From New York to Moscow, Holocaust survivors share memories

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ANGELA CHARLTON
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Holocaust survivors sang at Jerusalem’s Western Wall, danced in Paris and lit candles in other cities to celebrate Hanukkah together, recalling Nazi horrors that Jewish community leaders fear are fading from the world’s collective memory.

An 86-year-old man in Moscow described being forced by Nazi occupiers into a ghetto as a child. Elderly survivors in New York shared stories Sunday at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

Survivors of the Holocaust and others gather at the Museum of Jewish Heritage as the Statue of Liberty can be seen through a window of the museum Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in New York, as they recognize International Holocaust Survivors Night, one of several events held around the world.

Continued on Page 3
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The Aruba Today Newspaper announces that due to the holidays, we will not be in circulation on Wednesday, December 25th, 2019 or Thursday, December 26th, 2019. We will be back on newsstands everywhere bright and early to serve our readers and advertisers first thing in the morning, Friday, December 27th, 2019. Until then: Season’s Greetings and Happy Holidays from the team at the Aruba Today Newspaper and the entire staff at Caribbean Speed Printing (CSP).

Top baby names in NYC were Liam, Emma in 2018, officials say

NEW YORK (AP) — The most popular baby names in New York City last year were Liam and Emma, according to data released by city health officials Monday. Of the babies born in New York City in 2018, there were 779 Liams and 501 Emmas, according to the city’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s birth certificate records.

The number of births in the city decreased from 117,013 in 2017 to 114,296 in 2018, according to the city’s data.

Liam has been the top name for boys since 2016, and Emma has been the top name for girls since 2017.

Some New Yorkers opted for rarer names: There were a handful of girls named Aminah, Ida and Zadie and boys called Bentley, Lucian and Warren.

Nine of the top 10 boy names from 2017 remained on the list in 2018. Jayden was dropped from the 2018 list while Alexander was added as the tenth most popular name.

Eight of the top girl names stayed on the top 10 list for 2018. Amelia and Chloe joined the list as the ninth and tenth most popular names in 2018 respectively.
Continued from Front

They worry that today’s youth in many countries don’t recognize names of Nazi death camps, fall prey to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, or don’t realize that 6 million Jews were killed in Hitler’s World War II extermination campaign. Lighting the Hanukkah candelabra, France’s chief rabbi, Haim Korsia, told survivors in Paris, “What you are, each of you, is exactly like the light. ... We will never put out the first flame. When we transmit the knowledge, your experience and when we transmit it to others, it takes nothing from us and it gives to others.”

With folk dancing, festive songs and shared meals, the ceremonies Sunday and Monday also aimed to combat the solitude and other difficulties many survivors face in old age. Some 400,000 Holocaust victims are estimated to still be alive, about half of them in Israel — and as many as 40% are living in poverty, said Ruediger Mahlo of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which organized the events.

“We want to make this public in order to help them and in order that other people help them as well,” he told The Associated Press. With tears in their eyes, survivors sang Israel’s national anthem together at the Western Wall, the holiest site in the world where Jews can pray. The mood turned joyous by the time candles were lit, with survivors joining hands, dancing in circles and laughing.

“For me, the holiday of Hanukkah is a holiday of victory, and it’s very important for me to see the light of victory,” said Amonn Elkev, a survivor originally from the Netherlands who came to the ceremony with his wife. Renowned Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld was among those attending a bitter-sweet ceremony in Paris, where young and old sang and prayed together.

Anna Sterman described being “hunted ... like mice” as a child near Lyon. Sarah Saragoussi, whose parents were deported to camps, said: “We thought they would come back nonetheless. We didn’t think they were leaving to their deaths.”

The gathering in New York included some 200 survivors, some wearing winter caps, others wearing kippas. Some smiled as they listened to speeches; others looked on pensively. They touched on recent anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. and on concerns that younger generations of Americans know little about what they went through.

Hand-in-hand with a rabbi, survivor Mikhail Spekt said a prayer and lit a Hanukkah candelabra in Moscow. He then took the microphone and sang for members of Russia’s Jewish community, accompanied by a fiddler and accordion player.

“As a child when the war began, Spekt said, he didn’t realize what was going on. When the Nazis came, he recalled his grandfather telling him that they were “a civilized nation, they wouldn’t do anything to us.” But he and his family were taken to a ghetto on Ukraine’s western edge and held there from 1941 until the Red Army liberated it in 1944.

“We were all sleeping on the floor. We lived on the territory (of the ghetto), isolated from the city by barbed wire. The entrance was guarded by Nazi soldiers and policemen,” he said. “People who dared (to leave) were indeed shot.”

Bearing witness is ever more important as survivors die out. French survivor Suzanne Bakon said, “We are doing everything while we are living so that (the memory) remains.”


Associated Press
House committee raises prospect of more impeachment articles

By ERIC TUCKER
WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Judiciary Committee held open the possibility Monday of recommending additional articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump as it pressed anew for the testimony of former White House counsel Don McGahn.

The committee wants a federal appeals court to order McGahn to testify as it examines potential obstruction of justice by the president during special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation. The committee says McGahn’s testimony could also be useful for any Senate impeachment trial.

In a court filing Monday, lawyers for the committee said McGahn’s testimony remains essential even though the House has already voted to impeach Trump on two charges related to his interactions with Ukraine rather than on actions uncovered during Mueller’s Russia probe. "If McGahn’s testimony produces new evidence supporting the conclusion that President Trump committed impeachable offenses that are not covered by the (two) articles of impeachment approved by the House, the Committee will proceed accordingly — including, if necessary, by recommending new articles of impeachment," lawyers for the Democratic-led committee wrote.

Democrats on the Judiciary Committee subpoenaed McGahn well before the start this fall of an impeachment inquiry centered around Trump’s request to Ukraine’s president that he investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and his son, as well as an unsubstantiated conspiracy theory alleging Ukraine’s interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

U.S. allocates $175 million in military aid to Baltics in 2020

HELSINKI (AP) — The United States has allocated $175 million in military aid to the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for 2020, the Estonian defense ministry said Monday.

The three countries are NATO members and all of them border Russia. The Estonian defense ministry said that along with $125 million in general military aid, Washington has for the first time earmarked a separate $50 million budget line to boost air defense capabilities of the three ex-Soviet republics — seen by many military experts as a weak area in their current defense.

The overall aim of U.S. military aid to Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius is to strengthen “the deterrence and defense posture in the Baltic States including in the area of airspace and especially in the field of air defense,” Estonian Defense Minister Juri Luik said in a statement.

As Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have no fighter aircraft, NATO fighter jets are responsible for policing Baltic airspace on a four-month rotational basis from bases in Estonia and Lithuania. Luik stressed “the transition from (Baltic) air policing in NATO to air defense requires a common decision from all (NATO) allies, but the U.S. position and practical support are of great importance.”

In this Feb. 22, 2018, file photo White House counsel Don McGahn speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), at National Harbor, Md.
STAFFORD, Va. (AP) — The holidays came early for some Virginia families struggling to pay school lunch debt.

Three Virginia pastors used more than $17,000 from their church’s budget to pay off meal debt at two local school systems.

“IT seemed like a good idea, but [T] we didn’t know if there was a need because no one ever seems to talk about this,” said the Rev. Jerry Williams, a pastor at Mount Ararat Baptist Church. “So we called the school systems. And gosh, wow, was there a need.”

Williams, the Rev. Brian Bennett and the Rev. Andrew Segre gave $10,500 to Stafford County Public Schools and close to $7,000 to Spotsylvania County Public Schools, which wiped out balances across the district, news outlets reported.

Keana Butler, principal of Park Ridge Elementary School in Stafford, said she was skeptical when the pastors emailed her about students’ meal debt. She said usual parent-teacher groups and members of her own staff pay out of pocket to help reduce the debt.

“I was overwhelmed by the generosity,” Butler said. About 75% of schools districts nationally reported unpaid meal debt, with the median amount per school being about $2,500, according to The Washington Post, which cited the national School Nutrition Association. The median amount of unpaid debt increased 70% from the 2012-2013 school year. The Washington Post reported students across Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia owe nearly a $500,000 in meal debt. The Post also reported that although the National School Lunch Program allows some students to get free or reduced-price meals, many families who barely fall to qualify for federal aid still struggle to pay for school breakfast and lunch five days a week. Williams said neither he nor the other pastors were aware of the meal debt statistics. They intend to pay off the debt again. He said he hopes their actions bring more awareness to the growing debt.

“This is not a churchy thing,” Williams said. “This — helping children and families — is a thing that anyone can do.”

Virginia pastors give over $17,000 to pay student meal debts

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration awarded billions of dollars in contracts for private companies to operate immigration detention centers in California — less than two weeks before a new state law takes effect to prohibit them.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill in October to ban contracts for for-profit prisons starting Jan. 1. Supporters hoped the law would force U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to look elsewhere after current contracts expire.

However, a federal website posted long-term awards on Friday worth a combined $6.8 billion for detention facilities in San Diego, Calexico, Adelanto and Bakersfield. The sites will house about 4,000 detainees, with capacity to expand in the future.

ICE said the contracts were not subject to the new state law, deflecting criticism that the timing was meant to circumvent it. Paige Hughes, an agency spokeswoman, said ICE believed the new contracts will limit transfers of detainees outside California, where they would be farther from family, friends and legal representatives.

“State laws aimed at obstructing federal law enforcement are inappropriate and harmful,” Hughes said.

The governor’s office had no immediate comment when contacted Monday. When he signed the bill, Newsom said private prisons contribute to excessive incarceration, including of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

“These for-profit prisons do not reflect our values,” he said at the time.

A state Senate analysis of Assembly 52 said the Trump administration would likely sue to block the law, partly by arguing that is is preempted by federal immigration law. The analysis predicted the state would prevail in court.

The GEO Group Inc. won two five-year extensions — one to operate the detention center in Adelanto, with capacity for 2,690 beds, and another to run the facility in Bakersfield, with capacity for 1,800 beds. The two contracts are worth more than $3.7 billion.

GEO said Monday the contracts would provide more than $200 million in annual revenue and 1,200 jobs.

CoreCivic Inc. won an extension worth $2.1 billion to operate an immigration detention center in San Diego, with capacity for 2,690 beds. California, with its large immigrant populations and border with Mexico, is a major priority for ICE, which has found itself increasingly unwelcome under state laws.

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U.S. awards immigration detention contracts in California

In this Aug. 28, 2019, file photo, the Adelanto U.S. Immigration and Enforcement Processing Center operated by GEO Group, Inc. (GEO), a Florida-based company specializing in privatized corrections, is viewed in Adelanto, Calif.


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Gender gap opens among Hispanics who could be key in 2020

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI  
COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo.  
(AP) — Yolanda Avila and Andres Pico are friends who sit next to each other on the Colorado Springs’ city council. But politically they couldn’t be further apart — Avila is a durable Democrat and Pico an unflinching Republican.

It’s a split that’s common across the country, as Hispanics are divided along gender lines. Overall, Latinos are far more likely to be Democrats than Republicans, but Hispanic men are more likely than Hispanic women to vote Republican.

Last year, as about two-thirds of Latinos backed Democrats, Hispanic women were 9 percentage points more likely to vote for them than Hispanic men, according to AP VoteCast, a national survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters, including 7,738 Latinos. Though Hispanics started from a more Democratic baseline — 61% of men still backed that party’s candidates in 2018 — the gender divide in the group was comparable to the split among white men and women.

Data from Pew Research Center shows the gap has widened since 2012. “You do see the Latino population reflect the same divides as among the U.S. population as a whole,” said Mark Hugo Lopez of the Pew Hispanic Center. “All these pieces begin to tell a story of integration.” The emerging divide highlights the complexity of what is now the nation’s largest minority group before a presidential election where immigration and identity will be core issues.

President Donald Trump is hoping that his inroads among Hispanics will help him win the pivotal swing state of Florida, and possibly provide enough support to threaten Democrats in states like New Mexico and Nevada. Still, the gender gap has traditionally helped Democrats because women are more likely to vote than men, so that party benefits more from its disproportionate support among women.

Over the past two decades, immigrants from Latin America have increasingly been women, often bringing children north, sometimes trying to rejoin partners who left earlier, when Latin American immigration to the United States was predominantly male. Newer arrivals in the country are more likely to vote Democratic when they attain citizenship. Additionally, Hispanic women have become more likely to earn college degrees than their male counterparts.

“Latinas have a much more positive relationship with U.S. institutions like schools,” said Jessica Lavariega Monforti, a dean at California Lutheran University who has studied the Latino gender gap and noted Hispanic men have higher rates of incarceration. “For Latino men in particular, and for a lesser extent Latinas, this is about wrapping yourself up in American identity, wrapping yourself in the flag,” she said of men supporting the GOP. Trump, and his alpha-male projection of masculinity, also has appeal. “There is a certain ‘manliness’ that comes with being part of the Republican Party” now, Monforti said.

In Las Vegas, Jesus Marquez, a Trump-supporting talk radio host, says he notices that people backing the president who call into his Spanish-language show lean male. He said there’s been considerable social pressure for Latinos of all genders not to admit to backing Trump.

“Males might be a little more outspoken on that,” Marquez said. Jacqueline Armendariz, a Democratic organizer, has seen the gender gap among Latinos firsthand while working for an abortion rights group along the Texas border. The group was almost all Hispanic women. “A man can feel the luxury of feeling that’s not related to pressure for Latinos of all genders not to admit to their own life-and-death situation,” Armendariz said of abortion rights.

Armendariz noted that, in today’s polarized political world, voters are constantly being forced to choose sides. “Is machismo a factor? Maybe,” she said. “For that to translate into what we see in voting data right now doesn’t surprise me.”

The split is evident among the handful of elected Hispanic officials in Colorado Springs, a conservative city 70 miles south of Denver. The three elected Republicans in the county are all men — Pico, county commissioner Longinos Gonzalez and a state legislator, Dave Williams. Avila, for whom Armendariz once worked, is the only Democrat and only woman. Pico, 68, has considered himself a Republican ever since he joined the military decades ago. “I always found conservatives would find a way to solve a problem, and Democrats would find a way to feel good about it,” the retired Naval flight officer said.

In this Friday, Dec. 13, 2019, photograph, Colorado Springs, Colo., council members Yolanda Avila and Andres Pico are shown in a city office in Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Associated Press
Baba Ram Dass, spiritual guru and LSD pioneer, dies at 88

MAUI, Hawaii (AP) — Baba Ram Dass, the 1960s counterculture spiritual leader who experimented with LSD and traveled to India to find enlightenment, returning to share it with Americans, has died. He was 88. Dass’ foundation, Love Serve Remember, announced late Sunday that the author and spiritual leader died peacefully at his home earlier in the day. No cause of death was given.

He had suffered a severe stroke in 1997 that left him paralyzed on the right side and, for a time, unable to speak. More recently, he underwent hip surgery after he was injured in a fall in November 2008, according to his website.

“I had really thought about checking out, but your love and your prayers convinced me not to do it... It’s just beautiful,” he told followers in a videotaped message at the time from his hospital bed in Hawaii. Over the years, Ram Dass — born Richard Alpert — associated with the likes of Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg. He wrote about his experiences with drugs, set up projects to help prisoners and those facing terminal illness and sought to enlighten others about the universal struggle with aging.

But he was best known for the 1971 “Be Here Now,” written after his trip to India. The spiritual primer found its way into thousands of backpacks around the world.

“I want to share with you the parts of the internal journey that never get written up in the mass media...” he wrote. “I’m not interested in what you read in the Saturday Evening Post about LSD. This is the story of what goes on inside a human being who is undergoing all these experiences.”

Among his other books were “How Can I Help?” and “Compassion in Action” and “Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying.”

“In the 60s, I was an uncle for a movement,” he told The Associated Press in 1998. “I was always showing people where they could go. I went east, and then there was a big movement east.”

Now, he said, “the baby boomers are getting old — and I’m learning how to get old for them. That’s my role.”

The Boston-born son of a prominent attorney, Ram Dass entered the public sphere in the early 1960s as a young Harvard psychology professor. Alpert, as he was then known, earned a doctorate at Stanford University.

He and Leary, a Harvard colleague, began a series of experiments with hallucinogenic mushrooms and LSD, giving the drugs to prisoners, philosophers and students to study their effects. Ram Dass later wrote that he tried psilocybin, the compound found in hallucinogenic mushrooms, in Leary’s living room.

“I peered into the semidarkness and recognized none other than myself in cap and gown and hood,” he wrote. “It was as if that part of me, which was a Harvard professor, had separated or dissociated itself from me.”

The experiments got him and Leary kicked out of Harvard in 1963. “It was a little too sensational,” Ram Dass said in 1998, “We were the starters of it.”

He and Leary retreated to an upstate New York mansion that drew Beat Generation figures Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac.

By the late 1960s, LSD and other hallucinogens had become part of pop culture and a rite of passage for many young Americans. But Alpert eventually sought a way to reach a state of enlightenment without drugs. Following Ginsberg’s advice, he headed to India in 1967, where he met the man who became his guru, Neem Karoli Baba.

There, his guru introduced him to yoga, meditation, Buddhism and Sufism, and gave him the name Ram Dass. Hindi for “servant of God.” (He is often called Baba Ram Dass; “baba” is an honorary title.)

Ram Dass wrote “Be Here Now” when he returned to the United States. Around the same time, he told The New York Times that he had turned away from drugs, saying: “I don’t want to break the law, since that leads to fear and paranoia.”

In 1974, Ram Dass founded the Hanuman Foundation, which set up programs such as the Prison Ashram Project to introduce inmates to spirituality. He also helped create the Seva Foundation, which works to prevent blindness and helps community groups in developing countries. His Love Serve Remember Foundation is dedication to preserving his teachings and those of Neem Karoli Baba.

Ram Dass lived for many years in the quiet town of San Anselmo, Calif., about 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of San Francisco, surrounded by the markers of his life straddling East and West: Japanese prints and statues of Buddha, seashells from the South Pacific and a well-used player piano.
Holiday blues: French strikes hit Christmas shopping season

By NICOLAS GARRIGA ANGELA CHARLTON
PARIS (AP) — Last year, it was the yellow vest protests. This year, it’s the strikes that have crippled Paris. The Christmas holidays aren’t proving to be a lucrative — or indeed merry — time for boutiques in the capital.

Or, for that matter, oyster vendors. Or hotels, or cafes. Decorative lights still shimmer along the French capital’s glamorous avenues and illuminate its breathtaking monuments, but that’s not enough to bring back the business that retailers have lost since train drivers and others went on strike Dec. 5.

Monday marked Day 19 of the strikes over President Emmanuel Macron’s plans to redesign the national pension system, which unions see as a threat to the French welfare system and way of life.

A wildcat protest by union activists Monday disrupted traffic on one of only two Paris subway lines that’s been functioning normally — and prevented shoppers from reaching the shopping mecca along the Champs-Elysees.

Those driving to the capital to shop sometimes face hours of traffic, and battles or long waits for scarce parking spots. “It’s very difficult. I usually go the Galeries Lafayette several times, walk through Paris to buy things, but this time I gave that up,” said Marie Lesage, a 32-year-old Parisian.

So she decided to shop online or in little boutiques close to work. Overall estimates of retail losses vary, but they’re hitting across the board. Toy stores, florists and foie gras sellers. Train station cafes, brasseries or burger shops.

The Paris government is offering to delay payments until next year. But some shops struggle to stay open because their own employees can’t get to work.

Online deliveries are sometimes delayed by tangled traffic — a problem that’s making last-minute shoppers nervous the day before Christmas Eve, when French families often exchange gifts.

The Paris government is offering 2.5 million euros in tax breaks to city merchants, and the central government is offering to delay 400 million euros in tax payments until next year. But the Paris region Chamber of Commerce says that’s not enough.

The chamber estimates retail sales in central Paris are down 30% from last year. Galeries Lafayette alone registered a 50% drop in sales the first day of the strike, it said.

Pascal Bouaziz, owner of a high-end electronics shop in the tony 8th district of Paris, estimated sales were down a third from a normal December.

“We are in a business neighborhood, so people finish work … and usually during the holiday season they come in, they buy their products and they calmly return home. But now they’re scared to miss their train, so at 5 p.m. they’re running to get home,” he told The Associated Press. “We understand them. Because of this, we have fewer customers than usual.”

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Retailers have lost since train drivers and others went on strike Dec. 5.

The Christmas holidays have crippled Paris.
Germany argues over migrant children on Greek islands

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German government officials are rejecting an opposition leader’s call for the country unilaterally to take in migrant children stuck in overcrowded camps on Greek islands.

Robert Habeck, a co-leader of the Green party, said in an interview with Sunday’s Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung newspaper that “it is an imperative of humanity to help quickly” and get some 4,000 children out of the camps.

He noted that some German states have said they’re ready to help. Asked whether Germany should go ahead even if other European countries don’t also take in migrants, he replied: “Yes. In any case, everyone will never join in.”

But government officials made clear that they don’t want to let other European countries, many of which have been reluctant to take in migrants, off the hook.

Government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said Monday that Germany wants to help improve the living conditions of all concerned, but added: “We are seeking a European solution for the future, and Germany can’t do that unilaterally.”

Gerd Mueller, the development aid minister, told the Passauer Neue Presse newspaper that “the children can and must be helped on the spot.”

Under a 2016 deal between the European Union and Turkey to stop migrant flows into Europe, those who arrive on Greek islands from the nearby Turkish coast are held in island camps pending deportation unless they successfully apply for asylum in Greece.

The deal, coupled with an increase in new arrivals since the summer, has led to deteriorating conditions in overcrowded camps on the eastern Aegean islands.

Greece’s 6-month-old government has vowed to move about 20,000 people off the islands and into other migrant and refugee facilities on the mainland by early 2020.

In this Monday, Oct. 28, 2019 file photo Green party co-chairman Robert Habeck addresses the media during a press conference in Berlin, Germany.

Associated Press
By NASSER KARIMI
TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Dangerously poor air quality forced Iran's government on Monday to extend school closures in the capital Tehran, a city home to over 10 million people.

Schools have been closed since Saturday and will remain shut until Wednesday, the end of Iran's workweek, according to the official IRNA news agency.

Nearby mountains were completely obscured by the a thick layer of air pollution called an inversion that's been hovering over the capital since last month.

The smog is mostly caused by heavy traffic as well as factory pollution, according to Tehran's provincial governor. It's been worsened by a lack of wind and rain.

Tehran's air is among the most polluted in the world. Similar school closures were in effect in other cities as well. Still, despite the pollution, many students seemed to be enjoying their extended vacation, according to one schoolteacher in Tehran, Maryam Lavasani.

But the smog doesn't only affect children. Zahra Alipour, a 60-year-old homemaker with a chronic lung condition, told The Associated Press that she has trouble just going outside.

"Breathing is really difficult for me. What can I do? If I don't leave home, how can I take care of my daily jobs? And when I come out of the house, the air pollution really hurts me," she said.

Poor air quality keeps schools closed in Iran's capital
China, South Korea look to improve ties with Beijing summit

Beijing (AP) — The leaders of South Korea and China said Monday that they look forward to improved ties following a protracted disagreement over the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile system that Beijing considers a threat.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in told Chinese leader Xi Jinping that while the sides may have felt “disappointed toward each other for a while,” their shared culture and history prevented them from becoming completely estranged.

“It is hoped that South Korea’s dream becomes helpful for China as China’s dream becomes an opportunity for South Korea,” Moon said in opening remarks before reporters were ushered from the room.

In his opening comments at the meeting at the Great Hall of the People in the center of Beijing, Xi described bilateral ties as “a substantial relationship in the world and an influential relationship among world nations.”

Ties between the northeastern neighbors nosedived in 2017 after Seoul accepted the emplacement of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system in southern South Korea. Beijing insists its real purpose is to use its powerful radars to peer deep into its territory, rather than to warn of North Korean missile launches and shoot them down.

Furious at being snubbed, China launched an unofficial boycott of everything from Chinese tour group visits to South Korea to South Korean television shows, boy bands and other cultural products. Major South Korean retailer Lotte, which provided a golf course where the missile system was deployed, was singled out for especially harsh treatment and its China business operations were essentially destroyed.

Even sales of ubiquitous South Korean auto brands such as Hyundai and Kia plunged for months.

New construction seen at missile-related site in North Korea

SEoul, South Korea (AP) — A new satellite image of a factory where North Korea makes military equipment used to launch long-range missiles shows the construction of a new structure.

The release of several images from Planet Labs came amid concern that North Korea could launch a rocket or missile as it seeks concessions in stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States. North Korea has warned that what “Christmas gift” it gives the U.S. depends on what action Washington takes.

One of the satellite images taken on Dec. 19 shows the completion of a new structure at the March 16 Factory near Pyongyang, where North Korea is believed to be developing and manufacturing vehicles used as mobile launchers for long-range ballistic missiles.

Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia nonproliferation program at the Middlebury Institute, said in an email that the construction seemed to be an expansion of the factory, which would be “big news.”

North Korea used what appeared to be vehicles imported from China during its three flight tests of the Hwasong-14 and -15 intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2017, Lewis said. An increased capacity to produce mobile launchers would potentially help expand North Korea’s ICBM force and improve its survivability during nuclear conflict. “As far as I know, North Korea only imported eight of those vehicles,” Lewis said about the vehicles the North used during the 2017 tests.

This Dec. 19, 2019, satellite image from Planet Lab Inc., that has been analyzed by experts at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, shows the March 16 Factory in Pyongsong, near Pyongyang, where North Korea manufactures military trucks used as mobile launchers for long-range missiles.
By SCOTT SMITH
Associated Press
CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Tour operator Alejandro Palacios joined hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans protesting in the streets early this year, wanting to believe that things would finally change in the country as upset opposition leader Juan Guaidó rallied international support and promised a swift end to President Nicolás Maduro’s rule.

To Palacios, Guaidó seemed different from the string of past opposition leaders who had challenged Maduro and his predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez, over 20 years of increasingly authoritarian socialist rule.

The United States and dozens of nations had thrown their support behind the youthful congressional leader, recognizing him as the country’s legitimate president, arguing that Maduro’s re-election was invalidated by fraud and a ban on most opponents. And there seemed to be signs that the military might heed Guaidó’s repeated calls for soldiers to abandon Maduro. A few joined him in the streets in a quickly quelled uprising. The U.S. and other countries rushed to offer financial aid to Venezuela’s borders to be defended by Guaidó’s backers, and they were put in charge of many Venezuelan embassies and assets abroad.

Then February turned to March, and the months marched by. No international aid made it through Maduro’s blackmaile. The military stayed loyal. Even as the nation’s catastrophic economy began to improve slightly, Maduro remains in power.

“We were 2019, like a dictatorship,” Guaidó said in an interview with The Associated Press. “I think that is central.”

Guaidó said he remains focused on winning over the military, the linchpin of support for Maduro, and he dismissed the idea of further negotiations with the socialist administration — talks his side says Maduro has used to defuse protests without making concessions.

He also said he favors boycotting legislative elections in 2020 as long as the electoral board running the vote remains packed with Maduro loyalists. Still, Guaidó insists his domestic and international support will only grow.

Guaidó, the hand-picked successor to then-detained opposition leader Leopoldo López, leaped onto the stage last January at a dark moment in the once-wealthy nation’s history. Despite sitting atop the world’s largest proven oil reserves, gasoline shortages plague the nation, most homes don’t have reliable drinking water or electricity and there are shortages of food, medicine and spare parts.

Roughly 4.5 million people have left the country, figures that rival mass migration from war-torn Syria. Seizing on the nation’s desperation, Guaidó drew masses into the streets 11 months ago when he claimed to be Venezuela’s legitimate interim president after congress declared Maduro’s re-election illegal. The bold move overnight turned Guaidó into the nation’s most powerful politician since Chávez burst onto the political scene in the early 1990s. More than 60% of Venezuelans viewed him favorably in February, according to Caracas-based poll firm Datanalísi.

In this Dec. 16, 2019 photo, Venezuela’s National Assembly President and self-proclaimed interim President Juan Guaidó speaks during an interview with the Associated Press in Caracas, Venezuela.

With many believing he would rid them of Maduro within three months, “Guaidó became the outsider that people were looking for to face Maduro,” said Datanalísí’s president Luis Vicente Leon. “A kind of hope formed around him.”

Today that support has sunk by 20 percentage points, said Leon, a sign that Venezuelans are starting to think that removing Maduro from power may be impossible.

Maduro, whose approval ratings in the other polls have dipped closer to 10%, has proven more resilient than many expected. Venezuela’s oil production has inched up for the second consecutive month after crashing to a seven-year low under U.S. sanctions, and shoppers are increasingly pulling U.S. dollars from their wallets — a sign the economy is bouncing back, or at least stabilizing, due in part to an easing of currency controls that the government had earlier resisted.

Maduro also appeals to many Venezuelans who still mistrust an opposition seen as corrupt and elitist and who honor the memory of Chávez, who died before the economic collapse hit home.

Vice President Delcy Rodríguez declared the “attempted coup d’etat” led by President Donald Trump a failure as she spoke last week to the National Constituent Assembly, a body the government created to bypass the opposition-dominated congress. “They don’t understand what’s happening within Venezuela,” Rodríguez said. “They follow Hollywood scripts but don’t have an ending our political project.”

Maduro has agreed to several rounds of negotiations over the years, including some sponsored by the Vatican and the government of Norway that raised hopes of a breakthrough to the political crisis, only to have them fall apart.

Accelerating the opposition’s downfall have been revelations of corruption. The National Assembly that Guaidó heads has suspended seven opposition lawmakers — three of them from Guaidó’s Popular Will party — who are accused of lobbying on behalf of companies who were under investigation both in Venezuela and the U.S. for allegedly defrauding Maduro’s landmark food subsidy program.

In January, the National Assembly decided whether to extend Guaidó’s tenure, and he said he is confident he has the backing to be re-elected as assembly president. Analysts say pointing any alternative would be devastating for the opposition.

Adding to his obstacles, Maduro’s government has stepped up its campaign to undermine the opposition, offering large bribes to lawmakers to vote against Guaidó, Elliott Abrams, the U.S. special envoy to Venezuela, told reporters in Washington on Friday.

Maduro’s government has also recently charged four opposition lawmakers with treason and rebellion, bringing to roughly 32 the number of legislators who have been detained, forced into exile or had their constitutional immunity from prosecution revoked.
Christmas Lights

ORANJESTAD — Christmas in Aruba would not be complete without a visit to see the Christmas Lights around the island. By just driving around on the main roads you can enjoy a variety of creativity with colorful lights being displayed on various Aruban homes. Also the majority of the roundabouts are decorated.

If you are lucky enough you might hear Christmas carols and “gaitas” at any of these locations but also at the malls and stores. Gaita is a style of Venezuelan folk music from Maracaibo in Zulia State. It is possibly derived from gaita, the Gothic word for goat, the animal whose skin generally is used for the membrane of the furro instrument (kind of tambura with stick). Other instruments used in gaita include maracas, cuatro, charrasca and tambora (Venezuelan drum). Song themes range from humorous and love songs to protest songs. The local gaita bands are composed mostly of a group of ladies who sing with angelic voices while they dance in a choreographic manner.

The map shown here will give you an overview of the most popular decorated places around the island. So hop into your car or call a taxi driver to go around and enjoy the spectacular Christmas scenes. We wish you a wonderful Christmas.

Aruba to Me

ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today likes to welcome readers to participate in our newspaper. You can see that in our Honored Guest-publications, specials like on Valentine’s Day and on other occasions. Throughout the year you are always welcome to send us your vacation picture(s) together with completing the sentence: Aruba to me is …… (Email: news@arubatoday.com)

For today’s newspaper we received a great picture from Maggie Kinney from Hoosick Falls, NY. She wrote to us:

Aruba to me is…. JOY!

Happy Holidays Maggie and family from all of us at Aruba Today!
Back in the mid-1700s, there was no electricity; however, the people of Aruba were waiting for Christmas with excitement and certain traditions. Weeks before Christmas, the Arubans began cleaning and painting their homes. An old custom was also to tie three aloe leaves with a bright red ribbon and hang that amulet over doors and windows to welcome the spirits of peace and harmony in each home. Typical dishes were enjoyed among the family: Christmas ham, ayaca, goat stew, stuffed turkey and oliebollen (a Dutch tradition). They drank chuculati di panda which is hot milk with peanuts mix and crème punch.

Aruba’s families went to the Aurora Mass to demonstrate their Christian faith. It called ‘Aurora’ because it is celebrated at the dawn of the new day. The blessed dawn, the divine sun light of the East that we waited for has appeared and will no longer be hidden in our lives.

The cradle of Aruba’s Christianity is found at the north coast of the island. This little chapel has a lot of history that attracts many tourists year round and for the Aruban population it’s a place for veneration where they find peace and tranquility for their restless spirit.

Among the many stories of this small chapel, there is one that happened during Christmas Eve a quit long time ago and that reveals the great Christian faith of the Aruban native people. This took place in 1760, in times where Prosecutor Miguel Alvarez ruled. Between the books of the chapel of Alto Vista, a manuscript was obtained whose historical value gives us an idea of the religiosity that occupied the hearts of the native inhabitants of Aruba already at that time. The manuscript mentions that at the end of the year 1760 a neighbor of Alto Vista named Antonio Gregorio, a man of advanced age and a devotee became ill. He was so sick that he understood that it was his last days and felt a great spiritual discomfort because he could die without before first having received the holy sacrament given by the Church. Antonio’s greatest wish was to receive the sacraments before he died and he asked his family and friends to pray for this to happen.

Antonio’s request seemed very difficult to fulfill since there was no priest at Alto Vista at the time. Days passed and his illness progressed. Days before Christmas, Antonio’s neighbors and friends gathered to pray in the chapel of Alto Vista. Antonio was getting sicker and sicker he was confident that God would not abandon him and asked the Prosecutor and his friends to prepare Christmas in the best way to fulfill his request.

Continued on Page 15
After eighth days of prayer there was no news that any priest could get to meet the request of this ill stricken man. At dawn the next day a group of mounted men arrived in Alto Vista, one of them was Guillermo, an old neighbor of Alto Vista who years earlier traveled to Venezuela and returned to greet his family. As soon as the inhabitants of Alto Vista confirmed that a priest was arriving in the company of Guillermo they overjoyed with happiness and quickly ran to give the sick Antonio the great news. The neighbors told the priest, whose name was Maximilian about Antonio’s wish and accompanied him to the Sacristy where the priest was able to dress his religious habits. Father Maximiliano and several neighbors went to see the sick man; the priest confessed to Antonio and promised to give him the extreme unction at dawn the next day to make it a more solemn act. Meanwhile the Prosecutor raised two flags to announce to the inhabitants of Alto Vista that something extraordinary was happening and people began to arrive from all sides for the occasion. The priest greeted everyone with great cordiality, speaking to them of the importance of confession in order to receive the Holy Eucharist (Communion). At twelve o’clock at night, Father Maximiliano gave his first Mass “Misa di Aurora.” At the end of the Aurora Mass, all those present lightened the way with torches and accompanied the priest to Antonio’s house. After giving the Holy Oils of the extreme unction to the sick the priest returned to the chapel to prepare the afternoon procession after a few hours someone came running to notify him that Antonio is about to die. The priest and a group of neighbors returned to the house of the dying man and kneeled beside him and began to pray. Everyone was around the bed of the dying man and they were surprised to see how the sick man sat on the bed and with his arms outstretched he cried for mercy to God asking him to help him get to his side ... after his request Antonio died in peace on Christmas Mass day.
They love Aruba and Aruba loves them

ORANJESTAD — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba’s loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The Distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were brothers Kaleb & Zach Riddle as Distinguished visitors of Aruba. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate went to couple Larry & Laura Peterson.

These lovely people stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious variety of foods, its safety, and Aruba’s warm and friendly people who became like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of Renaissance Resort & Casino presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home.
Bohemian Restaurant: Live Violinist Angela

PALM BEACH — Avant-garde from France, nonconformist in style and ethnic in cuisine. That is what the new kid in town is about. Bohemian Restaurant is different, unconventional and a rebel with a cause. The cause is to make you feel king in this hidden garden with outstanding dishes that connect you to the European liaisons of Aruba. Thursday nights has an extra magic: the live Violinist Angela performs! From traditional French and Italian famous melodies to more upbeat pop and rock and roll. A taste for everyone.

A garden full of strong trees and dressed up in New York-style industrial-look elements creates a cosmopolitan vibe while at the same time the tropical breeze and outside dining connect to the Caribbean.

Waiters with French barrettes and pant suspenders service you with a happy and loose style with on the background the sounds of underground chill music varied with French classics.

ONLY French owned Restaurant
The French are famous for their culinary art. Bohemian is the ONLY French owned restaurant on Aruba and offers you Grande gastronomy in a hip decor. French classics like Coq-au-Vin, Beef tartare, Escargot, Duck Foie Gras Terrine, Bouillabaisse Fish Soup, Tuna-Tartare, Quinoa-Salad, Rib-Eye Butter Maitre-D’, Crème Brulee, Chocolate Lava Cake and Pineapple Carpaccio are on the menu. Mediterranean inspired dishes like Ras el Hanout Fish Kebbab, Honey and Rosemary Lamb Shank, Moroccan Lamb sausages, Mediterranean Sea Bass and Grilled Local Catch are other finger licking options. Directly imported wines from wineries in Europe make up for a perfect pairing. You are welcome to enjoy the Happy Hours and Daily Early Birds from 5 to 7 PM. Bon appetit!

Free Parking available at the parking lot in front of Barcelo Resort.

Make your reservations through their website: https://bohemianaruba.com.
Call them at 00 297 280 8448.
Facebook: Bohemian.
Ravens clinch AFC’s top seed by beating Browns

by Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Lamar Jackson threw three touchdown passes — two to tight end Mark Andrews late in the first half — and rushed for 103 yards as the Ravens won their 11th straight game, 31-15 against the Cleveland Browns on Sunday to lock up the conference’s top seed and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

The Ravens (13-2) shook off a sluggish start and avenged their last loss, a 40-25 to the Browns on Sept. 29. But Baltimore looks nothing like the team it was three months ago as the marvelous, multi-dimensional Jackson has taken the league by storm with his arm and legs.

Jackson finished with 238 yards passing and went over 100 yards for the fifth time this season.

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Nuggets beat LeBron-less Lakers 128-104 for 6th win in row

Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis dunks against the Denver Nuggets during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Los Angeles. The Nuggets won 128-104.

Associated Press
AP source: Ryu, Blue Jays agree to $80 million, 4-year deal

By MIKE FITZPATRICK

Hyun-Jin Ryu is headed north of the border to a Toronto Blue Jays team in dire need of starting pitching. One that was willing to pay for it, too. Ryu and the Blue Jays agreed to an $80 million, four-year contract, according to a person familiar with the negotiations. The person spoke late Sunday night on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a physical after Christmas and had not been announced.

Ryu was 14-5 with a major league-best 2.32 ERA for the Los Angeles Dodgers last season. He started for the National League in his first All-Star Game and finished second in Cy Young Award voting to New York Mets ace Jacob deGrom. The 32-year-old left-hander from South Korea receives a $20 million salary each of the next four years, with no signing bonus. His deal raised agent Scott Boras’ total to more than a billion dollars in guaranteed contracts — $1,016,500,000 to be exact — for seven players eligible for free agency since the start of November, agreements extending as many as nine seasons.

Boras is also likely to land lucrative deals in free agency this winter for outfielder Nicholas Castellanos, and in salary arbitration for several stars — including 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts. “One hundred and thirty-five people in Boras Corp. work very hard for players,” Boras said in a text message to The Associated Press. “Free agency is an achievement few players ever reach, and I am honored to work for these talented players.”

Toronto is building around a promising young core of hitters, including three sons of former big league stars who broke into the majors last season: Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Bo Bichette and Cavan Biggio. Looking to surround them with some proven pitching, the Blue Jays are set to add Ryu to the top of a revamped rotation that should also include newcomers Tanner Roark and Chase Anderson. Roark signed a $24 million, two-year deal last week with Toronto, which finished fourth in the AL East at 67-95 last season. Anderson, a right-hander, was acquired from Milwaukee last month.

The moves follow Toronto home attendance declining from nearly 3.4 million in 2016, when the Blue Jays lost in the AL Championship Series for the second straight year, to 1.75 million last season — the club’s lowest since 2010.

Pitching was certainly a problem: No starter won more than six games for the Blue Jays this year, and the rotation ranked 22nd out of 30 teams with a 5.25 ERA. Ryu, who turns 33 in March, spent his first seven years in the majors with the Dodgers after coming over from South Korea and signing a $36 million, six-year contract before the 2013 season. He was effective the first two years but sat out the 2015 season and made only one appearance in 2016 due to left shoulder surgery and elbow tendinitis. He also missed time in 2017 with injuries to his left hip and foot.

Ryu re-emerged with a 1.97 ERA over 15 starts in 2018 and accepted a $17.9 million qualifying offer from Los Angeles for 2019. He threw 182 2/3 innings in 29 starts this season for the NL West champions. Boras is also likely to land lucrative deals in free agency this winter for outfielder Nicholas Castellanos, and in salary arbitration for several stars — including 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts.

“One hundred and thirty-five people in Boras Corp. work very hard for players,” Boras said in a text message to The Associated Press. “Free agency is an achievement few players ever reach, and I am honored to work for these talented players.”

In this Oct. 6, 2019, file photo, Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Hyun-Jin Ryu throws to a Washington Nationals batter during the first inning in Game 3 of a baseball National League Division Series in Washington.
Flames score 3 power-play goals, beat Stars 5-1

DALLAS (AP) — The Calgary Flames overpowered the Dallas Stars.

Matthew Tkachuk, Sean Monahan and Mikael Backlund scored power-play goals and Calgary beat the Stars 5-1.

Elias Lindholm assisted on the Flames’ first three goals. “They’re getting some nice chemistry,” Flames interim coach Geoff Ward said of Tkachuk and Lindholm. “The power play looked like it did for long stretches of last year. The key thing for us tonight was that the puck movement was quick and on the tape.”

Tkachuk’s 14th goal of the season broke a 1-1 tie in the second period. Monahan also scored in the second. Backlund’s goal in the third period preceded a short-handed, empty-net goal by Derek Ryan.

Tkachuk noticed the chemistry with Tkachuk, who had two assists. “The last five or six games, play after the first period because of a lower-body injury and other penalty killers were in the penalty box for two goals.”

“We’re just out of synch,” Bowness said. “[Janmark]’s gone, [Radek Faksa]’s in the box, [Andrew Cogliano]’s in the box. That’s our penalty killers.”

Flames goalie David Rittich made 26 saves and picked up his first career assist on Backlund’s goal.

Andrew Mangiapane scored Calgary’s first goal in the opening period. Denis Gurianov countered 38 seconds later for Dallas. Stars goalie Ben Bishop had 25 saves. The Flames had been 0-2-1 in their previous three games. They are now 7-2-1 under Ward.

Travis Hamonic had the Flames’ first shot 8:02 in, a wrist shot stopped by Bishop. That began a stretch of 10 straight shots, including the goals by Tkachuk at 12:28 and Monahan, on a play similar to Mangiapane’s goal, at 14:21.

COYOTES 5, RED WINGS 2

DETROIT (AP) — Clayton Keller had two goals and an assist to lead Arizona past Detroit.

Carl Soderberg, Taylor Hall and Christian Dvorak also scored for Arizona. Coyotes defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson had three assists and Nick Schmaltz added two.
By The Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Kyle Lowry had 32 points and 10 assists, Chris Boucher scored a career-high 21 points and the Toronto Raptors overcame a 30-point deficit to beat the Dallas Mavericks 110-107 on Sunday, the biggest comeback in franchise history and the NBA’s largest in a decade.

Lowry had one fewer point in the fourth quarter (20) than the Mavericks managed as a team (21). It was the first 30-point comeback in the NBA since Sacramento beat Chicago on Dec. 21, 2009, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored 18 points and Fred VanVleet had 10 as the short-handed Raptors won their fifth straight and improved to 13-3 at home, ending the Mavericks’ seven-game road winning streak.

Kristaps Porzingis had 19 points and 12 rebounds and Jalen Brunson scored 21 points as Dallas dropped to 2-2 without guard Luka Doncic, who sat for the second time in seven days with a sprained left ankle. Western Conference-leading Los Angeles lost its third in a row.

THUNDER 118, CLIPPERS 112

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander matched his career high with 32 points and Oklahoma City rallied to beat the Clippers.

Oklahoma City came back from 18 points down in the second quarter. It’s the third time in seven days the Thunder overcame a deficit that big to win. Paul George scored 18 points in his first game back in Oklahoma City since being traded from the Thunder to the Clippers.

Los Angeles scoring leader Kawhi Leonard sat out because of left knee soreness. Dennis Schroder scored 28 points and Steven Adams added 20 points and 17 rebounds to help the Thunder win their fourth straight.

Bucks 117, Pacers 89

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Giannis Antetokounmpo had 18 points, 19 rebounds and nine assists, and the Bucks spoiled Malcolm Brogdon’s return to Milwaukee.

Wesley Matthews scored 19 points for NBA-leading Milwaukee, which has won three in a row. Brook Lopez and George Hill each had 17 points.

Brogdon was drafted by Milwaukee and spent his first three seasons with the Pacers before he was acquired by Indiana in a sign-and-trade deal over the summer. He finished with 10 points on 5-of-19 shooting and 10 assists.

CELTICS 119, HORNETS 93

BOSTON (AP) — Jayson Tatum had a career-high 39 points and 12 rebounds. Kemba Walker scored 23 points against his former team, and Boston beat Charlotte.

Tatum eclipsed his previous high of 34 points against Brooklyn on Jan. 14. Jaylen Brown added 16 points and nine rebounds, and rookie Grant Williams added 12 points off the bench for the Celtics. Boston has won three straight and seven of nine.

Devonte’ Graham had 23 points and 10 assists, Bismack Biyombo scored 18 and Miles Bridges scored 15 to lead the Hornets.

Celtics’ Kanter thanks Trudeau for chance to play in Canada

Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter says he will be able to play in his team’s Christmas Day game in Toronto against the Raptors after discussions with the Canadian government.

In a column published Monday by The Globe and Mail, the native of Turkey thanked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government as well as other officials from Canada and the U.S. for getting him the green light to cross the border to play in the NBA’s first Christmas game in Toronto.

Kanter, an outspoken critic of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government for its treatment of residents, has not traveled outside the United States for years. Kanter has said his passport was revoked by the Turkish government in 2017.

The Globe’s headline reads, “Thank you, Canada, for letting me play basketball — despite Turkey’s threats against me.” The Celtics already were short-handed at center with Vincent Poirier and Robert Williams nursing injuries.

Kanter, 27, is averaging 7.8 points and 7.3 rebounds for the Celtics this season.

“I want to thank Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government, U.S. and Canadian law enforcement, U.S. Senator Ed Markey, the Celtics, the NBA and my managers for working diligently to make my Christmas game against the Raptors possible and ensuring my safety there,” Kanter writes in the Globe. “And, on Christmas night, I will play in my first game as a Celtic outside the U.S. when I take the court against the Raptors.”
Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Tyler Boyd (83) stretched for a touchdown as Miami Dolphins defensive back Nik Needham (40) is unable to defend, during the second half at an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press
Norway's Windingstad wins parallel GS event for career first

ALTA BADIA, Italy (AP) — Norway's Rasmus Windingstad won a men's World Cup parallel giant slalom night race on Monday for his first career victory.

Windingstad defeated Stefan Luitz of Germany by 0.41 seconds in the final of the event, which sees two competitors race side-by-side on identical, shortened giant slalom courses, with run times just over 20 seconds.

It was his sixth top-10 result, and second podium finish, since coming runner-up in a regular giant slalom in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, last season.

Windingstad became the fifth different winner in the five parallel GS events held in Alta Badia since 2015, after Kjetil Jansrud, Cyprien Sarrazin, Mats Olsson and Marcel Hirscher.

Roland Leitinger of Austria beat Windingstad's Norwegian teammate Leif Kristian Nestvold-Haugen for third place.

Pinturault could have become the first male Alpine skier to win a World Cup race in six of the seven different disciplines.

Clijsters targets March return 7 years after retiring

BRUSSELS (AP) — Kim Clijsters plans to make her delayed comeback to tennis by the Monterrey Open in Mexico after winning an alpine ski, men's World Cup parallel giant slalom, in Alta Badia, Italy, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

At the Monterrey Open in Mexico, Clijsters plans to make her return 7 years after retiring.

The former No. 1 and four-time grand slam champion, announced her retirement in April 2007, more than seven years after her second retirement.

Clijsters said on Monday that WTA rules allow her, as a former No. 1, to receive unlimited wild-card invitations to tournaments from April 6.

She accepted wild cards at the Monterrey Open in Mexico and Indian Wells from March 11, and then the Charleston clay tournament from April 6.

By ROB HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

DODON (AP) — Expelling all Russians from the Olympics would have been disproportionate and risked being overturned in court, according to the lawyer facing mounting criticism for overseeing a World Anti-Doping Agency decision not to impose a total ban on Russia for a fresh cover-up.

“Should it have been stronger? Well, I would say … it was the appropriate line to draw,” Taylor told the AP on Thursday.

“You should not punish innocent athletes. So it’s not as if there’s some overwhelming voice that says, ‘No you’ve got this completely wrong.’ Russia could still appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, if that leads to a lengthy legal battle, the punishment could be pushed back to cover the 2024 Paris Olympics instead of the Tokyo Games.

The idea that somehow this is a weak proposal, I just don’t accept,” Taylor said. "Russia doesn’t care about this, this is a sham, they laugh this off — I don’t accept it."

Scott, for a complete prohibition on Russians from the rating after Moscow was found to have tampered with doping data as recently as January. A British member of the athlete panel quit on Thursday in protest, with former Paralympic rower Victoria Aggar saying WADA prioritized “politics over principle.”

AP Interview: WADA lawyer defends no blanket ban on Russians

Chair of the Compliance Review Committee (CRC) Jonathan Taylor speaks during a press conference after the WADA’s extraordinary Executive Committee (ExCo) on the Russian doping data manipulation, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Monday, Dec. 9, 2019.

By ROB HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

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Russia could still appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, if that leads to a lengthy legal battle, the punishment could be pushed back to cover the 2024 Paris Olympics instead of the Tokyo Games.

"If they drag it out so that it doesn’t cover Tokyo, it will cover Paris," Taylor said. "They have to decide which consequences ... Anyone who says to me Russia doesn’t care about this, this is a sham, they laugh this off — I don’t accept them."

But the ban on hosting events does not impact St. Petersburg staging four games at the 2020 European Championship and the 2021 Champions League final, because European soccer body UEFA is not bound by the ruling.
NEW YORK (AP) — A chat app that quickly became popular in the United Arab Emirates for communicating with friends and family is actually a spying tool used by the government to track its users, according to a newspaper report.

The government uses ToTok to track conversations, locations, images and other data of those who install the app on their phones, The New York Times reported, citing U.S. officials familiar with a classified intelligence assessment and the newspaper’s own investigation.

The Emirates has long been suspected of using so-called “zero day” exploits to target human rights activists and others. Zero day exploits can be expensive to obtain on the black market because they represent software vulnerabilities for which fixes have yet to be developed. The Times described ToTok as a way to give the government free access to personal information, as millions of users are willingly downloading and installing the app on their phones and blindly giving permission to enable features.

The Times says ToTok is a home to their loved ones playing up ToTok as an alternative for expatriates using Facebook’s WhatsApp and other calling apps. ToTok did not respond directly to Sunday’s Times report.

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The app also has access to microphones, cameras, calendar and other data. A security expert who said he analyzed the app for the Times, Patrick Wardle, said that ToTok “does what it claims to do” as a communications app, which is the “genius” of the app if it is being used as a spy tool.

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By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
NEW YORK (AP) — To get that monogram tote bag by Louis Vuitton or leather Flashtrek sneakers by Gucci, the go-to place had been luxury department stores.

Not anymore. Now, there are far more options to access exclusive labels. You can buy them at online sites like Netaporter. Or get them barely used through sites like Fashionphile and The RealReal. You can even rent an entire rotating wardrobe through companies like Rent the Runway.

“The consumer is king. And they can buy luxury brands in different places,” says Steve Sadove, former CEO and chairman of Saks Fifth Avenue and now senior adviser a MasterCard.

The new entrants have disrupted the luxury sector by creating different channels to attain the seemingly unattainable. For luxury department stores that once had a lock on where the well-heeled could shop, that has forced them to reimagine their approach.

They now offer new services as well as food and alcohol to lure back customers who were once exclusively theirs.

At Nordstrom’s women’s flagship in Manhattan, for instance, customers sip champagne and nibble on small bites while trying on shoes. Recognizing the growing popularity of second-hand sites, Neiman Marcus is rolling out shops where customers can sell their designer belongings as part of a partnership with Fashionphile, an online resale accessories company. And as part of a $250 million renovation of its flagship store in Manhattan, Saks Fifth Avenue has dedicated its main floor to luxury handbags that’s staffed with 50 handbag style advisers, in addition to sales associates.

Meanwhile, brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton are opening more of their own stores and expanding online. Robert Burke, a luxury consultant, says they are trying to control their future as they watch their products get discounted on resale sites.

Joseph Aquino, president of real estate services firm JAACRES, sees luxury’s future with fewer stores that focus on “less product” and “higher prices.”

In one sense, traditional luxury stores are no different than other brick-and-mortar retailers that must now fiercely compete with online rivals. But the exclusivity they used to command by catering to a niche market of wealthy spenders is beginning to erode, especially among the new-moneyed set of shoppers in their 20s through their 40s who can afford high-end merchandise but may still be looking for a deal.

Millenials and Generation Z accounted for 47% of luxury consumers in 2018 and for 33% of all luxury sales worldwide in 2018, according to a study by consulting firm Bain & Co. Together, however, they contributed to virtually all of the market’s growth, compared with 85% in 2017.

Overall, the global market for personal luxury goods is healthy, buoyed by a strong economy and the spending power of China. The sector reached a record high of $286.53 billion (260 billion euros) in 2018 — a 6% increase from the year before, according to Bain. Jewelry in particular has been one of the top luxury growth categories.

In the U.S., luxury sales excluding jewelry have fallen 1.9% through November compared to a 3.4% increase in overall retail sales excluding autos and gas, says MasterCard SpendingPulse, which tracks sales across all types of payments. That’s in part because of store closings and a drop in international tourists.

Luxury shoppers like Sabina Gill present challenges to luxury department stores.

Champagne and shoes: Luxury stores adapt to changing shopper

In this Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019, photo shows customers shopping in the shoe department at the Nordstrom NYC Flagship in New York.

Associated Press
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- $850 also Bonaire Filming
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  - 3BR OceanView $26K

For Sale:
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- 2BR OceanFront $26K

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Tel. 1-714 248 0011

**Marriott Surf Club For Sale**
- Platinum Season:
  - 2BR OceanView $15,5K
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  - 3BR OceanView $26K

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**Marriott Surf Club For Sale**
- Platinum Plus:
  - WK51 OceanView $9K
  - WK52 OceanView $9K
  - WK51 &52 OceanFront $160K both weeks

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**Divi Links Golf**
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  - 2BR WK51 $24K
  - Birdie 1 with 26 weeks
  - 1-BR WK15 & 2
  - Birdie 9 with 30 weeks remaining on each $10K each
  - Studio WK12 $7.5K
  - eagle 3 with 23 weeks
  - 1-BR WK13 $9K
  - eagle 3 with 23 weeks

**La Cabana Beach Resort**
- 2BR E Unit wk 49 /Oceanfront ground floor $15K each

**Eagle 8 with 25 weeks**

**Divi Village**
- studio wk#1 $7K
  - building G with 34 weeks

**Dutch Village**
- studio wk#1 $7500
  - 17 weeks 9 accelerated

**Divi Links Golf**
- $7,500
  - Studio wk#1 building 4
  - 24-weeks 8-accelerated

**Divi Links Golf**
- 1-BR WK#4 $8K
  - birdie-1 with 20 weeks
  - studiowk#4 $18K
  - birdie-4 with 28 weeks

**Eagles Resort**
- 3-BR wk#5 $8K
  - 1-BR wk#5 & 6 $25K
  - both weeks

**La Cabana Beach Resort**
- Thursday check-in 4th floor
  - 1 BR wk 51 $4500
  - 4th floor thursday check
  - 1-WK#5 $8,5K

**La Cabana Beach**
- Sunday check in
  - 1 BR wk 49
  - 2nd floor $5,5K
  - 1 BR wk 50
  - 3rd floor $5,5K

**Aruba Divi Phoenix**
- 2-BRPH WK49 & 50
  - building 7/7th floor
  - 32 weeks on each $24K each
  - 2-BRPH Wk #1
    - building 6/7 th floor
    - 28 weeks $30K
  - 2-BR OceanView $8K

**Divi Links Golf**
- 1-BR WK51 $12.5K
  - Birdie 1 with 26 weeks
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Scientists claim to find ancient seawall off Israeli coast

HAHOTRIM BEACH, Israel (AP) — An international team of researchers says it has discovered a 7,000-year-old-seawall along Israel’s Mediterranean coast, providing evidence that coastal communities protected themselves against rising waters even in ancient times.

The scientists believe the more than 100-meter-long (110-yard-long) structure acted as a fortification against surging waters and storms. The study, published Wednesday in the Public Library of Science One journal, said the Neolithic era village, called Tel Herzl, was abandoned and eventually swallowed by the sea.

“Here we have an example, a practical example of a process that is still going on. We can see a whole community which are now under the sea,” said Ehud Galili, lead researcher and archaeologist from Israel’s Haifa University.

The researchers believe the structure was built by villagers out of riverbed boulders found several kilometers (miles) away. The site lies just south of the northern Israeli port city of Haifa.

While seas were rising at a faster rate during the Neolithic period than they are today, the causes were much different, according to co-author Jonathan Benjamin from Flinders University in Australia.

“There’s a big difference between climate change and prehistory which was naturally occurring, and climate change now, which is due to this huge human intervention,” Benjamin said. Still, similar to contemporary coastal communities, Benjamin said the villagers of Tel Herzl had to make “the very human decision” to stay or go as the coastline receded.

The ancient settlement was first exposed in the mid 1960s and re-covered by thick sands. After winter storms along the coast in 2012 and 2015 moved these sediments, the structure was uncovered. Archaeologists have also dug up pottery, animal and human remains that, based on carbon dating, are believed to be from the same settlement.

The community, Galili said, was an “early Mediterranean fishing village” which relied on farming, animal husbandry and exploitation of the land and sea. During the excavations, they also found early examples of olive oil extraction.

At first, researchers considered the possibility that the wall was built for other reasons like agriculture or protection from attackers. But Galili said that during this period, enemies would have come from land and not the sea. He also said there was no sign that the wall extended around the village to defend against land invasions. He concluded the wall “has no other function possible” except to protect against the elements.

Researchers say the seawall itself — found about 120 meters (130 yards) off the coast — is the only structure of its kind found in Israel’s coastal region, making it a “unique example” of the human response to the threat of shrinking coastlines in the Neolithic period.

Roland Gehrels, a physical geographer at Britain’s University of York who specializes in sea-level studies and was not involved in this study, called the discovery a “fascinating find.” He said...
Times Square characters head to Rock Center for the holidays

By SABRINA CASERTA

NEW YORK (AP) — Visitors headed for Times Square have long been bedazzled by thick crowds, bright lights, and a cadre of costumed characters who sidle up to tourists, pose with them for pictures, then persistently pressure them for tips.

Complaints about the sometimes aggressive behavior of the performers prompted the city in 2016 to pass a law relegateing the Times Square characters to 8-by-50 foot “activity zones” where they might annoy fewer people.

Now, with the holiday season in full swing, some of the costumed superheroes, Muppets and Disney characters have headed to the equally crowded environs around Rockefeller Center and its iconic Christmas tree.

The scene on a recent weekend was a familiar one, though absent the activity zones that keep the characters penned in.

“All right, smile,” one dad said as he snapped a picture of his two girls standing with Minnie and Mickey Mouse on Fifth Avenue. After he pulled out his wallet and handed over a few dollar bills, he was greeted by grumbling from Mickey that this wasn’t enough, because there were two characters in his picture, not one.

Ed Saverino, of New Jersey, brushed off the characters on his way to see the tree as someone else politely declined a photo opportunity. “Don’t do it!” Saverino shouted. “I’ll cost you $100.”

“I’m from around here,” Saverino said. “So I know the deal. These guys are predatory. If you wanna take pictures with people, then let them come to you. Don’t go running up to people and touching them.”

After a Times Square Elmo was arrested in September for grabbing a 14-year-old girl, authorities posed for a photo with him. Mayor Bill De Blasio promised stricter enforcement to ensure harassment wouldn’t happen again, but didn’t outline how he’d do so.

On this holiday playday, three Minnie Mouses and one Mickey Mouse character roamed the sidewalks outside Rockefeller Center. Each politely declined to be interviewed.

Some passersby defended them as harmless and fun. “I work down here, right by Rockefeller Center, and I think they should be allowed to take pictures wherever they want,” said Jen Radin, who was accompanied by her son and daughter. “Maybe not during the week because it forms crowds, and it’s already hard enough to walk around here. But on the weekends, I don’t see a problem.”

Mexican wrestlers thrill public at historic Metro station

By AMY GUTHRIE

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Tinieblas, one of the grandmasters of Mexican wrestling, looked on from a stage over the weekend as lucha libre wrestlers put on a free show for spectators at the open air plaza of Metro Insurgentes.

The young men donned studded collars, devil horns, masks and —of course—fight pants as they hurled insults, kicked one another in the chest and swung legs like pendulums around opponents. The high-risk theatrics were far more dangerous than when Tinieblas began his wrestling career in 1971, but the enthusiastic cheers and jeers of the crowd prompted the city in 2016 to pass a law relegateing the Times Square characters to 8-by-50 foot “activity zones” where they might annoy fewer people.

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Mexican wrestler Relampago Veloz encourages the crowd during a "lucha libre" fight in Mexico City, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019. Like riding the Metro, indulging in a lucha libre wrestling match is a quintessentially Mexican pastime. It’s the second most-followed sport in the country, after soccer.

“Mexicans identify with lucha libre because Mexican culture is very colorful,” said So, alluding to the bright colors of the wrestlers’ costumes as well as their flair for the dramatic.

The bravado on display over the weekend included a five-woman match filled with grunts, slaps, chest pumps, body locks and flips. An Aztec princess in fishnet stockings took on the bad girls with the help of a little person whose hits and punches drove the crowd wild.

"Cmon little one!" cheered a spectator as children chanted “Again, again!” every time the blonde woman with dwarfism entered the ring.
By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

There’s usually one film that tops lists whenever powerful legal thrillers are debated — “To Kill a Mockingbird,” set in the 1930s. Now comes a film showing how little has changed since then, based on a murder in the same Alabama town where Harper Lee wrote her masterpiece.

“Just Mercy” is the real story of civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson and his fight to keep an innocent black man from being executed. It is urgent, searing and powerful, led by a first-rate cast. Though it portrays events more than 25 years ago, it is very much a film of our time.

Michael B. Jordan portrays Stevenson, who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal organization that has successfully challenged the death row conviction of more than 130 inmates.

Earlier this year, he was the subject of HBO’s film “True Justice: Bryan Stevenson’s Fight for Equality.”

Stevenson has been a dogged fighter for justice, someone Archbishop Desmond Tutu once called “America’s Mandela.” When Starbucks was faced with a racially charged uproar over the arrest of two black men at one of its stores in Philadelphia, it turned to Stevenson for advice.

The film follows one of his first cases, that of Walter McMillian, a black pulpwood worker sentenced to death for the 1986 fatal shooting of an 18-year-old white woman. Stevenson was able to prove that a key witness had lied and prosecutors withheld important evidence.

McMillian is played by Jamie Foxx and it is his best work in years, raw, soulful and honest. Tim Blake Nelson, as the key witness, also turns in a stunning performance, as does Rob Morgan playing a death row inmate. Brie Larson as Stevenson’s assistant is unflashy and strong. Jordan is the calm, quiet anchor of the film, his kind eyes radiating pathos.

In a pivotal scene, Fox’s character asks Stevenson why a Harvard-trained attorney would go to the South and risked violence to do this legal work.

“I know what it’s like to be the shadows,” Stevenson responds. “That’s why I’m doing this.”

Daniel Cretton directed the film from a screenplay he co-wrote with Andrew Lanham, based on Stevenson’s bestselling 2014 memoir. Stevenson is also an executive producer, meaning sometimes he’s illuminated in the best light.

So if there’s one weakness in the film, it’s that it sometimes veers into hagiography. The naturalism of the cinematography and acting sometimes clashes with dialogue that seems overly polished.

“I just want to help people,” Jordan says at one point. “I just have to figure out how.” In another scene, Foxx declares to his attorney: “I got my truth back. You gave that to me.”

The film at times follows other great courtroom dramas that build to a emotional conclusion such as “My Cousin Vinny” and “A Few Good Men” but “Just Mercy” has larger and deeper social issues — constant swilling, including criminal justice reform, the death penalty and racial profiling. If ever there was an example of how film can slide from entertainment to advocacy, this is it.

With the exception of Larson and a young corrections officer, no white characters come across as anything but venal and Alabama is portrayed as a place where African Americans are “guilty the moment you’re born.” While it ends on a happy note, you cry for all those generations of people railroaded into a cell. “Just Mercy” is not always an easy film to watch, but it is necessary.

BUSY PHILIPPS SAYS HER FAMILY LIKES SPONTANEOUS TRAVEL

NEW YORK (AP) — Busy Philipps and screenwriter husband, Marc Silverstein, jet around the world a lot with their two daughters, ages 6 and 11, and often don’t have much time to plan ahead.

“My husband and I have always been spontaneous travelers because of the way that our jobs work. We never know and can schedule things aside from big holidays,” the actress told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

With the holiday travel season upon us, the “Freaks and Geeks” star is encouraging parents not to be afraid to book a last-minute family getaway. She’s promoting the HotelTonight travel app, which offers discounts on last-minute accommodations.

Just make sure the whole family is on board with the idea, she says.

“My friends who have kids always ask, isn’t that a lot more stressful? But it’s not. It’s better in a weird way because your expectations are lower and you’re kind of like all in it together,” she said. “It becomes a family adventure and the kids really get into it.”

As for traveling with kids, her advice is: Be prepared, bring snacks or even whole meals, and don’t be too tough on activities.

“We have no limits on screen time on an airplane or in a car trip,” she said. She tries to encourage other things, like card games or coloring, but if the kids just want to watch movies, “I’m like, ‘OK, that sounds fun. Great.’”
**PEOPLE & ARTS**

**SAUDI ARABIA CUTS LOOSE WITH BEVY OF MODELS AND A RAVE**

**By AYA BATRAWY**

DIRIYAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Supermodels and social media mavens, their make-up artists and hair stylists in tow, posed at a concert in leather pants, chunky sweaters and trendy black combat boots. What was unusual about these Instagram posts was that they were all deliberately tagged in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

That's why we picked it,” said McBride Newman’s husband, Billy Newman, who accompanied the model to the event. “We’re really out for free to some government employees.

The incident tarnished Mohammed bin Salman’s international image though his popularity is undeniable at home.

**WHOO’S THERE? GEORGIA FAMILY DISCOVERS OWL IN CHRISTMAS TREE**

**ATLANTA (AP)** — A Georgia family got a real hoot from its Christmas tree.

Katie McBride Newman said Friday that she and her daughter spotted the bird on Dec. 12. They had bought the 10-foot (3-meter) tall tree from a Home Depot, brought it back to their Atlanta area home and decorated it with lights and ornaments.

“IT was surreal, but we weren’t really freaked out about it,” McBride Newman said. “We’re really out doorsy people. We love the wilderness.”

The family opened windows and doors near the tree hoping the owl would fly away, but it didn’t.

“The owl seemed to be pretty comfortable, and I thought, ‘Hey buddy, it’s not going to go well if you just stay here. There’s no food, I’m sorry,’” said McBride Newman’s husband, Billy Newman.

By CEDRIC RAMSAY

Earlier this year, hip-hop star Nicki Minaj pulled out of performing in the kingdom over concerns about women’s rights, gay rights and freedom of expression. When asked by The Associated Press, the entertainment authority that licensed MDL Beast said some people had been compensated for promoting the event, but denied such high sums were paid to individuals.

While the social changes ushered in by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have been sweeping, so too is his crackdown on criticism and political expression. The prince has overseen the country’s war in Yemen, which has led to the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, and the arrest of women’s rights activists, clerics and writers.

He’s also drawn international condemnation for the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last year.

The incident tarnished Prince Mohammed’s international image though his popularity is undeniable at home.

The fully veiled Hassan said she wasn’t raised on this kind of entertainment, but has no problem with her kids enjoying it.

**IN THIS SATURDAY DEC. 21, 2019 PHOTO, PEOPLE ATTEND A CONCERT, PART OF THE MDL BEAST FESTIVAL, A THREE-DAY MUSICAL extravaganza in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

In this Saturday Dec. 21, 2019 photo, people attend a concert, part of the MDL Beast Festival, a three-day musical extravaganza in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

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