Strong passion for perfume in Kuwait all year round

NBK reports 10.9% rise in 9M 2019 net profit

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This article is about the situation of dogs in Kuwait and how some of them turn from domestic pets into strays and predators. Who is responsible for this and are there solutions?

I believe that the lives and survival of pets in Kuwait is not easy, because it depends primarily on the owner. The animal might be lucky to have a kind owner who knows how to take good care of the animal, or a crazy owner who practices the worst forms of torture on the poor animal, or young children who do not know how to care of an animal and its needs.

So when they get bored of the pet, they take easiest route by kicking it to the street to suffer from hunger and heat, because the pet is not prepared to deal with the streets or the animals there. Or it could end up at the Friday animal market, which is not better than the street. This is an unfortunate end of a creature that had been predestined to be here, and we bear moral responsibilities that hold us accountable for the harm it suffers.

An expatriate woman sent me a letter about a personal experience related to dogs in Kuwait, and I will share with the readers some parts of the letter. She said: “I got a little dog a year ago, which I love walking every day. Unfortunately, having a dog has opened my eyes to the miserable world of dogs in Kuwait. On my walks on Abou Hassania beach, I see dead dogs left for weeks (owned by people because they wear a collar), and dogs just dumped by owners starving day by day. I try my best to rescue the dogs I meet, but it’s a never-ending story. The animal shelters in Kuwait are overfilled with dogs and puppies and cannot take more dogs.”

She added that countries like Turkey have neutering programs to avoid this, while Switzerland requires people to get a dog license before buying a dog. Finally, the woman suggests all expats dumping their animals when they leave Kuwait should be fined big time (KD 500 is my suggestion). This lady is right to worry about the issue of dogs breeding in the streets. I do not think there is something called a stray, but they are animals neglected or left on the street by their owners. Rarely, they may be animals that were lost or stolen.

I liked the woman’s suggestion, because some expatriates when they leave Kuwait leave the animal on the street, especially if they do not find someone to adopt it or if they cannot take it with them because of the high ticket prices and fees required. So a fine is required, but I do not know how to make sure that the returnee had a dog or whether or not they had a license to own a dog. I also do not know who will verify the owner’s info.

I believe a dog is a big responsibility, as being a dog owner means you have to walk it daily. I have a cat and every time I need to take it to the vet, it usually takes me a few days to even get an appointment, aside from the cost of consultation and medicine, which is not cheap.

I know some people here don’t hate dogs but also don’t welcome having them in their houses, especially those who view this matter from a religious perspective. Also, I notice some people do not even pick up the poop while walking their dog. I wish Kuwait bans the import of all dogs and runs education campaigns for people. So before taking a dog into your house to please the kids, think twice about who will bear the responsibility in case of illness, and the fact that dogs have needs just like human beings.

Stray dogs did not appear out of nowhere, but because of the neglect of some dog owners who abandoned them. They did not go to animal shelters but threw them on the streets, which turned them into sick dogs that breed randomly and cause harm.

The animal health department of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources is legally authorized to deal with animals. I hope that a campaign will be launched to prevent pet shops from selling animals - especially dogs - without a license, and make sure about the identity and age of the owner and their ability to care for the animal. Also, the sale of any animal poison should be prohibited. Dogs should not be killed or poisoned.

Establishing new animal shelters or offering them up for adoption in the West should be done, because a culture of respecting animals and preserving their rights is clearly missing.
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Wherever you go in Kuwait, whether it is a mall, hotel, restaurant or even a health club, you can smell the heady scent of perfume. Wearing strong perfume is part of Kuwaiti culture particularly and of the Gulf region in general. As perfumes are usually expensive, financial situation and wealth of the user are somehow related to this issue.

Usage of perfume differs among nations, as some use it for occasions only, while others use it daily. Kuwaitis use it throughout the day no matter the occasion. This habit has roots from ancient times. Islam encourages Muslims to always be clean and smell good. It also warns Muslims against annoying others by smelling bad. And different hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) mention that he used perfumes, especially when going to the mosque for prayers.

The passion for perfumes has even been expressed in poems. Poets have mentioned perfume as reminding them of places or persons. For instance, one of the most popular romantic poets Qais bin Al Mulawah mentioned musk and carnation used by his beloved one.

Arabian perfumes have more varieties than Western fragrances. In addition to liquid perfumes, there is the heavy thick oil called `Dihn al-oud` that is used for the skin, and only a few drops are enough. There is also `bulhoor`, wood mixed with essence that is burned and used for clothes, hair and the home as well. It can also be used on top of the perfume.

The high consumption of perfumes in the Gulf has made it a profitable business for both local and international companies. This has made the annual perfumes exhibition held at the Misha`ef fairground the most visited expo in the region, if not the world. And due to high demand, the exhibition is held twice a year, and is growing bigger every year.

The word perfume comes from the French language, expressing the good smell of burning wood essence (bulhoor). Bulhoor was first discovered about 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, where the perfume was used in religious rituals and also on the body by soaking the wood in oil and water and using the liquid on the body.

The Arabs were the first to use the floral crown to get the liquid out of it around 1,300 years ago. The oldest perfume was rose perfume, which was popular among many Arab tribes. Arabs also used jasmine, violet and lemon blossom as the main sources of perfume. In addition, they used other sources such as wood (especially sandalwood), leaves (mint, geranium and lavender) and roots (ginger and iris). Also, musk and amber are the main ingredients of perfumes. Arabs were the first to use distillation in producing perfumes.

According to www.marketwatch.com, the global perfume and fragrance market has witnessed a continued demand during the last few years and is projected to reach $66.6 billion at a compound annual growth rate of 6 percent by 2023 in terms of value. The perfume and fragrance market has witnessed substantial innovation in terms of new product launches along with research and development and collaboration by the industrial players. The overall increasing disposable income of the consumers and their evolving buying pattern over the past few years has also led to a surge in the sales of perfumes and fragrances during the forecast period.

Globalization and urbanization have significantly affected the composition of the consumption basket of consumers and have influenced their buying behavior. The urban life also encourages consumers to segregate priority and non-priority goods for themselves. In developing economies, especially India and China, major factors such as growing number of affluent and middle class, rising household disposable income, and higher luxury spending have also contributed to the increasing sales of perfumes in these economies. The emergence of consumer-oriented societies along with the spread of consumerism and evolving consumerist attitudes in the GCC region has further reinforced the potential growth of the perfume industry.

The leading market players in the global perfume and fragrance market primarily are Elizabeth Arden, Inc (US), L’Oreal (France), Shiseido (Japan), IFF (US), Chanel (France), Estee Lauder (US), Avon (US), Vivenza (Kuwait), Royal Beauty Group Co (Kuwait), AlQuraishi Fragrances (Kuwait), Reechat Al Atoor (Bahrain), Asghar Ali Co WLL (Bahrain), Rasasi Perfumes Industry LLC (UAE), Arabian Oud (Saudi Arabia), Swiss Arabian Perfume Group (UAE), Atyab Al Marshoud (Kuwait), Al Shaya (Kuwait), Ajmal Perfume (UAE) and Abdulsamad Al Qurashi (Saudi Arabia).
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KCC to perform on the world stage

By Ben Garcia

Music is a universal language. On Dec 1, 2019, the Kuwait Chamber Chorale (KCC) will perform in front of a global audience at a concert organized by DCINY, the leading concert producer in New York. Fifty-three members of KCC will fly to New York from Kuwait to present the concert at Carnegie Hall. In Feb 2020, they are also invited to perform at the Dubai Opera, a very significant venue as well.

The KCC is a non-profit, unique and one-of-a-kind musical ensemble. It was conceived in the hearts and minds of a few ardent music lovers residing in Kuwait. The vision became a reality when Fredrick Nirmal, 39, contacted choirs from various choir groups in Kuwait to come forward and join the musical venture. "KCC was born out of a passion for music. We are all in same direction and we all want to learn. We all want to perform - we all like the music we are playing," Nirmal told Kuwait Times.

"We all wanted to have a group that could perform on the world stage. This is about to happen. This is our objective and we are very happy that we were selected to perform at Carnegie Hall. KCC endeavors to position itself as an integral part of the community and not just be a peripheral attraction. Every concert, special event and outreach program seeks to find new ways to genuinely engage listeners. From amateur musicians to artistic collaborations with other musical groups, KCC constantly seeks new ways to bring immediacy, relevance and personal connections to all segments of the community through the shared experience of orchestral music," he added.

Nirmal said the reward for each one of them is the fact that KCC can be a uniting force, even as the musicians come from various backgrounds and ages. "In a chorale group, it has to be mix of everyone - that is why we have young and old ladies and gentlemen."

KCC’s debut concert was conducted in March 2017 with a presentation of acclaimed Western classical anthems. "The concert had about 40 live instrumentalists and 65 vocals in four parts (bass, tenor, soprano and alto). The packed audience in the concert hall was enthralled, leaving a lasting impression with the high-quality presentation," he said. The second concert presentation in 2018 was yet another milestone, when KCC proudly presented a few anthems, duets and solo renditions from the evergreen G F Handel’s oratorio ‘The Messiah’. On Oct 26 and 27, 2019, KCC will perform Joseph Haydn’s ‘The Creation’ in Kuwait.


Asked if they are a chorale with strong religious connections, Nirmal replied in the negative. "We want to be known not as religious group, so our group comprises of a lot of members from various religious affiliations - there are Hindus and Christians and we have Muslims in the group too. So it is not religious in nature - this is a group of people willing to entertain, and music is innate in the members," he said.

KCC consists of musicians from all age groups, from children as young as 11 to adults over 60. The basic element that binds the team to stay together is their love and passion for music. It’s a group of enthusiastic instrumentalists, passionate for their love of music, and nothing quenches their thirst for the utmost and supreme quality when it comes to concert performances. Members of KCC stand committed to the call and strive to achieve greater heights in all their engagements with music in the future. All expenses for learning and practicing music are shared by its members. Well-wishers do donate to the choir after listening to the high quality presentations, but KCC utilizes such gifts to help poor children with a passion for music.

The chorale is trained by Nirmal, who plays the piano and cello. According to the members, he is an excellent music teacher and team player, the reason why KCC has been so successful in all its concerts and presentations. KCC has an administrative core team of six senior members, who under the guidance of the director, manage the day-to-day affairs and concert preparations.

**Member voices**

- **Suresh Thomas, 61, bass**
  
  "I am the senior-most member of the choral group. I just love being with the group. I don't play any instruments though, but my contribution is very significant in a choral group like KCC. I may be the oldest in age, but I am proud of being part of this wonderful team of people headed by Nirmal. I am happy that I will be joining them in the concert of a lifetime at Carnegie Hall."

- **Christi Tomas, 57, tenor**
  
  "I am what we call the jack-of-all-trades. I can be in the base, tenor and alto. I am into music - I play the guitar, piano, cello and other instruments. Music is my life! I teach several musical instruments to young kids too. It is really very rewarding - it's fulfilling if you teach kids and they actually learn something."

- **Jin Jacob, 43, tenor**
  
  "My role in the group is to help everyone in doing their homework, making sure that everyone is updated and in the loop and have been practicing their assigned lines. So, even as we only have training once a week, we are up to date. When the time of training comes, we can easily follow and do our part."

- **Joseph Haydn's 'The Creation' in Kuwait.**

- **Frida Y.**

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**Kuwait’s economic steps in right direction: World Bank**

**MENA economic outlook subject to substantial downside risks**

WASHINGTON: The World Bank has lauded economic steps that have been taken by the Kuwaiti government for boosting the private sector, saying these moves “are on the right track.” The Kuwaiti government is seeking to limit the state participation in the economy to bolster the private sector and minimize barriers facing commerce and investments, the report notes. Key initiatives that have been taken by the Kuwaiti government cover laws, privatization, partnership between the private and public sectors in fields such as property development, education, water, sewage, transports and management of solid waste. These efforts have been exerted in the right direction, the WB report affirms.

On the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the report said economic growth in the region will slow by 0.6 percent this year compared with 1.2 percent last year. The growth forecast for 2019 is revised down by 0.8 percentage points from the April 2019 projection due to lower oil prices since April 2019 and a larger-than-expected contraction in Iran. MENA’s economic outlook is subject to substantial downside risks, most notably, intensified global economic headwinds and rising geopolitical tensions.

The latest edition of the MENA Economic Update titled “Reaching New Heights: Promoting Fair Competition in the Middle East and North Africa” discusses the current sluggish growth due to conservative oil production outputs, weak global demand for oil and a larger-than-expected contraction in Iran. On the other hand, a boost in non-oil activities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), most prominently in construction, partially offset the dampening effect on the region’s average growth numbers as a result of Iran’s economic contraction.

“Countries in the region have implemented bold reforms to restore macroeconomic stability, but the projected growth rate is a fraction of what is needed to create enough jobs for the fast-growing, working-age population,” said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa region. “It is time for courageous and far-sighted leadership to deepen the reforms, to bring down the barriers to competition and to unlock the enormous potential of the region’s 400 million people as a source of collective demand that could drive growth and jobs.”

In the medium-term, the World Bank expects real GDP in the MENA region to grow at 2.6 percent in 2020 and 2.9 percent in 2021. The projected pickup in growth is largely driven by increasing infrastructure investment in GCC countries and the recovery in Iran’s economy as the effects of current sanctions wane. However, the report warns that a further escalation in regional tensions could severely weaken Iran’s economy and spill over to other countries in the region. While rising oil prices would benefit many regional oil exporters in the short run, the overall impact would be to hurt regional trade, investment, and spending on infrastructure.

In addition to providing economic growth forecasts for each country, the report highlights how unfair competition results from markets dominated by state-owned enterprises and politically-connected firms which deters private investment, reducing the number of jobs and preventing countless talented young people from prospering.

“The lack of fair competition is holding back the development of the region’s private sector, which history has shown to be the source of broad-based growth and jobs,” said Habib Attar, World Bank MENA Chief Economist. “Countries in the region have an opportunity to transform their economies by levelling the economic playing field, and creating business environments that encourage risk-taking and reward innovation and higher productivity.” — KUNA

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**Roudhan hails role of female entrepreneurs**

By A Saleh and Mashaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan speaks at the Women’s Cultural and Social Society.

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan announced welcoming women into the world of business and investment, adding that the legislative amendments approved by MoCI during the past two years had contributed in creating more opportunities for female entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the Women’s Cultural and Social Society, Roudhan stressed the presence of businesswomen fully capable of becoming an added value for Kuwait’s economy. He also reiterated his full belief in Kuwait women as an integral part of the future economy. The society’s Chairperson Luwa Al-Mulla called for putting an end to gender discrimination in all fields.

**Shisha ban hailed**

Secretary of the Kuwait Society for Smoking and Cancer Prevention Anwar Burhamah strongly hailed the Municipal Council’s approval of a proposal made by member Hamdi Al-Azim on banning shisha for families at various restaurants and cafes. Burhamah added the society had been calling for fighting all forms of smoking since its establishment in 1989, noting that studies have proven the disastrous effects of passive smoking on dental health, as the tobacco used includes nicotine and countless carcinogenic substances. Burhamah stressed recent studies had shown that smoking e-cigarettes is also harmful, because the vapor damages blood veins and include carcinogenic substances as well.

- CEO of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), Emad Al-Salman yesterday visited the tests of citizens applying to work in the anti-corruption authority (Nazahiah).
- Health Minister Dr. Basel Al-Sabah recently gave strict instructions to various health zone directors and hospital managers to follow up the collection of fees from expatriates without exceptions, said informed sources.

The sources explained that the minister had been tipped that some expatriate and, sometimes, Kuwaiti doctors have been ignoring the fee collections from sick relatives or friends. The minister’s instructions stressed warning doctors, be them expats or Kuwaitis, against such practices and telling them they would be held accountable for them, the sources underlined.

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**Municipality first public body set up in Kuwait**

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality was the first public service body established in Kuwait - in 1930 - to initially serve Kuwait City. It later extended its services to cover villages and Failaka Island 20 years later, as mentioned in a book titled ‘The Dream of Modern Kuwait...History of Kuwait Municipality Pre-oil’ written by Municipality director from 1971 to 1980 Mohammed Al-Mushijeri, who attributed the idea of establishing the Municipality to Sheikh Yousif Al-Qenaie, who wanted to follow in Bahrain’s footsteps in this regard and published the idea in Kuwait Magazine in 1928.

In this regard, civil society researcher Bader Al-Hetaithah told KUNA that the Municipality was established before the discovery of oil and that it used to rely on both donations and revenues it collected as fees. Hetaithah added that a meeting was held at Mubarakiya School on April 9, 1930 to call for electing the first 12-member Municipal Council for a two-year tenure, before direct orders from Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah were made to appoint Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the first Municipality chief, while Sulaiman Al-Adasani was elected as its first director.

Hetaithah said that Kuwait was plagued by smallpox from July to December 1932, which claimed around 3,000 lives. “It was then that the Municipality imported the needed vaccines from Iraq and launched a vaccination campaign to fight the disease,” he explained.

In addition, Hetaithah said that under its second director Nsif Al-Nisf, the Municipality played a major role in recruiting citizens to work in a private shipping and unloading company, distributing aid to citizens affected by the heavy rainfall in 1934 - the year of haddarlamah (destruction) - which destroyed several houses, and collecting a half per cent custom tax to be used for establishing the first education ministry (al-maaref department). — KUNA
Amiri Diwan launches third edition of KAFO initiative

EPA chief hails youth’s interest in environmental issues

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Various vital issues including education, environment and health were discussed and presented the third annual Kuwait’s Achievers for Future Opportunities (KAFO) forum held on Wednesday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. The event included various sessions on volunteering, sports, entrepreneurship, science and technology, media, arts and culture. Video presentation of previous achievements and projects was presented during the opening ceremony.

Work on KAFO, an initiative by the Amiri Diwan, started in 2015, and the first version of KAFO’s website was launched in 2017. KAFO aims to create tools and channels to showcase young achievers and enable collaborative opportunities including knowledge transfer that leads to national development.

“KAFO is one of the Kuwait Youth Program (Kuwait Listens) projects launched in 2013 as a recommendation to launch a platform for Kuwaiti achievers. We studied the needs of the society and the way of connecting achievers. Participants can build their CV’s on the website and show the possible ways of cooperation, in addition to searching for achievers according to their specialization,” Executive Manager of KAFO Fatemah Al-Mosawi told Kuwait Times.

“This fair is just a part of our activities that present the achievements of participants. We have nine ideas that we would like the public to know and participate in achieving them,” she pointed out. KAFO has been hugely successful, and participants are increasing every year. “Over 500 participants attended today to participate in this event. Our platform includes over 3,000 achievers, and this number is increasing every year,” concluded Mosawi.

Chairman and General Director of the Environment Public Authority Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah attended the event and praised the high interest of the achievers in environmental issues. “Various environmental initiatives were presented today, but we aim to have more. The previous environmental initiatives were great, although they were presented by young people. The young achievers can also participate in improving the environmental situation in Kuwait through social media or drones that take pictures of the vegetation,” he noted.

Iran FM pitches Gulf security plan to neighbors

TEHRAN: Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pitched the Islamic republic’s Gulf security plan to neighboring nations yesterday, saying regional security cannot be provided by foreign powers. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced the plan at the UN General Assembly last month, calling on Gulf nations including arch-rival Saudi Arabia to join it but without giving details.

In an article published yesterday in Arabic by Kuwait’s Al Rai daily, Zarif said that the plan, named Hormuz Peace Endeavour, offered the chance of “expansive security” and cooperation between Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. Cooperation could include areas such as a regional non-aggression pact, combating terrorism, cybersecurity, energy and freedom of navigation, Zarif said.

“In order to save the region from the edge of ruin, we feel the necessity of realising a new discourse more than ever,” he wrote in the article, a translation of which was provided by his ministry. “The fate of the people and nations of the Persian Gulf is entwined ... either everyone benefits from security in the region or everyone will be deprived of it,” Zarif said.

Tensions have risen in the Gulf since last year when US President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned a 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Iran and began reimposing crippling sanctions. They flared again this May when Iran began reducing its own commitments under the deal and the US deployed military assets to the region. Since then, ships have been attacked, drones downed and oil tankers seized. In June, Trump called off air strikes against Iran at the last minute after the Islamic republic’s forces shot down a US drone.

Last month, twin attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure, which knocked out half the kingdom’s production, drew accusations of blame against Iran not only from the US but also from its European allies. Tehran has denied any involvement in the attacks, which were claimed by Iran-backed rebels fighting a Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The US has since formed a coalition with its allies Australia, Bahrain, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to escort commercial shipping in the Gulf. Tehran has warned that the planned US-led International Maritime Security Construct will only increase instability. — AFP

Kuwait: Turkish military operation threatens stability

KUWAIT: An official source at Kuwait’s foreign ministry said on Wednesday the military operation launched by the Turkish army in northeast Syria posed “a direct threat to the security and stability in the region”. The source urged Turkey and the parties to the conflict in Syria to exercise self-restraint and avoid resorting to the military option. “The military escalation risks undermining the chances of political solution sought by the international community after the tangible progress made in the quest for peace in Syria,” the source said.

The source was referring to the recent success of the Syrian parties in forming a constitutional committee under the mediation of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Syria Geir O Pedersen. Highlighting the need to realize the aspirations of the Syrian people and maintain Syria’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the source called on all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint and avoid resort to military option that could exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Officials participate in the third annual Kuwait’s Achievers for Future Opportunities (KAFO) forum held on Wednesday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The interior ministry yesterday celebrated the graduation of batches 44 and 45 of border security personnel and the graduation of batch 9. Assistant undersecretary for border security Maj Gen Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad expressed the supreme commandment’s pride in border security forces and welcomed the new graduates into the force. Assistant undersecretary for education and training affairs Maj Gen Mizan Al-Jarrah and assistant undersecretary for backup services Maj Gen Zuhair Al-Nasrallah were also present.

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday received and honored Lt Col Saleh Al-Rashed from the traffic department, who was insulted by a sheikh for refusing to violate the law and pass illegal transactions.
ISTANBUL: Turkey pressed its military offensive against US-allied Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria yesterday, shelling towns and bombing 181 targets from the air in an operation that has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. At least 23 fighters with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and eight civilians, two them SDF administrators, have been killed, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The SDF has not given a casualty toll, while six fighters with Turkey–backed rebel groups have also been killed. More than 60,000 people have fled since the offensive began, the Observatory added. The towns of Ras al-Ain and Darbasiya, some 60 km to the east, have been largely deserted as a result of the attack. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan told members of his AK Party in Ankara that 109 militants had been killed so far in the two days of fighting, while Kurds said they were resisting the assault.

According to a senior Turkish security official, armed forces struck weapons and ammunition depots, gun and sniper positions, tunnels and military bases. Jets conducted operations up to 30 km into Syria, and a Reuters witness saw shells exploding just outside the town of Tel Abyad. “The operation is currently continuing with the involvement of all our units... 109 terrorists have been killed so far,” Erdogan said in a speech to members of his AK Party in Ankara.

NATO member Turkey has said it intends to create a “safe zone” for the return of millions of refugees to Syria. But world powers fear the operation could intensify Syria’s eight-year-old conflict, and runs the risk of Islamic State prisoners escaping from camps amid the chaos. Erdogan sought to assuage those concerns, saying that militants from the jihadist group would not be allowed to rebuild a presence in the region.

Taking aim at the European Union and Arab powers Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which have voiced opposition to the operation, Erdogan said those objecting to Turkey’s actions were dishonest. He threatened to permit Syrian refugees in Ankara brands the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia as “terrorists because of their ties to militants who have waged an insurgency in Turkey. But many members of Congress, and US officials, credit the Kurds with fighting alongside American troops to defeat Islamic State militants.

Trump says incursion is a ‘bad idea’

The 22-member Arab League said it would hold an emergency meeting on Saturday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned Turkey’s military incursion and cautioned about the possibility of ethnic cleansing.

“Israel is prepared to extend humanitarian assistance to the gallant Kurdish people,” he wrote on Twitter. Russia said it planned to push for dialogue between the Syrian and Turkish governments following the incursion. Italy condemned the offensive as “unacceptable”, saying military action in the past always led to terror.

Their proposed sanctions would target the assets of senior officials including Erdogan, mandate sanctions over Turkey’s purchase of a Russian S–400 missile defense system and impose visa restrictions. They also would sanction anyone who conducted military transactions with Turkey or supported energy production for use by its armed forces, bar US military assistance to Turkey and require a report on Erdogan’s net worth and assets.

The United Nations Security Council will meet to discuss Syria at the request of the five European members, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Poland. In a letter to the 15-member Council seen by Reuters, Turkey said its military operation would be “proportionate, measured and responsible”. The 22-member Arab League said it would hold an emergency meeting on Saturday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned Turkey’s military incursion and cautioned about the possibility of ethnic cleansing.

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Turkey military hits 181 targets

EU removes UAE, Switzerland from tax-haven list

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“Israel is prepared to extend humanitarian assistance to the gallant Kurdish people,” he wrote on Twitter. Russia said it planned to push for dialogue between the Syrian and Turkish governments following the incursion. Italy condemned the offensive as “unacceptable”, saying military action in the past always led to terror.

‘Bad idea’

The Kurdish-led authority in northern Syria said a prison struck by Turkish shelling holds “the most dangerous criminals from more than 60 nationalities” and Turkey’s attacks on its prisons risked “a catastrophe”. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) holds thousands of Islamic State fighters and tens of thousands of their relatives in detention.

There was no immediate comment on the situation in the prisons from Turkey. Trump called the Turkish assault a “bad idea” and said he did not endorse it. He said he expected Turkey to protect civilians and religious minorities and prevent a humanitarian crisis - as Turkey has said it would. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, usually a vocal Trump ally, has criticized his decision to withdraw US troops from northeastern Syria and unveiled a framework for sanctions on Turkey with Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen.

Trump says incursion is a ‘bad idea’

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WASHINGTON: Two notorious Islamic State jihadists dubbed “The Beatles” who were held by Syrian Kurds are now in US custody and have been moved out of the country, President Donald Trump said yesterday. Turkey has launched an assault on the Syrian Kurdish forces - with which the US partnered to combat Islamic State militants - sparking fears that the offensive could lead to captured fighters they held escaping and reconstituting the group.

“In case the Kurds or Turkey lose control, the United States has already taken the 2 ISIS militants tied to beheadings in Syria, known as the Beatles, out of that country and into a secure location controlled by the US,” Trump tweeted. “They are the worst of the worst!”

The pair were part of an extremely violent all-British four-man cell that kidnapped and tortured foreigners, including journalists, at the height of the Islamic State group’s power in Syria and Iraq.

A US defense official had earlier confirmed they had taken custody of two “high-value” IS individuals from the Kurdistan-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that held the captured jihadists. “They have been moved out of Syria and are in a secure location,” the official said, without identifying where. “They are being held in military custody pursuant to the law of war.” One other member of the four-man jihadist cell was killed in a drone strike and the fourth is imprisoned on terror charges in Turkey.

**Particularly bad**

Their cell is accused of abducting and decapitating around 20 hostages including American journalist James Foley, who was beheaded in 2014. Trump had earlier said the US was taking steps to prevent the potential escape of particularly dangerous Islamic State group fighters amid the Turkish offensive.

“We are taking some of the most dangerous ISIS fighters out and we’re putting them in different locations where it’s secure,” Trump said at the White House.

“We have taken a certain number of ISIS fighters who are particularly bad and we’ve wanted to make sure nothing happened to them with respect to getting out,” he said.

The move addressed one of the most worrisome issues of Trump’s green light to Turkey to invade Syria, where the Kurds, a longtime US battlefield partner, are viewed as a terror threat by Ankara, a NATO ally of Washington.

The SDF have been holding prisoner some 10,000 captured Islamic State group fighters. The SDF-held fighters include around 2,000 of foreign nationality, many of them from European countries that have refused to take them back.

Trump would be responsible for them. “If the Kurds don’t watch, Turkey will watch. They don’t want those people out any more than we do,” he said.

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**Turkish threats to EU with ‘refugee influx’**

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned the EU yesterday that Ankara would allow millions of refugees to head to Europe if the bloc criticized Turkey’s military offensive in Syria. “Hey EU, wake up. I say it again: if you try to frame our operation there as an invasion, our task is simple: we will open the doors and send 3.6 million migrants to you,” Erdogan said in a speech to his party.

Turkey launched an operation into Syrian territory on Wednesday, aimed at combating Kurdish militants tied to insurgents in its own territory.

Erdogan said 109 “terrorists” had been killed so far in the operation, which would soon cover ground from Manbij in northern Syria to the Iraqi border some 350 kilometres east. “God willing, we will crush these snakes’ heads quickly,” he said.

“What we are trying to do is prevent the establishment of a terrorist state on our southern border. This cannot happen,” Erdogan currently hosts 3.6 million refugees from the eight-year conflict in Syria - the highest number in the world.

Under a 2016 agreement with the EU, Turkey agreed to prevent refugees from leaving towards Europe in exchange for six billion euros and visa-free travel for its citizens, but has frequently criticized the lack of assistance from Brussels. “You have never been sincere,” Erdogan said, addressing the EU. “Now they say they will withhold three billion euros from us. Have you ever kept any promise you gave us so far? No.”

One aim of the military operation is to establish a “safe zone” in which at least one million Syrian refugees can be repatriated, after the long-term presence of refugees became an increasingly political liability.

“For those who want to return to their country but don’t have a home left anywhere, we plan to build settlements for one million people, with international financing,” Erdogan said. He also sought to assuage concerns regarding Islamic State prisoners currently held by Kurdish forces.

“They need to be kept in jail. We will keep in jail. We will return foreigners to their home countries if they accept them back,” he said.
Yemen to become world's poorest country if war continues, UN says
79 percent of the population living under the poverty line

DUBAI: War-ravaged Yemen is on course to become the world’s poorest country if the conflict persists, the United Nations said in a report. “If fighting continues through 2022, Yemen will rank the poorest country in the world, with 79 percent of the population living under the poverty line and 65 percent classified as extremely poor,” according to the United Nations Development Program report, published Wednesday. Because of the war, poverty in Yemen has jumped from 47 percent of the population in 2014 to a projected 75 percent by the end of 2019.

Yemen, long the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula, plunged into war after Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa in late 2014. A Saudi-led military coalition launched a blistering offensive months later to prop up the internationally-recognized government of Abdrabbo Mansour Hadi against the Iran-aligned insurgents. The fighting has since killed tens of thousands of people, most of them civilians, and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine.

It has also displaced millions and left more than two thirds of the population living in camps and hostels. The UN has previously described Yemen as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. “Not only has the war made Yemen the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, it has plunged it into a harrowing development crisis too,” UNDP Yemen’s resident representative, Auke Lootsma, said in a statement on Wednesday. “The ongoing crisis is threatening to make Yemen’s population the poorest in the world — a title the already suffering country cannot afford.”

Power-sharing talks

Yemen’s internationally recognized government and southern separatists are holding indirect negotiations and are close to reaching a power-sharing agreement, sources from both sides said. The two camps have been for weeks in indirect and discreet talks in Saudi Arabia’s western city of Jeddah with the kingdom’s mediation, an official from the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) told AFP.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said there has been “a lot of progress” in the past couple of days. A Yemeni government source confirmed that talks between the two parties have been ongoing. In August, fighting between the two camps – both of which are battling Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels – opened a new front in the country’s complex war. But sources from both sides told AFP on Monday that they are close to reaching a power-sharing deal.

“The agreement would stipulate that the government return to Aden and that the Security Belt Forces be responsible for security under the supervision of the Saudis,” a source informed about the negotiations said. The source also said that the deal would include “the participation of the STC in government”. The Security Belt Forces – dominated by the secessionist STC – in August took control of the southern city of Aden, which has served as the government’s base since it was ousted from the capital Sanaa by the Houthi rebels in 2014. The clashes between separatists and government forces – who for years fought on the same side against the Houthis – have raised fears that the country could break apart entirely. The coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 as the Houthi rebels closed in on Aden prompting Yemeni President Abdrabbo Mansour Hadi to flee into Saudi exile. — Agencies

Tunisia presidential hopeful walks free from jail in runoff

TUNIS: Tunisia’s presidential candidate Nabil Karoui received a hero’s welcome as he walked free from jail Wednesday, just days ahead of a runoff against a political newcomer. Karoui’s release is the latest twist in a shock election dominated by political outsiders in the country whose 2011 revolution sparked a wave of regional uprisings. His return to the arena as a free man comes at a time of uncertainty for the country hailed as the sole democratic success story of the Arab Spring. An AFP journalist outside Maoroua prison near Tunis saw a throng of media mogul Karoui’s supporters waving Tunisia’s red-and-white flag and campaign banners as they jubilantly cheered for him. An elated Karoui then left the scene in a black Mercedes, without speaking to the press. The Court of Cassation’s decision to free Karoui, a business tycoon who has been detained since August over a money laundering probe, comes ahead of Sunday’s final presidential vote. Despite being behind bars, he won 15.6 percent of votes in the first round of the presidential poll.

No clear majority

The runoff comes as Tunisia appears poised for complex, rowdy negotiations to form a government. Announced shortly after Karoui’s release, preliminary results of last Sunday’s legislative election showed Islam-inspired party Ennahda came out on top with 52 out of 217 seats – far short of the 109 needed to govern. Karoui’s Qalb Tounes party placed second with 38 seats. In the run-up to the parliamentary poll, Ennahda and Qalb Tounes had officially ruled out forming an alliance. The abstention rate was 58.6 percent, nearly double that of the last legislative polls in 2014, despite the post-revolution constitution putting parliament at the heart of political power. TV pundits contend that the high abstention rate is not only a mark of voter apathy, but also a repudiation of the parties taking part.

A tired electorate

It was a similar sense of rejection of the establishment that catapulted political newcomers Karoui and rival contender conservative law professor Kais Saied to the lead in the September 15 presidential first round. The sidelining of Tunisia’s post-Arab Spring political class in the vote was rooted in frustration over a stagnant economy, high unemployment, failing public services and rising prices. While the country has succeeded in curbing jihadist attacks that rocked the key tourist sector in 2015, its economy remains hampered by austere International Monetary Fund-backed reforms. Saied had announced last weekend he was quitting campaigning in order to avoid an unfair advantage over Karoui.

Televised debate

With the contenders now free to campaign on a level playing field, the pair will face off in a televised debate Friday, one of the organizers said. The debate is expected to begin at 9:00 pm on state-owned TV channel Wataniya. Wataniya has also invited Karoui for an on-screen interview. Previous requests to release Karoui had been turned down and he has branded his arrest as “political”. Karoui’s lawyer Kamel Jlen Messoud said Wednesday that the Court of Cassation had “annulled the detention order” against his client. Another of his lawyers, Nazih Souei, said Karoui remains under investigation, “but he is free”. — AFP

Iraq mourns protest dead

BAGHDAD: Iraq began three days of national mourning yesterday for more than 100 people killed during recent protests, while the government was expected to present a reshuffle to parliament in response to the political crisis. While social media sites in Iraq remained inaccessible – except intermittently via virtual private network (VPN) applications – more images emerged of the violence over the past week in which mainly protesters died from live fire. Footage showed demonstrators – who initially demanded jobs and services before calling for “the fall of the regime” – being fatally shot, or running for cover under heavy fire. Authorities initially blamed “unidentified snipers” and inflicting “saboteurs” but later acknowledged that the military had used “excessive force” in the Shiite bastion of Sadr City in Baghdad. The judiciary also announced that a riot police officer had “confessed to killing a protester” in Hilli, south of Baghdad.

Prime Minister Adel Abdel Madhi responded to public anger in his second public address in less than a week, pledging to propose a cabinet reshuffle to parliament yesterday. The deeply divided assembly depends on the participation of its largest bloc: 54 lawmakers led by populist cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr. The bloc includes ministers but Sadr called for the resignation of the government nearly a week ago. Since protests and violence calmed on Tuesday, the government has proposed reforms to lower youth unemployment, currently at 25 percent, while the labor ministry proposed an online job register. — AFP
Social networks face quandary on politics in the misinformation fight

Biden asks Facebook to take down ‘debunked’ claims

WASHINGTON: As social media firms ramp up their fight against misinformation, politicians have been largely left exempt. To some, that’s a huge problem. Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms have decided to allow politicians including President Donald Trump extra leeway to their rules, seeking to avoid stifling political debate and leaving “newsworthy” content online.

But Trump’s efforts to push falsehoods and conspiracy theories have prompted calls for platforms to rethink those guidelines to prevent the president and others from spreading false and misleading information. Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden recently asked Facebook to take down “debunked” claims in a Trump ad on the leading social network, only to be rebuffed. In a response to Biden, Facebook said statements by politicians, even if false, are “considered direct speech and ineligible for our third-party fact checking program.”

Senator and presidential candidate Kamala Harris meanwhile called on Twitter to ban Trump after the president violated the platform’s rules by accusing his critics of “treason” and warning that Trump’s supporters could “take down” debunked claims in a Trump ad on the leading social network, only to be rebuffed. In a response to Biden, Facebook said statements by politicians, even if false, are “considered direct speech and ineligible for our third-party fact checking program.”

Facebook vice president Nick Clegg said last month the social network would treat speech from politicians “as newsworthy content that should, as a general rule, be seen and heard.”

Gaurav Barret, deputy director of the Stern Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University and author of a report on “Disinformation and the 2020 Election,” said Facebook is now okay with running political ads take down “provably false” information, though he acknowledged that would leave big loopholes for politicians stretching the truth. The report noted that a majority of deliberately deceptive or false information shared on social media comes not from Russia or other foreign sources but from within the United States, making it more complicated to take down. “It’s a real conundrum. I don’t think there’s an easy answer,” Barrett said.

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The emotive issue could fracture the Catholic Church, critics warn

The idea of married priests raises fears of Church split

**Ghana puts nine ‘coup plotters’ on trial for treason**

*ACCRA:* Ghana has charged nine people with treason for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government, in a rare case for one of West Africa’s most stable democracies. The suspects, who were arrested in a security operation last month, pleaded not guilty as they appeared in court in the capital Accra on Wednesday. They include four military officers and five civilians, who were arrested in a security operation last month, and pleaded not guilty as they appeared in court in the capital Accra on Wednesday. They include four military officers and five civilians, who were arrested in a security operation last month.

**Poland’s populists set for victory but majority at risk**

WARSAW: Poland’s governing right-wing party is poised to win a general election on Sunday, buoyed by generous social spending and fiery nationalist rhetoric, but its majority is at risk, giving opposition parties a narrow chance to snatch power. The conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, which has sought to mobilize mainly poorer rural voters by coupling family values with populist promises, faces a challenge from smaller groups, including the far-right.

**Most migrants**

On the economic front, Poland has fared well with strong growth under the PiS, which has sought to provide a clear alternative to Kaczynski’s polarising campaign. “Let’s clean up politics, free Poland from hatred, poverty and political toxic,” she told supporters in Warsaw this week. The KO opposition has vowed to reverse a string of controversial PiS judicial reforms which the EU says threaten judicial independence and the rule of law but has otherwise offered support for fairer elections heading into 2015.

**Migrants**

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WASHINGTON: Democratic White House hopeful Joe Biden called Wednesday for Donald Trump’s impeachment, saying the president “betrayed” the United States, but Trump dug in, predicting that the Supreme Court would have to resolve the fight. “To preserve our constitution, our democracy, our basic integrity, he should be impeached,” Biden told supervisors when he holds campaign rallies in Minneapolis and in Louisiana.

While some believe House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been under pressure to launch the inquiry, and lawmakers predict it could happen this year. Several House committees are gathering information as part of the probe, and while they have been blocked at multiple turns, Pelosi says there is a “growing body of evidence” that shows Trump abused his office.

The process accelerates, Trump’s administration is gearing for war in the courts, and a case Tuesday in Washington related to special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation may prove instructive. In arguing to a judge that House requests for grand jury materials in the Mueller probe be denied, Justice Department lawyers argued that Nixon’s impeachment case and said courts should not have given Watergate grand jury data to Congress, The Washington Post reported.

Nixon went to the Supreme Court in his failed bid to prevent the release of incriminating White House tapes, so there is potential for the high court to be drawn into today’s impeachment fight. Trump said as much Wednesday: “It probably ends up being a big Supreme Court case,” he told reporters, Democrats are mulling whether to engage in a protracted court battle, or wrap up their investigation with the evidence they have, add White House obstruction to articles of impeachment, and pull the trigger.

Democrat Biden calls for Trump’s impeachment

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Trump loyalists see a hyper-partisan abuse of power

WASHINGTON: The White House’s open defiance of the impeachment investigation has thrown the process into turmoil, Donald Trump’s loyalists and adversaries scrambling to carve a path forward in the battle over the American presidency. While some believe House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s effort to hold Trump accountable is a profile in constitutional courage, Trump loyalists see a hyper-partisan abuse of power.

Either way, the process is likely to provoke a “national nightmare,” as constitutional scholar Cass Sunstein put it in his 2017 book “Impeachment: A Citizen’s Guide.” Will Democrats succeed in obtaining documents and testimony from key witnesses such as US diplomats, whose text messages show they helped coordinate efforts to pressure Ukraine into investigating Trump’s political adversary Joe Biden? Or can Trump thwart the process and essentially block congressional oversight?

Next steps?
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In another tweet, Trump dismissed the impeachment process as a Democratic bid to influence the election, saying “their total focus is 2020, nothing more.” But Trump, who broke with precedent by campaigning for reelection almost from the moment he took office in 2017, is himself pouncing on the impeachment as the new cornerstone of his 2020 effort. He and the Republican Party have pushed hard to raise funds off the back of their accusation of unlawful treatment from the Democratic lower house in Congress.

And on Thursday and Friday, Trump will take that message to his core supporters when he holds campaign rallies in Minneapolis and in Louisiana. Even if the House impeaches Trump, it remains unlikely that the Republican-led Senate would convict him in the subsequent trial. However, Trump’s already turbulent presidency would be forever associated with the impeachment.

On Twitter, which Trump is using to bombard the public with conspiracy theories about a “deep state” aiming to eject him, the president argued that Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation may prove instructive. In arguing to a judge that House requests for grand jury materials in the Mueller probe be denied, Justice Department lawyers pointed to Nixon’s impeachment case and said courts should not have given Watergate grand jury data to Congress, The Washington Post reported.

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The migrant caravans: Finding freedom and hardship in America

LOS ANGELES: A year to the day after crossing the US-Mexico border in May 2018, Luis Rodriguez, 20, with his father, Luis, and his younger brother, Bryan, was one of the hundreds of Central American children who crossed the border. Luis, who had been living in the United States for three years, was stopped by US Border Patrol agents and sent back to Mexico. Now, a year later, he is still stuck in Mexico.

For many migrants, the journey to America is a difficult one. The border is often deadly, and the journey is fraught with danger. But for Luis, the journey has been even more difficult. He has been rejected by the US government and is now stuck in Mexico, with no idea when he will be able to return home.

But even as he waits, Luis is still hopeful. He dreams of a better life in America, and he is determined to make it happen. He has been working hard to save enough money to make the journey again, and he is determined to make it happen.

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Racism and anti-Semitism have no place in Germany

Investigator tells German broadcaster: ‘He planned to kill’

HALLE: Germany must crack down on hate, violence and hostility, Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday, a day after a gunman attacked a synagogue and killed two people nearby in a live-streamed rampage. There could have been many more victims had the suspected perpetrator, German national Stephan B., breached the gates to the synagogue in the eastern city of Halle, Merkel said.

The gunman failed to get into the synagogue in Wednesday’s attack, but went on to kill two bystanders in his live-streamed rampage, which appeared to be modeled on last year’s gun attack on a New Zealand mosque. “I am, like millions of people in Germany, shocked and dejected by the crime that was perpetrated in Halle yesterday,” Merkel said to loud applause in an address to a trade union congress in Nuremberg.

“We all know, we only just avoided a terrible attack on the people in the synagogue,” she added. “There could have been many more victims.” In a video of more than 30 minutes that the attacker live-streamed from a helmet camera, he was heard cursing his failure to enter the synagogue before shooting dead a woman passing-by in the street and a man in a nearby kebab restaurant.

Two other people were injured but regional broadcaster MDR said their condition was not critical. “We are happy about every synagogue, every Jewish community and all Jewish life in our country,” Merkel said. “That means the representatives of the state must use all the means of the state to crack down on hate, violence and hostility towards people.” A military source said Stephan B. had done military service, but received no special training. His full name cannot be published under German privacy laws.

German media said investigators had searched the attacker’s home. MDR reported that he lived with his mother in Bennigsen, west of Halle, and that he told reporteurs: “Today is a day of shame and disgrace ... It fills us all with horror that an attack took place in our country, a country with this history.” “I’m very sure the overwhelming majority of this society in Germany wants Jewish life to be part of this country,” Steinmeier said. “We must protect Jewish life.”

**Attack**

Most Jewish institutions in Germany’s large cities have a near-permanent police guard due to occasional anti-Semitic attacks by both far-right activists and Islamist militants. Josef Schuster, president of the council of Germany’s Jewish community, criticized police for not being stationed outside the synagogue that was attacked as dozens prayed inside.

“If police had been stationed outside the synagogue, then this man could have been disarmed before he could attack the others,” Schuster told Deutschlandfunk public radio. In the event, the synagogue’s solid locked gates and high walls provided ample protection against the attacker’s seemingly improvised weapons. Schuster said that while it was normal practice in his experience for all synagogues to have police guards while services were being conducted inside, this appeared not to be the case in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, where Halle is located.

However, the head of Germany’s police union was sceptical about providing that level of protection. “We’d have to guard every synagogue, every church, every mosque, every holy place in Germany around the clock, so I don’t know if this was a mistake or if this really couldn’t have been foreseen,” Oliver Malchow told ARD public television. Germany’s federal prosecutors ramped up their legal case yesterday, saying they would ask the investigating judge at the Federal Court of Justice to issue an arrest warrant against Stephan B, who was detained on Wednesday. —Reuters

Halle gunman’s fumbling, furious assault caught on camera

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: After minutes of stillness punctuated by clicks and muttering, the camera pitches up and shows the close-shaven, youthful face of a man looking into the lens. On Wednesday in the east German city of Halle, the man before the camera is preparing to commit a violent assault against a synagogue that will devolve into a random, blundering search for fresh targets.

The shooter’s technique recalls the self-preparation of the man who killed 51 and wounded dozens at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March. In a heavy German accent, he hurriedly habbies a brief anti-Semitic diatribe blaming Jews for being “at the root of problems” in Western societies. Then the shooter reads an apparently home-made shotgun before driving the short distance to the synagogue, blasting hip-hop over a bluetooth speaker. Parking in the leafy street by the high brick wall of the Jewish cemetery, the man who introduced himself as “Anon” is discouraged when he sees the massive wooden synagogue doors bolted shut. When he fails to barge open smaller entrances, he lights the fuse of a homemade bomb and hurls it over the wall. A shocked old man in a cap hurriedly turns his bike away as the shooter walks from the explosion. After the door resists another bomb, a 50-something woman in a pink shirt, light scarf and glasses walks by, grumbling at the bizarrely-dressed attacker but apparently most unfazed.

He levels an automatic weapon and fires a solid bullet into her back. Further efforts to force the door prove useless, and after pitching more bombs and a molotov cocktail over the wall, he fires another, longer burst into the lifeless body of the woman lying by her car: “Frida!” he shouts, before realising he has punctured a tyre. The automatic weapon lets the killer down when a man stops his van soon after to check on the dead woman. Attempting to fire a new burst, the gun only clicks and he fumbles to change the magazine. When the frightened passer-by has driven off, attempts to blast the lock off the synagogue door with a shotgun are equally unsuccessful. “Sorry guys. I’m a fucking idiot. I can’t kill shit,” he tells his imagined viewers in English as he drives away. Inside the synagogue, worshippers have watched the attacker’s attempts to penetrate the building on the security cameras. “We barricaded our doors from inside and waited for the police,” Jewish community leader Max Privorotzki told Stuttgarter Zeitung. “In between, we carried on with our service.”

A few streets away, the gunman spots a kebab shop and pulls up, grabbing his cobbled-together arsenal. “Doener. That’ll do,” he says under his breath. He tosses one of the bombs inside, firing a final burst with the automatic before it jams for good. But his arrival is enough to scare patrons and the owner, and several men flee from the plush red-upholstered benches into the depths of the store. “He was really calm, like a professional. Perhaps he’s done something like this several times,” proprietor Rifat Tekin, who escaped by ducking behind the salad counter, later told broadcaster NTV. From the shooter’s perspective, there is more wrestling with weapons and cursing as he attempts to harm the men covering at the back of the shop, who are pleading for their lives.

Cartridges rattle onto the floor from his seemingly inept fingers. After briefly stepping outside and scaring pedestrians, he returns to the shop where he executes one of the men at point-blank range with two shotgun blasts, cutting off his cry of “No!” “At least I’ve demonstrated how useless improvised weapons are,” he mutters to himself and the camera on his way out, a lone bottle of cola somehow still standing on one table, another toppled next to an abandoned meal and a pair of glasses at the next.

The police cut off his first attempt at escape in the car, and he exchanges fire with them before falling to the ground for several seconds, struck by a bullet as he attempted to drive off. “I’m bleeding. I’ve been shot in the neck,” he says once he is underway again, groaning with pain and grimacing in the moments his face is visible. He turns the car radio on over hectic, cartoonish music from his bluetooth speaker, but the presenters are discussing the US-China trade war rather than his failed onslaught. “Sorry guys, that was it. A total loser...” the killer says, before tossing the still-broadcasting smartphone out of the window. — AFP
$14.02 bn promised for global fight against AIDS, TB, malaria

France offers to contribute an extra $60 million

LYON: Governments, businesses and philanthropists pledged just over $14 billion yesterday to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, exceeding the target set for a replenishment meeting in Lyon, France. “I am delighted to be able to tell you that having set a target of raising at least $14 billion... we have today secured pledges, commitments for $14.02 billion,” the fund’s chief executive officer Peter Sands announced.

Standing next to conference host Emmanuel Macron, Sands said there had been increases in the pledges of all the G7 bloc of rich countries, 20 donations from African governments, and 11 new donors from the private sector. Sands was speaking shortly after Macron had officially announced the finality of $13.92 billion, just short of the target. Conference organizers said $14 billion would help save 16 million lives and avert 234 million infections by 2023.

Macron, who in the morning described $14 billion as “the minimum,” and warned he would “not allow anyone to leave this room, nor Lyon, until the $14 billion has been obtained”, said several countries had increased their pledges during the day. African countries have promised double the amount they pledged at the fund’s last meeting in Montreal three years ago, he said. “When there is common cause, we know how to reconcile,” he said, thanking Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, who contributed $50 million each.

The total of all the pledges came to $13.8 billion, Macron said. France offered to contribute an extra $60 million from its own coffers, which billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates agreed to match shortly later, however, the money had been found. This was despite government officials having predicted that collecting such a large sum would likely be challenging, especially as global attention moved from AIDS towards fighting climate change. —AFP

EU removes UAE, Switzerland from tax-haven list

LUXEMBOURG: The EU removed Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates from its list of tax havens yesterday, giving two global hubs for multinational tax schemes the all clear. “Albania, Costa Rica, Mauritius, Serbia and Switzerland have implemented ahead of their deadline all necessary reforms to comply with EU tax good governance principles,” the bloc’s 28 finance ministers said. The EU’s grey list has included Switzerland since its launch in December 2017 as the country was deemed as having inadequate tax rules, although it had expressed commitment to reform them. “If Switzerland is off this list, it is a success for me. The best list is the shortest,” said Pierre Moscovici, European Commissioner for Economic Affairs, at a press conference in Luxembourg. Switzerland had approved a tax reform in October 2018, but its entry into force had been delayed due to a referendum.

The United Arab Emirates, which includes Dubai, was also given a clean bill of health, lifted out directly from the blacklist after rushing through reforms. “Today, the EU has whitewashed two of the world’s most harmful tax havens,” said Chiara Putaturo, Oxford’s EU Policy Advisor on Tax. “Despite recent reforms, both countries will continue to offer sweet treats to tax-dodging companies, like very low tax rates, accelerating the race to the bottom on corporate taxation.”

The move leaves only nine countries or territories considered to be uncooperative on the list: American Samoa, Belize, Fiji, Guam, Oman, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States Virgin Islands and Vanuatu. The 28 EU finance ministers drew up the lists – that followed several scandals including Panama Papers and LuxLeaks – in the hopes of “naming and shaming” countries into better combating tax evasion by multinationals and wealthy individuals. Blacklisted countries face only limited sanctions, consisting of freezing them out of European aid or development funding. —AFP

Malaysia must scrap ‘cruel’ death penalty

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian police sometimes use torture to extract confessions from suspects in death penalty cases and their trials are often unfair. Amnesty International said yesterday, piling pressure on the government to abolish capital punishment. The South-east Asian country has the death penalty for dozens of crimes and it is mandatory for murder and drug trafficking.

A reformist alliance which took power in 2018 pledged to scrap capital punishment entirely, a move that would have handed a reprieve to almost 1,300 people on death row. But after facing opposition, officials announced only the mandatory death penalty for some offences would go, leaving it to judges in such cases to decide whether to order someone to hang or jail them. In a new report, Amnesty said that torture and beatings were sometimes used to force confessions from suspects accused of offences punishable by death.

A Malaysian on death row, who was arrested in possession of methamphetamine in 2005, said police broke his finger during interrogation and he was forced to “make a confession” according to Amnesty. It was common for defendants who could not afford a lawyer to go without any legal assistance until charges were brought in court, and they were often left without legal support for long periods, the rights group said.

“From allegations of torture and other ill-treatment to an opaque pardons process, it’s clear the death penalty is a stain on Malaysia’s criminal justice system,” said Shaminn Darshni Kaliemuthu, executive director of Amnesty International Malaysia. “Amnesty International’s research shows why this government must now honor its pledge to abolish this ultimate cruel and inhumane punishment without delay.”

Legislation to make the changes is expected to be tabled in parliament soon. A moratorium on executions has been in place since last year, shortly after the new government took power. Amnesty urged the government to take the first step towards total abolition by eliminating the mandatory death penalty entirely, including for drug-related offences, when it puts forward the new legislation. It said 73 percent of those on death row were convicted of drug crimes. The Malaysian law minister’s office did not have an immediate response to the report. —AFP
Kashmir hotels empty or shut as tourist restrictions lifted

Internet and mobile phones remain cut off in most areas

SRINAGAR: India lifted yesterday restrictions on tourists visiting Kashmir, but for hotels around the picturesque lake in Srinagar two months into a lockdown it was still far from business as usual. Authorities in early August had told holidaymakers to leave “immediately” over “terror threats” to a major Hindu pilgrimage, sending thousands scrambling for places on planes and buses.

A few days later on August 5 New Delhi scrapped Indian-administered Kashmir of its semi-autonomous status, sent in tens of thousands of extra troops and imposed a lockdown. More than two months later the internet and mobile phones remain cut off in most areas and fixed-line phone lines are unreliable, crippling many businesses - including tourism. “Lifting the restrictions on tourists coming will not help until communications are restored,” Vishal Sharma, general manager of the five-star Taj Viva hotel said.

“We haven’t had a single direct call (on the phone) for a booking,” he said, all 83 rooms at the hotel empty. “The last two months were the worst ever.” It was a similar story at the luxury Lalit Grand Palace where a senior member of staff, preferring to stay anonymous, said occupancy in the 113 rooms was “very low”. Most other hotels around the lake were shuttered, as were travel agents, while Srinagar’s famous houseboats, usually full at this time of the year, looked mostly empty.

‘Terrorists’

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since 1947 and has been the spark of several conflicts, each time drawing in the world’s largest military powers - China and India - which have been in a near-constant state of tension since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Most recently in February with tit-for-tat air strikes.

India says that most people in its part of Kashmir support its August 5 move, and that militants backed by Pakistan are covering businesses into not cooperating. It says that communications remain snapped to prevent these “terrorists” organizing attacks.

Authorities say they have killed several militants in gun battles and intercepted weapons. Authorities yesterday also released three low-ranking police officers who along with hundreds of other local lawmakers, activists and others have been detained since August 5. Those still in detention include three former Kashmir chief ministers: Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti. Farooq Abdullah, 81, was formerly arrested in mid-September under a law allowing him to be held for up to two years without charge that has been widely used, and criticized, in Kashmir.

More than 250 people have been sent to jails outside Jammu and Kashmir, the Press Trust of India news agency reported. UN human rights experts have criticized, in Kashmir.

“Fought the police”

An eyewitness told an AFP reporter that the female attacker was dressed in a body and face-covering niqab. “When the car stopped, there were people circling around, protecting him,” he said. “But a man got into the circle and stabbed Wiranto. The woman also tried to stab him. He was arrested and the woman fought the police.” Last year, JAD staged a wave of suicide bombings by families - including young children - at churches in Surabaya, killing a dozen congregants. Many past attacks by Indonesian militants have been against police and other state symbols. Authorities routinely arrest suspected IS-loyal militants that they claim were planning bomb and other attacks. The issue has clouded preparations for a two-day “informal summit” between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping beginning in India today.

India’s August move to split Jammu and Kashmir state into two was seen as a rebuke of China because it will make the Ladakh region - claimed in part by Beijing - of the state a separate administrative territory. China has given diplomatic backing to Pakistan, while part of its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative passes through Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which is claimed by India.— AFP

Minister stabbed by IS-linked pair

JAKARTA: Two members of an IS-linked terror network stabbed Indonesia’s chief security minister Wiranto yesterday, the intelligence head said, as the powerful politician underwent emergency surgery for injuries.

The suspects were identified as 31-year-old Syahril Alamshah and Fitrri Andriana, 21 - a married couple, according to local media. They were members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an extremist group responsible for deadly suicide bombings at churches in Indonesia’s second-biggest city Surabaya last year, State Intelligence Agency chief Budi Gunawan told reporters in Jakarta.

JAD is among dozens of radical groups that have pledged loyalty to the Islamic State group in Indonesia, which has long struggled with Islamist militancy.

“Terrorists”

Wiranto, 72 - who police have said was one of several targets in an earlier failed assassination plot - was rushed by helicopter to the capital where he underwent emergency surgery for his wounds.

He has faced controversy over alleged human rights violations and allegations of crimes against humanity linked to Indonesia’s brutal occupation of East Timor. In May, police said Wiranto and three other top officials were targeted in a failed assassination plot linked to deadly riots in Jakarta after Widodo’s re-election victory. A group of six people - arrested before they could carry out the killings - planned to murder the officials and an election pollster in a bid to plunge the country into chaos, police said at the time.— AFP
This photograph shows a sculpture titled ‘Goliath Monumental’ carved by French artist Christophe Charbonnel in the streets of Mont de Marsan, southwestern France, during the 11th edition of the triennial ‘Sculptures of Mont de Marsan’ on the theme of Myths. — AFP

Olga Tokarczuk, Peter Handke win Literature Nobels
See Page 20
Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk yesterday won the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature, which was delayed over a sexual harassment scandal, while Austrian novelist and playwright Peter Handke took the 2019 award, the Swedish Academy said. Tokarczuk, considered the most talented Polish novelist of her generation, was honored “for a narrative imagination that with encyclopaedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life”. Her books portray a polychromatic world perpetually in motion, with characters’ traits intermingled and language that is both precise and poetic.

Handke meanwhile won “for an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience,” the Academy said. Handke “has established himself as one of the most influential writers in Europe after the Second World War.” His works are filled with a strong desire to discover and to make his discoveries come to life by finding new literary expressions for them, the Academy said. Tokarczuk and Handke each take home a cheque worth nine million kronor. Tokarczuk becomes just the 15th woman to have won the prestigious distinction, out of 116 literature laureates honored since 1901.

Academy rocked by scandal

Dating back to 1786, the Swedish Academy is at pains to repair its reputation after a devastating scandal that saw Frenchman Jean-Claude Arnault, who has close ties to the Academy, jailed for rape in 2018. The Academy was torn apart by a deep rift between members over how to manage their ties to him. The dispute exposed scheming, conflicts of interest, harassment and a culture of silence among its 18 members, long esteemed as the country’s guardians of culture.

The revelations shook Sweden, a Lutheran nation that prides itself on transparency and consensual democracy and is intolerant of inequality. Arnault is married to Katarina Frostenson, a member of the Academy who later resigned over the scandal at the height of the #MeToo movement against harassment of women. The pair also ran a cultural club in Stockholm that received funding from the body.

Ultimately, seven members quit the Academy. In later years, it postponed the 2018 prize until this year—the first delay in 70 years. “From having been associated with literature of the highest order, the Nobel Prize is for many now associated with #MeToo... and a dysfunctional organisation,” Swedish literary critic Madelaine Levy told AFP. Even before the scandal, the Academy had courted controversy in 2016 when it gave the prestigious prize to US singer songwriter Bob Dylan, leading some to question its judgement.

The Academy has in the past year been revamped with new members and statutes. Literature professor Mats Malm took over as the new permanent secretary in June. “The changes have been very productive and we are hopeful for the future,” Malm told AFP in an interview just days before the prize announcement. He acknowledged the affair had tainted the institution and said improvements were still needed.

“A lot of hard work remains, of that we are certain.” In 2017, the last year the prize was awarded, it went to British author of Japanese origin Kazuo Ishiguro, best known for his novel “The Remains of the Day”. —AFP

The Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, Mats Malm, announces the winners of the 2018 and 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm, Sweden. —AFP photos

Members of the Nobel Committee for Literature, left to right, Chairman Anders Olsson, Per Wastberg, Rebecka Karde, Mikaela Blomqvist and Henrik Petersen announce the winners of the 2018 and 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature.
Poland’s Olga Tokarczuk: Perpetual motion literature

Olga Tokarczuk, considered the most talented Polish novelist of her generation, has a string of best-sellers to her name and a style that blends the real with the mysterious. A vegetarian and environmentalist with long, dark dreadlocks, the 57-year-old writer is also a political activist who does not shy away from criticizing Poland’s right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) government. She received death threats in 2015 after telling state media that an open and tolerant Poland was a myth. Her publishers assigned her a security detail for a week.

Her books portray a polychromatic world perpetually in motion, with characters’ traits intermingled and language that is both precise and poetic. “I don’t have a clear biography of my own that I could recount in an interesting way. I’m made up of the characters that I pulled out of my head, that I invented,” Tokarczuk said in an interview with The Polish Book Institute. “I’m made up of all of them. I have a huge, multi-frame biography.”

Tokarczuk has written more than a dozen books and won numerous honours, including Britain’s Man Booker International Prize last year and Poland’s most prestigious Nike Literary Award—twice. Her books have been turned into plays and films and translated into more than 25 languages, including Catalan, Hindi and Japanese.

Mystic
Born on January 29, 1962, in the western town of Sulechow, Tokarczuk studied psychology at the University of Warsaw. She worked as a therapist for a few years in the western city of Walbrzych and published a collection of poems before taking a stab at prose. Following the success of her early books, she turned to writing full time and wrote a bestselling novel set in the Sudety mountains near the Czech border.

The mother of one is an animal lover with a keen interest in astrology and psychanalyst Carl Jung. “She’s a mystic in constant search of the truth,” a truth that can only be perceived on the move, by transcending borders,” said Kinga Dunin, a friend and fellow writer. “All set forms, institutions and language are death,” Dunin told AFP.

Spanning borders
Tokarczuk’s first novel, “The Journey of the People of the Book,” released in 1993, chronicles a failed expedition to find a mysterious book. She won the Booker International Prize along with her translator Jennifer Croft for her 2007 novel “Flights,” whose English version came out in 2017. The book was praised for its “series of startling juxtapositions” (as Tokarczuk) flies us through a galaxy of departures and digressions, all the while exploring matters close to the contemporaneity and human predicament.”

Her 900-page “The Books of Jacob” spans seven countries, three religions and five languages, tracing the little-known history of Frankism, a Jewish messianic sect that sprang up in Poland in the 18th century. Released in 2014, its pages are numbered in reverse in the style of Hebrew books. It became both an award-winning bestseller and the target of harsh criticism from nationalist circles in Poland.

Tokarczuk also co-wrote the screenplay for the Polish crime film “Spoor,” which won the Alfred Bauer Prize for a work of particular innovation at the Berlin film festival in 2017. “Spoor” was also selected as Poland’s entry for the best foreign language film at the 2018 Oscars. When not travelling, Tokarczuk divides her time between an apartment in Poland’s western city of Wrocław and her mountain home.—AFP

Peter Handke: Avant-garde writer, Nobel critic

Austrian Peter Handke, one of the most original German-language writers alive, once used his famously sharp tongue to call for the Nobel Prize in Literature to be abolished. The prize brings its winner “false canonization” along with “one moment of attention (and) six pages in the newspaper,” the novelist, playwright, poet and translator told Austrian media in 2014. It was not the first time that Handke had shown himself to be an iconoclast. He has described Thomas Mann, a giant of German literature and a 1929 Nobel laureate, as a “terribly bad writer” churning out “condescending, snotty-nosed prose”.

But what really appalled many peers and fans was his attendance at former Serbian president Slobodan Milošević’s funeral, and his sympathy for the Serbs in the 1990s Yugoslav wars. Handke was born in southern Austria during World War II on December 6, 1942 to a German soldier father and a mother from Austria’s Slovenian minority. After a few early years in Communist East Berlin, Handke grew up back in Austria and first discovered his love of writing while contributing to the magazine of his hated Catholic boarding school.

He burst onto the literary scene in 1966 with his novel “The Horns of Terminus” and with a play, “Offending the Audience”, in which four actors dissect the nature of theatre and then turn on the audience. That success led him to kiss goodbye to his law studies and write full-time. He has never looked back, leading a paradoxical existence and writing prolifically.

Cult classics
Notable works include “Short Letter, Long Farewell”, the poetry collection “The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld” and “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams” about his mother, who killed herself in 1971. He has also been no slouch in film-making, cooperating several times with German directors and close friend Wim Wenders. Many of their works explore themes such as loneliness and mortality. In 1972, Wenders adapted Handke’s novel “The Goalkeeper’s Fear of the Penalty” about a goalie who is sent off during a match and later commits a murder.

The pair also worked together in the 1987 cult classic “Wings of Desire”, about a pair of angels roaming Berlin. In the 1990s Handke emerged as a vocal defender of the Serbs in the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia, even comparing them to the Jews under the Nazis, a remark he later retracted. His 1996 travelogue “A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia”, caused a storm, and in 1999 he returned Germany’s prestigious Buechner prize in protest at NATO’s bombing of Belgrade.

An indignity
At the 2006 funeral of Milošević—who died while on trial for crimes against humanity, and who wanted Handke to testify in his defence—the writer made a speech in front of thousands of mourners. Some stood up for Handke, including Nobel-winning compatriot Elfriede Jelinek. But many others, from Susan Sontag to Salman Rushdie, lined up to lambast him. German poet and essayist Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, noting Handke’s 1960s firebrand past, said it was “a paradox that the remnants of the peace movement are running around with supporters of mass murder”.

In 2006 an outcry forced him to reject another German prize—the Heinrich Heine award—and the Comédie-Française theatre in Paris refused to put on one of his plays. And when, in 2014, he came to collect the Ibsen prize in Norway, he was greeted with demonstrators chanting “fascist” and holding “genocide-denier” placards. “What an indignity!” Handke told the Austria Press Agency afterwards. “Not for me, but for the seriousness of writing.” But despite it all, at 76 and with a mane of grey hair, Handke remains active.

His play, “The Innocent, Me and the Unknown Woman by the Side of the Road”, premiered at Vienna’s hallowed Burgtheater in February 2016, while later that year a Wenders-Handke creation, “The Beautiful Days of Aranjuez”, competed at the Venice Film Festival. “Without him I would perhaps have become a painter,” Wenders said. — AFP
Burning love: Afghan Elvis's legacy endures, decades after death

Sporting a black quiff and sideburns, Ahmad Zahir sang of love and heartbreak in liberal 1970s Kabul—a city now plagued by war and suffering, but where the popularity of Afghanistan's "Elvis" remains undimmed 40 years after his death. Zahir—the son of a former prime minister with a penchant for brandy and his red Mercedes-rose to fame in an era when the capital hummed with Western tourists and women strolled through the streets in high heels.

"Everybody loved him," 73-year-old Safiullah Sobat, a longtime friend of Zahir, told AFP. "At nighttime girls would come outside his house and honk the horn of their cars." But on the day of his 33rd birthday in 1979, Zahir was found dead in his car in mysterious circumstances. His death—much like his life—has become part of folklore.

In Afghanistan today, where space for music and dance has shrunk under the shadow of war, music channels still play his songs daily and fans—even those born decades after his death—continue fanning the flames. "His songs will touch your heart no matter what mood you are in, happy or sad," says Hashmat, who goes by one name and is his time friend of Zahir, told AFP. "At nighttime girls would come outside his house and honk the horn of their cars."

The 26-year-old welcomes his customers—mostly young couples—with tea, a hookah pipe and most importantly, their hero’s songs. Zahir’s music—Pashtun-played concerts in various locations across the country and had fans among all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, which is far more polarised now than at the height of his fame. "Today we see ethnic rivalries have sadly increased but Ahmad Zahir’s music is still connecting people," explains Basir Barhan, a 30-year-old amateur musician.

Rumors and secrets

The 1960s and 70s are remembered as a golden age of music for Afghanistan, when young musicians were mostly influenced by Indian classics and would flock to “Radio Kabul” - the only radio broadcaster at the time—to record hits at their studio. Zahir’s best-known works were inspired by Persian poets like Rumi and Hafiz, and he sang mostly in Dari or Afghan Persian. But he did not shy away from covering Western greats such as France’s Enrico Macias and, of course, Elvis Presley.

"At a time when singers shaking their bodies or dancing on stage was seen as awkward, he appeared on stage and shore doing exactly that," said Zahir’s friend Sobat, who also runs “Ahmad Zahir’s Art and Culture Centre” in Kabul. “He was talking about Elvis a lot and when you look at his hairstyle, his clothes, the way he moved his body in concerts, you realise he was inspired by Elvis.” Over the decades since his death, conflicting accounts have surfaced about whether Zahir—who recorded more than 20 albums in his short life—was killed or died in a car accident.

The official line was that he was killed in a crash near the Salang Pass, north of Kabul. But many maintain the communist regime assassinated him after his songs became increasingly critical, or because of rumors he had a secret affair with the daughter of the then prime minister. Sobat believes he was murdered. “When I saw his body in the coffin, there was hole in his forehead with signs of burns. He was shot at close range,” he said.

Years of war have followed and under the Taliban, who banned music, Zahir’s grave in Kabul was desecrated. But it has been rebuilt and since then, every June 14, his birthday, pilgrims have flocked to Shohada-E-Salehin Cemetery on the southern edge of Kabul to lay flowers on his grave and play one of his last memorable songs. “My death shall arrive one day! In a spring bright with waves of light/ Oh, perhaps my lovers at midnight/lay wreathe on my sorrow (full) grave,” the lyrics read. — AFP
B<br>ritis super star DJ Fatboy Slim paid tribute to teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg by performing a remix of his hit song “Right Here, Right Now,” using samples from her dramatic UN speech. The 56-year-old artist played the mash-up, made by South African electronic artist David Scott, at a show in Gateshead, northeast England, last Friday, with a video clip of the performance recently going viral on social media.

The remix samples Thunberg’s demands for action against climate change in her fiery speech at the United Na-

tions last month to be taken “right here, right now”; using it during each refrain of the song’s title. It also includes other excerpts from the 16-year-old Swede’s speech. “When Greta spoke to the UN and I saw the video and it was quite late at night, and as soon as she said ‘right here, right now’, the Fatboy Slim song popped into my head and I just knew in that moment I had to create a mash-up,” Scott told AFP.

“When Fatboy Slim picked up the video and reposed it, it was a massive shock and a massive honour as well. I’ve always looked up to him as a music producer. “If you look at the (original) video as well it ties into the whole story, it’s the story of evolution, how we came from the sea and evolved into humans and now we are at this stage where we consume and consume, and that’s where the video ends, with this big fat kid,” he added. Hundreds of protesters have blocked central London streets this week as part of worldwide events organized by Extinction Rebellion, the climate movement partly inspired by the pigtailed activist.—AFP

In Brooklyn catacombs, classical music rises among the dead

Deep in one of New York’s most prestigious cemeteries, the eerie vibrations of a string concerto ricochet off catacomb walls, a seance of sorts invigorating the spirit of classical music. Media reports regularly warn of the genre’s impending doom, but Andrew Ousley, who founded the cheekily named “Death of Classical” series, says the obituaries are beyond premature. “Classical music can be relevant, it can be impactful for people who are not already among the template,” he told AFP at a rehearsal in Brooklyn’s famed Green-Wood Cemetery for this week’s concert series.

“The music is not dead; it’s the creativity of the approach in getting to audiences that feels more the issue to me.” After debuting his “Cryp Sessions” series—an intimate show held in the crypt of Harlem’s Church of the Intercession—in 2015, Ousley began curating shows in the National Historic Landmark cemetery, using the 1850s-era catacombs normally closed to the public as a venue.

The artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein and William “Boss” Tweed, known for his corrupt mid-19th century political reign over New York, are among Green-Wood’s famous residents. The spooky haunts offer “extraordinary acoustics” that lend “an incredible generosity of sound, that for classical, for acoustic music, for strings, voice, piano, is unbelievably enhancing,” Ousley said.

“The catacomb shows known as the “Angel’s Share” series—named after a distiller’s term for whiskey that evaporates as the liquor matures—include tastings of the spirit that encourage concert-goers to mingle. “I think it’s important to surround the music, to be as welcoming and unpretentious as possible for people who have never been.”

For Eli Spindel, the artistic director of the String Orchestra of Brooklyn that will play this week’s program, major classical music institutions do sometimes “tend to be too conservative.” “But the things that they’re able to accomplish are amazing and couldn’t be accomplished by people with smaller budgets, smaller venues,” he said. “You do want to have orchestras who are performing Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, in the highest level in a large hall.”

He sees traditional venues and more eccentric classical performances as essential to maintaining a healthy ecosystem for the genre to thrive. This week, the program in Green-Wood aptly centers on the subject of grief and “how we find catharsis and meaning in the loss of life,” Ousley said. The showcased piece is “Stabat Mater,” a medieval Christian hymn to Mary whose musical score was composed by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi in 1736.

The concert also features Samuel Barber’s melancholic “Adagio for Strings” and Arvo Pärt’s “Fratres,” performed as immersive visual projections dance on the catacomb’s arched space. “The smallest motion of the bow will just create very beautiful, blooming sound,” said Spindel. “This is a very appropriate chamber for this music,” he added with a smirk.—AFP
Mexico says last goodbye to legendary singer Jose Jose

Thousands of tearful fans said a final goodbye in Mexico City Wednesday to superstar singer Jose Jose, whose death last month triggered national mourning and a family feud worthy of a telenovela. The government said 15,000 people thronged the Palace of Fine Arts in the heart of the Mexican capital to file past a gold-plated coffin and cry for “The Prince of Song,” whose velvety voice and ballads of heartbreak made him one of the most successful Latin American singers of all time.

A Mexican air force plane flew Jose Jose’s ashes—half of them, anyway—to his native Mexico City from Miami, where the musician died of complications from pancreatic cancer on September 28 at age 71. The other half remained in Florida, under a grudging deal negotiated between his eldest children, Jose Joel and Marysol, and their half-sister, Sarita, who lived in Miami with her father and initially resisted plans to bring his body back to Mexico.

In the days after their father’s death, Jose Joel and Marysol accused Sarita of hiding his body, seeking to get rich off his death and “putting on make-up” amid the family’s mourning. They went as far as to file a police report, hire a lawyer and insist on an autopsy, before the Mexican consulate in Miami and President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador himself intervened to mediate.

‘He’s home now’

Under the truce brokered by the Mexican government, half of Jose Jose’s cremated remains stayed in Florida with Sarita and her mother-Cuban national Sara Salazar, who was the singer’s third wife. Jose Joel and Marysol, who were born to Jose Jose’s second wife, took the other half to Mexico. “We have brought back the heart of our beloved Prince of Song, my father. He’s home now,” said Jose Joel at the Mexico City airport, where white-gloved ushers placed Jose Jose’s coffin in a glistening vintage hearse.

Escorted by police, the hearse made its way to the Palace of Fine Arts, where the coffin was placed on a red carpet beneath a giant black-and-white picture of Jose Jose with the words “How sad it was to say goodbye”—the opening lyrics to his most famous song, “El Triste.” “He was one of a kind, unique in all the world. No one can ever, ever replace him,” said Leticia Hernandez, 58, carrying a poster with photographs of the singer, as the National Symphony Orchestra played his classic songs in the background.

A microphone and roses are seen on top of the coffin of late Mexican singing legend Jose Jose during a tribute at the Fine Arts Palace in Mexico City. — AFP photos

The first wife of late Mexican singing legend Jose Jose, Anel Norena, left, and their children Jose Joel, second left, and Marysol, right, stand by the singer’s coffin during a tribute at the Fine Arts Palace in Mexico City.
“He will live on in our hearts,” another mourner, 52-year-old Araceli Segura, said through tears. The coffin was then brought for a mass at the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico’s patron saint.

Collective grief

Throngs of mourners also gathered at a statue of the singer in his home neighborhood, Claveria, for a collective outpouring of grief. The hearse made a stop there, then brought the half of Jose Jose’s remains to the Panteon Frances cemetery, where they were laid to rest alongside those of his mother, a concert pianist, Jose Romulo Sosa Ortiz, as he was born, sold more than 100 million albums in a career spanning over five decades.

He adopted the stage name Jose Jose in tribute to his father, an opera singer who was also named Jose, after his death in 1968. Living under the constant gaze of the public, Jose Jose openly struggled with alcoholism. He quit drinking in 1993, but health issues led him to give up singing as his voice gave out in the early 2000s. He moved to Miami in 1995 with Salazar. —AFP
Tourists surge at Uluru before Australia bans climb

Large numbers of tourists are rushing to scale Uluru—also known as Ayers Rock—ahead of a looming ban on climbing a site sacred to indigenous Australians. Photographs of hundreds of people scaling up the giant red monolith have provoked a social media backlash, with critics lashing as “ignorant” those going against the wishes of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land, the Anangu.

“A mass of morally and ethically bankrupt people,” indigenous woman Laura McBride tweeted alongside an image showing a queue of people snaking up the side of Uluru. “One even hiking a toddler up, teaching the next generation how to be ignorant.” “Imagine rushing to climb Uluru before it closes just so you could brag about disrespecting the oldest living culture in the world.” tweeted National Indigenous Television journalist Madeline Hayman-Reber, who called the scenes “embarrassing”.

Officials say the ban, which comes into effect on October 26, is intended to show respect for cultural practices, protect the site from further environmental damage and to ensure visitors’ safety. More than 305,000 people visited the Uluru-Kata National Park in the 12 months to June 2019, according to Parks Australia, about 20 percent more than the previous year. Around 13 percent of those who visited during that period made the climb, park authorities said.

More recent figures are not available but Tourism Central Australia CEO Stephen Schwer said there had been a “significant jump” in the number of people visiting in recent weeks, with the period leading up to the ban coinciding in part with school holidays. “It’s been very busy, particularly down in the national park precinct itself,” he told AFP. “We’ve had quite an issue with accommodation availability, because there’s a lot of people wanting to climb Uluru before it closes. It’s been a busier than normal holiday period.”

Japanese visitors and Australians on driving holidays were most likely to want to scale Uluru, Schwer said, though he urged them not to do so. Australian tourist Belinda Moore, 33, drove to Uluru from her home in central Queensland to ascend the rock, an experience she said she “absolutely loved”. “It’s always been amazing just to see it. I would still recommend it. It’s been a busier than normal holiday period made the climb, park authorities said.

Uluru has great spiritual and cultural significance to indigenous Australians, with their connection to the site dating back tens of thousands of years. Though visitor numbers were expected to decline once the ban was in place, Schwer said local tourism operators were “not particularly concerned” as it would return the area to normality. “People need to remember that in central Australia we’re a very interconnected community,” he said. “The people who are requesting the climb closure are our friends and colleagues. “We’re just looking forward to being able to have the climb consigned to the annals of history.”—AFP

Japan student uses invisible ink to ace ninja report

A Japanese student aced an assignment on ninja culture by making her own invisible ink from soybeans in a stealthy move that impressed her professor. Eimi Haga, a member of Mie University’s ninja club, turned in an essay on a visit to a museum about the nimble assassins with an attached message to heat it before reading. “I knew that I needed to take it home and put it above a stove,” said Yuji Yamada, who teaches Japanese history, including ninja culture. “She replicated what is written in records of ninja art. She tried to prove what was written actually works and went through a trial-and-error process. I was impressed,” he said. When the characters of Haga’s essay revealed themselves in the heat, Yamada—who had promised his students extra marks for creativity—decided to award her an A. Haga, 19, made the ink by soaking soybeans overnight and then squeezing them into a paste.

She told AFP she had tested three different kinds of paper for the optimum effect. “If the paper is too thin, it burns when heated. If it’s too thick, it doesn’t absorb the ink very well,” she said. “I usually use pens and PC to write things. It’s been a while since I took a brush to write with an invisible ink,” she said. Yamada said reports filed as scrolls or folded into throwing stars were the most creative his students had been up until now. “We discussed the use of invisible ink, but I was amazed that someone actually used it,” he said, adding that he didn’t read the entire paper because he wanted to keep some of Haga’s work invisible. “By learning about ninja... we can apply their knowledge and ways to modern society.”—AFP
Morocco's rugged Rif Mountains have long been renowned for their cannabis but traditional varieties are being smoked out by foreign hybrids offering higher yields and greater potency. The local strain of marihuana, known as Beldiya, is coveted by aficionados but is gradually disappearing from the fields in the North African kingdom. Nowadays in Ketama, a region in the heart of the northern Rif, a strain called “Critical” is king.

Hicham, a 27-year-old cannabis farmer, says that he grows Critical because “the new imported seeds give a much higher yield.” Major cannabis producers decide what to plant and “hybrid plants have become a market all on their own,” said Moroccan anthropologist Khalid Mouna, who has written a thesis on the economics of Ketama’s cannabis production.

Critical, which Mouna said comes from the Netherlands, is the latest hybrid created in laboratories in Europe or North America to be introduced to Morocco. With names like “Pakistania”, “Amnesia” and “Gorilla”, hybrids are popular for their potency and affordability. Critical sells for 2,500 dirhams per kilo ($252, 230 euros), while Beldiya goes for up to 10,000 dirhams per kilo.

A villager stand in a fields of cannabis near the town of Ketama in Morocco’s northern Rif region.—AFP photos

Buoying production

Morocco has long been a leading producer and exporter of hashish-refined cannabis resin—even though the production, sale and consumption of drugs is illegal in the country. A quarter of hashish seizures worldwide originated from Morocco between 2013 and 2017, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. While Morocco’s cannabis cultivation is falling, the adoption of hybrids means hashish production has remained stable. In 2003, 134,000 hectares were under cannabis cultivation, falling to 47,500 hectares by 2011 under a large official reconversion program, according to a 2015 study by the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT). But modern hybrid strains produce five to 10 kilos of hashish per quintal, a traditional unit of weight equivalent to 100 kilos, compared to a single kilo for kif, as local cannabis is known. “The substitution of hybrids for kif has barely decreased,” the study said.

Livelihood

In Ketama, kif is part of the culture. Producing it and smoking it are tolerated by the authorities and its cultivation provides a livelihood for 90,000 to 140,000 people in an otherwise deprived region known for its poor soil. People in the area told AFP that it was mostly traffickers or intermediaries who bought the cannabis harvest for smuggling to Europe or other Moroccan towns.

Hicham divides his time between his cannabis field and a café, where he and his friends smoke joints and watch satellite TV—a distraction from unemployment, he says. In this rural region, job prospects are rare, with one in four young people unemployed, according to official figures. Hicham and his friends all left school early to support their families, and many have left for Europe in search of work. Those who stay mostly work seasonally for large cannabis growers, earning about 100 dirhams per day for a month or two at a time. Most lack the money to get set up and work for themselves.

Environmental cost

The high yields of imported hybrid cannabis plants come at a cost however. The strains require heavy fertilization, which can damage the soil. And their insatiable thirst threatens the region’s water supplies, according to the OFDT. Critical grows in the dry summer, requiring heavy irrigation, while Beldiya is planted in winter, depending only on rainfall. Some locals complain that major producers enforce the planting of hybrids even in arid areas. “The traffickers impose it and the people don’t have any other choice,” says Mohamed Benyahya, a local community figure. To water their plantations, major producers install solar pumps on the roofs of their mansions. Not far from Hicham’s local café, a vast terraced cannabis plantation sprawls up a nearby mountain. Rows of carefully maintained plants are watered by drip irrigation via a network of pipes connected to a reservoir.

To legalize, or not

Hybrids like Critical are notable also for high levels of THC, marijuana’s main psychoactive chemical. The adoption of hybrids explains the “rapid and significant increase in the average THC content” of seized Moroccan hashish, according to the OFDT. For smokers, the effect compared to Beldiya is pronounced. “One makes you think, the other makes you paranoid,” says Mohamed, a friend of Hicham.

“European consumers no longer want hybrid cannabis on account of its high THC levels,” Mouna said. “Traditional Moroccan cannabis remains highly coveted, particularly by advocates of legalization.” Cannabis decriminalization remains controversial in the conservative country. Proposals to legalize cannabis have so far met fierce political opposition. For Mouna, legalization could help regulate cannabis consumption while also preserving the more traditional and environmentally friendly Beldiya. And, while Hicham may have switched to growing Critical, he still only smokes Beldiya. “The modern varieties,” he says, “are mediocre.”—AFP
One day after the blaze that scarred Notre-Dame, President Emmanuel Macron addressed a nation in shock at the damage to one of its great cultural landmarks, with a promise that rang as clearly as the peal of the cathedral’s bells. “We will rebuild the cathedral even more beautifully and I want it to be finished within five years,” Macron said on national television on the evening of April 16, 2019. “And we can do it,” he added.

But six months after the April 15 fire that tore through the roof of the 13th-century Paris cathedral and toppled its spire, the reconstruction process is shaping up to be much more complex than many anticipated. Workers have had to clean up significant quantities of lead that melted from the roof and contaminated areas around the cathedral, with critics saying the authorities were slow to warn the public of the risks.

There remains no consensus on how the cathedral should look after reconstruction, with many experts wanting the spire to be rebuilt exactly like the original, and Macron arguing for an innovative solution. Above all, the process of securing an edifice still at risk of collapse after the fire damage has taken precedence over any reconstruction. It is only at the end of 2020 that a complete check will allow architects to work out how to restore the cathedral. No reconstruction is expected to start before 2021.

Six months on, Notre-Dame’s rebirth still years away

In this file photo Patrick Palem, expert of the heritage restoration, holds the head of a statue showing the face of French architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc as Saint Thomas, stored in SOCRA workshop in Marsac-sur-Isle near Bordeaux, one of the statues which sat around the spire of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris and removed for restoration.
Not scaremongering

It is impossible at this stage to say “how much this is going to cost, how long this is going to last,” said Michel Aupetit, the archbishop of Paris. Macron’s five-year goal would see the cathedral’s reconstruction completed in the spring of 2024, before Paris hosts the Olympic Games that year. The top priority is to eliminate any risk to the vaulted ceiling, with the main danger coming from 500 tons of scaffolding that was erected around the fire for renovation work before the blaze.

The damage caused by just a single bar of scaffolding falling could prove irreparable, and the work to remove the structure will take several months. “This is not scare-mongering, it is a physical reality,” said Christophe-Charles Rousselot, director general of the Fondation Notre-Dame, the charity that is overseeing the gathering of donations to the cathedral. With regards to the spire, a late addition to the mediaeval cathedral designed by the 19th-century French architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, many see it as an integral part of the building.

“It needs to be rebuilt as it was before,” said Philippe Villeneuve, the architect in charge of restoring the cathedral, arguing that the sheer power of the spire integrated it with the mediaeval church. His is backed by Viollet-le-Duc’s descendants and, according to opinion polls, the French public. But the government has left open the possibility of an international competition for architects to design something new.

‘I feel orphaned’

Experts are also intensively researching the precise original architecture of the cathedral, so that when reconstruction begins it is as accurate as possible. “Before 2010, we only have old-style surveys, plans that have been redrawn on numerous occasions which are very partial and very imprecise,” said Remi Fromont, one of the architects responsible for the site who is working on drawing up accurate plans.

Andrew Tallon, a Belgium-born scholar who died aged 49 in November 2018, carried out hugely valuable laser scans of the interior in 2010 that have proved an even more valuable
legacy than he could have imagined. “We know that we will have shortcomings. Not all the chapels were systematically scanned. There are still areas of doubt,” Fromont said.

In the aftermath of the fire, private individuals and above all rich French cooperations rushed to pledge hundreds of millions for the rebuilding of the cathedral. There were concerns whether this funding would ever be realized. But France’s richest man Bernard Arnault in September signed a formal accord over his pledge of 200 million euros ($220 million), as did the Pinault family for their promised 100 million euros.

A signing on another 100 million promised by the oil giant Total is awaited in October. The consortium of fundraising groups behind the drive believes that 800 million euros ($890,000) can be raised in total, with over 616 million euros now either transferred or pledged. But lovers of the historic masterpiece, be they tourists, architecture buffs or worshippers, may have to wait some time before Notre-Dame becomes theirs again.

“I have felt myself orphaned, it is like being in mourning,” said Michele Chevalier, 70, a regular at Notre-Dame who was at the service when the first evacuation took place. “I still manage to pray, but it’s not the same.” —AFP

This file photo shows the altar surrounded by charred debris inside the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris in the aftermath of a fire that devastated the cathedral.

This file photo shows damage on the nave and rubble during preliminary work in the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral three months after a major fire.

This file photo shows parts of a destroyed ribbed vault and scaffolding.

A picture shows the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.
Yesterday's Solution

Happy New Year

Crossword 2330

ACROSS
1. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
2. A crown-like jewelled headdress worn by women on formal occasions.
3. A species of the people inhabiting an area of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
4. A tall, wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
5. A member of a North American Indian people living around the mouth of the Colorado river.
6. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
7. A plant with glossy lanceolate leaves.
8. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
9. Enthusiastic or ardent.
10. A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
11. Standard time in the 5th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 75th meridian.
12. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
13. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
14. A can for storing tea.
15. Relating to or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
16. A rotary duplicator that uses a stencil through which ink is pressed (trade mark Roneo).
17. A flat, wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
19. Be a signal for or a symptom of.
20. A doctor's degree in optometry.
21. A sign of assent or salutation or commitment.
22. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
23. A member of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
24. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
25. Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
26. A polite name for any woman.
27. A species of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
28. A species of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
29. Lacking companions or companionship.
30. Soreness and warmth caused by friction.
31. The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
32. The basic unit of money in Israel.
33. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
34. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
35. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
36. English theoretical physicist who applied relativistic theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antiparticles and the positron (1902-1984).
37. A member of a North American Indian people living around the mouth of the Colorado river.
38. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
40. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
41. A species of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
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69. Anything that serves as an enticement.
70. A can for storing tea.
71. Take in solid food.
72. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
73. European twinning plant whose flowers are used thinly to flavor mulled liquors.
74. Pertaining to or involving or having the nature of space.
75. Humic substance secreted by certain insects.
76. A unit of heat equal to the amount of heat required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere pressure.
77. Loggerhead turtles.
78. A species of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
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80. A species of the people inhabiting areas of northern Mongolia and eastern Siberia.
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DOWN
1. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
2. A can for storing tea.
3. Amphibians that resemble lizards.
4. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
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daily SuDoku

Yesterday's Solution
**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

You might like to ignore responsibilities and do some socializing, but realities demand that you tend to business for the moment. Your superior value your advice in the practical decisions. Others may seek you out for ad-
vice concerning business matters. You could be put in charge to make decisions, that affect conditions in the workplace. You are most persuasive and you will find others immediately cooperate. You possess a powerful, persistent drive and are a hard, steady worker. You have a sense of mission and mystery. You are willing to do the work that others wouldn’t get near. A young person is monitoring your activities today. Whether you realize it or not, you are being an important mentor. Enjoy dinner out—do it this evening.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

Focus intensely on your career can find you mercilessly cutting hours and getting down to the essentials regarding your professional direction. You will have a sense of being almost driven to pursue your course and succeed. Perhaps you will want to take a class or have someone guide you with a new skill or technique. This could be beneficial in your career by giving you new growth and change may not agree with your progress in the business world. You should not forget all of the intensely personal staff that is helping you now. It is best to get your lesson learned now—it will help to decrease frustrations later. Deal with situations as they appear and ask questions if someone is not easily understood. Relax with your loved one this evening.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

Philosophizing, or expressing your theories, is an inborn talent and you are in love with grand gestures and long thoughts. Someone may bring up a subject of interest today and you may want to explore. You enjoy fair, just, and balanced surroundings as well as long discussions with your friends touching on a variety of subjects this afternoon. You dare to dream big. You are very tolerant of opposing differences and may find yourself promoting your own ideas much of this day. Your sense of inner direction is good and should lead to some ideas for future monetary opportunities. Later today you will be able to make a great deal of headway on your personal projects. You will find a way around almost any obstacle.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

Obtaining and exchanging information takes on an emotional sig-
ificance for you. Learning the experience of others will help you in your own decision-making. The power of organization on a social scale regarding busi-
ess, politics, etc., seems to take on an important aspect. This may mean that you are a concert pianist and have social obligations to play before a charity or perhaps some performance before an educational group. Professionally, speaking, it is very important to exhibit superior social skills, particularly if you travel and perform out of the country. Most certainly, this is a wonderful time to discipline your mind through study, education or writing. You will have many experiences to write about and the outcome will be intriguing and positive.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Respect, status and achievement are central goals you have been wanting and today may bring you insights along that line. You are good when you work with teammates but to lead a team calls for a whole different bag of tricks. Your mental energies, ideas and thoughts, may undergo some changes—soon. Take time to review your goals and perhaps some of the sources. Your financial obligations may or may not increase just now, but your way of handling these obligations may change for the better. Moreover, because of some inside information, it looks as though your finances will show significant improvements—soon. Take time to review your goals and perhaps some of the methods by which you reached those goals.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

Communications could be strained this morning. There could be a misunderstanding that needs clearing up—ask questions and remain respect-
ful. By the afternoon all will be at ease. Everything will transform and begin to work together. You will overcome communication expression errors. Something is lost by another person. A difficult project can be finished by you. A lost customer will find the right side or item, thanks to you. All is working to-
gether to make things work out right, particularly when the participating parties are patient and have taken care of any physical problems. Your occupation will eventually bring about some incredible results. This evening is a good time to work in the garage or in a garden.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

You can put your ideas into words and describe or analyze situa-
tions for yourself and others quite well. This could involve teaching and lec-
turing, etc. Chances are you are work in one of the many service occupations, taking care of and looking after people. A bout of philosophy or even a little religion could have an enormous effect on your career during this time. Lasting values—whatever you find to be true and lasting—can guide you as now you open up avenues that have remained blocked. Outside circumstances are favorable and it should be easy for you to push forward in projects and in all aspects of your life. Things may seem to go well in your career in the days ahead.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Obtaining and exchanging information is an important aspect today. You may be very helpful in what you say and think just now. With all of this emotional responsibility, you can be valuable to those in need of personal security for the future. Just as important is the way you are using your own resources. Your financial obligations may or may not increase just now, but your way of handling these obligations may change for the better. Moreover, because of some inside information, it looks as though your finances will show significant improvements—soon. Take time to review your goals and perhaps some of the methods by which you reached those goals.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

A supervisor or some senior worker steps in to create some sort of change in direction today. This is a go-with-the-flow sort of day and gives you plenty of opportunities for success in problem solving. Later today, you may consider restructuring your finances. You want a better sense of personal security for the future. Just as important is the way you are using your own resources. Your financial obligations may or may not increase just now, but your way of handling these obligations may change for the better. Moreover, because of some inside information, it looks as though your finances will show significant improvements—soon. Take time to review your goals and perhaps some of the methods by which you reached those goals.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

Your willingness to give credit to others that deserve recognition is commendable and higher-ups have noticed. You may also go beyond the as-
signed and expected tasks asked of you. Help may be needed and you just jump in and too. Your energy and motivation are thus a role model and a decision—above and beyond your job identity—will bring you recognition. Today is a self-ex-
pression day. You will find others listening to your particular ideas. A good con-
munication of thought and emotion with those you love is possible this evening. Leads others to share their experiences by listening—you enjoy your family. Seek advice and support from your family and encourage your family to seek your advice and support as well. Family members enjoy a strong bond.

**Aquarius (January 20-February 18)**

Taking care of the necessary parts of life—health, work and such—is in the greatest preoccupation just now. Sorting things out and getting them organized to utmost efficiency keeps you busy. When there is an opportunity to move forward in your career or in your work, do not hesitate to seize the moment. Your energy is high and your motivation are thus a role model and a decision—above and beyond your job identity—will bring you recognition. Today is a self-ex-
pression day. You will find others listening to your particular ideas. A good com-
munication of thought and emotion with those you love is possible this evening. Leads others to share their experiences by listening—you enjoy your family. Seek advice and support from your family and encourage your family to seek your advice and support as well. Family members enjoy a strong bond.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

This is a period of great mental activity and heightened commu-
nication with others. Your own growth and success may be linked to questions of security—home and family in particular. Faith, family, friends, mental and physical health are important. Someone may bring your attention to things that affect conditions in the workplace. You are most persuasive and you will find others immediately cooperate. You possess a powerful, persistent drive and are a hard, steady worker. You have a sense of mission and mystery. You are willing to do the work that others wouldn’t get near. A young person is monitoring your activities today. Whether you realize it or not, you are being an important mentor. Enjoy dinner out—do it this evening.

**Country Codes**

- Afghanistan: 93
- Albania: 355
- Algeria: 213
- Armenia: 374
- Australia: 61
- Austria: 43
- Bahamas: 1242
- Bahrain: 973
- Bangladesh: 880
- Barbados: 1246
- Belarus: 375
- Belgium: 32
- Belize: 501
- Benin: 229
- Bermuda: 1441
- Bhutan: 975
- Bolivia: 591
- Bosnia: 387
- Botswana: 267
- Brazil: 55
- Brunei: 673
- Bulgaria: 359
- Burkina Faso: 226
- Burundi: 257
- Cambodia: 855
- Cameroon: 237
- Canada: 1
- Cape Verde: 238
- Cayman Islands: 345
- Central African Republic: 236
- Chad: 226
- Chile: 56
- China: 86
- Colombia: 57
- Costa Rica: 506
- Croatia: 385
- Cuba: 53
- Cyprus: 357
- Côte d’Ivoire: 225
- Czech Republic: 420
- Denmark: 45
- Diego Garcia: 246
- Djibouti: 253
- Dominica: 767
- Dominican Republic: 809
- Ecuador: 593
- Egypt: 20
- El Salvador: 503
- England (UK): 44
- Equatorial Guinea: 240
- Eritrea: 351
- Estonia: 372
- Ethiopia: 215
- Falkland Islands: 500
- Faroe Islands: 242
- Fiji: 679
- Finland: 358
- France: 33
- Freundy Polynesia: 859
- Gabon: 241
- Gambia: 220
- Georgia: 995
- Germany: 49
- Ghana: 233
- Gibraltar: 350
- Greece: 300
- Greenland: 259
- Grenada: 4137
- Guadeloupe: 508
- Guatemala: 506
- Guinea: 224
- Guyana: 592
- Haiti: 509
- Holland (Netherlands): 30
- Honduras: 504
- Hong Kong: 852
- Hungary: 36
- India: 91
- Indonesia: 62
- Iran: 984
- Iraq: 964
- Ireland: 353
- Israel: 979
- Ivory Coast: 225
- Jamaica: 876
- Japan: 081

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**Fridays Times**

Friday, October 11, 2019

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**Stars**

- Aries (March 21-April 19)
- Taurus (April 20-May 20)
- Gemini (May 21-June 20)
- Cancer (June 21-July 22)
- Leo (July 23-August 22)
- Virgo (August 23-September 22)
- Libra (September 23-October 22)
- Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
- Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
- Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
- Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
- Pisces (February 19-March 20)
Classifieds

Friday, October 11, 2019

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, SHAIK YUSUF SHAIKH KARIM QUIRESHI, holder of Indian Passport No. L6661740 presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: SHAIK YUSUF SHAIKH KARIM and Surname: QUIRESHI. (C 5399)

I, KUTTIKATTIL RAMDAS holder of Indian Passport No. L3857702 having permanent address Kerala, India 679105 presently residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: RAMDAS and Surname: KUTTIKATTIL. (C 5455) 11-10-2019

I, Rosamma Mathew Kallukuzhy, Kallukuzhy House, Umbidi P.O., Thottakkad, Kottayam (holder of Indian Passport No. K5294494) presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Rosamma Mathew, Surname: Kallukuzhy. (C 5453) 10-10-2019

The embassy of India, Kuwait has no objection to KAMAL SHERWANI MALIK, of Indian Passport No. S9731277 issued on 04/09/2018 at Kuwait to change the name of his son from old SHAHEEM KAMAL SHERWANI to new ABDULLAH KAMAL SHERWANI in his Kuwait birth card. (C 5451)

Old name: D COSTA FILIPE ROCHA FULIPINA, new name: FELIPE DA COSTA FILIPA ROCHA, Passport No: K7034936. ID 27112 603451. (C 5452) 8-10-2019

**MATRIMONIAL**

**32 year old Goan Catholic boy looking for suitable Goan Catholic life partner.** He has graduated in industrial engineering from a reputed university in the US. He is currently employed in Kuwait and looking forward to settle down very soon. He is 5’10” tall, fair and good looking. If you think you are the right match please contact at 96765696 ASAP. Email: if8016037@gmail.com (C 5454) 10-10-2019

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**Hospitals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sabah Hospital</td>
<td>24812000</td>
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<td>Amiri Hospital</td>
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<td>Maternity Hospital</td>
<td>24843100</td>
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<td>Chest Hospital</td>
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<td>Ibn Sina Hospital</td>
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<td>Al-Razi Hospital</td>
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<td>Physiotherapy Hospital</td>
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**Clinics**

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<th>Clinic</th>
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<td>Kaizen center</td>
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<td>Rawda</td>
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<td>Kaifan</td>
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<td>Shamiya</td>
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<td>Shuwaikh</td>
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<td>Abdullah Salem</td>
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<td>Nuzha</td>
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<td>Industrial Shuwaikh</td>
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<td>Qadsiya</td>
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<td>Bneid Al-Gar</td>
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<td>Shaab</td>
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<td>Mirqab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salmiya</td>
<td>25746401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours**

**BY DAY:** Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to variable, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Fair and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate variable wind speed of 8 - 24 km/h.

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**4 DAYS FORECAST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Weather Conditions</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Wind Direction</th>
<th>Wind Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>11/10/2019</td>
<td>Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for mist forming at night</td>
<td>40° - 43° C</td>
<td>NW-SE</td>
<td>8 - 28 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>12/10/2019</td>
<td>Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for mist forming at night</td>
<td>40° - 43° C</td>
<td>SW-SE</td>
<td>8 - 28 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>13/10/2019</td>
<td>Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for mist forming at night</td>
<td>40° - 43° C</td>
<td>SE-NE</td>
<td>8 - 28 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>14/10/2019</td>
<td>Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for mist forming at night</td>
<td>39° - 41° C</td>
<td>NE-SE</td>
<td>8 - 28 km/h</td>
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**PRAYER TIMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>04:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>04:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>04:48</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather Conditions</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Wind Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAX. Temp.</td>
<td>33 °C</td>
<td>12 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIN. Temp.</td>
<td>27 °C</td>
<td>12 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAX. RH</td>
<td>84 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIN. RH</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAX. Wind</td>
<td>25 km/h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIN. Wind</td>
<td>15 km/h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.</td>
<td>0 mm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced its financial results for the 9-month period that ended on September 30, 2019. NBK reported a net profit of KD 302.2 million (USD 993.8 million), increasing by 10.9 percent compared to September 30, 2018 with total assets increasing by 6.6 percent to reach KD 28.9 billion (USD 95.1 billion).

Performance highlights: 9M 2019
- Operating income reached KD 672.8 million (USD 2,212.6 million), growing by 1.7 percent
- Customer loans and advances reached KD 16.4 billion (USD 53.8 billion), increasing by 6.2 percent year-on-year
- Customer deposits increased by 12.2 percent to reach KD 15.8 billion (USD 51.9 billion)
- Capital Adequacy Ratio of 15.8 percent, in excess of regulatory requirements
- NPL to gross loans ratio at 1.37 percent and an NPL coverage ratio of 227 percent demonstrate maintenance of strong asset quality indicators
- Consistently positive long-term credit ratings reflect conservative approach to risk
- Net profit for the 9-month period ended 30 September 2019 was KD 302.2 million (USD 993.8 million)
- Total assets reached KD 28.9 billion (USD 95.1 billion), increasing by 6.6% year-on-year
- International operations contributed 26% to Group profits
- NBK has been recognized for excellence in digital services and its sustainability initiatives
- Al-Sayer: NBK is on track to record another year of strong earnings
- Al-Sager: We achieved solid results across business units demonstrating the positive impact of our strategy of diversification
- Commenting on the interim results, NBK Group Chairman, Nasser Al-Sayer, said: "The bank continues to operate in a challenging macroeconomic environment, but we are pleased that despite headwinds we are growing our business - and its profitability - across the region. Although there has been slower demand for credit in Kuwait, we have seen growth in our loan book, and we expect this trend to continue until the end of the year. By continuing to focus on our strategy to diversify and digitalize our operations we have seen incremental and continuous top- and bottom-line growth across business units and geographies. Key metrics demonstrate the Bank’s strong position, with 9-month net profit growth of nearly 11 percent and a 6.6 percent increase in total assets."
- Nasser Musaed Al-Sayer

Isam Al-Sager

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019

NBK reports 10.9% increase in 9M 2019 net profit

NBK Group CEO, Isam Al-Sager, commented: "We’re achieving solid results across business units, demonstrating the positive impact of our strategy of diversification, to mitigate risk and navigate market headwinds. Our digitalization initiatives continue to be rolled out across the bank, optimizing back- and front-end operations and creating a more seamless experience for customers. This year we have been formally recognized by Global Finance magazine for our leadership in the digital arena - in areas including online banking, consumer digital banking and real-time transaction tracking."

In terms of income diversity, it is particularly pleasing to have achieved solid growth across units, with robust bottom-line contributions made by international operations, consumer banking and our Islamic subsidiary - Boubyan Bank - for the period ended 30 September. Meanwhile, we are making significant progress on our ESG goals, with the Bank now a constituent of the FTSE4Good Index Series, the only Kuwaiti bank included in the benchmark."
Turkey assets under pressure after Syria incursion

LONDON: A dive in the dollar catapulted the euro higher and flattened stocks yesterday as the first US-China trade talks since July and a report accusing the European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi of going rogue jostled for attention. Markets were bombarded from all sides: denials and counter-denials on the state of US-China trade talks and the Brexit countdown, a Turkish military push into Syria and a blizzard of weak data stretching from Japan to France.

Asia had managed a broadly positive finish before the euro maul bourses and the Footsie followed futures were left dithering as the more serious action took place in the currency markets. The euro shot above $1.10 versus the dollar as the greenback turned weaker across the board - partly due to market chatter about a currency pact with China to stop devaluation - but there was plenty else too.

The Financial Times reported that the ECB had restarted its bond-buying program last month despite objections from its own officials, a further sign of how the move has reopened divisions within the institution. ECB meeting minutes then showed similar. “The view on the currency story could be swinging here,” said Saxo Bank’s head of European currency strategy, John Hardy. “And the market is sensing that euro-dollar is the pressure point.”

Perhaps the main mover overnight though was a rally in China's offshore yuan, which strengthened to its best levels in more than two weeks after a Bloomberg report said US and Chinese officials werereviving a currency pact first mooted earlier this year that stops denials and counter-denials on the state of US-China trade talks - but there was plenty else too.

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Saudi Arabia says its oil output fell in Sept after attacks

LONDON: Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest oil exporter, told OPEC that the kingdom’s oil production in September fell by 660,000 barrels per day when compared with August. The Sept. 14 attacks targeted two of state oil giant Saudi Aramco’s plants, the country’s official news agency reported. The Sept. 14 attacks targeted two of state oil giant Saudi Aramco’s plants, the country’s official news agency reported. The Sept. 14 attacks targeted two of state oil giant Saudi Aramco’s plants, the country’s official news agency reported.

World Bank trims 2019-2021 growth outlook for Philippines

MANILA: The World Bank yesterday cut its forecasts for economic growth in the Philippines for 2019 and the next two years, citing external problems, including the US-China trade war, and a slowdown in public investments. The global lender projected the Philippine economy would grow 5.8 percent this year and 6.1 percent next year, slower than the forecasts of 6.4 percent and 6.5 percent announced in April, which were also a revised group’s own plan and had lowered its 2019 growth forecast to 6.2 percent from 6.5 percent previously.

“Given the global environment, the model used in the forecast is that the pace of expansion in infrastructure and human capital spending will be key for the Philippines to regain higher growth momentum while continuing to lay the foundation for greater inclusion,” said Mara Warwick, the World Bank country director for Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines. In April, the bank also cut its 2019 and 2020 GDP growth forecasts for the Philippines because of a delay in approval of this budget and a slowdown in global trade.

“Timely passage of the 2020 budget and decisive action on the country’s tax-reform program will re- move uncertainties and help the private sector make timely decisions, boosting job creation,” Warwick said in a statement. Despite the projected slowdown, the World Bank expects the Philippines to continue making progress in reducing poverty.

“In the medium term, accelerating implementation of high-impact infrastructure projects and the recently approved critical reforms like the Ease of Doing Business Law and liberalization of the rice trade will help the country sustain inclusive growth that generates high-paying jobs and reduces poverty,” said World Bank Senior Economist Rong Qian. Last week, Philippine central bank Governor Benjamin Diokno said he remained confident 2019 growth would reach 6 percent, the lower end of its 6 percent to 7 percent forecast, but acknowledged it might just miss the mark. The Philippine government’s proposed 2020 budget of 4.1 trillion pesos ($79.3 billion) is 12 percent higher than this year’s spending plan, with the largest chunk, 24 percent, allotted for infrastructure development. — Reuters
Turner painting unveiled on Britain’s new £20 note


The note was unveiled at the Turner Contemporary art gallery in the southeast England seaside resort of Margate. The £20 note accounts for more than half the banknotes in circulation. “Our banknotes celebrate the UK’s heritage, salute its culture, and testify to the achievements of its most notable individuals,” said Carney. “Turner’s painting was transformative, his influence spanned lifetimes, and his legacy endures today.”

The new £20 note celebrates Turner’s art and his legacy in all their radiant, colorful, evocative glory.”

Turner was selected by Britain’s central bank following nominations from the public. The Bank of England issued £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes. The latest series is the first to feature non-banknotes in circulation. “Our banknotes celebrate the UK’s heritage, salute its culture, and testify to the achievements of its most notable individuals,” said Carney. “Turner’s painting was transformative, his influence spanned lifetimes, and his legacy endures today,” he added.

The new £20 note features Turner’s most well-known paintings including “The Fighting Temeraire” and “Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour’s mouth.” The note includes Turner’s signature and a portrait of him by Margaret Cousins.

The new £20 note is made of durable polymer and features a hologram, a raised tactile element, and a foil strip. It also includes a security feature that changes color when tilted. The note was unveiled at the Turner Contemporary art gallery in Margate, where Turner was born and spent much of his life.

India pursues China-led trade deal despite domestic opposition

NEW DELHI: India is pressing ahead with talks to join a China-led free trade pact, officials said yesterday, despite some domestic producers’ concerns that the country could become flooded with cheaper Chinese imports. Negotiators for the 11-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are in the Thai capital Bangkok this week for talks aimed at finalising the giant free trade zone by the end of the year. India will be the first of the world’s four most populous countries to sign a free trade deal with China, and could offer some relief to the country’s farmers, who have borne the brunt of the trade war.

Warning signs for the global economy have blared ever louder in recent weeks, however, increasing the pressure on both sides to reach a deal. The International Monetary Fund this week said the trade war was due to shave nearly $700 billion from global growth next year, with 90 percent of the world’s nations now experiencing a “synchronized slowdown.”

In return, Beijing would expect a pause on planned increases in US import tariffs, which are currently scheduled to increase in waves through December. Earlier in the week, firebrand White House trade advisor Peter Navarro told NPR that Trump was uninterested in half measures, showing “steely resolve” instead.

More and more friction

“It’s a big deal or no deal,” said an official with knowledge of the talks. “We all know the next round of tariffs is going to hurt the United States and China. We are interested in half measures, showing “steely resolve” instead.”

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India pursues China-led trade deal despite domestic opposition

NEW DELHI: India is pressing ahead with talks to join a China-led free trade pact, officials said yesterday, despite some domestic producers’ concerns that the country could become flooded with cheaper Chinese imports. Negotiators for the 11-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are in the Thai capital Bangkok this week for talks aimed at finalising the giant free trade zone by the end of the year.

Trade Minister Piyush Goyal will join Indian delegates on the weekend for direct talks with their counterparts from China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. India will be looking for safeguards to be built into the proposed pact to prevent a sudden surge in imports, the trade ministry said in a statement. Goyal has been holding talks to allay fears of a flood of Chinese imports if New Delhi joins the agreement, the ministry said.

“The focus and emphasis of the meetings chaired by the Commerce and Industry Ministry was on putting in place appropriate safeguards including auto-trigger mechanism against sudden surge in imports from RCEP countries,” it said.

India has reached an agreement in principle with other countries to include a safeguard mechanism that would trigger duties if goods are deemed to have been dumped from a partner country, a source with knowledge of the negotiations said.

Indian producers fear cutting tariffs on dairy and other produce would open the door to cheap Chinese imports and flood the market. “There is no silver lining on the horizon,” said a source with knowledge of the negotiations. “The focus and emphasis of the meetings chaired by the Commerce and Industry Ministry was on putting in place appropriate safeguards including auto-trigger mechanism against sudden surge in imports from RCEP countries,” it said.

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Paris vows to scrub levy once global accord is in place

PARIS: The world’s wealthiest nations were urged Wednesday to accept a “unified approach” to break the deadlock over taxing the global revenues of digital giants, a dispute that has stoked tensions between the US and several European nations. The OECD group of wealthy democracies published its suggestions to bridge gaps between three competing plans to tax technology firms, which currently shift the bulk of their earnings to low-tax jurisdictions.

Public outrage has grown over the practice, which critics say deprives many nations of their fair share of tax revenue, since digital giants can often pay next to nothing in countries where they rake in huge earnings. France in particular has railed against EU rules that let American heavyweights like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon declare their earnings from across the bloc to low-tax jurisdictions.

This year it imposed its own tax on digital giants, drawing the ire of US President Donald Trump even though Paris has vowed to scrub the levy once a global accord is in place. The Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development is leading the negotiations to reach an accord next year. But for months it has made little headway on reconciling the three competing plans—one backed by Britain, another mainly on digital groups, and says any country where a firm has users could impose tax. It largely echoes the Digital Services Tax that London plans to impose next year. The American plan would cover a much broader group of consumer companies with marketing operations in a country—a World Bank analysis has cited Coca-Cola or General Motors as potentially impacted.

The third option would target all companies with a “sustained economic participation” via technology or other means, which could give a greater share of a firm’s global tax payment to smaller countries. The OECD said its “unified approach” aimed to take elements from each plan, though it admits that “certain aspects still require further work”. The suggestions will be formally presented at a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors in Washington on October 17 and 18. Governments are under pressure to address widespread public outrage over tech multinationals exploiting global tax rules dating back to the 1920s to pay only cursory taxes on their profits.—AFP

Regulators reject Qatari-backed Deutsche Bank board member

FRANKFURT: In a rare intervention, Deutsche Bank’s regulators are blocking a banker backed by its largest shareholder, Qatar, from a seat on the supervisory board because of a conflict of interest, according to two people with knowledge of the matter. The rejection is a further hiccup for the lender, which has reshuffled management, is cutting thousands of jobs and is closing down some businesses in an effort to make a profit.

Deutsche Bank chair Paul Achleitner had announced in August the appointment of former UBS manager Juerg Zeltner, praising him as a valuable addition and “a top-level European banker with proven expertise”. Zeltner was also to represent the interests of Qatar’s royal family—a top shareholder in the German lender. KBL, is controlled by the same family.

Deutsche’s regulators—the European Central Bank and financial markets watchdog BaFin—have now determined that Zeltner’s position on Deutsche’s board would be a conflict of interest because he is also the chief executive officer of KBL, European Private Bankers (KBL, epb), a business that overlaps with Deutsche’s. “It’s a done deal. It is now only a matter of finding a face-saving way out,” the person said. Deutsche Bank declined to comment. The bank said last month in a statement that all potential conflicts of interest that could arise from Zeltner’s activities and his relationship with one of Deutsche’s major shareholders had been reported to the supervisory board and the company.—Reuters

Spanish farmers baulk at no-deal Brexit

MADRID: At this time of year, Juan Colomina is preparing for the start of the harvest of thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables grown under plastic in southern Spain and exported to the world. This year he has an added complication—trying to work out which forms are needed to get crops of fresh produce like lettuce and tomatoes through French and British customs in the event that Britain leaves the European Union without a withdrawal agreement.

“Our peak season starts now,” said Colomina, head of Coexphal, an association representing more than 9,000 farmers in Almeria, in southern Spain, who send dozens of trucks daily to Britain laden with everything from broccoli to watermelons. “We don’t know exactly what kind of documentation we’ll need until we know what kind of Brexit will happen,” he added.

With just three weeks before Britain is due to leave the world’s biggest trading bloc, it is still unclear on what terms it will leave or indeed whether it will become the first sovereign state to depart the European project. It’s a big unknown causing headaches in farms across Spain, Britain’s biggest foreign supplier of fruit and vegetables.

“Britain’s putative Oct 31 exit date from the EU comes at the height of Spain’s export season when the end of the British summer heralds imported tomatoes and lettuce grown in huge industrial greenhouses in the year-round Mediterranean sun. Growers and exporters will have to prepare paperwork to present at borders to smooth the passage of trucks and prevent delays that could turn perishable loads to garbage.

“I can’t believe administrations will be so blundering as to say it’s all change from one day to the next because no-one is prepared,” said Francisco Sanchez, manager of growers’ association Onubafruit which represents over 1,000 farmers. Near a third of Onubafruit’s production—mostly strawberries, raspberries and blueberries—is exported to Britain, selling to supermarket groups like market leader Tesco and No. 2 Sainsbury’s.

Both growers and supermarkets fear a change in status of Britain overnight from EU member to default terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO) could lead to huge queues at French ports with delays and millions of euros in losses. The EU accounted for nearly two-thirds of Britain’s imports of fruit and vegetables last year, according to the Office of National Statistics.

Spain was the biggest foreign supplier of fresh produce, followed by the Netherlands. In turn, Britain is an important market for Spanish produce—a third biggest with fruit and vegetable exports worth nearly two billion euros ($2.2 billion) last year. If Britain leaves without a deal, trucks carrying produce from the trading bloc will have to have present customs, sanitary and quality control documents, Spain’s Agriculture Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Luis Planas, told Reuters.

Spain had done its preparation, he said, by setting up a process to present documents electronically and working alongside France which tested out its’ smart’ border to speed entry into Britain last month. “Our exporters want to sell,” the minister said. However, many producers do not have these documents and processes in place, exporters and producers say.

Many do not want to invest in software needed to present the documents electronically in case the no-deal scenario does not happen, said Jose Maria Pozancos, director of Fenex, the Spanish association of processors and exporters of fruit and vegetables. Growers say they speak daily to British supermarkets, but are receiving no guidance from them as to what to expect. The British government has said that in the event of a no-deal Brexit, its priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border without compromising security.

It has indicated it would minimize checks or simply waive through lorries from EU countries. “The answer to all these questions is it depends’ because nobody knows what the specifics will be,” said Dave Lewis, chief executive of British supermarket chain Tesco. Tesco was working closely with producers, Lewis told Reuters. Sainsbury’s declined to comment on specifics. However, it has repeatedly warned of the consequences of a no-deal Brexit.—Reuters
Delhi hawkers to be free from threat of eviction after five-year delay

Delhi govt officials set up TVC to issue vending certificates

MUMBAI: Delhi is set to become the first Indian city to fully implement a law that protects street vendors against the threat of eviction, authorities in the capital said on Thursday, five years after the landmark legislation was first introduced. Delhi government officials have set up Town Vending Committees (TVC), which will survey hawkers in the city and then issue vending certificates to give them the right to do business from a fixed spot, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said.

"Without street vendors, no city can function. We just need to regularize them so that other citizens are not inconvenienced," Kejriwal posted on Twitter. "Vendors will get the right to make an honest living, and they will not be harassed by the police and other authorities," he said, adding that licenses would be issued before the end of the year. With Asian towns and cities expanding and striving to become more international and attract investment, street vendors and hawkers are viewed increasingly as a hindrance to city planning.

Vendors selling everything from snacks and tea to toys and clothes are a common sight in India’s cities, with items for sale spread out on pavements or in mobile carts. The Street Vendors’ Act was introduced by federal lawmakers in 2014 to help protect the country’s hawkers from eviction, with states required to establish vending zones, set up TVCs and issue licenses.

Unlicensed hawkers are often targeted for bribes by criminals or corrupt officials and police, and fee evasion drives which are becoming more common as cities modernize and competition for space grows from pedestrians and cars. “The law emerged after a long struggle for improved livelihood, security, legality and protection from eviction,” said Shivani Chadha, executive director of the Housing and Land Rights Network, a non-profit in Delhi.

“Street vendors form the backbone of the city economy. Non-implementation of the law has resulted in their continued persecution, including arbitrary evictions, and lack of recognition of their rights,” she said. No states had fully implemented the 2014 act, according to the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). Members of NASVI, who are staging a protest in Delhi on Thursday against the slow rollout of the law, said there was still no detailed plan for its implementation in the capital.

“There is a lack of political will to implement the law, and there is a pushback from citizens because of the misconception that vendors cause hindrance to city planning,” said Shivani Chaudhry, executive director of the Housing and Land Rights Network, a non-profit that helps informal workers.

Nissan to build new Juke car at UK plant as Brexit looms

SUNDERLAND, England: Nissan said it will begin making the next-generation Juke vehicle at Britain’s biggest car plant on Monday, just over two weeks before a possible no-deal Brexit which the industry has warned could bring production to a halt. Nissan decided in 2015, before the 2016 referendum was even held, to make the latest version of the sport utility vehicle at its northern English Sunderland factory, reflecting how major decisions are made years in advance.

The Japanese company, which was encouraged by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s to use Britain as a gateway to the Continent, has spent 100 million pounds on the latest investment in Juke with 70% of the output for EU markets. “Thirty-five years ago Nissan decided to create a plant in the UK to serve our European markets,” said Nissan’s European Chairman Gianluca de Ficchy on Thursday.

“The new Juke represents a further 100 million pound investment in our Sunderland plant and is designed, engineered and manufactured in the UK for European customers,” he added. The factory is also due to build the new Qashqai model from next year but the firm has previously said it could review that 2016 decision especially if there is a change to “free trade agreements.” Nissan’s then Europe manufacturing boss Colin Lawther told lawmakers in 2017: “As those circumstances change - and we will not wait until the end of the process - we will continually review the decisions that we take based on anything that materially changes.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said he is prepared to take Britain out of the European Union without an agreement but is seeking a deal with the bloc, although time is running out to secure an orderly departure before the Oct. 31 deadline. The car industry fears that a no-deal Brexit will add tariffs on vehicles, engines and components as well as introduce customs delays which could rapidly production and risk the long-term viability of British sites.

Ministers have said they are prepared for a no-deal outcome and could help affected sectors. Brexiters have long argued that Europe’s biggest economy, Germany, which exports hundreds of thousands of cars to Britain each year, would protect that trade. Nissan is ending the night shift at the Sunderland plant and the overall headcount of staff will be a little lower at about 6,000 as it focuses on ramping up the new vehicle.

British city launches innovative fund to tackle climate change

LONDON: The mayor one of Britain’s largest cities has launched an innovative fund aimed at tackling social and environmental problems from hungry children to carbon emissions. The £10 million ($12.20 million) venture is the first of its kind in the UK – launched on Wednesday aims to attract private sector contributions to advance Bristol’s 2050 vision of a “fair, healthy and sustainable city” that is “carbon neutral and zero-waste”.

Bristol city council invested 5 million pounds in CityFunds, an example of “impact investing,” a multi-billion dollar movement which pursues social and environmental outcomes and financial returns. Rather than focusing on a single issue, CityFunds invests in local companies that work towards achieving the south-western city’s four socio-economic priorities, from equal access to housing to greening transport.

Big Society Capital, a social investment firm, also invested in the fund which backs projects including a wind turbine built by residents to power deprived communities. Bristol is one of more than a dozen cities including New York, Buenos Aires and Taipei that in September announced plans to fight global warming and pledged to report their progress to the United Nations. Bristol’s mayor, Marvin Rees, said in a statement the fund would transform the city, which suffers from inequality, and could be a “step towards delivering inclusive and sustainable growth.”

The idea for CityFunds was partly inspired by similar projects in American cities like Chicago which have worked with business to tackle poverty, said Anna Shiel of Big Society Capital. The “scale, longevity, and inclusivity” makes this fund unique, said Shiel, adding the model could be replicated across the country. So-called social entrepreneurs face scrutiny from investors over their ability to deliver social and environmental impact as well as profit.

SUNDERLAND: In this file picture a member of Nissan’s manufacturing staff works in the “Trim and Chassis” section of their Sunderland Plant in Sunderland, north east England. — Reuters
Scotland plead for WCup go-ahead as typhoon threatens campaign

**SPORTS**

**Typhoons, heat and ice: When extreme weather disrupts sport**

**TOKYO:** After an approaching typhoon prompted the cancellation of two games at the Rugby World Cup, here are some other examples of extreme weather disruption in sport:

### JAPAN’S FI FATALITY

Japan’s Formula One Suzuka race track is no stranger to extreme weather and in 2014 French driver Jules Bianchi crashed in the heavy rain — on the fringes of a typhoon — and tragically died nine months later without regaining consciousness. A typhoon forced the postponement of qualifying in 2004 as did heavy rain in 2010, and as Hagibis approaches, organisers say that while they want to minimise disruption the safety of fans and competitors is their top priority.

### TRAGEDY AT SEA

Violent storms wrecked havoc on the 303 yachts that started in the 1979 Fastnet yachting race off the south coast of England, resulting in England’s largest peace-time rescue operation. At least 75 yachts capsized and there were 19 fatalities, while naval and civilian vessels as well as helicopters plucked 125 yachtsmen from the sea.

In 1998, fierce storms battered the 115 yachts which started in the annual Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Only 44 made it to the finish, while five sank and 66 pulled out. Six sailors died and 55 were plucked from their yachts.

### THE ICE BOWL

The 1967 NFL championship game between the Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers was played in such atrocious conditions that it gave birth to safety rules to prevent players and fans being exposed to such extreme weather again. The temperature was a freezing -26 Celsius (-18F) with a wind chill factor of -44C. The whistles stuck to the referees’ lips with one ripping his skin off, and calling plays by shouting through bleeding lips. For the record, Packers legend Bart Starr scored a touchdown with 13 seconds remaining to win the game.

### BRITAIN’S BIG FREEZE

The third round of English football’s 1963 FA Cup lasted 66 days as Britain was hit by a major freeze. Frost and snow, as well as power cuts, rain and mud were responsible for 261 postponements, with 86 of the 32 ties called off 10 or more times. The round was ultimately spread over 22 playing days.

### HAIL HITS THE TOUR

For current French players Louis Picamoles and Wesley Fofana, this is not the first time they have faced weather disruption. In 2012 they were at Stade de France for the Six Nations match against Ireland which was called off 30 minutes before kick-off because of a bitter chill and the referee feared for the players’ safety on the frozen ground. When the match was eventually played three weeks later, it resulted in a 17-17 draw. — AFP

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**Wallabies avoid typhoon to line up ‘tough’ Georgia**

**SHIZUOKA:** Escaping an incoming super typhoon, Australia will warm up for the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals with a last Pool D outing today against “tough” Georgia.

World Rugby took the unprecedented step Thursday of cancelling two games — England v France and New Zealand v Italy — as Japan braces for Super Typhoon Hagibis, likely to be the biggest storm to hit Japan this year.

Scotland’s final Pool A fixture against Japan in Yokohama, at 7:45 pm (1045 GMT) on Sunday, is also in the projected path of the typhoon, in Yokohama, at 7:45 pm (1045 GMT) on Sunday, is also in the projected path of the typhoon, in Yokohama, at 7:45 pm (1045 GMT) on Sunday.

If the game goes ahead, it would mean Scotland were out, leading to more World Cup heartache after a controversial referencing decision led to them being denied a quarter-final win over Australia four years ago. But Townend, during a hastily-arranged press conference at Scotland’s hotel in Hamamatsu on Thursday, said: “We believe the game should go ahead because the weather forecast is much improved for Sunday.

“It looks like the game will be played and that’s what we have to keep faith with.”

“I’d hope that everyone who is involved in the tournament would want the game to be played and that they will do all they can to ensure that it is. “We have to have faith in the organisers that the game will be played behind closed doors or at a different venue.”

Former Scotland fly-half Townsend added: “The way I read the rules is that you can’t change days but you could change venues and contingencies would be in place.

“I’ve since been told there is a force majeure (provision in the rules) and things can change because of exceptional circumstances.

“If that means (playing the game) on Monday because it takes a day for things to be put back in order then who knows. But right now I think they’re planning on it going ahead on Sunday.”

Scottish Rugby responded to Thursday’s announcement by World Rugby with a statement that said it “fully expects contingency plans to be put in place to enable Scotland to contest for a place in the quarter-finals on the pitch”.

But World Cup tournament director Alan Gilpin said yesterday teams knew long before the event started that “matches in the pool phase wouldn’t be postponed”. He added: “We have looked at the potential to apply some consistency to our contingency plan across all the games and we treat all the matches fairly.

“My confidence is that we can play these games in Japan and they are the same position as Scotland are in. It’s a joint decision and we would love to play that game. But we won’t treat that match any differently.”

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**ANDREW MILES**

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TOKYO: Italy captain Sergio Parisse has slammed the decision to cancel his side’s World Cup match against New Zealand in Fukuoka due to Typhoon Hagibis, saying the game would have gone ahead if the All Blacks needed a win.

The number eight also said it was “ridiculous” for organisers not to have an alternative to cancel the match as “it isn’t news that typhoons hit Japan”. In an unprecedented move at a Rugby World Cup, organisers scrapped today’s matches between England and France, and New Zealand and Italy — with both fixtures in the path of the powerful typhoon.

While England and France both advance to the quarter-finals regardless, with two points each from a Pool C match now deemed a draw, Thursday’s announcement ended Italy’s slim hopes of reaching the last eight.

“If we play more Tier 1 Test matches that will be beneficial. It’s a little bit about what this team is capable of,” said the New Zealand-born coach. The 29-17 scoreline against Wales was little different to the 23-13 result the two teams met at the 2015 World Cup.

“Every World Cup, the competition gets higher and higher. In 2015 we thought we did OK and with a lot of work we could do better and we haven’t. We’re sort of in the same position,” McKee said.

“If we play more Tier 1 Test matches that will be great. But at the same time, I understand that it’s very complicated to organise the whole international calendar,” McKee’s frustration echoed that of Georgia coach Milton Haig who said his side’s 43-14 loss to Wales in their opening game was a perfect example of why they need to play Tier 1 opposition regularly.

“We can’t control what happens with the Japan-Scotland game, so tomorrow it’s up to us to get our business done as best we can,” coach Joe Schmidt said when naming his side yesterday. Ireland-Samoa, played in the country’s south-west likely to be spared by Hagibis, is the only game on Saturday to go ahead and Pool A is the only pool with qualification still up for grabs.

“If Ireland win without a bonus point it will put them at risk of finishing third despite losing only one game as the pool goes down to the wire with Japan on 14, Ireland on 11 and Scotland on 10.

“The return of the 38-Test centre Henshaw, who suffered a hamstring injury soon after arriving in Japan, is one of 11 changes from the side that beat Russia 35-0 as Schmidt zeroes in on his first-choice line up.

“Robbie is fresh and we’re excited to have him in there. It is a little bit about balancing the load as well, albeit in a huge game for us,” Schmidt said. Half-backs Conor Murray and Johnny Sexton will start together for the 55th time, overtaking Keith Wood and moving into second place behind Brian O’Driscoll (83).

Only flanker Peter O’Mahony and full-back Rob Kearney are missing from what is thought to be Schmidt’s preferred starting line up. O’Mahoney and Garry Ringrose are the only two Ireland players that have started in the first three matches. The former is on the bench against Samoa and the latter has the weekend off. — AFP

URAYASU: New Zealand’s head coach Steve Hansen (L) and captain Kieran Read attend a press conference in the team’s hotel in Urayasu yesterday, during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

Friday, October 11, 2019

URAYASU: New Zealand’s head coach Steve Hansen (L) and captain Kieran Read attend a press conference in the team’s hotel in Urayasu yesterday, during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

Friday, October 11, 2019

Game would have gone ahead ‘if New Zealand needed the points’: Parisse

Fiji offer blueprint to trouble Wales

OTTA: Fiji bowed out of the World Cup leaving a blueprint for putting Six Nations champions Wales under pressure and highlighting the need for more Tests against the Tier 1 nations.

The free-spirited Fijians started the tournament racing into an 18-point lead against one of the great teams,” Parisse told reporters in Toyota City yesterday.

“If New Zealand needed four or five points against us, it would not have been cancelled,” he added in comments published on the official Rugby World Cup news service but later removed.

With a match meant to be played at the City of Toyota Stadium officially declared a score draw at the end of the cancellation, the Fijians which Italy received left them third in Pool B on 12 points behind South Africa on 15, with reigning world champions New Zealand topping the group on 16. The All Blacks will now face the Euro group for first time in its history.

“We had the chance to play in a big stadium, against a great team,” Parisse said. “It is ridiculous that a decision of this nature has been made because it isn’t like the fans arrived yesterday.

“It is ridiculous that there was no Plan B, because it isn’t news that typhoons hit Japan. The alternative is Plan B. When you organise a World Cup you should have one in place.”

Parisse even suggested there was an element of disrespect in the decision, even though Italy had lost every one of their previous 15 Tests against New Zealand. “Sure, everyone might want to play, then fine. But as I said before, if New Zealand needed the points it wouldn’t have cancelled.”

Meanwhile Italy coach Conor O’Shea lamented a “horrible” finish to the World Cup. “I saw the players’ reaction after training and it was horrible because these guys have given their lives to Italian rugby and their World Cup has ended on the training pitch, when it should be on the playing field,” he said.

“I feel bad for Sergio and the whole squad.” But All Blacks coach Steve Hansen said cancellation was a “no-brainer”, insisting when you “get a typhoon to the level we’re getting then safety is the paramount thing”. — AFP

Fiji offer blueprint to trouble Wales

Game would have gone ahead ‘if New Zealand needed the points’: Parisse

Henshaw back as Ireland chase vital bonus point

FUKUOKA: A fit-again Robbie Henshaw will make his first World Cup appearance in Japan tomorrow after being named to start in Ireland’s crucial match against Samoa in Fukuoka. Ireland need a bonus-point win to ensure they qualify before the final Pool A showdown on Sunday between hosts Japan and Scotland — if Typhoon Hagibis allows it to proceed.

“We can’t control what happens with the Japan-Scotland game, so tomorrow it’s up to us to get our business done as best we can,” coach Joe Schmidt said when naming his side yesterday. Ireland-Samoa, played in the country’s south-west likely to be spared by Hagibis, is the only game on Saturday to go ahead and Pool A is the only pool with qualification still up for grabs.

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Thai badminton star cleared of doping as tests linked to meat

BANGKOK: Former badminton world champion Ratchanok Intanon bears “no fault” after testing positive for doping, the sport’s governing body said yesterday, clearing the path for the Thai star to compete in the 2020 Olympics after another close brush with a possible suspension.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said the women’s world number 5 was found to be in violation of anti-doping regulations earlier this year. But Ratchanok, known as “May” in Thailand, was able to prove that the low amount of the banned substance clenbuterol was related to meat she had eaten at a barbeque restaurant.

“She was found to bear no fault or negligence for the violation, and thus no period of ineligibility has been imposed on her,” the statement said.

The decision was reached after taking into account the sufficiently low concentration of clenbuterol in her system, according to the 26-page doping panel decision.

It also cited positive tests of clenbuterol from at least eight samples collected from the restaurant where Ratchanok had eaten meat. Thailand’s Badminton Federation celebrated the decision in a statement saying Ratchanok was “confident she did not do anything wrong. It was the second close call with drug tests for Ratchanok, who broke down in tears in 2016 when cleared of doping. Back then it was ruled that the detected substance had been administered for a tendon injury and was allowed.

The player has caught the imagination of Thais as much for her rags-to-riches back story as on-court heroics. Her parents are migrants to Bangkok from the country’s poor northeast who worked in menial jobs at a badminton centre on the outskirts of the city.

While they worked, Ratchanok honed her on court skills. This week’s result will come as a relief to the former world no 1 and for Thai sports in general, which is already weathering a doping scandal in weightlifting. Thai weightlifters were not allowed to compete at the world championships despite the country hosting the event last month after nine Thais — including two reigning Olympic champions — were suspended following positive drug tests since November.

The tests prompted Thailand to voluntarily ban itself from the September championships in Pataya as well as next year’s Olympics. — AFP

High noon decision Friday on typhoon-hit Japan GP qualifying

SUZUKA: Japanese Grand Prix organisers will decide at noon Friday (0300 GMT) if the race weekend timetable, including tomorrow’s qualifying, can go ahead as Super Typhoon Hagibis threatens the Suzuka circuit.

A spokesperson for the governing body FIA told AFP Thursday that any decision to change the weekend programme rested with the local authorities in consultation with the FIA and Formula One.

The typhoon has already claimed casual-

ties at the Rugby World Cup in Japan, with to-
morrow’s England-France clash in Yokohama and the New Zealand-Italy match in Toyota City cancelled.

Two minor support races scheduled for Saturday at Suzuka have already been scrapped as a precaution. Tomorrow’s third free practice session and qualifying are likely to follow suit, but the volatile nature of Hagibis means even Sunday’s race could be under threat, though the current forecast is for better weather that day.

Earlier, the FIA issued a statement saying the safety of fans and drivers would be the top priority as Hagibis — classed as “violent” and the equivalent of a Category Five hurricane — is predicted to make landfall near Tokyo to-
morrow. The latest forecasts for Saturday predict heavy rain and winds gusting in excess of 100 kilometres an hour to batter the Suzuka Circuit, which lies near the Ibaraki coast about 300 kilometres (180 miles) southwest of the capital.

“Every effort is being made to minimise disruption to the Formula 1 timetable, however, the safety of the fans, competitors and everyone at the Suzuka Circuit remains the top pri-

ority,” said the FIA. The qualifying session, originally scheduled to start at 3 pm Saturday (0600 GMT), determines the starting order for Sunday’s race.

It leaves the organisers with two options to form the race grid. They can either shift qualifying to Sunday morning, something that was done successfully at Suzuka in 2004 and 2010 because of bad weather, or they can use the timings of the drivers from Friday afternoon’s second free practice to determine the starting order.

Whatever happens, a postponement of the grand prix to Monday is impossible, the FIA said. After the tail-end of a typhoon af-

fected the 2014 race at Suzuka, French driver Jules Bianchi crashed heavily after losing con-
trol in rain and poor visibility and died the fol-

lowing year from his injuries having never recovered from a coma.

Drivers yesterday backed changing the weekend timetable, “I don’t think anybody wants to put anybody’s life in danger,” said Ferrari’s four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel. “The decision is not for us, necessarily, because for us it’s nice and easy, cosy, in the garage. “But for the people out there around the track, it is not nice to be sitting there with rain going sideways.”

A blanket Saturday would be a huge disappointment to thousands of fa-
natical supporters at one of the best-attended races on the circuit, but other drivers were prepared for the worst.

“I’ve got my speedboat on standby, so I’m ready,” joked Red Bull’s Max Verstappen. “At the moment it doesn’t look very likely. So we’ll have a bit more free time tomorrow and it means waking up a little bit earlier on Sun-

day,” he added. — AFP

Hamilton warns Ferrari not to snub Vettel to ‘ramp up’ Leclerc

SUZUKA: Lewis Hamilton said yesterday that Sebastian Vettel was now “clearly not” number one at Ferrari but warned against the team “ramping up” support for rookie Charles Leclerc.

Ferrari’s botched team orders at the previous race in Russia two weeks ago handed Hamilton a surprise victory after Mercedes had trailed Ferrari on the timing sheets all weekend.

Vettel ignored team instruction several times to hand back the lead to Leclerc at Sochi. The German’s retirement with a mechanical problem and a virtual safety car then enabled Hamilton and Bottas to secure the top two steps of the podium.

Both Leclerc and Vettel were at pains yes-
terday to point out that all was now “clear” between them and Ferrari. But the major beneficiary of their spat, Hamilton, has been keenly watching the antics of the Maranello team.

“It’s an interesting dynamic they have there because obviously Seb was number one and now clearly not,” Hamilton told re-

porters at Suzuka. Leclerc has been the fastest man on the grid since the summer break, securing four straight pole positions and two race wins.

“From kind of the energy, from the outlook, they’re trying to ramp Charles up to be (number one). Is that good for a team? I don’t think so,” said Hamilton.

Hamilton said he had a similar issue in his 2007 rookie season at McLaren when he part-

tnered Fernando Alonso, and that didn’t end well after the Spaniard was angered by losing his number one status.

“Obviously when I was with Fernando he was the hired number one. But then mid-season they changed that,” recalled Hamilton.

“He was still the number one because he was the highest-paid driver.”

“But then they gave us equal fuel and then you started seeing changes like Montreal and In-
dianapolis. Then that dynamic shifted, and it ob-
viously didn’t go well for the team,” he added.

“There are drivers that always wanted that number one status. I like to earn that. Start on an equal platform, then either of you can get that number one status on that weekend. Weekend-

in, weekend-out.”

Mercedes can secure a record sixth succes-
sive constructors’ championship with another one-two in Japan. “It’s pretty special,” said Hamilton. “I’m really proud to be a part of it.”

Hamilton knows a victory Sunday will leave only his teammate Valtteri Bottas able to catch him in the remaining four races.

But Saturday’s qualifying and practice have been put in doubt by the approach of Super Typhoon Hagibis, which has already caused havoc with the cancellation of two Rugby World Cup games. Japanese Grand Prix organisers will decide at noon on Friday (0300 GMT) whether to scrap Saturday’s schedule, saying the safety of fans and drivers was their top priority.

A relaxed Hamilton, though, did not seem bothered by Hagibis, categorised as “violent” — the highest level on the Japan storm scale, even if it causes qualifying to be shifted to Sunday morning.

“I love driving in the rain,” Hamilton said, seemingly oblivious to Hagibis potentially lash-

ing Suzuka with torrents of water and winds well in excess of 100 kilometres per hour. — AFP
Opener Agarwal hits ton as India dominate South Africa

PUNE: Mayank Agarwal hit his second century in successive matches on the opening day of the second Test against South Africa yesterday and said his side should aim for a 500-run first innings. The opener, who made a double century in India's opening Test win, scored 108 after the hosts elected to bat.

India were 273-3 when bad light forced an early end to play, with skipper Virat Kohli unbeaten on 63 and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on 18. Kohli and Rahane put on 75 runs for the fourth wicket to thwart South Africa's determined bowlers who kept them under pressure as the gloom crept in.

Agarwal, 28, said he was thrilled with his performance. "The team is in a good position, winning the toss, batting first and with one batsman short, it's a good thing to make runs... 450-500 would be nice," Agarwal said.

"Try and get big runs in the first innings... (that) could help us in case we don't want to bat again. It could really put pressure on the South Africans," Kohli, leading the Test side for the 50th time, reached his century with a boundary off fast bowler Vernon Philander.

But Agarwal took the lead role despite being hit on the helmet from a bouncer by debutant paceman Anrich Nortje. He went on to hit Nortje for three glorious off drives in one over before lunch. The right-handed batsman put on 138 runs for the second wicket with Cheteshwar Pujara, who made 58, to steady the innings after the fall of Rohit Sharma early in the day.

He was eventually caught in the slips by South African captain Faf du Plessis — one of fast bowler Kagiso Rabada’s three wickets for the day. "There were periods where I was getting boundaries very easily, there were periods where they bowled very good line and lengths and were testing the bouncer as well," said Agarwal, who is playing his sixth Test since making his debut last year.

Rabada also claimed Sharma, who edged the ball into the gloves of wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock for 14 in the 10th over. That was a disappointment for Sharma, who hit twin centuries in his first run as Test opener in Visakhapatnam where India took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Rabada struck again to get Pujara, caught again by du Plessis, just before tea. Pujara, who was dropped by Temba Bavuma before he scored, hit a six and nine fours.

Rabada returned figures of 3-48 in 18.1 overs. Victory for India in the series will see them beat South Africa in 10 straight home series wins they record of 10 straight home series wins they share with Australia. — AFP

Naomi Osaka picks Japanese citizenship with eye on Olympics

TOKYO: Tennis star Naomi Osaka has decided to choose Japanese over American nationality with an eye on the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, public broadcaster NHK reported yesterday. Osaka, who has a Japanese mother and a Haitian father, told NHK she has completed an administrative step to obtain Japanese citizenship ahead of her birthday next week.

Japanese law stipulates that a Japanese with more than one nationality must choose one before turning 22 years old. "It gives me a special feeling to try to go to the Olympics to represent Japan," the two-time Grand Slam champion told the broadcaster in an interview in Tokyo. "I think I will be able to put more of my emotion into it by playing for the pride of the country," she said, according to the article published on Japanese on the NHK website. Osaka added she wants to aim for the gold although she is also worried as expectations will be high.

The young tennis sensation is a household name in Japan, where her every move is followed feverishly by local media, particularly when she is in the country of her mother's birth. She is the face of several leading Japanese brands, including the carrier ANA, and "Naomi-chan" — as she is affectionately known — was the main attraction at last month’s Pan Pacific Open in Osaka, which she won.

But she has faced controversies over her dual heritage in a nation that is fairly racially homogeneous, as well as scrutiny for her imperfect Japanese language skills — though others insist they add to her charm.

Mixed-race children can often face prejudice in Japan, although attitudes among younger generations are changing. Osaka became the first Japanese player to win a Grand Slam last year after beating Serena Williams at the US Open. — AFP

Cardinals swamp Braves, book NL showdown with Nationals

LOS ANGELES: The St. Louis Cardinals exploded for 10 runs in the biggest first inning in Major League Baseball playoff history on Wednesday, routing the Atlanta Braves 13-1 to book a National League Championship Series showdown with the Washington Nationals.

The Nationals advanced with a 7-3 extra-innings victory over the Dodgers in Los Angeles, where Howie Kendrick belted a grand slam in the 10th to complete Washington's rally from an 0-3 deficit. Kendrick's blast off Dodgers relief pitcher Joe Kelly came after Los Angeles' three-time Cy Young Award-winner Clayton Kershaw — pitching in relief — gave up home runs to Anthony Rendon and Juan Soto on back-to-back pitches in the eighth inning. With the score tied at 3-3, Kelly walked Adam Eaton to load the bases with no outs, and Soto doubled before Soto was intentionally walked.

Kendrick fouled off a pitch, then smashed a 97 mph fastball over the wall in center field.

"You know what, it was electric," said Kendrick, whose massive shot atoned for three fielding errors in the series. "Probably the best moment of my career."

The Dodgers had seized the early initiative with homers from Max Muncy and Enrique Hernandez.

The Nats pulled a run back when Soto singled in a run in the sixth. Their late-game turnaround gave the Nationals a 3-2 win in the best-of-five National League Division Series and denied the Dodgers — winners of a whopping 106 regular-season games — in their bid to reach the World Series for a third straight year. They fell in MLB's championship showcase to the Houston Astros in 2017 and to the Boston Red Sox last year. Instead the Nationals — who rallied from a 3-0 eighth-inning deficit to beat the Milwaukee Brewers in the NL wild card game — will battle the Cardinals for a World Series berth in the NL Championship Series starting on Friday.

"We never gave up," Kendrick said of a Nats team that started the season 19-31. "The city had faith in us, the fans had faith in us. We believed in ourselves, everybody came through for us."

All the drama came early in Atlanta, where Braves starting pitcher Mike Foltynewicz — who pitched seven scoreless innings in a game-two victory — retired just one batter before he was pulled in the first frame.

Tommy Edman, Dexter Fowler and Kolten Wong each had two-run doubles, Cardinals pitcher Jack Flaherty walked with the bases loaded to force in a run, and St. Louis scored their final run of the first on a sacrifice fly. Kendrick said the team "never gave up," and the Nats celebrated once more in the ninth, when Soto scored on a sacrifice fly.

"It's hard to score 10 runs in an inning without hitting a home run," mused Cardinals manager Mike Shildt. "But just great at-bats, relentless."

In was the most ever runs in the first inning of a post-season game and tied for the most runs in any inning of a playoff game.

"I don't know that I've seen that many guys hit in the first inning that quick in my entire life," said shell-shocked Braves manager Brian Snitker. "I don't know. It wasn't how we drew it up, I know that."

That thing just kept rolling and we couldn't stop it."

"The Cardinals' 13 total runs matched their total in the first four games of the best-of-five NL Division Series. The Braves endured their 10th straight playoff series defeat while the Cardinals wrapped up a 3-2 series win to reach the NLCS for the first time since 2014. — AFP
Kipchoge compares sub two-hour marathon to going to the moon

The marathon: Five milestones of a legendary race

1896: INAUGURAL GAMES GETS GREEK HERO

The inspiration for the feat is the popular, albeit historically inaccurate myth of Pheidippides, the Greek “hemorodromos” (military runner), who is said to have run from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens in 490 BC to announce victory over the Persians, only to die of exhaustion afterwards.

In spite of the fact the story was invented by the satirist Lucian in the second century AD - around 700 years after the Battle of Marathon - Baron de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympics, championed the romance and bravery of the tale to ignite interest in the 1896 Olympics.

Seventeen runners took part in the first Olympic marathon at the inaugural Games in 1896, starting in Marathon and ending in the Olympic stadium in Athens, a distance of just under 40km - a little short of today's standard 42.195-kilometres (26 miles 385 yards).

The first to cross the finish line was a shepherd and former soldier, Spyridon Louis, who became a national hero when he completed the race in two hours and 58 minutes despite stopping to quaff a glass of wine halfway through.

The second-place finisher Spyridon Belokas was disqualified after it was discovered that he had completed part of the course in a carriage.

A Greek woman, Stamata Revithi, was denied entry to the marathon to going to the moon

VIENNA: Kenya’s world record holder Eliud Kipchoge has compared running a sub two-hour marathon to going to the moon before his unofficial attempt in Vienna tomorrow to become the first athlete to break the barrier.

“I am running to make history, to show that no human is limited. It’s not about money, it’s about showing a generation of people that there are no limits,” Kipchoge, who will make his second attempt to break the two-hour mark, told reporters.

The 34-year-old Olympic champion set the world record of 2:01.39 at the Berlin marathon last September, smashing the previous one by 78 seconds, but said Saturday’s race is a completely different challenge.

“Running Berlin and running Vienna are different. Running Berlin is for winning and running a world record. Vienna is like going to the moon,” he said. A 41-man pacing squad will support Kipchoge, who missed out by 26 seconds in Monza, Italy, in May 2017.

Kipchoge said he had chosen Vienna as it was a “sporting city”, the course was fast and because of the Prater park. “It's a natural environment,” he said. “I am feeling well. I have run on the course and it is a good course. It is flat and very fast and in the park where we can enjoy the environment. I am ready for tomorrow,” he said.

The sport’s governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), will not recognise the run as an official record because it is not in open competition and it uses in and out pacemakers.

In Monza, Kipchoge also received drinks from a moving motorbike rather than having to collect them from a table. But IAAF president Sebastian Coe told reporters in an interview last month the milestone would still be important.

“If there’s an exciting attempt for getting under two hours for the marathon I'm not sure that most people are going to be sitting there going, ‘Well, it wasn’t sanctioned as a world record because it wasn’t in open competition,’ ” said Coe.

“I just don’t think it matters. It’s just a big milestone being met and our sport has space for all sorts of things and I think it will appeal and add value.” Organisers of the event, dubbed the INEOS 1.59 challenge, said the exact start time would depend on the weather forecast and would be announced on Friday.

“The current conditions are looking to be optimal for temperature, humidity, wind and precipitation for this Saturday morning,” said Robby Ketchell, who leads the weather analysis. He said the temperature was expected to be between tive and nine degrees Celsius between 0500 and 0800 local time on Saturday when the run is likely to take place.

“After 0800 the temperature is looking like it will rise slightly, and humidity will drop slightly. For the Challenge we need a 24-hour window of no rain to keep all the surfaces dry and that is currently looking to be the case for tomorrow too.” — Reuters

1960: BAREFOOT BIKILA STUNS WORLD

Ethiopia’s Abebe Bikila became an international sporting icon at the 1960 Rome Olympics, running barefoot to victory on his way to setting a new world record of 2hrs 15min 16sec and making history as the first African to win the Olympic marathon.

Bikila twice passed the Obelisk of Axum — erected opposite the Circus Maximus in 1937 after it was taken from Ethiopia by the Fascist regime — and raced up an ancient Apsidal Way lit by Italian soldiers holding torches on his way to finishing at the Arch of Constantine just by the Colosseum.

He was nearly 28 when he won the marathon, which was staged in the late afternoon and evening due to the punishing late summer heat. The former soldier, and member of the imperial bodyguard of ruler Haile Selassie, retained his title four years later in Tokyo — he was the first person to win two Olympic marathons - and paved the way for an era of African distance running dominance.

1967: WOMEN JOIN THE PACK

Ever since Stamata Revithi was prevented from running in the 1896 Olympics, women were banned from taking part in marathons, officially for reasons of health and femininity. But in 1967 a 20-year-old journalism student, Kathrine Switzer, defied the ban and ran in the Boston marathon, becoming the first woman officially to complete the course.

She gained entry by registering as KV Switzer and was issued race number 261. On seeing her during the race, one organiser tried to remove her bib and expel her but was prevented by her coach and her partner, a hammer thrower.

The scene was captured by a photographer and travelled the world, turning Switzer into a feminist icon. Fired by anger and a desire to show that women could run the distance, Switzer completed the race in 4hrs 20mins.

The Boston marathon was officially opened to women in 1972 and in 1984 women ran the Olympic marathon for the first time. Switzer won the New York marathon in 1974 and in 2017, at the age of 70, she returned to Boston. Again wearing bib number 261, she finished in 4hrs 44mins 31secs.

2018: RECORD SMASHED

On a flat course and with a finish line at the Brandenburg Gate, the Berlin marathon has gained a reputation as the ideal circuit for setting new world records. Eliud Kipchoge did just that in September 2018 with a lightning quick time of 2hrs 1min 39secs, smashing Dennis Kimetto’s previous record by an astonishing 78 seconds. The Kenyan had taken inspiration from a run he made in May 2017 when he clocked 2hrs 25secs on a special track at the Monza National Autodrome in Italy. It was the fastest run over the marathon distance but because of the time trial tactics used it is not recognised by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

Kipchoge will try again to break the two-hour barrier in Vienna tomorrow. —AFP
Iranian soccer fans cheer during the World Cup Qatar 2022 Group C qualification football match between Iran and Cambodia at the Azadi stadium in Tehran yesterday. — AFP

**Sports**

 Iranian women attend first soccer match in 40 years

**Tehran:** Iranian women entered the country’s national stadium in Tehran yesterday after being able to purchase tickets for a national team game for the first time in 40 years. Women have been banned from watching men’s games since shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution with only a few exceptions made for small groups on rare occasions.

But under pressure from world governing body FIFA and women’s rights campaigners, Iranian authorities earmarked around 3,000 tickets for them to yesterday’s World Cup Asian qualifier against Cambodia in the 78,000 capacity Azadi Stadium.

The tickets are for a special women’s only section of the stadium, a decision that has been criticised by some campaigners who would prefer women to be able to attend with their male family members.

Footage posted on social media showed women arriving at the stadium more than two hours before the scheduled kick-off time. The women waved flags and blew ‘vuvuzela’ horns while the rest of the stadium was still mostly empty.

But while campaigners have welcomed the access granted for yesterday’s game, it is unclear if such scenes will become the norm in Iran.

A report posted by the semi-official Fars news agency warned that women attending yesterday’s match could be exposed to foul language, drug use and even violence.

Now that the government has decided to let women into Azadi stadium – we must be hopeful that the spectators will try to respect Iranian women in order to change the public atmosphere of the stadium,” the report said.

FIFA stepped up pressure on Iran to meet commitments allowing women to attend World Cup qualifiers following the death last month of Sahar Khodayari, who set herself on fire for protest against her arrest for trying to get into a match. Dubbed “Blue Girl” online for her favourite team Esteghlal’s colours, Khodayari had feared being jailed for six months by the Islamic Revolutionary Court for trying to enter a stadium dressed as a man.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has urged Iranian authorities to open up stadiums to women for all games, not just World Cup qualifiers. The sport’s governing body has sent officials to Tehran to monitor access for women at the match and said it will continue to press for their inclusion.

“FIFA’s stance on the access of women to the stadiums in Iran has been firm and clear: women have to be allowed into football stadiums in Iran. For all football matches,” it said in a statement.

Further details on the next steps to be implemented to ensure the future access of women to the stadiums in Iran will follow once we have performed a thorough assessment of yesterday’s match based on the input provided by the FIFA delegation that is present in Tehran.” — Reuters

**Argentina coach hails ‘positives’ despite Messi absence in Germany draw**

**Dortmund:** Lionel Scaloni praised his battling Argentina side, missing Lionel Messi, as they scored second-half goals to earn a 2-2 draw in a friendly against an experimental Germany team Wednesday.

The Germans flew into a 2-0 lead with first-half goals by Serge Gnabry and Kai Havertz in Dortmund before Lucas Alario turned the game when he came on for Argentina with an hour gone. The Leverkusen striker pulled a goal back, then set up Lucas Ocampos for a deserved late equaliser.

“We made two or three mistakes in the first half, but got a grip in the second half, were more patient and we take a lot of positives for the future,” Scaloni said.

“We matured during the game,” said Argentina coach Scaloni. “We lost a few balls, a bit of courage and got into trouble.”

Loew handed out four debuts in Dortmund. Freiburg defender Robin Koch and striker Luca Waldschmidt started, then Leverkusen forward Nadiem Amiri and Schalke midfielder Suat Serdar came in for second-half debuts.

Loew was forced into a hastily-rearranged defence as Koch replaced centre-back Niklas Stark, who pulled out before kick-off with a stomach bug. Despite 13 withdrawals due to either illness or injury, Germany impressed early against an Argentina team missing Messi, Sergio Aguero and Angel di Maria.

With Messi suspended for comments made at the Copa America, Juventina’s Paulo Dybala partnered Lautaro Martinez up front for Argentina. The friendly was a repeat of the 2014 World Cup final, yet Argentina’s Manchester United defender Marcos Rojo was the only survivor when the Germans won Rio de Janeiro. Rojo partnered Manchester City veteran Nicolas Otamendi in an Argentina defence which crumbled early on.

A week after scoring four goals for Bayern Munich at Tottenham, Gnabry put Germany ahead on 15 minutes. The winger used his pace when Atlético Madrid’s Angel Correa lost possession to get in behind the defence to stab the ball past Argentina goalkeeper Augustín Marchesín.

When Rojo then lost the ball to Waldschmidt, Gnabry turned provider, using his pace to present Havertz with a simple tap-in on 22 minutes. It should have been 3-0 when Brandt just failed to connect with a Niklas Sule header as Germany looked like they would run away with it.

However, the South Americans had the best of the second-half, starting when Scaloni put Alario on for Dybala on 62 minutes. Alario showed his strength in the air to head past Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen four minutes later. — AFP

**Euro 2020 hopefuls England must tighten up at the back: Trent**

**London:** Trent Alexander-Arnold says England must improve their defensive record if they are to stand any chance of winning Euro 2020. Gareth Southgate’s side can assure themselves of a place in next year’s finals if they beat the Czech Republic in their Group A qualifier in Prague today. England are firm favourites to advance after a perfect start to the qualification campaign, including a 5-0 win over their next opponents at Wembley in March. England have a wealth of attacking options including Harry Kane, Raheem Sterling and Jadon Sancho but have had defensive problems in recent matches.

A 5-3 win over Kosovo at Southampton last month did little to paper over cracks that showed when the Netherlands won 3-1 in the Nations League semi-final in June. Individual errors accounted for many of the goals shipped across those two games as Southgate continues to strive for a settled back four. “If we want to be regarded as one of the best teams in Europe and go far in the Euros and try and win the competition, our clean sheets and goals conceded must be fewer,” Liverpool full-back Alexander-Arnold said.

“We have to concede fewer goals. As defenders, as a team and as a unit we know where to improve and where to work on. Some games, it just happens, We will analyse what went wrong and try and make sure it does not happen again,” Champions League-winning right-back Alexander-Arnold will battle with Kieran Tripper for a place in Southgate’s team. James Maddison has withdrawn from the England squad for the two Euro 2020 qualifiers due to illness. The Leicester midfielder, 22, has made an impressive start to the Premier League campaign and was in strong contention to make a senior debut. — AFP
BANGKOK: File photo taken on August 3, 2019, Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon reacts after beating compatriot Pornpawee Choowong during their women's singles semi-final match in Bangkok. Ratchanok bears "no fault" after testing positive for doping, the sport's governing body said yesterday. — AFP

Thai badminton star cleared of doping

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