kosuke Hagino, the defending Olympic champion in the 400m IM, mired in a lengthy slump since Rio, Seto should have more than one chance of glory as he chases the ultimate prize.

BADMINTON: KENTO MOMOTA

Coming off a year in which he captured a record 11 titles, badminton's world number one goes into Tokyo 2020 as the overwhelm-

ing favourite to win a first Olympic gold. But his preparations were dealt a blow 10 days ago when he was injured in a car crash in Kuala Lumpur just hours after winning the Malaysia Masters, potentially sidelining him for two months.

The 25-year-old suffered cuts and heavy bruising after the vehicle he was travelling in collided with a lorry, killing his driver and leaving three other passengers with minor injuries. Momota, who was suspended for the 2016 Rio Olympics for gambling at an illegal casino, could return in time for the All England Championships in March, according to Japanese badminton officials.

JUDO: SHOHEI ONO

Widely regarded as judo's best pound-for-pound fighter, the reigning world and Olympic champion will again be the man to beat in the 73-kilogramme division. The 27-year-old underlined his credentials by storming to a third world title in Tokyo last summer, crushing Azerbaijan's Rustam Orujov to win gold in a carbon copy of the Rio Olympic final four years ago. All six of his victories came by ippon, judo's closest equivalent to a knockout. An unshakably cool customer, Ono is unlikely to wilt under the pressure of a home Olympics.

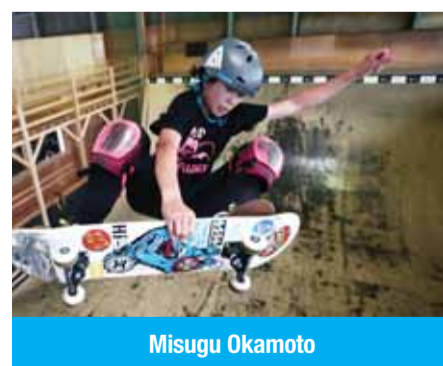


Daiya Seto

SKATEBOARDING: MISUGU OKAMOTO

The Japanese schoolgirl became skateboarding's youngest world champion last year to underline her gold medal credentials when the sport makes its Olympic debut. Still only 13, Okamoto added the world title to gold at the prestigious X Games a month earlier in a sizzling run of form that eclipsed tiny 11-year-old rival Sky Brown, who has opted to represent Britain rather than Japan.

Okamoto combines a smooth-flowing technique with an ice-cool temperament and makes high-adrenaline tricks look routine. Her composure could just be the difference as she tries to pip the younger, gnarlier



Misugu Okamoto

Brown to gold.

SPORT CLIMBING: AKIYO NOGUCHI

Once a tearaway tot who used to clamber onto the backs of cows for fun on the family farm, the 30-year-old is looking to go out with a bang with Olympic gold. The serial World Cup winner has the technique, but she will need all her experience and composure to fend off Slovenia's young world champion Janja Garnbret in what is likely to be the final chapter in Noguchi's illustrious career.

A historic gold in sport climbing's first appearance on the Olympic schedule would be a fitting way to bow out. —AFP

Sports

Nadal in the pink as Sharapova hits all-time low at Australian Open

Federer and defending champion Djokovic in round two

MELBOURNE: Top seed Rafael Nadal turned on the style as he launched his bid for a record-equalling 20th Major title at the Australian Open yesterday, but falling star Maria Sharapova hit a career low.

Australia's Nick Kyrgios also cantered into the second round, but fourth seed Daniil Medvedev had to fight his way past American Frances Tiafoe in four sets. Nadal, one shy of Roger Federer's Grand Slam mark, dropped only five games as he swatted aside Bolivia's Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 in just over two hours at a sunny Rod Laver Arena.

"It was a positive start," said the reigning Roland Garros and US Open champion, wearing a bright pink singlet and matching trainers. "What you want in the first round is just to win, and it's better if it's in straight sets." He joins Federer and defending champion Novak Djokovic in round two as the Big Three look to tighten a stranglehold that has brought them all but one of the last 14 Australian Open titles. Nadal, the first player to be world number one in three different decades, is still thriving at 33 but it's a different story for five-time Grand Slam winner Sharapova.

The 32-year-old, playing on a wildcard as she wrestles with a shoulder injury, lost 6-3, 6-4 to Croatian 19th seed Donna Vekic, making her an opening-round loser at three straight Grand Slams for the first time.

The future looks uncertain for the former world number one, who won Wimbledon when she was just 17 but has not reached a Grand Slam final since she lifted the 2014 French Open trophy.

"I can speak about my struggles and the things that I've gone through with my shoulder, but it's not really in my character to," Sharapova said. "I was there, I put myself out there (playing). As tough as it was, I finished

the match — it wasn't the way that I wanted."

Britain's Johanna Konta, a two-time Slam semi-finalist, also fell at the first hurdle as she battles to overcome a knee problem, losing 4-6, 2-6 to unseeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur.

On a bumper day of 88 first-round matches, after rain wiped out half of Monday's schedule, former US Open champion Marin Cilic and Milos Raonic both moved safely through. Italy's Fabio Fognini, two sets down against America's Reilly Opelka when their match was suspended on Monday, returned to win it in five after a stormy encounter when both players argued furiously with the umpire.

A new star emerged in 18-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner, last year's NextGen champion, who earned his first Grand Slam victory against Australia's Max Purcell. Australia's Kyrgios, who has spearheaded fundraising efforts for the country's deadly bushfire disaster, kept his notorious temper in check despite being taken to two tie-breaks in a 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7-1) win over Lorenzo Sonego of Italy.

"I feel super-comfortable, you guys are the best. I feel the support... I am ready to go again," Kyrgios told the crowd. Medvedev, the narrow loser to Nadal in September's US Open final, dropped the second set against Tiafoe before recovering to win 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. Austria's Dominic Thiem, who has reached the last two French Open finals, went through in straight sets against Adrian Mannarino, while 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka needed four to get past Damir Dzumhur.

Seventh seed Alexander Zverev beat Marco Cecchinato in straight sets but there was disappointment for France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the 2008 finalist, who retired with a back injury against Australia's Alexei



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Bolivia's Hugo Dellien during their men's singles match on day two of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Popyrin. Elsewhere, women's fourth seed Simona Halep survived some painful-looking falls to beat America's Jennifer Brady, and 2016 champion Angelique Kerber dropped only four games against Elisabetta

Cocciaretto of Italy. Air pollution from the bushfires disrupted the build-up to the year's first Grand Slam, but after Monday's heavy rain the skies were clear and sunny yesterday. — AFP

De Kock named South Africa one-day captain

JOHANNESBURG: Quinton de Kock was yesterday named as South Africa's one-day international captain as part of a long term transition plan.

His first assignment will be to lead the team in a three-match series against World Cup champions England, starting in Cape Town on February 4. Test and Twenty20 captain Faf du Plessis was not in a 15-man squad named by Cricket South Africa yesterday despite committing himself to the organisation until the World Cup T20 in October and November.

Independent selector Linda Zondi said Du Plessis' omission did not signal the end of his ODI career. "We decided to rest Faf and Kagiso Rabada for this series because they have both played a lot of cricket," said Zondi.

"A different squad will be picked for a T20 series against England after the one-day games and after that there are still T20s and ODIs against Australia."

Zondi said the appointment of De Kock was part of succession planning leading up to the 2023 Cricket World Cup. In his press conference after the third Test against England on Monday, Du Plessis said there was an opportunity to relieve some of the pressure on his captaincy.

De Kock, 27, has previously captained South Africa in two one-day internationals and two T20 internationals. Graeme Smith, CSA acting director of cricket, said De Kock was one of the best wicket-keeper-batsmen in the world.

"He has a unique outlook and manner in which he goes about his business and is tactically very street smart," said Smith. "We are confident that the new



PORT ELIZABETH: File photo shows South Africa's Quinton de Kock (L) and South Africa's Vernon Philander (R) leaves the field at the end of the third day of the third Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the St George's Park Cricket Ground in Port Elizabeth on January 18, 2020. —AFP

leadership role will bring out the best in him as a cricketer and that he can take the team forward into the future and produce results that South Africans the world over can be very proud of."

The South African squad includes new ODI caps in batsmen Janneman Malan and Kyle Verreynne, all-rounder Jon-Jon Smuts, fast bowlers Lutho Sipamla and Sisanda Magala and left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin. Of these Magala and Verreynne have yet to play at any international level.

South Africa squad

Quinton de Kock (captain), Temba Bavuma, Bjorn Fortuin, Beuran Hendricks, Reeza Hendricks, Sisanda Magala, Janneman Malan, David Miller, Andile Phehlukwayo, Lungi Ngidi, Tabraiz Shamsi, Lutho Sipamla, Jon-Jon Smuts, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne.

Smuts, Magala, Ngidi and Shamsi have been called up to a conditioning camp in Pretoria and will have to prove their fitness ahead of the series. — AFP

Halep braves falls to make winning start

MELBOURNE: Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep survived a couple of tumbles and a sore wrist before surging into the Australian Open second round yesterday.

The Romanian fourth seed recovered from a poor start to beat the big-hitting American Jennifer Brady 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 and launch her title bid.

The 2018 Roland Garros and 2019 Wimbledon champion faces British qualifier Harriet Dart next in Melbourne. The 28-year-old Halep had her serve broken in the first game by the 49th-ranked Brady, who defeated world number one Ashleigh Barty in the build-up to the year's first Grand Slam. Halep, the 2018 runner-up, was uncharacteristically flustered, taking a couple of falls, tossing her racket and complaining to her coach.

She appeared to hurt her right wrist in one fall in the first set, and had heavy strapped by a medic.

"A little bit sore but nothing dangerous at this moment," the former world number one said afterwards. "So I will see tomorrow morning after I wake up."

With both players relentlessly pummeling from the baseline, Halep finally put a punishing first set away in 69 tough minutes, having saved three set points to force the tie-break. The second set was far more straightforward as the 24-year-old Brady appeared to run out of gas and Halep made light of her painful wrist. —AFP

SA bowler Rabada surprised by ban

PORT ELIZABETH: South Africa paceman Kagiso Rabada says he was surprised to be sanctioned for his exuberant celebration of Joe Root's dismissal in the third test against England but knows he cannot keep letting his team mates, and himself, down.

Rabada was handed a one-match ban by the International Cricket Council, ruling him out of the last match of the four-test series, which starts in Johannesburg on Friday. His absence is a serious blow to South Africa's hopes of levelling the series after a heavy defeat in the third test at Port Elizabeth on Monday left them trailing 2-1.

Rabada's sanction related to an incident on the first day of the Test last Thursday. After bowling out Root he ran down the pitch, went down on his haunches, clenched his fists and roared into the ground - all under the nose of the England captain.

The umpires reported him to the match referee at the end of play and he was handed one demerit point and fined 15% of his match fee after being found guilty of breaching the ICC's code of conduct.

It was his fourth demerit point in a 24-month period, triggering a one-match ban. "It was something I didn't expect," Rabada said yesterday. "Whether it was the right thing to ban me or the wrong thing, the reality is that I'm banned."

"I cannot keep happening because I'm letting the team down and I'm letting myself down. That's why it hurts so much but it gives me a chance to work on my game and a chance to have a bit of a rest."

Rabada, fourth in the ICC's rankings of test bowlers, said he was confident South Africa could level the series without him, but little has gone right for the home team, with the ban just one of several setbacks.

"We haven't done ourselves any favours, it feels as if we are always chasing," he added. "We've played long enough to know how to get out of a slump but it's difficult. There is more pressure, we just have realise our strengths and trust our ability and play the way we know how." — Reuters

Borthwick named Leicester coach

LONDON: Former England captain Steve Borthwick is to be head coach of Premiership strugglers Leicester Tigers next season, the club announced yesterday.

The 40-year-old is stepping down from his present post as England skills coach having earned plaudits for his spell in charge of the forwards which played a pivotal role in their reaching last year's World Cup final.

His arrival at the Tigers will see present head coach, former Irish international full-back Geordan Murphy, move up to fill a director of rugby role. Borthwick faces quite a challenge as The Tigers have had a miserable season continuing a sharp decline in the fortunes of a club that once dominated the domestic and European scene.

The last of their 10 Premiership titles dates back to 2013 and this term but for champions Saracens being punished firstly with a 35 point deduction and then on Saturday with relegation due to breaching the salary cap they would be bottom of the table with just 11 points from eight matches.

"We are delighted to confirm that Steve will be joining us as head coach," said Leicester chairman Peter Tom in a club statement. "He is regarded among the brightest and most astute young coaches in the game and he played a prominent part in the coaching team which led England to the Rugby World Cup Final last year."

Borthwick, who was Eddie Jones's first coaching appointment when the Australian took over following the 2015 World Cup, said he wanted to restore The Tigers to their former prominent status.

"The Tigers have such a long and successful history,



Steve Borthwick

and are one of the greatest rugby clubs in the game," said Borthwick, who captained England from 2008-2010. "Welford Road, with the special atmosphere created by the club's incredible supporters roaring their team forward, is a very special place to be."

"We must now work to build upon that great history, and create our future to get this club to the top of European rugby. "It is a brilliant challenge." Jones had praised Borthwick on Monday when it was announced

he would be leaving at the end of the season — the Englishman had worked with the Australian when the latter was head coach of Japan which included the remarkable victory over South Africa at the 2015 World Cup.

"I have had a great seven years with Steve," said Jones. "He is a loyal, hard-working coach. "He created a great line-out for England and really developed the young guys." — AFP

Sports

La Liga chief concerned reforms will hasten growing financial gap

Liverpool set new record for Europe's top five leagues by taking 64 points

LONDON: La Liga president Javier Tebas has warned Europe's top clubs of the destabilising effect seeking further riches through a revamped Champions League or FIFA's new Club World Cup will have on national leagues.

China will host FIFA's expanded 24-team Club World Cup in June and July of 2021, while talks are ongoing over plans to reform the Champions League from 2024. However, Tebas believes increasing revenues must be more evenly redistributed to prevent the increasing dominance of a few select clubs.

European champions Liverpool have set a new record for Europe's top five leagues by taking 64 points from a possible 66 in the Premier League just two seasons on from Manchester City posting an English record 100 points.

Barcelona and Real Madrid have also hit a century of points in La Liga over the past decade. Juventus have won eight Italian titles in a row, Bayern Munich have been crowned German champions for the past seven years and Paris Saint-Germain have claimed six of the last seven Ligue 1 titles.

"I don't think we are helping football in any way if we generate wealth and it just goes straight back to the big clubs but that's what's happening, the major clubs share out the large part of the income among their players," Tebas told reporters at a launch for La Liga TV in London.

"In the end instead of having 12 Ferraris, they have 15. Instead of having 10 Lamborghinis they have 12. We're dealing with major clubs generating a huge amount of money. So our aim is to redistribute that wealth." Proposals to change the Champions League to four groups of eight and introduce promotion and relegation to Europe's premier club competition have been rejected, but some reform is still expected in the coming years.

'GRASSROOTS WON'T BENEFIT'
Meanwhile, FIFA's Club World Cup expansion has already met opposition from top managers with Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola of Manchester City criticising the addition of more matches to an already

congested calendar.

However, rather than player welfare, Tebas is concerned the huge prize money offered to clubs to take part in China will cause the gulf between the richest clubs and the rest to grow. "It's not just about generating more money and creating a legacy, like FIFA is doing with the Club World Cup, for example. Often, the implications, the ramifications, are not considered, and that can cause harm," he added. "Everything we're talking about new formats and competitions aren't going to benefit grassroots football, they're going to benefit the 10 or 15 major clubs."

For the first time this season all of the Champions League's last 16 will consist of teams from England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France. And Tebas called for greater distribution of the booming TV revenues from UEFA to prevent the latter stages of the competition becoming a closed shop to teams outside the top five leagues.

"We need to be able to help other leagues and place them in a good situation so they can grow and that means redistributing the



Javier Tebas

wealth generated," he added.

"If we continue to have economic problems in Eastern European leagues or other

leagues like the Greek league then in a few years our industry will collapse. We need to strengthen football as a whole." — AFP

Guardiola hits out at 'unsustainable' schedule as injuries mount

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes some competitions in English football must be scrapped to protect the welfare of players and increase the quality of matches.

City face Sheffield United away last night in the Premier League in their 17th match in 59 days since the last international break in November.

Serious injuries to Tottenham's Harry Kane and Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford that could have an impact on England's chances at Euro 2020 have highlighted the issue and Guardiola believes the status quo is "unsustainable".

"The players arrive at the Euros, trying their best with their national teams then they are back here after no more than 20 days' rest because the show must go on. It's unsustainable," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference on Monday.

"I'm sorry for Kane and Rashford because they are good for the league, but we demand a lot from the players, it's too much. "They (the Premier League) should reflect on it but all the managers complained about it and they don't care."

The pressure is on England's football authorities to at least remove replays from the third and fourth round of the FA Cup and scrap the two-legged format of the League Cup semi-finals. City are still involved in both domestic cup competitions, as well as the Champions League, and have a minimum of 19 games left this season. "You have to eliminate competitions. Take them out completely, so less games," added Guardiola.

"Less games, less competitions, less teams, less quantity and more quality." Guardiola also joined Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp in ridiculing the idea of expanding the Champions League from 2024 onwards. "The solution you have is to make a year of 400 days - then we can book in another competition," he said sarcastically.

For the first time this season, every club in the Premier League will have a two-week break in February, but Guardiola believes that comes too late after a gruelling festive period. "The big administration people cannot complain because it's normal this happens," he added. "Look at the injuries we have had, all the teams have had. That is normal."

"With that number of games, players break down. I'm not surprised, I am so sorry for them." — AFP



Pep Guardiola

Qatar, FIFA publish WCup rights pledges

DOHA: Qatar and FIFA published yesterday the first jointly issued legacy planning strategy ahead of a football World Cup, with pledges on labour and LGBT rights alongside protections for activists and journalists.

Qatar has faced intense scrutiny from rights groups over its treatment of migrant labourers working on construction projects ahead of the 2022 tournament as well as its laws criminalising homosexual acts.

The 112-page "Sustainability Strategy" also sets out commitments on making the tournament inclusive for groups including the disabled, boosting economic development, protecting the environment and promoting ethical business practices.

"A total of 22 objectives have been described in detail, together with more than 70 concrete initiatives and programmes to deliver the strategy," FIFA and the Qatari Supreme Committee organisers said in a statement. On workers' rights, the document said Qatar would promote "decent working and living conditions and fair recruitment, including effective access" to remedial measures.

"Efforts include measures to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all the associated workers, especially migrant workers in Qatar, and to avoid any forced and child labour."

Gulf analyst James Dorsey said the strategy "puts pressure on Qatar by definition".

"Qatar may very well welcome this and they have been involved in drafting this document," he said. "It helps them project themselves as standing up for human rights and values."

But Dorsey warned that while "FIFA has these lofty principles" it was unclear how their implementation would be monitored.

The strategy also contains a pledge to certify all stadiums and permanent offices under rigorous Global Sustainability Assessment System criteria to minimise environmental impacts.

Organisers will also improve "sustainable building standards and tools in Qatar" while seeking to use green building materials where possible, the document said. Qatar's ruler, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, vowed at the United Nations last year that the tournament would be carbon neutral, but gave little detail on how this would be achieved.

The document stresses that FIFA events prohibit "discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, opinion, wealth, birth or any other status".

"As a host country for the FIFA World Cup 2022, Qatar is fully aware of its responsibility to adhere to FIFA's human rights and non-discrimination" policies, the document added.

Security officers involved in the tournament would receive specialised human rights training and guidance on how to deal with media and rights activists, it said.

FIFA secretary general Fatma Samoura said the tournament "offers us a unique opportunity to bring about positive change — one that FIFA and Qatar cannot, and will not, let slip away". — AFP

Qatar coach Felix ponders Plan B after Olympic failure

BANGKOK: When the battle for Asia's berths at the Olympic Games reaches its climax later this week, Felix Sanchez will be sitting in Doha pondering how he puts his Plan B into action for Qatar's final run towards the 2022 World Cup.

The Qatar coach had earmarked an appearance at this summer's Tokyo Olympics as an important step along the road to 2022, when the Gulf state will become the first nation from the Middle East to host football's global showpiece. For a country that has never appeared at the World Cup and played only once at the Olympics, in 1992, claiming one of Asia's three tickets for the under-23 tournament in Tokyo was an imperative.

Their hopes, however, failed to survive the opening rounds of the Asian Under-23 Championship, which is currently being played in Thailand. Saudi Arabia will take on Uzbekistan while South Korea meet Australia in Wednesday's semi-finals, with the winners claiming a place at the Olympics and the losers playing off for another spot in Tokyo.

Qatar, though, will be on the outside looking in having exited the competition in the opening phase, where they were grouped with Saudi Arabia, Syria and Japan. "We would like to have been at the Olympics but we knew it was a possibility that we wouldn't qualify, especially with the group we faced," said Sanchez.

"We have Asian Cup qualifiers with the first team and we have the Copa America, so we have big events waiting for us and we're going to keep working. "We had two different plans, if we qualify or not, so we will keep going on our way." Sanchez, who led Qatar to a first Asian Cup triumph last year, remained upbeat and was already looking forward to this year's Copa America, where his team will play as one of two invited nations.

"We have a long-term project because we have a World Cup in three years and we need to build a team," the Spaniard said. "For us, we had two objectives. To try to play at the Olympics, because if you play at this competition you're going to have another experience against top national teams in the world."

"And the second objective for us was to see our young players and to see how they are doing and how they are able to deal with such a big competition like this one." Sanchez said the Thailand experience had been useful in identifying which under-23 players were ready to take the step up to play senior international football.

"It's good for us to take notes and to have players under consideration to join the national team," he said. "Some of them are already in the first squad, but some of the very young players we want to keep them in mind soon to join our national team because it's in three years' time and the age they have they're going to be eligible to play. "So hopefully we're going to see some of them in the next FIFA windows or the Copa America being in the squad." — Reuters



NANTES: File photograph taken on February 8, 2019, shows yellow flowers are displayed in front of a portrait of Argentinian forward Emiliano Sala at the Beaujoire stadium in Nantes. — AFP

Family to mark Sala's anniversary in 'quiet contemplation'

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Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Leicester City v West Ham United	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
Tottenham Hotspur v Norwich City	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
Manchester United v Burnley FC	23:15
beIN SPORTS	

25 Whizkids: Japan's Olympic athletes going for gold



26 Nadal in the pink as Sharapova hits all-time low at Australian Open



27 La Liga chief concerned reforms will hasten growing financial gap



Lillard scores 61 in Blazers' OT win



PHOENIX: Derrick White #4 of the San Antonio Spurs attempts a shot against Kelly Oubre Jr. #3 of the Phoenix Suns during the first half of the NBA game at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

PORTLAND: Damian Lillard broke his own franchise records by scoring 61 points and making 11 3-pointers to lead the Portland Trail Blazers to a 129-124 overtime victory over the visiting Golden State Warriors on Monday night. Lillard scored 60 points during a 119-115 loss to the Brooklyn Nets on Nov. 8. He also held the franchise mark of 10 3-pointers. Lillard was 17 of 37 from the field — including 11 of 20 from 3-point range — and hit all 16 of his free-throw attempts. He also had 10 rebounds and seven assists. Hassan Whiteside recorded 17 points and 21 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who had lost four of their previous six games. Alec Burks scored a season-high 33 points and matched his season best of eight assists for Golden State, which lost for the 11th time in the past 12 games.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS 120 - PHOENIX SUNS 111

Derrick White racked up a season-high 25 points, including a big 3-pointer in the final two minutes, and San Antonio outlasted host Phoenix. The Suns' Devin Booker scored a game-high 37 points but clanked a 34-foot 3-point attempt with two seconds left. Deandre Ayton scored 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, and Kelly Oubre Jr. and Ricky Rubio scored 10 points apiece for Phoenix. Bryn Forbes scored 24 points, all on 3-pointers, for the Spurs. DeMar DeRozan finished with 18 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, and LaMarcus Aldridge added 19 points.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 111 - CHICAGO BULLS 98

Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded a triple-double with 28 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists, and host Milwaukee cruised past Chicago for its seventh win in a row. Khris Middleton added 24 points on 10-for-13 shooting as the Bucks improved to 21-2 on their home court and completed a four-game sweep of the Bulls in the regular season. It was Antetokounmpo's fourth triple-double of the season and the 18th of his career. Zach LaVine scored 24 points to lead the Bulls, who have lost nine of their past 12 games. Kris Dunn had 15 points, and Thaddeus Young finished with 14 points off the Chicago bench.

BOSTON CELTICS 139 - LOS ANGELES LAKERS 107

Jayson Tatum scored 27 points, Kemba Walker and Jaylen Brown added 20 apiece, and host Boston overwhelmed Los Angeles to end a three-game losing streak. Enes Kanter had 18 points (all before halftime) and 11 rebounds off the bench, and Gordon Hayward chipped in 16 points. Walker (knee) and Brown

(thumb) were back in the lineup after one and two missed games, respectively. Walker ended a personal 0-28 career drought against LeBron James-led teams. James had 15 points and 13 assists for the Lakers, who lost for just the second time in their past 12 games. Anthony Davis had nine points in his return from a five-game absence caused by a bruised tailbone.

OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 112 - HOUSTON ROCKETS 107

Dennis Schroder scored 15 fourth-quarter points and teamed with Danilo Gallinari to rally visiting Oklahoma City past Houston. Gallinari scored 12 of his 25 points in the fourth as the Thunder erased a 15-point deficit in the final period and won for the seventh time in their past eight road games. They did so despite a quiet second half from Chris Paul, who tallied just one point after posting 27 prior to halftime. Rockets star James Harden struggled mightily throughout, missing 16 of 17 3-point attempts while scoring 29 points. Russell Westbrook posted a triple-double of 32 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists, but his errant 3-point try with 8.8 seconds left represented the Rockets' final gasp.

WASHINGTON WIZARDS 106 - DETROIT PISTONS 100

Bradley Beal had 29 points to pass Wes Unseld for fourth on Washington's career scoring list and lead the Wizards past visiting Detroit. Ian Mahinmi supplied 21 points on 9-for-10 shooting and added seven rebounds, three blocks and two steals for Washington, which won the season series 3-1. Thomas Bryant added 13 points and six rebounds off the bench. Derrick Rose led the Pistons with 21 points. Andre Drummond had 18 points and 16 rebounds but also committed nine turnovers. He left the game in the final minute after being elbowed in the face by Bryant.

TORONTO RAPTORS 122 - ATLANTA HAWKS 117

Norman Powell came off the bench to score 27 points, and Fred VanVleet scored eight points in the final 63 seconds to help visiting Toronto hang on for a win over Atlanta. VanVleet scored 20 points and made 5 of 6 free throws in the final 42.6 seconds to help prevent the Raptors from blowing a 21-point lead. He made each attempt of a three-shot foul with 14.2 seconds remaining to give Toronto a five-point lead and preserve the win. Powell was 6-for-9 on 3-point attempts and scored 20-plus points for his fifth straight game. Toronto also got 18 points from Pascal Siakam and 14 from Marc Gasol.

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 117 - BROOKLYN NETS 111

Ben Simmons posted a triple-double with a career-high-tying 34 points, 12 assists and 12 rebounds, and Philadelphia made enough plays down the stretch to beat Brooklyn in New York. The 76ers beat the Nets for the second time in six days by executing in the fourth quarter. After outscoring the Nets 31-16 in the final 12 minutes Wednesday at home, Philadelphia did not dominate the entire quarter, but it made plays on both ends in the final minutes after blowing most of a nine-point lead in the final six-plus minutes. Al Horford scored 19 points for Philadelphia, and Josh Richardson and Tobias Harris had 15 apiece. Seven Nets scored in double figures, led by Spencer Dinwiddie, who had 22 points and added seven assists.

NEW YORK KNICKS 106 - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 86

Marcus Morris' four-point play capped a game-turning run of 15 unanswered points in the third quarter as visiting New York pulled away from Cleveland. The Knicks, playing on the road on Martin Luther King Jr. Day for just the second time since 1987, snapped a three-game losing streak. The Cavaliers have lost five straight — their fourth losing streak of at least five games this season. Morris finished with 19 points for the Knicks despite playing through an ankle injury sustained when he landed awkwardly while being fouled by Kevin Love on the four-point play. New York's Julius Randle had 19 points and nine rebounds. Cleveland's Collin Sexton had 17 points, and Tristan Thompson added 13 points and 22 rebounds.

ORLANDO MAGIC 106 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 83

Evan Fournier scored 20 of his 26 points in the second half as Orlando overcame a sluggish start to win at Charlotte. Nikola Vucevic poured in 24 points, and Terrence Ross, who carried the team in the first half, ended up with 19 points for the road-weary Magic, who played Saturday night at Golden State and wrapped up a season-long six-game road trip. Malik Monk came off the bench to lead the Hornets with 20 points. P.J. Washington finished with 19 points, and Devonte' Graham had 15.

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 126 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 116

Jrue Holiday returned from a seven-game absence and tied a season high with 36 points to lead visiting New Orleans to a victory over Memphis. The Grizzlies' seven-game winning streak ended. Holiday overcame an elbow contusion to make 12 of 18 field

goals, including 7 of 10 3-point tries, and the Pelicans made a franchise-record 21 3-pointers on 48 attempts. Brandon Ingram added 25 points, Nicolo Melli had 15 and Josh Hart and JJ Redick scored 10 each as the Pelicans won for the 11th time in 16 games since they had a 13-game losing streak. Dillon Brooks poured in 31 points for the Grizzlies.

MIAMI HEAT 118 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 113 (OT)

Rookie Kendrick Nunn scored a game-high 25 points and reserve James Johnson added a season-high 22 points to lead host Miami to an overtime win over Sacramento. Johnson made 9 of 11 shots from the floor, including 4 of 5 from 3-point range, as the Heat improved their home record to an NBA-best 19-1. Johnson also blocked a potential game-tying 3-point shot by Bogdan Bogdanovic in the final seconds of overtime. The Heat improved to 7-0 in overtime games this season in a contest that featured 16 lead changes and 14 ties. Nemanja Bjelica led the Kings with 22 points, Buddy Hield had 20, and Marvin Bagley III contributed 15 points and 15 rebounds.

DENVER NUGGETS 107 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 100

Rookie Michael Porter Jr. had 20 points and a career-high 14 rebounds, Nikola Jokic finished with 17 points and 13 rebounds, and Denver beat Minnesota in Minneapolis. Jerami Grant scored 19 points and Will Barton added 18 for Denver, which has won seven straight against the Timberwolves. The Nuggets have won four of their past five games overall. Karl-Anthony Towns had 28 points, Josh Okogie scored 16 and Andrew Wiggins 15 for Minnesota, which has lost six straight. Allen Crabbe had three points in his first game for the Timberwolves.

UTAH JAZZ 118 - INDIANA PACERS 88

Donovan Mitchell scored 25 points, and Rudy Gobert added 20 points and 14 rebounds as Utah continued its home dominance while also halting Indiana's winning streak at five games. Georges Niang scored 15 points as the Jazz improved their home record to 17-3 while winning their eighth consecutive game at Salt Lake City. They are the only Western Conference team with three or fewer home defeats. The Jazz won for the 12th time in 13 games overall. Aaron Holiday and Myles Turner each scored 12 points, and Jeremy Lamb added 11 for the Pacers, who lost for the first time since Jan. 8 against the Miami Heat. Indiana fell on the road for the first time since losing at Atlanta on Jan. 4. — Reuters