

4 Dirt pitches attracting large numbers of football lovers



9 Three dead, 77,000 flee as storm pounds Philippines



31 Flops take center stage, from Colgate Lasagna to monoski



16 Ronaldo retains Club World Cup for Real



Fatah calls for protests over Pence's visit to Jerusalem

US vice-president's trip to Mideast overshadowed by Trump's decision

RAMALLAH: Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah faction yesterday called for a massive demonstration next week to protest against a visit to Jerusalem by US Vice President Mike Pence after Washington said it would recognize the holy city as Israel's capital. Breaking with decades of US policy, President Donald Trump also said on Dec 6 that he would move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The move has stirred global condemnation and sparked angry protests across Arab and Muslim countries, as well as deadly clashes in the occupied territories between Palestinians and Israeli forces. It also prompted Abbas to cancel a meeting with Pence, who arrives Wednesday in Jerusalem, and warn that Washington no longer had a role to play in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. "We call for angry protests at the entrances to Jerusalem and in its Old City to coincide with the visit on Wednesday of US Vice President Mike Pence and to protest against Trump's decision," Fatah said in a statement.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the most controversial issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel seized control of the eastern part of the city in the 1967 Middle East war and sees the whole of Jerusalem as its undivided capital. The Palestinians view the east as the capital of their future state. The call to protest came as thousands of Palestinians took part in funerals for four men killed Friday in clashes with Israeli forces during protests in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Mourners chanted anti-Trump slogans and masked men fired into the air during one of the ceremonies in the village of Beit Ula in the occupied West Bank. Funerals were also held for the two other Palestinians



RAMALLAH: A Palestinian demonstrator kicks a burning tyre during clashes with Israeli forces near an Israeli checkpoint in this West Bank city yesterday. — AFP



BEIT ULA: The mother of Mohamed Amin mourns over his body during his funeral in this village near Hebron yesterday. — AFP

killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, where the enclave's Islamist Hamas rulers had on Friday called for a "day of rage". One of those killed was Ibrahim Abu Thurayeh, a Palestinian who lost his legs in an Israeli attack a decade ago, who, with his wheelchair, was a regular feature at protests along Gaza's border with Israel.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniya attended Abu Thurayeh's funeral in a refugee camp west of Gaza City. "With his

death there is no valid excuse not to fight," Haniya said. "No one in the world can change the truth that Palestine and Jerusalem belong only to the Palestinians," he said. Friday's deaths brought to eight the number of Palestinians killed in violence or air strikes since Trump's Jerusalem move, and hundreds have been also wounded.

Pence will no longer see Palestinian officials during

his visit to the region after they - as well as Egyptian Muslim and Christian religious leaders - cancelled meetings in protest at the embassy move. "We understand that the Palestinians may need a bit of a cooling off period, that's fine," a senior White House official said Friday. "We will be ready when the Palestinians are ready to re-engage."

Continued on Page 11

News in brief

Saudi women can drive motorcycles

RIYADH: Saudi Arabian women will be able to drive trucks and motorcycles, officials have said three months after the kingdom announced a historic decision to end a ban on women driving. The Saudi General Directorate of Traffic gave details of the new regulations that will follow the lifting of the ban on the official Saudi Press Agency late on Friday. "Yes, we will authorize women to drive motorcycles" as well as trucks, it said, adding that the royal decree stipulates that the law on driving will be "equal" for both men and women. There will be no special license plate numbers for female-driven cars, it said. But women involved in road accidents or who commit traffic violations will be dealt with at special centers that will be established and run by women.

'Youthquake' Oxford word of 2017

LONDON: "Youthquake" was crowned Friday as Oxford Dictionaries' word of the year 2017, following a five-fold increase in usage. The word is defined as "a significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people". It first rose during Britain's June general election, which saw an upsurge in youth turnout, then had an even bigger spike in September around New Zealand's general election. However, the word was first coined in 1965 by the then Vogue magazine editor Diana Vreeland to describe how youth culture was changing fashion and music. It beat eight other words on the shortlist - milkshake duck, white fragility, broflake, newsjacking, antifa, gorpcore, kompromat and unicorn.

Billionaire couple's deaths 'suspicious'

TORONTO: Canadian police said they were investigating the mysterious deaths of Barry Sherman, founder of Canadian pharmaceutical firm Apotex Inc, and his wife, Honey, one of the nation's wealthiest couples whose bodies were found in their mansion on Friday. Police said they learned of the deaths after responding to a midday medical call at the Sherman's home in an affluent section of northeast Toronto. Two bodies covered in blankets were removed from the home and loaded into an unmarked van on Friday evening. "The circumstances of their death appear suspicious and we are treating it that way," said Constable David Hopkinson. Homicide detectives later told reporters gathered outside the home that there were no signs of forced entry. Forbes has estimated Sherman's fortune at \$3.2 billion.

On the trail of London's serial cat killer

LONDON: In what has become a grim ritual, Tony Jenkins examines the mutilated remains of a domestic cat - and says the south London serial killer has struck once again. Nobody is surprised when Jenkins, the co-founder of Snarl, a local animal rescue and rehabilitation shelter, arrives at a veterinary surgery to confirm the grisly find. In the last two years, Snarl has identified more than 400 suspected victims: Mostly cats, but also some foxes and rabbits.

Jenkins enters a small examination room where a plastic bag lies on the table. He pulls on a pair of gloves and opens the bag, removing the corpse of a black cat with white paws. The veterinary assistant standing alongside him recoils. The head and tail are missing, having been cut off, and the belly has been sliced open - trademarks betraying the killer's surgical skill. Even Jenkins, who has seen this several times before, is disgusted. "It's a definite victim," he explains. "It's the classic head and tail removal: Clean cuts on both, with a bit of additional mutilation to the stomach area," he told AFP. "We've had cats matching that exact same thing in all sorts of different areas," he says.

Continued on Page 11

Macron marks 40th birthday in royal style

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday celebrated his birthday at the iconic chateau of King Francois I, a choice denounced by critics as an example of how he is "cut off from the people". Macron, who turns 40 on Thursday, is spending the weekend with his wife Brigitte and extended family at the chateau of Chambord in France's Loire Valley, the French daily La Nouvelle Republique reported.

With its fairytale facade, elaborately turreted roofline and vast grounds, Chambord is probably the valley's best-known Renaissance chateau, located about 200 km southwest of Paris. Macron and his family will stay at one of the cottages on the vast estate, French media said, with a birthday gala that was to be held yesterday evening in one of



Emmanuel Macron

the castle's 440 rooms. The estate has several four-star guest houses which can be rented for €800 to €1,000 (\$950 to \$1,200) per weekend. The Elysee Palace said Macron and his wife were using private funds to pay for their stay.

But the choice of venue was still criticised from some French politicians. "Why is he celebrating his birthday at Chambord?" asked radical-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon, quoted in the newspaper Le Figaro. "What a strange idea! I am so republican that everything about royal symbols exasperates me. I find it ridiculous," he said.

Continued on Page 11

Palestinian billionaire 'detained'

AMMAN: Sabih Al-Masri, Jordan's most influential businessman and the chairman of its largest lender Arab Bank, was detained in Saudi Arabia for questioning after a business trip to Riyadh, family sources and friends said yesterday. Masri's detention, which follows the biggest purge of the Saudi kingdom's affluent elite in its modern history, has sent shockwaves through business circles in Jordan and the Palestinian territories, where the billionaire has major investments.

A Saudi citizen of Palestinian origin, Masri was detained last Tuesday hours before he was planning to leave after he chaired meetings of companies he owns, according to the sources. He is the founder of Saudi Astra Group, which has wide interests in diversified industries

ranging from agro-industry to telecommunications, construction and mining across the region. "Masri was heading to the airport and they told him to stay where you are and they picked him up," said a source familiar with the matter who asked not to be named.

He cancelled a dinner in Amman on Wednesday that he had invited board members of Arab Bank and business associates to attend on his return. Masri could not be reached for comment. The Saudi authorities did not respond to requests for comment. Confidants said Masri had been warned not to travel to the Saudi capital after mass arrests of Saudi royals, ministers and businessmen in early November. "He has been answering questions about his business and partners," said a source familiar with the matter who did not elaborate nor confirm he was held. A source close to the family later said that "while Masri is currently restricted from leaving Saudi Arabia, no official charges have been filed against him".

Continued on Page 11



LONDON: A woman walks her dog past police officers outside Stamford Bridge stadium yesterday. — AFP

Amir, top Kuwaiti officials greet Bahrain on national day



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah joins GCC ambassadors in cutting the cake during Bahrain's Embassy's reception on the occasion of the 47th National Day. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bahrain's Ambassador to Kuwait Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa welcomes His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa, congratulating him on the Kingdom's national day. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent cables of congratulations to Bahrain's parliament speaker Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla and Bahraini Shura Council Chairman Ali Bin Saleh Al-Saleh.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah had extolled the deeply-rooted ties with the Kingdom of Bahrain. After attending Bahrain's Embassy's reception on Wednesday on the occasion of the 47th National Day celebrations, Sheikh Sabah Khaled expressed pride of the great achievements and development activities made by the sisterly Gulf Monarchy. He congratulated the Bahraini King, government and people on the dear occasion. In similar statements, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulated the Bahraini leadership and people on the national day. —KUNA



Bahrain's Ambassador to Kuwait Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa welcomes officials during the reception.



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Speaker warns of 'temporary' moves over Jerusalem



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his delegation are seen after returning home from Morocco. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and a delegation accompanying him returned home, Friday evening, coming from Rabat, Morocco, after attending an emergency Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) on the US move on Jerusalem. The delegation was received at the airport by Minister of State for National Assembly Adel Al-Kharafi. The delegation consists of MPs Rakan Al-Nesf, Khalil Abul, Omar Al-Tablabaie and Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie.

Ghanem said on Friday there should not be only 'temporary' moves towards Jerusalem, calling for continuing response to the recent US decision over the holy city. Ghanem made the press statement following the conclusion of the emergency summit, which focused on US President Donald Trump's recent decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

"The reaction should not be temporary. Rather, it should continue in order to avert

similar future decisions and to stop this unjust decision which affected all Muslims, Arab Christians and humanity as well as all sympathizers with this just issue," he said. Kuwait's top lawmaker pointed out a Kuwaiti working paper put on table during the Rabat summit, which included practical steps and concrete measures, including moves through Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Ghanem hoped that there would be stronger international, rather than Arab or Islamic, response to Washington's recent controversial move over Jerusalem. Earlier on Thursday, the Kuwaiti parliament speaker said that a unified Arab stance on the regional and international level was needed against the recent US move on Jerusalem.

Addressing the Rabat summit, he said that Arabs must unite themselves against injustice and should not isolate themselves from what is occurring in the international scene; otherwise, the enemy (Israel) will continue the aggression against the Palestinian people. —KUNA

Italy's president looking forward to visit Kuwait



ROME: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (left) poses with Italian President Sergio Mattarella. —KUNA

ROME: Italian President Sergio Mattarella is looking forward to visit the State of Kuwait in the near future to further strengthen bilateral relations. This came during President Mattarella's meeting with the Kuwait Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah on Friday.

The embassy said in a statement yesterday that the ambassador conveyed greetings to Mattarella on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing him everlasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to the Italian people.

The Italian President, in turn, expressed pleasure in accepting the invitation to visit Kuwait to meet His Highness the Amir, and

praised the distinguished relations between the two countries and their cooperation to maintain security, stability and peace in the region, the statement said. —KUNA

Local

local spotlight

Human trafficking
in Kuwait

By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

A few days ago, local newspapers published a small but important report about a Kuwaiti official from the interior ministry who received a representative of the Interpol Organization for Combating Human Trafficking. The security official assured the guest on Kuwait's efforts in strengthening relations with Interpol by supporting its anti-trafficking programs.

I believe that this is important for several reasons, because ignorance of the seriousness of a crime may lead to it. Innocent people can fall victim to trafficking gangs with no way out, especially since this crime is not committed by an individual or an insane person, but an organized criminal network. Like anything else in our world today, it has traders, a black market and clients, so we need to be careful and cautious in dealing with the subject. Governments are required to act to combat this epidemic.

I am surprised that at a time when Arab and Gulf countries are occupied with several less important issues, I find such a crime is not widely discussed and is neglected and absent from the media. People should be aware of the seriousness of this offense and how to deal with it. The annual report by the US State Department on 'Trafficking in Human Beings for 2016' lists several crimes under trafficking, such as prostitution, human organ trade, enslavement of individuals as a result of poverty, begging and forced labor of children. A number of Arab countries are included in the report, with Yemen an exception because of a lack of sufficient and reliable data due to the turmoil there. According to the report, women and children in Yemen are most vulnerable to human trafficking.

I think that the report focused on the spread of trafficking in people in troubled countries or conflict areas and war zones, but I see that even countries outside the conflict are subjected to this crime. Today's children and teenagers are the biggest users of the Internet and social media, talking about and discussing what they want without the guidance or knowledge of parents, and may become victims of traders in human organs and white slavery.

Kuwait has established a shelter for female victims of human trafficking. Work is ongoing for the establishment of a shelter for men too, but we often see this crime as harmful only to women and children. The Kuwaiti official said that it tries to maintain close relations with international organizations to implement anti-trafficking programs, stressing the keenness of the ministry of interior to participate in meetings related to control this crime.

I still believe public awareness is essential here, because people may not know what is trafficking in human beings and how to deal with this issue in the event of such an attempt. There are real efforts to combat this scourge in society, but we have to realize that it is not only the interior ministry's responsibility, but a shared one. The ministries of education and information must be involved in raising awareness, especially for school kids and teenagers. I trust this is a good achievement compared to many Arab countries that need to wake up to this threat.

News in brief

PM vows successful 'Gulf 23'

KUWAIT: His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that Kuwait is doing its best to ensure the success of the Gulf football cup (Gulf 23) due in Kuwait from December 22, 2017 to January 5, 2018. His Highness the Prime Minister made the remarks in a phone call from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee Anas Al-Saleh. During the phone conversation, His Highness the Prime Minister inquired about preparations and arrangements for the championship, emphasizing that all relevant obstacles should be wiped out. — KUNA

Women in army

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah underscored the significance of developing the army's units and sectors in line with His Highness the Amir's 2035 vision. Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah made the remark while receiving well-wishers who congratulated him on Thursday on having been given the defense portfolio. He also emphasized that it is important to pay much attention to military scientific research in order to upgrade the army's combat efficiency, the Ministry of Defense said in a press release. The minister called for enabling the civil society to get involved in the military philosophy with military institutions to address looming challenges and crises, while noting that the "women's role should not be ignored." In this context, he pointed to serious objective studies aiming at allowing women to work side by side with men in the national military service. — KUNA

GCC Electric Grid

RIYADH: Gulf Cooperation Council Electric Grid has signed on Friday a memorandum of understanding with Saudi National Power Academy (NPA) to enhance cooperation by investing in the commercial marketing of the training courses provided by the academy. The MoU was signed by Electric Grid Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ahmad Al-Ibrahim and NPA Executive Director Ahmad Al-Essa. The MOU aims to develop the combined work between the GCC grid and NPA, to achieve human development and increase efficiency. — KUNA

Metro transport system
expected to finish in 2019

Project creates over 1,500 job opportunities

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Official statistics issued by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development showed that the total estimated cost of building the metro transport system - one of the development plan projects included in the 2035 vision - will be KD 3.46 billion. Statistics also showed that 11 percent of the project has been completed and that it is expected to be finished in 2019. Further, the sources explained that the project will be done through the public private partnership (PPP) system to provide an integrated transport system that would facilitate public transport within Kuwait City.

In addition, the council's report revealed that the main aims of the project include providing over 1,500 job opportunities, reducing traffic congestions as the metro would have a rush hour capacity of 19,000 passengers, and reducing expats' use of private transport as 90 percent of them are expected to use it. The project's goals also include developing the social and commercial complexes surrounding its stops, reducing the number of private vehicle users, reducing traffic accidents, and reducing air pollution resulting from vehicle exhaust fumes. In addition, the project would contribute in building Kuwait's share of the GCC metro project, encouraging the private sector to participate in development projects and making use of the private sector experiences in a way that would ultimately benefit the local economy.

Marginal labor

Kuwait University political sciences professor Dr Hailah Al-Mukaimi said Kuwait's demography is linked to the state's strategic thinking, adding that strategies need to change from time to time, especially when statistics show that 72 percent of the expats in Kuwait are marginal laborers. Speaking at a seminar titled 'Kuwait's Demography' held at the Social Sciences College, Mukaimi said Kuwait has an ambitious strategy including the 2035 vision and the Silk Road project. She added that much has to be done to resolve demographic imbalances, especially in terms of unemployment. "Do we have real or fake unem-

ployment?" she wondered, demanding rethinking educational curricula.

Social sciences professor Dr Yaqoub Al-Kandari said demography should be viewed in relation to national security and development. He explained that national security means getting rid of fears that threaten individuals' social lives, which calls for more efforts by state officials and official bodies to provide social stability and welfare. "Security plays a great role in achieving any society's development," he underlined, noting that security threats, economic stability and cul-

Further, Kandari said according to the 2011 census, Kuwait's population comprised of 3,085,635 expats and 1,351,955 citizens; ie 64.4 percent expats. He added that expat manpower has multiplied 5.4 times in the period between 1957 and 1996, and that the majority of them were illiterate and those with low qualifications - at 72 percent. "The problem does not lie in expat workers - but rather in the fact that the majority of them are marginal," he concluded.

Smuggling foiled

Iraqi border security announced foiling an attempt to smuggle drugs into Kuwait through the Safwan border exit in Basra, said security sources, noting that the drugs had been hidden in a truck coming to Kuwait.

Social aid

Statistics issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) showed that the total sums collected from citizens who had unlawfully received social aid in the period starting with the fiscal year 2013-2014 until now is KD 4,887 million; ie 18.3 percent of the total unlawfully paid sums of KD 26,727,000. Informed sources added that the new sums in the fiscal year 2017-2018 totaled KD 9,831,000 and that only KD 442,000 was collected.

Legal proceedings

A proposed amendment of the legal proceedings law number 80/1980, namely article 153, has been listed on Tuesday's parliamentary session's agenda after the proposal was approved by the legislative affairs committee. The committee explained that the suggested amendment aims to double the grace given to file a contest at the court of cassation against verdicts made by the court of appeal from 30 to 60 days.

The committee said after consultation with relevant bodies, the ministry of justice stated that the period of 30 days is not enough for indicted individuals to get a copy of the verdict and study it prior to contesting it before the court of cassation, which was seconded by the Supreme Judicial Council, which only suggested extending the period to 40 days.

Imam, muezzin
held for fight

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Police announced yesterday that an imam and muezzin were sent to the Public Prosecution for investigations in a fight involving the two and multiple other suspects reported recently. In his statements to police, the Lebanese imam said that the muezzin stormed his apartment in a Sabah Al-Salem building along with other persons, then attacked him and his two sons aged 16 and 15. The muezzin, Egyptian, admitted engaging in a fight with the imam, saying that it was sparked by a verbal dispute, but denied allegations that he was joined by others in the brawl. Police arrested a number of people suspected of being involved in the fight, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said in a statement.

Missing family found

Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) said firemen found a family missing in the Salmi desert. The family of five was reported missing, and Salmi fire station men responded and began a search. Two hours later, firemen found the mother and her two daughters walking, then an hour later the father and the third daughter were found in their car. All were in good health.

Helicopter received

Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for operations affairs Maj Gen Hatem Al-Sayegh, accompanied by Acting Director General of the Central Operations Directorate Col Ahmad Al-Ateeqi and Director of Police Aviation Wing Col Salem Jassem Al-Shihab, witnessed the arrival of the second AS-365N3 helicopter to join the police aviation fleet. The craft arrived at Nawaf Al-Ahmad Airbase, piloted by Col Bashar Al-Musaileem, in a journey that took four days from France. Sayegh said the craft has the ability to monitor roads from three kilometers and carry out backup missions for police men, in addition to rescue and assistance.

Deportee detained

Residency detectives arrested a European woman of Arab origin for attempting to enter the country despite being deported by criminal detectives. She obtained a new passport to be able to get an entry visa at the airport without a fingerprint, but was later caught and sent to the forensics department. Her fingerprints were taken and she was discovered to have been deported several times.

Fake cops caught

Three citizens were arrested in Farwaniya for posing as detectives and robbing expats. A security source said Farwaniya patrols had three persons under surveillance in Hasawi as they entered a building, but when they saw the police, they escaped on foot, but were caught. They confessed to robbing expats. They were also found to be ex-convicts in theft and drugs cases.

Detention extended

A judge extended the detention of a citizen who attacked an Egyptian, and asked he be brought to him after two weeks. The judge charged the suspect with causing severe harm to the victim Waheed Mahmoud, but the suspect denied it, saying he was defending himself. The prosecution will start investigations next week.

72% expats are
marginal
laborers

tural invasion pose local challenges.

Kandari added that by reviewing the nationalities of those involved in crimes as per Ministry of Interior (MoI) statistics, expats were a majority in a number of cases, especially in drug trafficking, while Kuwaitis are a majority in terms of drug abuse and possession. He said the total number of crimes committed by citizens in 2010 was 755 compared to 615 committed by expats. He also noted that 150 citizens committed drug trafficking crimes compared to 278 by expats in the same year, which shows that expats procure and traffic in drugs, while citizens are only users. In addition, Kandari said governmental instability played a role in demographic imbalances, explaining that 15 cabinets had been formed since 2006, and the maximum term of relevant ministers was insufficient to tend to the problem, as the maximum term at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) was three years, seven in the housing ministry and six in the ministry of planning.

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Local

Zain showcases its latest services and solutions for entrepreneurs

As part of its platinum sponsorship of 'Start A Business'

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, participated in the opening ceremony of 'Start A Business' exhibition as part of its platinum sponsorship and in collaboration with its strategic partner Cisco. The exhibition was held at Kuwait International Fair - Mishref under the patronage and attendance of the Assistant Undersecretary of Companies and Commercial Licenses at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ahmad Al-Faris.

Zain's support to the event came as part of its strategy to dedicate more efforts into supporting and empowering Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, as well as take part in initiatives that contribute to infusing creativity within the entrepreneurial community through partnering with entities that aim at developing it. Through its dedicated booth and in collaboration with its strategic partner Cisco, Zain showcased its latest services and solutions for entrepreneurs visiting the exhibition. These services were specifically designed to meet the needs of SME owners, including Zain's Hosted Collaboration Solution (HCS),

cloud-based collaboration services, as well as industry-leading voice and video, mobility, messaging and presence services.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in supporting the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Small-Office and Home-Office business (SOHO) segments, especially that Zain is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. The company's participation showcased its keenness in developing the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community.

'Start a Business' exhibition mainly aimed at encouraging promising entrepreneurs to enhance and better shape their businesses by bringing them together with the biggest service providers in Kuwait under one roof. The event featured various ministries, business funding and investment companies, as well as new start-up needs providers such as marketing agencies, graphic designers, food suppliers, industrial suppliers, training providers, and more.



Exhibition held in partnership with Cisco



KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of Companies and Commercial Licenses at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ahmad Al-Faris poses with Zain's officials at the company's booth in the exhibition.

KFH supports students' graduation projects

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) took part in sponsoring 35 graduation projects for students of College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, as part of KFH efforts to encourage academic and scientific innovations of Kuwaiti students, and in line with the bank's social responsibility.

KFH is considered as the major supporter of College of Engineering and Petroleum students' graduation projects for over seven years. This confirms KFH's

interest in the youth and students segment as well its keenness to support their activities and participate in fairs and events that would highlight these activities and the latest updates thereon.

KFH's support to students of College of Engineering and Petroleum stems from its awareness of the importance of this college since its graduates work in the most vital economic sector in Kuwait; especially that this college includes various sections of engineering that can boost development in all fields. Moreover, KFH firmly believes that students are the real assets of Kuwait, yet an essential pillar for the comprehensive development.

Meanwhile, graduation projects owners applauded KFH's continuous support and praised its keenness to participate in their activities and events which empowers and motivates them, yet underlines bank's significant role in assuming the social responsibility.

NBK attracted 258 Kuwaiti graduates in 2017

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has recruited 258 Kuwaiti graduates of both genders during 2017 as part of its commitment to providing distinctive career opportunities to ambitious young Kuwaitis.

"The development of human talent remains a top priority for NBK," said Emad Ahmed Al-Ablani, NBK Group General Manager-Human Resources. "NBK maintains its position as a major national employer in the private sector. In 2017, NBK hired 258 Kuwaiti citizens. This con-

firms NBK's full support of government efforts to employ young national cadres in the private sector and develop the human capital of Kuwait."

Ablani added "NBK continued in 2017 to invest in its employees to develop their skill sets and expand their knowledge base. We also strengthened our partnership with leading universities and academic institutions to organize many of the high level training programs to prepare the next generation of bankers - the promising young leaders."

Ablani said: "NBK is committed to continuously motivate its employees through creating an ideal work environment and fostering team-work spirit, setting NBK apart as a result of the numerous initiatives and programs that it has been implementing for decades."

"We believe that our people are our most valuable resource and to that end we have

implemented numerous professional training programs to continue developing our employees while focusing our recruitment efforts on hiring the country's best assets," noted Ablani.

Aiming at developing the skills of young Kuwaitis, NBK offers several training and developing programs including NBK Academy, Shabab Program, Summer Internship Program and the NBK High Fliers Program. NBK also organizes Executive Training Programs in line with the bank's commitment to developing and investing in its key resource and human capital.

NBK training programs are parts of a continuous process to develop and grow young talents. The initiative provides the trainees with the right environment in which they have the opportunity to increase their understanding on the theoretical, technical and practical functionalities of various Major Banking Units.



KUWAIT: KFH representative pose with some graduation projects' owners.



KUWAIT: NBK's Executive Management pose with a group of new recruits.

Dirt pitches still attracting football lovers

KUWAIT: Dirt pitches spreading all over neighborhoods in Kuwait are still attracting large numbers of football lovers, despite the availability of stadiums and equipped

fields. Major sport clubs usually send scouts in search of young talents playing on these pitches, allowing them to join the clubs and develop their skills. —KUNA



KIB organizes awareness event for autism

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) partnered up with Artspace art studio and cafe to organize a unique initiative at Commons Cafe, which aimed at raising awareness about autism and providing guidance on how to cope with the disorder. This initiative began several months ago at Artspace studios across different locations in Kuwait; where multiple art canvases were created with the intent of being combined to create the world's longest canvas at a staggering 11.4 meters, which is set to be nominated for entry into the Guinness World Records within the next three months.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia said: "KIB remains committed to participating in various events that share its mission of supporting awareness programs and social initiatives, particularly ones that focus on serving diverse segments of the local community. We believe that this initiative educates people, in addition to promoting awareness about those diagnosed with autism and their role as integral members of the community, shedding the light on the importance of accepting others' differences. The initiative also focuses on the importance of true

community inclusion and nurturing the abilities and talents of people with autism, given that every person in society possesses their own unique set of skills and can serve their country in their own individual way."

This latest awareness initiative saw the participation of people of all different ages from across Kuwait, who all created their works of art on five meter pieces of canvas. All the participating art pieces will be combined to create the world's longest artwork, which will then be submitted for entry into the Guinness Book of World Records. Najia

further added that the initiative brought out a strong sense of collaboration and community amongst the participants, who all worked together in the hopes of achieving this record-breaking accomplishment, and demonstrating that real change can happen through the combined efforts and passion of members of the community.

It serves to note that through its leading social responsibility program, KIB always strives to participate in initiatives and activities that aim at catering to the needs of all segments of the local community.



Local

KIPIC: No delay in Al-Zour Refinery project; work proceeding by leaps and bounds

KPC and KIPIC boards on field visit to Al-Zour Complex project



KUWAIT: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has announced that work at Al-Zour Refinery, one of the world's largest, is proceeding by leaps and bounds, saying that achievement rate in the project has hit 45 percent. The company staunchly denied delay in any of the Five Packages of the Refinery project, which is slated to be completed by the end of 2019, in line with schedule.

Prompted by the great importance of such projects, which are witnessing unprecedented acceleration of work, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Boards of Directors have paid a field visit to inspect work and check the achievement rate at Al-Zour Refinery's Five Packages, as well as the LNG Import Facilities.

KPC's CEO Nizar Al-Adsani hoped that the initial units of the Refinery would start operations, as planned, in May 2019. KIPIC's CEO Hashem Sayed Hashem said that the rate of achievement at Al-Zour Refinery has hit 45 percent, and 21 percent at the LNG Import Facilities.

This is not the first visit by the KPC's board to follow up progress and the advanced phases of work at KIPIC's projects, Adsani said. He voiced hope that the initial units at Al-Zour Refinery would be operated in May 2019. "These projects are part of KPC's 2030 Strategy to enhance growth in the refining and manufacturing sectors,"

Quantum shift
Zour Refinery is one of KPC's largest projects at present, and together with the Petrochemicals Complex (PRIZe), will lead to a quantum shift in transformative Industries to diversify sources of income. KIPIC is the first company in Kuwait to achieve refining-petrochemical integration, the KPC's CEO noted, hoping more companies would follow suit. Adsani said that such field visits offer KPC's board the opportunity to be up to date with progress of work, and to follow up readiness to operate the Refinery in 2019.

KIPIC's Chairman Hamza Bakhsh said that it was the third visit for the company's Board of Directors to the projects. "This time it was a joint one with the KPC board, which gave us further support. In fact, success of such a tremendous sophisticated project is impossible without KPC backing," he stressed.

Hashem said that the visit to Al-Zour Complex included Al-Zour Refinery and the LNG import Facilities. "We have toured the five packages of the Refinery," he added, pointing

out that despite challenges, "work is proceeding in line with schedule. It is one of the largest projects in the region and the world." "We inspected work closely and saw progress on the ground. Hopefully, the achievement rate will continue so that the project can be completed on time," Hashem said.

According to KIPIC's CEO, the achievement rate in Al-Zour Refinery has hit nearly 45 percent, and 21 percent at the LNG Import Facilities. Hashem praised KPC's close follow-up of KIPIC's projects, which "gives incentive to officials in charge."

Mega projects

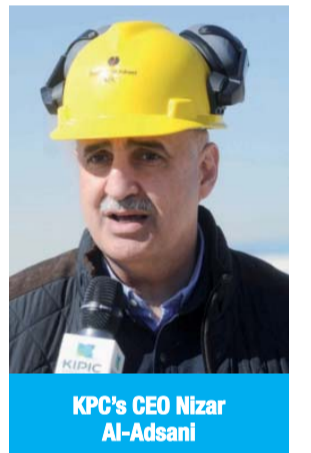
Member of KPC's Board of Directors Samie Fahad Al-Rasheed said it was his first field visit to KIPIC's projects. "I had a full idea on the projects, but when you see it in reality, one realizes their huge size and sophistication. They are mega projects, and Kuwait will reap up their fruits," Rasheed added. He stressed KPC's regular follow-up of reports on progress of work in terms of schedule, and aspired efficiency, and pointed out that prime attention is paid to the safety

of workers and contractors.

KPC's Board Member Khalid Saleh Bu-Hamra said that he was amazed how work proceeded in the projects. "I visited the site a year ago, and it was then just desert. Now, mega projects are being carried out," he added. "No doubt such projects will add to Kuwait and the pleasure of the Kuwaiti people, he said. "KPC follows up the projects to check how they will achieve the targeted economic return, and the opportunity they could offer for the training and qualifying Kuwaiti youth," Bu-Hamra noted.

"These are enormous projects that require support by all officials," KPC's Board Member Abdulmalek Al-Gharaballi said. He voiced pleasure that some of the Kuwaiti "elite" are in charge of the implementation of the projects.

The achievement rate varies from one package to another, yet generally it is in line with the set timeframe, he added. "The projects are expected to achieve great economic benefits, for the good of Kuwait," he stated.



KPC's CEO Nizar Al-Adsani

Project to be completed by end of 2019



KNPC honors National Guards



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) honored a Kuwait National Guards' division for their efforts in securing its fuel depots in Sabhan.

Tunisian FM: Kuwait to actively advocate Arab, Islamic issues at UNSC

BELGRADE: Kuwait's two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, which begins as of January 2018, will help advocate the Arab and Muslim issues, with Jerusalem on top, Tunisia's Foreign Minister Khemis Al-Jahnawi said. Speaking on the sidelines of his visit to Serbia on Friday, Jahnawi stressed Kuwait's leading and effective role on the Arab scene, referring to its tireless efforts to push "brothers in the Gulf" to overcome their differences through dialogue. Tunisia has always welcomed the constructive role of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

Al-Sabah, who has perpetually been a 'voice of reason and wisdom,' he said.

Meanwhile, the Tunisian chief diplomat said that the stance adopted by the extraordinary Islamic summit in Istanbul, Turkey, Wednesday, has displayed resolute and determination by participant states rejecting any unilateral move on Jerusalem. Jerusalem has had a notable legal status in place since 1947, Jahnawi pointed out.

The city has its great importance not only for Palestinians or Arabism but also for the world's Muslims and Christians, he noted. Jerusalem's future has to be determined through talks among the relevant states and not through a unilateral move, he stressed.

In the meantime, Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic reaffirmed his country's stance in support of an everlasting and just political solution between the Palestinians and the Israelis. —KUNA



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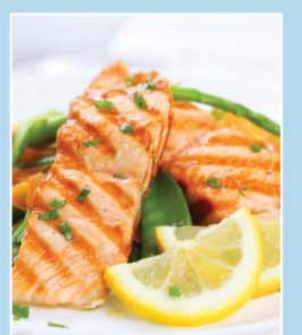
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Earthquake hits Indonesia's Java

Austrian conservatives bring far right into government

Page 8

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BANI WALID, Libya: African migrants prepare food at a Safe House in the town of Bani Walid, on the edge of the desert 170 kilometers southeast of the Libyan capital Tripoli. For migrants who escape torture and starvation at the hands of people traffickers, a 'Safe House' in an oasis town offers a rare commodity in Libya: shelter and medical care. —AFP

Libya town offers migrants rare 'Safe House'

2-hectare plot set aside to bury migrants' corpses

BANI WALID: For migrants who escape torture and starvation at the hands of people traffickers, a "Safe House" in an oasis town offers a rare commodity in Libya: shelter and medical care. Bani Walid, on the edge of the desert 170 kilometers southeast of the capital Tripoli, is a transit point on the way to the coast and perilous boat journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe. With the old green flags of Muammar Gaddafi's regime fluttering in the wind, time appears to have stood still in what was one of its last bastions before he was toppled and slain in the 2011 revolution.

The basic housing consists of rooms made of concrete bricks built around a central courtyard in the industrial zone of Bani Walid, a town outside the control of Libya's UN-backed government in Tripoli. Amara, a 30-year-old from Mali, is one of the lucky ones. "There were three of us..." he said, hesitating to hold back the tears before telling of how the other two died of starvation in one of the jails run by trafficking gangs extorting money from desperate migrants.

"We told them we had no money to pay, so they only gave us food one day out of two," said the Malian with a gaunt face behind a full beard. Seated on a breeze-block, Amara was unable to stand up on

legs that bore the scars of eight months of being locked up and tortured. One of his guards, having given up hope of any ransom being paid and taking pity on Amara, decided to let him go before he ended up the same way as his two companions. According to a local official, Bani Walid numbers around 20 illegal detention centers or gathering points of migrants.

'They beat me'

A 28-year-old Nigerian, named Lucky Monday, received treatment from the medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) which makes weekly visits to the shelter appropriately named Safe House. "I was planning to go to Europe so that I can live a better life, but unfortunately in this country... they can take your life at any moment," he said. Lucky was kidnapped by a militia who demanded

\$2,000 to let him go. "They beat me and destroyed my hand. They beat me morning and night," said the Nigerian with his hand in plaster, whose ordeal lasted three months. He finally

came up with the money after asking his family back home to sell a small plot of land he owned and transferring the funds. Behind him was a fellow resident with tuberculosis who was spitting blood into a plastic bottle.

"Rasta, that man needs to be isolated, away from the others, until a doctor comes to examine him," said Salah Ghummaidh of a

local activists group that runs the refuge housing around 400 migrants. Rasta Moraba, a 32-year-old from the Ivory Coast, is a founder of the Safe House. Having arrived in Libya two years ago to work, Rasta came across many migrants robbed of their possessions and left without shelter in the wild by kidnap-

pers. "I decided I had to do something... and I started to organize things here," with help from local residents, said Rasta. "I've seen a lot of things here. I've seen people die. They come here very sick" from torture and abuse.

Cemetery in lunar landscape

Apart from running the Safe House, the "Association for Peace in Bani Walid" has set aside a two-hectare (five-acre) plot for a cemetery to bury migrants' corpses. Between 30 and 40 are found in the area every month, said its chairman, Hatem Atawaijir. "Most have died of hunger, but some of them carry signs of torture," he said. The cemetery is set in a lunar landscape, an arid plot dotted with black volcanic rocks at the end of a stony track some 15 kilometers out of Bani Walid.

Diggers have carved out one-meter-wide (one-yard-wide) trenches, ready for the next anonymous victims to add to the 400 already buried. On a visit to the grim scene, Atawaijir could not control his anger over what he termed the indifference of Libyan authorities and the international community. "Their only concern is to prevent migrants reaching their side of the Mediterranean!" he fumed. —AFP



Trafficking gangs extorting money from migrants

Sonia Gandhi: The power behind the Congress throne

NEW DELHI: Sonia Gandhi stepped down as head of India's opposition Congress party yesterday after an extraordinary odyssey that transformed her from a shy housewife into the country's most powerful politician and a torchbearer for the iconic Gandhi-Nehru dynasty. The Italian-born Gandhi, 71, was thrust into the cauldron of Indian politics after marrying Rajiv Gandhi, scion of India's political first family, in February 1968.

One of three daughters of an Italian building contractor, she arrived in India as a mini-skirt-wearing bride and converted into a sari-clad daughter-in-law, giving up her Italian citizenship for Indian nationality. Her years in the Gandhi household when her strong-willed, autocratic mother-in-law Indira was prime minister gave her a ringside seat to India's turbulent history.

It was Sonia who cradled Indira Gandhi as she lay dying after being shot by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984. She said she "fought like a tigress" to prevent Rajiv, a commercial pilot, from entering politics after his brother Sanjay-Indira's first political heir-died piloting a small plane. After Indira's assassination, Sonia feared politics might mean a violent death for her husband too, a vision that materialized when Rajiv was killed by a Tamil suicide bomber on the campaign trail in 1991. She then led a reclusive existence for six years, raising her two children.

Sense of duty

But in 1998, she accepted the entreaties of Congress leaders to join the political fray and give the party a Gandhi figurehead. A year later she was elected to parliament. In a rare television interview last year she said she had changed her mind "because of a certain duty that I felt towards my mother-in-law and my husband". "I saw them struggle, work day and night to uphold certain values, certain princi-



NEW DELHI: Newly-elected President of the Indian National Congress party Rahul Gandhi kisses his mother and former party President Sonia Gandhi during a ceremony at the party headquarters in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

ples," she said. "When it came to my call, I felt that I was being cowardly not to respond to them." Having been raised in a Roman Catholic family near Turin, she once confessed that before meeting her husband she had "only a vague idea India existed somewhere in the world".

The pair met in Cambridge when Sonia was studying English at a language school and Rajiv was a mechanical engineering student at Trinity College. She said it was "love at first sight". Sonia overcame stagefright to propel Congress to a surprise electoral win over the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in May 2004. She barnstormed the country, addressing huge rallies who shouted "Sonia Gandhi zindabad" - "Long Live Sonia Gandhi". Speaking in Hindi, reading from a Roman text, she

told audiences that her heart was "buried in the soil of this country".

'Inspirational story'

Poised to make history as India's first-foreign born leader, but with Hindu rightwingers threatening mass protests and vowing to hound the "foreigner" out of office, she quietly declined the job of prime minister. She was dubbed "Saint Sonia" by Indian media for giving up leadership of the world's largest democracy, an act that only enhanced the family mystique. But as Congress party president, she remained at the heart of decision-making. Her heavily guarded bungalow at Number 10 Janpath in the Indian capital became as vital an address to visit as the prime minister's sprawling Race Course Road residence. —AFP

Islamic State: What happened to all the foreign fighters?

WASHINGTON: An estimated 40,000 people traveled from around the world to take up arms for the Islamic State group as it occupied territory in Syria and Iraq and declared a caliphate in 2014. A few hundred are believed to still be fighting as IS struggles to survive, having lost most of its territory to campaigns by Western-backed Syrian and Iraqi coalition armies.

But what happened to the rest?

Many thousands were certainly killed in the intense fighting, but US experts believe many have survived, posing a formidable threat going ahead. "The issue is: how many have died? How many are still there and willing to fight? How many have gone elsewhere to fight?" said Seth Jones, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the Rand Corporation.

"How many have given up? I don't think we have a good answer." International counterterrorism groups are putting huge efforts into answering those questions, working hard to name, count and track IS foreign fighters. In France, officials say, around 1,700 people went to Iraq and Syria since 2013 to join IS. Of those, 400 to 450 have been killed, and 250 returned to France. Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on December 8 that about 500 are still in the Iraq-Syria theater, and for them it is now very hard to return to France. But that leaves another 500 whose whereabouts are unknown, many of them with the skills of war, wielding weapons and making bombs.

'One-way ticket'

Terrorism specialist Bruce Hoffman of Georgetown University estimated during a conference Wednesday that "thousands" have escaped the war zone. "Today, some of them are most likely in the Balkans, lying low for the time being, waiting for the opportunity to infiltrate themselves to the rest of Europe," he said. Some have traveled to other jihadist fronts, according to Thomas Sanderson, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Transnational Threats Project.

For example, he said, at least 80 IS fighters from Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen have joined since May the IS-allied Abu Sayyaf insurgents battling government forces in the southern Philippines. Local people in the northern Afghanistan province of Jowzjan have told AFP that French-speaking IS veterans-from France or northern African countries have recently set up camp there. —AFP

International

Ramaphosa, Dlamini-Zuma in tight race to lead S Africa's ruling ANC

Party once led by Mandela now split, tainted by graft

JOHANNESBURG: The African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's only ruler since the end of apartheid, votes this weekend in a race too close to call to replace Jacob Zuma as party leader with the winner also likely to become the next president. The election is perhaps the most pivotal moment for the ANC in its 23 years of power. Scandal and corruption allegations have tainted Zuma's presidency and the party that launched black majority rule under Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nelson Mandela is now deeply divided, its image tarnished at home and abroad.

The ANC will announce Zuma's successor today, concluding a bruising leadership battle that threatens to splinter the 105-year-old liberation movement. The race has been dominated by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, 65, generally favored by financial markets, and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, 68, an ex-cabinet minister, chairwoman of the African Union Commission and Zuma's ex-wife. Zuma, whose term as head of state expires in 2019, is backing Dlamini-Zuma to succeed him.

South Africa's rand firmed more than 2 percent after courts ruled senior officials in two provinces seen as supporting Dlamini-Zuma had been illegally elected and could not attend the conference. Ramaphosa won a majority of the nominations to become leader of the party, but delegates at the Dec. 16-20 conference in Johannesburg are not bound to vote for the candidate their ANC branch nominated, meaning it is unclear if he will actually win. The ANC's National Executive Committee, a decision-making group of senior leaders, met before the conference began and decided that barred delegates could not vote at the conference.

"We don't want to contaminate the conference... They will not vote on any matter," ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe told reporters. ANC Youth League leader Collen Maine, who backs Dlamini-Zuma, said 122

delegates would be prevented from voting at the conference following the ruling by the courts. "That is not significant," Maine said. At the meeting venue, delegates in T-shirts in the gold and green colors of the ANC sang party songs and danced, with many waving party flags while women rent the air with ululations.

Tight contest

To his supporters, Ramaphosa's business success makes him well-suited to the task of turning around an economy grappling with 28 percent unemployment and credit rating downgrades. "Early signs of a win for Cyril Ramaphosa, the more investor-friendly option, have provided support for the rand," John Ashbourne, Africa economist at Capital Economics, said. "But while Ramaphosa is popular among party members, the result will be decided

by political insiders, who may opt for his leftist opponent, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma." Ramaphosa has recently stepped up criticism of Zuma's scandal-plagued government, while Dlamini-Zuma has said her priority is to improve prospects for the black majority. He is expected to be backed by ANC veterans, labor unions and civil society organizations.

In contrast, Dlamini-Zuma is seen as a fierce campaigner against racial inequality whose hostility to big business has rattled investors in South Africa.

"She has not made corruption the only pillar of her campaign, because the most critical issue in South Africa is this huge inequality," said Carl Niehaus, a key member of Dlamini-Zuma's campaign. Growth in Africa's most industrialized economy has been lackluster for the last six years, and the jobless rate is near record levels. Analysts say the ANC leadership battle has made it hard to reform the economy and improve social services. "The outcome is difficult to predict. This creates considerable uncertain-



JOHANNESBURG: Cyril Ramaphosa (center), South Africa's Vice-President and presidential hopeful for the African National Congress presidency, speaks with guests during a presidential gala dinner at the NASREC Expo Centre in Johannesburg, on the eve of South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) 54th National Conference.—AFP

ty that is reflected in significantly increased volatility for the rand," Elisabeth Andreae, analyst at Commerzbank, said in a note.

Zuma scandals

In a move likely to please the ANC rank and file, Zuma announced hours before the conference kicked off that South Africa would raise subsidies to universities to 1 percent of GDP over the next five years from nearly 0.7 percent at present. Speaking at a breakfast of businessmen and politicians at the venue of the ANC conference, Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba said South Africa's government would take "necessary tough decisions" to stabi-

lize public debt and grow the economy.

On Friday evening, Zuma cracked jokes at an ANC dinner and said that leading the party had "been a worthwhile experience", while adding he looked forward to stepping down. He is expected to make a speech to launch the conference. The 75-year-old has denied numerous corruption accusations since taking office in 2009 and has survived several no-confidence votes in parliament. Zuma has faced allegations of undue influence in making cabinet appointments and awarding state tenders to his friends, the Gupta family. Zuma and the Guptas have denied any wrongdoing. "People can't wait to see his back," political analyst Prince Mashele said in a newspaper opinion piece.—Reuters



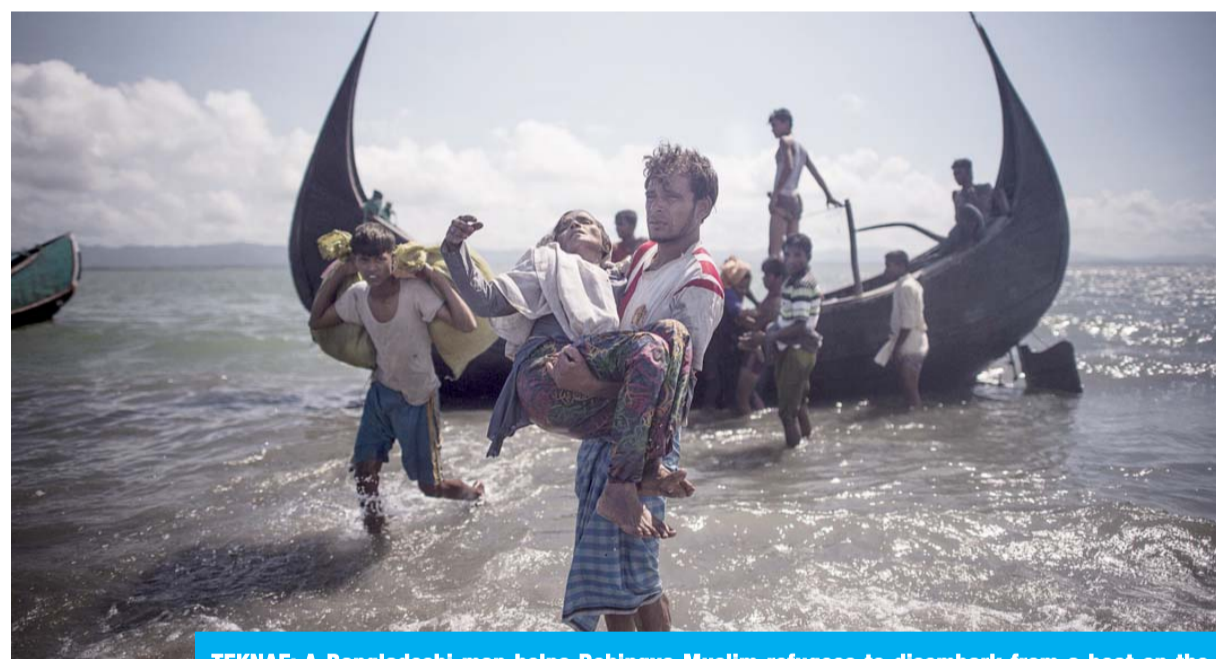
ANC to vote to replace Zuma as party chief

Rohingyas 'rather die' than return to oppression

COX'S BAZAR: Disease, hunger and misery stalk the Rohingya living in Bangladesh's refugee camps but despite the grinding hardship, few are willing to consider the alternative—returning home under a deal struck with Myanmar. The arrangement signed by Myanmar and Bangladesh in November to start repatriating refugees within two months is viewed with deep suspicion and dread by Rohingya still traumatized by the violent expulsion from their homeland. "They make deals, but they won't follow them," said Rohingya refugee Mohammad Syed, who estimated his age at 33. "When we go back, they will torture and kill us again." Their fear is not misplaced.

Doctors Without Borders said Thursday that at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed in the first month of a Myanmar army crackdown on rebels in Rakhine state that began in August. The worst bouts of violence have subsided but Rohingya continue to flee, the UN says. Nearly 650,000 of the Muslim minority have fled across the border into Cox's Bazar district in southeastern Bangladesh since the army campaign began. The UN rights chief said in December the catalogue of abuses—including indiscriminate killings, mass rape and the razing of hundreds of Rohingya villages—contained "elements of genocide".

Myanmar has consistently denied committing atrocities in Rakhine, saying the crackdown was a proportionate response to the Rohingya militants who attacked police posts on August 25, killing around a dozen officials. But rights groups say the conditions are not in place to ensure safe, voluntary and dignified returns, and Rohingya sense danger lurking behind Myanmar's assurances. "It's a trap. They have given such assurances before, and still made our lives hell," said Rohingya woman Dolu, who goes by one name, in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. "I would rather live here. We get food and shelter here, and we can pray freely. We are allowed to live."



TEKNAF: A Bangladeshi man helps Rohingya Muslim refugees to disembark from a boat on the Bangladeshi shoreline of the Naf river after crossing the border from Myanmar in Teknaf.—AFP

Fear of return

The Rohingya have reason to be wary. The persecuted minority has been the target of past pogroms in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which does not recognize the group as a genuine ethnicity and has stripped them of citizenship. Many have no homes left after their villages were torched. Those still living in Rakhine, Myanmar's poorest state, face heavy restrictions on work, travel and access to basic services.

More than 100,000 Rohingya displaced by a 2012 outbreak of violence have been trapped in squalid camps in central Rakhine ever since. Aid groups have warned Myanmar they would boycott any new camps for Rohingya returnees, saying refugees must be allowed to settle in their own homes and not forced into ghetto-like conditions. "They have to recognize us as citizens of the country. They have to give us proper Rohingya identity cards. Only then we will go back," said 25-year-old Rohingya man Aziz Khan at Kutupalong, a gigantic camp in Cox's Bazar. "Otherwise we would rather die here in Bangladesh." Bangladesh has been praised for opening its bor-

ders as waves of Rohingya civilians fled army reprisals and Buddhist mobs. But the government has always maintained that the refugees would one day return, tussling for months with Myanmar over the terms of repatriation deal. Before the latest surge, Bangladesh was already hosting hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled previous waves of persecution. This crisis has put enormous pressure on ordinary Bangladeshis living in Cox's Bazar, where the refugee population has grown four-fold since August.

"It is good news, goodbye to them. It is time they go back to where they belong," said Ehsaan Hossain, a shopkeeper at Cox's Bazar where prices for basic goods has skyrocketed. Others complained about the headache of frequent identity checks and roadside patrols since the Rohingya influx began. But rickshaw driver Mohammad Ali worried his income—which had doubled since the flood of refugees—would slump if the Rohingya suddenly left en masse. "In a way, I will miss them if they leave," the 30-year-old said.—AFP

Growing French ties

Prince Mohammed—widely known by his nickname "MBS"—has presented himself as a champion of moderate Islam as he seeks to modernize Saudi Arabia. Last month he launched a military coalition of 40 Muslim countries, vowing to "pursue terrorists until they are wiped from the face of the earth". And Riyadh was already a member of the US-led anti-jihadist coalition fighting in Iraq and Syria. "Saudi Arabia has an interest both in combating violent jihadi movements and in being seen to do so," said Jane Kinninmont, a senior research fellow at British think-tank Chatham House.

"This isn't entirely new under MBS," she added. "Saudi leaders have been aware of the risks of transnational violent Islamist movements for a long time—especially since 9/11 and since Al Qaeda started to attack Saudi Arabia in 2003." Diplomatic interests are at play too in yielding to French pressure to join the project, Kinninmont said. "France's ties with the Gulf have been growing for years and as the UK prepares to leave the EU, France is likely to become the new best friend of the Gulf states within the EU," she said.—AFP

Sahel force funding shows Saudi 'serious' on terrorism fight

PARIS: Saudi Arabia's hefty donation to a new anti-terror force in west Africa's Sahel region is a conspicuous attempt by Riyadh to show it is serious about fighting extremism, analysts say. The new G5 Sahel force pools troops from Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in an area of desert the size of Europe where extremist groups have been thriving. Money had been a major obstacle to getting it off the ground, meaning Riyadh's pledge of 100 million euros (\$118 million) is a relief for former colonial power France, which has spearheaded the project.

But Saudi-watchers say getting involved also serves twin purposes for Riyadh: countering accusations that it finances extremism, and consolidating influence in a region where it has invested for years. "Fighting terrorism and

Pentagon alarmed by uptick in close calls with Russia planes

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon is voicing growing alarm that the risky flying of Russian pilots in Syria could lead to a mishap—or even the nightmare scenario of a US jet shooting down a Russian warplane. Defense officials this week highlighted several recent close calls with Russian planes, including one Wednesday, when a pair of US F-22s intercepted two Russian jets over a part of Syria in which the Pentagon says they are not meant to be operating. The uptick in incidents comes as remaining operations by the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Syria have shrunk down to an area of only about 15 square miles around Abu Kamal in eastern Syria, by the Iraq border.

Coalition forces are giving air support to local Kurd and Syrian Arab partner troops on the ground as they root out remaining IS fighters east of the Euphrates River. Under a verbal agreement, the Russians, who support President Bashar Al-Assad, are supposed to stay to the west. Lieutenant Colonel Damien Pickart, an Air Force spokesman in the Middle East, outlined a string of instances where Russian fighter jets flew east of the Euphrates without notifying the coalition. On November 15, two US A-10 Warthog ground-attack planes nearly collided head-on with a Russian Su-24 Fencer that passed within only 300 feet of the American planes—a mere whisker in aviation terms.

One A-10 pilot had to "aggressively execute a defensive maneuver to avoid a midair collision," Pickart said in an email to AFP. Then on November 17, two F-22s intercepted an armed Russian Su-24 that flew over coalition and partner forces three times and failed to respond to radio call. "The F-22s intercepted this pilot and were in a position to fire," Pickart said. "Luckily our pilots showed restraint, but given the actions of the Su-24 aircraft could have reasonably been interpreted as threatening to US forces, our pilots would have been well within our rights to engage."—AFP



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International

'Nothing to fear' as Austrian far-right enters government

Kurz and Strache stoke concerns about immigration

VIENNA: Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) was in triumphant mood yesterday after agreeing a coalition deal with the conservatives, capping a year of successes for Europe's nationalist movements. As the parties met to rubber-stamp the accord struck the previous day, Herbert Kickl, the FPÖ's secretary general and Austria's next interior minister, said he had "very, very good feeling". "Nobody has anything to fear," Kickl said, one of six FPÖ ministers in the new government including defense and foreign affairs. Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache, 48, will be vice-chancellor.

The agreement reached by Sebastian Kurz's People's Party (ÖVP) and the FPÖ sets Kurz, 31, up to become chancellor and also the world's youngest leader. Kurz and Strache were to unveil their program yesterday afternoon, with the government likely to be sworn in tomorrow. The ÖVP came first in October snap elections after Kurz—who is known as "wunderwuzzi" or "whizz-kid"—rebranded the formerly staid party as his own personal "movement", promising to get tough on immigration and to lower taxes.



FPOe caps a year of success for nationalist movements

Economy and security

"Our aims are quite clear. We want to ease the tax burden for people, we want to strengthen our economy, which will bolster our social system," Kurz said late Friday. "And first and foremost we want to increase security in our country, including by combating illegal immigration," Kurz told reporters. The anti-immigration FPÖ came third in the election with 26 percent of the vote, which was double the stunning 13 percent notched up by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in elections

the month before. Both Kurz and Strache stoked concerns about immigration following a record influx in 2015, and also took advantage of voter fatigue with the ÖVP's previous "grand coalition" with the Social Democrats (SPÖ). Their success was mirrored in elections elsewhere in Europe this year. Geert Wilders' Freedom Party became the second-largest in the Netherlands, France's National Front was in a runoff for the presidency in May and the AfD entered the Bundestag, re-drawing Germany's political map.

Real power

But the FPÖ is rare in western Europe, having translated its ballot box success into real power. Last year it came close to winning the largely ceremonial presidency. The last time the FPÖ entered government was in 2000 under Joerg Haider, its controversial leader at the time who has since died, in a move which saw Austria briefly ostracized within the European Union. This time though the reaction is likely to be much more muted with the FPÖ seen as having mellowed and with Europe more inured to rightwing parties. Several different groups including the anti-fascist "Offensive against the Right" have said they plan to stage demonstrations on Monday in Vienna. The FPÖ is also ambivalent about the EU but the joint program shows that Kurz has managed to ensure the government will be decidedly pro-European, political analyst Thomas Hofer said. "The European part is very strongly influenced by the ÖVP and it is ruled out that there might be a referendum on Austria's membership of the EU or other international organizations," Hofer told AFP.

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VIENNA: Austria's President Alexander Van der Bellen (left) shakes hands with the Chairman of the Freedom Party (FPÖ), Heinz-Christian Strache (right) during a press conference together with the leader of Austria's conservative People's Party (ÖVP) Sebastian Kurz at the Hofburg in Vienna yesterday.—AFP

'A clear mandate'

"The election gave a clear mandate from the Austrian people to take people's concerns seriously in this country, to listen and to avoid a repeat of the mistakes of recent years," Strache said Friday. "That covers lots of areas—security, illegal immigration and also the tax cuts that are needed... The main thing is the responsibility to represent the people of this wonderful homeland." Kurz and Strache's news conference later was to be held atop the

Kahlenberg hill overlooking Vienna and the Danube river, a location of major symbolic importance for the FPÖ. There, in 1683, a Polish king launched an attack that broke the Ottoman siege of Vienna. Some of Europe's nationalists like the 17th-century Ottoman offensive to the immigration of Muslims in recent years. "They say there is no real relevance but of course at least for the FPÖ it has some relevance with 1683," Hofer said. "The pictures up there will be pretty nice." —AFP

EU leaders fail to narrow east-west gap over migrants

BRUSSELS: EU leaders failed early Friday to narrow the east-west gap over how to deal with migrants coming to Europe and face a big task ahead to reform asylum rules by a deadline of June next year, summit participants said. During more than two hours of what one called "fierce" debate, eastern European leaders stood firm against refugee quotas which the majority adopted in 2015 as a form of solidarity with frontline states Greece and Italy.

The stubborn divide contrasts with broad agreement among the leaders to continue shoring up Europe's external borders through cooperation deals with third countries like Turkey and Libya. "Solidarity cannot exist only in the external dimension, but must also exist in the internal one," German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters following the summit. "Here we still have a lot of work to do. The points of view did not change. But there is a clear task to continue working until June next year," Merkel said.

European Council President Donald Tusk irked some nations when he said in a pre-summit letter that a mandatory quota scheme for relocating refugees from frontline states was "ineffective" and "highly divisive". Eastern European states Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have backed his approach, but Germany and others say the quotas are a necessary way of showing solidarity in the EU. Merkel's 2015 decision to open the doors to one million asylum seekers was blamed by a number of European leaders, particularly Hungary's Viktor Orban, for worsening the migration crisis.

The quotas triggered sharp east-west division when they were adopted at the height of the migrant crisis in 2015 as a way to ease the burden on Italy and Greece, which have had more than 1.5 million people land on their shores in the last three years. The EU has since stalled on plans for a permanent mechanism for future crises, and the leaders of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia made clear their continuing opposition. "The discussion was fierce because the differences of opinion are still wide," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said after the long dinner talks.

"There's no solution on how to find a consensus on the quotas," Rutte said. Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel told reporters afterwards "it is dangerous to think we can do without a permanent mechanism". Before the summit started, the four eastern leaders offered a financial contribution of 35 million euros (\$30 million) to bolster external borders. But Bettel, Rutte and others said the money cannot buy off countries that do their share to admit migrants and refugees. "What Orban is doing is shameful!" Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said at the end of the summit. "If you allow that to happen, the EU becomes a place where each one does his shopping to buy what he likes," Rutte added.

'Decide by majority'

Orban has led eastern opposition to admitting refugees and migrants, saying the region will not be able to integrate them and it will face a security threat, particularly from Muslims. EU sources said there is a "window" to try to bridge the gap over sharing the migrant burden as the bloc has been under less migrant pressure for the last year or so. The June deadline for asylum reform comes as the summer weather makes Mediterranean boat crossings more likely. Italy and Greece have seen sharp declines in migrant arrivals in the last months and year as a result of EU cooperation with Libya and Turkey, but fear future crises. —AFP

May wins Brexit boost, but bigger battles await her

LONDON: After a turbulent few months when some predicted she could be gone by Christmas, British Prime Minister Theresa May finally has some good news with a deal on Brexit—but any reprieve will likely be short-lived. The EU's decision Friday to move to the next stage of negotiations with Britain was a much-needed success for May, whose leadership has been dogged by doubts since a disastrous snap election in June.

The approval followed an 11th-hour deal struck last week by the prime minister and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker on the terms of the divorce, including Britain's financial settlement. It drew rare support from across all sections of May's frequently divided Conservative party, and was agreed despite concerns in the Northern Irish party which props up her minority government. But some key issues were left unresolved, while Britain is yet to set out what it wants from the future relationship with the European Union. Cabinet ministers are due to discuss the subject formally next week. A parliamentary defeat on the eve of the EU summit was a timely reminder of the opposition May faces to her Brexit strategy at home, as the negotiations enter what is likely to be the most challenging phase. "The government has to decide what to ask for in phase two, which is going to be very difficult in itself," said Charles Grant of the Centre for European Reform. "The British government is going to find that whatever it asks for, the EU is going to be tough," he told AFP, adding: "I think there's going to be a massive crisis."

'Formidable operator'

May said the divorce agreement defied the doubters, and described the EU summit as "an important step on the road to delivering a smooth and orderly Brexit". The agreement

had almost collapsed following opposition from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party over the Irish border, sparking warnings about the fragility of May's position and media reports of plots to oust her. May has struggled to assert her authority since losing her parliamentary majority in June, with Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson openly challenging her Brexit strategy at one point. But the deal was made, and despite the splits in her government—and two ministerial resignations over separate scandals last month—public support for May is holding firm. A YouGov survey for The Times this week put approval ratings for her party at 42 percent, one point ahead of the main opposition Labour party.

She may face more trouble within her own party's ranks. Eleven Tory MPs joined with opposition parties on Wednesday to demand that parliament have the final say on the terms of the divorce, a move that has the potential to bind May's hands. But in a welcome move for her on Friday, Tory backbenchers tabled a new amendment to the draft withdrawal legislation on the exact timing of Brexit, which rebels are expected to support and should avert another House of Commons vote loss next week. It proposes allowing ministers the flexibility to amend the date and time of Brexit, which the government wants to fix in law as 2300 GMT on March 29, 2019, but the rebels had opposed.

European leaders had sought to play down May's parliamentary difficulties and hailed her leadership, with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte calling the prime minister a "formidable political operator". Tim Bale, a politics professor at Queen Mary University of London, said that for both Brussels and the factions in the Conservative party, May provides a balance. "European leaders recognize that she is their least worst option—if there were to be leadership contest in Britain they've got no idea who they would get," he said. And at home, as a pragmatic rather than idealistic supporter of leaving the EU, "she is the only alternative for both sides of the Brexit divide in the Conservative Party".

Hard decisions loom

But Bale warned that May's position might not hold indefinitely as Britain prepares to withdraw by March 29, 2019. "Decisions are going to have to be made in this phase, and some people are not going to like these decisions," he



BRUSSELS: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May arrives to attend the first day of a European union summit in Brussels.—AFP

said. May says Britain will quit the EU's single market and customs union, but forge a new "deep and special partnership" with as few barriers to trade as possible. Options include following the model of a recent EU-Canada trade deal, or Norway's membership of the European Economic Area—both of which would be controversial to sections of May's Conservative party. Chuka Umunna, a leading pro-European opposition MP, warned: "The clock is ticking, and we are far away from anything resembling a deal." —AFP

Catalan separatists, in uncharted waters, keep the faith, hope

BARCELONA: Voters like David Hornos drove separatist parties to success in Catalonia's last election in 2015, giving them an absolute majority of seats in the Spanish region's parliament for the first time. But even though the Catalan government failed to achieve independence as promised—and some of its leaders ended up in jail or left the country because of their efforts—he still plans to vote for a separatist party at the elections set for Thursday. "I understand that some may feel disappointed but no one said it would be easy," Hornos, 50, a teacher of Spanish to foreigners in Barcelona said.

"Maybe they should have been more realistic and had more foresight to anticipate the strong reaction from the Spanish government. But I am not going to point the finger at the (separatist) leaders, especially when they are in jail or in exile." Hornos is not alone in sticking by separatist parties. Polls put support for Catalonia's three separatist parties at around 45 percent, down just slightly from the 47.8 percent score in the 2015 election. That would give them 66 to 67 seats in the 135-seat Catalan regional parliament, one short of the absolute majority of 68 seats needed to control the assembly. They won 72 seats in the 2015 election. Madrid ejected Catalonia's regional government and called new elections after the parliament's October 27 declaration of independence—a move no country has recognized. Most of the Catalans who in "good faith believed separatism was possible, continue to believe in it and will take time to react" to the failure of the independence drive, said Joan Botella, dean of politics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The separatist cause has "two million



BARCELONA: People wave Catalan pro-independence 'Estelada' flags during a campaign meeting of 'Junts per Catalonia' - JUNTSXCAT (All for Catalonia) grouping for the upcoming Catalan regional election, in Barcelona.—AFP

supporters and they will not be converted overnight; it is very hard for people to admit they were tricked," he said.

'Economic disaster'

Political science professor Oriol Bartomeus agreed, saying that abandoning support for independence after years of campaigning for the cause, going to rallies and collecting signatures for petitions, would be like "committing harakiri". "If you accept that it was all a lie... that means that everything you did was not worth anything," he said. Backers of separatist parties have a

much rosier view of the state of the Catalan economy in the wake of the separatist crisis, which might help explain their continued support.

Nearly 3,000 companies—including the largest banks, utilities and insurers—have moved their legal headquarters out of Catalonia to other parts of Spain since the banned independence referendum on October 1, and tourist numbers are down. But the "majority" of supporters of Catalonia's three main separatist parties feel the region's economic situation is "good", said Jose Pablo Ferrandiz, a sociologist at the Metroscopia polling firm. —AFP

International

Three dead, 77,000 flee as storm pounds Philippines

Tropical Storm Kai-Tak triggers landslides

TACLOBAN: At least three people were killed and tens of thousands were driven from their homes by floods as Tropical Storm Kai-Tak pounded the eastern Philippines yesterday, cutting off power and triggering landslides, officials said. Kai-Tak, packing gusts of up to 110 kilometers an hour, hit the country's third-largest island Samar in the afternoon and tore through a region devastated by Super Typhoon Haiyan four years ago, the state weather service said.

Local officials reported three deaths on neighboring Leyte island—a two-year-old boy who drowned in the town of Mahaplag, a woman buried by a landslide and another person who fell into a flooded manhole in Ormoc city. Samar and Leyte, with a combined population of about 4.5 million, had borne the brunt of Haiyan in 2013, which left more than 7,350 people dead or missing.

Bus driver Felix Villaseran, his wife and four children hunkered down in their two-storey house in the Leyte city of Tacloban along with 11 relatives whose homes were flooded from incessant rain. "We have yet to shake off our phobia. I hope to God we don't have a repeat of that," Villaseran, who lost 39 cousins in the Haiyan onslaught, told AFP by telephone. "My missus stockpiled on groceries before the storm hit, but since we also have to feed these three other families we're now running low on food," he added.

77,000 evacuated

Military trucks drove through rising floodwaters on

Samar and Leyte to rescue trapped residents, with more than 77,000 people now in evacuation centers, local officials said. Strong winds toppled trees and power pylons, knocking out power throughout the region while floods, small landslides and rock falls blocked roads and buried some homes, local officials and witnesses said. Farmland in the mainly rural region was also under water, while seven people were injured by landslides and flying objects, the regional civil defense office said in a report. A spokeswoman for the national government's National Disaster Risk

Reduction and Management Council told AFP it was trying to confirm reports of two other deaths from landslides and floods on the islands of Biliran and Dinagat. "It was like a flashback again for residents of Tacloban city," its vice mayor Sambo Yaokasin told Manila television station ABS-CBN by telephone, referring to the Haiyan disaster.

The station broadcast images of flooded streets and corrugated iron roofing sheets flying off homes. "Nearly half the villages here are flooded," Marcelo Picardal, vice governor of Eastern Samar province told ABS-CBN in a telephone interview. Three other people were missing in Ormoc after being swept away by floods yesterday, city mayor Richard Gomez told CNN Philippines television in an interview. "We need a lot of water and a lot of blankets," Gomez added, citing widespread flooding that may have contaminated the tap water system of the city of 200,000 people. The state weather service said more heavy rain was



BORONGAN, Philippines: Villagers wade through a flooded street in Brgy Calingatnan, Borongan in central Philippines yesterday. A boy drowned and tens of thousands were driven from their homes by floods as Tropical Storm Kai-Tak pounded the eastern Philippines, cutting off power and triggering landslides. —AFP

expected in the eastern Philippines in the coming hours with Kai-Tak forecast to slice across the rest of the central Philippines over the weekend. Ferry services on the storm's path were suspended due to rough seas, the civil defense office in the area said. About 20 typhoons or

weaker storms either make landfall in the Philippines or reach its waters each year, bringing annual misery and death and consigning millions of survivors to perennial poverty.—AFP



Woman buried by a landslide; Two-year-old boy drowned

Bustling Beijing migrant area turns into ghost town

BEIJING: The narrow alleyways of the Beijing migrant neighborhood were once crammed with men cooking on outdoor stoves, women hanging clothes to dry and young children playing games. Now dead leaves litter the pavement as a bitterly cold wind blows through empty lanes after authorities swept through the area in a controversial city-wide eviction campaign. It is one of the myriad migrant neighborhoods in the capital of 23 million people that have been turned into ghost towns as the government shuts down and demolishes illegal or unsafe structures.

Authorities stepped up the controversial expulsions last month, arguing that they have to clear dangerous buildings after a fire killed 19 people. A blaze in another migrant area killed five people on Wednesday. The harsh tactics sparked uproar as rural migrants who had been seeking a better life were suddenly given hours to vacate homes in the shivering cold. When AFP journalists visited Houchang Cun—"the village behind the factories"—in the summer, residents in one densely populated section had been warned that evictions were looming. This is the scene of desolation the reporters found when they recently returned to the single-storey brick homes.

Taps off

In August, shirtless men washed vegetables, brushed their teeth or cleaned themselves in the only facility with running water in the urban "village". Today, litter is strewn around the empty space under its tin roof. The tables that people used to place their bowls or toiletries on are gone. Even the silvery spigots have been ripped off the walls.



BEIJING: Combo photo shows a file picture (left) of a woman hanging a t-shirt up to dry and another picture showing the same area after the residents were evicted and their doors sealed off by authorities. —AFP

Movers moved

Many of the residents were movers. Zhang Zhanrong, a mother in her early 30s, ran her own moving business. She lived in a one-room dwelling with her husband and son. Wearing a blue dress, she served dinner on a small table, next to a bed and tall armoire. The mattress now rests diagonally against the wall while the makeshift stove which she shared with her neighbor outside their brick homes is gone.

Sealed doors

As the homes were so small, much of life took place outside in the lanes whose entrances have been closed with concrete and barbed wire. A large grease stain is left on a brick wall where a woman used to cook meals outside her home. A poster of Chairman Mao Zedong surrounded by officials that hung on a wooden storage space is gone. An abandoned sink lies on the pavement in front of a home where a woman once hung shirts while another woman washed clothes in a green plastic bucket. A nail remains on a wall where a woman used to hang garlic. Purple and

flowery sheets are still draped over some entrances in the deserted alleyway. A mop still hangs from a window next to where a man held his baby in his arms months ago. The green and brown doors are all shut and bear an official white seal with different dates of evictions in November.

'No use to protest'

One couple remained behind, spending days sitting on blankets on a corrugated metal rooftop. "There's no heating where we are so it's warmer out here in the sun," the husband said, declining to give his name, on a below-freezing day. The man plans to leave Beijing after he receives his last paycheck from his job as a maintenance worker. Many residents hailed from the same hamlet in Pengshui, a mountainous region in southwestern Chongqing province, and relocated to Beijing to work menial labor jobs or to start small businesses. Evictees said they received no compensation and feel forced to return to a place where they have no way of making a living. "There is no use to protest," said a woman surnamed Wang. "It will all be gone sooner or later."—AFP

Strong quake hits Indonesia's Java, kills three

JAKARTA: A powerful magnitude 6.5 earthquake struck the island of Java in Indonesia just before midnight on Friday, with authorities reporting three deaths and damage to hundreds of buildings. The US Geological Survey said the epicenter of the quake was located at a depth of 92 km, about 52 km southwest of Tasikmalaya.

Indonesia's national disaster management agency said the quake activated early tsunami warning systems in the south of Java, prompting thousands to evacuate from some coastal areas, but no tsunami was detected. Tremors were felt in central and west Java. Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, a spokesman for the disaster agency, said in a press briefing yesterday three people had been killed, seven injured and hundreds of buildings damaged, including schools, hospitals, and government buildings in West and Central Java.

Dozens of patients had to be helped to safety from a hospital in Banyumas and were given shelter in tents, he said. He posted on his Twitter page photos of people scouring collapsed buildings. The quake swayed buildings for several seconds in the capital Jakarta. Some residents of high rise apartment buildings in central Jakarta quickly escaped their apartments, local media reported. Indonesia's meteorology and geophysics agency said a magnitude 5.7 quake yesterday also struck south of West Java. —Reuters



CENTRAL JAVA: Hospital staff inspect the damages caused by an earthquake in Banyumas yesterday. — AFP

Rahul extends family grip on Congress party

NEW DELHI: India's Rahul Gandhi took over yesterday as president of the main opposition Congress, becoming the sixth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to head the party that has ruled the country for much of its independent history. Fireworks erupted over the party headquarters in New Delhi drowning out the voice of his mother Sonia Gandhi as she handed over the reins of power to her 47-year-old son, who now faces the tough task of ousting the right-wing government of premier Narendra Modi.

Rahul, wearing a long flowing white kurta, smiled and waved from the dais adorned with posters of his late grandmother and father, former prime ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. "I accept this position with the deepest humility, with the knowledge that I will always be walking in the shadow of giants," Gandhi said in his acceptance speech which quickly became an attack on Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "The Congress party took us into the 21st century but the prime minister today is taking us backwards to the medieval times where people are butchered for who they are, beaten for what they believe and killed for what they eat," he said.

The Modi government has been under fire in the past several months for an increase in inter-faith violence,



NEW DELHI: Indian supporters of the Congress Party shout slogans after the party named Rahul Gandhi president, outside Congress headquarters in New Delhi. — AFP

including attacks by vigilantes largely targeting Muslims for allegedly consuming beef or killing cows which are sacred to Hindus. Gandhi was elected unopposed to take over from his mother Sonia who has been at the helm since 1998 following the assassination of her husband Rajiv. She helped the Congress win the general elections in 2004 and 2009.

But the party was swept out of office by the BJP in 2014 and is now in a fight to win back support before a general election which must be held by 2019. Gandhi became Congress vice-president in 2013 and led the campaign for the 2014 election, in which the party recorded its worst-ever showing as it lost power to Modi's BJP. Since then, the party has lost polls in many key states to the

BJP, exposing Gandhi to further criticism. "Personal attacks on my son have made him fearless. I am sure he will lead the party with exemplary courage," Sonia said to loud applause from party supporters who arrived in busloads for the ceremony. Slogans of "long live Rahul" were shouted as hundreds of supporters danced and burst firecrackers.

Gandhi will confront his first test as Congress leader this week when election results emerge from Gujarat, Modi's home state, which the BJP has ruled for over two decades. He has led the Congress campaign for the election, winning the backing of some influential caste groups who say they have been left behind by an economic boom in the prosperous western state. —AFP

News in brief

Mammoth skeleton sells for €550,000

LYON: The nearly intact skeleton of a woolly mammoth that lived at least 10,000 years ago was sold at auction for more than a half million euros yesterday in the southeastern French city of Lyon. The giant skeleton—mounted in a forward walking position with its enormous curved tusks with tones of caramel and ivory facing slightly downward—was bought by the chief executive of a French waterproofing company whose logo is of the prehistoric mammal. "We are going to display it in the lobby of our firm," said Pierre-Etienne Bindschedler, the CEO of Soprema. "I think we have enough room". Bindschedler bought the piece for €548,250 (\$645,000) at the Aguttes auction house. One of the largest specimens ever found, the mammoth skeleton measures a little over three metres in height and was estimated to sell for at least €450,000 because of its "fine condition", remarkable because it retained 80 percent of its original bones. Experts believe the animal weighed about 1,400 kilos.

Australia gay marriages

SYDNEY: Australia's first gay weddings took place yesterday, ushering in a new era after the country's marriage equality law came into effect this month. The historic reforms were given royal assent on December 8, the final step in a process that began with a national postal vote in September. There was supposed to be a 30-day waiting period after couples registered to marry, with the first weddings expected on January 9. But some sought an exemption due to their circumstances, and the first ceremonies went ahead yesterday, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. "Australia's first legal same-sex marriage has just taken place. Congratulations Amy and Lauren," Equal Marriage Rights Australia announced on its Facebook page. Fairfax Media said Lauren Price, 31, and Amy Laker, 29, solemnized their vows in Sydney, while Melbourne couple Amy and Elise McDonald—who coincidentally have the same surname—tied the knot two hours later.

Canadian-Iranian sentenced

WASHINGTON: A Canadian-Iranian man was sentenced Friday to 32 months in prison for violating US sanctions against Iran. Between 2014 and 2016, Ali Soofi, 63, "conspired to export military items from the United States to Iran, both directly and through transshipment to intermediary countries, without a license," according to prosecutors. Soofi "sought to purchase and ship numerous items, including helicopters, high-tech machine gun parts, tank parts, and military vehicles, from the United States to Iran, all without a license and while knowing that such shipments were illegal under US law," a statement from the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York added. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to violate US sanctions against Iran, and was sentenced to 32 months in prison plus one year of supervised release. Washington has implemented a series of economic sanctions against Tehran and its elite Revolutionary Guards Corps forces.

Venezuela holds talks

SANTO DOMINGO: Venezuela's government and opposition concluded a new round of talks Friday in an effort to bridge deep and entrenched differences to find a way to end the dire political and economic crisis tearing apart their country. After eight hours of discussions at the foreign ministry in Santo Domingo, the two sides agreed to resume negotiations on January 11, Dominican President Danilo Medina announced. It will be followed by a meeting of foreign ministers on January 12. "There has been significant progress," said Medina, whose country is hosting the second meeting after a first on December 1 and 2 yielded what was similarly termed "significant advances." "There are six major issues that we are discussing... We cannot announce any of the advances we have had because they are part of a package. As long as agreements are not reached completely, we cannot make an announcement." Chilean Foreign Minister Hernando Munoz expressed hope that an agreement would be "finalized" by January 12.

Analysis

Kuwait Times
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Washington Watch

Positive attitudes
toward Arabs,
Muslims are up;
so is hate in US

By Dr James J Zogby

Are anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments on the rise in the US? And what are the best ways to combat them? These were some of the questions we discussed at the 2017 "Global Peace and the Fear of Islam" Forum held this past week in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Based on our most recent Arab American Institute (AAI) survey of American public opinion, conducted in conjunction with Zogby Analytics (ZA), I was happily able to report to the Forum that negative attitudes toward both communities appear to be in decline. I also noted that in charting a way forward it was important to consider that since much of the hostility toward both communities has been politically manufactured, part of the solution must be political.

A bit of history is in order. Going back to the 1990s, the public's views of both Arabs and Muslims were somewhat favorable. Both communities were not well known. Popular culture, fed by pro-Israel propagandists, had created negative stereotypes of Arabs and this had taken a toll. But, on the whole, attitudes toward both Arabs and Muslims were stable and more positive than negative.

Things did change in the aftermath of 9/11 but not as badly as some had feared. While there were those who deliberately fanned the flames of hate and suspicion, they were countered by push-back emanating from the White House, the creators of popular culture in Hollywood, and a wide range of religious, ethnic, and civil rights organizations. It was, nevertheless, a difficult period for both communities.

Despite President Bush's admonitions, some Republican political figures, think tanks, and funders perceived that there might be an electoral advantage in propagating and exploiting anti-Muslim sentiment. With the nomination and then election of Barack Obama, these purveyors of hate felt they had an ideal target. Preying off of both the widespread economic insecurity created by the economic downturn of 2008 and the perceived "foreignness" of Obama (his race, his name, and his Kenyan father's religion), a conservative group spent millions of dollars producing and widely distributing a hate-filled film that warned of Muslim efforts to take over America - with the - presumption being that with the election of Obama they were getting closer to their goal.

Lasting mark

On one level, this effort to undercut Obama failed since he was twice elected. The campaign of hate did, however, leave a lasting mark on Republican attitudes toward Islam and Muslims. And it continued to grow. First came the "birther movement" - spreading the notion that Obama was secretly a Muslim, wasn't born in America, and therefore wasn't legally entitled to serve as president. As late as our 2015 poll we found that over 60 percent of self-identified Republicans believed Obama wasn't really born in the US and was secretly a Muslim.

During this same period, funded by conservative donors, a nation-wide effort was launched to get states to pass legislation banning Sharia law. The effort was ridiculous - since no one had ever proposed introducing sharia law in the US. Ridiculous or not, the effort ultimately was considered by 27 state legislatures raising the specter of the Muslim take-over of America. These same groups sponsored "studies" purporting to demonstrate that Muslim groups, with Obama's support, had succeeded in infiltrating the government. This effort was repudiated by a host of political leaders and organizations. While it spread fear in the Muslim community, it failed to dislodge loyal Muslim Americans from government service.

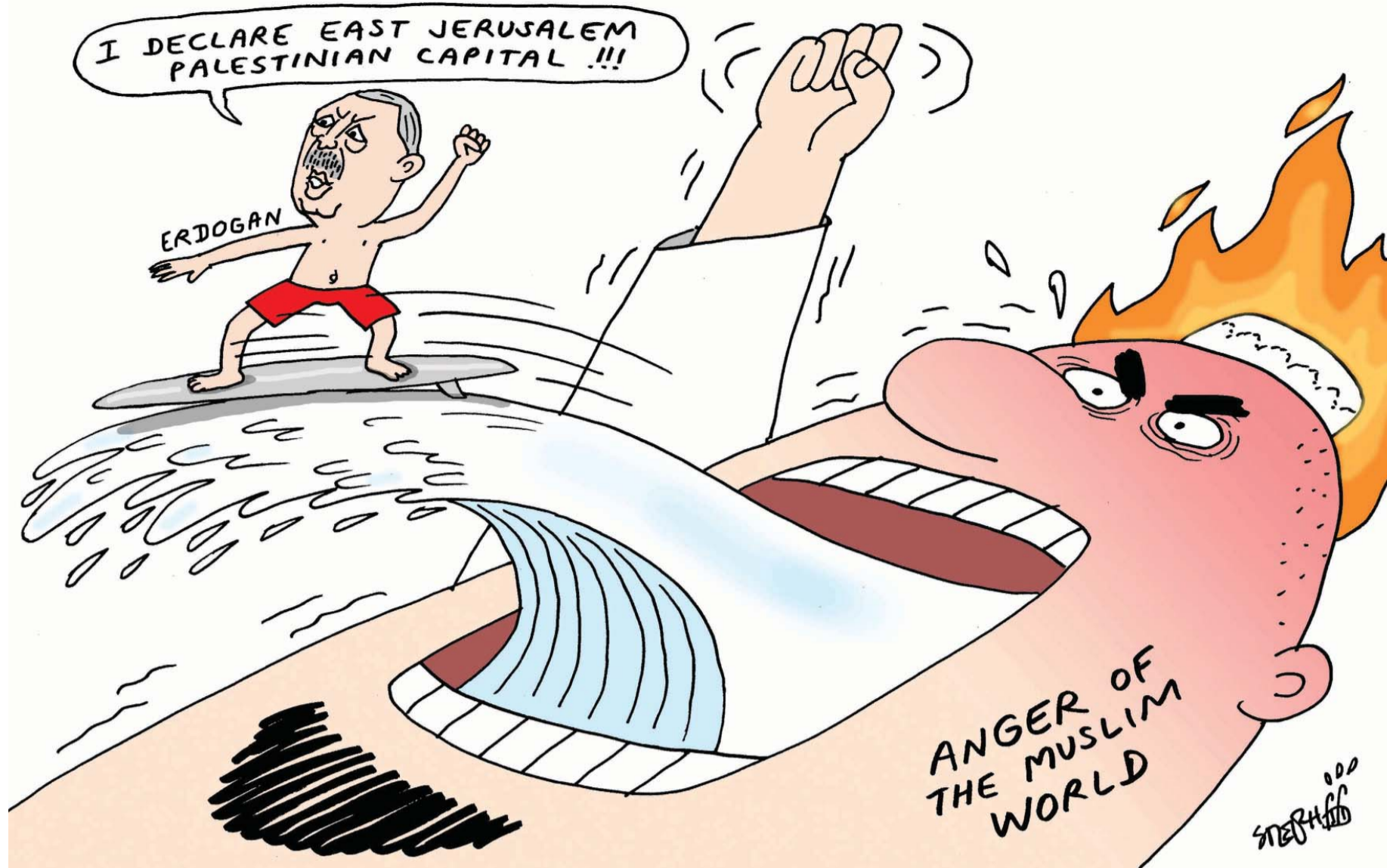
In 2010, Republicans, joined anti-Muslim hate groups in opposing the proposed construction of an Islamic community center in Manhattan about 10 blocks away from Ground Zero. Led by former Congressman Newt Gingrich, they termed the center a "Victory Mosque", claiming it was intended by Muslims as a declaration of victory over America. Based on this theme, the Republican congressional campaign committee produced TV ads for use in 17 congressional races. The ads warned about the dangers of the "Victory Mosque" and challenged Democratic candidates to declare opposition to this "Muslim insult to America".

While this GOP effort also failed, since in only one of the 17 races did their candidate win, once again damage was done in promoting hatred and fear of Muslims among Republicans. Exploiting anti-Muslim sentiment was also a feature of the 2012 and, of course, in the 2016 Republican presidential contests. It failed in 2012 when it was repudiated by the GOP's nominee, Mitt Romney, but it won in 2016 with the victory of Donald Trump.

As candidate and then as president, Trump worked hard to promote and exploit fear of Muslims. The arguments he made in defense of his Muslim ban, his disgraceful behavior toward the Muslim Gold Star parents who spoke at the Democratic Convention, and the Islamophobes he appointed to serve in the White House - all had an impact on the public's attitudes. But the impact has not been what Trump may have expected.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

SURFING THE PERFECT WAVE ...



EU is no haven of net neutrality

America's decision to scrap rules designed to ensure a free and open internet leaves the European Union as the biggest market where net neutrality still prevails - but critics say the EU is not a level playing field. Consumer rights groups complain that EU regulations are being interpreted in ways that allow telecom firms and internet providers to offer discriminatory access to applications ranging from social media to music and video streaming.

"In practice, providers are allowed to use their position as gate-keepers to favor certain services, which is detrimental to consumers, competition and innovation as far as new, smaller players are concerned," said Eduardo Santos, director of the D3 Association for the Defense of Digital Rights in Portugal. "The law is lax on that, which is wrong," he said.

At the heart of the issue is a practice whereby network operators charge nothing for data traffic on a popular app or a pool of apps in order to attract more clients. This preferential pricing strategy, called "zero rating", is being tolerated to an extent by European net neutrality rules. In Portugal, the practice grabbed international attention when US House representative Ro Khanna, campaigning against the removal of net neutrality in the United States, portrayed it as a country without a level playing field.

Khanna tweeted that Portuguese Internet providers were "starting to split the net into packages" and cited offers advertised by local telecoms provider MEO, a unit of Dutch-listed Altice. Aside from standard zero-rating pricing, some of MEO's mobile phone packages adopt two-tiered pricing which critics see as an even bigger departure from net neutrality than zero rating. In addition to a basic package, it offers more attractively priced add-on packages tied to groups of the most popular apps.

For example, its "Social" package lists eight apps including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Apps not listed are only available at the more expensive, basic data-usage

rates. MEO says it "complies with the EU rules on net neutrality and there is no market distortion caused by its offers". It denies any preferential treatment, saying that the apps tied to its packages only reflect consumer preferences and that other app providers should contact MEO if they want to be included.

'We continue to fight'

Nevertheless, experts and regulators say it is an exaggeration to describe the EU situation as "no net neutrality".

'Zero rating'
tolerated to an
extent by EU

EU rules still ban operators from blocking access to apps, which is what backers of net neutrality fear will now happen after the US regulator's decision on Thursday to repeal the rules there. However, Carlos Martins, a software programmer and blogger in Portugal, said MEO's offers represented a threat to fragment the Internet. He likened it to the broadcasting industry, where content is split up into separate pay-TV channels. "Unfortunately the tendency is for providers and telecoms to test the limits of the rules more and more, so the concern is that such offers will spread," Martins said.

In Italy, mobile operator WindTre was banned this year

from offering its own music app in a zero-rating plan, meaning the app's usage did not count toward the plan's data cap. Once the cap was reached, the app could keep functioning while "general traffic" would slow down until more data was purchased. WindTre did not comment for this story. In making its decision, Italian regulator AGCOM cited the EU's net neutrality policy, adopted in April last year, which states "providers of internet access services shall treat all traffic equally, when providing internet access services, without discrimination, restriction or interference".

The policy is interpreted by national regulators which may have different views on the issue of zero-rating, said Marco Pierani, a spokesman for Italian consumer group Altroconsumo. "There are cases that can be interpreted differently depending on the country, which is absurd given that we should be a single digital market," he said. "It is a battle we continue to fight ... Leaving the choice to the service providers creates a false market and places the choice in the hands of very few operators who are very strong."

The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), has produced guidelines on zero-rating and acknowledges national regulators "are still at an early stage of the implementation of net neutrality rules". "The situation with zero-rating offers is not black and white," BEREC chairman Sebastian Soriano told Reuters. The group expects to come up with a detailed report within 12 months to assist Brussels in a review of the regulations.

"We are applying these rules for a little more than a year. We ask for a little bit of time to be judged on that," Soriano said, adding that national regulators were taking action. "That MEO offer is a third kind of offer - so far the only one in Europe... but I assure you that it is under scrutiny by the Portuguese regulator ANACOM and it has not been cleared." —Reuters

Syria talks in doubt
as Russia takes
on dealmaker role

The failure of Syria peace talks last week has cast doubt over UN efforts to mediate a solution to the country's devastating war, while regime backer Russia has emerged as a key dealmaker, analysts say. The latest round of Geneva-based talks aimed at ending the nearly seven-year conflict, which has killed more than 340,000 people, ended Thursday in failure. UN mediator Staffan de Mistura acknowledged that "real negotiations" never took place during the eighth round of talks. "I am disappointed," he said, blaming the Syrian government for refusing to enter into dialogue and calling the round "a golden opportunity missed".

Seven previous rounds of talks mediated by de Mistura have also gone nowhere - and under his watch the rival sides have never met for face-to-face negotiations. The discussions have repeatedly stumbled over the fate of President Bashar Al-Assad, and Damascus is refusing to meet the opposition directly until it drops demands that he leave office. For their part, the opposition and western diplomats are concerned that parallel Moscow-backed talks are an effort to circumvent the UN talks and impose a solution favorable to Assad after major battlefield gains by Russian-backed regime forces.

'On life support'

"The balance of power undeniably favors the Russians," Karim Bitar of the Paris-based Institute of International and Strategic Affairs told AFP, adding that the Geneva talks appeared to be "on life support". Bolstered by Russia's intervention in 2015, Damascus has regained the upper hand militarily, retaking large swathes of rebel-held territory. Russian-backed Syrian forces have also dealt severe blows

to the Islamic State group, whose self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria has largely collapsed.

As regime forces advanced on the ground, Moscow, along with fellow Syrian ally Iran as well as rebel-backers Turkey, have organized talks on halting the fighting, which are set to resume next week in Astana, Kazakhstan. Those talks have resulted in "de-escalation zones" and ceasefire deals that critics say have been imposed in a manner that largely serves to consolidate regime gains.

Diplomats warned that a meeting organized by Moscow for early next year in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi might further ease the pressure on Assad as well as undermining the Geneva talks. A European diplomat, who asked not to be identified, said the Sochi meeting could be "a stitch-up and a tendentious attempt to invite the wrong people to discuss the wrong issues (and) create the wrong kind of consensus." Bitar said the idea was "to legitimize, to consecrate diplomatically, if not to consecrate legally, this balance of power."

'Treading water'

The government and opposition delegations both insisted Thursday that they were committed to the Geneva talks, with de Mistura voicing hope he could convene a ninth round in January. Nasr Al-Hariri, the chief negotiator for the opposition, said the Swiss city remained "the only place to reach a political solution" but warned that with international institutions "held hostage" by the regime and its backers, yet another round would probably be fruitless.

The Syrian government's top negotiator, Bashar Al-Jaafari, said that "we don't want the Geneva track to fail", though he denounced the opposition and its backers for sabotaging talks with demands for Assad to step down. But the European diplomat said the failure of the latest round of talks had raised "profound questions" about the government's commitment to the process. —AP

Russia securing
position as Assad
presses for war

With the map of Syria's conflict decisively redrawn in President Bashar Al-Assad's favor, his Russian allies want to convert military gains into a settlement that stabilizes the shattered nation and secures their interests in the region. A year after the opposition's defeat in Aleppo, government forces backed by Russia and Iran have recovered large swathes of territory as Islamic State's "caliphate" collapses. As UN-backed talks in Geneva fail to make any progress, Russia is preparing to launch its own political process in 2018. President Vladimir Putin declared mission accomplished for the military on a visit to Russia's Syrian air base this week, and said conditions were ripe for a political solution.

Though Washington still insists Assad must go, a senior Syrian opposition figure told Reuters the United States and other governments that have backed the rebellion had finally "surrendered to the Russian vision" on ending the war. The view in Damascus is that this will preserve Assad as president. A Syrian official in Damascus said "it is clear a track is underway, and the Russians are overseeing it". "There is a shift in the path of the crisis in Syria, a shift for the better," the official said.

But analysts struggle to see how Russian diplomacy can bring lasting peace to Syria, encourage millions of refugees to return, or secure Western reconstruction aid. There is no sign that Assad is ready to compromise with his opponents. The war has also allowed his other big ally, Iran and its Revolutionary Guard, to expand its regional influence, which Tehran will not want to see diluted by any settlement in Syria. Having worked closely to secure Assad, Iran and Russia may now differ in ways that could complicate

Russian policy.

Assad and his allies now command the single largest chunk of Syria, followed by US-backed Kurdish militias who control much of northern and eastern Syria and are more concerned with shoring up their regional autonomy than fighting Damascus. Anti-Assad rebels still cling to patches of territory: a corner of the northwest at the Turkish border, a corner of the southwest at the Israeli frontier, and the Eastern Ghouta near Damascus. Eastern Ghouta and the northwest are now in the firing line.

"The Revolutionary Guards clearly feel they have won this war and the hardliners in Iran are not too keen on anything but accommodation with Assad, so on that basis it is a little hard to see that there can be any real progress," said Rolf Holmboe, a former Danish ambassador to Syria. "Assad cannot live with a political solution that involves any real power sharing," said Holmboe. "The solution he could potentially live with is to freeze the situation you have on the ground right now."

'The world is 'tired of the crisis'

The war has been going Assad's way since 2015, when Russia sent its air force to help him. The scales tipped even more his way this year: Russia struck deals with Turkey, the United States and Jordan that contained in the war in the west, indirectly helping Assad's advances in the east, and Washington pulled military aid from the rebels. Though Assad seems unbeatable, Western governments still hope to effect change by linking reconstruction aid to a credible political process leading to "a genuine transition".

While paying lip service to the principle that any peace deal should be concluded under UN auspices, Russia aims to convene its own peace congress in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. The aim is to draw up a new constitution followed by elections. The senior Syrian opposition figure said the United States and other states that had backed their cause - Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey - had all given way to Russia. —Reuters

News

Senegalese renounce European odyssey for fields at home

KAOLACK, Senegal: Some spent years working in Italy. Others dreamed of getting to Europe but never even made it as far as Libya. Today, they are among a small number of Senegalese who have turned away from the allure of migration and instead are part of a new generation of farmers at home. Pape Samba Diane, 45, spent five years working in agriculture and in a factory in Italy's Brescia region - the dream of thousands of fellow Senegalese, many of whom risk the dangerous journey through the Sahara for a place on a rickety boat across the Mediterranean.

As he labored on the vineyards, Diane could not help but fail to notice that the people making most of the money were not the workers, but the farmers. That led him to ponder about the potential to do the same back home. "We didn't realize that we could make something of ourselves using the earth," he told AFP, sitting under a large tree on his rice farm in Senegal's central Kaolack region. "In Italy they have agriculture, food processing, agribusiness and they launch their own companies, so I asked myself: 'Why can't I do that?'"

After returning, he doggedly pursued the idea,

helped by a program tailored to fill gaps in knowhow and technology intended to make farming in the West African fields less backbreaking and more lucrative. Senegal's government is pushing a policy of self-sufficiency in rice production, aided by research to make crops more climate-resistant and provide a higher yield. It has a partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized UN agency, which has brought support and training in a nation where a stable political climate contrasts with persistent food insecurity.

The problems facing Senegalese agriculture are many. Low mechanization means that much planting and harvesting is done by hand - the toil and low pay are viewed dimly by many young people. Many villages in Senegal's central and western regions have emptied of men who go to look for better-paid work elsewhere. The back-to-farming program seeks to brake the trend. More than \$100 million has been earmarked for a scheme running from 2011 to 2022, which organizers say will benefit 75,000 households.

Deputy Mayor Babacar Mbaye returned to the Kaolack community of Nganda in 2013 after eight years in Italy and he has watched others follow in his footsteps. "In the area, around 20 or 30 people have returned from the 100 or so who left," Mbaye said. "They emigrate to other African countries as well, not just to Europe." Rice is Senegal's staple food, and once Diane was enrolled in a training program he quickly learned when to sow and harvest a new strain of



NGANDA, Senegal: Former migrant worker in Italy, municipal councillor of Nganda and head of a rice producers' association Pape Samba Diane holds hay in the storage unit of his home yesterday. —AFP

resilient seed, devised to cope with a warmer climate and declining rainfall.

This season, he harvested three tonnes of rice per hectare from land where yields had been zero for four years. "We learnt the importance of quality grain and

when to use fertiliser at the right time," he explained. Meanwhile Diane has embedded himself fully in his community, serving on the local council and heading up a rice producers' association. He is passing on expertise to a younger generation of would-be farmers. —AFP

Palestinian billionaire...

Continued from Page 1

Reasons for Masri's detention were not clear but political sources said the Saudis might have used him to put pressure on Jordan's King Abdullah not to attend a Muslim summit last week to discuss US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The Jordanian monarch attended the Istanbul summit, however. He is a custodian of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and has been vocal in criticizing Trump over his decision on Jerusalem.

Saudi Arabia, whose relations with the United States have warmed with Trump taking a harder line against its archrival Iran than his predecessor, appears to have taken a softer line on the decision on Jerusalem, according to analysts. Riyadh sent a junior minister to the Istanbul meeting. Masri, who comes from a prominent merchant family from Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, amassed a fortune from partnering with influential Saudis in a major catering business to supply troops during the US-led military operation to retake Kuwait from Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War.

Reports of his detention surfaced on Thursday in the local media in Jordan where Masri's multi-billion dollar

investments in hotels and banking are a cornerstone of the economy. He was elected chairman of Arab Bank in 2012 after the resignation of Abdel Hamid Shoman whose family had founded the bank in Jerusalem in 1930. The bank, which has earned a reputation of resilience in the face of political upheaval, played a prominent role in supporting former Palestinian leader, the late Yasser Arafat during past Middle East turmoil.

Arab Bank, which operates in 30 countries and five continents, has an extensive network in Palestinian territories where it is the largest bank. It also owns 40 percent of Saudi Arabia's Arab National Bank ANB. Masri led consortium of Arab and Jordanian investors who bought a 20 percent stake in Arab Bank Group from Lebanon's Hariri family business empire for \$1.12 billion last February. He was also instrumental in agreeing in 2015 to settle litigation brought by hundreds of Americans who accused Arab Bank of providing financial services in the West Bank that facilitated militant attacks in Israel.

They had sued Arab Bank under the US Anti-Terrorism Act, which permits US citizens to pursue claims arising from international terrorism. Masri is also the leading investor in the Palestinian territories with a large stake in Paltel, a public shareholding company, which is the largest private sector firm in the West Bank. Masri's family ranks among the wealthiest in the Palestinian territories, with majority holdings in real estate, hotels and telecommunications firms set up after a self-rule agreement with Israel in 1993. — Reuters

tured a theatrical production at the foot of the Louvre pyramid in Paris. Several newspapers have also expressed unease over the growing concentration of power in the presidency, and critics have said his use of executive orders to ram through landmark reform in September did not help matters.

In July, the cover of the leftwing Liberation newspaper mockingly depicted him as Jupiter, the Roman king of gods, and accused him of failing to share power - an accusation echoed by Le Monde daily. Jupiter is now regularly used by Macron's critics who accuse his centrist government of favoring the rich. The president yesterday also visited Beauval Zoo, home to France's first panda cub, which Brigitte baptized - becoming the fluffy bear's "godmother" - earlier in the month.

Macron, his wife and several relatives went to the zoo in the village Saint-Aignan-sur-Cher after having lunch at the nearby Le Bacchus restaurant, an AFP correspondent said. Brigitte, in one of her most high-profile outings since her husband's election, cooed over the panda cub at a ceremony on Dec 4 before a Chinese minister unveiled its name as Yuan Meng, which means "making a dream come true" in Chinese. The French first lady became "godmother" of the panda, along with her Chinese counterpart Peng Liyuan. — AFP

Fatah calls for protests over...

Continued from Page 1

Pence is expected to try to push the Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward after he lands in Jerusalem on Wednesday, US administration officials have said. They also suggested that the Western Wall - in largely Palestinian east Jerusalem - would almost certainly be part of Israel under any deal, sparking Palestinian condemnation. "We will not accept any changes to the 1967 border of east

Jerusalem," Nabil Abu Rudeina, a spokesman for the Palestinian president, said yesterday. "This American position proves once again that the current US administration is completely out of the peace process," he said, adding that Trump's decision on Jerusalem was "totally unacceptable".

A US administration official said Friday: "We cannot envision any situation under which the Western Wall would not be part of Israel." Another one added: "We cannot imagine Israel would sign a peace agreement that didn't include the Western Wall." The Western Wall is the holiest site where Jews are permitted to pray, at the foot of the Haram Al-Sharif compound housing the Al-Aqsa mosque and the golden-topped Dome of the Rock, the third holiest site in Islam. — AFP

On the trail of London's serial cat killer

Continued from Page 1

The hunt for the killer started in Sept 2015. Intrigued by a series of suspicious deaths cropping up locally on social media, Jenkins and his Snarl co-founder Boudicca Rising started investigating. They canvassed vets, pet owners and residents for information, piecing together a map and a timeline of the attacks. They then took their findings to Scotland Yard police headquarters, which opened its own inquiry, as did the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Britain's biggest animal welfare charity.

Snarl's Facebook page has a grim roll call of victims of the "Croydon Cat Ripper", as the killer was initially nicknamed, referring to the south London area first hit. "Rest in peace", says one November memorial post about Cody, complete with pictures of the eight-year-old Bengal cross relaxing at home. "You're just an evil piece of lowlife scum who gets some sick gratification being the filth that you are. You will get caught," Jo Platt said in the post's comments.

Jenkins and Rising have identified patterns of behavior in the killings, discovering that some cat bodies are deliberately posed near schools and in parks, or even under their owners' windows. The possibility that the cats were killed by other animals was quickly ruled out. Post-mortems following the first spate of attacks found that the cats died from blunt force trauma and the mutilations occurred after death.

"Police believe an individual or a group of individuals... are responsible for both the deaths and mutila-

tions," Scotland Yard told AFP. The National Crime Agency and the ArroGen Veterinary Forensics pathology labs are both on the case. Two groups, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, are each offering a £5,000 (\$6,700) reward for information leading to the culprit's capture.

Jenkins is also trying his best to track down the killer. "It's difficult. I wish sometimes it was a bit more like 'CSI,'" he said of the television series where crimes are solved every episode using forensic science. Examining the clues, Jenkins wondered whether the killer was a man trading in animal skulls, but it turned out to be a false lead. "Whilst it was obviously a weird thing to be doing, it wasn't, strictly speaking, illegal because he imported them from China," he said.

Snarl has published a profile of the killer based on the evidence they have gathered. They believe he is a white man in his 40s, around 1.8 m (5.9 feet) tall. "It's somebody who either grew up in Croydon or lives in Croydon," said Rising, noting his ease in operating around the suburb.

The killer is a skilled, methodical and forensically aware person with sufficient knowledge of police procedures to avoid detection, said Vincent Egan, associate professor in forensic psychology at the University of Nottingham. "The person involved has to be able to entice the animal, capture and kill it without being scratched or bitten... dissect in the skilled way reported, put the body in a place where it can be seen, and do all of this quietly and surreptitiously," he told AFP.

And while the list of cat victims grows ever longer, one question becomes more pressing: is this just the first step for someone bent on killing? "There is a known link between serial killers and harming animals, when you look into their dark history," said Detective Sergeant Andy Collin, who is leading the police investigation. He told Sky News: "The concern is they will cease getting that gratification and escalate the attacks to humans, specifically vulnerable women and girls." — AFP

Macron marks 40th birthday...

Continued from Page 1

"While the French suffer from taxes, insecurity, immigration, Macron celebrates his 40th birthday at Chambord," rightwing politician Nicolas Dupont-Aignan said on Twitter. "Eras go by but the oligarchy remains cut off from the people," he said.

Commissioned nearly 500 years ago by King Francois I (1494-1547), the immense chateau remains the largest of the Loire grand estates, boasting 365 chimneys and a 5,500-hectare estate. It also has the largest enclosed forest park in Europe, a long-time favorite for presidential hunts. The chateau, which attracts some two million visitors each year, has been listed as a regional UNESCO World Heritage cultural site.

Macron, a media darling during his campaign, has seen his image as a monarchical or even "pharaonic" leader climb from the night of his election, which fea-

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Sports

Confident Vonn claims first victory, fires warning shot to Olympic rivals

Record tally of 78 World Cup victories

VAL-D'ISERE: Lindsey Vonn put a stuttering start to the season and a backlash over her anti-Trump remarks aside as she stormed to a first World Cup victory in 11 months yesterday, in a warning shot to Olympic rivals.

As one of world sport's most recognisable athletes, US speed queen Vonn has never been shy of facing the cameras but she has been dealing with a furor over her criticism of President Donald Trump and the US government in a CNN interview.

The 33-year-old responded perfectly on the piste with a dominant win in the super-G in Val d'Isere, taking to 78 her record tally of World Cup victories. "I don't think I really ever went anywhere. I just had some bad luck and things weren't really going in the first few races of the season," Vonn said. "I knew my skiing was there and I just had to execute on race day and make it all the way to the finish."

Vonn had to withdraw from a super-G in St Moritz last weekend with a back injury, for which she had treatment in Austria. "My back's much better. It was still a bit stiff at the start," she said, stressing the challenge had been "more mental".

"The physical issue that I had just made it hard to have confidence in trusting my body. It was mentally challenging to overcome that and be able to trust myself and push myself even though I'm maybe not moving as well as I normally do."

"Over the last few weeks, it's been a question of 'keep going, keep fighting, keep trying, keeping pick-

ing yourself back up', especially after the first crash in Lake Louise. "My body wasn't quite up to par and so it was important for me to stay mentally tough and continue to fight."

Focus on Pyeongchang

Austrian duo Nicole Schmidhofer and Anna Veith, previously Fenninger, respectively the world and Olympic super-G champions, finished fourth and 15th in a competitive field. And Vonn said her aim was now turned on the February 9-25 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, having missed Sochi because of injury after claiming downhill gold in 2010.

"I'm back on track and my goal now is to continue to take this self-confidence, this momentum through to February," the American said. "It's been a while since I've been on top in super-G, so it just proves that my skiing is good."

Vonn added: "Of course, all victories are important, especially at this point of my career. But the biggest thing is just getting the confidence going for February. "My confidence gives me a lot of peace of mind going into the next few months of ski races."

Under the watchful eye of father Alan, Vonn admitted it had been an emotional day's racing in the French resort. "We've all been a little bit disappointed the way the start of the season has gone. But we work very hard as a team together and I think everyone's exceptionally

“It was important for me to stay mentally tough”



VAL-D'ISERE: US Lindsey Vonn holds a cheese as she celebrates on the podium after winning the women's Super-G race at the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Val-d'Isere, French Alps, yesterday. —AFP

happy to get things back on track," she said. "After Lake Louise I asked my dad if he'd come to some races with me. "It's important for me to stay positive and my dad's always the one to say never, never give up - he

loves Winston Churchill! My dad has always taught me to be mentally tough. "He was very happy, it's his first time in Val d'Isere and it was really cute when he was crying at the finish." —AFP

Williams put off driver announcement to New Year

LONDON: Formula One team Williams have put off until the New Year an announcement on who will partner Canadian teenager Lance Stroll next season. A team spokeswoman confirmed no driver news was planned before January, with the 21-race 2018 season due to start in Australia on March 25.

Russian Sergey Sirotkin appears favourite for the drive, the only remaining vacancy on the starting grid, rather than Poland's comeback hopeful Robert Kubica. Williams have said their decision would be based on performance and have given few hints about who is likely to succeed now retired Brazilian Felipe Massa at the former champions.

Sirotkin, a 22-year-old development driver for the Renault team this year, has been backed by Russian billionaire Boris Rotenberg and his SMP Racing. Rotenberg's brother Arkady is a close ally and former judo partner of President Vladimir Putin.

Leaving aside his significant backing, the Russian impressed in post-season testing in Abu Dhabi after he was passed over by Renault when that team were looking to replace Britain's Jolyon Palmer.

Both he and Kubica, 33, were at the factory last week for debriefs and further assessment, with media reports suggesting Russian Daniil Kvyat was also in the frame after being dropped by Red Bull and Toro Rosso. Russia, which pays handsomely for the right to host a grand prix in Sochi, currently has no Formula One driver contracted to race next year. Kubica was tipped as a future champion before a 2011 rally accident partially severed his right arm, and while there are some lingering doubts about his ability to race without full movement the Pole has said he has no problems and is fitter than ever.

Kubica has tested twice for Williams this year, as well as with Renault, and his case for the seat is being argued by former world champion Nico Rosberg, who is acting as a go-between. — Reuters

Paillaugue stars as Montpellier stay in hunt

PARIS: Benoit Paillaugue kept Montpellier afloat in the European Champions Cup with a match-winning performance in a 36-26 victory over Glasgow yesterday. The bonus-point victory moved the French Top 14 outfit to a point off Pool 3 leaders Leinster ahead of the Irish team's clash with Exeter. Scrum-half Paillaugue scored the crucial bonus point fourth try and kicked four conversions while monstrous Fijian wing Nemani Nadolo scored a try and had a crucial hand in two others as Montpellier hit back from a blistering Glasgow start that saw the visitors score three tries in the opening 20 minutes.

But having lost a fourth game in a row in this competition, Glasgow remain rooted to the bottom of Pool 3, although in truth they dominated this match. Glasgow's Fraser Brown charged down a Jesse Mogg clearing kick and dived on the ball over the Montpellier line to open the scoring after just two minutes.

Montpellier relied on power to get a hold of the game and the bullocking Nadolo set free Jan Serfontein to take the ball close to the line. The Fijian followed up to scoop the ball into his giant hands and bundle over the line.

The fast and free-flowing start to the game continued as Glasgow twice came close to scoring, only to be thwarted by forward passes close to the tryline. Glasgow did score when Matthew Smith stripped the ball from Francois Steyn and Peter Horne ran through a gaping gap to score.

CONTROVERSIAL TRY

Montpellier then kicked a penalty to the corner and got the rumble on before Romain Ruffenach barged over and twisted in the tackle to stretch out an arm and dot down. Yet back came Glasgow as Lee Jones collected a Horne chip on the left wing and made ground before the Scots recycled quick ball and Nick Grigg burrowed over from close range.

Horne missed the conversion but Glasgow, who were playing with the abandon of a team with nothing to lose, led 19-12 after 20 minutes. The players on both sides were enjoying themselves so much that neither



MONTPELLIER: Montpellier's South African number eight Jan Serfontein (R) runs with the ball during the European rugby champions cup match between Montpellier and Glasgow Warriors yesterday at the Altrad stadium in Montpellier, southern France. — AFP

team wanted the half to end and it went on for three minutes beyond the 40 before a Montpellier knock-on brought a return to the changing rooms.

Montpellier went in front for the first time in controversial circumstances after getting away with a knock-on at a line-out in their own 22. Nadolo charged 80 metres up the left wing and although Ali Price dragged the Fijian down just short of the line, the hosts exploited an overlap on the right for Henry Immelman to score.

Benoit Paillaugue converted and a couple of minutes later was on hand to score in the corner after Nicolaas Janse van Rensburg charged down a Price clearance. After brilliant breakdown work from Steyn in the Montpellier 22, another Nadolo surge down the left ended with Immelman scoring his second, but New

Zealand international fly-half Aaron Cruden was injured in the build up.

Glasgow scored a consolation bonus-point try their dominance of territory and possession deserved after another rapier move ended with Horne galloping through to score by the posts. There was only a converted try in it but after Paillaugue had missed a penalty Steyn landed one two minutes from time to seal the win. In the day's other early match, Scarlets kept their quarter-final hopes alive with a thumping 31-12 victory at Treviso, just a week after needing a last-gasp try from Steff Evans to beat the 14-man Italians in Llanelli.

Their four-try bonus point win put the Welsh outfit level with Toulon at the top of Pool 5 ahead of the French side's trip to Bath later. — AFP

Kvitova looks on positive side after 'rollercoaster year'

LONDON: Czech tennis star Petra Kvitova says a year on from being the victim of a horrific knife attack she can look to the future positively having successfully returned to the WTA circuit. The 27-year-old two-time Wimbledon champion defied expectations in returning to competition despite suffering serious wounds to her playing left hand as she fought off a knife-wielding intruder at her home in the eastern Czech town of Prostějov in December 2016.

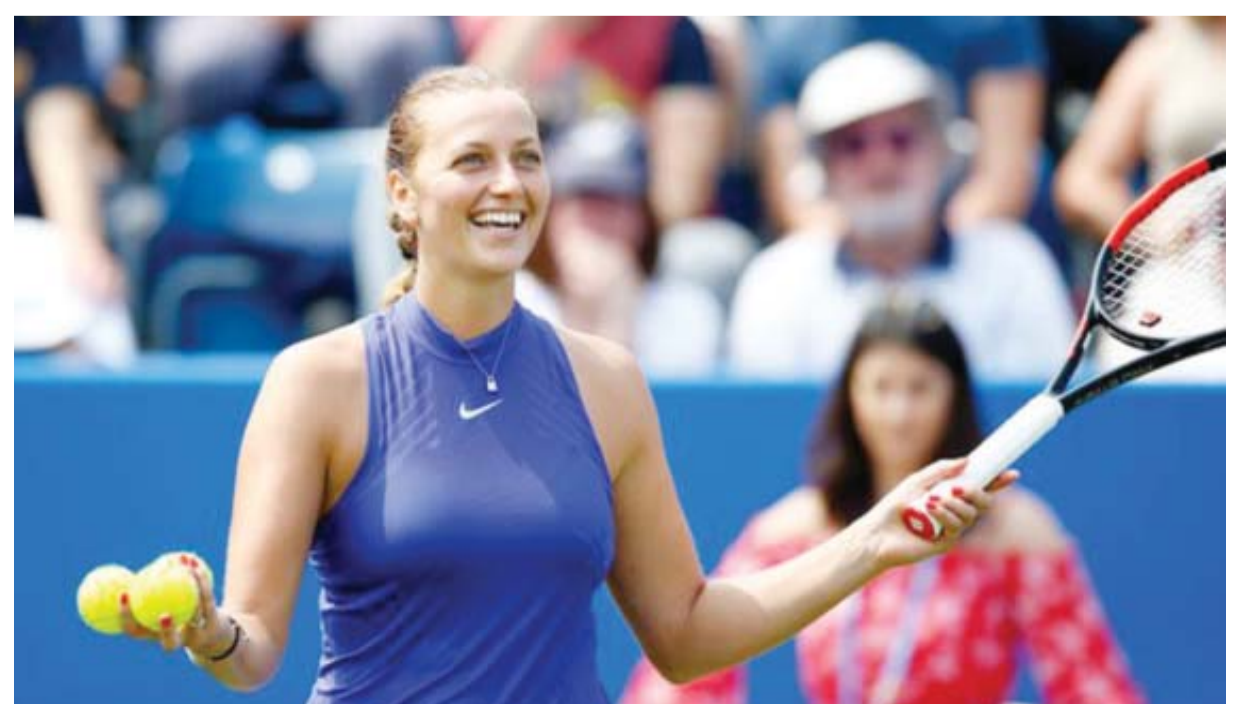
However, within months she had not only made a comeback but also won a title—the pre-Wimbledon tune-up event in Birmingham—and rounded off the Grand Slams with a quarter-final appearance in the US Open. "Playing on the grass at Wimbledon (where she reached the second round) and getting a good result in the US Open was very important for me mentally, and for my confidence," Kvitova told The Guardian newspaper. "This year has been a rollercoaster. The beginning wasn't very nice, so I'm really glad that it's over. Now I can look at everything positively

again." Kvitova—who reached a career high ranking of second in the world in December 2011 — says she shrugged aside fears she would never play again.

"I did hear the rumours that I would never ever play again but I thought: 'I will show them,'" said Kvitova, who has been playing since she was four. "I was like: 'Why are they saying this?' It was very painful for me, it felt like they didn't believe me. "The week after surgery I asked my doctor: 'Do you think I could play in Wimbledon this year?' He didn't answer for a while and then he said: 'We are going to work on it and blah, blah, blah.' I understood then that it wasn't going to be easy."

Kvitova, who has 20 titles to her credit, admits her hand is still not what it was. "It will probably take more than a year to get full movement back, I'm not sure," said Kvitova, who is presently ranked 29 in the world. "For tennis and for life, it's good."

"I am happy that (throughout the recovery) I was always looking forward to the better tomorrows," Kvitova, who was told last month police had shelved the investigation as they had hit a dead end in identifying her assailant, says she has grown to love her 'new hand'. "I have started to live with my new hand," said Kvitova, who will kick off 2018 in the WTA tournament in Brisbane, Australia. "I've started to try to like it, to love it, and that's how I am going to take it. It's my hand and I am just happy that I have all of my fingers." — AFP



Petra Kvitova

Sports

England admit bowling attack flaws as Australia seize control

Marsh completes family hat-trick of Ashes centuries

PERTH: England conceded their bowling flaws were savagely exposed as Steve Smith and Mitchell Marsh's relentless batting on day three of the third Test in Perth yesterday left the tourists praying for rain to salvage their Ashes hopes. Australia were 549 for four in their first innings by stumps, with Smith on 229 and Marsh on 181, having seized total control to lead England by 146 runs with six wickets still in hand. It was a horrendous day for the visitors, who must win or draw in Perth to keep alive their hopes of retaining the urn, but claimed just one wicket all day at a cost of 346 runs.

England assistant coach Paul Farbrace said the weaknesses in the English attack, particularly in foreign conditions, were being cruelly exposed. "I don't think we've learned anything from today that we didn't already know," he said in a sobering assessment of the English bowling unit. "We don't have that extra pace, we knew that coming into that series, and we haven't got the highest quality of magical spin. Our bowlers have been very honest ... we've got what we've got, what can we do?"

"There is nothing that has surprised us," Farbrace said. "I don't think we've learned anything from today that we didn't already know," he said in a sobering assessment of the English bowling unit. "We don't have that extra pace, we knew that coming into that series, and we haven't got the highest quality of magical spin. Our bowlers have been very honest ... we've got what we've got, what can we do?"

Farbrace said rookie seamer Chris Overton was being hampered by a "cracked rib", and also conceded the match turned when England lost their last six wickets for just 35 runs in their first innings to squander a potentially huge total. However, he wouldn't concede the Ashes defence was over. Australia lead the series 2-0 and can regain the Ashes with victory at the WACA Ground, with England's hopes of staying alive in the five-match series seemingly resting with the local weather. Heavy rain is forecast for the fourth day, but is not predicted to arrive until late in the afternoon, reducing the chances of a draw.

England's bowlers could not trouble Smith, who notched his second Test double-century as



PERTH: Australian captain Steve Smith (R) with England's Jonny Bairstow (L) plays a shot on day three of the third Ashes cricket Test match at the WACA ground in Perth yesterday. —AFP

he batted all day for his highest Test score, and passed 1,000 runs in the calendar year. Mitchell Marsh answered his critics to post his maiden Test ton on his home ground.

Farbrace conceded the English were almost powerless to stop Smith in his current form. "We've tried all sorts, we've thought about our plans to him for some time, but we've come up against a player in the form of his life playing absolutely fantastically," Farbrace said.

Smith and Mitchell Marsh dominated the flagging England attack to put on an unbroken stand of 301 for the fifth wicket without even offering a single chance. It is the highest partnership for Australia against England at the WACA. Captain Joe Root even turned to the part-time leg-spin of Dawid Malan late in the day in search of a desperately needed breakthrough, to no avail. Resuming on 92, Smith reached his 22nd Test hundred early in the day from the 138th ball he faced, his quickest Test century in terms of balls faced. Coming in his 107th Test knock, only Don

Bradman (58 innings) and Sunil Gavaskar (101 innings) have reached 22 Test centuries in fewer innings. He then reached his double-hundred from 301 balls, including 26 fours and one six, although he was content to milk easy singles against a defensive field as he reached the milestone. Mitchell Marsh came to the crease after the dismissal of his brother Shaun under huge pressure to perform after a contentious recall, and having dropped a simple catch and bowled poorly during the England innings.

He started nervously but blossomed as his innings went on and notched his maiden Test century from the penultimate over before tea on his home ground, sparking scenes of jubilation from a parochial crowd. Marsh had faced 130 balls for his hundred and a number of powerful drives were a feature of his landmark Test innings. On the comeback trail after a major shoulder injury, Marsh admitted there were times during his rehabilitation that he feared his Test career was over. —AFP



SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day in the third Test between Australia and England on Saturday in Perth, Australia.

England 1st innings 403 (D. Malan 140, J. Bairstow 119, M. Stoneman 56; M. Starc 4-91)	Total (for 4 wickets, 152 overs)	549
Australia 1st innings (Overnight: 203-3)	Fall of wickets: 1-44 D. Warner, 2-55 C. Bancroft, 3-179 U. Khawaja, 4-248 S. Marsh	
C. Bancroft lbw b C. Overton	25	To bat: T. Paine, M. Starc, P. Cummins, N. Lyon, J. Hazlewood
D. Warner c Bairstow b C. Overton	22	Bowling: J. Anderson 29-8-85-0 (nb-1), S. Broad 28-3-112-0, C. Woakes 32-4-108-1 (w-1), C. Overton 23-1-102-2, M. Ali 31-4-104-1, J. Root 3-0-13-0, D. Malan 6-1-13-0.
U. Khawaja lbw b Woakes	50	
S. Smith not out	229	
S. Marsh c Root b Ali	28	
M. Marsh not out	181	
Extras (b-2 lb-10 nb-1 w-1)	14	

Westbrook nets triple double for never-say-die Thunder

LOS ANGELES: Russell Westbrook registered 27 points, 17 rebounds and 15 assists and Oklahoma City outlasted Philadelphia in three overtimes. Westbrook shot 10 of 33 yet managed to notch his 10th triple-double of the season and the 89th of his career. Paul George and Carmelo Anthony scored 24 points apiece for the Thunder, who earned their third straight road win. It was also their 17th consecutive win over the Sixers. Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 34 points while playing a career-high 48 minutes. J.J. Redick scored 19 points and Dario Saric added 16. Jerryd Bayless had 14 points and Ben Simmons had 12 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds.

ROCKETS 124, SPURS 109

Chris Paul delivered an impressive two-way performance and the Houston Rockets rolled to a 124-109, wire-to-wire win over the San Antonio Spurs on Friday night at Toyota Center. Paul finished with 28 points, eight assists and seven steals as the Rockets, who are unbeaten with Paul in the lineup this season, extended their winning streak to 12 games in large part courtesy of an early 3-point barrage. All five Rockets starters scored in double figures, with James Harden adding 28 points, seven rebounds and six assists. Clint Capela (18 points, 10 rebounds) and Ryan Anderson (12 points, 10 rebounds) had double-doubles for the Rockets, who are 13-0 with Paul in the lineup. The Spurs pulled their starters in the third quarter, with LaMarcus Aldridge (16 points) leading that group with just 27 minutes. Kawhi Leonard, playing in just his second game after a quad injury, did not play after the break after scoring 12 points in the first half.

NUGGETS 117, PELICANS 111 (OT)

Will Barton scored 11 of his 19 points in overtime in his return to the lineup, and Denver rallied from 18 points down to beat New Orleans. Gary Harris had 21 points, Trey Lyles scored 14 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter and Nikola Jokic had 13 points and 11 rebounds for the Nuggets in his first game back after missing seven with a sprained left ankle. DeMarcus Cousins scored 29 points, Anthony Davis had 28 points, 12 rebounds and five blocks, and Jrue Holiday scored 25 points for the Pelicans.

JAZZ 107, CELTICS 95

Utah lost two starters to injury in the first half but ended a four-game losing streak by stunning Boston. Utah starters Rudy Gobert (knee) and Derrick Favors (left eye laceration, six stitches) left the game, with Gobert departing before it was two minutes old. Ricky Rubio had 22 points, seven rebounds and five assists, and rookie Donovan Mitchell scored eight straight points for his team late and finished with 17 points, nine assists and six rebounds. Kyrie Irving had 33 points, six assists and four rebounds for Boston. Al Horford, who returned from a one-game absence with a sore knee, added 21 points, seven assists and six rebounds.

WIZARDS 100, CLIPPERS 91

Mike Scott matched his season high with 22 points off the bench and Bradley Beal had 20 points and 11 rebounds as Washington overcame its latest uneven performance by beating Los Angeles. John Wall had 15 points in 29 minutes in his second consecutive game after sitting out nine in a row following injections in his



WASHINGTON: John Wall #2 of the Washington Wizards passes the ball around Jawun Evans #1 of the LA Clippers in the second half at Capital One Arena on Friday in Washington. —AFP

knee to help with inflammation. Scott sank 9 of 10 shots from the field. Lou Williams had 23 points and Jawun Evans scored 15 for the Clippers. Los Angeles had won three in a row, starting with a 113-112 win over the Wizards on Dec. 9. DeAndre Jordan finished with 12 points and 16 rebounds.

PISTONS 104, PACERS 98

Andre Drummond had 23 points and 13 rebounds as Detroit held off Indiana. The Pacers rallied from a 16-point deficit in the fourth quarter to get within 100-98 in the final two minutes, but the Pistons regrouped as Reggie Jackson hit two key free throws to make it 102-98 with 18.1 seconds remaining. Drummond then blocked Victor Oladipo's step-back 3-point attempt on the next possession to seal the win. Oladipo led Indiana with 26 points and eight rebounds. Myles Turner had 24 points and eight rebounds.

HEAT 104, HORNETS 98

Tyler Johnson and Wayne Ellington came off the bench to score 16 points apiece, and Miami beat Charlotte. The Heat built a 17-point lead in the fourth quarter and then held off a Charlotte rally in the final six minutes. The Hornets got as close as two in the final two minutes, but Dion Waiters hit a 15-footer with 1:08 left to push the lead to 102-98. Goran Dragic later hit two free throws with 9.0 seconds remaining to push the lead to six. Waiters finished with 12 points on a night when the Heat shot 50 percent from the field. Josh Richardson, James Johnson, Kelly Olynyk and Bam Adebayo scored 11 points each. Kemba Walker led the Hornets with 25 points. Dwight Howard had 15 points and 16 rebounds.

RAPTORS 120, NETS 87

Kyle Lowry posted his 11th career triple-double and DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points as Toronto defeated Brooklyn. Lowry had 10 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds as the Raptors won their second game in a row and the eighth in their past nine. The Nets lost their second in a row. The Raptors have defeated the Nets in the past nine meetings between the teams. Serge Ibaka

added 18 points and eight rebounds for Toronto, Jonas Valanciunas contributed 14 points and Jakob Poeltl and Norman Powell scored 11 each. Nik Stauskas had 22 points and seven rebounds off the bench for Brooklyn.

TRAIL BLAZERS 95, MAGIC 88

Damian Lillard scored 21 points and CJ McCollum added 20 as Portland handed Orlando its fourth straight loss. Al-Farouq Aminu added 15 points as the Trail Blazers swept the season series. Nikola Vucevic led an injury-wrecked Orlando team with 26 points and 14 rebounds, while Jonathon Simmons and D.J. Augustin added 15 and 14 points, respectively. Aaron Gordon, who returned to the Magic after missing three games with a concussion, had 13 points before leaving the game midway through the fourth quarter with a right calf strain.

BULLS 115, BUCKS 109

Bobby Portis scored 27 points and Chicago extended its winning streak to five games by beating Milwaukee. Only one of Chicago's starting five failed to score in double figures as Nikola Mirotic added 22. Robin Lopez scored 18 and Kris Dunn finished with 17 for the Bulls, who shot 48.8 percent from the field and made eight of 22 attempts from beyond the arc. Khris Middleton and Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 29 points apiece but Middleton went 2-for-8 from distance while the Bucks were 9-for-32 as a team despite matching the Bulls by shooting 48 percent overall.

GRIZZLIES 96, HAWKS 94

Guard Tyreke Evans scored 22 points and made a driving layup with 1:02 left in the fourth quarter to give Memphis the victory over Atlanta. Marc Gasol (13 points, six rebounds and five assists) scored all his points in the third quarter as the Grizzlies broke a five-game losing streak and won for just the second time in their last 18 games. Atlanta has lost four in a row and six of the last seven games. Kent Bazemore led Atlanta 19 points, five assists and three steals. Dennis Schroeder had 18 points and 11 assists and Taurean Prince finished with 17 points. —Reuters

Jadeja hits six sixes in an over ahead of South Africa tour



Ravindra Jadeja

NEW DELHI: Swashbuckling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja smashed six sixes in an over in a local cricket match, sending selectors a reminder of his short-form prowess after being omitted from India's recent Twenty20 squads.

Jadeja scored 154 off just 69 deliveries in his explosive innings during a district-level T20 game on Friday in India's western Gujarat state, including a total of 10 sixes. The 29-year-old left-hander has been left out of India's one-day and T20 squads of late, last playing the shortest version of the game at international level in July against the West Indies.

However, he has been a match winner for India in Tests—a format in which he is currently ranked second in the world among all-rounders. Only four batsmen have ever achieved the feat of hitting six sixes in one over in first-class or international matches.

India's Yuvraj Singh and South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs recorded the sixes in international cricket, while Gary Sobers and Ravi Shastri did so in first-class games. However, Jadeja's innings will not be added to that list as it only came at local level, between Jamnagar and Amreli districts. A wily left-arm spinner, Jadeja is expected to play a key role when India tour South Africa in January for a three-Test series. India will also play six one-day internationals and three T20 matches in the tour, for which squads have yet to be announced. India are ranked number one in Tests with South Africa just behind on two. —AFP

Porzingis eases injury fears

NEW YORK: New York Knicks ace Kristaps Porzingis escaped a serious knee injury when he limped off against the Brooklyn Nets but remains doubtful for this weekend's clash against Oklahoma City, the team said Friday.

An MRI scan revealed no structural damage, with the towering forward diagnosed with a twisted left knee. Porzingis, who left Thursday's win over the Nets in the third quarter, is listed as questionable to face the Thunder on Saturday.

Porzingis told reporters on Thursday he had left the game after his knee began to feel unstable. "I felt my knee buckle a little bit, and I felt a little pain there, so it's more about being cautious," Porzingis said.

"I had a little shock pain there, and that's it," Porzingis has averaged 25.5 points, 6.6 rebounds and 2.1 blocked shots this season. Michael Beasley is expected to start if the 7ft 4in (2.23m) Latvian is ruled out.

Porzingis meanwhile said he believes fans will give former Knicks star Carmelo Anthony a generous reception when he returns to Madison Square Garden with the Thunder on Saturday for the first time since leaving earlier this year. "I think he was as professional as he can be in his time here in New York, so I don't see why they would not receive him with love," Porzingis said. —AFP

Sports

South Korea win East Asia title as North Korea restore pride

Kim doubles up in historic four-goal thrashing of Japan

TOKYO: Beanpole striker Kim Shin-Wook fired a quick-fire double as South Korea thrashed fierce rivals Japan 4-1 to capture a fourth East Asian championship title in Tokyo yesterday.

Earlier, forward Jong Il-Gwan scored with a delicious free kick as North Korea salvaged a measure of pride by drawing 1-1 with China. Hosts Japan only needed to avoid defeat against South Korea after taking six points from their opening two games but failed to deliver when it counted.

The Blue Samurai, who like the Koreans have qualified for next year's World Cup in Russia, got off to a flying start when striker Yu Kobayashi converted a penalty after just three minutes.

But the towering Kim headed the equaliser 10 minutes later, before Jung Woo-Young slammed home a superb free kick midway through the first half. Kim profited from some abject Japanese defending to extend South Korea's lead with a low left-foot shot 10 minutes before the break.

Missing the likes of Tottenham forward Son Heung-Min against a Japan side also without their Europe-based regulars, the Koreans were gifted a fourth via a

Kobayashi own goal after the interval and should really have added more.

The North Koreans were beaten 1-0 by Japan and South Korea in their opening two matches—both played against the backdrop of souring political relations following Pyongyang's recent missile launches.

They looked to be heading for another defeat against Marcello Lippi's China after Wei Shihao swept home a Zhang Wenzhao cross after 28 minutes. But Jong equalised 10 minutes from time when he curled home a free kick from the edge of the box that Lionel Messi would have been proud of, sparking wild celebrations on the North Korea bench and from several hundred pro-Pyongyang ethnic Koreans in the crowd.

Despite United Nations sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme, their footballers were allowed to compete in the tournament after the Japanese government waived travel restrictions.

The biennial East Asian tournament was first held in 2003 when South Korea won it for the first time, a year after reaching the semi-finals of the World Cup as co-hosts with Japan. — AFP



TOKYO: South Korea's players and officials celebrate their victory on the podium during the men's event awarding ceremony of the EAFF E-1 football championship in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP



Japan failed to deliver when it counted

Inter Milan lose unbeaten record with shock Udinese defeat

MILAN: Inter Milan lost their Serie A unbeaten status after a shock 3-1 home defeat to Udinese yesterday that puts their position at the top of the league under threat.

Inter stay temporarily top on 40 points after their first defeat of the season, which came thanks to a Rodrigo De Paul penalty and Antonin Barak tap-in adding to Kevin Lasagna's opener after Mauro Icardi had equalised for the hosts. But they can be overtaken by Napoli, who are one point behind Inter in second, if they win at Torino later. The loss for Luciano Spalletti's side also gives third-placed Juventus, themselves just two points back, the opportunity to leapfrog their old rivals Inter at Bologna today.

Inter looked like they were set to maintain their unbeaten record and momentarily extend their lead at the top when Icardi levelled the scores with a smart volley just 71 seconds after Lasagna's 14th-minute opener.

But despite dominating, the hosts could not find the breakthrough, and were punished just after the hour mark. Inter defender Davide Santon compounded a poor display by handballing Silvan Widmer's cross, and after referee Maurizio Mariani consulted the



MILAN: Inter Milan's Uruguayan midfielder Matias Vecino fights for the ball with Udinese's French midfielder Seko Mohammed Fofana during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Udinese yesterday. — AFP

video assistant referee to check that the ball had not gone out before the Udinese right-back reached the ball, he awarded the penalty from which De Paul gave the away side the lead. Inter continued to push and almost levelled in the 68th minute when Milan Skriniar thumped Antonio Candreva's cross off the bar, but were punished when Barak finished a lightning break with 13 minutes left to sink the home side. — AFP

Mourinho faces Ibrahimovic dilemma

MANCHESTER: Jose Mourinho must decide whether now is the time to recall Zlatan Ibrahimovic to his starting line-up as Manchester United prepare to visit West Brom in the Premier League today.

The former Paris Saint-Germain striker has played 73 minutes in five substitute appearances since returning from cruciate knee ligament damage against Newcastle in November.

There were fears that Ibrahimovic's career may be finished after he suffered the injury during a Europa League quarter-final victory over Anderlecht in April. The 36-year-old's return to fitness came sooner than most expected, although it is clear that Mourinho is wary of asking him to do too much too soon.

United's manager suggested a week ago that Ibrahimovic, who has yet to score since his comeback, is not yet ready to play a full 90 minutes, but the form of Romelu Lukaku may cause a rethink soon.

Lukaku did score the first-half winner on Wednesday as United beat Bournemouth, 1-0, at Old Trafford, but has looked below par for the past two months, with just three goals in 15 games. "There will be a bit of rotation," said Mourinho without directly addressing the Lukaku situation.

"I'll change a few players from match to match, because I think it is almost impossible for players to play all these matches in December and the beginning of January."

Lukaku's goal did at least lift the mood at United, which was pretty low after last Sunday's home defeat by neighbours Manchester City. It was a result that left Mourinho's side still second in the league but now 11 points behind Pep Guardiola's leaders and with diminishing hopes of getting back into the title race.

Mourinho tried to put the 38 points his side have accrued into some perspective. "We are second. The number of points could be first in other seasons, but we are second," said Mourinho.

"We go one match at a time and let's see at the end of the season how many points we have and where we are." A further setback off the pitch came with Mourinho's confirmation that centre-back Eric Bailly, who has not played since November 5, needs ankle surgery and is likely to be out for the next three months. — AFP

Nash shines as Rangers topple Kings

NEW YORK: Rick Nash scored a tiebreaking goal with 3:27 left in the third period to help the New York Rangers to a 4-2 victory over the Los Angeles Kings on Friday night at Madison Square Garden. Henrik Lundqvist stopped 33 shots for the Rangers, who had lost three of four entering the game. Chris Kreider and Kevin Hayes also scored for New York. J.T. Miller added his fifth of the season into an empty net with 53.4 seconds remaining. The Kings have dropped two straight games after winning eight in a row. Marian Gaborik had a goal and an assist and Torrey Mitchell scored for the Kings, who received 24 saves from goaltender Jonathan Quick.

DEVILS 5, STARS 2

Brian Boyle made his 100th career goal a memorable one as New Jersey beat Dallas at the Prudential Center. Steven Santini, Blake Coleman and Nick Lappin also scored for the Devils. Boyle had three points and Brian Gibbons added two assists. The Stars, who lost for the time on their four-game road trip, received goals from Martin Hanzal and Alexander Radulov. The loss kept Ken Hitchcock from becoming only the third coach in NHL history to win 800 games as he remains stuck at 799. Boyle scored his milestone goal at 16:39 of the second period to snap a 2-2 tie.

RED WINGS 3, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Danny DeKeyser and Trevor Daley each scored their first goals of the season as Detroit beat Toronto to end a three-game losing streak. Tomas Tatar also scored for the Wings, who finished a five-game homestand 2-1-2. Jimmy Howard made 25 saves. Andreas Borgman scored for the Leafs, who have lost three in a row. Toronto's five-game winning streak against the Red Wings also came to an end.



NEW YORK: Marian Gaborik #12 of the Los Angeles Kings skates in his 1000th NHL game against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden on Friday in New York City. The Rangers defeated the Kings 4-2. — AFP

HURRICANES 5, SABRES 4

Jacob Slavin scored 2:15 into overtime to lead Carolina over Buffalo. Slavin's goal capped a frenetic finish that featured six goals in the third period and a hat trick for Buffalo's Jack Eichel. On the game-winner, Elias Lindholm found Slavin open in the center of the ice and Slavin scored on a shot to the blocker side. Lindholm, Justin Williams, Jordan Staal and Derek Ryan also scored for Carolina. Cam Ward made 37 saves. Eichel picked up his first career hat trick for the Sabres, who came back from a two-goal deficit before falling. Jake McCabe also

scored for Buffalo. Chad Johnson made 29 saves.

CANUCKS 4, SHARKS 3 (OT)

Sam Gagner scored with 25.7 seconds left in overtime as Vancouver defeated San Jose. Markus Granlund scored twice for the Canucks and Brock Boeser scored once. Daniel Sedin and Henrik Sedin had three assists each. Brent Burns scored two goals and Marcus Sorensen scored the other goal for the Sharks. Canucks goalie Jacob Markstrom made 35 saves and the Sharks' Martin Jones stopped 36 shots. — Reuters

NHL result/standings

Vancouver 4, San Jose 3 (OT); Detroit 3, Toronto 1; Carolina 5, Buffalo 4 (OT); New Jersey 5, Dallas 2; NY Rangers 4, Los Angeles 2.

Western Conference						
Central Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Nashville	20	7	4	106	85	44
St. Louis	21	10	2	105	84	44
Winnipeg	18	9	5	108	92	41
Minnesota	17	11	3	91	88	37
Chicago	16	11	5	98	85	37
Dallas	18	14	1	98	97	37
Colorado	15	14	2	96	101	32
Pacific Division						
Los Angeles	20	10	3	100	77	43
Las Vegas	20	9	2	107	95	42
San Jose	17	10	4	85	75	38
Calgary	16	13	3	91	99	35
Anaheim	14	11	7	86	92	35
Vancouver	15	14	4	87	100	34
Edmonton	13	17	2	93	105	28
Arizona	7	22	5	76	118	19
Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
Tampa Bay	23	6	2	117	75	48
Toronto	20	13	1	109	97	41
Boston	15	10	4	84	82	34
Montreal	14	14	4	87	100	32
Detroit	12	13	7	86	103	31
Florida	12	15	5	93	110	29
Ottawa	10	13	7	82	103	27
Buffalo	8	18	7	72	111	23
Metropolitan Division						
Columbus	20	11	1	94	84	41
New Jersey	18	9	5	100	96	41
Washington	20	12	1	105	96	41
NY Rangers	17	12	3	105	94	37
NY Islanders	17	12	3	114	111	37
Pittsburgh	16	14	3	95	106	35
Philadelphia	13	11	7	89	89	33
Carolina	13	11	7	88	97	33

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

Sports

Chelsea sink Saints, Ozil cracker downs Newcastle

Huddersfield Town thrash 10-man Watford 4-1

LONDON: Chelsea kept their faint Premier League title hopes alive with a 1-0 win over Southampton, while Mesut Ozil's stunning strike fired Arsenal to a 1-0 victory against Newcastle United yesterday.

With runaway leaders Manchester City in action against Tottenham Hotspur later, the focus turned to the clubs desperately trying to hang onto their coat-tails. At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea sealed their second successive win to move within 11 points of City and draw level on points with second-placed Manchester United, who face West Bromwich Albion today.

After a tame opening from the champions, who started with star striker Alvaro Morata on the bench following a back injury, Antonio Conte's side finally opened the scoring in first-half stoppage-time. Marcos Alonso provided the breakthrough, the Spanish wing-back curling a free-kick past flat-footed Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster from 35 yards. Chelsea have won eight of their last 10 league matches, but City remain out of reach for now. At the Emirates Stadium, Arsenal won for the first time in four league games to boost their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish. Heavily linked with a move to Manchester United when his contract expires at the end of the season, Ozil showcased his talents for any interested clubs when he put Arsenal ahead in the 23rd minute.

After an Alexis Sanchez shot deflected into Ozil's path, the German midfielder smashed a superb volley past Newcastle goalkeeper Rob Elliot from the edge of

the area for his third goal of the season. Newcastle's eighth defeat in their last nine league games leaves Rafael Benitez's side mired in relegation trouble.

BLAZED OVER

Brighton and Hove Albion's Glenn Murray missed a penalty in his team's 0-0 draw against high-flying Burnley at the Amex Stadium. Murray won a first-half penalty when he was fouled by James Tarkowski, but the Brighton forward couldn't take advantage as he blazed the spot-kick high over the crossbar. Huddersfield Town thrashed 10-man Watford 4-1 to record their first away win since the opening day of the season. Elias Kachunga scored Huddersfield's first away goal since August, poking home after Watford failed to clear a sixth-minute corner. Congolese striker

Alonso provided the breakthrough

Kachunga was stretchered off soon after, but the Terriers doubled their lead through Aaron Mooy's close-range finish in the 23rd minute. A bad afternoon for Watford got even worse when Troy Deeney was sent off by referee Michael Oliver for a lunge on Collin Quanan in the 33rd minute, making it three red cards in their last three games.

Laurent Depoitre bagged Huddersfield's third in the 50th minute before the visitors had Jonathan Hogg sent off for a second booking. Watford's Abdoulaye Doucoure got one back with a powerful 68th-minute strike, but Mooy's 89th-minute penalty wrapped up the points. — AFP



LONDON: Southampton's Danish midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg (L) falls by Chelsea's French midfielder N'Golo Kante during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Southampton at Stamford Bridge in London. —AFP

Mueller fires Bayern 11 points clear

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller came off the bench to score the only goal and Sven Ulreich saved a stoppage time penalty for Bayern Munich as they won 1-0 at VfB Stuttgart yesterday to go 11 points clear in the Bundesliga.

Mueller put Bayern ahead with 11 minutes remaining and keeper Ulreich saved Chadrac Akolo's 95th-minute spot kick to break the home fans' hearts. There was plenty more drama around Germany's top flight as Brazil defender Naldo scored in the 95th minute to snatch a 2-2 draw for second-placed Schalke at Eintracht Frankfurt and maintain their 11-match unbeaten run. There was also excitement at mid-table Augsburg as Iceland striker Alfred Finnbogason scored twice in added time to claim a hat-trick and grab a 3-3 draw at home to Freiburg after the hosts had been 3-1 down on 90 minutes. Finnbogason's treble overshadowed ex-Bayern striker Nils Petersen who scored twice for Freiburg to hit six goals in his last three games.

Not to be outdone, strugglers Mainz also came from two down at Werder Bremen to poach a point in a 2-2 draw thanks to goals by Sweden midfielder Robin Quaison and then Swiss Fabian Frei, who equalised in the 93rd-minute. Bottom side Cologne finally picked up their first win of the season 1-0 over Wolfsburg thanks to Christian Clemens' second-half winner, but his side remain 11 points from safety.

In Stuttgart, defending champions Bayern remain in pole position to win a sixth straight league title and maintain their iron-grip on first place when the Bundesliga's winter break starts after this weekend. Head coach Jupp Heynckes named a star-studded team, which was frustrated until he threw Mueller on for the final 25 minutes. The Germany star delivered in style



STUTTGART: Stuttgart's defender Andreas Beck (L) and Argentinean midfielder Santiago Ascacibar (R) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between VfB Stuttgart and Bayern Munich yesterday in Stuttgart. — AFP

when the Stuttgart made a rare mistake, leaving him unmarked on the edge of the area to allow him to smash his shot home.

For only the fifth time in Bayern's 17 Bundesliga, striker Robert Lewandowski, the league's top scorer with 15 goals this season, failed to hit the net when he wasted a late chance. Ulreich, back in goal after a groin strain, was Bayern's hero by diving to his right to save Akolo's penalty after the video assistant referee confirmed Niklas Suele made contact with Santiago Ascacibar's knee in the area. Having also scored their

last-gasp equaliser when Schalke came from four goals down to sneak a 4-4 draw at arch-rivals Borussia Dortmund last month, centre-back Naldo again rescued the Royal Blues unbeaten run in Frankfurt. Eintracht raced out of the blocks when Luka Jovic beat Schalke goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann with just two minutes gone and went 2-0 up 24 minutes from time when Sebastian Haller came on to bang home their second. Breele Embolo pulled a goal back for Schalke before Naldo banged home a speculative long-ball to the delight of travelling fans to keep his team second. — AFP

Hodgson praise for Benteke as Palace striker makes amends

LONDON: Belgian striker Christian Benteke made good on his pledge to make amends to his Crystal Palace team mates as he ended his long scoring drought with the first goal in his side's 3-0 victory at Leicester City yesterday.

Benteke was the villain of the piece last week when he ignored team orders to take, and miss, a stoppage-time penalty that would have given Palace victory over Bournemouth.

But he headed goal after 18 minutes, his first in 1,106 minutes of Premier League football and Palace's first on the road this season, paved the way for a victory that lifted Roy Hodgson's side out of the bottom three.

Wilfried Zaha, whose form has helped Palace climb out of trouble, scored a silky second and Bakary Sako was also on target in stoppage time at the King Power Stadium. "Benteke was very strong. The day after (the penalty miss)

he came in and held his hand up, he spoke to the players and myself and made the point that he would make it up to team, and that is what he has done," Hodgson said.

"We know that he is a quality player and the goal he scored is the sort of one he's going to score, and had it not been for a wonder-save by Kasper Schmeichel, he would have scored two today because he got in the positions well. "His record at Aston Villa was one every two games, and it wouldn't surprise me if he matched that here in the remaining games of the season—that's what we're hoping for." Palace have 17 points from 18 games, which is a remarkable turnaround considering they had none, and no goals, after seven.

Former England boss Hodgson, who lost his opening three league games in charge after replacing Frank de Boer in September, has been the mastermind behind their recovery from the worst start in top flight history.

With struggling Swansea City up next for Palace they could even find themselves clear of danger before Christmas, although Hodgson knows they must maintain the level that has seen them put together a seven-match unbeaten run.

"We did feel a bit marooned (at the bottom of the table), there was a time when we were looking up at everyone above us and the gap was massive,"



LEICESTER: Leicester City's English-born Jamaican defender Wes Morgan wins a header above Crystal Palace's Ivorian striker Wilfried Zaha during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Crystal Palace at King Power Stadium in Leicester. — AFP

Hodgson, 70, said. "But since then we have started playing the way we have over the past few games, and if we can

produce performances like this all the way until May, we will have given ourselves a chance." — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
West Bromwich Albion v Manchester United	17:15		
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
Bournemouth v Liverpool	19:30		
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Girona v Getafe	14:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
Loganes v Real Madrid	14:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
Celta de Vigo v Villarreal	18:15		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
Las Palmas v Espanyol	20:30		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna	22:45		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Hellas Verona v Milan	14:30		
beIN SPORTS			
Bologna v Juventus	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
Florentina v Genoa	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 1			
Sampdoria v Sassuolo Calcio	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 7			
Crotone v Chievo Verona	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 8			
Benevento v spal	20:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
Atalanta v Lazio	22:45		
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA			
Hannover v Bayer 04 Leverkusen	17:30		
beIN SPORTS HD 5			
Leipzig v Hertha Berlin	20:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 5			
FRENCH LEAGUE			
Nantes v Angers	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
Nice v Girondins de Bordeaux	19:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
Olympique Lyonnais v Olympique Marseille	23:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 6			

Neymar in form as PSG extend Ligue 1 lead

PARIS: Neymar scored two goals and set up two more as Paris St Germain extended their Ligue 1 lead to nine points with a 4-1 away demolition of Stade Rennais yesterday. Neymar struck both sides of the interval and assisted Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani to score, putting PSG on 47 points from 18 games after second-placed Monaco hammered St Etienne 4-0 on Friday at Geoffroy Guichard.

Rennes, who finished with 10 men after Benjamin Andre was sent off in the 63rd minute, replied through Firmin Mubele and stayed sixth on 25 points. Brazil forward Neymar quickly found the back of the net at Roazhon Park as he tapped in from Mbappe's cross after only four minutes. He returned the favour in the 17th minute by setting up Mbappe in the box, the French international doubling the tally from close range. Eight minutes into the second half, Rennes reduced the arrears when Mubele finished it off after Morgan Amalfitano's strike had struck the post.

But the home side were heavily penalised when Andre picked up a second yellow card. In the 75th minute, Uruguayan striker Cavani collected Neymar's through ball before beating Tomas Koubek to score his 18th league goal in as many games. Neymar rounded it off one minute later by latching on to Mbappe's cross. — Reuters

12 Confident Vonn claims first victory, fires warning shot to Olympic rivals

14 South Korea win East Asia title as North Korea restore pride

15 Chelsea sink Saints, Ozil cracker downs Newcastle



ABU DHABI: Real Madrid players celebrate with the FIFA Club World Cup trophy following their victory in the final football match against Gremio at Zayed Sports City Stadium in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi yesterday. Real Madrid defeated Gremio 1-0 to lift the FIFA Club World Cup for the third time in their history. — AFP

Ronaldo retains Club WCup for Real

Pachuca beat hosts Al Jazira 4-1 in third-place play-off

ABU DHABI: Cristiano Ronaldo's second-half free-kick ensured Real Madrid picked up a fifth trophy of 2017 by beating Gremio 1-0 in Abu Dhabi yesterday to retain the Club World Cup. A third Club World Cup in four years brings Madrid level with rivals Barcelona as the most successful side in the competition's history and adds to the La Liga, Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and Spanish Super Cup titles already won by Zinedine Zidane's men this year.

Ronaldo was once again Real's man for the big occasion as his strike went through the Gremio wall eight minutes after the break to ensure the European club champions were also crowned world champions for a fifth straight year.

Gareth Bale was left on the bench despite scoring with his first touch as a substitute against Al Jazira on Wednesday to book Madrid's place in the final, as

Zinedine Zidane kept faith with the same side that started Real's Champions League final triumph over Juventus back in June.

Gremio booked their ricket to Abu Dhabi by winning the Copa Libertadores for the third time last month and Madrid knew they weren't in for a comfortable evening just two minutes in when Gremio captain Pedro Geromel raked his studs down the back of Ronaldo's calf without any punishment from Mexican referee Cesar Ramos. Madrid dominated possession but, unlike in their profligate semi-final performance, found clear-



Ronaldo was tripped 25 yards from goal

cut chances hard to come by against the well-organised Gremio defence. Luka Modric came closest to breaking the deadlock in the first half with a left-footed shot from the edge of the box that flew inches wide of the far post.

Ronaldo also hammered a long-range free-kick that dipped onto the roof of the net, whilst Edilson gave Keylor Navas a similar scare at the other end with a free-kick from range. Gremio pleaded for the referee to consult with the video assistant referee (VAR) when Sergio Ramos clipped Ramiro inside the area early in the sec-

ond period. However, those claims fell on deaf ears and Madrid instantly broke up the other end to open the scoring. Ronaldo was tripped 25 yards from goal and the world player of the year's resulting free-kick sneaked through a gap in the Gremio wall to skip into the bottom corner.

Gremio were handed a lifeline when Ronaldo had the ball in the net again just before the hour mark, but Karim Benzema was flagged for being marginally off-side in the build-up. Marcelo Grohe then turned another Modric drive onto the post and made great stops from Ronaldo and Bale in the final 10 minutes to keep Gremio in the game. However, the Brazilians failed to register a single shot on target as Madrid comfortably held out to seal their most successful ever year with a fifth trophy. Earlier, Mexican side Pachuca beat hosts Al Jazira 4-1 in the third-place play-off. — AFP

City make it 16 in a row

LONDON: Manchester City racked up a 16th consecutive Premier League win as the runaway leaders routed Tottenham 4-1 yesterday. Ilkay Gundogan opened the scoring at Eastlands before Kevin De Bruyne and Raheem Sterling netted after the interval to ensure City opened up a 14-point lead over second placed Manchester United, who face West Bromwich Albion on Sunday.

Having set the Premier League record for successive wins in their midweek triumph at Swansea, Pep Guardiola's side now have their manager's personal bests in their sights. City's 16-match winning run in the league equals Guardiola's second longest streak as a boss-

with Barcelona in 2010-11 — and moves them within three of his career-high 19 successive victories with Bayern Munich in 2013-14.

With the title race turning into a lengthy coronation for City, it would be easy for the leaders to take their eye off the ball, but they were always in control against a Tottenham team who once again flopped in an away game against top-six opponents.

Germany midfielder Gundogan put City in front in the 14th minute with a stooping header from Leroy Sane's cross. De Bruyne made it two with a blistering finish from Gundogan's pass in the 70th minute. Gabriel Jesus squandered a chance to make it three when the City forward hit the post with a penalty awarded for Jan Vertonghen's foul on De Bruyne. But Sterling scored with an 80th minute tap-in and then punished a mistake by Tottenham's Eric Dier to claim his 15th goal of the season.

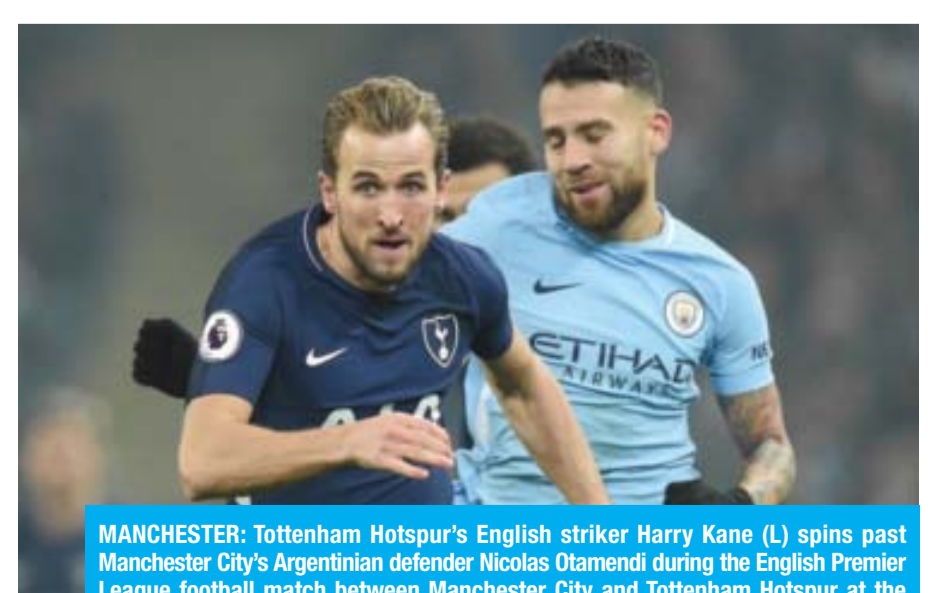
Christian Eriksen's stoppage-time goal for Tottenham couldn't take the gloss off another

City masterclass. West Ham piled pressure on Stoke boss Mark Hughes with a 3-0 win in a match delayed by an hour after a power outage plunged parts of the bet365 Stadium into darkness before kick-off.

Mark Noble, Marko Arnautovic and Diafra Sakho scored for the visitors as West Ham climbed above Stoke into 15th place. Brighton's Glenn Murray missed a penalty in his team's 0-0 draw against high-flying Burnley at the Amex Stadium.

Huddersfield thrashed Watford 4-1 to record their first away win since the opening day of the season. Elias Kachunga and Aaron Mooy scored for Huddersfield before Watford's Troy Deeney was sent off, making it three red cards in their last three games.

Laurent Depoitre bagged Huddersfield's third before the visitors had Jonathan Hogg sent off. Watford's Abdoulaye Doucoure, but Mooy's 89th-minute penalty wrapped up the points. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (L) spins past Manchester City's Argentinian defender Nicolas Otamendi during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester yesterday. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017

19 Oil prices remain high on pipeline shutdown



19 World trade order in a wobble as Washington snubs WTO status quo



22 US moves to roll back 'net neutrality' rules



WASHINGTON, DC: US House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady discusses progress on the tax reform bill with reporters at the US Capitol on Friday in Washington, DC. — AFP

Trump's tax cut on track for passage

Final compromise text released after Republicans adopt bill

WASHINGTON: A major tax cut promised by US President Donald Trump was on track for final passage next week, after two previous holdouts in his Republican party said Friday they would vote yes on the legislation.

Republicans in both houses of the US Congress, where they hold majorities, each adopted their own versions of the controversial tax code overhaul, and the final compromise text was released late Friday.

"By lowering tax rates, simplifying the rigged and burdensome tax code, and repealing the failed tax on lower- and middle-income households known as the Obamacare individual mandate, this legislation will grow our economy, raise wages and promote economic competitiveness," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said.

Trump "looks forward to fulfilling the promise he made to the American people to give them a tax cut by the end of the year," she added in a statement. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida had imperiled the legislation this week when he said he would not vote

in favor of the sweeping bill unless some changes were made.

Rubio had been demanding a doubling of the child tax credit to \$2,000. His spokeswoman confirmed to AFP that Rubio had moved to the "yes" camp after he got an increase in the refundable portion of the credit, which will help lower-income families.

Bob Corker of Tennessee, a fiscal conservative who had been the only Senate Republican to vote against the chamber's initial tax proposal, also said he would vote for the bill, despite reservations over the likelihood that the reforms would substantially increase the national

debt. "I know every bill we consider is imperfect and the question becomes is our country better off with or without this piece

of legislation," Corker said in a statement. "I think we are better off with it. I realize this is a bet on our country's enterprising spirit, and that is a bet I am willing to make."

Wall Street records

Wall Street stocks surged to fresh records following the news that Rubio and Corker were on board with the reform, pushing the

long-awaited measure closer to the finish line. Under the legislation, the federal corporate tax would fall from 35 percent to 21 percent—a notch up

from the 20 percent in previous versions—and the maximum income tax rate would drop from 39.6 percent to 37 percent.

Republicans hold a 52-48 majority in the Senate, and could have only afforded two defectors, with Vice President Mike Pence casting a deciding vote in case of a deadlock.

No Democrats support the measure.

Each Republican member therefore has considerable power, especially with Senator John McCain hospitalized as he fights an aggressive form of brain cancer. Trump was optimistic about his party's chances of passing tax reform, which would be a massive win for the leader who has yet to notch any major legislative victory after nearly a year in office. "I think we are going to be in a position to pass something as early as next week, which will be monumental," he said. Trump has promised Americans that the sweeping reform would pass before Christmas, so that it would take effect from the beginning of 2018. —AFP



Congress set to pass bill next week

Boursa Kuwait becomes IOSCO member

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait has announced that effective this month, it has become a member of International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), a major achievement to be added to the company's track of records and a testimony for its clear vision and successful strategy.

The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) is the international body that brings together the world's securities regulators and is recognized as the global standard setter

for the securities sector. IOSCO develops, implements and promotes adherence to internationally recognized standards for securities regulation. It works intensively with the G20 and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) on the global regulatory reform agenda.

Through this membership, Boursa Kuwait will get the necessary support for developing, implementing and promoting adherence to internationally recognized and consistent standards of regulations to protect investors, maintain fair, efficient and transparent markets, and seek to address systemic risks. The membership will also allow exchanging information at both global and regional levels on experiences, to help developing the market, strengthening infrastructure and implementing appropriate regulations.

IOSCO categorizes members of its organizations to ordinary, associate and affiliate members. Affiliate members are self-regulatory organizations, securities exchanges, financial market infrastructures, international bodies other than governmental organizations with an appropriate interest in securities regu-

lation, investor protection funds and compensation funds, and other bodies with an appropriate interest in securities regulation.

Commenting on the achievement, Khaled Al-Khaled, Boursa Kuwait Chief Executive Officer said: "By being an affiliate member of IOSCO, we celebrate another major success not only for us as a company, but also for Kuwait's history of exchange. Since resumed the responsibility of managing Kuwait's stock market we had a clear vision, identified objectives and detailed strategic plan for us to achieve our goals, and so far, every single accomplishment we record puts us a step closer to fulfilling our objectives and confirms that we are on the right track applying a wise strategy"

"By being an affiliate member of IOSCO, we are enhancing the methods used to protect investors and promote their confidence in the integrity of securities markets, which is something we very much need to fulfil" added Al-Khaled.

Since established, Boursa Kuwait has recorded a lot of achievements, the latest and the biggest was the upgrade from



Khaled Al-Khaled

developed to an emerging market by FTSE Russel. The company has also managed to launch number of services and products within very brief period and continued to maintain transparency to strengthen its leading position at the regional level.

China, UK vow to strengthen economic ties

BEIJING: China and Britain have vowed to continue and strengthen cooperation on a wide range of economic, financial and trade issues, including speeding the introduction of a London-Shanghai stock connect program.

In a joint statement yesterday, coinciding with an official visit to China by British Finance Minister Philip Hammond, the countries also said they opposed trade protectionism and reaffirmed their support for the World Trade Organization as a key pillar of the global trade system.

The statement comes as China, in an unusual step, accused the United States and the European Union of breaking promises that they made when China joined the WTO. Speaking at a press conference in Beijing together with Chinese Vice Premier Ma Kai, Hammond said the two countries were also discussing a long-awaited London-Shanghai stock connect program, as well as a possible scheme to connect their bond markets.—Reuters



NBK International Report

Tax cuts boost US growth, Brexit talks make headway

Advanced economies enjoy solid growth

KUWAIT: An already robust global economic picture improved still further in recent weeks. Data in Europe and Japan firmed noticeably, and continued to come in strong in the US. The outlook in the US also benefited from the Senate's passage of an historic tax reform bill, though a final reconciled measure will require some additional work. Meanwhile, the UK made significant progress on a Brexit agreement with the EU, removing some of the dark clouds on the horizon. With that, equities continued to perform well, hitting fresh highs. Despite the robust outlook for growth, inflation continued to lag behind.

The figures on the US economy continued to come in strong. The latest employment report showed labor conditions continuing to tighten. Nonfarm payrolls rose by 228,000 in November, though the unemployment rate stayed put at the 17-year low of 4.1 percent. A number of leading indicators have been particularly strong, including capital goods orders and the ISM manufacturing index, showing increased optimism and rising investment. GDP growth also remained solid. 3Q17 GDP growth was revised upward to a solid 3.3 percent q/q annualized, from 3.0 percent in 2Q17.

Optimism in a more business friendly White House and a GOP controlled Congress paid off this month, as legislators passed landmark tax cuts. The Senate passed long-awaited tax reform, though it will still need to be reconciled with the House version. While most Republicans believe the cuts, estimated to cost around \$1.4 trillion over ten years, will generate enough growth to pay for themselves, many economists do not see them resulting in a large fiscal stimulus. Nonetheless, they are expected to be a boon for corporate earnings and could boost growth in the medium term.



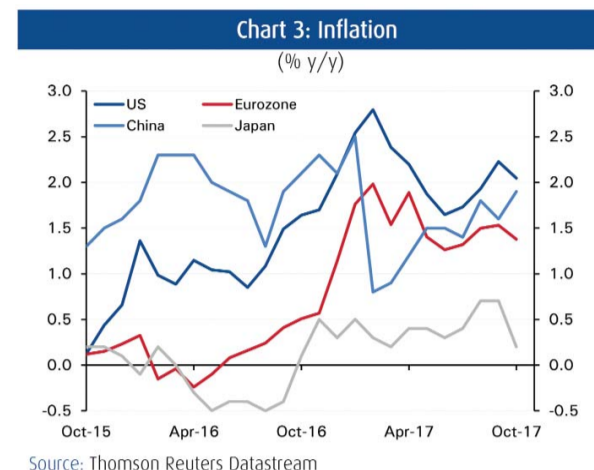
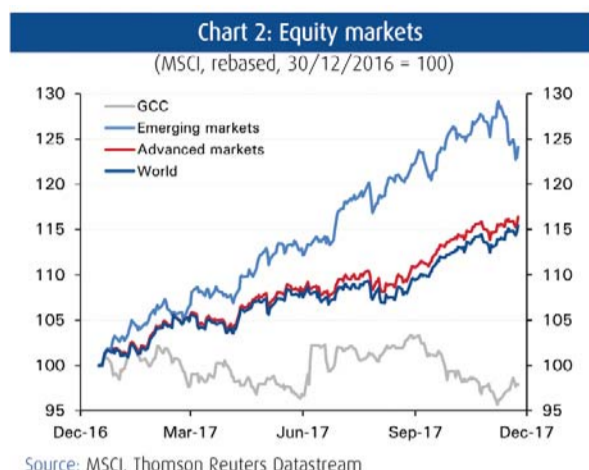
US jobless rate stays at record low

mandated ceiling. In an effort to avert a government shutdown, Congress passed a 2-week stopgap-spending bill, giving legislators more time to agree to new spending levels for the 2018 fiscal year. A broad bipartisan effort is currently underway with hopes an agreement can be reached before Christmas. However, with some expecting agreement on other pending issues, including immigration and healthcare, a deal is unlikely to be straightforward, especially given the need to have something ready before the end of 2017.

Performance in the eurozone has increasingly mirrored the strength seen in the US, with recent data indicating growth picking up pace. The PMI rose to a more than 6-year high of 57.5 in November, showing solid activity across the eurozone. Strength continued to be broad-based, with France (60.3), Ireland (57.7), and Germany (57.3) seeing the best performance. The data pointed to further strengthening in

4Q17 GDP growth. Meanwhile, the final revision to 3Q17 confirmed growth at a robust 2.6 percent y/y. Consumer confidence for the area also beat expectations, increasing to a post-Great Recession high after its fourth consecutive monthly increase.

The solid economic recovery took place even as the EU grappled with a series of existential political crises that threatened to upset the status quo; in November, it was Germany's turn. After several EU members survived a wave of anti-EU challengers earlier in 2017, the German national election weakened Angela Merkel, the longest serving EU leader, as the anti-EU far right made marked inroads. With a government yet to be formed, the initial uncertainty subsided after the Social Democrats agreed to talks to form another coalition with Merkel's Christian Democrats. Brexit-related uncertainty subsided slightly as the UK



reached an agreement with the EU over Brexit divorce terms, which should pave the way for negotiations on the trade relationship. The UK agreed to pay €40-60 billion to settle existing commitments to the block. The deal also included a settlement on the rights of EU citizens in the UK post-Brexit and the question of the Irish border. Now the UK and EU will embark on the more important part of the talks, their trade relationship immediately after Brexit and further in the future.

Japan growth
In Japan, a strong showing by Shinzo Abe in the October election now appears to have coincided with an improving economy. Indeed, Japan's economy appears to be seeing its best performance in years, with GDP recording the longest growth streak in decades. GDP growth in 3Q17 was revised upwards to an annualized 2.5 percent. The question remains whether this pace can be sustained in 2018, something markets will be looking out for.

While advanced economies enjoyed solid economic growth, they continued to see inflation below target and failing to pick up. In the US, core CPI inflation stood at 1.8 percent but did not appear to be gaining momentum after a bout of soft figures in the summer. This was confirmed once again in November's wage growth, which despite a

tight labor market was not gaining pace. The story was similar in the eurozone, where the flash core inflation rate came in at 0.9 percent for November.

While the Fed has not allowed soft inflation to get in the way of a third hike in 2017, continued softness could begin to weigh on central bank tightening schedules in 2018. Virtually everyone expected the Fed to hike their policy rate by another 25 basis points in December, which they did, especially given the solid economic data and assurances markets received that soft inflation will not hold them back from normalizing. Next year, markets see the Fed moving 2-3 times. In the eurozone, things could be more complicated; given the structural limitations of QE there, the ECB has little credibility continuing with that program past 2018.

Boosted by a solid global economy and the recent OPEC agreement, oil prices climbed for a fifth consecutive month in November, and are holding above \$60. Brent rose to \$63 per barrel in November, up 32 percent from where it was six months ago. The recent agreement reached between OPEC and some non-OPEC countries to extend production cuts through the end of 2018 provided additional support to prices, though US production growth from shale oil will continue to weigh on prices in the medium term.

Budget deal

Meanwhile, markets continue to await a budget deal in the US as the government debt, again, approaches the

Bayt.com weekly Report

Use these tricks when you are stuck on a job interview

There are many nightmare scenarios when it comes to job interviews. For example, you could show up late or poorly dressed. You could have forgotten to bring an extra copy of your CV. Even worse, you could completely blank on the interviewers' names. While any of these would be certainly embarrassing and unfavorable, they pale in comparison to the ultimate worst case scenario.

Imagine this for a moment. The interview has been going on for some time and as far as you're concerned, it is going well. Some of the nervousness you felt at the start of the interview begins to ebb and you feel confident with the way it's going. Suddenly, the interviewer brings that train of thought to a roaring halt by asking an interview question...that causes you to freeze on the spot.

That is, full-on, white noise and static clouding your brain, frozen. This is definitely a tense, anxiety-inducing situation. But, most professionals will have been in that situation more often than they would like to admit. Of course, the ideal is the vision of walking into an interview suave, dressed to the nines, confident and prepared to answer whatever questions the interviewer has. While that is the goal, the arrow sometimes just misses the mark. Even if you have thoroughly researched the company and prepared a set of answers for the most frequently asked questions, there is always the possibility that an unexpected question will catch you off guard.

Don't get knocked off your feet. Take a deep breath. With

these five, fail-proof tricks, Bayt.com, the Middle East's leading job site, will show you exactly how to escape this kind of situation.

1. Take your time answering

Taking your time does not suggest you should allow yourself to succumb to a long, awkward pause. Additionally, you should do your best not to let a single, 'Um', 'Uh', or anything similar pass through your lips. What it really means is that you should take a moment to process the question. Stall for time by saying something along the lines of, 'Wow, that's a good question! Let me just get my thoughts together.' This will show that you are giving the question the proper consideration and will give you a minute or two to come up with a good answer.

2. Ask for some clarification

This might either seem obvious or hard to believe, but it is absolutely fine to ask your interviewer questions. An interview, unlike an interrogation, is a two-way conversation. If you don't understand the question, or simply don't know if you have understood it correctly, ask for further clarification. Just ask and say that you want to provide the best possible answer. Make sure you smile and be sincere. Remember, the interviewer has probably interviewed many people before, and you will not be the first person they have come across who needed further details before answering.

3. Come back to the question later

If you are completely thrown off by the question and find yourself absolutely incapable of coming up with an answer, you can also try the tactic of asking the interviewer to ask you another question in the meanwhile. Let them know that you would prefer to come back to this question later on in the interview. This will give

your brain time to work on an answer as you go through some other questions.

4. Change the subject

Just to be clear, do not, for any reason, avoid the question altogether as that is a bad idea. Instead, try to redirect the interviewing process briefly and mention something the question reminds you of. For instance, a situation in a previous job or when handling a previous project that is relevant to the topic of the question. Throw in an anecdote about how you solved the problem or made a good decision in the past. Ensure, however, that you are not digressing too far from the question.

5. Throw in some humor

Building rapport with your interviewer is essential. Neither one of you would enjoy sitting through a stiff and awkward exchange that lasts anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour. In addition, if you and your interviewer are enjoying a nice, pleasant conversation, there is a chance that they will not immediately notice you are struggling with a particular interview question. Have a sense of humor about it and say something along the lines of, 'I was so excited about the interview and the job that my brain can't seem to catch up.' Then laugh a little and see how the interviewer responds. At best, the interviewer will laugh and reassure you, and at worst? You bought yourself a few extra minutes.

Remember, a combination of preparation and research is the keystone of any successful job interview. However, even the best, most experienced and most prepared job seekers can get caught off guard every once in a while. Stay positive and try your best. Still looking for a job? No responses on your applications yet? Don't get complacent and keep your rhythm by applying to any of the 10,000+ jobs available on Bayt.com on any given day.

Fitch raises Irish debt rating, citing healthier banks

WASHINGTON: The Fitch ratings agency raised Ireland's sovereign debt rating Friday, pointing to the increasing strength of the local banking sector.

The move marked the republic's continuing recovery from the eurozone debt crisis. Fitch raised Ireland's long-term sovereign debt rating to A+ from A, with a stable outlook.

Among lenders, the share of non-performing loans fell below 12 percent in the second quarter of this year, down from more than 25 percent four years ago, the agency said in a statement.

And in major Irish banks such as Bank of Ireland Group, tier-one capital has risen to 25.3 percent in the second quarter, up 1.6 percentage points in a year.

Meanwhile, the country's debt-to-income ratio is falling, even though it remains the fourth-highest in the European Union, according to Fitch. Ireland has a "wealthy, flexible economy," with strong institutions and among the highest per capita incomes of any country in the A category, the agency said.

But uncertainty surrounding EU-British negotiations and the future of trade relations with Britain remains a risk to growth prospects, according to Fitch. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.672
Indian Rupees	4.700
Pakistani Rupees	2.852
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.976
Nepali Rupees	2.941
Singapore Dollar	225.110
Hongkong Dollar	38.817
Bangladesh Taka	3.647
Philippine Peso	6.009
Thai Baht	9.317

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	80.854
Qatari Riyal	83.276
Omani Riyal	787.420
Bahraini Dinar	805.100
UAE Dirham	82.550

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.240
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.986
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.217
Tunisian Dinar	123.670
Jordanian Dinar	427.300
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.020
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.581

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	303.000
Euro	357.990
Sterling Pound	405.720

Canadian dollar	237.000
Turkish lira	80.050
Swiss Franc	307.910
Australian Dollar	231.190
US Dollar Buying	301.800

GOLD

20 Gram	249.070
10 Gram	127.450
5 Gram	64.570

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	302.350
Canadian Dollar	236.590
Sterling Pound	407.825
Euro	359.230
Swiss Frank	299.325
Bahrain Dinar	802.460
UAE Dirhams	82.710
Qatari Riyals	83.535
Saudi Riyals	81.485
Jordanian Dinar	427.725
Egyptian Pound	17.084
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.973
Indian Rupees	4.727
Pakistani Rupees	2.761
Bangladesh Taka	3.667
Philippines Peso	5.993
Cyprus pound	17.990
Japanese Yen	3.685
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.945

Malaysian Ringgit	75.010
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.185
Thai Bhat	10.305
Turkish Lira	79.755

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY BUY SELL

British Pound	0.399797	0.407297
Czech Korune	0.005908	0.017908
Danish Krone	0.043955	0.048955
Euro	0.351596	0.359096
Georgian Lari	0.134911	0.134911
Hungarian 0.001141	0.001331	
Norwegian Krone	0.032546	0.037746
Romanian Leu	0.064826	0.081676
Russian ruble	0.005166	0.005166
Slovakia	0.009030	0.019030
Swedish Krona	0.031906	0.036906
Swiss Franc	0.299870	0.310870
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.223636	0.235636
New Zealand Dollar	0.205842	0.215342
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.230358	0.239358
US Dollars	0.298800	0.303220
US Dollars Mint	0.299300	0.303220
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003300	0.003884

Chinese Yuan	0.044357	0.047857
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036843	0.039593
Indian Rupee	0.004133	0.004774
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002618	0.002798
Korean Won	0.000268	0.000283
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070251	0.076251
Nepalese Rupee	0.003022	0.003192
Pakistan Rupee	0.002611	0.002901
Philippine Peso	0.005935	0.006235
Singapore Dollar	0.219734	0.229734
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001698	0.002278
Taiwan	0.010007	0.010187
Thai Baht	0.008968	0.009518
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.796666	0.805166
Egyptian Pound	0.014518	0.020236
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000186	0.000246
Jordanian Dinar	0.422613	0.431613
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000156	0.000256
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022147	0.046147
Omani Riyal	0.0780436	0.786115
Qatar Riyal	0.078909	0.083849
Saudi Riyal	0.079687	0.080987
Syrian Pound	0.001284	0.001504
Tunisian Dinar	0.117348	0.125348
Turkish Lira	0.073518	0.083818
UAE Dirhams	0.081043	0.082743
Yemeni Riyal	0.000985	0.001064

Business

KAMCO Monthly Report

Oil prices remain high on pipeline shutdown and stock drawdown

OPEC says output cut is pushing for a greater rebalancing

KUWAIT: Oil prices remained range-bound with minimal volatility and comfortably above the \$60/b mark during November-17 and during the first two weeks of December-17 following the extension to the ongoing oil production cut agreement until the end of 2018. An oil pipeline shutdown in North Sea for repairs and maintenance after a leak also exerted upward pressure on Brent crude prices as the pipeline carries around 0.45 mb/d of Forties crude from the North Sea. The pipeline carries the biggest of the five North Sea crude oil streams and according to reports, it would take several weeks for the repair work to reach completion, and for the pipeline to come back online.

Oil price support also came after OPEC chief said that the ongoing output cut pact is pushing for a faster rebalancing of the oil market as inventory glut declined to 130 million barrels above the 5-year average.

This also triggered talks of an exit strategy to the pact but the OPEC chief said that the producers are working on a continuity strategy for adjusting supply beyond the existing agreement that runs until the end of 2018. He added that oil fundamentals continue to remain strong, and improving global economic growth would support higher oil demand in the future. However, Kuwait's oil minister said that the producers may end their production cuts before 2019 if the market rebalances by June-18, highlighting the pressure from Russia to end the pact. On the other hand, energy ministers of UAE and Iraq said it was too early to speculate an exit strategy, and that OPEC plans to discuss this in its June-18 meeting.

Meanwhile, IEA, in its monthly report, kept global oil demand growth unchanged at 1.5 mb/d (+1.6 percent) for 2017 and at 1.3 mb/d (+1.3 percent) for 2018. In terms of OECD commercial inventory, IEA data suggested a drop of 40.3 million barrels in October-17 to reach 2.94 billion barrels, the lowest level since July-15 and 111 million barrels above the five year average. On non-OPEC supply, IEA lowered the forecast for 2017 from an expected growth of 0.7 mb/d in the previous report to 0.6 mb/d in the latest report. However, the agency raised supply forecast for 2018 by 0.2 mb/d to an expected growth of 1.6 mb/d primarily on the back of US shale producers also highlighting their flexibility in increasing output when prices are high. In addition, a pickup in US drilling activity and well completion rates would imply higher supply in the coming months. On a positive note, IEA forecasted a surplus global supply of 200 tb/d during H1-18 that would revert to a deficit of 200 tb/d during 2H-18, resulting in a closely balanced market by year end.

With firming oil prices, US hydrocarbons production is not expected to slow down in the near future due to the growth of horizontal drilling and fracking. US oil rig count also increased for the 5th consecutive week rising by 2 to reach 751 rigs. This has resulted in US exporting the highest amount of hydrocarbons in its history backed by its pipeline and dock infrastructure. US shipped its excess refined products in the Midwest for filling the gap left by refiners in Latin America, in addition to customers in Europe and Asia.

Crude prices continued to surge during November-17 and December-17 following extension to the ongoing output cut agreement between OPEC and non-OPEC producers further supported by reports of faster rebalancing in the oil market. Spot crude prices remained comfortably above the \$60/barrel mark for most of the November-17 and in the first two weeks of December-17 after reaching a daily peak of \$62.07/barrel in the first week of November-17, the highest level since June-15. Average Brent crude prices during November-17 reached the highest level in 36

months to \$62.6/barrel recording a month-on-month increase of 9.3 percent while average OPEC crude reached the highest level in 30-months to \$60.74/barrel, an increase of 9.4 percent as compared to average prices in October-17.

Meanwhile, EIA in its weekly inventory report for the week ended 8-December-17 reported an inventory draw of 5.1 million barrels to reach 443 million barrels, a seasonal average level. API also reported crude stock decline of 7.4 million barrels for the week ended 8-Dec-17 to reach 444.4 million barrels on the back of declining imports. This was the second consecutive week of inventory draw after API reported a 5.5 million drop in the previous week, although gasoline inventory saw a massive build of 9.2 million barrels during the same week. However, the enthusiasm from the EIA's report was dampened by gasoline inventories that rose once again by 5.7 million barrels (similar to API's expectations) as refineries produced at the rate of 10.1 mb/d of gasoline, up from 9.8 mb/d during the previous week.

Furthermore, in its short term energy outlook, the EIA raised Brent crude price forecast for 2017 and 2018 to \$53.88/barrel and \$57.26/barrel respectively, while raising US oil output forecast for 2018 by 60 tb/d to 10.02 mb/d, the highest average production level ever achieved in the US. The recent surge in oil prices is expected to provide

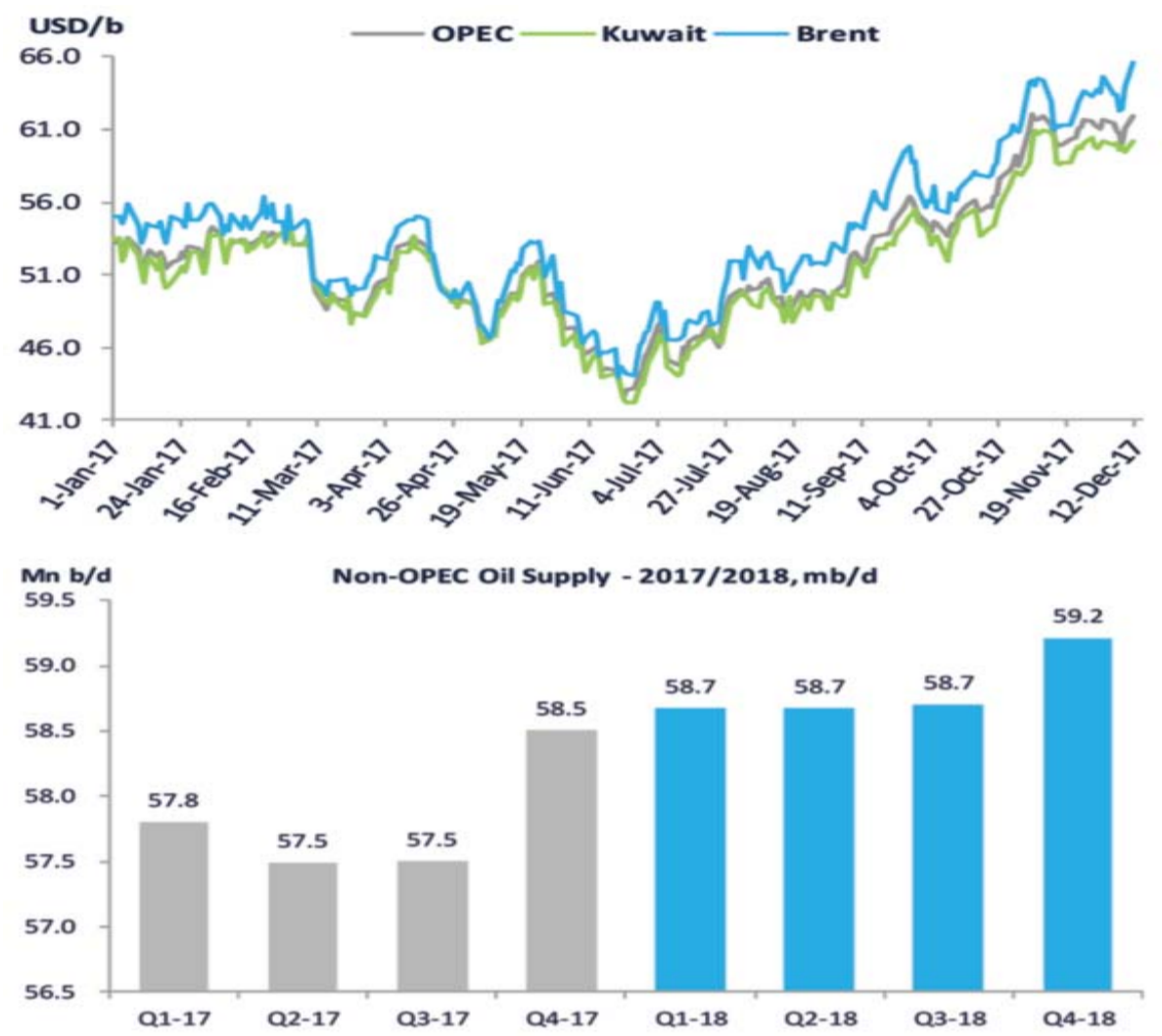
motivation to US producers to add output. On the other hand, oil demand growth for 2018 was lowered by 40 tb/d to 1.62 mb/d by the EIA, although 2017 demand forecast was raised by 80 tb/d to 1.39 mb/d.

World oil demand

After seeing upward revisions for four consecutive months, world oil demand growth projections

for 2017 were kept unchanged in the latest OPEC monthly oil report. The growth is expected to reach 1.53 mb/d to 96.94 mb/d primarily reflecting higher demand from Europe, China and Other Asia regions. In the US, data for September-17 showed a declining trend in oil demand as compared to September-16 due to weak gasoline demand while demand for diesel increased. However, preliminary data for October-17 and November-17 showed strong demand growth as compared to the previous year, resulting in a demand growth of 0.15 mb/d for the first eleven months of 2017. In the European region, oil demand remained strong in Germany, UK, France, Italy, Turkey, the Netherlands and Poland, as lower oil prices boosted demand from the transportation sector despite some offsetting factors. In the OECD Asia Pacific region, Japan reported weak demand trends for October-17 while South Korea saw strong increase in oil demand for the majority of petroleum product categories. September-17 data for Australia also showed bullish demand trends for oil. In the non-OECD region, China continued to see higher oil demand in October-17, although total demand growth projections for 2017 was kept unchanged. India also recorded demand growth in October-17, however, the growth was marginal as compared to the trends seen in the past few months. In the Middle East, oil demand declined sharply in Saudi Arabia in October-17 due to substitution effect as well as a decline in direct crude burning for electricity generation owing to seasonal factors. Global oil demand growth expectations for 2018 was also kept unchanged at 1.51 mb/d to a total demand of 98.45 mb/d. Economic growth and low price environment is expected to exert upward pressure on oil demand in the US while substitution effect, vehicle efficiencies and high baseline of 2017 are expected to counter the aforementioned positive factors. A similar trend is expected for European oil demand that has seen slight improvement as compared to the previous report as a result of healthy

IEA keeps oil demand growth unchanged



economic growth but the overall growth is expected to be lower than in 2017 as some positive factors are expected to fade away next year.

World oil supply

Global oil supply during November-17 witnessed a strong month-on-month increase of 0.84 mb/d and averaged 97.44 mb/d, showing an increase of 0.35 mb/d, as compared to November-16. Non-OPEC supply during the month accounted for the bulk of this increase at 0.98 mb/d and averaged at 64.99 mb/d. The full year 2017 oil supply growth forecast for non-OPEC producers was revised upward by 0.15 mb/d to average at 57.82 mb/d resulting in an expected growth of 0.81 mb/d. The revisions primarily came on the back of higher supply expectations from Russia (+0.09 mb/d) and from the US and Canada which showed higher-than-expected output in Q3-17, in addition to an upward revision to Mexico's supply that is now expected to decline at smaller pace. On the other hand, supply forecast for Indonesia was lowered in the latest report, which partially offset the aforementioned upward revisions.

Non-OPEC supply growth projections for 2018 was also revised upward by 0.12 mb/d to 0.99 mb/d and is expected to average at 58.81 mb/d, primarily reflecting higher expected supply from the US that is now expected to report a supply growth of 1.05 mb/d. Supply from some non-OPEC countries were also raised by a total 0.99 mb/d; however, this growth was partially offset by 0.15 mb/d downward revision for Russia's oil supply growth.

OPEC production & spare capacity

OPEC oil production continued to decline during November-17 as a majority of the producers reported a month-on-month drop in production. According to Bloomberg data, average OPEC production rate stood at 32.47 mb/d, the lowest level in the past six months, as

compared to 32.55 mb/d in October-17, resulting in a decline of 80 tb/d in November-17. According to OPEC's secondary sources, average production during the month stood at 32.45 mb/d with almost similar production declines reported by individual producers. Angola reported the biggest monthly drop in production by 100 tb/d to reach 1.61 mb/d followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia that curbed production by a total 90 tb/d. On the other hand, Iraq reported the biggest increase of 40 tb/d followed by Qatar that raised production by 30 tb/d. Saudi Arabia's production was once again reported at below the 10 mb/d mark that helped, in addition to higher compliance by other members, to increase the overall OPEC compliance. It is believed that the compliance by OPEC and non-OPEC producers remained above 100 percent during Nov-17. That said, the shutdown of the Forties Pipeline System (FPS), which affected crude supplies to the tune of 0.45 mb/d, could result in lower compliance by OPEC producers as some producers, specifically Saudi Arabia and potentially Algeria, have undertaken additional production cuts than what is required. These producers can increase output without breaching their share of output cuts.

Meanwhile, despite pressure from other OPEC producers, Nigeria and Libya are signaling an output hike in 2018. According to reports, Total is expected to complete its \$16 billion EGINA project in Nigeria in 2018. The field will have a capacity of 0.2 mb/d, or 10 percent of Nigeria's production, and is expected to commence in Q4-18. On the other hand, Libya is also making efforts to raise additional funds that is limiting crucial repairs to its energy infrastructure.

KAMCO Research believes that the current surge in oil prices are led by temporary factors and any normalization in the near term, wherein the FPS is back online or there is a start to discussion on the exit strategy for the output cuts would put downward pressure on crude prices.

World trade order in a wobble as Washington snubs WTO status quo

BERLIN: The frustration of Roberto Azevedo was evident when, as director general of the World Trade Organization, he summed up the results of a three-day ministerial conference in Buenos Aires in the past week. There were simply none. The delegates of more than 160 countries from around the globe failed to reach any new agreements in the face of stinging US criticism of the WTO and vetoes from other countries. At the end, they were not even able to agree on a joint communique.

And a further blow could strike in the coming week when Republican US lawmakers aim to pass sweeping changes to the tax code which may introduce protectionist measures critics say are at odds with WTO rules. "In retrospect, 2017 could mark the beginning of the end of the rules-based free trade order and the system unraveling," said Andre Sapir, senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel. He called it a "big worry". US President Donald Trump, propelled to power by his election promise to put "America First" and protect US workers against what he views as unfair trade practices from China and others, has weakened the WTO as a forum to settle disputes.

In the past months, Washington has blocked the appointment of several WTO appeals judges, a move which could paralyze the body's dispute settlement system for years to come. "The new US administration

does not want to work within multilateral frameworks. It wants bilateral deals," Sapir said. As a critic, he says, "This would lead to a system in which the stronger ones outplay the smaller ones, it would be the law of the jungle." This apparent change of course in Washington is puzzling for free trade advocates who argue that the United States for decades supported and benefitted from multilateral decision-making and rules-based arbitration enshrined in the WTO statutes.

Threat to growth

For them, Trump's protectionist rhetoric is a threat to global growth and prosperity since tariffs and other trade barriers such as import restrictions, registration formalities or state aid for domestic suppliers push up costs for everyone. The slow dismantling of the international trade order could also hurt mid-term export prospects for European countries and Germany in particular at a time when the euro zone economy is benefiting from a surge in demand for its manufactured goods.

A rebound in exports is one of the key drivers of Germany's economic upswing as they still account for more than 40 percent of its gross domestic product. The United States is Germany's most important single export destination after the bloc of European Union countries. But the combat lines have also become blurry. In a sign that other countries share Trump's concerns about Chinese trade practices, the European Union and Japan joined Washington in the past week in vowing to combat market-distorting policies that fuel excess industrial capacity, including subsidies for state-owned enterprises and technology transfer requirements.

Following the fruitless WTO meeting, the US tax overhaul could now be another nail in the coffin of free trade. The European Union and the finance minis-



BUENOS AIRES: View of the closing ceremony of the 11th WTO ministerial conference in on Dec 13, 2017.—AFP

ters of Europe's five biggest economies have sounded an alarm over elements of the plan. In a letter sent to US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain said that the inclusion of "certain less conventional" tax provisions would contravene WTO rules and violate double taxation treaties. In a separate letter, the European Commission warned Mnuchin the planned overhaul contained elements that risk seriously hampering trade and investment flows between the world's two biggest economic blocs.

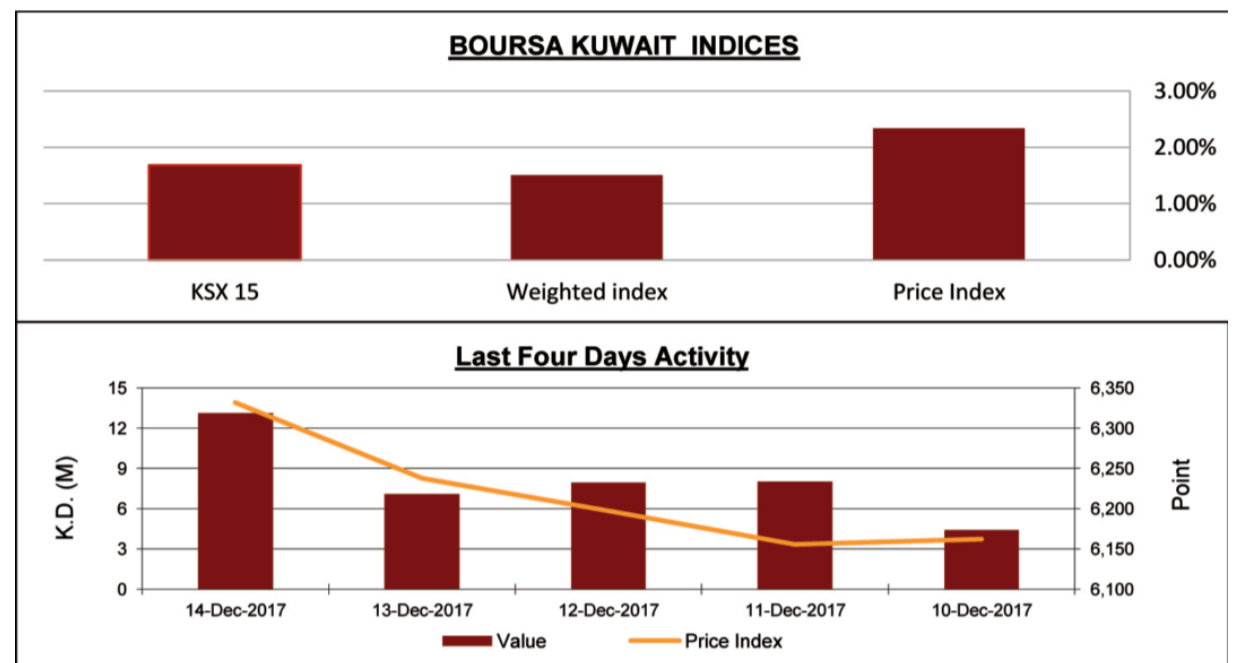
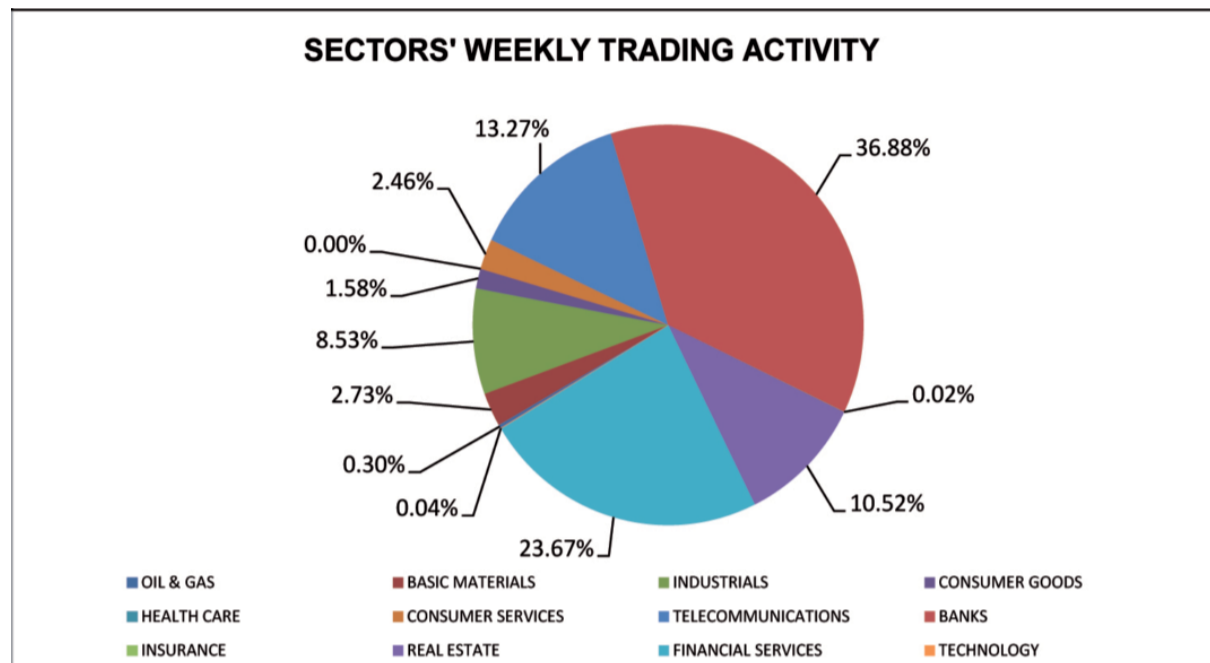
Some of the provisions would discriminate against foreign business in the United States, the Commission said, while the Federation of German Industries (BDI) - the biggest lobby group for manufacturers in Europe's largest economy - was more blunt. "Clearly protectionist," it said of some proposed excise taxes. What actually emerges from Washington remains unclear, but even if US lawmakers decide to delete some of the disputed measures in their final bill, Trump is still wedded to a unilateral approach to trade that does not require consultations with Congress.— Reuters

Business

Bayan weekly market report

Boursa Kuwait stocks rally amid solid buying interest

Three indices pare losses on renewed optimism



Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
OIL & GAS	1,904,341	0.69%	121,612	0.30%
BASIC MATERIALS	2,663,552	0.97%	1,108,784	2.73%
INDUSTRIALS	11,708,481	4.25%	3,461,800	8.53%
CONSUMER GOODS	2,967,441	1.08%	640,041	1.58%
HEALTH CARE	0	0.00%	0	0.0000%
CONSUMER SERVICES	12,528,188	4.55%	998,398	2.46%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	13,842,806	5.03%	5,383,819	13.27%
BANKS	51,016,081	18.54%	14,961,230	36.88%
INSURANCE	83,309	0.03%	6,977	0.02%
REAL ESTATE	52,013,284	18.90%	4,269,223	10.52%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	126,336,903	45.91%	9,602,721	23.67%
TECHNOLOGY	119,455	0.04%	14,307	0.04%

Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	967.87	932.72	3.77%	23.98%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,224.97	1,223.31	0.14%	21.91%
INDUSTRIALS	1,833.36	1,722.61	6.43%	36.41%
CONSUMER GOODS	852.55	847.34	0.61%	-24.22%
HEALTH CARE	1,510.51	1,510.51	0.00%	21.38%
CONSUMER SERVICES	926.58	920.83	0.62%	0.22%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	545.79	535.69	1.89%	-14.21%
BANKS	895.74	874.12	2.47%	6.99%
INSURANCE	1,031.44	1,044.99	-1.30%	3.74%
REAL ESTATE	882.77	877.08	0.65%	1.45%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	625.33	623.43	0.30%	4.74%
TECHNOLOGY	497.65	480.25	3.62%	-18.04%

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait ended last week in the green zone. The Price Index closed at 6,331.72 points, up by 2.34 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index increased by 1.51 percent after closing at 399.78 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 910.07 points up by 1.68 percent. Furthermore, the week's average daily turnover decreased by 35.50 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching K.D 8.11 million, whereas trading volume average was 55.04 million shares, recording a decrease of 19.41 percent.

As far as the weekly performance of Boursa Kuwait; the trading activity during the last week showed that the market was able to record a weekly growth for its three indices and compensated its previous week's losses in light of the optimism trend that controlled many traders after the new government reformed, which caused a wide purchasing activity in the market that included many listed stocks headed by the small-cap ones, and was apparent on the Price Index performance in particular, which over performed its peers, the Weighted and KSX-15 indices in the recorded weekly gains.

Also, the Boursa recorded during the last five sessions market gains of over KD 430 million, as the total market capitalization for the listed stocks in the regular market reached by the end of last week KD 26.82 billion, up by 1.64 percent of its value in the previous week, where it reached then KD 26.38 billion. On an annual level, the market cap gains reached 5.54 percent compared to its value at end of last year where it reached KD 25.41 billion. (Note: The market cap for the listed companies in the Regular Market is calculated based on the average number of outstanding shares as per the latest available official financial statements).

On the other hand, last week the market witnessed an increase in prices of 73 stock out of 157 listed stock in the Regular Market, compared to the week earlier, however 45 stock dropped, and 39 stock remained unchanged.

For the daily trading activity; the market initiated its first session of the week with a decline that included all its indices, affected by the selling operations witnessed by the market and included many stocks, amid a refrain from a large group of traders from trading, causing a drop in the cash liquidity during the session to reach its lowest level in six months. The next session followed the first in performance, as the market indices continued recording losses affected by the continued random selling pressures that included many stocks, despite the large increase in the trading activity, where the volume increased by 106 percent and the cash liquidity grew by

the end of the session by around 82 percent.

In addition, the market witnessed a clear transformation beginning of Tuesday's session, where it was able to redirect its indices to the green zone, supported by the strong purchasing operations witnessed by the market, and concentrated on the leading and operational stocks; while Wednesday's session continued the positive performance and the Boursa indices were able to enhance its gains as a result of the continued purchasing operations in controlling the trading activity. The market continued also on the end of week session in recording gains and its three indices were able to realize good gains, with highest portion given to the Price Index, supported by the purchasing operations that included many listed stocks headed by the small-cap ones.

For the annual performance, the Price Index ended last week recording 10.15 percent annual gain compared to its closing in 2016, while the Weighted Index increased by 5.18 percent, and the KSX-15 recorded 2.83 percent growth.

Sectors' Indices

Ten of Boursa Kuwait's sectors ended last week in the green zone, one recorded declines, whereas the Health Care sector's index closed with no change from the week before.

Last week's highest gainer was the Industrial sector, achieving 6.43 percent growth rate as its index closed at 1,833.36 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Oil & Gas sector's index closed at 967.87 points recording 3.77 percent increase. The Technology sector came in third as its index achieved 3.62 percent growth, ending the week at 497.65 points.

On the other hand, the Insurance sector was last week's only loser as its index declined by 1.30 percent to end the week's activity at 1,031.44 points.

Sectors' Activity

The Financial Services sector dominated a total trade volume of around 126.34 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 45.91 percent of the total market trading volume. The Real Estate sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 18.90 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 52.01 million shares.

On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 14.96 million or 36.88 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Financial Services sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 9.60 million representing 23.67 percent of the total market trading value.

—Prepared by: Studies & Research Department - Bayan Investment Co.



Market capitalization reaches KD 26.82bn

Warba Bank wins the 'Financial Institutions Deal of the Year' award

KUWAIT: Warba Bank won the "Financial Institutions Deal of the Year" award at the Bonds, Loans & Sukuk Awards Ceremony for the Middle East, held at Jumeirah Hotel in Dubai on December 7, 2017, in presence of a number of decision makers from financial and economic institutions in the region. Warba Bank was awarded for its successful issuance of tier one sukuk of

USD 250 million in March 2017, which attracted a global response from investors, with an initial subscription of 5 times the capital and was subsequently listed on Nasdaq Dubai and the Irish Stock Exchange.

Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi, Senior Manager of Corporate Communication-Strategic Planning Group at Warba Bank, received the award on behalf of Warba Bank.

Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, Chief Executive Officer of Warba Bank, said: "We are proud that Warba Bank has been selected for the 2017 Financial Institutions of the Year Award for its success in issuing tier one sukuk at the beginning of the year. We see the award as a strong indicator of the Bank's successful strategy in the investment and financing operations that have resulted in the bank gaining the confidence of the local, international and international investment community and winning a prestigious award that clearly demonstrate its ever evolving strategic vision".

Al-Ghanem explained that the successful launch of Warba Bank's Sukuk constituted a pivotal step in the growth of the Bank's operations, which greatly contributing towards enhancing its operations and drawing the attention of the international community and increasing confidence in the Bank's performance.

Warba bank has been intensifying its financing and investment operations since the beginning of the year. It has actively engaged in a number of big financing transactions, including a syndicated financing deal for the Turkish sharia-compliant Ziraat Bank. A well, in partnership with other banks, Warba Bank acted as the lead arranger and book runner of the IPO financing.

The Bank also successfully coordinated the issuance of Sukuk to the UAE-based real estate developer Meras Holding located in Dubai. In terms of financing transactions in Kuwait, Warba Bank participated in syndicated financing deal for ALAF-CO Company for Aircraft Finance and Leasing.

BOURSA KUWAIT INDICES				
	Last week	Price Index	Weighted index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	6,331.72	399.78	910.07
	Previous week	6,186.94	393.84	894.99
	Change (Point)	144.78	5.94	15.08
Annual	Last year	5,748.09	380.09	885.02
	Change (Point)	583.63	19.69	25.05
	Change (%)	10.15%	5.18%	2.83%

MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	275,183,841	341,460,492	-19.41%
Value (K.D.)	40,568,913	62,892,959	-35.50%
Deals	11,791	15,399	-23.43%

MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %
	26,815,318,909	26,382,427,774	1.64%
			5.54%

TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
ABAR	84.00	62.00	22.0	35.48%
NAFAIS	800.00	650.00	150.0	23.08%
AFAQ	115.00	95.00	20.0	21.05%
ITHMR	35.60	30.30	5.3	17.49%
KGL	67.00	58.20	8.8	15.12%

TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
CABLETV	14.80	19.00	-4.2	-22.11%
FTI	61.20	69.90	-8.7	-12.45%
GFC	62.00	70.00	-8.0	-11.43%
HAYATCOMM	63.00	70.00	-7.0	-10.00%
KAMCO	62.00	68.80	-6.8	-9.88%



Business

Gulf Bank wins 'Credit Risk Technology Implementation of the Year in MEA'

Award serves as benchmark for global best practices in risk management

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is pleased to announce it has been awarded the 'Credit Risk Technology Implementation of the Year in the Middle East and Africa' by The Asian Banker. Gulf Bank received the award at a ceremony following the 'MENA Risk and Transaction Banking Dialogue 2017', held earlier this month, at the Conrad Hotel in Dubai. The Asian Banker is one of Asia's leading consulting companies in financial services research, benchmarking and intelligence.

Commenting on this award, Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank is proud to be the recipient of this prestigious award. This award serves as a benchmark for global best practices in risk management and Gulf Bank was selected for this award from all the applicants from the Middle East and North Africa region."

Raghuandan Menon, General Manager of Risk Management at Gulf Bank, emphasized the importance of the bank's risk management saying: "With our partner, Intellect Design Arena Limited, we implemented a highly effective consumer risk collection system which has helped Gulf Bank advance key business priorities. This credit risk technology implementa-

tion has delivered a state-of-the-art retail collection system that has reduced delinquencies, increased the control of delinquency volumes, and decreased our overall provision pool."

All banks and non-bank financial institutions (including insurance companies, brokerages, credit companies and finance companies) with operations in Middle East and Africa were eligible for submission. The entrants for the Credit Risk Technology

and judges across a stringent set of criteria to determine the Bank's overall performance and services compared to other local banking competitors. The selection process began in August and finished in October, and involved a team of researchers working in tandem. The initial selection is through a survey and desk research done by the research team at the Asian Banker. The identified candidates are then subject to further scrutiny through interviews and their names are put into a poll that is distributed to The Asian Banker's 38,000 readers.

After the results of the poll and the research have been compiled, a short-list of candidates is then submitted for review by the international board of advisors for a final evaluation and recommendation to determine which candidate should receive the award. The exemplary implementations are subsequently documented and published as research noted in the Risk and Regulation Working Group, the Asian Banker's repository of best practices in the industry.

To learn more about any of Gulf Bank's awards, products and services, visit one of Gulf Bank's 57 branches, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, log on to www.e-gulfbank.com, Gulf Bank's bilingual website, or visit its social media channels.




The Asian Banker recognition


Implementation award were assessed based on detailed descriptions and documentations of how the strength of the institution's risk management core competencies was applied.

Prior to its selection, Gulf Bank was carefully assessed by a panel of industry experts

Gulf Bank Wins 'Credit Risk Technology Implementation of the Year in the Middle East and Africa' from The Asian Banker



THE ASIAN BANKER
RISK MANAGEMENT AWARDS FOR MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, 2017
CREDIT RISK TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YEAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA



KFH officially 'Top Primary Dealer' for the IILM Sukuk Program in FY 2017

KUWAIT: The International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) has announced officially Kuwait Finance House (KFH) as a "Top Primary Dealer" for the IILM Sukuk Program in FY 2017. This ranking is based on the total allocated amount for the 15 issuances this year accumulating a total of circa \$10bn, where KFH occupied around 30 percent of it.

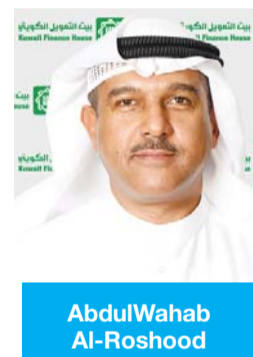
Group Chief Treasury Officer at KFH, AbdulWahab Al-Roshood said that KFH ranking as the "Top Primary Dealer" on top of 10 IILM Primary Dealers of banks and financial institutions is a source of pride not only to KFH but also to Kuwait, indicating KFH came first followed by Standard Chartered and First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) in second and third places respectively. This confirms the prestigious status of KFH in the Sukuk market.

Al-Roshood added in a press release, that the ranking was based on several factors approved by the IILM including Secondary Market trading, Feedback from end investors on the service provided, efficiency and other factors in developing the program.

He remarked that the bank managed to achieve remarkable development in the Sukuk market at the regional and global levels as it motivated and encouraged a number of conventional and Islamic financial institutions to enter the market. Sukuk are the most significant and powerful low

risk investment financing instruments that contribute efficiently to the process of encountering liquidity crises. Sukuk are characterized as instruments of high liquidity, active secondary market, flexibility and good returns. Sukuk represent a significant investment outlet for banks and an effective instrument to manage liquidity in accordance with CBK regulations. In addition, Sukuk contribute in increasing shareholders profit.

Meanwhile, International Islamic Liquidity Management, IILM expressed appreciation for KFH's excellent and strong performance, boasting the strong ties since inception from 2013.



AbdulWahab Al-Roshood

Capital Intelligence upgrades Gulf Bank's outlook to 'Positive'

KUWAIT: Capital Intelligence Ratings, the international credit rating agency, announced yesterday that it has assigned a "Positive" outlook to Gulf Bank and affirmed its Financial Strength Rating of 'BBB+'. "The rating remains underpinned by Gulf Bank's good loan asset quality, solid capital ratios, sound liquidity and improving operating profitability", said Capital Intelligence. The rating also reflects, according to Capital Intelligence "Gulf Bank's position as the second largest conventional commercial bank with a well-established domestic franchise". Gulf Bank's Long- and Short-Term Foreign Currency Ratings are affirmed at 'A' and 'A2', respectively. Capital Intelligence has assigned a 'Positive' Outlook for all ratings in expectation of a further improvement in a number of the Gulf Bank's financial metrics.

Commenting on the Capital Intelligence credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Investor Relations said: "We are proud to announce the second "Positive" outlook upgrade of Gulf Bank this year. In Addition to this Positive outlook upgrade from Capital Intelligence, S&P Ratings has upgraded Gulf Bank's outlook to "Positive" and affirmed its issuer credit rating at "A-" on June 2017. "Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally," said Al-Dousari. Earlier this year, Fitch Ratings has upgraded Gulf Bank's viability rating from "bb" to "bb+" and affirmed the bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A+' with a "Stable" Outlook. Similarly, Moody's Investors Service Affirmed the bank's "A3" long-term deposits rating and "Stable" outlook on October 18, 2017.



Dalal Al-Dousari

X-cite offers 70% discounts & daily deals on thousands of electronics

KUWAIT: In its ongoing biggest sale campaign of the year, X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait's largest electronic retailer continues to offer discounts of up to 70 percent on thousands of electronics ranging from smartphones, laptops, house appliances and the latest electronics from the largest selection of products and brands available in Kuwait.

Extending until the end of December, the sale is available at all X-cite showrooms located across Kuwait. Customers can take advantage of unprecedented prices on all ranges of electronics in addition to the daily exclusive offers launched on select products. Customers can learn more about the daily offers and ongoing sale on X-cite's social media platforms.

Through its customer-centric concept, X-cite offers customers competitive quality and prices to

serve every segment of its customer-base, providing them with the highest level of service, engaging with them through various mediums, and earning their trust by offering services and promotions. X-cite also enables customers to shop from the comfort of their homes through its free mobile app and website at www.xcite.com.

X-cite is one of the largest electronic retailers in Kuwait and the Middle East, and has established itself as a leading brand in providing the latest products to customers as it continues to build strong relations with international brands in the electronics sector. Continuously seeking to satisfy the needs of its customers, X-cite provides them with diverse services that enable customers to experience products and interact with them, whether in its 20 showrooms or through the website which was designed to make online shopping a fast and easy experience. X-cite also offers premium maintenance and purchase services at most of its major showrooms throughout Kuwait and other services such as free delivery and additional warranty.

To stay updated on the latest events, monthly promotions and offers, subscribe to the daily newsletter on xcite.com, follow X-cite's social media channels on Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, @xcitealghanim, or Facebook, XcitebyAlghanim, or visit the online store at www.xcite.com

Jet Airways begins countdown to 2018 with a 48-hour, end of year sale

KUWAIT: Jet Airways, India's full-service, premier international airline, begins the countdown to 2018 by announcing a special, 48-hour limited period offer launching today.

Guests making bookings during the limited window starting December 17, 2017 and lasting until Monday, December 18, will enjoy extensive savings via the flat 12 percent* discount on its flights from the Kuwait to India and beyond to destinations including Bangkok, Colombo, Dhaka, Hong Kong, Kathmandu, and Singapore.

The limited period sale will be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis and will be valid for both one way and return journeys, allowing guests to plan their forthcoming travel well in advance. Tickets booked as part of the promotion will be valid for travel from January 03, 2018 until May 31, 2018.

The special fares will be applicable only on flights operated by Jet Airways and guests can book their tickets via the airline's website at www.jetairways.com or use the airline's mobile app.

Shakir Kantawala, Vice President - Gulf, Middle East & Africa, Jet Airways, said, "The End of Year sale offers our guests one last opportunity to enjoy special fares, as we bid farewell to 2017 and herald in 2018. The offer is an invaluable opportunity for our guests to travel home, meet friends and family or take on adventures in the Far East. It is another way in which we offer exceptional value to those travelling with us".

NAFTA Washington talks said to leave major differences untouched

WASHINGTON: NAFTA negotiators made some progress on less controversial issues this week but left untouched the thorniest subjects of autos, dispute settlement and an expiry clause to be tackled at pivotal talks in January in Montreal.

Some participants said on Friday the Washington "interseasonal" round of negotiations to modernize the North American Free Trade agreement focused on technical issues and areas like environmental standards, digital trade, energy, telecommunications and regulatory practices.

Canada and Mexico have not yet offered counter-proposals to the Trump administration's automotive demands that half the content for North American-made vehicles come from the United States along with sharply higher regional content, a proposal that would dramatically reshape the industry.

Canada and Mexico rejected the US proposal as unworkable last month in Mexico City, but some officials said they expected alternatives to emerge in Montreal. "There wasn't much of a discussion on autos" at the Washington talks this week, Mexican chief negotiator Ken Smith told reporters.

"So we'll take that conversation up again in Montreal, and hopefully, what I told my US counterparts, is that we should start a dialogue that takes into consideration the position of the industries of the three countries because we cannot operate in a vacuum."

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has repeatedly expressed frustration that Canada and Mexico have not accepted his demands in autos and other areas to "rebalance" the trade agreement to

shrink US trade deficits. "The United States continues to look for serious engagement and meaningful progress in these talks for a modernized and rebalanced NAFTA," USTR spokeswoman Amelia Breinig said in a statement on Friday as the talks wound down.

But she said the three countries did manage to substantively complete a sectoral annex on energy efficiency standards, marking the first time a NAFTA negotiating area or so-called chapter had closed since September.

"No fireworks"

Breinig said the meetings focused on narrowing remaining gaps in the chapters where previous progress had been made. "I think the technical work is advancing pretty much as we expected it would," said Smith. "No fireworks, but no major obstacles."

However, even some minor chapters and annexes still had big differences as the talks closed.

U.S. textiles producers have been pushing to end rules of origin exclusions that allow Canada and Mexico to ship large quantities of products made with Chinese yarn to the United States duty-free but the issue was left unresolved, said Auggie Tantillo, president of the National Coalition of Textiles Organizations. "I hate to say it, but bigger, more sensitive issues weren't discussed," Tantillo told Reuters. "Montreal should be interesting."

Mexico and Canada are unlikely to accept the Trump administration's demands on autos, a five-year sunset clause and a repeal of a trade dispute settlement system that largely shields them from US anti-dumping duties, said Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow and trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

Without some concessions in Montreal, Hufbauer said President Donald Trump would be more tempted to issue a notice of withdrawal from NAFTA, as he has repeatedly threatened if US terms cannot be met. Such a move would create massive uncertainty for companies and would likely draw legal challenges.

"We have a frozen situation," Hufbauer added. "Right now, I can't see the reconciliation but what I can see is a kind of zombie NAFTA in the year 2018." —Reuters

Burgan Bank will announce winners of Yawmi and Youth Accounts today

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank will soon be announcing the names of the lucky winners of Yawmi and Youth Accounts quarterly draws that will be held today. To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi Quarterly Draws and get the chance to win KD 125,000 every quarter, customers should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning the grand prize.

The first place winner in Youth Accounts quarterly draw, will take home a cash prize of KD 1,000, while second and third place winners will each receive a gift of an "unlimited access" voucher to Grand Cinemas for one year. Customers transferring their Student allowances to the bank will automatically be enrolled into the draw and with every KD 20 in their Youth account they will get one chance to enter the quarterly draw.



26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account this week

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw, Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the 13th of December 2017. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car.

On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300.

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Bothaynah Abdulrahman Aljulaib, 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Fatemah Hanoun Alshemali, Faraj Asal Alajmi, Hamad Musaad Al Saleh, Huda Mohammad Madi, Shaikha Adel Alhajri, Abdullah Mohammad Kandari, Ahmad Mohammad Alkhaled, Lateef Abdul Hussain Khodayer, Mariam Ahmad Abdullah, Keron Bana Miyah, Ahmad Yusef Alfaalakawi, Majed Khaled Alhuwailah, Khaled Saleh Bokhamseen, Ahmad Abduljalil Salam, Nourah Khuwailed Matorod, Muna Ibrahim Abu Laban, Jameelah Abd Alhussain Alfoudari, Ahmad Hussain Ashkanani, Rahman Rahim Lolo, Hanaa Mohd Alhumood, Jaafar Mohammad Alwayel, Ali A.Redha Radhi, Waleed Khalid Mubarak, Ghada Mohamed Ahmed and Anisa Abdulaziz Altajer.

Al Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions Ahli United Bank added. "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year." Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.



Technology

US moves to roll back
'net neutrality' rules

Opponents say move would curb online freedom

WASHINGTON: US regulators voted Thursday to roll back so-called "net neutrality" rules which required internet providers to treat all traffic equally, a move opponents say would curb online freedom.

The Federal Communications Commission, in a three-to-two vote, adopted a proposal by Republican-appointed chairman Ajit Pai, who said his plan would scrap "heavy-handed" rules adopted in 2015 which he argued discouraged investment and innovation.

The vote capped a heated partisan debate and is just the latest in a battle over more than a decade on rules governing internet service providers in the courts and the FCC.

Democratic member Mignon Clyburn, one of the two dissenters, charged that the agency was "handing the keys to the internet" to "a handful of multibillion dollar corporations."

Immediately following the vote, officials from two states and others vowed to challenge the FCC action in court. Net neutrality activists have staged a series of protests in cities around the US and online, amid fears that dominant broadband providers could change how the internet works. "Chairman Pai has given internet service providers an explicit license to block, slow, or levy tolls on content," said Ferras Vinh of the Center for Democracy & Technology, a digital rights group.

Vinh said internet providers "will now have even greater power to shape the online experiences of internet users, at the expense of consumers and small companies."

Net neutrality backers argued that clear rules are needed to prevent internet service providers from blocking or throttling services or websites for competitive reasons. Some activists fear internet service providers will seek to extract higher fees from services that are heavy data users, like Netflix or other streaming services, with these costs passed on to consumers, but new startups without the resources of major companies would be more likely to feel the pain.

New startups
will feel
the pinch

Commission on the wrong side of history, the wrong side of the law, and the wrong side of the American public."

Appointed by President Donald Trump, Pai was a fierce critic of the neutrality rules adopted under former president Barack Obama in 2015 and earlier this month unveiled his plan named the "Restoring Internet Freedom" order.

Many Republican lawmakers backed Pai, although a few had urged the FCC to delay the vote to allow Congress time to consider legislation.

More court challenges

Within minutes of the vote, the attorneys general of New York State and Washington State vowed to challenge the FCC in court. "The FCC just gave Big Telecom an early Christmas present, by giving internet service providers yet another way to put corporate profits over

Not a water pipe

Critics of the 2015 net neutrality rule counter that it was based on utility-style regulation designed for 1930s telephone companies, not a dynamic internet market. Pai said ahead of the vote that his plan would restore "light-touch" rules which allowed the internet to flourish, and promote investments to enable new and emerging services.

"The digital world bears no resemblance to a water pipe or electric line or sewer," Pai said in a session briefly halted over an undisclosed security threat. "Entrepreneurs and innovators guided the internet far better than the heavy hand of government."

Pai said removing neutrality rules is key to investment to develop newer "next generation" services such as telemedicine or autonomous driving. "When there's less investment, that means fewer next-generation networks are built," he said. "And that means more Americans are left on the wrong side of the digital divide."

But dissenting FCC commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel said: "Net neutrality is internet freedom. I support that freedom," she said. "This decision puts the Federal Communications



WASHINGTON DC: Activists gather before a hearing at the Federal Communications Commission on Wednesday in Washington, DC. —AFP

consumers," New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said. Others planned legal challenges including the consumer activist group Free Press.

"We'll have plenty to say in court about the legal mistakes littered throughout this decision," said Free Press spokesman Matt Wood. Democratic Senator Ed Markey said he would ask lawmakers for a regulatory review to overturn what he called the FCC's "misguided and partisan decision" in order to "keep the internet in the hands of the people."

Pai and internet firms have maintained that internet users will see no difference once the new rules are implemented. Commission member Michael O'Rielly dismissed "fear-mongering" by neutrality backers. "The internet has functioned without net neutrality rules far longer than with them," he said.

Michael Powell, a former FCC chair under Republican president George W. Bush who now heads a lobby group for major internet firms, cautioned against panic.

"Time will prove that the FCC did not destroy the internet, and our digital lives will go on just as they have for years," said Powell of the NCTA - The Internet & Television Association.

But Ed Black of the Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents major tech firms such as Google and Facebook, said internet users should be wary of such promises.

"It's not realistic to think that these companies would spend many millions lobbying for the FCC to agree to abdicate its authority to protect open internet rules-and then not use their market power to recoup that money from customers," Black said. —AFP

Amazon claims
record-breaking
Australia launch

This file photo taken on December 28, 2016 shows the logo of US electronic commerce and cloud computing company Amazon. —AFP

SYDNEY: Amazon's Australia launch was the company's biggest-ever opening day for orders, the US giant said Wednesday, but some shoppers were underwhelmed by the range of goods and prices on offer.

The country's retailers have been scrambling to lift their online presence and cut costs amid expectations that Amazon, one of the world's most valuable companies, would shake up the market and eat into their profits. Amazon said first-day orders on Tuesday were "higher than for any other launch day" in its history, with "tens of thousands of customers visiting the website during the first 24 hours."

"We are thankful to Australian customers for making this a landmark day in Amazon history," Amazon's Australia country manager Rocco Braeuniger said in a statement. "From early in the day, we experienced visitor numbers that far exceeded our expectations."

Despite the US giant's high-profile launch, local retailers who expect to be hurt by Amazon-including electronics chain Harvey Norman and department store Myer-saw their shares close higher Tuesday.

It followed disappointment from some shoppers that prices on Amazon were not always lower than those offered by competitors.

"Amazon has underwhelmed high customer and investor expectations with its launch based on initial range and prices," Citi analysts said in a note.

"Amazon has long targeted a pre-Christmas 2017 launch, but is unlikely to make an impact with the current undeveloped offer," Harvey Norman's co-founder and chairman Gerry Harvey said the launch did not live up to the hype. "Beautiful, lame duck! Can't believe how bad they are, but it's good news for everybody because the hype has been ridiculous and the result has been, well, you couldn't be this bad," Harvey told Sky News Business late Tuesday. But he acknowledged Amazon could still undercut local rivals and "sell 20 percent below cost".

Australian Retailers Association's executive director Russell Zimmerman said it was still early days and he expected Amazon to talk to retailers about their pricing on its platform. —AFP

Britain's iconic
red phone boxes
ring the changes

LONDON: Facing extinction due to ubiquitous mobile phones, Britain's classic red telephone boxes are being saved from death row by ingenious conversions into all sorts of new uses. "It smells nice," a passer-by said while sniffing the waft of hot stew steaming out of one phone box in the heart of London. Every day, dozens of office workers come down to Bloomsbury Square to get their lunch at a phone box that has been converted to hold a tiny refrigerator and shelves to put the dishes on. The generous salads-the-house speciality-go down particularly well with customers who like to sit in the square's gardens to enjoy their lunch.

It is one of thousands of phone boxes which are enjoying a new lease of life. Often abandoned, vandalized or reeking of urine, some have been transformed into libraries, art galleries and information hubs; others into cafes, hat shops or even heart defibrillator points.

Loss maker

Since their numbers peaked at 92,000 across Britain in 2002, phone boxes have been in rapid decline. There are now 42,000 left, of which 7,000 are the classic red booths loved by tourists. British telecoms giant BT plans to remove 20,000 more by 2022. It says most of its phone booths lose money, while maintaining them costs £5 million (5.7 million euros), \$6.7 million) a year.

Overall, 33,000 calls are made daily from phone boxes, a drop of 90 percent in 10 years. The best-known model is the K6, in pillar box red with a crown embossed on its curved roof. It was the first to be installed as a standard around the country.

It was designed by the British architect Giles Gilbert Scott for the silver jubilee of king George V in 1935, marking 25 years of his reign. "We are looking for new alternatives to payphones," Mark Johnson, BT's head of payphone operations, told AFP.

AI finds solar
system with 8
planets like ours

A solar system with as many planets as our own has been discovered with the help of NASA's Kepler space telescope and artificial intelligence, the US space agency said Thursday.

"Our solar system now is tied for most number of planets around a single star," NASA said in a statement. However, none of the planets are expected to be hospitable to life.

The eight-planet system-the largest known outside of ours-orbits a star called Kepler 90 some 2,545 light-years away. "The Kepler-90 star system is like a mini version of our solar system," said Andrew Vanderburg, an astronomer at the University of Texas at Austin.

"You have small planets inside and big planets outside, but everything is scrunched in much closer."

The newly identified planet, Kepler-90i, is a rocky



LONDON: A pedestrian walks past a coffee shop run by Umar Khalid (unseen) in a red telephone box in Hampstead Heath, north London. —AFP

Saving Britain's heritage

Several hundred phone boxes now house cash machines, while others are being turned into free and ultrafast wifi booths paid for by advertising BT is also considering whether they could be turned into power points for electric vehicles. Some are restored and sold via an authorized reseller, with prices starting at £2,750, excluding value added tax. Others are sold for a pound to local communities or associations wanting to give them a new lease of life, part of BT's Adopt a Kiosk scheme which has already kept 5,000 of them standing. "The whole idea of this is keep the heritage of the UK in place," Johnson said. The Red Kiosk Company, which donates a portion of its profits to charity, is one of the

beneficiaries. It has already bought 124 redundant phone boxes, which it rents out for £360 a month. It hopes to acquire 500 more over the next three years.

"You're saving an historic structure, you're creating employment and you're regenerating an area," founder Edward Ottewill told AFP. Outside the costs of refitting them, which can be up to £6,000, local authority authorization can be difficult to obtain, Ottewill said. The modest rental costs allows young entrepreneurs to get started, particularly in London, where commercial rents can be prohibitively high. "It was the only place where we could afford the rent, because it's only a square meter!" said Ben Spier, who founded the salad bar in London's Bloomsbury Square. —AFP

planet like Earth, but orbits its star once every 14.4 days, meaning a full year there is the same as two weeks on Earth.

"Kepler-90i is not a place I'd like to go visit, though," said Vanderburg.

"Its surface is likely far too hot," NASA calculated its average temperature at about 800 degrees Fahrenheit (426 Celsius) — as hot as Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun.

Artificial intelligence

Scientists found it by using machine learning from Google. The process involved teaching a computer to scan a trove of 35,000 possible planetary signals collected from NASA's Kepler Space Telescope for search for signs of planetary transits. Transits are the dimming of light when planets pass in front of a star. The Kepler Space Telescope launched in 2009, and has scanned some 150,000 stars. Astronomers have already confirmed the existence of some 2,500 far-away worlds using Kepler data.

"I became interested in applying neural networks to astronomy when I learned that the Kepler mission had collected so much data that it was impossible for scientists to examine it all manually," said Christopher Shallue, a senior

software engineer with Google's research team.

"Instead scientists selected the strongest signals, which are the most likely to be actual planets, to receive the most attention." Shallue likened this process to "looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Machine learning really shines when there is too much data for humans to examine for themselves."

More planets are expected to be found, because researchers plan to apply their neural network to Kepler's full set of more than 150,000 stars.

"There is a lot of unexplored real estate in the Kepler 90 system," said Vanderburg. "It would almost be surprising to me if there weren't any more planets in around that star." One day, artificial intelligence might even be used to search specifically for more Earth-like planets, which have proven difficult to pin down.

"For the first time since our solar system planets were discovered thousands of years ago, we know for sure that the solar system is not the sole record holder for the most planets, and we have just scratched the surface," Vanderburg added.

"Maybe there are systems out there with so many planets that they make our eight-planet solar system seem ordinary." The findings are published in The Astronomical Journal. —AP

Health

SpaceX launches recycled rocket and spaceship

SpaceX manages to return 20 rocket boosters

MIAMI: For the first time, SpaceX on Friday blasted off both a rocket and a cargo ship that have flown before, a step forward in the company's goal to lower the cost of spaceflight. After the launch, the California-based company headed by Internet tycoon Elon Musk landed its rocket booster upright on solid ground at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

SpaceX has now managed to return 20 of its rocket boosters after launch, whether on land or on a floating ocean platform, as part of its effort to re-use instead of jettison costly components. The gleaming white Dragon spacecraft and Falcon 9 rocket soared into the blue sky over Florida at 10:36 am (1536 GMT). Three minutes later, the booster and second stage of the rocket separated.

SpaceX's live video webcast showed the two components arcing away from each other in the sky. The second stage continued to propel the Dragon toward the International Space Station, while the tall portion of the rocket powered its engines and maneuvered its grid fins to guide it back to Landing Zone 1 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

As live images showed the first stage glide down, steady and upright, from the air to the launchpad, cheers erupted at SpaceX's Hawthorne, California headquarters, where employees regularly gather to watch rocket launches. "That marks the second successful visit to and from space for this particular booster," said a SpaceX commentator on the webcast. The Falcon rocket booster previously

propelled a space station resupply mission in June, called CRS-11. The Dragon capsule was flown to the ISS in 2015. SpaceX confirmed that the launch sent the Dragon into a "good orbit" and it was "on its way to the International Space Station."

'The beginning'

"This is the beginning of rapid and reliable reusability," said SpaceX Dragon mission manager Jessica Jensen, at a press briefing Monday. Though the early days of rocket landings saw many of them topple, miss the target or blow up, SpaceX has successfully recovered 14 of its boosters this year alone. Friday also marked the fourth time SpaceX is re-flying a used booster for one of its clients.

However, it was the first such effort for NASA, SpaceX's most important customer. NASA's ISS program manager Kirk Shireman said rocket experts from around the agency had reviewed safety for the mission, and that re-used components were seen as no more dangerous than new ones. "The net result is about equivalent risk," he told reporters Monday.

The unmanned spaceship is packed with 4,800 pounds (2,200 kilograms) of food, supplies and experiments—including one to study thyroid cancer and another to grow barley in space. The mission is SpaceX's 13th of 20 under a \$1.6 billion contract with NASA. The Dragon is scheduled to arrive at the ISS today.—AFP



FLORIDA: This NASA photo shows the SpaceX Falcon 9 first stage as it returned to Landing Zone 1 in Cape Canaveral, Florida.—FP

Wild boars thrive in German capital

BERLIN: They have coarse bristles, huge heads with tiny eyes and protruding tusks and, occasionally, a really bad temper. Thousands of wild boars call Berlin home, where they dig up gardens, cause road accidents and rampage through neighborhoods. Especially on the outskirts of the leafy German capital, people have had to learn to live with the massive omnivores.

"Many people tell me: wherever I go, I see wild boars," said Derk Ehlert, a Berlin municipal wildlife specialist. The population is estimated to hover around 3,000, he said, but sightings are becoming more common. While their numbers have remained steady, their behavior has "changed enormously," he said.

There are regular reports of joggers and dog-walkers encountering the beasts that can move their bulky bodies at 40 kilometers an hour. Wild boars have even been spotted in the very heart of the city, with two animals, possibly injured in road traffic, charging through Berlin's busy Alexanderplatz shopping square. Daytime sightings are becoming ever more common, said Ehlert, likely because "they are no longer so fearful."

The metropolis, sometimes dubbed the "wild boar capital" by local media, has long been a haven for all kinds of wild animals. Thousands of foxes prowl its many green spaces, stone martens are known to chew through car cables and raccoons rummage through rubbish bins.

Unlike many big European cities, Berlin also makes for a comfortable home for the hairy ancestors of the domestic pig.

Forests cover 20 percent of greater Berlin, and other green spaces set aside during the 19th century industrial revolution act as wildlife corridors. Plenty of food can be found in allotment gardens and in a belt of maize and other fields around the once divided city. The wild boars have no natural predators, hunting is seasonally restricted, and a series of mild winters has reduced mortality among the offspring. The number of incidents involving wild boars seems to be on the rise—from road accidents, to a suburban train stoppage caused by a herd, to attacks on dogs and occasionally, humans. Then there are the countless gardeners who report having their flowers and veggies ransacked by the wild swine.—AFP



BERLIN: A picture shows a wild boar at an enclosure set up by forest rangers in a northwestern district of Berlin.—AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

248 33 199

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What's On

BSK students achieve outstanding marks in Board examinations



Cambridge Assessment International Education recognizes the highest achievement in their examinations world-wide through their Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards. Following their June 2017 GCSE and IGCSE examinations, three students from The British School of Kuwait (BSK) stood out head and shoulders above other candidates.

Omar Almutoteh and KarimElmasry (currently in Year 12) were

joined by Principal, Paul Shropshire, Higher Phase Head Teacher, Ms Emma Bowie and Subject Component Coordinators for Economics and Geography, Miss Suzanne Davey and Paul Kemp respectively. Omar achieved the highest mark in Kuwait in IGCSE Economics, whilst Karim achieved the highest mark in Kuwait in IGCSE Geography.

Both boys were visibly proud and delighted that their hard work

had reaped such rewards, boding well for their academic studies in the Sixth Form and beyond. Recognized for High Achievement in A Level Computer Science, Alexander White, Head Student of 2016-17, was unable to join in the celebrations as he is currently studying Computer Science and Mathematics at Durham University, UK. However, his success in Computer Science was a significant factor in gaining a place at one of the UK's top universities.

NBK hosts students from Al Rabei Bent Moawath Secondary School

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) recently hosted students from Al Rabei Bent Moawath Secondary School, who toured the bank's head office to learn about the banking industry and the day to day work of the bank's various departments. The students had the chance to learn about the broad range of NBK financial and banking products and services. As part of the tour, the students visited NBK museum where they had the chance to learn about Kuwait's history, key national historical events in addition to NBK's establishment story.



NBK Communications team accompanied the students on their tour to the bank's various departments including the banking hall, and different banking. The students also were introduced to NBK's safety deposit boxes. The tour is part of NBK's ongoing commitment to its corporate social respon-

sibility program and to promoting the education and development of the country's youth. NBK regularly hosts students on field trips from both public and private schools in Kuwait and provides them with information about the banking industry and career opportunities.

NBK organizes a story telling session at NBK's Specialty Hospital

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) in collaboration with Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah organized a story telling session for children at NBK's children specialty hospital and the new Stem Cell Therapy Unit at Al Sabah Medical Area. NBK Public Relations' Team prepared recently consecutive movie nights for children at the hospital who had the chance to choose their favorite cartoon movies and watched with their family and friends.

This initiative comes as part of a fun activity program that extends all year long and includes a library, a reading corner, storytelling sessions, activities for the medical staff such as the "nurse of the month", interactive expression day, "my message" initiative, fun events and a movie night activity that are organized occasionally. The fun activity program is a part of NBK's social responsibility towards children and keenness to support them while

they get their treatment. NBK has provided a display screen, entertainment facilities, variety of different and various books and other supplies for children to enjoy the whole program.

"We take great pride in sharing happy moments with our children at NBK's Children Specialty Hospital," said Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel. "In collaboration with Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah, we have arranged story telling sessions and seeing the children read their favorite stories. Al Abdul Jaleel added: "Children also enjoyed watching a movie with their families and loved ones. The movie night event aimed to provide a safe space for families to come and enjoy their time with children in a welcoming environment provided by the volunteers at NBK."

NBK's initiative reflects the bank's high sense of duty and responsibility towards the community and helping those in need. It is a well rooted tradition that has been carried out by NBK each year in its efforts to continuously have an active role in Kuwait's society. It's worth mentioning that NBK's Stem Cell Therapy Unit is the first children's bone marrow transplant center in Kuwait. The new center is the largest corporate social responsibility donation in Kuwait and will expand the hospital's ability to treat children with cancer and blood diseases.



ACK organizes a workshop in collaboration with IKEA

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), in collaboration with IKEA, organized a workshop for its marketing students at the School of Business on "Visual Merchandising." In line with ACK's vision "To generate human capital equipped with practical knowledge and employability skills that contributes to the economic development and welfare of Kuwait", the School of Business (SOB) constantly strives to collaborate with companies operating in Kuwait to triumph ACK's vision into reality and translate the theory into practical. Furthermore, ACK approached IKEA, who willingly offered the "Visual Merchandising" workshop for the SOB retail marketing students.

The workshop was led by Valentina Dencheva, Communication and Interior Design Manager at IKEA. She supported ACK students with providing them visual Merchandising (VM) manners and generously shared her knowledge and expertise cov-



ering all visual merchandising aspects, such as colors used to complement seasonality, she also emphasized on the utilization of VM to tell a story, and much more finer details such as crockeries and table details being used for different occasions.

From her end, Zahraa Al-Tamimi, Visual Merchandising Co-worker at IKEA, participated in the workshop by explaining to the students the design mood board and layout of the "A room for Everyone" campaign, where IKEA is known for utilizing latest technology, putting the brand in the lead in terms of trend-setter and presentation excellence in merchandising that reflects

their customers lifestyle. In addition, Lyon Pereira, Visual Merchandising Manager at IKEA, explained the importance of the placement of merchandise, the reasoning and use of colors, as well as the importance of consistent merchandising branding. Later, students were escorted in a showroom tour to illustrate the consistency of the campaign. The workshop drew the attention of ACK students. On this occasion, Noura Al-Mutairi stated that: "We have gained a valuable knowledge from this experience and that the attention to details approach adopted in this workshop will help us complete our educational assessment successfully."

'SCAFFOLD - Train the Trainer' Training Program

Adding on to its illustrious pathways of educating and empowering its members, American Society of Safety Engineers, (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter organized "SCAFFOLD - Train the Trainer" Training Program on 23rd to 25th November 2017 at Best Western hotel, Mahboula. ASSE - Kuwait Chapter lead by Chairman Fadhel Al Ali, is a non-profit organization which always strives to excel in providing quality trainings and consultation in the field of Health Safety and Environment all across different public and private sectors in Kuwait.

Aamir Rasheed, Vice President of ASSE Kuwait chapter welcomed the participants. He briefed about the significance of the training seminar and the importance of conducting the training program to help the people get certification in the field of Health, Safety & Environment. Jahid Thakor, treas-



urer thanked the participants for their interest shown towards this program and shared upcoming chapter activities.

Adnan Yousaf, Head of Training Committee, in his brief address, congratulated the participants for their interest to learn and updating their knowledge and committed to serve the community by providing such training courses for enhancement of professional's skills, he introduced the trainer, Steve Hiner from Scaffold Training Institute, USA. Training Session was held for three days. All the participants to the site on last day Sunil Sadanandan, Secretary of ASSE Kuwait

Chapter visited the venue and took feedback from participants.

During his closing remarks he thanked the trainer and the participants on successful completion of the session. Twenty ASSE Members utilized this opportunity. ASSE Kuwait Chapter will continue its strive to do their best for the progress of the society and its members in particular, by organizing such important and remarkable events in future too. Details about the future events would be available to the members and community members through email info@assekuwait.org for more details, visit www.assekuwait.org

Top journalist holds media workshop

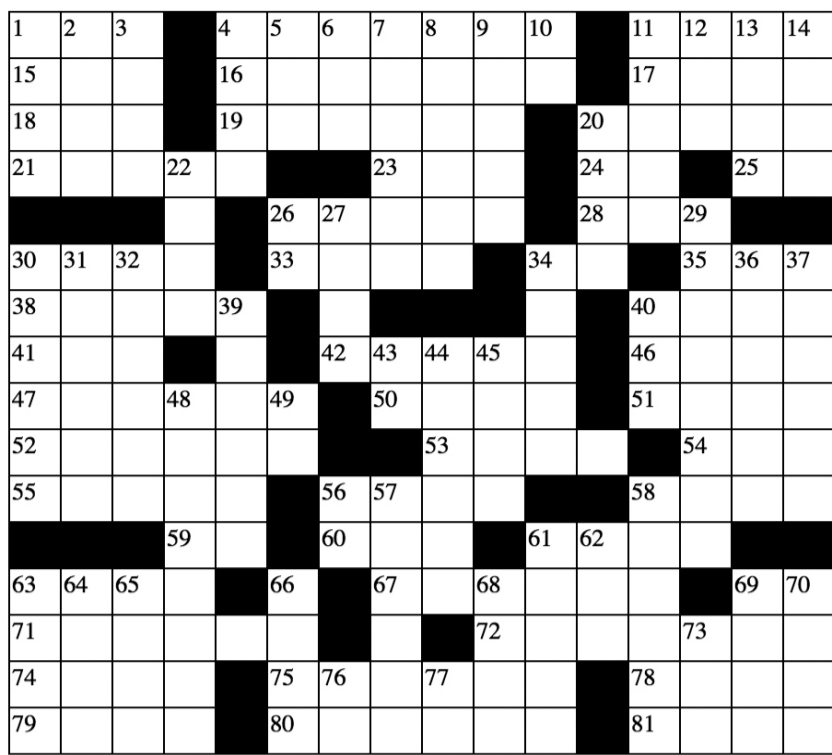
Veteran Indian journalist and former Chairman of the Kerala Press Academy N P Rajendran led a media workshop for Malayali Media Forum (MMF), Kuwait members on Friday. Rajendran, who arrived from India in Kuwait to attend the workshop and a media conference spoke about the emerging trends in the media today following the advent of the social media and growth of online and television channels.

"The print media remains resilient in the face of a phenomenal growth of the electronics media, online media and the social media in India though in many Western countries, newspapers faced a real time threat," he said. According to him the newspapers are still doing good in India and the social media is losing its initial charm as it failed to maintain the credibility of news reporting. "In many cases, such footages and reports were published or telecast without the support of verifiable facts and veracity remained in question," he said. "In nutshell, democratization of the media though the social media revolution largely remained a myth today," he said. Rajendran addressed a media conference yesterday in which invited Indian community leaders in addition to the MMF members, attended.



Stars

CROSSWORD 1786



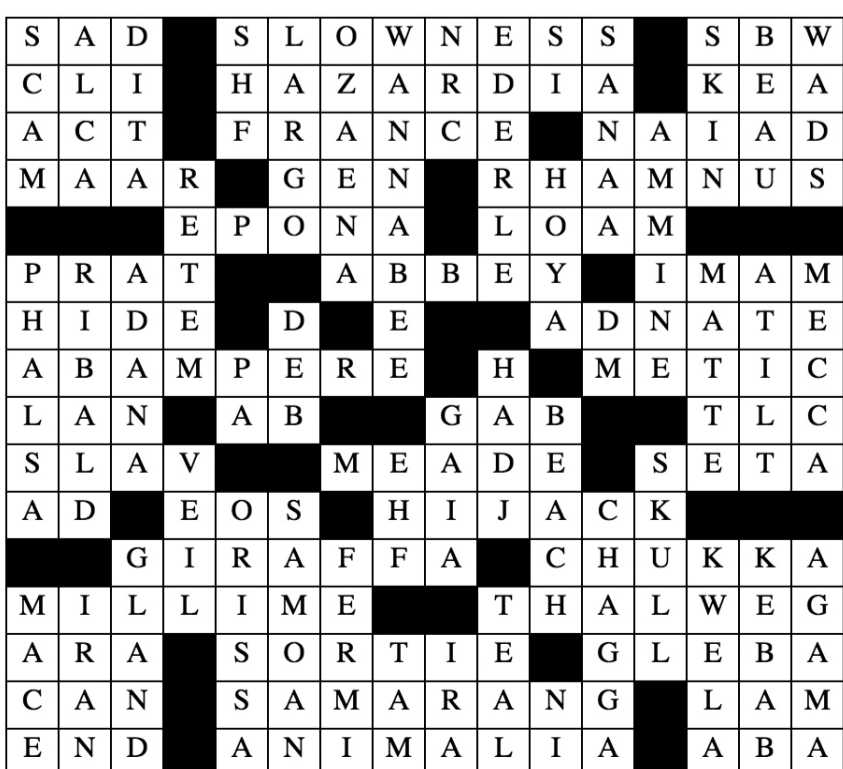
ACROSS

- 1. Not reflecting light.
4. An obsolete kind of container used for distillation.
11. Containing or filled with salt.
15. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
16. Relying on another for support.
17. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
18. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
19. A genus of Caltha.
21. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
23. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
24. An informal term for a father.
25. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
28. Take in solid food.
30. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
33. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
35. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
38. Type genus of the Canidae.
41. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
42. A gliding joint between the distal end of the tibia and fibula and the proximal end of the talus.
46. The total spent for goods or services including money and time and labor.
47. (Greek mythology) A Titaness and sea goddess.
50. A composition written in metrical feet forming rhythmical lines.
51. A river that rises in western New Mexico and flows westward through southern Arizona to become a tributary of the Colorado River.
52. Far away from home or one's usual surroundings.
53. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
54. The habitation of wild animals.
55. An ancient region on the coast of southwest Asia Minor.
59. A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
60. Above average in size or number or quantity or magnitude or extent.
63. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
67. Done under pressure.
71. Activity involved in maintaining something in good working order.
72. Genus of tall smooth herbs of forested mountains of Europe and Asia minor.
74. A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
75. Make attractive or lovable.
78. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
79. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
80. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
81. The sixth month of the civil year.

DOWN

- 1. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
2. A city in northern India.
3. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
4. Type genus of the family Arctidae.
5. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
6. An extension at the end and at right angles to the main building.
7. Ox of southeast Asia sometimes considered a domesticated breed of the gaur.
8. The dialect of Malay used as the national language of the Republic of Indonesia or of Malaysia.
9. Complacently or inane foolish.
10. A New England state.
11. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
12. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
13. A long narrow inlet of the sea in Scotland (especially when it is nearly landlocked).
14. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
20. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
22. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
26. A public promotion of some product or service.
27. A small cake leavened with yeast.
29. Of or relating to or shaped like a toroid.
31. Lessen the density or solidity (of a substance).
32. Related on the mother's side.
34. Fragrant resin obtain from trees of the family Burseraceae and used as incense.
36. The third month of the civil year.
37. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
39. United States space station.
40. A graphical recording of the cardiac cycle produced by an electrocardiograph.
43. A radioactive transuranic metallic element.
44. A member of an aboriginal people living in the hills in southeastern India.
45. A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
48. United States writer of science fiction (1907-1988).
49. A state in north central United States.
56. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
57. A full skirt with a gathered waistband.
58. The southern part of the ancient Palestine succeeding the kingdom of Judah.
61. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
62. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
64. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
65. A Loloish language.
66. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
68. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
69. Any of various minerals consisting of hydrous silicates of aluminum or potassium etc. that crystallize in forms that allow perfect cleavage into very thin leaves.
70. Of a temperature scale that registers the freezing point of water as 32 degrees F and the boiling point as 212 degrees F at one atmosphere of pressure.
73. A boy or man.
76. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
77. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You most assuredly will find yourself gaining materially. Tangible things have a great deal of importance for you just now. You just have a greater appreciation for things of value—and even the idea of value and investments is in order now. It should not be hard for you to be able to enjoy and value your own life situation or to feel especially kind toward a friend or loved one. You should find pleasant communication, and helpful family members are available for most anything you desire. Some pretty neat compliments may find a way to your ears today, making a nice day even more joyous. Being more involved with friends, neighbors and family is highly likely now and makes for a very rewarding day. Your efforts this evening prove most positive.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Using commonsense and being more conscientious takes on special importance. Taking care of the necessary supports of life—health, work and so forth—becomes a greater preoccupation. Sorting things out and getting them organized to the utmost efficiency keeps you very busy. You may want to just stop and take a deep breath to relax for a few minutes. You are either planning a big get-together with friends and relatives or worrying about work; for a few minutes relax and be grateful for what you have, where you are and that you have the keen mind to make things work. This can be an expansive, creative and even romantic phase—a time you'll look back on with pride and fondness. This evening you show off your talents!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Take a look into your deeper, more spiritual nature just now. You may be able to discover whole new areas of your psyche or mind that have been closed up until now. There are new insights into dreams and ideals as you visit or communicate with friends and family. Energies combine to help you get in touch with your more unique and unusual qualities and talents. You will be appreciative of the fact that someone you are close to will be understanding and supportive of your ideas as well as your eccentricities. Allowing your creative and intuitive side a free rein could be your ticket to new solutions or inventions. You show great understanding and awareness toward the needs of others just now and you are helpful through the art of listening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Many times, you find yourself talkative and quick-witted—much to the amusement of those lucky enough to be around you. Ideas are clear and easy for you to express. Fun conversations and political differences can be maneuvered through with great success. There is talk about living on the moon. It should be a super day for making plans or decisions or finding your way through just about any problem that may present itself—but not the moon! You feel successful and able to contend with things. Good advice from a guide or an older person may be coming your way. This is a wonderful day in general and an exceptional time to make a difference with the people in your own surroundings. This could be by simply volunteering to help the needy.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a natural sense for communicating with others, especially those that are younger than you. Clear thoughts about the past may also be flowing in this Saturday. Other people and the general circumstances should be very pleasant. You usually enjoy the company of many people. If you are living in the town where you were born, there will be opportunities to visit with old school friends this winter. If you are visiting your home town, you will find school friends calling on you. Fun conversations and renewing old friendships make you feel in touch as you have never felt before. You are thankful for your many blessings. Attitude is everything and your attitude is most positive.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find your friends calling on you in some very special way today, or it could be that circumstances force you to reorganize and be more frugal. All of this will work out to your benefit. Your more practical qualities are present and should serve you very well. Wanting and needing to be the center of your family's attention takes hold in your life now—there is a craving to be appreciated for your gifts. This should work out to be an expansive, creative and possibly even a romantic time—a phase that you could look back on with a great deal of pride and fondness. You receive good news about a creative project. This is a wonderful time to surround yourself with family and friends. This is a great time to celebrate life.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Dinosaurs

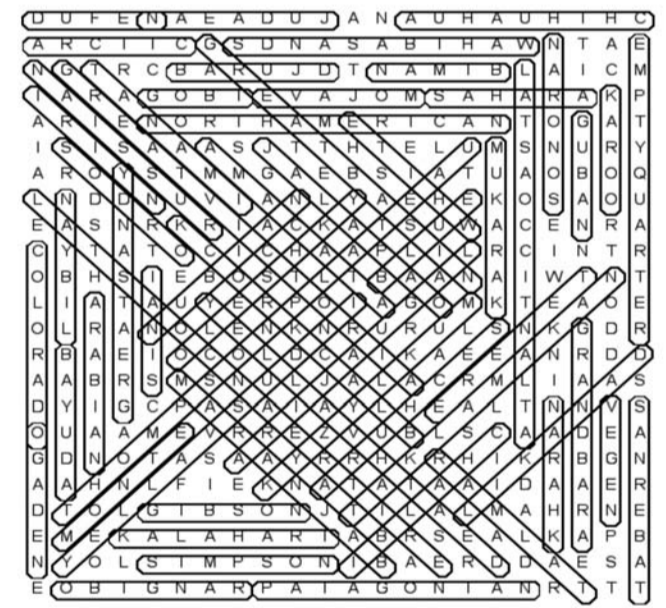
Find and circle all of the Dinosaurs related words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ALLOSOSAURUS, ARTHROPODS, BABIES, BONES, BRACHIOSAURUS, CARNIVORE, CLAWS, CRAWLERS, CREST, DIG, DISCOVERY, DOME HEAD, EGG, ERUPTION, EXTINCT, FLYERS, FOOTPRINT, FOSSILS, GEOLOGY, GIANT, GLIDERS, HERBIVORE, HERD, HOPPERS, HORN, HUNT, IGUANODON, JURASSIC, LIZARD, MESOZOIC, NEST, PREDATOR, PREHISTORIC, PTERANODON, PTERODACTYL, REPTILE, RIDGE, ROAR, ROCK, SAUROPODS, SCALES, SCARY, SKELETON, SKULL, SPINOSAURUS, STEGOSAURUS, STOMP, TAIL CLUB, TEETH, TITANOSAURUS, TRACKS, TRICERATOPS, TYRANNOSAURUS REX, VELOCIRAPTOR, VOLCANO, WING.

Friday's Solution

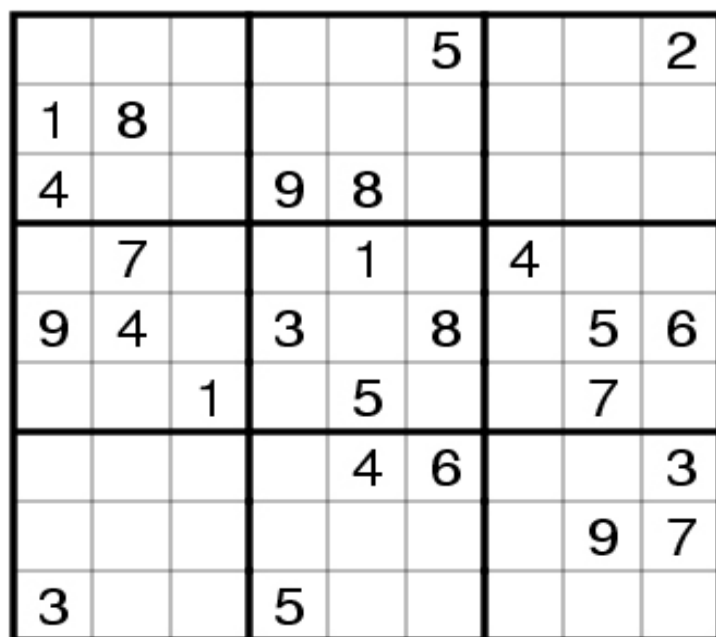
Deserts of the World



- ARABIAN, ARCTIC, ATACAMA, ATLANTIC COASTAL, BAYUDA, BLACK ROCK, BLUE, CHALBI, CHIHUAHUA, COLORADO, DANAKIL, DEATH VALLEY, DJURAB, EMPTY QUARTER, ERITREAN COASTAL, GIBSON, GOBI, GRAND BARA, GREAT BASIN, GREATSANDY, GREAT VICTORIA, GUBAN, HALBI, INDUS VALLEY, JALAPA, JUDAEN, KALAHARI, KARAKUM, KAROO, KHARABAN, KYZYLKUM, LAGUAJIRA, LIBYAN, MARANJAB, MCJAVE, MONTE, NAMIB, NEFLU, NEGEV, NORTH AMERICAN, NUBIAN, NYIRI, OGADEN, OLESHKY, OROOS, PATAGONIAN, RAMLAT, RANGIBO, RUSSIAN, SAHARA, SECHURA, SIMPSON, SINAI, SONORAN, TABERNAS, TAKLAMAKAN, TANAMI, TENERE, THOMPSON PLATEAU, WAHIBA SANDS, WHITE.

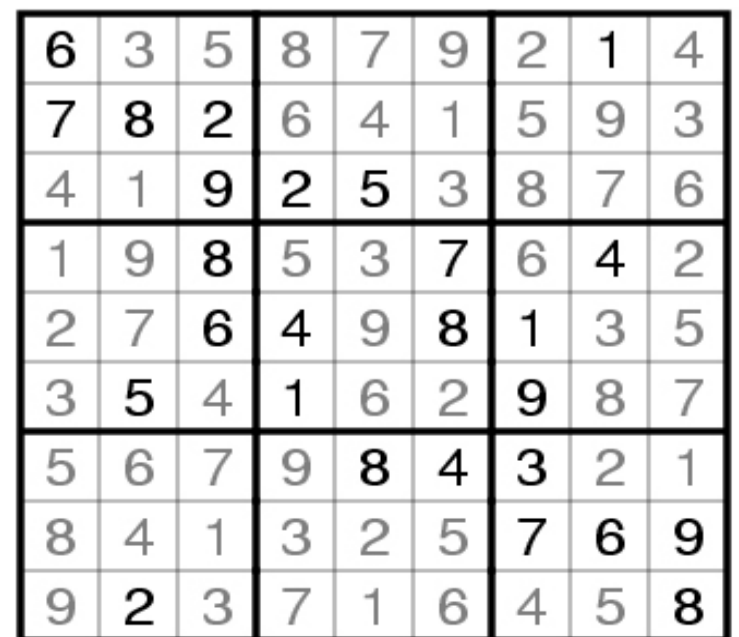
The hidden message is: ANTARCTICA IS THE LARGEST DESERT IN THE WORLD AND IS CLASSIFIED AS A POLAR DESERT.

Daily SuDoku



hard

Friday's Solution



medium

Kuwait Times Classifieds

Sunday, December 17, 2017

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind changing to north easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 16/12/2017 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	11 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	07 °C			
ABDALY	20 °C	06 °C			
BUBYAN	19 °C	06 °C			
JAHRA	20 °C	09 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	09 °C			
SALMIYAH	19 °C	12 °C			
AHMADI	20 °C	11 °C			
NUWAISIB	21 °C	09 °C			
WAFRA	19 °C	09 °C			
SALMY	17 °C	08 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	12/17	Warm and some high clouds will appear	22 °C	08 °C	NW-N	10 - 32 km/h
Monday	12/18	Warm	23 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	12/19	Mostly Sunny	24 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	12/20	Partly cloudy	24 °C	10 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:10
Sunrise	06:35
Zuhr	11:43
Asr	14:34
Sunset	16:52
Isha	18:14

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	72 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	SW 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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EMERGENCY 112

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Experience: 5 - 10 years.
Age: 30 - 45 years.

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- Good knowledge of pricing and ability to get orders
- Good business relations
- Good negotiation skills
- Transferrable Iqama
- Driving License

Cv: ahmedku2020@gmail.com

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 Clinical Beauticians

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION



Arrival Flights on Sunday 17/12/2017				Departure Flights on Sunday 17/12/2017			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	MSC	406	Sohag	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	677	Dubai	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	BBC	044	Dhaka	01:30
WAN	416	Beirut	01:05	JZR	142	Doha	01:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40
JZR	125	Bahrain	02:35	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:05	ETD	306	Sohag	04:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	KAC	103	London	05:00
JZR	555	Alexandria	03:55	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:05
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	QTR	8512	Doha	07:55
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	KAC	165	Rome	08:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	934	Sohag	08:30
KAC	358	Kochi	05:40	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35
KAC	678	Dubai	06:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	691	Muscat	08:50
QTR	8511	Doha	06:25	BAW	156	London	08:55
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	KAC	613	Bahrain	08:55
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:30	KAC	117	New York	09:00
WAN	342	Sohag	06:35	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	101	London	09:45
FEQ	933	Sohag	07:30	KAC	741	Dammam	09:45
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
WAN	332	Alexandria	08:00	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	617	Doha	10:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	10:30
IRC	528	Ahwaz	10:00	JZR	482	Istanbul	10:30
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:40
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	JZ	R778	Jeddah	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	IRC	529	Ahwaz	11:00
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	MSC	416	Sohag	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
WAN	134	Doha	11:45	WAN	953	Abu Dhabi	12:00
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	JZR	786	Riyadh	12:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	QTR	1075	Doha	12:30
FDB	075	Dubai	12:45	VIZ	202	TQD	12:30
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	FDB	076	Dubai	13:45

Indonesia: A combination of culture, nature and magic

The batik of Indonesia is the best known in the region

By Sahar Moussa

For the second time this year, the Indonesian Embassy invited Kuwait Times and other Kuwaiti media to visit and discover the wonders and the beauty of Indonesia. After welcoming us in his office at the embassy, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Kuwait Tatang Budie Razak enthusiastically explained the purpose of this invitation and its importance on shedding light on Indonesia's tourism sector that attracts more than 12 million foreign tourists and more than 200 million local tourists every year. This makes tourism one of Indonesia's top sectors because of its natural beauty and diverse culture. Indonesia is a country with a population of 262 million - and the largest Muslim population in the world - which makes it a very interesting country to discover and learn more about.

The ambassador was proud to speak about the latest update on Indonesia's development, especially in Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra province which will host the Asian Games in 2018. The ambassador's eyes filled with affection and pride when speaking about the 17,000 islands and the 700 ethnicities spread around the country, with more than 1,000 languages that can puzzle and captivate anyone who visits Indonesia.



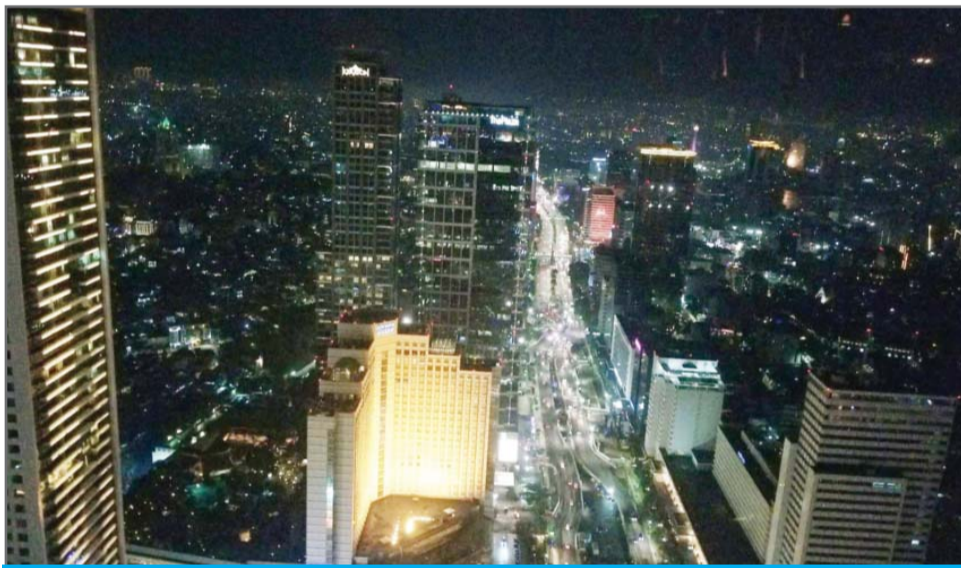
(From left) Photo shows Gantosori Tanjung, Reaven D'Souza (Times magazine), Ambassador of Indonesia to Kuwait Tatang Budie Razak, Sahar Moussa (Kuwait Times), Ahmad Al-Failakawi (Qabas) and Ibrahim Abdalla (Al-Rai) are pose during the interview at the embassy.



Photo shows the Ambassador of Indonesia to Kuwait Tatang Budie Razak with the journalists during the interview at the embassy.

is 1 hour and 25 minutes, and from Doha to Jakarta 8 hours and 45 minutes. The transit time is 4 hours and 20 minutes, so basically it is considered a long flight. Is it worth it? You have to continue reading to know.

The first impression you will get when you reach Jakarta is how well the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport is



The view of Jakarta from above from SKYE Bar & Restaurant which is located in the heart of the city, on the 56th floor rooftop of BCA Tower

Razak explained the various abundant natural resources that Indonesia is known for around the world and its products that are available at reasonable prices. This ranks Indonesia's GDP 15th in the world, with almost a trillion US dollars in 2017. He wished us good luck on our trip to Indonesia as we left, eager to visit this wonderful country that we had heard so much about. We visited three cities - Jakarta, Puncak, Bogor and Palembang.

Jakarta

The estimated time from Kuwait to Doha

organized. The buildings in Jakarta are innovative, and the city in general looks new and well-structured. Jakarta is the capital and is considered the most populous city of the Republic of Indonesia. It is located on the northwest coast of the world's most populous island - Java.

Jakarta is the country's economic, cultural and political center, with a population of 10,075,310 (as of 2014), so it is only normal that the locals' first concern is the traffic. To solve this problem, several attempts have been made to reduce traffic congestions on Jakarta's main arteries, one of them being



The media delegation in Jakarta city

Jakarta is the capital and is considered the most populous city of the Republic of Indonesia

the 'odd-even' policy which was introduced in 2016, which designated cars with either odd or even-numbered registration plates

on a particular day. I personally found this solution very smart and effective.

If you ever go to Jakarta, you will be confused which hotel to choose to stay in because of the numerous and luxurious choices that you have. We checked in at Pullman Hotel Thamrin CBD - a five-star hotel that in my opinion deserves its stars. If you want to enjoy the beauty and the charming view of Jakarta from above, all you have to do is to make a reservation at the SKYE Bar & Restaurant, which is located in the heart of the city on the 56th floor rooftop of BCA Tower. The restaurant has a unique Southern-American influence in its

architecture and interior design, and the view from above is simply jaw-dropping. At SKYE, it's not only about the view, but also the food is really tasty. It serves international ethnic cuisine focusing mostly on Hispanic food, with a strong integration of Middle Eastern and Asian delicacies. I recommend trying the steak there - it was just yummy!

National Museum

If you are interested in learning about the history, culture and heritage of Indonesia, then the National Museum is the right place to visit. It is also called the Elephant Building after the elephant statue in its forecourt. The museum is regarded as one of the most complete and the best in Indonesia, as well as one of the finest museums in Southeast Asia. The architecture of the building is a fusion between a colonial style building and modern architecture



The Library



The National Museum



The National Museum

design. The museum has preserved about 141,000 objects on various themes such as the environment, knowledge, technology, economy, social organization and residence patterns, with gold and ceramic objects.

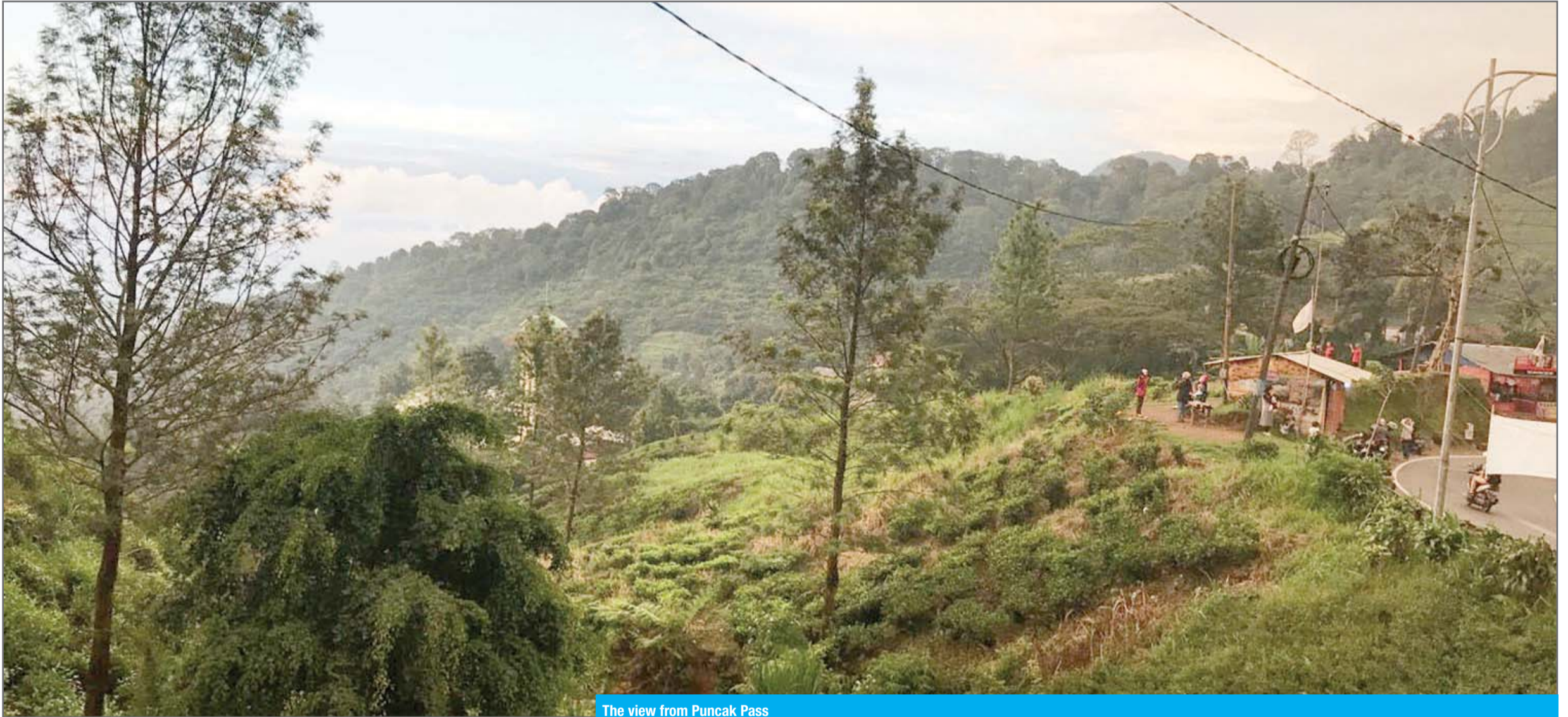
Personally, I was fascinated by the treasure collection that consists of gold and silver jewelry decorated with precious stones. Most of the gold collection originates from different kingdoms and Muslim sultanates in the archipelago during the 16th until the 20th centuries. The most important objects on display are regalia



The entrance of the National Library



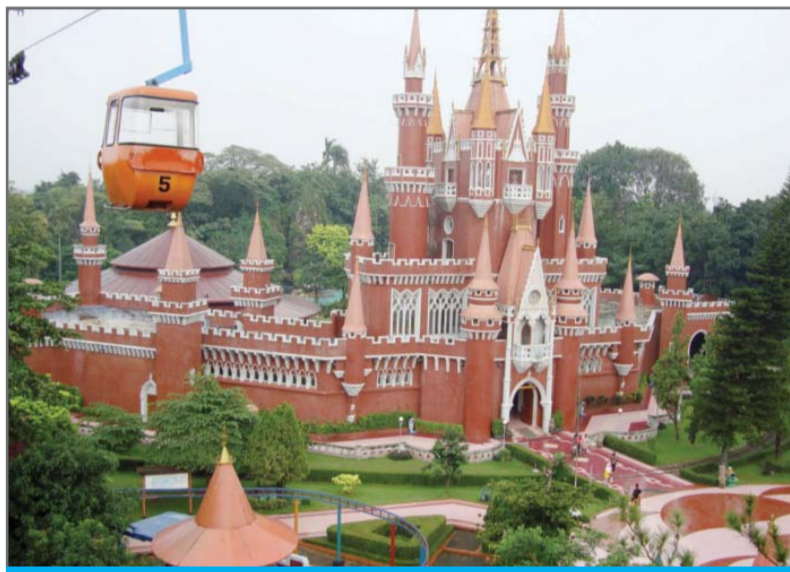
The media delegation with an official at The National Museum



The view from Puncak Pass



A rumah adat example at the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature park)



Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature park)



Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature park)

and heirlooms from previous kingdoms, such as ceremonial objects, betel sets, containers in animal shapes, jewelry, performing art objects and weapons. The museum is open from Tuesday till Sunday from 8:30 am till 4:00 pm.

National Library

I believe that you can figure out how much a country takes care about education by focusing on its city's library, and the National Library is no joke at all. Let me start by complimenting its building. The building is 130 m tall with 27 floors. It is well-designed, clean, painted white and decorated with mirrored windows. When you enter through the door and pass by the lobby, the first thing you notice is the enormous bookcase from the bottom to the fourth floor, with thousands of books in it. And if you look at the ceiling, your eyes will be caught by a round-shaped illustrated map of Indonesia, designed like a dome over your head. This view reminded me of a Harry Potter movie because it was really

kind of magical. It has a variety of facilities, such as reading rooms devoted to the blind and elderly. The government has made a great effort to attract youngsters and people in general to encourage them to study and read by providing them spacious areas with energy-saving concepts and many windows.

Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature Park)

You cannot miss visiting Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature Park), or TMI for short. This is because the park is a summation of Indonesian culture, with virtually all aspects of daily life in Indonesia's 26 provinces summarized in separate pavilions with collections of rumah adat (traditional houses built in any of the vernacular architecture styles of Indonesia). Indonesian architecture, clothing, dances and traditions are all depicted flawlessly.

There is a lake with a miniature of the archipelago in the middle of it, gardens and parks, cable cars, museums, Keong Emas

TMI is considered to be one of the most popular tourist destinations in the city

Imax cinema, a theater, restaurants and several religious buildings of several official faiths meant to showcase the interfaith tolerance and religious harmony of Indonesia. For all these reasons, TMI is considered to be one of the most popular tourist destinations in the city. It is a perfect place to spend a whole day. As part of our tour, we paid a visit to the Ministry of Tourism, where we met its Director Nia Niscaya and had a very friendly discussion about the culture, habits and the things that distinguish Indonesia from other cultures. It was such an exquisite meeting!

Jakarta Aquarium

Jakarta Aquarium is a nice place to visit with your family - it is located in Neo SOHO, a shopping center in west Jakarta. It is considered to be an edutainment destination, and if you are ready to embark on an underwater adventure, Jakarta Aquarium is the place, as it is the home to more than 600 species.

Shopping

One of the most delightful experiences is shopping in Jakarta, where you can find toptouch brands and the latest trends and designs, such as at the Grand Indonesia Shopping Town in central Jakarta. My shopping tip for you if you want to buy more and spend less - visit malls such as Sarinah Shopping Complex and Plaza Semanggi, where you can find local clothing such as



Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature park)



Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia Miniature park)



Jakarta Aquarium



Jakarta Aquarium



Tea plantation in Puncak Pass



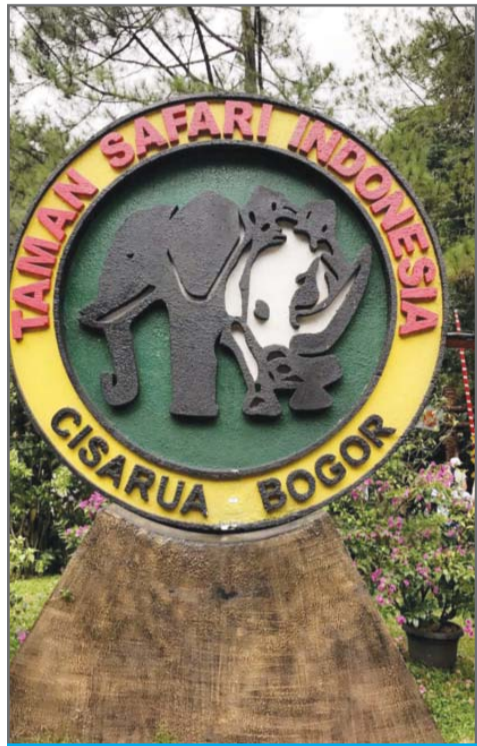
Handmade wooden carved statues at the Complex and Plaza Semanggi



Handmade wooden statues



Paragliding in Puncak Pass



At the Taman Safari Indonesia Park

oped in terms of pattern, technique and the quality of workmanship.

Puncak, Bogor

Are you sick of the traffic, loud noises and the hectic busy life in the city? Then you will definitely fall in love with Puncak, Bogor. Puncak, which means 'peak', is a weekend getaway. It is a mountain pass where you can find peace and tranquility with spectacular views of tea plantations. Here you can enjoy the clear and clean air and scenery. Far from the city's noises, we went to Puncak, where we checked in at Royal Safari Garden Hotel, a hotel that makes you get back in touch with nature.

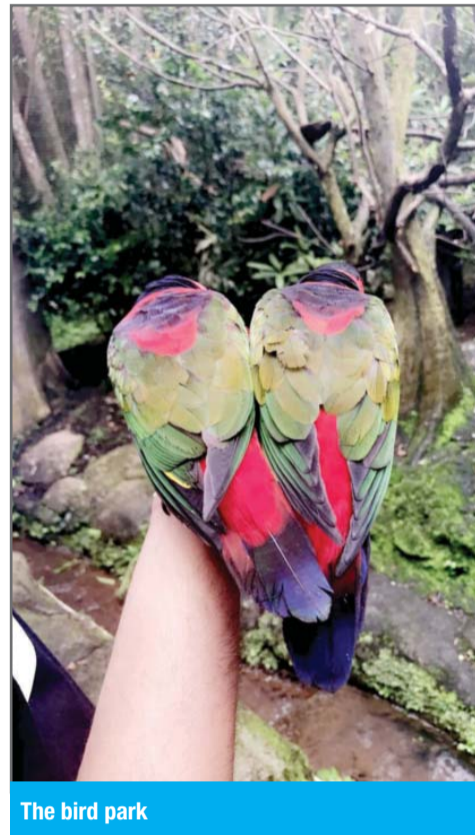
Royal Safari Garden Hotel

At the hotel, you will be able to clear your head from the wild and busy life, meditate and become completely relaxed. The positive energy around you is unlimited. It is a family-friendly hotel surrounded by trees, a waterpark, mini golf course, a reptile area, bird park and pony rides.

The staff are extremely nice and friendly and the service is quick. The room's names are inspired by animals, such as the lion deluxe room or panda deluxe room. The rooms are very clean, spacious, practical and equipped with satellite TV and minibar. The bathrooms have shower facilities. Royal Safari Garden's Jambo Restaurant serves Indonesian dishes, while the Sky Garden Restaurant serves local and Western food. It is a perfect place to bring your kids for a weekend and take them to the Taman Safari Indonesia.

Taman Safari Indonesia

This is the ideal fun place for children and grownups to get ultimate pleasure and amusement. It is considered to be the biggest zoo in Indonesia. You need two days to cover the entire area and enjoy the place. The park covers up to 50 hectares.



The bird park

Before going to the zoo, make sure to buy carrots from the many vendors by the roadside to feed the animals. The best experience you can get from the safari is to see and feed the elephants, zebras, goats and hippos.

Only when you see the lions and the majestic presence of the white tigers up close that you get this extreme intense feeling and the adrenaline rush through your body. Inside the zoo there are more animals to see, shows to view such as the 'Wild-Wild West', the lion show and the sea lion show, and you can interact and ride the elephants and ponies. There are also



The media delegation with Director Nia Niscaya at the Ministry of Tourism



With the Royal Safari Garden Hotel staff

restaurants and shops with good-quality souvenirs.

your inner self and simply be grateful for the God-given nature.

Paragliding at Puncak Pass

Are you an adventurous person and like to take risks? Do you like dangerous things and have no problem to try new things and feel the adrenaline rush. Paragliding from above the Gunung Mas Tea Estate from a hill 1,350 m above sea level is the place for you. This location is not only for paragliding, but is also a popular touristic destination because of its flawlessness. The adventure starts from the beginning of the road, where you can hire men with small motorcycles to get you up to Gunung Mas.

The roads are narrow and slippery, so wearing suitable shoes is a good idea. Reaching to the top is a spiritual adventure, because you can actually inhale the fresh air, unite with nature and the sky above you, enjoy the mesmerizing scenery and breathe again. When you are at the top, it is like everything stops and you reconnect with

If you decide to actually take the leap and jump, you should come early in the morning and check the weather, because if it is raining, your plan to jump will fail. I personally loved Puncak, Bogor - it is also very popular amongst Arabs, because many Arabs have opened businesses and restaurants here. I advise you to try the machbous (rice with meat) at Zahra Al-Jazeera Restaurant - it is really delicious.

Puncak Tea Plantation

The Gunung Mas tea plantation was cultivated in the Dutch colonial era, although it is now a government-owned estate. The site sprawls over more than 6,000 acres, where row after row of tea grows in cool climes of between 18 and 25 degrees. The lush hill-sides and processing plants of the Gedeh tea plantation are worth a visit.

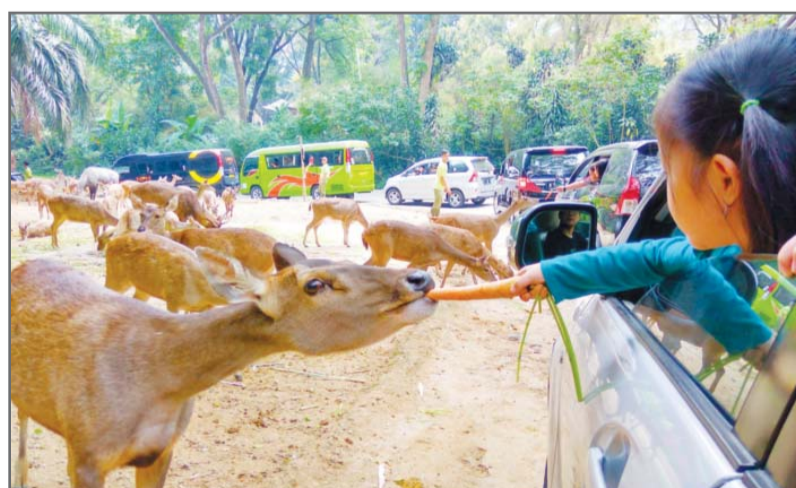
See tomorrow issue for the second part of the story



At the Taman Safari Indonesia Park



At the Taman Safari Indonesia Park



At the Taman Safari Indonesia Park



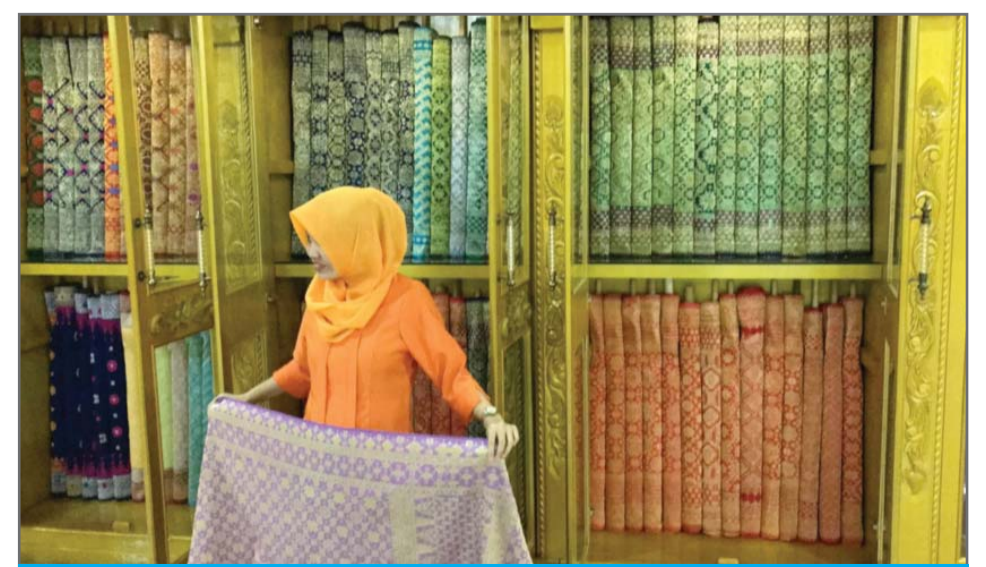
At the Taman Safari Indonesia Park



Batik scarves



An Indonesian woman is showing the way a batik is sewn.



An Indonesian woman showing one of the different batik fabrics.

From Colgate Lasagna to the monoski, flops take center stage

Once cast aside as a cringe-worthy mistake, “Colgate Lasagna” has at last found fame... as a top flop at the Museum of Failure. The dental care brand’s 1980s culinary foray joins the line-up of epic fails on display in Los Angeles at a roving pop-up museum that has proven an ironic success. A model of the Titanic, coffee-based Coca Cola and the flashy but under-powered DeLorean car from “Back to the Future” all have a special place among the more than 100 flops of innovation that make up the show, which first opened in Sweden in June before moving to California this month.

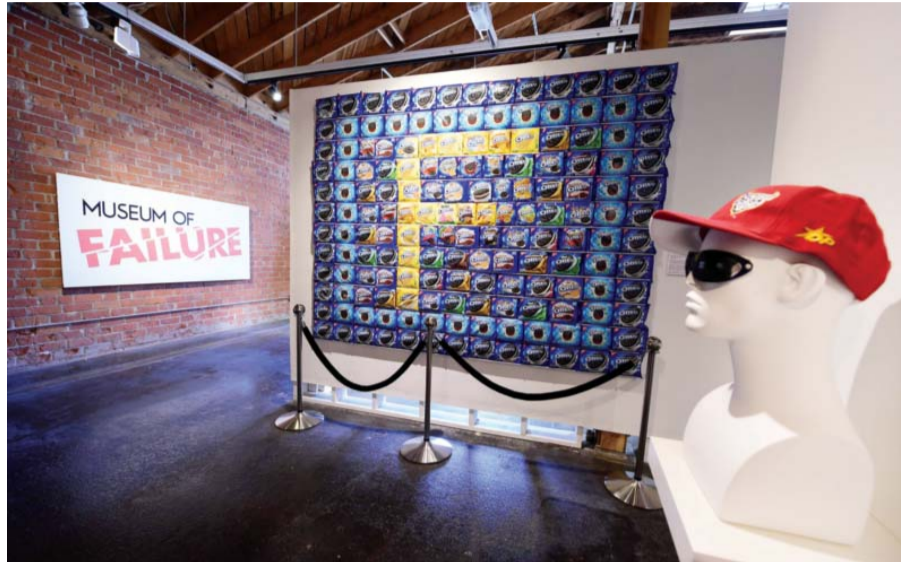
The inventions may trigger facepalms, but the show aims to prove that failure is indeed an option. “For technological progress you need a lot of failures along the way,” said clinical psychologist Samuel West. Without the all-but-defunct monoski, for instance, the snowboard may never have seen the light of day.

“It is the same for any other social innovation, even us as individuals when we learn new things, we are going to fail. So I think we should accept it more,” says West, who came up with the idea for the museum because he was “tired of the success stories.” Although the infamous Colgate Lasagna features, West said the packaging is actually a well-researched copy. The company known for toothpaste was not keen to provide a sample from its frozen food-known as one of the biggest marketing duds ever.

Spotlight on Trumpian hiccup

Though he prides himself on his business acumen, Donald Trump also made the show’s cut, for several ventures from the time when he was known not as president but as simply “The Donald.” What West calls a “shrine” to the former real estate magnate includes a Monopoly-esque board game named simply “Trump: The Game,” a bottle of Trump Vodka and a textbook on entrepreneurship from the for-profit Trump University.

The glass case also includes one of the now-iconic red caps emblazoned with his presidential campaign slogan: “Make America Great Again.” Trump is “a man who built his image on being a successful business man, it’s his trademark,” curator West told AFP. “But if you look at his business adventures, they are misadventures, he failed over and over and over again,” he said, noting that he included the cap to hint at pitfalls the embattled



Nike’s Magneto eyewear is displayed at The Museum of Failure in Los Angeles. — AFP photos



The Monoski, the precursor to the modern-day snowboard.

leader may yet hit.

The lasting impact of failure

West has no sponsors—as “companies don’t want to be associated” with failure—but every week he receives packages with donations for his collection, from cappuccino-flavored chips to the astronomically high-priced—and just as short-lived—“Juiceiro” juicer. Today, the museum’s exhibits are made up of 40 percent donations, and 60 percent his own finds. The collection, which will move to other cities in the United States early next year, fits in well in Los Angeles: the city houses museums dedicated everything from broken relationships to bunnies, and even an art gallery featuring only works created using velvet.

The Museum of Failure also encourages visitors to own their own botched efforts, confessing to them on index cards and publicly posting them on a wall. “I liked it because I think it was such an unusual idea,” said Chris Whitehead, IT worker who visited the museum—and wrote on the wall that he failed his driving test six times. “I think the lesson to take away is even if you fail you might actually have a lasting impact anyway.” — AFP

“ Back to the Future ”



Donald Trump games, books, water, alcohol and other items are displayed.



The packaging from a Colgate Beef Lasagna frozen entree from the 1980’s.



The Minitel, France’s precursor to the internet



A display of Oreo cookie variations



The 1956 Ford Edsel



A nylon stocking, the eventual result of early failed experiments by German polymer researchers going back to 1935



The Power Glove (1989), the first mass marketed wearable video game controller.



The 1981 Audio Technica Sound Burger



A package of Lifesavers Holes candy

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017



This handout photo shows a DJ gesturing to the crowd during the 808 Festival Yangon, EDM music event in Yangon. — AFP photos

Raving in Myanmar as EDM conquers Asia's frontiers

Lasers cut across the sea of ravers bouncing to the beat at '808 Festival Yangon', as Asia's \$1 billion EDM money machine careers into Myanmar, whose youth are at last able to connect with their global peers. With its high-voltage staging and superstar DJs, EDM (Electronic Dance Music) is scooping up devotees with dollars to spend in the poor but emerging frontier market. Martin Garrix, Armin Van Buuren and Hardwell, each of whom bill hundreds of thousands of dollars per set, have led the vanguard of big names to play Myanmar in the last year, adding the country to their mega tours of Asia.

Myanmar was for decades locked down by its paranoid former junta, which viewed modernity and outside communication as a threat to its rule. But that has changed under the civilian government and the slick branding of EDM's DJs and festivals is now streaming in, priming the country's millennials with a soundtrack played in bars, clubs and festivals across the world. And as Myanmar opens up, social mores are also shifting.

Dressed in hot pants, her eyes rimmed by sparkling silver makeup, 21-year-old Khin Wint War Myint looks a long way from the long-skirted, demure paradigm of femininity upheld by Myanmar's conservative culture. "I wear traditional clothes in my day-to-day life. This outfit is only for when I come to EDM events," she said. She

joined 12,000 other EDM fanatics at '808 festival Yangon', one of several major events studding the city's party calendar.

Young women in skimpy tops danced hands aloft alongside shirtless guys with dyed hair and shades, hypnotized by the pounding bass, pyrotechnics, lasers and huge LED screens. "Mingalabar!" 'hello' in Burmese, shouted Australian DJ Timmy Trumpet before dropping 'Party Till We

“

Party Till
We Die

”

Die', the masticating jaws and diluted pupils around the VIP areas suggesting some may have taken the "always getting crazy, always getting high" lyrics literally.

The line-up included Israeli psytrance pioneers Vini Vici and Canadian duo DVBBBS, playing for the second time in Myanmar. "If you look at the global scene, Asia is the only region where EDM is growing," Kaung Sett from 808 Festival Yangon promoters H-Life, said. "In the West, hip

hop is coming back...but Asia is where the money is, where the market is."

Millennials = money

With more than four billion people and growth economies stacked with millennials hooked on social media, Asia is in the crosshairs of dance music's money men. Each year EDM nets around \$7.4 billion globally, according to the IMS Business Report 2017, whose research estimates around \$1 billion pours in from Asia-Pacific. Korea is Asia's biggest market and China its fastest-growing, with major global festivals such as Ultra partnering up in the region.

But festivals curated by Asian promoters, including ZoukOut, DWP Jakarta and 808 Bangkok, are also flourishing as social media and streaming sites soften up fanbases in unlikely corners. "The 20-year-old kids in Yangon are listening to the same thing as the 20-year-old kids in LA," says Kaung Sett. Many major Asian cities boast EDM festivals, despite the unique challenges posed by countries with reams of rules controlling nightlife and law enforcement prone to bribery.

While the scene has exploded in Myanmar, there are in-built checks to its growth. Superstar DJs charge the same jaw-dropping rates for emerging markets—even though tickets cost a fraction of the price elsewhere. General admission to a



This photo shows Myanmar DJ Mickey, right, and Lu Lu playing music in Yangon.

festival that would cost over \$100 in the West is less than \$20 in Myanmar, one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries with a pool of just some 14,000 EDM fans with enough cash to burn.

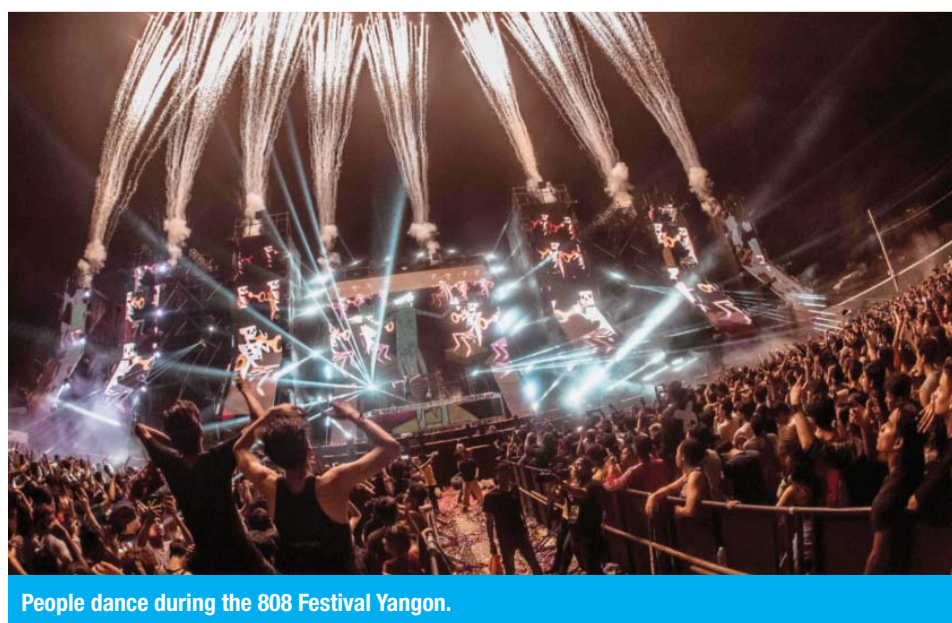
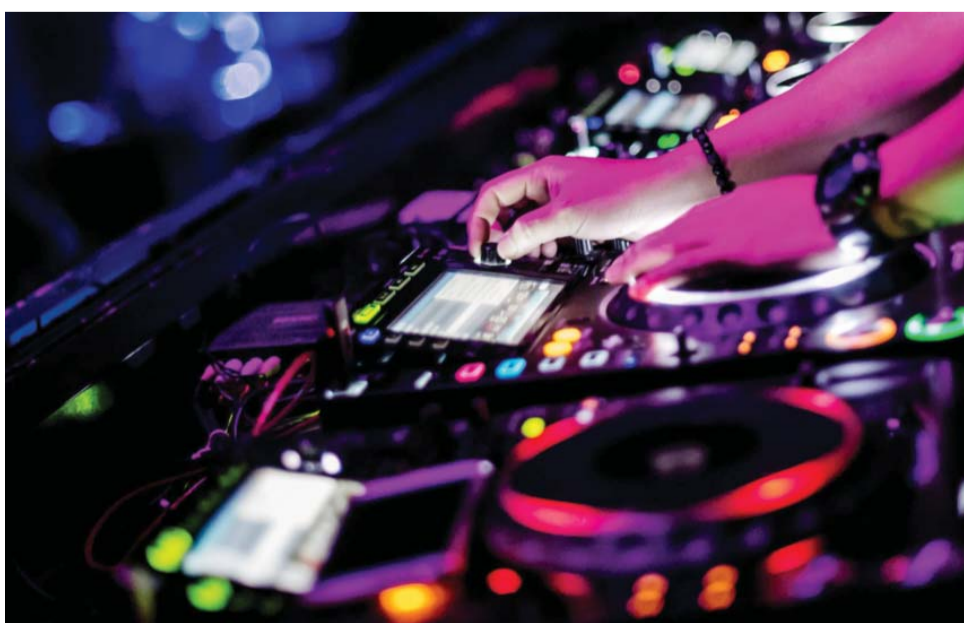
"If 5,000 people come, we don't even break even so we push for 8,000, 10,000... we have to try different marketing strategies to pull more and more people in," explains Kaung Sett. Sponsorship deals are plugging the gap: 808 Festival Yangon is

backed by giant Myanmar Beer. But with the cost of the talent outweighing ticket sales, there are questions over the sustainability of hosting festivals in Myanmar.

Homespun headliners?

To prolong the boom, Asia's music honchos are hunting for homegrown headliners, who are cheaper to book and more tightly bound to the market they serve. Myanmar DJs are bringing a local twist to mainstream music, mixing traditional instruments into big party tunes, says Si Thu Tun of promoters Zeekwat collective. "I'm very confident (local talent) will make the breakthrough," he says, explaining "young creatives" have used the relative immaturity of Myanmar's scene to build broad production skills.

"They are not just one dimensional 'DJs'...a lot would describe themselves as mixture of producers, photographers, videographers, graphic designers and content creators." M-invaders, a foursome who are regulars at clubs across Myanmar, have their sights set on making it to the global party outside their country's borders. Two years ago they played at 'Together Festival', Myanmar's first major EDM event, alongside DVBBBS and Belgian DJ Wollpack. "You're playing on the same stage as the international DJs," explains 30-year-old DJ Lu Lu. "You all wear the same badges and bracelets saying 'Artist'. It's just really exciting." —AFP



People dance during the 808 Festival Yangon.