

# Friday Times

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## Do what you can

## Scribbler's Notebook

By Jamie Etheridge

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There has been an enormous amount of negativity in Kuwait of late. From the regional political situation to the stagnant economy, everyone seems stressed, worried and more than a little insecure about what the future will hold.

In uncertain times, people often hunker down, closing them-

selves off and waiting for better times. This is a natural tendency and makes sense but it will not help a society or a country to thrive. Moreover, in times of uncertainty, it feels like the individual is powerless to bring about positive change. Yet there are still things one can do, even if they seem small or unimportant, that can have a huge and constructive impact on society.

Volunteering helps not only those in need but also everyone else in a society. It alleviates the suffering and difficulties faced by those in need and at the same time, helps the rest of us gain an understanding of the different challenges people can face in life. We become more empathetic and more grateful for our own circumstances, no matter how difficult or challenging they may seem.

## Kuwait: Haven for expatriates



## Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Kuwait is a haven for all expats. I know saying such a thing may not please everyone, including some Kuwaitis, but let me tell you why I believe so. There are main five reasons for this. Firstly, Kuwait has a tax-free environment. Where would you find a place today that doesn't levy taxes if you are not a citizen but merely an expat who doesn't even have a permanent house or a guarantee not to be fired or deported for any reason? There are none - at least not in the Arab world.

Not to mention the West, many of whose citizens flee to other countries, including the Arab Gulf countries to avoid taxes. But they find themselves trapped with the same problem, with the high rate of value-added tax (5 percent). I am not opposed to paying a tax for a service, but in the Arab world, a person may pay a tax without getting any worthwhile service. The problem is that the only victim here is the citizen and the expatriate, because merchants raise prices only to keep their financial status safe and secure, and the consumer suffers. But Kuwait has not imposed VAT yet and may not do so until 2019.

The second reason is that Kuwait is a family-oriented society. Here you can raise your family or start one. There is not much to do outside of work, so being alone leads many to consider having a partner. Because cohabiting without marriage is not permitted in Kuwait - as a Muslim country - many single women and men tend to find love and marry in Kuwait.

The third reason Kuwait is wonderful is due to Internet prices and being widely open to all Internet apps. You can download any app you wish and enjoy long-distance calls and videos without any interruption or being blocked by greedy communication companies, or pay for it. It's free! Don't say this is not good!

The fourth reason is that medical services are accessible to all. In the UAE, you cannot be admitted to a hospital or get a consultation without insurance or paying a large cash amount in advance, and this applies to all, including GCC citizens. In Kuwait, for many years expats used to enjoy all medical services for free, until recently when the government started to put limits due to their excessive use and overcrowding, because some expats began to bring their visiting relatives to the hospital too.

Finally, Kuwait is safe. Yes, you hear and read about sporadic incidents of fights and beatings. But is there any country in the world today that doesn't have such incidents - even killings - every day?

I know that some criticize Kuwait because it has no development projects or a pleasant nightlife and the availability of alcohol in public places, but this has not deterred the arrival of scores of expatriates. We are not a tourist spot or an industrialized country, but a desert country where life is not easy. There is no state in the world that is free of discrimination on the basis of color, race and religion - not these days.

Life in countries outside home is no longer as easy or feasible as it was in the past. Yet more and more expatriates come to Kuwait, as it is still a good location despite all the difficult circumstances and political uncertainties in the GCC and the world.

## Abeer2

Abeer2 works with people mental disabilities in collaboration with parents under the umbrella of the Voluntary Work Center in Kuwait.  
<http://www.aber2.com/index.php/en/ct-menu-item-13>

## Abolish153

Local human rights and women's right activist group advocating for women's equality before the law.  
<http://abolish153.org/>

## AlKout Youth Group

A youth volunteer group that believe in doing good and serving society and the country.  
+965 66878712

## BAACH

Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice provides care and support to children with life limiting or life threatening illnesses.  
<http://www.bacch.org/volunteering/>

## Basta Kuwait

A local and sustainable non profit organization that focuses on buying, selling and donating clothing, home goods and books.  
[bastakwt@gmail.com](mailto:bastakwt@gmail.com)

## Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah

Local cultural organization and museum that provides educational opportunities for children, cultural programs and viewing of the Al-Sabah collection.  
<http://darmuseum.org.kw/learning/docents/>

## Injaz-Kuwait

Works with students ages 11-24 years through implementing programs in middle schools, high schools, vocational colleges and universities to prepare them for the future.  
<http://www.injaz-kuwait.org/>

## KAACH

Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital helps children and their families cope with the stresses of hospitalization.  
<http://www.kacch.org/volunteering.html>

## Kareq8

A local animal protection organization that adopts or helps rescue abandoned animals.  
<http://www.kareq8.com/volunteer/>



## Kharafi Activity Kids Center

Provides play-based learning environment for children with disabilities and special needs.  
<http://www.kharafi-akc.org.kw/en/>

## Kuwait Cancer Control Center

Provides care and support for people with cancer. Contact the KCCC Social Work department at 2484-9100 ext. 5097/5092/5132.  
<http://www.kuwaitcancercenter.com/index.php>

## Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Provides aid and relief for communities in need. Training for volunteers available.  
[kres.org.kw](http://kres.org.kw)

## Loyac

Organizes a variety of social and community based programs for the enrichment of Kuwait.  
[https://www.loyac.org/Local/Community/VolunteeringPrograms\\_EN.aspx](https://www.loyac.org/Local/Community/VolunteeringPrograms_EN.aspx)

## ReFood

Local food bank that provides food for those in need.  
<http://www.refoodkuwait.org/volunteer>

## Spread Passion

Local volunteering organization focused on charitable works.  
<http://spreadthepassion.org/volunteer-lounge/>

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Kuwait Heritage & Culture

# Darwaza

## Al-Abdul Razzaq



Story and photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

**W**hen you reach the intersection of Abdul Razzaq Square in Kuwait City, you arrive at one of the most important historical spots in the country.

This used to be the site of Darwaza Abdul Razzaq, the gate to the second Kuwaiti wall called Al-Medfa'a (cannon).

The pedestrian underpass under the intersection has four exits - the first leads to Souq Mubarakiya, Souq Bin Duaij and Souq Kuwait. The second exit takes you to the stock exchange, Sharq and Abdul Razzaq Mosque.

The third leads to Sharq and Sawaber, while the fourth exit will take you to the ninth commercial area and the joint bank center.



Local

Friday, December 15, 2017



Darwaza Abdul Razzaq used to be a horse stable and camel passageway, where water and food were sold. In addition, it was the spot where the late Sheikh Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah loved to have his coffee. The place thrived during the holidays, with horse and donkey carts and swings.

Today, it is a circular underpass under the intersection with wide vestibules. However, small business owners are aware of the verve of this area and the possibility of developing it commercially.

The center of the underpass has a column covered with blue porcelain tiles, like water towers, topped with beautiful geometrical lines. Adding to the aesthetic touch are old-fashioned fans.

The underpass has a clement temperature, even during the summer, which is likely to be a success if cafes are opened here, unlike the area of Mubarakiya, where life dies during the summer due to extremely high temperatures. Some cafes have opened at the Safat Square underpass, but they lack privacy and coziness, in contrast to Darwaza-Abdul Razzaq.

It's worth noting the cautious comeback of posters as marketing gimmicks for small businesses, but these efforts are still in their infancy. However, we can suppose that this is an attempt to revive commerce in this area and make Darwaza a vital place for social gatherings for young people.



## Local



# Fishing

## IN KUWAIT

By Ben Garcia

Fish are abundant in Kuwaiti waters, but account for only 20 percent of the stocks sold in the Kuwaiti market, with the remaining imported from Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Iran, Thailand and Sri Lanka. There are no Kuwaiti fishermen either - most hail from Egypt and India.

Fishing is no easy task. According to some fishermen who spoke to Kuwait Times, they are at sea with their fishing boats for four to five days before they return. The docking areas for fishermen are in Sharq and Fahaheel. Only Egyptians and Indians are allowed in this job, according to Suresh, a captain of a fishing boat stationed in Sharq. "Regardless of the weather, we go out to fish. There are 250 boats of this kind," he said.

While they have everything at sea - from food supplies to first aid kits - emergencies can happen without warning.

According to Suresh, in times of emergency or sickness, there are teams that respond. "If we fall sick at sea, they respond to emergency calls. For the last 13 years of my work with them, I haven't faced any problems," he said.

Suresh, 37, has been doing this work since 2003. He likes his job, but said there can be no alternative to life on dry land. "I will retire soon because I want to live on dry land - for many years I have lived in Kuwaiti waters. Life on a boat is not as steady as

living on land. If we encounter bad weather, we tend to stay put. We are used to the waves, and if there is no reason to give up, we do not give up that easily. We persevere because we want to feed our families," he said.

Suresh aims for a big catch once he and his team go out fishing, as they are contracted on a "half and half" system. "We do not get regular wages. Our salary comes from the 'half and half' scheme we agreed on accepting our job," said Mitesh, another Indian fisherman. "So we always want a big catch once we head out to sea. For example, if our catch is worth KD 1,000, half of the amount will go to fish market management, while the other half will be divided among the fishermen and crew," he said.

Big fishing vessels usually have six to eight crewmembers, including the captain and co-captain. These boats are allowed to fish even outside the waters of Kuwait, as far as Iran and Iraq. "There are territorial water boundaries, but we have fishing agreements, so we can go out of Kuwaiti waters as long as we have the permits with us," Mitesh said.

Muhammad, an Egyptian supervisor at the docking port of Sharq, said smaller fishing boats also go out to fish regularly. "They are only allowed to fish in Kuwaiti waters, plus they need to come back on the same day. These smaller fishing vessels make more money. They return with a catch worth KD 300-KD 500 daily. If they go out even three or

“ For many years I have lived in Kuwaiti waters. Life on a boat is not as steady as living on land.

”



four times a week, they can earn much more," he said. "They also go out with two crewmembers, so they get more benefits. On the other hand, the numbers of small fishing vessels are limited," he told Kuwait Times.

Kuwait waters are rich in fish resources and there are certain months when catching some Kuwaiti seafood favorites is banned. For example, catching local zubaidi is banned by the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) from June 1 to July 15 to allow replenishment of stocks. Besides zubaidi, shrimping is banned from Jan 1 to Aug 31. Zubaidi, hamour, nuwaibi and maed are just some of the variety of fish prized by many in Kuwait.



## Local

# Picnicking in old Kuwait



Wadha's Side, Four Sidr Trees and Hawally are used to be destinations for Kuwaitis to hold picnics in the old times, where they usually went on foot to enjoy the nature, stroll around and spend times of relaxation. This was usually done either within or outside the city walls to enjoy the cool weather after the long hot summer.

Speaking about picnics in the past, Kuwait heritage researcher Hussein Al-Qattan said people used to launch the picnic season at the beginning of winter and spring, when the land turned green. He added that people used to head away from neighborhoods, houses, the market and the port to the inner side of the wall for picnicking.

However, after vehicles arrived in Kuwait, it became easier to go picnicking as far as Hawally and Fintas outside the wall. People usually prepared for the picnic the night before, so that they could head out first thing in the morning. Women usually cooked a lunch of 'momaouwash' (rice and lentil cooked together). They used to cover the pot with canvas to keep it warm. Preparations also included readying tea and coffee flasks, dates and some traditional desserts. They used to return home by sunset due to the lack of street lighting then.

Once a group arrived at the picnic site, they usually picked a shady spot beneath sidr trees, where women started preparing the place, lighting up a fire to make tea and coffee and warm up lunch, while kids played around and hunted migrating birds with a 'nabatah' (a traditional handmade catapult used to hurl small stones).

Qattan added that boys sometimes went out on separate picnics. He noted that the most famous picnicking sites in old Kuwait included the Four Sidr Trees area in Sharq and Wadha's Side, which was small hill on top of which trees and truffle grew. It was called Wadha because it was noticeable from afar. Another spot was the Al-Shaab sidr tree, which was near Hawally, while Hawally itself was popular, as it had freshwater wells and leafy trees. — KUNA



## Social life is like chocolate!



By Jeri Al-Jeri

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When I was at a festival at Mishref's house of arts that celebrated different countries' cultures, I was pondering to myself - what are the values that all these societies appreciate the most? Is it love? Or honor? Or is it something else? In Kuwait, we seek more and more luxuries from material life, causing us to have less and less tight family bonds.

When I reached the Mexican booth, I was offered a free cup of Mexican hot chocolate. When I took my first sip, I remembered the articles I published in Al-Jarida about the seductive relationship between patience and pleasure in this life, and how this philosophy is perfectly personified by chocolate! To illustrate, the chemical structure of any piece of solid chocolate is made up of rows of crystals that are stacked together. This finding allowed scientists, after years of research, to find the answer to the question: How is it that the longer a morsel of chocolate stays in our mouth, the more layers of "coco goodness" we taste?

Not only that, but scientists did in fact discover that the nutritional benefits derived from chocolate protect us from heart attacks. These microscopic rows of crystals cannot be fully absorbed by our bodies, and can only be unlocked by the secretion of saliva. This means that we have to be patient during the time we are chewing on a bar of chocolate in order to receive more of its nutritional value. But what does all of this have to say to a meditative mind?

Countless quotes and sayings from different religions and psychologists encourage everyone to implement the age-old art of respect for one another - the respect that demands us to be patient, listening to everyone's ideas and feelings. This is greatly important to us in Kuwait, given this time of distress we are suffering from due to the less popular ministers who were chosen to lead us in the course of 2018. We people do not give them a chance to prove themselves, and we also cannot seem to manage quite effectively the insane rates of divorce.

Respect is the value that connects all of humanity, because whether it is in business or romance, the more layers we unlock of a person's identity in our process of empathizing with him or her, the more tasteful our collective social life becomes. So let us allow others a chance to melt.

## Local

# Kuwait oil production to hit 4.75m bpd by 2040

## Work at joint Duqm refinery to begin mid-2018

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is seeking to boost its oil production capacity up to 4.75 million barrels per day by 2040 in line with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's strategy, Minister of Oil Bakheet Al-Rasheedi said yesterday. Rasheedi, who doubles as Minister of Electricity and Water, made the press remark while receiving well-wishers who congratulated him on being selected as minister. The 2040 strategy is expected to be approved soon by the KPC's board, then it will be referred to the Supreme Petroleum Council, he said.

The oil output cut agreement between OPEC and non-OPEC producers has led to an over 50 percent drop in stocks since it was put in place in January, the minister added. However, the minister said it is too early now to talk about a strategy to exit the oil output cut agreement. He also spoke highly of a recent decision to extend the agreement till the end of next year, saying that it would create balance amid a notable improvement in the basic

market factors of supply and demand. He pointed to the emergence of several positive indicators in the world oil market, which are predicted to speed up market recovery and rebalance, hailing the compliance of OPEC and non-OPEC member producers, mainly Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Rasheedi said that up to \$5 billion is due soon from global banks for the financing of Oman's Duqm refinery, a joint venture of Oman Oil Company (OOC) and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI). Work on the project is expected to be launched mid-2018, Rasheedi told well-wishers. On resuming production from the joint neutral zone shared with Saudi Arabia, the minister noted that consultations on technical aspects are underway with partners, voicing optimism on concluding solutions soon. Referring to the joint Nghi Son Refinery project with Vietnam, he said minor units are already operational. Full commercial operation of the facility is expected during the first half of 2018. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Oil Bakheet Al-Rasheedi receives well-wishers yesterday. — KUNA

## Warning over photo ban at holy mosques

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs yesterday issued a directive to all Kuwait hajj convoy owners, reminding them of a recent Saudi decision number banning all types of photography within the two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah. The directive said that in a bid to avoid Kuwaiti pilgrims violating Saudi laws and regulations and due to the disturbance and provocation of other pilgrims' feelings by taking photos inside both mosques, all pilgrims should be notified and warned not to use regular or video cameras or any other photography devices to avoid having the photos or videos deleted or even the devices confiscated.



## Kuwait Arts Association opens int'l arts forum

**KUWAIT:** As part of its golden jubilee celebrations, Kuwait Arts Association (KAA) opened the international arts

forum on Wednesday evening. The event, being held under auspices of Sheikha Dr Suaad Al-Sabah, falls within the framework of the KAA's efforts to foster talented artists, KAA chairman and head of the Union of Arab Artists Abdurassoul Salman said.

The forum gathers 30 creative artists from Arab and European countries, and its agenda includes a workshop on live drawing, he said at the opening ceremony. The KAA celebrations marking its 50th anniversary started on Dec 10 and will continue until April 11, 2018. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Sheikha Dr Suaad Al-Sabah opens the international arts forum. — KUNA

## Blaze at Mirqab bldg

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A fire broke out yesterday in a Mirqab building located opposite the old education ministry building. Security sources said firemen from Hilali and Capital stations rushed to the scene and found the fire was on the third floor. The building was evacuated and the blaze was controlled without any casualties.



## CRIMES

### IS funders remanded

**KUWAIT:** The criminal court ordered the continued detention of six expats (five Syrians and an Iraqi) over charges of funding the Islamic State terrorist organization in Syria with around KD 11 million (\$36 million) they collected as charity in Kuwait. Informed sources explained that the suspects had been using a money exchanger in Mubarakiya to pass the sums to IS without using any electronic databases or records of the remittances they made. The sources also said that the suspects used to send money to terrorists in Syria and Turkey via a GCC state where they owned another money exchange office.

### False abuse accusation

A Filipina maid filed a complaint at Jabriya police against her 69-year-old Egyptian sponsor, accusing him of sexual harassment. Security sources said the man totally denied the charges and investigations proved his innocence. A case was filed against the maid and further investigations are in progress to find out her motives.

### Man found hanging

A citizen in his 60s was found hanging in his house in Mubarak Al-Kabeer. Security sources said initial investigations showed that the man had been suffering from psychological disorders and that had a file at the psychiatric diseases hospital.

### Lonesome caller

A search is on for an unidentified caller who harassed a female police operator, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a female police operator (receiving calls on 112) reported that a man called asking her "what can someone missing person another do?", adding that when she expressed exclamation, the caller repeated the same words before playing an Iraqi love song for her. The operator filed a case and on inquiring about the caller's number, it was found registered in a female citizen's name. Further investigations are in progress to identify the caller. — Al-Rai



## Local

# Kuwait keeps discount rate unchanged at 2.75%

## Other Gulf states follow US rate rise

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) decided yesterday to keep the discount rate unchanged at 2.75 percent. Meanwhile, the Gulf's dollar-pegged economies followed a US interest rate hike to maintain the value of their currencies but at the risk of denting efforts to stimulate their flagging economies. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain all raised their key benchmark interest rates by 25 basis points after the move by the US Federal Reserve late on Wednesday. Kuwait, whose dinar is pegged to a broader basket of currencies, is battling to boost its economy, which is forecast by the International Monetary Fund to shrink by 2.1 percent this year.

On the basis of a thorough study of latest data, the CBK's board of directors maintained the discount rate at current level to enhance the atmosphere of economic recovery and the attractiveness and competitiveness of the national currency, the CBK said in a press release. The Central Bank continues to use the available means of the monetary policy with a view affirming the status of the national currency as a credible and profitable facility for local savings, it said.

As part of the regular surveys of the economic, fiscal and banking trends, the outlook of the interest rates on major currencies, notably the US dollar, and the recent decision of the US Federal Reserve Board of Governors, the CBK decided to keep the discount rate unchanged at 2.75 percent, the statement affirmed. The CBK is keen on boosting the non-inflationary recovery in the non-oil economic sectors and maintaining the fundamentals of its fiscal policy, Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said.

Recent data show that the local banks are able to accommodate to the CBK measures, notably those relating to ratcheting up the interest rates on KD deposits under the ceiling of

the interest rates on loans of these banks' as per the current discount rate, he noted. The local banks are vying for borrowers under the low credit rates and the modest growth rates of the non-oil sector, Hashel pointed out. The CBK governor recalled the last decision on June 14 to keep the discount rate unchanged while the Federal Reserve Bank decided at the same time to increase the interest rate.

There was need to enhance the KD's competitive edge as an attractive facility for local savings and boost the local credit growth, he added. Hashel reaffirmed the CBK's commitment to monitor the latest economic, fiscal and banking developments and take the necessary measures to bolster up the economic recovery.

The Saudi central bank said it was raising one of its benchmark rates to 1.5 percent although that was counterbalanced by a government announcement of \$19.2 billion in stimulus funds for the private sector. The kingdom reported a negative inflation rate in October and economic forecasts say the region's largest economy is likely to shrink this year. The United Arab Emirates central bank raised its benchmark short-term borrowing rate to 1.5 percent while Bahrain raised its key rate to 1.75 percent and Qatar raised its to 2.5 percent. There was no immediate word from Oman.

Raising interest rates is a tool normally used to cool heating economies and check inflation but the Gulf states are suffering from the reverse problem - economic contraction and deflation. Gulf oil exporters have been hit hard by the slump in world prices for crude, which provided a major part of their finances. Huge budget deficits have forced them to cut public spending and seek to restructure their economies away from oil. They have all been keen to boost lending to expand their private sectors. — Agencies

## Dubai opens \$10m camel hospital

**DUBAI:** Pristine operating theatres and state-of-the-art medical equipment are featured in a new Dubai hospital that opened last week - exclusively for camels. Camels remain an important part of the Gulf Arab state's heritage. Camel races and camel beauty pageants are a favorite recreation for locals, and some beasts fetch millions of dollars at auctions in the country. Preserving that heritage is part of the purpose of Dubai Camel Hospital, which cost 40 million dirhams (\$10.9 million) and is the first of its kind in the world, said Mohamed Al-Bulooshi, the hospital's director.

"We found that we must care for camels not only by breeding and raising them, but also by being able to medically treat them," Bulooshi said. Staffed by a team of international veterinarians, the hospital, can treat 20 camels. It's also equipped with a mini-race track to get the camels up and running after their medical procedures. Its customized equipment was adapted from equestrian medical equipment to accommodate camel treatment. A surgery starts at \$1,000 and an X-ray or ultrasound at \$110. The hospital intends to help in the research and development of camel medicine, Ahsan Ul Haq, the facility's head of marketing and finance, in an effort "to unfold the secrets of this strange desert animal," he said. — Reuters

## Arad Fort: Witness to Bahraini history



**MANAMA:** Arad Fort, on Muharraq Island east of Manama, is an important location in the kingdom, dating back to the 15th century. The fort was renovated in the 1980s. Its name was derived from Aradous, an ancient Greek word referring to the island of Muharraq. — KUNA

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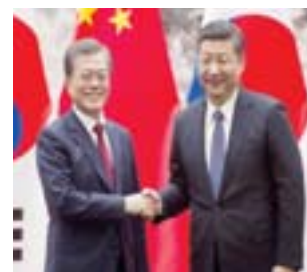
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China, S Korea  
eye warmer ties  
following tensions

## Israel closes Gaza border after Palestinian rocket strikes

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MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during his annual press conference in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

# Putin praises Trump's 'achievements'

## Putin's main challenge will be to convince Russians to vote

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday Donald Trump had made "significant achievements" as US leader, rejecting claims that Moscow meddled in the election that brought the American president to power.

Putin was speaking in a wide-ranging annual press conference that also touched on Olympic doping and Arctic exploration. The marathon event, which has in the past lasted up to almost five hours and this year saw more than 1,600 journalists accredited, was Putin's first major public appearance since announcing he would seek a new six-year term in March 2018 elections.

"We can see several quite significant achievements in the short time he has been at work," Putin said when asked to assess Trump's time in power. "Look at how the markets are reacting, they are growing. This shows confidence in the American economy. With all due respect to (Trump's) opponents, these are objective facts," he said.

### Call for political competition

But he said that accusations Moscow had interfered in last year's US presidential election to swing the result had been "made up" by US opposition to discredit Trump's work in the White House. He referred to contact between Trump's team and representatives of the Russian government, which he said was normal diplomatic practice. "What is so transgressive in this case and why should it take on this spy-thriller tone?" Putin asked.

The press conference kicked off with a question from a

Moscow radio station on why Putin was seeking re-election. "To improve quality of life for Russians," said Putin, who has been in power since 1999. He could become the country's longest-serving leader since Joseph Stalin if he wins a fourth term.

Putin said he would stand for election as an independent candidate rather than with the backing of his traditional party, United Russia. A journalist asked about the state of the opposition in polls in which Putin will face only nominal competition and is all but certain to cruise to victory.

According to a survey published by independent pollster Levada on Wednesday, 75 percent of Russians would be prepared to vote for Putin in March, despite having yet to hear any specific campaign pledges. "Is it up to me to form the opposition myself?" Putin replied. "I think in politics, as in the economy, there should be competition. I will strive for this."

One of these opponents is Ksenia Sobchak, a former socialite turned liberal TV presenter who many suspect is running as a Kremlin "spoiler" candidate to split the opposition and boost interest in the polls. Sobchak, whose father was Putin's political mentor and who is rumoured to be the president's goddaughter, was at yesterday's event as a journalist for opposition television channel Dozhd. She was expected to be allowed to ask a question.

Putin's main challenge will be to convince Russians to vote at all in an election that he is widely expected to win. According to Levada, only 28 percent of Russians said they were certain to vote in March.

### Carnival atmosphere

Putin also addressed the doping scandal that has seen Russia barred from competing in next year's Winter Olympics and athletes from the country only allowed to take part under a neutral flag.

He said he hoped Russia could work "constructively" with the World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Olympic Committee, which banned the country over state-sponsored doping. But Russia would "defend the interests of our athletes, including in civil courts," he said.

Putin acknowledged that doping violations took place but claimed that the scandal was politically motivated. The president typically addresses the economy at the annual event. On Thursday he said it was "obvious" the Russian economy was growing and reported "brilliant" grain exports, while highlighting Arctic exploration and mineral extraction as a priority.

As in previous years, there was a carnival atmosphere in the press conference hall. Journalists held signs to attract the president's attention and one reporter even dressed as the Russian equivalent of Father Christmas, an AFP correspondent said.

Signs offered an indication of the sort of question the reporters would ask if given the floor by the president. Slogans included "children," "agriculture," "Krasnoyarsk is choking," and "spiritual foundations". —AFP

## International

# Israel closes Gaza border crossings after Palestinian rocket strikes

## Tensions spike since Trump's Jerusalem declaration

**JERUSALEM:** Israel announced the closure of its Gaza border crossings yesterday in response to daily rocket fire from the enclave over the past week after US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital stoked Palestinian anger.

Israeli aircraft struck three facilities belonging to Hamas, the militant group that controls the Gaza Strip, before dawn yesterday after the latest rocket attacks, Israel's military said.

It said it targeted training camps and weapons storage compounds. Hamas usually evacuates such facilities when border tensions spike. Two of the rockets fired by militants were intercepted

by Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system and a third exploded in an open area. There were no reports of casualties on either side of the frontier. The military said in a statement that "due to the security events and in accordance with security assessments" Kerem Shalom crossing - the main passage point for goods entering the Gaza Strip, and the Erez pedestrian crossing - would be shut as of Thursday. It did not say how

long the closure would last.

Some 15 rockets have been fired into southern Israel since Trump's Dec. 6 announcement, and none of the projectiles has caused serious injury or damage. The attacks have drawn Israeli air strikes that have killed two Hamas gunmen. Two other Palestinians have been killed in confrontations with Israeli troops during stone-throwing protests along the border.

Israeli cabinet minister Tzachi Hanegbi said on Israel Radio that while Hamas, which last fought a war with Israel in 2014, was not carrying out the rocket strikes, it needed to rein in militants from "break-away groups" or it

would "find itself in a situation where it has to contend" with the Israeli military.

In Istanbul on Wednesday, a summit of more than 50 Muslim countries condemned Trump's move and called on the world to respond by recognising East Jerusalem, captured by Israel along with the West Bank in a 1967 war, as the capital of Palestine.

Trump's declaration has been applauded by

“ Attacks met by Israeli air strikes ”

## With IS in tatters, Syria Kurds fear US to abandon them

**QAMISHLI:** Syria's Kurds fear the steadfast ally they found in the US to successfully take on Islamic State group jihadists may now leave them to face threats from Turkey and Damascus alone.

Across Syria's north, Kurdish authorities have spent more than four years steadily building public institutions including elected councils, security forces, even schools.

They felt they had found an international sponsor in the United States, which relied primarily on the fighters of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) to roll back IS in northern and eastern Syria. But with IS holding just five percent of Syria, Kurds worry the US could withdraw support, costing them the key political and territorial gains they scored in the chaos of war.

"We are afraid of America, which has been using us as a card to play for a long time," said Rafea Ismail, a 37-year-old who sells women's accessories on the hood of his car in the city of Qamishli.

"When they're done using us, they'll forget us," he said. Qamishli is the main hub of the autonomous administration the Kurdish authorities have run since regime forces withdrew from swathes of northeast Syria in 2012. "All countries should support us because we fight terrorism. We liberated Raqa, and America should not abandon us and ally with Turkey," said Nawal Farzand, a 45-year-old Kurdish language teacher.

In March 2016, Kurdish parties announced they would seek to establish a federal system there after ousting IS from much of the area with the help of the US-led coalition.

Their biggest win was Raqa, once IS's de facto Syrian capital but captured in October by the YPG-led Syrian Democratic

Forces. Weeks later, the US announced it was pulling 500 Marines from its nearly 2,000-strong force in Syria and "amending" its support to the YPG. But the jihadists are "not finished yet," said Nassrin Abdallah, a commander in the militia's female branch, the Kurdish Women's Protection Units (YPJ). Sleeper cells still stage attacks and IS fighters are active in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, she said. "It is important for the coalition forces to stay to guarantee security and stability, since the threat from Daesh still exists," Abdallah added, using the Arabic acronym for IS. "Turkey is also a threat to the Kurdish people."

### 'Gravest' danger is Turkey

The Kurds' rising profile had enraged Damascus, which insists it wants to recapture every inch of territory lost since Syria's uprising erupted in 2011. But it especially alarmed Turkey, which feared the semi-independent administration in northern Syria would inspire similar ambitions among its own Kurdish community. Ankara considers the YPG as "terrorist" because of its ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). English teacher Nada Abbas says she, too, fears the US "will abandon the Kurds after the end of the battle against Daesh."

"This would be a gift to Turkey, which doesn't accept Kurds becoming stronger," says the 30-year-old. "It would attack us like it did in the past. The Turkish threat will not end," Abbas adds.

Nicholas Heras, a fellow at the Centre for a New American Security think tank, says Turkey poses "the gravest threat to the Kurds in Syria" - even more than Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or IS. Turkish President Recep Tayyip "Erdogan has made it crystal clear that as soon as the Americans are no longer in the way, he intends to crush the Syrian Kurds, all of whom he views as PKK," Heras tells AFP.

### 'Russia is the insurance policy'

Fears of an American withdrawal may be drawing Syrian Kurds into Russia's orbit. The YPG recently announced that its anti-IS operations in east Syria had received air support from Moscow.



**GAZA CITY:** Hamas leader Ismail Haniya (L) and Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar wave during a rally marking the 30th of the founding of the Islamist movement, in Gaza City, yesterday. — AFP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a recognition of political reality and Jews's biblical links to Jerusalem, a city that is also holy to Muslims and Christians. — Reuters

Russian forces have also trained Kurdish fighters further west in Afrin - where there is no IS presence - and manage a buffer zone between Kurds and Turkish-backed rebels. And Moscow has been particularly outspoken in support of Syria's Kurds having a seat at the negotiating table at talks in Geneva. "The relationship between the YPG and the Russian military is becoming a special one. The Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin is solely dependent on the Russian military, not the Americans, for protection from Turkish attack and occupation," says Heras. — AFP

## Iraq hangs 38 members of IS

**NASIRIYAH:** Iraq hanged 38 jihadists belonging to the Islamic State group or Al-Qaeda for terrorism offences yesterday in the southern city of Nasiriyah, provincial authorities said. It was the largest number of executions in a single day since September 25 when 42 people were put to death in the same prison.

"The prison administration executed yesterday in the presence of Justice Minister Haidar al-Zameli, in Nasiriyah prison, 38 death row prisoners belonging to Al-Qaeda or Daesh (IS) accused of terrorist activities," said Dakhel Kazem, a senior official in the provincial council. Amnesty International has voiced repeated concerns about the use of the death penalty in Iraq, which it ranks as one of the world's top executioners behind China, Iran and Saudi Arabia. — AFP

# Cameroon's Anglophones flee to Nigeria as crackdown grows

**IKOM:** When soldiers burst into her village in southwest Cameroon last month with guns blazing, small farmer Eta Quinta, 32, raced into the forest with three of her children.

"I found a canoe and I used it to cross over with my kids, not knowing where my husband and my (other) two kids are," she told Reuters across the border in Nigeria, where thousands of English-speaking Cameroonians have fled in past weeks.

What began last year as peaceful protests by Anglophone activists against perceived marginalisation by Cameroon's Francophone-dominated elite has become the gravest challenge yet to President Paul Biya, who is expected to seek to renew his 35-years in power in an election next year.

Government repression - including ordering thousands of villagers in the Anglophone southwest to leave their homes - has driven support for a once-fringe secessionist movement, stoking a lethal cycle of violence.

The secessionists declared an independent state called Ambazonia on Oct. 1. Since then, 7,500 people have fled to Nigeria, including 2,300 who fled in a single day on Dec. 4 fearing government reprisals after raids by separatists killed

at least six soldiers and police officers.

The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR is preparing for up to 40,000 refugees. Quinta and her children walked for three days through the dense forests to reach a border crossing at the Agbokim Waterfalls. They remain without news of the rest of the family.

"There are many pregnant women in the forest," Quinta said as she held her sick two-month-old baby whose head was covered by a white wooly hat. "I have friends in the forest and am not sure if I will get to see them again or their kids."

At the end of World War One, Germany's colony of Kamerun was carved up between allied French and British victors, laying down the basis for a language split that still persists.

English speakers make up less than a fifth of the population of Cameroon, concentrated in former British territory near the Nigerian border that was joined to the French-speaking Republic of Cameroon the year after its independence in 1960. French speakers have dominated the country's politics since.

Cameroonian authorities say the English-speaking separatists pose a security threat that



IKOM: Cameroon's worsening Anglophone crisis calls for strong measures.

justifies their crackdown. The new arrivals in Nigeria live mainly with host families who have supported them with food, clothing and shelter.

The integration, a UNHCR official said, was made easier by the pidgin English spoken on either side of the border. —Reuters

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## International

# Suicide bomber kills at least 18 at police academy in Somalia's capital

## 'Police continue their work despite death'

**MOGADISHU:** A suicide bomber disguised as a policeman blew himself up inside a police training camp in Somalia's capital Mogadishu yesterday and killed at least 18 officers, officials said.

Police spokesman Major Mohamed Hussein said the attacker strapped explosives to his body and infiltrated the General Kahiye Police Training Academy during an early morning parade.

"Police were preparing for the 74th anniversary of police day. As they wanted to start exercise, a suicide bomber came in and blew up himself. We lost 18 police officers and 15 others were injured," Muktar Hussein Afrah, Somalia's deputy police commander, told reporters at the blast scene.

"Police will always continue their work despite death." Police earlier put the death toll at 15. Reuters witnesses who attempted to visit the site of the blast said police had sealed it off. Hours later when they were allowed in, a witness saw body parts suspected to be from the bomber on the ground in the field where police officers had been training.

The witness said the ground nearby had also been washed to remove blood stains and people were burying bodies at the police academy. The

militant Islamist group al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack and gave a higher death toll.

"We killed 27 police (officers) and injured more," Abdiasis Abu Musab, the group's military operations spokesman, told Reuters. Al Shabaab carries out frequent bombings in Mogadishu and other towns.

The group, which is allied to Al-Qaeda, is waging an insurgency against the UN-backed government and its African Union allies in a bid to topple the weak administration and impose its own strict interpretation of Islam.

The militants were driven out of Mogadishu in 2011 and have since been steadily losing territory to the combined forces of African Union peacekeepers and Somali security forces.

On Tuesday, the US Africom said the US military had conducted an air strike on a vehicle they said was strapped with explosives some 65 km southwest of Mogadishu. Thursday's attack comes at a time when the African Union is finalising plans to trim its peacekeeping mission called AMISOM.

The 22,000-strong AU force is scheduled to leave by 2020 and some security experts say al

hope for the future."

May joined the mourners for the service, after being forced to try to restore confidence in the public inquiry into the fire. "We will welcome her, but she will have to come and face us and we will be asking those questions of her. It's not much to ask," said Sandra Ruiz, who lost her niece in the fire.

Retired appeal court judge Martin Moore-Bick is presiding over the probe. However, a 16,000-strong petition called for a diverse panel to assist him, fearing he would not have an understanding of issues like living in public housing. A separate police investigation is also under way and will determine whether any criminal charges can be brought against individuals or corporate entities. It is expected to run until late 2018. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, May promised that survivors would be guaranteed new homes on the same terms, within three weeks, as close as possible to the north Kensington area where they had been living.

However, of the 208 households needing rehousing, 118 are facing Christmas in emergency accommodation—many in hotels—or living with friends, said Grenfell United. Some 42 families have moved into permanent accommodation, while a further 48 have accepted offers for permanent new housing but are still living in temporary quarters.

Many families do not want to accept temporary accommodation, fearing they will be parked there and forgotten about. —AFP

“People burying bodies at the police academy”



**MOGADISHU:** File photo shows a Somali man reacts next to a dead body on the site where a bomb exploded at the center of Mogadishu. — AFP

Shabaab could find it easier to stage attacks as the peacekeeping forces are reduced because government forces will find it hard to replicate their work. At the same time, Somalia could become a safe haven for militants linked to Al-

Qaeda currently in Yemen, the experts said. The peacekeepers were deployed to help secure a government that has struggled to establish central control in a country that plunged into civil war in the early 1990s. — Reuters

## UK remembers tower blaze, six months on

**LONDON:** Britain marked yesterday the six-month anniversary of London's Grenfell Tower fire that killed 71 people, with most survivors still awaiting permanent housing and sagging confidence in a public probe into the tragedy.

Those who escaped the inferno and the families of the dead were joined by the royal family and Prime Minister Theresa May in a national memorial service at Saint Paul's Cathedral. While the service was an opportunity for quiet reflection, anger at the disaster is still simmering, while the aftermath remains unresolved.

The fire, which started with a faulty refrigerator on the fourth floor, engulfed the 24-storey west London tower in the early hours of June 14, rapidly spreading up the new cladding on the outside.

The painstaking process to identify all the remains found in the tower took months. "December 14 will be a special day for our community," said Shahin Sadafi, who chairs the Grenfell United survivors' group. "We are coming together to remember the loved ones we lost in the fire, to unite as a community and to start to build

## Dogs shielding S Africa's youth from violence

**MPOPHOMENI:** When Thobani Gasa took his puppy for obedience training a few years ago it was just for fun. But soon his own behaviour started to change thanks to his canine companion. Many townships in South Africa are notorious for gang-related violence but in Mpopophomeni, near the southeastern town of Howick, pet dogs are helping lead the way to a more peaceful future.

On a hot Friday afternoon with their dogs in tow, dozens of children filed neatly into the grounds of the Zamuthule primary school for the weekly training session. "I was part of the gangs, but this programme changed my life," said Gasa, 20, now a trainer.

"When I started learning about dogs, I started to focus on the dogs and abandoned gangster life." Eight years ago, volunteer dog trainer and retired teacher Adrienne Olivier started teaching children how to treat pet dogs. Every week some 100 children aged between eight and 15 go with their animals for the training she pioneered. The project, which is called "Funda Nenja"—Zulu for "learn with the dog"—

has helped to nurture kinship and respect between humans and their dogs in the township in southeastern KwaZulu-Natal province.

"Coming here has taught me to treat dogs with respect," Sihle Dubazane, 13, said, while caressing his four-year-old crossbreed, Lion. "A dog has to be treated nicely, it has blood, it can feel." In a classroom nearby, children and their puppies sat quietly on cream-coloured rubber mats, listening attentively to a tutor. In the playgrounds outside, children and their dogs are clustered into three classes—ordered from beginners to seniors, depending on their dog's level of obedience. A better understanding of animal behaviour has helped the youngsters to understand their own. Violence against or involving children in South Africa is alarmingly common, according to several children's charities. A 2016 study revealed that in some parts of South Africa more than half of children are abused by caregivers, teachers or relatives. Children who experience or witness violence are at a significantly heightened risk of becoming abusers themselves later in life, according to the June report of the Cape Town-based Children's Institute entitled "Out of Harm's Way?".

Vuyani Dube, 11, has been taking his dogs to Funda Nenja for just three months and already his family has noticed the change in his behaviour. "He wasn't this disciplined and he wasn't this responsible," said Siphesihle Dube, referring to his nephew as he walked back home from the school with one of the family's three dogs.—AFP

## International

# Firefighters defend homes as huge California wildfire rages on

## Nearly 8,000 firefighters battling the blaze

**LOS ANGELES:** Firefighters grappling with a wildfire that has burned out of control for 10 days on California's scenic coastline, destroying more than 700 homes, sought on Wednesday to defend homes from flames whipped by resurgent Santa Ana winds.

The so-called Thomas Fire, already the state's fifth-largest wildland blaze on record, remained a threat to the communities of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Summerland and Montecito despite gains made by crews during a lull in the winds a day earlier.

"Very high fuel loading, critically low fuel moistures, above average temperatures and single-digit relative humidities will

continue to support fire growth on the west, east and north sides of the Thomas Incident," the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said in a statement.

"Firefighters will remain engaged in structure defense operations and scout for opportunities to establish direct perimeter control," the department said. The Thomas Fire, which broke out on Dec. 4 near the community of Ojai, has traveled 27 miles (43 km), blackening more than 368 square miles (953 square km) in Ventura and

Santa Barbara counties, an area larger than New York City. The conflagration has destroyed 709 single-family homes, damaged 164 others and displaced more than 94,000 people. It was 25 percent contained as of Wednesday afternoon.

On Tuesday, some of the nearly 8,000 firefighters battling the blaze took advantage of the lighter winds to set controlled burns in a canyon near Carpinteria to deprive the flames of fuel,

Cal Fire Captain Steve Concialdi told reporters.

U.S. Representative Julia Brownley, whose congressional district includes Ventura, said on Tuesday the fire could take another week to contain. The efforts have so far

cost more than \$61 million, according to authorities. Many public schools in the Santa Barbara area canceled classes this week and will not reopen until the annual winter break is completed in January.

Some of the other fires burning over the past week in San Diego and Los Angeles counties have been largely brought under control.

Investigators determined that the Skirball Fire, which destroyed six homes in Los Angeles' wealthy Bel-Air neighborhood and scorched a

building at a winery owned by billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch, was started by a cooking fire at a homeless encampment, authorities said on Tuesday. The Lilac Fire, which burned

more than 4,000 acres (1,620 hectares) in northern San Diego County and destroyed 157 structures, was 95 percent contained by Wednesday, Cal Fire said. — Reuters



**MONTECITO:** The Thomas Fire approaches a home in Montecito, California. The Thomas Fire has spread across 365 miles so far and destroyed about 800 structures since it began on December 5 in Ojai, California. —AFP

“**Fifth-largest wildland blaze on record**”

## Landmine deaths soar with record number of child victims

**LONDON:** A record number of children were reported killed or hurt by landmines and other explosives last year, with a handful of conflicts contributing to a "horrific" toll for the second year running, experts said yesterday.

The annual Landmine Monitor report recorded 8,605 casualties in 2016, the second highest figure since 1999 when it began gathering data. The spike was fuelled by violence in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen and Libya.

About three-quarters of known casualties were civilians, including more than 1,000 children who were injured and nearly 500 who were killed, the report said. "A few intense conflicts, where utter disregard for civilian safety persists, have resulted in very high numbers of mine casualties for the second year in a row," said co-editor Loren Persi.

He described the spike as "alarming", adding that the true number of victims would be significantly higher due to gaps in data from several countries, particularly Syria and Iraq. The toll - more than twice that recorded in 2013 - includes deaths from improvised

explosive devices, unexploded cluster munitions and other remnants of war, as well as from mines.

Earlier this year, Britain's Prince Harry called for greater global efforts to rid the world of landmines by 2025, two decades after his mother, Princess Diana, walked through a minefield in Angola to highlight the plight of victims.

Production and use of landmines has fallen since the Mine Ban Treaty - which prohibits their use, stockpiling and transfer - was adopted in 1997. But campaigners said Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria produced improvised mines on an "industrial scale" this year.

The report said armed groups had also used mines in at least seven other countries in the last year: Afghanistan, India, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ukraine and Yemen. Myanmar and Syria are the only countries where government forces continue to use mines, it said.

Experts told a teleconference briefing there was evidence earlier this year that Myanmar had laid mines along border areas where Rohingya refugees were crossing into Bangladesh, and that there had been reports of women and children killed. Algeria and Mozambique both declared themselves free of landmines in 2017, but 61 countries and disputed regions are still known to be contaminated. Just over half are parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, which calls for clearance of contamination within 10 years. But experts said only four countries appeared set to meet their deadlines. "The high number of casualties is horrific," the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor's editor Jeff Abramson said. "States need to stay committed to reach the goal of a mine-free world by 2025." —Reuters

## Police ambush Maoist rebels, killing eight

**NEW DELHI:** At least eight suspected Maoist rebels were killed in a gunfight with police who ambushed their hideout in southern India yesterday. The deaths are the latest in a long-running conflict between Indian authorities and the leftist rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised tribal groups. Police said they came under fire from the group when they ambushed a suspected forest hideout in Bhadradi Kothagudem district in the southern state of Telangana.

"Special police forces launched a search operation in the forest on Wednesday night to capture a group of extremists," district police chief Ambar Kishor Jha told AFP. "They came under fire and eight of the extremists were killed." Telangana is part of the so-called "red corridor" that passes through resource-rich areas of central, southern,

western and eastern India and is mostly inhabited by underprivileged tribes. The state was once a hotbed of Maoists rebels, but has managed to curb the insurgency through welfare schemes for tribal groups and a security crackdown. Jha said hundreds of police were still searching the dense forests after the siege for any rebels who may have escaped.

He said police seized two semi-automatic rifles, hand grenades and ammunition from the site after a gunbattle lasting several hours. The Maoist insurgency has claimed around 10,000 lives since it started in the 1960s, and is considered India's most serious internal security threat.

The rebels operate from jungle bases, but often descend on villages to demand protection money and recruit young men and women to their ranks.

They also oppose efforts to build new roads and infrastructure in remote areas because it undermines their long-running campaign against India's security forces. Since his election in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been seeking to stem the insurgency by earmarking development funds for revolt-hit areas and improving policing. — AFP

## International

# America presses Thailand to downgrade ties with N Korea

## Some of the sanctions are starting to bite

**BANGKOK:** The US has urged Thailand to downgrade diplomatic and trade ties with North Korea, a senior Thai official said yesterday after meeting with an American envoy, as the Trump administration pushes ahead with a global campaign to further isolate the nuclear-armed pariah state. General Wanlop Rugsanoah, secretary general of Thailand's National Security Council, told AFP the request was made during his meeting with US special envoy for North Korea Joseph Yun, who arrived in Bangkok Wednesday evening for a two-day trip to the kingdom.

"The US asked Thailand to put more pressure on North Korea, put more trade

and diplomatic pressure," Wanlop said after his sit-down with Yun in Bangkok. He stressed that Bangkok had already significantly reduced its trade volume with Pyongyang—down to around \$1.5 million a year—and would curtail visas to North Korean citizens.

Thailand, one of America's oldest allies in the region, is one of several Southeast Asian countries to host a North Korean embassy, and once enjoyed valuable economic ties with the reclusive regime. But the UN and the US have increasingly leaned on regional leaders to do more to squeeze North Korea as international sanctions have not resulted in Pyongyang halting its nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests.

“Bangkok reduced its trade volume with Pyongyang”

Yun's visit is part of a December 11-15 trip to Asia—including a stop in Japan—"to discuss ways to strengthen the pressure campaign following the DPRK's latest ballistic missile test," the US State Department said, referring to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name. The US embassy in Bangkok confirmed Yun's meeting with the National Security Council chief took place but declined to provide more details on the discussion.

Wanlop insisted there were no meetings planned between American and North Korean officials in Thailand. In August, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stopped in Bangkok to pressure the government to crack down on North Korean shell companies that use the Thai capital as a trading hub.

Thailand said this week it had drastically slashed trade with North Korea this year, down 94 percent compared with 2016. Pimchanok Vonkorporon, director of the Thai Commerce Ministry's Trade Policy and Strategy Office, said "there will be no export or import of goods between Thailand and North Korea" by the end of 2017. Outside of Southeast Asia, Washington has focused most on Beijing to counter Pyongyang, urging the North's longtime ally and economic lifeline to rein in leader Kim Jong-Un and his nuclear programme. China has accepted a series

## Indian court sentences man to death for rape, murder

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian court yesterday handed down the death penalty to a man found guilty of raping and murdering a law student in a brutal knife attack in southern Kerala state. The murdered student was found dead in a pool of blood in her home in Perumbavoor town on April 28, 2016, with nearly 30 stab wounds and bite marks on her severely disfigured corpse.

Muhammed Ameerul Islam was convicted by a district court in Kerala over the gruesome attack which sparked nationwide outrage and drew comparisons with the high-profile gang-rape and murder of a Delhi student in 2012. Prosecutors successfully sought the death penalty for the crime, describing it as "rarest of the rare" in its violent nature.

"The court sentenced him to death for mur-

der and life sentence for rape," B. A. Aloor, Islam's lawyer told AFP. He said his client was not treated to a fair trial and the defence team would appeal the sentence in a higher court.

Aloor said Islam was framed by police for the crime to cover up for their botched investigation, which drew protesters to the streets in the coastal state. Police took nearly two months to identify a suspect, angering women's activists who accused investigators of bungling the case. The victim, a member of India's lowest Dalit caste who was studying to become a lawyer, lived with her mother who was not at home when the murder took place.

The prosecution described the crime as unprovoked but some media reports say the attack was motivated by revenge over a disagreement. The level of brutality in the attack sent shockwaves through India and was quickly compared to the fatal gang-rape of a 23-year-old medical student on a moving bus in New Delhi in 2012.

That crime shone a spotlight on the rising levels of violence against women in India, sparked mass protests and led to an overhaul of rape laws that increased penalties for offenders and accelerated trials through courts. India has a grim record of sexual crimes against women, with nearly 39,000 rape cases reported in 2016, according to government data. — AFP



**BANGKOK:** This handout taken and received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand yesterday, shows United States Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun (L) meeting with Thailand Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Virasakdi Futraku. — AFP

of UN sanctions against Pyongyang but has so far resisted calls to shut a crude oil pipeline considered crucial to North Korea's economy.

However, some of the sanctions are starting to bite. The UN Security Council had ordered countries to stop providing guest work permits to North Koreans after Pyongyang's sixth nuclear test in September. The ban impacts an es-

timated 100,000 North Koreans who send some \$500 million in wages back to the regime.

US President Donald Trump's administration has swung back-and-forth between contradicting approaches to the crisis on the Korean peninsula, with Tillerson adopting a more diplomatic attitude amid fiery threats from the White House. — AFP

## Indian tried to raise money with video of killing of Muslim: Police

**NEW DELHI:** A Hindu man in India tried to raise money for a campaign against minority Muslims by issuing an appeal for donations with a video he took and posted online showing him killing a Muslim, police said yesterday.

The killing last week is the latest to roil India's minority Muslims who have faced attacks from mobs who accuse them of killing cows, which Hindus consider sacred. Hindu fringe groups also campaign against Muslim men marrying Hindus.

The Hindu man, Shambu Lal Regar, has been arrested on suspicion of hacking and burning a Muslim labourer in the western state of Rajasthan, police said.

Regar had posted a video of the attack along with his bank details for donations to finance his

anti-Muslim campaign, police officer Anand Shrivastava said. More than 700 people from across India deposited 300,000 rupees (\$4,665) into the account.

"The accused wanted to become a Hindu hero after killing a Muslim man, his main aim was to collect money after committing the hate crime," said Shrivastava. Regar's video went viral on social media before authorities took it down. Police investigators had frozen the bank account and were tracking down donors, Shrivastava said.

Shrivastava said the video had showed Regar claiming to be a proud Hindu trying to stop "love jihad" - a term used by Hindu hardliners who accuse Muslim men of entrapping Hindu women and girls on the pretext of love in order to convert them to Islam.

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who leads the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, has been criticised for failing to do enough to stop attacks on Muslims. The government rejects that. Modi has condemned violence in the name of protecting cows.

Muslims account for 172 million of India's 1.32 billion citizens and Modi's critics say Hindu groups linked with his ruling party are trying to marginalise them. The BJP denies any bias against Muslims. — Reuters



## International

# China says war must not be allowed on Korean peninsula

## White House says N Korea must improve behavior before talks

**BEIJING:** War must not be allowed to break out on the Korean peninsula and the issue must be resolved through talks, Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday, while UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of the danger of “sleepwalking” into conflict.

Xi made his comments to visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-in just days after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson offered to begin direct talks with North Korea without pre-conditions.

But the White House said on Wednesday that no negotiations could be held until North Korea improved its behavior.

The White House has declined to say whether President Donald Trump, who has taken a tougher rhetorical line toward North Korea, approved Tillerson’s overture.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tillerson’s offer of direct contacts with North Korea was “a very good signal”, while warning that a US strike on the North would have catastrophic consequences.

North Korea tested its most advanced inter-continental ballistic missile on Nov. 29, which it said could put all of the United States within range, in defiance of international pressure and U.N. sanctions.

The United States has said all options were on the table in dealing with North Korea, including military action.

While South Korea and China share the goal of getting North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and stop testing increasingly sophisticated long-range missiles, the two have not seen eye-to-eye on how to achieve this.

Meeting in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, Xi told Moon that the goal of denuclearising the Korean peninsula must be stuck to, and war and chaos cannot be allowed, Chinese state media said.

“The peninsula issue must, in the end, be resolved via dialogue and consultation,” Xi was cited as saying.

China and South Korea have an important shared interest in maintaining peace, and China was willing to work with South Korea to promote talks and support North and South to improve relations, Xi said.

South Korea’s Yonhap news agency said Xi and Moon agreed war on the peninsula would not be tolerated and they would cooperate in applying sanctions and pressure on North Korea.

The apparently warm tone of their talks followed nearly a year of tense relations between the two countries.

### Strike on North Korea could have catastrophic result



## Over 6,700 Rohingya killed in ‘horrific’ Myanmar violence

**KUALA LUMPUR:** At least 6,700 Rohingya Muslims, including many children, were killed in the first month of violence that erupted in Myanmar’s troubled Rakhine state in August, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said yesterday.

The medical charity said the first major survey on the scale of mortality was the “clearest indication yet of the widespread violence” that began on August 25, which has driven over 600,000 Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh.

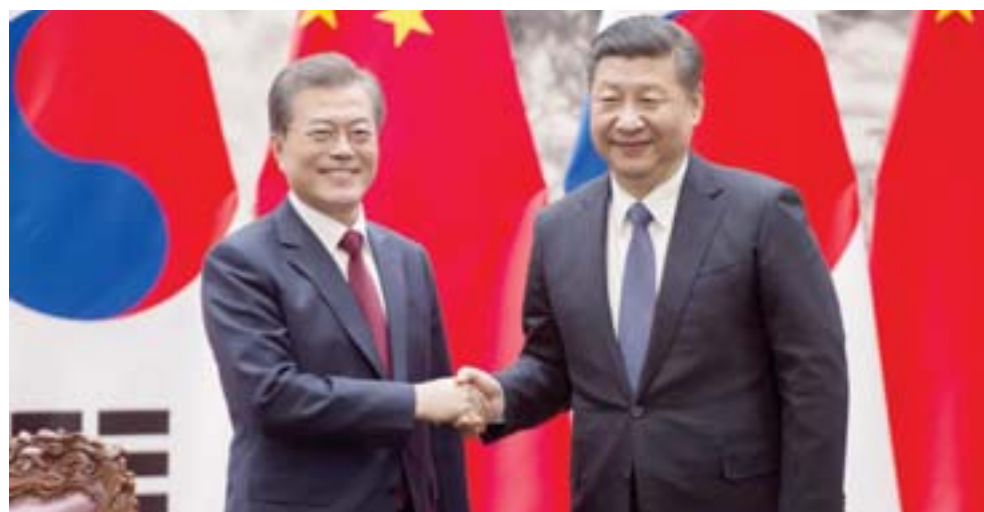
Based on interviews at refugee settlements in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar region, MSF estimated at least 6,700 Rohingya - including some 730 children below the age of five - were killed by violence between August 25 and September 24.

The charity, also known as Doctors without Borders, said the figures were “the most conservative” estimates. “We met and spoke with survivors of violence in Myanmar, who are now sheltering in over-

crowded and unsanitary camps in Bangladesh,” MSF’s medical director Sidney Wong said.

“What we uncovered was staggering, both in terms of the numbers of people who reported a family member died as a result of violence, and the horrific ways in which they said they were killed or severely injured.” Gunshots were the cause of death in most cases. Others were beaten or burned to death in their houses. “We heard reports of entire families who perished after they were locked inside their homes, while they were set alight,” Wong said in a statement. Mainly Buddhist Myanmar denies atrocities against Rohingya, and said in September that nearly 400 people died in the fighting, mostly Rohingya insurgents.

A top United Nations human rights official said last week that Myanmar’s security forces may be guilty of genocide against the Rohingya. Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to cooperate on the repatriation of the displaced Rohingya but rights groups have cautioned against any hasty return before peace and stability is restored. Save the Children said last week that testimonies from pregnant women and mothers who were subjected to brutal violence must serve as a warning. “It is abhorrent to make these people return to a place they have just recently fled with no guarantee they will be safe and will not be left at the mercy of their persecutors once again,” its Bangladesh director Mark Pierce said in a statement. — Reuters



**BEIJING:** South Korean President Moon Jae-In (L) and Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) shake hands at the end of a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

### ‘Dramatic circumstances’

China has been furious about the deployment of the U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea, saying its powerful radar can see far into China and will do nothing to ease tension with North Korea.

China and South Korea agreed in October to normalise exchanges and move past the dispute, which froze trade and business exchanges.

Xi reiterated China’s position on THAAD and

said he hoped South Korea would continue to “appropriately handle” the issue.

Guterres, speaking to reporters in Tokyo after meeting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, said Security Council resolutions on North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes must be fully implemented by Pyongyang and other countries. “Security Council resolutions must be fully implemented, first of all by North Korea, but by all other countries whose role is crucial,” Guterres said. — Reuters

## Japan arrest three over ‘illegal food exports’ to N Korea

**TOKYO:** Japan’s police yesterday arrested two Japanese and one South Korean for alleged shipments of food to North Korea that would contravene sanctions, officials said.

Japan has banned trade with North Korea as part of sanctions imposed on the country over its missile and nuclear programmes as well as the abduction of Japanese nationals.

Police suspect the three-two Japanese businessmen both aged 47 and a 59-year-old South Korean national working at a transportation company shipped some

1,530 boxes from Yokohama port, southwest of Tokyo, to North Korea via Singapore in 2014.

The boxes contained food and other items worth 7.16 million yen (\$63,500). “They allegedly loaded the boxes onto a vessel and exported them without permission,” a spokesman at the Kyoto Police Department, told AFP.

Earlier in the day, investigators raided several places in connection with the arrest. According to local media, police raided a Tokyo-based commercial association affiliated with the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, known as Chongryon, the de-facto North Korean embassy in Japan.

Police also raided a firm in Tokyo, the Asahi Shimbun said. During last month’s visit by US President Donald Trump in Tokyo, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to freeze the assets of North Korean groups and individuals.

The issue of abductions to North Korea is a highly-charged one in Japan, which suspects dozens of people were kidnapped by agents from the isolated country. — AFP

## International

# UN resolutions on N Korea must be fully implemented: Guterres

## N Korea appears to have little interest in negotiations with US

**TOKYO:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said yesterday that United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes must be fully implemented by Pyongyang and other countries.

Guterres made the comments to reporters after meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo just days after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson offered to begin direct talks with North Korea without pre-conditions.

The White House said Wednesday that no negotiations could be held with North Korea until it improves its behaviour. The White House has declined to say whether President Donald Trump, who has taken a tougher rhetorical line toward Pyongyang than Tillerson, gave approval for the top US diplomat's overture.



**Tillerson offered direct talks with N Korea without pre-conditions**

"It is very clear that the Security Council resolutions must be fully implemented first of all by North Korea but by all other countries whose role is crucial to ... achieve the result we all aim at, which is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Guterres said.

Japan has insisted that now is the time to keep up maximum pressure on Pyongyang, not start talks on the North's missile and nuclear programmes. Tillerson's overture came nearly two weeks after North Korea said it had successfully tested a breakthrough intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that put the entire United States mainland within range. In September, North Korea fired a ballistic missile over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, the second to fly over Japan in less than a month.

North Korea appears to have little interest in negotiations with the United States until it



**TOKYO:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (R) attend their joint news conference at Abe's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

has developed the ability to hit the US mainland with a nuclear-tipped missile, something most experts say it has still not proved.

United Nations political affairs chief Jeffrey

Feltman, who visited Pyongyang last week, said on Tuesday senior North Korean officials did not offer any type of commitment to talks, but he believes he left "the door ajar". —Reuters

## China fumes over potential US navy visits to Taiwan

**BEIJING:** China said yesterday it lodged an official protest with the United States after President Donald Trump signed a defence budget that opens the possibility for US warships to visit self-ruled Taiwan. Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang charged that the legislation, while non-binding, violates the one-China policy and "constitutes an interference in China's domestic affairs". "We firmly oppose any form of official exchanges or military links between Taiwan and the US, as well as US arms sales to Taiwan," Lu told a regular news briefing.

"We hope that the US can fully grasp the damaging nature" of the legislation's Taiwan clause, he said. Trump on Tuesday signed the budget, which includes a clause saying the United States should "consider the advisability and feasibility of reestablishing port of call exchanges between the United States navy and the Taiwan navy". Chinese media reported last week that a diplomat from the Chinese embassy in the United States had warned that Beijing would take Taiwan back by force the day that a US warship enters a Taiwanese port.

The island has been a thorny issue in China-US relations, as Trump began his transition into office by taking a precedent-breaking phone call from Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen. Trump mended ties by vowing to uphold the one-China policy shortly before Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to his Florida Mar-a-Lago resort, but infuriated Beijing again this summer by approving a \$1.3 billion arms sale to Taiwan.

China and Taiwan split after a civil war in 1949, and while Taiwan sees itself as a sovereign nation, it has never formally declared independence. Beijing says Taiwan is a part of Chinese territory and will be brought back into the fold at some point. —AFP

## UN chief: Arrest of journalists shows erosion of press freedom in Myanmar

**TOKYO/YANGON:** The arrest of two Reuters journalists in Yangon this week was a signal that press freedom is shrinking in Myanmar and the international community must do all it can to get them released, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said yesterday.

Guterres said his main concern over Myanmar was the "dramatic violations of human rights" during a military crackdown in Rakhine State that forced more than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee the country for southern Bangladesh, and the arrest of the journalists was probably related. "It is clearly a concern in relation to the erosion of press freedom in the country," he told a news conference in Tokyo, referring to the detention of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who had been working on stories about the strife in Rakhine State.

"And probably the reason why these journalists were arrested is because they were reporting on what they have seen in relation to this massive human tragedy," he added. Myanmar's Ministry of Information said in a statement on Wednesday that the Reuters journalists and two policemen faced charges under the British colonial-era Official Secrets Act. The 1923 law carries a maximum prison sentence of 14 years. The reporters "illegally acquired information with the intention to share it with foreign media", the ministry said in its statement, which was accompanied by a photo of the two reporters in handcuffs.

Reuters President and Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Adler said in a statement on Wednesday: "We are outraged by this blatant attack on press freedom. We call for authorities to release them immediately." Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo went missing on Tuesday evening after they had been invited to

meet police officials over dinner on the outskirts of Yangon. The authorities have not confirmed where the journalists are being held and, as of Thursday morning, Reuters had not been formally contacted by officials about their detention.

### Britain raises concern

The British embassy in Yangon expressed deep concern about the arrests, and said in a statement that journalists "must be allowed to work freely and without intimidation". "We have raised our concerns with the Burmese government, urging them to explain these arrests and allow immediate access to the two journalists," it said.

Myanmar is also known as Burma. The Foreign Correspondents Club of Myanmar said it was "appalled" by the arrests and "gravely concerned" about the state of press freedom in the country. In a statement, it called on the authorities to ensure the safety of the reporters and allow their families to see them.

The foreign correspondents' club in neighbouring Thailand said it was "alarmed by the use of this draconian law with its heavy penalties against journalists simply doing their jobs". "Wielding such a blunt legal instrument has an intimidating effect on other journalists, and poses a real threat to media freedom," the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand said in a statement, calling for the journalists to be released.

It said journalists should be given access to Rakhine State so that they can report accurately on developments there. Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh say their exodus from the mainly Buddhist nation was triggered by a military offensive in response to Rohingya militant attacks on security forces at the end of August.

The United Nations has branded the military's campaign "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" of the minority Rohingya. Guterres said the international community should do everything possible to secure the journalists' release and freedom of the press in Myanmar.

He called for aid to be delivered, violence contained and reconciliation promoted in Rakhine State, and for the Rohingyas' right of return to be fully respected and implemented. —Reuters

# Friday Times [www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net) Lifestyle

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017



Ildo Damiano poses for pictures in the Atrium lobby of the Monte Carlo Casino, decorated under the theme "Let's fall in Diamonds" by the artist, as he arrives for a Surrealist Dinner Party in Monaco. — AFP

**Films on Yazidi plight, Arab displacement honored in Dubai**

# Films on Yazidi plight, Arab displacement honored in Dubai



Film director Mohammad Bakri (center) receives a prize from Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (left) and from the director of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF), Masoud Amralla Al Ali (right), during the closing ceremony of the Dubai International Film Festival in Dubai on Decemb. —AFP photos



Dhyaa Joda holds an award he received for his short film "Sabyea."



The Chairman of Dubai's Film Festival Abdulhamid Juma (center) chats with a Star Wars Stormtrooper during the closing ceremony of the Dubai International Film Festival.

Films about Yazidi suffering at the hands of the Islamic State group, Syrian laborers cut off from home and Palestinians estranged from family earned top awards Wednesday at the Dubai film festival. As industry stars crowded the red carpet for this year's glitzy showcase event the troubles roiling the surrounding Middle East region were brought sharply into focus on the big screen. Dhyaa Joda's short film "Sabyea" won the special jury prize for its unflinching portrayal of the persecution of the Yazidi religious minority by IS jihadists.

In 2014, the Sunni extremists overran Yazidi villages in northern Iraq, slaughtering thousands of men, taking women and girls as sex slaves and sending boys to military training camps. The United Nations has called the massacres of Yazidis—dubbed heretics by the IS jihadists for their non-Muslim faith—a genocide.

In "Sabyea" (a Koranic term for concubine), a Yazidi woman waits with her young daughter in a deserted village for her husband to return. Among the woman's meagre possessions are a rifle and a radio, which gives horrific daily dispatches on the IS advance, as well as a mirror she uses to burn her daughter's face to make her uglier to potential captors. A young Yazidi man stumbles up their mountain one day with news of mass killings, only to die of his wounds the next morning. The messenger confirms the woman's deepest fears, and she will eventually sacrifice herself but save her daughter. The film drew applause from the festival's Arab audience, which included conservative Muslim women in face coverings with only their eyes showing.



Guests, dressed in cosplay, arrive for the screening of Star Wars: The Last Jedi" after the closing ceremony of the Dubai International Film Festival.



A cast member gets dressed as Gamorrean Star Wars character ahead of appearing on the red carpet.

## Displacement

Modern suffering in the Middle East was also portrayed in "Taste of Cement", a documentary by Syrian director Ziad Khalthoum, which took the prize for best non-fiction production. The work focuses on the lives of seasonal Syrian construction workers in Lebanon who were cut off from their homeland by the outbreak of the war in 2011. In Lebanon, a country of four million where half a million Palestinian refugees already live in purgatory, the Syrians find themselves increasingly unwelcome.

Forbidden to leave the building site after dusk, the men gather at night around a communal television, watching anxiously for news from home. The issue of displacement and a loss of roots in a region wracked by conflict was a recurrent theme at the festival. Annemarie Jacir's "Wajib"—the Palestinian entry for the 2018 foreign language film Oscar-scooped the top prize for the best feature film and best actor gongs for father-and-son duo Mohammad and Saleh Bakri.

It is the tale of a Palestinian man who returns home to Nazareth from Rome to help his father hand-deliver wedding invitations for his sister's big day. The pair, who live two very different lives, are compelled to reconcile as they go about their task. The cross-generational Palestinian tale was feted as Arab and Muslim leaders on Wednesday urged the world to recognize occupied East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. US President Donald Trump last week sparked international condemnation by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, further throwing into doubt the right for Palestinian refugees to ever return home. —AFP

## India orders movie moguls to avoid the Weinstein effect

India has issued a rare diktat to its powerful movie moguls, reminding Bollywood to keep women safe from the sort of sex abuse allegations poisoning the US film industry. India's minister for women and child welfare Maneka Gandhi wrote to major production houses on Wednesday, asking them to comply with the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, which stipulates a series of processes to protect women at work. "Bollywood filmmakers are ethically and legally accountable for the safety of not only their direct employees but of all outsourced and temporary staff as well," read a tweet posted by Gandhi's ministry, quoting from her letter.

Indian firms with 10 or more employees must set up committees to look into complaints of sexual harassment and ensure that female staff know their workplace rights. Despite such laws, activists say very few of cases of sexual harassment are reported to the police in an industry, like Hollywood, that is run by men and operates by its own rules.

## Film families

The vast majority of Bollywood's biggest producers and film-makers come from prominent film families who until recently controlled most of the high-profile and lucrative industry. Tales of sexual harassment have begun to surface in Mumbai, home to the world's biggest film industry, following a wave of similar accusations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. More than 50 women have claimed that Weinstein sexually harassed or assaulted them over the past three decades.

Weinstein has denied having non-consensual sex with anyone. But Bollywood has all the same elements that make it easy for men to exploit wannabe stars eager for fame and fortune. Thousands of young boys and girls flock to the Bollywood capital Mumbai every year seeking film parts and are often exploited by agents who promise roles in exchange for favors. While some big Bollywood names have been charged with rape and harassment, they have rarely lost their peers' support. —Reuters

# Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson honored with Hollywood star

He's been named "sexiest man alive" and "world's highest paid film star" — now Dwayne Johnson can celebrate being accepted into the Hollywood establishment with a Walk of Fame star. The 45-year-old football player turned wrestling pro and then actor sported a sharp black suit and was joined by longtime partner Lauren Hashian and their almost two-year-old daughter Jasmine at the ceremony on Hollywood Boulevard. "I didn't want to write anything down. I figured this is such a monumental moment and significant time for me it's probably best I just speak from the heart and from my gut," the Herculean father-of-two said.

He told cheering fans the 2,624th star on the Walk was the result of years of hard work, voic-

ing gratitude for the opportunities he'd been afforded and the friends and family who'd helped him along the way. "This moment is so significant because it's full circle. 2018 will mark 18 years in Hollywood and that is a very long time of blood, sweat and earning respect," he added. Johnson announced Monday on Instagram that he and Hashian were expecting a second child, hours before they stepped out for the premiere of his latest movie "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle."



Dwayne Johnson, Jasmine Johnson and singer Lauren Hashian attend a ceremony honoring Dwayne Johnson with the 2,624th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. — AFP photos

Tom Rothman, chairman of Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group, paid tribute to the actor, who has entertained the possibility that he might run for president in 2020. "Dwayne said he would use me as a bar bell if I didn't show up," Rothman joked, before describing his friend as a



Actor Dwayne Johnson (center) watches as his Hollywood Walk of Fame Star is unveiled in Hollywood, California.

"global superstar with hundreds of millions of fans and billions of dollars in box office." Johnson's recent work includes "Baywatch," "The Fate of The Furious," "Central Intelligence" and "San Andreas," as well as the HBO comedy "Ballers." Reputed to be one of the hardest-working stars in Hollywood, he has been in 14 movies in just four years, including previous installments of the "Fast and Furious" franchise, "Hercules," "Snitch," "G.I. Joe: Retaliation," "Empire State," "Pain and Gain," and "Moana."

Born on May 2, 1972, in the San Francisco Bay Area and raised in Hawaii and Pennsylvania, Johnson grew to six foot five inches (196 centimeters) and weighs 245 pounds (111 kilograms).

He played defensive tackle at the University of Miami and went on to a stint on the practice roster of the Calgary Stampeders of the Canadian Football League in 1995. Johnson became a professional wrestler in 1996, following his father, Rocky Johnson, and grandfather, High Chief Peter Maivia. He would become an eight-time World Wrestling Federation/World Wrestling Entertainment champion. Nicknamed "The Rock" due to his strength in the ring and rough-hewn features, he was declared "sexiest man alive" by People magazine in November 2016. It was a good year for the actor, who was also named the world's highest paid film star by Forbes magazine. — AFP

## Berlin's town hall takes techno scene under its wing

It's a familiar story across the Western world: a heated property market and complaints from the neighbors are squeezing nightlife in the big city. But in Berlin-known for its nightlife and understated cool-the town hall is stepping in to defend its legendary techno scene. "Techno culture has given so much to Berlin, using some taxpayer money to support it is the least we can do," says local Greens party lawmaker Georg Koessler, the initiative's most ardent supporter.

City representatives are set to approve Thursday a million-euro (\$1.2 million) fund to cover soundproofing and additional staff to cool partygoers' exuberance, a big gesture for the chronically indebted administration. They hope the cash can help brake a wave of closures that have struck in recent years. Since 2011, 170 clubs have shut down their lasers, sound systems and smoke machines for good.

That leaves some 500 for the 3.5 million people of Germany's largest city and the armies of tourists disgorged from trains, planes and buses

each weekend more than 12.7 million in 2016 according to official statistics. "Politicians used to talk about Berlin clubs as something nice on the fringes," 32-year-old Koessler-who still calls himself a dedicated clubber- points out. "But very surprisingly, even our opponents in the (conservative) CDU are suddenly very passionate about this subject, which they call the 'night economy'," he adds.

### Late-night lobby

Many clubs sprang up after German reunification in 1990 in derelict or abandoned industrial spaces in the once-divided city's east. Now with 30 years of experience, club owners won't limit themselves to waiting around for one-off hand-outs from city authorities. "We're aware of the power we have, so we press home the benefit the city draws from us, from tourism to the property market to startups," says Lutz Leichsenring, spokesman for the "Club Commission" which counts some 220 of the city's best-known estab-



This file photo shows German techno producer and dj Frank Muller playing at Berlin's Suicide Circus night club. — AFP

ishments among its ranks. The latest campaign is for recognition as artistic venues, which could grant techno havens a seven percent VAT rate rather than the 19 percent paid by bars and restaurants. Such cash incentives underpin noble sentiments about keeping the sacred techno flame alight. "We want to stay on the sharp edge of contemporary music culture," says Leichsenring.

"If you're offering 'free entry for ladies' or 'buy one get one free' on beer, we're (Club Commission) not going to spring to your defence." Techno pilgrimage site Berghain was the first to talk its tax rate down in 2016, convincing the state that clubgoers came for its line-ups of star DJs rather than booze, sex and drugs. — AFP



This file photo shows fans taking photographs with a mural of Prince at the Governors Ball Music Festival in New York. — AFP

## Ultra-rare Prince vinyl 'Black Album' resurfaces

One of the world's rarest records has resurfaced—several vinyl copies of Prince's "Black Album," which the eccentric pop legend had demanded destroyed 30 years ago. Recordmecca, a collector's site owned by a former executive on Prince's Warner Brothers label, on Wednesday was selling a coveted sealed vinyl copy of the album for \$15,000. The "Purple Rain" star, then at the height of his fame, in December 1987 sought to release music like no one had attempted before—sending it to stores completely secretly, without his name or any art on it.

Warner, with which he had legendary feuds, discouraged Prince but eventually relented and ordered the pressing of the vinyl—which has no actual title but was informally called the "Black Album" for its blank, dark cover. But Prince soon afterward declared that he had a spiritual revelation that the album was "evil" and demanded the destruction of all copies. Warner largely succeeded in seizing and destroying the more than 500,000 copies at their factories. But Recordmecca owner Jeff Gold, who worked with Prince at Warner, said he was recently contacted by a fellow former executive who

came upon five copies. Gold said that the executive, who requested anonymity, had been sending records to his own daughter, who had bought a first turntable amid vinyl's rebirth. Sifting through his collection, the executive discovered two envelopes distributed within Warner. Inside were five copies of the "Black Album."

"For 30 years, the two mailers had sat unopened among their other boxed-up vinyl," Gold wrote. The former executive decided to sell three copies. Gold was offering one copy online, saying he already sold another one directly and would list the third one later. Gold said he would attach certificates of authenticity. Prince in late 1994 finally released the "Black Album" on limited-edition CDs and cassettes but not vinyl, making the record a holy grail for record collectors.

Prince resented Warner's constraints and in the 1990s changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol in hopes of getting out of contractual conditions. He finally made peace with Warner in 2014 in a deal that gave him control over his classic albums. He died two years later at his Paisley Park estate in Minnesota from an accidental overdose of painkillers. — AFP



## Oscar Isaac: Happy to be alive in Star Wars

Oscar Isaac is very happy Poe Dameron wasn't killed off in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'. The 38-year-old actor stars as the Resistance X-wing fighter pilot and one of the most trusted operatives for General Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher), and he was originally supposed to have met a grisly end in the 2015 movie. However, the character survived being tortured by First Order enforcer Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and Isaac is back in the role in Rian Johnson's new movie 'The Last Jedi' and he admits it was really exciting to get to see his character develop.

During the European press conference on Wednesday at the Corinthia Hotel in London, Isaac said: "It's definitely good to be alive. I was really excited to see what Rian created for Poe, the conflict that he has in a very bru-

tal way. He took away the one thing he was good at which was blowing things up and so he had to deal with being grounded and I was really fortunate to have scenes with Laura (Dern) and it did feel like it was an intimate set. You know we were all sort of walking around in our jeans and T-shirts rehearsing it and talking about different motivations."

As well as appearing with Dern - who plays Resistance officer, Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo - Isaac also got plenty of scenes with the late Fisher making her final appearance as Leia and he very much enjoyed getting to work closely with the 'Star Wars' legend. He said: "It was great to be able to take our time with scenes in such a huge movie and obviously to have scenes with Carrie was great." — Bang Showbiz

## 'He was my monster': Actress Salma Hayek alleges Harvey Weinstein misconduct

Mexican-born actress Salma Hayek has joined the ranks of Hollywood women accusing movie producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual misconduct, calling him a "monster" in an article published by the New York Times on Tuesday. "For years, he was my monster," Hayek wrote in the opinion piece in which she included descriptions of sexual harassment, bullying and threats. Holly Baird, a spokeswoman for Weinstein, issued a statement on his behalf on Wednesday night disputing Hayek's account and calling her allegations of sexual misconduct inaccurate.

More than 50 women have claimed that Weinstein sexually harassed or assaulted them over the past three decades. Weinstein has denied having non-consensual sex with anyone. Reuters has been unable to independently confirm any of the accusations against Weinstein. Hayek's spokeswoman had no immediate comment on Wednesday. Police in New York, Los Angeles, Beverly Hills and London have said they are investigating allegations of sexual assault or rape by Weinstein.

Hayek wrote in the article that she was inspired to share her experiences after other women came forward. Her account largely centered around the time she was involved with making the 2002 film, "Frida," in which she portrayed Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. Hayek wrote that she was pleased to have the opportunity to work with Weinstein and Miramax, which he then owned, because it was "synonymous with quality, sophistication and risk taking in films." But, she wrote, she found herself rebuffing sexual advances and requests from Weinstein. "No to letting him give me oral sex," Hayek wrote as one of several examples. "And with every refusal came Harvey's Machiavellian rage."



Salma Hayek

### 'Nervous breakdown'

Hayek wrote that Weinstein was threatening to shut down the production of "Frida" and that he pressured her into doing a sex scene with another woman in the film. Hayek said that when she went to film the scene, "... for the first and last time in my career, I had a nervous breakdown." The actress, who called Weinstein a "passionate cinephile, a risk taker, a patron of talent in film, a loving father and a monster," wrote, "I never showed Harvey how terrified I was of him." "Until there is equality in our industry, with men and women having the same value in every aspect of it, our community will continue to be a fertile ground for predators," she wrote.

Baird issued a statement on behalf of Weinstein that disputed Hayek's version of events. "Mr Weinstein regards Salma Hayek as a first-class actress and cast her in several of his movies, among them 'Once Upon a Time in Mexico,' 'Dogma,' and 'Studio 54.' He was very proud of her Best Actress Academy Award nomination for 'Frida' and continues to support her work," the statement said.

"While Jennifer Lopez was interested in playing Frida and at the time was a bigger star, Mr Weinstein overruled other investors to back Salma as the lead," it said.

The statement also said Miramax put up half of the money in a film with a budget of more than \$12 million, and also noted that there was "creative friction" on the film, which it said "served to drive the project to perfection." "Mr Weinstein does not recall pressuring Salma to do a gratuitous sex scene with a female costar and he was not there for the filming," the statement said. "All of the sexual allegations as portrayed by Salma are not accurate and others who witnessed the events have a different account of what transpired." — Reuters

## A different Guantanamo

# Detainee art on display in NY

The art is striking—a miniature three-masted ship in cardboard, with bits of T-shirt for the sails and threads from a prayer cap for ropes. A picture of a huge mosque at water's edge. A shadowy and faceless Statue of Liberty. The pieces are all part of a surprising exhibit in New York with an unlikely source—the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice is offering art lovers a chance to examine the works of eight presumed jihadists now or once held at the detention center, which has become a symbol of America's "war on terror"—and of the excesses committed in its name.

The prison was opened in 2002 at the US naval base on Cuba's southern coast. Some 800 suspected jihadists, swept up by American forces in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, have passed through its cells. Former US president Barack Obama promised to close the prison amid reports of torture or arbitrary treatment. But 41 detainees remain, and President Donald Trump, vowing a relentless war on extremists, wants to keep them there.

The exhibit of paintings and other objets d'art made by detainees is called "Ode to the Sea" and the water is indeed an omnipresent theme—even though prisoners were able to see it only once. A 2014 hurricane briefly forced the US military to remove the tarps blocking the detainees' view, said Erin Thompson, a co-curator of the exhibit and an assistant art professor at John Jay.

### No 'glorification'

While the sea apparently fed the dreams—and the nightmares—of detainees, it is also a theme that passes the rigorous standards of Guantanamo censors, who have rejected some artworks as "overly political or angry," Thompson said. Censors did, however, approve a drawing entitled "Vertigo at Guantanamo"—a dizzying spiral of blue, green and red dots. Pakistani detainee Ammar al-Baluchi, the exhibit's only artist to have been charged formally over the 9/11 attacks, wanted to convey to his lawyers the precarious feeling he says he has suffered since being "tortured by the CIA," Thompson explained. "This art is not here to glorify him as an artist—it's here so we can learn about his experience, his life," she said. Of the 30 works on display, 16 come from a single detainee: Muhammad Ansi, a Yemeni. Released from Guantanamo and transferred to Oman in January 2017, Ansi is, in a way, the man behind the exhibit, explained his New York lawyer, Beth Jacob.

### 'Demonized'

During their first meeting, Ansi spoke to her at



Yemeni artist and detainee Moath Al-Alwi's, three-masted cardboard ship is viewed part of an exhibit from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. —AFP photos

length about the art courses that Guantanamo first offered in 2009, and he asked if his work could eventually be displayed in the outside world. Jacob received clearance from Guantanamo officials to take a few of his works off the island, and she showed them to artist friends in New York. Thus was born the idea of an exhibit. Other detainees, or former detainees who had left Guantanamo along with their artworks, asked to take part.

These men "know they have been demonized," Jacob said. "What they hope by this is that people will see them not as the worst of the worst but as people, as humans, as people who have feelings and emotions, who appreciate beauty, who try to create that beauty." It's almost a cry for understanding. For other detainees, the exhibit is a chance to "reaffirm (their) existence," said Ramzi Kassem, a law professor at the City University of New York, who has also represented Guantanamo detainees.

Yemeni detainee Moath al-Alwi—the creator of the three-masted cardboard ship—was one of the first to arrive in Guantanamo, in January 2002, after his arrest at the Afghan-Pakistan border. "He has seen all these other prisoners leave, and he is still there for no real reason. He has never been charged, never been tried, so it is a form of disap-

pearance, a form of erasure," Kassem said.

### 'Caged bird sings'

Judging by the exhibit's guest book, visitors often leave feeling both surprised and moved. "The caged bird sings," wrote one who did not leave a name. "To be there all this time, and to be alone and



An art piece by Khalid Qasim is viewed.

just having an art class—how important that must have been just to keep you sane," Robert Fulmer, a coffee importer from San Francisco, told AFP. The exhibit has apparently caused a stir at the Pentagon, after reports that some patrons wanted to buy the works on display. Spokesman Benjamin Sakrisson confirmed to AFP that the release of artworks from Guantanamo was being suspended amid a "re-examination" of the policy.



A clock art piece by Khalid Qasim.

The Defense Department had not realized before the exhibit opened that works considered US property "could be sold," he said. Thompson confirmed that some visitors to the exhibit, which runs through January 26, had expressed an interest in purchasing certain works. But only those by former detainees would be made available for sale, she said. Kassem said he feels certain the potential sales are only a pretext for the Pentagon to change course. "The moment these prisoners begin to express themselves, that they are able to show that they are human beings like everyone else... that's a threat," Kassem said. "It runs immediately counter to the narrative that justifies not only Gitmo but the entire war on terror." — AFP



Yemeni artist and detainee Moath Al-Alwi's, three-masted cardboard ship is viewed part of an exhibit from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.



A painting by detainee Ahmed Robbani.



Art by detainee Mohamad Ansi.

# London museum to honor fashion giant Alaia with 2018 show

## Mary J Blige on her transformation for 'Mudbound'

Of all the names that came up during a typically contentious Golden Globes nominations announcement in Beverly Hills this week, Mary J. Blige's was perhaps the least controversial. Critics have lavished praise on the soul queen's magnetic turn as Florence Jackson, a stoic housewife in Dee Rees's civil rights drama "Mudbound," many noting how she disappeared completely into the role. Blige, who got an acting coach to help her prepare, revealed at an awards season screening of the low-budget Netflix movie in Los Angeles last week that Rees wanted to strip away the star's diva persona.



This file photo shows Mary J Blige attending the 'Mudbound' screening during the 55th New York Film Festival at Alice Tully Hall in New York City. —AFP

"Dee just said, 'Get rid of Mary J. Blige, period' and it was hard to pull away from her because, you know, she's been around. But Dee kept her foot down and said Florence doesn't need to have anything to be beautiful," said Blige, 46. "She really put into perspective the things that I was holding onto that deem me beautiful, like lashes and stupid stuff like that. But Florence liberated me once she was born. She helped give me a whole bunch of new confidence."

The New York native joined an exclusive club when she was nominated for best supporting actress and again, seconds later, for her song "Mighty River," written specially for the movie. Only six performers had previously earned song-writing and acting nominations for the Globes, the last of them John C. Reilly for "Walk Hard" a decade ago. The real icing on the cake came on Wednesday, when

she was nominated for best supporting actress at the Screen Actors Guild Awards, seen as a better bellwether for Oscars success than the Globes.

### 'Mesmerizing'

Rex Reed of the New York Observer describes Blige as "mesmerizing" in "Mudbound," while for Peter Travers of Rolling Stone, she "imbues Florence with such grit and radiant grace" that she deserves an Oscar nomination. The adaptation of Hillary Jordan's 2009 novel tells the sprawling, epic story of a black and a white family living and working side by side in the rural American south during the Jim Crow era of segregation and open discrimination. Bound together as tenant and owner on shared farmland in the Mississippi Delta, the relationship between the neighbors is strained when young men from each clan return from the horrors of World War II.

The film stands out as a rare example of a Western which employs women in the lion's share of creative jobs, with Rees relying on a trusted inner circle including cinematographer Rachel Morrison, makeup head Angie Wells, composer Tamar-kali, sound engineer Pud Cusack, and editor Mako Kamitsuna. "I think women are the center, period. We always hold things together. We suffer quietly because we have to, but we are powerful people," said Blige, to cheers from the audience in Los Angeles.

"Mudbound" co-stars Carey Mulligan and Jason Clarke as white sharecroppers Henry and Laura McAllan, Jason Mitchell as the Jacksons' eldest son Ronsel and Garrett Hedlund as Henry's brother Jamie. A central theme of the movie is the manner in which people focus on their hatred of "the other" as a means of avoiding their own problems.

### Manifest destiny

"After the hate goes away—because it's something to hang onto, an excuse, an obstacle—we're forced to deal with ourselves, and a lot of people don't want to deal with themselves," said Blige, who was speaking before her nominations were announced. "That's where the problem comes in—the world is afraid to look in the mirror. So I'm hoping that this film is making everyone look in the mirror, because it's definitely a direct reflection of where we are today." In "Mudbound" that fear is manifested in the racist reaction to Ronsel and Jamie striking up a friendship after their return from Europe, but it is an issue which resonates beyond the Jim Crow era, says Rees. —AFP

French-Tunisian fashion designer Azzedine Alaia will be honored by London's Design Museum with a major exhibition next year following his death on November 18 at the age of 77. "Azzedine Alaia: The Couturier" will run from May 10 to October 7, showcasing more than 60 pieces personally selected by the iconic designer. "Azzedine Alaia was recognized throughout his life as a master couturier who expressed the timeless beauty of the female form in the most refined degree of haute couture," the museum said.

"The Design Museum will now present this unique exhibition planned by Alaia himself, exploring his passion and energy for fashion as he himself intended it to be seen." Alaia was born to a farming family in Tunisia in 1940 and studied sculpture at the fine arts school in Tunis before working at a modest neighborhood dressmaker's shop. He rose to fame in the 1980s, refusing to march to the beat of international fashion weeks and instead releasing his collections in his own time, with scant concern for publicity. He became



Photo shows late French-Tunisian fashion designer Azzedine Alaia. — AFP

known as the King of Cling for his form-fitting gowns. "I like women," he told AFP in a 2013 interview. "I never think about doing new things, about being creative, but about making clothing that will make women beautiful." —AFP

## RICHIE SAMBORA EXCITED FOR BON JOVI REUNION

Richie Sambora is excited to celebrate Bon Jovi's career at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony in April 2018. The legendary guitarist - who spent 31 years in the 'Livin' On A Prayer' band before leaving four years ago - said their induction will be a "joyous" occasion as he reunites with his former bandmates for the show. Speaking to Billboard, he said: "It's the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame - it'll be a joyous occasion. I was there for 31 years and we sold 150 million records or something and we put a lot of a\*\*es in seats in stadiums around the world and made a lot of people happy. "I did so many different jobs in that band, so, yeah, I'm showing up for that. Everybody should have a smile on their face and a smile in their hearts and it should be a celebration of what we did." The group will be recognized alongside The Cars, Dire

Straits, the Moody Blues, Nina Simone and 'Early Influence' Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

Sambora - who explained he decided to leave the band because of a desire to work on other projects and spend time with his family - added that being inducted was a huge honor. He explained: "It's great to be recognized for anything you do. It's fabulous to be in line with the greats and your heroes that you grew up listening to and emulating.

"When you put me in line with the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan and the Beatles and everyone else who's there, it's a big honor." Meanwhile, frontman Jon Bon Jovi - who currently completes the line-up alongside - David Bryan, Tico Torres, Phil X and Hugh McDonald - suggested there was never any doubt Sambora would be back for the ceremony - which takes place on April



Richie Sambora

14. He recently said: "He was my right hand for a long time, so there was never ill will, just like I told everybody. [He] just didn't show up anymore. "We went on, but he was there for three decades and he should be there to celebrate the moment. So he'll be invited to join the rest of the band in all of the festivities."

— Bang Showbiz

## Women accuse rap mogul Russell Simmons of rape

At least three women say that they were raped by hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, who recently left his business empire following abuse allegations, The New York Times reported Wednesday. The 60-year-old hip-hop legend denied the rape accusations—which date back to 1988 — and voiced support for the growing movement of women speaking out against abusive men. Simmons announced on November 30 that he was stepping down from his business roles after two women accused him of assault, which he also denied.

But The New York Times article described an alleged



Russell Simmons

pattern of behavior by the enormously influential Def Jam Recordings co-founder, who was accused of preying on women entering the industry. Tina Baker, a singer who has performed back-up for Madonna and Bruce Springsteen, said Simmons was her manager when he invited her to his apartment in 1990 or 1991. She told the newspaper that he pinned her down and raped her. The Times said the account was confirmed by four people close to her including her ex-husband and therapist. "I didn't have sex with a man for almost nine years" afterward, Baker told the newspaper. "I went into a cocoon." — AFP





Military school students dance during their annual ball in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday. — AP photos



# Moscow's cadet ball mixes pomp discipline and inclusivity

Moscow's International Kremlin Cadet Ball is a picture of discipline, pomp and splendor. Girls in billowing dresses twirl across the dance floor, immaculately dressed young men line the hall in orderly rows, and teachers bark out orders, trying to get their students to keep time. Backstage, however, chaos reigns. As lipstick is applied and hair frantically braided, girls jostle for position in front of floor-length mirrors, trying to capture the perfect selfie.

"Red lipstick is absolutely forbidden!" shouts a teacher, causing the room to go silent. "Cadet girls should be girly, not womanly!" For many at Tuesday's ball, it's a fairytale chance to experience the grandeur



Red lipstick is absolutely forbidden

of Russia's czarist traditions. With its string quartets, traditional dance routines and patriotic speeches, the event harks back to a bygone era. "I'm a bit scared, to be honest," said 13-year-old

Masha Pavlenkova, one of a family of six. "I don't want to make a mistake." More than 1,000 students, from both general and military schools, travelled to Moscow from 42 different regions for the ball, including the Sakha Republic in Russia's Arctic North and the Crimea annexed from Ukraine in 2014. "The main thing is to do your best, to study well and to believe in yourself," said 13-year-old Andrei Amurskov. Patriotic pride underpinned the evening. Lyudmila Vanina, one of the ball's organizers, says the event offers children an opportunity to meet and talk with war veterans and heroes of the Soviet Union.

Contrary to its image, the ball is not the preserve of the rich - many children

come from poor family backgrounds or orphanages. "There are lots of people from different family backgrounds, anyone can be a cadet and that's really shown here," said Leonid Dontsov, 16. For a group of orphans from Krasnoyarsk in eastern Siberia and a cadet school from Yakutia in the Far North, the event offered students their first chance to visit the Russian capital.

Natalya Miroshkina, a teacher from Samara, noted the "huge diversity" of children from different schools, regions and backgrounds. "For us, this was a unique opportunity to represent Samara at this wonderful event," she said. "We have to teach our children the importance of patriotism. They need to value their history, love their past and protect their future."—AP



# Veggie-filled spring rolls

## offer the perfect holiday detox



### Vegetable Spring Rolls

#### Ingredients:

1 cup plain yogurt  
 Zest and juice from 1 lemon  
 Sea salt, to taste  
 6 to 8 leaves lacinato (or Tuscan) kale  
 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
 12 spring roll wrappers  
 1 cup hummus  
 1 kohlrabi, peeled and julienned  
 1 watermelon radish, peeled and julienned  
 2 tablespoons Egyptian dukkah spice blend, plus more as needed  
 4 green onions, thinly sliced  
 3/4 cup cilantro or mint leaves  
 1 daikon radish, peeled and julienned  
 4 red radishes, julienned  
 3 small (or 1 medium) beets, peeled and julienned  
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
 Toasted black sesame seeds

### By The Culinary Institute of America

If you are up to your eyeballs in eggnog, you're probably in desperate need of a detox. And by detox, we mean a truckload of fresh fruits and vegetables prepared as minimally as possible, because you have things to do! And we're not just talking any vegetables. We're talking super-cruciferous vegetables, full of the good fuel that your body needs to rev up for the new year.

Though the term may be unfamiliar, cruciferous vegetables are not. Arugula, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and radishes are among many vegetables in the cruciferous family, which are prized for their flavor, texture, and nutrients. Chef Katherine Polenz says, "Cruciferous vegetables are underutilized, but are so rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and nutrients. Dark leafy kale is high in minerals and proteins, and provides a great textural addition."

This Vegetable Spring Rolls recipe is packed full of these super-vegetables, which means it's also full of antioxidants; fiber; vitamins C, E, and K; and folate. We've added some creamy hummus and the ultra-flavorful dukkah spice blend.

An aromatic spice blend with Egyptian roots, dukkah is unique because it includes seeds and nuts, like hazelnuts, pistachios, and sesame seeds, which adds a welcome richness to vegetarian

recipes. Dukkah is commonly used as a seasoning on traditional flatbreads, but once you try it, you'll be hard pressed to find something that couldn't use a sprinkle. It should be easy to find at your local grocery store or specialty market.

To pair with the spices, we've added some of our favorite crunchy cruciferous veggies, which also happen to be vibrant in flavor and color. Each vegetable, from the kohlrabi (kind of like radish/broccoli) to the watermelon radish, lends a new flavor and texture to the spring roll, so each bite is unique. The beauty of this recipe is that you can mix and match your favorite flavors, adding broccoli, shredded cabbage, or even tofu.

We call for most of the vegetables to be julienned, which is a cut in the shape of a thin matchstick. This cut is perfect for a spring roll, because it's big enough to be crunchy, but thin enough to bite through. The best way to cut a julienne is to slice each vegetable about 1/8-inch thick, then cut those slices into matchsticks. A mandolin will do it twice as fast, if you have one.

Once you have your juliennes in order, it's time to give the kale a little extra attention. Kale is a needy vegetable though to be fair, it really does a lot of work for us, and we probably owe it a good massage from time to time. If you've ever declared, "Ugh, I hate kale," it's probably because it wasn't properly coaxed and coddled

into a good mood.

For science reasons (enzymes, compounds), kale benefits from a literal massage, where you take the leaves and rub them together until they soften. You will see a notable change in the appearance of the leaves, which will turn a more vibrant shade of green, and they will also be much softer and tenderer. The kale will also be sweeter.

Serve these spring rolls as a light lunch, on a platter as a party snack, or alongside a nice veggie soup for a satisfying dinner. And if a raw, vegetarian spring roll is going a little too cold turkey, we'll look the other way if you want to add some grilled shrimp or chicken. Maybe just not that leftover prime rib.

#### Directions:

In a small bowl, combine the yogurt, lemon zest, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt. Stir to combine, then cover and refrigerate.

Trim the stems from the kale leaves and cut the leaves into 4-inch squares (you will need 12 total). Transfer the kale to a large resealable bag and add the olive oil and a pinch of salt. Seal the bag and gently massage the leaves to tenderize the kale.

Fill a large shallow bowl with warm water. One at a time, dip the spring roll wrappers into

the water and soak until just pliable, about 10 seconds. Remove from the water and lay on a clean work surface and blot the wrap to remove any excess water.

Starting at about 1 inch from the lower edge, place a square of the massaged kale, then spread about 1 tablespoon of hummus across the kale. Top with a thin layer of kohlrabi and watermelon radish. Sprinkle with about 1/2 teaspoon of dukkah, about 1 tablespoon of green onion, and about 1 tablespoon of herbs. Top with a layer of daikon, red radish, and beet, then season with additional dukkah or salt and pepper, to taste.

Dampen your fingertips. Carefully, but firmly, pull the lower edge of the wrap up and over the filling to start the roll. After the first full rotation, fold in each side of the wrap to close in the ends and continue to roll closed, ending with the seam-side down.

Transfer the completed roll to a platter, and then continue to form 12 rolls. Do not stack the finished rolls, as they will stick together if touching. Cover the finished rolls with lightly oiled parchment paper and refrigerate until ready to serve. To serve the spring rolls, use a very sharp knife to cut each roll in half. Drizzle with the reserved lemon yogurt sauce and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

# MAKE DELICIOUS CHICKEN AND RICE UNDER PRESSURE - IN A COOKER

## Under Pressure Quickie Chicken and Rice

### Ingredients:

1 pound of mushrooms, cleaned and sliced (optional)  
 1 1/2 cups brown jasmine rice (White rice cooks too quickly and will be mushy and overcooked)  
 2 cups chicken stock  
 1/2 cup white wine  
 1/8 pound butter (half a stick)  
 2 teaspoons kosher salt  
 1 teaspoon smoked paprika  
 1 teaspoon granulated garlic  
 1 teaspoon onion powder  
 1 teaspoon dried thyme  
 1/2 teaspoon ground white pepper  
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
 4-6 bone-in chicken thighs, or 8 boneless chicken thighs  
 1 16-ounce bag of frozen peas and carrots  
 1-2 sprigs of fresh thyme  
 Special Equipment: Electric Pressure Cooker



By Elizabeth Karmel

Chicken and Rice is having a moment. Whether you make the Spanish staple, Arroz con Pollo or make up your own version, it is soul-satisfying and perfect for the cooler weather. A few weeks ago, I made a version of Arroz con Pollo that a friend remembered from his favorite childhood restaurant. It was green with cilantro and creamy with cheese and sour cream.

I made a casserole that combined three recipes, my Green Rice, Poached Chicken and a creamy cheese sauce. All this was topped with buttered breadcrumbs and took me about four hours to make. It was delicious but it was so much work! Even the more traditional Spanish Chicken and Rice is a multi-step recipe that takes a lot of time. In my world, I can make rice on the stovetop and grill chicken thighs in less time with less mess, but that is not what most people think of when they think of Chicken and Rice.

Electric pressure cookers are also having a

moment. And, until recently, I had never used one. My sister bought one and bragged about making chicken soup in 15 minutes. I thought she was dreaming, or had made a chicken soup so devoid of taste that no one would want to eat it.

But all that changed when I got my hands on a pressure cooker. I chose a simple model from Cuisinart that would let me choose between high and low and set the time. As someone new to pressure cookers, I am not going to bake a cake or make yogurt in one of them.

Thinking about the simple and crave-able combination of chicken and rice, I experimented with throwing it all in a pressure cooker and seeing what would happen. I didn't sauté onions or even use them or brown the chicken which you could certainly do and it would only make it better. I made it by putting everything in the pressure cooker and turning it on.

I did stack the flavor deck a little. I used chicken stock and white wine to cook the brown jasmine rice and the chicken. I seasoned the chicken thighs with a spice rub and added it to

the liquid, and added unsalted butter for flavor and texture. But I also used a bag of frozen vegetables for convenience.

I am partial to lima beans, but I figured that most people would prefer peas and carrots so that is what I used. I had some fresh thyme so I added that to the pot, but if you don't have it you can use dried thyme.

I had a pound of fresh mushrooms that needed cooking so I sliced and sautéed them before putting everything in the pressure cooker but they could be optional. After 23 minutes, I was rewarded with a surprisingly delicious one-bowl meal that was the very definition of wholesome comfort food. It was bursting with flavor and made me dream of what else I could make in the pressure cooker. With food this good, and this fast, there is no excuse not to cook from scratch.

### Directions:

If using mushrooms, sauté and set aside. Measure out rice, stock, wine and butter, and place in

pressure cooker pot. Meanwhile, mix salt and dried spices together.

Season chicken and set aside. Add remaining spice mixture to rice and stock. Stir to mix. Add the mushrooms, if using, and the frozen vegetables and place the chicken on top. Add the sprigs of fresh thyme.

Lock the pressure cooker according to manufacturer instructions. Make sure the valve is in the pressure position. Set the pressure on high and set time for 23 minutes.

The pressure cooker will take about 20 minutes to build pressure. After that, it will begin to time the cooking process so the whole cooking time is 43 minutes.

Once the pressure cooker has cooked for 23 minutes, let it release naturally. Open and stir to make sure the rice is done. If it is too al dente, continue cooking on simmer or pressure cook for another 3-4 minutes. The chicken skin will not be brown or crispy. If you want the skin crispy, place in a heat proof serving piece and crisp the skin under the broiler.

Lifestyle



**CROSS WORD**

Rearrange the jumbled words.

- IRACH \_\_\_\_\_
- LCPIEN \_\_\_\_\_
- EORSH \_\_\_\_\_
- UNEQE \_\_\_\_\_
- YDRAI \_\_\_\_\_
- NTOTCO \_\_\_\_\_
- OMNAG \_\_\_\_\_
- YDIAS \_\_\_\_\_
- ELPTA \_\_\_\_\_
- SLSGA \_\_\_\_\_



**Sudoku**

2		6		1				5
7				3				4
								1
	4		5			2	7	
	1				7	3		
5			3				8	9
8	2		4				3	

1	3	4	9	2	8	7	6	5
2	5	6	7	1	4	8	9	3
7	8	9	6	3	5	1	4	2
6	7	5	2	4	3	9	1	8
3	4	8	5	9	1	2	7	6
9	1	2	8	6	7	3	5	4
4	9	3	1	8	6	5	2	7
5	6	1	3	7	2	4	8	9
8	2	7	4	5	9	6	3	1

COLOR ME

Lifestyle | Kids

DID YOU KNOW?



**S**now forms when water vapor in the atmosphere freezes into ice crystals.

Snowflakes form in a variety of different shapes.

Snow is a form of precipitation, other forms of precipitation are rain, hail and sleet.

Light and fluffy snow is often called 'powder'.

Heavy snowfalls are often called 'snowstorms'.

Snowstorms with high winds are often called 'blizzards'.

Snow reflects a high level of ultraviolet radiation and can cause snow blindness (photokeratitis). Sunglasses, goggles and other eye

protection help absorb the ultraviolet rays.

A number of winter sports rely on snow, including skiing and snowboarding.

Recreational activities such as snowball fights, tobogganing and making snowmen are also popular in the snow.

Skis, sleds and snowmobiles are useful transport options through snow.

Snow can lower visibility, making driving conditions dangerous.

The highest snowfall ever recorded in a one year period was 31.1 meters in Mount Rainier, Washington State, United States, between February 19, 1971 and February 18, 1972.

Make Glowing Water

What you'll need:

A black light (you can find them at stationery and hardware stores)

Tonic water or a highlighter pen

A dark room to do the experiment

Instructions:

If you are using a highlighter pen carefully break it open, remove the felt and soak it in a small amount of water for a few minutes.

Find a dark room.

Turn on the black light near your water, how does it look?

What's happening?

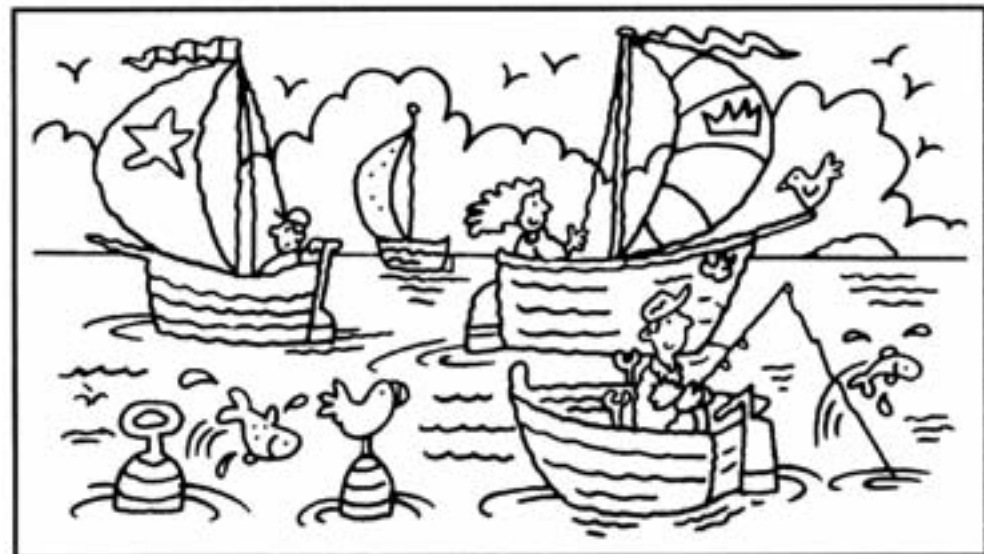
The ultra violet (UV) light coming from your black light lamp excites things called phosphors. Tonic water and the dye from highlighter pens contain phosphors that turn UV light (light we can't see) into visible light (light we can see). That's why your water glows in the dark when you shine a black light on it.

Black lights are used in forensic science, artistic performances, photography, authentication of banknotes and antiques, and in many other areas.



Spot the difference

Can you spot the 10 differences between these two pictures?



Maze

GUIDE ROGER RODENT TO THE CHUNK OF CHEESE!



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## Lifestyle | Book review

# Paula Hawkins's 'Into the Water' Dives Into Murky Skulduggery

By Janet Maslin

Paula Hawkins has followed up “The Girl on the Train,” her 2015 monster hit, with another bookload of skulduggery. And rather than mimic her proven formula for success, she has tried something very different. There you have it: All the good news about her new one, “Into the Water.” If “The Girl on the Train” seemed over plotted and confusing to some readers, it is a model of clarity next to this latest effort. “Into the Water” is set in the rural British town of Beckford, an extremely unhealthy habitat for women.

Beckford has cliffs, a bridge, a river and a drowning pool. It also has a long history of women falling off, stepping into or otherwise dying via any of the above. Libby, murdered by men in the prologue, turns out to be an accused witch from the 17th century. But Hawkins starts with just the spookiness, withholding the date and the full, pointless story for a long time. The rest of the novel takes place over the course of one month, August 2015.

Hawkins plagues little Beckford with contemporary watery deaths, grieving about other watery deaths and the discovery of a manuscript about the town's history of watery deaths. Her goal may be to build suspense, but all she achieves is confusion. “Into the Water” is jam-packed with minor characters and stories that go nowhere.

What happened to the Paula Hawkins who structured “The Girl on the Train” so ingeniously? That book, and the ensuing movie starring Emily Blunt, used a cleverly devised unreliable narrator, focused on interrelated couples, revealed all its characters to be untrustworthy and came close to bursting at its seams. But that story radiated sheer serenity compared with the three-ring circus that “Into the Water” becomes.

The new one properly begins in 2015 with the death of Nel Abbott. (Make a chart. A big one.) Nel was the mother of 15-year-old Lena, whose best friend, Katie Whittaker, died in the water only a few weeks earlier. Nel has a chilly estranged sister, Julia (known as Jules), who's been gone so long she doesn't know her niece Lena, but now comes back to town to impose her presence on the orphaned girl. Lena has no idea who her father was. But he must have been a man and therefore likely a terrible monster. Every man in “Into the Water” has the potential to be one.

Louise Whittaker, Katie's mother, walks the path beside the river daily as she mourns her daughter. Patrick Townsend, the oldest man in the book, is a frequent walker too. There's more walking here than in the average Jane Austen novel, and not much else to do in Beckford. We do learn



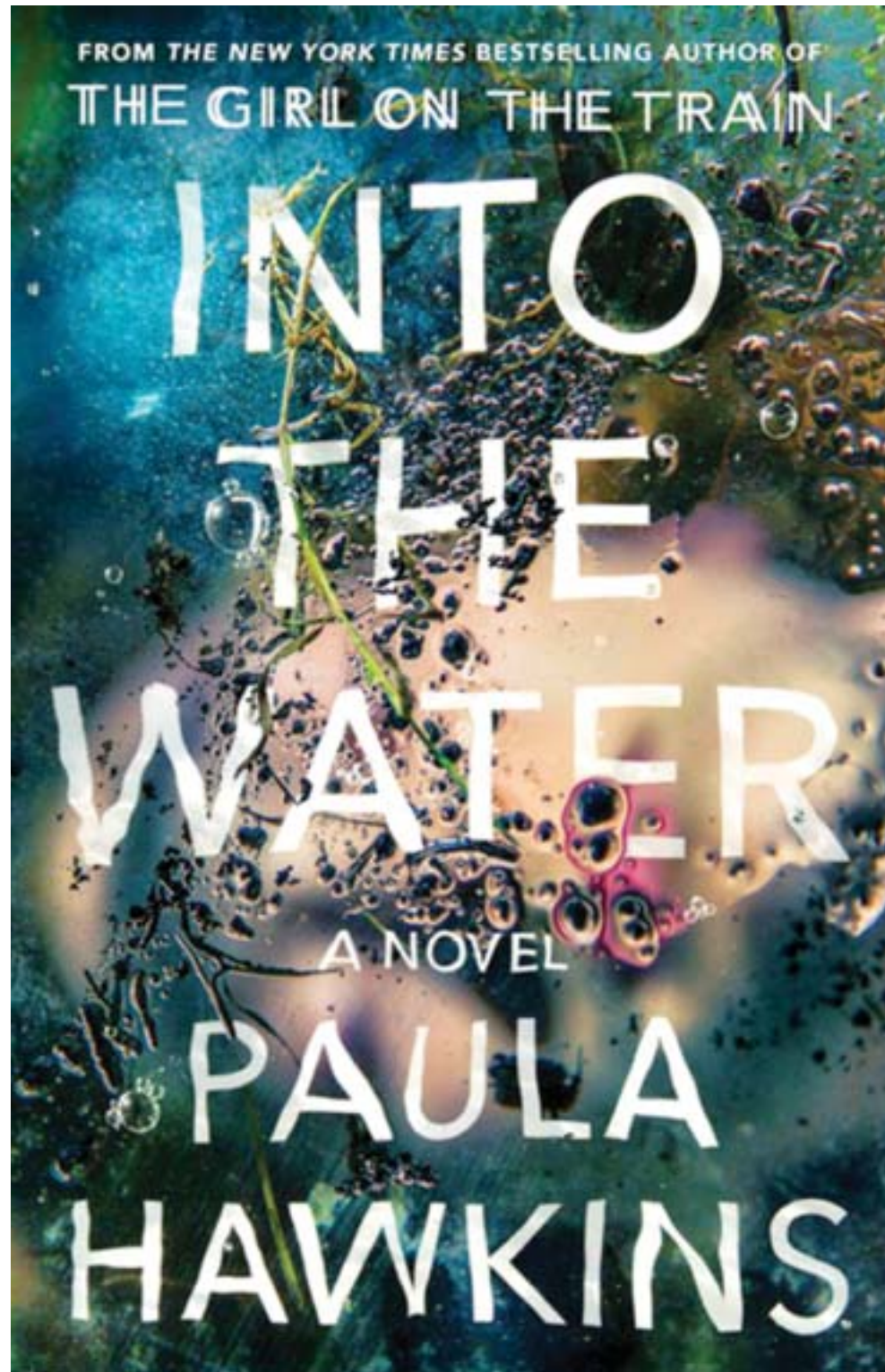
that it's possible to buy milk and a newspaper somewhere, but everyone seems most drawn to the sinister, wet, lethal outskirts of town.

“So much for prose”

Patrick is the father of Sean Townsend, a detective assigned to look into Nel's death. Sean has his own traumatic history involving a drowned Beckford woman, but nobody thinks to bring it up before he's given the case. Sean's partner is Erin Morgan, who likes to run on the riverbank and does her best not to wonder what kind of crazy place this is. And Sean is married to but separated from Helen, head of the local school, who knew a lot about Katie and Lena's friendship.

A teacher on Helen's staff, Mark Henderson, knows all the local teenagers, has had enough of the school system and would dearly love to get out of town. Finally, and why not, there's the psychic. Her name is Nickie Sage and she looks and dresses like a goth witch. She knows a lot more than the police do about Beckford's endless parade of secrets. Hawkins does not so much introduce these characters as throw them at the reader in rapid succession.

There's no time to process who's who, and not much detail about any of them. The writing doesn't help: Nel's high school boyfriend (not even mentioned above) is “tall, broad and blond, his lips curled into a perpetual sneer.” One detective describes Beckford as “a strange place, full of odd people, with a downright bizarre history.” So much for prose. As for dialogue, Jules actually leans over Nel's corpse and whispers: “What did you want to tell me?” Many of us are going to read this novel anyway. Hawkins could have published a book of



386 blank pages and hit the best-seller lists.

So on the bright side for those who insist: A few of the book's many killings happen for unexpectedly powerful reasons. The one that occurs in 1920 delivers a particularly strong shock. And even though Hawkins does a lot of needless obfuscating just to keep her story moving, she blows enough smoke to hide genuinely salient clues.

“Clues” isn't quite the right word, since nobody in this book behaves logically, schemes cagily, has legitimate motives or relies on any sane staples of the murder story.

“Into the Water” chugs off to a slow, perplexing start, but it develops a head of steam at an unlikely moment. It has exactly one smart, perfectly conceived Hitchcockian page: its last.

## Comic

### WORD SEARCH

#### Deserts of the World

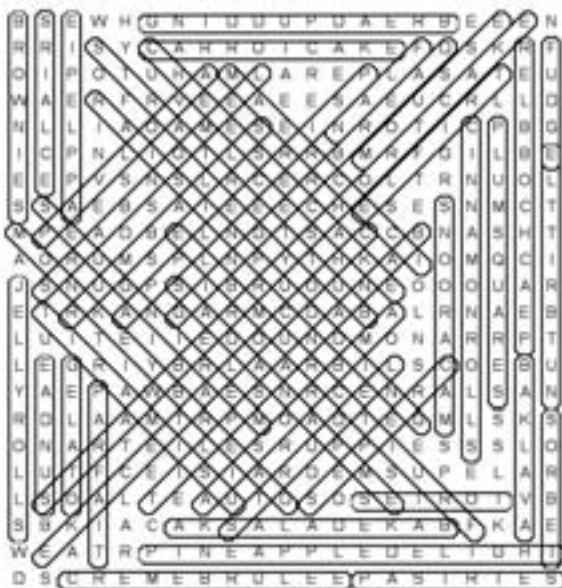
Find and circle all of the deserts that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- |                  |                |                |                  |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| ARABIAN          | GIBSON         | LAGUAIIRA      | RAMAT            |
| ARCTIC           | GOSI           | LIBYAN         | RANGIRO          |
| ATACAMA          | GRAND BARA     | MARANDAB       | RUSSIAN          |
| ATLANTIC COASTAL | GREAT BASIN    | MOJAVE         | SAHARA           |
| BAYUDA           | GREATSANDY     | MONTE          | SECHURA          |
| BLACK ROCK       | GREAT VICTORIA | NAMIB          | SIMPSON          |
| BLUE             | GUBAN          | NEFUO          | SINAI            |
| CHALBI           | INDUS VALLEY   | NEGVE          | SONORAN          |
| CHIHUAHUA        | JALAPAO        | NORTH AMERICAN | TABERNAS         |
| COLORADO         | JUDAEAN        | NUBIAN         | TAKLAMAKAN       |
| DANAKIL          | KALAHARI       | NYIRI          | TANAMI           |
| DEATH VALLEY     | KARAKUM        | OGADEN         | TENERE           |
| DURAB            | KARDO          | OLESHKY        | THOMPSON PLATEAU |
| EMPTY QUARTER    | KHARAN         | ORDOS          | WAHIBA SANDS     |
| ERITREAN COASTAL | KYZYLKUM       | PATAGONIAN     | WHITE            |

### Yesterday's Solution

#### Delicious Desserts



- |                |                |               |                       |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| AMBROSIA       | CINNAMON ROLLS | JELLY ROLLS   | PINEAPPLE DELIGHT     |
| APPLE CRISP    | CREME BRULEE   | LEMON BARS    | PLUM SQUARES          |
| APPLE PIE      | CREPES         | MACAROONS     | RAISIN PUDDING        |
| BAKED ALASKA   | ECLAIRS        | MERINGUES     | RUM BALLS             |
| BACLAVA        | EMPANADAS      | HONKY BREAD   | SOBBIT                |
| BANANA SPLIT   | FLAN           | HOUSSE        | STRAWBERRY SHORT CAKE |
| BREAD PUDDING  | FRUIT CRUMBLE  | NUT BRITTLE   | STRUDEL               |
| BROWNIES       | FUDGE          | PARFAIT       | SUNDAE                |
| BUTTER TARTS   | GELATO         | PASTRIES      | TIRAMISU              |
| CARROT CAKE    | GINGERBREAD    | PAVLOVA       | TORTES                |
| CHEESE CAKE    | ICE CREAM      | PEACH COBBLER | TROPLE                |
| CHOCOLATE CAKE |                |               |                       |

The hidden message is: WHEN YOU ARE FEELING STRESSED, A SOLUTION IS "STRESSED" SPelled BACKWARDS.

### CROSSWORD 1785



#### ACROSS

- Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
- Unskillfulness resulting from a lack of training.
- The compass point that is one point west of due south.
- A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
- Small genus of shrubs and subshrubs of western United States having flowers that change color as they mature.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- A republic in western Europe.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- (British) Informal term for information.
- Type genus of the Rhamnaceae.
- (possibly Roman) Goddess of horses and mules and asses.
- A rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials.
- The fleshy part of the human body that you sit on.
- A church associated with a monastery or convent.
- (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
- The dressed skin of an animal (especially a large animal).
- (biology) Of unlike parts or organs.
- A unit of current equal to 10 amperes.

#### DOWN

- A fraudulent business scheme.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising

- solely the razorbill.
- Evergreen tree of eastern Asia and Philippines having large leathery leaves and small green-white flowers in compact cymes.
4. 3 to 30 gigahertz.
- Very slow in tempo and broad in manner n.
- A chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge and atrophy of nasal structures.
- An ambitious and aspiring young person.
- Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
- United States swimmer who in 1926 became the first woman to swim the English Channel (1903-).
- A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- A natural protective covering of the body.
- A man who is the lover of a girl or young woman.
- A large number or amount.
- A complex inorganic compound that contains ammonia molecules.
- Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
- Any plant of the genus Hoya having fleshy leaves and usually nectariferous flowers.
- Humorously vulgar.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- Not reflecting light.
- Departing or being caused to depart from the true vertical or horizontal.
- Joint capital (with Riyadh) of Saudi Arabia.
- A young woman making her debut into society.

- Diabetes caused by a relative or absolute deficiency of insulin and characterized by polyuria.
- An informal term for a father.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- An area of sand sloping down to the water of a sea or lake.
- A garment that covers the head and face.
53. 30 to 300 gigahertz.
- The bony skeleton of the head of vertebrates.
- State in eastern India on the Bay of Bengal.
- Of or relating to Samoa or its people or language or culture.
- A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
- Any of various organs that synthesize substances needed by the body and release it through ducts or directly into the bloodstream.
- A metric unit of length equal to one quadrillionth of a meter.
- A kind of danceable music popular among black South Africans.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- A bluish shade of green.
- A woolen cap of Scottish origin.
- A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

### Yesterday's Solution



### Daily SuDoku

6					1
7	8	2			
		9	2	5	
		8		7	4
		6	4	8	1
	5		1		9
				8	4
					7
					6
2					8

### Yesterday's Solution

8	3	6	9	7	1	5	4	2
5	4	9	8	2	3	1	7	6
1	7	2	6	4	5	8	9	3
2	6	5	4	8	7	9	3	1
7	1	3	2	5	9	6	8	4
9	8	4	1	3	6	2	5	7
4	9	8	3	6	2	7	1	5
3	2	7	5	1	8	4	6	9
6	5	1	7	9	4	3	2	8

## TV Listings

**00:05** Wyrnwood: Road Of The Dead  
**01:50** Resident Evil: Vendetta  
**03:30** Operation Chromite  
**05:25** Crossfire  
**07:00** The Tower  
**09:05** Savage Dog  
**10:40** Iron Man 3  
**12:50** Shanghai Knights  
**14:50** Crossfire  
**16:25** Captain America: The First Avenger  
**18:30** War Of The Worlds  
**20:30** Knight And Day  
**22:30** Assassins Tale

**00:10** Carol  
**02:10** A Birder's Guide To Everything  
**03:50** The Wave  
**05:45** Every Thing Will Be Fine  
**08:00** Operation Avalanche  
**09:45** Every Thing Will Be Fine  
**12:00** An Inconvenient Truth  
**13:45** East Side Sushi  
**15:50** New York Stories  
**18:05** The Apartment  
**20:20** Stand By Me  
**22:00** The Man Who Knew Infinity  
**23:55** Scent Of A Woman

**01:10** Code Of Silence  
**03:00** Man Down  
**04:40** Captive  
**06:30** Close Range  
**08:05** Code Of Silence  
**09:55** Man Down  
**11:35** Captive  
**13:25** The Hollow One  
**15:10** Tell Me How I Die  
**17:05** Pressure  
**18:45** The Blair Witch Project  
**20:15** Runaway Jury  
**22:30** Deception

**01:00** True Heart  
**02:35** Get Santa  
**04:20** The Good Dinosaur  
**05:55** Rio  
**07:35** True Heart  
**09:10** Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked  
**10:40** The Good Dinosaur  
**12:15** Pirates Who Don't Do Anything  
**13:45** Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Road Chip  
**15:20** Zootropolis  
**17:10** The Kids From 62-F  
**18:50** The Adventure Club  
**20:20** Pirates Who Don't Do Anything  
**21:50** Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Road Chip  
**23:25** The Kids From 62-F

**02:10** The Runner  
**03:45** I Am Number Four  
**05:40** The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water  
**07:15** Creed  
**09:30** Die Hard  
**11:50** I Am Number Four  
**13:45** Bridge Of Spies  
**16:15** Nacho Libre  
**17:55** Seven Years In Tibet  
**20:15** Hudson Hawk  
**22:00** Black Snake Moan

**00:15** Resident Evil: The Final Chapter  
**02:05** Bravetown  
**04:00** Aloha  
**05:45** Finding Dory  
**07:20** Hello, My Name Is Doris  
**08:50** Aloha  
**10:35** Captain America: Civil War  
**13:05** Queen Of Katwe  
**15:10** Pete's Dragon  
**16:55** Monster Trucks  
**21:00** Smurfs: The Lost Village  
**22:35** Lights Out

**00:35** Drunk Wedding  
**02:05** The Mexican  
**04:10** Are We Done Yet?  
**05:45** Spy Hard  
**07:10** Big Mommas: Like Father, Like Son  
**09:00** Leap Of Faith  
**10:50** The Guilt Trip  
**12:30** Spy Hard  
**13:55** Big Mommas: Like Father, Like Son  
**15:45** Undercover Brother  
**17:15** The Family Fang

**19:05** Life Or Something Like It  
**20:50** Elizabethtown  
**22:55** The Parole Officer

**00:00** Man Of The Year  
**02:00** Acceptable Risk  
**03:00** The Code  
**04:00** Body Of War  
**05:30** Touchy Feely  
**07:00** Lock Charmer (A.K.A El Cerrajero)  
**08:20** Border  
**09:55** 3 Backyards  
**11:25** Movie Talk Legends: Lauren Bacall  
**11:55** It Might Get Loud  
**13:35** A Small Section Of The World Stutterer  
**14:40** Lock Charmer (A.K.A El Cerrajero)  
**16:20** Border  
**17:55** 3 Backyards  
**19:25** Paper Covers Rock  
**21:00** Movie Talk Legends: Audrey Hepburn  
**21:30** Movie Talk  
**22:00** Music Of The Heart

**00:15** Mom  
**00:40** Mom  
**01:05** The Middle  
**01:30** The Middle  
**01:55** Bette!  
**02:20** Angie Tribeca  
**02:45** The Good Place  
**03:15** Late Night With Seth Meyers  
**04:00** The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
**04:50** The Ellen DeGeneres Show  
**05:40** Brothers  
**06:05** Bette!  
**06:30** The Goldbergs  
**06:55** Imaginary Mary  
**07:20** Late Night With Seth Meyers  
**08:10** The Ellen DeGeneres Show  
**09:00** The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
**09:50** The Simpsons  
**10:15** The Last Man On Earth  
**10:40** Dr. Ken  
**11:05** Bette!  
**11:30** The Ellen DeGeneres Show  
**12:20** The Goldbergs  
**12:45** Imaginary Mary  
**13:10** Mom  
**13:35** Mom  
**14:00** The Middle  
**14:25** The Middle  
**14:50** Dr. Ken  
**15:15** The Simpsons  
**15:40** The Last Man On Earth  
**16:05** The Ellen DeGeneres Show  
**17:00** The Goldbergs  
**17:30** Imaginary Mary  
**18:00** Mom  
**18:30** Mom  
**19:00** The Middle  
**19:30** The Middle  
**20:00** Life In Pieces  
**20:30** Fresh Off The Boat  
**21:00** The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
**22:00** Man Seeking Woman  
**22:30** Dr. Ken  
**23:00** Powerless  
**23:25** Late Night With Seth Meyers

**00:00** American Crime  
**01:00** The Art Of More  
**01:50** Claws  
**02:40** Lethal Weapon  
**03:30** S.W.A.T.  
**04:20** American Crime  
**05:20** The Night Shift  
**06:10** APB  
**07:00** Good Morning America  
**09:00** The View  
**09:45** The Chew  
**10:30** Supergirl  
**11:20** The Night Shift  
**12:10** APB  
**13:00** Time After Time  
**13:45** Lethal Weapon  
**14:30** The View  
**15:15** The Chew  
**16:00** APB  
**17:00** Live Good Morning America  
**19:00** Bones  
**20:00** Time After Time  
**21:00** Survivor: Heroes v. Healers v. Hustlers  
**22:00** The Amazing Race  
**23:00** WWE Experience

**00:55** Anacondas: The Hunt For The Blood Orchid  
**02:35** The Magicians  
**03:25** Snow White: A Tale Of Terror  
**05:10** Warehouse 13  
**06:00** Stargate SG-1  
**06:50** Stargate SG-1  
**07:40** Stargate SG-1  
**08:30** Stargate SG-1  
**09:20** Stargate SG-1  
**10:10** Stargate SG-1  
**11:00** Smallville  
**11:50** Smallville  
**12:40** Smallville  
**13:30** Smallville  
**14:20** Smallville  
**15:10** Face Off  
**16:00** Face Off  
**16:50** Evan Almighty  
**18:30** Dark Matter  
**19:20** Face Off  
**20:10** Face Off  
**21:00** The Mummy  
**23:10** Anacondas: The Hunt For The Blood Orchid

**00:40** Lethal Weapon  
**01:30** S.W.A.T.  
**02:20** American Crime  
**03:20** The Night Shift  
**04:10** APB  
**05:00** Good Morning America  
**07:00** The View  
**07:45** The Chew  
**08:30** Supergirl  
**09:20** The Night Shift  
**10:10** APB  
**11:00** Time After Time  
**11:45** Lethal Weapon

**00:00** The Knick  
**01:00** Girls  
**01:30** Girls  
**02:00** Snowfall  
**03:00** Michelle Wolf: Nice Lady  
**04:00** Mr. Robot  
**05:00** Plastic Disasters  
**06:05** Path To War  
**08:50** Into The Storm  
**10:30** Hard Times: Lost On Long Island  
**11:30** Empire Falls: Part I  
**13:20** Empire Falls: Part II  
**14:45** Tsunami: The Aftermath (Part 1)  
**16:25** Tsunami: The Aftermath (Part 2)  
**18:00** From The Earth To The Moon  
**19:00** Beware The Slenderman  
**21:00** Chance  
**22:00** Berlin Station  
**23:00** Jerrod Carmichael: Love At The Store

**00:00** Married At First Sight  
**01:00** Married At First Sight  
**02:00** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**02:30** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**03:00** Fashion StartUp  
**04:00** Project Accessory  
**05:00** Fashion Star  
**06:00** Married At First Sight  
**07:00** Married At First Sight  
**08:00** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**08:30** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**09:00** Fashion StartUp  
**10:00** Project Accessory  
**11:00** Fashion Star  
**12:00** Married At First Sight  
**13:00** Married At First Sight  
**14:00** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**14:30** Mom vs. Matchmaker  
**15:00** Fashion StartUp  
**16:00** Project Accessory  
**17:00** Mistresses  
**18:00** Project Runway  
**19:00** Project Runway  
**20:00** Making Mr. Right  
**21:00** Grey's Anatomy  
**22:00** Grey's Anatomy  
**23:00** Grey's Anatomy

**00:00** Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy  
**00:30** Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy  
**01:00** Private Chef  
**01:30** Private Chef  
**02:00** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**02:30** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**03:00** Man Fire Food  
**03:30** Man Fire Food  
**04:00** Chopped  
**05:00** Guy's Grocery Games  
**06:00** Barefoot Contessa  
**06:25** Barefoot Contessa  
**06:50** Bake With Anna Olson  
**07:15** The Kitchen  
**08:05** The Pioneer Woman  
**08:30** The Pioneer Woman  
**08:55** Siba's Table  
**09:25** Siba's Table  
**09:55** Bake With Anna Olson  
**10:25** Bake With Anna Olson  
**10:55** The Kitchen  
**11:45** Cooking For Real  
**12:10** The Pioneer Woman  
**12:35** The Pioneer Woman  
**13:00** Siba's Table  
**13:30** Siba's Table  
**14:00** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**14:30** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**15:00** Chopped  
**16:00** The Kitchen  
**17:00** Bake With Anna Olson  
**17:30** Bake With Anna Olson  
**18:00** Chopped  
**19:00** Holiday Baking Championship  
**20:00** Extreme Cake Wars  
**21:00** Paul Hollywood - City Bakes  
**22:00** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**22:30** Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
**23:00** Chopped

**00:00** Island Life  
**00:30** Island Life  
**01:00** Renovation Raiders  
**02:00** Beachfront Bargain Hunt  
**02:30** Island Life  
**03:00** Caribbean Life  
**03:30** Caribbean Life  
**04:00** Island Life  
**04:30** Island Life  
**05:00** Caribbean Life  
**05:30** Hawaii Life  
**06:00** Extreme Homes  
**07:00** House Hunters  
**07:30** House Hunters  
**08:00** House Hunters  
**08:30** House Hunters

**00:25** Holby City  
**01:20** Bad Move  
**01:55** Uncle  
**02:20** Mum  
**02:50** Last Tango In Halifax  
**03:45** Call The Midwife: Christmas Special 2015  
**04:25** EastEnders  
**04:55** Doctors  
**05:30** Bad Move

**00:30** Idiotsitter  
**00:55** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**01:20** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**01:45** Graves  
**02:15** Chappelle's Show  
**02:40** Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
**03:00** The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
**03:25** Idiotsitter  
**03:50** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**04:15** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**04:40** Workaholics  
**05:05** Workaholics  
**05:30** Workaholics  
**05:55** Workaholics  
**06:20** Workaholics  
**06:50** I Live With Models  
**09:20** Punk'd (Bet)  
**09:45** Important Things With Demetri Martin  
**10:10** Important Things With Demetri Martin  
**10:35** Important Things With Demetri Martin  
**11:00** Kroll Show  
**11:25** Kroll Show  
**11:50** Kroll Show  
**12:15** Kroll Show  
**12:40** Kroll Show  
**13:05** Disaster Date  
**13:30** Disaster Date  
**13:55** The Dude Perfect Show  
**14:20** The Dude Perfect Show  
**14:45** Ridiculousness Arabia  
**16:00** Important Things With Demetri Martin  
**16:25** Important Things With Demetri Martin  
**16:50** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**17:15** Lip Sync Battle UK  
**17:40** Friends  
**19:45** Detroiters  
**20:07** Workaholics  
**20:30** Graves  
**21:00** The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
**21:30** South Park  
**22:00** Amy Schumer-Mark Normand: Don't Be Yourself  
**22:50** Comedy Central Roast Of Charlie Sheen



## TV Listings

06:00 EastEnders  
06:30 Casualty  
07:25 Holby City  
08:15 Doctors  
08:50 Doctors  
09:20 Doctors  
09:50 Doctors  
10:25 Doctors  
10:55 Casualty  
11:50 Holby City  
12:45 EastEnders  
13:20 EastEnders  
13:50 EastEnders  
14:20 EastEnders  
14:55 Casualty  
15:50 Doctors  
16:20 Doctors  
16:55 Doctors  
17:30 Doctors  
18:00 Doctors  
18:35 Casualty  
19:30 The Detectives  
20:00 Poldark  
21:00 Poldark  
22:00 Line Of Duty  
22:55 War And Peace  
23:50 Doctors

14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?  
15:10 The Chase  
16:00 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
17:00 5 Star Family Reunion  
17:50 Murdoch Mysteries  
18:45 Emmerdale  
19:15 Emmerdale  
19:45 Coronation Street  
20:10 The Chase  
21:00 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
22:00 5 Star Family Reunion  
22:50 Emmerdale  
23:15 Emmerdale  
23:40 Coronation Street



00:50 Untamed & Uncut  
01:45 Treehouse Masters  
02:40 Cats 101  
03:35 Meet The Orangutans  
04:00 Meet The Orangutans  
04:25 Whale Wars  
05:15 Whale Wars  
06:02 Deadly Islands  
06:49 Untamed & Uncut  
07:36 Orangutan Island  
08:00 Orangutan Island  
08:25 Meet The Orangutans  
08:50 Meet The Orangutans  
09:15 Treehouse Masters  
10:10 Cats 101  
11:05 Deadly Islands  
12:00 Meet The Orangutans  
12:28 Meet The Orangutans  
12:55 Whale Wars  
13:50 Whale Wars  
14:45 Cats 101  
15:40 Deadly Islands  
16:35 Untamed & Uncut  
17:30 Treehouse Masters  
18:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger  
19:20 Wildest Africa  
20:15 Cats 101  
21:10 Shamwari: A Wild Life  
21:38 Shamwari: A Wild Life  
22:05 Keeping Up With The Kruger  
23:00 Wildest Africa  
23:55 Deadly Islands



00:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
01:00 The First 48  
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos  
03:00 It Takes A Killer  
03:30 It Takes A Killer  
04:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
05:00 The First 48  
06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos  
07:00 Homicide Hunter  
08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia  
09:00 It Takes A Killer  
09:30 It Takes A Killer  
10:00 Homicide Hunter  
11:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
12:00 Escaping Polygamy  
13:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath

14:00 It Takes A Killer  
14:30 It Takes A Killer  
15:00 Homicide Hunter  
16:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
17:00 The First 48  
18:00 It Takes A Killer  
18:30 It Takes A Killer  
19:00 Homicide Hunter  
20:00 Homicide Hunter  
21:00 Homicide Hunter  
22:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
23:00 When Life Means Life  
00:05 Origins  
00:30 Destroyed In Seconds  
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds  
01:20 Weather Gone Viral  
02:10 Bermuda Triangle Exposed  
03:00 Ultimate Survival  
03:50 Destroyed In Seconds  
04:15 Destroyed In Seconds  
04:40 How It's Made  
05:05 How It's Made  
05:30 Origins  
05:55 Origins  
06:20 Nextworld  
07:00 Destroyed In Seconds

07:25 Destroyed In Seconds  
07:50 Origins  
08:15 Origins  
08:40 How It's Made  
09:05 How It's Made  
09:30 Nextworld  
10:20 Ultimate Survival  
11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
12:00 Deception With Keith Barry  
12:50 How It's Made  
13:15 How It's Made  
13:40 Nextworld  
14:30 Destroyed In Seconds  
14:55 Destroyed In Seconds  
15:20 Origins  
15:45 Origins  
16:10 Ultimate Survival  
17:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
17:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
17:50 Troy  
18:40 Nextworld  
19:30 How It's Made  
19:55 How It's Made  
20:20 Destroyed In Seconds  
20:45 Destroyed In Seconds  
21:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
21:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
22:00 Troy  
22:50 Ultimate Survival  
23:40 Origins



00:50 Guilty Rich  
01:45 Hollywood Horror Story: People Magazine...  
02:40 Murder By Numbers  
03:35 Reasonable Doubt  
04:30 Guilty Rich  
05:25 The Locator  
05:50 The Locator  
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It  
07:10 Swamp Murders  
08:00 The Locator  
08:25 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall  
09:15 The Locator  
09:40 The Locator  
10:10 Swamp Murders  
11:05 Shadow Of Doubt  
12:00 Evil Stepmothers  
12:55 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall  
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
14:45 Swamp Murders  
15:40 Shadow Of Doubt  
16:35 The Perfect Murder  
17:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall  
18:25 The Locator  
18:50 The Locator  
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It  
20:15 Swamp Murders  
21:10 Shadow Of Doubt  
22:05 Murder Calls  
23:00 American Monster  
23:55 I Speak For The Dead



00:20 Street Outlaws  
01:05 Finding Escobar's Millions  
01:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island  
02:35 The Wheel: Survival Games  
03:20 Diesel Brothers  
04:05 Deadliest Catch  
04:50 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
05:35 How Do They Do It?  
06:00 Strip The City  
06:45 Boy To Man  
07:30 How Do They Do It?  
07:53 How Do They Do It?  
08:15 Boy To Man  
09:00 Gold Divers  
09:45 Strip The City  
10:30 Auction Kings  
11:00 Auction Kings  
11:25 How Do They Do It?  
11:50 How Do They Do It?  
12:17 Auction Kings  
12:47 Fast N' Loud  
13:37 Fast N' Loud  
14:27 Misfit Garage  
15:17 Street Customs 2008  
16:02 Street Customs 2008

16:47 Street Customs 2008  
17:32 Fast N' Loud  
18:22 Fast N' Loud  
19:12 Garage Gold  
19:42 Garage Gold  
20:10 Gold Rush  
21:00 Street Outlaws  
21:50 Garage Rehab  
22:40 Misfit Garage  
23:30 Gold Rush



00:00 Million Dollar Genius  
01:00 Ultimate Guide To The...  
02:00 Clash Of Warriors  
03:00 Missing In Alaska  
03:50 Ancient Aliens  
04:40 Decoding The Past  
05:30 Million Dollar Genius  
06:20 Ultimate Guide To The...  
07:10 The Universe  
08:00 Clash Of Warriors  
09:00 Missing In Alaska  
10:00 Ancient Aliens  
11:00 Decoding The Past  
12:00 Million Dollar Genius  
13:00 Ultimate Guide To The...  
14:00 Clash Of Warriors  
15:00 Missing In Alaska  
16:00 Ancient Aliens  
17:00 Decoding The Past  
18:00 The Universe  
19:00 Ultimate Guide To The...  
20:00 Clash Of Warriors  
21:00 Missing In Alaska  
22:00 Ancient Aliens  
23:00 Cowboys & Outlaws



00:21 Ultimate Wheels  
01:11 American Pickers  
02:00 Swamp People  
02:50 Counting Cars  
03:15 American Pickers  
04:05 Time Team  
05:00 Counting Cars  
05:25 Counting Cars  
06:00 Aussie Pickers  
06:50 Aussie Pickers  
07:40 Ultimate Wheels  
08:30 Hunting Hitler  
09:20 Hunting Hitler  
10:10 Hunting Hitler  
11:00 Aussie Pickers  
11:50 Aussie Pickers  
12:40 Alone: Lost And Found  
13:30 Pawn Stars South Africa  
13:55 Pawn Stars South Africa  
14:20 Ice Road Truckers  
15:10 Ice Road Truckers  
16:00 Ice Road Truckers  
16:50 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle  
17:40 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle  
18:30 Ultimate Wheels  
19:20 Cars That Made America  
21:00 The Warfighters  
21:50 New Age Of Terror  
23:30 Hunting Hitler



00:15 Lee Chan's World Food Tour  
00:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour  
01:10 Rustic Adventures Italy  
01:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
02:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
02:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea  
03:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
04:25 What's For Sale?  
04:50 What's For Sale?  
05:20 Stepping Out  
05:45 Stepping Out  
06:15 Bad Trip  
07:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
07:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
08:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The

Sea  
09:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
09:55 What's For Sale?  
10:20 What's For Sale?  
10:50 Stepping Out  
11:15 Stepping Out  
11:45 Bad Trip  
12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
13:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
13:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea  
14:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
15:25 What's For Sale?  
15:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia  
16:20 Stepping Out  
16:45 Stepping Out  
17:15 Bad Trip  
18:10 Bad Trip  
19:05 What's For Sale?  
19:30 Cesar's Recruit: Asia  
20:00 Stepping Out  
20:30 Stepping Out  
21:00 Bad Trip  
22:00 Bad Trip  
22:55 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
23:20 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet  
23:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea



00:10 Straits Dreams  
01:00 Supercar Megabuild  
02:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5  
03:00 Science Of Stupid  
03:30 Science Of Stupid  
04:00 Straits Dreams  
05:00 Crowd Control  
05:30 Crowd Control  
06:00 Taiwan: Tropic Of Extremes  
07:00 Facing...  
08:00 Seconds From Disaster  
09:00 Crowd Control  
09:30 Crowd Control  
10:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5  
11:00 Hard Time  
12:00 Brain Games  
12:30 How To Win At Everything  
13:00 Supercar Megabuild  
14:00 Seconds From Disaster  
15:00 Facing...  
16:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5  
17:00 Hard Time  
18:00 The Long Road Home  
19:00 No Man Left Behind  
20:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5  
20:50 Hard Time  
21:40 The Long Road Home  
22:30 No Man Left Behind  
23:20 Brain Games  
23:45 How To Win At Everything



00:20 Hyena Queen  
01:10 Jobs That Bite!  
02:00 Savage Island Giants  
02:50 Wild 24  
03:45 Wild Case Files  
04:40 Photo Ark  
05:35 Savage Island Giants  
06:30 Wild 24  
07:25 Wild Case Files  
08:20 Photo Ark  
09:15 Snakes In The City  
10:10 Nature's Greatest Talents  
11:05 The Miracle Cheetah  
12:00 Shark Men  
12:55 Croc Inside Out  
13:50 Animal Fight Club 4.5  
14:45 Cameramen Who Dare  
15:40 Photo Ark  
16:35 Snake City Compilations  
17:30 Wild 24  
18:25 1000 Days For The Planet  
19:20 Cameramen Who Dare  
20:10 Photo Ark  
21:00 Snake City Compilations  
21:50 Wild 24  
22:40 1000 Days For The Planet  
23:30 Shark Men



00:40 Mythbusters  
01:30 How Do They Do It?  
01:55 Food Factory USA  
02:20 Street Science  
02:45 Street Science  
03:10 Space Pioneer  
04:00 Prototype This  
04:48 Mythbusters  
05:36 How Do They Do It?  
06:00 Food Factory USA  
06:24 Street Science  
06:48 Street Science  
07:12 Space Pioneer  
08:00 How Do They Do It?  
08:26 Prototype This  
09:14 Mythbusters  
10:02 Space Pioneer  
10:50 How Do They Do It?  
11:14 Food Factory USA  
11:38 Street Science  
12:02 Street Science  
12:26 Prototype This  
13:14 Mythbusters  
14:02 How Do They Do It?  
14:26 Food Factory USA  
14:50 Space Pioneer  
15:38 Prototype This  
16:26 Street Science  
16:50 Street Science  
17:14 Mythbusters  
18:02 Space Pioneer  
18:50 Prototype This  
19:40 Mythbusters  
20:30 How The Universe Works  
21:20 How Do They Do It?  
21:45 Food Factory USA  
22:10 Space Pioneer  
23:00 How The Universe Works  
23:50 Prototype This



05:00 Bali  
05:15 Chuck And Friends  
05:40 Om Nom Stories  
05:50 Kids Crafting  
05:55 Boj  
06:10 Lucky Fred  
06:25 Thomas And Friends  
06:40 Chirp  
06:55 My Little Pony  
07:20 Angelina Ballerina  
07:35 Sandra, The Fairytale Detective  
07:50 Playdate  
08:00 Barney And Friends  
08:30 64 Zoo Lane  
08:45 Transformers: Rescue Bots  
09:10 Om Nom Stories  
09:20 Kids Crafting  
09:25 Littlest Pet Shop  
09:50 Franny's Feet  
10:15 Mouk  
10:30 Boj  
10:45 Kit 'n' Kate  
10:55 What's The Big Idea?  
11:00 Transformers: Rescue Bots  
11:25 Bali  
11:40 My Little Pony  
12:05 Lucky Fred  
12:20 Thomas And Friends  
12:35 Angelina Ballerina  
12:50 Transformers: Rescue Bots  
13:15 Barney And Friends  
13:45 64 Zoo Lane  
14:00 Chirp  
14:15 What's The Big Idea?  
14:25 Kit 'n' Kate  
14:30 Playdate  
14:40 Franny's Feet  
15:05 Thomas And Friends  
15:20 Mouk  
15:35 Boj  
15:50 Sandra, The Fairytale Detective  
16:05 Littlest Pet Shop  
16:30 My Little Pony  
16:55 Looped  
17:10 Barney And Friends  
17:40 Angelina Ballerina  
17:55 Lucky Fred  
18:10 Qumi Qumi  
18:25 Transformers: Rescue Bots  
18:50 What's The Big Idea?  
19:00 Bali  
19:15 Kit 'n' Kate  
19:25 Littlest Pet Shop



00:20 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
00:42 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
01:05 90 Day Fianc?: Happily Ever After?  
01:50 Say Yes To The Dress  
02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?  
03:20 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm  
04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras  
04:50 Ultimate Shopper  
05:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
06:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints  
06:45 Outdaughters: Busby Quints  
07:30 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm  
08:15 Outdaughters: Busby Quints  
09:00 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
09:25 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners  
10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners  
10:55 Love, Lust Or Run  
11:17 Love, Lust Or Run  
11:40 Love, Lust Or Run  
12:02 Love, Lust Or Run  
12:25 Love, Lust Or Run  
12:47 Love, Lust Or Run  
13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?  
13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?  
14:40 Cake Boss  
15:02 Cake Boss  
15:25 Cake Boss  
15:47 Cake Boss  
16:10 Cake Boss  
16:35 Cake Boss  
17:00 Little And Looking For Love  
17:50 Meet The Putmans  
18:50 Outdaughters: Busby Quints  
19:40 Cake Boss  
20:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
20:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK  
21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints  
21:50 Sister Wives  
22:40 My Giant Life  
23:30 Return To Amish



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?  
01:00 Emmerdale  
01:30 Coronation Street  
02:00 Coronation Street  
02:30 The Chase  
03:25 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
04:50 Gino's Hidden Italy  
05:15 Murdoch Mysteries  
06:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?  
07:05 The Chase  
08:00 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
09:10 Catchphrase  
10:05 Murdoch Mysteries  
10:55 Who's Doing The Dishes?  
11:50 The Chase  
12:45 Emmerdale  
13:15 Emmerdale  
13:45 Coronation Street

## Stars

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

You may have some heavy responsibility today. However, this is a good time for you to show off your capabilities—you are in a high achievement mode. You may find that you enjoy your job or the responsibility of your position more than usual. You are empowered with a clear and inquisitive mind. You will be discussing ideas with co-workers and higher-ups—this can be most rewarding. New insights or breakthroughs are possible with authorities or someone older. Communal activities, which take place after work, should be both well-attended and successful.

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

Your ability to truly understand and have a handle on things of a conceptual and spiritual nature certainly won't hurt your popularity in a social situation. Others appreciate the time that you take to listen or share in conversations. Take a long hard look at your own personal situation. Those around you could come to you for your observant, psychological viewpoint and understanding. A possibility of some changes in your environment is at hand. Getting down to the basics and making sure that everything around you is taken care of could be where your emotional orientation is concentrated now.

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

You could be tempted to let office gossip interfere with the normal flow of business today. This is an excellent time to emphasize practicality and realism in any endeavor in which you are engaged. It is also important to effectively communicate your ideas to co-workers and those who work under you. Ideas and technologies that change the way people live—not just one person, but many—are a major new focus in your life now. Your powers of creativity are great—placing problem-solving difficulties in the past. You are particularly witty in social surroundings and this evening you make for stimulating company.

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

You gain profound insights and you want to improve the world. Be very clear in all the things you do and say. Also, make sure you have complete information before gambling with an investment. You may experience abrupt changes in fortune—in a relatively short period of time—good or bad. You may find yourself in the pursuit of recognition at this time. This could bring into focus the practical, the successful and the sensible—whatever it takes to get you ahead in the long run. Your ambition will increase and you will take a more serious approach at taking better care of yourself.

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

An outgoing and very expressive cycle of experience has begun. You may have a mad desire to do nothing but communicate and exchange ideas today. You could shoot the breeze with someone for hours, if given the opportunity. There could be a temptation, however, to play devil's advocate or analyze things to death. Just enjoy the interactions and give the other guy a chance. Also, if too much time is taken up in conversation during your work time today, higher-ups could be unhappy. You face many responsibilities with loved ones this evening.

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

A kind of romantic dreaming characterizes your approach to life now. This could mean a longing for a soul mate or a yearning to save the world—it could mean carrying a torch as well. Secret loves, lost loves—all you need is love. There could be a more dynamic and outgoing quality to your way of life now. Beating others in the heat of competition and taking on a leadership role may mean more to you now than in the past. Second best just isn't good enough. You have plans and the coming year will show a great deal of success.

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

In the workplace, conference calls and other means of communication that will help you be part of some decision-making action have positive results. Later, this afternoon, you are enthusiastic in making new friends and becoming involved in some new activity. Now is the time for showing off your talents. In the past, you may have been encouraging others to be expressive but for now, it is your turn to enjoy the art of expressing yourself. Perhaps a creative writing course or a dancing contest is in order.

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

This time period in the workplace may open up several opportunities for you to involve yourself with some highly ambitious projects. The accent is on charisma at this time. Manners and respectful actions will bring many listeners to your attention. You will have the co-workers you need to help you with the unexpected workload. Persistent follow-through will find you and your teammates completing what you thought were impossible. If you cannot get yourself invited to some kind of a social function later this evening, then do not hesitate to create one—you should shine.

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

This is a good time to lead the way in a particular project. Your originality is at a high—you are ready to apply those creative ideas to the work in front of you now. If you give your best effort considerable success will follow. Everything is moving in your direction to put together a great sales package or some presentation package. What a day to make a deal favorable for any business, financial or legal ventures! Your mind is alert—your objectives are clear. Your cheerful confidence will help you to win your way. At this time, athletic energy is also high.

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

You will find that pleasant surroundings in the workplace or at home make for good vibrations. You could be in the limelight, especially with superiors or in relation to your work. Bigger and better is the theme when it comes to creativity, romance and self-expression now. This is a time when taking chances in these areas of your life pays off beyond your wildest imagination. Your emotions in particular, or the feelings of those around you, are very clear at this time. Others should find it easy to understand how you feel and will lend advice—if that is what you need.

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

A very powerful need for nurturing is a larger-than-life issue just now. You could be feeling the need to care for other people or to have them care for you. This could be on a public rather than a private level—service or health care oriented. Your needs are very strong and you feel the needs of others, as well. Being able to bring the two together in harmony is what will make the day move along smoothly. This could be political and will have a positive outcome because of your attention. Others will find you most sensitive and intuitive.

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

It may come as a big surprise for you to be given some extra support or recognition—perhaps in relation to your work. Some kind of a little boost will definitely be yours now. You should be feeling as though those around you are in touch and harmony with you at this time. You will not want for support—it will be there when you need it. Mentally, you are very perceptive, with sharp ideas and clear thoughts. It should be an excellent time to make decisions and to take care of any mental task. Great practical job-related thoughts and ideas will be yours today.

## COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	Sao Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

# Indonesia's asbestos 'time bomb'

**JAKARTA:** The symptoms were mild and seemingly innocuous at first: mostly coughing and fatigue. But it wasn't long before Sriyono got a grim diagnosis—he had asbestosis—an incurable scarring of the lungs that often leads to cancer. It was caused by decades of inhaling asbestos fibers at the factory where the 44-year-old still works outside the sprawling capital Jakarta. "There was a feeling of

shock," said the rail-thin Sriyono, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

"There was no information telling us that asbestos could cause diseases like cancer when I got into the industry," he said. The soft-spoken father of three is the first person to win compensation for exposure to asbestos in Southeast Asia's biggest economy—one of the world's top consumers of a

toxic material blamed for more than 100,000 annual deaths globally. He was awarded 57 million rupiah (\$4,200) by the government this year, and he may not be the last: a local NGO is pushing for compensation in 15 similar cases.

Asbestos fibers that lodge in the lungs can cause diseases including lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis, according to the World Health Organi-

zation (WHO). Banned in more than 60 countries, including all members of the EU, the carcinogenic material is still widely used in developing countries for construction, textiles, brake pads and cheap insulation. Canada, once the world's top producer of asbestos, announced a ban last year, but some other countries, including Russia and India, have resisted global efforts to outlaw it. —AFP

**CLINIC  
PAGE**



**Kuwait Times**  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

**Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem**  
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Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Air Slovakia	22434940
Olympic Airways	22420002/9
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
Reservation	22433388
British Airways	22425635

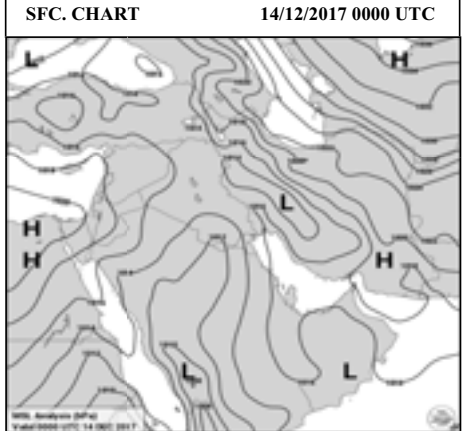
**STATE OF KUWAIT**  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817  
Fax: (+965) 24348714  
[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)

**Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours**

**BY DAY:** Warm with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 14/12/2017 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	11 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	05 °C		
ABDALY	24 °C	06 °C		
BUBYAN	19 °C	05 °C		
JAHRA	22 °C	08 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	09 °C		
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	20 °C	10 °C		
NUWAISIB	23 °C	09 °C		
WAFRA	23 °C	07 °C		
SALMY	23 °C	06 °C		

**4 DAYS FORECAST**

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/15	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	22 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h
Saturday	12/16	Warm	22 °C	07 °C	NE-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	12/17	Warm	24 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Monday	12/18	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	23 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h

  
**PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY**

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan	Fahaheel Makka St	23915883
	Abu Halaifa	Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd	23715414
	Danat Al-Sultan	Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1	24575518
	Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 92	24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967

**PRAYER TIMES**

Fajr	05:10
Sunrise	06:34
Zuhr	11:43
Asr	14:32
Sunset	16:51
Isha	18:14

**RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT**

MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	56 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	W 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Business

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017

**39** Central Asia yet to adjust to cheaper oil**40** ECB keeps policy unchanged, leaving money taps wide open**41** Philippines passes major tax reform law

HONG KONG: This picture shows a section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB) still under construction in Hong Kong.—AFP

# Marvel or mishap? Hong Kong's troubled mega bridge

## Bridge to boost business, cut travel time

**HONG KONG:** Billed as the world's longest sea bridge connecting Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China, it has been touted by supporters as an engineering wonder. But critics say the multi-billion dollar infrastructure mega-project is politically driven and a costly white elephant. Dogged by delays, budget overruns, accusations of corruption and the deaths of construction workers, there is little prospect it will open by the end of 2017 as hoped.

Building started in 2009 on the 55-kilometre crossing, which includes a snaking road bridge and underwater tunnel, linking Hong Kong's Lantau island to the southern mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai and the gambling enclave of Macau, across the waters of the Pearl River Estuary. Officials say it will boost business and cut travel time, but opponents in Hong Kong see it as another attempt by Beijing to tighten its grip on the semi-autonomous city.

Hong Kong enjoys rights unseen over the border but challenges from young pro-democracy activists and the emergence of a fledgling independence movement have riled Chinese authorities, who have warned they will not tolerate threats to China's sovereignty. The Chinese government is "trying to blur the boundaries between Hong Kong and the other parts of the mainland", said pro-democracy lawmaker Kwok Ka-ki, who sits on the legislature's transport panel. With its dire housing shortage and growing wealth gap there are also questions over whether the bridge is a good use of the Hong Kong government's money—all three jurisdictions pay a portion of the costs. The total price tag for the project, which includes artificial islands, link roads and new border-crossing facilities, is unclear but some estimates run to over 100 billion yuan. "Hong Kong doesn't really need it—we've got air, land and sea connections to the main-

land," said pro-democracy lawmaker Claudia Mo, also on the transport panel. "To Beijing it's one big gigantic symbol to link Hong Kong to the mainland."

### Loyalty test

Officials cast the bridge as part of the Greater Bay Area project to create an economic hub linking nine southern mainland cities to Hong Kong and Macau, also a semi-autonomous Chinese territory. Pro-Beijing Hong Kong lawmaker Regina Ip says the bridge will help connections all the way to Southeast Asia, as part of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative to link with Africa, Asia and Europe through a network of ports, railways, roads and industrial parks. "Although we have a boundary, we are still part of China and economic integration has been happening in a market-driven way for the past few decades," Ip said of Hong Kong's position.

"We cannot go against this trend."

However, some analysts including commentator Stephen Vines see the billions being spent on the bridge and other infrastructure links, including a new high-speed rail connection, as predominantly a political calculation—not only by the Chinese central government, but also by local authorities. "The political leadership in Hong Kong wants to prove its loyalty to the leadership in Beijing," Vines said. Ip said she expects the bridge crossing to open in the first quarter of 2018. Hong Kong's highways department said it could not give a time frame.

### View from the ground

Officials put the current cost overrun of the main bridge section at 10 billion yuan, partly driven by engineering challenges, which have included problems with the drifting of reclaimed land.—AFP

## Business

# European stocks, euro dip as central banks dominate

## Pound, euro, await BoE, ECB decisions

LONDON: European shares and the euro dipped yesterday as cautious comments on inflation from the US Federal Reserve gave investors pause before a series of central bank decisions in Europe. The European Central Bank and the Bank of England are due to announce their final policy decisions of the year later in the day, with both expected to keep benchmark rates on hold. Weakness in bank stocks contributed to a downbeat open in Europe, as the pan-European STOXX index fell almost 0.2 percent.

The financial sector caught the cold from US and Asian trading, which suffered from a less hawkish than expected tone from the Fed after it raised rates as expected on Wednesday and stuck to a projection for three hikes next year. Banks were the worst-performing sector in Europe as cautious comments from Fed Chair Janet Yellen on persistently low inflation rattled investors. Surveys of purchasing managers indexes from Germany and the euro zone came in stronger than expected, but failed to boost the euro, which fell 0.1 percent in morning trade.

In a session packed with central bank decisions, the Norwegian crown rose over 1 percent against both the dollar and the euro after the central bank in Oslo brought forward its forecast for when rates might rise. The Swiss franc fell against the dollar and the euro after the Swiss National Bank maintained its ultra-loose monetary policy stance and said the local currency re-

mained "highly valued". Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was largely unchanged, still nursing a 0.8 percent loss in the wake of the Fed's decision. The Fed projected inflation to remain shy of its goal for another year, giving policymakers little reason to accelerate the expected pace of rate increases. "The make-up of the Federal Reserve is going to change a lot in the next few months and with that we can't necessarily put too much weight behind the statement last night," said David Madden, CMC markets analyst in London.

### Asian stocks bounce

Asian stocks rose yesterday after the Fed decision, and the MSCI World Index, which tracks stocks in 47 countries, was up 0.1 percent. China's central bank also raised rates, though marginally. While Chinese shares slipped, the wider impact was limited. "The key takeaway from the Fed meeting was the degree of concern shown towards low inflation, which likely led to two dissenting votes," said Junichi Ishikawa, senior FX strategist at IG Securities in Tokyo.

"The 10-year Treasury yield fell sharply on the Fed's stance and lackluster US CPI, which shows that the markets don't necessarily see the Fed hiking rates three times in 2018." After dropping overnight, the 10-year Treasury yield crawled up to 2.3761 percent. The Fed's less hawkish statements sup-

### Asian stocks rise



NEW YORK: Traders and financial professionals work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) ahead of the closing bell in New York City. —AFP

ported MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan, but by afternoon its gain had been pared to 0.15 percent.

China's yuan was firmer and Shanghai shares were lower after the People's Bank of China hiked the reverse repo rate and the one-year medium-term lending facility (MLF) rate by 5 basis points as Beijing seeks to prevent destabilizing capital outflows without hurting economic growth. South Korea's KOSPI climbed 0.5 percent. Other gainers included equities from Taiwan, Thailand and

Malaysia. Japan's Nikkei lost 0.3 percent, hurt by dollar weakness after the Fed decision.

In commodities, US crude futures rose 0.15 percent to \$56.61 per barrel, lifted by the weaker dollar after two days of losses. Brent advanced 0.3 percent to \$62.63 per barrel. Spot gold was flat after rising to a one-week high of \$1,259.11 an ounce. Copper and nickel also advanced. A lower dollar generally makes dollar-priced commodities such as oil, gold and industrial metals cheaper for non-US investors, boosting demand.—Reuters

## With Fed out of way, emerging markets await Turkish cbank

LONDON: Emerging equities rose to a near two-week high yesterday after the US Fed delivered a widely-expected rate rise but remained cautious on the inflation outlook, while Turkey's lira slipped before a central bank meeting. MSCI's benchmark emerging equities index gained 0.2 percent after the Federal Reserve raised rates by a quarter percent but said weakness in inflation remained a concern.

The average yield spread of emerging dollar debt over US Treasuries narrowed to 287 basis points (bps), off a two-week high of 291 bps. "We would need to see an incredible pickup in inflation and rate hikes to impact emerging markets but at present there is no basis for such an assumption (that there would be pick up in pace of rate hikes)," said Esther Reichelt, a strategist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. "Generally, markets are correct to be calm."

The dollar weakened against a basket of currencies and US yields fell, but some emerging currencies struggled nonetheless to make gains as investors awaited central bank decisions. The most closely-eyed is Turkey, where a Reuters poll predicted the bank to raise its late liquidity window rate by 100 bps to combat inflation at 14-year high, even though President Tayyip Erdogan opposes higher rates. The lira eased 0.5 percent, slipping off one-month highs. It has firmed recently on the back of strong economic growth and rate rise expectations.

"If they don't deliver we definitely see a higher risk for the lira to depreciate," Reichelt said. "They need to prove to the market they are ready to



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a stock quotation board flashing the Nikkei 225 key index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. —AFP

act despite the political pressure, otherwise markets will lose all trust in the central bank." She added that if the bank failed to meet market expectations, the lira could go into a "depreciation spiral", breaching the key 4 (per dollar) mark. Earlier, China's yuan hit two-week highs and stocks fell 0.6 percent after the central bank raised money market rates to prevent destabilizing capital outflows.

Ten-year Chinese bond yields fell 2-3 basis points as some had expected a bigger move, a trader said. The South African rand weakened 0.4 percent. While data showed the current account deficit narrowing slightly, politics weighed, with a judge instructing President Jacob Zuma to set up a judicial inquiry into state influence-peddling.—Reuters

## Saudi king orders \$19bn stimulus for private sector

RIYADH: Saudi King Salman yesterday issued a decree allocating 72 billion riyals of stimulus funds to support the Saudi private sector. The package aims to boost the role of the private sector in light of economic reforms to diversify the Saudi economy away from oil following a slump in crude prices. The funds will be used to finance 16 initiatives, the largest of which earmarks \$5.7 billion to provide subsidized housing loans to citizens, according to the official news agency SPA.

The decree states that \$1.33 billion will be used as a first installment for the newly established exports promotion fund which will eventually have capital of \$8 billion. More than \$2.6 billion will be used to support projects and \$3.7 billion will be allocated to support construction technology, the decree said. The remaining funds will be spent on a string of smaller projects carried out by the private sector with the aim of strengthening the competitiveness of the Saudi economy.—AFP

## Business

# Central Asia yet to adjust to cheaper oil

## Chinese FDI could help the region

**WASHINGTON:** Countries across energy-rich Central Asia are a long way from readjusting to lower oil prices and will need to carry out large-scale reforms to regain competitiveness, a senior World Bank economist said in an interview. Failure to do so could undermine ruling elites and create serious political risks, said Hans Timmer, chief economist for the Europe and Central Asia region of the World Bank.

"Anxiety among the population... should be taken seriously. Remember the Arab Spring? Or populism in Europe and the United States? Something like that could happen in Central Asia if no adjustments are made," Timmer said by telephone from Astana. Although only Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are energy exporters, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have also benefited from petrodollars, largely thanks to remittances from hundreds of thousands of their citizens working in Russia.

Following the plunge of global oil prices, all five Central Asian states have seen their currencies fall sharply against the dollar and their economic growth significantly slow. "The main challenge (for Central Asian nations) is rebalancing their economies to adjust to the new economic reality of lower oil prices seen since 2014," Timmer said. Other major issues faced

by Central Asia's 70 million inhabitants are adjustments in the neighboring China's economy and global technological changes, he said.

Timmer compared the situation to the early 1990s when the former Soviet republics were plunged into poverty and chaos by the collapse of the Soviet Union and had to reform quickly and under pressure. "I think this risk (of the events of the early 1990s repeating) is there, and everybody has to learn from that experience," he said. "Not transforming is a huge risk."

### Uber for tractors

Economies in the region lost their competitive edge during the oil-fueled boom, while a lot of investment went into sectors producing non-tradable goods such as the construction and property industry, Timmer said. The primary concerns now are government finances - states across Central Asia are borrowing to finance spending - and financial sectors, which are riddled with bad debt. But fundamentally, reforms need to focus on improving the business environment, he added.

"Ultimately, the goal should be creating an environment where new jobs are being created," Timmer said. The region needed to take advantage



**BASRA:** This picture shows the Bin Omar natural gas facility, part of the Basra Gas Company, north of the southern Iraqi port of Basra.—AFP

of all opportunities, he said, for example developing horticulture in Uzbekistan, where farmers need access to credit, a level playing field and help with implementing new technology. Uzbekistan could also benefit from "an Uber-like system" for renting tractors and other agricultural machines, he said. China's evolution into an exporter of foreign direct investment and its "Belt and Road" infrastructure project was another opportunity for the region which, after currency devaluations, can offer cheaper labor than China itself.

### Flexibility

China could also serve as a good example of policy flexibility for the region, which is dominated by autocratic governments where vested interests sometimes stand in the way of change, Timmer said. Asked if deep structural economic reforms were possible without political ones, he said: "It all depends on the extent to which the existing political powers see the urgency and the need to reform." —Reuters

## Investors pour cash into US shale despite questions on returns

**HOUSTON:** Financiers keep pouring cash into the shale oil sector, providing producers with a path to keep US output rising through the middle of the next decade. The United States is on track to deliver up to 80 percent of the world's oil production gains through 2025, the International Energy Agency estimates, increases fueled in part by easy access to capital. Rising US production is undermining OPEC's attempts to curb global supply and boost prices, forcing the oil cartel to continue restraining output through the end of 2018.

Hedge funds and private equity firms have given producers a range of new and traditional financial levers they can pull as needed to keep shale rigs drilling, according to interviews with more than a dozen financiers, advisers and executives. The money continues to flow despite rising pressure from some investors for drillers to prioritize better profit margins over expanded production. Producers holding land in prime fields with oil trapped in shale rock are having little trouble financing their fracking projects, said Buddy Clark, co-chairman of the energy practice group at Haynes Boone law firm in Houston. "If you've got the rocks, you can get the money," he said. The IEA predicts US shale oil output, now about 6.17 million barrels per day (bpd), will rise another 8 million bpd by 2025. That would turn the world's largest oil-consuming nation into a net exporter of oil. The United States already is a net exporter of natural gas.

Through the third quarter of this year, private equity firms have put \$20.26 billion into energy-related deals, 36 percent more than all of last year, according to financial data provider Preqin. Initial stock offerings for US-listed oil and gas firms raised \$2.93 billion this year, up from \$1.52 billion in 2016, according to Thomson Reuters data. Another way to finance drilling

- production hedging, or contracts producers use to lock in prices on future output - also is on the rise this year.

Hedging acts as insurance against price drops, letting producers drill with more certainty they can earn a profit. Forty midsize producers tracked by researcher PetroNerds LLC hedged 45 percent of their production in the third quarter, up from 36.5 percent a year earlier. Those same companies boosted capital spending by nearly two-thirds this year.

### Rising output, spending

In response to investor pressure for better profits, producers are touting efficiencies from newer well designs and their efforts to shed less productive shale acreage as evidence that they can lift returns and output at the same time. A 39 percent increase in crude prices since June also has helped shale producers deliver better returns while boosting spending. ConocoPhillips - which has sold properties in the Canadian oil sands, along with less profitable shale holdings - recently said that its capital budgets from 2018 to 2020 will average \$5.5 billion annually, up from about \$4.5 billion this year, because of higher production and cash flow.

"This is not a supply source that is going away any time soon," said Ryan Lance, Conoco's chief executive, in a recent interview. The rising investment marks a reversal from the period following the 2014 oil price collapse, which triggered scores of oil-firm bankruptcies and caused banks to abruptly pull back on lending to oil and gas producers. In their place, private equity firms, hedge funds and others have added to investments and unleashed new ways to finance drilling. "You've seen this marriage of necessity between private equity and independent producers needing to drill acreage," said Hillary Holmes of Gibson Dunn, a Houston law firm specializing in energy finance. The retreat of banks and other lenders opened "a finance vacuum that we're looking to fill," said Mark Stoner, a partner at Houston private equity fund Bayou City Energy, which has financed about 80 new shale wells since last year.

One innovation that emerged is DrillCos, which allow investors to finance new wells and control their cash flow for a few years until double-digit rates of return are met. Such partnerships have contributed at least \$2 billion to producers since 2015. —Reuters

## Bank of England holds interest rate at 0.5%

**LONDON:** The Bank of England kept its key interest rate at 0.5 percent at its final meeting of the year, it said yesterday while keeping an eye on Britain's Brexit-fueled inflation. The BoE sat tight at the meeting on Wednesday after lifting the rate in November for the first time in a decade, from a record-low 0.25 percent, faced with high inflation that could see the central bank lift borrowing costs further in 2018, according to analysts.

"Our Monetary Policy Committee has voted unanimously to maintain Bank Rate at 0.50 percent," said minutes of the latest regular meeting.

"The committee also voted unanimously to maintain the stock of corporate bond purchases and UK government bond purchases" under the bank's cash stimulus program that is pumping £445 billion (\$597 billion, 505 billion euros) around the economy. —AFP

## Business

# ECB keeps policy unchanged, leaving money taps wide open

## Asset buys set to go until end Sept

**FRANKFURT:** The European Central Bank kept its ultra-easy policy stance unchanged yesterday, promising to hold rates low for an extended period and even maintaining a pledge to provide more stimulus if needed. Six weeks after agreeing to halve asset buys from January, the bank reiterated its commitment to continue bond purchases at least until the end of September, and to keep reinvesting cash from maturing debt until much later to support a rebound in growth and inflation.

Attention now turns to ECB President Mario Draghi's news conference at 1330 GMT, where he will present fresh economic forecasts and may discuss whether hawkish policymakers continued to push for a shift in the bank's guidance on bond buys. Having faced five years of anemic inflation, the ECB has deployed its entire policy arsenal, cutting rates into negative territory, giving banks cheap loans and hovering up bonds, all in the hope of boosting growth and rekindling inflation.

Its work has paid off as the euro zone recovery is now well into its fifth year thanks to nine million new jobs, letting policymakers curb stimulus from next year and raising the prospect that the lavish bond buys it started in early 2015



### Rapid expansion fuels arguments

could finally end. But the economic run is stronger than most have expected. Indeed, the euro zone purchasing managers' index rose to a seven-year high this month, data yesterday showed, while Germany's Ifo institute unveiled surprisingly bullish forecast for the euro zone's biggest economy.

This rapid expansion is fuelling arguments among more conservative policymakers that the ECB is moving too slowly and should be more decisive in signaling the end quantitative easing to preserve its remaining firepower after the crisis tested its limits. Shifting the ECB's message on stimulus may have been made easier by a benign market reaction to the Federal Reserve's third, well telegraphed interest rate hike this year late on Wednesday.

This was a sign that investors were confident enough in the state of the global economy not to fear a continued, albeit very gradual, increase in the cost of borrowing dollars - the currency that underpins much of world trade. Indeed, policy hawks in Frankfurt are likely to have pushed Draghi to keep preparing markets for an end to asset buys sometime next year, arguing for changes in the bank's message to set up a formal decision by mid-year on ending a 2.55 trillion euro (\$3 trillion) bond purchase scheme.



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: This file photo shows the building of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. —AFP

### Forecasts

The first clue to future policy will come from the ECB's new economic projections, which are likely to show better growth for the year ahead and a broadly unchanged or marginally improved inflation path. The key number to watch will be the ECB's initial forecast for 2020 inflation to see whether rising oil prices push the inflation path higher and how far it is from the bank's target of close-to-but-below 2 percent.

Analysts see the figure in the 1.7-1.8 percent range and while the target is intentionally vague, Draghi has said that 1.7 percent is considered a miss so any figure at the bottom of expectations would make it difficult to argue for an exit. But a benign 2020 projection could rekindle the debate about the end of asset buys. In October several influential policymakers argued that the ECB should amend its guidance, cutting the direct link between inflation and bond purchases. —Reuters

## Commonwealth Bank accused of more 'very serious' rule breaches

**SYDNEY:** Australia's financial intelligence agency expanded an anti-money laundering probe into Commonwealth Bank yesterday to include new claims that it failed to adequately monitor suspected terrorist financiers. The lender, the country's largest company by market capitalization, was already facing a civil case by AUSTRAC in August. It alleged the bank engaged in "serious and systemic non-compliance" of anti-money laundering laws involving thousands of transactions.

In its first response, Commonwealth late Wednesday admitted 53,506 breaches, saying it was due to a "systems-related error", but added that it would defend a host of others claims brought against it. "We contest a number of allegations but admit others, including the allegations relating to the late submission of 53,506 threshold transaction reports (TTRs), which were all caused by the same single systems-related error," it said.

The bank is accused of failing to deliver to AUSTRAC on time reports for cash transactions of Aus\$10,000 (US\$7,700) or more at ATMs between November 2012 and September 2015, with a total value of Aus\$624.7 million. The financial giant could face a massive fine, with the matter due in court in March. But the lender said it would defend more than 100 other claims regarding its alleged failure to disclose suspicious transactions on time, or not at all.

Adding to its woes, AUSTRAC filed a further 100 additional alleged contraventions yesterday, which were identified since its earlier charges were made. They include two instances where the bank is accused of failing to inform the regulator of its suspicions relating to the financing of terrorism within the required 24 hours. It is also accused of not reporting 54 suspicious matters either on time, or at all, in relation to accounts and individuals being investigated by police.

"These allegations are very serious and reflect systemic non-compliance over approximately six years," AUSTRAC chief executive Nicole Rose said. The initial AUSTRAC case prompted other regulators to launch inquiries into the embattled bank over its handling of the issue and its organizational culture. A class action has also been filed over non-disclosure issues. —AFP

## Backyard savings clubs on the money amid Zimbabwe cash crisis

**HARARE:** Bank clients wait in a meandering queue at Barclays along First Street in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital - but those wanting to withdraw cash may be on a hopeless mission as often there is no money available. Out in the crowded suburb of Mabvuku, Lynet Sigauke, 41, does not have a bank account, and says she has not felt the effects of cash shortages in the southern African nation. She is a pioneer member of the Shingairai Savings Club formed by a group of local people who circulate hard currency among themselves to avoid the country's liquidity crunch.

"As soon as we sensed that money was going to become a problem, we built our stocks as a savings club through individual contributions," Sigauke said. Anyone borrowing money from the club, including individuals recommended by members, must pay it back in hard cash at an interest rate of 15 percent. Sigauke, who is treasurer of the 30-strong Shingairai club, said members take turns to make contributions of \$300 each into its coffers, to ensure adequate levels of cash.

Savings clubs are not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. The first is thought to have been started in 1963 by a Catholic missionary, Brother F. Waddelove, launching what became known as Zimbabwe's savings movement. In recent years, with the economy in the doldrums and inflation high, the savings societies resurfaced - this time giving citizens precious access to scarce hard currency.

### Way out of poverty

Even economists agree indigenous savings clubs are the way to go as Zimbabweans try to avert the deepening cash deficit. "Without cash at the country's banks, you should expect Zimbabweans to do everything to survive the crisis - and that is why savings clubs have become a big hit," said Kingston Nyakurukwa, an independent economist based in Matabeleland North Province. Thanks to the clubs, many like Sigauke say their lives have changed for the better.

"Before, I was extremely poor - in fact a charity case - but after I became a member of Shingairai Savings Club, I now have a home under construction here in Harare," said Sigauke, who also owns a thriving transport business ferrying children to and from private schools by mini-bus. Like other club members, she was able to borrow money to invest in her own projects to generate income. There are no official statistics about the number of savings societies that have sprung up in Zimbabwe, as scores of them are operating illegally. —Reuters



## Business

# Philippines passes major tax reform law

## Duterte to launch golden age of infrastructure

**MANILA:** The Philippines has passed a tax reform bill at the heart of President Rodrigo Duterte's economic agenda, officials said yesterday, raising levies on coal, cars, soft drinks and cosmetic surgeries to finance the country's crumbling infrastructure. Economists and environmentalists have praised the package, with the Philippines winning a credit rating upgrade this week from Fitch Ratings and green campaigners hailing the higher tax on coal.

Officials said the tax reforms, the most significant revenue-boosting measure introduced since Duterte took office last year, would finance increased spending on infrastructure to ease the cost of doing business. "The tax reform (act) seeks to achieve a simpler, fairer,

and more efficient tax system characterized by lower rates and a broader base, to encourage investment, job creation, and poverty reduction," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said in a statement. The government has warned that bad roads, crowded trains and poor internet speed have hindered the country's competitiveness and threaten to derail efforts to lift millions out of poverty. The key provisions of the bill, which Duterte is expected to sign later this month, in-

cludes a rise in the excise tax on coal, the fuel that runs almost half the country's power plants. The coal tax will increase incrementally to tenfold or 100 pesos (\$1.98) a ton by 2020 according to the version passed in Congress late Wednesday.

The act also significantly raised excise taxes on automobiles, petroleum products including diesel, gasoline and cooking gas, and jacked up mining levies. The effort to raise revenues also

led to a "sweetened beverage tax", an excise tax on "cosmetic procedures, surgeries and body enhancements", and the doubling of tax rates on dollar deposits, capital gains tax and stock transactions. The affected sectors have warned of an inflation spike but Congress has

described the legislation as pro-poor for lowering income tax rates and exempting some small businesses from paying a sales levy.

Duterte has vowed to launch a "golden age of infrastructure," with spending of about \$170 billion for roads, railways and airports during his six-year term. International credit rating agency Fitch had earlier cited the impending passage of the tax reforms as one of the reasons behind its decision to upgrade the Philippines' credit rating

“  
Sweetened  
beverage tax”



MANILA: This general shot shows vehicles stuck in traffic in Manila.—AFP

on Monday.

"We estimate the bill to be net revenue positive, reflecting an expansion of the VAT (value-added tax) base and higher taxes on petroleum products, automobiles and on sugar sweetened

beverages, which would more than offset a lowering of personal income taxes," Fitch said in a statement. Congress this week also passed a 3.767-trillion-peso national budget for 2018, a 12.4-percent increase from last year.—AFP

## Greece strikes against budget cuts, labor reforms

**ATHENS:** Some 20,000 people demonstrated in Greece yesterday as a general strike against new budget cuts and labor reform paralyzed the civil service and disrupted transports. Around 16,000 mainly Communist demonstrators marched in Athens while another 4,500 protested in Thessaloniki, local police said. Some of the protesters held banners in support of Palestine and against the US decision to name Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Greek unions called the 24-hour labor action against new budget cuts and plans to revamp labor mobilization rules.

In addition to shutting down the public sector, the strike sidelined trains and ships, disrupted some domestic flights and the operation of public hospitals and schools. The budget goes to a vote in parliament on December 22. The Greek finance ministry is maintaining high taxation with the aim of collecting a budget surplus equivalent to 3.8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), excluding debt payments in 2018. The country's EU-IMF creditors have also demanded a revision in labor law, setting a higher worker participation requirement for strikes to be held at primary union level.

Greece has tougher targets to meet this year, as the primary surplus goal mandated by its international creditors is 3.5 percent, up from 1.75 percent this year. The ministry last month said that



GREECE: Members of the Greek Communist labor union take part in a 24-hour general strike in Thessaloniki.—AFP

enough "fiscal room" was achieved to permit tax cuts after 2018, when the country is scheduled to exit its third multi-billion EU-backed bailout. Official data yesterday showed unemployment fell to 20.2 percent in the third quarter of the year—the height of Greece's busy tourist season—from 22.6 a year earlier.—AFP

## Finisar deal helps Apple block rivals' path to AR features

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Apple Inc's \$390 million deal with chip supplier Finisar Corp announced on Wednesday helps lock in the supply of a component that Apple believes will play a big role in its future products by bolstering augmented reality features. And because the parts Finisar supplies are new and in extremely limited supply, the deal also helps Apple lock out Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, Huawei Technologies Co Ltd and other competitors in the premium smartphone space that are working to develop similar features, analysts said.

The investment will enable Apple to "get better supply and better pricing, and it makes it more difficult for Android phones to compete," said Gene Munster, a longtime Apple watcher at Loup Ventures. Apple awarded Finisar \$390 million from a \$1 billion fund dedicated to American manufacturing. Finisar, a much smaller firm with a market capitalization of \$2.2 billion, was quick to say that the deal did not represent debt or equity investment but "anticipated future business between the companies over a period of time."—Reuters

## Sports

# Lehtonen - the 33rd goalie in NHL history to record 300 career wins

## Dallas Stars beat New York Islanders 5-2

Kari Lehtonen became the 33rd goalie in NHL history to record 300 career wins Wednesday night, when he carried a shutout into the third period and recorded 32 saves as the Dallas Stars defeated the New York Islanders 5-2. The win capped a milestone-filled night for Lehtonen. The game appearance was the 624th of his career, breaking a tie with Miikka Kiprusoff for the most games played by a Finnish-born goaltender. Lehtonen is also the second goalie in as many nights to reach 300 career wins. Carolina Hurricanes netminder Cam Ward recorded his 300th victory Tuesday in a 3-2 shootout win over the Vegas Golden Knights. Ward and Lehtonen are the fifth and sixth active goalies with 300 wins. Tyler Pitlick scored twice for Dallas. The Islander fell behind 5-0 before getting two goals from Anders Lee.

### PREDATORS 7, CANUCKS 1

Defenseman P.K. Subban scored two goals on a pair of strange plays to help Nashville defeat Vancouver. Subban's first goal was a fluttering shot from the faceoff circle that opened the scoring in the first period. His second was a slapshot from center ice that gave the Predators a 3-0 advantage early in the second period. Craig Smith had a goal and two assists while Kevin Fiala and Filip Forsberg added a goal and an assist for the Predators, who are 9-1-2 in their last 12 games. Viktor Arvidsson and Calle Jarnkrok also scored. Ryan Johansen had two assists in his return after missing the past three games. Alexander Burmistrov scored for the Canucks, who lost their fourth straight game. Henrik Sedin collected his 800th NHL assist.

### SENATORS 3, RANGERS 2

Ottawa stopped a five-game losing streak by earning only its second victory in 14 games. Bobby Ryan, Cody Ceci and Zack Smith scored the Ottawa goals. Michael Grabner and Pavel Buchnevich replied for New York. Craig Anderson made 27 saves in the Senators net while Henrik Lundqvist stopped 27 shots for the Rangers.

### BRUINS 3, RED WINGS 2 (OT)

Brad Marchand's goal 35 seconds into overtime gave Boston the win over Detroit. Marchand also had an assist, and Noel Acciari and David Pastrnak also scored for Boston, which won its third straight. Tuukka Rask stopped 31 shots. Tomas Tatar and Dylan Larkin scored for Detroit, which has lost 10 of its last 11 (1-5-5). Jimmy Howard made 29 saves.—Reuters



NEW YORK: Kari Lehtonen #32 and Esa Lindell #23 of the Dallas Stars defend against Andrew Ladd #16 of the New York Islanders during the first period at the Barclays Center on December 13, 2017 in the Brooklyn borough. —AFP

## In elaborate hoax, Redskins renamed as the Redhawks

WASHINGTON: Native American advocates launched an elaborate hoax on Wednesday, creating authentic-looking web pages of major media that purported to report that the National Football League's Washington Redskins had changed their name to the Redhawks. The campaign, led by a group called the Rising Hearts Coalition, created web pages that appeared strikingly similar to the real pages of those of The Washington Post, ESPN, Sports Illustrated and Bleacher Report, plus one for the team itself with a new Redhawks logo.

Some Native Americans consider the Redskins name highly offensive and evocative of the genocide of North American tribes by

American settlers of European descent. "We created this action to show the NFL and the Washington Football franchise how easy, popular and powerful changing the name could be," Rebecca Nagle of the Cherokee Nation said in a news release that identified her as "one of the organizers of the stunt." "What we're asking for changes only four letters. Just four letters! Certainly the harm that the mascot does to Native Americans outweighs the very, very minor changes the franchise would need to make," Nagle said.

All the online pages added disclaimers announcing the website as a parody and not endorsed by nor affiliated with sites they were imitating. A Washington Post spokeswoman provided a link to the newspaper's own report on the stunt, but declined to comment further. US President Donald Trump regularly derides the mainstream media as "fake news," raising the stakes for news organizations that might be victims of a hoax. The Redskins have long declined to change their name, saying their fans support keeping it.—Reuters

## FBI 'controlling whistleblower Rodchenkov'

MOSCOW: Grigory Rodchenkov, who is the source of revelations about state-sponsored Russian doping, "is under the control of the American secret service," Vladimir Putin said yesterday. "He is under the control and the protection of the FBI. For us it's not a good thing: it means he is working under the control of American secret services," Putin said in his annual press conference. "What are they doing to him? What substances are they giving him to say everything they need him to say," Putin added.

Rodchenkov is the former director of the Moscow anti-doping lab. He fled to the United States in 2016 saying he feared for his life after the sudden death of two senior officials in the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA). He then provided information which led to an investigation of doping at the Sochi Winter Games in 2014.

As a result, Russia was last week barred from the Winter Games in Pyeongchang in February for insti-

tutionalized doping, though athletes who are deemed "clean" can compete under the Olympic flag. Rodchenkov is in the FBI's witness protection program and has made further revelations about doping. Putin accused Rodchenkov of having psychological problems and having been involved in doping.

"How is it that this individual came to head our anti-doping agency?" Putin asked. "This is the mistake of those who made the decision, and I know very well who made the decision." Putin promised that Russia "will cooperate" with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) "to correct the problems that we have". But he added that Russia would "defend the interests of our athletes, including in civil courts." "I know that many international officials don't want that, but what can we do? We will be forced to help our athletes to stand up for their honor and dignity in civil courts," he said.

The 25 Russian athletes suspended by the IOC for doping in Sochi have announced their intention to go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. If they lose, they could appeal to a Swiss federal tribunal and finally the European Court of Human Rights. Russia has always vehemently rejected accusations of state-sponsored doping while accepting that some of its athletes did take banned drugs.—AFP

## Sports

# George shows off skill, juggles emotions in return to Indiana

## Wizards overwhelm Grizzlies 93-87

**LOS ANGELES:** Paul George was held to 12 points in his return to Indiana, but Steven Adams scored 23 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 100-95 victory over the Pacers on Wednesday night. George was booed loudly when introduced and every time he touched the ball throughout the game. The four-time All-Star was traded to Oklahoma City in exchange for Victor Oladipo and Domantas Sabonis after he told the Pacers he didn't plan to re-sign with the team following the 2017-18 season. George shot 3-of-14 on Wednesday. Thunder guard Russell Westbrook, despite shooting 3 of 17 from the field, delivered his ninth triple-double of the season with 10 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists. Oladipo led the Pacers with 19 points but shot 9 of 26 from the floor. Bojan Bogdanovic added 15 for Indiana, and Thaddeus Young had 11 points, 10 rebounds and seven steals.

### Rockets 108, Hornets 96

Chris Paul posted a season-high 31 points, Houston seized control with a 25-0 run bridging the first and second quarters to extend their winning streak to 11 games with a victory over Charlotte. Paul added 11 assists and seven rebounds to his ledger and dominated the game on both ends as Houston extended its winning streak to 11 games and improved to 12-0 with Paul in their lineup. James Harden added 21 points and eight assists while Eric Gordon scored 17 points off the bench for Houston. Dwight Howard paced the Hornets with 26 points, 18 rebounds and three blocks. Kidd-Gilchrist added 18 points and 11 boards while Kemba Walker was held to 13 points.

### Wizards 93, Grizzlies 87

Bradley Beal scored 18 points and John Wall had 13 in his return from a left knee injury as Washington fended off struggling Memphis. Wall sat out the previous nine games after receiving injections in his knee Nov. 25 to deal

with inflammation. The Wizards went 4-5 without the four-time All-Star. Andrew Harrison scored 20 points for the Grizzlies, who shot 38.3 percent and lost for the 16th time in 17 games. JaMychal Green totaled 15 and 15 rebounds while Marc Gasol finished with 15 and 10.

### Celtics 124, Nuggets 118

Kyrie Irving returned from a one-game absence caused by a quad bruise and scored 33 points as Boston beat Denver. Jaylen Brown added 26 points and Aron Baynes had 17 as the Celtics overcame a career-high 36 points by Nuggets guards Gary Harris and 28 by Jamal Murray. Irving added seven assists, and Boston's Jayson Tatum scored 15 points.

### Trail Blazers 102, Heat 95

CJ McCollum scored a game-high 28 points and Damian Lillard came alive late as the Portland rallied from a 16-point, second-half deficit to defeat Miami. Lillard, who has scored more than 30 points 10 times this season, was held to nine points through three quarters. However, he finished with 18 points to help the Trail Blazers snap a season-worst, five-game losing streak. The Heat were led by reserve guard Wayne Ellington, who had 24 points.

### Pelicans 115, Bucks 108

DeMarcus Cousins scored a team-high 26 points, including a 3-pointer from the left wing with 22 seconds left, and Anthony Davis added 25 points to power New Orleans to a victory over Milwaukee. The Pelicans trailed 94-87 early in the fourth quarter but outscored the Bucks 28-14 in the final 10 minutes. Cousins added 13 rebounds, and Davis had 10 boards. E'Twaun Moore scored 21 points for New Orleans. Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with a game-high 32 points.

### Bulls 103, Jazz 100

Nikola Mirotic scored 29 points and grabbed

but they're a big club," said Monaco coach Jardim. "They have been at the top of the table in recent years. We have to respect them and play at 100 percent to get the three points." It has been a difficult season for the principality club after losing Kylian Mbappe, Tiemoué Bakayoko, Bernardo Silva and Benjamin Mendy during the transfer window, while Djibril Sidibe and Thomas Lemar have struggled with injuries.

## Monaco look to revive title challenge

**PARIS:** Leonardo Jardim's Monaco head to Saint-Etienne today hoping to put a recent slump in form firmly behind them with a third straight Ligue 1 victory. The reigning French champions sit nine points adrift of league leaders Paris Saint-Germain, who visit Rennes, after following back-to-back defeats with successive wins over lowly Angers and Troyes. They should face a tougher test against Saint-Etienne, although Les Verts are also struggling at the wrong end of the table after an eight-match winless streak.

"Saint-Etienne are going through a difficult time



INDIANAPOLIS: Victor Oladipo #4 of Indiana Pacers shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder at Bankers Life Fieldhouse on December 13, 2017 in Indianapolis, Indiana. —AFP

nine rebounds, and Robin Lopez scored 16 as Chicago beat Utah for its fourth straight victory. The Bulls, who have not lost since snapping a 10-game losing streak last week, had all five starters reach double figures. Denzel Valentine and Kris Dunn each added 13 points for Chicago, which also got 12 points from Justin Holiday. Rookie Donovan Mitchell scored a game-high 32 points to pace the Jazz, who dropped their fourth straight and fell to 2-10 on the road.

### Clippers 106, Magic 95

Reserve Lou Williams scored 31 points, and Los Angeles beat Orlando. DeAndre Jordan dominated around the basket with 16 points and 20 rebounds. Sam Dekker had 12 points for the Clippers, who won their third straight. Jonathon Simmons led the Magic with 20 points and eight assists. Nikola Vucevic had 14 points and 12 re-

bounds, and Elfrid Payton scored 13 points.

Mario Hezonja, in his second start of the season, managed 17 points and nine rebounds.

### Raptors 115, Suns 109

DeMar DeRozan scored 18 of his 37 points in the third quarter, and Toronto wrapped up a 3-1 Western Conference road trip with a win over Phoenix. The Raptors, who got 21 points and 13 rebounds from Serge Ibaka and 20 points and 11 rebounds from Jonas Valanciunas, followed up wins over the Memphis Grizzlies and Sacramento Kings by sweeping the season series from the Suns for only the fourth time in team history. Troy Daniels had a career-high 32 points including seven 3-pointers for Phoenix. The Suns lost their fifth in a row and fell to 0-4 since losing star Devin Booker to an adductor injury. — Reuters

Madrid in the last 16 in February.

Alongside Monaco nine points adrift are Lyon and Marseille. Those two teams go head-to-head in the big match on Sunday, as the race for a top-three spot and a place in the Champions League takes centre stage. Marseille will put a 12-match unbeaten run in the league on the line at Lyon, who will be looking to bounce back from a 4-1 League Cup loss at Montpellier.

### Player to watch

Argentinean Guido Carrillo has hit form for Monaco in recent days, with close-season additions Stevan Jovetic and Keita Balde both struggling for consistency, scoring three goals in his last two games. "He knows how to seize the opportunities that I give him. It's no coincidence that he's already our second leading scorer," said Jardim. Carrillo has only made two Ligue 1 starts this term but two of his four goals came last weekend against Troyes. — AFP

same from their captain. PSG bid to stretch further clear - PSG have already ensured they will head into the winter break top of the table, but have shown signs of weakness this month with losses to Strasbourg and Bayern Munich. But they brushed aside Strasbourg in the French League Cup on Wednesday without Neymar and Mbappe, who are both expected to return to the starting line-up at the weekend. Neymar will return to training on Thursday after a trip to his native Brazil for a 'family problem', having also been suspended for last week's win over Lille. The world's most expensive player hasn't had the smoothest of seasons off the field since joining PSG from Barcelona, and Brazilian website Globoesporte suggested the player could have been at the birthday party of his friend's father. But Unai Emery's men will be heavy favorites to see off Rennes, as the Spanish coach will be keen to see his side move further clear before they return to Champions League action against holders Real

## Sports

# High-flying Inter look to defend Serie A lead

## Inter coach laughs off Mourinho comparisons

**MILAN:** Inter Milan coach Luciano Spalletti has laughed off any comparisons between himself and Jose Mourinho, yet the Italian has done more than the club's previous 10 coaches to emulate the Portuguese's success at San Siro. For the first time since Mourinho led them to a consecutive league triumph in 2010 before leaving for Real Madrid, Inter are serious Serie A title contenders and can cement their position at the top of the table at home to Udinese on Saturday.

Title rivals Napoli and Juventus face potentially tricky away trips to Torino and Bologna respectively, with the latter fixture taking place on Sunday. Inter displayed their resilience under former AS Roma coach Spalletti by holding Juve to a goalless draw last week, mimicking their 0-0 stalemate at Napoli in October and becoming the first team to keep a clean sheet away to the champions since August 2015.

Spalletti heavily rotated his side for Tuesday's Coppa Italia game against Serie C minnows Pordenone which almost backfired as Inter only squeezed through to the quarter-finals by winning a penalty shoot-out following a goalless draw. Before the game with Pordenone, Spalletti asked journalists to stop comparing him to Mourinho, saying: "I've been here for two days, he made history". Yet Spalletti has already made history with Inter, overseeing their best ever start to a season in taking 29 points from their

first 11 games and with no European football to distract his side, unlike Roma, Napoli and Juventus, he has a real chance of adding to the club's 18 league triumphs.

Against Udinese they will be looking to continue their imperious home form, which has seen them win seven of eight league games at San Siro, although defender Andrea Ranocchia believes teams are more determined to try and beat Inter now they are riding high. "Being at the top of the league annoys people, but it's normal that you have more enemies when you are at the top than when you are not," he said. "But we are calm, we are aware of our qualities. We are building something important with this coach (Spalletti) and his staff. The teams we face will always give 100 percent against us but we must remember what team we are and keep going as we are."

Napoli, who also drew their last game 0-0, at home to Fiorentina, are still likely to be without injured forward Lorenzo Insigne when they visit Torino, who are unbeaten in their last six games and won 3-1 at Lazio last weekend. Juventus, meanwhile, are still missing captain Gianluigi Buffon and veteran defender Giorgio Chiellini for their trip to 11th placed Bologna. Also, the poor form of playmaker Paulo Dybala, who was left out of the game at Inter, continues to be a big talking point in Italy.— Reuters

## Barcelona looking to recover sparkle against Deportivo

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona have managed to get away with some lacklustre displays recently and Sunday's visit of struggling Deportivo La Coruna offers them a chance to recapture their sparkling early season form a week before the 'Clasico' against Real Madrid. Victory over Depor would see Barca move 11 points clear of their bitter rivals before the crunch game at the Santiago Bernabeu on Dec. 23, as Real, eight points adrift of Barca in fourth, are away on Club World Cup duty in Abu Dhabi.

Barca remain unbeaten in the league and have a healthy five-point cushion at the top of the standings over Valencia despite trundling along in their last three games, in which they have drawn twice. They were held by Valencia and Celta Vigo, who have proved to be their bogey team in recent years, while their 2-0 win at Villarreal in their last outing owed a lot to opposing midfielder Daniel Raba's second half dismissal. Shorn of Neymar's speed and flair, and

with his replacement Ousmane Dembele still injured, Barca have lacked the excitement of recent years and become increasingly reliant on the consistency of Lionel Messi to keep them ahead of their rivals.

Barca have developed into a more reliable outfit under coach Ernesto Valverde, however, gaining extra control in midfield and a tougher edge, and Deportivo goalkeeper Ruben Martinez believes they are as difficult to beat as they have ever been. "In football, the most important thing is results and for me Barcelona are at the same level as before... in fact they are much more efficient than in other years," he said. Deportivo should make for more accommodating opponents for Barca than those in their last three games as the Galicians have only taken five points from seven league away trips and are hovering above the relegation zone ahead of the Nou Camp visit. "We're focusing on how we can cause them harm. We need to be concentrated for the entire game, we have to be positive, we know it'll be difficult but we have to try," Martinez added. Second-placed Valencia scraped a 2-1 win over Celta Vigo last week with the help of a highly controversial late penalty and will need to raise their game when they visit Eibar if they want to stay on Barcelona's tail. Atletico Madrid are one point behind Valencia and searching for a fourth consecutive league win against Alaves, who are in the relegation zone but experiencing a revival under new coach Abelardo Fernandez, who has won both of his games in charge.— Reuters



**TURIN:** Inter Milan's Italian coach Luciano Spalletti enters the pitch prior to the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Inter Milan at The 'Allianz Stadium'. — AFP

## Bayern look for strong finish as winter break looms

**BERLIN:** Bayern Munich will be looking to end the year in style when they travel to VfB Stuttgart tomorrow, with the champions intent on carrying their nine-point lead into the winter break. The Bavarians, who face Borussia Dortmund in the German Cup last 16 next week in their last competitive game of the year, are on course for a record-extending sixth straight Bundesliga crown.

Revitalized after Jupp Heynckes took over from Carlo Ancelotti two months ago, Bayern have had to cope with injuries to goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and then his replacement Sven Ulreich, which forced 36-year-old Tom Starke out of retirement. The absence of Arjen Robben and Thiago Alcantara due to injury has also hindered them up front, with Bayern having more than 75 percent possession against

bottom club Cologne on Wednesday but missing a hatful of chances in a 1-0 win.

"We already have a busy schedule behind us and still got two big matches coming up," Heynckes said in explaining his team's lacklustre performance on Wednesday. The coach, who led Bayern to a treble in 2013 including the Champions League, said his players were missing their usual spark and precision, while his defense was a step too slow. "After taking the lead the team knew very well that there are still two more matches left this year," said Bayern's Thomas Mueller. "We do not have 100 percent left in the reserve tank at this point."

But it was still enough to send Bayern nine points clear of second-placed Schalke 04, who are on 29 points. Schalke, unbeaten in their last 10 league matches, travel to in-form Eintracht Frankfurt, who have only two losses in their previous 10 Bundesliga games. Borussia Dortmund, who notched their first win since September on the debut of new coach Peter Stoeger on Tuesday to move into sixth on 25 points, will be hoping their recovery will continue against visitors Hoffenheim tomorrow. Bayer Leverkusen, fourth on 27, have quietly climbed up the table on the back of an 11-game unbeaten run and face Hanover on Sunday.—Reuters

## Sports

# Paris Saint-Germain cruise into League Cup quarters

## PSG brush off the absence of Neymar

**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain brushed off the absence of Neymar to ease into the French League Cup quarter-finals with a 4-2 victory at Strasbourg on Wednesday. The Ligue 1 leaders gained a measure of revenge for their shock 2-1 league defeat by Strasbourg less than a fortnight ago as they started their bid for a fifth straight League Cup title. PSG will take on Amiens in the last eight, after the newly-promoted top-flight club edged out second-tier Tours 2-1. "We needed to improve from the league game and the team was more focused from the start," said PSG coach Unai Emery.

"Maybe we could have scored more goals and played better after it went to 4-2, but we are still happy." With Neymar having only just returned from a visit to his native Brazil, Emery opted to play Edinson Cavani up front on his own with Kylian Mbappe on the bench. Home hopes of a repeat performance for Strasbourg were dashed in only the 12th minute, as Yoann Salmier sliced Angel Di Maria's cross into his own net. Argentina international Di Maria made it two midway through the first half, capitalizing on a goalkeeping error by Alexandre Oukidja to slot in his fourth goal of the season.

But Strasbourg pulled one back before half-time against the run of play as midfielder Jeremy

Grimm, who has been with the club throughout their rise from the third tier, slotted into the corner. The hosts battled hard in the second period but their resistance was finally ended when Thomas Meunier crossed for fellow full-back Dani Alves to tap in from close range. German international Julian Draxler impressed in a three-man attacking midfield alongside Di Maria and Javier Pastore, and drilled in to end a nine-game goal drought for club and country. Jeremy Blayac came off the bench to score a late consolation for Strasbourg, but PSG had long since secured their place in the quarters.

Elsewhere, a much-changed Lyon were stunned 4-1 at Montpellier despite taking a 10th-minute lead through teenager Myziane Maolida, as Souleymane Camara scored twice for the hosts. Nice goalkeeper Yoan Cardinale was the hero as Lucien Favre's men edged past managerless Lille on penalties after Mario Balotelli had rescued the a 1-1 draw for the visitors. Monaco will be Nice's last-eight opponents, after the principality outfit saw off Caen on Tuesday. Rennes beat Marseille in a penalty shootout after an entertaining 2-2 draw at Roazhon Park, where Kostas Mitroglou and Valere Germain scored for the visitors, but to no avail. — AFP



**STRASBOURG:** Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Lucas (2nd-right) falls down in front of Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinean midfielder Javier Pastore (right), Strasbourg's French midfielder Jeremy Grimm (2nd-left) and Strasbourg's French defender Ernest Seka during the French League Cup round of 16 football match between Strasbourg (RCSA) and Paris-Saint-Germain (PSG) on December 13, 2017. — AFP

## A clinical first-half display lifts Celtic

**GLASGOW:** A clinical first-half display helped Celtic to a 3-1 win over Hamilton on Wednesday as the Scottish champions extended their unbeaten domestic run to 69 matches. Olivier Ntcham fired Celtic in front with a superb volley in the 12th minute before Daniel Redmond leveled for Hamilton against the run of play. However, two goals in a minute from James Forrest and Scott Sinclair handed Celtic a two-goal cushion at the break and they saw out the win to move onto 41 points at the top of the Scottish Premiership.

"We made some changes and tried something slightly different tonight, but I thought the players worked it really well," Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers said. "It was a good win for us because Hamilton have had some really good victories this season." Rivals Rangers remain five points behind in second place as they came from behind to claim a 2-1 win over Hibernian at Easter Road, while Aberdeen stay third on goal difference following their 3-0 win at St Johnstone. The supporters who packed into a bitterly cold Celtic Park were warmed up by four superb first-half strikes.

Moments after coming close with a curling effort, French midfielder Ntcham's stunning strike handed Celtic the lead. Sinclair burst to the byline and floated a cut-back to the far post, where Ntcham was on hand to smash a volley beyond the

despairing Gary Woods. Ntcham seemed to be shooting every time he had sight of the Hamilton goal and only a fine diving save from Woods kept another effort on the half-volley from sneaking in. It looked like it was just a matter of time before Celtic had a second, but Hamilton grabbed an equalizer out of the blue.

### Missed chances

Darian MacKinnon's pass from the left found Redmond at the edge of the box and he spun to send a superb looping effort over Craig Gordon and into the top corner. The goal handed Hamilton hope, but Celtic quickly reasserted control. A clever pass from Stuart Armstrong played in Forrest, who beat the offside trap to round Woods and slot home. The winger turned provider for Sinclair, who took a couple of touches just inside the box before expertly curling the ball into the far corner. Celtic looked to pick up where they had left off after the break, with Odsonne Edouard's effort blocked by the legs of Woods before Armstrong sent a shot narrowly wide. Hamilton should have pulled another goal back in the 69th minute when Greg Docherty's cross found Rakish Bingham unmarked in the box, but the striker sliced his effort wide of the target.

Docherty's pace then caused panic in the Celtic defense as he burst into the box before Bingham hit the post with a low angled strike as Hamilton exerted more pressure without any reward. Hamilton manager Martin Canning bemoaned his side's missed chances. "We created three or four real good opportunities in the second half that we probably should have done better with," he said. "Ultimately the two goals just before half-time killed the game for us, but I was pleased with the effort, commitment and quality from the boys." — AFP

## China clubs urged to develop youth or lose licenses

**TOKYO:** Chinese soccer authorities are set to impose strict new regulations on the country's clubs, using the threat of losing their professional licenses as a spur to establish a more comprehensive youth development program. According to Titan Sports, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) will introduce rules in 2019 that force clubs in the top two tiers of the domestic league to create youth teams ranging from the under-13 bracket up to the under-19 level.

The teams would play in competitions organized by the CFA and, claim Titan Sports, a failure to comply would see clubs forfeit their registration to play professionally. The CFA have yet to respond to a Reuters request for a comment on the matter. The move marks the latest CFA directive to enhance the future prospects of the national team, who have struggled to make an international impact in the last decade-and-a-half. Bora Milutinovic led the coun-

try to their only World Cup appearance in 2002, before an Arie Haan-coached team reached the final of the Asian Cup on home soil two years later.

Since then, China have struggled, with the number of youngsters in the country playing the game diminishing as a number of factors, including match fixing scandals, blighted the sport's progress. Soccer-loving Xi Jinping's rise to become the Chinese president in 2012 has helped reinvigorate the sport's popularity, with state and private entities throwing huge sums into the development and promotion of the game. High-profile imports such as Carlos Tevez, Luiz Felipe Scolari, Andre Villas-Boas and Oscar are among those who have worked in the Chinese Super League in the last 12 months, while the clubs have become more prominent on the continental scene.

The national team continues to struggle, however, with coach Marcello Lippi calling for patience as the nation seeks to make an impact on the global stage. "When you talk about China, you have to think about the culture and the time China has spent with football," he said after Tuesday's loss to Japan in the East Asian Championship. "It's very different to Europe. I'm having to grow a team almost from scratch." Under the Italian, China recorded their best performance in World Cup qualifying since 2002, but the country still missed out on a place at next year's finals in Russia. — Reuters

## Sports

# Unstoppable City break record, United edge out Bournemouth

## Liverpool frustrated again in West Brom stalemate

**LONDON:** Manchester City set a new top-flight record of 15 consecutive wins as their seemingly unstoppable march towards the Premier League title continued with a 4-0 romp at bottom club Swansea City on Wednesday. David Silva struck twice for Pep Guardiola's side as they went past Arsenal's 14-match winning sequence, although unlike the London club's, City's streak has been in a single season.

Manchester United kept up a distant pursuit as they toiled to a 1-0 defeat of Bournemouth at Old Trafford to remain 11 points adrift in second place, Romelu Lukaku's ninth league goal of the season proving just enough. Liverpool and Arsenal could only draw 0-0 with struggling West Bromwich Albion and West Ham United respectively, allowing Tottenham Hotspur to move into fourth spot behind Chelsea thanks to a 2-0 win over Brighton and Hove Albion as Serge Aurier scored his first goal for the club.

City have 49 points to United's 38 with champions Chelsea, who won at Huddersfield Town on Tuesday, on 35. Tottenham have 31, ahead of Liverpool on goal difference while Arsenal dropped to seventh with 30 points. It was an enjoyable night for managers returning to former clubs as Sam Allardyce watched his Everton side win 1-0 at Newcastle United and Claude Puel's fast-improving Leicester City triumphed 4-1 at Southampton, the club who sacked him at the

end of last season despite taking them to the League Cup final.

City hardly broke sweat as they turned their trip to south Wales into a training session despite making four changes to the side that won 2-1 at Manchester United on Sunday. Silva opened the scoring from Bernardo Silva's cross and Kevin De Bruyne made it 2-0 with a free kick. It was all over when the silky Silva played a one-two with Raheem Sterling to make it 3-0 early in the second half with his fourth goal in his last three games. Sergio Aguero, back in the side with Gabriel Jesus rested, fired past Lukasz Fabianski to complete another masterclass from Guardiola's City slickers.

### City form

While the purists are purring at City's form, you could only sympathize with Swansea boss Paul Clement who summed up what many of his peers might be feeling. "At times it was horrible to be on the sideline watching that, seeing my side trying but suffering for long periods," he said. "It was hard to watch at times because they were so dominant. One of the best sides I've ever come across."

United looked flat after their chastening defeat against City and were indebted to Lukaku's powerful header and several good saves by David de Gea against a plucky Bournemouth.

England pair Chris Smalling and Phil Jones had established themselves as Mourinho's centre-back pairing of choice until Marcos Rojo returned from a long-term injury lay-off of his own recently.

"Tonight, we had Smalling and Jones," said Mourinho. "Lindelof was on the bench, Blind was on the bench, Marcos Rojo was injured, but nothing serious. "During the whole season we had problems with central defenders but because we now have four or five (of them) we always manage. And Chris Smalling is playing amazingly well now, for seven or eight matches in a row. So we are fine." One player who was not involved in the victory over Bournemouth was midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan, who has started just one league game since the end of October, and has been left out of the squad entirely in recent games.

### Determination

"I can only have six players on the bench," said Mourinho. "And I try to have some balance on the bench." United won the game to start their recovery from the damaging weekend defeat by league leaders City in the Manchester derby. And, although his team remain 11 points behind Pep Guardiola's in-form league leaders, Mourinho refused to concede the title race is over. Mourinho said: "I said we play match after match and the next we have to try to win, we have a difficult one at West Brom and we try match after match. "It is only over in May, if it is over now I go on holiday to Brazil or Los Angeles."—AFP



**SWANSEA:** Manchester City's Spanish midfielder David Silva (center) celebrates after scoring their third goal with teammates during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and Manchester City at The Liberty Stadium in Swansea on December 13, 2017. — AFP

Manager Jose Mourinho, distracted by reports of a fracas after the City defeat in which he was reported to have had milk thrown at him, admitted his side had been low on energy. "It was difficult match. They had one more day's rest than us, they were fresher than us, and mentally fresher because a big match takes more from our

players," he said. "They were difficult opponents and difficult conditions. If we had scored the second it would have been a calm night."

Liverpool were left to rue a late disallowed goal for Dominic Solanke as they could find no way past West Brom, their second home draw in four days. —Reuters

## Mourinho reveals Bailly could be out for season

**MANCHESTER:** Jose Mourinho admitted he is not certain if Manchester United defender Eric Bailly will play again this season after revealing he may need surgery on a persistent ankle injury. Bailly, 23, has not played for United since a defeat at Chelsea at the start of last month, having sustained the injury while on international duty with the Ivory Coast. And United manager Mourinho, who signed the centre-back from Villarreal last year, admits he is concerned by the lack of progress.

Speaking after Wednesday's 1-0 victory over Bournemouth, Mourinho said: "I think it's serious. I don't know. It's an injury that comes from last time he went to the national team. "Since then we were trying a conservative treatment but if that conservative treatment is not resulting how we want, he will either have surgery or a procedure. Let's wait a little bit more. "I'm not a doctor, probably the doctor can inform you, there is nothing to hide. I don't want to be pessimistic." In Bailly's absence,

## Wenger refuses to give up on EPL title

**LONDON:** Arsene Wenger has refused to give up on the Premier League title despite a goalless draw at West Ham United that left Arsenal 19 points adrift of leaders Manchester City. Arsenal are seventh, below Burnley, having added just two points in three games after a 3-1 defeat at home to Manchester United and a 1-1 draw at Southampton before Wednesday's stalemate. The manager of third-placed Chelsea Antonio Conte and his counterpart at fourth-placed Tottenham, Mauricio Pochettino, have both conceded City will be impossible to overtake, but Wenger says he will not abandon hope of a first Arsenal title since 2004.

"That's good to make headlines, but we have to focus on the next game," the Arsenal manager said. "City are too far away to talk about the title at the moment, but it's one thing to be far away, it's another thing to give up. "You don't give up. Our job is to fight as long as we can. I don't listen too much to all that stuff. Our job is to fight and to continue to give everything and see where you finish." Arsenal are only one point off fourth place but did not look like a side going places despite enjoying the majority of possession against West Ham. Wenger was confident his

side would not finish the season in seventh.

"The table is the table, but it is not a definitive one today," he said. "Let's see after Christmas and January. There is a long way to go until May. "Our performances are not reflected by the results. Against Manchester United we had 33 shots, but we didn't win. "Southampton was similar to tonight. There is a difference in what we create to what we score, but it will not last." West Ham beat champions Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday to give David Moyes a first victory as manager and the Scot said he would certainly have taken four points prior to the two London derbies.

The Hammers remain in the relegation places, but appear to be moving in the right direction. Substitute Javier Hernandez almost won it for West Ham late on with a shot that hit the bar and bounced short of the line and Moyes credited Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech with a vital touch. "If you hang in and stick with it you can get yourself opportunities and we got one right at the end," he said.

"I thought it had gone in, but the goalkeeper saved it. Four points against Chelsea and Arsenal, we have got that. We have done a pretty good job against these two teams." Adrian has taken over in goal from England goalkeeper Joe Hart after the latter was unable to play against his parent team City three games ago. The Spaniard put in a good performance in a 2-1 defeat at the Etihad Stadium and has followed that up with two clean sheets against top-quality opposition. "At this moment in time Adrian has got the shirt," Moyes said. "He played well."—AFP

# Malan inspires England with first ton of series

## Opening day overshadowed by fixing allegations



PERTH: England batsman Dawid Malan plays a shot on day one of the third Ashes cricket Test match against Australia in Perth yesterday. — AFP



PERTH: Dawid Malan struck England's first century of the Ashes series as the tourists saw off Australia's marauding pace attack to emerge on top of an enthralling first day of the third test at the WACA yesterday. The middle order batsman's unbeaten 110 anchored a flourishing 174-run stand with wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow (75 not out), the pair pushing England to 305 for four at the close of a glorious day in Perth. England captain Joe Root and his predecessor Alastair Cook may have failed with the bat, but the skipper won perhaps the most important contest of the day when he guessed correctly at the toss and opted to bat first.

Criticised for electing to bowl in the second test defeat in Adelaide, Root was rewarded this time with three of his batsmen passing 50. "Tomorrow the first hour is crucial for us," Malan told reporters after celebrating his maiden ton in his eighth test. "We're going to have to be quite ruthless the way we play tomorrow morning and put them under pressure, get some more overs into their legs." Australia's pacemen were generally superb through much of the day and breathed fire in some hostile

“

**Root wins toss, opts to bat first**

”

spells before the tea interval, but the quicks were let down in the field by three dropped catches.

The last of them reprieved lefthander Malan on 92 off the first delivery with the second new ball from a frustrated Mitchell Starc late in the day. Coaxing a thick edge from the England number five, Cameron Bancroft dived across from third slip in front of his captain Steve Smith to grass the chance. "Obviously no one goes out trying to drop catches but I think when the wicket's that flat and it's that hard for our bowlers, it's certainly disappointing," Australia wicketkeeper Tim Paine said. The 30-year-old

Malan went on to raise his century in style, pulling paceman Josh Hazlewood to the fence to trigger a standing ovation from a crowd of 22,148.

### Nervy moments

Bairstow played a fine support role on his return to the city where he drew unwanted attention for 'head-butting' Bancroft at a local bar on the first night of the tour. The pair came together with England 115 for three just after lunch and their ability to survive for nearly two sessions will have inspired Root's team as the Ashes

## SCOREBOARD

**PERTH, Australia:** Scoreboard at stumps on day one in the third Ashes Test between Australia and England in Perth on Thursday:

### England first innings

Cook lbw b Starc	7
Stoneman c Paine b Starc	56
Vince c Paine b Hazlewood	25
Root c Paine b Cummins	20
Malan not out	110
Bairstow not out	75

Extras (b8, lb2, nb1, w1)	12
Total (for four wickets; 89 overs)	305
Fall of wickets: 1-26 (Cook), 2-89 (Vince), 3-115 (Root), 4-131 (Stoneman).	
Bowling: Starc 19-3-79-2, Hazlewood 20-7-62-1 (1nb), Cummins 21-6-60-1 (1w), Lyon 19-4-61-0, Marsh 7-1-25-0, Smith 3-1-8-0.	

holders seek to claw back from a 2-0 deficit in the five-match series. They weathered some nervy moments. Bairstow, promoted to sixth in the order, all but played onto his stumps during all-rounder Mitchell Marsh's third over when on 39. Opener Mark Stoneman was out for 56, having twice been dropped after reaching his second half-century of the series and also struck on the helmet with a vicious short ball by Hazlewood. He was first put down by Mitchell Marsh in the slips, then a diving Nathan Lyon was unable to complete a difficult low chance at point. Root was out softly for 20, caught down the leg-side by wicketkeeper Tim Paine, and Stoneman followed in controversial circumstances. Paine leapt high to take a fine one-handed catch after

Starc appeared to graze Stoneman's right glove but the caught behind appeal was turned down.

Australia reviewed and third umpire Aleem Dar overruled Marais Erasmus on the strength of a noise picked up on the 'snicko' technology. England number three James Vince contributed 25 in a 63-run stand with Stoneman before being caught behind off Hazlewood before lunch. Cook's 150th test started sourly, the 32-year-old opener lasting just 16 balls in the morning before being trapped lbw by Starc for seven. Day one at the WACA was overshadowed by spot-fixing allegations in a British newspaper. The ICC said it took the accusations "seriously" but said there was no evidence to implicate any of the match's players or officials.— Reuters

## No evidence Ashes test under fixing threat

PERTH: The ICC are taking allegations in a British newspaper about attempts to organize spot-fixing during the third Ashes test "extremely

seriously" but do not think the match has been compromised, global cricket's governing body said yesterday. The Sun reported that underground bookmakers from India had offered to sell undercover reporters from the newspaper information about spot-fixing in the test between Australia and England, which started in Perth yesterday. Cricket Australia said the report was a "serious concern", while the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said they were "aware" of the allegations even if there had been no suggestion any England players were involved. Spot-

fixing occurs when corrupt players agree to manipulate part of a match by, for example, bowling a wide on a particular delivery or ensuring a particular run rate. The corruption does not usually affect the overall outcome of the match but gamblers in the know can use the information to beat the betting market. The underground bookmakers told the reporters they had previously manipulated matches in the Indian Premier League and were also targeting Australia's Twenty20 Big Bash League. The newspaper said it had passed all the evi-

dence to the International Cricket Council, who said they would be investigated by its Anti-Corruption Unit.

"From my initial assessment of the material there is no evidence, either from The Sun or via our own intelligence, to suggest the current test match has been corrupted," Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager Anti-Corruption, said in a statement.

"At this stage of the investigation, there is no indication that any players in this test have been in contact with the alleged fixers.— Reuters

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**SWANSEA:** Manchester City's Spanish midfielder David Silva (center) scores their third goal past Swansea City's Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and Manchester City on December 13, 2017. — AFP

## Man City roll over Swansea for 15th straight league win