



3 Kuwait celebrates 14th year of Amir's reign



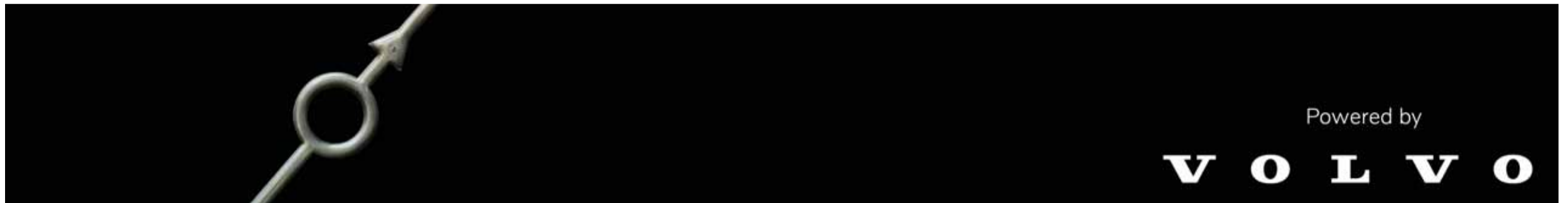
11 Defying US, Britain approves restricted 5G role for Huawei



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28 Federer saves seven match points to set up Djokovic semi



Trump proposes Palestinian state with capital in eastern Jerusalem

White House map shows borders • Oman, UAE, Bahrain envoys attend announcement

Amir attends flag-hoisting event



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends a flag-raising ceremony at Bayan Palace yesterday. The Amir was given a 21-gun salute and warmly welcomed by army, police and National Guard personnel. Sheikh Sabah then hoisted the flag and the national anthem was played. — KUNA (See Page 2)

Ex-health minister, bedoon activist handed jail terms

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The ministers court yesterday issued a seven-year jail sentence against a former health minister and issued the same sentence against a former ministry undersecretary, a current senior official and an agent of a foreign company after convicting them for squandering public funds. The court, in its first jail

sentence against a former minister, asked the convicts to pay KD 10,000 each to suspend the implementation of the jail term, but asked all of them to return KD 81 million to the state.

The minister and officials have been on trial before the special court for the past several months on graft charges. The minister was grilled by MP Rakan Al-Nasef over alleged financial and administrative violations. Nasef yesterday welcomed the court verdict, describing it as "historic", adding the verdict launches a new phase in which more ministers and senior officials will be tried. The lawmaker called on the prime minister to closely watch ministers in order to prevent any violations against public funds in the future. In another court case, the criminal court yesterday

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Qatar Amir appoints trusted confidant as new prime minister

DOHA: Qatar's ruler appointed a trusted adviser as prime minister yesterday, the government said, replacing a veteran regime insider who had spearheaded diplomatic efforts to end a regional embargo on Doha. New Prime Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani previously headed up the office of gas-rich Qatar's ruler, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, according to the government website.

The new premier also takes over as interior minister from predecessor Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani, although other key posts remain unchanged, including the defense, finance and energy portfolios. The amir issued an order "to appoint His Excellency Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani as prime minister", the amir's office, the Amiri Diwan, said in a statement, adding it was effective immediately.

He was sworn in during a ceremony at the Diwan in downtown Doha early yesterday and security forces blocked traffic to clear roads for VIP convoys moving around the city. King's College London assistant professor and regional expert Andreas Krieg described the new head of government as "one of the most trusted advisors and confidants of the amir".

Continued on Page 24

China fighting 'demon' virus as contagion spreads

WUHAN, China: President Xi Jinping said yesterday China was in a struggle against a "demon" epidemic, as the death toll from the new SARS-like virus soared to 106 and the first cases of human-to-human contagion were detected abroad. Xi made his remarks during talks with head of the World Health Organization in Beijing as a host of nations prepared to airlift their citizens from Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak.

"Chinese people are currently engaged in a serious struggle against an epidemic of a new type of coronavirus infection," Xi told WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "The epidemic is a demon, and we cannot let this demon hide," the Chinese leader said, pledging that the government would be transparent and release information on the virus in a "timely" manner. His comments came after anger simmered on Chinese social media over the handling of the health emergency by local officials in central Hubei province, where the disease first emerged in December.

Some experts have praised Beijing for being more reactive and open about this virus compared to its handling of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic of 2002-2003.

Continued on Page 24

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday proposed creation of a Palestinian state with a capital in eastern Jerusalem, dependent on Palestinians taking steps to become self-governing, in an effort to achieve a peace breakthrough in their decades of conflict with Israel. "Today, Israel takes a big step towards peace," Trump told a White House news conference, standing alongside visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he revealed key points of the plan already strongly rejected by the Palestinians.

"My vision presents a win-win opportunity for both sides, a realistic two state solution that resolves the risk of Palestinian statehood to Israel's security," Trump said. The White House later said that a future Palestinian state would remain demilitarized under the

plan proposed by Trump. "The vision provides for a demilitarized Palestinian state living peacefully alongside Israel, with Israel retaining security responsibility west of the Jordan River," it said in a statement.

The White House also released its proposal for the future borders of Israeli and Palestinian states. The map shows the West Bank area containing some 15 Israeli settlements, connected to the Gaza Strip area by only a tunnel. This would technically fulfill Trump's promise of a contiguous Palestinian state. Senior administration officials, briefing Reuters on the plan the president announced at the White House, said that under Trump's proposed Middle East peace plan the United States will recognize Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

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Amir attends Kuwait's flag-hoisting ceremony



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend a flag-hoisting ceremony at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves during the ceremony.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended a flag-raising ceremony at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior state officials attended the event. His Highness the Amir was given a 21-bullet salute and was warmly welcomed by Army, Police and National Guard personnel. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad then hoisted the flag and the National Anthem was played. Major Fahad Humoud Al-Shemari then recited a poem marking the occasion. —KUNA



Major Fahad Humoud Al-Shemari recites a poem during the ceremony.



(From left) Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel, Justice Minister Fahad Al-Afasi, Audit Bureau chief Faisal Al-Shaya and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the Kuwaiti flag.



(From left) National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem, Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



Kuwait Police and National Guard officers salute the political leadership.



(From left) Services Minister Mubarak Al-Harees, Social Affairs Minister Ghadeer Aseeri, Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi, Public Works Minister Rana Al-Fares and Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Senior state officials seen in attendance.

Kuwaiti flag flutters aloft to kick off national celebrations

KUWAIT: A festive atmosphere pervaded Kuwait's six governorates yesterday as a nationwide flag-hoisting ceremony was held to usher in national celebrations and mark the 14th anniversary of the ascension of His Highness the Amir. Leading the festivities in their respective administrative divisions as Kuwait celebrates its 59th Independence Day and 29th Liberation Day, the country's six governors conveyed their heartiest congratulations to the Kuwaiti leadership and people over the joyous occasion. "The security and stability of Kuwait is plenty to be grateful for," said Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, wishing the nation continued prosperity and development.

Extending his well wishes to the Kuwaiti people, Hawally Governor retired Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah recalled Kuwait's eventful history, saying such events are an opportunity for Kuwaitis to demonstrate their "patriotic fervor." The Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Mahmoud Bushehri congratulated the Kuwaiti leadership and people on the joyous occasion, saying he is immensely proud of his fellow compatriots' achievements across various fields.

Speaking on the national celebrations, Al-Jahra Governor Nasser Al-Hajraf emphasized that His Highness the Amir's wisdom and shrewdness have garnered him the adulation of the international community. "Our hearts are filled with joy as we celebrate these joyous events," said Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Sabah, who added that the sacrifices the Kuwaiti people made in the name of their country would forever stand the test of time. Al-Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Meshaal Al-Sabah said the national flag represents an "emblem" of unity that represents the sheer patriotism Kuwaitis exude. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Hawally Governor retired Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah hoists Kuwait's flag during a ceremony yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Sabah delivers a speech during a flag-hoisting ceremony yesterday.



Children wave Kuwaiti flags during a ceremony organized by the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate yesterday.



Kuwait's flag is hoisted during a ceremony organized by Al-Farwaniya Governorate yesterday.

Local

Kuwait celebrates 14-year anniversary of Amir's reign



KUWAIT: In this file photo, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah swears in before the parliament as the 15th Amir and ruler of Kuwait. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait celebrates today the 14-year anniversary of the ascendency of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as he continues his leadership of this nation and its people. It all started when His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad swore in before the parliament as the 15th Amir and ruler of Kuwait amid huge support from the public and local officials. Perhaps what came in His Highness the Amir's speech to the nation last November, that he stressed to his people and his nation's stability, when saying "I call upon my fellow citizens to be aware of the interests of our dear nation, and protection of its security and stability, stand united against whoever tries to undermine national unity, and stay away from assemblies that might deviate from their objectives and lead to chaos."

Decades-long commitment

The fourth child of the late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Sabah's wisdom and intelligence stems from a decades-long commitment to serving in the social, political and diplomatic spheres following extensive travel and tutelage at Al-Mubarakiya School; Kuwait's first formal educational establishment named after the late ruler, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's initial foray into public office came in 1954, when he was appointed member in the supreme executive committee tasked with the role of the regulation of government interests and bodies. A year later, he was handed the role of director of the department of social and labor affairs, where he was instrumental in several factors, namely regulating the relationship between employer and employee. Upon the expansion of his role to include director of the publications department in 1957, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad demonstrated a commitment to reviving old books and manuscripts and tasked a committee with writing the first book detailing the history of Kuwait.

Kuwait's journalism, regarded one of the most transparent in the Middle East, continues to thrive thanks to His Highness the Amir, who was behind the publications' law, which remains in use today, albeit with some minor amendments. As Kuwait declared its inde-

pendence in 1961, he was appointed member of the Kuwaiti constitution's founding council. This was followed by his appointment in the first official cabinet, where he assumed the role of minister of guidance in 1962. Only one year later, he began a journey as minister of foreign affairs, where he remained the top man responsible for delivering Kuwait's diplomacy to the world for 40 years.

Balanced foreign policy

On May 11, 1963, during the first year of Sheikh Sabah's time in office as minister, Kuwait became a member of the United Nations. Diplomatically, he was involved in Kuwait-hosted talks in 1966 between warring parties in Yemen, attended by representatives from Egypt and Saudi Arabia aimed at putting an end to the Yemeni civil war. When the relationship deteriorated between South and North Yemen, with both involved in border clashes, Sheikh Sabah visited the two countries (at the time) helping forge a peace agreement in 1972. He also successfully mediated an agreement of diplomatic principles between Oman and South Yemen, which was followed by a joint announcement of the resumption of diplomatic relations from Kuwait in 1984.

Throughout his tenure, the then minister assumed a balanced foreign policy that enabled Kuwait to overcome some difficult periods such as the Iraq-Iran War of 1980 and its repercussions on the internal and external security and stability of his country. He also forged a strong relationship with countries around the world, particularly the five permanent member nations of the United Nations Security Council. These strong ties culminated in the emergence of a 35-nation coalition that helped liberate Kuwait from invasion by Iraq in 1991 as a result of a Security Council resolution that paved the way for a military offensive against the occupying forces.

Alongside his role as foreign minister, His Highness Sheikh Sabah was handed numerous roles due to his wise policies and diplomatic proficiency, namely acting information minister (1971-1975), deputy prime minister (1978), acting information minister (1982), deputy prime minister (1985-1992) and first deputy prime minister and foreign minister (1992). In 2001, he was tasked with forming

the Kuwaiti cabinet in the place of the then Crown Prince and Prime Minister the late Amir Sheikh Saad Al- Abdullah Al-Sabah. Two years later, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became prime minister upon Amir's decree. It is during his time as prime minister that his ability to guide domestic policy came to light. The prime minister adopted a comprehensive development-based vision focused particularly on economic growth through support of the private sector and entrepreneurship amongst the youth.

Huge development

On the economic spectrum, a tour in Asia, including China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, at the head of a business delegation in 2004 resulted in the joint signature of 10 mega deals and projects. He remained premier until 2006 when a cabinet session passed a motion

appointing him Amir of Kuwait. Over the 13 years under his reign, Kuwait has witnessed huge development concentrated on a number of mega projects like Sabah Al-Ahmad Marine City - the first fully-developed by the private sector. His Highness the Amir made comments urging nationals to stand together in the face of challenges and threats, namely the June 2015 terrorist attack on Al-Sadeq Mosque, in which 26 people were martyred and resulted in the injury of 200 more. Shortly after the suicide attack, His Highness the Amir took it upon himself to visit the location in person unannounced, where he uttered the renowned paternal words: "Those are my children." While leading thousands of Kuwaitis who came to attend the mass funerals for the victims, His Highness the Amir urged "the Kuwaiti family to stand together united through troubles and strife in tackling violence and fundamentalist rhetoric that aims to undermine the other."

On the scale of his foreign policy, Kuwait over recent years had pioneering role in the global humanitarian field thanks to his wise policies. Kuwait hosted three pledging conferences for international governments and organizations, co-chaired a similar event in London and attended another European Union-organized event in Brussels. The Kuwait-hosted donors conferences raised a total of \$7.5 billion from attending nations and organizations, while Kuwait handed out a total \$1.6 billion across all five gatherings as support for the victims of the Syrian conflict. The endeavors overseen by His Highness the Amir earned him the unprecedented title of 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait, the title of 'Humanitarian Centre', both granted by the United Nations. In February 2018, Kuwait also hosted a pledging conference dedicated to efforts aimed at rebuilding cities and towns in Iraq reclaimed from the so-called Islamic State group. These efforts have been commended worldwide and have transformed from a unilateral effort to a global ini-

tiative, receiving the full backing of the United States and the European Union.

In 2018, His Highness inaugurated a number of important projects in the country, such as Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center and the Kuwait Motor City, Al-Jahra Medical City and the new passenger terminal 4 at Kuwait International Airport and Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital. In 2019, His Highness opened Sheikh Jaber Causeway, which is one of the most prominent mega projects in the country and the fourth longest sea bridge in the world. In terms of strengthening friendly relations and pushing diplomatic efforts, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad made an official visit to Iraq in June 2019, which is the first of its kind by a high-ranking Kuwaiti official to Baghdad since 1990, during which he launched a new era in the march of relations at various levels between the two brotherly countries.

'Dean of Diplomacy'

From the internal affair to the external affairs, which His Highness was and still attaches great care to, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's diplomacy was in the interest of the Gulf and the region as a whole, he is the 'Dean of Diplomacy' and he has the decisive role in resolving disputes and reduce tensions in the region, especially keeping the GCC unity. From this standpoint, His Highness at the emergency Gulf summit in May 2019, he called on his brothers, the GCC leaders, to put an end to the dispute and prevail in wisdom and dialogue so that the GCC countries can achieve the hopes and aspirations of their people. His Highness was not only keen on the unity of the Gulf, but also unity of the Arab countries, as he stressed in his important speech before the Arab leaders at the emergency Arab summit held in Makkah May 31, 2013, that the Arab nation suffers from difficult situations and a sharp retreat in its security and stability, as he called to dialogue, rather than clash in regard to the escalation in the region. — KUNA

Crown Prince, state officials congratulate Amir on anniversary

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a congratulatory cable from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday, on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of His Highness' assumption of office. In the cable, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf praised the prominent achievements of His Highness the Amir at all levels. His Highness the Crown Prince also wished His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah a long healthy life and more development for Kuwait, under his wise leadership. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, thanking him for his kind feelings and praise of His Highness Sheikh Sabah's achievements. His Highness the Amir also wished His Highness Sheikh Nawaf a long healthy life and further development for Kuwait and its people.

His Highness the Amir also received a congratulatory cable from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, in which he hailed His Highness' great achievements in the humanitarian field, as well as his efforts to protect international peace and security. He also underlined Kuwait's political, economic and social developments under the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah, as his efforts were deeply admired by the Arab World and the international community. Ghanem wished His Highness a long healthy life and more development for Kuwait. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Speaker Ghanem, thanking him and the MPs for their kind feelings. His Highness Sheikh Sabah noted that the development in different sectors in Kuwait is due to the hard work and determination of Kuwaiti people to achieve success on all levels.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir

received a congratulatory cable from Head of Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, in which he expressed his gratitude for His Highness Sheikh Sabah's wise leadership and great achievements on all levels. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali, thanking him for his kind feelings. His Highness the Amir also prayed to God to protect Kuwait's peace and security and wished His Highness Sheikh Salem a long healthy life. Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a cable to His Highness the Amir, in which he noted that the anniversary is a joyful national occasion. He expressed his deepest admiration of His Highness' wise leadership, leading Kuwait into a bright future. Moreover, he wished His Highness Sheikh Sabah a long healthy life and further development for Kuwait on all levels. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad, thanking him all members of the National Guard for their kind feelings. His Highness the Amir also prayed to God to protect Kuwait's peace and security and wished everyone a long healthy life.

His Highness the Amir received similar cables as well from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in which they praised the great achievements Kuwait saw under the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah, and wished His Highness a long healthy life and further development for Kuwait on all levels. In return, His Highness the Amir sent cables thanking them for their kind feelings and wishing them a long healthy life. — KUNA



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Local

Plan to lay off 25,000 expats, replace them with citizens: MP

Kuwaitis seeking private sector jobs up 8% in 2019

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Chairman of the parliamentary manpower committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the committee discussed various proposals to be included in a single report on employing children of Kuwaiti women. "There is a plan to set a timeline to prioritize appointing Kuwaiti women's children in various state bodies," Saleh added, noting that their employment procedures and privileges will be set by each body.

Saleh noted that the committee had been notified of the availability of 1,500 job vacancies for Kuwaitis in the banking sector. "We are in real trouble in view of the increasing number of unemployed graduates and the lack of clear policies to enroll them in the labor market," he warned, noting that the total number of citizens registered at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) awaiting employment had dropped to 6,000. Furthermore, Saleh spoke about a plan to lay off 25,000 expats and replace them with citizens, without providing any more details. In addition, Saleh stressed that there are no Kuwaiti nurses because Shadadiya university does not have a nursing faculty.

Lawmakers have been pushing the government in recent years to create more jobs for national manpower in the private sector, which relies heavily on expatriate labor.

Most government plans in this regard had failed to encourage citizens to leave the generally more rewarding and less demanding public sector job in favor of the commonly high demanding, less rewarding job in private companies. Expatriate make up more than 90 percent of the private



1,500 jobs available for Kuwaitis

sector's workforce - a figure lawmakers usually blame for the country's demographic imbalance and often demand reducing in order to rectify the said imbalance while at the same time create more jobs for Kuwaiti jobseekers.

Meanwhile, national labor statistics issued by the manpower authority showed 14,697 citizens, including 55



MP Khalil Al-Saleh

percent with university degrees, were awaiting employment in the private sector in 2019 compared to 15,600 in 2018, said informed sources, noting that the total number of citizens seeking private sector employment had increased by 8 percent in 2019.

In other news, Minister of Education Saud Al-Harbi issued a ministerial decision authorizing assistant under-secretary for public education Osama Al-Sultan to be the ministry's acting under-secretary. Harbi also endorsed the results of the interviews conducted to select an administrative and technical affairs manager for Ahmadi educational zone and the appointment of Ameen Mohammed Fahd Tumeiher in the position. Meanwhile, high-ranking educational sources said Harbi will continue reshuffling the ministry's top officials with the aim of injecting fresh blood and exchanging expertise.

No coronavirus cases registered in Kuwait: Health Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait is free from the new strain of coronavirus. In statements to the press on Monday, the minister pointed out that no single case of infection has been detected or reported across the country so far. He advised people to seek credible information in this regard from the ministry's official sources. Sheikh



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah

Basel has stated that the ministry, upon instructions from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and in coordination with the World Health Organization, had put into effect the international plan of action to prevent and control the spread of the deadly virus.

Meanwhile, the ministry's Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that as a precautionary measure, relevant bodies in the state have recently refused to allow some people to enter the country. This measure is applied worldwide to control and prevent the spread of such kind of diseases, he pointed out. In time of epidemic, countries reduce reception of people coming from infected areas to its minimum limit, only allowing those with official capacity and after conducting necessary examinations to avoid the transmission of the disease, he argued.

On Thursday, Sanad affirmed that the Ministry of Health, in coordination with other state bodies, has taken all preventive and precautionary measures to confront the virus. He assured that all sectors of the ministry are ready to deal with any relevant emergency. Sanad clarified that the entire health sector has been equipped with all necessary equipment and devices to confront and stop the spread of the deadly virus. The ministry has also issued instructions to doctors and health practitioners about how to deal with suspected infected cases, he said. He added that the ministry is also coordinating with relevant international and regional organizations in this regard. — KUNA

Kuwait aviation regulator seals deal with UAE counterpart

DUBAI: The civil aviation authorities of Kuwait and the UAE yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) dealing with maintenance safety, part of efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation's chief, signed the MoU on behalf of Kuwait, alongside his counterpart in the UAE Seif Al-Suwaidi, amid an international aviation investment summit in Dubai. The deal aims to boost aviation safety in both countries, the Kuwaiti official said, focusing on more efficiency and expedition in maintenance procedures. The deal will prove equally beneficial for both countries, allowing aviation officials a platform for knowledge exchange over aircraft maintenance, according to UAE Minister of Economy Sultan Al-Mansoori. He described the deal as a 'launchpad' for greater cooperation in the aviation sector, one that would help propel this crucial industry to greater heights. — KUNA



DUBAI: Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah (left) and his UAE counterpart Seif Al-Suwaidi sign the agreement. — KUNA

Kuwait bans poultry products from 6 countries

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Secretary general of the supreme food safety committee at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition Adel Al-Suwaidi said that the committee's first meeting in 2020 came up with a number of recommendations to achieve food safety. The committee's recommendations include banning the import of all fresh, chilled, frozen and manufactured poultry products and eggs, except those treated at 70 degrees centigrade, from India, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Czech Republic because of the spread of bird flu there. The recommendations also include banning the import of all fresh, chilled, frozen and manufactured ruminant products, except those treated at 70 degrees centigrade, from Libya because of the spread of Rift Valley fever disease.

Family care

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri announced concluding maintenance works at the Hawally family care hostel, adding that tenants will be soon moved in after furnishing it according to international standards. Aseeri added that the ministry is keen on providing welfare and services to children hosted at those care houses throughout their life stages including meals, clothes, modern vehicles for transport, education, scholarships and follow-up of students inside and outside Kuwait.

Emergency plans

Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department strongly hailed the success achieved by the national project 'Jahzi' (Ready!) through coordination amongst various state bodies and sectors to qualify and train national manpower on running and operating government bodies' strategic reserves during emergencies, which was executed for the first time in 2019. In this regard, head of the Capital emergency team and coordinator between the municipality and the civil defense Zaid Al-Enezi said that Jahzi2, the second phase of the project, was launched recently. Enezi explained that 120 male and female volunteers will be trained to take the total number of volunteers in the civil defense committee to 400 by the end of 2020. He added that the second phase of the project is being held in the period of Jan 5 to 30, 2020 and that the aim of the project is to prepare national well-trained volunteers to operate various facilities in times of distress and crises.

Kuwait, Saudi eye closer cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khodhr and head of the Saudi national guard's training and education authority Maj Gen Nayef Al-Saud and his accompanying delegation discussed mutual cooperation on Monday. During the meeting, the two sides also dealt with the key topics of common concern, mainly the military field, the Kuwaiti Defense Ministry's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a press statement. They further discussed means of developing cooperation between the two sisterly countries, it added. In addition, Deputy Chief of Staff Lt Gen Khaled Al-Sabah and the Saudi official and his delegation focused on bilateral cooperation at the command of the Kuwaiti ground forces, it noted. — KUNA

News in brief

Green light for Discovery Mall businesses

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan responded positively to demands of small business owners in Discovery Mall and told them their stores will not be closed as planned by the end of this month to start the third phase of Shaheed Park. People at the mall were happy, and several young investors described the speedy response of Amir Diwan officials as an action by a loving father who moves to contain a problem his sons face, and this is something they are accustomed to in Kuwait. They said the diwan's financial and administrative director Abdelaziz Ishaq told them they will be given enough time to continue with their activity at the mall and promised to find a way that allows them to continue operating while the park is being developed. — Al-Qabas

Visas denied

KUWAIT: Informed diplomatic sources said many Kuwaitis have been denied Schengen visas, especially those wanting to go to France, based on previous visits to the country in which they used tourist visas and received medical treatment in hospitals without paying for it. Sources said French hospitals wrote to the Kuwait health office in France, but it denied that those patients were sent by the government for treatment, so the office cannot pay their bills. In the meantime, European Union countries will start implementation of the decision increasing fees for the Schengen visa by 33 percent from Feb 3 from €60 to €80. New measures will allow visa applications for up to six months up to 15 days before the trip, to make sure member countries cover the cost in a better way. For children aged 6 to 12 years, the fees will be increased from €35 to €40, while those under six will be given visas for free. — Al-Rai

Minor's assault

KUWAIT: Police arrested a youth red-handed in the room of a minor girl after he had raped her. He told police he enters her room frequently. He will be sent to the prosecution charged with unconsented indecent assault. The victim's father sensed strange movements in his daughter's room, and when he realized what was happening, he called the police, who arrested the youth inside the minor's room. The girl told police that the man had sex with her against her will, like in previous instances. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

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Cabinet members briefed on anticorruption measures after Kuwait's int'l ranking drop

Ministers discuss measures taken to digitize government services

KUWAIT: Two senior government officials made a visual presentation to Cabinet ministers on the circumstances of the decline in Kuwait's ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index. The presentation, delivered by Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi and Chairman of the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Counselor Abdulrahman Al-Nemash, also included a detailed explanation of the reasons behind the decline as well as the rules on which the Transparency International is based in terms of Kuwait's ranking in this index. During the Cabinet's weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the ministers reviewed the recommendations by Nazaha aiming to promote Kuwait's ranking. Of the most outstanding recommendations are the acceleration of enacting relevant legislations, achieving national strategies as soon as possible and activating reform measures and procedures. The Council of Ministers expressed its appreciation to efforts made by Nazaha, and decided to refer the recommendations to the legal affairs committee.



Govt follows up on coronavirus spread

Meanwhile, and within the framework of the Council of Ministers' follow-up to carry out the government's work program and the main axes, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and senior officials of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) made a presentation on what has been taken in digitizing government services, as well as plans and steps necessary to implement the digital transformation (DT) of government services aiming to achieve several goals, including promoting transparency and fighting corruption through the optimal use of the data, modern technology, facilitating services of citizens and others. Challenges facing the digital transformation in Kuwait as well as the recommendations regarding accelerating setting a national strategy on the DT were reviewed, Saleh said. The Cabinet com-

mended the strenuous and serious efforts made by the working team, stressing the necessity of cooperation amongst all government bodies in order to achieve the purposeful positive results. It referred the recommendations to the public service committee.

Coronavirus spread

The Cabinet followed up the news pertaining to the coronavirus spread inside and outside China. Within the framework of the government's keenness to take the preventive and precautionary measures to prevent the virus from moving to Kuwait, the council listened to a presentation by Undersecretary of Health Ministry Moustaf Redha on the measures taken by the ministry, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and all international organizations as well as local bodies, to deal with such epidemics. He confirmed that no coronavirus case was registered in Kuwait, pointing to the readiness of clinics and the separating rooms at Kuwait International Airport. The

Cabinet stressed taking all necessary practical measures and procedures by the concerned bodies to combat any possible spread of the virus.

The council also was briefed on a presentation by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, and Information Ministry Undersecretary and Kuwait's representative at 2020 Dubai Expo Munira Solaiman pertaining the ongoing preparations to take part in the expo. The opening of Kuwait's pavilion and the reception of visitors will start on October 20, 2020.

Furthermore, the Cabinet studied the economic affairs committee's recommendation regarding the report of following up the 2019-2020 plan of the first half as well as the challenges facing the projects and the percentage of their implementation. The council reviewed the recommendations mentioned in the committee's report pertaining linking budgets of the subsidiary bodies for FY 2020-2021, and decided to approve the draft resolutions and referred them to His



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

Highness the Amir. It was informed about the bills on linking budgets of independent-budget institutions for the FY 2020-2021. It discussed National Assembly affairs and was briefed on questions and proposals of MPs in this regard.

National days

At the onset of the meeting held at Seif Palace on Monday, the Cabinet expressed sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the Kuwaiti people on the country's national days. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah raised the country's flag at Bayan Palace yesterday marking the beginning of the national celebrations on the 59th anniversary of the Independence Day, the 29th anniversary of the Liberation Day and the 14th anniversary of the assumption of the post of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. The Cabinet prayed to Allah the Almighty to maintain security, safety and welfare to the dear homeland, its people as well as the expatriates, Saleh said.

Meanwhile, the ministers were briefed by Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the results of Iraqi Defense Minister Hassan Al-Shammari's recent visit to Kuwait as well as the talks pertaining to means of promoting ties and cooperation between the two sisterly countries in all domains, Saleh added. The Cabinet also discussed the political affairs in light of the reports regarding all ongoing developments in the political area on both international and Arab levels. It congratulated Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab on the new government formation, wishing progress and prosperity to Lebanon, and good relations between the two countries. The council expressed its condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the victims of the recent quake that hit eastern part of the country. The earthquake left several people dead and wounded, and caused harm to properties and public utilities. The council congratulated Ekaterini Sakellariopoulou on being elected as Greece's President, wishing further progress and prosperity to Greece and its people. — KUNA

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Milan	126	569	1,600
Vienna	129	729	2,500
Prague	140	778	1,800
Barcelona	143	878	1,700
London	159	699	1,597
Seoul	287	1,428	4,062

FLY BETTER



International

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020



White House, wrapping up Trump defense, seeks a swift acquittal

Thai police under scrutiny; record number of trafficking cases dismissed

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TARKWA BAY: A naval personnel walk past jerrycans abandoned by vandals stealing from oil pipelines belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) close to Tarkwa Bay. — AFP

Jihadists target Northern Nigeria road

Terror as militants disguise as soldiers, set up checkpoints

MAIDUGURI: The bus driver sensed straight away that he and his six passengers were in trouble when the gunmen, dressed in Nigerian army uniforms, stopped their vehicle at a checkpoint. They were on the main road connecting the city of Maiduguri in volatile northeast Nigeria with the rest of the country. For weeks there had been reports of jihadists disguised as soldiers abducting travelers. Now his own luck had run out.

"They took us at gunpoint into the bush," the driver told AFP, asking that his name not be used for his own safety. "I spent four days in detention. I have never in my life felt the fear and trauma that I passed through in those four days." The kidnapping around two weeks ago was part of a wave of identical attacks targeting the key Damaturu road—the main lifeline linking Maiduguri and its roughly two million people to the outside world.

Since early December jihadists disguised as soldiers have been setting up checkpoints to snare and abduct unsuspecting passengers. They appear to focus on Christians, aid workers and military personnel. Some of those seized were executed on the spot. Others were taken as captives. In late December the jihadists released a gruesome video showing them shooting and slitting the throats of 11 abducted Christians.

'Shot at any moment'

The bus driver and his passengers were kept in cells in a camp ringed with iron railings. "The psychological torture was indescribable. I was living by the minute because I felt I would be taken and shot at any moment," he said. A "judge" would come to hear the cases of those being held and deliver a verdict within minutes. When he ordered a hostage be dressed in an orange jumpsuit it meant they were sentenced to die. After a few days it was the turn of the driver to be heard. He was asked what crime he had committed but said he did not know; he had just been driving along the road when he was stopped. This time the judge chose leniency. The driver—a Muslim—was ordered released, handed back the keys to his vehicle and escorted away. "I don't know what befell my six passengers. I left them awaiting judgment at the camp," he said.

Upsurge in attacks

International aid agencies have sounded the alarm about the rising threat on the roads which is making tackling the vast humanitarian crisis in the region even harder. The UN says recent weeks have seen an upsurge in violent attacks across northeast Nigeria and "an increasing trend of illegal checkpoints on major supply and commercial routes".

The terror on the roads has shaken residents of Maiduguri, a place that has already lived through 10 years of brutal insurgency. The conflict has killed over 36,000 and seen hundreds of thousands of displaced people flood into the city. The army has told those using the road not to stop at unofficial checkpoints and insists it has already re-established control of the main route. But traffic on the road to Damaturu has dropped off dramatically and drivers wait for other vehicles so they can form convoys to travel.

Those who make the journey admit they are taking their lives in their hands. As she boarded a bus to leave, Hauwa Musa told AFP that relatives had warned her off travelling on the road. "But I told them whatever happens to me, it is destined by God," she said. Another passenger, Mohammed Adam, insisted he had no choice but to make the trip for work. "We have to go as we are struggling to feed ourselves and our families," he said.

Gunmen kill 13

Meanwhile, unknown gunmen have killed 13 people in an attack in central Nigeria, the police said Monday, in an



Gunmen kill 13 in central Nigeria



MAIDUGURI: This screen grab image taken from a video shows Boko Haram fighters during an attack on a military checkpoint in Molai village on the outskirts of the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri. — AFP

area known for ethnic clashes. A local resident said the assailants opened fire late Sunday on a bar where people were drinking beer in the village of Kwatas, 80 kilometers south of the city of Jos.

"Thirteen persons lost their lives while five persons were critically injured and are receiving treatment," regional police spokesman Ubah Agaba said. The reasons for the attack were not immediately clear. Central Plateau state is part of Nigeria's so-called middle-belt that divides the mainly-Muslim north from the predominantly Christian south.

Deadly clashes between nomadic Fulani herders and farmers over land, grazing and water have plagued the area for years. Local resident Usman Hardo said that some hamlets where Fulani live were burnt down follow-

ing the attack. State governor Simon Lalong said his "heart again bleeds" for the victims of the latest killings as he called on the security forces to find those responsible. "We do not need another circle of bloodshed," he said in a statement.

Aid group Mercy Corps said in May last year that violence between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria had "contributed to more than 7,000 deaths in the past five years". Attacks in remote areas often go unreported but the authorities in Plateau state insist the bloodshed has decreased following reconciliation efforts between the communities. Gunmen on January 8 killed 12 people in a village some 25 kilometers away from the scene of the latest incident. — Agencies

Brexit new chapter: The 'impossible' trade deal

BRUSSELS: With just days to go before Brexit, European diplomats are already hard at work for the next phase: negotiations to hammer out a future with Britain after its EU divorce. In the words of EU negotiator Michel Barnier, during the next phase of Brexit, Brussels and London will "have to rebuild everything". Prime Minister Boris Johnson seems reinvigorated after a clear electoral victory in December, but intense talks lie ahead. Here are the main battle lines for the coming weeks:

No extension

Throughout his campaign, Johnson said he would seal a trade deal by December 31, the deadline set by the EU-UK divorce agreement. London could request an extension of one or two more years if it decided to do so before summer, but Johnson insists it will not. This marked the EU's first reality check - only reluctantly accepted - and Brussels officials no longer expect Johnson to ask for a delay. That leaves only eight months, from late February to October, to reach an agreement and allow time for ratification. "It's an impossible task," warned one European diplomat. "By the end of the year, we could get the skeleton of a trade agreement plus something on internal and foreign security, but there is no guarantee," the diplomat added. Talks can begin as soon as EU ministers agree their joint mandate on February 25.

Johnson is not May

Johnson's campaign promised "to get Brexit done"

and to do away with his predecessor's goals of close ties with Europe and minimal disruption to the cross-Channel economy. Theresa May's government had proposed a "dynamic alignment", where London would find a way to match EU rules on the environment, state aid and other standards to guarantee UK companies easy access to Europe. Johnson has pledged to instead pursue a far more minimal trade deal that will seek zero tariffs and quotas on goods, but make no binding commitment on standards. "The prime minister has been clear that he wants a Canada-style free trade agreement with no alignment," a UK official told AFP.

This refers to the EU's trade deal with Canada that Europeans consider ambitious as a trade deal, but too narrow for an important neighbor like Britain. "This is probably not the best time for them to make that decision," warned Ian Bremmer, president at Eurasia Group. "The UK does not have the size, does not have the technology does not have the competitiveness, does not have the diplomacy to really choose their future."

Threat to unity

A tariffs-only trade deal would be a blow to Britain and a challenge to the UK's closest trading partners - such as Ireland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. No alignment on EU standards means custom checks, paperwork and all sorts of new limits to trade. "Our first choice is that nothing changes," lamented a diplomat. "But that is not going to happen, so we must now be realistic." Many in Brussels fear that Johnson's low-bar strategy could be the biggest challenge to European unity since the Brexit referendum in 2016. Member states will be pulling in different directions with some - like France, Belgium and Denmark - concerned about fishing access while eastern Europeans and Germany will want a deal on cars.

'Zero-dumping'

Referred to as keeping a level playing field, mem-

ber states with the most trade with Britain want to ensure that British companies gain no unfair advantage after Brexit. When British goods and services come knocking on Europe's door, they will insist that UK goods are subject to checks like those from any other non-EU country. "Zero tariffs, zero quotas, zero dumping," Barnier said. Diplomats warn there were not many ways to enforce the level playing field in a simple trade deal, except through threatening tariffs that can take months or even years to impose. The EU 27 have begun to draw up an elaborate arbitration process that could mean fines and suspension of any EU-UK accord if either side fell out of line.

'Negotiation tables'

Months of intense discussions, to alternate between London and Brussels, will be coordinated by Barnier and his UK counterpart, probably David Frost. The tight deadline allows "about 40 days of pure negotiation" in eight to ten-week sessions, an official warned. This is a far cry from the years devoted to trade deals with Canada, Japan or South Korea. Barnier said negotiators would open about ten "negotiating tables" in parallel. "We will give each subject two or three weeks and see what is possible. If the divisions are too great, we move on," a diplomat said.

Big deal?

One question nagging Europeans, notably France, is the future structure of the EU's relationship with Britain. Will it be something formal, with clearly set joint institutions, or a looser arrangement structured by separate deals on trade, security and other topics as necessary? Many European capitals abhor the latter, spooked by the EU's confused ties with Switzerland, which are governed by over 100 deals. — AFP

More sleep could improve behavior, UK bankers told

LONDON: With little progress to report in efforts to improve professional conduct at Britain's banks, the body charged with raising standards has suggested that getting a better night's sleep might help bankers behave better. The banking industry was asked by parliament to set up the Banking Standards Board in 2016 to improve behavior after the financial crisis and a subsequent interest rate rigging scandal.

The BSB said that its fourth annual survey of efforts to improve culture and raise standards of behavior at banks showed little change in 2019 after a jump in 2017. Given the efforts many financial firms have been taking, that outcome was a "surprise and disappointment", the BSB said. Results at big banks flattened in 2019 as they did in 2018, after earlier improvements, while scores for smaller firms had declined over the past few years, the BSB said.

A quarter of employees surveyed said working at their firm had a negative effect on their health and wellbeing, little changed since the survey began in 2016. In a sector known for early starts and late nights entertaining clients, nearly 40% of respondents said they slept for six hours or fewer each night, with almost 30% saying they felt tired at work every or almost every day.

"Given the importance of sufficient sleep not only for physical and mental health, but also for the ability to exercise professional and ethical judgment, this may be something that the industry wishes to explore further," the BSB said. One major British financial institution, the London Stock Exchange, is consulting on whether to shorten trading hours to make it more family friendly for employees. The BSB survey covered 81,664 employees at 29 banks and building societies. — Reuters

International

Tension heats up between church and villagers amid land ownership debate

Construction site triggers a dispute between Muslim villagers and Church

MOKHE: On a snow-covered plateau in southern Georgia, a wooden cross marks the construction site of a monastery that has triggered a bitter land dispute between local Muslim villagers and the Christian Orthodox Church. The quarrel revolves around property registration issues that have haunted the Caucasian nation since the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite the 2016 launch of a heralded new blockchain-based land-titling system.

The disputed land, seven hectares of an eight-hectare plot surrounded by forest, lies in a mountainous area in the Adigeni municipality, near the Turkish border. Families from nearby villages, who belong to the Muslim minority in an overwhelmingly Christian country, say they have owned and used the lot for decades to grow hay and graze cattle - their main source of income. "We have no land other than this, so if (the church) takes it away, we will have nothing left," said David Beridze, 33, as he walked on the snow-covered plot with a group of farmers.

Yet, according to the government the land belonged to no one before 2018, when it was registered as state property and donated to the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate, which wants to build a new monastery there, near the remains of a small 10th-century church. "We have just taken back what was historically ours," said Archimandrite Nikoloz Getsadze, the priest in charge of construction works. "They (Muslims) have been using the monastery land for so many years and haven't even expressed their gratitude," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, as he sat sipping tea in the living room of a clergy house in the nearby village of Mokhe.

From paper to digital

Last year, with help from the Tbilisi-based Human Rights Education and

Monitoring Center (EMC), Beridze and four other farmers took the case to a district court in the southern city of Akhaltsikhe in a bid to get the land back. They say local families collectively worked that land throughout the communist era and were each assigned a portion of it as Georgia moved to a private property system in the 1990s.

When asked for proof, Beridze produced a partially handwritten document bearing an official stamp from a land reform commission and containing a general description of his family's plot as well as a list of its neighbors. Similar documents are common across the country and have become a familiar source of tension and confusion, said Teona Zakarashvili, a lawyer at corruption watchdog Transparency International.

When Georgia modernized its paper archives, launching an electronic land database in the mid-2000s, the onus of registering titles was left to property owners, she said. But this has proven difficult and expensive for the many people who hold vaguely-worded papers and who, on top of registration fees, might have to pay for a lawyer and an expert survey to accurately demarcate property boundaries, she said.

"Regular farmers can hardly afford this," said Zakarashvili in an interview at the NGO's offices in Tbilisi.

In 2016 Georgia moved to a blockchain-based system, becoming one of the first countries to use the technology - which underpins digital currencies like bitcoin - for land registration. The innovation made transactions transparent and immutable, allaying fears that titles could be lost, damaged or tampered with, but did little to help people register their land, according to land rights experts. "A blockchain registry can make it easier to search, update, and visualise records, but it can't go out and

collect the information," said Yuliya Panfil, property rights director at New America, a U.S.-based think tank.

"If the information isn't in the registry, then no bells and whistles will suddenly make it appear," she said in emailed comments. As of today, only an estimated 25% of all land in Georgia has been digitally registered, Zakarashvili said. While registering titles is not mandatory, not doing carries risk, as owners are invisible to officials who tend to check only the digital database when the government decides to give some land to investors or other entities, she added.

Hay vs Honey

For years, registering the disputed lot in Adigeni seemed an unnecessary expense to the farmers using it. "We knew what land belonged to each person and we never had any dispute among ourselves," said Beridze. That changed in September 2018 when priests accompanied by construction workers showed up and started delimiting the perimeter with iron poles, he said. The locals turned to the National Agency of Public Registry of Georgia (NAPR) with their papers, only to find that the lot had already been recorded as Church property - so they took the government to court, said EMC lawyer Meri Agapishvili. "Even if they didn't register the land it doesn't mean they waived their right to it," she said.

A spokeswoman for Georgia's economy ministry said it donated the land to the church following a request from the Georgian Patriarchate, adding that an onsite investigation found "no physical entity" was using any of it at the time. Locals said that although no Christian family lives in the area, they are happy to leave one hectare for the Church to build its monastery, as long as they could keep farming the rest. "We

respect everyone who believes in God ... but one can easily understand that you do not need eight hectares of land to build a church," said 30-year-old Zaza Shavadze.

But Archimandrite Nikoloz noted the Church needs the plot to produce honey, cheese and vegetables to feed its monks. He dismissed the farmers' claims that the plan would threaten their livelihoods as "lies", saying locals had access to other fields and pastures. "They have so much hay, that it's getting rotten," he said. NAPR did not respond to several requests for comment. According to the agency's website, since 2016 more than 40,000 land parcels have been registered as part of a pilot initiative to increase registrations.

In December 2019, the Akhaltsikhe court ruled against the farmers, saying they could not prove that the lot described in their titles was the same land that was assigned to the Church, said Agapishvili, the lawyer. The farmers, who kept using the land up to ruling, are now appealing. Zakarashvili, the lawyer at Transparency International, said the organization deals with about 40 such cases every year. These types of disputes will remain common, she added, until the government carries out a nationwide land survey to define exactly who owns what and where.

That would benefit investments, easing fears businesses might have of potential property rights disputes, and help locals get more from their land by allowing them to safely sell or mortgage it, she said. "We understand that the history of the Soviet Union and the administrative relics we inherited are not the best start to defining property rights," said Zakarashvili. "But there has been ample time for the state to realize that the current approach is not working and something else should be done to systemise land ownership," she added. — Reuters

Libyan govt shoots down 'UAE drone'

TRIPOLI: Libya's unity government said yesterday it had shot down an Emirati-supplied drone operated by forces led by eastern commander Khalifa Haftar near Misrata in western Libya. The Tripoli-based Government of National Accord said its "anti-aircraft defences" had shot down the drone east of Misrata, Libya's third largest city.

That came days after the United Nations slammed "continued blatant violations" of a 2011 arms embargo, despite world leaders committing in mid-January to upholding the blockade. The GNA yesterday posted images on Facebook showing what appeared to be a Chinese-made Wing Loong drone. Experts say Haftar has procured a number of the aircraft from his main backer, the United Arab Emirates.

Haftar, who controls much of eastern and southern Libya, launched an offensive in April to seize the capital Tripoli, in the country's northwest, from the GNA. His advance stalled on the edge of the capital, but in early January he captured the strategic coastal city of Sirte. On Sunday his forces clashed with those of the GNA in the Abu Grein region, on the road west from Sirte towards Misrata, the hometown of many of the forces backing the GNA. The advanced UAE-supplied drones have given Haftar an advantage in the skies.

Turkey has supplied the GNA with Bayraktar drones, but they have proven less sophisticated and prone to being shot down by Haftar's forces. On Sunday, Germany's foreign ministry echoed UN concerns over arms flowing to Libya, citing "a series of unconfirmed but credible reports of embargo violations on both sides". That comes despite a January 12 ceasefire announced by Haftar backer Moscow and pro-GNA Ankara. Each side has repeatedly accused the other of violations. — AFP

14/5/99

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International

White House, wrapping up Trump defense, seeks a swift acquittal

Bolton revelations roil impeachment trial, witness push grows

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's lawyers were to wrap up their defense at his Senate impeachment trial yesterday, but their hopes for a swift acquittal may be in jeopardy amid calls for more witnesses. Democrats want former national security advisor John Bolton to testify about Trump's dealings with Ukraine and there are growing indications that enough Republican senators may support the demand.

"I think it's increasingly likely that other Republicans will join those of us who think we should hear from John Bolton," said Utah Senator Mitt Romney, one of the few Republicans who has dared to publicly criticize Trump and risk his Twitter ire in the past. Calling Bolton, and potentially other witnesses, to testify could prolong the historic trial and torpedo efforts by the White House and Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring the proceedings to a close by the end of this week.

Trump is to deliver the nationally televised "State of the Union" speech to a joint session of Congress on Feb 4 and the White House clearly wants to have moved past impeachment by then. Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer accused the White House and McConnell yesterday of seeking a "very short and incredibly rushed trial". "Because the longer it goes on, the more likely that new evidence and more new evidence will come out that further implicates the president," Schumer said.

Bolton is looming large over the trial after The New York Times reported that an upcoming book by the 71-year-old foreign policy hawk contains revelations that could harm Trump's defense. According to the Times, Bolton says in the book that Trump told him in August that he wanted to freeze military aid to Ukraine until Kiev opens an investigation into political rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma. The accusation that the funds were withheld for Trump's own political purposes was at the heart of his December 18 impeachment by the

Democratic-controlled House of Representatives for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

16 hours of questions

Trump's lawyers were to conclude their defense of the president before the 100 members of the Senate beginning at 1:00 pm. Once they wrap up, senators will have 16 hours to pose questions to White House lawyers and the seven members of the House who have served as prosecutors at just the third impeachment trial of a president in US history. The questions will be submitted in writing to US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, who is presiding over the trial and will read them aloud.

After that, the Senate is expected to debate whether witnesses should be subpoenaed. Democrats will make the case that Bolton should appear while Republicans may demand the testimony of Hunter Biden or perhaps even that of his father, the former vice president who is seeking to challenge Trump in November's presidential election. Four Republicans would need to join Democrats in the Senate, where Republicans hold a 53-47 edge, to allow testimony from Bolton and others. While just 51 senators are required to allow trial witnesses, 67 senators - a two-thirds majority - are needed to remove Trump from office and despite some cracks in the Republican ranks he does not appear in any serious danger at the moment.

Power grab

Trump's lawyers launched a concerted attack on the Bidens on Monday, arguing that the president's demand that they be investigated was motivated by concerns about corruption not personal political gain. The White House also rolled out two high-profile lawyers to defend the president - Clinton impeachment investigator Ken Starr and Harvard constitutional expert Alan Dershowitz.

Dershowitz, who has made a career defending unpopular positions and controversial clients - O J Simpson and



WASHINGTON: Rep Lee Zeldin, R-NY speaks to the press at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. White House lawyers resumed their defense of President Donald Trump at his Senate impeachment trial Monday as explosive revelations from former national security advisor John Bolton increased pressure on Republicans to call him as a witness. — AFP

Jeffrey Epstein to name just two - argued that the House case against the president was "unconstitutional" and amounted to a congressional power grab. He also sought to

neutralize the Bolton developments. "Nothing in the Bolton revelations, even if true, would rise to the level of abuse of power or impeachable offense," Dershowitz said. — AFP

Catalan separatist hopes Brexit brings 'immunity'

LEUCHARS: Catalan separatist Clara Ponsati has not set foot in her native Barcelona for two years for fear of the Spanish authorities. But her circumstances could be about to change thanks to Brexit. The former education minister in the Catalan regional government of Carles Puigdemont is wanted in Spain for alleged sedition over the failed 2017 independence bid. An economics professor at St Andrews University in Scotland, her extradition case is being heard at the courts in Edinburgh.

But once Britain leaves the European Union on Friday, she will automatically become a member of the European Parliament - something she believes will give her immunity from extradition. After Brexit, additional MEPs elected in the remaining member states will be installed to fill empty seats left behind by the outgoing British deputies. Following the May 2019 European Parliament elections, Ponsati is due to take one of the five seats reallocated to Spain, as an incoming MEP for the Together for Catalonia party.

Once Ponsati joins the European legislature, the 62-year-old hopes to benefit from immunity, as Puigdemont and a former Catalonia health minister Toni Comin already do as MEPs. "Once I become an MEP, I get immunity from prosecution - and that means that the Spanish justice should withdraw the order of arrest against me," Ponsati told AFP at her home in the small Scottish town of Leuchars. "I should be free to walk in Barcelona without being threatened with arrest."

May court date

However, Ponsati knows that the Spanish authorities may not give in so easily. Madrid has not withdrawn the arrest warrants issued for Puigdemont and Comin. The Belgian judge who examined their extradition requests decided to suspend them when they became MEPs, meaning they can freely move around Europe - although, as a precaution, they do not return to Spain.

Ponsati believes the Scottish courts will be sensitive to her case. "It's for the Scottish judges to decide what the implications of my MEP status are. I totally trust justice in Scotland," she said. Furthermore, with Brexit, the European Arrest Warrant could lose its validity in the United Kingdom and have to be replaced by an international extradition request, starting a complex process which Ponsati could claim was politically motivated.

"The fact that Spain is not respecting European law certainly has an effect on how external judges see the way Spanish justices are managing the conflict in Catalonia," she said. After voluntarily going to the Scottish police in November, Ponsati was released on bail. Her extradition case is due to begin on May 11, following a preliminary hearing on March 5 which could decide on her immunity claim, as she will be an MEP by then. She has raised more than £166,000 (\$217,000, 197,000 euros) in online donations towards her legal costs. — AFP



EDINBURGH: In this file photo, former Catalan Minister Professor Clara Ponsati (left), gestures as she leaves Edinburgh Sheriff Court with her lawyer Aamer Anwar, having been released on bail. — AFP

Crowded Lagos to ban motorbikes

LAGOS: Nigeria's business capital Lagos will ban commercial motorcycles from many areas of the city, citing overcrowding and safety, authorities said on Monday, a move that could change the commute for thousands and threaten ride-hailing startups. The Lagos state government announced on Twitter that it would ban motorcycles, commonly known as okadas, from operating in most of Lagos because of what it described as their "chaos and disorderliness" and "scary figures" of fatal accidents.

Companies such as Max.ng, Oride and Gokada have been aiming to capitalize on the congested Lagos roads



GLASGOW: In this file photo, pro Scottish Independence campaigners listen as Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister addresses a rally calling for Scottish independence in Glasgow. — AFP

Brexit fueling calls for second Scottish independence vote

EDINBURGH: Britain's departure from the European Union has revived the debate for an independent Scotland, which was thought to have been settled in a landmark referendum nearly six years ago. Scots voted by a majority of 55 percent to remain part of the United Kingdom in 2014, effectively taking the issue off the table in what was described as a "once-in-a-generation" decision. But nationalists argue Brexit represents a material change in Scotland's constitutional arrangements with the UK government in London. Some 62 percent of people north of the border voted to remain in the EU in 2016.

That is now prompting some who voted "no" to independence in 2014 but "yes" to stay in the bloc to shift their attitudes on Scotland going its own way after more than 300 years of union. "I did vote in the last referendum and I actually voted to remain in the UK," said Christopher Clannachan, who took part in an independence march in Glasgow earlier this month. "I think the Brexit situation has highlighted a real deficit in the UK's constitution where Scotland votes for one thing and does not see that in return. "So that's what's changed for me and that's what's changed for a lot of people."

'Electoral mandate'

The First Minister of Scotland's devolved parliament, Nicola Sturgeon, has in recent months been ramping up the pressure for a new independence referendum - dubbed "indyref2". Sturgeon wrote to Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson after the December general election, at which her Scottish National Party (SNP) won a landslide across Scotland. But he said London would not transfer powers to Edinburgh to hold another referendum, arguing it would "continue the political stagnation that Scotland has seen for the last decade". Sturgeon accused Johnson's ruling Conservatives of ignoring the will of the people.

"The problem for the Tories is the longer they try to block democracy, the more they show the Westminster

and the city's teeming population to expand their operations. The ban cites a 2018 law to bar okadas and small three-wheeled vehicles known as kekes from Feb 1. It would bar them from 40 bridges and flyovers and areas covering the business districts of Victoria Island and Lagos Island, Apapa, where the primary port is located and Ikeja, which is home to the international airport.

Chinedu Azodoh, cofounder of Max.ng, is hopeful that the ban would not apply to them since their bikes are above the 200 cubic centimeter engine size banned specifically by the law. "From what we've seen today, we don't think the ban affects our business," Azodoh said. But Gbenga Omotoso, Lagos state commissioner of information and strategy, said the ban would affect all passenger companies and only courier service companies would be exempt.

"They have been found to have become part of the

problem they set out to resolve," he said of commercial motorcycle companies. Max.ng, which also operates in Kano, Ibadan and Akure in Nigeria, had an investment round last year that raised more than \$5 million. Startup Gokada also raised \$5 million last year for its Lagos operations. Founder Fahim Saleh said that while their bikes are also above 200cc, he was not sure about the impact of the ban on them.

"It's disappointing," he said, adding they would seek to expand its operations in courier and logistics services. "We don't know how it's going to be enforced." ORide, part of OPay in which Norwegian software firm Opera Ltd has an equity interest, also offers ride-hailing motorcycles in Lagos. Reuters could not immediately reach the company for comment. In June, Gokada told Reuters that there are an estimated 8 million okada drivers operating across Nigeria. — Reuters

Nigeria, Oxford English Dictionary 'rub minds'

LAGOS: Ask a Nigerian what corrupt politicians do with public funds and he or she may say, "They chop it." The Oxford English Dictionary agrees. Hailing from the streets of Nigeria, "to chop" - meaning to illicitly make money, and "rub minds" - a synonym for "confer", are among 29 distinctive aspects of Nigerian English to obtain pride of place in the august dictionary.

"By taking ownership of English and using it as their own medium of expression, Nigerians have made, and are continuing to make, a unique and distinctive contribution to English as a global language," the dictionary said in notes accompanying its latest update this month. One of the major drivers of Nigerian cultural influence abroad has been its Afropop music which now dominates swathes of home continent Africa and influenced the work of overseas artists as big as Drake.

Getting Nigerian English recognized for inclusion has not been easy, however, according to Nigerian author TJ Benson, who said his favorite of the new Nigerian terms making it into the dictionary was "severally", meaning "repeatedly". "When it (Nigerian English) is being suppressed or we are being told that there is a better way (of saying something), or this is what is correct and then this is what is not correct, I think it affects us and it also demeans us," he told Reuters.

"I think this (recognition) is empowering for lots of us writers and for everyday people, because at the end of the day it ties back to identity and how we perceive ourselves and how we express ourselves." Another of the unique Nigerian references now in the dictionary is "okada", which stems from the massive traffic jams for which megacity Lagos is internationally notorious. Okada are motorcycle taxis that weave through motionless cars and are named after the defunct Okada Air airline because they are often the only way to "fly" through the city.

But okada are the bane of daily commuters such as baker Dambo Godfrey. "There is no day I go out that I don't see okada in my path," said Godfrey. "It should not be very difficult (now) for me to explain to a white man when he is asking what is an okada - I will say: 'Go and check your English dictionary.'" Godfrey added that the Oxford English Dictionary's embrace of words from Nigeria, with the world's largest black population in one country - was only right. "If over 190 million people are saying one thing, it is something that should be popular."

Pro-independence marches are a common sight on the streets of Scotland's main cities of Glasgow, in the west, and Edinburgh, 50 miles away in the east. Earlier this month, an estimated 80,000 people braved icy winds and torrential rain, waving blue and white Saltire flags and calling for an end to "London rule". But even if London agrees to allow a second referendum, nationalists still face a battle to secure the support of a majority of their compatriots.

Polls over the past year consistently show no clear majority for either side, making any result too close to call. "There has been an increase (in support for independence) but it has been modest and has been driven primarily by those who voted to remain in the European Union," said McEwen. Any economic damage from Brexit in the coming years, however, could fuel Scottish discontent and increase the chances of a "yes" vote to independence. — AFP

Too close to call

International

Thailand police under scrutiny; record number of trafficking cases dismissed

Police 'on a drive to boost numbers to enhance global image'

BANGKOK: Thai prosecutors turned down about a fifth of human trafficking cases sent to them by police last year, a soon-to-be released government report shows, raising concerns that police were on a drive to boost numbers to enhance Thailand's global image. The 79-page report - drafted to inform an annual US report ranking countries on their efforts to combat trafficking and revealed exclusively by the Thomson Reuters Foundation - showed Thailand's public prosecutors rejected 64 of 364 cases in 2019.

Thailand has faced criticism in recent years for failing to stop trafficking in its lucrative textile and seafood sectors, as well as the sex trade. The country secured 194 trafficking convictions last year, down 17% from 2018, the report found. Most of the cases dismissed last year involved smuggled migrants being misidentified as trafficking victims, according to two prosecutors who said police had been told to increase trafficking figures amid concerns about the dwindling number.

"In practice, (most) of the police know that the cases involve smuggling, but they receive orders to treat them as human trafficking offences," one public prosecutor said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. "This is perhaps due to the lack of clear understanding on the differences between trafficking and smuggling of migrants."

The percentage of trafficking cases dismissed by prosecutors hit a record 18% last year, up from 10% in 2018 and 4% in 2017. The 64 rejected cases from 2019 were instead prosecuted under smuggling and transnational crime laws, the report said. Police lieutenant general Jaruvat Vaisaya - the country's top anti-trafficking cop - said officers were responding to a growing number of people being transported towards Malaysia.

Unlike trafficking, which involves deception or control over another person for the purpose of exploitation, smuggling means entering another country illegally and is considered consensual. Lawyers and campaigners said the conflation of smuggling and trafficking meant some state resources intended for trafficking victims were being spent on migrants who had not been exploited. A second prosecutor source said they had also heard of police officers being ordered to find more trafficking victims.

"This clearly shows that [the government] wants the highest number of cases to show that many arrests have been made," said Adisorn Kerdmongkol, a coordinator at the Migrant Working Group. "Human trafficking is a political issue in Thailand." Thailand's anti-trafficking department - part of the social ministry - declined to respond to questions about the report, which is due to be sent to US officials by the end of January.

Wasted resources?

Thailand rescued a record 1,807 trafficking victims last year, up from 622 in 2018, the government said this month. Most were Burmese migrants bound for Malaysia and campaigners have questioned whether many had in fact been smuggled. Police chief Vaisaya said it was certain that people headed to Malaysia would be trafficked once they crossed the border.

"Regardless of whether it's human trafficking or not, what we want is for the offenders to be in jail," he said, adding that prosecutors had dismissed trafficking cases referred to them by police because "the crime has not been committed yet". Public prosecutor Pravit Roykaew said Thai authorities often rushed to make decisions within 24 hours about whether or not someone was a victim of human trafficking.

"Authorities are confused with the (trafficking) law ... it does not provide a specific timeframe on identifying victims," Roykaew said. "This results in not getting all the facts, which may cause ... misidentification." From court proceedings to the provision of care in state-run



BANGKOK: A passenger wearing a mask collects luggage at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok. — AFP

shelters, wrongly labeling smuggled migrants as trafficking victims has wasted government time and money, said Papop Siamhan, an independent lawyer with expertise in trafficking.

"If it's one or two cases, it's acceptable, but if you have over 60 cases (that were dismissed), it means you just

weren't careful enough," he said. "Having a high number of cases doesn't mean that Thailand is successful in solving human trafficking." Thailand is home to about 610,000 modern-day slaves - about one in 113 of its population of 69 million - according to the Global Slavery Index by the rights group Walk Free Foundation. — Reuters

Indian schoolgirl wins 'bravery award' for thwarting trafficker

CHENNAI: An Indian schoolgirl who won a bravery award after she helped a child escape a trafficker, is to become the inspiration for a new anti-slavery campaign, officials said yesterday. Carolyn Malsawmtluangi, from the northeastern state of Mizoram, was honored by the government on India's Republic Day last week for "showing exemplary courage" after she stopped a human trafficker who had kidnapped a seven-year-old girl from a neighboring village.

Malsawmtluangi, 11, first spotted the trafficker when playing volleyball with friends in June last year but assumed they were a mother and daughter, and even asked if the young girl wanted to join their game. But after

police raised the alarm over a trafficker the next day, Malsawmtluangi soon spotted the woman again and began talking to her before agreeing to take care of the girl while the woman ran an errand.

It was then that both girls escaped - Malsawmtluangi carrying the child on her shoulders and the woman while avoiding stones hurled by the angry trafficker. "If Carolyn had not stopped them, the trafficker would have disappeared with the little girl," said Khawhrinj Lalhlupui, a secretary at the Mizoram State Council for Child Welfare that recommended her for the annual award. "She was very brave to understand the danger to the little girl and save her," she said. "We plan to share her story in all schools and create awareness on trafficking and safety."

Of the nearly 6,000 victims of human trafficking in India each year, about half were children, according to the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau. Most are women and children from rural areas looking to escape poverty - lured to cities each year by traffickers who promise good jobs, but sell them into modern day slavery. More than 60,000 children were kidnapped in

2018, the crime bureau added, with the majority trafficked for marriage, forced labor or into domestic servitude, and rarely reunited with their families.

In Mizoram, anti-trafficking efforts have been increased in recent years in a bid to stem a rise in reported cases. "We are stepping up our efforts because young people are increasingly getting duped by fake agents promising jobs," said Vanlalruata, president of the Central Young Mizo Association, a charity that works on anti-trafficking programs. "This young girl will now inspire others and bring attention to the problem," he said.

The National Bravery Awards are given to around 25 children between the ages of six and 18 every year. The recipients, selected from across India, are given a medal, a certificate, a cash prize, and also receive financial assistance to complete their schooling. In the past, children have won awards for foiling robberies, fighting off armed intruders, rescuing people from drowning, saving lives in a stampede and putting out fires. "We are very proud and happy," said Lalsangzeli, Malsawmtluangi's mother. "The entire village will celebrate my brave daughter." — Reuters

Mothers of jihadist, Belgium attack victim write book together

BRUSSELS: Bloodlines bind them to people on opposite sides of a violent divide. One is the mother of a jailed jihadist, the other the mother of a victim wounded in a bloody 2016 attack in Brussels. But these two Belgian women shared tears, and compassion, and finally an idea to write a book together to tell the world what unites them beyond the differences.

Fatima Ezzarhouni, a 48-year-old born in Morocco and raised since the age of four in the city of Antwerp where she works as a care assistant, said she "just clicked" with Sophie Pirson, a 61-year-old employee in a contemporary arts museum who lives in Brussels. "We connected immediately," confirmed Pirson. They met in 2018 in a therapy group started by clinical sociologists that brought together mothers of jihadists and of the victims of a wave of attacks that rocked Europe two years earlier.

The deadliest in Belgium occurred in the capital on March 22, 2016, when double attacks claimed by the Islamic State group killed 32 people and wounded 340 others. Pirson's younger daughter Leonor, then aged 30, was travelling in a Brussels metro train that day when a suicide bomber in her carriage set off his bomb. More than a dozen people were killed. Leonor, mutilated and made deaf, ended up being treated for a long time in hospital.

Living a 'nightmare'

Sitting by her daughter's bed in intensive care, Pirson said her thoughts turned "to the mothers of the bombers" that day. "I said to myself, it must be horrible for them to have their son killed and nobody being able to understand the pain those mothers were going through," she told AFP.

Ezzarhouni's son Abdellah Nouamane wasn't involved in those Belgian attacks. But he was an IS jihadist. Recruited online aged 18 while in Antwerp, he left without word for Syria in 2013 to join the so-called "caliphate". Ezzarhouni said that since then she has lived "a nightmare" over the fate of her eldest child. In 2018, a telephone caller said Nouamane had been killed in Syria. But a year later a Belgian TV crew tracked him down to a Kurdish-run prison where he was held with other IS fighters.

Nouamane told them he "regretted" his decision to become a jihadist and wanted to return to Belgium, where he has been convicted in absentia on terrorism charges. He remains locked up in northeast Syria with little chance of repatriation. Ezzarhouni said the bits of information she gets about her son are rare and sometimes contradictory - especially about "the two children he had with a Dutch woman. I have no idea where they are." Today, she also spends part of her time speaking in schools about her experience as the mother of a radicalized Islamist.

Friendship from tragedy

After meeting at the therapy session, the two women discovered, beyond their anguish, shared values that have forged a new bond. They have built their common esteem for being welcoming and open, and of their status as grandmothers into a friendship - a relationship that could serve as a platform to pass on something positive from the tragedies they have lived.

"If we have been able to come together to write this book, with our differences, with what has happened to each of us, I hope that it will make people think about what we can do together today to fight barbarism," Pirson said. "For me, it's to pass on a message," added Ezzarhouni, who said she gave more of herself than she ever had before to write the book, confiding to her friend painful secrets she had long kept hidden. Their book is a collection of joint interviews between the two women. They hope to have it published in March, in time for the fourth anniversary of the Brussels attacks. — AFP

UN: Sahel violence having devastating impact on children

DAKAR: Hundreds of children in the Sahel were killed, maimed or forcibly separated from their parents last year, the United Nations said yesterday, as a jihadist conflict rages across the region. In Mali alone, 277 children were killed or maimed during the first nine months of 2019, the UN children's agency UNICEF said in a report, more than double the number in the year before. Despite support from French and UN troops, Mali has been struggling to quell an Islamist insurgency that erupted in the north in 2012 and which has claimed thousands of military and civilian lives.

The conflict has since spread to the centre of the West African country, as well as neighboring Sahel states Burkina Faso and Niger, inflaming ethnic tensions along the way. The whole Sahel region has seen a "significant increase of violence against children who are caught in the cross fire," according to the report, which added that hundreds had been maimed or forcibly separated from their families.

Mali is the only country for which there are hard figures on the number of child war victims, a UNICEF spokeswoman said. But nonetheless she said that children in Burkina Faso and Niger have also been murdered, sexually abused, kidnapped, or pressed into armed groups. The spiraling conflict had also forced about 1.2 million to flee their homes as of November - a two-fold increase on 2018 - of whom more than half are children. Some 4.9 million children need humanitarian aid, the report added. "We cannot help but be struck by the scale of violence children are facing," said UNICEF's regional director for West and Central Africa Marie-Pierre Poirier, in a statement. "Hundreds of thousands of them have lived through traumatizing experiences". But the impact of the conflict goes beyond violence. — AFP



NIAMEY: French Minister of Army Forces Florence Parly (center) stands as she meets French officers of the Barkhane counter-terrorism operation in Africa's Sahel region, at the Barkhane base near Niamey in Niger. — AFP

Iraqi protesters rebuild torched camps; rocket attack sparks fears

BAGHDAD: Anti-government demonstrators rebuilt torched protest camps across Iraq on Monday as more than a dozen countries condemned the "lethal" reaction by security forces seeking to snuff out the civil campaign. The renewed pressure on Iraq's government came a day after three rockets hit the US embassy in Baghdad, wounding one person and marking a dangerous escalation after months of close calls against American facilities. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday on Twitter that "the government of #Iraq must take immediate steps to protect our diplomatic facilities as required by international law."

The attack on the embassy sparked renewed fears that Iraq could be dragged into another armed conflict as its capital and Shiite-majority south are rocked by the country's largest and deadliest grassroots movement in decades. Youth-led rallies erupted on October 1 over corruption, joblessness and poor services but were met with violence that has since left nearly 480 people dead - most of them protesters. Security forces and unidentified gunmen this week tried to clamp down on rallies again, and more than 20 protesters have lost their lives.

On Monday, 16 ambassadors based in Iraq issued a joint statement condemning the "excessive and lethal use of force" and demanding the government allow citizens to protest freely in Baghdad and the south. "Despite assurances by the government, security forces and armed groups continue to use live fire in these locations, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries of civilians, while some protesters face intimidation and abduction," said the statement. It was signed by the US, UK, France, Germany and a dozen other countries.

'We will continue'

Anti-government activists feared a crackdown this week after losing the support of powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, who backed the rallies when they first erupted then abruptly changed course Friday after holding his own rally. University students have carried the torch, gathering in the thousands to insist on their political independence. "When we first came out to protest and hold sit-ins, we did-



NAJAF: An Iraqi student, holding a national flag, flashes the V-sign for victory during anti-government protests in the Shiite shrine city of Najaf in central Iraq yesterday. — AFP

n't commit to the narrative of the Sadrist movement or any other political party," said Zainab Mohammad, a university student in the shrine city of Karbala. "We came out on our own, and we will continue until our demands are met," she said. Protesters are demanding snap elections, an independent successor to prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi - who has resigned but remains in a caretaker role - and the prosecution of those implicated in corruption or recent bloodshed.

Early on Monday, unidentified gunmen stormed a protest camp in the flashpoint southern city of Nasiriyah and torched tents, an AFP correspondent there said. The attackers fired on activists who had been sleeping there, killing one and wounding four others, a medic said. But hours later, determined protesters had erected new tents and even built a one-room cement installation, signaling their determination to stay put. In the oil-rich but impoverished port city of Basra, student protesters erected tents dismantled by authorities over the weekend, AFP's reporter said.

The main protest camp in the Shiite holy city of Najaf was also burned down overnight by unidentified gunmen, but protesters jumped into action Monday morning, blocking roads with burning tyres. In the early afternoon, a funeral march made its

way through the city to mourn the young man killed earlier in the day in Nasiriyah, identified as 14-year-old Ali Zuweir. Relatives carried the boy's coffin through Najaf, a favored burial place for Iraqi Shiites, holding up his portrait and weeping loudly.

PM warns of broader war

Sadr's march on Friday saw thousands turn out to demand American troops leave the country, after the US used Iraqi airspace to carry out a drone strike on top Iranian and Iraqi officials on January 3. Outraged, Iraq's parliament voted on January 5 in favor of ousting all foreign forces, including the 5,200 US troops deployed in Iraq. Pro-Iran factions in Iraq, particularly those tied to the Hashed Al-Shaabi military force, had long lobbied for the ouster of American forces. On Monday, top Hashed commander Qais Al-Khazali said any candidate being considered to replace Abdel Mahdi must pledge to execute parliament's vote and oust foreign troops. Other conditions for the new premier included holding snap parliamentary elections by the end of the year and implementing a landmark development deal with China. Washington has blamed headline Hashed factions, including Khazali's Asaib Ahl al-Haq for rocket attacks on the US embassy and American troops in recent months. — AFP

Analysis

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Currency crisis brings new hardship to war-weary Yemen

A flare-up of a currency war between Yemen's three foes has sent the rial crashing, aggravating a humanitarian crisis that has already driven millions to the brink of famine after five years of conflict. The confrontation was sparked when the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa and most of the north, banned the use of new banknotes printed by the central bank in Aden which is run by the internationally recognized government.

The ban on the notes, which were first issued three years ago, came into effect on Jan 19 when residents and moneychangers stopped dealing with them under the threat of a 10-year jail term, according to sources close to the rebels. The Houthis insist they are safeguarding the people against high inflation, but the move has slashed purchasing power and effectively created two exchange rates - around 682 to the dollar in Aden and 600 in Sanaa and the north.

The currency's value has dropped some 15 percent in the south in the past five weeks, and about seven percent in the north, in a slide that shows no sign of slowing. In the marketplaces of Yemen, stalls are piled high with tomatoes, onions and bananas, while nearby shopkeepers offer racks of clothes and consumer goods. But ordinary people are increasingly distressed at the loss in value of their cash, which has inflicted more misery in a long war that pits the Houthis against the government which is backed by a Saudi-led coalition.

"Prices are extremely expensive, we are not receiving our salaries and the situation is going from bad to worse," said Abdo, a resident of the port city of Aden. In Sanaa, which has been under rebel control since 2014, residents also hit out at the measure. "The ban has resulted in massive harm to citizens. Many of us own quantities of the new banknotes but from now on we will not be able to use them to buy our day's food," Abdulaziz Ali told AFP.

A senior UN official warned earlier this month that certain factors that threatened to trigger famine last year in Yemen - including a plunge in the value of the national currency - were once again looming large. "With a rapidly depreciating rial and disrupted salary payments, we are again seeing some of the key conditions that brought Yemen to the brink of famine a year ago," Ramesh Rajasingham, who coordinates humanitarian aid in the country, told the UN Security Council. "We must not let that happen again," he said, adding that even if it escapes famine, Yemen will remain the world's worst humanitarian crisis in 2020.

The Yemeni government moved the central bank from Sanaa to Aden in 2016 in order to have effective control on monetary policy, currency and payment of wages. But the central bank's historic home in Sanaa is still operating under the Houthis, who have stewardship over the country's major consumer markets. The Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies said in a recent report that the tussle threatened to collapse the rial-based system and had driven the country towards the use of hard currencies, mostly Saudi riyals and United States dollars.

"A population in which millions already verge on starvation is set to bear increasing costs, further eroded purchasing power and a deterioration in the humanitarian situation resulting from the escalating currency war," it said. Anthony Biswell, an economic analyst from the Sana'a Centre, said that the north was suffering from a shortage in supply of the old riyals, and that ordinary citizens were turning to the black market to convert their new notes. — AFP



Old and new Yemeni bank notes are pictured at a money exchange office in the southern port city of Aden on Jan 23, 2020. — AFP

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



This photo taken on Dec 10, 2019 shows the first female flogger whipping a woman in public in Banda Aceh, after she was caught in close proximity with a man who is not her husband in a hotel. — AFP

Aceh unveils new female flogging squad

The masked woman nervously approaches her target, shuffles into position and then unleashes a flurry of lashes - proving herself as the newest member of the first female flogging squad in Indonesia's Aceh province. The new recruit initially needed some coaxing to punish the offender - an unmarried woman caught in a hotel room with a man. Such behavior constitutes a morality crime in Aceh, the only region in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation that imposes Islamic law - known as sharia. Those found guilty of breaches are often publicly whipped with a rattan cane.

But despite her reticence, she persevered and delivered her first flogging. "I think she did a good job. Her technique was nice," Banda Aceh Sharia police chief investigator Zakwan, who uses one name, told AFP. The controversial punishment enrages rights activists and generates heated media debate, as well as amongst politicians. Indonesia's president has issued a call for the public floggings to stop but he has little say over what happens in Aceh, a deeply conservative region on Sumatra island.

Unlike the rest of the nation, Aceh follows religious law as part of a 2005 autonomy deal agreed with the central government that ended a decades-long separatist insurgency. Here, public whipping remains a common punishment for scores of offenders for a range of charges including gambling, adultery, drinking alcohol, and having gay or pre-marital sex. But the job has always been done by men. Until now.

'No mercy'

More and more women are being charged for morality crimes such as public affection or premarital sex, experts say, as greater internet access and global-

ization bring clashes with local cultural and religious norms. Enforcement too has increased and now Aceh says it's trying to follow Islamic law, which calls for women to whip female perpetrators. This is already what happens in neighboring Malaysia. But convincing women to participate has been no easy task, and it's taken years to assemble the first female squad, according to Safrjadi, who heads provincial capital Banda Aceh's Sharia Implementation Unit.

Eight women - all sharia officers - agreed to be floggers and were trained in the appropriate technique and advised how to limit injury. Previously, a dozen men performed all the whippings in the city for an unspecified fee. For security reasons, Aceh officials declined to let AFP speak with the floggers, who are outfitted in cloth masks and loose fitting brown uniforms to hide their identities. "We train them to make sure they're physically fit and teach them how to do a proper whipping," Zakwan said.

But the secret for any whipping is getting past the mental hurdle of lashing fellow citizens. For that, you need to look to God, Zakwan said. "It's kind of an indoctrination that we give to them so they have a better understanding of their role - have no mercy for those who violate God's law," he added.

'Too lenient'

Aceh officials insist caning deters crime, with patrols often scouring public places and establishments - or acting on tip-offs - to monitor behavior. Sharia police in Banda Aceh, a city of some 220,000 people, are on the streets round-the-clock in three shifts. On a recent patrol, a couple sitting close to each other on the beach escaped with a reprimand. But a group of men and women spotted at a coffee shop

around 3:00 am weren't so lucky and were arrested on suspicion of breaking strict codes about unmarried men and women interacting. "This shows that we never sleep looking for violations of sharia (Islamic law)," Safrjadi said.

From behind bars, one of the men said that there was nothing romantic happening at the coffee shop. "We don't even know the women and were sitting at different tables," he told AFP. The women were later released with a reprimand as were the men, but police said the trio may be charged for a new offence, after it was determined they were gay. Same-sex relations can earn residents a whipping in front of jeering crowds, which can number in the hundreds. "Sharia in Aceh is still lenient," said resident Saiful Tengkuh. "Aceh needs harsher punishments like stoning, not just whipping. Someone committing adultery should be stoned 100 times," he added.

Aceh, home to about 5 million people, once mulled beheading for serious crimes, but the central government ruled it out. This summer, it made headlines over a fatwa, or religious edict, against online game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) and opposing a national women's football league because it didn't have a stadium where only female players, match officials and spectators would be present.

But whipping is often what gets Aceh in the news - unwanted attention local officials say is Islamophobic. Advocates say many people caught breaking religious law choose whipping as an efficient, if painful, way to avoid a stiff jail term. But this rough justice can take a toll. Floggings can be so severe that people pass out or are hospitalized, with the most serious crimes - including gay sex and having relations with a minor - earning as many as 150 lashes. — AFP

Deploying flimsy masks against virus: Fig leaf or first defense?

As fears of a deadly virus sweep the globe, panicked members of the public are depending on a flimsy first line of defense - surgical masks that are coveted, but in short supply and of limited use. While Asian commuters cover their noses and mouths with the blue-green paper-thin covers - and social media buzzes with mask emojis, rumors of stockpiles and shortages - the humble medical mask has become an essential weapon in the battle against an invisible enemy.

Cheap, mass-made and usually readily available at convenience stores, experts dispute the usefulness of masks as a tool to block transmission of the new SARS-like virus. While the basic, loose-fitting mask can help restrict the spread of cough droplets from infected people, they are a "one-way" defense and do not create an effective barrier to breathing in dangerous airborne microbes. "It is not one of the recommended barrier measures" for people who have not been contaminated,



A discarded facemask sits on a street in Wuhan on Jan 26, 2020, a city at the epicenter of a viral outbreak. — AFP

according to France's health minister Agnes Buzyn.

Satoshi Hiroi, a senior researcher at the Osaka Institute of Public Health, told AFP, that high-quality masks could be effective, referring to more expensive, tight-fitting respirators used to filter fine particulates of dust and pollution. "But as always, there is no 100-percent guarantee," he said, adding, the science was still out on exactly how the virus - which has so far killed 106 people and infected over 4,000 - is transmitted.

Still, on Bangkok's streets many members of the

public put faith in surgical masks on Tuesday, an act of self-defense in worrying times. "I'm very concerned about the virus," Tanyamon Jamophast, 28, told AFP. "Everywhere I go (in addition to a mask) I also bring alcohol and gel sanitiser to clean my hands and avoid areas with Chinese tourists." Others wore heavier duty - and more effective - PM2.5 or 3M (N95) masks, in a city shrouded for weeks by damaging pollution. Fourteen infections, all but one detected in Chinese visitors, have been reported in Thailand, a peak season destination for the tour groups from the mainland.

Sold out

For chemist Suphak Saphakkul that has led to the most intense panic-buying of medical items he has witnessed since the SARS epidemic in 2002/3. "All our (mask) suppliers are out of stock. These masks are made in China and the country itself is out of stock," he said. "We know that it does not provide 100 percent protection but it is better than nothing... (and) it can also reassure the public." Even for those who have one, there is a proper method to masking up.

On Monday the mayor of Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, took an online battering after wearing his mask inside-out. "You can inhale the virus if there is a gap between the mask and the face," added Satoshi Hiroi of the Osaka Institute of Public Health. Meanwhile the Hubei provincial governor was pilloried for not wearing a mask during a press conference - contravening an order to cover-up in public. — AFP

Revenge of the albatross: Seabirds expose illicit fishing

For the magnificent but maligned albatross, it was time for a little payback after centuries of insult and injury. Snagged by longlines, tangled in nets, shot at by sailors, and scorned by poets as lazy or a bad omen, the world's largest flying seabird is today a front-line agent in the fight against illegal fishing, according to a study published Monday. Indeed, a squadron of 169 albatross fitted with cutting-edge communications gear revealed that a third of the vessels plying Antarctic waters below the Indian Ocean are very likely filling their hulls unlawfully with toothfish, ice fish, krill and other bounty from the icy waters.

On the high seas beyond national economic zones, anything goes. But some of the choicest hunting grounds in that region lie within the territorial waters of South Africa around Prince Edward and Marion Islands, and France, near the Crozet and Kerguelen Islands. "It's the first time we've had an estimate like this for detecting illegal fishing ships," said Henri Weimerskirch, a marine biologist at France's National

Centre for Scientific Research and lead author of the study, in the journal PNAS.

For six months starting in November 2018, the albatross - which have the wingspan of a small car - patrolled more than 47 million sq km of open ocean. The birds are perfectly adapted for the mission, Weimerskirch told AFP. They cover great distances and are particularly attracted to fishing boats - especially the fish or fish parts thrown overboard. To turn the albatross into high-flying spies, a team of scientists designed a light-weight device with a GPS antenna to track location, another antenna to detect ship radar, a third one to send the data back to headquarters - and a solar panel to power them all.

The units were mounted on the backs of the birds, which seemed unperturbed by the extra cargo. All registered fishing vessels have an automated identification system (AIS) that is supposed to remain activated.

"On certain Chinese or Spanish ships the signal suddenly goes silent when they approach an economic zone," Weimerskirch said. "That means they're fishing in the boundary area." That's a problem for out-gunned enforcement forces and conservationists trying to prevent rogue commercial ships from emptying the oceans of edible life forms. Most alternative monitoring systems are impracticable.

Flying is too costly and hit-or-miss. Satellite-based radars that detect metal mass are also expensive, and only work when the probe happens to be in orbit over-



In this file photo taken on July 1, 2007, an albatross flies over the Austral seas off the archipelago of Crozet. — AFP

head. They can also be thrown off by choppy seas. But even when a ship turns off the AIS system, it still needs radar to navigate and avoid collisions, which gave researchers something else to home in on. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020

12 Global equities rallied in Q4 2019 on Fed support, easing trade fears**13** Wall Street recovers after turbulent Monday**14** NBK wins 'Best Customer Service Bank', 'Best CSR Program' excellence awards

CBK, ABK and KfW IPEX-Bank lead arrange \$650 million project finance

MPW signs PPP agreement for Umm Al-Hayman Company for waste water treatment



KUWAIT: Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares, Minister of Public Works, Bakheet Al-Rashidi, Chairman and Joachim Dudey, CEO of Umm Al-Hayman Company for Waste Water Treatment, Talal Behbehani (Chairman ABK), Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah (Chairman CBK), Motlaq Al-Sanei - General Director KAPP and senior representatives from the German and Kuwaiti sponsors.

KUWAIT: A consortium of six banks led by Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK), Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), and KfW IPEX-Bank as Initial Mandated Lead Arrangers and Joint Bookrunners has signed a US \$650 million, 26-year project loan to finance the construction and operation of the Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Plant. The other mandated lead arrangers are The Korea Development Bank, DZ BANK AG, and Siemens Bank GmbH. Under the loan facility agreement, KfW IPEX-Bank will act as the Global Facility Agent and Offshore Security Agent, while Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait will act as the Onshore Security Agent and Commercial Bank of Kuwait as the Onshore Account Bank. The legal services were led by Hogan Lovells and ASAR Legal on behalf of the Developers and Covington's and Al-Bader Law Office on behalf of the Financiers.

On 23rd January 2020, Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares, Minister of Public Works; Bakheet Al-Rashidi, Chairman of Umm Al-Hayman Company for Waste Water Treatment KSCCP, and Joachim Dudey, CEO of Umm Al-Hayman Company for Waste Water Treatment KSCCP, signed the PPP agreement and other Project Agreements for the development of the plant.

The banks represented by Talal Mohamed Reza Behbehani (Chairman ABK) and Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah (Chairman CBK), signed the Financing Agreements with the Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Company KSCCP, in the presence of Motlaq Al-Sanei - General Director of the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) and Senior Representatives from the German and Kuwaiti

- Loan will finance construction and operation of Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Plant
- CBK, ABK and KfW IPEX-Bank are Initial mandated lead arrangers and joint bookrunners
- The Korea Development Bank, DZ BANK AG, Siemens Bank, are also part of loan consortium
- Umm Al-Hayman will be the largest waste water treatment facility in the region

Sponsors. The project was tendered under the auspices of KAPP and will be developed by WTE Wassertechnik GmbH (Germany), a fully owned subsidiary of the Austrian State Utility Company EVN, and International Financial Advisors (Kuwait).

Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Treatment Co. KSCCP is owned 40 percent by the German/Kuwaiti Development Consortium and 10 percent by the Kuwait Investment Authority on behalf of the Government of Kuwait. The remaining 50 percent is held by KAPP, with the aim of offering shares to the public through an IPO once the facility is operational.

Joachim Dudey, Director of WTE and CEO of the Umm Al-Hayman Company for Waste Water Treatment KSCCP, said: "WTE Wassertechnik is delighted to be involved in this project, which represents a milestone in the development of modern, efficient and environmentally friendly waste water infrastructure in Kuwait. We are pleased to bring our market leading water management and environmental systems technology to this project, which we believe will be hugely beneficial for all parties."

Saleh Al-Selmi of IFA said: "Since 1974, IFA has

invested in assets management and infrastructure projects that help in creating efficient market structures and streamline the investment industry. Umm Al-Hayman is a critical infrastructure project that will set a new worldwide benchmark for sustainable water treatment and reuse."

Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah, Chairman of Commercial Bank of Kuwait, said: "The signing of the PPP agreement for Umm Al-Hayman project is truly a landmark event and the learning during the process will serve as a benchmark for future PPP projects. The signing of the financing agreements reflects major developers' continued confidence in the ability of Kuwaiti institutions to arrange financing for such complex project financing transactions. We are pleased to partner with our fellow banks on this project and thank the Government of Kuwait for showing confidence in us."

Markus Scheer, Member of the Management Board of KfW IPEX-Bank, said: "As a bank that is strongly committed to environmental sustainability, KfW IPEX-Bank has been involved with this project as an Initial Mandated Lead Arranger from the very beginning. This builds on our many years of firm support to

WTE's/EVN's worldwide investment. The Government of Kuwait understands that water is a critical resource, and its decision to build the Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Plant is in line with this view."

In closing, Talal Mohamed Reza Behbehani, Chairman Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait, said: "The financing of critical and mega infrastructure projects is a part of our strategic and long-term objective, especially as such projects are considered an essential part of Kuwait's Vision 2035, which is aimed at transforming and diversifying the national economy. We are extremely pleased with the hard work of the MPW, KAPP, the sponsors and our partner banks that has resulted in the signing of the PPP agreement today."

The Umm Al-Hayman Waste Water Treatment Project is one of the largest of its kind in the world, with a number of treatment plants, related facilities, and transmission and distribution assets being constructed, operated, rehabilitated and/or decommissioned under a single concession agreement - the Transmission and Sewage Treatment PPP Agreement (TST-PPP).

Under the terms of the TST-PPP, the assets are split between two contracting models (BOT and DBO). The BOT elements include a new waste water treatment plant near Umm Al-Hayman with an initial hydraulic capacity of 500,000 m³/d daily average inflow and a new electrical substation for the stage 1 plant. The DBO elements include a number of wastewater transmission assets, effluent transmission and distribution assets and the rehabilitation or demolition of existing pumping stations and treatment facilities.

UK approves restricted Huawei role in 5G network

LONDON: Britain yesterday greenlighted a limited role for Chinese telecoms giant Huawei in the country's 5G network, but underscored that "high risk vendors" would be excluded from "sensitive" core infrastructure. London's decision, following a meeting of the National Security Council chaired by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, came shortly after Brussels said it would allow Huawei a limited 5G role in the European Union.

"We want world-class connectivity as soon as possible but this must not be at the expense of our national security," Britain's Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan said in reference to high-speed fifth generation networks that offer almost instantaneous and reliable data transfer.

"High risk vendors never have been and never will be in our most sensitive networks," she insisted.

Huawei welcomed news that it would have at least a limited role in building Britain's high-speed fifth generation net-

works, after Washington lobbied hard for the company to be sidelined completely on security concerns. "Huawei is reassured by the UK government's confirmation that we can continue working with our customers to keep the 5G roll-out on track," said Huawei Vice-President Victor Zhang.

"This evidence-based decision will result in a more advanced, more secure and more cost-effective telecoms infrastructure that is fit for the future."

Washington has banned Huawei from the rollout of the next generation mobile networks because of concerns strongly denied that the firm could be under the control of Beijing.

Unlike the United States, Britain has been using Huawei technology in its systems for the past 15 years.

The US had threatened to limit intelligence sharing with London in the event of Huawei winning a UK role. All eyes will now be on Washington's response to Tuesday's announcements.

The matter could hinder the chances of a favourable Britain-US trade deal after Brexit, according to analysts. Johnson on Monday insisted that the UK can have "technological progress" while preserving national security. There has been intense debate in Europe and the US about whether or not to exclude Huawei from developing 5G.

However in Brussels yesterday, a top European Union official said the bloc would not ban Huawei and would instead impose "strict" rules. US President Donald Trump has already ordered American firms to cease doing business with market leader Huawei, and urged allies to follow suit.

Trump's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday declared that Britain faced a "momentous decision". Huawei is widely viewed as providing the most advanced alternative for super-fast data transfers behind technologies such as self-driving cars and remotely operated factory robots.



LONDON: A photograph shows the logo of Chinese company Huawei at their main UK offices in Reading, west of London, yesterday. — AFP

Existing providers of limited 5G network infrastructure in Britain include Nokia and Ericsson, while non-core elements include antennae and base stations attached to masts and roofs.

A number of UK mobile phone operators, including EE and Vodafone, currently sell 5G services-but it is so far available only in a handful of cities, notably London and Birmingham. — AFP

NBK MARKETS REPORT

Global equities rallied in Q4 2019 on Fed support, easing trade fears

Kuwaiti equities benefit from MSCI EM inclusion

KUWAIT: After losing momentum in the third quarter, global equities rallied in the fourth quarter, rounding off a strong year for equities. Easing trade tensions, positive corporate earnings, lower interest rates, and signs of improvement in macroeconomic data have led to a restoration of investor confidence and in a return of bull markets. Emerging markets led quarterly gains, trailed closely by US and other developed markets; GCC markets, somewhat weighed down by geopolitics, underperformed but still booked decent gains in 4Q2019.

The strong fourth quarter performance ended the year with strong gains where the MSCI World Index recorded a remarkable 24 percent y/y, led by the S&P500 which rose by a solid 29 percent y/y, extending the record-long US bull-market into its tenth year. Global equities performed well in the fourth quarter, with the MSCI World up a solid 7.1 percent q/q led by the emerging markets and the S&P500, which gained 9.1 percent and 8.5 percent q/q, respectively.

Markets were supported by a de-escalation of trade tensions following the announcement of a phase one US-China trade deal in November 2019, which was signed on 15 January. Markets were supported by three Federal Reserve rate cuts between August and October, and more importantly by signs of improvement in economic data, alleviating previous economic slowdown concerns: the US labor market remains robust and the slowdown in quarterly growth appears to have stabilized. Additional support came from mostly good US corporate earnings, which helped bolster investor confidence during the quarter. Chinese stocks were helped by the inclusion of Chinese A-shares in the MSCI-EM Index, raising the weight of the country in that index.

Meanwhile, European stocks posted decent gains with the Euro Stoxx 50 up 5 percent q/q partly supported by ECB expansionary monetary policy, despite continued sluggishness in economic growth. GCC mar-



kets' performance was generally positive in 4Q2019 with the MSCI GCC up 3.7 percent q/q, lifted by Kuwait (+11 percent), Bahrain (+6 percent) and Saudi Arabia (+4 percent). Meanwhile, Qatar and Abu Dhabi posted minimal gains, while Dubai and Oman were slightly negative.

While escalating geopolitical risk and oil price volatility impacted most regional markets, Kuwaiti equities benefitted from strong sentiment and capital inflows ahead of the recently confirmed MSCI EM inclusion, which will be implemented in May 2020. This inclusion is expected to generate sizeable passive and active inflows, which will support the market going forward into 2020. The fourth quarter also saw the successful conclusion of two large IPOs in Kuwait: the Boursa Kuwait IPO and the North Al-Zour one, whereby both were oversubscribed and to be listed in the official market later this year, with the Boursa Kuwait stock already trading on the OTC market. The positive expectation for Kuwaiti equities was reflected in the record net foreign

inflows recorded in 2019, at about KD 600 million (\$2billion). Bahraini equities on the other hand were supported by good progress towards economic reforms and fiscal consolidation, which may have helped restore economic stability and in turn investor confidence. The Saudi market performed decently, up 3.7 percent q/q as investors shrugged off some concerns following the (largely contested and perhaps unwarranted) downgrade of its sovereign credit rating by Fitch in October. The weakest performers, Dubai and Oman were likely hindered by the absence of market catalysts and economic challenges.

A cautiously optimistic outlook

With the slowdown in global growth appearing to stabilize, and with trade tensions easing, the outlook for equities in 2020 appears good. The consensus view is that the US equity rally will moderate but continue to be positive in 2020. With that said, it is prudent to bear in mind certain risk factors, first of which is the possibil-

ity of no further progress in US-China trade negotiations (only phase one has been struck, with most tariffs still in place) and even the likelihood that this deal may be unwound (unilaterally) given any future disagreement or lack of compliance.

Secondly, a maturing business cycle and elevated valuations (especially in the US) resulting from a record-long rally may lead to the unwinding of positions (profit taking) by investors. Thirdly, no further support is expected from a reduction in the interest rates by the Fed and if anything, the rates might increase especially if there are signs that inflation is inching upward, and last but not least geopolitical risk and oil price volatility continue to loom, especially for the GCC region. For Kuwait specifically, given that the past two year rally was driven in large part by multiple benchmark index inclusions, a fresh catalyst may be needed to fuel the market beyond the May 2020 MSCI upgrade. Our equities outlook in 2020 is therefore one of cautious optimism.

Wuhan: A central Chinese hub for transport and industry

WUHAN: The central Chinese city of Wuhan has been locked down after being identified as the epicenter of a new SARS-like virus, which has infected 4,515 people and killed 106 in the country. Here's what you need to know about the city of 11 million people:

Industrial powerhouse

Wuhan is the capital city of the province of Hubei, central China's industrial heartland. It is a huge center of industry, including iron and steel manufacturing. According to UNESCO, half the world's long-span bridges and 60 percent of China's high-speed railways were designed by Wuhan designers.

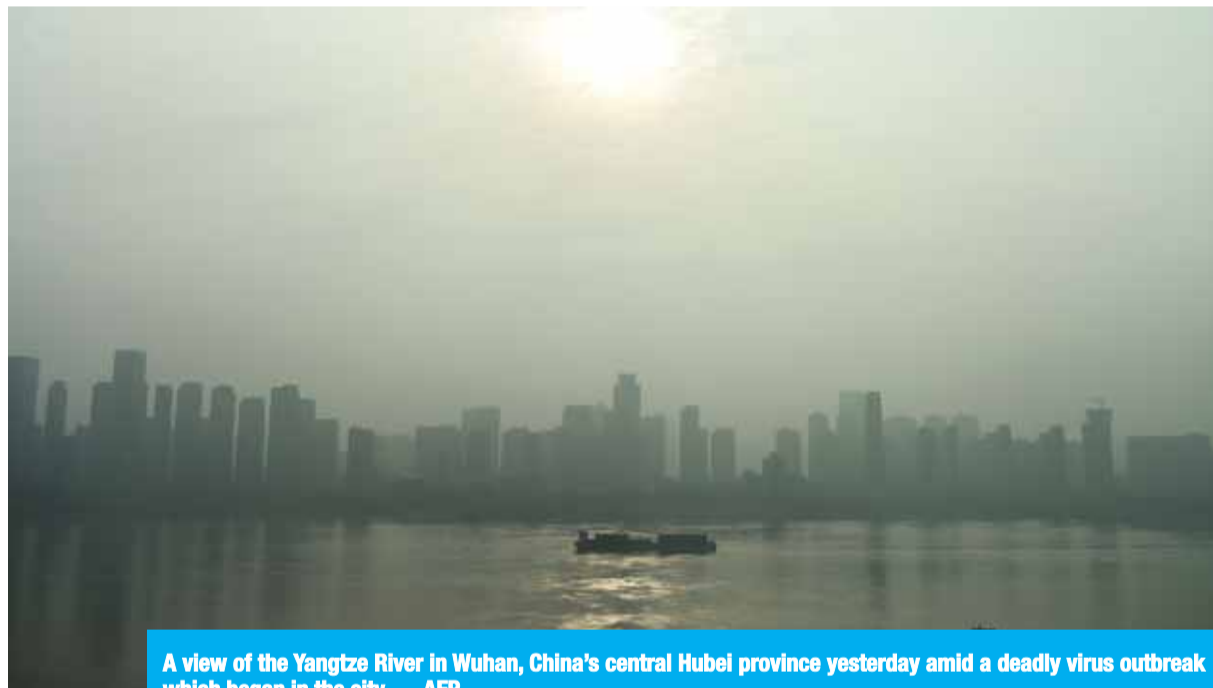
As a traditional industrial hub it has attracted large numbers of migrants seeking work-according to Wuhan's mayor Zhou Xianwang, five million of the city's population are migrants.

Central China hub

The city is a crucial hub in the middle of China. It is an important transport interchange, with three major rail stations, ferry ports and an airport. It is also a key stop for Yangtze river cruises. Several countries have consulates in the city, including the US and France-both of which are working to evacuate their nationals from Wuhan due to the virus.

Around 160 Japanese companies, including in the auto and electronics industries, have offices in the city, according to the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Wuhan.

It is also a center for sporting and cultural events. The state Military Games were held there last October, for which China built an athletes' village to host around 10,000 participating soldiers, coaches and officials. The city is home of tennis championships including the China Open. The Women's Olympics football qualifiers were due



to be held in Wuhan in February, before being relocated to Sydney because of the virus.

High-tech industries

Wuhan has been making inroads into high-tech industries. In a report last year, the Milken Institute ranked it China's ninth best-performing city, up seven places from the organization's previous annual report. Wuhan's economy included areas from chip-making to biomedicine and had secured investments from 230 Fortune Global 500 firms, according to the study. The Wuhan East Lake High-tech Development Zone, also known as "Optics Valley", had attracted several high-tech companies, including Xiaomi. It was the city's first fibre-optic cable production site, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Automobile industry

Wuhan has five automobile enterprises, more than 10

passenger vehicle factories and more than 500 automobile parts enterprises. The output value of the automobile and parts industry in Wuhan was around 400 billion yuan (\$57 billion), according to a report in the Changjiang Daily.

The city was expected to produce around 1.7 million vehicles in 2018, it said.

Several foreign carmakers, including General Motors and Renault, manufacture in the city through joint ventures.

Tough guys

It was in Wuhan that an armed rebellion began against the ruling Qing dynasty in 1911, leading to the establishment of the Republic of China-which ruled until the Communist Party won power in 1949 and declared the People's Republic of China. For this reason, Wuhan natives have earned a reputation in China for being tough. — AFP

Romania 2019 budget deficit breaches EU limit

BUCHAREST: Romania's budget deficit ballooned to 4.6 percent of gross domestic product in 2019, Finance Minister Florin Citu said yesterday, breaking the three percent ceiling laid down by the European Union. Romania's liberal government, installed in November of last year, said it had encountered "unexpected" expenses.

It may now run the risk of disciplinary action from Brussels. At a press conference, Citu indicated that the previous left-wing government's spending plans had been to blame for the deficit increase.

"Last year funds allocated to investment ended up being directed towards salaries and welfare payments," Citu said. The previous leftist government had projected a deficit of 2.76 percent for 2019, which experts described as unrealistic even at the time.

The new liberal government was initially expecting the figure to reach 4.4 percent.

Spending on public sector salaries was up 19 percent compared with 2018 whereas public revenue only increased 10.7 percent. Citu said the government should be able to bring the deficit down to 3.6 percent over 2020. "It's not just a promise of mine that I want to keep, but if we don't respect this (3.6 percent) target we will lose what I see as the most important thing right now, and that is investors' trust," Citu said in a TV interview on Monday evening.

He predicted "a hard fight" ahead to keep to this threshold given upcoming local and national elections this year. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and credit rating agencies have urged the government to abandon a 40 percent hike in pensions voted through by the previous government and due to take effect in September. According to the independent Fiscal Council watchdog, the pension hike could mean the deficit going beyond 4.6 percent in 2020. — AFP

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 Baht	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	231.355
Sterling Pound	398.580
Euro	336.800
Swiss Frank	297.760
Bahrain Dinar	808.850
UAE Dirhams	83.210
Qatari Riyals	84.450
Saudi Riyals	82.000
Jordanian Dinar	430.270
Egyptian Pound	19.311
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.674
Indian Rupees	4.263
Pakistani Rupees	1.966
Bangladesh Taka	3.550
Philippines Pesto	5.978
Cyprus pound	18.095
Japanese Yen	3.790
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.663
Malaysian Ringgit	75.450
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.270

Thai Bhat	10.870
Turkish Lira	51.640
Singapore dollars	225.000

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
EUROPE		
British Pound	0.390202	0.404102
Czech Korune	0.005259	0.014559
Danish Krone	0.040810	0.045810
Euro	0.327879	0.341579
Georgian Lari	0.104759	0.104759
Hungarian	0.000903	0.001093
Norwegian Krone	0.029231	0.034431
Romanian Leu	0.053190	0.070040
Russian Ruble	0.004826	0.004826
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Svedish Krona	0.027571	0.032571
Swiss Franc	0.307051	0.318051
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.197460	0.209460
New Zealand Dollar	0.192883	0.202383
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.225448	0.234448
US Dollars	0.300400	0.304950
US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.304950
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002917	0.003718

Chinese Yuan	0.042529	0.046029
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037056	0.039806
Indian Rupee	0.003676	0.004448
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002708	0.002888
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071012	0.077012
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001295	0.002065
Philippine Peso	0.005891	0.006191
Singapore Dollar	0.218769	0.228769
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.009982	0.010162
Thai Baht	0.009641	0.010191
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801542	0.809598
Egyptian Pound	0.019098	0.021839
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.424573	0.433573
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021022	0.045022
Omani Riyal	0.785780	0.793677
Qatar Riyal	0.082983	0.083817
Saudi Riyal	0.080113	0.081413
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.103694	0.111694
Turkish Lira	0.044755	0.054600
UAE Dirhams	0.082271	0.083097
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

US core capital goods orders post largest drop in 8 months

Durable goods orders increase 2.4%

WASHINGTON: New orders for key US-made capital goods dropped by the most in eight months in December and shipments were weak, suggesting business investment contracted further in the fourth quarter and was a drag on economic growth. Business spending remains one of the weak spots in the economy. Housing, the other laggard, is regaining momentum in response to the Federal Reserve's three interest rate cuts last year. Officials from the US central bank were scheduled to start a two-day policy meeting yesterday.

They are expected to reiterate the Fed's desire to keep rates unchanged at least through this year. Weak business investment and the resulting slump in manufacturing have been on the radar of Fed officials who have blamed trade tensions, especially the White House's 18-month trade war with China, and an uncertain global economic growth outlook for the malaise.

Though tensions have eased with the signing this month of a "Phase 1" trade deal between Washington and Beijing, Boeing continues to loom over manufacturing. Boeing this month suspended production of its troubled 737 MAX jetliner, which was grounded last March following two fatal crashes. The Commerce Department said yesterday orders for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business

spending plans, fell 0.9 percent last month as demand for machinery, primary metals and electrical equipment, appliances and components declined.

That was the largest decrease since April. Data for November was revised lower to show these so-called core capital goods orders edging up 0.1 percent instead of gaining 0.2 percent as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast core capital goods would be unchanged in December.

Core capital goods orders rose 0.8 percent in 2019. Shipments of core capital goods decreased 0.4 percent last month. Core capital goods shipments are used to calculate equipment spending in the government's gross domestic product measurement. They declined by an unrevised 0.3 percent in November.

US stock index futures were trading higher and the dollar rose against a basket of currencies. Prices of US Treasuries fell.

Manufacturing slump

Business investment has contracted for two straight quarters and likely remained in the red in the fourth quarter, subtracting from GDP growth. The Atlanta Fed is forecasting GDP to rise at a 1.8 percent annualized rate in the fourth quarter. The economy grew at a 2.1 percent rate in the July-September period.

The government will publish its snapshot of fourth-quarter GDP tomorrow. Business investment had been weighed down by steep declines in both spending on equipment and nonresidential structures such as gas and oil well drilling. That has landed manufacturing, which accounts for 11 percent of the economy, in recession. Capital expenditure has been undercut by the U.S.-China trade war, which has hurt business confidence.

Boeing's biggest assembly-line halt in more than 20 years is expected to wreak havoc with the supply chain. The plane maker's largest supplier, Spirit AeroSystems Holdings, announced early this month that it planned to lay off more than 20 percent of the workforce at its Wichita, Kansas base.

Economists estimate the production suspension could slice at least half a percentage point from first-quarter GDP growth. The hit to GDP growth would come from a smaller inventory build. Though airlines have continued to submit orders there have been no deliveries, leading to a rise in inventories at factories. In December, overall orders for durable goods, items ranging from toasters to aircraft that are meant to last three years or more, rebounded 2.4 percent after tumbling 3.1 percent in the prior month.

They were boosted by a 7.6 percent surge in orders for transportation equipment, the largest increase since August 2018, which fol-

lowed an 8.3 percent drop in November. Orders for defense aircraft and parts soared 168.3 percent last month, offsetting a 74.7 percent plunge in demand for civilian aircraft. Boeing reported on its website that it had

received only three commercial aircraft orders in December, down from 63 in November. December is normally a strong month for aircraft orders. Motor vehicles and parts orders fell 0.9 percent in December. — Reuters



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



The Brazilian Congress in Brasilia. Lawmakers in Brazil will consider in 2020 various proposals to simplify one of the world's most complicated and time-consuming tax regimes. — AFP

Brazil businesses hope for simpler tax system in 2020

SAO PAULO: Alex Serodio struggles to find enough superlatives to describe Brazil's cumbersome tax system. "I think rocket science might be easier," quips the online beauty products retailer in Sao Paulo. That could change this year, as lawmakers consider various proposals to simplify one of the world's most complicated and time-consuming tax regimes.

President Jair Bolsonaro, who came to power in January 2019 on a promise to slash red-tape for businesses, has made tax reform a priority this year. It is an ambitious goal that previous governments have failed to achieve. While tax cuts are not an option for the cash-strapped country, modernizing the system is seen as key to spurring economic growth, boosting foreign investment and enabling the private sector to flourish.

"It's really, really, really, really complex," says Serodio, whose company Beleza na Web, or Beauty on the Web, employs a team of accountants and lawyers to navigate the labyrinthine tax rules that are constantly changing. "This is why you don't have many (foreign) retailers in Brazil... it's too complicated." An average of 31 tax rules are introduced or amended every day, according to the Brazilian Institute of Planning and Taxation, making compliance almost impossible for many companies.

"It's so complex that we spend a lot of our decision-making time on this and not how to add more value to consumers," Serodio adds.

He is not alone. A medium-sized company in Brazil spends more than 1,500 hours a year preparing and paying taxes, according to the World Bank's latest Doing Business report.

It ranked Brazil among the 10 worst countries for paying taxes-only slightly better than the Congo and Venezuela. That compares with 175 hours in the United States and 114 hours in Britain.

"I often joke that even when we sleep, we're paying taxes," Gabriel Kanner of Brasil 200, a business lobby group, told local media recently. Brazil has 63 different taxes, including multiple levies on goods and services. These consumption taxes, which unfairly hurt the poor and are a nightmare for businesses to calculate, are in the cross-hairs of lawmakers.

Their rates can vary wildly across Brazil's federal district, 26 states and

5,570 municipalities, depending on the product or service and jurisdiction. "It's totally irrational," a vexed Flavio Rocha, chief executive of retail giant Riachuelo, tells AFP.

"A big industry in Brazil is the tax fight industry." In the northeastern state of Maranhao, for example, 12 different tax rates apply to milk depending on its fat content and the animal it came from, according to Sao Paulo-based Endeavor, which assists startups.

"It is a system that is old, onerous, very expensive and complex for companies," says Monica Bendia, a tax specialist at UHY Bendoraytes, an auditing firm in Rio de Janeiro.

Winners and losers

Several proposals for streamlining the system for taxing goods and services are on the table. Two plans in Congress propose combining several municipal, state and federal taxes into a value-added levy. They also push for a selective tax on goods such as alcohol and cigarettes. The chance of getting one of the proposals through the lower and upper houses seems higher than in the past, experts say.

Some taxes are included in the Constitution and changes to those have to be approved by 60 percent of lawmakers in both houses. "We have a federal district, 26 states and more than 5,500 municipalities and each of them has a tax authority," says Linneu de Albuquerque Mello, a tax lawyer in Rio de Janeiro. "When you talk about overhauling the tax system because it's not efficient, if you change anything, someone will lose and someone will gain."

The government's success in winning congressional support for its pension overhaul last year—something previous administrations had also failed to do—has raised hopes for the possibility of tax reform. "We have a very special moment to do this, so it would be terrible if we lost this opportunity because we don't know when we will have another one," says Marina Thiago of Endeavor.

Serodio does not favor a particular proposal. He just wants lawmakers to make the system "very simple." "Do that and we are going to be able to get more traction and pay more than we pay today," he says. — AFP

Wall St on track to recover after turbulent Monday

NEW YORK: US stock indexes were on track to recover yesterday after the S&P 500 suffered its worst day in nearly four months in the previous session on fears that a coronavirus outbreak could hit global economic growth.

Markets across the world stabilized as the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said he was confident in China's ability to contain the virus outbreak, which has killed 106 people, prompted businesses to close operations and curbed travel. "Some of the comments coming out of the WHO and other medical advisers are helping markets catch a breath after yesterday's decline which was somewhat overdone," said Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at Spartan Capital Securities in New York.

Investors will keep a close watch on Apple Inc results, due after markets close amid concerns of a disruption in iPhone production as the coronavirus spreads across major markets like China.

Its shares were up 1.2 percent in premarket trading after falling about 3 percent on Monday amid a broad-based pullback in US stocks. US industrial giant 3M Co slid 1.8 percent after it forecast 2020 profit below expectations as it faced sluggish demand in Asia. Earnings are now expected to show a decline of 0.5 percent for the fourth quarter, according to Refinitiv data. Of the 87 companies that have reported through Monday, 67.8 percent have topped expectations, below the 74 percent rate from the past four quarters.

Pfizer Inc fell 2 percent after posting a lower-than-expected quarterly profit on disappointing sales of breast cancer drug. The Fed officials will gather for the first policy meeting of the year on Tuesday, and markets do not expect the central bank to change its benchmark overnight lending rate at the end of the meeting today.

Shares in Harley-Davidson Inc tumbled 5.9 percent after the company reported a larger-than-expected decline in its motorcycles revenue. Shares in Xerox Holdings Corp, known for its photocopiers and printers, jumped 4.6 percent after it reported 2020 profit above Wall Street expectations. Concerns about the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak in China supported safe-haven currencies yesterday with the dollar index approaching a two-month high and the Swiss franc holding near the highest in almost three years.

"Uncertainty on the virus news front is the name of the game in the markets and markets don't like uncertainty," said Lee Hardman, a currency strategist at MUFG in London.

German industry bloc says hard Brexit risk remains

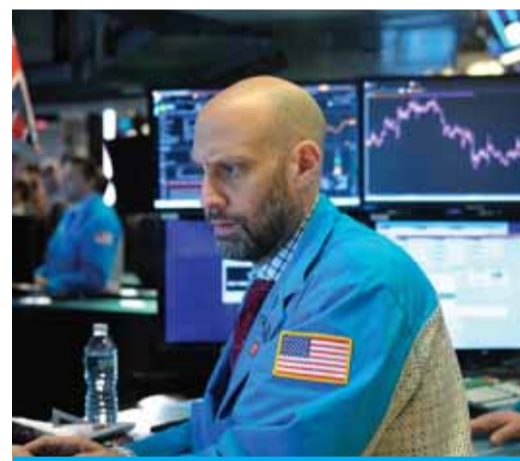
BERLIN: The risk of a disorderly Brexit will remain even after Britain leaves the European Union (EU) this week, Germany's powerful BDI industry association said yesterday, urging both sides to aim for a basic trade agreement by the end of the year.

BDI Managing Director Joachim Lang said there were no reasons to sound the all-clear now that Britain's departure will be governed by a formal withdrawal agreement, since the transition period agreed only lasts until the end of the year. That would not

The euro/Swiss franc cross, a pair highly correlated to risk sentiment, touched 1.0666 francs per euro, the lowest since April 2017, before recovering to 1.0690. It has fallen 1.6 percent so far in January and is on track for its biggest monthly drop since April 2019.

Global stock markets and oil prices have tumbled in recent days on fears the virus could further damage China's already weakened economy, an engine of world growth. That also briefly inverted the US Treasury yield curve, considered a fairly reliable recession predictor.

But larger moves were subdued, with the US dollar adding to previous gains ahead of the start of a two-day US Federal Reserve meeting later yesterday.



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Monday in New York City. — AFP

Against a basket of currencies, the dollar rose 0.1 percent to 98.01, its highest since early December and taking its gains so far this month to 1.7 percent. It remains unfazed by signs that money markets are pricing a US Federal Reserve interest-rate cut later this year and possibly even a second.

Versus the euro, it firmed 0.14 percent to an eight-week high of \$1.100.

Fed policymakers are largely expected to reiterate that interest rates will remain on hold this year.

"The market is taking a step back from the selloff earlier due to the virus concerns though the dollar is unlikely to weaken substantially as there is safe-haven demand for the greenback," said Morten Lund, a senior FX strategist at Nordea. The Australian and New Zealand dollars, both highly geared to China, shed 0.2 percent and 0.1 percent respectively. Stability in the offshore yuan, after a recent drop, provided some calm to nervous currency markets. The Chinese currency firmed 0.2 percent versus the dollar, rising off three-week lows. At a time when mainland markets are shut, the offshore yuan has weakened more than 2 percent in less than a week. — Reuters

leave enough time to secure a comprehensive free trade agreement, he said, as such a deal touches on areas that would need ratification from all 27 national parliaments in the bloc and some regional parliaments.

"It's impossible to complete such a project by the end of the year," he told reporters in Berlin.

Since negotiators on both sides would need significantly more time to reach a comprehensive trade agreement it was a "grave mistake" on Britain's part to rule out extending the transition period, Lang warned. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, elected on a promise to "Get Brexit Done", has ruled out extending the transition and is in the process of making it illegal to do so, leaving only 11 months to seal a deal between the world's fifth biggest economy and its largest trade bloc.

Failure to reach an agreement by the end of the transition could deliver a chaotic or hard Brexit, throwing up legal barriers to trade and travel overnight and halting the cross-border flow of everything from nuclear isotopes used in medicine to car parts.

By the end of the year, the EU and Britain could only aim for a basic trade agreement on matters that lie within the bloc's sole responsibility, Lang said, but such a deal would exclude tariffs and quotas. The German industry group also urged the EU and its 27 member states to remain strong and united in negotiations with Britain. "The EU must leave no doubt: If you want to deviate from EU rules, you will not get the best access to the largest single market in the world," Lang said. — Reuters

Kenyan GDP expected to grow 6.2% in 2020: CB

NAIROBI: Kenya's economy is forecast to grow 6.2 percent this year, up from 5.7 percent last year, central bank governor Patrick Njoroge said yesterday, as regional trade shields Kenya from the effects of a global downturn.

The bank expects recovering agriculture, medium and small businesses and robust private-sector credit growth to support that growth. "We will end up with 6.2 percent," Njoroge told a news conference.

Kenya is East Africa's richest economy and is enjoying an extended rainy season after several years of drought. The government also lifted caps on bank lending rates last year, which had inhibited loans to private business. Kenya's trade with other African countries "has a stabilizing effect," Njoroge said. On Monday, the central bank cut the benchmark lending rate for the second meeting in a row, to 8.25 percent from 8.50 percent. It said the economy was operating below potential and it saw room for a more accommodative monetary policy.

The finance ministry said earlier this month economic growth probably slowed to 5.6 percent last year, from 6.3 percent a year earlier, compared with government's initial estimate of about 6 percent.

The ministry forecasts growth of 6.1 percent this year, rising to 7 percent per annum in the medium term. But concern has been growing over increasing public debt. Hundreds of mismanaged infrastructure projects have stalled and it will cost around \$10 billion to revive them, the International Monetary Fund said this month. — Reuters

Business

NBK wins 'Best Customer Service Bank', 'Best CSR Program' excellence awards

Recognition by Kuwait's Public Relations Association

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was awarded with the Excellence in the Corporate Social Responsibility Programs and also received the Best Customer Service Bank Excellence Award in Kuwait by Kuwait's Public Relations Association during the conclusion ceremony of the Kuwait Public Relations and Customer Service Prize.

The event was held at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The awarding ceremony witnessed the attendance of the Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri, and Head of Kuwait's Public Relations Association Jamal Al-Nasrullah.

"These two excellence awards represent a testimony of NBK's leading position as the largest and the most prominent financial entity in Kuwait, which was committed to launching an array of services, initiatives, and products for both customers and the whole society," stated Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, NBK.

In addition, the best customer service award is recognition of NBK's keenness to exceed its customers' expectations by offering his clients highly competitive services and banking products, and through fulfilling the top-notch and most modern requirements including

the mass media penetration and the introduction of digitalized services, Al-Othman added.

Kuwait Public Relations and Customer Service Prize is gaining momentum due to compliance with the global standards, assessed by international experts, said Al-Othman, adding that these trophies encourage companies and other institutions to maintain their leadership and pursue their development plans. "NBK boasts its track-record of social initiatives; these prizes encourage us to proceed with our efforts to develop these initiatives and serve the society," NBK Public Relations and Communications Assistant General Manager, Manal Faisal Al-Mattar, said.

Throughout the year, NBK has sponsored several useful social programs in fields of healthcare, childcare, social development, environment, sports, in addition to awareness campaigns, which boosted its leading position as the top contributor to the social responsibility programs in Kuwait and the sustainable development in light of Kuwait's development plan, Al-Mattar noted. NBK recorded a robust performance in terms of sustainability in an array of services, and initiatives in several fields including environment, healthcare, society and education.

Kuwait's Public Relations Association dedicates this prize to shed light on the distinguished efforts and



achievements of companies and organizations in the fields of public relations and customer service across all industries in both public and private sectors. The

event also featured a number of workshops about the strategies of PR and customer service targeted at employees of ministries and organizations.

Boubyan Bank announces successful offer for BLME

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank is pleased to announce that, as at 27 January 2020 (being the first closing date for acceptances of the offer), Boubyan Bank had received valid acceptances in respect of a total of 73,263,270 BLME shares (representing approximately 39.52 per cent. of the issued ordinary share capital of BLME, excluding BLME shares held in treasury), which, when taken together with Boubyan Group's existing shareholdings in BLME, represent approximately 67.44 per cent. of the issued ordinary share capital of BLME (excluding BLME shares held in treasury).

On 27 January 2020, Boubyan Bank announced that all conditions to the offer were either satisfied or waived and the offer became unconditional both as to acceptances and in all respects with effect from such date. The offer will remain open for acceptances until 1.00 p.m. (London time) on 19 February 2020 or such later time(s) or date(s) as Boubyan Bank may determine, subject to the consent of the Panel on Takeovers and Mergers of the UK and the Dubai Financial Services Authority, where required.

Commenting on the successful offer, Abdul-Salam Al-Saleh, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Boubyan Bank, said: "As one of the market leading and fastest growing Kuwaiti based banks we have an increasing number of GCC clients who seek access to Sharia compliant UK wealth management opportunities. We believe that by consolidating our longstanding shareholding position in BLME we can further develop its business and drive the growth of both businesses."

Following completion of the offer, Boubyan

Bank intends that BLME will continue to operate as a standalone group within the wider Boubyan Bank business.

On 5 December, Boubyan Bank announced that it had reached agreement with the independent directors of BLME on the terms of a recommended all cash offer by Boubyan Bank to acquire the shares of BLME

(other than the BLME shares already held by Boubyan Bank (or its associates) and BLME shares held in treasury). BLME is a UK public limited company listed on Nasdaq Dubai and the direct holding company of The Bank of London and the Middle East plc, which provides Sharia compliant financial services to its customers. Boubyan Bank has been a long-term shareholder of BLME. On 20 December 2019, Boubyan Bank published an offer document setting out the full terms and conditions of the offer.

Under the terms of the offer, BLME shareholders are entitled to receive US\$1.05 per BLME share. Moreover, Boubyan Bank had received irrevocable undertakings from certain BLME directors and BLME shareholders to accept the offer in respect of approximately 13.21 per cent. of the issued ordinary share capital of BLME (excluding BLME shares held in treasury) as at 4 December 2019.

Recently, Boubyan Bank has reported net profit of KD 62.7 million in 2019, at a growth rate of 12 percent compared to 2018, with an earnings per share of 20.4 fils compared to 19.2 fils in 2018.

Boubyan Bank's acquisition of BLME coincides with the Bank's 15th anniversary celebration, and the 10th anniversary of its transformation which brought a lot of achievements and successes, the most important of which is increasing the Bank's shares in the Kuwaiti market.

All of the Bank's main indicators witnessed a remarkable growth in 2019 where the total assets increased to KD 5.3 billion at a growth

rate of 22 percent while customers' deposits increased by 17 percent, to reach KD 4.3 billion and the financing portfolio increased to KD 3.7 billion with a growth rate of 14 percent in addition to the continuous growth of the bank's customers' base.

The total equity of the bank increased to KD 575 million by the end of 2019 and the operating income increased to KD 146 million. The market share in financing increased to approximately 9.3 percent, while Boubyan Bank's share of the retail finance increased to approximately 12 percent. Besides, the bank recorded outstanding growth in the corporate credit portfolio which grew by 17 percent. This was achieved by attracting a number of operational companies known for their financial and economic creditworthiness while continuing to maintain the highest standards of credit quality, monitoring and diversifying risks.

Furthermore, Boubyan Bank has made a new achievement in 2019, adding to its other successes, when Standard & Poor's Global rating agency confirmed its Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating at "A/Stable", thereby ranking the Bank as the second highest credit rating among local banks.

S&P's rationale for the rating noted Boubyan Bank as the fifth largest bank in Kuwait, with a solid retail franchise, good market position, strong capitalization as well as exhibiting good profitability.

During the past year, Boubyan Bank managed to maintain its technological leadership by receiving the World's Best Islamic Digital Bank Award for the fifth year in a row from Global Finance.

For the first time in Kuwait, two international institutions, namely, Global Finance and the Banker, named Boubyan Bank the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait in 2019 due to its accomplishments across various financial indicators and the growth of its market shares.



Abdul-Salam Al-Saleh

Jazeera Airways signs LEAP-1A engine services agreement

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways signed a long-term Rate Per Flight Hours (RPFH) agreement with CFM International to support the LEAP-1A engines that power the airline's fleet of Airbus A320neo aircraft. The agreement, which is valued at \$1.3 billion, covers a minimum of 20 aircraft and five spare engines, with the option of including additional aircraft as Jazeera Airways continues to expand its fleet.

RPFH agreements are part of CFM's portfolio of flexible aftermarket support packages. Under the terms of the agreement, CFM Services guarantees maintenance costs for Jazeera's LEAP-1A engines on a dollar per engine-flight-hour basis. Jazeera Airways became the first LEAP-1A-powered A320neo operator in the

Middle East in May 2018 and the fleet has since logged more than 6,000 flight hours. The airline also operates nine CFM56-5B-powered A320ceo aircraft.

"The LEAP engine is a real asset to our daily operations in harsh environments and we look forward to introducing more of these engines in the coming months", said Rohit Ramchandran, CEO of Jazeera Airways. "We have been really happy with the reliability and the best-in-class support provided by CFM over the years, so we are delighted to expand our relationship through this new agreement."

"We are very proud of the trust Jazeera has placed in CFM products," said Gael Meheust, president and CEO of CFM International. "And we welcome the responsibility that comes with that trust to support Jazeera's operations and to ensure a smooth introduction of the new LEAP-1A engines into its fleet."

CFM International's advanced LEAP-1A engine continues to set a new industry standard for fuel efficiency and asset utilization as the fleet continues the most rapid buildup in commercial aviation history, logging more than five million engine flight hours through December.



Rohit Ramchandran



NBK Capital Fixed-income MENA Markets Report

\$111bn in total debt issuances in 2019, record growth of 17.6%

KUWAIT: Global fixed-income markets continued their positive momentum in the last quarter of 2019 as a coordinated global tightening policy from major Central Banks created a positive backdrop for the asset class. As anticipated, the US Federal Reserve cut its policy rate by 25 basis points (bps) during the meeting in October. This has brought the total number of cuts for the year to three, and lowered the policy rate by 75bps, to a range of 1.50 percent - 1.75 percent.

The reference yield on 10-year US treasury treasuries closed the quarter at 1.92 percent, up 25bps as risks around the US-China trade conflict receded following the announcement of the Phase 1 trade deal. The deal is expected to result in the cancellation of previously scheduled tariffs. Notwithstanding the yield rise in Q4, the reference yield on the 10-year US treasuries closed 77bps lower on a year-to-date basis. In the fourth quarter of 2019, all central banks in the GCC reduced their policy rates by 25bp, following the Federal Reserve's steps.

Investment grade sovereign issuers in MENA saw their 5-years risk premium tight-

ening by 18bps on average in the fourth quarter. The equivalent spread declined by a larger amount for sub-investment grade countries: CDS of Bahrain and Oman dropped by 60 and 90bps respectively during the same period. The risk premium of all GCC countries declined in 2019 as perceived risk in the region receded.

GCC inclusion in the JP Morgan Emerging Market Bond Index was arguably the larger catalyst for regional fixed-income performance in 2019. The inclusion of the sovereign debt of five GCC countries attracted new inflows and improved the liquidity of regional debt market. Regional fixed-income markets performed in line with their global peers during the year.

Update on primary Issuances in MENA

MENA entities borrowed a total amount of \$18.2 billion in Q4. The financial sector dominated primary deals representing around 65 percent of total volume while governments contributed to 35 percent. Overall, total issuances in the 2019 reached a record level of \$111.2 billion, an increase of 17.6 percent when compared to 2018. Issuances were met with a strong demand from a growing investor base and performed relatively well in the secondary market.

Issuances in Q4 Kuwait:

- NBK launched a \$750 million AT1 perpetual bond with a coupon rate of 4.50 percent
- KIPCO borrowed \$500 million in 7-year senior bond issuance with a coupon

rate of 4.23 percent

Saudi Arabia:

- The Saudi Arabian government borrowed \$2.5 billion with a 10-year sukuk deal. The issuance has a profit rate of 2.97 percent
- Dar Al-Arkan issued a 6-year \$600 million sukuk with a profit rate of 6.75 percent
- Arabian Centers borrowed \$500 million in a debut 5-year sukuk with a profit rate of 5.38 percent

United Arab Emirates

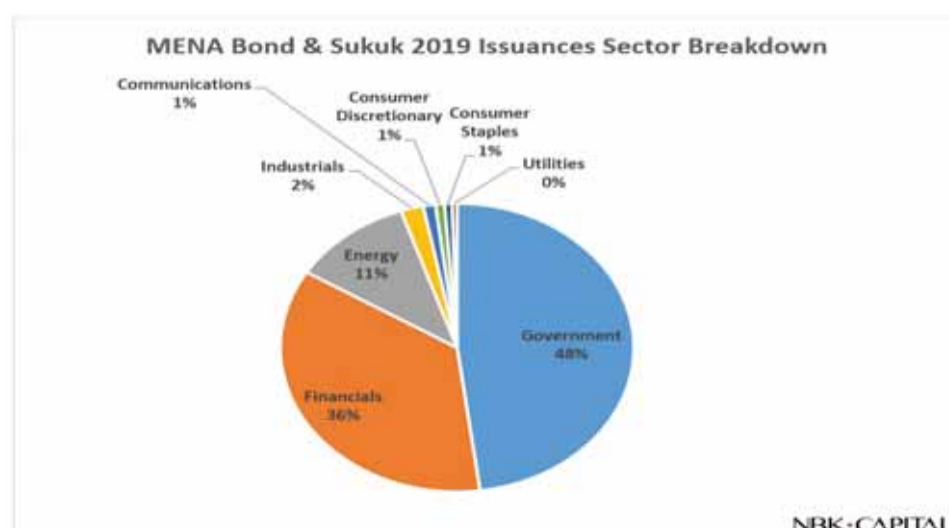
- The Abu Dhabi Government owned Mubadala raised \$3.5 billion in a three-tranche bond transaction with maturities 5, 10, and 30 years. Another Abu Dhabi related entity, Aldar, borrowed \$500 million in a 10-year Sukuk deal with a profit rate of

3.88 percent

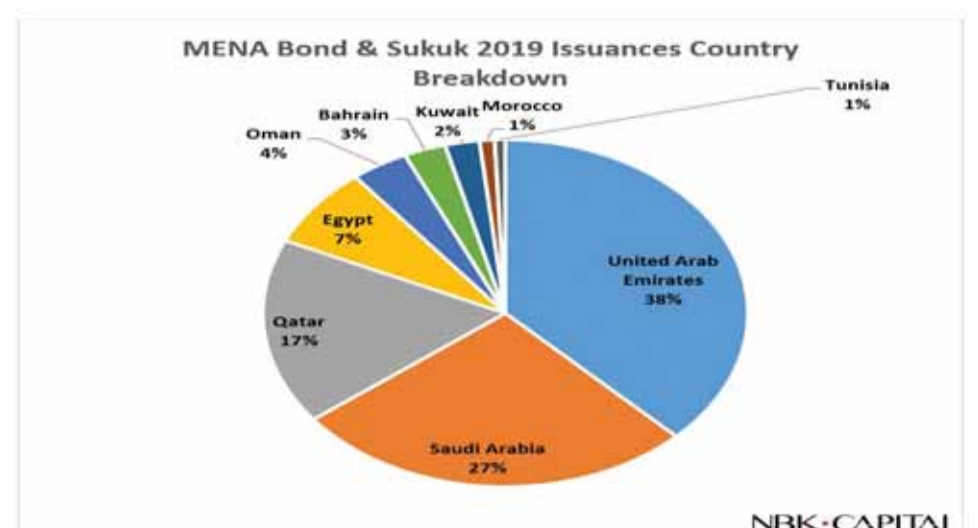
- Sharjah government issued a 10-year \$750 million sukuk with a profit rate of 3.23 percent
- Majid Al-Futtaim Properties borrowed \$600 million with an 11-year sukuk deal. The issuance has a profit rate of 3.93 percent
- Dubai Islamic Bank raised \$750 million in a 6-year Sukuk with a profit rate of 2.95 percent

Other issuances:

- Masraf Al-Rayan borrowed \$500 million in a 5-year Sukuk deal. The issuance has a profit rate of 3.02 percent
- The Egyptian government raised \$2 billion in a 3-tranche deal, with maturities at 2023, 2032 and 2059. The deals have coupon rates of 4.55 percent, 7.05 percent and 8.15 percent, respectively.



NBK-CAPITAL



NBK-CAPITAL

What's On



AUB recognizes employees during 2019 annual gala

In recognition of the exceptional efforts and admirable performance of various employees across all sectors, Ahli United Bank (AUB) held its annual 2019 Staff Annual Event with the attendance of a group of senior executive management members and many of the bank's employees.

AUB holds this gala annually to reflect the commitment of its top management to supporting and encouraging all employees. In addition, this ceremony provides an opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation to the employees' vital roles, while honoring distinguished ones and noting their tangible contribution in attaining success.

The event included distribution of certificates and souvenirs of appreciation to long-serving employees for their continuous efforts, commitment and dedication. Their contribution became a source of inspiration for many of the employees who joined the bank at later stages. In addition, recognition was extended to employees and departments that received prestigious international awards or achieved excellence in various areas during 2019, as well as the service stars from branches, Haykom tele-banking and other employees who have direct engagement with customers.

The celebration, which was held at Arraya Ballroom in Kuwait, commenced with recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by many events and competitions.

Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Acting CEO of AUB, expressed overall pride towards all employees at the bank, wishing everyone continuous success and achievements in all sectors.

Al-Humaidhi lauded the remarkable performance of the honored employees and departments for their

active role in the development and advancement of the bank at all levels. She commended AUB results in 2019, prestigious international awards, significant achievements, developments and improvements that the bank is witnessing year after year. She affirmed that the bank's support through its services to individuals and corporations in Kuwait have a positive impact on the national economy, which is as significant as AUB's financial results.

Amgad Younes, Finance Senior General Manager at AUB, pointed out the positive results achieved by the bank during the first nine months of 2019 that exceeded the results of the same period of 2018. He expressed gratitude and appreciation to all employees for their dedication and vital role in attaining more achievements and excellence in various areas to advance the valued standing of AUB as one of the Islamic banking institutions that gained the respect of many local and international organizations.

Naqeeb Amin, HR General Manager at AUB, emphasized that this annual gala is a translation of the family spirit among the bank's employees, which clearly proves that AUB is a model for a unique work environment through its ability to retain many distinguished and highly skilled employees, who are considered the true wealth of the bank, for more than twenty years while maintaining top performance and achieving more success.

Mariam Al-Mudhaf, HR Assistant General Manager at AUB, said: "This is not only a celebration, it is also a way to appreciate the impact, excellence and dedication of our employees to encourage them to achieve more, as well as increase their sense of belonging and loyalty."



ICSK Khaitan blesses Class XII with Aashirvaad ceremony

A spectacular blessing ceremony, Aashirvaad 2020, was held on Tuesday, 21st January, 2020 at The Indian Community School, Kuwait, Khaitan branch. The ceremony was conducted to bless the Class XII outgoing students of Science and Commerce of ICSK, Khaitan.

The function commenced with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran. This was followed by the national anthems of Kuwait and India. The auspicious lighting of the ceremonial lamp was done by Karthik Unnithan, the Chief Guest, followed by S.N. Raju Hon. Treasurer, ICSK Board of Trustees, Agnello Fernandes, Hon. Jt. Secretary, K. G. Shirsath, Principal, ICSK, Khaitan, Dr V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator, ICSK Senior, Ravi Ayanoli, Principal, FAIPS, Dr. Sam T. Kuruvilla, VP, ICSK, Khaitan and Mrs C. Sheeja, VP, ICSK, Junior.

Thereafter, the students of Class XI who were the hosts of the day to bid farewell to their Seniors, sang a touching Welcome Song - Sundaram Manu Bhavanam.

K. G. Shirsath, Principal ICSK, Khaitan delivered the welcome address. He mentioned that the school had high expectations from the outgoing batch and would look forward to their achievements in the future. He added that they should be the ambassadors of ICSK Khaitan. He blessed the students for their CBSE exams. Agnello Fernandes, Hon. Jt. Secretary, BOT gave the Presidential address. He said that school was the first step to preparing the students for the life and career ahead. He urged the students to follow their hearts and chase their dreams.

The Chief Guest, Karthik Unnithan, Psychologist and Motivational speaker was felicitated. In his address he said that stress is



self-created. One must make an effort to overcome the stress. He advised the students to avoid junk food. He further said that students must practice and revise to achieve perfection for the examinations.

The students of class XII sang an inspirational medley. It was followed by reminiscences by Class XII Valedictorians, Ms. Aysa Wafiyath and Ms. Alpha Susan. The students recalled their time at school with nostalgia. It was followed by a dance - Rhythmic Movement - by students of class XI. Manoj P. Kuriakose, parent of a class XII student, thanked the school for all the efforts made to groom the personalities of the students.

Next, the students of class XII were presented mementoos. The students were accompanied by their parents to receive the same. Vasanthi Suresh and Manish Ramesh

Chander, Class teachers of XII A and XII B respectively gave valedictory messages. They advised the students to keep working hard and wished them the best for the examination. It was followed by a group song by students of class XII.

Master Chetan Jithesh, President of the School Senate, proposed the Vote of thanks. He lauded the combined efforts of everyone to help the students in facing a new brave world. The exhortation from the students was elicited by the Vice Principal Dr. Sam T. Kuruvilla. After this emotional event, the students passed through the corridor of blessings formed by the Principal, all the staff and parents with lit candles. The students were blessed by everyone present with the school choir singing Showers of Blessings. The solemn function came to an end with a sumptuous dinner for all present.

Gulf Bank celebrates National Day with limited edition prepaid card free for first year

In celebration of the upcoming National Day holidays, Gulf Bank has released an exclusive, limited edition prepaid card. The new prepaid card, whose design features the Kuwaiti flag, is available just in time for Kuwait's National & Liberation Day holidays.

This exclusive Prepaid Card design which can be requested today, will be available while supplies last. Gulf Bank customers can request the new prepaid card through Gulf Bank's online banking or mobile banking services, or by visiting their nearest branch.

Commenting on the new prepaid card design, Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "With February just around the corner, we are very excited to announce Gulf Bank's latest surprise of the year. In celebration of the upcoming national holidays, Gulf Bank has introduced a new and exclusive prepaid card which features a limited edition design highlighting our beloved Kuwaiti flag."

Starting this week and while quantities last, the new prepaid card will be available to all Gulf Bank customers. We are delighted to be celebrating our national holiday and are wishing our beloved Kuwait peace and prosperity."

The limited edition prepaid card is a reloadable card that offers cardholders a variety of exclusive benefits, including being free for the first year and valid for 3 years. Cardholders can also avail instant discounts of up to 20% at over 500 local restaurants and discounts of up to 25% at over 300 retail outlets in Kuwait. As with all Gulf Bank prepaid cards, the new limited edition card is reloadable, and offers users faster payments on service-enabled POS terminals with Gulf Bank Tap & Pay, enhanced security, safety and convenience with EMV chip technology, and global acceptance at more than two million ATMs and 33 million point-of-sale terminals worldwide. The new card is available for both Gulf Bank customers.



Asian nations try to shield against deadly outbreak

MANILA: Asian nations were ramping up defenses against a deadly viral epidemic yesterday, sealing borders, shuttering public places and clamping down on visitors from China. Concern over the steadily expanding contagion, which has killed over 100 in China and sickened more than 4,500, is prompting an increasingly urgent push for protection.

Hong Kong, which has eight reported cases of the SARS-like disease, announced the sealing of six of its 14 border crossings to the mainland from Thursday. The government in the semi-autonomous Chinese city of seven million had faced criticism for merely barring people from the outbreak's ground-zero, central Hubei province. "The epidemic has spread to many Chinese provinces. Only blocking visitors from Hubei can't do much to help Hong Kong," lawmaker Helena Wong said.

Singapore, with seven confirmed cases of the virus, has announced it will ban visitors who have travelled to Hubei as well as those with passports issued in that Chinese province. Government official Lawrence Wong said the travel restrictions were not taken lightly and will be expanded if necessary. Officials said efforts are also underway to track down an estimated 2,000 people already in Singapore with a Hubei travel history for potential quarantine.

Mongolia has taken a much more drastic line, closing its entire border with China to pedestrians and cars as well as ordering schools to close. It has no reported cases. In Russia's Far-Eastern district, which shares some 4,500 kilometers (2,800 miles) of frontier with China, crossings that should have re-opened after Chinese New Year will stay closed for days or weeks.

Corralling the disease has become an effort at contain-

ing people's movements, and both Malaysia and the Philippines have taken steps to squelch the flow of Chinese visitors. Manila has been issuing visas on arrival since 2017 to Chinese nationals, adding fuel to the boom in mainland visitors to the Philippines. That policy is now suspended, though Chinese can still apply for a visa at a consulate or embassy in their home nation.

'Avoid people gathering'

"We are taking this proactive measure to slow down travel, and possibly help prevent the entry (of the virus)," said Jaime Morente, immigration commissioner in the Philippines, which has no confirmed cases. Thailand announced that all passengers flying in from Chinese airports are undergoing screening, as the number of confirmed infections hit 14 yesterday — the highest outside of China. The outbreak is sending shock waves through Asia's tourism industry, which has become increasingly reliant on growing numbers of Chinese visitors. The measures come amid a boom in Chinese foreign travel, with the number of tourists from the country increasing nearly tenfold since 2003, according to a report by research firm Capital Economics.

China has already imposed wide-ranging travel restrictions across the country and halted international tours, but yesterday called for all overseas travel to be postponed. Authorities have also cracked down on public places where the disease could spread, with Mongolia barring events like conferences or sporting competitions. From today, Hong Kong public facilities ranging from pools and sports centers to museums will all be closed. Authorities say the restrictions have one primary purpose: "avoid people gathering." — AFP



Chinese tourists, wearing protective face masks, listen to their guide during a group tour visit at the Taj Mahal in Agra yesterday. — AFP

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Consultant Ophthalmologist



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- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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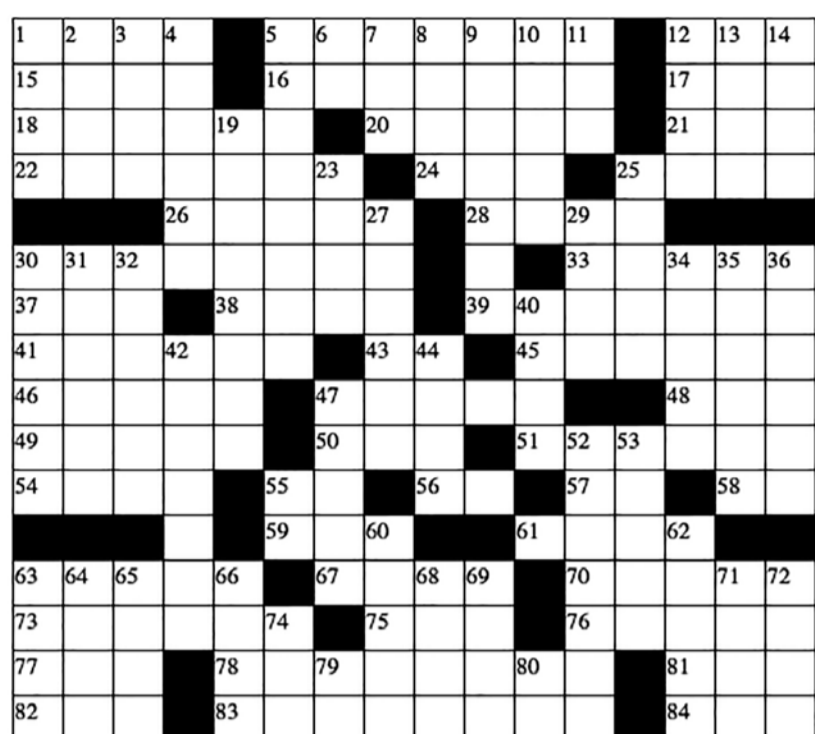
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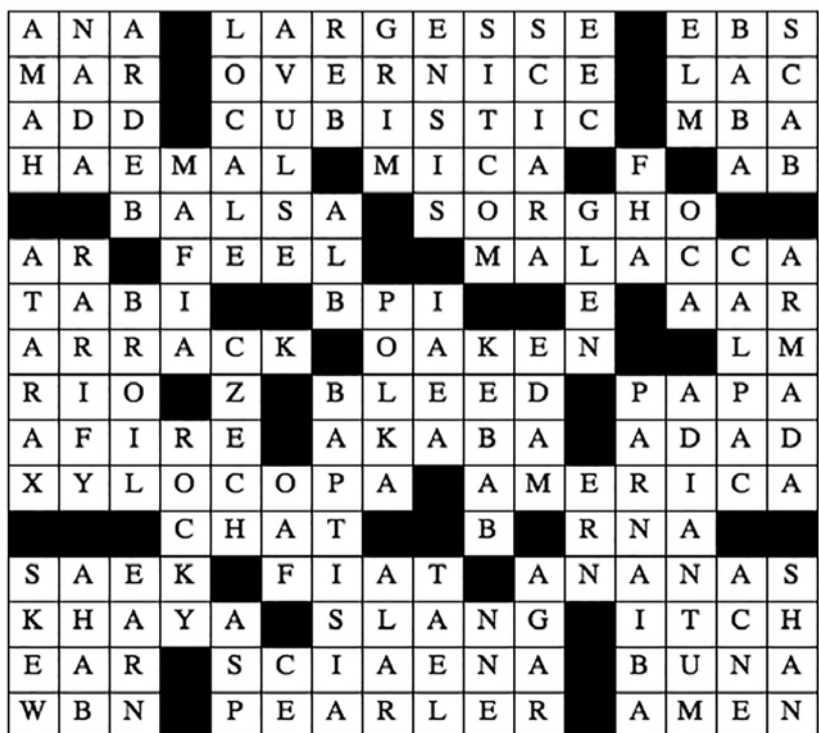
ACROSS

- 1. Voluntary contributions to aid the poor.
5. Walk or tramp about.
12. Being five more than one hundred fifty.
15. An investment trust that owns and manages a pool of commercial properties and mortgages and other real estate assets.
16. To the degree or extent.
17. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
18. A sudden short attack.
20. A kind of danceable music popular among black South Africans.
21. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
22. (British) A cope that shelters game.
24. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
26. Any of several plants of the genus Camassia.
28. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
30. Walk consisting of a paved area for pedestrians.
33. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
37. (informal) Of the highest quality.
38. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
39. (Greek mythology) A maiden who was first a sculpture created by Pygmalion and was brought to life by Aphrodite in answer to Pygmalion's prayers.
41. A statement that expresses a personal opinion or belief.
43. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
45. Of an instrument of certain death.
46. (medicine) Having or experiencing a rapid onset and short but severe course.
48. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
49. The local environment.
50. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
51. Noisy quarrel.
54. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
56. A hemoprotein composed of globin and heme that gives red blood cells their characteristic color.
57. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
58. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
59. Top part of an apron.
61. A formal association of people with similar interests.
63. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
67. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
70. A region of central Europe rich in deposits of coal and iron ore.
73. Disparaging terms for the common people.
75. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
76. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
77. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
78. (British) Liable to payment of rates or taxes.
81. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
82. The cry made by sheep.
83. A short speech (often in verse) addressed directly to the audience by an actor at the end of a play.
84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. Weapons considered collectively.
2. A light springing movement upwards or forwards.
3. Little known Kamarupan languages.
4. Standing posture.
5. Indicator consisting of a line at the high-water or low-water limits of the tides.
6. A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
7. Inquire about.
8. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in Iowa and Minnesota and Missouri.
9. 100 pfennigs equal 1 Deutsche Mark.
10. Spicy sauce of tomatoes and onions and chili peppers to accompany Mexican foods.
11. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
12. Wearing or provided with clothing.
13. A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
14. A Spanish unit of length (about a yard) having different values in different localities.
19. Without forethought or plan.
23. River in eastern Asia.
25. Enthusiastic approval.
27. A vehicle resembling a bicycle but having skis instead of wheels.
29. A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
31. A mass of ice and snow that permanently covers a large area of land (e.g., the polar regions or a mountain peak).
32. Affectedly modest or shy especially in a playful or provocative way.
34. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
35. 40th President of the United States (1911-1913).
36. A constitutional monarchy in southeastern Asia on Borneo and the Malay Peninsula.
40. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
42. Earnest and conscientious activity intended to do or accomplish something.
44. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
47. A member of an American Indian peoples of NE South America and the Lesser Antilles.
52. (trademark) A light plastic disk about 10 inches in diameter.
53. A boy or man.
55. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
60. Glazed yeast-raised doughnut-shaped roll with hard crust.
62. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
64. An informal term for a father.
65. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
66. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
68. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
69. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
72. God of love and erotic desire.
74. A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
79. A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
80. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find this to be one of those days you are in true admiration of the beauty that surrounds you. You may see beauty in everything and everyone you encounter today. This brings a sense of peace and harmony into your world and you may find this to be a delightful day. Be careful not to overspend today because this mood tends to make you want to bring home every beautiful treasure you find. Not the best day for a trip to the mall. You will want everything you see! Take a stroll in the park and enjoy the beauty of the nature that surrounds you. This will keep your money in your wallet and a sense of peace in your heart.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

After much thought and reflection you may come to realize how much you truly appreciate where you are in life. Through many challenging situations, and past you may not be very proud of, you have successfully been able to turn the stumbling blocks you have encountered into stepping-stones. Seeing others go through some of the same hard times you have draws you to them and gives you a desire to reach out and help. You may feel especially kind to a close friend in need. This is a person you are led to take under your wing. You may find this person looks up to you. Your kind words will have more of an impact than you can ever imagine.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It may seem if your sexual needs are coming to mind quite frequently. You crave power and control. The great mysteries of life and death seem are subjects you find intriguing. This is a time you long to mend fences and let by gones be by gones. This is a time you crave peace and lasting friendships.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could snap your fingers and disappear that is just what you would do today. You need an escape from reality. Always being responsible is starting to wear you down. You work hard and never take any time for yourself. A massage, a good book, even a night out at a quiet restaurant would be a welcome break for you. You work hard and need to always remember to take a break. Take to reward yourself for all you do. You will find spoiling yourself a little will help you be much more productive in the long run.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have always had that strong shoulder that others seem to lean on. Today is no exception. You may find your phone ringing off of the hook with friends in need. Your advice is in high demand. The level of respect your friends have for you is to be envied. You are the friend others wish to have. Being the one everyone turns to in their time of need can be exhausting. Who is there when you need a friend to confide in? You may find someone older or in authority can offer you the support you need today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Variety is the spice of life. This seems to be your motto at this time. You may find yourself drawn in different directions or drawn to new experiences. You can't seem to sit still. You are finding you are happiest when on the go. You have a desire for knowledge and you are gathering it from all new experiences. You may find others being drawn to you and expressing admiration toward your desire for knowledge and for the wisdom you possess. This day could bring a variety of emotions as well. You may go from feeling on top of the world to feeling misunderstood. Remember, Virgo, this day is about your pursuit knowledge and it is ok to do just what makes you happy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A desire for the unusual seems to overcome you today. A desire to broaden your horizons and experience more of what this world has to offer you. The in and outs of your regular world seem to have you bored and unsatisfied. Planning a trip or planning an outing with friends will satisfy your needs. Spend time with friends from different cultures and religions. A new outlook on the same day-to-day issues will be enlightening. Your eccentric ways could bring a new outlook into their lives as well. Spend some time learning to appreciate the beauty that surrounds you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It seems the more independent you become the more you face conflict with those close to you. This is a time you may be trying too hard to be different. This could be met with disapproval from your peers. Not everyone is fond of the changes they see you making. This could cause a great deal of pressure in your life. You well know when making decisions under pressure you seem to freeze and never seem to do the right thing. Take your time. Relax and wait until some of the stress passes. Save the decision making for later. These issues are not matters of life and death.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Communication is important. When it is put in writing, what you thought was a compliment could be interpreted as criticism. Something you thought was completely innocent or innocuous may be seen as derogatory. Misunderstandings that are in writing are difficult to overcome. They can result in a lifetime of hard feelings. Be thoughtful about what you put on social media. Consider the possible reactions before you send a text, a tweet, or an email.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This may be a great day to enjoy a good book or catch a movie. An escape from reality may be just what you need. This could clear your mind and leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. You feel your most secure when surrounded by friends. You may be feeling a real need for a change in your life. You may feel as if you want to throw out the old and bring in the new. You have had this on your mind for a while and today seems the day you really begin to act on it. It seems a change in the right direction may bring great reward into your life. You will send enjoy world you have no desire to escape from.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Sexual needs seem to be a major focus for you now. There are just some things and some one you cannot seem to get off of your mind. This is a great desire for some special time to be spent with a special someone. You desire power and control. These thoughts have your mind racing and you start focusing on a plan to accomplish your goals and satisfy your desires. The great mysteries of life and death fascinate you and you have a desire to live each day to the fullest. You may appear to be at ease and loose today. Everything seems to be working together, and you will be able to communicate and express yourself well.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is day you may feel as if you are spinning your wheels. It seems to be a very superficial day for you. Everything and everyone seems fake to you. It seems as if you are going through the motions, it is a very repetitive and senseless day for you. You find no depth nor meaning in your actions nor the ones around you. You cannot seem to get beneath the surface. It may seem as if your feelings are going against what you value. You could find this difficult for you to deal with.

Wordsearch Puzzle

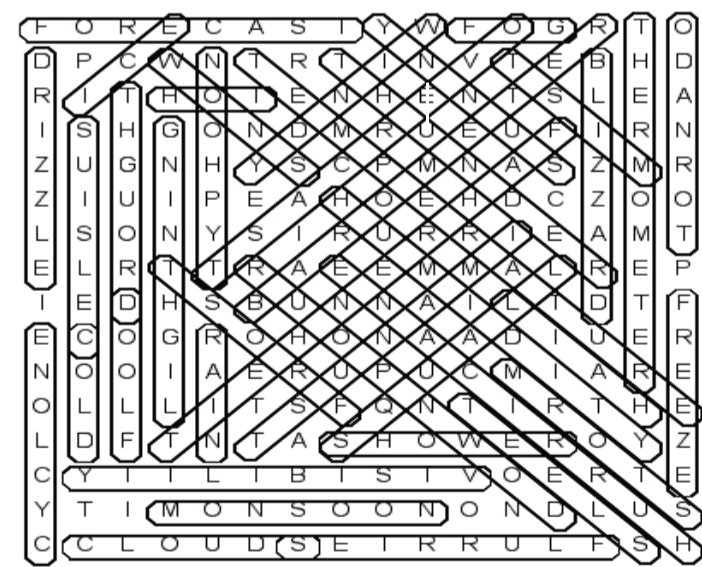
What's the Point?

Find and circle all of the things with points that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ANTENNA, ANTLER, ARGUMENT, ARROW, BACKGAMMON BOARD, BALLPEN, BEAK, BIRD TALON, COMPASS, CONE, CORKSCREW, CRAYON, DART, DECIMAL, FINGER, FISH HOOK, FORK, ICE PICK, ICICLE, JAVELIN, KNIFE, NAIL, NOSE, PENCIL, PINE NEEDLE, POINTER STICK, PYRAMID, QUILL, RHINOCEROS HORN, ROCKET, SCALPEL, SCISSORS, SEWING NEEDLE, SHARK TOOTH, SHERIFF'S BADGE, SPEAR, SPIKE, STAPLE, STAR, STYLUS, SWORD, THORN, THUMB TACK, TOOTH PICK, TRIANGLE, TRIDENT, VULCAN EAR, WOODEN STAKE

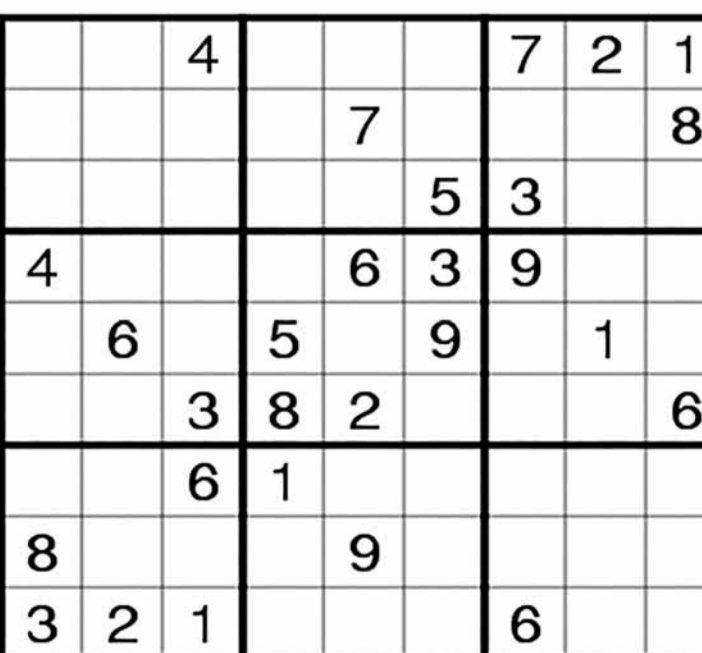
Weather



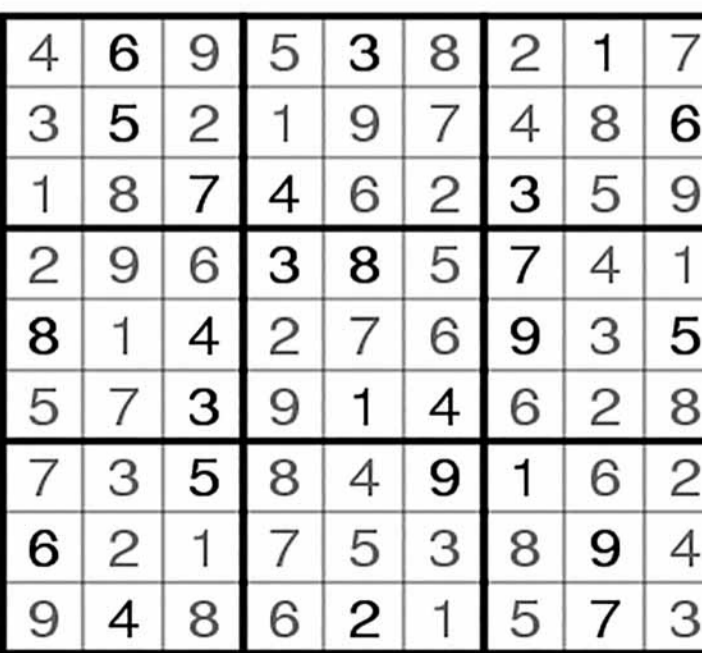
- BAROMETER, BLIZZARD, CELSIUS, CLOUDS, COLD, CYCLONE, DOWNPOUR, DRIZZLE, DROUGHT, FAHRENHEIT, FLOOD, FLURRIES, FOG, FORECAST, FREEZE, FROST, HAIL, HOT, HUMIDITY, HURRICANE, ICE, LIGHTNING, MIST, MOONSOON, OVERCAST, RAIN, SHOWER, SLEET, SNOW, SQUALL, STORM, SUNNY, TEMPERATURE, THERMOMETER, THUNDER, TORNADO, TSUNAMI, TYPHOON, VISIBILITY, WINDY

The hidden word is: PRECIPITATION

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020



A woman looks at a mural by the artists Muck Rock and Mr79Its showing Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna Bryant, who were killed with seven others in a helicopter crash on January 26, in Los Angeles on January 27, 2020. — AFP

Seeds of hope: Young volunteers replant Tunisia forests



Around 40 young Tunisian volunteers gather on a bare hill in the central region of Siliana. Their weekend mission - revive a burned forest by planting Aleppo pine shoots. Hamdi, from the eastern city of Sfax, gets straight to work after travelling 250 kilometers to the marginalized region. A camping and hiking enthusiast, he found out about the initiative on Facebook. "It's a chance to have fun and do something good together," says the student.

He is part of a network of nature lovers who have joined forces with Tunisian authorities for an ambitious venture: plant 12 million trees across the country by the end of this year. That target equates to one tree per Tunisian citizen. "We can only get there together," says Baya Khalfallah, one of the heads of the Soli&Green association, which launched the campaign in November.

"To reach our objective, we are counting on all the (community) organizations, our partnership with the government-and, obviously, on those who are environmentally conscious," she adds. Most of the volunteers come from the large coastal cities of Tunis, Sfax and Sousse. Amin Farhat, a young executive from Tunis who is also an activist for a recycling charity, says they want to safeguard Tunisia's natural beauty and resources. "We're doing it for the future," he says.

Effective & enthusiastic

Soli&Green, founded by a handful of environmental activists in their thirties, organizes planting weekends in winter and helps other organizations that want to do the same. Since November, it has compiled a list of all the country's reforestation initiatives and estimates that by mid-January, almost a million trees had been planted. The state does most of the work. The regional commission for agricultural development (CRDA), a public body, provides volunteers with basic training, thousands of tree shoots and a watering truck.

"When we use laborers, we plant around 1,000 trees a day. But with volunteers, we can plant 4,000, even 5,000 a day. There are a lot of

them, they are effective and it's free," says Nizar Khelif, a manager at the Siliana branch of the CRDA. "And there is a participatory approach - they involve the local population." The arrival of the city-dwelling, backpack-carrying volunteers has inspired Siliana residents.

In 2017, 40 hectares (almost 100 acres) of forest went up in smoke. A suspected arsonist said he had hoped the blaze would compel authorities to recruit forest rangers, and that he would be hired. "It was as if we'd lost a family member,"

al dessert) and rosemary, sold for its essential oil," adds Jaïdi, a local guide from the nearby town of Kesra.

Forest fires, both deliberate and accidental, eat away at hundreds of hectares each year. But the state is increasingly joining forces with local residents and its reforestation strategies seem to be paying off. Forests and scrubland now cover more than 1.3 million hectares, or around 8.5 percent of the country, up from 7.4 percent in 2011, according to the directorate general for forests.



says 14-year-old Khairi Jaïdi, from a nearby village. "I have many good memories of the forest. It's good to see these people helping so that our region can rebuild its resources."

'Motivating'

"Before the fire, there was a dense forest here," says 46-year-old Khelifa Jaïdi, pointing at a rocky hill. Reforestation is a crucial part of curbing erosion and fighting global warming - trees capture carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, and transform it into oxygen. But it's also a way of creating local revenue. "People used to gather Aleppo pine seeds to make zougou (a tradition-

The aim is to reach 10 percent by 2024. Whether it's post-fire reforestation or fighting desertification in the south by planting palms and olive trees, the task is enormous. Nessim Zouaoui, 26, says he is sometimes discouraged. "I spend most of my free time cleaning beaches and planting trees," says the young entrepreneur and activist. "But we just went to see a neighboring plot where we worked in March and we realized that we had completely planted a forest. That's really motivating!" — AFP



Volunteers plant trees on the Kesra mountains in Tunisia's Siliana region. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Michelin guide international three star awarded Japanese chef Kei Kobayashi (center) pose for the photo family with other awarded chefs, during the Gala' of Michelin Guide 2020' list of top restaurants and chefs in Paris. — AFP photos



Michelin guide international three star awarded chefs French Glenn Viel (left), Japanese Kei Kobayashi (center) and French Christopher Coutanceau celebrates during the Gala' of Michelin Guide 2020' list of top restaurants and chefs in Paris.

Japanese chef makes history as he joins France's Michelin elite

Chef Kei Kobayashi became the first Japanese chef ever to win the maximum three Michelin stars in France on Monday. The flamboyant 42-year-old, who was born in Nagano, was the biggest winner on a night when Japanese cooks triumphed in the backyard of French haute cuisine. Kazuyuki Tanaka won two stars for Racine, his restaurant in the northeastern city of Reims, as did Yasunari Okazaki for his sushi and crossover cuisine at L'Abysee au Pavillon Ledoyen in Paris.

Kobayashi—a striking figure with bleached blond hair—said Japanese cooks have earned their place at the top table of French cuisine. "There are lots of Japanese chefs now in France and you have accepted us and given us a place," he said as picked up the highest distinction in French cooking. "Thank you, France," he added. Kobayashi admitted that his perfectionism can make him a "difficult person" to work with. "I am quite hard. I ask a lot of my team, and then I ask a lot more," he joked.

A dozen top Japanese cooks in France have shaken up the elite ranks of the Michelin in recent years, led by two-star chefs Takao Takano in Lyon and Masafumi Hamano at the Au 14 Fevrier near Macon in rural Burgundy. Last year, Keigo Kimura at the Asperule in Dijon and Takafumi Kikuchi at La Sommiere in Lyon won their first stars for helping to re-define and re-invent French cuisine. Kobayashi opened his restaurant, Kei, in center of the French capital nine years ago, and wowed diners with such dishes as sea bass cooked on its scales and smoked salmon with roquette mousse and a tomato vinaigrette

with lemon emulsion.

'Virtuoso of flavors'

Critics hailed the precision of his cooking and the way he made relatively simple dishes like gnocchi, truffle, bellota ham and parmesan cheese extraordinary. He told AFP after his Michelin victory Monday that he didn't like his cooking "categorized" as either French or Japanese, "just the best". The famous red guide described him as a "virtuoso of flavors" and his cooking as both "delicate and memorable".



In this file photo Japanese chef Kei Kobayashi works in his restaurant "KEI".

"It's very simple. Every dish that Kei turns the rigour of his attention to is called on to become a signature one," it added. But not all

French gastronomes were quite as convinced of his genius. The influential culinary website Atabula said his cooking lacked "coherence and emotion", adding that although his restaurant was "a good two-star table, it's a thin three-star one". Kobayashi, however, is



Michelin guide international director Gwendal Poullennec (right) stands on stage next to chef Kei Kobayashi (second right) of restaurant Kei awarded with three star, during the Gala' of Michelin Guide 2020' list of top restaurants and chefs in Paris.

not one to be easily shaken. With its sparse grey interior, the chef said he did not need to hang pictures on the walls of his 30-seat restaurant, which he runs with his wife Chikako. "My cuisine provides the necessary touches of color," he declared.

New French openness

The son of a chef who worked in a traditional Japanese multi-course "kaiseki" restaurant,

Kobayashi decided to dedicate himself to French cuisine after watching a television documentary about the nouvelle cuisine pioneer Alain Chapel, himself a three-star Michelin chef. He moved to France in 1998 after training in French restaurants in Japan,

working in France to get three Michelin stars for his restaurant Mirazur, overlooking the Mediterranean at Menton near the Italian border. Two French chefs—Christopher Coutanceau from the western port city of La Rochelle and Glenn Viel, who cooks at the



Michelin guide international director Gwendal Poullennec addresses the audience during the Gala' of Michelin Guide 2020' list of top restaurants and chefs in Paris.

Oustau de Baumaniere hotel in Baux-de-Provence-joined Kobayashi this year in earning the maximum Michelin ranking. Only some 130 restaurant worldwide hold the prestigious guide's highest distinction. — AFP



Handout picture released by Bolivia's Natural History Museum "Alcide d'Orbigny" showing one of three 'glass frogs', found on January 8, at the Sehuenca National Park, some 120 km east from Cochabamba, Bolivia. — AFP

Glass frogs reappear in Bolivia after 18 years

A rare species of frog native to the eastern slopes of the Bolivian Andes has been spotted in the South American country for the first time in 18 years, the investigation team that made the discovery told AFP. The Bolivian Cochran frog is notable for its transparent belly, leading to its nickname, the "glass frog". "The rediscovery of this species fills us with a ray of hope for the future of the glass frogs—one of the most charismatic amphibians in the world—but also for other species," said investigation team members Rodrigo Aguayo and Oliver Quinteros, from the Natural History Museum "Alcide d'Orbigny", and Rene Carpio of the San Simon University in Cochabamba.

The team came across the frogs on January 8 during a mission to rescue reptiles and amphibians threatened by a hydroelectric project in the Carrasco National Park to the east of Cochabamba, the fourth largest city in Bolivia. Glass frogs are tiny, measuring only 0.7-0.9 inches (19-24 millimeters) and weighing just 2.5-2.8 ounces (70-80 grams). They can be found in the departments of La Paz (west), Cochabamba, Santa Cruz (east) and Chuquisaca (southeast). Some frogs' hearts and digestive tracts can be seen through their transparent bellies.

Those found in the Carrasco National Park had a transparent belly with a "white chest. The bones and vocal sac of the males are dark green," the team said. The three frogs found were taken to the K'ayra amphibian conservation center at the Alcide d'Orbigny museum. Experts will try to encourage the frogs to breed as part of a conservation strategy. The K'ayra Center is also home to a pair of Sehuenca water frogs, known as Romeo and Juliet, that scientists have been trying to convince to mate to help preserve their critically endangered species. Their attempts have so far been in vain. — AFP



Tissot T-Wave Bicolor Glamour always!

Life is full of encounters, the most important of which is finding your true love. For Valentine's Day, Tissot is offering a unique watch for declaring your love to the woman you have set your heart on: the T-Wave Bicolor. A real object of desire, this is a highly covetable timepiece with its stainless steel and rose gold PVD trim. Its dial in white iridescent mother-of-pearl adds a soft, elegant touch to a stylish design that lends itself well to any occasion. It's a measure of love, right there on the wrist, as well as an enduring reminder of promises made and the continuation of a love story.

It's without a shadow of a doubt the most romantic day of the year. Valentine's Day is also the occasion chosen by Tissot for presenting its latest creation, dedicated to lovers everywhere: the T-Wave Bicolor. The name is often associated with an especially glamorous ladies' collection. And the

same is true of this model combining stainless steel and rose gold PVD, which is the essence of elegance with a hint of poetry. Nothing if not subtle, the watch does not reveal all its secrets at first glance, but only to the woman who takes the time to get to know it. It has a subtle yet extreme beauty and smoothly flowing curves.

The lines of its fine, multi-dimensional, two-color design catch the light in a host of different ways, from bracelet to case. On the dial, the understated, sophisticated mother-of-pearl adds a very pure, natural aspect that complements the delicacy of the hands in the shape of skeleton petals. Even the crown adds an original touch: set with a white agate stone, it looks like a jewel in itself, while still being easy to manipulate. And the ultimate stylish yet laid-back touch? The shape of the horns, which perfectly hug the curve of the wrist and provide a unique level of everyday comfort.

Clean lines, a distinguished silhouette, perfect finishes and ultimate precision... the T-Wave watch can only be described in superlatives. To add to its charm, it is dedicated to a very special event in anyone's life: the consecration of love. On the wrist of the woman you love, it sets the tempo for precious moments and makes every second spent with your loved one even more special.

Technical features

- Made in Switzerland
- Quartz end-of-life movement
- 316L stainless steel and rose PVD case
- Scratch-resistant sapphire crystal
- Stainless steel bracelet and rose gold PVD executions
- Diameter: 30 mm
- Water-resistance to a pressure of 3 bar (30 m)

'Bad Boys' again do well for Sony, topping N. America box office

Sony's "Bad Boys for Life" stayed atop the North American box office at the weekend, while war film "1917" held at second as it continued racking up awards, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Monday. "Bad Boys," with popular actors Will Smith and Martin Lawrence reprising their roles as two wise-cracking detectives, took in \$34 million for the three-day weekend, a surprising success for a sequel that kept fans waiting for 17 years. Universal's World War I drama "1917" continued its march forward, selling \$15.9 million in tickets to remain in second place while passing the \$100 million mark domestically since its release.

The Sam Mendes film has piled up the honors, including the Directors Guild of America's top prize Saturday, and is considered an Oscar favorite. In third place was "Dolittle," Universal's take on the beloved children's book about a veterinarian who can talk to the animals. It took in \$12.2 million, raising its domestic total to just over \$44 million—still a small fraction of its net budget of \$175 million, according

to Hollywood Reporter. The cast includes Robert Downey Jr., Emma Thompson, Antonio Banderas and Marion Cotillard.

Fourth spot went to new release "The Gentlemen," an action comedy from STX that took in \$10.7 million. The Guy Ritchie movie, with a star-studded (and mainly male) cast including Matthew McConaughey, Hugh Grant, Henry Golding and Colin Farrell, tells the story of an American in London who encounters a series of complications when he decides to sell off his lucrative cannabis empire. And in fifth, down one spot from last weekend, was Sony's "Jumanji: The Next Level," at \$7.7 million. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Kevin Hart star in the action sequel.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Turning" (\$7 million) "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" (\$5.6 million) "Little Women" (\$4.6 million) "Just Mercy" (\$4 million) "Knives Out" (\$3.5 million)—AFP



In this file photo (from left) Director Adil El Arbi, actors Will Smith, Joe Pantoliano, Martin Lawrence, director Bilal Fallah and actor Charles Melton arrive for the World Premiere of "Bad Boys For Life" at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Waiters of Michou Cabaret serve clients in Paris. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on February 27, 1989 French Cabaret artist and French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty, also known as Michou performs at the 'Paradis Latin' during a TV show for the centenary of the Parisian cabaret in Paris.



In this file photo taken on June 7, 2016 French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty, also known as Michou, poses with stuffed animals in his house in Paris.

Michou, the blue man of Paris nightlife

Michou, a legend of the Paris night scene who helped inspire the comedy classic "La Cage aux Folles", died Sunday at the age of 88. A trailblazer who established drag cabaret in France, Michou died in a Paris hospital, Francois Deblaye, a spokesman for his Chez Michou theatre, told AFP. Michou, whose real name was Michel Catty, was a fixture of Paris nightlife for more than 60 years, unmistakable in his top-to-toe all-blue outfits and chunky dark glasses.



In this file photo taken on June 13, 2016 French Cabaret artist and transvestite cabaret owner Michou, whose real name is Michel Georges Alfred Catty, poses in Paris.

His tiny Cabaret Michou launched drag entertainment in the mid-1950s when it put on shows featuring men caricaturing women personalities of the time. Michou would recount over the years how one Mardi Gras he dared some male friends to dress up as

famous women for after-dinner entertainment in his simple bar in the city's northern Montmartre district. "I imitated Brigitte Bardot, finishing my number almost naked... for the time, it was very cheeky," he says on his club's website.

'Michettes'

He and his friends repeated the performance and soon the barmen and waiters were swapping aprons after their shifts for outrageous gowns, wigs and false eyelashes. Michou and his camped-up "Michettes" became icons of Paris's saucy nightlife, alongside the larger, more conventional cabarets of the Moulin Rouge, Lido and Crazy Horse. His entertainment was about mimicking—not mocking—the stars of the day, Michou insisted. "There is a lot of respect in our caricatures. We adore our victims and they know it," he told AFP in 2011.

"We do not ape them. There is never any vulgarity." Egyptian-born diva Dalida, France's blonde pop queen of the 1970s and 1980s, "loved to come and see herself more crazy than ever," he said. Such was his fame that he and his club inspired a hit 1978 French comedy film, "La Cage aux Folles"—later remade in Hollywood as "The Birdcage", starring Robin Williams.

Blue Prince

In 1948, Michou arrived in the City of Light from the small northern city of Amiens, aged 17. As his reputation grew through his niche cabaret, he had a film cameo in 1973 and was a frequent feature on television in



In this file photo taken on April 5, 1986 (Top left to right) French actor Jean-Claude Brialy, US actress and singer Liza Minnelli, French singer Charles Aznavour, pose with (Front Row from left to right) transvestite impersonator Silvestre, French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty, also known as Michou (center), and French artistic director Georges Garaventz pose during a dinner in a restaurant, in Paris.

the 1980s, also recording several songs. Always proudly and flamboyantly gay, even when homosexuality was illegal, Michou was awarded France's highest civilian honour, the Legion d'honneur, in 2005.

His 80th birthday party was a megabash of stars, from fashion's Jean-Paul Gaultier to

singing legend Nana Mouskouri.

It was fueled by lots of champagne, his preferred "fountain of youth". Michou made clear in his 2017 memoirs "Blue Prince of Montmartre" that he wants to be buried in a blue coffin, also saying his cabaret should die when he does. "I want this to disappear with

me. That may seem pretentious but the cabaret will not survive after me," he said in a recent interview. — AFP

TMZ: The 'merciless' news outlet slammed for scooping Kobe death

Known for its celebrity scandals and salacious gossip, website TMZ has carved out another niche for itself—breaking the news of famous deaths first, at any cost. TMZ was first to report the helicopter crash that killed NBA legend Kobe Bryant and eight others near Los Angeles on Sunday. Law enforcement officials have lashed out at the website for publishing details of the loss of life before victims' next of kin could be notified.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva called the practice "extremely disrespectful" and "wholly inappropriate." His deputy Tim Murakami tweeted that he was "saddened that I was gathering facts as a media outlet reported ... Kobe had passed. I understand getting the scoop but please allow us time to make personal notifications to their loved ones," he wrote. "It's very cold

to hear of the loss via media. Breaks my heart."

TMZ did not respond to AFP's request for comment on its reporting or protocols on the story. But the website, founded in 2005, has a track record of being quickest to grisly celebrity deaths. It broke details of Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston and Prince passing before mainstream outlets. Other famous scoops included Mel Gibson's drunk-driving arrest and anti-Semitic tirade, and Chris Brown's physical assault on then-girlfriend Rihanna.

Experts say this stems from its extensive network of news gatherers and sources, particularly in Los Angeles. Unconfirmed reports claim these include airport officials, limo drivers and court officials. Los Angeles police and justice officials have lost their jobs after allegedly providing confidential information to

the website. "TMZ effectively—when it comes to entertainment news that is headline-breaking, like the Kobe story—they run this town," said Hollywood entertainment journalist and producer Simon Thompson. "They have people everywhere."

'Merciless approach'

The outlet is also known for paying tipsters, often generous fees reaching thousands of dollars, in what a New Yorker profile called a "merciless approach to celebrity news." Founder Harvey Levin—a lawyer by training, and former reporter-told Fox News in 2014 there was "nothing wrong" with paying sources for surveillance camera footage or photos. "The video is still the video. So who cares whether you pay money for it?"

Levin did not respond to a request for comment by AFP. While mainstream journalism typically frowns on some of these practices, TMZ is not unique in doing so, and has also drawn reluctant praise for its work on important stories. It broke allegations of racism against ex-Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling, and "Seinfeld" star Michael Richards. Owned by WarnerMedia, TMZ's name comes from an old industry term, "Thirty Mile Zone," designating the limits of Hollywood's entertainment district. The brand now operates television shows and Los Angeles celebrity-themed bus tours. While TMZ's reporting methods are not to everyone's tastes, its impact is difficult to ignore. "Their track record is pretty consistent," said Thompson. "Whether you agree with how they do it or not, they have a very strong network of people in places where they need to be to get pretty accurate information pretty quickly." — AFP



Los Angeles County Fire Department fire fighters are on the scene of a helicopter crash in Calabasas on Sunday that killed 5 people including former Los Angeles Laker star Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna Maria. — AFP

Kobe Bryant: Private helicopters ferry LA elite above traffic

Police, firefighters, news channels and tourists: helicopters are a constant buzz in the Los Angeles skies, but only a few wealthy people like Kobe Bryant could afford to use them on a daily basis. The expensive, rapid option is restricted to a handful of businessmen and celebrities—including the late basketball legend—seeking to avoid the Californian city's notoriously clogged roads.

"Renting a machine like (Bryant's Sikorsky S-76) is about \$4,000 an hour, the pilot is earning at least \$100,000 a year," Philippe Lesourd, a helicopter pilot and instructor who has been flying in the state for 29 years, told AFP. "It's not within anyone's reach."

Beside Bryant, other celebrities who regularly use helicopters include the Kardashian family, said Lesourd, as well as businessmen who prefer an option "about five or six times faster than the road with traffic." Bryant started using private choppers around 2006. After dropping his daughters at school by car in the morning, he would fly 40 miles north to the Lakers stadium in downtown LA for basketball training, and return to Newport Beach in time to collect them.

The journey took just 15 minutes by helicopter, compared to at least two hours by car during rush hour. "I had to figure out a way where I could still train and focus on the craft but not compromise family time," Bryant once said. After retiring in 2016, the basketball titan—worth an estimated \$600 million—continued to rent helicopters and pilots for his travels. He was in his regular helicopter Sunday morning when it crashed

into a hillside near Los Angeles. Eight others were killed, including his 13-year-old daughter, whom Kobe was accompanying to a basketball game she was due to play in.

'Unstable'

The causes of the disaster have not yet been determined, but the city was shrouded in a dense fog. "He should have said to himself 'Let's take the car,' or stopped somewhere and waited a couple of hours for the

fog to lift," said Lesourd. According to Lesourd, the likeliest explanation is that the pilot suffered "spatial disorientation" after losing sight of the ground upon entering the clouds. "A helicopter is unstable—not like a car or a plane. You constantly have to actively control its altitude," he said.

"When you're in the clouds, your brain doesn't know which way is up and which is down, like when you're scuba diving." Bryant's pilot would have been highly experienced, because helicopters which transport individual passengers "on demand" require strict, airline-style permits to operate.

Such "air taxi" pilots—a minority of those flying helicopters—have to undergo regular training and drug testing checks, added Lesourd. California is the US state with the highest number of helicopter accidents, with 177 recorded between 2007-2016, according to official statistics. Helicopters were on average safer than airplanes in the US, with a fatality rate of 0.82 per 100,000 flying hours, including 55 deaths in 24 accidents last year. But according to figures from a US helicopter safety group, private flights have the worst performance of any sector. Over the past decade, they accounted for only three percent of flying hours, but 26 percent of fatal accidents. — AFP



In this file photo taken on April 09, 2014 NBA Los Angeles Laker Kobe Bryant stands on the sideline with his daughter Gianna Maria-Onore on his shoulders prior to the start of the game against the United States and China during an international friendly match at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, California. — AFP

Lifestyle | Gossip



Sparks announce new album and UK tour

Sparks will release new album 'A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip' later this year. The art rock duo - made up of brothers Ron and Russell Mael - have unveiled plans for their upcoming 24th studio record, which will be their first since 2017's 'Hippopotamus'. The band made the announcement in a surreal Twitter video featuring a mannequin confirming the LP is coming on May 15. The mannequin said:

"The boys have really taken it up a notch on these 14 tracks, some sounding even Grammy ready. "Later, the band hits the road for what promises to be an exciting Fall tour." In October, the 'This Town Ain't Big Enough For The Both of Us' hitmakers will be playing five shows across the UK and Ireland. The short run will kick off at the Roundhouse in London on October 21, before the band travel up to Manchester's Albert Hall two days later. The following

night, Sparks will be at the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow, followed by shows in Belfast at the Limelight Club and Dublin's Vicar Street. The social media clip also teased a new documentary about the group - directed by 'Shaun of the Dead' and 'Scott Pilgrim' filmmaker Edgar Wright - which is also set to be released later this year. Meanwhile, keyboard player Ron previously admitted the pair prefer the music they are making now, rather

than their earlier releases in the 70s. In an interview with The Times newspaper, he admitted: "I can't say it wasn't fun in the 70s having screaming people in the audience. "Musically, though, it is more fun now. The fact we are still here, it's beyond surreal."

Justin Bieber plotted music return after Coachella success

Justin Bieber decided to return to music after performing at Coachella in 2019. The 'Yummy' hitmaker joined Ariana Grande on stage during the annual music festival and his close friend Ryan Good admits that was the moment that Justin knew he wanted to step back into the studio and work on new tracks. Ryan revealed: "Justin was going back and forth whether it was the right time or not. I think Scooter was thinking he should have this opportunity to go out on that stage so he could be reminded himself and of who he is and what he does. It kind of seemed like a turning point for him to where he was like, 'I think I'm ready to do this again. I think I need to do this again.' As he was walking of stage, he said that to Allison [Allison Kaye - Justin's management], he said, 'I need to get back out here.'" Justin famously cancelled the last dates of his 'Purpose' tour back in 2017 after struggling with his own mental health and exhaustion and whilst his long-time manager Scooter Braun admitted he used to push Justin a lot, he now lets the singer "do it in his own time" as he feels he has "earned the right" to do so. Speaking as part of Justin's YouTube Originals documentary

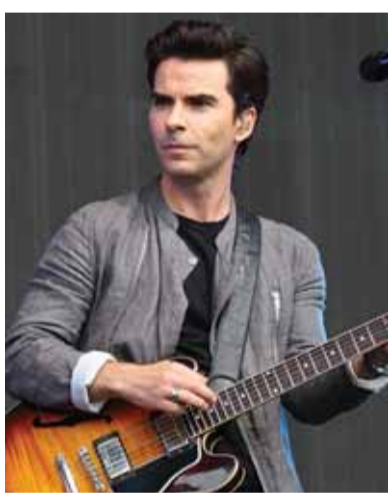


series, titled 'Seasons', Scooter said: "Early on in his career, we'd always say, 'Let's go for another one, another hit, another record, another thing, another tour.' And before 'Purpose', with 'Journals', I didn't want him to tour. I wanted him to get healthy and then he got healthy and we went on 'Purpose' and then at the end he was tired and said, 'Look, I need a break again.' And we took the break and he's taken a very long break and in that time he's found his wife, he's grown a lot. I don't put any pressure on that timeline anymore, he's earned the right to do it in his own time."

Stereophonics announce huge outdoor UK summer shows

Stereophonics have announced two "very special" outdoor shows this summer. The 'Dakota' hitmakers will be playing a pair of huge concerts in Scotland and Wales later this year, with tickets for the gigs going on sale on Friday after a pre-sale two days earlier. On July 11, Kelly Jones and his bandmates - Richard Jones, Adam Zindani and Jamie Morrison - will play at Bught Park in Inverness, before taking to the stage

at Vaynol Park in Bangor on July 25. The 'More Life in a Tramp's Vest' rockers are about to hit the road for an arena tour across the UK, which kicks off at Sheffield's Fly DSA Arena on February 28 and is set to end with two nights at the Motorpoint Arena in Cardiff on March 14 and 15. The group will also be marking 20 years since they first played the Teenage Cancer Trust as they return to headline the annual charity event at London's Royal Albert Hall on March 25. Two decades on from the inaugural gig, Stereophonics will step out with Paul Weller joining them on the night for a special solo acoustic set. Roger Daltrey, Teenage Cancer Trust Patron, said in a statement: "Once again we've got some incredible artists on the bill for 2020 and I can't thank them enough for giving up their time for Teenage Cancer Trust. "Since the first gig back in 2000 audiences have raised millions to fund Teenage Cancer Trust nurses, support teams and special hospital wards that have helped young people cope with some unimaginably hard times. "Without Teenage Cancer Trust these specialist services would simply not be there."



The 1975 to headline London's most environmentally friendly show ever

The 1975 have announced a massive headline concert at Finsbury Park this summer which will be the most environmentally friendly show ever staged in London. The English band - comprised of Matthew 'Matty' Healy, Ross MacDonald, George Daniel and Adam Hann - will take to the stage at the iconic open air venue on July 11 and will be supported on the bill by Charli XCX, Clairo, Phoebe Bridgers, Pale Waves and Beabadoobee. To help reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint of the mammoth gig, the concert will be powered by using European

sustainably sourced and traceable Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel, and will also deploy hybrid powered generators with solar arrays. The 'Love It If We Made It' hitmakers have also arranged for 1,975 trees to be planted across the local boroughs of Islington, Hackney and Haringey to enhance community wellbeing, increase biodiversity, capture carbon and improve air quality. It will also mark the first time that a show at Finsbury Park will be entirely paperless. The 1975 have also pledged to plant a tree for every ticket sold at the festival. Teaming up with One Tree Planted foundation, trees will



BTS promise 'harder' record

BTs have promised their new album will be "better and harder" than people expect. The South Korean group - V, Jungkook, Jimin, SUGA, Jin, RM and J-Hope will release 'Map of the Soul: 7' next month and have told fans the record will exceed their expectations of what the band can deliver. RM told E! News: "It's going to be whatever you're expecting it is but it's going to be better and harder." The 'Boy With Luv' hitmakers have become a global sensation but insisted they can "never get used to" attracting such huge crowds, though they are proud to have a diverse following. They said: "It's something we can never get used to... performing in front of thousands of people. "It's all about love and truly transcends language, races, and nationalities." The K-Pop superstars shared the first single from the new album earlier this month, emo rap song 'Black Swan'. The new track - which follows the Suga-led interlude 'Shadow' - is accompanied by an art film performed by MN Dance Company.

The video features the words of dancer Martha Graham, who inspired the song, which is about their "fears that one day music will no longer be able to move or touch them." Seven dancers depict a black swan "rising from the ashes of trial and hardship" in the unique and immersive performance. As per a press release, on 'Black Swan' BTS "dive deep into their inner selves as artists and faces the shadows they had once hidden." The description continues: "The song lends voice to their fears that one day music will no longer be able to move or touch them. The very moment they come face to face with the Black Swan within themselves, however, they are stricken with a paradoxical realization that music is all they have. It is a confession of an artist who has truly learned what music means to himself." 'Map of the Soul: 7' is the fourth studio album for the 'Boy With Luv' hitmakers, and follows their 2019 chart-topping EP 'Map of the Soul: Persona'.



Post Malone promises new music

Post Malone plans to release a new album this year. The 24-year-old musician is planning to get back into the recording studio once the North American leg of his 'Runaway Tour' is completed and is hoping to have the follow-up to 'Hollywood's Bleeding' - which was released last September - completed before the end of 2020. He said: "I hope to have a record out for the fans in 2020." The 'Rockstar' hitmaker was nominated for two Grammy awards this weekend for his and Swae Lee's song 'Sunflower', Record of the Year and Pop Duo/Group Performance, but he

skipped the ceremony because he was in need of a break to recharge ahead of getting back on the road next week after partying "a little hard" recently. He explained to Rolling Stone magazine: "I'm taking it nice and easy. I needed a little break because I've been partying a little hard, so it feels good to be back home and playing 'Call of Duty'. "I'm going to take some R&R and get some beauty sleep so my body and voice doesn't suck on tour. If I go to L.A, I'll get into trouble." Meanwhile, Post admitted he had "no idea" Ozzy Osbourne's condition was so serious after the 71-year-old rocker - who he per-

formed with at the American Music Awards in November - recently revealed he has Parkinson's Disease. He explained: "Working with him and hanging out with him and being around him, you can't tell. You can tell he has a little difficulty getting around, but he's so strong." And the rapper doesn't think the condition will spell the end of the 'Paranoid' hitmaker's career. He said: "I know he's been working on a new project with a bunch of my friends, [and] I'm really excited for him because he's so passionate about it and it sounds incredible: he sounds incredible."



Bombay Bicycle Club hint at Glastonbury slot

Bombay Bicycle Club have hinted that they will play at Glastonbury this year. The British indie band appeared on UK station BBC Radio 1 on Monday to perform in the Live Lounge on Clara Amfo's show, playing a rendition of 'Everything Else Has Gone Wrong', the title track from their recently released fifth studio album. During their interview with Clara, the group were quizzed by a fan about the possibility of them playing at Michael and Emily Eavis' world famous festival for a fifth time. The fan asked "Glastonbury please, any comments?", to which the band - Jack Steadman, Jamie MacColl, Suren de Saram and Ed Nash - replied: "Working on it." Glastonbury 2020 takes place between June 24 and June 28 on Worthy Farm in Somerset, England, and will be headlined by Taylor Swift and Sir Paul McCartney, with a third act to be announced, whilst Motown star Diana Ross will fill the Sunday afternoon legends slot. Other acts believed to performing at the 50th anniversary of the festival include Pet Shop Boys, TLC and Crowded House.

Meanwhile, Glastonbury is once again offering unsigned artists from the UK and Ireland a chance to compete for a slot on one of the main stages at the festival. The winner of the Emerging Talent Competition will also be awarded a \$5,000 Talent Development prize from PRS Foundation to help take their songwriting and performing to the next level, while the runner up will receive a

£2,500 prize. Acts from any genre can enter the contest from 9am on Monday (27.01.20) until 5pm on February 3, via the official Glastonbury website. Previous winners include Izzy Bizu and She Drew The Gun, whilst 2019 winner Marie White was signed to Decca Records following her performance on the Acoustic Stage.—Bangshowbiz



Classifieds

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

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www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair and with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

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

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 28/01/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	10 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	03 °C			
ABDALY	19 °C	04 °C			
BUBYAN	18 °C	06 °C			
JAHRA	20 °C	06 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	18 °C	11 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	10 °C			
NUWAISIB	19 °C	07 °C			
WAFRA	20 °C	03 °C			
SALMY	18 °C	04 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	01/29	Partly cloudy and with a chance for scattered light rain with a chance for fog forming at night	21 °C	07 °C	S-SE	15 - 40 km/h
Thursday	01/30	Fair and Visibility will improve gradually	22 °C	08 °C	NE-NW	12 - 35 km/h
Friday	01/31	Fair	21 °C	06 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	02/01	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	22 °C	08 °C	SE-NW	12 - 42 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:01
Sunset	17:23
Isha	18:42

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	74 %
MIN. RH	25 %
MAX. Wind	NW 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

LOST

I, Abdul Aziz Riaz S/O Riaz Hussain Residence of Salmiya, Kuwait announce through daily newspaper that my SSC/HSSC certificate bearing Roll No. 684345 of the year 2016 issued by Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Islamabad has been lost during transit etc. Whoever finds it, shall send it to the address Pakistan school Salmiya or call on the No. 97200842 at Kuwait. (C 5624) 29-1-2020

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Chakrapani Megam holder of Indian Passport No. R7680229 at Kuwait on 10-05-2017 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 Kakumama.

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) Sheik Alaudeen (given name). (C 5620) 26-1-2020

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

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

Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 29/1/ 2020				Departure Flights on Wednesday 29/1/ 2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	00:01	AHY	120	Baku	13:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	JZR	123	Dubai	14:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	105	London	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	102	London	00:55	RBG	218	Asyut	14:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	TBZ	6606	Mashhad	14:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	PVV	730	IGA	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:05
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	CLX	7912	Hanoi	15:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
PGT	384	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	IRA	664	Shiraz	16:40
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
JZR	702	Asyut	04:55	RBG	554	Alexandria	17:10
FDB	069	Jeddah	05:00	KAC	361	Colombo	17:30
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	KAC	619	Doha	17:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	357	Kochi	17:55
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	405	Dubai	17:55
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
KAC	284	Dubai	05:35	SAW	706	Dammam	18:00
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	SVA	505	Madinah	18:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	120	Dubai	07:10	KAC	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
ABY	889	Sharjah	07:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	RIA	641	Amman	20:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:35	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	MSC	402	Alexandria	21:30
RBG	553	Alexandria	09:50	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	889	Luxor	10:55	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
AWB	129	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
JZR	122	Doha	11:15	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
PVV	730	Sharjah	12:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:00
KIS	6032	Mashhad	12:00	OMS	226	Muscat	23:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	JZR	622	Amman	23:15
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:25	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
TBZ	6605	Mashhad	13:40	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	795	Madinah	23:30
CLX	7912	Luxembourg	14:00	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
				GOW	062	CNN	23:55

Syria regime forces recapture most of key rebel-held town

BEIRUT: Regime forces yesterday recaptured most of Maaret Al-Numan, a semi-deserted town of symbolic and strategic importance in Syria's last major rebel-held bastion, state media and a war monitor said. "The Syrian army has retaken most neighborhoods in Maaret Al-Numan" and are now combing recaptured areas, said state news agency SANA, shortly after Damascus loyalists entered the town in the northwest province of Idlib for the first time in eight years.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that most rebels and jihadists had pulled out after regime forces stormed the town from multiple fronts earlier in the day. It said regime forces were left battling the few fighters that remained holed-up in the area, which has been under opposition control since 2012. Maaret Al-Numan, which is nearly deserted after months of bombardment, lies on the M5 highway linking Damascus to Syria's second city Aleppo, a main artery coveted by the regime as it tries to rekindle a moribund economy.

It is also the second biggest urban center in the beleaguered opposition bastion of Idlib. Its recapture would bring the regime a step closer to taking full control of the wider jihadist-run bastion and the M5 highway that runs through it. Damascus loyalists have since Friday seized more than 25 towns and villages around Maaret Al-Numan, the Observatory said. The regime's advance is part of a multi-pronged push in northwest Syria, dominated by jihadists of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance and their rebel allies. The violence has displaced

around 358,000 people in Syria's north-west since December, the United Nations says.

In areas north of Maaret Al-Numan, bombardment by regime ally Russia has prompted a fresh wave of displacement in recent days, with hundreds of vehicles packing a key exit route towards areas near the border with Turkey, according to the Observatory and AFP correspondents. Most were fleeing the town of Saraqib and the Jabal Al-Zawiya region, both located north of Maaret Al-Numan. Russia has bombed areas around the main exit routes, despite the heavy outflow of civilians, according to the Observatory.

Misty Buswell of the International Rescue Committee warned that the latest escalation "will only add to the humanitarian catastrophe that is already unfolding". The escalation has also sparked concern from rebel-supporter Turkey which operates 12 observation posts in Idlib under a Sept 2018 deal with Russia that aimed to prevent an onslaught in the province.

Turkey warned yesterday it will retaliate "in self-defense" if any of its army posts are threatened, while accusing the regime of "massacring innocent civilians and causing a humanitarian tragedy". The Observatory says regime troops have encircled a Turkish observation post south of Maarat Al-Numan as part as their push towards the town. It is the third such post encircled by regime forces in the region.

The Idlib region is home to three million people, half of whom have already been displaced from other parts of the country. Maaret Al-Numan was one of the first in



HAZZANU, Syria: An aerial photo shows displaced Syrians driving through the northern countryside of Idlib after fleeing yesterday its southern countryside towards areas further north near the border with Turkey. — AFP

that region to rise up against the government of President Bashar Al-Assad in 2011, its residents say. Dubbed "the town of the revolution", it became a hub for demonstrations in the southern part of Idlib, attracting followers from villages all around.

Rebels overran the town in Oct 2012, attracting deadly regime air strikes on the town but without dousing the revolution-

ary fervor. The latest push to retake Maarat Al-Numan coincides with battles between regime forces and jihadists in the west of Aleppo province, a rebel-held area that in mid-January became the latest front of fighting in northwest Syria. The battles there are the most intense since regime forces forced rebels out of large swaths of the province in 2016.

Regime forces, which currently control around 70 percent of Syria, have repeatedly vowed to recapture the entire country, including Idlib and its environs. Syria's war has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced more than half the country's population since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. — AFP

Qatar Amir appoints trusted confidant as...

Continued from Page 1

"This is part of a wider trend in Qatar to become more meritocratic, getting the right people for the job. You need someone as head of the cabinet who can manage the other ministers and their egos," he told AFP. "Abdullah bin Nasser has signalled for a while already that he wanted to resign. And I think they found a very suitable successor."

Sheikh Tamim's brother and head of Qatar's Olympic Committee, Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, tweeted his "sincere thanks" to Sheikh Abdullah, praising him for "his work for the homeland". Sheikh Abdullah tweeted his hope that he "succeeded in bearing responsibility and honesty for the period of my service

to the homeland and the amir". He had served as prime minister since 2013 and led Qatar's delegation to December's Gulf Cooperation Council regional bloc summit in Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia along with its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut all diplomatic, trade, and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. The four nations accused Doha of backing radical Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeking closer ties with Saudi arch-rival Tehran - allegations Qatar vehemently denies. Hopes were high ahead of the summit that Sheikh Abdullah could secure a breakthrough and negotiate the end of what Qatar decries as a "blockade", but the stalemate has persisted.

The new premier previously worked in the gas industry and was educated in the United States before going on to work for Sheikh Tamim when he was the crown prince, according to his official biography. Sheikh Tamim announced plans in November for the Gulf state's consultative council to be partly elected by the time the nation hosts the World Cup in 2022. — AFP

imposed a wide range of travel restrictions inside China, suspending long-distance bus routes and more than 2,000 train services.

But with the death toll climbing and more fatalities reported in Chinese cities far away from Wuhan, authorities yesterday urged people to delay any foreign travel "to protect the health and safety of Chinese and foreign people", the National Immigration Administration said. Wuhan, meanwhile, has been turned into a near ghost-town under a lockdown that has largely confined the industrial hub's 11 million people to their homes.

With a ban on car traffic, the streets were nearly deserted apart from the occasional ambulance - although the city's hospitals are overwhelmed. "Everyone goes out wearing masks and they are worried about the infection," said David, a Chinese man who works in Shanghai but ended up trapped in Wuhan after it was put under quarantine. Many thousands of foreigners are also among those stuck in the city. "It's deeply stressful," Joseph Pacey, a 31-year-old Briton who teaches English in Wuhan, told AFP. "The biggest fear for me is that this thing will go on for months, and it will get harder and harder to get supplies, and to live."

Japan said it would send a chartered flight yesterday evening to get about a third of its 650 nationals there. "We will also bring aid supplies such as masks and protective suits for Chinese people as well as for Japanese nationals," Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said in Tokyo. If the mission succeeds, Japan would be the first country to airlift its citizens out of Wuhan. A US-chartered flight bound for California is scheduled to leave Wuhan today with consular staff and some American citizens, a day later than previously planned.

France and South Korea are also planning to fly out their citizens later this week, and several other countries, including Germany, were considering doing the same. The United States, Turkey and Germany have urged their citizens to "reconsider" all travel to China. Landlocked Mongolia - which is heavily dependent on trade with China - took the drastic step of closing the border with its huge neighbor to cars, as well as shutting down schools and banning large gatherings. — AFP

in protests demanding rights for bedoons, including citizenship. The court acquitted a dozen other bedoon protesters.

Meanwhile, Nasef yesterday criticized Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri for taking harsh disciplinary action against a senior ministry official. He said he will support the no-confidence motion against the minister next week. MP Saleh Ashour warned Finance Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel of a grilling for not providing retired people their complete rights and for making controversial statements about the need to review public wages. MP Abdullah Al-Kandari yesterday asked Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh about alleged corruption in granting Kuwaiti citizenship. He asked the minister if the ministry has launched an administrative probe into the citizenship issue.

Trump proposes Palestinian state...

Continued from Page 1

In exchange, Israel would agree to accept a four-year freeze on new settlement activity while Palestinian statehood is negotiated.

Calling it a "historic opportunity" for the Palestinians to achieve an independent state, Trump said he had written yesterday to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to enlist his support for the plan. "We will also work to create a contiguous territory within the future Palestinian state, for when the conditions for statehood are met, including the firm rejection of terrorism," Trump said as he called on the Palestinians to turn their back on the radical Hamas movement.

"I explained to (Abbas) that the territory allocated for his new state will remain open and undeveloped for a period of four years," Trump said. "This could be the last opportunity they will ever have. Palestinians are in poverty and violence, exploited by those seeking to use them as pawns to advance terrorism and extremism," the president added. "They deserve a far better life."

"This is a historic day," Netanyahu said, comparing Trump's peace plan to former President Harry Truman's 1948 recognition of the state of Israel. "On this day, you became the first world leader to recognize Israel's sovereignty over areas in Judea and Samaria that are vital to our security and central to our heritage," he added, using the Biblical names for the West Bank. While Israeli leaders have welcomed Trump's long-delayed plan, Palestinian leaders had rejected it even before its official release, saying his administration was biased towards Israel.

"Jerusalem will remain Israel's undivided, very important, undivided capital," Trump stressed. But the plan would also provide the Palestinians with a capital in occupied East Jerusalem, he said, while indicating that the West Bank would not be cut in half under the plan. Hamas immediately rejected the proposal. "We reject this deal. We won't accept any substitute for Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state," senior Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya told AFP.

The absence of the Palestinians from Trump's announcement is likely to fuel criticism that the plan tilts toward Israel's needs rather than those of the Palestinians, although the ambassadors from three Arab nations - Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain - were at the White House.

Israeli-Palestinian talks broke down in 2014, and it was far from clear that the Trump plan will resuscitate them. US officials said they were braced for initial Palestinian skepticism but hoped that over time they will agree to negotiate. The plan places high hurdles for the Palestinians to overcome to reach their long-sought goal of a state.

It remains to be seen also how Israel responds, given the pressures its rightwing prime minister, Netanyahu, faces going into his third attempt at re-election in less than a year. The US plan represented the most dramatic and detailed attempt to break the historic deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians in several years, the result of a three-year effort by Trump senior advisers Jared Kushner and Avi Berkowitz and former adviser Jason Greenblatt.

Trump has endorsed a proposed map outlining the two states, the officials said. The Palestinian state would be double the size of land that Palestinians currently control and would be connected by roads, bridges and tunnels, the official said. Trump briefed Netanyahu and his rival in Israel's March 2 elections, Blue and White Party chief Benny Gantz, in talks on Monday.

Asked what Washington was prepared to do to advance negotiations, the officials said it was up to the Palestinians to come forward and to say they are prepared to negotiate. They said both Netanyahu and Gantz had said they were willing to support the effort. Israeli leaders have agreed to negotiate on the basis of the Trump plan and agreed to the map, the officials said.



Israel's agreement on statehood for Palestinians is dependent on a security arrangement to protect Israelis, they said.

Israel will also take steps to ensure Muslim access to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and respect Jordan's role regarding holy sites, the officials said. Palestinian statehood would be dependent on Palestinians taking steps for self-government, such as respect for human rights, freedom of the press and having transparent and credible institutions, the officials said.

"In doing the map it's incredibly difficult to try to create contiguity for a Palestinian state based on what's happened over the past 25 years so if we don't do this freeze now I think that their chance to ever have a state basically goes away," said one official in reference to the growth of Jewish settlements. "So what we've done is basically we've bought four to five more years for them to get their act together and try to negotiate a deal for them to become a state, and I think this is a huge opportunity for them," the official said.

The official said the question for Palestinians is will they "come to the table and negotiate?" If they agree to negotiate, there are some areas that can be compromised in the future, the official said without offering details. Trump's plan calls for Palestinians to be able to return to a future state of Palestine and creates a "generous compensation fund", the official said.

About Israel retaining the settlements, a US official said: "The plan is based on a principle that people should not have to move to accomplish peace ... But it does stop future settlement expansion which we consider to be the most realistic approach. The notion that hundreds of thousands of people, or tens of thousands of people, are going to be removed either forcibly or not from their homes is just not worth entertaining."

Before the Trump announcement, thousands of Palestinians demonstrated in Gaza City and Israeli troops reinforced positions near a flashpoint site between the Palestinian city of Ramallah and the Jewish settlement of Beit El in the West Bank. A Netanyahu spokesman said the Israeli leader would fly to Moscow today to brief Russian President Vladimir Putin on the proposals.

Palestinian leaders had said they were not invited to Washington, and that no plan could work without them. On Monday, Palestinian leader Abbas said he would not agree to any deal that did not secure a two-state solution. That formula, the basis for many years of frustrated international peace efforts, envisages Israel co-existing with a Palestinian state. — Agencies

China fighting 'demon' virus as...

Continued from Page 1

But others say local cadres had earlier been more focused on projecting stability than responding to the outbreak when it began to spread earlier this month. Since then, the number of cases has soared - doubling to more than 4,500 in the past 24 hours. WHO chief Tedros praised China's response to the crisis during a meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to state news agency Xinhua.

The WHO last week stopped short of declaring the outbreak a global emergency, which could have prompted a more aggressive international response such as travel restrictions. But global concern has been growing, with Japan and Germany yesterday reporting the first human-to-human infections outside China. Until now, all cases in more than a dozen countries involved people who had been in or around Wuhan.

In Japan, a man in his sixties contracted the virus apparently after driving two groups of tourists from the city earlier in January, the health ministry said. He was hospitalized with flu-like symptoms on Saturday. On the other side of the world, a 33-year-old German man caught the disease off a Chinese colleague from Shanghai who visited Germany last week, according to health officials. The development came after countries including Sri Lanka, Malaysia and the Philippines announced tighter visa restrictions for people coming from China.

Experts believe the virus came from a wild animal market in Wuhan and then jumped to humans, with Chinese health officials saying yesterday that people infect each other through sneezing or coughing, and possibly through contact. Authorities initially sealed off Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province late last week, trapping more than 50 million people. China then halted international and domestic group tours. It also

Ex-health minister, bedoon activist...

Continued from Page 1

sentenced a well-known stateless activist for life for instigating stateless people or bedoons in Kuwait to resort to violence to obtain their rights. The activist, Mohammad Wali Al-Enezi, is not in Kuwait and the sentence was issued in absentia. He has been living abroad for years. The court sentenced two other bedoons to a 10-year jail term each for taking part

Sports

Qatar crowned Asian handball champions for fourth year

Japan defeat Bahrain to clinch third spot



The victorious Qatar handball team with the cup.



Qatar and South Korean team in action.

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Qatar tightened its grip on the Asia Handball Championship title for the fourth consecutive time after beating South Korea 33-21 in the final match of the 19th championship held at Sheikh Saad Indoor halls complex.

Performance was level during the first half despite having Qatar ahead in the score, as Qatari players were complying with the strict tactics dictated by their Spanish coach, especially in having the 6-0 defence, while not being reckless during fast breaks.

Qatar's Francis Mazouroo was excellent and scored five goals, and broke the Korean defence which relied on the 4-2 defence plan to prevent shooting from outside the nine meters zone.

Meanwhile, Qatar increased its lead in the second half to 17-12, taking opportunities of intercepted balls while Qatar's goalkeeper was at his best, and alternating goal keepers was also successful, that in addition to high concentration.

FAHAD AL-NASSER HANDS THE CUP TO THE WINNERS

Representative of the championship patron Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, President of Kuwait

Olympic Committee, who represented HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, handed the champion's cup to the winners accompanied by Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al-Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee who attended the final match.

JAPAN IN THIRD PLACE

Japan was third in the championship by defeating Bahrain 27-26 in a highly exciting and fast match, bearing in mind that both Japan and Bahrain already qualified for the World Cup finals 2021 in Egypt.

Japan's coach said he was satisfied with the performance of his team ending in third place, adding that luck was against them in the second half in the semifinal against Korea.

He said that the bronze medal is a good incentive for the team in preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, as it is still too early to prepare for the World Cup.

ABDELHUSSEIN: BAHRAIN QUALIFY FOR WCUP 2021

Bahrain's goalkeeper Mohammad Abdelhussein said he was sad for ending in fourth place, as it was better if he won a medal. He said the Bahrain team achieved what is more important which qualify for the World Cup 2021 in Egypt. He hoped the future will be better for Bahrain during the upcoming events.



Qatari fans cheering their players during the match.

Zimbabwe restrict S Lanka to edge ahead in 2nd Test

HARARE: Donald Tiripano and Sikandar Raza took a wicket each as Zimbabwe reduced Sri Lanka to 122 for two in their first innings before bad light brought a premature end to the second day of the final test at the Harare Sports Club yesterday.

Zimbabwe had posted 406 all out in their first innings and lead by 284 runs on a wicket that is offering little encouragement to the seamers, but providing turn for the spin bowlers, which is likely to be the key factor in the remainder of the Test.

Kusal Mendis (19 not out) and Angelo Mathews (four not out), who crafted an unbeaten double ton



HARARE: Sri Lanka's captain Dimuth Karunaratne (L) plays a shot as Zimbabwe's Brendan Taylor (R) looks on during the second day of the second Test cricket match between Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka at the Harare Sports Club in Harare yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Brief scores at close of play on the second day of the second Test between Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka at the Harare Sports Club Ground yesterday.

Zimbabwe 406 (S. Williams 107, S. Raza 72, B. Taylor 62, K. Kasuva 38, C. Mutombodzi 33, R.Chakabva 31; L. Embuldeniya 4-182, D. de Silva 3-71, S. Lakmal 2-37).

Sri Lanka 122-2 (D. Karunaratne 44, P. Fernando 44)

Match situation: Sri Lanka trail Zimbabwe by 284 runs with eight first innings wickets in hand.

in the first test, will resume on the third morning with Zimbabwe the happier of the two camps. The home side claimed the wickets of both Sri Lanka openers with their scores on 44. Captain Dimuth Karunaratne was trapped leg before wicket by off-spinner Raza before Oshada Fernando edged seamer Tiripano to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva.

Sean Williams top-scored in the Zimbabwe first innings on Monday with a superb 107 from 137 balls. With the hosts resuming day two on 352 for six, Sri Lankan left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya

put a poor first day behind him as he claimed three of the final four wickets for figures of 4-182.

Zimbabwe will feel well ahead in the game if they can pick up key wickets in the first session today, having made it into the final hour on the fifth day of the first test at the same venue earlier this month, only to lose by 10 wickets. It was their return to the international arena having been briefly suspended by the International Cricket Council last year because of government interference. — Reuters

Australia. Awarded a central contract by the Indian board earlier this month, Shafali was then signed up by the same sports marketing company which represents the country's top badminton player PV Sindhu and male cricketer Ravindra Jadeja. Her father, who runs a small jewellery shop, has been a stubborn supporter of his daughter's cricket dream but gave her a deadline to realise it. "I'd told her, 'The first 19 years of your life are yours — chase your dream. If you can't make it big by 19, you'll follow what I say.'"

Verma is well on her way to "making it big" and her father is building a gym for her on the first floor of their modest house in Rohtak. With women wrestlers from Haryana winning medals at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, Sanjeev said a wind of change was blowing through the conservative state.

"The success of Sakshi Malik and the Phogat sisters inspired many girls," he said. "Shafali had no girl to play with in the locality. Now there are nearly 30 girls in that academy alone."

'NEVER CHICKENED OUT'

Fellow 16-year-old Richa Ghosh's story is not too dissimilar. Her passion for cricket clashing with cultural expectations, Ghosh lacked opportunities to play in Siliguri, a bustling town nestled at the foothills of the Himalayas.



Shafali Verma

"For some reason, parents were not very keen to let their daughters play cricket," her father Manabendra told Reuters. "So Richa had no other option but to play with boys at a local club."

Convinced of her potential, Manabendra took his daughter to Kolkata and even before reaching her teens she had made the state's under-19 team, eventually earning a place in the senior side which also had former India captain Jhulan Goswami. — Reuters

Stars top Lightning in OT, stop Vasilevskiy's winning streak

DALLAS: Dallas' Jamie Benn capped a two-goal night with an overtime tally as the Stars broke Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy's 10-game winning streak in a 3-2 victory over the visiting Lightning on Monday night. Benn stole a clearing pass by Brayden Point in the extra period, and he chipped the puck past Point. He then deked Vasilevskiy for the unassisted winner at 2:07 of the three-on-three session. Denis Gurianov scored, and Tyler Seguin, Esa Lindell and Blake Comeau produced assists for Dallas, which improved to 16-7-2 at home and swept the two-game season series with Tampa Bay. Stars goalie Ben Bishop stopped 23 shots. Steven Stamkos notched two goals, Nikita Kucherov chipped in two assists, and Jan Rutta and Victor Hedman added helpers for the Lightning, who fell to 3-6-3 against the Central Division. Vasilevskiy made 32 saves.

SHARKS 4, DUCKS 2

Patrick Marleau and Stefan Noesen scored two goals each to help San Jose end a three-game losing streak with a win against visiting Anaheim. Marleau's first goal was his 1,100th point with the Sharks. His second goal moved him past Rod Brind'Amour for 50th on the NHL's all-time points list (1,185). San Jose goalie Aaron Dell made 26 saves. Ondrej Kase scored short-handed, Nick Ritchie scored on a late power play, and John Gibson made 27 saves for the Ducks, who lost for the fifth time in seven games.

CANUCKS 3, BLUES 1

J.T. Miller scored twice as Vancouver extended its home-ice unbeaten streak with a win over St. Louis. The Canucks are 9-0-0 in their past nine home games, tying the fourth-longest home winning streak in franchise history. The streak has powered Vancouver to a 12-3-0 record in its past 15 games, and to first place in the Pacific Division. St. Louis dropped to 0-2-1 in its past three games. The Blues took their first regulation loss of the season (21-1-6) after scoring first in the game. Zach Sanford scored for St. Louis. Bo Horvat netted an emp-

ty-net goal for Vancouver.

MAPLE LEAFS 5, PREDATORS 2

Rasmus Sandin scored his first career goal to cap a two-point performance as visiting Toronto topped Nashville. William Nylander scored a goal in his fourth consecutive contest and also set up Sandin's tally for the Maple Leafs, who posted just their second win in seven games. Zach Hyman collected a goal and an assist, Jason Spezza and Auston Matthews also scored goals, and Frederik Andersen finished with 34 saves as Toronto avenged a pair of shutout loss to the Predators last season. Mikael Granlund and Viktor Arvidsson scored for Nashville, and Pekka Rinne stopped 26 shots.

CAPITALS 4, CANADIENS 2

Jakub Vrana and Tom Wilson each had a goal and an assist, and Braden Holtby stopped 31 shots to lead visiting Washington over Montreal. Vrana now has eight goals to go along with three assists during a nine-game point streak. Travis Boyd and Nicklas Backstrom also scored goals for the Capitals, who won their fourth straight game while improving their road record to an NHL-best 19-6-1. Jeff Petry and Dale Weise scored goals for the Canadiens, who had a two-game win streak snapped. Carey Price finished with 36 saves.

DEVILS 4, SENATORS 3 (SO)

Kyle Palmieri scored the tying goal late in the third period, and New Jersey prevailed in a shootout to snap a three-game skid with a victory at Ottawa. Palmieri, who has 13 points in 14 games, tied the score at 3 when he buried a touch pass from Jesper Bratt off a rebound with 3:21 left in regulation. Nikita Gusev and Jack Hughes then scored in the shootout, and New Jersey goalie Mackenzie Blackwood stopped attempts by Anthony Duclair and Drake Batherson. Blackwood finished with 35 saves. Marcus Hogberg stopped a career-high 50 shots for Ottawa, which failed in a bid to win consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 19-22. — Reuters

Verma takes a short cut to women's team

NEW DELHI: Shafali Verma's journey to become part of the India women's cricket team began with a haircut. Growing up in Haryana, a state well known for its male bias and skewed sex ratio, the 10-year-old Verma enrolled in the Shree Ram Narain Cricket Academy but was banned from playing in the male-only tournaments as organisers said she might get hurt.

Frustrated but undeterred, she had a plan. "It was her idea," her father Sanjeev told Reuters from the northern city of Rohtak. "She said, 'What if I crop my hair? I don't think anyone would notice I'm a girl.'"

Thankfully for Verma, and Indian cricket, nobody did. "Nobody noticed her among the boys and she got important match experience," said Sanjeev. "It was an important decision we made. Her career could have been nipped in the bud."

That career has now blossomed, with the 16-year-old Verma earning a place in the national side for next month's Twenty20 World Cup in

Sports

Gordon's career-high 50 points outburst carries Rockets past Jazz

Doncic, Mavs snap Thunder's 5-game winning streak

SALT LAKE CITY: Eric Gordon scored a career-high 50 points, Danuel House Jr. chipped in a double-double, and the short-handed Houston Rockets pulled off a stunning 126-117 victory over the red-hot Utah Jazz on Monday in Salt Lake City. With James Harden (thigh), Russell Westbrook (rest) and Clint Capela (heel) all unavailable for the second game of a back-to-back set at altitude, Gordon carried Houston with a scintillating performance. The veteran guard shot 14 of 22 from the floor, drilled 6 of 11 3-point attempts and hit 16 of 20 free throws to lead the way. His three-point play through a Rudy Gobert foul extended the Houston lead to 118-105 with 1:39 remaining and snuffed out the final hope Utah had at capping a comeback. House added 21 points with 11 rebounds while adding five steals, and Austin Rivers contributed 21 points for Houston. Gobert posted 12 points and 14 rebounds for Utah, which got 36 points from Donovan Mitchell and 30 from Bojan Bogdanovic. The Jazz had won 14 of their previous 15 games.

CHICAGO BULLS 110 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 109
Zach LaVine hit a pair of go-ahead free throws with 2.1 seconds remaining to cap a 23-point effort, and Denzel Valentine added 16 points to lift host Chicago over San Antonio. San Antonio's DeMar DeRozan missed the second of two free throws with 0.2 seconds remaining and missed a put-back try at the buzzer as the Spurs lost their third straight game. Chicago relied on seven double-figure scorers to earn successive wins for the first time since Dec. 18-21. LaVine scored 14 points in the final 12 minutes to help the Bulls erase an 11-point deficit. DeRozan scored 36 points and grabbed 10 rebounds while Patty Mills added 25 points for the Spurs, who were without LaMarcus Aldridge (thumb).

DALLAS MAVERICKS 107 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 97
Luka Doncic scored 29 points to lead Dallas to a

road win over Oklahoma City, snapping the Thunder's five-game winning streak. Doncic was just 2 of 8 from the field in the opening quarter but 8 of 16 the rest of the way. Tim Hardaway Jr. added 15 points for the Mavericks while Kristaps Porzingis and Delon Wright scored 14 each. Wright added a season-high 12 rebounds. For Oklahoma City, Dennis Schroder was forced into the starting lineup for the first time this season as Chris Paul missed the game one day after the death of his close friend, Kobe Bryant. Paul and Bryant played on two Olympic teams together. Schroder and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander were a combined 11 of 36 from the floor. Schroder led the Thunder with 21 points.

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 115 - DETROIT PISTONS 100

Collin Sexton scored 23 points, Kevin Love supplied 20 points (all in the first half), and Cleveland snapped a seven-game losing streak by thumping host Detroit. Tristan Thompson had 17 points and 11 rebounds, and Alfonzo McKinnie contributed 15 points off the bench for Cleveland. The Cavaliers outscored Detroit 65-49 in the second and third quarters. Reggie Jackson topped the Pistons, who have lost three straight, with 16 points. Andre Drummond had 15 points and eight rebounds for Detroit.

MIAMI HEAT 113 - ORLANDO MAGIC 92

Center Bam Adebayo recorded the third triple-double of his career — 20 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists — as host Miami defeated Orlando. The Heat also got 21 points from Duncan Robinson — he made 6 of 9 3-point attempts — and 19 points and seven assists from Jimmy Butler, who had left Miami's previous game with a sprained ankle. With the win, the Heat tied the Milwaukee Bucks and Philadelphia 76ers for best home record in the NBA (21-2). Orlando, which had won nine of its previous 13 games against in-state



SALT LAKE CITY: Mike Conley #10 of the Utah Jazz shoots the ball against the Houston Rockets at Vivint Smart Home Arena in Salt Lake City, Utah. — AFP

rival Miami, was led by Nikola Vucevic's double-double: 13 points and 12 rebounds. Aaron Gordon added 13 points, but just two after halftime.

SACRAMENTO KINGS 133 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 129 (OT)

Nemanja Bjelica broke the fifth tie of overtime with two free throws with 48.3 seconds left, and Sacramento,

after an improbable rally that forced the extra session, held off Minnesota in Minneapolis. Buddy Hield scored a career-high 42 points off the bench for the Kings, including 12 during a 21-4 regulation-ending flurry that erased a 17-point deficit in the final 2:49. Andrew Wiggins scored 36 points, including seven 3-pointers, for the Timberwolves, who set season highs for threes (23) and 3-point percentage (50 percent). — Reuters

Bryant tragedy looms over Super Bowl launch

MIAMI: The death of NBA icon Kobe Bryant loomed over the build-up to the Super Bowl here Monday as players from the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers paid tribute to the Los Angeles Lakers legend.

One day after Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter and seven others were killed in a helicopter crash outside Los Angeles, the build-up to Sunday's NFL championship game in Miami cranked into gear.

Both the Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers teams were presented before thousands of journalists and fans in the now circus-like "opening night" event that formally kicks off Super Bowl week. But the festivities at Marlins Park began on a somber note, with a moment's silence observed as a giant screen displayed a photo of Bryant.

Chants of "Kobe! Kobe!" rang out towards the end of the brief pause before numerous members of the Chiefs roster shared their memories of the five-time NBA champion. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said although he had never met Bryant, he continued to be inspired by his famously ferocious competitive spirit. "I wasn't lucky enough to meet Kobe but the impact he made in my life was huge," the 24-year-old told reporters. "The work ethic, that intensity that he had to be great every single day."

"Even to this day, I still watch videos on YouTube the day before games, just listening to him talk, how he puts everything into perspective being great on and off the court." San Francisco veteran cornerback Richard Sherman — who grew up in the tough Los Angeles neighborhood of Compton — said he was left mourning the loss of "a friend and a mentor."

"There's nothing I can say that can really quantify his impact on myself and others," the 31-year-old said. "I just know how he would have wanted me react in this moment and this game."

"I was really sad yesterday, and I was really sad this morning, kind of down. But then I thought about what Kobe would tell me. And he'd probably tell me 'Stop being a baby, man up, and win this game for me.' And that's what I'm going to try to do on Sunday. Go out there and play some dominating football. Mamba mentality, just like he would have wanted."

Sherman added that he expected it might take him years to come to terms with Bryant's death. "You don't process a shock like this in a few days. It will probably take me months, maybe years," Sherman said.

"He's gone long before he was supposed to. And what's sad is he was going to end up being so much more than basketball. An amazing father, an entrepreneur, a philanthropist. I'm just sad the world never got to see his full capabilities."

Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, who had met Bryant, described the fallen NBA star as an "unbelievable person." "You can't say enough about who he was and his impact," Kelce said. "I just feel bad for the Bryant family, everybody involved. My heart's with you and everyone here in America." Chiefs safety Tyrann Mathieu admitted he was still struggling to comprehend news of Bryant's death. "Shocked and sad," Mathieu said. "I thought guys like him lived forever." Bryant's death hit home for Chiefs coach Andy Reid, the respected NFL veteran who grew up in Los Angeles.

Reid had also become acquainted with Bryant during his long association with the Philadelphia Eagles. Bryant was born in Philadelphia. "It's sad," Reid said. "I knew Kobe from Philly, and he was a great person. I feel bad for his family, sick for his family. 'They'll rebound. They're strong. They'll live up to his strength.' Defensive end Chris Jones, meanwhile, said the tragedy had underscored the fragility of life. — AFP

Battling Jabeur sets new benchmark for Arab tennis

HAMMAM SOUSSE: A straight sets defeat at the hands of Sofia Kenin yesterday was hardly the script that Ons Jabeur deserved but the Tunisian's passage to the quarter-finals of the Australian Open is already one of the stories of the tournament. The 25-year-old, who will break into the world's top 50 after this run, saw off Johanna Konta and Caroline Garcia before putting an end to former champion Caroline Wozniacki's glittering career.

Victory over Wang Qiang in the fourth round made Jabeur the first player from the Arab world ever to reach the last eight of a Grand Slam in the Open era. "I think I proved that I can be in the quarter-finals in a Grand Slam, even if I have a lot of things to improve, probably physically and mentally some stuff, for sure," Jabeur said after her 6-4 6-4 defeat to Kenin.

"I proved to myself that I could do a lot of great things. I'm happy that I played this way. I know sometimes I'm hard on myself, but I think I could do better, especially with the moments where it's kind of tough and stressful."

"With more experience, I will be able to handle the pressure better." Her exploits went further than the established tennis world, hitting the headlines at home — where sporting infatuation has largely been restricted to football — and evincing a phone call of support from the Tunisian president Kais Saied who described her as "an example for women and young people". "Every swing of her racket honours the Tunisian flag," he said.

It is all a long way from the small town of Hammam Sousse, near the seaside resort of Sousse, where Jabeur first picked up a racket at the age of three. After a stint at a



MELBOURNE: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur hits a return against Sofia Kenin of the US during their women's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

club, she joined a tennis promotion centre at her school run by Nabil Mlika who coached her from a four-year-old up to 13. "Ons stood out above all for her talent and her desire to win," Mlika told AFP.

As a 10-year-old, her sights were already set on some lofty goals. "Several times she told her mother: 'One day I will get you a coffee at Roland Garros,'" says Mlika. "I took it as a bit of a joke but it seems she was very serious. It's magical."

Aged 12, the prodigy joined the best athletes in the

country at the sports school of El Menzah in Tunis. "Ons had an exceptional technical gift," says the former technical director of the Tunisian federation Hichem Riani. "She was very lively, dynamic, friendly and sociable with a great sense of humour."

Her former colleague Mehdi Abid remembers a child who, having always dominated other girls, loved to train with boys. "Once, she participated in a boys' tournament and won matches, which demoralised some players, annoyed to be beaten by a girl," says Mehdi. — AFP



'Ezallah' wins Equestrian and Hunting Club cup

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: The horse "Ezallah" owned by Al-Mulla stable won the Equestrian and Hunting Club Cup in the seventh run for the first class horses for 1,200 meters at the end of the 13th gathering horse race at the club in a time of 1:13.1 minutes, followed Al-Ashras owned by Daeya, and Zaboon Al-Hard by Al-Mulla. In the sixth run for beginners for 1,400 meters, horse Mighbash won first place with the time 1:28.7 minutes, while the horse Bulldozer won the cup of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Club for the mixed horses in the

fifth run for 1,600 meters in 1:43.5 minutes, while the horse Ramadhan won the Arab Horse Center Cup for 1,200 meters in 1:27.3 minutes in the fourth run. In the third run for the Arab Horse Center, Pure Arab Horses, the horse "Mamdouh Al-Jazeera" won the race of 1200 meters in 1:31.2 minutes.

In the second run for second class horses for 1,200 meters the horse "Sail Al-Fahaheel", from Al-Dabbous stable won first place in 1:13.3 minutes, while the horse "Thuraya" from Abu Shaiba stable won first place in 2:13.6 in the first run for 2,000 meters.

NBA postpones Lakers game after Bryant's death

LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Lakers players will have more time to mourn the death of Kobe Bryant before returning to the court after the NBA on Monday postponed yesterday's game against the Los Angeles Clippers. The Staples Center matchup, which was to be the first game on the Lakers' home court since Lakers legend Bryant died in a helicopter crash Sunday, will be rescheduled for a later date. "The decision was made out of respect for the Lakers organization, which is deeply grieving the tragic loss," the NBA said in announcing a postponement.

The next scheduled Lakers game is on Friday at Staples Center against Portland. In the wake of the postponement, the Lakers made their first public comment since Bryant's death, thanking fans for support while acknowledging the heartache involved.

"The Los Angeles Lakers would like to thank all of you for the tremendous outpouring of support and condolences," the team statement said. "This is a very difficult time for all of us. We continue to support the Bryant family and will share more information as it is available."

Lakers star Anthony Davis, averaging 26.5 points and 9.1 rebounds a game, unveiled the depth of the grief being felt over the tragedy in an Instagram posting Monday, noting how personal the loss of Bryant was after Davis had been mentored by the icon.

"Man this is a tough one for me!" Davis wrote. "You were the first guy to put me under your wing and show me the ins and outs of the league. Had so many great convos about so many things and I will cherish those moments forever. Love you forever, Bean!" —AFP

Sports

Young guns shine as Arsenal move into FA Cup fifth round

Arsenal's third win in eight matches under Arteta

BOURNEMOUTH: Mikel Arteta hailed Arsenal's "hungry" youngsters after Bukayo Saka and Eddie Nketiah fired their side into the FA Cup fifth round with a 2-1 win against Bournemouth on Monday. Arteta turned to youth at Dean Court and Saka, Nketiah and Joe Willock repaid the Arsenal manager's faith with influential displays that secured a trip to third-tier Portsmouth.

Saka gave Arsenal an early lead as the 18-year-old full-back bagged his third goal of the season with a superb strike. Nketiah got the second before the interval to ensure Arteta took another step towards emulating his FA Cups triumph as an Arsenal player in 2014 and 2015. Sam Surridge got one back for Bournemouth in the closing minutes, but it was too late to salvage a replay. "I'm very pleased. Always tough to come here and win, we've done it with a young team as well," Arteta said.

"I have a lot of faith in them. I think they are developing really well. They are willing and hungry and will only get better." Languishing in 10th place in the Premier League after failing to win any of their last three games, this was a welcome boost for Arteta as Arsenal built on their hard-fought draw at Chelsea last week.

It was Arsenal's third win in eight matches under Arteta in all competitions, with just one defeat in that run. It was not all plain sailing by the seaside for Arteta, who added: "We scored two fantastic goals, but after that we became a little bit sloppy and I didn't like that very much."

Arteta's first match in charge of Arsenal was a 1-1 Premier League draw at Bournemouth in December, but his team looked far more accomplished this time, even without several key players.

With Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang still suspended, 18-year-old striker Gabriel Martinelli started for Arsenal. Martinelli had scored in Arsenal's past two Premier League games to reach 10 goals for the season. But the

Brazilian isn't just a poacher and he showed his creative vision as Arsenal made a perfect start in the fifth minute.

As a 22-pass Arsenal move approached an eye-catching crescendo, Willock's surge opened up the Bournemouth defence. Willock picked out Martinelli, who deftly moved the ball onto Saka when a more selfish player would have shot and he smashed a thunderous drive into the roof of the net from an acute angle.

Arteta had made five changes from the Chelsea match, with Nketiah making his first Arsenal start since January last year against Blackpool in the FA Cup.

Nketiah was recently recalled from a loan spell at second-tier Leeds over concerns he wasn't playing enough, but the 20-year-old showed his potential in the 26th minute as he doubled Arsenal's lead.

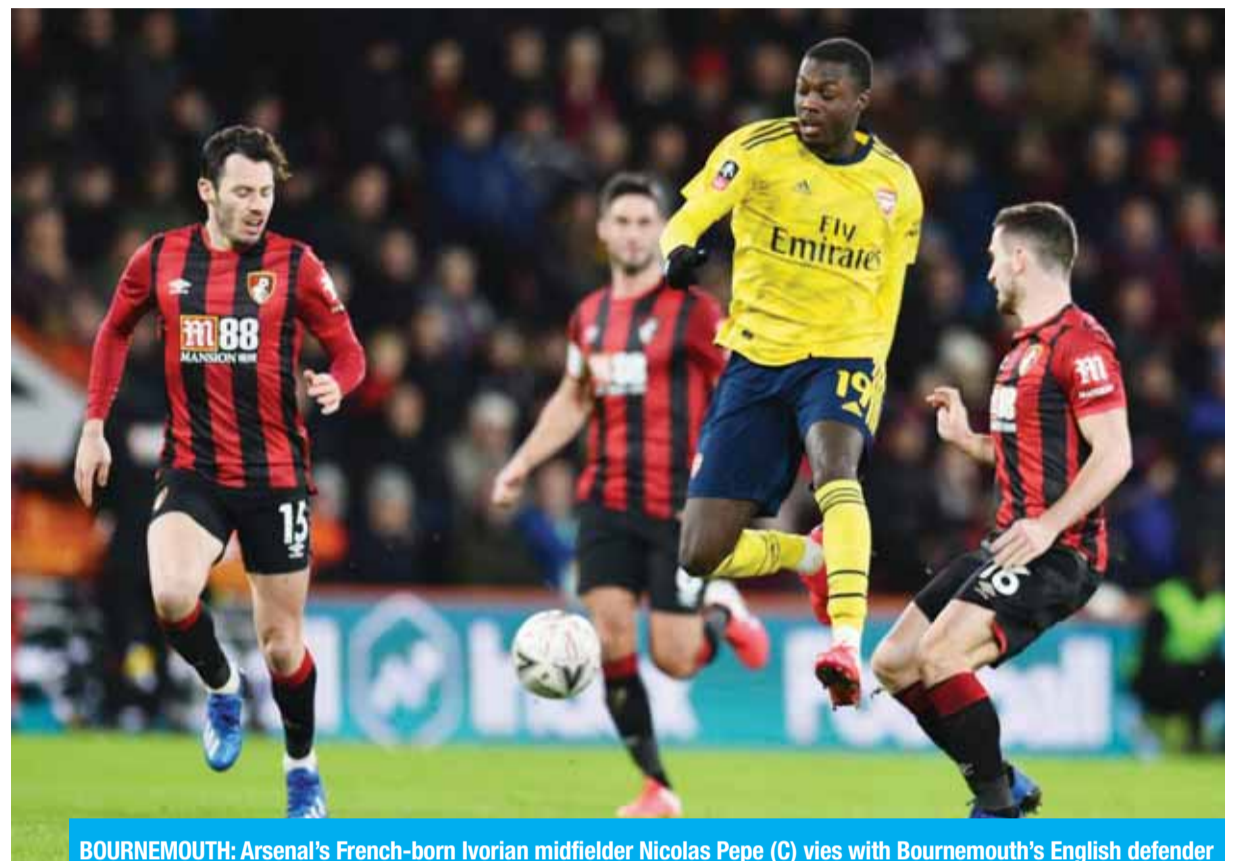
Unable to contain Willock and Saka, Bournemouth were carved open as the midfielder's pass found the defender in acres of space on the left.

Saka's cross into the six-yard box was perfect for Nketiah and he slotted in his first Arsenal goal since May. Completely outclassed for the first 30 minutes, Bournemouth finally had a sight of goal when Harry Wilson's volley was saved by Emiliano Martinez.

Arteta's men didn't have it all their own way in the second half and Martinez took out his own player when he clattered into Shkodran Mustafi in a bid to catch a cross. Mustafi had to be stretchered off as a result of the clash and Arteta said: "We'll have to assess tomorrow but when Mustafi has to come off normally it is not a good sign."

The hapless Martinez nearly gifted Bournemouth a goal moments later when he missed with his attempt to punch clear, but Jack Simpson headed just wide of the empty net.

Surridge punished sloppy defending to tap in from Simon Francis' cross deep into stoppage time, but Arsenal's rookies held on. — AFP



BOURNEMOUTH: Arsenal's French-born Ivorian midfielder Nicolas Pepe (C) vies with Bournemouth's English defender Adam Smith (L) and Bournemouth's English midfielder Lewis Cook (R) during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Bournemouth and Arsenal at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, southern England. — AFP

Premier League clubs hold fire in January arms race

LONDON: Premier League clubs have until Friday to boost their squads but there has so far been little desire for a spending spree from the richest league in the world. The slump in January spending over the past couple of years shows that the mid-season transfer window is increasingly seen as an undesirable time to do business.

Last year, the total outlay for Premier League clubs in January was £180 million (\$234 million) — nearly a third of which was what Chelsea spent on Christian Pulisic, who was loaned back to Borussia Dortmund for the rest of the season.

That was down from a record £430 million splurge in the 2018 mid-season window, when there were a series of big-name moves including Virgil van Dijk, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Aymeric Laporte.

However, the success of those signings has tended to be the exception rather than the rule in a seller's market in January. Manchester United are still counting the cost of their lavish outlay on Alexis Sanchez in the

same month. The Chilean is now on loan at Inter Milan, but United are still paying a large part of his wages on a contract with two-and-a-half years left to run. Currently fifth in the table, United are desperately in need of reinforcements as they battle to avoid missing out on the riches of Champions League football for a second consecutive year. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's already shallow squad has been hugely impacted by injuries to Marcus Rashford, Paul Pogba and Scott McTominay. The club's executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward has been the target of fans' frustrations for his handling of transfers over recent years.

United have been in prolonged negotiations with Sporting Lisbon over Portuguese international midfielder Bruno Fernandes, but latest reports suggest the Red Devils are no nearer to completing any deals before Friday's deadline.

"It is difficult this window — it's always been. I can't remember how many good deals that we've brought in in January," said Solskjaer yesterday. "It's very hard because the clubs don't want to lose their best players."

Liverpool's 16-point lead over Manchester City at the top of the table has lessened the need for either side to bolster their squads for a title fight. City boss Pep Guardiola has stated for the past few months that his club would not do business in January despite a chance to shore up his defence before the Champions League knockout stages.

"Normally the players we could think would be interesting to add something for our squad — clubs are not going to sell them in January," he said. Liverpool's romp towards a first league title in 30 years has been built on smart recruitment and they moved quickly to activate a £7 million release clause in Japanese international Takumi Minamino's contract with Red Bull Salzburg in December.

Other clubs have only been forced into the market by injuries. Tottenham's search for a striker to fill in for the absent Harry Kane has seen the Champions League finalists reportedly agree a fee of around £27 million with PSV Eindhoven for Steven Bergwijn.

However, for all of the wealth enjoyed by Premier League clubs, for some the well has run dry after a series of bad investments. Everton and West Ham were among eight English clubs to make the top 20 of Deloitte's "Football Money League" when it comes to revenue.

Yet Everton posted eye-watering losses of £112 million this month, with cost-cutting needed to avoid breaching the Premier League's financial fair play rules next year. West Ham's perilous position just outside the relegation zone on goal difference is normally one that induces panic buying. But after a net spend of £214 million on players over the past four years, on Tuesday they announced significant losses for the year to May 31, 2019 and warned of "serious financial consequences" should they be relegated. — AFP

Chelsea handed potential Liverpool clash in FA Cup

LONDON: Premier League leaders Liverpool will face Chelsea in the FA Cup fifth round if Jurgen Klopp's understudies win their replay against Shrewsbury. Third-tier Shrewsbury fought back to draw 2-2 with Liverpool on Sunday, earning a replay at Anfield that falls during the Premier League winter break.

Reds boss Klopp insists he will not use his senior stars for that match because he doesn't want to deny them a much-needed rest. To earn a trip to Stamford Bridge, Liverpool may play the youngsters who were beaten by Aston Villa in the League Cup quarter-finals while the Reds were at the Club World Cup.

FA Cup holders Manchester City have been given a trip to second-tier Sheffield today. Manchester United will visit the winners of the replay between Northampton and Derby, who feature former United star Wayne Rooney in their squad.

Oxford's reward for a replay victory over top-flight Newcastle would be a trip to Championship leaders West Brom. League One side Portsmouth will face Premier League opposition at Fratton Park after being drawn against Bournemouth or Arsenal.

Southampton or Tottenham will play host to struggling Norwich, while either Coventry or Birmingham face a short trip to Leicester. Championship sides Reading and Cardiff will battle it out in a replay for the chance to host Sheffield United.

FA Cup fifth-round draw:
Sheffield Wednesday v Manchester City
Reading/Cardiff v Sheffield United
Chelsea v Shrewsbury/Liverpool
West Brom v Newcastle/Oxford
Leicester v Coventry/Birmingham
Northampton/Derby v Man Utd
Southampton/Tottenham v Norwich
Portsmouth v Bournemouth/Arsenal. —AFP

Solskjaer seeks spirit of PSG as Man Utd prepare to face Man City

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says Manchester United need to harness the spirit of Paris Saint-Germain and put in a "perfect performance" if they are to overcome Manchester City and reach the League Cup final. United face an uphill battle after losing the first leg of their semi-final against Pep Guardiola's men 3-1 at Old Trafford. Marcus Rashford's goal gives United a glimmer of hope heading to the Etihad Stadium today and Solskjaer said the stunning comeback win against PSG in the Champions League last March can be an inspiration.

United were 2-0 down after the first leg and then 3-1 down on aggregate in Paris before storming back to win on away goals. "Well, it looked like it was over at half-time," he said, referring to the first leg of the City match. "I have to say the second part of that first half, they outplayed us for a while and it's hard."

"But then when we got the goal, of course you're back in it, we hope for another one."

"But now we've got to go into the memory bank and think PSG because we've done it against good teams before and it gives us some hope, and the game in December (when United won 2-1 against City) of course gives us hope that we can do something there."

Solskjaer confirmed Nemanja Matic is a

doubt for the second leg in a press conference that included plenty of transfer talk but no updates. Sporting midfielder Bruno Fernandes reportedly remains a target for the club, while a number of enquiries have been made as United look at possible attacking options.

Alexis Sanchez would have been an option but does not have a recall clause in his loan deal, although Solskjaer expects him to have an Old Trafford future when he returns from Inter Milan at the end of the season. "We've got players here we're working hard to get back as well and if there is something out there, then the club are pursuing that and looking at it," said the United boss.

"Of course it is a difficult window. It always has been. I can't remember how many good ones we've brought in, good deals that we've brought in in January. Henrik (Larsson) was good, Nemanja (Vidic) and Patrice (Evra) were two good ones."

When January 2018 signing Sanchez was mentioned, Solskjaer said: "It's very hard because the clubs don't want to lose their best players. Alexis will come back in the summer and prove you all wrong."

Solskjaer expects defender Marcos Rojo to stay at Old Trafford despite speculation over a move to former club Estudiantes de la Plata. — AFP

who has today completed a transfer to Inter Milan," Tottenham said in a statement. "We wish you all the best for the future." Eriksen made 305 appearances for Spurs after joining from Ajax in 2013, scoring 69 goals.

Tottenham also confirmed the permanent signing of Giovanni Lo Celso from Real Betis to replace Eriksen yesterday. Eriksen was a key part of the side that reached last season's Champions League final and finished in the top four of the Premier League for the past four seasons under Mauricio Pochettino.

However, a contract standoff with the club meant a departure was inevitable either this month or on a free transfer at the end of the season. Eriksen expressed his desire to move at the end of last season and was jeered by some Spurs fans in recent games as speculation over his future grew.

Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho praised the Dane's professionalism, but expressed frustration at the timing of the move after weeks of negotiations between the clubs. "The only thing I can say is Eriksen, since I arrive, he is behaving in a very, very professional way, with me and the team," Mourinho said after Saturday's 1-1 draw at Southampton.

"Tottenham is the last one to blame for this situation," Eriksen becomes Inter's third signing of the January window after the arrivals of Ashley Young from Manchester United and Victor Moses on loan from Chelsea as they aim to end Juventus' stranglehold on the Serie A title.

Antonio Conte's men are three points behind Juve at the top of the table, but their title challenge has stumbled of late with three consecutive draws. — AFP



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

Inter Milan sign Eriksen from Tottenham

MILAN: Inter Milan completed the signing of Danish international midfielder Christian Eriksen from Tottenham Hotspur yesterday. Eriksen, 27, has signed a contract until 2024 with the Italian giants after the clubs reached an agreement for a reported transfer fee of 20 million euros (£17 million, \$22 million).

"We can confirm the departure of Christian Eriksen

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
West Ham United v Liverpool	beIN Sports	22:45	
ITALIAN CUP			
Internazionale Milano v ACF Fiorentina	beIN Sports	22:45	
ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP			
Manchester City v Manchester United	beIN Sports HD 2	22:45	

25 Qatar crowned Asian handball champions for fourth year



26 Gordon's career-high 50 points outburst carries Rockets past Jazz



27 Young guns shine as Arsenal move into FA Cup fifth round



Federer wins to set up Djokovic semi

MELBOURNE: Swiss great Roger Federer said "I believe in miracles" after he saved seven match points in a five-set nail-biter against 100th-ranked Tennys Sandgren to go into an Australian Open semi-final with Novak Djokovic yesterday.

The six-time champion, struggling physically, saved three match points at 4-5 in the fourth set and four more in the tie-breaker to scrape through 6-3, 2-6, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8), 6-3. Federer, 38, now goes into an unmissable semi-final with Djokovic, who blunted Milos Raonic's razor serve to win 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/1) and move two wins from an eighth Melbourne title.

Djokovic, despite trouble with his contact lenses, ended Raonic's run of 63 straight games in the tournament without a break of serve and moves smoothly into the semis for the loss of just one set so far.

He paid tribute to the great escape by Federer, ahead of a semi-final that reprises his epic win over the Swiss in last year's Wimbledon decider. "What he did today was really amazing, to come back and save seven match points at his age," Djokovic said.

"He's still playing such a great tennis and proving that he deserves to be up there. He's a great fighter. Obviously I have lots of respect for him." Federer's match was incident-packed and he received a rare warning for an audible obscenity before going off-court for treatment on a groin injury.

Still hampered by the injury, he somehow forced a fifth set and began to regain control against the big-serving American. "I believe in miracles," Federer said,

revealing that he thought his groin strain had ended his chances. "There could be rain, there could be all kinds of stuff.

"(I thought) just let him finish me off in style, and he didn't do that. I'm incredibly lucky tonight, today — I don't even know what time it is." Sandgren, aching close to becoming the lowest-ranked player to beat Federer at the Australian Open, can count himself unlucky especially after a ball girl accidentally collided with him during the pivotal tie-breaker, which he lost.

Federer has made heavy weather of reaching his 46th Major semi-final. He was two points from defeat by John Millman in a fifth-set tie-breaker in round three, and dropped a set against 67th-ranked Marton Fucsovics in round four.

In the women's draw Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty dismissed two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in impressive style to reach the semis for the first time. The unflappable Barty beat the Czech 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 and will be favourite in her semi-final against America's Sofia Kenin — sending hopes soaring of a first home winner in 42 years.

The French Open champion, who once quit tennis to play cricket and has been steadily rising since her return, is the tournament's poster girl with her image plastered all over Melbourne.

But she said: "I'd prefer to just be sitting at home just living my quiet little life." Kenin, whose career is also on the up, made her first Grand Slam semi-final and with it will rise to at least 12 in the rankings — making her the



MELBOURNE: Switzerland's Roger Federer hits a return against Tennys Sandgren of the US during their men's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

second-highest American behind Serena Williams.

The feisty 21-year-old was a 6-4, 6-4 winner over Ons Jabeur, halting the Tunisian's historic run which made her the first Arab woman to reach a Major quarter-final. "She's a really tough player, I knew she's going to come out playing strong," Kenin said. "She's had really good matches, good wins. It wasn't an easy battle — all respect to her."

Jabeur has ignited interest back home with her run to the last eight, even receiving a good-luck phone call from her president. "I think I proved that I can be in the quarter-finals in a Grand Slam, even if I have a lot of things to improve physically and mentally," said the 25-year-old, who will now move inside the top 50. "I proved to myself that I could do a lot of great things. I'm happy that I played this way." — AFP

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



Kuwait Finance House Group
on behalf of Chairman, Board members
and all employees

would like to convey its sincere congratulations
and best wishes to His Highness the Amir
Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
on the 14th anniversary of his reign.

**KFH also extends its sincere congratulations
to the citizens**

on the auspicious occasion of the National Day
and the Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.

May Allah Almighty safeguard and preserve
His Highness, the Humanitarian Leader for his
nation and to the people of Kuwait.

