LONDON: The Arab Women’s Foundation in Britain honored Kuwait’s Minister of Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance Maryam Al-Aqeel, in recognition of her outstanding role in the development of the government sectors. In a statement to the press, Aqeel expressed her happiness with this honor that she shares with a group of distinguished Arab women in a number of fields, pointing out that Arab women have become an important and influential element in all aspects of life.

She praised the encouragement of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his keenness to empower Kuwaiti women. In this context, Minister Aqeel pointed to her personal experience in government work through holding several senior management positions and responsibilities in Kuwait, praising the confidence given by the political leadership, which enables her to serve her country.

Meanwhile, vice president and chief executive officer of Regent University in London Professor Aldwin Cooper said it was important to recognize the pioneering role played by Minister Aqeel at a time when the influence of Arab women is greater than ever. In the meantime, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan said that he is proud to participate in honoring Minister Maryam Al-Aqeel, describing her as “diligent and persevering,” who has been able to attain the highest leadership positions in the country. He added that Kuwait is one of the first countries that focused on empowering women and enhancing their role in all fields. — KUNA
School guards

By Muna Al-Fuzai
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What is going on in public schools in Kuwait? Various reports, images and videos about verbal disputes between parents and teachers have appeared on social media, along with others warning the public about drugs in schools in the form of colored candy, and no one knows for sure if this is true or false.

I won’t take social media as the most reliable source for information, but things are really entering a new phase now with the issue of school guards. School guards are supposed to secure school facilities, but this is not possible for them because they have not been paid for months! They are human beings with families and kids who are waiting eagerly for the little money they get from abroad.

Minor cases start in school but end up in newspapers and sometimes in court. This week, a news channel published an interview with a school guard, who said few words, but they were painful and shameful. He said and I quote: “I have been locked up in school for five months without salary.” This is not the first time these poor workers have faced such a problem, as in 2017, expatriate security guards complained of delayed salaries of more than three months, and spoke about wanting their wages in order to fulfill their needs and those of their families too.

The reason for delays usually go back to routine paperwork of the contracting company and the ministry of education, with the long documentary cycle and approvals required by government regulators. I believe the ministry of education can intervene to stop the sufferings of these workers as a matter of urgency and oblige the company to pay their salaries.

First of all, as a citizen and journalist, I see this from a humanitarian perspective. It does not matter who is causing this delay, whether the company that brought these workers from their country without guarantees to receive their wages on time, or the ministry of education, which is supposed to have a decisive attitude towards these companies and not allow them to delay wages even for a month. Also, why not reveal the name of these companies and their owners, as this is not a problem of labor, but a problem of a country and schools that are supposed to have guards working actively and faithfully!

We often repeat that we are a state of law. So why are such companies allowed to manipulate people’s rights? The ministry of education should bear the responsibility of supervision and implementation. Some may see this issue of school guards as a minor one, but how would you feel if you didn’t get paid your salary for months?

Deflate car tires for wrong parking?

By Ben Garcia
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Some people in Kuwait believe deflating a car’s tires sends a strong message that you are occupying their parking spot. In the past two years, the tires of my car have been deflated on several occasions. I don’t know the exact reasons, but obviously they did it to let me know that I was occupying their parking space. There could be other reasons too - perhaps the perpetrator was mentally ill and could not control his desire to deflate tires. Perhaps they deliberately did so over a dare from a friend. Or maybe aliens invaded Farwaniya and Khaitan and happened to see my car to deflate it.

Imagine waking up one day and finding your car in a horrible state as all four tires are deflated. The hassle is real, especially if you have an appointment scheduled that day. When I was evicted recently from a family apartment in Farwaniya, I had no choice but to immediately transfer to another location, so I rented an apartment in Khaitan. During the first month, I parked my car near a mosque, since few parking spaces were available. When there’s no space available, many park on the side streets, including me.

To my disappointment however, three of my car’s tires were deflated one morning. That day, I had an important appointment to attend. So I left my car there and took a taxi. I came back to my car a few hours later to fix it. I don’t know the suspect, and even if I knew, what could I do to face a coward bully? The incident in Khaitan was my fourth - the first three were in Farwaniya. This nightmare is all about a lack of parking places! Since I do not have my own personal parking spot, I park my car on the side street by the mosque. These spaces are owned by the state and not by anyone else.

The question is why deflate the tires when you can easily leave a message to vacate that place. The next day you will never find my car in that specific spot since you are claiming it. To deflate my car’s tires is a very challenging way to make friends. That space is obviously not mine, but it isn’t yours too. So why deflate three tires at once?

Until Kuwait solves the problem of the lack of parking spaces, such cases will continue in the coming years. The lack of parking spots in many areas is also related to the heavy traffic in Kuwait near schools, government complexes, private commercial establishments, and most importantly, in residential areas. Traffic is chaotic during rush hours between 6 am and 10 am and 5 pm and 9 pm. Visit the areas of Farwaniya governorate at night, and you will see how people park their cars - literally piled up. In case of emergency, you will have to disturb everyone in your neighborhood!
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Palestinian embroideries are one of the most recognizable forms of artwork in the Palestinian heritage. This week, the Kuwaiti Women’s Cultural and Social Society in Khaldiya hosted the Palestinian Cultural Heritage Expo, which showcased various artistic, awe-inspiring embroidery designs that gave visitors a glimpse of the splendid culture of Palestine. This year’s event marked the silver jubilee anniversary of the expo, reflecting the strong bonds that the Kuwaiti and Palestinian people have shared for generations.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat
The 24th Arabian Gulf Cup is in full swing, and as usual, Kuwaiti fans showed up to support their national team. In turn, the Kuwaiti players returned the favor to their faithful fan base by securing a huge victory in their first match of the tournament. Thousands of Kuwaiti fans of all ages traveled to Doha, Qatar to watch Kuwait beat Saudi Arabia 3-1 Wednesday evening in their opening match of the prestigious regional competition.
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Judicial Council visit in manifestation of Kuwait Amir directives: Prime Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday that his visit to the Supreme Judicial Council came to translate directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This came in a statement to KUNA and Kuwait TV on the sidelines of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled’s visit, where he was received by Council Chairman Justice Youssef Al-Mutawaa, who is also Chair of the Cassation Court and President of the Constitutional Court. The visit came to translate His Highness the Amir’s directives during a meeting a few days ago with the heads of the three branches: legislative, executive and judicial. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted. The directives of His Highness came to “abide by the implementation of the Constitution, especially Article 50 of separation of powers.” His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled added, “We discussed in [yesterday’s] meeting how to implement this directive in cooperation among the three authorities for the betterment and interest of the country,” he said. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also pointed out that he will visit National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem within the same vein and purpose. — KUNA

Amir extends condolences to US, Albania presidents

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to US President Donald Trump, offering condolences over casualties of a chemical plant explosion in the State of Texas. His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar letters to President Trump.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir also sent a cable of condolences to President of Albania Ilir Meta over victims and injuries of a devastating earthquake that ripped through the country. In the cable, His Highness prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and a speedy recovery for the wounded, voicing trust in local authorities to overcome aftermath of such natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister also sent similar cables. — KUNA

KFAED, Uzbekistan sign $30.5 million loan deal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Uzbekistan inked on Wednesday a KD 9 million ($30.5 million) loan agreement to contribute to financing an infrastructure project for rural dwellings. The deal, signed in Uzbekistan capital Tashkent, aims at improving living conditions of people in six provinces through setting up houses complex and providing basic services like water, gas, electricity, roads and others in these areas, KFAED said in a statement. The project seeks also to create jobs for residents of these rural areas through backing construction work and industries related to this field in the rural areas, it added. It aims to construct 13,312 housing units in six provinces, it said, noting that the scheme will provide commercial and commercial services as well as public utilities for these units. This is the 10th loan provided by the fund to Uzbekistan which also obtained two technical grants worth KD 528,800 ($1.7 million). The previous nine grants were estimated at KD 53.9 million ($177.33 million). The deal was signed by KFAED’s Deputy Director-General Ghanem Al-Ghanaiman and Uzbekistan deputy finance minister. — KUNA

Kuwait warns against children recruitment in wars

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait on Wednesday highlighted the need to protect children against manipulation in armed conflicts. Delivering her country’s statement to a UN Security Council meeting, Kuwait’s diplomatic attache Sara Al-Zoman appreciated the efforts of the international community to better protect children once they have been separated from arms forces and armed groups. Zoman said the year 2018 saw 13,600 children separated from armed groups and civil society organizations. “The separation of children from armed groups should be viewed as only a first step which should be followed by their reintegration into their respective communities,” she reminded.

The recruitment of children in armed groups constitutes a big crime which could put them liable to further violations, Zoman said. Calling for a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem of former child soldiers, she said those children need psychological support to be better able to resume their childhood in familiar atmospheres. She also urged incorporating children’s views into the strategies for reintegration and post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation. The meeting, co-hosted by Belgium, Peru, Poland and the United Kingdom, was opened by Ambassador Marc Peetersen of Buijowere (Belgium) - the chair the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. — KUNA
Interior Ministry sues MP for helping juvenile son escape arrest

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry filed a case against a sitting lawmaker for obstructing justice, insulting a public servant on duty, taking his juvenile son out of a police patrol by force in Egailah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and helping him escape arrest. Further investigations are still in progress in the case, the ministry announced in a statement yesterday.

Unlicensed drone

The Amiri Guards recently arrested a Kuwaiti citizen for using a drone without a license and flying it near the Dasman Palace, the Interior Ministry’s Relations and Security Media Department said yesterday. Notably, security forces had received a report about the citizen’s activity near the palace. Coordination was made with the palace’s Amiri Guards and the suspect was arrested red-handed.

Ghouss street crash

A Kuwaiti citizen was severely injured when his sports utility vehicle crashed into a half lorry along the Ghouss street, said security sources, noting that the man was rushed to hospital for immediate medical care. An investigation was opened into the accident.

Smuggling foiled

Air cargo customs inspectors recently foiled an attempt to smuggle 1.5 kilograms of marijuana, said security sources, noting that both the recipient and the drugs were referred to relevant authorities pending further investigations.

Fire drill

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) yesterday held a fire drill at Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company’s headquarters as part of its ongoing training courses and activities. The drill included dealing with post-rain flooding dangerously affecting the company’s strategic reservoir. Separately, KFSD took part in the second safety awareness campaign organized by EQUATE Petrochemicals, said security sources, noting that a lecture was presented by officer Ali Al-Dagher about surviving fires through a review of the ‘Young Fireman’ book explaining basic steps to protect children from fires.

Ministry hires large number of nurses from India, Philippines

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MOH) is hiring a ‘huge batch of nurses’ from India and the Philippines who are due to join service in various public hospitals and clinics by January after their arrival by the end of next month, well-informed health sources said. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the sources added that MOH would need over 700 nurses to operate the new hospitals due to be launched soon including the new Al-Sabah Hospital, the infectious diseases hospital and some new clinics in various areas.

Private companies

Further, the sources explained that the nurses had been contracted through private companies while some of them were directly contracted by MOH. “Hiring nurses through companies will help avoid violating labor rights as MOH will be responsible to make sure accommodation is provided and monthly salaries are regularly paid without delay,” the sources explained. The sources also stressed that MOH would immediately deduct any delayed or unpaid salaries from the concerned companies’ deposit with the ministry in order to pay the nurses.

Banknote forgery

In other news, well-informed security sources said that Hawally criminal investigators recently arrested an African gang who had forged millions of Kuwaiti dinars along with the machines, tools, paper and ink they had been using in the process.
Iraqi forces kill 25 after Iran mission torched

PM deploys military chiefs to ‘impose security and restore order’

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraq’s southern hotspot of Nasiriyah was in bloody upheaval yesterday after a government crackdown killed 25 protesters and thousands defied a curfew to march in their funerals, following the dramatic torching of an Iranian consulate. Iraq’s capital and south have been torn by the worst street unrest since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, as a protest movement has vented its fury at their government and its backers in neighboring Iran.

Late Wednesday, protesters outraged at Tehran’s political influence in Iraq burned down the Iranian consulate in the shrine city of Najaf, yelling “Victory to Iraq!” and “Iran out!” In response, Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi early yesterday ordered military chiefs to deploy in several restive provinces to “impose security and restore order”, the army said. But by the afternoon, after the protesters’ deaths, the premier had already removed one of the commanders, General Jamil Shummary. Shummary had been dispatched to the premier’s birthplace of Nasiriyah, a southern city that has been a protest hotspot for weeks.

The ensuing crackdown was particularly bloody, with at least 25 protesters killed and more than 200 wounded as security forces cleared sit-ins with live fire, medics and security sources said. The provincial governor in Nasiriyah, Adel Al-Dakhili, blamed the crackdown on Shummary, who was the military commander of the southern port city of Basra when demonstrations there were brutally suppressed in 2018. Dakhili demanded the premier sack him, and hours later, state television announced Abdel Mahdi had ordered Shummary removed from the post.

Tribes deploy

The latest violence brought the death toll since early October to over 370, with more than 15,000 wounded according to an AFP tally, as authorities are not releasing updated or precise figures. Thousands of Nasiriyah’s residents took to the streets to mourn the city’s dead in funeral processions, defying a curfew announced there earlier in the day. “We’re staying until the regime falls and our demand are met!” they chanted.

Demonstrators who had been dispersed by security forces regrouped at Nasiriyah’s police station, setting it on fire. They then encircled its main military headquarters as armed members of the area’s influential tribes deployed along main highways to blockade military reinforcements trying to reach the city. Events in southern Iraq have unfolded dramatically since late Wednesday, when protesters stormed the Iranian consulate in the Shiite holy city of Najaf.

They set tyres and other items ablaze around the consulate, sending tall flames and thick clouds of smoke into the night sky, an AFP correspondent witnessed. They also broke into the building itself, which had been apparently evacuated by its Iranian staff. Demonstrators across Iraq have blamed powerful eastern neighbor Iran for propping up the Baghdad government which they are seeking to topple.

Tehran demanded Iraq take decisive action against the protesters, with foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi condemning the attack. “Iran has officially communicated its disgust to the Iraq ambassador in Tehran,” he said in comments carried by Iran’s state news agency IRNA. —AFP

Houthi prisoners freed in Saudi, flown to Yemen

SANAA: Some 128 Houthi rebels detained in Saudi Arabia were flown to the Yemeni city of Sanaa and released yesterday, as efforts to end the five-year conflict gain momentum. The prisoners arrived on three International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) planes and were met inside the airport by rebel commanders and some family members, an AFP correspondent saw. The Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen said earlier this week that it would release 200 Houthi prisoners and also allow patients needing medical care to be flown out of Sanaa airport, which has been closed to commercial flights since 2016.

Riyadh and its allies intervened in the Yemen war in March 2015 to back the internationally recognized government, shortly after the Iran-backed Houthi rebels seized Sanaa. “The ICRC sees the release as a positive step and hopes that it will spur further releases and repatriations of conflict-related detainees,” it said in a statement. It said the Yemen Red Crescent transferred some of the released prisoners to a medical facility for check-ups. As they alighted from the plane, some of the detainees had to be helped down the steps and put in wheelchairs. —AFP

International

Pak court strikes down 3-year extension for army chief

Turkey signs military deal with Libya govt
Israel drone industry becomes global force

UAVs tested and fine-tuned against neighbors

AEROPORT CITY: In a force battle for market share against world superpowers China and the United States, Israel's drone industry likes to say it has a secret weapon - military experience. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are used daily by Israel's military in and around its borders, whether dropping tear-gas canisters on Palestinian demonstrators, monitoring Hezbollah positions in Lebanon or striking Islamic Jihad bases in Gaza. The senior echelons of the country's industry are populated by former military and intelligence officials, many of whom became founders or engineers in local startups.

Israel's first rudimentary drone dates back to 1969: It was a remote-controlled plane with an attached camera to spy on neighboring rival Egypt. Drones became more common, though not much more technically advanced, during the war in Lebanon from 1978. But half a century later, tiny Israel now is a global force in the multibillion-dollar UAV industry, competing against China and the US. It trades on its unique selling point: Enemies at its borders and therefore plenty of opportunities to test and fine-tune its UAVs.

Ronen Nadir was a military commander specializing in missile development before establishing his company, BlueBird Aero Systems. It sells combat drones across the globe, including the Wander V-ToI that takes off and lands vertically like a helicopter, but has wings to improve speed. These drones can take off and land in a town, a jungle or the deck of a boat. "You will not believe it, but it took only four and a half months" from the first concept, scribbled on paper, "until this UAV was demonstrated to the first customer", Nadir said. Hundreds have been sold since Oct 2018, he added.

Real-time feedback

"When an American company develops a mini-UAV and then it is used by the Marines in Iraq or Afghanistan, it takes a few years from the development of the system until it is used on the battlefield," Nadir said. "In Israel all the people (in the industry) are ex-army soldiers, officers, the engineers who work on the development of the systems are actually operating the UAVs in the (military) reserves, in actual service. Then they come back to the office with actual and real-time feedback."

Development cycles are therefore short, he said, ensuring that Israel is at the "cutting edge" of the industry. One study often cited by local officials puts Israel as the world's largest exporter of drones, but it dates to 2013. Since then, the US has vastly increased exports of its Global Hawk, a higher cost and performance drone, as well as the Predator. These have sold particularly in European markets, pushing the country ahead of its ally Israel.

"China, which offers cheaper, lower-quality solutions, is perhaps also ahead of Israel now, often selling to countries the Jewish state has no relations with, said Philip Finnegan, director of corporate analysis at the American firm Teal Group. "The difficulty with ranking Israeli companies in the market is that they are very secretive over what they are selling and to who, as are the Chinese," he said. Tel Aviv estimates the global drone market to be worth around $12 billion in 2019, with that expected number to double in a decade. "They (Israel) are certainly in the top three, if not the top two."

A stage ahead

At a recent conference for Israeli drones at Airport City, an industrial zone close to the airport in Tel Aviv, a discreet guest sneaked in: Nadav Argaman, head of the Shin Bet internal intelligence services. His message was clear: "We buy Israeli technologies before anything else." The technology, he said, helped allow Israeli civilians to live "comfortable daily lives, without knowing what happens under the surface" - or in this case above it.

"In order to be alive we have always to be a stage ahead, including in drones," said Zohar Dvir, the former deputy police chief reported to have inspired the Adam Sandler film "You Don't Mess with the Zohan". Today Dvir is a board member at Gold Drone, which specializes in agricultural drones. Even here, military expertise comes in handy. —AFP

Iran arrests eight ‘linked to CIA’ in street unrest

TEHRAN: Iran has arrested eight people it accused of CIA links and sending abroad information on recent urban unrest, days after the United States said it had received thousands of messages on a protest crackdown in the Islamic republic. New York-based Human Rights Watch has accused Tehran of "deliberately covering up" more than 140 deaths that it said came when security forces suppressed demonstrations against a sharp fuel price hike.

Iran said that among the more than 500 people arrested were eight who were "linked to the CIA", state news agency IRNA said late Wednesday, citing the head of the intelligence ministry’s counterespionage department. "Some elements who tried to collect information about the recent riots and send them out of the country... were identified and arrested," the director-general was quoted as saying. "Six of them were alleged to have been at "the riots and carrying out orders," IRNA reported, without naming the official.

Two others were arrested before they could leave the country, the news agency said, and all had been "trained in different countries on how to collect information... as citizen-journalists". Iran's arch-foe the United States has said it received thousands of messages from the Islamic republic about the protests, including photos and videos, after issuing an appeal for people to defy sweeping Internet restrictions. "We've received to date nearly 20,000 messages, videos, pictures, notes of the regime's abuses through Telegram messaging services," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Tuesday, referring to the encrypted app.

The unrest came after a year and a half of biting sanctions reimposed by US President Donald Trump that aim to heap "maximum pressure" on Iran and contain its regional influence. The sanctions followed Trump's decision in May 2018 to unilaterally withdraw the United States from an international agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has also come under pressure in neighboring Iraq, where protesters infuriated by Tehran's influence on the government in Baghdad torched its consulate in the city of Najaf late Wednesday. Tehran, which sees the nearly two months of protests in Iraq as a "conspiracy", on Thursday demanded decisive action against the "aggressors" behind the consulate attack. Iran also blamed the unrest within its own borders on "thugs" backed by its foreign enemies, including the United States, Israel and the People’s Mujahedeen of Iran, an exiled armed opposition group it considers a "terrorist" cult. —AFP

Israel demolishes Palestinian homes

HEBRON: Israel yesterday demolished the West Bank homes of four Palestinians accused of a deadly attack, sparking clashes with stone-throwing protesters, the army and an AFP journalist said. The houses in the village of Beit Kahlil near Hebron in the occupied West Bank were home to men who were "part of the squad that carried out the stabbing attack" which killed an off-duty soldier in August, the army said. Clashes broke out during the demolitions, the army said, with Palestinians hurling "rocks and burnt tyres at troops". "In response, troops used riot dispersal means."

Residents stared at piles of concrete after bulldozers reduced one house to rubble, an AFP photographer said. After the demolitions one Palestinian died in a car accident at a junction near Hebron. Palestinian official news agency Wafa said his car was hit by an Israeli military bulldozer, but the army said he drove into the stationary vehicle. "A Palestinian vehicle deviated off the road and hit the (Israeli military) vehicle, which had stopped on the side of the road," an army spokeswoman told AFP, without confirming the death.

Wafa named the dead man as Mohammed Al-Nawajaa, saying his son was also injured in the incident. In August, off-duty soldier Israel Dvir Sorek was ambushed and killed, and his body was dumped near a settlement in the West Bank. He had been studying at a Jewish seminary in the settlement. Israel routinely demolishes the homes of those accused of carrying out attacks. It argues that such measures act as a deterrent, but critics say it amounts to collective punishment. —AFP
Crisis puts Mali political class under pressure

BAMAKO: As Mali’s gruelling jihadist conflict grinds on, many say military forces cannot be expected to do all the heavy lifting, and the country’s fractured political class has to help. The country’s problems are as much about poverty, ethnic divisions and weak institutions - which require political solutions - as they are about Islamist violence, they argue. Jihadi leaders, capitalizing on underlying grievances, seized much of northern Mali in 2012, triggering a_semi-military forces cannot be expected to do all the heavy lifting, and the country’s political class has to help. The country’s problems are as much about poverty, ethnic divisions and weak institutions - which require political solutions - as they are about Islamist violence, they argue. Jihadi leaders, capitalizing on underlying grievances, seized much of northern Mali in 2012, triggering a semi-military conflict that spread across the region to help local forces. A new unit of European special forces is also due to deploy in Mali to shore up the fragile country.

“I would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “We would like to restate that the car has not been active since the beginning of November,” he said. “The war is first and foremost political,” Roulain Barro, an opposition MP, told AFP. Cheickna Camara, from the presidential majority, said that “dialogue is necessary and the political class needs to play its part.” He added that talks would “allow us to leave this in-famous cycle of killings.” But there is also an uncomfortable truth: Mali’s battered army remains chronically underfunded and poorly equipped. Soldiers have paid a heavy price - more than 140 Malian troops have died since September. Questioned by MPs on Thursday about the state of the army, Malian Defence Minister Dahiou Dembele agreed it was a problem. “You’re right to be afraid. I’m afraid,” he said. “I have seen the army, I’m afraid.” Dembele said he wanted to see Mali’s army “reach the level of other armies, so that they are no longer saying there’s such and such a force (in Mali),” but that Mali is taking charge of its own defense.

The government intervened in Mali in March 2013 to stop the jihadist advance and has some 4,500 troops deployed across the region to help local forces. The deputy chairman of European special forces is also due to deploy in Mali in 2020. On Tuesday, 13 French soldiers died in a mide-air helicopter collision while pursuing jihadists in Mali. It was France’s worst single-day military loss of life in 36 years.

Appeals to national unity, a recurring government refrain, have largely fallen on deaf ears. The main opposition party has declined an invitation to join talks meant to bring diverse sections of society around the table, complaining that they are not really inclusive. The government is nonetheless undertaking country-wide consultations. — AFP

Cyprus appoints investigator over ‘Israeli spy van’

NICOSIA: Cyprus appointed an independent criminal law expert yesterday to help police investigate an alleged “spy van” reportedly owned by an Israeli and equipped with sophisticated surveillance technology. Attorney General Costas Clerides said that because of the “seriousness of the case and the different legal aspects”, the expert, Elias Stephanou, had been asked to help police. The multi-million-dollar vehicle was showcased in a Forbes video broadcast several months ago that only recently went viral online in Cyprus.

The van is owned by Cyprus-registered company WiS-pear whose founder and CEO is an Israeli former intelligence officer, Tal Dilian, the report said. Forbes said the van’s $9 million state-of-the-art equipment can monitor devices within a 500-m radius, hack any phone and listen in on encrypted conversations. The probe began after the opposition communist party AKEL asked what the government was doing about alleged activities undertaken in the van.

Earlier this month, police searched the company’s premises in the southern coastal resort of Larnaca. The van was seized on Nov 17 and is still in police possession. Clerides said in a statement Stephanou would help investigate whether any offences had been committed that might violate the rights to privacy and confidential communication. WiS-pear denies any wrongdoing and says the vehicle was not used to spy on anybody in Cyprus, nor was it hired to do so.

“We would like to restate that the car has not been active within Cypriot territory other than for demo and field tests purposes only, solely on company-owned devices,” a WiS-pear statement last week said. — AFP

Turkey signs military deal with UN-backed Libya govt

ISTANBUL: Turkey signed a military deal late Wednesday with Libya’s UN-recognized gov-ernment following a meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul, his office said. Erdogan met with the head of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj, to sign agreements on security and military cooperation, as well as mar-titime jurisdictions.

“We are confident that we will improve the security situation for the Libyan people to-gether,” Fahrettin Altun, communications director at the Turkish presidency, wrote on Twitter. He called on other countries to support the GNA. “Stability of Libya is critically important for the safety of Libyans, regional stability, and preven-tion of international terrorism,” Altun tweeted.

The deal comes despite calls from the Arab League - which includes Libya - to end cooper-ation with Turkey in protest at its military offen-sive against Kurdish forces in Syria last month. Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Since then, the UAE and Turkey have been based on the divided island. The dispute pits the Turkish and UAE-backed Khalifa Haftar, a military strongman in eastern Libya who launched an of-fensive in April in a bid to seize Tripoli from fight-ers loyal to the GNA. Turkey and Qatar openly support his rival Sarraj.

The Turkish government did not say where the maritime accord meeting was held. It said it would respect the rights to privacy and confidential communication. WiS-pear, whose founder and CEO is an Israeli former intelligence officer, Dilian, is the “Israeli spy van” reportedly owned by an Israeli and equipped with sophisticated surveillance technology.

The agreement comes despite a peace agreement reached in 2015 and an attempt at wide consultations. — AFP

Maritime accord may complicate energy exploration row

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shakes hands with Fayez Al-Sarraj, the head of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), during their meeting on Wednesday. — AFP

French sailors stand during a minute of silence on board a ship in the Black Sea early yesterday as they remember the 13 French soldiers killed in Mali. — AFP
DURRES, Albania: The death toll from the most powerful earthquake to strike Albania in decades rose to 40 yesterday after more bodies were pulled from the wreckage overnight in a tragedy that has wiped out whole families. The 6.4 magnitude earthquake rocked the Balkan state while people were sleeping just before 4:00 am (0300 GMT) on Tuesday, razing buildings and trapping victims beneath the debris in towns near the Adriatic coast.

Rescue teams were still shovelling away massive chunks of collapsed apartments and hotels in the coastal city of Durres, where nearly 30 buildings were badly damaged. Teams from around Europe have flown in to help with the effort, bringing dogs and specialized cameras to hunt for survivors, around 50 of whom have been pulled out alive, mostly on Tuesday.

As the operation stretched into day three, rescuers insisted there was still reason to hope for more survival stories. “There may be hope for up to eight to ten days” for victims to live after an earthquake, Captain Joel Leroy, a French rescuer, told AFP. His team of around 50 was searching for two people believed to be buried at the site of a seven-story building in Durres. The whole family has now perished in the quake, with the bodies of a father and daughter pulled out the day before, according to Ilir Duka, an Albanian rescuer at the scene.

Similar tragedies have befallen other families as the pre-dawn quake shattered their homes. Loved ones have watched on in horror as rescuers pulled out bodies covered in a grey film of dust, many in their pyjamas. On Tuesday a woman was heard crying out from inside a wrecked building, where she was stuck inside with a dead child. She was eventually rescued but later died in hospital.

“Hope dies last”

Around 50 survivors have been hospitalized and are “in a state of shock and worried about their loved ones”, defense ministry spokeswoman Albana Qe-hajaj told AFP. The number of people who may still be buried in the rubble is unknown. Rescuers, helped by teams from across Europe, have been working in perilous conditions as hundreds of aftershocks rattle buildings, interrupting search efforts.

“It’s a heavy operation, but that’s why we’re here, we’ve been doing this for a long time,” said an Italian rescue worker who didn’t give his name. “Hope dies last,” he said, adding that survivors have been found up to four days after an earthquake in some instances. The Italian team was working with dogs to search on a flattened tourism house that belonged to the Lala family and their relatives. Two toddlers and their mother were among those who have not yet been found in the debris, their neighbor Fatmira, dressed in black and whispering through tears, told AFP.

Moved to hotels

Thousands of people have been displaced, either because their homes were severely damaged or were still unsafe because of the continuing aftershocks. On Wednesday night authorities in Durres moved those who had been sleeping in tents to hotels and a sports centre. Prime Minister Edi Rama has promised to rehouse the newly homeless by next year. Illegal construction is rife in Albania, where chaotic development exploded after the fall of communism in 1990. Many buildings lack proper permits and do not adhere to safety codes. The earthquake was the deadliest in several decades in Albania, which lies near a tectonic fault line. —AFP

The mysterious reappearance of Turkey’s missing

ANKARA: News that a loved one was in custody would be unwelcome in most circumstances – but when the police called Sumeyye Yilmaz, she felt her prayers had been answered. Her husband Mustafa Yilmaz had been missing for eight months. At last, she knew he was alive and she would see him again. But she could not take in the news, calling the officer on the phone if he was sure: “There are many Mustafa Yilmazes, I didn’t want to be disappointed,” she told AFP. The next day, he was finally back in her arms.

Police told Sumeyye that her husband was “found” on Oct 21 and was in good health, but she could see he had lost weight and his hands and face were “ice cold”. Sumeyye feared her husband, a 33-year-old physiotherapist, had been tortured and said he looked anemic, but he gave no account of his missing months and told her only that he had been “hidden”. She knew this was untrue: He had just started a new job when he vanished on Feb 19 and had no reason to disappear.

Enforced disappearances

Öztürk Turkoğlan of campaign group Human Rights Association told AFP a unit within the security services was likely to be behind 28 disappearances recorded since a failed coup in 2016. Similar techniques were used by agents against suspected political dissidents in the 1990s, Turkoğlan said the 28 were probably abducted to obtain information, though it was unclear why they would have been singled out - tens of thousands were arrested in a post-coup crackdown. The interior ministry and police did not respond to requests for comment on the cases.

Mustafa had already been sentenced to six years in prison over links to the Gulen movement - a religious organization that Turkey blamed for the failed coup - but he had been released at the start of the year pending an appeal. He was one of six men who disappeared within a few days of each other around the country in February - all with alleged ties to the Gulenists. Four of the six reappeared in July in police custody. —AFP

Dutchman in cult case

‘sexually abused children’

THE HAGUE: A Dutch man accused of-sequestering his family in a farmhouse for nearly a decade is suspected of sexually abusing two of his children, prosecutors said yesterday. The two children were not among the six living on the farm in the village of Ruinerwold at the time and had previously left home, the Dutch prosecution service said. Prosecutors also confirmed that the suspect was the father of all six of the children who were being kept on the farm at the time of his arrest in October.

“In addition to money laundering and deprivation of liberty and mistreatment of his nine children, the 67-year-old man is also suspected of sexually abusing two of his three oldest children,” the prosecution service said in a statement. “DNA kinship research has shown that the six children from the farm in Ruinerwold have the same father and mother and that the 67-year-old suspect is the father,” it said, adding that the mother died in 2004. The Dutch suspect and an Austrian man were both arrested in October and remain in custody. The family was first discovered when the oldest son still living on the farm walked into a local bar in a confused state and raised concern about the welfare of his other siblings. Police then went to the farmhouse and found the other five children locked in a small room.

In a further twist to the case, the prosecutors added that the Dutchman and the Austrian had held another Austrian man, aged 69, captive “for several months” in 2009. “More details will not be shared about the case. The investigation is still in full swing,” the prosecutors said. Both suspects and the family were all part of South Korea’s controversial Unification Church, dubbed “Moonies” after its late founder Sun Myung Moon, Dutch media have said. The Universal Peace Federation, the name the church now goes by, has confirmed that the father of the family was a member in the 1980s before leaving for Germany where “we lost sight of him.” —AFP

40 dead as families pulled from Albania quake rubble

Rescuers hoping for more survival stories
Scientists spot black hole so huge it ‘shouldn’t even exist’

LB-1 has mass 70 times greater than the Sun

BEIJING: Astronomers have discovered a black hole in the Milky Way so huge that it challenges existing models of how stars evolve, researchers said yesterday. LB-1 is 15,000 light years from Earth and has a mass 70 times greater than the Sun, according to the journal Nature. The Milky Way is estimated to contain 100 million stellar black holes but LB-1 is twice as massive as anything scientists thought possible, said Liu Jifeng, a National Astronomical Observatory of China professor who led the research. “Black holes of such mass should not even exist in our galaxy, according to most of the current models of stellar evolution,” he added.

Scientists generally believe that there are two types of black holes. The more common stellar black holes – up to 20 times more massive than the Sun – form when the centre of a very big star collapses in on itself. Supermassive black holes are at least a million times bigger than the Sun and their origins are uncertain. But researchers believed that typical stars in the Milky Way shed most of their gas through stellar winds, preventing the emergence of a black hole the size of LB-1, Liu said. “Now theorists will have to take up the challenge of explaining its formation,” he said in a statement.

‘New kind of black hole’

Astronomers are still only beginning to grasp “the abundance of black holes and the mechanisms by which they form,” David Reitze, a physicist at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) who was not involved in the discovery, told AFP. The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory at Caltech, overseen by Reitze, had previously detected ripples in space-time that suggested the possibility of black holes in distant galaxies that were much bigger than what was thought possible.

Stellar black holes are usually formed in the aftermath of supernova explosions, a phenomenon that occurs when extremely large stars burn out at the end of their lives. LB-1’s large mass falls into a range “known as the ‘pair instability gap’ where supernovae should not have produced it,” Reitze said. “That means that this is a new kind a black hole, formed by another physical mechanism!”

100 million black holes

LB-1 was discovered by an international team of scientists using China’s sophisticated LAMOST telescope. Additional images from two of the world’s largest optical telescopes – Spain’s Gran Telescopio Canarias and the Keck I telescope in the United States – confirmed the size of LB-1, which the National Astronomical Observatory of China said was “nothing short of fantastic”. Scientists have tended to find black holes by detecting the X-rays they emit. But this method has limited usefulness because only a small number of black hole systems where the companion star orbits very close to the black hole would emit detectable X-rays, Liu said at a press conference. Instead, the team that discovered LB-1 tracked the movements of “huge numbers of stars over a long period of time”, before identifying LB-1 based on the motion of its companion star, Liu said. This method has been used for decades without much success due to the limitations of the available equipment, Liu added.

But LAMOST, constructed between 2001 and 2008 in north China’s Hebei province, allows researchers to detect up to 4,000 stars simultaneously with each exposure, making it one of the world’s most powerful ground-based telescopes. Liu told AFP the method used to discover LB-1 could help scientists identify many more black holes in the future. Out of the 100 million black holes believed to exist in our galaxy, Liu said, only 4,000 “can give you X-rays that can be detected by us.” —AFP

Kiev slams Apple for calling Crimea part of Russia

KIEV: Ukraine has lashed out at Apple for showing the annexed Crimea peninsula as part of Russia, saying the US tech giant did not “give a damn” about the pain of the Ukrainian people. Russian lawmakers said on Wednesday that Apple had complied with a demand from Moscow for Crimea to appear as Russian territory on its maps and weather apps.

“Let me explain in your terms, @Apple,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko wrote on Twitter in response to the news. “Imagine you’re crying out that your design & ideas, years of work & piece of your heart are stolen by your worst enemy but then your inventive mind doesn’t give a damn about your pain. That’s how it feels when you call #Crimea a (Russian) land,” he said. “@Apple, please, please, please, stick to high-tech and entertainment. Global politics is not your strong side.”

The Ukrainian Embassy in the United States tweeted: “We guess Ukrainians (are) not giving any thanks to @Apple this #Thanksgiving!” As of Wednesday, the Black Sea peninsula and its largest cities of Sevastopol and Simferopol were being displayed as Russian territory on Apple’s apps when used in Russia. Moscow has put pressure on foreign companies to recognize the peninsula as an integral part of its territory.

‘Let’s boycott Apple’

Some Ukrainians responded by calling for a boycott of Apple devices. “Let’s take our gadgets onto the square, pile them up and burn them,” wrote Igor Kravchuk from Kharliv on Facebook. Another, Yevgen Petrov from Zhitomir, said: “Let’s boycott Apple and support Android, a creator of gadgets that don’t cave in to the Kremlin!” Google does not identify Crimea as belonging to either Russia or Ukraine on its maps. However, when used in Russia, it writes Crimean place names in Russian and shows a line along the de facto border with Ukraine. —AFP

Climate summit host Spain struggles on environment

MADRID: Spain wanted to make a splash on the international scene by agreeing to host next month’s COP25 climate summit at the last minute after Chile pulled out. But experts say green issues have not been a priority in the country, which has a poor environmental track record. Only 2.3 percent of all Spaniards consider the environment as one of the country’s main problems, according to the latest survey by the state-run Centre for Sociological Studies (CIS). That compares to 56.9 percent who listed unemployment and 21.2 percent who said corruption were major concerns.

Like other southern European nations, Spain does not have a significant green party and environmental issues were not in focus during the campaign for the Nov 10 general election. They were not even among the themes addressed during the only TV debate held before the polls. “Environmental problems are not a priority in the political agenda,” said Claudio Cattaneo, an environmental sciences professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. “Social inequalities are very high in Spain so the political demands (of the left) are more oriented towards the right to housing than to ecology.”

The environment accounted for just 0.44 percent of the debate in parliament between 2011 and 2016, according to a tally kept by the Spanish Society of Ornithology, an NGO dedicated to protecting birds and their habitats. While ecological issues became a key political theme in Europe, Spain “redesignated its political-party system” after democracy was re-established following the death of long-time dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 without making room for green parties.

Infractions

At the same time European authorities routinely call out Spain for its environmental shortcomings. According to the European Commission, Spain racked up more infringements of European Union (EU) environmental law between 2015 and 2018 than any other member state – and nearly three times as many as the average for members of the bloc. In July Brussels asked the EU’s Court of Justice to take action against Spain over its “systemic violations” of rules limiting nitrogen dioxide emissions, a poisonous gas in car exhaust. —AFP

This handout picture received on Nov 26, 2019 shows a rendering of the accretion of gas onto a stellar black hole from its blue companion star through a truncated accretion disk. —AFP

MOSCOW: An illustration picture taken yesterday shows an Apple map with the Crimea peninsula on a smartphone screen. —AFP
Thousands march in Colombia to maintain pressure on Duque

Public transport shut down, shops and offices closed

BOGOTA: Colombian unions marked their second general strike in a week on Wednesday as tens of thousands poured onto the streets in protest against the government of right-wing President Ivan Duque. Public transport was largely shut down and shops and offices closed in the center of the capital as a series of protests that began with a 250,000-strong march last Thursday continued for a seventh consecutive day.

Some protesters banged pots and pans as they made their way through the streets. Large demonstrations were also held in Cali and Medellin. “We are outraged by so much mistreatment and so much corruption,” said David Martinez, a 50-year-old public employee who joined a march in Bogota dressed as a clown. “I’m dressed as a clown because that’s how the government sees us. People have risen up in Ecuador, Chile, in Bolivia, now it’s our turn to say: No More!” Martinez told AFP.

The protests have been largely peaceful but sporadic violence has left four dead — including a young man who died Monday after being wounded in clashes with riot police on Saturday. Some 500 people have been injured. Police said 184 people had been detained in the protests since last week. “They have turned Colombia into a democracy where they favor a minority of businessmen and bureaucrats, while the vast majority must try to hang on to their privileges,” teachers union Fecode said in a statement.

Duque, under fire over his economic policies and corruption, launched a “national dialogue” Sunday with mayors and other officials in a bid to assuage popular anger. However, protest leaders reacted angrily when they were initially omitted from direct talks.

US support

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo voiced “steadfast support” for Duque’s government in a phone call to the beleaguered president on Wednesday, the State Department said. Pompeo “welcomed the national conversation that President Duque has convened in Colombia in response to recent demonstrations,” it said. A Gallup poll published on Nov 7 showed Duque’s approval ratings at 26 percent in October, the lowest since he took office in Aug 2018, while 70 percent of respondents believe the country is heading in the wrong direction.

The National Strike Committee — which groups unions, students, university lecturers and indigenous groups — presented a list of 13 demands to the government, including the withdrawal of Duque’s proposed tax reforms, and full compliance with the 2016 peace deal with FARC guerrillas. But perhaps the most controversial is the call to dismantle the feared ESMA riot police, after the death Monday of a 76-year-old pro-Duque supporter Dilan Cruz, who was hit in the head by a tear gas canister.

Duque has yielded to some of the demands on tax reform, announcing the return of value added tax to the poorest 20 percent of the population and benefits for companies that hire young people. “This government is open building towards the future, but it must be done with the whole of society,” Duque said in an interview with Colombia’s W Radio, insisting that many of the protesters’ claims were based on disinformation or “false premises.”

Envoy key in Trump impeachment

accused of sexual misconduct

WASHINGTON: A US ambassador nominated by President Donald Trump who provided key testimony in his impeachment hearings was accused Wednesday of sexual misconduct by three women. Gordon Sondland, the US envoy to the European Union, denied the allegations, with his lawyer alleging that the accusers were trying to tamp his credibility in the inquiry. The Portland Monthly published named accounts by three women who said that Sondland, a wealthy hotel owner from Seattle, retaliated against them professionally after they rejected him sexually.

One of the women, Jana Solis, said she met Sondland in 2008 when she was seeking work in the position of a safety expert for hotels. She said Sondland met her for lunch and offered her a job as “my new hotel chick” before slapping her rear. She said Sondland later invited her to his Portland home to evaluate his personal art collection — which included a picture of himself with then-president George W Bush — and that he exposed himself in the pool house. She said Sondland at a later meeting also forcibly kissed her.

Another woman, Nicole Vogel, said she met Sondland in 2003 over dinner to seek investment in a new magazine. He then took her to a hotel he owned and invited her to see a room, where he requested a hug and then “grabs my face and goes to kiss me,” she said. Vogel said she refused and left. She pointed to an email afterward in which Sondland declined funding for her project. Sondland in a statement rejected all the accusations and accused Vogel of “underhanded journalism” out of anger that he did not invest in the magazine. “These untrue claims of unwanted touching and kissing are concocted and, I believe, coordinated for political purposes,” he said. “They have no basis in fact and I categorically deny them,” he said.

Vogel owns the Portland Monthly, which published the article. The magazine said that, due to her implication in the story, it teamed up with ProPublica, a respected non-profit news group known for investigations. A lawyer for Sondland told the magazine the article was timed to damage the ambassador’s credibility in the impeachment inquiry. Sondland donated $1 million to Trump’s inauguration and was afterward named ambassador to the European Union.
Scientists spot black hole so huge it ‘shouldn’t even exist’

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100 million black holes

LB-1 was discovered by an international team of scientists using China’s most powerful telescope. Liu, who led the research, said: “Black holes of this size are very rare. This discovery is the first identification of a black hole this massive.”

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Friday Times

Friday, November 29, 2019
Families have waited weeks for bodies to come back

DIEN CHAU, Vietnam: Throngs of weeping relatives yesterday buried the first of 39 Vietnamese people found dead in a truck in Britain last month, in emotional ceremonies for the young victims whose deaths have rattled their rural towns. The first of the remains arrived in Vietnam from London on a commercial flight Wednesday, closing a weeks-long, agonising wait by families eager to have their children back home. All 33 men and eight women found dead in a refrigerated trailer in Essex last month were Vietnamese, many from small towns in central Vietnam.

Yesterday, several families laid their loved ones to rest after long nights of emotional vigils. Under rainy skies in central Nghe An province, scores of relatives and villagers gathered for a final farewell for Hoang Van Tiep, 18, Nguyen Van Hung, 33, two cousins who died on the truck. “I’ve never attended a funeral as big as this. It’s a sad day for all of us,” said a neighbor Hoang Thi Mai, her eyes wet with tears.

“I hope they are happy in heaven,” she added, as their flower-flanked caskets were transported by a long procession to a cemetery in Dien Chau district. The parents of Hung were carried away from the bare home in Ha Tinh, surrounded by mourning relatives. “I want to bring him back in full so I could see his face one last time,” he said of his 25-year-old son. Vo Van Binh, who was sent abroad in search of a good job. He was among 36 victims whose bodies arrived in Vietnam on Wednesday. The rest of the remains are expected later this week. Vietnam has arrested at least 10 people in connection with the tragedy for people smuggling, though none have been formally charged. Several people have also been arrested in Britain, including the 25-year-old driver of the truck Maurice Robinson, who pleaded guilty to conspiring to assist illegal immigration in court this week. —AFP

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DIEN CHAU, Vietnam: Throngs of weeping relatives yesterday buried the first of 39 Vietnamese people found dead in a truck in Britain last month, in emotional ceremonies for the young victims whose deaths have rattled their rural towns. The first of the remains arrived in Vietnam from London on a commercial flight Wednesday, closing a weeks-long, agonising wait by families eager to have their children back home. All 33 men and eight women found dead in a refrigerated trailer in Essex last month were Vietnamese, many from small towns in central Vietnam.

Yesterday, several families laid their loved ones to rest after long nights of emotional vigils. Under rainy skies in central Nghe An province, scores of relatives and villagers gathered for a final farewell for Hoang Van Tiep, 18, Nguyen Van Hung, 33, two cousins who died on the truck. “I’ve never attended a funeral as big as this. It’s a sad day for all of us,” said a neighbor Hoang Thi Mai, her eyes wet with tears.

“I hope they are happy in heaven,” she added, as their flower-flanked caskets were transported by a long procession to a cemetery in Dien Chau district. The parents of Hung were carried away from the bare home in Ha Tinh, surrounded by mourning relatives. “I want to bring him back in full so I could see his face one last time,” he said of his 25-year-old son. Vo Van Binh, who was sent abroad in search of a good job. He was among 36 victims whose bodies arrived in Vietnam on Wednesday. The rest of the remains are expected later this week. Vietnam has arrested at least 10 people in connection with the tragedy for people smuggling, though none have been formally charged. Several people have also been arrested in Britain, including the 25-year-old driver of the truck Maurice Robinson, who pleaded guilty to conspiring to assist illegal immigration in court this week. —AFP

Vietnamese families bury first victims of UK truck tragedy

North Korea fires two projectiles on Thanksgiving

SEOUL: North Korea fired two “unidentified projectiles” yesterday - the Thanksgiving holiday in the US - Seoul said, as nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington remain deadlocked. The projectiles were fired eastwards from South Hamgyong province and came down in the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. They added that the launch, the latest in a series by Pyongy...
Top general granted six months in power

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's top court yesterday gave the government six months to justify why it granted a controversial extension to the country's army chief, in a rare case that pits the judiciary against the government and the military. The cabinet of prime minister Imran Khan approved a three-year extension for General Qamar Javed Bajwa in August, citing a worsening national security situation in the region over its rivalry with India. But in a surprise ruling on Tuesday, the Supreme Court suspended the extension, citing a series of irregularities and ordering the government and the army to produce legal provisions and detailed arguments on the reasoning behind the move. On Thursday the court granted a temporary six-month extension to Bajwa's tenure due to end at midnight, but said the government must pass legislation through parliament in that time to clarify the section of Pakistan's constitution governing the armed forces. "We are showing judicial restraint although there is no provision in law to grant an extension," Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa told the court. "We leave this matter to parliament to make law regarding this." Khan welcomed the verdict yesterday. "Today must be a great disappointment to those who expected the country to be destabilized by a clash of institutions," he said in a tweet. But despite giving a temporary reprieve over its handling of the extension, the episode could weaken the authority of the coalition government, led by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, that now has to pass what is likely to be complex legislation on the military through parliament.

The civilian government has enjoyed good relations with the armed forces, in contrast to the previous government of Khan's main rival Nawaz Sharif. It has also led to questions about the future of Bajwa, who has led the military through a period of escalating tensions with India and western neighbor Afghanistan. The abrupt decision of the court to suspend Bajwa's extension, and the government's reaction, has been branded "a comedy of errors" by Pakistan's media, which is rarely critical of the military. "This is without a doubt the most shamful episode in the PTI government's tenure so far," said an editorial in Dawn, the country's leading English-language newspaper yesterday. "Surely there are other officers more than capable of leading the army. General Bajwa's next step will determine whether he is thinking of himself or his institution." Bajwa was commissioned as an army officer in 1980. As a general, he has served as a field commander of units stationed in the contested Kashmir region, where nuclear powers India and Pakistan have fought two wars since both won independence from colonial power Britain in 1947. Upon his appointment by Sharif in 2016, a government minister told Reuters the then-prime minister had picked Bajwa because of his low-key style, and felt the incoming general would be more willing to cede control of key areas to the civilian government. But during his tenure, the military has been accused by opposition politicians of electoral manipulation, meddled in politics, suspension of civil liberties and muzzling the media to help Khan win power last year. The military has always denied interfering in politics. The army chief usually serves a three-year term. Since the role was established in 1972, only one general has had his term extended by a civilian government. — Reuters

Former Maldives leader jailed for money laundering

MALE: Disgraced Maldives ex-president Abdulla Yameen was sentenced to five years in prison for money laundering yesterday after a corruption probe into the former strongman's rule of the luxury tourist destination. Yameen, who ran the Indian Ocean archipelago with an iron fist before his shock election loss in 2018, was accused of illegally transferring one million dollars from one of his bank accounts during an ongoing graft investigation.

The 60-year-old was arrested in February on charges of bribing witnesses in the ensuing money laundering trial. Authorities also froze bank accounts belonging to Yameen that held around $6.5 million at the end of last year following accusations he had taken illicit payments. Investigators believe Yameen could have millions more stashed abroad and are working to repatriate the cash. Yameen's government regularly jailed opponents or forced them into exile during its five years in power, and the former president relied heavily on China for political and financial support as his human rights record faced criticism. Current leader Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won an unexpected landslide victory last year on a pledge to end corruption, and dissidents have since returned to the country.— AFP

Men who exposed Afghan pedophile ring released

KABUL: Afghan security officials have released two rights activists detained by the country's powerful intelligence agency for exposing an alleged pedophile ring operating in the country's schools. Mona Mahmudi - a youth social worker - told Britain's Guardian newspaper earlier this month that teachers and local officials were involved in the ring based in Logar province, sparking outrage across the country. Mahmudi and activist Ehsanullah Hamidi were later detained by the National Directorate of Security (NDS) on their way to meet with the European Union ambassador in Kabul last week. "They are in Kabul now and reunited with members of their families. There is no restriction to their movement," Naem Nazari, deputy head of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, told AFP. At least 546 boys from six schools were allegedly abused, the Guardian reported. Some victims went on to be murdered, the newspaper said, adding that rights campaigners had uncovered more than 100 videos of the abuse. Authorities have not confirmed the allegations.

The two were released Wednesday just a day after the NDS released a video of Mahmudi appearing to retract his account, which sparked harsh condemnation of the spy agency's conduct by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the US envoy in Kabul - who blasted the agency over its “Soviet-style tactics”. Amnesty International had also called for the pair's immediate release and warned that Mahmudi had been receiving death threats accusing him of “dishonouring the people of Logar.”

Hamidi's role in revealing the scandal was not immediately clear, and he was not referenced in the Guardian story. Sexual abuse is widespread in Afghanistan despite efforts to clamp down on the crime, and boys are often reluctant to come forward in a culture that still shames victims rather than going after perpetrators. Parts of Afghanistan still tolerate the practice of bacha bazi, or "boy play", where older men force boys to dress up as women and then force them to have sex.— AFP

Cuba allows police to snoop electronically

HAVANA: Cuba has authorized state security agencies to use electronic surveillance without prior approval from a court, prompting criticism from the United States which accuses Havana of spying on opponents and tourists. Havana said the new laws would make the police more effective in “preventing and confronting money laundering and terrorist financing.” The measures were introduced in a change to the Communist-run country's penal code last week.

Investigators must first request surveillance authorization from the attorney general. "This is the case everywhere in the world. The difference is that elsewhere you need authorization from a judge whereas in Cuba it is between police and the prosecutor's office," constitutional analyst Julio Fernandez Estrada told AFP. Fernandez said electronic surveillance would allow investigators to "listen to and record conversations," locate and track suspects, take picture and videos and tap into all types of communications technology. The United States - involved in a mass surveillance scandal in 2013 reported by ex-Central Intelligence Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden - slammed what it called "a sweeping new law that enables surveillance in Cuba".—AFP
Turtles and tourists share the same beach on a Tunisian island
Page 26

‘Insurrection in the blood’: Brazil’s theater legend Ze Celso at 82
See Page 20
Dressed in white and with hands raised in the air, Ze Celso crosses the stage, already reveling in the boisterous performance his troupe is about to deliver: at 82, this legend of the Brazilian stage still believes in the virtue of insurrection. He founded his theater company Teatro Oficina 61 years ago and it became an icon in the years of Brazil's military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985. Despite the years, both Ze Celso and the company are still going strong.

To stage their performance of “Roda Viva” (“Living Circle”), written by singer-songwriter and playwright Chico Buarque in 1968 and mixing dance, song, theatre and video, the 60-strong troupe had to rustle up buses to transport them for free from Sao Paulo to Rio, where they bunked up at friends’ places and paid the costs of putting on the show through crowdfunding donations.

From the outset, “there were a thousand problems, but the thing is to resist,” says Jose Celso Martinez Correa, better known as Ze Celso, in an interview with AFP. “I have insurrection in the blood.”

In 1968, “militiamen from the commando group hunting down communists launched a police operation” against the performance of “Roda Viva,” says Ze Celso. “They stormed the theater, and even ran into the dressing rooms to beat up the performers.”

“In reaction (to Bolsonaro), our culture is very strong,” says Ze Celso. “The theaters are full, the artists are vibrant. All of Brazil’s culture is rising up!” That is certainly the case with “Roda Viva,” which is by turns burlesque, comic and sarcastic, and which Ze Celso describes as a “tragi-comedy” performed at a frenetic pace.

It follows the antics of popular singer Benedetto Silva and his “guardian angel,” who asks for 20 percent of the singer’s earnings. Benedetto becomes pop hero Ben Silver, who morphs into Benedetto Lampiao, the name of a mythical insurgent in Brazilian culture, under the diktat of show business. The “Roda Viva” of 2019 is deeply anchored in contemporary Brazilian politics, featuring a Bolsonaro with Hitler moustache and hair, and who declares his love for US President Donald Trump. The Brazilian president’s image appears on the video screen to boos and jeers from the audience.

By contrast, the audience is urged by the ensemble—sometimes in pressing tones—to join them in applauding former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the leftist who was in jail on corruption charges during the last election. As the dancers climb the rows of theater seats, Ze Celso stretches out on the laps of three audience members, and at the end of the show, performers and audience all dance together on the stage. For Ze, “everything is sexual” and the scenes of rape or orgy are raw. Occasionally, naked actors run through the rows of seats.

Yet the experimental theater has managed to escape the censorship and pressure on cultural centers by the far-right administration of President Jair Bolsonaro, and “Roda Viva” has been running for nearly a year now in Sao Paulo.

**Hitler moustache**

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Australian broadcaster Clive James dies at 80

Clive James, the Australian broadcaster, writer, critic and poet who charmed generations of Britons with his wit and wit, has died at the age of 80, his agents said Wednesday. James died “peacefully and at home, surrounded by his family and his books” in Cambridge, eastern England, on Sunday, United Agents said in a statement. A private funeral attended by family and close friends took place on Wednesday in the UK for the man who was best known for the US television show that he hosted for the first time in 1972, where he turned the TV review into a kind of art form. His hit TV show, “Clive James on Television”, fronted by his wise-cracking presenting style, put some of the world’s biggest names in front of him. The polymath first found fame in the early 1960s with his TV show “Beyond The Fringe” with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Alan Bennett. James presented him with a special lifetime achievement award in 2015.

Jonathan Miller dies, 85

James’ death was announced after the family of theatre director Jonathan Miller said he died Wednesday at the age of 85. His own hit TV show, “Clive James on Television”, fronted by his wise-cracking presenting style, put some of the world’s biggest names in front of him. His final meditations on his final medication, he wrote.

The 35-year-old reality star recently admitted she was tired of receiving “countless” attention from Tristan in the wake of her split from her boyfriend after a change in her life. But he had left behind his script to start his new life in the UK for the first time in 1972, where he turned the TV review into a kind of art form. His hit TV show, “Clive James on Television”, fronted by his wise-cracking presenting style, put some of the world’s biggest names in front of him. The polymath first found fame in the early 1960s with his TV show “Beyond The Fringe” with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Alan Bennett. James presented him with a special lifetime achievement award in 2015.

British actor John Boyega said on Wednesday that he left his copy of the closely-guarded script for the new “Star Wars” movie under his bed, and that it ended up for sale on eBay. Boyega, who plays Stormtrooper turned resistance fighter Finn in “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker,” told US television show “Good Morning America” that a cleaner had found the script and put it up for sale on eBay.

Tristan Thompson hails Khloe Kardashian as ‘perfection’

Tristan Thompson put up a lengthy video on Wednesday, in which he spoke about his experience with abuse, with as she alleged that a former partner - whom she did not name - abused her both physically and emotionally for the duration of their relationship. And now her friends and family have spoken out.

Melissa Benoist opens up on her experiences with domestic abuse

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In September, Khloe shared a selfie in which the sun was behind her and captioned her Instagram post: “May you have the courage to explore every dream you dream.” In a now-deleted comment, Tristan wrote: “The sun is shining bright on a beautiful day” and later deleted his comment.

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Vanessa Hudgens fascinated by her style evolution

The ‘Spring Breakers’ star has sported a number of looks throughout the years and she is always amazed by how her style has changed. She said: “I think the message is that women don’t have to be one thing. We’re so multifaceted; the more we embrace our duality, the stronger we are ... My style, and the evolution of it, is something that’s fascinating to me. Where I was ten years ago is so different from where I am now. It was a very Bohemian time for me. I would always be in maxi dresses with feather earrings and my long hair. I just felt so feminine and flowy. Now, I love an iconic look.” And the 30-year-old actress thinks people struggle to tell her age because of her breakout role in ‘High School Musical’. She added to Women's Wear Daily: “No one ever gets my age right, I used to want to be older when I was younger. Now that I’m 30, if you tell me I look underage, I actually greatly appreciate it. Most people are acquainted with me via ‘High School Musical’, so I think in their eyes, I’ll be forever 15. “People 100 percent still look at me as Gabriella but it’s really sweet that I get to be a part of people’s childhood and take them back to a time for them when things were simpler. That’s a beautiful thing. I’ve played so many different kinds of people, I don’t think that you can put me into a box.” — Bang Showbiz

Beyonce’s new merchandise drop is holiday-themed

The ‘Crazy in Love’ hitmaker has unveiled her new collection, which includes clothes like crewneck sweatshirts and graphic tees as well as accessories like eye masks. Items include a white unisex tee featuring a holiday graphic of Beyonce and the words ‘Your Favorite Wrapper’, a black unisex crewneck pullover featuring ‘Holiday Party Energy’ in multicolor embroidery on the front and a heather grey hooded pullover featuring an image of Beyonce on the front in disco shades, ‘Gon’ Be Litty’ on the back in black puff ink, and Beyonce logo on the bottom left sleeve.

Other items are a holiday ornament set, which “includes red shatterproof ball ornament featuring an image of Beyonce when she was young and a black shatterproof ball ornament featuring an image of Beyonce in green”, as well as the Three B’s Collage tee, a “white crewneck tee featuring a collage of three Beyonce images on front and ‘Santa, Get Me a Bag’ on back”. The prices range from £12 for Beyonce themed wrapping paper, which is available in blue and white, to £66 for the ‘Gon’ Be Litty Woven Blanket.— Bang Showbiz

Miley Cyrus shows off new platinum mullet

The ‘Wrecking Ball’ hitmaker has transformed her look with the edgy new hairstyle after her mother Tish gave her a trim over the weekend, but the uneven cut meant she turned to celebrity hairstylist Sally Hershberger to tweak the ‘do. The pair both shared the updated version of the shoulder length haircut on Instagram, and Sally revealed the “punk vibe” was Miley’s own influence. She told InStyle.com: “Miley wanted to go more punk... We went with a modern mullet that she can wear sleek, but also wavy and messy.”

Some fans took to social media to voice their disapproval of the new look, with some claiming it wasn’t “even”. One cruel commenter described it as the “worst haircut I’ve ever laid my eyes on”. Sally issued a defiant response and explained the angle made it look a certain way. She responded on Instagram: “First of all, if you knew anything about hair, it’s the position she’s in. That’s why it looks that way, it’s 100% even, and she also had it straightened, so it’s more severe, which I actually like. “That being said chill out and know it’s a modern mullet which is very cool, but it’s something you probably aren’t even well-versed in sorry but not sorry.” — Bang Showbiz
Shooting stars: TikTok's explosive and rocky ride to fame

In July, the app suspended the accounts of some of its biggest Indian stars after the four men—all Muslims—posted videos criticizing the lynching of a Muslim youth by a Hindu mob. The videos, which were shared widely on social media, led to widespread outrage and calls for the government to take action. The Indian government later pledged to ban TikTok and other Chinese apps, citing national security concerns. The ban was later reversed, but TikTok remains under scrutiny.

TikTok is not the only Chinese app that has faced challenges in India. In May, the Indian government banned 59 Chinese apps, including Alibaba's e-commerce platform Taobao and Huawei's video-sharing app Koo. The ban was in response to a clash between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley in June 2020. The Indian government said the apps were involved in activities that were detrimental to India's national security.

However, the ban did not last long. In June, the Indian government announced that it would reinstate all the banned apps, including TikTok, provided they comply with the country's rules and regulations. TikTok has already started working with Indian authorities to ensure that it complies with all the rules and regulations.

TikTok's popularity in India has been driven by its ability to connect with young people and its ability to create and share content. The app has become a platform for users to express themselves and share their creativity. It has also become a platform for brands and advertisers to reach young people.

However, TikTok's rise to fame has not been without controversy. In May, a 22-year-old Indian named Ahmed Siddiqui filed a case against TikTok for promoting violence and hatred. Siddiqui said that the app promoted a culture of violence and hate, and that it should be banned.

TikTok has faced similar controversies in other countries. In the United States, for example, the app has faced criticism for allowing users to share的内容 that promote violence and hate. In response, TikTok has taken steps to remove such content and to ensure that its users comply with the country's laws.

In conclusion, TikTok's rise to fame has been driven by its ability to connect with young people and its ability to create and share content. However, the app has also faced challenges, including controversies and legal challenges. As the app continues to grow in popularity, it will need to ensure that it complies with the laws and regulations of the countries where it operates.
The hair salon changing how transgenders are seen in Pakistan

Bebo Haider’s beauty parlor is bright, small, and decorated sparsely with three large photographs: transgender models who became her customers because the Karachi salon is one of the few in Pakistan which caters to them without judgment. Tarawah, a middle-class neighborhood of the sprawling southern port city, is owned and run by Haider, herself a transgender person who came to Karachi in 2003 from a small rural town in southern Sindh province with dreams of becoming a beautician. It was not easy.

Even when the owner of one salon in a posh Karachi neighborhood finally decided to take a chance on her, the clients refused her services—or to return her greetings, she told AFP. It took two years before one salon regular finally returned her hello, she said—but the thaw, for that customer at least, was complete. “After that day she would not get her hair and make up done. This is a symbol of transgender empowerment,” she told AFP.

In this picture, transgender beautician Bebo Haider gets ready in her home to go to work in Karachi. — AFP photos

Haider then began doing Doll’s make-up, lifting her eyes darkly to match Haider’s own. “The eye makeup is the essence,” she explained. After finishing Doll’s eyes, Haider turned back to her own reflection, reviewing herself in the mirror. “Do I look good?” she said softly, apparently to herself. “I am beautiful. Am I not?” — AFP

The salon is inside a crowded market, surrounded by grocery and milk shops. When Haider first opened it, she said, neighbors were so hostile that she felt afraid. “I would wear tough looks when I came to the shop so that people would not dare to mess with me,” she said. She warned her clients to dress conservatively, and deployed the strategy which had worked so well before: good manners. It worked.

Whenever she sees us, she greets us with a good heart and she meets with everybody pleasantly,” said Mohammad Akram, the 40-year-old owner of a milk shop next to the salon. “We are not concerned with what their gender is,” he added.

TRANSAGENDERS are often judged, harassed or even denied entry at other salons, she and her customers told AFP. “When we would sit along the ladies at the parlour, they would feel nervous, confused and even feel repulsive of us. (But) we are also human beings,” said Mahi Doll, a 21-year client of Tarawah. Haider’s salon, Doll says, is more than just a safe space for her customers to get their hair and make-up done. “This is a symbol of transgender empowerment,” she told AFP.

Symbol of empowerment

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But-despite these gains—many still live daily as pariahs, often reduced to begging and prostitution, subjected to extortion and discrimination or targeted for violence. Haider fought hard to avoid that fate.

Once she gained a foothold with her first job, she began to grow politically active, joining transgender rights organizations and eventually becoming the president of Sahrang, one community group. When a Dutch organization said it wanted to finance a project to empower the transgender community, she and a partner jumped on the chance to open their own salon—which, they say, is the first transgender owned and run beauty salon in Pakistan. “I never looked back,” Haider told AFP.

Haider then began doing Doll’s make-up, lifting her eyes darkly to match Haider’s own. “The eye makeup is the essence,” she explained. After finishing Doll’s eyes, Haider turned back to her own reflection, reviewing herself in the mirror. “Do I look good?” she said softly, apparently to herself. “I am beautiful. Am I not?” — AFP
Clothes should be cherished, re-worn and even passed on to the next generation, Anna Wintour, the influential editor of Vogue magazine said, calling for more sustainability in the fashion world and less of a throwaway culture. In an interview with Reuters, Wintour, considered one of the most powerful people in fashion, also said the industry was “a little bit late in the game” in pursuing diversity and inclusivity and that, despite the meteoric rise of social media influencers, Vogue would remain a benchmark for fashionistas.

Many brands are trying to bolster their green credentials and entice young environmentally-savvy consumers as the sector comes under scrutiny for fuelling a throwaway culture. But in good news for second-hand bargain hunters, Wintour, who has been at the helm of American Vogue for more than 30 years, said fashionistas should care for their clothes and even pass them on. “I think for all of us it means an attention more on craft, on creativity, and less on the idea of clothes that are instantly disposable, things that you will throw away just after one reading.”

“(It’s all about) talking to our audiences, our readers, about keeping the clothes that you own, and valuing the clothes that you own and wearing them again and again, and maybe giving them on to your daughter, or son, which were the case may be.” A 2016 report by management consultancy McKinsey & Company said global clothing output doubled between 2000 and 2014, with the number of garments bought each year per person surging 60 percent.

**Lifestyle | Fashion**

**Love your clothes and pass them on, says Vogue supremo Wintour**

Instantly recognizable with her short fringed bob haircut and sunglasses, British-born Wintour has long been a front row staple at catwalk shows. The 2006 movie “The Devil Wears Prada” starring Meryl Streep as a no-nonsense editor of the fictional Runway fashion magazine is widely believed to be based on her. Thanks in part to social media, who aree is now a no-nonsense editor of Vogue.

**Yves Saint Laurent jacket fetches record sum**

A richly embroidered jacket by Yves Saint Laurent inspired by Vincent van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” was sold at auction Wednesday for 382,000 euros ($420,000), a record for a garment from the celebrated French designer. The jacket, which was once modeled on the catwalk by supermodel Naomi Campbell, had been expected to fetch between 80,000-120,000 euros at the Christie’s sale.

It was bought by the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. The bright yellow and orange jacket took haute couture embroiderers Maison Lesage more than 600 hours to stitch by hand, according to the Yves Saint Laurent museum’s website. It was part of Saint Laurent’s 1988 spring/summer collection. Only four of the sequined jackets, which are lined with silk, were ever made.

Saint Laurent’s 1988 collection also featured an embroidered jacket honoring another flower-themed van Gogh canvas, “Irises.” The blue and purple garment was auctioned for 175,500 euros—four times the guide price—in January out of the closet of Lebanese-born entrepreneur Mouna Ayyoub, one of the world’s richest women. “I have always been fascinated by painting, so it was only natural that it should inspire my creations,” the designer wrote in a catalogue for a 2004 Paris exhibition. Yves Saint Laurent died in 2008, aged 71. — AFP

**Sarah Burton honored with Trailblazer Award**

The creative director at Alexander McQueen will be handed the gong at this year’s Fashion Awards for her “empowering and narrative approach to shows,” Caroline Rush, British Fashion Council executive, said “Sarah’s empowering and narrative approach to shows and her focus on community and appreciation of craft, technology and English heritage is what has made her one of the most respected designers of our time. Her commitment to sharing her vision and expertise with the future generations of fashion designers has been remarkable. She’s an incredible source of inspiration for many generations to come and we look forward to celebrating with her in London in December.”

Sarah has worked with a number of celebrities, but one of her most iconic pieces was the wedding dress that Duchess Catherine wore when she married Prince William, Duke of Cambridge in April 2011. And Sarah previously revealed she absolutely “loves” what she does and is grateful she can go to work every day doing what she enjoys. She said last year: “What everyone always wants to ask about are the three things I don’t talk about: the wedding dress, Lee and my family. But I always say, it’s so amazing to be able to go to work every day and love what you do, and I personally want that to be how I’m judged. The work - that’s the narrative, not what I do on the weekend.” — Bang Showbiz

**H&M-backed startup puts bacteria to work in green dyeing process**

A British biotech startup is developing a method of textile dyeing that taps into the bright colors of birds and butterflies and then micro-organisms recreate them on fabric, slashing the use of water and heavy chemicals in the process. Based in the English city of Norwich, Colorifix has attracted backing from the venture capital arm of Swedish fashion giant H&M.

“We’re harnessing the ability of microbes in this case to be able to deposit and fix a pigment on to fabric,” Colorifix Chief Scientific Officer Jim Ajoka told Reuters. Common dyeing, with synthetic pigments, involves large concentrations of hazardous chemicals such as chromium and other heavy metal salts and consumes vast amounts of energy and water, with contaminated wastewater a big source of pollution.

Colorifix said its method uses no hazardous chemicals and cuts water use by up to 90% depending on equipment, pigment and fabric, and is carried out at lower temperatures than common dyeing. Shoppers’ growing awareness that apparel is one of the top-polluting industries is pushing image-conscious retailers to address the environmental impact of their clothes’ full life cycle. The dyeing stage has one of the biggest.

Colorifix, like French rival PILI, harvests a color gene in nature and inserts it into a bacterial cell, tricking it to fill up with the color as well as duplicate. In Colorifix’s dyeing process, cells jump onto the fabric and release the dye on it, after which the solution is briefly heated up to kill them. Chief Executive Orr Yarkoni said Colorifix is about to launch industrial-scale trials in partnerships with fashion groups, including H&M, and textile manufacturers such as Switzerland’s Forster Rohner and India’s Arvind. The tests will be conducted at dye houses already supplying those brands.

“For the first pilots, I hope we have everything up and running by Christmas. We are starting on multiple sites simultaneously in Portugal, Italy and India,” Yarkoni said. If these are successful, Colorifix expects to launch commercially its 5-nm batches of microbes bulging with color, in 2020. Challenges include creating new genes on demand, maintaining standards of current processes and keeping costs down.

“The H&M group and Colorifix were in India this summer to, together with our production organization, see how we can develop the technique so that it can be applied to our production,” H&M spokeswoman Jeanette Mattsson said. “Given our size it takes more work to enable a scalable solution.” Colorifix’s other backers include Swiss investment firm Challenger 88 and Cambridge University. — Reuters

**Sarah Burton honored with Trailblazer Award**

Editor-in-chief of Vogue Anna Wintour delivers a speech during the Vogue ‘ChangeMakers’ event on Wednesday in Athens, Greece. — Reuters

Sarah Burton honored with Trailblazer Award

Editor-in-chief of Vogue Anna Wintour delivers a speech during the Vogue ‘ChangeMakers’ event on Wednesday, Vogue Greece hit the newsstands. — Reuters

Sarah Burton honored with Trailblazer Award
Between plastic chairs on a crowded Tunisian tourist beach, a sign indicates where another species shares the sand: a nest is buried below. On this paradisiacal island off the coast of Monastir—a resort town south of the capital Tunis—tourists co-exist with loggerhead turtles thanks to a novel initiative. Since 2017, the Tunisian government and a local NGO have jointly run a turtle conservation program under the noses of bathing-suited beach-goers, who are offered an environmental education along with their holiday.

The Kuriat islands are the westernmost permanent loggerhead turtle breeding site on the Mediterranean's south coast, and are in the process of being listed as a protected nature reserve. But while the islands are an important turtle sanctuary, the white sand beaches and crystal waters of little Kuriat are irresistible to holidaymakers. During turtle hatching season from July to October, day-trippers arrive daily in their hundreds, transported on pirate-themed boats for barbecues and swimming.

“I thought that this was just an island where I’d go to swim, eat and return,” said holidaymaker Souad Khachnaoui. “I’d never imagined that this site was so important for turtles, birds and other species.” Rather than ban visitors, the authorities work with local volunteers to brief arriving tourists on the local fauna, including the jellyfish-eating turtles, which can live for a century. “Many people are stunned on arrival, they didn’t think that we had these kinds of animals in our country,” said Manel Ben Ismail, co-founder of the environmental NGO Notre Grand Bleu, which means “Our great blue (ocean)”.

And if they are lucky, tourists can watch as volunteers help defenseless hatchling turtles—measuring just five centimeters across—on their journey from the nest to the sea. Loggerheads are classified as vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. They do not become fertile until about 20 years old and breed only every two to three years. Female loggerheads return to the same beach where they were born to lay their clutch of about 100 eggs. But it is a perilous life cycle and only one in a thousand juveniles lives to reproductive age.

The Kuriat islands—the largest of which is a military zone and the smaller is not permanently settled—offer young turtles slightly better survival odds. Both are far from the light pollution of the mainland, which can disorientate hatchlings. This year 42 nests were recorded on the islands. Laying have increased since monitoring started in 1997. If managed correctly, tourism can be a boon for the islands as visitors learn about conservation, the government believes.

“We try to strike a balance between ecological activities and the economic activities of people on this site,” said Ahmed Ben Hamida, head of the Kuriat Marine Protected Area for the government agency for coastal protection.—AFP
The eagles have landed: Singapore shows off rare Philippine raptors

Singapore showed off two critically-endangered eagles Wednesday that were loaned from the Philippines as part of a breeding program to reverse the dwindling numbers of the feathered giants. Destruction of tropical rainforest and relentless hunting have decimated the population of the Philippine Eagle—one of the world’s biggest and most powerful birds whose wingspan can reach 2 meters — with only around 800 believed left in the wild, conservationists say.

The birds, Geothermica and Sambisig, are the first breeding pair ever to be sent outside the Philippines and arrived in Singapore in June on a 10-year loan from Manila. The creatures are being cared for at the city-state’s main aviary and were shown to the media Wednesday, as part of events marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between the countries. “Any future offspring of the eagles will be returned to the Philippines to contribute to the sustainability of the species’ population,” said Wildlife Reserves Singapore, which runs the aviary.

The scheme has echoes of China’s “panda diplomacy”, which sees the Asian giant send the black and white bears to countries as gifts. A breeding program is also being carried out in the Philippines by a small band of conservationists at a sanctuary outside the southern city of Davao, close to the eagles’ main forest habitat. The bird of prey, which has white and brown plumage and an enormous wingspan, is classified as “critically endangered” by protection group the International Union for Conservation of Nature.—AFP
They train with swords and fighting fans after their prayers and morning chants. Meet the Himalayan kung fu nuns using their martial arts skills to challenge stereotypes about women's roles in the region's patriarchal societies. “In the Himalayas, girls are never treated equally and girls are not given equal chances—that's why we want to push the girls up,” practitioner Jigme Konchok Lhamo, 25, told AFP. “Kung fu has helped us in taking a stand on gender equality as we feel more confident, we feel strong physically and mentally.

“We are doing kung fu as an example for other girls.” The nuns are from the 800-strong Druk Amitabha Mountain Nunnery in Nepal and belong to the centuries-old Drukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. In 2008 as part of his mission to bring about gender equality in Buddhism, spiritual leader His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa encouraged them to learn kung fu and take on traditional norms that forbid women and girls from leaving the confines of the nunneries, leading prayers or being fully ordained.

Emboldened by their fighting prowess, the nuns travel across South Asia to teach self-defense classes and promote awareness about human trafficking in a region where violence against women is rarely reported. They also embark on grueling mountain walks and cycling campaigns to reach out to remote communities. Most recently, they completed a three-month, 5,200-mile “bicycle yatra (journey) for peace” from Nepal to the mountains of Ladakh in northern India, where they passed through villages and spread their messages of gender equality and empowerment.

Lhamo—who was in New Delhi in early November after picking up an international award in New York for the nunnery’s efforts to inspire young girls—became a nun at just 12 despite strong disapproval from her family. “There was a lot of criticism in the beginning. People didn’t really like it because we were breaking rules,” Lhamo said, after she and her fellow nuns put on a demonstration of their prowess.

They wielded tasseled swords and open, Chinese-style fighting fans—which are used for signaling commands during combat—emblazoned with dragons and phoenixes. “But now when we go back to the same places we get a lot of good response. They call us to schools. They put the girls in front and the boys at the back. They give girls equal chances to ask questions and talk to us.”—AFP
Fashion Days of Budapest

Models present creations by Hungarian designer Anita Paarztor during the Marie Claire Fashion Days of Budapest in the ‘Millenaria’ cultural centre.
—AFP photos
11:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
10:10 Penn & Tellerr Tell A Lie
20:00 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:35 A.N.T. Farm
17:45 Coop And Cami Ask The World
16:30 Disney Jr.
15:20 Henry Hugglemonster
14:20 Alone Home
03:15 Through The Wormhole
02:50 Much Everything
01:45 Chef Wifi
00:30 Shop / Buy

Friday, November 29, 2019

TV Listings

12:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
11:20 Penn & Tellerr Tell A Lie
00:20 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
21:50 A.N.T. Farm
20:45 Coop And Cami Ask The World
19:40 Disney Jr.
18:35 Henry Hugglemonster
17:30 Alone Home
06:20 Through The Wormhole
05:15 Chef Wifi
04:10 Shop / Buy

Friday, November 29, 2019
Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are an inner urge for order and organization and a great sense of responsibility. You are competent, ambitious and cool. This marks the coming of a good time as far as career and social life are concerned. If you have not discovered this already, it seems your time of paying dues is over; real time to follow up on facts and confirm costs. You will prosper through an approach that makes you a shrewd and efficient worker. You may have some interesting ideas for your own business. You are wise to save a bit every week. Following the trends of business and investments in the world, you may find it too difficult to initiate the changes that are needed for this balance. Find some counseling or a business advisor for yourself. Compromise is the order of the day in the workplace. Instead of deciding you are not going to do something, think it through and try to find a beneficial end result. You may find that both your personal growth and your career may depend upon how you handle the challenges that are coming up. The power of organization on a social scale—business, politics and such—seems to have an important role in your making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Concentrated effort is important with your work just now—staying away from emotional issues is a very wise plan. Practice diplomacy when dealing with the public. Do not let feelings get in the way of clear judgment. Later today you will be able to see a little more clearly perhaps at the local library. This research will either help you in making a decision or in completing some project. You are learning that education wasn't as dull as you thought and the fabled discovery may point you toward the enjoyment of more education... Or at least, a few classes. Look beyond surface meanings for the insights you seek. Loved ones may give you support and, in some way, help you gain a focus this afternoon. Involve yourself with a relaxing activity this evening.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Big changes affecting your career, status and reputation are likely at this time. redesigned to be more efficient and organized. You have not discovered this already, it seems your time of paying dues is over; real accomplishment and focus are possible now. You are a very hard worker and are driven to accomplish whatever is set out for you. You like to manipulate a situation for its own benefit and would make a natural supervisor. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others just as you feel productive. You may take on a leadership role at this time. You look to you in making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You have an inner urge for order and organization and a great sense of responsibility. You are competent, ambitious and cool. This marks the coming of a good time as far as career and social life are concerned. If you have not discovered this already, it seems your time of paying dues is over; real accomplishment and focus are possible now. You are a very hard worker and are driven to accomplish whatever is set out for you. You like to manipulate a situation for its own benefit and would make a natural supervisor. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others just as you feel productive. You may take on a leadership role at this time. You look to you in making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have an inner urge for order and organization and a great sense of responsibility. You are competent, ambitious and cool. This marks the coming of a good time as far as career and social life are concerned. If you have not discovered this already, it seems your time of paying dues is over; real accomplishment and focus are possible now. You are a very hard worker and are driven to accomplish whatever is set out for you. You like to manipulate a situation for its own benefit and would make a natural supervisor. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others just as you feel productive. You may take on a leadership role at this time. You look to you in making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may find yourself working closely with someone that you always thought you would like to influence. Your work grows when you can take the same time and space that you thought you had on your own programs and you are happy to follow. Concentrating on pleasing this person is not your goal but learning and asking questions is bringing you forward. You may wonder if you will ever find enough time to pursue some of your own programs and you must certainly get. Getting down to the essential work process is most important now. Much can be accomplished now. Your thoughts are brought to a sharp focus. This evening you and a friend may decide to work on the making of a movie. Progress around this project or some similar project is good.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your ambition is strong. Things seem to fall into place and progress is good. Following the trends of business and investments in the world, you may have some interesting ideas for your own business. You are wise to save a bit every week. Following the trends of business and investments in the world, you may find it too difficult to initiate the changes that are needed for this balance. Find some counseling or a business advisor for yourself. Compromise is the order of the day in the workplace. Instead of deciding you are not going to do something, think it through and try to find a beneficial end result. You may find that both your personal growth and your career may depend upon how you handle the challenges that are coming up. The power of organization on a social scale—business, politics and such—seems to have an important role in your making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is a good day—one where much progress is gained. You do this work in the workplace. Instead of deciding you are not going to do something, think it through and try to find a beneficial end result. You may find that both your personal growth and your career may depend upon how you handle the challenges that are coming up. The power of organization on a social scale—business, politics and such—seems to have an important role in your making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your ambition is strong. Things seem to fall into place and progress is good. Following the trends of business and investments in the world, you may have some interesting ideas for your own business. You are wise to save a bit every week. Following the trends of business and investments in the world, you may find it too difficult to initiate the changes that are needed for this balance. Find some counseling or a business advisor for yourself. Compromise is the order of the day in the workplace. Instead of deciding you are not going to do something, think it through and try to find a beneficial end result. You may find that both your personal growth and your career may depend upon how you handle the challenges that are coming up. The power of organization on a social scale—business, politics and such—seems to have an important role in your making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

This is a good day—one where much progress is gained. You do this work in the workplace. Instead of deciding you are not going to do something, think it through and try to find a beneficial end result. You may find that both your personal growth and your career may depend upon how you handle the challenges that are coming up. The power of organization on a social scale—business, politics and such—seems to have an important role in your making your day run smoothly. Obstacles are short-lived.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

The power of organization on a social scale, such as business or political affairs, seems to take on a larger-than-life feeling now. It’s as if ambition and authority are answers in themselves, rather than means to an objective. This can lead to ambitious schemes that tend to become lost along the way. Real power is always hidden; finding it means delving into a few secret places, and you are bound to look. Look around and check out the people you admire that have reached the success you are for looking for and ask yourself how they made it to their success. Perhaps you can use one of those people as a mentor. You can demonstrate great understanding to family members this evening. You also may find yourself dealing with community affairs.
Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617 or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com
CHANGE OF NAME

(Old name) Ramachandrolla Bramahaiah S/o R. Ramachandra Res. 16/44 Thimmasamudram T Sundapalli Kadapa Dt. AP. Change my name (new name) Ramachandram Bramahaiah S/o R.Ramachandra Old PP No K4656763. (C 5691)

I Aravind Sethu Kurakunnel holder of Indian Passport No. S2395793 issued at Kuwait on 03/02/2019. Hereby declare that my given name is Aravind and Surname is Sethu Kurakunnel.

I Kurakunnel Chellappan Sethu holder of Indian Passport No. P7113495 issued at Kuwait on 19/12/2016. Hereby declare that my given name is Sethu and surname is Kurakunnel Chellappan. (C 5693)

I Isaac Jebaraj (F/o Master Joel Harrison Isaac PP No. M6714468) holding Indian Passport No. S2388598 residing in Block 2, Street 17, Building No. 22, new Rigga, hereby declare that henceforth my son’s name will be read as: given name: Joel Harrison and surname: Isaac Jebaraj. (C 5689) 29-11-2019

We, BUSIREDDY MALLESHVAR REDDY and BUSIREDDY YUJAVA KUMARI, parents of BUSIREDDY KARTHIKA, Passport No. M4250149 issued on 29-12-2014, who are residents at 7 67/95-3-1, SBI Colony, Marjayaram, Akkayapalli, Kadapa, V.S.R. District, changed our daughter’s name as BUSIREDDY KARTHIKA (new name) previously called KANTHUA BUSIREDDY (old name). (C 5690) 28-11-2019

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Clouds increase gradually with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: With partly cloudy to light and cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times. Winds will be south easterly with speed of 15 - 40 km/h that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

EXPECTED WEATHER conditions at 0211UTC: 28/11/2019 0000 UTC

Day Forecast 4

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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Temps</th>
<th>Wind Direction</th>
<th>Wind Speed</th>
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<td>15 - 38 km/h</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>11/30</td>
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<td>27°C/14°C</td>
<td>NW-VRB</td>
<td>08 - 30 km/h</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td>12/01</td>
<td>Warm and some scattered clouds will appear</td>
<td>27°C/13°C</td>
<td>VBR-SE</td>
<td>06 - 26 km/h</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>12/02</td>
<td>Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times</td>
<td>27°C/15°C</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>15 - 42 km/h</td>
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PRAyER TIMES

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<tr>
<td>18:11</td>
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RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>14°C</td>
<td>Min. Temp.</td>
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<td>45%</td>
<td>Min. RH.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28°C</td>
<td>Max. Wind</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Total Rainfall in 24 Hours: 0 mm
On Emirates’ coast, pearl trade lives on

Pearl industry once underpinned UAE economy

RAS AL-KHAIMAH: Before the discovery of oil transformed the Gulf into one of the world’s wealthiest regions, the fortunes of its people depended on pearling – a tradition that Abdullah Al-Suwaidi hopes to revive. Many Emirati families can trace their ancestry to a time when they were involved in the pearl trade, which served as the foundation of their modern-day wealth.

Although diving for the treasures is no longer necessary in an era where they can be cultured, Suwaidi said that after the death of his grandfather he felt “socially, culturally and historically” responsible for passing the knowledge on. “I lived and grew up around my grandfather,” the 45-year-old said. “He taught me a lot about pearl diving... because of my continuous stream of questions and requests for more information and stories of adventure.”

Suwaidi Pearls is the only commercial pearl farm in the United Arab Emirates, at a time of increasing awareness of cultural traditions, such as falconry and camel racing, and efforts to promote and preserve them. Last month, Abu Dhabi authorities announced that the world’s oldest natural pearl had been discovered two years ago just off the capital at Marawah Island and would be displayed for the first time at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the local outpost of the famous Paris museum. The 8,000-year-old pearl was hailed as proof that the objects have been traded along the coastline since Neolithic times.

“The fact that it is the oldest known pearl in the world is an important reminder of the antiquity of pearling and the deep connection that exists between the UAE people and the rich resources of the sea,” said Peter Magee, head of the Department of Culture and Tourism’s archeology section. “Pearling was a major economic activity through large periods of UAE history,” he said. “From the 15th century onwards, the pearls from the waters of the UAE were prized possessions in Europe and throughout Asia.”

Diving into history

Suwaidi’s pearl farm lies off the coast of his hometown Al-Rams in the northern emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah, situated against a backdrop of mangroves, with camels grazing near the waterline on one side and mountains rising up on the other. The oysters live in cages suspended from buoys that float close to the shore. After being “seeded”, some 60 percent will produce pearls, compared with just one in 100 among wild oysters. But it is the same place where Suwaidi as a young boy would accompany his grandfather to dive for the sea’s natural treasures and it is that tradition which captivates him to this day. No one dives commercially for pearls anymore but some people like Suwaidi still do it for the love of it and to show tourists how it is done. Aboard a traditional dhow, the same vessel that Arab pearl divers of the past would set sail in for months at a time, Suwaidi changes from his traditional Emirati dress to an all-cotton black diving suit, or shamshool. — AFP
India economy growing at 4.7% as consumer demand weakens

Govt seeks parliament nod for $2.7 billion extra spending

NEW DELHI: India’s economy probably expanded at its weakest pace in more than six years in the quarter to September, a Reuters poll showed, as consumer demand and private investment weakened further and a global slowdown hit exports. The median of a poll of economists showed annual growth in gross domestic product of 4.7% in the quarter, down from 5.0% in the previous three months and 7% for the corresponding period of 2018.

Economic growth could dip to around 4% in the September quarter, two domestic television channels said on Wednesday, citing government sources. If the latest figure for expansion of gross domestic product is 4.7% or less, the quarter will have registered the slowest expansion in 26 quarters, since 4.3% in January-March 2013. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has taken several steps, including cutting corporate tax in September, to boost investments and bolster economic growth.

Economists in a Reuters poll predicted the Reserve Bank of India would cut its repo rate for the sixth time in a row, by 25 basis points, to 4.00% at its Dec 3-5 meeting. “Agrarian distress and dismal income growth so far, coupled with subdued income growth expectation in urban areas, have weakened consumption demand considerably,” said Devindra Pant, chief economist at Fitch arm India Ratings & Research. “Even the festive demand has failed to revive it,” he said, citing data on non-food credit, auto sales and select fast moving consumer goods.

“Economic emergency”

On Wednesday, in a heated parliamentary debate on the economic slowdown affecting jobs, opposition parties said million of people had lost their jobs and the country faced a “economic emergency”. In her reply, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the economy faced a slowdown but no “recession” and cited several government measures to support economic growth. Yesterday, she sought parliament’s approval to spend $2.7 billion in addition to a budgeted $27.86 trillion rupees ($388 billion) in the 2019/20 fiscal year.

Economists said with persistently tight domestic credit and weak corporate profits, India’s economic recovery could be delayed and the pick-up would remain below potential. India needs to grow at around 8% to create enough jobs for its millions of young people joining the labor force each year. The unemployment rate in October rose to 8.5%, its highest since August 2016, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), though the government estimates that urban unemployment declined.

Some economists, however, said economic growth could pick up in the second half of the current fiscal year, after the government took steps to support real estate and non-bank financial companies. “The economic slowdown has bottomed out in the September quarter,” said NR Bhanumurthy, an economist at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, a Delhi-based government think tank. “With easing of credit and pick up in festival demand, economic growth is expected to pick up from October onward.”

AIR INDIA

MUMBAI: India’s debt-crippled national airline is focused solely on daily survival and keeping its flights in the air, a lost market share to low-cost rivals in one of the world’s fastest-growing but most competitive airline markets.

JAPAN RETAIL SALES

TOKYO: Japan’s retail sales tumbled at their fastest pace in more than 4-1/2 months in October as a sales tax hike prompted consumers to cut spending, raising a red flag over the strength of domestic demand. The Japanese government increased the nationwide sales tax to 10% from 8% on Oct 1, in a bid to fix the industrial world’s heaviest public debt burden, which is more than twice the size of the country’s gross domestic product.

However, some analysts have warned the tax hike, previously postponed twice, could leave the economy without a growth driver amid a slump in exports and production and as other factors drag on the consumer sector. Retail sales fell 7.1% in October from a year earlier, pulled down by weak demand for big ticket items such as cars and household appliances as well as clothing, trade ministry data showed yesterday, with department stores hit particularly hard.

The drop was the biggest since a 9.7% fall in March 2015 and worse than a 4.4% decline predicted by economists in a Reuters poll. “Regardless of today’s outcome, consumption has been of a weak tone, and consumer sentiment is getting worse,” said Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute. “Income hasn’t been rising originally, so consumption hasn’t been growing since before the sales tax hike.”

The slump was also sharper than the declines reported after the previous two sales tax hikes, in 1997 and 2014, suggesting other factors are dragging on consumption. “Retail sales fell more sharply in October than after previous sales tax hikes,” said Tom Learmouth, Japan economist at Capital Economics. “The fall in sales was slightly larger than the 13.7% m/m plunge which followed both the 1997 and 2014 sales tax hikes,” he wrote in a note. Sales fell 4.3% in April 2014, the month of the previous tax hike.

Seasonally-adjusted retail sales dropped 14.4% month-on-month in October, the data showed. The negative reading comes after separate data this month showed Japan’s economy nearly stalled in the third quarter, while exports in October shrank at their fastest pace in three years. The gloomy conditions have led to calls for the government to compile a big spending package to keep the country’s fragile economic recovery on track.

PRICE PRESSURES PERSIST

The 2014 previous tax hike to 8% from 5% hit the broader economy hard as households tightened their purse strings after front-loading purchases before the hike. Policymakers this time around do not expect the October tax hike to trigger such a big swing in demand, given the smaller hike and various measures to help offset the hit to spending.

However, analysts said retail sales in October were also hit by poor weather, after a huge typhoon ripped through central and eastern Japan, forcing stores and restaurants to temporarily close. Others also noted more structural pressures faced by retailers even before the sales tax hike, such as the prolonged decline in real wages. Data earlier this month showed inflation-adjusted wages rose 0.6% in the year to September, their first increase since the end of last year.

All those factors pose challenges to a government seeking to shake consumers out of a long-entrenched deflationary mindset, which has weighed on prices, hurt company profits and established a prolonged regime of ultra-easy monetary policy. Adding to these woes is the risk retailers will continue to cut prices to offset the hit from the tax hike, while many stores are also offering discounts for cashless payments.

The government has introduced a rebate program for cashless transactions designed to both soften the tax hike blow to retailers and encourage Japanese consumers to use electronic payments instead of cash. Other retailers are simply reducing prices to lure customers. “This could spark still price competition and induce deflation. Small firms that lack competitiveness will be forced out of business,” Yuuki Kawano, the head of Japan Supermarket Association said.

— Reuters
**Business**

**World stocks stall as US and China tensions flare**

Hong Kong law hurts optimistic mood

**Hong Kong, China warned that it would take “firm counter measures” if the US continues to interfere in Hong Kong, China warned that it would take “firm counter-measures” if the US continues to interfere in Hong Kong, saying that the legislation was “doomed to fail”.**

**LONDON:** The dollar was little changed in early London trading yesterday as a mild overnight risk-off move, sparked by the United States and China clashing over Hong Kong, subsided. After the US passed legislation backing pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, China warned that it would take “firm counter-measures” if the US continued to interfere in Hong Kong, saying that the legislation was “doomed to fail”. The dollar index was last down less than 0.1% versus the euro, still trading within the week’s ranges. The trade-exposed Australian dollar was also down versus the US dollar, with losses due to the risk-off mood compounded by weak domestic data. Record-low volatility and the United States’ Thanksgiving holiday mean traders are expecting a quiet day in markets. Euro-zone consumer confidence data for November is due at 1000 GMT and German CPI data for November is due at 1300 GMT. Spanish pricing data held no surprises and did not move the market. RBC’s Cole said the hurdle was quite high for such data to move markets.—AFP

US sparks risk-off move by backing Hong Kong

**LONDON:** The dollar was little changed in early London trading yesterday as a mild overnight risk-off move, sparked by the United States and China clashing over Hong Kong, subsided. After the US passed legislation backing pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, China warned that it would take “firm counter-measures” if the US continued to interfere in Hong Kong, saying that the legislation was “doomed to fail”. The dollar index was last down less than 0.1%, trading within narrow ranges, while the Japanese yen - a perceived safe haven - was up around 0.2% versus the dollar. The Swiss franc was up around 0.1% versus the dollar. Heightened discord between the United States and China risks jeopardizing negotiations around the “phase one” trade deal - a proposed preliminary deal to end the tit-for-tat tariff war between the world’s two largest economies.

**The moves have been quite modest because we’re still waiting to see what China’s response is - what they’ve said so far is quite vague,” said Adam Cole, chief currency strategist at RBC Capital Markets. “They’ve not gone so far as to say explicitly that this threatens the phase one trade deal, which is clearly what markets are worrying about, and for that reason the reaction so far has been quite mild,” he said. The offshore yuan was down 0.2% versus the dollar, still trading within the week’s ranges. The trade-exposed Australian dollar was also down versus the US dollar, with losses due to the risk-off mood compounded by weak domestic data. Record-low volatility and the United States’ Thanksgiving holiday mean traders are expecting a quiet day in markets. Euro-zone consumer confidence data for November is due at 1000 GMT and German CPI data for November is due at 1300 GMT. Spanish pricing data held no surprises and did not move the market. RBC’s Cole said the hurdle was quite high for such data to move markets.—Reuters

US economy grew faster, but trade woes continue

**WASHINGTON:** The US economy grew faster than originally reported in the July-September period and prices remain tame, but amid the unresolved trade war with China, economists and businesses note some worry issues persist. Higher exports and residential investment helped boost growth to a 2.1 percent annual rate from the 1.9 percent estimated last month for the third quarter, according to the more complete data the Commerce Department released Wednesday. But economists note the apparent good news on the economy is tempered by some concerning elements, reflected once again in a nationwide survey by the Federal Reserve, showing continuing concerns about the impact of tariffs and trade tensions. Business investment, which has been hit hard by President Donald Trump’s trade war with China, has declined sharply but since it dropped by less than originally reported, falling 2.7 percent rather than three percent in the first estimate, that smaller decline helped growth. Meanwhile, businesses building up their inventories of products added nearly 0.2 points to the GDP calculation, according to the revised data. While that could be due to companies stockpiling ahead of announced tariffs, it could also reflect slowing consumption. “In short, slightly stronger than before, but mainly because of inventories. That data continue to show growth slowing, but not dramatically,” said economist Jim O’Sullivan of High Frequency Economics. The consensus among economists predicted no revision to the GDP result. But some correctly forecast the upward revision which puts the third quarter on track to be the two percent growth in the second quarter, after the 3.1 percent expansion in the first three months of the year. Consumption, the traditional driver of growth, accounting for 70 percent of US GDP, increased 2.9 percent, with a strong gain in spending on durable goods such as cars or appliances, according to the data. However, that is a much smaller increase than the prior quarter.

Investment in real estate market jumped 5.1 percent, the strongest in two years, boosted by low interest rates. Exports, which fell 5.7 percent at the height of the trade war in the second quarter, recovered slightly in the latest quarter, rising 0.9 percent - two-tenths stronger than originally reported. Imports also were stronger than previously estimated, rising by 0.8 percent. The latest reading on GDP growth “indicates the economy is not about to fall off a cliff,” said Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics.—AFP

Hong Kong law hurts optimistic mood

**LONDON:** A four-day rally that had lifted world stocks to near-record highs stalled yesterday as a US bill backing Hong Kong’s pro-democracy became law, provoking China’s ire and threatening to derail an interim trade deal between Washington and Beijing. Fading hopes of a rapprochement between the world’s two biggest economies before additional, potentially damaging tariffs kick in, also helped safe-haven assets such as US and German bonds and lifted the yen from six-month lows.

The US legislation, which threatens sanctions for human-rights violations and seeks to safeguard Hong Kong’s autonomy, prompted China to warn of “firm counter measures”. “The risk-off moves clearly reflect a concern this could be an impediment to the ‘Phase One’ trade deal which is now widely expected,” said Adam Cole, a strategist at RBC Capital Markets.

Wall Street’s main indexes closed at record levels for a third straight day on Wednesday, albeit in thin liquidity before the Thanksgiving holiday, after data showed US economic growth had picked up in the third quarter and consumer spending had increased. Elsewhere, though, the outlook for growth looks less rosy. Japanese retail figures slumped the most since 2015 as a sales tax hike dragged on the economy, exacerbating a slowdown caused by slowing exports and manufacturing.

That took Asian shares excluding Japan down 0.2%. Japan’s Nikkei, Hong Kong’s Hang Seng and Shanghai blue chips also closed weaker. A pan-European index opened 0.2% lower, led by trade-sensitive sectors such as autos and tech. That kept MSCI’s world equity index flat, after it approached the record reached in January 2018. However, the index is up almost 3% so far in November and is on track for the best month since 2017 as investors fill in and our depending on the trade news.

“People don’t want to be bought on the wrong side,” said Geoff Yu, head of the UK investment office at CIBS Wealth Management. “It does reflect there’s cash on the sidelines. If you can stretch the positive narrative, if the trade issue is out of the way for the time being, we might actually see a demand pick up.” US markets are closed for Thanksgiving, but equity futures for all three major indexes were down around 0.3%.

**Hong Kong, Brexit jitters**

Jitters over a renewed Sino-US fracas also showed up in currency and bond markets. US bond markets are closed, but German yields fell to their lowest in nearly a month, down 1.5 basis points on the day Japan’s yen, a currency investors flock to in times of trouble, gained 2% against the dollar, rising as high as 109.85 yen per dollar. The Australian dollar and the offshore Chinese yuan lost around 0.2%.

The British pound rose on Wednesday after a model for pollsters YouGov, which accurately predicted the 2017 election, said Prime Minister Boris Johnson was on course to win a majority in parliament at the Dec 12 election. However, the currency failed to build on its gains, trading around $1.2914. It was flat versus the euro after surging to its highest in nearly seven months at $S 88 pence. Implementing Brexit by the end of January, as Johnson had promised, would leave him a “minuscule” 11 months to agree a trade deal with the European Union, analysts at Societe Generale told clients.—Reuters

**BANDA ACEH:** Vendors wait for customers at a fishing port in Banda Aceh yesterday.—AFP
Oil trader sues a Lebanese bank BankMed in US court

Crisis-hit Lebanon faces petrol station strike

BEIRUT: An international oil trader is suing a Lebanese bank in the United States over failing to release $1 billion in deposits, court documents showed, charges the banking institution denied yesterday. IMMS has filed a suit against BankMed in the Supreme Court of the State of New York over the “brazen theft of more than $1 billion”, according to court documents dated November 22 and seen by AFP. The lawsuit comes as Lebanon grapples with widespread anti-gov-ernment protests since October 17, a free-falling economy, and an escalating liquidity crisis.

The oil trader, which is incorporated in Belize, said it asked to withdraw its money on November 8, and received no response for several days, according to the court documents. It said the bank on November 12 informed it was terminating overdraft and letter of credit facilities due to “the prevailing circumstances and to the material adverse change in the economic condition of Lebanon and the Lebanese financial markets.”

BankMed yesterday strongly denied the allega-tions. “The $1 billion deposit is a blocked deposit by instructions of IMMS maturing in about 2 years from now,” it said. “Between Oc-tober 30 and November 12, 2019, BankMed discovered material breaches of contract and attempts by IMMS to direct funds due to BankMed overseas,” it said. “BankMed opposed such attempts by IMMS and took appropriate actions.” It said the banking contract was sub-ject to Lebanese law and that it would submit its response to a court hearing in Beirut next month, without giving a specific date. BankMed is chaired by Mohammed Hariri, a cousin of out-going Prime Minister Saad Hariri’s late father Rafic. Nazek Hariri, the widow of the embattled premier’s father sits on the bank’s board of di-rectors—as does the current interior minister, Raya Al-Hassan. Since September, debt-saddled Lebanon has had a liquidity crisis, with banks withdrawing hundreds of millions of dollars. The exchange rate in the parallel market has shot up from the pegged rate of 1,507 pounds to a dollar to more than 2,000.

Petrol station strike

Meanwhile, petrol stations in Lebanon began an open-ended strike yesterday nationwide, a union representative said amid the country’s worst economic crisis in decades. Protests since Oct 17 have pulled Lebanon deeper into eco-nomic crisis, worsening a hard currency crunch that has hit importers and raised fears of price hikes and shortages.

In a statement carried on state news agency NNA, the petrol stations union said it was strik-ing because of losses incurred from being forced to purchase dollars on a parallel market, the pri-mary source of hard currency in economic hard times. Petrol stations must collect payments from customers in Lebanese pounds but pay private fuel importers in dollars. The cost of dollars on the parallel market has surged since the start of protests, hovering currently at about 40% more than the official pegged rate, set at 1507.5

Lebanese pounds since 1997. There were queues at some petrol stations in Beirut late on Wednesday but the situation remained relatively calm. The central bank said last month that it would prioritize foreign currency reserves for fuel, medicine and wheat, but buyers tapping the facility are still required to supply 15% of their own dollar needs. Lebanon’s energy ministry sets guidelines for gasoline price levels. The minis-try said it would test a state tender for gasoline next month after fuel distributors threatened to raise prices. — Agencies

Farmers bring central Dublin to a halt with tractor protest

DUBLIN: Farmers shut down busy parts of central Dublin for a second successive day on Wednesday by parking dozens of tractors in the streets to protest against low beef prices and climate change initiatives they say are unfair. The farmers arrived on tractors from all over the country on Tuesday for a planned protest in a cordoned off area but instead parked their vehicles in the very centre of the city and refused to leave until the agriculture minister met them. Some slept in their vehicles overnight, many parked outside the luxury Shelbourne Hotel on the corner of St. Stephen’s Green, one of the main bus routes into the city.

Police warned commuters that a number of the city’s main thoroughfares, including Kildare Street, the seat of parlia-ment, were closed to traffic. The city’s bus operator told pas-sengers to expect delays on all routes.

“We’ll sit here for many more nights if we have to but this has got to stop and we have to start getting paid for our produce,” said Nicholas Hughes, a 53-year-old dairy farmer from Moylegough in County Galway who stayed awake all night in his tractor.

“It’s the only thing we can do, we’re gone if we don’t do this. We can’t stay producing food below the cost of produc-tion and we can’t keep getting blamed for climate change. This is about the death of rural Ireland, it’s dying on its feet as we speak.” — Reuters

Grocery deliveries go high-tech in New York

NEW YORK: In New York, a city famous for always being on the go, grocery shopping can be time consuming. But grocery com-pany FreshDirect promises to deliver within mere hours fruit, fish and bottles of water ordered online, and it relies on its high-tech Boro warehouse to keep up with demand.

Orders ramping up ahead of Thanksgiving, when families across the United States gather round the table for a huge feast.

Everything at the FreshDirect depot is as well-regulated as a Swiss clock, thanks to the computer system. On the ground, em-ployees manage palettes, scan labels and sort products. But above their heads, huge orange and green plastic bins—the company’s signature colors—seem to have a life of their own.

They zip along on conveyor belts that spiral up to the ceiling, carrying the bins through countless levels of shelves. As soon as a customer starts placing a FreshDirect online order, the system recognizes them. “The system knows you, where you live, what amount of groceries you usually buy, what truck it will fit on, and based on that, what time can be offered,” explained Timothy Knoll, the chief operating officer. Orders are grouped by destination, and the boxes can then be sent out.

Nine miles

The conveyor belts run for almost nine miles, crisis-crossing the 400,000 square foot depot. But their layout was designed to limit bins’ trips, which last between 25 to 30 minutes on average. For small products, robots will pick them out one by one from the massive shelving units and bring them to one of six packing sta-tions. Once there, employees scan them, package them and put them in boxes that are quickly sent on their way with the touch of a big red button. Bottles of water, the most popular item, are stored near the conveyor belts. For fruits and vegetables, employ-ees can see which products have been requested on tablets and employees set aside any that are damaged.

In a refrigerated room, other workers cut the fish of the day, still soft in their boxes of ice. “About 90 percent of our fresh con-nections are... with the farmers and the people that actually grow our food,” said Scott Crawford, the chief merchandising officer. This allows FreshDirect to eliminate middlemen and save time. “You can order a pound of codfish seven days from now, that fish is still swimming in the ocean for another four or five days be-fore we actually have it in-house,” said Knoll.

In order to accurately predict supply and avoid waste, “we are confident with our vendors, and we’re comfortable with how we handle things in the building to control the inventory,” he added. Each item has a barcode denoting the type of product, where it came from and its expiration date. FreshDirect also relies on 20 years of data accumulated since its launch in 1999. The company knows how to anticipate consumer habits as accurately as traffic patterns, including by accounting for weather conditions.

The company is not as prevalent as it has been in New York, but it still dominates: FreshDirect makes 68 percent of the grocery delivery market in the Big Apple, well ahead of Instacart (13 per-cent), Peapod (nine percent) and Amazon Fresh (nine percent), ac-cording to the data analysis firm Earnest Research. Sales slumped slightly just after the Bronx depot opened in the summer of 2018. As the system worked out any kinks, customers complained of in-complete or late orders. FreshDirect has regained some ground since then.

The company, which has offered same-day delivery since March, said that online business “continues to grow, and we are operating better than ever before.” “An online grocer’s biggest enemy is not Amazon—it’s itself,” said Paula Rosenbloom, a retail technology analyst for RSR Research. — AFP
LG replaces CEO and top executives after losses

SEOUL: South Korean appliance giant LG Electronics replaced its CEO and a raft of other top leaders yesterday after net profits slumped more than 30 percent in the third quarter and its smartphone division struggles.

CEO Jo Seong-jin, dubbed a “washing machine genius,” was appointed in December 2016, and is respected in South Korea for his unlikely journey to the top without a college degree in the education-driven country. But he has struggled to turn around the failing smartphone division, which last month announced its 18th consecutive quarter of losses.

As a whole LG Electronics’ net profits plummeted 30.5 percent in the July-September period from a year earlier. Jo’s term as vice-chairman was extended for three years in March 2018, but LG said Thursday he was being replaced as CEO by Brian Kwon, with effect from Sunday. It also changed its chief financial officer and created a new post of chief strategy officer, while changing the presidents of its home entertainment and mobile communications units.

“We have judged we need a fast decision making process... rather than stick with management style drawn from past successes,” the company said in a statement.

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“We have judged we need a fast decision making process... rather than stick with management style drawn from past successes,” the company said in a statement. Insisting the change was amicable, LG said Jo had resigned and released a picture of him and his successor smiling and hugging each other.

Kwon, a graduate of top Seoul National University with a major in industrial engineering, has been with the firm for 32 years and has “in-depth experiences and skills” in areas including big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technologies, the company said. —AFP

Herbs and hotels: Businesses helping revive rural Portugal

Small businesses cropping up in rural areas

PORTO: After Bruno Vargas and his wife had their first baby, they wanted a quieter life. So, they left their home in Angola and returned on real estate; said another reason people are moving to the country is the rising property prices that are pushing them out of cities. “Lisbon is getting really expensive and people are moving out, for sure. Even the city council and the real estate sector recognize that there is a housing crisis,” he noted.

Herbas entrepreneur Martins said the chance to revive old traditions was also what drove Frank Laigneau to open the Da Licencia hotel and gallery in Amealtejo last year and fill it with hand-woven blankets, tapestries and clay figurines made by local artisans. The Parisian entrepreneur was introduced to the region by his Portuguese friend, and he said he saw potential in the area’s untouched terrain.

“I fell in love with these vernacular landscapes of olive and cork trees, vines... and I thought where in Europe you can find an authentic region still preserved and almost unknown?”, he said.

Return to the countryside

Martins said finding small producers to work with is easier than it was when she started Terridos seven years ago, because more of them are setting up in the region, returning to the places of their heritage. “Many young people whose grandparents were from the region went away and are now coming back,” she said. Portugal has become a popular tourist destination in recent years, with a record-breaking 12.8 million visitors last year. As landlords and developers transform their properties into short-term rentals to cater to tourists, that has pushed rental prices for locals. Research by the Confidencial Imobiliario property consultancy shows that rents in Lisbon increased by more than 180% between 2013 and 2017.

Collaboration

Even with Portugal’s growing number of rural entrepreneurs, Chaves at Minha Terra said the government is still not doing enough to draw businesses into underdeveloped parts of the country. “A lack of attention and investment has continued to this day,” but national policy and promotion of small business could help to revive rural Portugal, he stressed.

“Young entrepreneurs have families that need basic services in education, justice, health, culture... and on equal opportunities with families living in cities.” Rural areas need more health centers, post offices, banks and schools, he noted. Ana Abrunhosa, Portugal’s minister of territorial cohesion, said “there is a lot of room for entrepreneurship in inland Portugal.”

“Our job at the government is to make sure these businesses have the conditions they need to be sustainable, profitable, and to be able to scale up one day, to generate more jobs,” she said in emailed comments. In some parts of inland Portugal, like Braganca in the north, local universities, research centers, small businesses and municipalities have started collaborating to revive local production of wine and fruit. Abrunhosa said these new networks will bring more young people to the territory, which will “generate more demand for better services and infrastructure”, she added.

Teritos co-owner Martins said being so far out of the city can have its downsides - in the winter, the food producer’s shop only gets a handful of visitors. But for her, the benefits are far greater. The countryside offers opportunities for her business that she could never get in the city, she said, such as the chance to give visitors experiences like mushroom harvesting and cookery classes right where the ingredients are grown. “We are a small country, but there are many areas of the countryside that people are discovering - and that are unique in the world,” she said. —Reuters

End of an era as Japan’s Panasonic exits chip business

TOKYO: Japanese electronics giant Panasonic said yesterday it was exiting the semiconductor business, selling its loss-making subsidiary to a Taiwanese firm as it struggles with intense competition from China and South Korea. It marks the end for a once iconic Japanese business, with Panasonic seen as a global chip-making powerhouse in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Japanese conglomerate said it was offloading its subsidiary Panasonic Semiconductor Solutions to Taiwan’s Nuvoton, with the sale scheduled to take place in June. A spokeswoman for the firm told AFP Panasonic would receive $250 million. The firm said it was the “best way” in the face of “extremely intense competition with rival firms’ business expansion and massive investment”. —AFP
No skate parks: Vietnamese medal hopefuls skating under nose of Lenin

HANOI: They have few places to practise, no government funding and little public support, but Vietnam's first national skateboarding team are carrying high hopes of winning medals for their country. The youth-friendly sport is being featured for the first time in the Southeast Asian Games, which open in the Philippines on Saturday, and it will also debut at next year's Tokyo Olympics. But skateboarding's reputation as a teenage, counter-culture hobby has been a major hurdle for the sport in Vietnam where there are no proper training facilities and just a handful of skate shops.

"The biggest problem is that we don't have a skate park," said Do Ngoc Linh, the manager of Vietnam's three-person skateboard squad heading to Manila this week. His troubles don't end there. Though the Vietnam General Administration of Sport has recognised skateboarding as a sport, it does not offer any funding for training or travel.

Instead the squad secured sponsorship to help fund their trip to the Games, where they will compete in the game of skate and street skate categories. The team has been practising for several hours most days, gathering at an abandoned basketball court where they've installed a few rails and benches.

Some days they go to Lenin Square or other public grounds, popular skate spots in the city sometimes crowded with children or tourists — or foul-tempered police trying to shoo them away. With no skate parks in Hanoi they won't be trying their hand in the Park category, which includes bowls or ramps, nor will they be racing in the Downhill. But that's not holding back their ambitions. "I want gold," 23-year-old Tran Dinh Anh told AFP, his skateboard underfoot.

"I fell in love with it" Regardless of the results, the team knows that even just going to the Games is a chance to re-brand the sport back home, where it is known as a frivolous — and dangerous — pastime by some. "This is really important for us because any medal we get, the sports federation can help make the sport bigger and make a skate park," said Linh, who opened the city's first skate shop 10 years ago. "People can see this is not just something for the street — this is a sport," he added. Back when he opened his store there were few customers and almost no awareness of the sport, but today he estimates there are a few thousand skaters in the city.

Most are young and like his team members were first exposed to it on YouTube or in music videos. I fell in love with it... I realised there's a culture that comes with it — music, fashion, arts," said 20-year-old teammate Tong Cam Vu, who practices with Japanese pop

Canadian Latifi replaces Kubica at Williams for 2020

ABU DHABI: Canadian Nicholas Latifi said his dream had come true after Williams announced yesterday he would be making his Formula One debut next year in place of Robert Kubica. His troubles don't end there. Though the Vietnam General Administration of Sport has recognised skateboarding as a sport, it does not offer any funding for training or travel.

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Hamilton eyes season-ending victory in UAE twilight zone

ABU DHABI: Lewis Hamilton heads into this weekend’s season-ending floodlit Abu Dhabi Grand Prix seeking to mark his 250th Formula One race with a memorable performance as Mercedes bid to bounce back from an off-form outing in Brazil. The six-time world champion, whose future beyond 2020 when his current contract expires has been a subject of intense scrutiny and linked with Hamilton’s as the sport prepares for the introduction of a radical new set of rules to brighten up the racing in 2021.

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Hamilton won from pole position last year and has enjoyed four pole position starts at the track and four victories, but may not have it all his own way in this weekend’s twilight contest scheduled to maximise global viewing potential.

“We are going to make the sport bigger and make a skate park," said Linh, who opened the city's first skate shop 10 years ago. "People can see this is not just something for the street — this is a sport," he added. Back when he opened his store there were few customers and almost no awareness of the sport, but today he estimates there are a few thousand skaters in the city.

Most are young and like his team members were first exposed to it on YouTube or in music videos. I fell in love with it... I realised there's a culture that comes with it — music, fashion, arts," said 20-year-old teammate Tong Cam Vu, who practices with Japanese pop

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**Penguins rally for wild win**

PITTSBURGH. Kris Letang’s one-timer from the right circle with 3:39 left in regulation broke a tie for good Wednesday night to give the Pittsburgh Penguins a wild 8-6 win over the visiting Vancouver Canucks. The Penguins erased a three-goal deficit in the third, a period that featured a total of eight goals, six by Pittsburgh. Matt Murray gave up four goals on 14 shots before being pulled. Tristan Jarry made six saves on eight shots. Pittsburgh’s Evgeni Malkin had two goals, including an empty-netter, and three assists. Jake Guentzel had two goals and two assists, Bryan Rust a goal and three assists, and Dominik Kahun and Zach Aston-Reese each scored for the Penguins. JT Miller and Adam Gaudette each scored twice, Elias Pettersson and Jake Virtanen each had a goal and assist, and Quinn Hughes had three assists for Vancouver.

**MAPLE LEAFS 6, RED WINGS 0**

Andreas Johnsson had two goals and an assist, Frederik Andersen made 25 saves to notch the shutout, and visiting Toronto defeated host Detroit in the first minute of the third period. The Leafs are 3-0-0 since Sheldon Keefe replaced Mike Babcock as head coach. Tyson Barrie, William Nylander and John Tavares each had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs. Travis Dermott also scored for Toronto. Detroit’s winless streak increased to seven games (0-5-2). Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard left the game in the opening period due to injury. He was replaced by Jonathan Bernier, who was battling an illness. Bernier made 37 saves on 40 shots after Howard made 11 saves on 14 shots.

**FLYERS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2**

Terry Priddick, Scott Laughton and Claude Giroux each scored a goal and Philadelphia got a rare win in regulation in Columbus. It was the Flyers’ first road win in Columbus in regulation since Dec. 13, 2005. The Flyers also won for just the second time in the last 15 games in Columbus. Nick Foligno and Seth Jones had one goal apiece for the Blue Jackets, who had won four of five entering this game. Blue Jackets goaltender Joonas Korpisalo made 19 saves but had his four-game winning streak snapped.

**India’s Mirza set for tennis comeback**

NEW DELHI: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza yesterday announced her return to competitive tennis at the Hobart International in January, two years after taking a maternity break. The 33-year-old, who last played at the China Open in October 2017, will team up with Ukraine’s Nadia Kichenok — ranked 38 in the WTA doubles charts. Mirza, who married former Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik, gave birth to her first child — a son the couple named Izhaan. “I am playing in Hobart, then I am playing the Australian Open,” Mirza was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency. “I am planning to play a tournament in Mumbai, which is a $25,000 (ITF women’s event) next month, but I am 50-50 about it, so let’s see how my wrist behaves. We will see, but Hobart and Australian Open (for sure).” She added that she had experienced “a lot of change” after having a baby. “Your routine and sleep pattern changes. I now fit, my body is where it used to be before I had the baby,” Mirza said. The Hobart WTA takes place between January 11-18 and is a key lead-in tournament to the Australian Open. Mirza, regarded as India’s best-ever women’s tennis player, will partner American Rajeev Ram for the mixed doubles at the Australian Open. Mirza in 2008 became the first Indian to win a WTA tournament singles title.
Brooks, spinners put West Indies on top in Afghanistan Test

LUCKNOW: A maiden Test century by Shamshar Brooks and wily spin bowling put the West Indies in firm command of the one-off Test against Afghanistan yesterday, Brooks made 111 as West Indies managed a lead of 90 after they were 277 all out in the second session of day two in the northern Indian city of Lucknow, which has been hit by heavy air pollution over the past month.

Spinners Rakheem Cornwall and Roston Chase then took three wickets each to leave Afghanistan tottering at 109 for seven at stumps on day two. The Afghans lead by just 19 runs in their second innings.

Opener Javed Ahmadi made 62 before falling to Chase's off spin on the final delivery of the day dominated by West Indies, who resumed on 68 for two in response to Afghanistan's 187. Cornwall, the heaviest man in Test cricket — weighing 140 kilograms (308 pounds), and 1.96 Metres (six feet five inches) tall — rattled the Afghanistan top-order and improved his match haul to 10 so far.

The 26-year-old Cornwall, who returned figures of 7-75 with his off spin on day one, struck twice in the second session. The Afghans lead by just 19 runs in their second innings.

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Players want answers from Australia board over Smith ban

MELBOURNE: The Australian Cricketers’ Association is seeking a meeting with Cricket Australia regarding the anti-corruption ban given to Imam-ul-Haq set to open the innings alongside David Warner and Nathan Lyon, part of the team that will play Pakistan in the second Test starting today, with Sharma Massood and Harris Sohail dropped.

The 24-year-old accepted the sanction, which rules him out of the remaining Tests against Australia, having lost 13 consecutive Tests in Australia.

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Pakistan recall Abbas after Gabba horror show

ADELAIDE: Pakistan were set to recall paceman Mohammad Abbas yesterday for the second Test against Australia as they look to add consistency to their bowling attack under lights at Adelaide Oval. Skipper Azhar Ali will also drop down the order to bat at number three in the day-night Test starting today, with Imam-ul-Haq set to get the nod to open the innings alongside Shan Masood and Harris Sohail dropped.

Seamer Abbas has taken 66 wickets at just 18.86 in 14 Tests but was a surprise omission for the opening clash in Brisbane, where Pakistan were crushed by an innings and five runs.

"Definitely there will be some changes," Azhar said of the team line-up, which will be announced on Friday. Asked if Abbas would be one of those changes, he replied: "Yes."

"He's (Abbas) done well in Test matches, he can definitely bring a lot of control and he has worked a lot since the last Test match on his rhythm and he is feeling better," he said.

"Obviously a bowler of his class, you feel he has something to offer." Azhar would not say who Abbas would replace, but Imran Khan is a candidate after failing to fire in Brisbane.

Pakistan desperately need their bowlers to perform in Adelaide, having lost 13 consecutive Tests in Australia.

They will be facing an Australian team that has won all five of its pink-ball matches and with David Warner, Joe Burns and Marcus Labuschagne in line form after big scores at the Gabba.

Azhar acknowledged Pakistan have long laboured in Australia, with their inability to bowl the opposition out twice their biggest problem. "A lot of our tours to Australia we have struggled to pick up wickets. We have to control the rate, bowl in good areas for a long time," he said.

"Wickets in Australia, a lot of people say it is bounce, it is pace. But equally it is good for batting as well, so if you can't bowl well for a long period of time, you can't put teams under pressure." He added: "If we want to pick up 20 wickets we have to execute our plan perfectly." Pakistan have played one pink-ball fixture in Australia — three years ago in Brisbane, when they lost by 39 runs.

Emotional Australia cricketers pay tribute to Hughes

ADELAIDE: Australia’s cricketers have paid moving tribute to Phillip Hughes on the fifth anniversary of his death, gathering on the Adelaide Oval pitch to remember him after his death in a freak on-field accident, Hughes, who played 26 Tests, died from bleeding on the brain on November 27, 2014, after being hit on the neck by a rising ball while batting in a domestic match at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

His death stunned Australia and the world cricket community, sparking an outpouring of grief and ushering in stronger protocols around concussion and better player safety equipment.

David Warner and Nathan Lyon, part of the team that will play Pakistan in the second Test starting Friday, were on the field when Hughes collapsed, while Steve Smith was also a teammate and friend of the 25-year-old. Australian captain Tim Paine said coach Justin Langer gathered the team in a circle on the pitch late Wednesday.

"Last night actually it was quite a nice moment. JL had us in a circle and guys who had spent a lot of time with him," Paine added: "It was just trying to remember him in a positive way and remind ourselves how lucky we are to be playing the game we love and how much playing for his country meant to Hughes and how much playing for his country meant to Hughes."

"And for us to never take that for granted."

"He's big on guys talking about things that help them deal with those moments," he said yesterday.

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Davis leads Lakers in New Orleans return

NEW ORLEANS: Anthony Davis scored 41 points in his return to New Orleans, and the Los Angeles Lakers won their ninth straight game, beating the Pelicans 114-110 on Wednesday night. Davis was roundly booed whenever he touched the basketball in the city where he played his first seven seasons before demanding a trade from New Orleans, which sent him to the Lakers in July. LeBron James added 29 points and 11 assists as the Lakers improved their league-leading record to 16-2. Kyle Kuzma added 16 points, Javale McGood had 12 assists and 29 points, but just four in the second half, as the Pelicans squandered a 16-point, third-quarter lead. Brandon Ingram, one of three players Los Angeles traded along with a group of draft choices for Davis, had 23 points and 10 rebounds.

CLIPPERS 121, GRIZZLIES 119
Montrezl Harrell tipped in the game-winner with 2.3 seconds remaining, capping a raucous fourth-quarter rally as visiting Los Angeles beat Memphis to earn its seventh straight victory. The Clippers were led by 24 points and 10 rebounds from Harrell, and 24 points from Lou Williams. Moe Harkless scored just five points, getting the start in place of Kawhi Leonard, but provided a win-sealing block of Jaren Jackson Jr.’s shot in the final seconds that would have tied the score. Jonas Valanciunas posted game highs of 30 points and 16 rebounds for Memphis. Rookie guard Ja Morant endured a slow scoring start, but he scored nine of his 20 points late in the fourth quarter, and dished a game-high 11 assists for the night.

WARRIORS 104, BULLS 80
Alec Burks scored six of his 23 points in a fourth-quarter flurry as Golden State won for just the second time at home all season. Eric Paschall scored a team-high 25 points, and both Burks and Omari Spellman recorded double-doubles for the Warriors, who had lost three straight and 10 of their previous 11 games. Burks had a nice all-around game with 10 rebounds and seven assists. Spellman produced 10 points and 16 rebounds for his fourth double-double of the season.

BUCKS 111, HAWKS 102
Giannis Antetokounmpo posted his 18th consecutive double-double to start the season, leading Milwaukee past visiting Atlanta for its ninth win in a row. Antetokounmpo scored 30 points and added 10 rebounds and four blocked shots. He is the first player since Hall of Famer Bob Pettit to start a season with 18 straight double-doubles. The Bucks also got 16 points from Khris Middleton, who returned from a seven-game absence caused by a left thigh contusion. Atlanta was led by Jabari Parker, who had a career-high 25 points in the first half and finished with a season-high 33 and 14 rebounds. Trae Young added 29 points and four rebounds.

CELTICS 121, NETS 110
Kemba Walker scored a season-high 39 points in his return from a neck sprain as host Boston held off Kyrie Irving-less Brooklyn. Jaylen Brown had 22 points and 10 rebounds as six Celtics scored in double figures. Boston won for the third time in its last five games. The Nets also placed six scorers in double figures, led by Garrett Temple and Joe Harris with 22 and 21, respectively. Despite hitting 21 3-pointers as a team, Brooklyn saw its four-game winning streak end.

HORNETS 102, PISTONS 101
Charlotte finally figured out how to close a game, riding a season-high 19 points fromليس Mack Brown to a victory against visiting Detroit. The Hornets, who dropped three games by fewer than 10 points in a four-day span last week, had help on Detroit’s botched final possession, hanging on to snap a five-game losing streak. PJ Washington scored 17 points, Devonte’ Graham tallied 16 points and Miles Bridges had 15 for the Hornets, who have defeated the Pistons twice this month in home games. Graham added a career-high 15 assists. For Detroit, Griffin posted 26 points, Kennard notched 16 points, and Andre Drummond had 14 points and 21 rebounds.

TIMBERWOLVES 113, SPURS 101
Andrew Wiggins poured in 26 points as visiting Minnesota defeated slumping San Antonio to capture its second straight game on the road and its first win in the Alamo City since 2013. Karl-Anthony Towns scored 23 points and took 14 rebounds for the Timberwolves, while Keita Bates-Diop added 16 points, Okogie had 11, and Gorgui Dieng and Jarrett Culver each scored 10 points for Minnesota. San Antonio, which has lost five straight games at home, missed seven of its last eight shots from the floor over the final four minutes. LaMarcus Aldridge led the Spurs with 22 points, and DeMar DeRozan scored 20.

MAGIC 116, CAVALIERS 104
Evan Fournier scored 19 of his season-high 30 points in the first half as Orlando recorded its first road victory, topping Cleveland. Fournier made four 3-pointers to highlight his performance for the Magic, who lost their first seven road games before winning the finale of their four-game trek. Jonathan Isaac and Terence Ross each scored 16 points, and Mo Bamba made all five of his 3-point attempts to match Markelle Fultz with 15 points. Collin Sexton scored 20 points on 8 of 14 shooting while playing in his 100th consecutive game to begin his career. Cedi Osman scored 14 points and Tristan Thompson added 13 for the Cavaliers, who fell for the eighth time in the last nine games.

PACERS 121, JAZZ 102
T.J. Warren scored 23 points, and Domantas Sabonis added 23 points and 12 rebounds to lead Indiana to a victory over Utah in Indianapolis. Malcolm Brogdon finished with 22 points and eight assists for the Pacers, who earned their fourth consecutive win. Jeremy Lamb added 18 points, eight rebounds and six assists. Bojan Bogdanovic scored 30 points to lead the Jazz, who dropped their second straight. Donovan Mitchell added 26 points while Rudy Gobert chipped in 14 points and 13 rebounds. Gobert returned to the lineup after a two-game absence caused by a sprained ankle.

Raptors 97, Kings 91
Joel Embiid rebounded from the first scoreless game of his career with a game-high 33 points, leading Philadelphia past Sacramento. Embiid, who shot 0-for-11 on Monday in a loss at Toronto, went 10-for-19 against the Kings, leading the 76ers to their eighth straight home win. Ben Simmons also recorded a double-double for Philadelphia with 10 points and 14 rebounds to go with five assists and two steals. Buddy Hield paced the Kings, losers of two straight, with 22 points.

ROCKETS 117, HEAT 108
James Harden made seven 3-pointers and scored 34 points to help Houston cruise past Miami. Russell Westbrook added 27 points, nine rebounds and seven assists as Houston halted a three-game slide. Daniel House Jr. scored a career-best 23 points to help the Rockets avenge a 129-100 loss to the Heat in Miami on Nov. 3. Tyler Herro scored 22 points off the bench for Miami, which was without star Jimmy Butler due to illness. The loss was just the second in the past eight games for the Heat. Miami’s Kelly Olynyk added 19 points, and Bam Adebayo recorded 17 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists.

RAPTORS 126, KNICKS 98
Pascal Siakam scored 31 points and grabbed eight rebounds as host Toronto won its eighth straight home game to start the season, a franchise record, in a blowout of New York. The Raptors have won 15 of their past 16 games against the Knicks, including the past seven in a row. Siakam, who did not play the fourth quarter as the starters were rested, finished 3-for-8 on 3-point attempts. Fred VanVleet added 15 points for the Raptors. OG Anunoby contributed 13 points and a career-best 12 rebounds, and Chris Boucher had 13 points and 12 rebounds. Julius Randle scored 19 points and pulled down eight rebounds for the Knicks. Toronto-born HJ Barrett added 16 points. — AFP
Martinez, Lukaku sink Slavia to keep Inter’s knockout hopes alive

PRAGUE: A brace from Lautaro Martinez and a Romelu Lukaku goal handed Inter Milan a 3-1 win at Slavia Prague on Wednesday, keeping the Italians in contention for the Champions League last 16.

Inter are level with Borussia Dortmund on seven points each in Group F topped by Barcelona who clinched a last-16 spot after beating the Germans 3-1 at the Camp Nou. "The win is important for us, we had no choice but to win," said Inter coach Antonio Conte.

"We knew what to expect, the forward duo were decisive and I’m very happy for them," he added. In the last round of games on December 10, Inter face Barcelona at the San Siro while Dortmund host Slavia.

"We gave meaning to this match against Barca by winning," said Conte. "We are expecting a great match, hard, but we know that we can count on 80,000 people who will come to the stadium to push us. That was what we can count on 80,000 people who will come to the stadium to push us. That was what we can count on.

Martinez scored for the fourth consecutive Champions League game for Inter, Tomas Soucek levelled for Slavia from the penalty spot before cutting it back to the unmarked Lukaku who robbed the Slavia defence and provided him with a superb cross in the 88th minute.

Outside of the four goals, Slavia had the first sight of the target on five minutes when Josef Lutovsky saw his shot go over the crossbar and Slavia's second-half substitute Ibrahim Traore missed narrowly. Moments later, Lukaku sent his header on to the crossbar and Marcelo Bro佐ovic then followed suit with a volley half way into the second half.

Five minutes later Masopust intercepted a pass and sprinted down the centre but failed to beat Handanovic one-on-one. The game went the wrong way, we had many losses during the game and Inter, leaning on two excellent forwards, could capitalise on that," said Slavia coach Jindrich Trpisovsky. "Inter’s performance improved in the second half and ours was getting worse. In fact, they could have scored the deciding goal earlier." — AFP

Man City owners snap up Mumbai City as global empire grows

London: Manchester City’s parent company City Football Group announced yesterday that it had bought a majority stake in Mumbai City, expanding its global empire of teams. The Premier League club toasted that CFG was delighted to welcome the Indian club to its “family of clubs”.

"City Football Group (CFG) has agreed a deal to acquire a majority stake in its eighth club, Mumbai City FC in the Indian Super League, marking a major move into Indian football,” the group said in a statement.

"CFG will become the 66 percent majority shareholder of the club, alongside existing shareholders, acclaimed actor and film producer, Ranbir Kapoor and Bimal Parekh who combined will hold the remaining 33 percent of shares."

Other clubs in the CFG stable include New York City, Melbourne City, Yokohama F. Marinos in Japan and Girona FC in Spain. “We believe that this investment will deliver transformative benefits to Mumbai City FC, to City Football Group and to Indian football as a whole,” said CFG chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak.

"City Football Group is committed to the future of football in India and to the potential for Mumbai City FC within that future.” Manchester City have won the Premier League title four times since Abu Dhabi United Group, the investment vehicle owned by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, took over the club. They have enjoyed 11 successive years of financial growth and earlier this month reported record revenue of £335.2 million (£268.6 million euros) last season. They are sitting third in the Premier League table and reached the knockout stages of the Champions League on Tuesday. — AFP

Zenit deny Lyon chance to clinch last 16 spot

Saint Petersburg: Lyon missed out on a chance to seal a Champions League last 16 place with a match to spare after losing 2-0 at Zenit Saint Petersburg on Wednesday.

A victory in Group G over the Russian Premier League leaders would have claimed a knockout spot for Rudi Garcia’s men. Lyon are now third behind Zenit, level with the Russians on seven points, ahead of their final group match on December 10 against leaders Leipzig, who are three points clear at the top and assured of a place in the knockout round.

"Lyon are a really good team. But we were prepared well and did what we had to,” Zenit midfielder Magomed Ozdoev told UEFA.com. “Now it’s all about the match in London and we will be ready for it.”

Bundesliga side Leipzig’s last-gasp 2-2 draw with Benfica later in the day gave them a place in the last 16 for the first time leaving Lyon and Zenit in pursuit of the second qualifying spot.

"It’s not over, we still have our last match to play and we’re supporting Benfica (who face Zenit in the last round),” Garcia said.

West Brom thrash Bristol City to go top

London: West Brom moved back to the top of the Championship with a thumping 4-1 victory over Bristol City at The Hawthorns. Leeds had gone top with victory at Reading on Tuesday, but Slaven Bilic’s men restored their two-point lead in style. Grady Diangana was the key man for the Baggies, setting up Kieran Gibbs to open the scoring on 10 minutes with a smart backheel and then being brought down on the edge of the area.

What is certain is that we have to beat Leipzig, who I think are the best team in the group.”

Zenit coach Sergei Semak kept faith in the starting lineup from the weekend’s 2-1 league victory over Rubin Kazan, with Artem Dzyuba who scored that winner in that game leading the attack. Garcia, who replaced the sacked Sylvinho in October, was without injured midfielder Thiago Mendes and ill winger Martin Terrier.

Garcia, who replaced the sacked Sylvinho in October, was without injured midfielder Thiago Mendes and ill winger Martin Terrier after beating Nice on Saturday as 16-year-old attacking midfielder Rayan Cherki was named on the bench.

The best of the early chances fell to Sardar Azmoun on 35 minutes after Daler Kuzayev and Joachim Andersen were shown yellow cards by Orsato for their complaints. Semak’s men continued to dominate as the Russian international headed in from a Douglas Santos corner as Lyon protested with referee Daniele Orsato for Dzyuba’s tussle with Marcelo in the penalty area.

Captain Leo Dubois and fellow-wing back Marcel were shown yellow cards by Orsato for their complaints, Semak’s men controlled a lacklustre second-half and Ozdoev made sure of all three points with his third goal of the season in the 84th minute. — AFP

five minutes from half-time. Mathieu Pereira took full advantage of the dangerous position to curl a left-footed free-kick over the wall and into the top corner.

Famara Diedhiou pulled a goal back for the visitors 10 minutes from time, but Hal Robson-Kanu made it 3-1 just two minutes later and substitute Charlie Austin completed the scoring in the 87th minute. Nottingham Forest moved up to fourth in the table with a 4-0 win at Queens Park Rangers, who had Lee Wallace sent off early in the second half. Tobias Figueiredo headed Forest in front after 15 minutes and the home side had a mountain to climb when Wallace was shown a straight red card for bringing down Joe Lolley. It took until the 82nd minute for Lewis Grabban to double his side’s lead and further late goals from Joao Carvalho and Alfa Semedo completed a miserable evening for QPR. — AFP
PARIS: A Lionel Messi-inspired Barcelona booked their place in the Champions League knockout stages on Wednesday by crushing a desperate Borussia Dortmund 3-1, while RB Leipzig made the last 16 for the first time with an incredible stoppage time comeback.

Lionel Messi’s position as Dortmund coach looks increasingly in peril following the thumping at the Camp Nou, orchestrated by a sensational Messi, that ensured Barca’s progress to the last 16 as Group F winners and leaves the Germans in danger of not qualifying.

The Argentine scored one and set up the other two for Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann to inflict a punishing defeat on Dortmund and move up to 11 points, four ahead of the Germans and Inter Milan, who won 3-1 at Slavia Prague. “He (Messi) was incredible,” said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. “It’s all about what he does and when he does it. It was a performance to put us through.” Messi got the ball out of his feet and passed it home to Griezmann that the Frenchman could double saw off a spirited Slavia side that had levelled in the 57th minute through a VAR-awarded penalty after Lukaku thought he had doubled his side’s lead. Lukaku had another strike ruled out for offside by VAR in the dying moments, but it made no difference to the result and now a win over Barca at the San Siro next month will guarantee them a place in the last 16.

“We’ve given meaning to the match with Barca by winning tonight,” said Conte. “We are expecting a tough, great match, but we know that we can count on 80,000 people who will come to the stadium to push us on.”

LEIPZIG BACK FROM THE DEAD

Leipzig made the knockout stages in dramatic style after Emil Forsberg fired them back from two goals down in the final minute to draw 2-2 with Benfica. The Germans needed a point to qualify but looked down and out as the match dragged towards added time, but Forsberg pulled a goal back from the penalty spot in the 89th minute before hitting the levelling six minutes later, sparking wild celebrations.

“Reaching the knockout stages for the first time in the club’s history means that we’re doing the right things and moving in the right direction.”

Messi, who has scored 10 times in his last 12 games, was also at the heart of the goal which extinguished Dortmund’s hopes of a result in the 67th minute, sliding a wonderful through ball for Griezmann that the Frenchman could hardly help but score, his first time past Roman Bürki.

Dortmund slip down to third behind Antonio Conte’s Inter side, who roared to a fine win which keeps alive their hopes of a place in the next round. Romelu Lukaku’s first Champions League goal for Inter and a Lautaro Martinez double saw off a spirited Slavia side that had levelled in the 57th minute through a VAR-awarded penalty after Lukaku thought he had doubled his side’s lead. Lukaku had another strike ruled out for offside by VAR in the dying moments, but it made no difference to the result and now a win over Barca at the San Siro next month will guarantee them a place in the last 16.

“We’ve given meaning to the match with Barca by winning tonight,” said Conte. “We are expecting a tough, great match, but we know that we can count on 80,000 people who will come to the stadium to push us on.”

LIVERPOOL AND NAPOLI DRAW

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool are used to making life difficult for themselves, admitted Jurgen Klopp as a 1-1 draw with Napoli leaves the European champions with work to do to reach the Champions League last 16.

Klopp’s men must avoid defeat away to Salzburg on December 10 to secure their passage into the knockout stages. Dries Mertens threatened to inflict Liverpool’s first home defeat in the Champions or Premier League since April 2017 with a sweeter struck opener midway through the first half.

Dejan Lovren’s header protected that proud unbeaten run, but after a host of late winners in the Premier League this season there was no such joy for the hosts this time round. “Our way was always the hard one,” said Klopp. “We have to go to Salzburg. If we had done it (qualified) today we’d have tried to win there and we will do the same now.”

Napoli remain a point behind Liverpool, but are well-placed to reach the knockout stages as they host winless Genk in two weeks’ time. “It’s not easy to get a draw here. We suffered under pressure and began to defend too deep, but there’s no other way to emerge alive from Anfield,” said Napoli coach Carlo Ancelotti. The Italians had travelled to Merseyside in disarray with Ancelotti seeming-ly on the brink of being sacked after a slump in Serie A. President Aurelio De Laurentiis has also threatened to sell the entire squad and take legal action against the players after they refused his orders to be confined to a week-long training camp earlier this month.

However, the Italians are the only side to have beaten the European champions this season and proved a thorn in Liverpool’s side again. “This is a healthy club within the locker room and with the desire of everyone to emerge from this difficult moment,” added Ancelotti. “I spoke to the president, he was very happy with everyone and congratulated us all on the performance.”

Liverpool were unsettled by the early loss of Fabinho to an ankle injury and Klopp is worried that the Brazilian could be sidelined for some time.

“The biggest thing tonight is the Fabinho injury,” added Klopp. “That’s massive, it’s still early and we hope it is not too serious but it is pretty painful.”

The home side were still re-grouping when the visitors opened the scoring on 21 minutes. Mertens learned into Virgil van Dijk as the Dutchman headed clear and was left on the ground holding his side. Napoli played on and when the ball was played forward again Mertens was unmarked to run through before beating Alisson Becker from a narrow angle. — AFP

Chelsea made to wait for last 16 spot after draw

VALENCIA: Daniel Wass’s late equaliser denied Chelsea a place in the last 16 of the Champions League as a profligate Valencia fought back for a 2-2 draw that maintains both sides’ chances of reaching the knockout stages.

A wide open game swung the visitors’ way after Carles Soler’s opener for Valencia as Mateo Kovacic and Christian Pulisic put Chelsea in pole position to avenge their 1-0 defeat on home soil to the Spaniards on matchday one.

However, after Kepa Arrizabalaga had saved Dimi Parejo’s penalty, Wass’s cross flummoxed the Spanish international to give Valencia a life-line. Both sides are tied on eight points in second place in Group H, two points behind Ajax, who beat Lille 2-0.

Victory at home to Lille in two weeks’ time will ensure Frank Lampard’s men make the last 16 and they were thankful to five huge misses from the hosts to escape with a point on a night that could also prove costly as top-scorer Tammy Abraham was stretchered off at half-time. “We nearly won it, nearly lost it. It was end-to-end, not that we wanted it to be,” said Lampard. “It keeps it in our hands and we have to be happy with that.” They were arriving in our box too much. Credit to the players for their work-rate and hanging on in there, but sometimes you have to be more secure than that.”

Maxi Gomez was the principal villain for Valencia as the Uruguayan twice failed to find the net with the goal at his mercy in the first half.

“In a very open game in which we’ve both had chances, we had by far the clearest chances, on top of the penalty,” said Valencia coach Albert Celades. “The key was that we didn’t take them.”

When Valencia did finally break the deadlock there was a hint of fortune in the fact that the ball ricocheted off Soler’s legs, but had enough power to beat Kepa.

Defeat would have left Lampard’s men on the brink of elimination, but they responded immediately after falling behind as Kovacic produced an fine low strike. Abraham was then left wincing in pain and holding his left hip as he was trampled on inside the area and eventually had to be stretched down the tunnel after both sides had already made their way to the dressing room at half-time. “He’s had a bang on the hip but it might not be as severe as we first thought,” said Lampard, who confirmed the England international’s injury. Chelsea took the lead five minutes into the second period when Pulisic kept up his fine scoring form by прододом home Kurt Zouma’s knockdown. Following a lengthy VAR check for offside, the goal was given, but Valen-cia were furious there was not a check for a potential foul by Zouma in the build-up. — AFP
India’s Mirza set for tennis comeback

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