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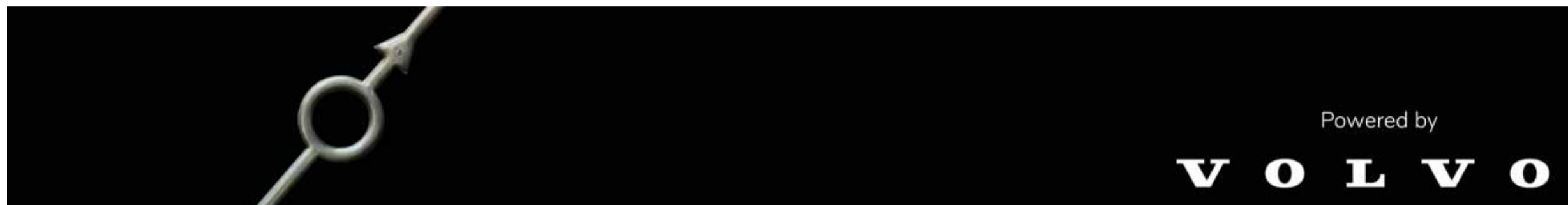
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Prosecutor refers Eurofighter aircraft deal for investigation

Director general sent to prosecution over graft • Kuwait slams Filipino FM's statement

By B Izzak and Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The public prosecutor yesterday referred the multibillion-dollar Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft deal to the investigation committee of the special court that tries ministers. The move came after Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah filed a complaint to the public prosecutor over allegations of corruption, amid reports of kickbacks in the \$9 billion deal.

Informed sources said the report includes the

involvement of some senior officials including a former defense minister and retired and current officials. Sources said according to accusations, some officials had unlawfully profiteered from their positions by deliberately inflating the contract value, exceeding their liabilities and not obtaining the required audit approvals, which caused massive loss of public funds.

The deal in question involves purchasing 28 Eurofighter jets at a total value of \$9 billion, which is twice the actual cost, in addition to millions of dinars in

commissions unlawfully paid to middlemen. The defense ministry had formed a special committee to investigate Audit Bureau reports concerning the Eurofighter contracts as well as those signed between the ministry and Airbus to purchase 30 Caracal helicopters along with maintenance, spare parts, training and technical support.

In a related development, the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) yesterday referred the director general of a public authority to the general prosecution to cross examine charges by Minister of Awqaf and

Islamic Affairs and Justice Fahd Al-Afasi against him. Mohammad Bouzbar, Nazaha's official spokesperson, said in a press release that the case revolves round a third charitable stake in a commercial company. When the company's extraordinary general assembly decided to liquidate the company, a panel tasked with the liquidation was formed and was headed by the director general of a public authority to ensure exemption of the charitable stake from the liquidation.

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China stiffens defenses against virus epidemic

WUHAN, China: China expanded drastic travel restrictions yesterday to contain an epidemic that has killed 56 people and infected nearly 2,000, as the US, France and Japan prepared to evacuate their citizens from a quarantined city at the outbreak's epicenter. China has locked down the hard-hit province of Hubei in the country's center in an unprecedented operation affecting tens of millions of people in a bid to slow the spread of the respiratory virus. Its ability to spread appears to be "getting stronger" though it is "not as

Continued on Page 24

Israel allows visits to Saudi; Palestinians threaten to quit Oslo

JERUSALEM/RAMALLAH: Israel yesterday officially gave its citizens the right to travel to Saudi Arabia for religious and business visits, in the latest sign of warming ties between the two states. The interior ministry's announcement will have limited practical impact, as Israelis had previously been travelling to Saudi Arabia via third countries, especially Jordan. But Israel had never granted official approval for such travel by both Jewish and Muslim Israelis.

Interior Minister Aryeh Deri "signed for the first time an order enabling an exit permit for Israelis to Saudi Arabia", his office said. Israel has a peace deal with two Arab countries - Jordan and Egypt - but its occupation of Palestinian territory has long served as a major factor preventing similar accords with the rest of the Arab world. The interior ministry said its move, coordinated with the security and diplomatic services, approves travel to Saudi "for religious purposes during the hajj and the umrah (Muslim pilgrimages)".

Continued on Page 24



NABLUS: This picture taken around sunrise yesterday shows the Askar (foreground) Palestinian refugee camp in "Area A" of the West Bank (full Palestinian civil and security control), Beit Fureik (background), partially between "Area B" (Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control) and "Area C" (full Israeli civil and security control). — AFP

News in brief

KFSD hit by ransomware

KUWAIT: A hacker called "Robin Hood" yesterday hacked and shut down the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's systems and threatened to delete all data unless he is paid \$10,000 within four days, said official sources at the KFSD. The sources added that the entire directorate was alerted and all employees were instructed to shut down their computers until further notice. In addition, the sources stressed KFSD has a backup of all its data and there is no fear of losing it, adding work was in progress to bring things back to normal. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Omani FM in Iran again

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif hosted his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi yesterday for the second time within a week for talks on security in the sensitive Gulf. Alawi was making the visit to Tehran on the tail end of his trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, which Zarif skipped after scheduling changes to the annual event. Zarif and Alawi discussed "bilateral cooperation regarding the Strait of Hormuz and emphasized their governments' will... to guarantee maritime and energy security for all," Iran's foreign ministry said in a statement. It was their second meeting in the Iranian capital since Tuesday and at least their fourth encounter since late July. — AFP

Saudi in talks to buy Newcastle

LONDON: Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is in talks to buy English soccer club Newcastle United for about £340 million (\$447 million), a source familiar with the situation told Reuters, confirming a report in the Wall Street Journal earlier on Saturday. British billionaire Mike Ashley, who made his fortune from sportswear retailer Sports Direct (renamed Frasers Group last month) has owned Newcastle United since 2007. Saudi's Public Investment Fund together with a group led by British financier Amanda Staveley, are in discussions to buy the Premier League club, but the talks were at a delicate stage and could fall apart, a source familiar with the situation said. — Reuters

UAE technology ambitions hit by Net restrictions

DUBAI: With its ultra-modern infrastructure and hyper-connected services, the United Arab Emirates is an emerging technology power, but a scandal surrounding a popular messaging application has highlighted tight controls on the Internet. The oil-rich country has invested billions in new technologies and artificial intelligence "to become a forerunner in the provision of smart services" as part of its Vision 2021 development plan.

But although more than nine million expatriates make up 90 percent of the population, making a WhatsApp or Skype call to get in touch with loved ones back home is no easy task. While

free voice over internet protocol (VoIP) telephony is commonly used across the globe, it is inaccessible through normal Internet services in the UAE - except for on the Abu Dhabi-developed mobile application ToTok.

"To speak with my family via WhatsApp, I buy a card every month," one Pakistani worker told AFP, holding up a small ticket with a code to access a virtual private network (VPN), which allows users to bypass Internet restrictions. While many opt to use VPNs - the legality of which is hazy - others have resorted to ToTok, which became popular in the Emirates and the Middle East after its 2019 launch.

"I used ToTok because it is the only platform where video calls work properly," said an Egyptian expat, who regularly uses the app to call his wife and daughter back home. However, a report by The New York Times in December

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DUBAI: Women use their cell phones to film screens showing a spacecraft lifting off in Kazakhstan carrying 35-year-old Emirati astronaut Hazzaa Al-Mansoori at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre on Sept 25, 2019. — AFP

Jabeur aims to inspire Arab generation

MELBOURNE: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur said she hoped to inspire young people across the Arabic-speaking world after she became the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final yesterday. The unseeded 25-year-old knocked out China's Wang Qiang, who upset Serena Williams in the previous round, 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 to extend her dream run in Melbourne. Jabeur, the highest-ranked Arab woman in history - she reached a career-high 51 last year, and is now 78th

- will next play America's Sofia Kenin in the last eight.

"I'm trying to inspire many (of the) young generation back home either in Tunisia or the Arabic world, especially in Africa, which is amazing," Jabeur said. "I mean, it's not impossible. I made it. Like I said before, I've been practicing in Tunisia from the age of three through 16 or 17." Jabeur, who sent former world number one Caroline Wozniacki into retirement in the previous round, described herself as a "100 percent Tunisian product" having turned down opportunities to train abroad to continue developing her game at home.

"I got a lot of offers to go to college in the US - wasn't really an option for me," said Jabeur.

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MELBOURNE: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur celebrates after winning against China's Wang Qiang on day seven of the Australian Open yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwaiti offices donate KD 2,700 to deceased Filipina maid's family

Goodwill gesture an attempt to calm rising tensions

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A few days prior to the expected visit to Kuwait of the Philippine Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III by the end of this month, a number of local domestic labor agencies made symbolic donations to the family of the recently murdered Filipina maid accompanied with letters of condolences to be unofficially presented to the family in an attempt to calm rising tensions. The letter sent to the deceased's family noted that KD 2,700 had been donated and remarked that no financial aid could make up for the family's loss.

Fish auctions

Chairman of Kuwait Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Suwayyan expressed the union's strong rejection of some of the articles included in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's (MoCI) executive charter concerning fish auctions, noting that the union's remarks on the charter had been ignored. Suwayyan added that MoCI's instructions to pay the auction deposit using K-Net will be difficult and cause confusion in the fish market. Suwayyan urged MoCI to amend its regulations concerning the minimum weight of auctioned fish, the fee collected per auctioned kilo

and determining the share for consumers, restaurants and companies after the auctions and not before them.

Waste removed

Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipal cleaning teams inspected Adan and Qusour, said Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipality's acting manager Khaled Al-Azmi, noting that the inspection tour started at 8:30 am and lasted till 1:30 pm. Azmi added that the campaign resulted in removing 14 truckloads of waste and six abandoned or displayed-for-sale vehicles and replacing 500 old garbage containers with new ones.

Citizens resigned

Minister of Public Works and Housing Rana Al-Fares said 169 citizens had resigned from the ministry of housing, 74 from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and 65 from Kuwait Credit Bank, adding the resignations were upon the employees' own requests or for stopping work without excuse. This came during Fares' attendance of the parliamentary budgets and final statements committee meeting to discuss MPW's final statement 2018-2019 and the Audit Bureau remarks about it. MP Safa Al-Hashem said the same remarks have been recurring despite the minister's activeness.

Supreme health committee meets on coronavirus



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Health Minister Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah met yesterday with members of the permanent supreme committee to implement international health regulations, discussing the latest developments related

to coronavirus. The meeting also aims to follow up on recommendations to raise the level of capabilities against the disease with relevant ministries and official institutions in the country. Meanwhile, the ministry said that the

minister held another meeting with senior officials at relevant sectors and departments to ascertain their readiness and contingency plans for any developments regarding the spread of the new virus. —KUNA

News in brief

Interior fights taxi apps

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the popular taxi application Draiwei may be the next to be blocked in Kuwait on the orders of the interior ministry after Careem. Several customers have complained for blocking the Draiwei app for reasons unknown, while informed sources said blocking by the communications authority is at the orders of the interior ministry. They said this action may hit new apps, and all of them will be closed due to licensing issues. Meanwhile, sources close to officials of these applications said there is interference by competing parties in the matter. —Al-Qabas

Future gen's fund

KUWAIT: The issue of deducting 10 percent from revenues for the future generations fund is now under discussion due to accumulating budget deficits, without reaching a sustainable solution for public finance. Well-informed sources said the deduction requires amendment of law 106/1976 so the government can reduce the deficit and limit the rate of exhaustion of the general reserve, but the amendment faces a wide-ranging national discussion due to its possible negative repercussions, because if it happens, it will set a precedent - the second since the Iraqi invasion. Concerned sources said there are conditions that are supposed to be applied parallel to the stop of deductions, because deficits in seven years reached KD 40 billion, while the deducted amount for the future generations fund is KD 15 billion, which means a large deficit will remain even if the deductions stop. Sources said the government must carry out deep financial reforms to stop uncontrolled spending and should implement measures to increase non-oil revenues and reduce current spending, in which there is much squandering. Another measure is related to committing all establishments and authorities in which the government is a contributor to transfer their annual profits to the public reserve fund and collect government debts, estimated at around KD 2 billion. —Al-Qabas

Visa trafficking

KUWAIT: Following up the case of an Arab mandoub and a company owner who were sent to the prosecution for obtaining hundreds of business visas for expats in exchange of money, it was found out that the same company was previously involved in bringing in expat workers for begging. After some of the beggars were arrested, a security block was placed on the company and it was not allowed to bring in any labor. But the block was lifted, only to find that it brought in expats on business visas in exchange of KD 200 to KD 250. A police source said officers who lifted the security restriction may be questioned. —Al-Anbaa

Guyana bags Guinness World Record for 'most stickers on a car'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Guyana in Kuwait has set a Guinness World Record in the category of 'most stickers on a car'. The embassy yesterday received a certificate from the Guinness World Records adjudicator, witnessed by several dignitaries from various embassies. The celebration coincided with Guyana's 50th anniversary since becoming a republic, 25 years of diplomatic ties with Kuwait and Guyana's 9th anniversary of opening its embassy in Kuwait.

The event was hosted by Guyanese Ambassador Dr. Shamir Ally and wife Maryam Beebe-Ally at Kuwait Motor Town near Wafra. "This is the first time in history an embassy has done such a thing. We are delighted to celebrate the friendship between Guyana and Kuwait and inviting Kuwait's royal family, ministers, governors, diplomatic corps and friends to share this special day with us. We are honored," said Ally in a short speech before receiving the award.

Guyana broke the previous record set by another country with 14,636 stickers to a new record of 41,543 stickers on a salon car. "The vehicle is a sedan with plate number 3. The car can be driven even after the stickers were pasted, as no stickers cover the operational aspects of the car such as the mirrors, windows and lights. Visitors to the embassy (in Mubarak Abdullah Jaber in west Mishref) can see the car as part of the 'Show, Tell and Know' tour, and later it will be turned over to the Kuwait museum as Guyana's gift to Kuwait," he said.

On Saturday, Shaifali Mishra, an adjudicator from Guinness World Records, flew into Kuwait from Dubai to oversee the proceedings. The stickers must adhere to rules and regulations - stickers can touch side by side but are not allowed to overlap. Mishra noted she had to disqualify 721 such stickers. However, Guyana broke the previous record as the sticker count reached 41,543.

Amir receives Pope reply to New Year greetings

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a letter yesterday from Pope Francis, in response to the greetings he sent the Vatican to mark the new year. In his letter, Pope Francis said he was overjoyed to have received His Highness the Amir's best wishes, saying he is eager to work with leaders across the world for the good of humanity. He went on to wish that Kuwait would remain on a fixed path towards prosperity and stability, hoping for even better bilateral ties.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, expressing sincere condolences over demise of his father. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables. —KUNA



Local

Kuwait Amir's representative attends Saudi Camel Festival



RIYADH: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the conclusion ceremony of the Fourth King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Riyadh. —KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed upon his arrival to Riyadh.

RIYADH: Representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with his accompanying delegation, attended yesterday the conclusion ceremony of the Fourth King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Riyadh. His Highness the Crown Prince then attended a luncheon held in his honor by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf arrived earlier yesterday to Riyadh, where he was received at King Khaled International Airport by Prince Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of Riyadh, and Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah. Upon his departure from Kuwait, His Highness the Crown prince was seen off by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem,

Kuwait National Guard's Deputy Chief Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

His Highness the Crown Prince was accompanied by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Duaij Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr Ali Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. The delegation also includes Crown Prince Diwan advisor Dr Hmoud Mohammad Al-Otaibi, Crown Prince chief of staff Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah, Crown Prince Diwan's head of protocol Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Sabah and Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen off at the airport upon his departure to Riyadh.

Kuwait's PM hosts Luxembourg's economy minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Minister of the Luxembourg Eitienne Schneider. —KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, with attendance of Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Nasser Al-Roudhan, received

at Bayan Palace yesterday the visiting Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Minister of the Luxembourg Eitienne Schneider and his accompanying delegation. —KUNA

Zain official sponsor of February Kuwait Festival 2020

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its official sponsorship of the February Kuwait Festival 2020. The event, organized by Rotana throughout the upcoming month of February, will be held in Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) to celebrate Kuwait's national holidays.

Zain's continuous support to this national festival comes as part of its commitment in being actively present in the various events and activities that celebrate Kuwait's national holidays on February of every year. The company is keen on sharing the joys of this cherished time of the year with the Kuwaiti public by supporting such events that reflect the love of Kuwaitis to their nation.

The February Kuwait Festival 2020 concerts for this year will feature Mohammed Abdu's concert on Thursday 6 February, Majed Al-Muhandes and Asalah Nasri's concert on Friday 7 February, Hussain Al-Jasmi and Balqees' concert on Thursday 13 February, Nawal Al-Kuwaitiyah and Motref Al-Motref's concert on Friday



14 February, Abdullah Ruwashed and Angham's concert on Thursday 20 February, as well as Rashid Al-Majid and Nabeel Shuaib's concert on Friday 21 February.

Zain has long considered itself a key partner of the Kuwaiti society, especially in such national celebrations. The company's official support to this national festival comes to show its commitment in sharing the joys of Kuwait as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector, and will spare no efforts in being an integral part of the many occasions that are of interest to the local community.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A man pushes a box as he passes by a shop under renovation in the historic Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City. — Photo by Ahmad Khamis (KUNA)

KIPCO Group sponsors Kuwait Aviation Show 2020

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KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - and its Group companies were the Gold Sponsors of the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020. The event was held under the patronage of HH the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Amiri Airport on January 15-18.

Burgan Bank, Gulf Insurance Group - Kuwait (gig - Kuwait) and Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company (QPIC) participated in the event under the KIPCO umbrella. The event brought together more than 300 exhibitors, with aircraft on display for close to 60,000 visitors.

Eman Al-Awadhi, KIPCO's Group Communications Director, said: "We are delighted to be taking part in this show, which brings the international aerospace business community back to Kuwait for the second time. At KIPCO, we are constantly looking for opportunities to take part in events that place our nation on the international map, in line with the vision 'New Kuwait 2035'."

Qutaibah Al-Rabe, Head of Corporate Communications and Investor Relations at Burgan Bank said: "The Kuwait Aviation Show has sparked considerable interest since its inception in January 2018, generating wider participation from both regional and global aviation entities. The event showcases the latest trends and brings to light new possi-

bilities for varied business segments. Driven to progress and facilitate dynamic change, Burgan Bank, under the umbrella of KIPCO, was proud to have sponsored an event of this magnitude that showcases the finest in aerospace and aeronautical engineering along with its cutting-edge technology. We maintain our strong support for national objectives supporting the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision that aims to herald a prosperous new era for Kuwait, economically and financially."

Aisha Al-Asfour, Senior Officer - Marketing and PR at gig-Kuwait, said: "We are proud to be part of the Kuwait Aviation Show 2020, in collaboration with our sister companies. One of the main goal of our company is to support initiatives that encourage the growth in the areas of transportation and aviation; we will continue to do so in the coming years." Ahmed Al-Masqati, Head of HR and Admin at QPIC, said: "QPIC's participation in the exhibition is aligned with the company's corporate social responsibility program and our ongoing efforts to further develop the industrial aspect of the local economy. The event brought together participants from the public and private sector, both local and international, to discuss cooperation opportunities, which is vital to achieving Kuwait's Vision 2035 that we are keen to support."



SAB studied KD 564.6 million tenders in Dec

KUWAIT: State Audit Bureau of Kuwait (SAB) said yesterday that it studied 342 topics in December 2019, including public and limited tenders, with an estimated value of KD 564.6 million (\$1.8 billion).

SAB expressed its opinion on 269 files, valued KD 300 million (\$987.6 million), or 53 percent of the total subjects under discussion during that period, auditor at the advance oversight department for economic affairs, Aisha Al-Awadhi said in a statement. The pre-censorship of some of the files studied resulted in direct savings to the public treasury, at an estimated value of KD 3.5 million (\$11.5 million) in December, she added. She pointed out that the bureau exercises its prior control in accordance with the law of its establishment No 30/1964, as it is able to prevent any violations or damage. — KUNA

Local

Kuwaiti students document migration of pelicans to Kuwait

Coordinated by Kuwait's Environmental Lens' team



Kuwaiti students photograph pelicans at Kerkin Lake in Greece. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's flag flutters over Kerkin Lake in Greece.



The pelican bird.

KUWAIT: A team of Kuwaiti students of the 'nature ambassadors' initiative concluded a trip to Kerkin Lake in Greece, to document the life of the pelican bird, which migrates to Kuwait annually. The trip, which started on January 19 and coordinated by Kuwait's Environmental Lens' team under Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), aims to spread environmental awareness among students, head of the

delegation Nora Al-Jabri said yesterday. The trip, which involves students with remarkable nature photography skills, also aims to educate participants on the importance of bird migration and protecting the ecosystem, she added.

Trip coordinator and team member Omar Al-Sayed Omar said meanwhile that the annual trip's program included boosting students' skills in taking photos of

birds on land and water. Team member Dr Aaref Al-Awadhi also affirmed that by photographing ecosystem aspects in Kuwait or abroad, students will learn that damage to one of these areas could affect the bird's migration to Kuwait and increase extinction threat.

Last year, photographer Omar Al-Sayed Omar managed to monitor and take rare photos of the pelican, which is classified among the endangered birds,

according to the World Conservation Organization. He documented the pelican's life and searched for its home until he reached Kerkin Lake and won the admiration of the largest global documentary channels interested in nature and living organisms. — KUNA

KU joins forces with Italian professors for archeology classes

KUWAIT: Kuwait University is collaborating with Italian scholars to offer special courses on the archeology of Western Asia and the Mediterranean, an initiative geared towards students eager to soak up the region's fascinating history. The classes are tantamount to a journey through Kuwait's culture and history, the remnants of which date back more than 300 years, according to Dr Humoud Al-Qashan, a professor of sociology at Kuwait University. The program is an effort to push forward Kuwait's development strategy for 2035, he added, revealing that a quintet of Italy's most renowned scientists are taking part in this academic endeavor. The courses revolve around the archeological and geographical histories of the region, said Marco Ramazzotti, a professor of archeology at Rome's famed Sapienza University, pointing out that the primary objective is to familiarize students with Arab civilization. He went on to



KUWAIT: Students participating in the initiative. — KUNA photos

thank Kuwait University for organizing the program, saying it is a testament to the increasing camaraderie between Arab countries and their European partners. The classes mark the first time Kuwait University has collaborated with the Italian embassy, said Dr Hassan Ashkanani, a researcher at the Experimental Anthropology Lab at Kuwait University. In addition to the classes, the program, attended by some 20 participants representing various state bodies, also features workshops covering particular time periods in the archeological history of the region, he added. — KUNA



Professor Marco Ramazzotti



Dr Humoud Al-Qashan

Italian Embassy holds waste and water management seminar

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A water and waste management seminar was held yesterday at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) in Shuwaikh. Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Carlo Baldocci inaugurated the seminar entitled 'Italian Water Management Capacity on Ports and Water Depollution' and thanked Kuwait for the warm ties and strengthening of cooperation in almost all fields, especially in science and technology.

"Based on our traditional friendship and collaboration, we would like to build an even more structured, ambitious and mutually profitable collaboration. This bilateral dimension of our relations is part of the common commitment of Italy and Kuwait for the promotion of regional and international stability and security," he said in a statement to the media.

Dr Samira Omar, Director of KISR, said her agency has played a significant role in addressing some of Kuwait's most pressing and critical national challenges, and more importantly has been the leader in promoting the growth of science and technology in the country and in the Gulf region. "Our secret is simple - we are home to some of the most creative, talented, skilled and professional individuals. We are also engaged in strategic partnerships and collaborations with scientific agencies in the country and the global community," he said.

"To me and to my embassy, this seminar on the Italian water manage-

ment means a lot," the Italian ambassador added. "Few weeks after my arrival in Kuwait, we decided to devote some special days to the discussion - at scientific, technical and commercial level - of an issue which was not yet too much at the center of the stage: water management. We knew that this is one of the key present and future challenges for Italy, Kuwait, for our two regions (the Mediterranean and the Gulf), and more than this for our planet. We therefore started an important number of event at Kuwait University, at KISR and in other prestigious location in Kuwait."

The event saw presentations by various Italian based companies on how they are managing their waste and water from the sea, land and air. One of the companies represented by Giorgio Tanoni has a Pelican system whose aim is to clean any solid and liquid pollution in the Adriatic Sea. The Pelikan aims to protect the marine environment by collecting floating solid, half-submerged and oily waste from the water's surface. The boat is equipped with a dual system for spraying chemical dispersants approved by the ministry of environment.

Other presenters include Garbage Group, which has been protecting and caring for the environment since 1958, Centro Assistenza Ecologica, Universita Politecnica (University of Marche), Adriatico Oli, Evergreen Techno Plants, MicrosystemFuel, CPN, Shipyard Ship Builder and Italdraghe, along with the local Green Hands Environment Team of Dr Samira Al-Saidan.

Gulf Bank celebrates staff at IBS ceremony



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank celebrated the success of its employees at the annual Institute of Banking Studies (IBS) graduation ceremony. The graduation ceremony, which was held at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, celebrated 28 Gulf Bank employees who completed specialist banking courses at IBS during 2018-2019. The ceremony was sponsored by Dr Mohammed Al-Hashel, Governor of Central Bank and Chairman of IBS, as well as Dr Yaqoub Al-Rifai, IBS Director General, and Suha Al-Awadhi, the Head of the Training Department at IBS.

Institute of Banking Studies awarded various certificates to Gulf Bank's employees, marking the completion of a wide range of

programs, including the Certified Credit Management (CCM), Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Assistant Bank Branch Manager programs (CABBMM), Certified Bank Branch Operations Manager (CBBOM), Strategic Management Performance System (SMPS) Certificate, and SHRM Essentials Certificate.

Commenting on the event, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, said: "In celebrating the accomplishments of Gulf Bank as a whole, it is more



Salma Al-Hajjaj

important than ever to recognize the magnificent achievements of our employees as individuals. We are proud to demonstrate our long-term commitment to each and every one of our employees, as it is only when we realize our full potential as individual leaders that we can excel as a group. We would like to extend our congratulations to the members of our staff who have successfully completed a training program at the renowned Institute of Banking Studies, and we wish them more career advancement and personal success to come."



KUWAIT: Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Carlo Baldocci exchanges commemorative plaques at the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Chinese Uighurs in Saudi face an impossible choice



ELAZIG: Rescue workers remove corpses from the rubble of a building after an earthquake in Elazig, eastern Turkey yesterday. — AFP

Turkey quake death toll hits 35

Hopes fade for those trapped; more bodies pulled from the rubble

ELAZIG: Hopes faded yesterday of finding more survivors from a powerful earthquake in eastern Turkey as more bodies were pulled from the rubble and the death toll climbed to 35. Nearly 4,000 rescue workers combed through debris in freezing temperatures, helped by mechanical diggers, in vain hopes of finding anyone alive in the city of Elazig.

Three bodies were found in the city centre, 38 hours after the 6.8-magnitude quake struck Friday evening, bringing the death toll to 35 in Elazig province and nearby Malatya, Vice President Fuat Oktay said. Rescuers carefully cleared the remains of the collapsed four-storey building where the bodies were found, using buckets to remove broken material as a sniffer dog was brought to the scene.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu told reporters that workers were searching for six people still under the rubble of the building. Residents nervously waited to find out what happened to their relatives. A group of women burst into tears when they learnt that the body of a relative was found, while

one woman fainted, an AFP photographer said. Nearby a Red Crescent official tried to calm down another woman whose cousin was missing, urging her to be patient. "We are doing everything we can." So



Growing concern for residents amid the bitter cold

far, the authorities say 45 people have been rescued alive but it is believed 14 people are still under the rubble in the region, according to NTV broadcaster. The government's disaster and emergency manage-

ment agency (AFAD) said 1,607 were injured including 104 still in hospital, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said.

There was growing concern for residents amid the bitter cold, said Hasan Duran, a 58-year-old shopkeeper, who lives in Sursuru. "If it was summer, people could maybe resist a little longer. But with this cold, it's hard to imagine. Even we are freezing at home. May God give them strength". President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday "every effort was made to ensure citizens whose homes have collapsed or been damaged will not suffer in this winter period." He added every type of assistance was "swiftly" provided to the affected region from rescue workers to vehicles.

Mother, toddler found alive

The epicenter of the quake was in the small lake-side town of Sivrice in Elazig province, and also affected neighboring cities and countries. With a population of around 4,000, Sivrice is located south of Elazig city on the shores of Hazar lake - one of the

most popular tourist spots in the region. The US Geological Survey said the magnitude was 6.7, slightly lower than AFAD, adding that it struck near the East Anatolian Fault in an area that has suffered no documented large ruptures since an earthquake in 1875. There had been elation on Saturday when Ayse Yildiz and her two-year-old daughter were found alive by rescuers after 28 and 24 hours respectively. Nearly 80 buildings collapsed while 645 were heavily damaged in Elazig and Malatya provinces, AFAD said in a statement.

Erdogan had promised Saturday during a visit to Elazig that Turkey's housing agency TOKI would "do whatever is necessary and make sure no one is left without a home". Residents avoided returning to their homes because of aftershock fears. They included Mustafa Top who said he would "wait a week while the aftershocks continue and then we'll check (our apartment)." Since Friday's quake, there have been 714 aftershocks with 20 above four in magnitude.— AFP

In Wuhan hospital, long lines, fear and frustration

WUHAN: Overwhelmed staff, patients waiting for hours to see a doctor, people fending for themselves: Wuhan residents describe scenes of chaos from one swamped hospital struggling to cope with crowds who may be infected by the new coronavirus. The city of 11 million is the epicenter of the new SARS-like epidemic and has been in quarantine since Thursday - with nobody allowed to leave as the government tries to contain its spread.

At one Wuhan hospital AFP visited, there were long queues of sick patients, many coughing, with overwhelmed staff unable to process them quickly. Outside the Red Cross facility - which is one of the hospitals people are sent to for initial tests if they show signs of infection - patients told AFP they felt exasperated and helpless. "It has been two days since I slept, and I have been wandering from hospital to hospital," said a man in his 30s, who was trying to see a doctor because he was worried he might be infected.

"At this rate, my turn will be tomorrow morning at best." Nearly 2,000 people have been infected across the country and 56 have died - mostly in Hubei. Those who spoke to AFP told of extremely long queues and disorganization. One spoke of a fear that sick patients with fevers will infect each other while waiting in long queues, even if they didn't have the coronavirus when they first arrived at the hospital.

Another man said he had seen several people faint while waiting. Many people carried their own plastic

stools to sit on, while one pragmatic man had brought a lounge chair with him. Volunteers were taking patients to the hospital on Sunday after cars were ordered off the road. Authorised neighborhood committees were transporting patients instead. "There are no cars, so we are responsible for taking them there," said one volunteer, 40-year-old Yin Yu.

'Lack of room'

The health crisis struck just before the Lunar New Year - the most important date of the Chinese calendar, when millions of workers travel across the country to visit family - putting more pressure on the understaffed hospital. "It takes at least five hours to see a doctor," one woman, who didn't want to be named, told AFP. The woman, who was with her son, said the management of the hospital was "really messy". An old man wearing a Mao cap said he had waited all day to see a doctor, only to be sent home because of a "lack of room".

AFP saw some patients inside the hospital who were without masks, despite city orders that anyone going out must wear them. Patients were taking their own temperatures with mercury thermometers, by mouth or armpit, and there were no checks on anyone entering or leaving the hospital. And there was no sign that the flow of patients would ease up. "Do not spread rumors. If you feel unwell, go to the hospital in time," was the message played over loudspeakers in the city.

'Saturated'

Wuhan hospitals are "saturated", the Municipal Health Commission admitted to the People's Daily. Faced with a congested medical system, authorities are racing to build two hospitals of over a thousand beds each within two weeks, and deployed hundreds of medical reinforcements to Wuhan. Patients say more capacity is sorely needed. "There is no more space, the staff are overwhelmed, there is a shortage of some medicine, and



WUHAN: A man wearing a protective facemask tries to take a bicycle on a street in Wuhan yesterday, a city at the epicenter of a viral outbreak that has killed at least 56 people and infected nearly 2,000. — AFP

patients are being left to fend for themselves," said one 30-year-old. He showed AFP pictures on his smartphone of a patient lying on the floor attached to a respiratory device. AFP was unable to verify the authenticity of the photograph. The vast majority of cases have been

reported in Hubei, and several Wuhan residents said they think the figure is far below the real number. One person said there were "many deaths" in the hospital, and he did not believe the bodies were properly removed. "It was like a horror movie," he said. — AFP

International

Netanyahu hopes to 'make history' at talks on Trump's Middle East plan

'It's a great plan. It's a plan that really would work'

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced hope yesterday that he can "make history" in Washington this week during talks on US President Donald Trump's peace plan for the Middle East. Netanyahu has been invited to meet Trump at the White House today and tomorrow to discuss the project, which has already been dismissed by the Palestinians. "We are in the midst of very dramatic diplomatic developments, but the climax is still ahead of us," Netanyahu told reporters ahead of a weekly cabinet meeting.

"In a short while, I'll leave for Washington to meet my friend, the President of the United States Donald Trump, who will present his deal of the century... I'm full of hope that we can make history," he added. Trump on Thursday said he will release his long-delayed plan before meeting Netanyahu in Washington. "It's a great plan. It's a plan that really would work," Trump said. Netanyahu's political rival Benny Gantz has also been invited to the White House to meet with Trump today.

Gantz told a news conference in Tel Aviv on Saturday that the "peace plan devised by President Trump will go down in history as a meaningful landmark". He expected the initiative to allow "different players in the Middle East to finally move ahead towards an historic regional agreement". The Palestinian leadership was not invited and has already rejected Trump's plan amid tense relations with the US president over his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital.

"This step only reaffirms our absolute rejection of what the US administration has done so far, particularly the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital,"

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's spokesman said in a statement. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state and believe Trump's plan buries the two-state solution that has been for decades the cornerstone of international Middle East diplomacy. World powers have long agreed that Jerusalem's fate should be settled through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel's 'greatest friend'

Israel has occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War. More than 600,000 Israelis now live there in settlements considered illegal under international law. Trump's peace initiative has been in the works since 2017.

The economic component of the initiative was unveiled in June and calls for \$50 billion in international investment in the Palestinian territories and neighbouring Arab countries over 10 years. Trump came to power in 2017 promising to broker Israeli-Palestinian peace, which he labeled the "ultimate deal". The US president has repeatedly boasted that he is the most pro-Israeli US president in history. Netanyahu in a statement Saturday called Trump "the greatest friend that Israel has ever had".

Gantz also showered Trump with praise during his news conference. "I wish to thank President Trump for his dedication and determination in defending the security interests that both Israel and the US share," Gantz said. Trump's separate meetings with Netanyahu and Gantz come a little more than a month before new Israeli elections, with polls showing Netanyahu's right-



RAMALLAH: Palestinians walk past a mural painting in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. US Vice President Mike Pence has invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main election rival to Washington next week to discuss Donald Trump's long-awaited Middle East peace plan. —AFP

wing Likud and Gantz's centrist Blue and White party running neck-and-neck. Israeli media speculated that

Trump had chosen to unveil his plan in support of Netanyahu's election bid — the third in a year. —AFP

Syria regime forces on the edge of key rebel-held town

BEIRUT: Syrian regime forces have reached the outskirts of a key city on the edge of the country's last rebel-held stronghold, a monitor and a pro-government newspaper said yesterday. The mainly deserted city of Maaret Al-Numan is a strategic prize lying on the M5 linking Damascus to Syria's second city Aleppo, a main highway coveted by the regime as it seeks to regain control of the entire country.

It is one of the largest urban centers in the beleaguered northwestern province of Idlib, the last stronghold of anti-regime forces and currently home to some three million people—half of them displaced by violence in other areas. The regime and its Russian ally have

escalated their bombardment against the jihadist-dominated region since December, carrying out hundreds of air strikes in southern Idlib and the west of neighboring Aleppo province.

Over the past 24 hours, government ground forces have seized seven villages on the outskirts of Maaret al-Numan, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said yesterday. They have now reached "the edges of the city and are... within gunfire range of part of the highway", it said. Pro-regime newspaper Al-Watan reported that loyalist forces were "just around the corner" from the city, whose "doors are wide open". Idlib and nearby areas of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia provinces are dominated by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) jihadist group, led by members of the country's former Al-Qaeda franchise.

The regime of President Bashar Al-Assad has repeatedly vowed to reassert control over the whole of Syria, despite several ceasefire agreements. An AFP correspondent says Maaret al-Numan has become a ghost town. Assad's forces, which are also

battling HTS jihadists in western Aleppo province, are backed on both fronts by Syrian and Russian air strikes. The fighting has left dozens of fighters dead on both sides. Since 1 December, some 358,000 Syrians have been displaced from their homes, the vast majority of them women and children, according to the United Nations.

A ceasefire announced by Moscow earlier this month was supposed to protect Idlib from further attacks, but the truce never took hold. Aid agencies and relief groups have warned that further violence could fuel what may potentially become the largest wave of displacement seen during Syria's nine-year-old civil war. Syrian government forces now control around 70 percent of the country and Assad has repeatedly vowed to retake Idlib. —AFP



IDLIB: Smoke billows above building during recent air strikes by pro-regime forces in the jihadist-held city of Maaret Al-Numan in Syria's northwestern Idlib province. —AFP

'Take her out': Audio recording appeared to capture Trump

WASHINGTON: An audio recording appeared to capture US President Donald Trump calling in 2018 for the firing of the then US ambassador to Ukraine, a main figure in the series of events that led to his impeachment, ABC News reported on Friday. The recording features a voice that sounds like Trump's speaking at a small dinner in April 2018 with guests including Lev Parnas, a former associate of Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, ABC reported, citing sources familiar with the recording.

If the recording is authentic, it would bolster Democrats' argument that Trump associates spent nearly a year trying to oust the ambassador, Marie Yovanovitch, because they saw her as an obstacle in their efforts to pressure Ukraine into investigat-

ing Trump's political rival Joe Biden. "Get rid of her!" the voice says, according to ABC. "Get her out tomorrow. I don't care. Get her out tomorrow. Take her out. Okay? Do it."

Trump has said he had the right to fire Yovanovitch, which he did in May 2019. Trump told Fox News on Friday that he was "not a fan" of Yovanovitch. Parnas had recounted the conversation in media interviews last week. Parnas found a digital recording of the comments after ABC published its article on Friday, his lawyer Joseph Bondy said, and sent it to the House Intelligence Committee, which is continuing to investigate Trump's conduct.

"I was particularly gratified to see that everything Mr Parnas has been stating about that event was true," Bondy said, referring to the April 30, 2018 dinner. "It is yet another example of Mr Parnas's version of events being corroborated by evidence in the form of recordings, emails, text messages." Parnas, a Florida businessman, has been providing evidence to Democrats now pushing for Trump's ouster at his impeachment trial in the Senate. He played a key role in Giuliani's effort to dig up dirt on Biden in Ukraine for Trump. He is now under indictment for campaign finance violations in a separate criminal case. —Reuters



Germany warns of 'mass exit' of Jews if hatred persists

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Foreign Minister Heiko Maas warned yesterday that Jews could leave Germany on a "massive" scale if urgent action was not taken to stem rising anti-Semitism. Writing in Der Spiegel weekly on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, Maas said anti-Jewish insults and attacks, in real life and online, had become "a daily occurrence".

Almost one in two Jews has considered leaving Germany, he said, a country that has long taken pains to confront its Nazi past. "We need to take urgent counter-measures to make sure that such thoughts do not turn into a bitter reality and lead to a massive departure of Jews from Germany," he wrote. The fight against anti-Semitism would be a priority when Germany takes over the rotating EU presidency in July and the chairmanship of the Council of Europe, the bloc's leading human rights body, in November, Maas vowed.

Germany will push for tougher legal consequences for anti-Semitic acts, he said, and for more EU nations to make Holocaust denial a crime—currently illegal in over a dozen member states including Germany, Belgium and Italy. Berlin will also

step up the battle against anti-Jewish hate speech and disinformation on social media, Maas wrote, saying perpetrators "should feel the full force of the law across Europe".

An anti-Semitic attack in the eastern German city of Halle in October—in which a gunman tried but failed to storm a synagogue before killing a passerby and a customer at a kebab shop—showed that "Jewish sites and communities" needed better protection "everywhere in Europe". To help make that happen, Germany will contribute 500,000 euros (\$550,000) to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this year, Maas said.

School trips

The diplomat stressed the importance of educating young people about the horrors of World War II, when six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis. Research had shown that "a third of young Europeans indicated knowing little to nothing about the Holocaust," he said.

The comments came on the same day a YouGov survey found 56 percent of Germans were in favor of making a school visit to a concentration camp mandatory. Elderly Holocaust survivors will gather in Auschwitz today to mark 75 years since Soviet troops liberated the camp, while world leaders held a somber remembrance ceremony in Jerusalem last Thursday. More than 1.1 million people, mainly Jews, were killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most died in the gas chambers but many also succumbed to starvation, disease and overwork. —AFP

International

Over and out: Britain readies to leave the European Union

A historic move that has bitterly divided UK

LONDON: Britain calls time on almost half a century of European Union membership this week, striking out alone in a historic move that has bitterly divided the country. At 11:00 pm on January 31, the UK will become the first country to leave the 28-nation EU, the world's largest single market area that it joined in 1973. Nothing will immediately change, owing to a transition period negotiated between London and Brussels to allow both sides to agree a new future partnership.

Britons will be able to work in and trade freely with EU nations until December 31, and vice versa, although they will no longer be represented in the bloc's institutions. But legally, Britain will be out. The exit process has been tortuous, with the years since the 2016 EU referendum marked by bitter arguments that paralysed the government and forced two prime ministers to quit.

Four years ago, 52 percent of Britons backed Brexit but 48 percent wanted to stay, and the country is still split between "Leavers" and "Remainers". The political chaos came to an abrupt halt last month when Prime Minister Boris Johnson won a decisive victory in a general election with a promise to "Get Brexit Done". The British parliament this week finally ratified the exit terms agreed with Brussels, and Johnson called on the country to move on. "Next Friday marks an important moment in the history of our United Kingdom," he said.

"No matter how you voted in 2016, it is the time to look ahead with confidence to the global, trail-blazing country we will become over the next decade and heal past divisions." The next stage of Brexit will also be a challenge, however. Johnson wants to negotiate Britain's new relationship with the EU, covering everything from trade to security cooperation, by the end of the year. But Brussels says this is an impossible ask, arguing that London must either limit its ambitions or request more time.

Muted celebrations

Johnson has been an enthusiastic supporter of Brexit since leading the 2016 campaign, but he is wary of inflaming divisions with the celebrations. Official events on Friday will be limited to a special prime ministerial address and a light display in Downing Street. Ten million commemorative 50 pence coins will also be issued in the coming months, bearing the words "Peace, Prosperity and friendship with all nations". Previous batches had to be destroyed after Brexit was delayed three times due to political wrangling in London.

Some eurosceptics had pressed for parliament's famous Big Ben bell, which is being renovated, to be brought back into action to ring out on Brexit night. But it was dropped after concerns about the cost. Johnson initially asked for public donations, only for officials to admit this was not possible. A countdown clock will instead be projected onto the black bricks of Downing Street, while Nigel Farage, another key figure in the 2016 campaign, will hold a rally in nearby Parliament Square.

Divided nation

Britain has always had an uneasy relationship with Brussels and refused to join either the EU's single currency or the Schengen free travel area. A minority of politicians have campaigned for decades to free Britain from what they see as an overly bureaucratic and unaccountable institution. Concerns grew as large numbers of EU citizens moved to Britain to work, while for many, Brexit was also a protest against a political establishment they felt was ignoring them. Yet for others across the continent, Brexit day will be a traumatic moment, ending any lingering hopes that the break-up could somehow be stopped. "We still love you," tweeted Donald Tusk, the former president of the European Council, this week after the divorce treaty was formally signed. Many of the esti-



A picture taken on January 23, 2020 shows the European Union flag and the British Union Jack waving in front of the European Parliament in Brussels. —AFP

mated 3.6 million EU citizens living in Britain, and one million Britons elsewhere in the bloc, fear an uncertain future. Brexit has also severely strained ties between the four nations that make up the United Kingdom. The devolved assemblies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales all rejected the terms of the divorce, although for

different reasons. In Scotland, where pro-European sentiment remains strong, the nationalist government is pressing for a second referendum on independence. Many in Northern Ireland meanwhile are concerned about special trading arrangements intended to keep open its land border with EU member Ireland. —AFP

The European Union: A union marked by crises

PARIS: Since it was created in 1957 to help avert another world war, the European Union has weathered numerous crises, though Britain's decision to leave might be the worst. As Brexit becomes reality and the bloc's membership declines for the first time on Friday, January 31, here is a recap of testing times in the past.

'Empty Chair'

In 1965, in what is known as the "Empty Chair" crisis, a dispute over budget funding sees French President Charles de Gaulle recall his representative to Brussels and boycott its institutions for seven months.

Thatcher wants 'money back'

In 1979, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher demands a rebate for Britain's contribution to the European budget, reportedly declaring: "I want my money back." After fierce negotiations, London secures an annual rebate in 1984.

Danish rejection -

In 1992, Danes shock Europe when they turn down the Maastricht Treaty that establishes the EU and a future monetary union. The Danes barely approve an amended version in 1993 after Denmark is granted greater autonomy in defense, currency, citizenship matters and judicial cooperation.

Mass resignation

The entire European Commission, led by Luxembourg's Jacques Santer, resigns in 1999 after a report reveals its responsibility for fraud.

Austria sanctioned

In 2000, Austria's conservative People's Party (ÖVP) picks the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) as its junior coalition partner, shocking Europe and leading to months of EU sanctions. The FPÖ again enters government in 2017, this time without stirring opposition from Brussels.

Constitution shot down

In 2005, French voters reject a draft European constitution, as do Dutch voters three days later. European leaders manage to get the Lisbon Treaty ratified in late 2009 with provisions designed to improve the functioning of the enlarged EU institutions.

Greek debt

In 2009, Greece reveals a sharp rise in its public deficit that had been underreported in official data. It warns of a debt default the following year, putting major European banks under strain and unleashing a crisis that threatens the euro single currency. First Greece and then Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus seek aid from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The so-called "troika" demands strict fiscal discipline in return for help, and several heads of government fall in a resulting public backlash against sharp public spending cuts.

Migration crisis

In 2015, Europe faces its most serious migration crisis since the end of World War II. More than one million people, fleeing war, mainly in Syria, arrive in the bloc via the Greek and Italian coasts. EU leaders struggle to work out a joint action plan, with several EU members refusing to take a share of refugees. More than 19,000 people have died making perilous sea crossings since 2014. —AFP

Britain's years-long battle over Brexit

LONDON: The curtain comes down on Britain's membership of the European Union on January 31 after more than three and a half years of disagreements and delays. Here are the milestones in the rocky process.

Leave wins

In a referendum on June 23, 2016 that followed decades of arguments over Europe, Britons vote by 52 percent to 48 percent to become the first nation to leave the EU bloc. Conservative leader David Cameron, who led the campaign to remain in the EU and called the vote expecting to win, resigns as prime minister the next day. He is replaced by Theresa May, the interior minister who also backed remaining.

Divorce process triggered

May formally triggers the exit process on March 29, 2017, sending a notification letter to Brussels that gives Britain until March 29, 2019, to leave.

Draft agreed

Ending more than a year of acrimonious talks, British and EU negotiators on November 13, 2018, reach a draft

UK's Boris Johnson: Brexit champion who delivered

LONDON: Even for a maverick politician like Boris Johnson, backing Brexit four years ago was a huge gamble. But as Britain prepares to leave the European Union next week, it has paid off spectacularly. The Conservative leader remains a divisive figure, hailed by many for his optimism and humor, accused by others of Trump-style populism and a blatant disregard for the truth.

But his name will be written in the history books for leading the campaign for Brexit in the 2016 EU referendum, and then, as prime minister, finally making it happen. Negotiating a new trade deal with Brussels is likely to be an even greater challenge, but for now, the former London mayor is riding high.

Early ambition

For a man who as a child wanted to be "world king", this moment of triumph has been a long time coming. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson was born in New York in 1964 into a high-achieving family. He spent his early years in Brussels, where his father worked for the EU, then attended the elite Eton school in England before studying classics at

divorce deal. But May faces an angry backlash from her own Conservative party over its terms. More ardent Brexit supporters believe the proposed deal could leave Britain interminably trapped in EU trade rules.

Triple rejection

On January 15, 2019, British MPs vote against the deal in the biggest government defeat in British parliamentary history. Brussels refuses to renegotiate. The House of Commons rejects the deal again on March 12 and for a third time on March 29.

Deadline delays

The EU agrees to delay Brexit until May 22 and then until October 31, 2019. It means Britain is obliged to organize European Parliament elections on May 23, which are won by the newly-formed Brexit Party of anti-EU populist Nigel Farage.

Johnson elected

The European election defeat and parliament's refusal to back her Brexit deal forces May to step down as Conservative leader on June 7. On July 23, party members vote for Brexit figurehead Boris Johnson as their new leader. He becomes prime minister the next day. Anxious over Farage's surge in support, Johnson promises to take Britain out of the EU on October 31, with or without a deal. He publishes his "final" Brexit proposals on October 2.

The endgame

On October 22, British MPs approve

Oxford University. He first worked as a journalist for The Times, where he was sacked for making up a quote, and moved on to become Brussels correspondent for the right-wing Daily Telegraph newspaper. There he made his name by writing about "Euro-myths" - exaggerated claims about the EU.

He came to public prominence in the 1990s as a guest panellist on a satirical television show, where his eccentric and self-deprecating wit made him a national figure known just as "Boris". His first few years in politics did not go smoothly - in 2004, he was sacked from the Conservatives' shadow cabinet for lying about an extra-marital affair. But in 2008 he was elected mayor of multicultural, Labor-voting London, an achievement commentators put down to his unconventional style.

Stoking controversy

Johnson is not like other politicians, with his messy blond hair, jokey style and willingness to make himself look ridiculous - notably once getting stuck on a zip wire brandishing British flags. He also differed from many of his Conservative colleagues with his pro-migration and socially liberal views, which resonated in London.

However, he has faced accusations of prejudice in his news columns over the years, describing gay men as "bumboys" and black African Commonwealth citizens as "piccaninnies". As recently as 2018, he drew criticism for writing that Muslim women in the full veil looked like "letter boxes", even while he argued that they should be free to wear what they want.



LONDON: In this handout photograph taken and released by BBC, Britain's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Brexit Minister) Stephen Barclay (right) gestures as he speaks with political journalist Andrew Marr during an appearance on the BBC political program The Andrew Marr Show in London. —AFP

in principle a new Brexit deal struck days earlier with the EU. But they reject Johnson's bid to fast-track final approval before October 31. On October 28, EU members agree to postpone Brexit for up to three months until January 31, 2020.

Elections, green light

Johnson's resounding win at a December 12 snap general election smoothes his Brexit bill's passage through parliament on January 9, 2020. Queen Elizabeth II gives her formal assent for Britain to leave the EU on January 23, with two top officials in Brussels and UK Prime Minister Boris

Johnson signing it the following day. The text is to go to the European Parliament for ratification on Wednesday, January 29, and diplomats from the EU member states are to approve the deal in writing the next day.

Then finally ... Brexit

Divorce is set for Friday, January 31 at 2300 GMT, which is 11:00 pm in Britain. An extendable transition period, during which much in the relationship will not change, has been agreed up to December 31, 2020. More tough talks on the future EU-UK partnership are expected by then. —AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks in the House of Commons in central London during the Prime Minister's Questions (PMQ) session. —AFP

But Johnson rejects accusations of racism, while supporters say he simply likes to stir things up. In last month's snap general election, he also proved he could still appeal to a broad range of voters by securing the Conservatives' best result since the 1980s heyday of Margaret Thatcher. With his promise to "Get Brexit Done", he tough on law and order and invest in public services, he took back working-class seats that his party had not held for decades.

Brexit promises

Johnson is known for his colorful private life. He is twice married, is believed to have five children - one from an affair

- and currently lives with his girlfriend in Downing Street. But his celebrity status has allowed him to shrug off scandals that would have destroyed many others. More damaging have been questions about his competence, with a two-year stint as foreign minister after Brexit widely viewed as underwhelming.

The family of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman held in Tehran for alleged sedition, say he jeopardized her case by misdescribing her job. After becoming prime minister in July last year, however, he defied his critics by renegotiating the terms of Brexit that MPs had rejected three times. —AFP

International

India's Republic Day celebrations marked with protests and blasts

Thousands protest across India against citizenship bill

KOCHI: Hundreds of thousands of Indians protested across the country yesterday against a citizenship bill that many fear is discriminatory against the minority Muslim community. The protests, which began last month, gathered fresh momentum as India celebrated Republic Day, in commemoration of the day the Indian constitution came into effect.

In the southern state of Kerala, organizers said more than a hundred thousand people formed a human chain. It was followed by public meetings at over 250 places across the state. "It was not a mere human chain, but a human wall against the violation of the principles of the Constitution," said Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, addressing a public meeting in the state capital of Thiruvananthapuram. Another human chain spread over 11 km was also formed in Kolkata, organizers said.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Citizens' Register (NRC) were a key part of the election manifesto of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party. The government believes the legislation is needed to protect refugees across south Asia. The CAA aims to fast-track citizenship for persecuted Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who arrived in India before Dec. 31, 2014, from Muslim-majority

Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Clashes between protesters and police leaving at least 25 dead have been a regular occurrence since Dec. 12, when the government passed the legislation. Tens of thousands protested in India's financial hub of Mumbai, as well as Lucknow, the capital of populous Uttar Pradesh state which has seen the highest number of deaths since the unrest began. Both were predominantly female-led.

"Our protest against this discriminatory citizenship act ... will continue until it is withdrawn by the government," said Ambreen Rizvi, a female protester in Lucknow. The North-eastern state of Assam witnessed five low-intensity explosions for which the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a militant group, has taken responsibility. No casualties were reported.

In New Delhi, the government hosted the annual Republic Day parade aimed at showcasing India's military hardware and cultural diversity. Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest. Protesters also gathered in the capital, including in the area of Shaheen Bagh, where hundreds of residents have blocked a major highway since December. A women-only led rally with over 20,000 protesters also gathered in a suburb in Mumbai to mark their dissent against the new law. — Reuters



ADHARTAL: Damaged motorbikes are seen along a street scattered with stones after two communities clashed during a demonstration in support of the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in Adhartal town in Jabalpur district yesterday. — AFP

Thousands rally across Australia for 'Invasion Day' protests

MELBOURNE: Thousands of people joined Invasion Day protests in cities across Australia yesterday to mark the beginning of British colonization of the vast continent. January 26 is officially recognized as Australia Day, a public holiday to celebrate the origins of the modern nation and is commemorated with fireworks, concerts and citizenship ceremonies.

However, the date is a time of mourning for indigenous Australians, who have inhabited the land for 65,000 years and view the arrival of British settlers in 1788 as heralding two centuries years of pain and suffering. Annual rallies have steadily grown in size as protesters bring attention to injustices faced by indigenous people and call on the government to change the date of Australia Day. It was only formally established as a nation-wide celebration in 1994. This year, non-indigenous Australians were asked to give reparations in the form of a donation to the #PayTheRent campaign.

Melbourne rally organizer Lidia Thorpe, a former Victoria state government politician, drew attention to the plight of Aboriginal families who had to pay for the funerals of relatives who died in custody. "It's 2020 and we're still trying to raise money to bury our people. So we're asking people to pay the rent, you're on stolen land," she said. "It's time to reparate for the mass injustice that we've had as first people of this country." Chants of "Always was,



SYDNEY: A busker performs for onlookers as people come out to celebrate Australia Day in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

always will be, Aboriginal land" rang out as large crowds marched through the city.

Some waved the Aboriginal flag while others held aloft signs with slogans such as "No Pride in Genocide" and "Sovereignty Was Never Ceded". One protester, who gave her name only as Sophie, said she believed Australia Day

should be abolished entirely rather than simply moved to another date. "I think any day that has these barbecues and celebrating Aussie pride, I think that's absolutely inappropriate," she said. "I don't think there's any day that you can celebrate Australia Day without also celebrating a genocide." — AFP

India ends internet blackout in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Indian authorities have restored internet in Indian Kashmir after a five-and-a-half-month blackout but maintained a block on social media sites. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government imposed a communications blackout in early August when it stripped the portion of Kashmir it controls - the country's only Muslim-majority region - of its partial autonomy.

India also imposed a curfew, sent in tens of thousands of extra troops and detained dozens of Kashmiri political leaders and others, many of whom remain in detention, drawing criticism abroad. Internet access was restored Saturday but only to 301 government-approved websites that include international news publications and platforms such as Netflix and Amazon.

Mobile phone data access was also restored, although it was limited to slower second-generation (2G) connections. "It's good some internet access has been restored but it's so slow I'm hardly able to access anything and social media is also

off-limits," Raashid Ahmad, a university student said. Azhar Hussain, a local businessman, also complained about the internet speed being "painfully slow". India is the world leader in cutting internet services, activists say, and access was also temporarily suspended in other parts of the country during recent protests against a new citizenship law.

Since August freedom of movement in heavily-militarized Kashmir has been gradually restored as has cellphone coverage, but apart from at a handful of locations, there has been no regular internet access. This made life even harder for the region's seven million inhabitants and hit the local economy hard. Modi's government said that the blackout was for security reasons, aimed at restricting the ability of armed militants - who it says are backed by arch-rival Pakistan - to communicate.

However, the Supreme Court criticized the government earlier this month for the move, calling it an "arbitrary exercise of power". The court also stated that having access to the internet "is integral to an individual's right to freedom of speech and expression". Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since independence in 1947, and has been the spark of two wars and numerous flare-ups between the two nuclear-armed foes. A bloody insurgency against Indian rule that has raged in the scenic Himalayan region for decades has left tens of thousands dead, mostly civilians. — AFP

Record rainstorms kill 30 in southeast Brazil

BRASILIA: At least 30 people have been killed in two days of intense storms in southeastern Brazil, the Minas Gerais state Civil Defense office said yesterday. Seventeen people are also missing, seven injured, and some 3,500 have been forced out of their homes following a series of landslides and building collapses, Civil Defense officials said. Television footage showed images of overflowing rivers, flood neighborhoods and trees and utility poles knocked over by the rushing water. Several highways have also been cut by the flooding, and scores of bridges have been knocked out.

Most of the victims were killed in landslides or buried in destroyed homes. At least two children were listed among the dead. The heavy rain and flooding is also hitting the nearby states of Rio de Janeiro and Espirito

Santo. Rainfall in the region has been the heaviest since records were first kept 110 years ago, the National Institute of Meteorology said. In one 24-hour period, the Minas Gerais state capital Belo Horizonte recorded 172 millimeters (almost seven inches) of rain.

Forecasters said the rain is expected to taper off on Sunday, but authorities warn that the danger of landslides remains high, especially in the Belo Horizonte area. The deluge coincided with the first anniversary of the dam collapse in the Minas Gerais town of Brumadinho that killed 270 people. Eleven people are still listed as missing. An accumulation of water and a lack of drainage caused the tailings dam rupture on January 25, 2019, according to a report commissioned by the mining firm Vale. — AFP

Jordanian charged with 'terror' over tourist stabbings

AMMAN: A Jordanian court yesterday leveled "terrorism" charges against a man suspected of wounding eight people in a November knife attack at a popular tourist site. The suspect, Moustafa Abourouis, 22, faces up to 20 years in prison after the stabbing of three Mexicans, a Swiss woman, a Jordanian tour guide and a security officer at the Roman city of Jerash.

At a hearing open to the press, prosecutors accused Abourouis of committing a "terrorist act" and "promoting the ideas of a terrorist group"—a reference to the Islamic State (IS) group. Abourouis, who is of Palestinian origins and grew up in the refugee camp of Souf, was arrested immediately after the attack at Jerash, close to the camp and around 50 kilometers north of Amman. The Jordanian prosecutor

accused Abourouis of trying to join IS, an operative of which in Syria had "ordered him to commit attacks against foreigners".

Two alleged accomplices, also Jordanians of Palestinian origin, were charged with "terrorism" in the same case. All three pleaded not guilty. The court is scheduled to hear witnesses next Sunday, with the date for a verdict to be confirmed. It was not the first time a Jordanian tourist attraction has been attacked. In December 2016, in Karak, home to one of the region's biggest Crusader castles, 10 people—seven police, two Jordanian civilians and a Canadian tourist—were killed in an attack that also left 30 wounded.

That attack was claimed by IS and 10 people were later convicted of carrying out the assault, two of them sentenced to death. Tourism is a key lifeline for Jordan, a country lacking in natural resources and reliant on foreign aid. The sector accounted for 14 percent of GDP in 2019. The kingdom, bordering conflict-torn Syria and Iraq, has been working to revive its tourism industry and aims to attract seven million holidaymakers a year. — AFP

Chinese Uighurs in Saudi face an impossible choice

MEDINA: His eyes brimming with tears, a Uighur student in Saudi Arabia holds out his Chinese passport—long past its expiry date and condemning him to an uncertain fate as the kingdom grows closer to Beijing. The Chinese mission in Saudi Arabia stopped renewing passports for the ethnic Muslim minority more than two years ago, in what campaigners call a pressure tactic exercised in many countries to force the Uighur diaspora to return home.

Half a dozen Uighur families in Saudi Arabia who showed AFP their passports—a few already expired and some approaching the date—said they dread going back to China, where over a million Uighurs are believed to be held in internment camps. "Even animals in other countries are allowed to have passports," said the 30-year-old religious student in the Muslim holy city of Medina, whose passport expired in 2018.

"Either they should renew my passport or let me drop my nationality. They make us feel like worthless humans." The community, now offered a one-way travel document suitable only for a trip to China, faces an impossible choice: return home at the risk of detention or remain illegally in the kingdom under constant fear of deportation.

"Refusing passport renewals is part of China's strategy to smoke out the Uighur diaspora, forcing them to return to China," Norway-based Uighur linguist Abdurweli Ayup said. "What awaits them on the other side is detention." Amplifying the community's fears is the conspicuous silence of Muslim-majority states—from Pakistan to Egypt—over China's treatment of Uighurs as they avoid crossing Beijing, an economic powerhouse.

Particularly concerning is Beijing's deepening ties with Saudi Arabia—the epicenter of the Muslim world and home to Islam's two holiest sites—which has reportedly condoned the Uighur policy of China, the top importer of Saudi oil. Saudi Arabia supports "China's rights to take counter-terrorism and de-extremism" measures, Chinese state media quoted Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as saying last year. This year, China threw its support behind the kingdom over its handling of journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder trial, which triggered global criticism after Prince Mohammed's closest aides were absolved of blame.

'Untraceable'

Only a few hundred Uighurs are estimated to be in Saudi Arabia, a disenfranchised community of mainly seminary students, traders and asylum seekers, many cut off from their detained families in China. Many are wary of what they suspect are Chinese spies and some are forced to live in hiding, a Uighur businessman in the kingdom said, showing AFP copies of eight expired passports of fellow Uighurs that have rendered them illegal.

"Within the next two years, expect many more Uighurs to become stateless," he said. Many have fled while they can, often heading to Turkey or Sweden. A Uighur student in the kingdom told AFP that three of his friends deported since late 2016 have become "untraceable" after arriving in China, likely now in the so-called re-education camps that Beijing says are meant to counter extremism.

Ayup told AFP he had confirmed five deportation cases from Saudi Arabia since 2017. Other Uighur campaigners say the number is higher. Similar extraditions have been reported from Egypt and Thailand. It is unclear whether Riyadh carried out deportations under pressure from China or if they were swept up in the kingdom's broad crackdown on illegal expatriates. Saudi officials did not respond to requests for comment.

The Chinese embassy in Riyadh told AFP it does not "cooperate with Saudi authorities to deport Uighurs". When asked about their refusal to renew passports, it only said it had not stopped consular services for their Uighur "brothers and sisters". — AFP



An unidentified Chinese Uighur man in the city of Medina holds his expired Chinese passport (red) and a one-way travel document (blue) issued in its place by the Chinese mission in Saudi Arabia. — AFP



KASHMIR: Security personnel block a road near Sher-I-Kashmir cricket stadium during the Republic Day parade in Srinagar yesterday. — AFP

Analysis

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Trump lawyers offer un-Trumpy defense to impeachment

Just before his lawyers stepped into the US Senate to begin their argument that he should not be removed from office, President Donald Trump offered a preview of sorts. Americans should turn on their televisions, he wrote on Twitter, and watch the attorneys make "our case against" his political antagonists, who he listed with a series of taunting nicknames. What those who tuned in saw was something quite different.

When Trump's legal team launched his defense at his impeachment trial on Saturday, they outlined a case far removed from his all-caps claims of a perfect phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart and denunciations of his political foes. Instead they focused largely on what they cast as glaring holes in Democrats' argument that Trump should be removed from office for his efforts to secure politically beneficial investigations from Ukraine's government, and argued that the allegations against Trump did not justify ousting him in an election year.

"We don't believe they have come anywhere close to meeting their burden for what they're asking you to do," White House counsel Pat Cipollone, the head of Trump's defense attorneys, told lawmakers on Saturday. The defense his team outlined was more subdued and sober than what Trump's lawyers, his political allies and certainly he himself has presented in the past. Whether that will continue when the trial resumes on Monday is anyone's guess, but their tone and engagement with the merits of the case that the Democrats have tried to build did not go unnoticed by some of the lawmakers who will decide whether Trump remains in office.

Democratic Senator Tom Carper of Delaware told reporters he "came expecting that the Republicans would come out all guns blazing and fire and brimstone, and I think they got a message from some of their Republican brethren that that would not be helpful." He said he thought the presentation was aimed at a handful of moderate Republican senators who could break with their party and vote to let Democrats summon some of Trump's closest aides to testify for the first time about the president's conduct.

'Low-key, specific' and 'solemn'

Trump has at times issued a much higher-decibel defense, declaring on Twitter that he "GOT IMPEACHED FOR MAKING A PERFECT PHONE CALL" and urging people to "READ THE TRANSCRIPTS." Trump's lawyers still struck some of his favorite notes, accusing Democrats pressing for his removal of trying to "cancel an election," casting him as the victim of a succession of politically motivated investigations brought only to tarnish his presidency, and seeking to discredit Representative Adam Schiff, the lawmaker leading the impeachment effort. Cipollone said on Saturday that Democrats were "here to perpetrate the most massive interference in an election in American history."

Senator Lamar Alexander, a Republican, said Trump's lawyers "were low-key, specific and I thought they were persuasive." Republican Senator Shelley Moore Capito said "it was pretty solemn, too, which I appreciated." The Democratic-led House of Representatives impeached Trump in December on two charges, abuse of power for pressuring Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading contender to challenge Trump this year, and obstruction of Congress for his efforts to impede the House investigation. The charges center on claims by administration officials that Trump pressed for the investigations using nearly \$400 million in security aid and a coveted White House visit as leverage.

The Democratic lawmakers serving as prosecutors in the trial spent three days last week mapping the case against Trump, drawing on documents and testimony from administration officials about Trump's efforts to secure investigations into the Bidens and a discredited conspiracy theory about the 2016 election. Trump's lawyers sought to chip away at that evidence on Saturday, pointing out that most of the witnesses who testified that Trump tried to trade government acts for political benefits never interacted with him directly. They also highlighted statements from Ukrainian officials who said they did not feel under any pressure.

And they sought to poke holes in some of the more powerful evidence against Trump, including testimony from the ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, who said he supposed that a holdup in security aid was connected to Trump's desire for investigations. Sondland also testified that he never saw the president draw that link directly. — Reuters

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Heavy machinery work is viewed in the coke storage area at US Steel Clairton Works on Jan 21, 2020 in Clairton, Pennsylvania. (Inset) Scrap metal is organized at Josh Steel Company for recycling on Jan 21, 2020 in North Braddock, Pennsylvania. — AFP photos

For Penn workers, a changing economy, politics

White plumes of smoke billow into the frigid air above the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania, as scorching ovens bake the coal that rolls in by the trainload along the Monongahela River. Built more than a century ago, Clairton is the largest plant in the United States to manufacture coke, a key component in steel - the long-time bedrock of a region now in economic and political flux. As the US election season opens, a team of AFP journalists is seeking a closer look at the national mood by driving from Washington to Iowa, which on Feb 3 holds the first contest to select presidential candidates.

Donald Trump in 2016 won historic Democratic stronghold Pennsylvania by fewer than 45,000 votes, one of several wins that stunned Washington political veterans and propelled the mogul to the White House. Walking over the icy parking lot of the Clairton plant, 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Pittsburgh, union leader Don Furko acknowledged he had a delicate task in representing his 1,200 workers.

The United Steelworkers went all in for Trump's rival Hillary Clinton, but there was so much dissent in the ranks that the union has promised to poll its members this time. "Trump spoke to a lot of our members," Furko said. "He was speaking directly to them, is what it seemed like." "I don't think that it's changed here. I don't know about other mills, but I know in my mem-

bership, the majority of them are still behind Trump," he said.

Working-class identity

Support for Trump is far from universal among the blue-collar workers, many of whom questioned how a billionaire could understand their lives. "We've got the worst president ever in Donald Trump. He's got more money than China has rice," said Dennis Melvin, a 75-year-old retired glass factory worker who bemoaned how young people no longer have the same career opportunities. With another coke factory in Erie, Pennsylvania, shutting down at the end of last year, union leaders at the US Steel plant in Clairton voice confidence in protections under their contract.

Trump has curtailed the collective rights of federal workers and has harshly criticized national unions, urging them to lower their dues and blaming them for plant closings. But several workers saluted Trump's tough talk on trade and his negotiation of a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico, which prominent union leaders praised as an improvement. In sharp differences from the Democrats, Trump has also attacked immigration and mocked the global scientific consensus on climate change.

Floyde Macheska, a retired third-generation coal miner, shared his skepticism about climate change and

and Harry are now staying.

He quipped that he might set up a stand to sell royal memorabilia on the street, where Chip Wilson, founder of the Lululemon yoga-wear chain, also lives. Canadian sales of the Union Jack and Saint George's Cross flags have already jumped, according to Susan Braverman, president of The Flag Shop. She admits to being "a big fan" of Meghan from the days when the former American actress appeared in the television series "Suits," shot in Toronto.

Braverman, like others here, was quick to dismiss criticism of the duke and duchess of Sussex for their shock exit from their royal roles. "We all want our kids to grow up and become independent, don't we? They're just spreading their wings," she said.

A matter of location

Where Harry and Meghan settle in Canada will likely depend on where they have the most support. Megan's mother Doria Ragland lives in Los Angeles, and Vancouver is the closest Canadian city with direct daily flights. But her best friend Jessica Mulrone - married to the son of former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulrone - is in Toronto, where Meghan spent years shooting "Suits."

Canada's Atlantic Maritime provinces are arguably the most vocally pro-monarchy. If Harry craves flavors

renewable energy - and questioned whose interests the Democrats had at heart. "The old-timers, they worked their way up, instead of having someone give them something," he said over breakfast with his wife - complaining that former president Barack Obama had unfairly championed renewables at the expense of coal. "They always had the theory that Democrats were there for the working people. Things have changed," he said.

Macheska, who suffers from black lung, looks back nostalgically to the booming industry of his childhood. "There were times when you couldn't even see where you were going it was so smoky. But we still had winters with lots of snow," he said. Industry's impact in western Pennsylvania goes well beyond climate change.

A 2017 study by a pediatrician in Pittsburgh - whose tech industry has now eclipsed steel - found that 22 percent of the city's children had asthma, far exceeding the national average of 10 percent. And a December 2018 fire at the Clairton plant temporarily sent sulfur dioxide levels skyrocketing, leading US Steel to promise \$1 billion to curb pollution and other investments. "In general politicians have always been very willing to give steel a pass, seeing them as a major employer," said Myron Arnowitt, Pennsylvania director of the Clean Water Action advocacy group. After the fire, "more politicians are willing to say, this has gone too far." — AFP

Canada monarchists flutter over Harry and Meghan move

A striking sight, the Royal Standard flaps against the dark skies and unrelenting rains of Vancouver, Canada's Pacific coast metropolis. Monarchist Raymond Greenwood raised the Queen's banner atop his house just days ago to welcome Prince Harry and his wife Meghan after learning that the royal runaways were considering moving to his oceanside Kitsilano neighborhood here. Locals surveyed by AFP are giddy about their move. Tourism groups are even more excited about the prospects of a boost from the global attention on the couple.

"I'm very, very happy," said Greenwood, president of the local branch of the Canadian Club and a volunteer at Tourism Vancouver; he is also known as "Mr Fireworks" for having brought an annual international fireworks show to the city. "I mean, who wouldn't want to run into Meghan walking her dogs in the neighborhood," he said, referring to pictures published of Meghan out for a stroll in North Saanich, where she

China's animal trade to spawn more outbreaks

The animal-borne SARS virus 17 years ago was supposed to be a wake-up call about consuming wildlife as food, but scientists say China's latest epidemic indicates that the practice remains widespread and a growing risk to human health. Like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which was traced to bats and civets, the virus that has killed dozens in China and infected almost 2,000 people is believed to have originated in animals trafficked for food.

Final findings are yet to be announced, but Chinese health officials believe it came from wildlife sold illegally at a market in the central city of Wuhan that offered enough animals to fill a zoo, including civets, rats, snakes, giant salamanders and live wolf pups. The so-called "bushmeat" trade, plus broader human encroachment on wild habitats, is bringing us into ever-closer contact with animal viruses that can spread rapidly in our uber-connected world, said Peter Daszak, president of EcoHealth Alliance, a global NGO focused on infectious disease prevention.

The Global Virome Project, a worldwide effort to increase preparedness for pandemics, which Daszak is a part of, estimates there are 1.7 million undiscovered viruses in wildlife, nearly half of which could be harmful to humans. Daszak said the project's research indicates we can expect around five new animal-borne pathogens to infect humanity each year.

'New normal'

"The new normal is that pandemics are going to

happen more frequently," he said. "We are making contact with animals that carry these viruses more, and more, and more." Viruses are a natural part of the environment, and not all are the stuff of sci-fi horror. But the recent track record of animal-hosted viruses that "jump" to humans is sobering. Like SARS, which killed hundreds in China and Hong Kong in 2002-03, Ebola also was traced to bats, while HIV has roots in African primates.

Today, more than 60 percent of new emerging human infectious diseases reach us via animals, scientists say. Even familiar menu items like poultry and cattle - whose pathogens we have largely adapted to over millennia - occasionally throw a curveball, like bird flu or mad-cow disease. "For the sake of these wild species' future, and for human health, we need to reduce consumption of these wild animals," said Diana Bell, a wildlife disease and conservation biologist at University of East Anglia who has studied SARS, Ebola and other pathogens. "But, 17 years on (from SARS), apparently that hasn't happened."

Wild-meat consumption itself is not necessarily dangerous - most viruses die once their host is killed. But pathogens can jump to humans during the capture, transportation, or slaughter of animals, especially if sanitation is poor or protective equipment not used. With scrutiny rising amid the viral outbreak, China on Sunday ordered a temporary ban on wildlife trading until the viral epidemic eases.

But conservationists say China has repeatedly failed to deliver on pledges to crack down. Chinese authorities have addressed the problem partly by encouraging a farmed-animal industry. This has included for endangered species like tigers, whose parts are prized in China and other Asian countries as aphrodisiacs or for other uses. But that comes with its own downside, by providing a channel for more sought-after wild-caught beasts to be laundered as "farmed," Bell said. She

of Britain, the island city of Victoria on the Pacific (named after Harry's great-great-great-grandmother), with its multitude of tea rooms and double-decker buses, might feel more at home. But, said Vancouver lawyer and royal commentator Edward Wang, "I wouldn't say British Columbia (overall) is very British anymore, it's become very multicultural, with large South Asian and Chinese communities."

Canadian monarchists, often on guest lists for functions hosted by Governor General Julie Payette and provincial viceregal, are champing at the chance to rub shoulders with the prince and his wife. "Selfishly, it's our hope that even if Prince Harry and Meghan are doing fewer royal duties overall, if they're doing them in Canada there'll be more for us," Bruce Hallsor, head of the Victoria chapter of the Monarchist League, told AFP. "So that's a plus for us," he said.

He rejected critics, including Meghan's estranged father Thomas Markle, who assailed the couple for bowing out from representing the British monarchy. "The idea that every member of the royal family should have a full-time role, be a patron of things and a ribbon cutter, is relatively new," Hallsor said. "It's not part of royal tradition," he added. "It started in the media age." As Greenwood said, "Let's be honest, there's enough members of the royal family over there (in Britain) for official duties." — AFP



This file photo taken on Aug 1, 2002 shows a kitchen worker using a wooden mallet to hit a water rat on the head to stun it before it is killed for a meal in a restaurant in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou. — AFP

added that wildlife traders also had become more savvy, avoiding market scrutiny by selling directly to restaurants. — AFP

Business

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NEW YORK, NY: People participate in the annual Women's March in front of the Trump International Hotel in New York City. In the fourth iteration of the Women's March, thousands are marching in cities across the world to draw focus on immigration, climate change and abortion rights. — AFP

Trump clampdown threatens US jobs, wages

American birth rate falling and labor shortage worsening

WASHINGTON: The 20-year-old San Diego bakery Con Pane Rustic Breads & Cafe went out of business this month after an audit by US authorities found immigrants working there illegally. In April, a small Nebraska town lost a potato processing plant, and the local revenue it generated, in the wake of an immigration raid on its facilities. A restaurant in New York appears to have suffered similar fate in August.

Farmers say they are planting less, turning to automation, eliminating some crops, leaving them to rot in the field or contemplating selling out of the business altogether—all because they cannot find enough immigrant labor. As the US birth rate is falling and a labor shortage is worsening, President Donald Trump's crackdown on immigrants could make the situation worse for businesses like these.

Trump and others who favor tighter immigration controls say low-skilled migrant workers compete for American jobs and drive down wages for all workers.

But a growing body of research suggests the contrary: that removing immigrant workers can be destructive, resulting in lost jobs, lower wages, canceled investments and less affordable services—even for Americans. About 7.6 million unauthorized migrants work in the

United States, amounting to 4.6 percent of the labor force, according to the Pew Research Center, and the share is shrinking even as demand for workers is strong. Immigrants staff major industries like food processing, farming and hotels as well as small businesses such as restaurants and building contractors and provide sought-after services such as child care and cleaning.

In 2016, an analysis by the National Academy of Sciences found there was "little evidence" that immigrants affected overall employment for the native-born.

And Julie Hotchkiss, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, sifted through employer and wage records from the state of Georgia and found firms that hire unauthorized workers actually pay their legally authorized workers higher wages and stay in business longer.

Immigrants a 'net positive'

"Paper after paper, I see a net positive impact from the presence of these workers," she told AFP, stipulating that her views are her own. Employment for US citizens actually fell by 0.7 percent in communities where authorities deported a half million mainly Hispanic immigrants between 2008 and 2015, according to

research published in December by economists at the Universities of Colorado and California.

Low-skilled immigrants often "complement" the skills of higher-skilled native-born and legally authorized workers—allowing businesses to thrive and employ more workers overall, they said.

An English-speaking restaurant host, for example, will lose her job if immigrant cooks and dishwashers flee and the restaurant closes. A high-skilled construction contractor may be unable to complete a job without the low-skilled immigrant labor needed for preliminary demolition work.

In Mexico, an aging population and falling birthrates, among other factors, mean that US neighbor to the South country is no longer the largest source of migrants, Randy Capps, research director at the Migration Policy Institute, said. Instead, new arrivals now come in large part from a smaller flow of Central Americans and include many asylum-seeking children and grandparents who are not of working age, he said.

"We're not getting nearly the same labor supply from unauthorized migration that we got before the recession," Capps said. These changes in the migrant labor supply may be showing up in economic data.

For example, since 2018 the cost of gardening and lawn care—a service frequently performed by migrants—has risen between three and five times as fast as overall consumer inflation, according to Labor Department figures.

US employers frequently argue that Americans will not do some jobs that migrant workers will, like picking crabs or slaughtering animals in food plants. In August, Americans rushed to fill newly open positions at a Mississippi chicken processing plant after one of the largest-ever federal immigration raids ensnared hundreds of Hispanic migrants.

But it was unclear if there were enough applicants to fill all the newly vacant positions or how long the replacements would stick to their grueling new jobs. Steven Camarota, a policy researcher at the hardline Center for Immigration Studies, whose work has been cited by the White House, told AFP that migrant workers compete for jobs with low-skilled American laborers, especially those without high school diplomas.

"How is it helpful to bring in more immigrant workers if we all agree that we're trying to make work pay, if we're trying to bring some of these folks back into the labor market?" he said. — AFP

Boeing's new 777X airliner makes first flight

EVERETT, United States: Boeing's new long-haul 777X airliner made its first flight on Saturday, a step forward for the company whose broader prospects remain clouded by the 737 MAX crisis. The world's largest twin-engine aircraft landed at Boeing Field near Seattle after approximately four hours in the air, following months of delays and erratic weather in recent days.

High winds led to the maiden flight's postponement on Friday, and the company blamed weather for an earlier delay on Thursday, which was rainy. A few minutes after 10 am local time (1800 GMT), the plane took off from the rain-slicked runway at Paine Field in Everett, Washington, home to Boeing's northwest US manufacturing site.

"Yes!" Boeing spokesman Josh Green shouted as the plane's wheels finally lifted off the tarmac.

Just minutes earlier, the pilots deployed the plane's winglets—folding wing tips—designed to improve the craft's fuel efficiency and make it possible for the plane, with the widest wing span ever from Boeing, to be accommodated at more airports. The first flight was originally scheduled to take place in mid-2019 but was postponed due to problems with the new engine, manufactured by General Electric, and difficulties with the wings and software.

Saturday marked the first of what is to be a series of in-flight tests. If they go well, Boeing will officially file for approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

With Boeing facing a crisis over its top-selling 737 MAX following two deadly crashes, the 777X is supposed to compete in the long-haul aircraft market with the A350 made by rival European aircraft manufacturer Airbus.

The flight was "a demonstration to the world that we know what we are doing. We know how to do aircraft designed safely and instill trust in the public," said Stanley Deal, president and chief executive of Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

Major airlines including Emirates, Lufthansa, Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines and Qatar Airways have placed

some 340 orders for the 777X. The first deliveries of the new model, with maximum capacity of 384 to 426 passengers depending on the configuration, are not expected before early 2021, instead of mid-2020 as initially planned. The aircraft encountered significant problems during pressurization tests in September.

Business down

Boeing's business has also been weakened by a lack of firm orders from Chinese airlines for its 787 Dreamliner, which is expected to see production cuts. The 777X has a range of 16,200 to 13,500 kilometers depending on its configuration and the number of passengers aboard, according to the Boeing website. It is also extremely fuel-efficient, an important consideration at a time when passengers are increasingly concerned about carbon emissions.

Its list price is between \$410 million to \$442 million, though customers often negotiate discounts.

US air safety regulators could clear the 737 MAX to return to service before mid-year, a person close to the process said Friday. The plane has been grounded since March following two deadly crashes, in Ethiopia and Indonesia. On Tuesday, Boeing announced that it did not expect to



SEATTLE: Boeing employees and guests welcome a Boeing 777X airplane returning from its inaugural flight at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington on Saturday. — AFP

win regulatory approval until mid-2020.

In addition to the crisis of confidence, Boeing is seeking some \$10 billion in loans to deal with swelling costs for the MAX. Boeing suspended production of the MAX this month but Chief Executive David Calhoun said this week the company plans to begin ramping up production of the model in anticipation of winning regulatory approval to restart service. Calhoun began

as CEO earlier in January following the ouster of Dennis Muilenburg, whose tenure was rocked by the MAX crisis which led to deteriorating relations between the company and the FAA.

Calhoun aims to turn the company around, and has highlighted restoring Boeing's reputation with regulators, customers and other stakeholders as an imperative. — AFP

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

IMF expects a stronger world economy in 2020 despite risks

ECB to issue strategic review by December

KUWAIT: The International Monetary Fund predicted a stronger world economy in 2020, though at a weaker pace than previously anticipated amid threats regarding trade and tensions in the Middle East. The fund said global growth will accelerate to 3.3 percent from the 2.9 percent in 2019. This marks the first pickup in three years, but is less than the 3.4 percent projected in October. The 2019 estimate was reduced six times. Positive signs include that the slump in manufacturing and global trade is bottoming out, progress on US-China trade talks, and accommodative monetary policy. The Fund said expansion in 2019 and 2020 would be 0.5 percent weaker without the impact of central banks' efforts to shore up growth last year.

With the Fed set to meet for the first time in 2020 on the 29th of January, markets expect the FOMC to maintain interest rates at current levels. The Fed should shed some light on their outlook for 2020 after solid manufacturing data and the signing of phase 1 of trade agreement between the US and China.

FX markets and fixed income

On the FX front, the dollar index gained some momentum last week and increased by 0.22 percent reaching a 7-week high of 97.855 following the drop in Euro after a dovish ECB meeting and market expectations of a cut by the Bank of England in its next meeting.

Meanwhile, US 10-year treasury yield dropped from 1.82 percent to 1.73 percent while the 2-year treasury yield dropped by 2 basis points to 1.52 percent narrowing the spread to 21 basis between the two maturities to the lowest since mid-December of last year.

ECB's strategic review

Almost three months after becoming ECB president, Christine Lagarde revealed the framework for the review that she aims to finalize by December 2020 and which promises to trigger bruising debates on some of the most divisive issues in central banking. The ECB kept its loose monetary policy unchanged last Thursday, and mentioned

they will consider the inflation target along with the tools used to achieve the target. Ms Lagarde said on Thursday it would be a "broad exercise" and that the ECB "cannot operate as we did back in 2003" - the only other time it has carried out a review. She also added that the growth outlook in the region is tilted to the downside with less stress on risks after a moderate increase in inflation and the phase one agreement between the US and China.

One cloud over the ECB's rate-setting meeting came from the German constitutional court, which is considering whether the central bank's €2.6 trillion bond-buying program is legal. The court announced on Thursday that it would give its ruling in the case on March 24. Following the meeting the euro fell to a 7-week low of 1.1023 as market participants digested the dovish stance of the ECB.

EU PMIs

Data on the manufacturing and services sector surfaced last week in the EU. Flash manufacturing PMI came at 47.7, beating both expectations and previous reading of 46.9 and 46.3 respectively. The rebound in the reading is mainly attributed to Germany's manufacturing data, which still remain in contraction zone and well below a reading of 50 at 45.2. On the other hand, the services PMI edged lower to a reading of 52.2 while market consensus was at 52.9.

The UK economy created jobs at its strongest rally in nearly a year in the three months to November. Tuesday's data showed the number of people employed rose by 208,000 to 32.90 million, the biggest increase since January 2019 and far stronger than the 110,000 expected. Additionally on Friday, services and manufacturing PMIs were released and both readings were solid. In details, the manufacturing PMI came at 49.8, 1 point higher than the expectations of 48.8. The figure is just shy of an expansionary reading of 50. The services PMI reading was at 52.9 and surpassed expectation of 51.1 and the previous reading of 50. The Sterling pound gained as much as 1.17 percent over the last week following the release of robust

Rates -26th January, 2020

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1094	1.1020	1.1118	1.1025	1.0880	1.1110	1.1092
GBP	1.2989	1.2962	1.3173	1.3073	1.2875	1.3270	1.3117
JPY	110.07	109.17	110.22	109.27	108.25	110.30	108.70
CHF	0.9675	0.9661	0.9728	0.9712	0.9540	0.9810	0.9660

data. However, the gains were short-lived as the markets are pricing a 50 percent probability of a cut by the Bank of England in its meeting on January 30th and the sterling went back to 1.30 levels.

Bank of Canada meeting

Bank of Canada maintained its target for the overnight rate at 1.75 percent and opened the door to a possible cut should the recent slowdown in Canadian economic growth persist. The central bank has kept rates unchanged since October 2018. In its latest meeting, it noted that while the economy has been resilient, recent economic data has been mixed notably unexpectedly soft indicators of consumer confidence and spending, and weaker business investment. "We're not saying that the door is not open to an interest rate cut. Obviously it is - it is open," Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz told a news conference. The BOC also cut its forecast for fourth quarter annualized growth to 0.3 percent from 1.3 percent in October. Canada's currency sold off after the release, losing around 0.5 percent of its value against the US dollar. Meanwhile, inflation figures

revealed Canada's consumer price index was flat in December and the annual rate remained at 2.2 percent.

BOJ meeting

The Bank of Japan monetary policy board opted to keep its monetary policy steady and nudged up its economic growth forecasts. The BOJ revised its growth projection for the year beginning in April to 0.9 percent, up from the 0.7 percent estimate made in October, helped by a boost from the government's fiscal stimulus package. The central bank also upgraded its growth estimate for 2021, but largely maintained its price forecasts that show inflation missing its 2 percent target through early 2022. "Japan's economy is likely to continue expanding moderately as a trend" as the impact of slowing global growth on domestic demand will be limited, the BOJ said in the quarterly report.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD opened at 0.30365 on Sunday morning.

Wall Street Week Ahead

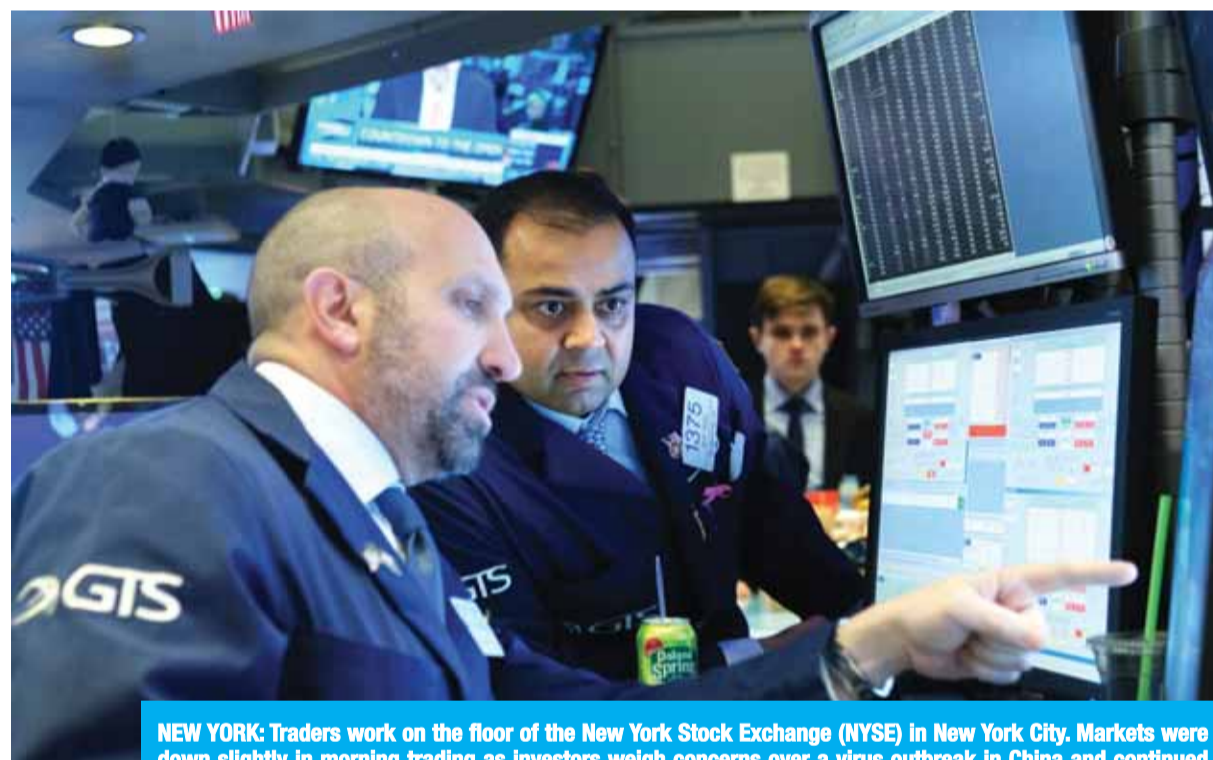
Hopes are high for tech stock 'Cadillacs'; so are their prices

NEW YORK: Wall Street is betting that the most popular US technology and internet stocks can keep outshining the broader equities market but their latest rally leaves little room for error this earnings season.

Investors dashed for the exits after Tuesday's less-than-stellar quarterly report from Netflix - the N in FAANG - an acronym for the group of US tech companies that have been the biggest drivers of the bull market. Hopes remained high for the other FAANGS - Facebook, Apple, Amazon.com and Google parent Alphabet, as well as Microsoft, ahead of their financial reports. Daniel Morgan, portfolio manager at Synovus Trust in Atlanta, Georgia describes the group as the "Cadillacs" of the technology sector, and said they should keep providing an outsized boost to the S&P 500.

"They're still going to be the show-business highlight stocks that everybody focuses on, and I expect them to do well," said Morgan, a long time technology stock investor. Analysts also see the group reporting faster revenue growth than the broader S&P 500 for the December quarter and faster earnings growth in some cases.

However with recent gains among most of the group far outstripping the broader market, general equity strategists say the market's superstars may need to provide outsized positive surprises in their quarterly numbers and their forecasts for future growth. In comparison to the S&P 500's gain of roughly 12 percent from the start of October to Thursday's close, Apple rose about 43 percent while Facebook climbed about 24 percent and



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. Markets were down slightly in morning trading as investors weigh concerns over a virus outbreak in China and continued trade concerns between the US and China. — AFP

Google jumped almost 22 percent, just beating Microsoft's 20 percent advance.

"We do believe there could be downside for the stocks if they do not over-deliver on earnings and narrative," said John Augustine, chief investment officer at Huntington National Bank in Columbus, Ohio. "To push the stocks higher from here, both earnings and guidance need to beat expectations."

Here is a graphic looking at valuations for the group

compared with the S&P 500 over the last year:

The S&P 500's fourth-quarter earnings are expected to decline 0.8 percent and revenue is seen rising 4.4 percent, according to the latest estimates gathered by Refinitiv. In comparison, Apple earnings for its fiscal first quarter ended in December are seen rising 8.7 percent while revenue could climb 4.8 percent year-on-year when it releases results on Jan. 28.

In comparison, Facebook, due to release fourth-quarter numbers on Jan. 29, is expected to report earnings growth of 6.2 percent on revenue that is estimated to grow 23.4 percent year-on-year. On the same day Microsoft is expected to post an earnings gain of 20 percent on revenue that is seen rising 9.9 percent for its fiscal second quarter ended in Dec. On Jan. 30, Amazon.com is expected to report a revenue rise of 18.7 percent in the same timeframe, although earnings per share are seen declining more than 30 percent because it announced it would beef up investment in its package delivery business during the fourth quarter.

The last of the group due to report, Google's parent Alphabet, is expected to announce a decline of 1.7 percent for fourth-quarter earnings and a revenue increase of 19.5 percent in its Feb. 3 release. Of all the group Morgan, at Synovus, favors Amazon most as he expects strong growth and profit margins in its cloud computing business. Plus, the stock has underperformed its peers, and the S&P 500, with a 8.6 percent gain since early October.

Kim Forrest, chief investment officer at Bokeh Capital Partners in Pittsburgh favors Microsoft because of its "great suite of products with no true replacement" but also cites a solid outlook for Facebook, Apple, Amazon and Alphabet.

"They're "core holdings for so many managers that they would have to have serious issues for them to be sold. Plus, when people buy an index, they are buying a lot of these companies given the market weight cap of an index," said Forrest. But she added: "They need to have a good enough quarter and forecast a better 2020 and be able to list the reasons why it'll be better than 2019."

Ken Mahoney, chief executive of Mahoney Asset Management in Chestnut Ridge, New York, said Netflix faces tough new competition from companies including Apple and Walt Disney Co but the rest of the group have "wide moats," including consistent growth and strong balance sheets. But he is not buying more of the group, arguing that valuations are too high. "I'd look to add on some of these names in a pullback," said Mahoney. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.787
Indian Rupees	4.273
Pakistani Rupees	1.968
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Nepali Rupees	2.666
Singapore Dollar	227.240
Hongkong Dollar	39.177
Bangladesh Taka	3.546
Philippine Peso	5.999
Thai Bhat	10.061
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	114.040
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	339.520
Sterling Pound	402.400
Canadian dollar	233.960
Turkish lira	52.500
Swiss Franc	317.520
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 Pessso	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	0.390931	0.404831
Czech Korune	0.005381	0.014681
Danish Krone	0.040973	0.045973
Euro	0.328851	0.342551
Georgian Lari	0.114211	0.114211
Hungarian	0.001148	0.001338
Norwegian Krone	0.029857	0.035057
Romanian Leu	0.065258	0.082108
Russian Ruble	0.004944	0.004944
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Slovenia	0.027897	0.032897
Swiss Franc	0.307519	0.318519
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.200103	0.212103
New Zealand Dollar	0.195419	0.204919
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.226555	0.235555
US Dollars	0.300400	0.304950
US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.304950
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002917	0.003718

Chinese Yuan	0.042721	0.046221
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037251	0.040001
Indian Rupee	0.003676	0.004448
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002703	0.002883
Korean Won	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071291	0.077291
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001295	0.002065
Philippine Peso	0.005906	0.006206
Singapore Dollar	0.220187	0.230187
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.010129	0.010309
Thai Baht	0.009671	0.010221
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000103

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	0.103694	0.111694
Turkish Lira	0.044843	0.054688
UAE Dirhams	0.082271	0.083097
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.01070

Business

Bugatti touts green ambitions while storming full speed ahead

French automaker implements a series of measures to offset carbon emission

MOLSHEIM, France: Supercar manufacturer Bugatti, fresh off one of its best years, wants the world to know it has taken environmental concerns to heart even as it prepares a next generation of heart-pounding-and gas-guzzling-speed machines. The French automaker has implemented a series of measures to offset the carbon emitted by the 81 racers it produced last year, including a shift to biogas and other green energy sources to power its manufacturing facilities in northeast France.

But will Bugatti, which has hinted at "surprises" this year, be joining other luxury carmakers in shifting to electric or hybrid models?

The short answer: Not right now. "For the next 10 years to come, only the W16 motor provides the emotion and the passion expected by our supercar clients," Stephan Winkelmann, the firm's chief executive, said recently in reference to its massive 16-cylinder engine.

Nonetheless, the Volkswagen-owned brand believes it can offset its own greenhouse gas emissions as well as those of its clients, a challenge admittedly made easier by its limited production runs.

Fewer than 700 Bugattis are in circulation worldwide, and on average they are driven just 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) a year. That's probably because the average Bugatti owner has a collection of 42 cars to choose from, the brand says.

"In 2018, that represented the equivalent of 1,380 tons of carbon dioxide emitted by Bugatti and its clients," the firm's managing director Christophe Piochon told journalists this week.

'Our responsibility'

The firm has employed a full-time environmental coordinator since 2016 to oversee a range of carbon-offset efforts, including buying up parcels of the Amazon rainforest to prevent them from being cleared by loggers or farmers. It has also planted

4,000 trees to help forests in its native Alsace region recover from a devastating infestation of bark beetles in recent years.

"Bugatti is a highly visible brand, so it's important for us to take these steps and set an example for the industry," Winkelmann said. While big business has jumped on the tree-planting bandwagon, the science underpinning it is under question, and such offset schemes have been derided as greenwashing that allows them to continue pumping CO2 into the atmosphere.

The car industry has come in for particular criticism as it is estimated to account for nine percent of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, with a recent Greenpeace report accusing it of trying to delay fundamental change towards zero-emission cars while raking in money with highly-polluting vehicles like SUVs. While the typical Bugatti buyer is no eco-warrior, "lots of them donate to environmental causes, even though most people might not know it," said Tim Bravo, the firm's head of communications.

Green concerns certainly aren't weighing on its business yet.

"2019 was an excellent year for Bugatti, the best since 1998 in terms of revenue, deliveries and earnings," Winkelmann said. Bugatti buyers—a Chiron sells for 2.5 million euros (\$2.8 million) before taxes while the Divo speedster goes for a cool 5 million euros—are shelling out for performance as well as luxury.

'Depends how you're driving'

Bugatti does not reveal the names of its buyers, though some have shown off their prizes on social media, such as football stars Cristiano Ronaldo or Karim Benzema, or the American boxing champion-turned-promoter Floyd Mayweather. When clients come to pick up their cars at the firm's headquarters in Molsheim, they get a demonstration of what the



In this file photo, a driver steers a Bugatti Chiron near the luxury automobiles manufacturer Bugatti's headquarters in Molsheim, eastern France. —AFP

1,500-horsepower cars can do from one of Bugatti's in-house drivers. One is France's Pierre-Henri Raphanel, an ex-Formula One and 24 Hours of Le Mans driver; the other is former British racing champion Andy Wallace, who recently hit a record 490 km/h (300 miles per hour) in a Chiron.

As for fuel economy, "it depends on how you're driving," Wallace said, recounting a recent trip to pick up a journalist at the Bale-Mulhouse airport

some 115 kilometers (70 miles) away.

"In dense traffic and driving normally, I was at 13.5 liters per 100 km (26.4 miles per gallon), which is pretty reasonable for a car like this," he said. But he admitted that's not the figure most buyers are likely to worry about. "If you had a perfectly straight 60-kilometre road and you kept your foot down the whole way, you would empty the 100-litre tank in seven minutes," Wallace said. —AFP

Libyan state firm says output down 75% due to blockade

TRIPOLI: Libya's oil production has plunged by around three-quarters since forces loyal to military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched a blockade a week ago, the National Oil Corporation announced Saturday. The fall, from 1.2 million barrels per day to just over 320,000, has caused estimated losses of \$256 million since the closure of major oil fields and ports in the east and south of the country, the NOC said in a statement.

Haftar, who controls the east and large swathes of the south, began an offensive in April last year to seize the capital Tripoli from the UN-recognized Government of National Accord.

Pro-Haftar forces blockaded the main oil terminals in eastern Libya the day before a summit in Berlin on January 19 that called for the end of foreign interference in the conflict and a resumption of the peace process. The move to cripple the country's main income source was a protest against Turkey's decision to send troops to shore up Haftar's rivals.

Turkey has backed the Tripoli-based GNA, while Haftar has had support from Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Exports were suspended at the ports of Brega, Ras Lanouf, Al-Sidra, Al-

Hariga and Zweisina in the country's "oil crescent", the conduit for the majority of Libya's crude exports.

The NOC also denounced the closure of valves at a pumping station in the southwest, which shut down production at the major fields of Al-Sharara and Al-Fil.

The corporation made assurances that "fuel is still available in most regions" of Libya, but called for an end to the blockades "to ensure continuing supply of fuel products to all regions and to restore vital revenues to the Libyan economy".

'Immediate resumption'

A ceasefire that went into effect January 12 at the initiative of Moscow and Ankara has been broadly respected, according to the United Nations, but the two camps have accused each other of violations. To consolidate the truce, the UN plans to hold inter-Libyan talks "within days" in Geneva.

An initial meeting of a military commission established at the Berlin summit-comprising five GNA loyalists and five Haftar delegates-will seek to define ways of consolidating the ceasefire. This will be followed by political negotiations to try to bring an end to the crisis. The embassies of the United States and the United Kingdom as well as the European Union delegation in Libya called this week for the "immediate resumption" of NOC operations, warning of the risks of exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the country. Oil production had already plummeted to less than 500,000 barrels per day between 2014 and 2016 due to



This file photo shows a general view of an oil facility in the northern oil-rich Libyan town of Al-Buraqah. Libya's oil production has plunged by around three-quarters since forces loyal to military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched a blockade a week ago, the National Oil Company announced. —AFP

fighting and attempts by rival factions to control the country's key resource.

A blockade of major Libyan oil ports is damaging the economy and must be quickly resolved, the Tripoli-based central bank governor told Reuters on Friday, adding that Libya could run a budget deficit in 2020 as a result. "Now oil represents 93-95 percent of total revenue and covers 70 percent of total spending. This is a bullet in the head, that will hurt Libya and the Libyan people," Sadiq Al-Kabir said in an interview in London. "We really hope the crisis is resolved as fast as possible because it

hurts everyone."

Libya's internationally recognized prime minister Fayeze Al-Serraj has warned of catastrophe if the week-long blockade by eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar's forces, which has cut oil output to almost zero, is not lifted. Previously, oil production was 1.2 million barrels a day.

Kabir said the central bank had not yet agreed on a budget for 2020 with the internationally recognized government, which had proposed a budget deficit of 17.5 billion (\$12.5 billion) dinars. —Agencies

London and Brussels have yet to start talks on a new trade deal for 2021 and beyond, after an 11-month, no-change transition period.

Turnaround or mirage?

Johnson's win also meant no shift to the left under the opposition Labour Party. Its plans for renationalizing some industries and a greater role for the state worried many business leaders, and the first gauges of the economy since the election have pointed to a bounce in confidence and a quickening of the housing market. On Friday, the IHS Markit Purchasing Managers' Index showed firms having their best month in more than a year in January, possibly dissuading the Bank of England from cutting interest rates on Jan. 30. However, it remains to be seen if the world's fifth-biggest economy really is emerging from the near standstill of late 2019. In the medium term, few investors expect British growth to speed up much from its current pace of just over 1% a year. Immediately after the shock decision by British voters to leave the EU in 2016, the PMs suggested the economy was nosediving, only to stabilize soon afterwards. The world economy had its weakest growth since the global financial crisis last year and has not yet reached a turning point, the International Monetary Fund says, and uncertainty could return to weigh on Britain if talks with the EU about a new trade deal go down to the wire before the Dec. 31 deadline.

Good news for some

Finance minister Javid plans to give the economy a boost in March, by announcing more investment in infrastructure to tackle Britain's weak productivity record. At least for some sectors, the picture is already brighter following the stasis of 2019. House-builder Berkeley is ramping up construction while Countryside Properties reported a record forward order book. Pub chains said they had a good Christmas even if supermarkets have reported little change in demand.

Companies in other sectors, especially those with a lot to



LONDON: Power lines and pylons are seen with the financial heart of London, Canary Wharf, in the distance. Britain is set to leave the European Union on January 31, 2020, ending more than four decades of economic, political and legal integration with its closest neighbors. —AFP

lose if Britain and the EU do not reach a trade deal this year, remain cautious. RDM Group, an automotive technology firm that makes computer systems for cars such as self-parking systems that can be operated from an iPhone, has seen no change in demand from clients that include Aston Martin and Jaguar Land Rover.

That reflects the high uncertainty for Britain's auto sector. It faces the risk of high tariffs on trade with the EU if a deal is not reached by the end of 2020. But RDM's Aurigo unit, which makes self-driving vehicles to shuttle passengers around shopping malls and carry baggage at airports, has seen a revival of interest from potential investors from the Middle East, North America and Australia who had gone quiet before the election.

"There was a lot of nervousness about which way the country would go," Miles Garner, sales and marketing director for RDM and Aurigo, said. "As it's turned out, it is more of a business-orientated government. It has helped." —Reuters

US pushing India to buy \$5-6bn more farm goods

NEW DELHI: The United States wants India to buy at least another \$5-6 billion worth of American farm goods if New Delhi wants to win reinstatement of a key US trade concession and seal a wider pact, four sources familiar with the talks told Reuters. US President Donald Trump cited trade barriers last year when removing India from its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program that allowed zero tariffs on \$5.6 billion of exports to the United States.

In retaliation, India slapped higher tariffs on more than two dozen US products. Ahead of a Trump visit to New Delhi to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi next month, negotiators on both sides are hammering out terms for a trade deal that would include New Delhi rolling back higher tariffs on some farm goods such as almonds, walnuts and apples, one of the sources said. Both governments had hoped to work out a limited trade deal last year, but struggled to reach an agreement.

India's commerce ministry and the US Embassy in New Delhi did not respond to a request for comment. The office of the US Trade Representative did not immediately respond outside regular business hours. While India has offered partial relief on medical device price caps that have hurt American pharma giants and a roll-back in tariffs on some US goods, Trump's team wants a sweetener of \$5-6 billion in additional trade for US goods to restore GSP privileges, three of the sources said. That demand was conveyed by the United States to India in late December, said two sources. As part of the negotiation, the US wants India to increase imports of frozen poultry products, the first source said. The US has already been pushing India to cut the high import taxes on poultry products. "The deal has to be agriculture focused, the US is putting a number on everything (if India wants GSP back)," said one of the sources. The sources asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the discussions. Other than the agriculture sector, the United States could be swayed if some of that additional revenue goes to its energy sector, said one of the sources. —Reuters

Japan arrests ex-SoftBank staff suspected of spying for Russia

TOKYO: Japanese police have arrested a former SoftBank employee for allegedly stealing proprietary information from the telecom giant and giving it to Russian officials, police and media reports said yesterday.

Yutaka Araki, 48, is suspected of obtaining "trade secrets from a computer server at a telecommunication-related company on February 18 last year, in violation of Japan's unfair competition prevention law," Tokyo police said in a statement. Authorities did not identify the firm, but local media said it was major mobile carrier SoftBank Corp, a unit of the SoftBank Group.

Police suspect Russian trade officials at Moscow's mission in Tokyo were involved in espionage, Jiji Press and other local media reported. The reports added that the police have asked the Russian embassy to present two officials to the authorities. —AFP

After Brexit-settling election, UK firms see business bounce

LUTON, England: At Bruderer UK, a small firm selling metal-stamping machines from an industrial estate just north of London, business kicked into high gear right after Prime Minister Boris Johnson's big election win last month. Clients, including the Royal Mint which uses Bruderer equipment to make coins, at last knew for sure that Britain would quit the European Union on Jan. 31. Many have revived plans that had long been on hold.

"For three years we were stuck in a rut of indecisiveness," Bruderer UK managing director Adrian Haller said. "Once the election happened, there was a massive sigh of relief." Other businesses are also reporting a post-election recovery, and finance minister Sajid Javid says he is hopeful that Britain's economic growth can eventually bounce back to its pre-financial crisis levels of nearly 3% a year. That would represent a victory for Britain's Brexit supporters and possibly inspire eurosceptics within the EU.

Bruderer has just sold two new machines - used to make car parts, fountain pen nibs, scalpels, drink tins and other products - for a total of 1.5 million pounds (\$2 million). The firm, whose turnover for all of 2019 was below 4 million pounds, has also taken on two projects to retool machines for companies worth 140,000 pounds since the vote. "January is usually synonymous with a bloc, very slow start to the year. Now, we're only three weeks in but our feet have not touched the floor," Haller said. However, many firms remain worried about leaving a bloc that accounts for nearly half of Britain's exports. Johnson's victory has ended prospects of further Brexit delays, but

Gulf Bank's WISE Investments achieves 26% returns in 2019

Aggressive investment strategy helps the platform outperform most GCC markets

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is celebrating the third-year anniversary of WISE Investments, the Bank's digital investment platform, with a strategy performance that has exceeded the returns of some of the major regional markets. In 2019, WISE Investments posted 26 percent returns for portfolios with "aggressive" investment strategies, and 21 percent returns for portfolios with "conservative" investment strategies. The rates of return for both investment strategies marked an impressive feat for the digital investment platform, outperforming most GCC market returns. Since its launch in 2017, WISE Investments has also achieved an annualized

return exceeding 10 percent across its various investment strategies.

Commenting on the results, Dalya Al-Qassem, Head of Investment Management at Gulf Bank, said: "We are proud to share the resilient performance of WISE with its different investment strategies. Interest in exchange-traded funds and passive investment has increased in recent years, with more clients opting to invest in portfolios with low costs and a long term approach. With WISE Investments, our clients have access to a bespoke investment strategy that suits their financial goals, including high-performing international ETFs listed in the London Stock

Exchange. We would like to thank our loyal clients for using WISE Investments, and we are excited to introduce new offerings that will continue to enhance our investment solutions."

Gulf Bank's WISE Investments is an advisory and portfolio management service for long-term investors. The platform follows a Nobel Prize-winning investment strategy, providing Gulf Bank clients with the opportunity to invest in international markets in an easy, transparent and cost-efficient way.

As a digital investment tool, WISE provides its clients with the opportunity to invest in a globally diversified portfolio with a long-term

approach. By filling out a simple questionnaire, WISE determines customers' financial goals, risk appetite, and investment horizon, to recommend a portfolio that is customized to their needs. Over the course of the investment period, Gulf Bank's investment managers continuously monitor and review their clients' portfolios, in an effort to safeguard and increase their wealth.

WISE Investments by Gulf Bank is available for anyone who is a legal Kuwaiti resident, or a Kuwaiti citizen with a permanent Kuwaiti address. Anyone residing abroad who are existing Gulf Bank account holders can also open a WISE portfolio with Gulf Bank.



Dalya Al-Qassem

Lagos waterfront evictions highlight Nigeria oil and land squabbles

LAGOS: The lagoon waters at the port entrance to Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital, are usually teeming with small fishing boats. But the bustling waterfront slums of Lagos are now quiet after the navy evicted tens of thousands of residents from their homes in recent weeks.

The evictions are highlighting tensions over real estate in the megalopolis of 20 million where building space is an increasingly rare commodity. The operation has also exposed the stark contrast of shantytown fishing communities in the shadow of Lagos' Ilesha beach with its villas for billionaires and expat executives. Nigeria is rich in crude oil, an OPEC nation and Africa's largest petroleum producer.

Its army says the operation stopped residents tapping into pipelines to illegally siphon off fuel oil that is pumped from the port. But locals and rights groups say the brutal evictions are an illegal seizure of precious building space in a city where the population is booming.

On Snake Island, a small community transformed by rural exodus into a huge shantytown, motor boats—often the investment of a lifetime—have been abandoned.

A few kilometers away, towards the Atlantic Ocean, the fishing community of Tarkwa Bay has become a ghost village. Brick houses, nestled under palm trees, wait empty for the bulldozers to claim them while a handful of locals sleep on the beach.

"I'm so confused. Where do I start from?" said one local father, sitting on a mattress in the middle of a pier. Just a week earlier, the small community had welcomed hundreds of beachgoers, surfers and Sunday revellers to their piece of the Lagos coast.

On Tuesday, naval forces arrived and gave Tarkwa Bay residents a morning to pack up their lives and move out. Like a scene from a war, household goods and belongings were hurriedly abandoned.

'Explode at any time'

For Nigeria's army, tens of thousands of residents had to be "evacuated", without alternative housing, because the communities participate directly, or indirectly by buying fuel, in siphoning oil from pipelines which skirt the lagoon. Between Ilesha and Tarkwa Bay, along the pipeline that supplies petrol throughout western Nigeria, the landscape is one of



LAGOS: A lady waits for a boat to evacuate household wares following forceful eviction and demolition of homes by the military at Takwa Bay waterfront settlement in Lago. More than thousands residents have been displaced following military eviction for "security reasons and to forestall stealing and vandalization of oil pipeline in the area" according to the residents. — AFP

polluted desolation.

The stench of gasoline catches in the throat of visitors. The few palm trees still standing are no more than trunks and the water is slicked with pollution.

The ground is pockmarked with holes where vandals have dug down to pipelines filled with shiny oil and water. Scores of oil installations sit next to homes and Nigerian navy posts, a testimony to the impunity with which "fuel thieves" have pursued their activity for years.

"These vandals are becoming more vicious and more sophisticated by the day," Admiral Oladele Daji told reporters during a tour of the area to justify the recent evictions.

"As you can see, this is high-organized crime. They don't farm, they don't fish. They are criminals. Nigerian economy saboteurs." He brushed off questions about why the military had not stopped the illegal activity before, and how thousands of residents could be involved in the vandalism and fuel trafficking. "It's for their own security. The pipeline can explode at any time. And these people were here illegally," he said. The admiral said Nigeria's government had the legal right to seize land in the interest of the nation. Authorities are stepping into a confusing grey area where private investors, ancestral communities, the state and the army have all disputed strategic areas of Lagos for decades.

Amnesty International has already urged Nigerian authorities to halt the forced evictions of waterfront communities and respect safety and housing rights.

'Little Dubai'

Local residents and critics see a cynical land grab in a city where building space is highly sought after. "The waterfront communities are valuable real estate," said Megan Chapman of the Nigeria Slum/Informal Settlement advocacy group. "They haven't been formerly developed—electricity, roads—and the communities are fishermen communities, less educated."

Sprawling Lagos has grown by one million inhabitants a year for the last decade, making every square meter of real estate a precious commodity. The city's seaside and lagoon edges are even filled in to reclaim more land and create more building space to be sold to wealthy investors.

One official with the Lagos State Ministry of Urbanization, who did not want his name to be published in the media, said Tarkwa Bay should become "a place of tourism as beautiful as Eko Atlantic".

Eko Atlantic is a 10-square kilometer area of land reclaimed from the Atlantic Ocean that is planned as a gleaming, high-end residential and business city. But the site is still virtually empty and barely three skyscrapers have emerged from the sand. "Now everybody wants to build his own little Dubai," says Muhamed Zanna, a Tarkwa Bay resident, in front of the house he was about to abandon.

"We made recommendations to the government, we asked them to investigate crime and go after the criminals," he said. "But now, what will happen to our children? It's a time bomb." —AFP

AUB offers customers global access to video and text chat service

KUWAIT: Continuing the introduction of state-of-the-art solutions to customers, Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the launch of an integrated "Video & Text Chat Service" that can be accessed through the Bank's website and mobile app from any part of the world.

Commenting on such an innovative step, Ranjan Sen, General Manager of Retail Banking at AUB, said: "Such a solution enables our valued customers and others to freely chat with AUB's customer service from anywhere around the globe as long as they are capable to access our website or mobile app. From the comfort of their homes, travel destinations or any other place, the customers can choose between video or text chat to receive answers for their inquiries through a very unique digital experience. As this service is embedded with advanced technology that is supported by enhanced security measures, it is an extension of the ultramodern chat room in our digital branch at the Avenues Mall that was launched

Burgan Bank announces Yawmi account winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:
Mohammad Ahmad Zaid Alareef
Lamiya Mohammad Hussin Daudjiwala
Akram Hussain Albandar
Mahdi Ahmad Abdullah Ali
Maryam Reja Huwail Alsahali



Huda Al-Madani



Ranjan Sen

during April 2019. Within the pipeline, AUB has a number of innovation-based services that would increase the world-class experience of our customers."

On her part, Huda Al-Madani, General Manager of Digital Transformation & Alternative Channels at AUB, said: "By enabling Video & Text chat from multiple channels, existing and prospective customers alike can inquire about the Bank's diverse services and products by using our website and/or mobile app. In addition, they can easily keep a copy of the chat with AUB's agent for future reference. This is an exciting and vibrant engagement platform, which will soon include the launch of additional sophisticated services."

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account, the new quarterly draw or on any of the bank's products and services, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch.

Libya's oil industry caught in middle of power struggle

TRIPOLI: A blockade on oil ports and fields in Libya is shutting down production from the OPEC member, potentially taking more than one million barrels per day (bpd) of oil off the market. The blockade is tied to a conflict between rival factions based in the east and west of the country, and an offensive by eastern-based forces against the capital, Tripoli.

Output

With ports and fields in the east and south closing, production could drop to 72,000 bpd from the western Wafa field and offshore, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) has warned.

Before the blockade, Libya was producing about 1.2 million bpd. That is well under the 1.6 million bpd that Libya was pumping in the years before the 2011 uprising against Muammar Gaddafi, but higher than during most of the period since his overthrow. Libya has the largest proven reserves of oil in Africa, and has been a key supplier of light, sweet crude.

It is an OPEC member, though it has been exempted from a 1.7 million bpd output reduction agreed by the group and its allies in December.

Money

Revenue from oil sales is Libya's only significant source of dollar income, earning \$22.5 billion in 2019 for a country with a population of just six million. Oil is marketed by the state-run NOC and money flows through the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) in Tripoli.

The CBL distributes public salaries, which account for more than half of all public spending, across the country. But groups in eastern Libya have long complained that they get less than their fair share, an accusation the CBL denies. They also say oil revenues are being used to prop up powerful armed groups in Tripoli.

Conflict

Libya's divisions surfaced during the NATO-backed uprising against Gaddafi. Since 2014, the country has been split into rival camps in Tripoli and the east, each with its own set of institutions. Most of Libya's oil facilities are in areas controlled by forces loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar, who has gradually expanded his power over the past six years with the help of foreign allies, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia. Since April, Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) has been waging an offensive against forces aligned with the internationally recognized government in Tripoli, which is backed by Turkey.

As world powers gathered in Berlin to try to revive a peace process opened by Haftar's campaign, eastern oil export terminals and then major oilfields in the southwest were shut, in an apparent power play. Authorities in the east presented the closure as the result of popular pressure. The NOC said it was directly ordered by the LNA.

Impact

The effect of the latest blockade on global oil prices has been limited and largely outweighed by other factors, with an expectation by analysts that the stoppage will be short-lived. The humanitarian impact could be significant, given Libya's dependence on oil revenues. Previous fluctuations in oil production have crippled Libya's economy and contributed to a rapid downward slide in living standards.

Foreign interest

A number of international oil firms have a presence in Libya including France's Total, Eni of Italy, US firms ConocoPhillips and Hess, and Germany's Wintershall. Western powers including the United States have sought to protect the NOC and the CBL in Tripoli, while urging them to be more transparent about oil revenues.

They have blocked attempts by the east to sell oil independently of Tripoli, invoking UN Security Council resolutions to do so. Public Western reaction to the blockade has been hesitant, reflecting internal divisions. Several days after the shutdown began, the United States, European Union and Britain expressed concern, calling for the NOC to be allowed to resume operations. — Reuters

Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma weekly account

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draw on Al-Najma Account. The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ana'am Al-Fadhli.

The winner was Zahrah Faleh Al-Khaldi - the prize of KD 5,000.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Customers can obtain further information on Al-Najma Account by either contacting the Bank through live video call service on CBK mobile application or calling the Service Center or by visiting the Bank's website www.CBK.com and they can also visit their nearest CBK branch where the Bank staff will be ready to serve them and respond to their queries.

What's On



Chinese community celebrate New Year in style at Crowne Plaza

The Chinese community in Kuwait celebrated the Chinese New Year at Crowne Plaza Hotel over the weekend. Dancing the Yangko opening dance, Chinese Ambassador Li Minggang joined the dancing group, creating the warm celebrating atmosphere, showing the Chinese government sharing happiness with the people.

Li delivered a New Year speech, giving New Year greetings to all Chinese in Kuwait, emphasizing that the relationship between China and Kuwait entered the historically best stage, recalling the great cooperation achievements between China and Kuwait in the past year and expecting better and more in the 2020. Wishing Kuwait and Kuwaiti people enjoy more achievements, prosperity and stability under the leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The ambassador's speech was followed by New Year greetings from heads of three Chinese associations of the Chinese corporations and Chinese community here in Kuwait. This was followed by children singing and dancing from the Chinese Language School of Kuwait Chinese Association. Children are the future of families, future of the country and future of China-Kuwait friendship, exchange and cooperation.



Children brought flower baskets with gifts inside to pay New Year respects to the elderly representatives and the aged, giving gifts to the child representatives in return. Traditionally in Chinese culture, respecting the elderly and caring for the young is among the good moral norms, descended from generation to generation.

Jiaozi are traditionally Chinese New Year dumplings and symbolic festival food.

When it was declared "jiaozi are ready from the boiling pot", waiters held plate full of dumplings with sauces among the people in the hall to share the warm fresh delicious dumplings. This was followed by a performance by a professional Chinese singer and dancer in Kuwait as an ode to the Chinese New Era and the great achievements by the Chinese people in the past 70 years since the founding of the



People's Republic of China.

Peking Opera "Empty City Trick" was performed by a senior Chinese engineer and PhD holder working at Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). Peking Opera is also called Oriental Opera, with about 230 years of history. Peking Opera is among the four quintessential aspects of Chinese culture, together with Chinese martial arts (Kung Fu), Chinese medicine and Chinese calligraphy.

"Empty City Trick" is a historical story from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms that actually happened in Chinese history about 1,800 years ago.

The chorus "Ode to Motherland" was performed by all Chinese Embassy staff headed by Ambassador Li and his wife, and all members of the choir of the Kuwait Chinese Association, raising the atmosphere of the party to a peak.

Talal Al-Jeri receives Vice President of Maldives



The Vice President of the Maldives, Faisal Naseem and his accompanying delegation paid a special visit to the State of Kuwait at the invitation of Talal Al-Jeri, Chairman and CEO of AlJeri Holding Group. This is in the framework of enhancing joint cooperation in the educational, academic and humanitarian fields. The guest and his accompanying delegation visited both the Ajjal Bilingual School, Cambridge English School and the American German School in addition to the Om Al-Qura Rehabilitation Center over 21 years, and Faisal Naseem held a coordination meeting with Kuwaiti

charities working in the field of humanitarian aid. This meeting was chaired by Talal Al-Jeri, as it was agreed to support Maldivian people. Faisal Naseem thanked Talal Al-Jeri for his donation of 40,000 varied books to schools in the Maldives, in addition to ten thousand copies of the Holy Quran.

The visit also included a prolonged meeting between the two parties, during which they touched on a number of matters of mutual interest in addition to ways to develop the educational process in the Maldives in general.

Talal Al-Jeri said during a field trip with the guest

and the accompanying delegation to the group's schools, that he was pleased with this visit, which was confirmed by the depth of the brotherly relationship between Kuwait and the Republic of Maldives.

Faisal Naseem also stated that he is happy with the advanced educational level that exists within the State of Kuwait, where he announced his desire to send and train a number of teachers of Arabic and Islamic law, as well as support the efforts of the Talal Foundation for Humanitarian Running in the Maldives, which are working to support humanitarian projects.

Cabinet meeting

In its weekly meeting last week, Kuwait Cabinet approved a draft decree with the approval of HH the Amir to appointing Suleiman Majed Al-Shaheen, Abdul Mohsen Yousef Jamal, Dr. Hailah Hamad Al-Mukaimi, Abdullah Ya'qoub Besharah and Nasser Abdullah Al-Roudhan as Kuwait representatives in the Advisory Body of the GCC Supreme Council. The draft decree was approved and submitted to HH the Amir to appoint the representatives for three years effective on April 22, 2019.

Welcome award winners in Kuwait

We wish to showcase the individuals who have been felicitated or awarded by any organization for their achievements or contributions in any field: Professional, academic or social.

Please send in your brief writeup, details of the award and photograph so that we can not only join in, in applauding your success but also publish it which can inspire countless others. These achievements will be published in www.iflkuwait.com and then will be published in our forthcoming IFL part 23 edition which will be released at our annual event. Please send your entries and contributions no later than Feb 5th 2020 at frontlinerskuwait@gmail.com

LAPA launches Talents Club

LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) launched its Talents Club program for children and teens on January 14, especially designed to boost children and teenagers' self-confidence and help them discover their talents and develop them as well as develop communication skills with others, stimulate their curiosity to self learn various arts such as music, drama, formative and performance arts.

In this regard, LAPA's chairperson, Fareah Al-Saqqaf stressed the significance of reviving the role of school activities to explore and stimulate children's talents. "The remarkable success achieved in LAPA Summer Camp motivated us to create more art programs as children always need constant unusual opportunities to develop their talents," Al-Saqqaf said.



Al-Saqqaf also announced hosting the talented child, Flor Zoratk; one of the world's most famous hip-hop celebrities to train the children on improvising in various performance arts as well as developing their talents to professional levels. She

also noted that LAPA hosted The Voice Kids' stars, Maria Qahtan and Jad Ezziddin as guests of honor to encourage the club children.

Further, Al-Saqqaf added that the program would also include many surprises,



recreational and cultural adventures for children and their parents on Saturdays.

"The first adventure was exploring Palestinian culture and heritage at al-Shaheed Park," Al-Saqqaf added noting that the event was held under auspices and

with the attendance of the Palestinian ambassador, Rami Tahboub.

Al-Saqqaf concluded that another group of children had a unique experience on LAPA's stage at the Qibliyya Shool where they practised developing their talents.

Health & Science

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

KUWAIT: ENGIE Services Kuwait, an international leader in providing low-carbon energy and innovative integrated facilities management solutions, has signed a contract with Taiba Hospital, one of the leading hospitals in Kuwait, to further enhance and introduce new model of Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) delivery in the Kuwaiti market.

The contract was inked by Tareq Mishari Al-Bahar, Executive Director and partner at Al-Dhow Engineering, a joint venture partner to the ENGIE Services Kuwait, Lama Al-Fadala, CEO, Taiba Hospital and Tomas Greenwood, General Manager of ENGIE Services Kuwait. The signing ceremony, held at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait - Burj Alshaya, was also attended by Her Excellency Madame Marie Masdupuy, the French Ambassador to Kuwait.

Taiba Hospital will receive total integrated facilities management and energy management services from ENGIE. This will include integrated technical, cleaning, and security services, as well as loss prevention, porter/helper and valet parking services, and the management of waste, pest control, landscaping, and laundry.

Speaking on the new contract, Tomas Greenwood said: "The contract with Taiba Hospital confirms ENGIE's position as a global provider of IFM and energy services in Kuwait's healthcare sector. ENGIE creates locally relevant solutions based on global expertise and best practices. Our integrated solutions improve asset and energy performance for our clients in the healthcare sector and beyond, across communities, properties, and industries."

Lama Al-Fadala said: "After a rigorous selection process, Taiba Hospital chose ENGIE as our partner based on local and regional site visits that demonstrated superior expertise in terms of hospital and international

facility management experience. Outsourcing our support services will enable us to deliver better quality and enhanced patient care, with the focus on quality, patient safety, and world class services. Additionally, working with ENGIE will enable us to reduce our energy consumption in the coming five years."

Vincent Montanet, Chief Business Development Officer for ENGIE Solutions in the Middle East, South and Central Asia and Turkey (MESCAT), commented: "We are pleased to be working with a forward-thinking partner such as Taiba Hospital, which has a clear objective in mind in its efforts to stand out as a premium provider of healthcare. ENGIE's global presence gives us access to the most advanced technologies, vast skills and resources as well as significant investments in R&D and sustainable research - all of which makes ENGIE the perfect partner to enable Taiba Hospital to become exemplary in Kuwait and further afield."

Last month, Taiba Hospital revealed its new strategy for 2020, announcing a focus on promoting health and medical knowledge within the community, supporting its needs and engaging directly with patients. The strategy complements the Hospital's investments in providing the highest standards of medical care in Kuwait, having partnered with world-class medical services providers and top-class practitioners who hold certifications from leading hospitals in Europe, the United States and Canada.

As a global leader in low carbon energy and services, ENGIE helps its clients reach their environmental goals and save energy. ENGIE can rely on customer intimacy, segment knowledge and a long-proven ability to finance and manage infrastructure. Combining its historical strengths, ENGIE can create "as a service" offers for a low carbon transition.



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

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates - Training

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

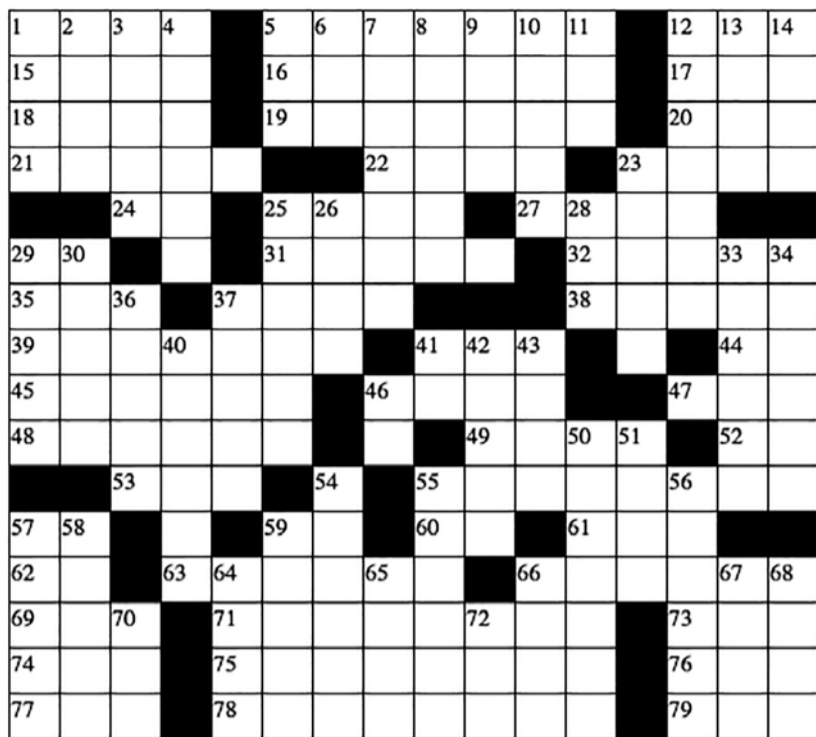
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2420



ACROSS

1. A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
5. Give sanction to.
12. A change in the electrical properties of the skin in response to stress or anxiety.
15. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
16. An annually elected magistrate of the ancient Roman Republic.
17. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
18. A fit of shivering.
19. Get or ask advice from.
20. (British) Your grandmother.
21. Valuable fiber plant of East Indies now widespread in cultivation.
22. A humorous anecdote or remark.
24. A state in northwestern North America.
27. In bed.
29. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
31. The capital of Morocco.
32. Lower in esteem.
35. British dominion over India (1757-1947).
38. Indigo bush.
39. An early French settler in the Maritimes.
44. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
45. Calling out the name of a person (especially by a loudspeaker system).
47. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
48. The place where something begins, where it springs into being.
49. Made of fir or pine.
52. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
53. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
57. A person forced to flee from home or country.
60. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
61. Step on it.
62. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
63. Any of various spectacular plants of the genus *Laelia* having showy flowers in many colors.
69. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
71. A large dog (usually with a golden coat) produced by crossing a St Bernard and a Newfoundland.
73. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
74. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
75. Not used in all classifications.
76. The sign language used in the United States.
77. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
78. A syntactic string that forms a part of some larger syntactic unit.
79. The corporate executive responsible for the operations of the firm.

DOWN

1. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
2. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
3. A Finnish steam bath.
4. Marked by deception.
5. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
6. In favor of (an action or proposal etc.).
7. A member of the majority people of Punjab in northwestern India.
8. Any plant of the genus *Reseda*.
9. A genus of Strigidae.
10. Italian physicist after whom the volt is named.
11. The universal time coordinated when an event is received on Earth.
12. Of or relating to the gonads.
13. A fraudulent business scheme.
14. Type genus of the Ranidae.
23. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
25. Sorting and allocating aid on the basis of need for or likely benefit from medical treatment or food.
26. Water falling in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere.
28. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
30. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
33. A meeting of spiritualists.
34. Imperial moths.
36. Tree of the West Indies and northern South America bearing succulent edible orange-sized fruit.
40. A full skirt with a gathered waistband.
41. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
42. A city in Veneto.
43. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
46. One million periods per second.
50. Loss of the ability to swallow.
51. Being three more than fifty.
54. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
55. A peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.
56. Belonging to or prescribed for celiac disease.
58. The capital of Cape Verde on Sao Tiago Island.
59. Smelling of beer.
64. A large mountain system in south-central Europe.
65. In or of the present month.
66. Thin and fit.
67. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
68. Herb of the Pacific islands grown throughout the tropics for its edible root and in temperate areas as an ornamental for its large glossy leaves.
70. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
72. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today is a day you may find yourself extremely understanding and sympathetic to others. There have been many times in your life you have made decisions that others didn't understand and didn't seem to agree with. You know that there are reasons people do the things they do that might be obvious to others. Becoming the friend to others you have always desired that someone be to you is helping you see beyond the surface of other's actions. You may find taking the time to be a true friend and getting to the root of other's problems draws people closer to you. You may find yourself taking more time to get to know your co-workers, peers, and friends on a much more intimate level. This seems to help you come to grips with a much more spiritual side of yourself than usual.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This may be a time to keep to yourself. A cool front seems to have moved in. Your usual warm caring personality seems to have been cooled off. Cold and hard have taken the place of the usual warm and loving side of you. This is not a good day to present yourself to others. First impressions last a lifetime and you would not make a good one today. This would be a day to skip any job interview or first date. Spend some time to yourself and find your happy place. The old you will emerge when you bring peace and happiness back into your world.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a time for imagination and creativity when it comes to the thoughts that are going through your head. You are able to eloquently put your thoughts into words. Others will find you captivating and be eager to hear all you have to say. This is a great time to escape by reading a book or watching a movie too. Great things are happening in your life. Your future depends on your ambition and drive. This is a time to follow your gut feelings about things. You should be able to use your intuition to know what trends are coming. Make a move now and you will be ahead of the game. You should find this is a time to make some very profitable decisions. Take action now, Gemini, and you will be ahead of the game.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Watch out! You are ready to make a change. You feel like trying something new and stepping out of your comfort zone. This may be anything from a new hairstyle to a new wardrobe. Chances are whatever you choose will be on the wild side. This is a great way of expressing yourself to others. You are ready to show the world a new you. A positive attitude and high energy fill your world this week. Enjoy a fun time.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a desire to make a lasting first impression on everyone new you meet. You take care of yourself and have been paying extra attention to how others may see you. Your appearance and style are a focal point in your life now. You want to be a head turner. Romance becomes a focus for you and probably a driving factor behind the way you are taking care of yourself. It is a time you may find yourself indulging in the finer things life has to offer. You feel good about spoiling yourself.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

The more unique or unusual it is, the more you are drawn to it today. A shopping trip may find you coming home with a new style. You have taken a giant leap out of your conservative comfort zone. The wilder the better. The evening may find you all dressed up and heading to a new hangout. New friends could be made. You may find yourself at odds with your usual crowd. You have caught others off guard with this big change.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Have you ever wanted something so bad you could taste it, feel it, or imagine yourself already having it? This goes beyond a want. This is a borderline obsession. That is the what you are feeling about something or someone right now. Your thoughts and energy have one focus. You will make this yours. You have never had a lack of determination and today is no exception. Your goal is set. You are focused on doing whatever you can to achieve it and will let nothing stand in your way. Go for it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find your thoughts are very intense now. You may feel as if you are under a tremendous amount of pressure. If decisions are made now you may find you will regret your choices later. You are full of nervous energy and may find yourself acting in haste without putting the necessary thought into the choices you make. You may find someone close to you seems to challenge your taste or choices. This seems to be a stressful and unpleasant time for you. Take a step back and take a deep breath. Scorpio. Take your time and things will work out in your favor.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

If you have a "gut feeling" about someone today, heed it. Your instincts are usually good. Don't act hastily, but be alert. Avoidance is sometime the best response. Don't give anyone an opportunity to cause a problem for you or a loved one. A little awareness could save you a lot of regret.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are ambitious, secure and responsible. All these qualities seem to combine to help you excel in any area you apply yourself. You are strong willed and have a desire to conquer the world and all that comes your way. You are taking time to reflect on any of your past shortcomings. This time of reflection is a guiding light for you now and will prevent you from repeating any of your past mistakes. Knowledge is power and the wisdom you have gained from past experience has you on the right track. You may feel as though you are on this journey alone. Not much support is felt from your peers. Do not worry. You will find this to be a very profitable time.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

This is time that you may feel more inward. You find satisfaction in spending time with the ones you love and the feeling you get from being surrounded by their kindness towards you. You tend to be strong and independent and want others to always see you in this light. You are a rock to many but there are times you need someone to lean on. This is one of those times and you need to realize you do always have to be strong. It is ok to turn to others with your problems. You may find these close friends jump on the opportunity to be able to give back to you. Your mood seems to be much more reflective rather than expressive now.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are experiencing a strong clarity. Your mind is sharp and so is your tongue. You may want to hold back a bit and bite your tongue to avoid conflict and confrontation today in the workplace. You are known for your quick wit and today you seem to be on a roll. You may feel as if though you are at odds with someone close to you. Use this time to clear the air and work on exiting this conflict with a stronger bond than the two of you previously had. Exercise fairness and take responsibility for your actions today. This will help keep your conscience clear and your mind at peace.

Wordsearch Puzzle

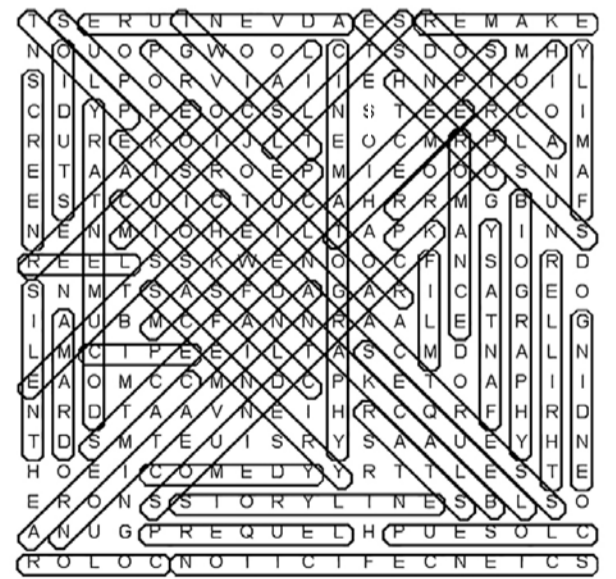
Martin Luther King Jr.

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.



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

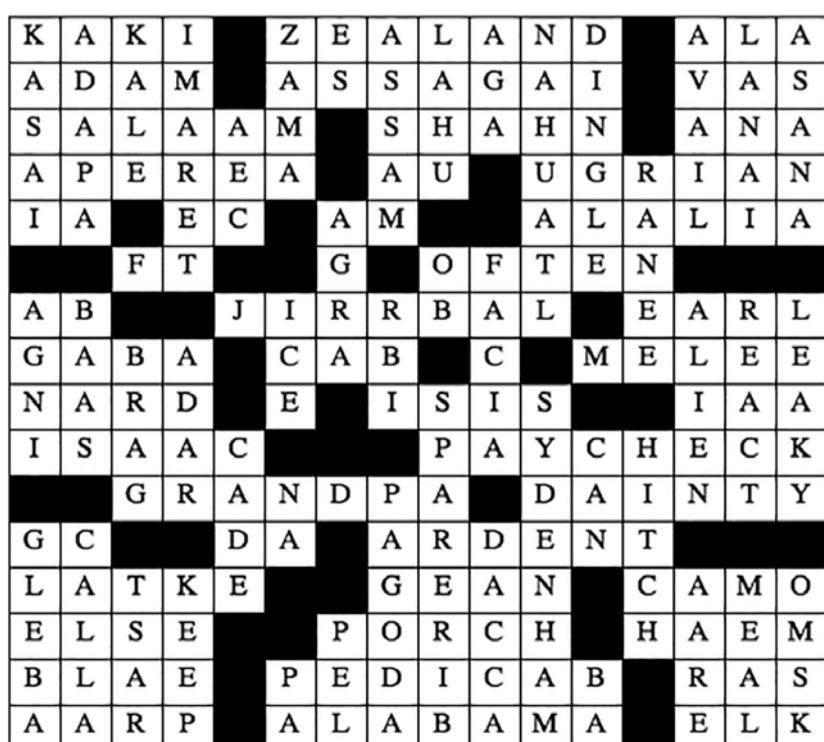
Yesterday's Solution



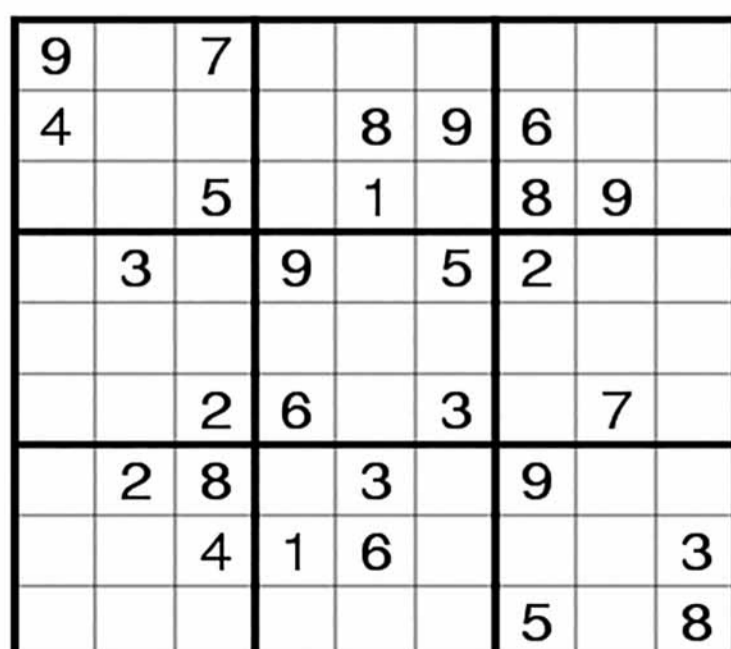
- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| ACTOR | DOCUMENTARY | PREQUEL | SOUNDTRACK |
| ADVENTURE | DRAMA | PROJECTOR | SPECIAL EFFECTS |
| ANIMATION | ENDING | PROP | STAR |
| BIOGRAPHY | EPIC | REEL | STILL |
| BLACK AND WHITE | FAMILY | REMAKE | STORYLINE |
| CAMERA | FANTASY | RETAKE | STUDIO |
| CINEMATOGRAPHY | FILM | ROMANCE | SUPPORTING ACTRESS |
| CLASSIC | HERO | SCENERY | SUSPENSE |
| CLOSEUP | HORROR | SCIENCE FICTION | THEME |
| COLOR | MAKEUP | SCREEN | THRILLER |
| COMEDY | MUSICAL | SEQUEL | TRWIST |
| COSTUME | PLOT | SILENT | |

The hidden message is: NO GOOD MOVIE IS TOO LONG AND NO BAD MOVIE IS SHORT ENOUGH

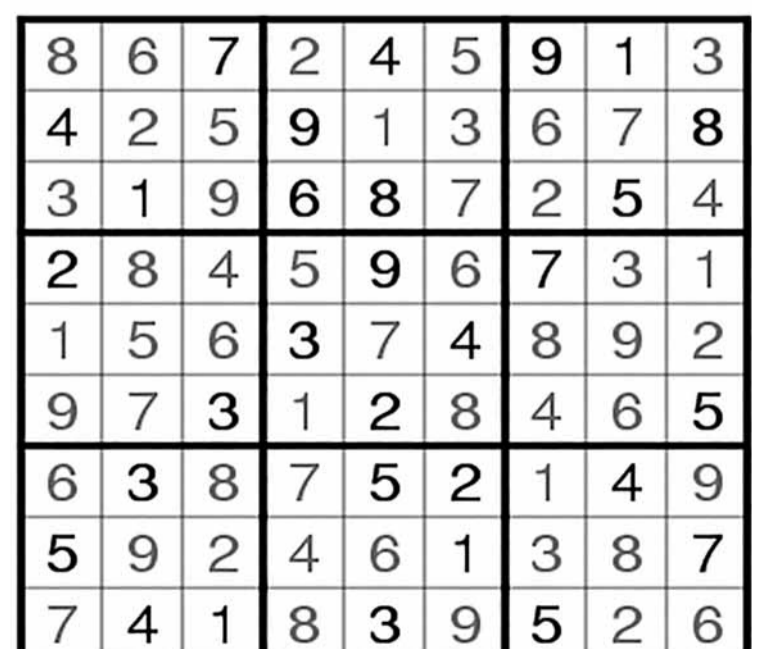
Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020



This photograph shows a man walking with his goats past the Sandamuni Pagoda in Mandalay. — AFP

BEYOND BENIDORM: SPAIN TOURISM MOVES INLAND



A man dressed in a traditional outfit poses at Ecuador's stand of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR).



A woman wearing a traditional costume stands at Brazil's stand.

Rural and green travel is the new frontier for Spain's tourism industry as it tries to break free from its dependence on mass seaside travel and fights off stiff competition from cheaper Mediterranean rivals. Foreign visitors accounted for just five percent of all tourists who stayed at a rural home in the country in 2014. Today they make up 20 percent, according to the tourism ministry, a share the government wants to rise to 35 percent.

"We must have done something right," the ministry's director for sustainable tourism, Ricardo Blanco, said at the five-day Fitur tourism trade fair in Madrid which wraps up Sunday. Spain, the world's second-most visited country after France, hit a record of tourist arrivals for the seventh year in a row last year, with nearly 84 million foreign visitors. But the big resorts which started out in the 1960s along the country's southern coastline saw profits fall by 0.7 percent as sun-seekers from northern Europe returned to less expensive destinations in Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt which they had shunned for years due to security concerns.

Pilgrim power

By contrast foreign tourism grew by "almost double digits" in Spain's green northern coast, and did well in the arid and underpopulated center which is home to medieval architecture, according to a recent report from tourism

company lobby group Exceltur which wants to end a reliance on "sun and beach" tourism. In the northern Asturias region, where a moist climate gives rise to a wealth of forests and rich vegetation, the government's efforts have "started to bear fruit", said the regional government's deputy tourism minister Graciela Blanco.

The region, which has long been popular with Spaniards, welcomed a record 400,000 foreign visitors last year. Foreigners accounted for 20 percent of all visitors to Asturias in 2019, up from 10 percent a decade ago. Asturias has benefited from renewed interest in the historical Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route which passes through the region. And the local government has boosted promotion of the region's natural parks for hiking, cycling and eco-tourism in other European countries as well as Japan and South Korea, where there is strong interest in the pilgrimage route known in English as the "Saint James Way".

The scenario is similar in the neighboring northwestern region of Galicia where the number of foreign tourists has nearly doubled over the past ten years. The pilgrimage route ends in Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia, and services catering to tourists have sprouted up in the region such as wine tours and horseback riding in a bid to attract the pilgrims. Many pilgrims return to Galicia to go sightseeing and take part in these activities, said Carmen Fernandez, a



People visit South Korea's stand of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR) in Madrid. — AFP photos

Hard sell

But interior regions "remain very hard to sell online" to tourists, said Cristina Brunet, who owns several bed and breakfasts in the northern city of Palencia in the Castilla-Leon region, one of Spain's most depopulated areas. Tourists looking for places to spend their holidays type the names of regions they already know into search engines, and the government does not take part in enough tourism fairs outside of Spain to promote the interior, she added.

"Everyone has heard of Marbella, Torremolinos and Benidorm but no one knows the rest of the country," said Eduardo Gutierrez of public tourism innovation body Segittur, in a reference to three popular seaside resorts on Spain's southern coast. Rural residents who want to open a bed and breakfast or other tourism-related project often lack internet connections and struggle to get loans, added Maria Teresa Lopez, president of the federation of rural women's associations (Fademur). — AFP



A woman and a child dressed with traditional outfits are pictured at Cantabria's stand of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR).



A man wearing a explorer outfit stand at Andalusia's stand.



A woman wearing a traditional outfit poses at Colombia's stand.



Spanish film director Pedro Almodovar receives the best direction award for 'Dolor y Gloria' (Pain and Glory) at the 34th Goya awards ceremony in Malaga. — AFP photos



Spanish actor Antonio Banderas receives the best actor award for his role in 'Dolor y Gloria' (Pain and Glory) at the 34th Goya awards ceremony in Malaga.



(From left to right) Argentinian actor Leonardo Sbaraglia, Spanish actress Penelope Cruz, Spanish film director Pedro Almodovar and Spanish actor Antonio Banderas pose on the Red Carpet.



All the awardees pose with their Goya awards during a photocall following the 34th Goya awards ceremony in Malaga.

PEDRO ALMODOVAR'S 'PAIN AND GLORY' SWEEPS SPAIN'S GOYA AWARDS

The Oscar contender won seven Goyas, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor for Antonio Banderas for his starring role in the feature closely based on Almodovar's life and work. Pedro Almodovar's Oscar-nominated, semi-autobiographical drama Pain and Glory was the big winner at the 34th Goya Awards, Spain's top film honors, taking home Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay.

Pain and Glory star Antonio Banderas won Best Actor for his role as the depressed director Salvador Mallo, while the film also nabbed Goyas for Best Editing, Best Original Music and a Best Supporting Actress win for Julieta Serrano, who plays Mallo's aging mother. Alejandro Amenabar's Spanish Civil War epic While

at War went into the Goyas ahead of Pain and Glory, with 17 nominations to 16 for Almodovar's feature. But in the end, Pain and Glory came out on top with seven Goyas to five for While at War, which nabbed honors for Best Production Design, Best Art Direction, Best Makeup and Hair Design and Best Costume Design as well as a Best Supporting Actor Goya for Eduard Fernandez.

Best Actress honors went to Belen Cuesta for her starring role in The Endless Trench, another drama about the Spanish Civil War, which was the breakout hit from last year's San Sebastian film festival. Les Miserables, Ladj Ly's social drama about life in the Parisian Banlieues, and, like Pain and Glory, a nominee for the Best International Film Oscar, took home the

Goya for Best European Film. But the evening was all about Almodovar. Accepting his acting honor Banderas, who is up for a Best Actor Oscar for the same role, thanked the director for giving him a life in cinema.

"In 40 years, I've never met an artist with the loyalty you have to your cinema," Banderas said. "I've learned so much from you, not only about the art world, but also about life. I had to meet you to get here. I have done my best work with you.... Today is three years since I had a heart attack. Not only am I alive, but I feel very alive." Almodovar used his awards platform to address what he sees as a crisis in Spanish cinema brought on by streaming platforms such as Netflix. Accepting his Best Director Goya, the veteran filmmaker

called on Spain's newly-elected Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to support "auteur cinema, independent, outside the margins of the platforms" which, he said, "in serious danger of extinction."

While theater attendance in Spain was up 8 percent in 2019 to 105 million tickets sold, the highest level of the past decade, according to Comscore figures, Spanish films only drew 15.9 million viewers, or 15 percent of the total, the worst level in 6 years. This year's lifetime achievement Goya went to Pepa Flores, better known as Marisol, a child actress who starred in dozens of musicals and reached her height of popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com>



Spanish actress Belen Cuesta receives the best actress award for her role in 'La Trinchera Infinita' (The Endless Trench).



Spanish comedian Silvia Abril performs at the 34th Goya awards ceremony.



Representatives of The French film 'Les Miserables' receive the best European film award.



Daughters of Spanish actress and singer Pepa Flores aka Marisol, actress Maria Esteve (right), singer Celia Flores (left) and Tamara Gades receive an honorary award for their mother's career.

2020 Goya Awards

BEST PICTURE

Pain and Glory by Pedro Almodovar

BEST DIRECTOR

Pedro Almodovar for Pain and Glory

BREAKOUT DIRECTOR

Belen Funes for A Thief's Daughter

BEST ACTRESS

Belen Cuesta for The Endless Trench

BEST ACTOR

Antonio Banderas for Pain and Glory

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Julieta Serrano for Pain and Glory

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Eduard Fernandez for While at War

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Pedro Almodovar for Pain and Glory

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Benito Zambrano, Daniel Remon and Pablo Remon for Out in the Open

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Mauro Herce for Fire Will Come

BEST ORIGINAL MUSIC

Alberto Iglesias for Pain and Glory

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

Intemperie by Javier Ruibal for Out in the Open

BEST NEW ACTOR

Enric Auquer for Eye for an Eye

BEST NEW ACTRESS

Benedicta Sanchez for Fire Will Come

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Bunuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles by Salvador Simo

BEST IBEROAMERICAN FILM

Heroic Losers by Sebastian Borensztein, Argentina

BEST EUROPEAN FILM

Les Miserables by Ladj Ly, France

BEST DOCUMENTARY

Ara Malikian: una vida entre las cuerdas by Nata Moreno

BEST LIVE-ACTION SHORT FILM

Suc de Sandria by Irene Moray

BEST ANIMATED SHORT FILM

Madrid 2120 by Jose Luis Quiros, Paco Saez

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT

Our Life as Refugee Children in Europe by Silvia Venegas

BEST EDITING

Teresa Font for Pain and Glory

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

Carla Perez de Albeniz for While at War

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

Sonia Grande for While at War

BEST ART DIRECTION

Juan Pedro de Gaspar for While at War

BEST SOUND

Inaki Diez, Alazne Amezttoy, Xanti Salvador, Nacho Royo-Villanova for The Endless Trench

BEST MAKEUP AND HAIR DESIGN

Ana Lopez-Puigcerver, Belen Lopez-Puigcerver, Nacho Diaz for While at War

BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS

Mario Campoy, Inaki Madariaga for The Platform

HONORARY GOYA

Pepa Flores



DGA Feature Film Award winner for '1917' Sam Mendes poses in the press room during the 72nd Annual Directors Guild Of America Awards at The Ritz Carlton. — AFP photos



Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Movies for Television and Limited Series winner Swedish director Johan Renck poses in the press room.



DGA First-Time Feature Film Award winner for 'Honey Boy' Alma Har'el (second left) poses in the press room.



DGA Feature Film Award nominee Taika Waititi poses in the press room.



Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary winners Julia Reichert and Steven Bogner pose in the press room.



DGA Commercials Award winner Spike Jonze poses in the press room.



DGA Reality Programs Award winner for 'Encore!' Jason Cohen poses in the press room.

'1917' SCOOPS TOP HOLLYWOOD DIRECTOR PRIZE FOR MENDES

Hollywood's directors handed World War I thriller "1917" their top annual award Saturday, one of the final major award shows that typically spells success at next month's Oscars. The win makes British auteur Sam Mendes hot favorite for the best director Oscar—the Directors Guild of America Awards have correctly predicted the victor the past six years running. The movie, which follows two British soldiers on a perilous mission across no man's land, has already scooped the Golden Globe for best drama, and has 10 Oscar nominations.

Mendes praised the work of fellow nominees Martin Scorsese ("The Irishman"), Quentin Tarantino ("Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood"), Bong Joon-ho ("Parasite") and Taika Waititi ("Jojo Rabbit.") "To those who kick dirt on the grave of the movies—not so fast," he said, dedicating the win to his grandfather, whose life inspired the film. "I know it sounds a bit loopy but I did feel he was with us in a couple of occasions when I was struggling," said Mendes.

Victory also boosts the film's frontrunner status for the best picture Academy Award. The win comes more than two decades after Mendes first received the DGA award for "American Beauty," a victory that led to Oscars wins for that film. Mendes told AFP his first win had been "frightening to be pitched into this sort of frenzy," adding: "I'm 20 years older and I'm probably a little less scared." The film's two lead actors paid tribute to Mendes.

"He's a master of so many mediums... he's pretty much done it all," said George Mackay. "We'll be very excited to see what happens at the Oscars—I've never been before!" his co-star Dean-Charles Chapman told AFP.



Outstanding Directorial Achievement in First-Time Feature Film winner director Alma Har'el poses in the press.

'New voices'

A-list presenters at the glamorous downtown Los Angeles event Saturday included Al Pacino, Leonardo DiCaprio and Alfonso Cuaron, with Judd Apatow returning as host. Like the Oscars, the DGAs were criticized this year for excluding women from the top prize shortlist. DGA president Thomas Schlamme said the movie industry "still have a lot of work to

do" on boosting diversity but pointed to the recently introduced first-time director category, featuring three women. Alma Har'el ("Honey Boy") won the prize, praising fellow female nominees Mati Diop ("Atlantics") and Melina Matsoukas ("Queen & Slim") as "the future."

The category means "new voices like us can be included and celebrated," said Har'el, voicing support for a campaign to assist new mothers in the movie industry. Around 50 Hollywood women including Amy Schumer, Amy Poehler and Greta Gerwig recently co-signed a letter stating women "are penalized for having children in a way that their male counterparts are not."

'Zeitgeist film'

"American Factory," a film about a US Rust Belt factory reopened by a Chinese billionaire, and which was produced by the Obamas, won best documentary. "When we started (the film), we didn't have President Trump even, let alone trade wars and the conflict with China," director Julia Reichert told AFP. "I think we're kind of a zeitgeist film." The DGAs also honor television—Bill Hader won for directing dark hit-man comedy "Barry," in which he also stars, while the limited series prize went to "Chernobyl."

Superhero series "Watchmen" won the drama prize, seeing off an all-HBO shortlist including the much-maligned final season of "Game of Thrones." Although lower key than the Golden Globes and Screen Actors



Frank Capra Achievement award recipient director Duncan Henderson poses in the press room.

Guild awards, the DGAs are longer-running and offer prestigious recognition from 18,000 voters including top directors. "To be nominated alongside these absolute legends is very surreal for me," Waititi told AFP. "I am amongst the greats right now." The Oscars will be handed out in Hollywood on February 9.—AFP

List of winners

1. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 2019
Sam Mendes "1917" (Universal Pictures)
2. Outstanding Directorial Achievement of a First-Time Feature Film Director for 2019
Alma Har'el, "Honey Boy"
3. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Dramatic Series
Nicole Kassell, "Watchmen," "It's Summer and We're Running Out of Ice"
4. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Comedy Series
Bill Hader, "Barry," "ronny/lily"
5. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Movies for Television & Miniseries
Johan Renck, "Chernobyl"
6. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Variety/Talk/News/Sports - Specials
James Burrows ("All in the Family") and "The Jeffersons" - Directed by Andy Fisher, ("Live in Front of a Studio Audience" - Directed by (ABC)
7. Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary
Steven Bogner and Julia Reichert, "American Factory" (Netflix)



This photo shows a Buddhist monk attending "Poetry for Humanity" event in which Rohingya Muslim poets recited poetry via a video link in Yangon.



This photo shows Rohingya Muslim poets reciting poems via a video link during the "Poetry for Humanity" event in Yangon.



This photo shows a laptop screen displaying a video link of Rohingya Muslim poets reciting poetry during the "Poetry for Humanity" event in Yangon.— AFP photos

Rohingya refugee writers dial into Myanmar poetry slam

Divided by hatred but united over the written word, Rohingya Muslim poets in Bangladeshi refugee camps joined Buddhist bards in Myanmar by video link as part of a groundbreaking poetry festival in a country reeling from genocide allegations. Five Rohingya writers took part in the three-day "Poetry for Humanity" event in Yangon, with three speaking live by video link to a packed room while two had sent pre-recorded readings, fearing their stuttering connection would not hold up. They drew applause for verses on the bloodshed that forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee their homes in northern Rakhine state—and also for their resilience.

"My words are taller than the walls put between Buddhists and Muslims. My words are stronger than the hatred designed for me," reads one verse from writer Mayyu Ali's poem "My Words". He fled with his family to the Bangladeshi camps where he has helped bring together a group of around 150 refugees sharing a passion for poetry. "I want to show Burmese people that the Rohingya are also

Burmese. We also love Myanmar," the 27-year-old told AFP. Poets once vexed Myanmar's censorship-obsessed former military junta. Now younger writers are keeping the art form alive as a form of dissent under the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which has defended the crackdown against the Rohingya.

Embracing the 'R' word

The festival came in a week of heightened sensitivity over the crisis. The International Court of Justice ruled Thursday there was enough evidence to pursue allegations that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya, and ordered the country to comply with urgent measures to protect the minority. Some 740,000 fled over the border to escape a bloody military crackdown in 2017 that is thought to have killed thousands.

Yet the minority evoke little sympathy in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where even the word "Rohingya" is taboo. Many instead refer to them pejoratively as "Bengali", suggesting they are illegal interlopers from Bangladesh. Festival organiser

Maung Saungkha, who was jailed for six months in 2016 for writing a poem deemed defamatory to the former president, says acknowledging the word "Rohingya" is a first step towards preventing more human rights abuses. "We hope people will learn about equal rights and about treating different people in a humane way."

Forty poets from across Myanmar recite works in various languages including Burmese, but the focus is on re-connecting the estranged Muslim minority. Ethnic Rakhine writer Won Roe travelled especially from his home state, where deep divisions prevail between the mainly Buddhist Rakhine and remaining Rohingya Muslim communities. Rakhine mobs stand accused of committing atrocities against the Rohingya alongside security forces. But Won Roe is convinced poetry can act as a "bridge between communities" and worked closely, with Mayyu Ali ahead of the event. "I see him as a poet, a friend."—AFP



Performers react after the parading during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.



Schoolchildren dance on Rajpath during the Republic Day parade.



Soldiers march along Rajpath during the Republic Day parade. — AFP photos

WOMEN GRAB LIMELIGHT AT INDIA'S REPUBLIC DAY PAGEANTRY



Youths dance during the Republic Day parade.



Youths perform a traditional dance during the Republic Day parade.

Huge crowds gathered for India's Republic Day parade yesterday, with women taking center-stage at the annual pomp-filled spectacle of military might featuring army tanks, horses and camels. For the first time, the riders performing daredevil stunts on motorbikes to the delight of the crowds lining New Delhi's central Rajpath boulevard, were women.

Inspector Seema Nag saluted the gathered VIPs as she led her fellow bikers, one precariously perched at the top of a ladder wedged behind her vehicle's handlebars as others formed a human pyramid, drawing the loudest cheers from thousands of spectators. And in front of the guest of honor Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, Captain Tania Shergill, a fourth-generation army officer, led an all-male Corps of Signals military communications contingent.

Bolsonaro sat next to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—who wore a saffron turban—and waved and clapped from behind a bullet-proof glass. January 26 is the anniversary of India's adoption of its constitution in 1950. The two-hour showcase of military might and cultural diversity included everything from battle tanks and state-of-the-art weaponry to traditional dancers.

Scaled-down models of the Rafale aircraft were paraded by the air force, following the South Asian nation's purchase of 36 jets from France in 2016 in a multi-billion-dollar deal. The mounted camels of the Border Security Force put in an early showing, strutting across the avenue in brightly colored caparisons. Traditional dancers representing some of India's diverse regional cultures performed on elaborately decorated floats showcasing selected states. The show culminated with a Su-30 MKI fighter jet roaring through the sky in a "Vertical Charlie" aerobatic manoeuvre.



Performers walk next to a float representing Goa along Rajpath.

Pageantry and protests

The parade was held against a backdrop of nationwide protests over a new citizenship law that critics say discriminates against minority Muslims, which make up 200 million people in India's 1.3 billion-strong population. A 620-kilometre long human chain was planned in southern Kerala state later Sunday as a mark of protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act and a proposed National Register of Citizens.

The new law makes it easier for persecuted religious minorities from three neighboring countries to obtain citizenship, but not if they are Muslim. There have also been protests against Bolsonaro's visit, with a small rally held

in the western city of Mumbai Friday where demonstrators questioned his stand on climate change and sexist comments against a woman politician.

On Saturday the two nationalist leaders signed a slew of deals, including for defense and oil and gas, and promised to strengthen bilateral ties. Last year Brazil complained about India's subsidies for sugar exports to the World Trade Organization, saying it would hurt free competition in the global market. India is the largest cane sugar producer in the world followed by Brazil, according to the International Sugar Organization. — AFP



Performers walk next floats along Rajpath during the Republic Day parade.



Soldiers march along Rajpath during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

Netflix announces Witcher anime movie

The online streaming platform - which has seen its live action series prove to be a huge success - has confirmed another project based on CD Projekt Red's action RPG game franchise. Taking to social media, the company tweeted: "The rumors are true, a new 'Witcher' story is in the works! The anime film, 'The Witcher: Nightmare of the Wolf,' will take us back to a new threat facing the Continent. Brought to you by the Witcher team @LHissrich and @BeauDeMayo, and Studio Mir the studio behind 'Legend of Korra.'" Fans of the live action series - which stars Henry Cavill, Anya Chalota, Freya Allan and Joey Batey - will be

pleased to see that showrunner Lauren S. Hissrich and writer Beau DeMayo are involved. Further details are scarce for now, with no suggestion of how production is going or when the spin-off is expected to air.

However, Tomek Baginski - an executive producer on the 'Witcher' TV show - previously hinted Netflix was "planning a few more interesting surprises between seasons". Although there's no confirmation, his comment could mean the anime movie is coming before the live action series returns in 2021. — Bang Showbiz



Man finds own grave

A man was stunned to discover his own grave at a cemetery, despite being very much alive. Alan Hattel - from Tayside in Scotland - wasn't contacted by anybody for months and now suspects that people thought he had died. Alan said: "My phone hasn't rung for three or four months. I've been confused by it all but now I know why nobody has been calling. "I don't even want to be buried - I plan to be cremated."

The 75-year-old feels that his ex-wife is responsible for his name appearing and plans to contact the local council to put a cover over the headstone. Alan added: "I've never, ever said I wanted to be buried alongside my ex-wife. "We've been separated 26 years and there's no animosity but I'm struggling to take it all in. "To find out you have a gravestone in a cemetery while you are still alive isn't something that happens every day." — Bang Showbiz

Classifieds

Monday, January 27, 2020

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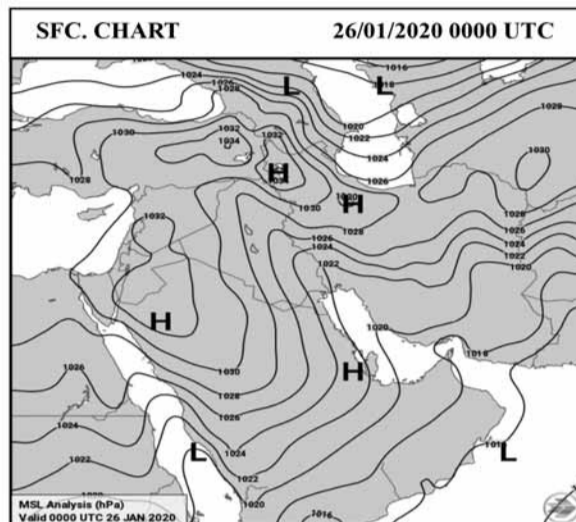
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Rather cold with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h with a chance for rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings	
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	18 °C	08 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	18 °C	08 °C
ABDALY	17 °C	06 °C
BUBYAN	18 °C	09 °C
JAHRA	19 °C	07 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	18 °C	09 °C
AHMADI	19 °C	08 °C
NUWAISIB	19 °C	07 °C
WAFRA	19 °C	07 °C
SALMY	17 °C	04 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	01/27	Rather cold	18 °C	06 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Tuesday	01/28	Rather cold and Clouds will increase gradually	19 °C	05 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	01/29	Rather cold and Partly cloudy	22 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 32 km/h
Thursday	01/30	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	20 °C	07 °C	NE-VRB	06 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:18
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:00
Sunset	17:21
Isha	18:41

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	16 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	85 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	NW 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

ICU Experienced Nurse Required

- MOH license
- Indian nationality
- Attractive salary

Contact: **65605660**

Airlines

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

I, Naeema D/O Habib Husain Kabir R/O Najampura, Sagwara Dist, Durgapur, Rajasthan have changed my given name to Naeema Habib Husain and surname to Kabir.

I, Rukaiya Mufaddal Kakumama D/O Mufaddal Shabbir Husain Kakumama R/O Najampura, Sagwara Dist, Durgapur, Rajasthan have changed my given name to Rukaiya Mufaddal and surname to Kakumama. **(C 5623) 27-1-2020**

Shaik Baba Alaudeen S/o Shaik Baba, holder of Indian Passport No. P1094143, Civil ID No. 274071201684, shall henceforth be known as Shaik Baba (surname) Shaik Alaudeen (given name). **(C 5620) 26-1-2020**

I, Chakrapani Megam holder of Indian Passport No. 7680229 have changed my name to given name: Shaik Mahammad Yousuf here and after in all documents I will be known as Shaik Mahammad Yousuf. **(C 5621)**

I, Johan Basha S/o Sowkath Ali, Date of birth: 10.05.1976, (Native District: Cuddalore), residing at Manikkam Nagar, Mangalam Pettai Post, Virudhachalam Taluk, Cuddalore - 606104, shall henceforth be known as John Basha S/o Sowkath Ali. **(C 5622)**

I, Husain Kakumama Mufaddal Shabbir S/O Shabbir Husain Kakumama R/O Najampura, Sagwara Dist, Durgapur, Rajasthan have changed my given name to Mufaddal Shabbir Husain and surname to

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

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 27/1/2020				Departure Flights on Monday 27/1/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
PIA	239	Sialkot	00:05	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	105	London	14:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	PVV	732	IOA	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	541	Cairo	16:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
JZR	540	KTM	04:40	KAC	361	Colombo	17:30
JZR	702	Asyut	04:45	JZR	403	Hyderabad	17:30
FDB	069	Dubai	04:50	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
KAC	358	Kochi	05:00	UAE	858	Kochi	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	052	Dubai	17:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	JZR	715	Sohag	18:15
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	FEJ	342	Sohag	18:20
JZR	112	Doha	05:45	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:50
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
BAW	157	London	07:05	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
RBG	213	Sohag	07:10	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	120	Dubai	07:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	7452	Doha	20:00
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	QTR	7454	Doha	20:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:25	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:25
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	114	Doha	09:45	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	507	KHI	22:00
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	GFA	220	Dammam	22:25
QTR	7453	Doha	11:30	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
QTR	7451	Doha	11:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
PVV	732	Sharjah	12:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
JZR	602	Baku	12:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	GOW	062	CNN	23:55

India police decommission historic British-era rifles

LUCKNOW, India: Police in northern India yesterday bid goodbye to the historic British-era bolt-action rifles after using them for one last salute during the annual Republic Day parade. The Lee-Enfield .303 rifle was the main firearm of British colonial military forces and, despite being designated "obsolete" around 25 years ago, it has been the main weapon used by police in Uttar Pradesh state over seven decades.

The rifle - used by the British during the two World Wars - fires one shot at a time, after which the barrel needs to be reloaded by pulling the bolt. "They have been in use since independence (from the British in 1947) and now they'll be replaced by INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) and SLRs (Self-Loading

Rifles)," said police superintendent Amit Verma. As many as 45,000 of the rifles were being used by the state police, Verma said, and the model was a favorite among constables due to accuracy and sturdiness.

"This (.303) rifle is a fantastic weapon and has served us brilliantly in various operations in the past," police additional director general Bijaya Kumar Maurya told AFP. "But it being a bolt action weapon with low magazine capacity, it was time for a change. Its production has also discontinued so there was all the more need for an upgrade."

Maurya said the new automatic rifles would "add to the confidence of our officers" and would result in improved policing. "The criminals will

naturally face the heat when they'll face officers armed with automatic weapons." The rifles will be returned to a gun factory in Ishapore in West Bengal state where they will be converted into anti-riot guns, spokesman Saurabh Singh told AFP.

Saroj Kumar Mishra, a constable with the Uttar Pradesh police since 1982, said he would miss the heavy-duty rifle. "The weapon is as smooth as butter even after 20 rounds of back-to-back firing," he was quoted as saying by the Hindustan Times newspaper. "This feature is perhaps the most important one which we often miss in the modern day weapons." India yesterday celebrating the anniversary of the adoption of its constitution in 1950. — AFP



ALLAHABAD, India: In this photo taken on Jan 22, 2020, Uttar Pradesh police personnel take part in a rehearsal for the upcoming India's Republic Day parade holding Lee-Enfield .303 rifles. — AFP

Israel allows visits to Saudi; Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

It said Israel would also allow its citizens to travel to Saudi Arabia "to participate in business meetings or seek investments" for trips not exceeding 90 days. Business travellers must have "arranged their entry to Saudi Arabia and received an invitation from a governmental source", the interior ministry said. There was no indication of a corresponding policy change from the Saudi side, but there have in recent months been gestures pointing to warming ties between Israel and Gulf states.

Earlier yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised Mohammed Al-Issa, head of the Muslim World League based in Makkah in Saudi Arabia, for attending commemorations in Poland this week marking 75 years since the liberation of the Nazi death camp Auschwitz. "This is another sign of change in the attitude of Islamic bodies and, of course, the Arab states toward the Holocaust and the Jewish people," he told reporters.

Following the cabinet meeting, Netanyahu was headed to Washington to discuss US President Donald Trump's project for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinians have rejected Trump's initiative but the US hopes Saudi Arabia can pressure the Palestinian Authority to accept it, boosted by an economic component of the peace plan announced in June. Common concerns over Iran are widely seen as having fostered incipient ties between Israel and several Arab states, especially in the Gulf.

Yoel Guzansky, a senior researcher at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies, called Israel's announcement on the Saudi travel permits "normalization kernels" between Israel and Gulf states, which he called "the worst-kept secret in the Middle East". Guzansky noted that while Israel no doubt timed the announcement to coincide with Netanyahu's trip to Washington, its publication - especially ahead of the launch of the peace plan - could be "veiling" to the Saudis.

"The fact that Israelis go there quietly is one thing. Once it's in the open, that can embarrass them" and cause trouble not only with conservative elements in the kingdom but also with regional foes such as Qatar and Iran, he said. The increasing Israeli presence in Gulf states - including sports competitions and the upcoming Dubai expo - could derive from "American pressure to make (positive) gestures toward Israel", Guzansky noted.

Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders threatened yesterday to withdraw from key provisions of the Oslo Accords, which define arrangements with Israel, if Trump announces his Middle East peace plan next week. Trump was scheduled to unveil the plan ahead of his meeting in Washington this week with Netanyahu. Netanyahu, who has called Trump "the greatest friend that Israel has ever had", said he hoped to "make history" in Washington this week.

But the Palestinian leadership was not invited to the

talks and has rejected Trump's initiative amid tensions with the US president over his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital. World powers have long agreed that Jerusalem's fate should be settled through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told AFP that the Palestine Liberation Organization reserved the right "to withdraw from the interim agreement" of the Oslo pact if Trump unveils his plan.

The Trump initiative will turn Israel's "temporary occupation (of Palestinian territory) into a permanent occupation", Erekat said. The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement, signed in Washington in 1995, sought to put into practice the first Oslo peace deal agreed two years earlier. Sometimes called Oslo II, the interim agreement set out the scope of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. The interim pact was only supposed to last five years while a permanent agreement was finalized but it has tacitly been rolled over for more than two decades.

Israel has occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War. More than 600,000 Israelis now live there in settlements considered illegal under international law. The Trump administration last year announced that it no longer considered Israel's settlement of civilians in the West Bank as "inconsistent with international law", further outraging the Palestinians.

Trump's peace initiative has been in the works since 2017, and its economic component was unveiled in June, calling for \$50 billion in international investment in the Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab countries over 10 years. Despite this apparent economic incentive, Palestinian leaders have made clear that they no longer recognize Washington's historic role as mediator in the conflict, given Trump's repeated backing of Israeli demands. "The US administration will not find a single Palestinian who supports this project," the Palestinian foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday. "Trump's plan is the plot of the century to liquidate the Palestinian cause."

Netanyahu's political rival Benny Gantz has also received an invitation to attend the White House talks. Gantz also showered Trump with praise during a news conference. "I wish to thank President Trump for his dedication and determination in defending the security interests that both Israel and the US share," Gantz said. Trump's planned separate meetings with Netanyahu and Gantz come a little more than a month before new Israeli elections, with polls showing Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Gantz's centrist Blue and White party running neck-and-neck.

Israeli media speculated that Trump had chosen to unveil his plan in support of Netanyahu's election bid - the third in a year, but the first since Netanyahu was charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three separate corruption cases. Netanyahu is seeking immunity from Israeli lawmakers through hearings due to start this week. "Immediately after news of the [peace] plan was reported, it became plainly evident based on the reactions that this wasn't a Trump plan, but a Bibi-Trump plot," analyst Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in yesterday's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper. "Yet another election ploy that was designed to extricate Netanyahu from the clutches of his immunity hearings." — Agencies

attempt to influence the ongoing investigations.

Kuwait is known for its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all who live on its soil and punishing law violators in accordance with the provisions of the country's laws and in a manner that guarantees the rule of law and justice for all, added the foreign ministry source.

The source also lauded the measures taken by Kuwaiti relevant bodies on this case. They quickly arrested those who committed the crime and referred them to a fair judiciary, the source clarified. Kuwait has also informed the Philippine authorities of its readiness to receive a Filipino security team to get acquainted with the measures taken on the case and the latest updates of the investigations.

Meanwhile, two MPs insisted yesterday on their resignation from the financial and economic affairs committee, saying the panel does not meet because a majority of other members do not attend meetings. MP Bader Al-Mulla said he and MP Saleh Ashour were actively taking part in the committee's functions until after the new Cabinet was formed, but then quit the panel because no meetings were held. Ashour also said he will not go back on his decision to resign from the committee because it was not holding any meetings and not even focusing on the important issues that concern citizens, like forgiving bank loans of Kuwaiti debtors.

Meanwhile, MP Safa Al-Hashem said after attending the budgets committee meeting with Minister of Public Works Rana Al-Fares that it appears that the metro and railway projects will not be implemented. She provided no details on her conclusion but added that she based this outcome on the way things are going. She said that until today, the problem of flying gravel and problems related to paving roads have not been resolved.

Member of the interior and defense committee MP Farraj Al-Arbeed said yesterday that the panel agreed to grant widows of Kuwaitis citizenship five years from the date of marriage. He said the committee decided to postpone the discussion of the government's law for naturalizing foreign spouses of Kuwaiti men because of a number of problems, mainly requiring 18 years of marriage to be able to get Kuwaiti citizenship. MPs want the period cut to 10 years.

Jabeur aims to inspire Arab...

Continued from Page 1

"I wanted to really go pro directly. I knew if I play in college, I cannot play professional tournaments. We don't have much experience in Tunisia. But hopefully now we can see more and more." Selima Sfar is the only other Tunisian woman to win at a Grand Slam after she reached the second round at Wimbledon, Roland Garros and the US Open in the 2000s.

Jabeur and Wang struggled with their serves at the start of the match, each losing an early break, before the Tunisian found her range and claimed the first set with a forehand winner in a tie-break. The 27th-ranked Wang faltered in the second set, going down two breaks as Jabeur kept her off balance with the variety and speed of her shots. Jabeur capped the victory in style, serving out to love and finishing with another forehand winner. "The

first set was tricky little bit because I started good, but then went down little bit, couldn't win my serve," Jabeur said. "Obviously second set was amazing for me. I was really relaxed... I'm happy that I went through."

Africa's number one, the first Tunisian woman to win a main-draw match at the Australian Open, said she had received messages from people watching in the early hours back home. "I'm receiving a lot of messages, especially people waking up at 5 am in the morning to watch my match. I'm really proud," Jabeur said. "Hopefully they can still watch me and follow more, not just in the Grand Slam but the other tournaments. It will be really amazing. I really hope I can give a good example."

Jabeur's success has not come easy - Tunisia has been through a period of upheaval surrounding the revolution of 2011, with security parlous for a time. "It was little bit tough after the revolution. It was not really safe at the time. Now everything, like, is normal," said Jabeur, who now feels she's getting the reward for years of hard work. "I called my mom right away. She was really, really happy. Probably receiving a lot of calls. My father, as well. I think he was crying. I don't know," she said. "The family, everyone was behind me." — AFP

UAE technology ambitions hit by...

Continued from Page 1

accused the UAE of using ToTok to spy on users, prompting both Google and Apple to remove the app from their online marketplaces. The report said ToTok allowed the Emirati government to track conversations, movements and other details of people who installed it on their phone.

Google Play made the app available again in January, listing a series of "updates", but it is still unavailable on the Apple Store. It remains unclear why Apple has yet to restore the app, or if it ever will, but according to researcher Bill Marczak, the tech giant "is viewed as perhaps being a bit more privacy friendly". He said the case of ToTok, which also won quick popularity in the United States, was unique in targeting such a large audience.

"As far as I know this pretty much is the only case of a messaging platform created by an intelligence group," Marczak, a senior research fellow with the Canada-based cyber security research group Citizen Lab, told AFP. "It's a very unique case in that sense because they were trying to develop this app that was designed to be used by millions of people in the world."

He said that the UAE may be moving towards a "China model" of digital authoritarianism, aiming to be

a powerhouse in technology, but also to use that status as a tool for control and surveillance. "It will be interesting how this public fiasco will affect the UAE development as a tech powerhouse in the future," he said. People will "probably have hard time trusting any sort of technology platform that comes out of the UAE".

The country's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority told AFP "it recently became aware of a number of concerns related to... ToTok". "The UAE telecommunications regulations prohibit unlawful interception and mass surveillance of any form and adopts the highest standards for consumer privacy," it added.

In a region regularly hit by political turmoil, the UAE puts a high value on "stability" and stamping out extremism. However, rights groups accuse it of holding opponents without legal basis, including award-winning rights activist Ahmed Mansoor, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2018 over accusations of spreading false information. National law stipulates that a person can be imprisoned and fined for using any means of technology to call for demonstrations, incite ideas against Islam or promote "destructive principles" such as homosexuality. Harsh cybercrime laws also carry jail sentences or fines for defamatory statements on social media.

"They are practising a high level of online restrictions and surveillance," said Amy Slipowitz from civil society group Freedom House, which marks the UAE as "not free" on its annual global Internet rankings. "They should have more transparency in their content restriction and stop targeting critics of the government," she said. — AFP

China stiffens defenses against...

Continued from Page 1

powerful as SARS", top Chinese health officials said at a press conference. The previously unknown virus has caused global concern because of its similarity to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pathogen, which killed hundreds across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003. Outside the epicenter, Shandong province and four cities - Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an and Tianjin - announced bans on long-distance buses entering or leaving, a move that will affect millions of people traveling over the Lunar New Year holiday.

The populous southern province of Guangdong, Jiangxi in the center, and three cities made it mandatory for residents to wear face masks in public. Originating in Hubei's capital of Wuhan, the virus has spread throughout China and across the world - with cases confirmed in around a dozen countries including as far away as the United States.

The US State Department said yesterday it was arranging a flight from Wuhan to San Francisco for consulate staff and other Americans in the city. France's government and the French carmaker PSA also said they planned to evacuate staff and families, who will be quarantined in a city in a neighbouring province. Japan is coordinating with Beijing to swiftly evacuate its citizens, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. South Korea's consulate in Wuhan said it was conducting an online poll of its citizens there to gauge demand for a chartered flight out.

Instead of New Year revelry, Wuhan has been seized by an eerie calm that deepened yesterday as new restrictions banned most road traffic in the metropolis of 11 million. Loudspeakers broke the silence by offering tips slathered with bravado. "Do not believe in rumors. Do not spread rumors. If you feel unwell, go to the hospital in time," the message said. "Wuhan is a city that dares to face difficulties and keeps overcoming them," the female voice added, mentioning the deadly 2002-03 SARS epidemic and 1998 Yangtze River flooding.

The health emergency has overwhelmed Wuhan's hospitals with patients, prompting authorities to send hundreds of medical reinforcements, including military doctors, and start construction on two field hospitals. The number of confirmed cases in the city could rise by 1,000, Wuhan's mayor Zhou Xianwang predicted yesterday, based on the number currently undergoing observation in

hospital. He also said around five million people had left the city during the new year travel rush.

Speaking at a press conference and wearing a face mask, Zhou said the city's medical staff were "very strained and tired". With non-essential vehicles banned from the road, volunteers stepped up to drive sick fellow citizens to hospitals. "There has to be someone who does this," Zhang Lin, 48, told AFP journalists as he waited for a patient to emerge from a clinic for the drive back home in nearly deserted streets.

Some foreigners in Wuhan expressed deep concern, saying they feared going outside. "We want to be evacuated as soon as possible, because either the virus, the hunger or the fear will kill us," Mashal Jamalzai, a political science student from Afghanistan at Central China Normal University, told AFP. The outbreak is suspected to have originated in a Wuhan market where animals including rats, snakes and hedgehogs were reportedly sold.

China said yesterday it was banning all trade in wildlife until the emergency is over, but conservationists complain that China has previously failed to deliver on pledges to get tough. Animal rights groups called for the ban to be made permanent, saying it could end the possibility of future outbreaks. Health officials said the virus has since become transmissible between humans. "From what we see now, this disease is indeed... not as powerful as SARS," said Gao Fu, head of China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, at a press briefing in Beijing.

However, it also appears that the "spreading ability of the virus is getting stronger," said Ma Xiaowei, head of China's national health commission. The government says most deaths involved the elderly or people with existing ailments. Fearing a repeat of SARS, China has dramatically scaled back celebrations and travel associated with the New Year holiday, which began Friday, while tourist sites like Beijing's Forbidden City and a section of the Great Wall have closed.

In Hong Kong, Disneyland announced yesterday it had closed as a precaution after the city declared an emergency to combat the crisis. Shanghai's Disneyland park had already closed Saturday. Also in Hong Kong, protesters opposed to government plans to use a newly built public housing facility as a quarantine center threw petrol bombs at the building, showing how fearful people are of the virus.

A new working group to tackle the epidemic, chaired by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, called for local authorities to consider "extending the Spring Festival holiday", in order to prevent the movement of people. Several cities responded, with new school terms delayed in Beijing, Shanghai and the city of Suzhou in eastern Jiangsu province - which also ordered companies to extend the end of the holiday until Feb 9. — AFP

Prosecutor refers Eurofighter...

Continued from Page 1

However, the latter's performance in this regard was shrouded with suspicion and ambiguity. Against this backdrop, Afasi submitted relevant documents to Nazaha to cross-examine the case and it did so instantly. Investigators found suspicious grave misappropriation of the third stake - the suspected offender neglected "technical studies and practiced his tasks without legal bases", where benefactors were deprived of proceeds from some realty assets.

Investigations, clues and testimonies led to conclusions that there was perpetrated intention to jeopardize public funds and make illegal earnings classified as an offense according to article 11 of law 1/1993 on protection of public funds. Bouzbar said. Realizing that there have been reasonable basis for suspicious corruption as stipulated in provision 22 and subjecting the suspected culprit to law 2/2016. Nazaha referred the related papers to the prosecution, recommending that the director general be suspended from work during the investigation period pending issuance of a judicial rule in this respect.

Meanwhile, an official source at the Kuwaiti ministry of foreign affairs has voiced Kuwait's dismay and condemnation of the Filipino foreign affairs secretary's remark about a case of a slain Filipino national. According to reports circulated by media and social networking sites, the Filipino secretary recently said he will not accept anything other than the lives of those who committed the crime against the deceased Filipino national in Kuwait.

The remark contained an unacceptable transgression against jurisdictions of Kuwaiti security and judicial authorities, the official source said, describing the statement as an unusual approach in dealing with countries. It runs counter to the simplest rules of international relations, the source lamented. The source also noted the Filipino secretary's remark represents an

Sports

66th World Cup for Shiffrin with Bansko super-G win

Shiffrin just one victory behind Austrian Marcel Hirscher's 67 World Cup wins

BANSKO: American Mikaela Shiffrin notched up her 66th World Cup victory by scorching the women's super-G in Bansko yesterday to wrap up an incredible weekend's racing. Shiffrin, winner of Friday's first downhill at the Bulgarian resort and fourth in the second downhill Saturday, timed 1min 10.88sec.

She came in 0.29sec ahead of Marta Bassino, who was also second in the Italian podium sweep of Saturday's downhill, with Switzerland's five-time world medallist Lara Gut-Behrami, at 0.70sec, making the podium for the first time this season.

"It was a perfect weekend for me," said Shiffrin. "The surface was just amazing, perfect, especially for super-G. I had to be really aggressive, it wasn't always perfectly clean, but it was the fastest way I could ski this hill and this course."

Shiffrin added: "I've had a wonderful time here. These kinds of races over the weekend, it's really challenging, they're very difficult, that's what makes the victories, the good races, so much sweeter."

But she admitted to sometimes feeling like a failure. "This season has been a really big challenge, every single race there are so many women who are skiing really fast, really strong," Shiffrin said. "Every race is such a big fight and I haven't been the one on top of this fight every time. Certainly I've been feeling that the expectations that I have and other people may have, I'm not quite living up to that and it's hard not to think I'm failing sometimes."

Shiffrin's victory was just her fourth in the super-G, the second of the speed events after the downhill, her last win in the discipline coming in January 2019 in

Cortina. "The thing I'm most proud of right now is that I now have wins in slalom, giant, super-G and downhill - I never expected that to really happen," the American said. Shiffrin, a technical specialist who has proven increasingly adept at the speed events, saw her result further consolidate her spot on top of the overall World Cup standings.

She now sits on 1,225 points, with Italian Federica Brignone — who fell in the super-G — second on 855pts. Slovakia's Petra Vlhova is in third on 830pts before a big drop to Bassino (620) and the Switzerland's Wendy Holdener (493).

The win also saw Shiffrin leapfrog five places to go top of the super-G standings, on 186pts, ahead of Swiss Corinne Suter (150) and Germany's Viktoria Rebensburg (148). The win was the 66th on the World Cup circuit for the 24-year-old, a two-time Olympic gold medallist and current three-time reigning overall World Cup champion who stands second behind now-retired compatriot Lindsey Vonn (82) for number of races won.

Shiffrin now sits just one victory behind now-retired Austrian Marcel Hirscher's 67 World Cup wins, bettered only by Vonn and Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark (86).

Shiffrin's rival in the technical events, Vlhova, threatened from start number 31, the Slovak close in the early interim timings before falling away on the bottom section to eventually finish sixth, 1.13sec off the pace. Italy's Elena Curtoni, who claimed her maiden World Cup victory by winning Saturday's downhill from start number 28, finished seventh. — AFP



BANSKO: First placed US's Mikaela Shiffrin (C) celebrates on the podium with her team after winning the women's Super-G event at the FIS ski alpine World Cup in Bansko yesterday. — AFP



Qatar, S Korea to clash in Asia Cup finals

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Qatar National Handball team will face its South Korean counter-part in the final of the 19th Asian Handball Championship at 6:30 pm today.

Bahrain will play Japan at 4:30 pm for the bronze medal.

Qatar qualified for the final after defeating Bahrain 28-24 during their match on Saturday. Meanwhile, S

Korea defeated Japan 34-32 in a marathon match during which they resorted to two extra times. The four teams already qualified for the world cup finals to be held in Egypt in 2021.

Qatar: Strength and experience

The Qatari players are well built and enjoy skill and international experience, and the team's strength is in its goal-keeper, who is a strong candidate for the best goal-keeper of the championship. The Qatar team is distinguished by its varied attack that can reach the goal from all positions.

Korea: Speed and skill

Performance of the South Korean team is improving from one match to the other and appeared totally different in the main draw than it was in the preliminaries. The team depends on its goal-keeper and advanced



defense 3/3, then man to man, which confuses any team and exhaust its physical fitness.

Valero: Tough match

Qatar Handball Coach Valero Rivera Lopez said the South Korean team has very good physical fitness that was very clear in front of Japan, adding that he has high respect for them. He said the match will be difficult especially that time is short for preparation for the final match. Meanwhile, Qatar's team manager Yousuf Al-Hail said his team will continue the good performance that it gave so far. He added "we beat a major team of Bahrain which gave a fierce performance."

South Korea Handball Coach Kang Il-Koo said he respects the Qatari team and expected a difficult final. He said "we had a strong match against Japan, and we were not in best shape because of injuries, but we had the speed in returning to defense and attacking."

Yule wins Kitzbuehel slalom, Noel third

KITZBUEHEL: Daniel Yule held his nerve yesterday to register Switzerland's first World Cup slalom win in Kitzbuehel since 1968, scuppering French rival Clement Noel's hopes of defending his title.

Yule was in second place after the first leg and went on to produce a consistent second leg to ensure a combined winning total of 1min 41.50sec down the Ganslern course in partly cloudy, relatively warm conditions.

Austrian Marco Schwarz, a two-time bronze medallist (slalom, combined) at last year's world championships in Are, Sweden, finished second at 0.12sec, with defending champion Noel, who was seeking to emulate his Wengen-Kitzbuehel double from last season after victory at the Swiss resort last weekend, in third, at 0.37sec.

Unheralded Norwegian teenager Lucas Braathen, with a lowly start number of 34, had laid down the run of his life to lead the first leg.

Going into the second run, the 19-year-old Braathen, whose sixth place finish in the season opener in Soelden was to date his first top-10 finish on the circuit, had a lead of 0.33sec.

But he couldn't hold it to the line, eventually finishing fourth equal with teammate Henrik Kristoffersen, a two-time winner on the Ganslern in 2016 and 2018. "I can't believe it, I have no words," Braathen gasped. "I missed out on a podium, but I'm so happy."

Instead it was Yule, the 26-year-old born in Switzerland to Scottish parents, who took his World Cup slalom win tally to four with a first Swiss win in the Tyrolean resort since Dumeng Giovanoli in 1968.

The big loser of the day was France's Val d'Isere slalom victor Alexis Pinturault, who straddled a gate on the second run. Pinturault now sits fourth in the race for the overall World Cup title, on 642 points.

Kristoffersen shot up into the lead on 741pts thanks to his fourth-place finish, sitting ahead of compatriot Aleksander Aamodt Kilde (700) and Austrian Matthias Mayer (692), the latter boosted after winning Saturday's downhill and finishing joint second with Kilde in Friday's super-G.

Pinturault admitted to being "a little bit disappointed" at not having kept up his momentum in the battle for the big crystal globe. "Clearly, on ice I am not able to produce my best skiing," he said. "I'm not skiing very well. On both legs I lost time on the icy part up top, there's some work to do."

But with little time before Tuesday's night slalom at Schladming, a two-hour drive further into eastern Austria, Pinturault acknowledged that changes would have to wait. "It's the same mistake on two consecutive races," he lamented. "I have to find solutions but on Tuesday I'll be in the same situation, it's going to be tough in Schladming." — AFP



KITZBUEHEL: Winner Switzerland's Daniel Yule celebrates on the podium after the men's Slalom event at the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in Kitzbuehel, Austria, yesterday. — AFP

Kuwaiti Motocross champion returns with a goal of securing title



KUWAIT: The return of Red Bull athlete and two-time Bahrain Motocross Champion back to compete this year at the 2020 Bahrain Motocross Championship.

The anticipated event brings professional racers from around the Gulf, including motorsport athletes from Kuwait, Bahrain, and from the United Arab Emirates. The event draws the attention of motocross fans everywhere, and the talent pool this year proves to be no different.

Along with being twice-crowned champion on the

podium in Bahrain, Fahad Al Musallam is also a three-time Qatar Endurocross Champion, a Junior Baja World Champion, and a Kuwait Motocross Champion as well.

"The Bahrain Motocross Championship has been going on for 5 years," said Fahad Al Musallam. "And I'm still excited about it every year."

The competition is a closed-course, timed 15-minute event. The objective of any motocross race is to complete the course which includes several obstacles and technical sections across the track. Every racer must

complete as many laps as possible within the set time limit, and once that has been reached, the driver that crosses the finish line first is the winner. The event continues for two days, in order for racers to improve their times and scores. Once the event days are over, a tally is made and the champion is revealed.

The race rewards consistency as well as athletic ability. The Bahrain Motocross Championship 2020 starts on the 31st of January, 2020, and continues until the 1st of February.



Sports

Another Rahul 50 as India coast home in second T20

Third Twenty20 match in Hamilton on Wednesday

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the second Twenty20 international between New Zealand against India in Auckland yesterday

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Kohli b Thakur	33
C. Munro c Kohli b Dube	26
K. Williamson c Chahal b Jadeja	14
C. de Grandhomme c&b Jadeja	3
R. Taylor c Sharma b Bumrah	18
T. Seifert not out	33
M. Santner not out	0
Extras: (lb1, w4)	5
Total: (five wickets: 20 overs)	132
Fall of wickets: 1-48 (Guptill), 2-68 (Munro), 3-74 (de Grandhomme), 4-81 (Williamson), 5-125 (Taylor)	
Did not bat: Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Blair Tuckner, Hamish Bennett	
Bowling: Thakur 2-0-21-1 (w1), Shami 4-0-22-0, Bumrah 4-0-21-1, Chahal 4-0-33-0, Dube 2-0-16-1, Jadeja 4-0-18-2 (w2)	
India	
R. Sharma c Taylor b Southee	8
K. Rahul not out	57
V. Kohli c Seifert b Southee	11
S. Iyer c Southee b Sodhi	44
S. Dube not out	8
Extras: (w7)	7
Total: (three wickets: 17.3 overs)	135
Fall of wickets: 1-8 (Sharma), 2-39 (Kohli), 3-125 (Iyer)	
Did not bat: Manish Pandey, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah	
Bowling: Southee 3-3-0-20-2, Bennett 3-0-29-0 (w1), Tuckner 3-0-34-0, Santner 4-0-19-0, Sodhi 4-0-33-1 (w2)	

AUCKLAND: With miserly bowling and another KL Rahul half-century, India again outclassed New Zealand as they coasted to a seven-wicket victory in the second Twenty20 match in Auckland yesterday to go 2-0 up in the series.

On the Eden Park ground renowned for its short boundaries — and which produced more than 400 runs in game one on Friday — New Zealand struggled with the bat and posted a meagre 132 for five, batting first against a disciplined Indian attack.

Rahul cracked his second half-century in as many matches to lead India's reply in which they reeled in the target for the loss of only three wickets and with 15 balls to spare. "Another good performance today, especially with the ball," said Indian skipper Virat Kohli who could scarcely contain his glee, exclaiming "oh happy days" when he lost the toss and heard New Zealand choose to bat first.

Bowling first was India's strength, he said. "We demanded the bowlers stood up and took control of what we wanted to do out there, and our line and lengths... was a very good feature. Even with a low target to chase, India had an early blip when Tim Southee removed Rohit Sharma for eight and Kohli for 11.

But Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, who set up India's six-wicket win in game one, were rarely troubled in an 87-run partnership to ensure victory. Iyer was eventually dismissed for 44 while Rahul was unbeaten on 57.

Despite the comprehensive defeat for New Zealand, captain Kane Williamson stood by his decision to bat first. "India were outstanding with the ball so it was tough," he said. "But there've been good bits in both of these games without putting it all together.

"On a small ground we knew if we were able to take early wickets and try and build pressure, like they did, then you never know."

For a brief moment at the start of the game, it looked



AUCKLAND: India's Lokesh Rahul (R) bats as New Zealand's wicketkeeper Tim Seifert (L) reacts during the second Twenty20 cricket match between New Zealand and India at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday. — AFP

as if Williamson may have made the right choice when Martin Guptill smacked sixes off consecutive deliveries from Shardul Thakur in the opening over.

But for much of the remainder of the innings it was the Indian bowlers who were in charge. When Guptill was dismissed for 33 he had faced 20 deliveries and only scored off 10 of them. Tim Seifert (33 not out) and

Colin Munro (26) were the only other batsmen to pass 20, while bowling for India, left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja had figures of two for 18 off his four overs.

Jasprit Bumrah with one for 21 and Mohammed Shami with none for 22 off their four overs were also miserly. The third match in the series is in Hamilton on Wednesday.

Philander fined for swearing at England batsman

JOHANNESBURG: South African paceman Vernon Philander became the fourth cricketer to be fined and given a demerit point in the series against England when the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a sanction for swearing yesterday.

Philander, playing in his final Test before joining Somerset in the County Championship, was sanctioned for the abusive send-off he gave Jos Buttler after he dismissed the England wicketkeeper on the second day of the fourth and final Test at The Wanderers on Saturday.

The ICC said he had breached their code of conduct, relating to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during an international match".

Philander, 34, admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by match referee Andy Pycroft. He was fined 15% of his match fee. Buttler received the same sanction for a similar offence in the second Test against South Africa, when he was caught on the television stump microphones swearing repeatedly at Philander late on the final day of England's 189-run win.

On Saturday, the ICC sanctioned England all-rounder Ben Stokes for a foul-mouthed row with a spectator after his dismissal on the opening day on Friday. South Africa's top paceman Kagiso Rabada was also fined 15% of his match and given a demerit point for his over-the-top celebration when he dismissed England captain Joe Root in the third Test at Port Elizabeth.

The other players did not have previous demerit points but Rabada's was his fourth in a 24-month spell, triggering a one-match suspension. He is banned from the fourth Test in Johannesburg where his absence has been marked as South Africa struggle. — Reuters

England set weary S Africa world record 466 to win final Test

JOHANNESBURG: Joe Root made a patient half-century as England set South Africa a world record target of 466 to win the fourth and final Test at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday. The England captain scored 58 and played an anchor role before he was last man out as England were bowled out shortly before the close for 248. Root decided not to enforce the follow despite England leading by 217 runs on the first innings. Fast bowler Mark Wood took five for 46 as South Africa were bowled out for 183 in their first innings.

Quinton de Kock (76) and Dwaine Pretorius (37) kept England in the field for most of the morning and probably made sure England would decide to bat again. De Kock and Pretorius put on 79 for the eighth wicket and prevented England from wrapping up the innings early. De Kock scored his fourth half-century of what has been a poor series for the South African batsmen. His team-mates have contributed only five other 50-plus scores between them. Vernon Philander was out to the sixth ball of the day, reducing South Africa to 93 for seven, at which stage a follow-on seemed a strong possibility. It was an unhappy day for Philander, who will be retiring from international cricket at the end of the match. Apart from his early dismissal for four, he received a fine of 15 percent of his match fee for his 'send-off' of Jos Buttler on the second day and he then pulled up with a hamstring injury after bowling just nine balls in the second innings.

He left the field immediately and was sent for a scan. Despite the loss of their leading bowler, South Africa bowled and fielded better than in the first innings when England scored 400. Left-arm seam bowler Beuran Hendricks claimed a five-wicket haul on debut, finishing with five for 64 when Root was last man out to a sensational diving catch by South African captain Faf du Plessis at a wide slip.

Ben Stokes, Sam Curran and Mark Wood all batted with freedom as England stretched their lead despite losing wickets at regular intervals. Typically at the Wanderers, there was some uneven bounce as cracks opened up, which will make South Africa's task virtually impossible.

With two days remaining, England are well-placed to complete a 3-1 series win. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: England's Joe Root (L) dives for the crease as South Africa's Dane Paterson (R) tries to catch the ball during the third day of the fourth Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the third day of the fourth and final Test between South Africa and England at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday.

England, first innings, 400		England, second innings	
South Africa, first innings (overnight 88-6)		Z. Crawley c De Kock b Pretorius	24
D. Elgar c Woakes b Stokes	26	D. Sibley c Malan b Hendricks	44
P. Malan c Buttler b Wood	15	J. Denly b Paterson	8
H. van der Dussen c Stokes b Curran	0	J. Root c Du Plessis b Hendricks	58
F. du Plessis lbw b Woakes	3	B. Stokes c Van der Dussen b Hendricks	28
Q. de Kock b Wood	76	O. Pope c De Kock b Nortje	11
T. Bavuma c Stokes b Wood	6	J. Buttler c De Kock b Nortje	8
A. Nortje c Denly b Wood	6	S. Curran c Paterson b Hendricks	35
V. Philander c Broad b Woakes	4	C. Woakes c De Kock b Hendricks	0
D. Pretorius c Crawley b Stokes	37	M. Wood b Pretorius	18
B. Hendricks not out	5	S. Broad not out	1
D. Paterson c Buttler b Wood	4	Extras (b4, lb8, w1)	13
Extras (lw)	1	Total (61.3 overs)	248
Total (68.3 overs)	183	Fall of wickets: 1-56 (Crawley), 2-75 (Denly), 3-92 (Sibley), 4-136 (Stokes), 5-150 (Pope), 6-160 (Buttler), 7-206 (Curran), 8-206 (Woakes), 9-240 (Wood), 10-248 (Root)	
Fall of wickets: 1-29 (Malan), 2-37 (Van der Dussen), 3-43 (Elgar), 4-60 (Du Plessis), 5-74 (Bavuma), 6-88 (Nortje), 7-93 (Philander), 8-172 (Pretorius), 9-174 (De Kock), 10-183 (Paterson)		Bowling: Philander 1.3-1-0-0, Nortje 11-1-61-2, Paterson 13.3-5-18-1, Hendricks 15.3-2-64-5, Pretorius 18-2-87-2 (lw), Malan 2-0-5-0	
Bowling: Broad 14-3-27-0, Curran 12-4-25-1, Woakes 17-7-38-2, Wood 14.3-2-46-5, Stokes 11-1-47-2 (lw)		Match situation: South Africa need 466 to win.	

Ali Jassim Al-Khorafi retains fence jumping cup championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Equestrian Club Star Ali Jassim Al-Khorafi retained the title of "Atyab Al-Marshoud" fence jumping cup championship, organized under the patronage of Sabah Jaber Al-Mubarak at Kuwait Equestrian center. He was the only rider who jumped the fences in the differentiation round at a height of 140cm without any error. He defeated Dalia Al-Zahim, Ghazi Al-Jaraiwi, Jamila Al-Mutawa, Latifa Al-Hajiri and Abdallah Al-Roudhan.

Rider Ali Al-Khorafi said "I was able to win one of the major championship of the season despite difficulties and strong competition by riders, and the difficult course by the international designer.

He said that he was able to make a good time in the first round then participated in the differ-

entiation round as the last rider and was able to see the mistakes and speeds of each rider, then was able to jump without committing any error.

Al-Khorafi succeeded in winning the main round in the first day for a height of 130 cm, so he won both cars.

Meanwhile, in the second day, and over the height of 130 cm, Ali Al-Khorafi won first place followed by Abrar Al-Musallam, Ahmad Al-Annaz, Kadi Al-Marshoud, Rakan Al-Hasawi and Ghazi Al-Jaraiwi. Over 120 cm it was Nick Chaning who took first place, and Yousuf Al-Nuami won the 120 cm first place.

Chairman of the higher organizing committee Waleed Al-Marshoud thanked all those who contributed to the success of the championship for the seventh consecutive season.



Ali Jassim Al-Khorafi seen with the cup in this group picture.

Sports

James makes history by passing Kobe Bryant as Sixers rout Lakers

Utah Jazz rally to beat Dallas Mavericks 112-107

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James passed Kobe Bryant on the all-time scoring list with a 29-point performance on Saturday, but his Los Angeles Lakers suffered a one-sided loss to the Philadelphia 76ers, 108-91.

James, who was named to his 16th straight all-star game this week, etched his name in the record books by becoming the third leading scorer in NBA history.

With the Lakers trailing the host Philadelphia 76ers 74-52 with 7 1/2 minutes left in the third period, James received a pass from Anthony Davis at the three-point line and drove across the lane, splitting two defenders for a layup and the historic points.

At the next timeout he received a standing ovation from the crowd of 21,109 at the Wells Fargo Center arena. The basket put James at 33,644 career points, one more than former Lakers great Bryant's 33,643.

Longtime Utah Jazz star forward Karl Malone is next for James to pass with 36,928 points. Centre Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is the league's all-time scoring leader with 38,387 points.

After the game, James talked about meeting Bryant as a teenager and getting a pair of shoes from his hero. They cramped his feet but he wasn't going to take them off. "I wore them that night. I was a 15 and he was a size 14. I wore them anyways," James said.

"He was immortal offensively because of his skillset," James said. "The story is too much. Now I am here in a Lakers uniform in Philadelphia where he is from."

"The universe just puts things in your life. When you live the right way, things happen organically. It is not supposed to make sense but it just happens."

Bryant congratulated James, who is in his second season with the Lakers, on Twitter. "Continuing to move the game forward @KingJames. Much respect my brother," Bryant wrote.

James spent 11 seasons across two different stints with the Cleveland Cavaliers, with a four-season run in Miami in between. He is averaging over 25 points over 44 games this season, leading the Lakers to the Western Conference's best record of 36-10. Ben Simmons finished with 28 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists to lead the Sixers.

Tobias Harris scored 29 points and Al Horford had 16 for the Sixers, who improved to 21-2 at home. The shorthanded Sixers played without Joel Embiid (injured finger) for the 16th time this season and were also missing Josh Richardson with a strained hamstring.

Anthony Davis led the Lakers with 31 points, while James also had eight assists and seven rebounds.

IRVING SHINES

Elsewhere, Rudy Gobert finished with 22 points as the Utah Jazz rallied to beat the Dallas Mavericks 112-107. Donovan Mitchell scored a team-high 25 points while Bojan Bogdanovic added 23 points as Utah won its fourth straight game. Luka Doncic scored 25 points, Seth Curry added 19 points and Kristaps Porzingis added 15 for the Mavericks, who are 1-2 in their last three after winning four straight.

In Detroit, Kyrice Irving scored 45 points and the visiting Brooklyn Nets snapped a five-game losing skid with a 121-111 overtime victory over the Detroit Pistons.

Irving added seven assists and six rebounds in his highest scoring game since his Nets debut in October.

Jarrett Allen had 20 points, 15 rebounds and four blocks and Joe Harris tossed in 16 points for Brooklyn.

Derrick Rose, who has scored 20 or more points in 12 straight games, led Detroit with 27 points and six assists. Detroit centre Andre Drummond delivered 20 points and 21 rebounds while Svi Mykhailiuk con-



PHILADELPHIA: Danny Green #14 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

tributed 19 points and Bruce Brown added 17 points with five assists. Drummond missed the previous two games after taking an elbow to the face at Washington

on Monday. Brooklyn scored the first six points of overtime and Harris nailed a three-pointer with 2:40 remaining to seal the match. — AFP

South Korea lift AFC U-23 title

BANGKOK: South Korea won the AFC U23 Championship final by dramatically beating Saudi Arabia 1-0 after extra-time.

Saudi Arabia's superbly organised defence looked set to frustrate the South Koreans until Jeong Tae-wook's 113th-minute winner.

It was the South Koreans' first title in the fourth edition of this tournament, giving them the perfect ending to a campaign in which they qualified for their ninth straight Olympic Games.

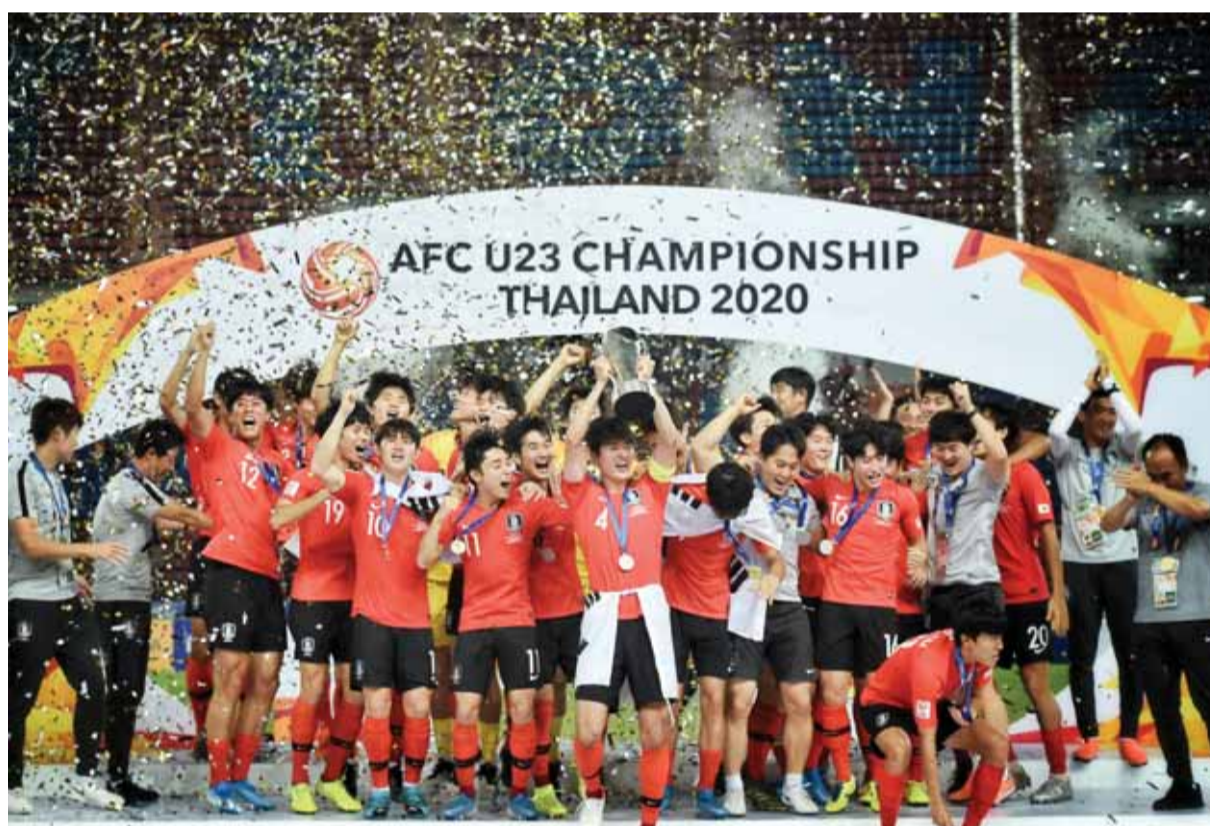
With the Top Three sides in the competition earning places at Tokyo 2020, Olympic qualification had already been secured for the two finalists, alongside third-placed Australia. But continental glory was at stake and, given their impressive form, South Korea were favourites coming into the final.

After a scrappy opening period, Jeong Woo-yeong brought the game to life in the 20th minute. The SC Freiburg forward tricked his way past a defender to go through on goal before Mohammed Al Yami narrowed the angle and saved his shot.

The Saudis responded 10 minutes later when Abdullah Al-Hamdan saw his effort blocked from close range. Three minutes from half-time, Jeong Woo-yeong missed the best chance of the first 45 minutes, blasting over from 12 yards out.

South Korea again came close to making the breakthrough in the 58th minute. Lee Dong-jun cut inside from the right and angled a shot for the far corner, but Al Yami got down to make a fine save.

Saudi Arabia finally showed some more attack-



BANGKOK: South Korean players celebrate winning the AFC U-23 Championship final football match between Saudi Arabia and South Korea at Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

ing intent as the match edged toward the 90-minute mark and Abdulrahman Ghareeb fired a powerful effort over from 20 yards with three minutes remaining.

The match entered extra time and, after an uneventful 20 minutes, Lee Dong-gyeong threat-

ened with a low shot from the edge of the box, but Al Yami made the save again. But South Korea finally broke the deadlock in the 113th minute when Jeong Tae-wook rose to head home Lee Dong-gyeong's free kick, sparking wild celebrations. — AFP

Atletico held by Leganes

MADRID: Atletico Madrid's goalscoring troubles resurfaced as they drew 0-0 at home to a struggling Leganes side that finished with a defender in goal after the dismissal of Ivan Cuellar. Atletico crashed out of the Copa del Rey in mid-week after losing to third-tier Cultural Leonesa, and yesterday's latest setback would appear to rule Diego Simeone's team out of title contention. They are now winless in four games, their surprise cup exit preceded by a 2-0 loss at Eibar in La Liga last weekend and defeat by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup.

Atletico could finish the day 10 points behind city rivals Real, who travel to Real Valladolid later, ahead of next week's Madrid derby at the Santiago Bernabeu. Simeone admitted on Saturday his "life is consumed by Atletico" and while his stock among the club's fans remains largely undiminished, there are concerns about his team's direction of travel.

"Honestly, we're not talking about the coach in the changing room," said Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak. "We all speak with him as players and we're here to get better and to play football the fans enjoy."

"But what pleases supporters is to see their team win. Unfortunately that hasn't been the case these past few matches. We're going through a bad patch." Having sold French striker Antoine Griezmann to Barcelona, scoring goals has been Atletico's fundamental weakness this season. They have managed only 22 in 21 league games, the same number as Real Mallorca in 17th.

Angel Correa and Alvaro Morata both tested



MADRID: Leganes' Nigerian defender Kenneth Omeruo (R) challenges Atletico Madrid's Spanish forward Alvaro Morata during the Spanish league football match Club Atletico de Madrid against Club Deportivo Leganes SAD at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

Cuellar in the first half while Recio went close for Leganes with a curling strike that was deflected over by an Atletico defender. Substitute Ivan Saponjic headed over for Atletico in stoppage time before bottom side Leganes were forced to play the final minutes with left-back Jonathan Silva in goal after

Cuellar was shown a second yellow card for time wasting.

Atletico continue to negotiate with Paris Saint-Germain over the signing of Edinson Cavani but even if the French club can be persuaded to sell this month, Cavani's arrival may come too late. — AFP

Martinez sees red as Nainggolan frustrates Inter Milan

MILAN: Radja Nainggolan grabbed the equaliser in a 1-1 draw for Cagliari to dent the title ambitions of his parent club Inter Milan, who struggled to a third consecutive stalemate yesterday. Tensions reached boiling point in the San Siro as Inter's goal scorer Lautaro Martinez was sent off in injury time for arguing with the referee.

The Argentinian risks a long suspension as he roared, kicked the ball and punched the plexiglass at the side of the pitch, after being dragged away by his teammates. Antonio Conte's second-placed Inter are now three points adrift of leaders Juventus, who travel to 13th-placed Napoli later.

The northerners can also be caught by Lazio, in third, who are three points behind before their derby clash against fifth-placed Roma. A win would see Simone Inzaghi's Lazio join Inter in the standings, with a game in hand to be played in February against Hellas Verona.

Martinez's frustration mirrored that of his team who have now been held to three consecutive 1-1 draws — at home against Atalanta and Cagliari and at Lecce. Inter have taken 11 points from the last seven games, not enough to keep pace with eight-time reigning champions Juventus.

Inter had gotten off to a promising start with Ashley Young having an immediate impact on his debut after arriving from Manchester United, providing the cross which allowed Martinez to head in just before half an hour.

But the hosts failed to build on the momentum and the Sardinians stayed in the match until Nainggolan's long-range equaliser which took a deflection into goal on 78 minutes. Romelu Lukaku missed a late chance for the hosts, sending wide, as both sides pushed desperately for the winner. — AFP

Liverpool too good for Man City: Guardiola

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola conceded the Premier League title to Liverpool and believes no team in the world would be able to stay with the European champions this season. Liverpool are well on course for a first league title in 30 years as they lead City by 16 points with a game in hand after winning 22 and drawing one of their 23 games.

City have won back-to-back titles with a combined 198 points, denying Liverpool last season despite Jurgen Klopp's men posting 97 points - the third highest tally in top-flight English football history. "Liverpool obviously will be champions of the Premier League, but they would be champions in Spain, champions in Italy, champions in Germany," said Guardiola.

"They would be champions everywhere after 23 games, 22 victories, 1 draw." City have lost five league games this season, but Guardiola defended their record by pointing out it would still be good enough to mount a title challenge in Europe's other top leagues.

"In the recent past when Chelsea won the league, the next season, they didn't qualify for the Champions League, Leicester the same and Chelsea again the same. When we won the league we repeated the league," added Guardiola.

"In Spain with the points we have we would be there, one or two points behind the leader, in Germany we would be there, one or two points behind the leader, in Italy as well. "But Liverpool are just fantastic, phenomenal, overwhelming. So we have to accept it and learn from that." — AFP

25 66th World Cup for Shiffrin with Bansko super-G win

26 Another Rahul 50 as India coast home in second T20

27 South Korea lift AFC U-23 title



Third-tier Shrewsbury hold Liverpool

Man Utd, Man City cruise into FA Cup fifth round



BIRMINGHAM: Shrewsbury Town's Grenadian defender Aaron Pierre (L) shoots past Liverpool's Welsh midfielder Neco Williams (R) during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between between Shrewsbury Town and Liverpool at the Montgomery Waters Meadow Stadium in Shrewsbury, north-west of Birmingham in England yesterday. — AFP

SHREWSBURY: Premier League leaders Liverpool were given a huge scare by third-tier Shrewsbury Town as they squandered a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 away in a pulsating FA Cup fourth round tie yesterday.

A much-changed Liverpool appeared to be cruising into the fifth round for the first time since Juergen Klopp took over in 2015, but Shrewsbury substitute Jason Cummins had the compact New Meadow stadium rocking with a memorable brace.

First he coolly tucked away a 65th-minute penalty and then he outpaced Liverpool's nervy back four to beat Adrian with a cool right-foot finish from the edge of the area. Liverpool, who have been untouchable in the Premier League this season making a first title for 30 years almost inevitable, took the lead through teenager Curtis Jones after 15 minutes. The seven-time Cup winners doubled their lead 28 seconds after halftime when Shrewsbury's Donald Love scored an own goal.

But European and world club champion Liverpool

lost concentration and were punished as Shrewsbury roared back to set up a thrilling climax and earn a replay at Anfield.

Earlier, Manchester United put a torrid week behind them by thrashing third-tier Tranmere 6-0 as holders Manchester City also cruised into the FA Cup fifth round with a 4-0 win over Fulham yesterday.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was badly in need of a convincing performance after 2-0 defeats to Liverpool and Burnley in the Premier League over the past seven days. Many tipped the Red Devils to get bogged down on a sandy surface at Prenton Park, but a flying start thanks to a host of unlikely goalscorers ensured there was no chance of an upset.

Captain Harry Maguire led by example by striding forward to smash home his first goal for the club since an £80 million (\$105 million) move from Leicester.

Diogo Dalot then also grabbed his first United goal before Jesse Lingard curled home for just a second

time in a year for club and country inside 16 minutes.

Phil Jones then nodded home his first United effort since 2014 and Anthony Martial's deflected strike made it five before the break. Solskjaer could then afford the luxury of resting Martial, Maguire and Nemanja Matic for most of the second half ahead of Wednesday's attempt to overturn a 3-1 first leg deficit against City in the League Cup semi-finals. Tahith Chong was one of those introduced and he was brought down by Tranmere goalkeeper Scott Davies, allowing Mason Greenwood to score United's sixth from the penalty spot. City manager Pep Guardiola hopes more fans show up at the Etihad Stadium for the derby in mid-week after questioning why there were 15,000 empty seats for his side's stroll past Fulham. Nearly 40,000 were in attendance to see Tim Ream's sixth-minute red card give the Championship side a mountain to climb after he hauled down Gabriel Jesus inside the box. Ilkay Gundogan converted the resulting penalty

before Bernardo Silva's smart turn and shot quickly doubled City's advantage. The visitors then held out for nearly an hour but two headers in three minutes from Jesus gave the scoreline a more accurate reflection of the English champions' dominance.

"Hopefully more people can come than today, hopefully (they) can support us more," said Guardiola. "I don't know the reason why, but it was not full."

Guardiola's men have now won 17 domestic cup ties in a row. The Catalan is relying on more cup success for silverware this season after conceding the Premier League title is beyond his side with Liverpool 16 points clear at the top of the table. "Liverpool are just fantastic, phenomenal, overwhelming. So we have to accept it and learn from that," Guardiola said on the eve of the game. Jurgen Klopp showed Liverpool's focus is very much on the title as he made 11 changes to the side that won at Wolves on Thursday for the trip to League One Shrewsbury Town later. — Agencies

Federer roars into record 15th Australian Open quarter-final

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer flicked a switch after losing the opening set to crush Marton Fucsovics and book a record 15th Australian Open quarter-final yesterday, with unheralded American Tenny Sandgren his next hurdle.

The Swiss master took time to work out the Hungarian but when he did it was one-way traffic, romping to a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 victory on Rod Laver Arena to edge closer to a seventh Melbourne title and 21st Grand Slam crown.

Awaiting him in the last eight on Tuesday is the 100th-ranked Sandgren, who upset 12th-seeded Italian Fabio Fognini over four intense sets. "I think it's good for me to know that I can put streaks like this together," said Federer, who won seven games in a row straddling the second and third sets.

"I think in any tournament I played very well, I had those streaks happening at some point," said Federer, who is into a record

15th Melbourne quarter-final, surpassing John Newcombe's 14.

It will be also be his 57th appearance in the last eight at Grand Slams. No one else is close, with Novak Djokovic next in line on 46. "It was nice especially off the (John) Millman match, after losing the first set (against Fucsovics), that I had that in me, at the end I was able to control things. So that was nice."

The ageless Federer was pushed to a gruelling five sets by Millman in round three, but showed no signs of tiredness against Fucsovics despite being 38. Sandgren, a devout Christian, achieved his best Grand Slam result at Melbourne Park by reaching the last eight in 2018, but it was overshadowed by a row over his political views and links to right-wing activists.

He has put the controversy behind him and shown battling qualities to make the last eight again, and said he was relishing

the chance to play an all-time great. "It will be very special, very special. To play him on a big stage like quarters of a Slam would be a ton of fun really," he said.

The pair have never met before, as Federer noted: "I've played a lot of tennis in my life but never against Tennys." I watched quite a little bit today against Fognini because it was exciting, it was close," he added. "It was impressive how he was competing. I'm looking forward to a tough one."

Both Federer and Fucsovics took time to feel each other out and it went with serve to 3-3 before the Hungarian grabbed the first break on the back of some high quality service returns. The unheralded 27-year-old, ranked 67, looked composed, with his power and aggressive forehand unsettling Federer and he held his nerve to grab the set — the first he had ever taken off the Swiss. Undaunted, Federer kept his cool, started to find Fucsovics' weaknesses and dictate the points, earning a break to go 2-0 ahead in the second set. He didn't let up as the Hungarian struggled to stay in touch, broken again as the tide turned and normal business resumed for the Swiss great.

Fucsovics, who was attempting to



MELBOURNE: Switzerland's Roger Federer hits a return against Hungary's Marton Fucsovics during their men's singles match on day seven of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

become the first player from his country to make the Melbourne quarters, was shell-shocked as Federer turned on the style. He raced to a double break lead in the third with some brilliant passing shots and there was no way back for a player who came into the

match in decent form, winning his three previous matches without dropping a set. Federer, who could face Djokovic in the semi-finals if he gets past Sandgren, wrapped it up in 2hrs 11mins, almost two hours less than his epic against Millman. — AFP