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Health minister: Statement on fees blown out of proportion

14 MPs to boycott government oath in Assembly

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: New Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah yesterday said that his statement on revising increased medical charges on expatriates was "blown out of proportion", insisting that he did not say anything about scrapping the decision. The minister said in a statement that his statement on Sunday was circulated in a wrong way and showed him as if he said he would consider scrapping the decision, which went into effect on Oct 1.

Sheikh Basel said he specifically mentioned that the decision to hike health charges on expatriates will be reassessed based on a statement made by the former health minister that the decision will be reevaluated three months after implementation.

A number of MPs had threatened to grill the minister if he studied the possibility of scrapping the increase in charges on expatriates, saying that the decision has already reduced the number of expatriate patients visiting health facilities, making way for Kuwaitis to secure better health services. The decision sharply raised the cost of medical services at public hospitals and clinics, in some cases several-fold. There were calls by some Kuwaitis to suspend the decision because many expatriates are unable to afford medical treatment now.

In another development, 14 opposition lawmakers said yesterday they will boycott the new ministers' oath taking in the National Assembly in protest against the jailing of three MPs with connection to the 2011 storming of the Assembly building. The lawmakers, all of them from the opposition, will boycott the period when the prime minister and the ministers will start taking the oath in the Assembly to become members, in accordance with the Kuwaiti law.

The new Cabinet was sworn in by the Amir last week, but under the law, they must take the oath in the Assembly too. The opposition lawmakers are expected to join the session after the government completes taking the oath. The opposition lawmakers are upset that three of their colleagues and dozens of opposition activists have been handed harsh jail terms and were sent to jail even before the sentences became final.

Meanwhile, MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, who gave themselves up to authorities, issued a joint statement yesterday in which they held the speaker and MPs responsible for their



Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah

imprisonment. They said that jailing them is against the constitution and that putting them behind bars before a final court ruling is a very serious precedence.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem accused sides he did not name of trying to make personal gains from the court ruling and trying to disrupt the proceedings of the Assembly, warning that he will not tolerate them and will take stern action. Ghanem charged they are trying to keep Kuwait indulged in crises without any moral obligations. He said he will not allow any chaos inside the Assembly, adding that he will take action against these elements. The speaker also said that the Assembly will resume its sessions today after a long halt since the opening session on Oct 24. Sessions may be extended to Thursday in order to compensate for the missed sessions.

Israeli appeals court ruling on KAC travel ban

BERLIN: An Israeli man appealed yesterday against a German court's ruling upholding Kuwait Airways' right to ban him from boarding a flight due to his citizenship, a legal decision that triggered sharp criticism from German officials and Jewish groups. The appeal argues that the ruling accepted a racist Kuwaiti law and allowed the airline to override German laws requiring that airlines transport any passenger with valid travel documents, according to the Lawfare Project, which filed the appeal.

"We cannot allow our laws to be subverted by the state-sponsored racism of other nations," said Nathan Gelbart, the German attorney for the group, which fights anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli discrimination around the world. He said the decision by the Frankfurt district court had allowed "anti-Semitic discrimination to be imported into our country and helped whitewash and sanitize it." Kuwait Airways has not commented on the decision.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other top officials have vowed to fight anti-Semitism and xenophobia with the full force of the law in recent



weeks after protests that included the burning of Israeli flags. Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said Germany had a historic responsibility to stand by Israel and Jews everywhere. Anti-Semitism remains a sensitive issue in Germany, one of Israel's closest allies, more than 70 years after the end of the Nazi-era Holocaust, in which six million Jews were killed.

The Frankfurt court last month ruled Kuwait Airways had the right to refuse to carry the Israeli man on a flight to Bangkok that began in Frankfurt and included a stopover in Kuwait City since it was abiding by the laws of Kuwait, a country that does not recognize the state of Israel. It said Germany's anti-discrimination law applied only in cases of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic background or religion, not citizenship.

Continued on Page 11

ANC elects Ramaphosa as new head

JOHANNESBURG: South African deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa was narrowly elected head of the ruling ANC party yesterday, winning a bruising race that exposed rifts within the organization that led the fight against apartheid. "We declare comrade Cyril Ramaphosa the new president of the African National Congress," an election official told party delegates in Johannesburg. The victory puts Ramaphosa in line to succeed

President Jacob Zuma, whose reign has been plagued by corruption scandals, economic slowdown and growing anger at the once-omnipotent party.

Thousands of raucous Ramaphosa supporters sang and chanted in the conference hall as rival backers of defeated candidate Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma appeared dejected. Ramaphosa won 2,440 votes to Dlamini-Zuma's 2,261. The vote was a long and acrimonious process. Delegates from around South Africa cast their ballots after repeated delays caused by disputes over who was entitled to vote.

Hundreds of attendees were banned from the poll, raising the possibility that supporters of Dlamini-Zuma, a former minister who is Zuma's ex-wife, could

Continued on Page 11



JOHANNESBURG: South African deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa hugs Minister Lindiwe Sisulu after he was announced President of the African National Congress (ANC) yesterday. — AFP

Lebanese Uber driver arrested over killing UK embassy worker

BEIRUT: Lebanese police yesterday arrested a driver with a criminal record suspected of killing British embassy worker Rebecca Dykes after trying to rape her, according to officials and the national news agency. The Lebanese news agency said the Lebanese man, who works as a driver with ride-hailing giant Uber, had confessed to killing the young woman, who was employed at the UK embassy in Beirut. Dykes was last seen alive at a party in Gemmayzeh, a Beirut neighborhood popular with foreign residents, on Friday night and left in the suspect's car.

"He picked her up in Gemmayzeh on Friday night, took her to Achrafieh then to the Metn highway and tried to rape her," the news agency said, referring to an expressway north of Beirut. Her body was found dumped on the roadside there early the following evening. A senior security official had told AFP that strangulation was the likely cause of death



Rebecca Dykes

and added that Dykes was found with string tied around her neck.

A second senior security official in Lebanon said the suspect was aged 41 and had been arrested on drug-related charges in the period 2015-17. A spokesman for Uber said in an email: "We are horrified by this senseless act of violence. Our hearts are with the victim and her family. We are working with authorities to assist their investigation in any way we can."

The Lebanese news agency said the suspect was tracked down thanks to security cameras and confessed to

Continued on Page 11

Modi steers party to state election wins

NEW DELHI: India's ruling party yesterday celebrated victory in two state elections, but saw its majority dip in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stronghold of Gujarat, where the charismatic leader campaigned aggressively in a closely-fought race. The wins in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh further cemented Modi's dominance, with his Hindu nationalist party now ruling in roughly two-thirds of India's states ahead of a general election slated for 2019.

Modi, draped in a garland of flowers, thanked voters in Gujarat - his home state of 60 million people - for backing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a sixth consecutive term. "The Gujarat election results are historic. In this day and age, for a party to keep winning for so long is unprecedented," he told cheering supporters at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi.

India's election commission said the party won 99 seats in the 182-seat Gujarat parliament, more than the majority mark of 92 needed to form government. But it lost 16 seats com-



Narendra Modi

pared to the 2012 polls. The party also wrested control of the northern Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh from the main opposition Congress party, winning 44 out of 68 seats. The twin victories extended BJP's command to 19 of India's 29 states.

Congress, which has ruled India for much of its history but was thumped by Modi's BJP in the 2014 national poll, now holds just four states in the world's largest democracy of 1.25 billion. Modi's chief rival Rahul Gandhi, who recently replaced his mother Sonia at the helm of Congress, said he "accepts the verdict of the people".

Continued on Page 11

News in brief

US vetoes Jerusalem resolution

UNITED NATIONS: The United States yesterday vetoed a draft UN resolution rejecting President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, after all 14 other Security Council members, including key US allies Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Ukraine backed the measure. The veto cast by US Ambassador Nikki Haley highlighted Washington's isolation over Trump's announcement that the US embassy will be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, effectively ignoring Palestinian claims on the city. "The United States will not be told by any country where we can put our embassy," Haley told the council after the veto.

Fatalities as US train derailed

LOS ANGELES: "Multiple" people were killed early yesterday when an Amtrak passenger train derailed in Washington state near the city of Tacoma, sending cars flying off a bridge and onto a busy interstate, officials said. Pictures from the scene showed one train car overturned and crushed on the interstate highway and another dangling down from the overpass above. The train, which was carrying 78 passengers and five crew, was part of a newly expanded faster rail service along the route linking Seattle and Portland, Oregon - featuring new locomotives.

Unease over Indian stance

NEW DELHI: A dozen Arab ambassadors have asked India to clarify its position on the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, diplomatic sources said, after New Delhi's muted response suggested a shift in support for the Palestinian cause. The Indian foreign ministry, in a brief statement, said India's position was consistent and independent of any third party. The bland statement made no reference to Jerusalem and prompted criticism at home that it was insufficient, vague and anti-Palestinian. Last week, envoys from Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait based in New Delhi met Indian junior foreign minister M J Akbar to brief the government about an Arab League meeting on Dec 9 condemning the US decision. The envoys also sought a more forthright Indian response.

Local

Global institutes affirm uniqueness of Kuwaiti economic status: KCCI

Plan to hold an international economic forum in Kuwait

KUWAIT: A number of international financial institutes affirmed the uniqueness of Kuwait's economic status, said Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Mohammad Thunayan Al-Ghanem yesterday. After a meeting between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan at Seif Palace, Ghanem said that most Kuwaiti banks as well as economic and shareholding companies have gained regional and international recognition due to their efforts.

Based on this fact, the KCCI, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and foreign investment authorities are eager to hold an international economic forum in

Kuwait to display the economic and financial opportunities in the country. With new laws and decrees, Kuwaiti economy will be more receptive for foreign investors, said the KCCI chairman who affirmed that Kuwait's top authorities were in favor of holding the forum.

Economy 'more receptive' for foreign investors

The event, scheduled for next year, will be attended by His Highness the Amir and will be held under his auspices, said Ghanem. Meanwhile Roudhan said that the forum, proposed for March of next year would be very beneficial for Kuwaiti economy. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah has informed us on the necessity of transforming Kuwait to a regional and international hub for business and economy, said Roudhan who affirmed that the forum would be geared toward such goal. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Mohammad Thunayan Al-Ghanem, in presence of Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan. —KUNA

Dubai hosts GCC executive education program next month

KUWAIT: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor and Institute of Banking Studies (IBS) Chairman Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel said yesterday that the ninth version of executive education program for banking and finance executives in the GCC region, and from other Middle Eastern countries, will be held in Dubai on January 27. The six-day program will be co-organized by the IBS and Harvard Business School for the Ninth year in a row, he said in a press release. As one of the strategic developmental projects organized by the IBS,

the program aims to upgrade the skills of the Kuwait and GCC national workforce, of which executives comprise the key component, he said.

The program was conducted for the first time in 2010 as an exclusive event for the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti banks. After the tremendous success of that first program and with the Harvard Business School showing interest in taking the program to the GCC level, the program continued to be run on an annual basis since then, alternately in one of the GCC states, he elaborated. Communication with Harvard Business School started in 2009 to organize the school's first custom program in the GCC region, he said, noting that the Harvard Business School is very selective in conducting custom programs, especially those beyond its campus in Boston, Massachusetts. The Governor explained that the title of the forthcoming 2018 program is 'Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services,' and it consists of two integrated themes: 'Strategic Management' and 'Leadership' and will be held for six consecutive days from January 27 to February 1, 2018.

Executive education programs held by Harvard Business School in the GCC region adhere to the School's high standards thus ensuring that participants and their banks and organizations will be provided with the same quality of learning experience for which the school is so well known, Hashel pointed out.

At the end of the program, participants will receive a Harvard Business School certificate, verifying that they have completed the program. The world-famous Harvard Business School case studies will be the main learning tool in the program; these case studies are written by the school's faculty and are used in numerous universities and executive development centers, he added. Development of the talented and qualified nationals in the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti banks will remain a top strategic priority considering the role of executives in developing their organizations, he stressed. Collaboration amongst the GCC countries in areas of common interest such as training and development has always been and will remain an item of top priority, he concluded. —KUNA



Mohammad Al-Hashel

Kuwait Times

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Kuwait amongst most charitable worldwide: Minister

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait built a strong reputation as one of the world's most charitable countries, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi said yesterday. Delivering a speech to the 24th Awqaf forum held under the auspices of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Afasi said that the UN recognition of His Highness the Amir as a 'Humanitarian Leader,' and Kuwait as a 'Global Humanitarian Center' was a clear indication of Kuwait's strong presence in the charitable scene all over the world.

He noted that securing a non-permanent seat at the UNSC between 2018-2019 would help Kuwait to further support charitable causes all around the world. On the current forum, the minister affirmed that Kuwait is aware of the importance of providing a helping hand to the poor and needy all over the globe, stressing that this would help push for worldwide development.

Afasi took the change to thank His Highness the Crown Prince for his generous sponsorship of the event, which was reflective of the top authority's keenness to support charitable efforts. Al-Afasi represented His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh



KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi delivers a speech during the 24th Awqaf forum. —KUNA

Nawaf at the event.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Awqaf Public Foundation Mohammad Al-Jalahma said that Kuwait had proven itself as a country keen on supporting the needy all over the globe. Building relationships through charitable is an integral part of a human being, affirmed Jalahma who expressed that the current event was held to support all those who are in need of charity and assistance.

In the meantime, former Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni delivered a speech during the event in which she lauded Kuwait's strong presence within the global charitable scene. The annual Awqaf forum is an indication that Kuwait was keen on continuing its charitable role, said Dr Moni. The two-day Awqaf forum honored during its opening session Dr Waleed Al-Ali and Fahad Al-Hussein who were killed during a charity mission in Burkina Faso back in August. —KUNA

Kuwait marks two years of continued aid for Yemen

RIYADH: Since December of 2015, the 'Kuwait By Your Side' campaign had been providing non-stop relief aid and humanitarian support to the Yemeni people after the war there crippled the country. The campaign issued a report from its headquarters in Aden, Yemen, recounting two years of humanitarian efforts. Despite the ongoing war as well as the huge natural and logistic obstacles, the campaign managed to deliver necessities in addition to food and water to the most devastated areas in Yemen.

The campaign distributed a sum of \$100 million worth of relief aid and materials in three phases with each costing \$17, \$23, \$53 million respectively. The current chair of the 'Kuwait By Your Side' campaign Raed Ibrahim said that the past two years saw the campaign aiding well-off Yemenis as

well as the poor, affirming that the current situation in Yemen had left everyone affected. In coordination with the legitimate Yemeni government in Aden, the campaign focused its efforts in providing water, education, health, refuge and food. The campaign was launched by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as part of various Kuwaiti groups providing relief aid to war-stricken Yemen.

In other news, Kuwait's Patients Helping Fund (PHF) on Sunday launched a clinic at Aden International Airport in Yemen, which aims to provide urgent healthcare to incoming and outgoing travellers. In a statement in Riyadh, PHF said the airport expressed gratitude for the initiative, which witnessed the construction of the clinic and stocking it up with necessary medicine and equipment. The Kuwait-established fund has made tangible contributions to healthcare facilities in the governorate of Aden, providing them with equipment and ambulances, mentioned the airport's director Tareq Abdo. —KUNA

Local

Amir meets former ministers, thanks them for their efforts

Top state officials receive new, outgoing ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harabi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace the previous cabinet's ministers. His Highness Sheikh Sabah met with former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, former Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, former Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State of Services Affairs Yaser Abul, former Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, former Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, former Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq, former Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Falah Al-Azb, as well as former Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares. His Highness the Amir thanked the ministers for their efforts during their tenures and wished them all success in their future endeavors. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also met with the former ministers yesterday to thank them for their efforts.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duajj Al-Sabah, who presented to him a copy of his book entitled 'Shariah, Democracy and the Kuwaiti Constitution.' Sheikh Dr Ibrahim later presented copies of the book to His Highness the Crown Prince

and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Humoud Hamad Al-Sabah and chief of Kuwait National Security Bureau (NSB) Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Ambassadors

In other news, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister have separately received the outgoing Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Jusupbek Sharipov on the occasion of ending his tenure in the country. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the credentials of France's new ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

During the reception, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled wished the new ambassador best of luck and more developed relations between Kuwait and France. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met with the outgoing Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Warren Hauck. During the reception, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled lauded Hauck's efforts and contributions to the promotion and development of firm relations between Kuwait and Australia. The meetings were attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Jusupbek Sharipov.

Office Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and several senior Foreign Ministry officials. Also yesterday, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received the outgoing UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident

Representative to Kuwait Zineb Touimi-Benjelloun. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled thanked the UN official for her efforts during her stay in Kuwait, wishing her the best of luck in her future ventures. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah joins in cutting the cake during the Qatar Embassy's National Day ceremony. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Qatar embassy celebrates National Day

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Sunday congratulated Qatar on its National Day and hoped security and stability would be maintained across all Gulf states. During their attendance of Qatar's National Day celebrations at its

embassy in Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also congratulated Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Father Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and the Qatari people on the occasion.

For his part, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah underlined the strength of relations between Kuwait and Qatar. Speaking to reporters at the event, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said he was proud of Doha's achievements made on the scale of development along with various other regional and international accomplishments. Qatar's National Day on December 18 marks the unification of the state in 1878. — KUNA



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attends the ceremony.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A colorful sunrise reflecting on clouds and water in Jahra Pools Nature Reserve. —KUNA

Zain participates in Arab Day of People with Special Needs

As part of its social responsibility strategy

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, participated in a special event organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in celebration of the Arab Day of People with Special Needs. The event was held at the Ministry's Social Care Centers under the patronage and attendance of the Deputy Director of Medical, Psychological, and Social Services at the Public Authority of the Disabled Dr Nadia Abul and in cooperation with the National Assembly Speaker's Committee of people with Special Needs.

Every year, Zain is keen on participating in the activities organized by the Social Care Centers as part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards people with special needs. The company will spare no efforts to take part in initiatives that celebrate the capabilities of people with special needs and their families and raise awareness about their cause within the community.

During the event, Zain organized a number of recreational activities to share the joys of this day with people with special needs and their families. The company was keen on contributing to making this event a success to celebrate the capabilities of people with special needs and empower them within the society.

Zain dedicates a great part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards people with special needs. The company recently sponsored the seventh annual RunKuwait charity marathon organized by Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN) and aimed at supporting children with special needs in Kuwait. The company was also the strategic partner of the fifth consecutive edition of the Ideal Mother Award organ-



KUWAIT: Zain is honored for its participation.

ized by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center and aimed at shedding light on the distinguished efforts of mothers of children with mental disabilities. The company also regularly conducts visits to social care centers during multiple seasons all year round. Zain constantly finds ways to shoulder



A scene from the event.

initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare. Zain's long-term cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor as well as other public entities

springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print in the society by sponsoring and launching initiatives that cater to various interests of the community.

Gulf Bank holds training session for Fikra Program

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank was pleased to lead a training session for participants of Fikra Program on non-financial analysis, session was conducted recently at Al-Hamra Business Tower. Omar Al-Muhaisen, Relationship Manager - Business Banking at Gulf Bank, led the training and focused on helping the participants understand techniques to conduct analyses of and make informed strategic decisions about how to establish their businesses.

The tools Al-Muhaisen focused on were Porter's five forces and SWOT analysis. Porter five forces are used to analyze the competitive environment within an industry, often focusing on external forces, while a SWOT analysis tends to look more deeply within an organization to analyze its internal potential.

Gulf Bank is proud to be a gold sponsor of the Fikra Program for the second consecutive year. Fikra Program is an intensive entrepreneurship training program that provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the technical skills and business knowledge needed to launch their own businesses such as leadership skills, comprehensive business plan design, mentorship, financial analysis, media exposure, investment opportunities, and others.

For this edition, over 350 applications were received and filtered to 30, before the actual interviews process. Meshari Shehab, Assistant General Manager for Priority and Wealth Management at Gulf Bank, was on the judging panel which then selected 15 business ideas to enter the program.

Fikra Program is held under the patronage of Khaled Al Roudhan, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs and is proudly supported by Ministry of State for Youth Affairs; The National Fund for SME Development; Gulf Bank; Al-Hamra Real Estate Company; Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co; Markaz Financial Center; Lexus Kuwait as a part of Al Sayer Group; and Grand Cinemas. Fikra Program is managed by Cubical Services Business Incubator.



Local

Investment authority pays 50 percent of Dhaman Health Insurance Company's cost

Security considerations prevent transferring liabilities to roads authority

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has paid around KD 115 million as 50 percent of the cost for the public shareholding company that was established to build hospitals for expatriates covered by the health insurance system. This amount represents citizens' share in the Dhaman Health Insurance Company, and is expected to be offered to citizens in an initial public offering in 2018. The project will organize health services in Kuwait and mainly targets the benefit of expats who are expected to only pay a comprehensive annual insurance fee without paying any extra charges when they visit hospitals built and operated by Dhaman. The health insurance company's operational plan is expected to start in 2018 by launching a number of integrated primary health care clinics, before launching further primary and secondary services by 2020. The hospitals will be located in Al-Ahmadi, Al-Jahra, and Al-Farwaniya, providing surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, operating rooms, accident and emergency, central laboratories and radiology.



Special services sought for martyrs' children

day received a memo including the Supreme Judicial Council's opinion about a proposal made by MP Waleed Al-Tabtabai suggesting extending the grace period to file a contest before the court of cassation from 30 to 60 days. The council initially accepted the proposal but limited the extension to 40 days so that defendants and their lawyers could have enough time to study the verdict and file their contests. The proposal suggests amending the first clause of article 153 of decree law number 38/1980 to define the contest grace period in letters to sixty days instead of only using the digit '60,' and omitting the phrase 'effective as of publication in the official gazette' to 'one month after publication.'

Legislations

Head of the parliamentary legislation affairs committee MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subai'e stressed that the proposal made on regulating the appointment of senior officials will help limit favoritism and deals made in such cases. Following the committee's meeting held yesterday, Subai'e

said that the committee has rejected a proposal to regulate private tuitions by building special private schools that will contradict with developing education. Subai'e added that bedoons' civil rights were one of the top priority proposals and that the committee will discuss it within a fortnight.

Roads authority

Head of the parliamentary budgets and final statements committee Adnan Abdulsamad said that the committee met with officials from the Interior Ministry, Ministry of Public Works, the Public Authority for Roads and Transport, the State Audit Bureau, the auditors apparatus and the Civil Service Commission to discuss transferring the liabilities of the newly-established roads authority



KUWAIT: Former health minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi participates in the Dhaman Hospital - Ahmadi Governorate groundbreaking ceremony, held in November 15, 2017. —KUNA

from various other state department as per the authority's founding law. Abdulsamad explained that the roads sector was transferred from the public works ministry to the authority with all its liabilities as per a meeting held with the prime minister on March 23, 2017 with the aim of avoiding contradiction of liabilities. He added that the interior ministry is yet to transfer some of its liabilities, such as technical vehicles' checkup and drivers' licenses, to the authority due to security considerations.

Martyrs' children

The Amiri Diwan undersecretary and director of Al-Shaheed (Martyrs) Bureau Fatima Al-Ameer said that extensive meetings was held with the

central apparatus for illegal residents' affairs to discuss the number of non-Kuwaiti martyrs' families registered in the bureau and not registered in the apparatus. Discussions in the meeting focused on finding ways to allow those families to receive health and educational services, she added. Speaking during a ceremony held to honor martyrs' creative children, Ameer said that the meetings discussed issuing a health card by which martyrs' families who are not registered with the apparatus could receive medical care. Ameer added that an agreement was made with the Interior Ministry to have relevant authorities study the files of martyrs during offensive operations pending granting them citizenship.

Court rejects petition to expel expats from public schools

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The court of first instance rejected a petition demanding that enrollment in public schools is made completely exclusive for Kuwaitis. However, lawyers who forwarded the petition have already announced plans to appeal the verdict. The comprehensive court had ruled that this case falls out of its jurisdiction. Although expatriates are generally not allowed to enroll their children in public schools, exemptions are made to those working in certain departments such as the ministries of education and health.

Weather forecast

Meteorologist Essa Ramadhan said that the weather is expected to remain warm and moderate during the day and cool during the night this week. Scattered clouds, dry weather and southeasterly winds are expected from Thursday onwards following a drop in temperature, he added.

Lawyer acquitted

The appeals court exonerated a Kuwaiti lawyer of joining Hezbollah. However, the suspect remains in jail as he is serving a five-year sentence for spreading false news in which he claimed that a Bangladeshi cleaning worker has impersonated a Kuwaiti doctor in a local public hospital.

Allegations

Head of the teaching faculty society at Kuwait University Dr Ibrahim Al-Humoud said that an investigation must be launched into allegations made by a local newspaper, claiming that an unauthorized Indian magazine published papers based on which some of faculty members were promoted.

News in brief

'Info' violations sent to Public Prosecution

KUWAIT: Reports on violations and plunder of public funds at the Ministry of Information were referred to the Public Prosecution, Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri said yesterday. Jabri said that the ministry would be focusing on transparency when it comes to expenditure, affirming that the ministry would work on measures to implement Kuwait's 2035 vision. Minister Al-Jabri added that a ministerial specialized committee would be looking into the parliamentary interpellations of the previous two ministers to prevent possible violations. —KUNA

No deal signed for smart driving licenses

KUWAIT: No deal was signed with any company to start issuing smart driving licenses, the Ministry of Interior said yesterday. The Interior Ministry's Public Relations department said that video clips circulating on social media regarding the deal were false. Currently there is no deal with any company to start issuing the smart licenses, said the ministry, adding the responsibility of striking a deal lies in the hands of Kuwait's General Secretariat for the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) and the UN Development Program (UNDP). The statement said that if a deal was signed, the ministry will be only responsible for the technical aspects of issuing the smart driving licenses. —KUNA

Addict stabs foe to settle old score

KUWAIT: A drugs user stabbed a citizen over an old dispute when he ran into him in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The victim was taken to Farwaniya Hospital for treatment. Police also discovered that the suspect is wanted to serve four years in jail over a previous case.

Meanwhile, Mubarak Al-Kabeer police arrested a citizen who was caught while being under the influence of drugs. Police had headed to the Sabhan Bridge following a report about a driver obstructing traffic. The man was found sleeping in his car while drugs were found inside the vehicle as well. The man was arrested and sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

In a separate case, a Vietnamese man resisted arrest when caught selling liquor along with a Bangladeshi taxi driver in Farwaniya. When policemen asked a taxi driver to pull over, both the driver and the man accompanying him attempted to escape on foot, but were caught. Police found bags containing homebrewed liquor inside the vehicle. Both suspects were sent to concerned authorities. —Translated by Kuwait Times

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Militants storm Kabul spy training centre

Rohingya families rescued from slavery in India

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BENGAZI, Libya: A Libyan armed forces cadet performs maneuvers during their graduation ceremony at the military academy in eastern Benghazi yesterday. —AFP

Mayor of Misrata abducted, killed

Libya strongman says UN-backed mandate has expired

TRIPOLI: The mayor of Libya's third-largest city Misrata has been killed by unidentified assailants who abducted him as he returned from an official trip overseas, a security source said yesterday. Mohamad Eshtewi's body was found dumped in the street after he was kidnapped after leaving the airport in the western coastal city late on Sunday, the source said. The city hospital said it had received the mayor's body bearing gunshot wounds. His brother was with him in the car and was wounded in the attack, the security source said.

Eshtewi was returning from an official visit to Turkey with other members of the city council, who were all elected in 2014 for four years. UN envoy for Libya Ghassan Salame on Twitter denounced the killing and expressed his "profound sadness" at the news. The Tripoli-based Government of National Accord deplored a "cowardly" and "terrorist act" that killed a "symbol of moderation and tolerance", vowing that those responsible would be brought to justice. France's foreign ministry said the killing confirmed "the urgency for a political solution" to the political and security problems plaguing the North African country.

Britain's ambassador to Libya, Peter Millett, said he was "deeply saddened by (the) senseless murder" of Eshtewi. "He worked hard to serve his people," Millett said on Twitter. Home to some 400,000 people, Misrata is considered one of Libya's safest cities. Its powerful militias played a major role in expelling the Islamic State group from the coastal city of Sirte last year. In October, four people were killed in a suicide bombing claimed by IS at the main court building in Misrata. Libya has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, with rival authorities and militias vying for control of the oil-rich country.

Meanwhile, Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar insisted

Sunday that the mandate of the country's UN-backed government has run out after what he said was the expiration of a tattered 2015 political deal. The UN-brokered agreement signed in Morocco on December 17, 2015 established Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) for a one-year period, renewable only once. Despite that deal, Libya has remained divided between the GNA government in Tripoli led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and a rival administration backed by Haftar in the east.

In a televised speech Haftar, who has never recognized the GNA's authority, said the "expiry of the Libyan political accord" marked a "historic and dangerous turning point". "All bodies resulting from this agreement automatically lose

their legitimacy, which has been contested from the first day they took office," he said. The United Nations Security Council on Thursday insisted the 2015 deal remains the "only viable framework" to prepare for elections next year. The UN in September launched a fresh push to agree a new accord aimed at bringing stability to Libya, which has been in chaos since the 2011 ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

One of the main stumbling blocks is the inclusion in any potential government of Haftar, whose Libyan National Army dominates the country's east. In a statement on Sunday the UN's special representative to Libya Ghassan Salame said Libyans were "fed up with violence" and hoped "for a political solution, for reconciliation and for harmony". "I urge all parties to heed their voices and refrain from any actions that could undermine the political process," the statement said. The foreign ministers of Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt after meeting in Tunis on Sunday, welcomed the UN Security Council declaration. They also reaffirmed their rejection of "any outside interference in Libya" and "any attempt by any Libyan party to derail the political process" there. — Agencies



Eshtewi's body found dumped in the street

Raising the bar: Local brews making a comeback in Syria

DAMASCUS: For years, Abu George's bar in Damascus's Old City served imported beers under portraits of famous foreigners Che Guevara and Marilyn Monroe-but the brews on offer now are Syrian-made. When war broke out in 2011, Syria's two main breweries halted production, leaving consumers sipping on foreign, and more expensive, beers. But as fighting has subsided across much of the country this year, a new pair of local lagers has hit the markets.

Tiny pubs line a cramped alleyway in the historic heart of Syria's capital, where a group of girls dressed in white distribute free bottles of "Afamia" to passers-by. Customers at Abu George's bar reach out for a few of the brown bottles, emblazoned with a blue and gold label proclaiming Afamia to be the "Beer of Syria".

"It's a lovely initiative," says Ghassan Salloum, who co-owns the popular watering hole. "The beer will be well-received-people want a national brew." The bearded 61-year-old floats between tables to top up the bowls of salted peanuts that inevitably accompany chilled ales, as loud music drowns out the clinking of beer bottles. "I've been here for 20 years, since a time when the national beer was really in demand," Salloum says, and Syrian spirits have continued to be a favorite. Before 2011, two local brews dominated the Syrian market: Barada, produced at a brewery outside Damascus, and Al-Sharq, based in second city Aleppo.

Al-Sharq shuttered its doors as violence in Aleppo escalated. The Barada brewery was ravaged by fighting, with Syria's government blaming "extremists" and rebels accusing the army of shelling it. "I was very sad when the war destroyed the breweries, so today I'm happy to have Syrian beer again," said Elias, a 27-year-old customer at Abu George's. He sipped on a cool Afamia, named after the celebrated city of Apamea in central Syria. The Afamia brewery on the eastern edge of Damascus had been all prepped for production in 2010, but after Syria's conflict broke out early the next year, the factory shut down and the lagers never hit the stores. — AFP

Kremlin's cyber weapons spark fears, fantasies

MOSCOW: From Donald Trump's election to Brexit and the Catalan crisis, accusations that the Kremlin is meddling in Western domestic affairs have heightened fears over Russian hackers, trolls and state-controlled media. While the first accusations against Moscow came following a 2016 hack attack on the US Democratic Party's servers, they rapidly multiplied after Trump's election, revealing a whole range of tools used by the Kremlin to serve its interests.

Fears initially centred on mysterious Russian hackers who supposedly worked for Moscow's security services as part of a cyber war but then shifted to a flood of online articles and social media posts aiming to explain Moscow's position and play up the failings of Western democracies. In the latest episode of the saga that is dominating Trump's presidency, Russian state television channel RT, accused of broadcasting Kremlin propaganda abroad, complied with Washington demands in November to register as a "foreign agent" in the US.

A few weeks earlier, social media giant Twitter announced it would stop distributing content sponsored by RT and linked news agency Sputnik while Facebook and Google promised to do more to fight Moscow's "disinformation". Panic has spread across the Western world: Madrid is worried about Russian-controlled "manipulation" of the Catalan crisis, while British analysts see signs of Russian influence in the Brexit vote and concerns are growing in Germany and France over possible interference in various polls.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, has dismissed the accusations as "hysterical" and "Russophobic," insisting there is no hard evidence for any of the charges. Russia has worked hard to increase its "soft power" following what it perceived as a defeat in the "media war" during its brief war with pro-Western Georgia in 2008. These efforts led to the expansion of Kremlin-controlled media for a foreign audience. State broadcaster RT, formerly Russia Today, and news agency Sputnik were assigned a mission



MOSCOW: People stand at a bus stop next to an official poster announcing next year's presidential election in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

to represent Moscow's position abroad, especially on topics where Russia and the West clash such as the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. "Russia spends a lot of money on this (information war) and we constantly see more players," said Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov, editor of Agentura.ru, a website specializing in security issues.

In 2014, Russian media reported on a new, powerful Kremlin tool: a "troll factory" in Saint Petersburg. Officially called the "Internet Research Agency," it was reportedly linked to Russian security services and ran thousands of fake accounts on social media in an attempt to influence public opinion. According to sources interviewed by the RBK daily newspaper, it was first deployed to influence domestic politics. The trolls, the paper said, were then reorientated from 2015 to sow unrest in the US. Here they pretended sometimes to belong to one camp and sometimes to another, spreading false informa-

tion and even organizing protests.

But Mark Galeotti, a security expert and researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Prague, wrote in Tablet magazine in June that the Kremlin's operation in 2016 "was about weakening Washington, not deciding who would sit in the White House" and aimed to "undermine the legitimacy of the American government, its capacity to act".

Despite these efforts, Moscow's ability to influence Western public opinion remains limited. American officials have said that content coming from Russia and the amounts spent on it were only a small portion of the total information flow and spending. The Kremlin nevertheless hugely increased the budget allocated to its cyber campaign during the 2016 presidential election. Russia spent \$50,000 on Facebook ads during the US election campaign compared to the whopping \$81 million that Trump and Hillary Clinton spent on their campaigns. — AFP

International

Militants storm spy training centre

Afghan president forces out powerful 'King of the North'

KABUL: Militants stormed an intelligence agency training centre in Kabul yesterday in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group, triggering an intense gunbattle with Afghan police. Security forces battled the militants, besieged in a construction site at the National Directorate of Security (NDS), for hours before killing at least two attackers. "They were well hidden in buildings under construction. We exploded their VBIED and killed two or three of them," a source with the NDS said on condition of anonymity, referring to a car bomb that attackers brought to the scene. Kabul police spokesman Basir Mujahid said two police officers were injured but there were no civilian casualties.

During the attack, roads to the area were closed and dozens of police and intelligence officers blocked access to the public. AFP reporters, who were held more than a kilometer away from the scene, saw ambulances and reinforcements headed towards the site. "I was going toward my school. It (the attack) happened suddenly... the police arrived in the area fast and blocked the roads, not allowing anyone to get to their homes," Naweed, a student said. IS claimed responsibility for the attack through its propaganda arm. "Two IS attackers raid the Afghan intelligence centre in Kabul," the jihadists' Amaq outlet reported.

The Afghan capital in recent months has become one of the deadliest places in the war-torn country for civilians, as the resurgent Taliban and increasingly IS both

step up their attacks on security installations and mosques. Security in Kabul has been strengthened since May 31 when a massive truck bomb ripped through the city's diplomatic quarter, killing about 150 people and wounding around 400 — mostly civilians. No group has officially claimed responsibility for that attack, which the government blamed on the Taliban-allied Haqqani Network.

Yesterday's attack represents another blow to beleaguered Afghan police and troops. The Taliban have targeted military installations in recent months, including a spate of attacks in October that killed around 150 people.

Afghan forces, already beset by desertions and corruption, have seen casualties soar to what a US watchdog has described as "shockingly high" levels since NATO forces officially ended their combat mission in 2014 and began a training and support role.

Morale has been further eroded by long-running fears that the militants have insider help — everything from infiltrators in the ranks to corrupt Afghan forces selling equipment to the Taliban. IS, which has expanded its presence in Afghanistan since it first appeared in the region in 2015, has also scaled up its attacks in Kabul, including those on the country's Shiite minority. Last month a suicide attacker blew himself up outside a political gathering in Kabul, killing at least 14 people in an attack claimed by IS.



KABUL: Afghan National Army (ANA) arrive at the side of an ongoing attack in Kabul. Militants stormed an intelligence agency training facility in Kabul yesterday, triggering intense fighting with police in the latest attack to hit the Afghan capital. —AFP

'King of the North'

In another development, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday announced the resignation of a powerful politician nicknamed "King of the North", sidelining a rival but angering the politician's party who said he had been sacked. Atta Mohammad Noor, 54, had been governor of Balkh province since 2004 but had recently been critical of the National Unity Government led by Ghani. Noor has previously hinted that he may run for the presidency in an election in 2019. Ghani has not yet confirmed if he will run again.

The president's office in a statement said Noor, a senior

leader of the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-e Islami party, had resigned from his post. "President Ashraf Ghani has approved the resignation of the governor of Balkh Mr Atta Mohammad Noor," the statement said, adding that engineer Mohammad Daud has been appointed to take his place. Noor was not immediately available to comment. But Jamiat-e Islami in a statement strongly condemned what it called a "decision by the presidency", branding it "hasty, irresponsible, against the security... and in contradiction of the principles of the National Unity Government". —Agencies



Security forces battle militants; attackers killed

61 killed as Ethiopia ethnic groups clash

ADDIS ABABA: At least 61 people have been killed in clashes between different ethnic groups in Ethiopia's Oromiya region, officials said, the latest bout of violence to highlight increasing instability in a province racked by bloody protests in 2015 and 2016. From Thursday, 29 ethnic Oromos were killed by ethnic Somali attackers in the region's Hawi Gudina and Daro Lebu districts, regional spokesman Addisu Arega Kitessa said. The violence triggered revenge attacks by ethnic Oromos in another district, resulting in the killing of 32 Somalis who were being sheltered in the area following a previous round of violence.

"The region is working to bring the perpetrators to justice," the spokesman said in a statement. The cause of the latest violence was not known, but it followed protests in Oromiya's Celenko town where the region's officials said 16 ethnic Oromos were shot dead on Tuesday by soldiers trying to disperse the crowd. "We do not know who ordered the deployment of the military. This illegal act should be punished," said Lema Megersa, the region's president. The clashes are likely to fuel fears about security in Ethiopia, the region's biggest economy and a staunch Western ally.

Lema's comments also illustrate growing friction within Ethiopia's ruling EPRDF coalition, since unrest roiled the Oromiya region in 2015 and 2016, when hundreds of people were killed. At that time, the violence forced the government to impose a nine-month state of emergency that was only lifted in August. The unrest was provoked by a development scheme for the capital Addis Ababa that dissidents said amounted to land grabs and turned into broader anti-government demonstrations over political and human rights. It included attacks on businesses, many of them foreign-owned, including farms growing flowers for export. —Reuters

Iran's death-row inmate confesses to 'spying for Israel'

TEHRAN: Iranian public television has broadcast images it says show the confession of an academic sentenced to death for spying for Israel during nuclear talks with world powers. In the video aired late Sunday and prepared by Iran's intelligence ministry, Ahmadreza Djalali says he worked with a foreign intelligence agency while studying in Europe. Djalali, an Iranian emergency medicine specialist resident in Sweden, was sentenced to death in the Islamic republic in October for spying for Israel.

The academic was a visiting professor at Belgium's Vrije Universiteit Brussel when he was arrested during a trip to Iran in April 2016. He was accused of passing information to Israel's Mossad intelligence service during the negotiations that led to Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2015. Djalali has said he is being punished for refusing to spy for Iran while working in Europe. In the 17-minute video, a narrator speaks over images of a purported "interview" with Djalali crosscut with archive footage, accusing him of being a "traitor" and of having been recruited by Mossad.

In the footage, Djalali says he gave information to foreign intelligence agents on two Iranian nuclear scientists, Majid Shahriari and Masoud Alimohammadi. The two were among five Iranian scientists — four of them involved in the country's nuclear program — killed in bomb and gun attacks in Tehran between 2010 and 2012. Iran has accused Mossad and the CIA of ordering the killings. The video comes just days after human rights group Amnesty International said Iran's Supreme Court had "run roughshod over the rule of law" by confirming Djalali's death sentence. —AFP

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International

Journalists accused of violating colonial-era Official Secrets Act

Myanmar authorizes police to proceed with a case

YANGON: Myanmar's civilian President Htin Kyaw, a close ally of government leader Aung San Suu Kyi, has authorized the police to proceed with a case against two detained Reuters reporters accused of violating the country's colonial-era Official Secrets Act, a senior government spokesman said. Journalists Wa Lone, 31, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 27, were arrested last Tuesday evening after they were invited to dine with police officers on the outskirts of Myanmar's largest city, Yangon.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs has already submitted the case to the Office of the President," Zaw Htay, spokesman for Aung San Suu Kyi, said by phone late on Sunday. He added that the president's office had given approval for the case to go ahead. Zaw Htay could not be reached yesterday to clarify whether Htin Kyaw or Suu Kyi had been personally involved in the decision, or if other officials had signed off on the president's behalf.

Suu Kyi, head of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD), is barred from the presidency under a constitution written by the military. But she effectively runs the country in the role of "state counselor". Approval from the president's office is needed before court proceedings can begin in a case brought under the Official Secrets Act. Section 13 of the Act states: "No Court shall take cognizance of any offence under this Act unless upon complaint made by order of, or under authority from, the President of the Union."

A number of governments, including the United States, Canada and Britain, and United Nations' Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, as well as Reuters Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Adler and a host of journalists' and human rights' groups have criticized the arrests as an attack on press freedom and called on Myanmar to release the two men. Zaw Htay said the journalists' legal rights were being

respected. "Your reporters are protected by the rule of the law," he said. "All I can say is the government can guarantee the rule of law."

NLD figures join critics

But two senior figures in the NLD yesterday joined the criticism of how the two men are being treated. Nyan Win, a member of the NLD's central executive committee and one of Suu Kyi's defense lawyers during her years of house arrest under junta rule, said it was "unfair" that the families of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were not allowed to contact them or be told where they are being held. He said the police were being "very secretive" and called for "openness", although said the NLD was unable to do anything about the issue as it was not being kept informed.

Although an NLD-led civilian government took office in April last year the police and home ministry, which are driving the

case, remain under the control of the military. Win Htein, another senior figure in the NLD, who was also critical of the journalists' detention, suggested they had probably been set up by the police. "In my opinion this is a trap," he said. "They met with two policemen and then they were arrested somewhere else with the documents." Asked on Mizzima Television what he would do for the detained journalists, Information Minister Pe Myint said: "When I know all the facts of the current case, I will work to do what I can."

Pe Myint is a former editor of the People's Age in Yangon and was Wa Lone's boss when the journalist worked at the paper in his first job as a reporter. The two journalists had worked on Reuters coverage of a crisis that has seen an estimated 655,000 Rohingya Muslims flee from a fierce military crackdown on militants in western Rakhine state. The Ministry



BAGAN, Myanmar: Buddhist monk novices prepare to wash their alms vases at the monastery after they walked through the streets of Bagan collecting alms from devotees. Buddhist tradition in Myanmar requires everyone to spend some time in a monastery or nunnery before the age of 18 in what is viewed as an important coming of age ritual. Others, however, are there for the long-term, destined for a monastic life.—AFP

of Information said last week that they had "illegally acquired information with the intention to share it with foreign media", and released a photo of the pair in handcuffs. It said they were being investigated under the 1923 Official Secrets Act, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 14 years.

The ministry said at the same time that two policemen, Police Captain Moe Yan Naing and Police Sergeant Khin Maung Lin, had also been arrested under the same act. No details have been released on whether a case against them

is also proceeding. The authorities have not allowed the journalists any contact with their families, a lawyer or Reuters since their arrest.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) called on the authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of the pair. "All detainees must be allowed prompt access to a lawyer and to family members," said Frederick Rawski, the ICJ's Asia-Pacific Regional Director, in a statement yesterday.—Reuters



ICJ demands journalists' whereabouts

News in brief

10 killed in stampede

CHITTAGONG: Ten people were killed and dozens injured in a stampede yesterday after tens of thousands of people gathered for a funeral feast in Bangladesh's southern city of Chittagong, police said. Police and hospital staff said they feared the death toll could rise. "So far we can confirm the death toll of 10 men," city police chief Iqbal Bahar said, adding it appeared to be an "accident". "The death toll could rise as 15 people are critically injured," said another police official, Mohammad Alauddin. Police staged baton charges to clear the crowd who packed community centers for the afternoon feast commemorating a popular former city mayor, Mohiuddin Chowdhury, a senior politician of the ruling Awami League party and a three-term mayor of the country's second largest city, died on Friday. He was 73.

Fire in Mumbai kills 12

MUMBAI: Fire tore through a sweet shop in the Indian city of Mumbai before dawn yesterday, sparking a building collapse which killed 12 sleeping workers, authorities said. Four others were injured but some saved their lives by scrambling out seconds before the collapse. Fire crews and other rescuers saved many trapped workers but 12 died of their injuries, said Tanaji Kamble, spokesperson for Mumbai's disaster management cell. "The casualties could have been much higher but luckily some workers managed to escape before the building collapsed," Kamble added. Authorities are looking into the cause of the blaze in the store in the suburbs of India's financial capital. Building disasters are common in Mumbai, especially during the monsoon season from late June to September. Millions live in cramped dilapidated properties because of high rental prices and activists say housing owners and builders often cut corners to save costs.

Philippine deadly storm

MANILA: Rescuers used bulldozers to dig through mountains of mud in the search for more than 40 people missing in the eastern Philippines after landslides triggered by a powerful storm which killed at least 31 at the weekend, authorities said yesterday. Tropical Storm Kai-Tak was heading out to the South China Sea yesterday afternoon after dragging its way across the archipelagic nation over the weekend, leaving at least 31 people dead, most of them from drowning and landslides, government officials said. President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque also said 49 people were still missing. The island province of Biliran suffered the brunt of the storm as the heavy rains caused landslides that buried many homes and destroyed roads and bridges. Rescuers searching for survivors on the island were not optimistic.

Landslide kills 8 miners

JAKARTA: A landslide on the slopes of Indonesia's Mount Merapi volcano on Java Island yesterday killed at least eight people mining sand and stones and injured eight, the country's disaster mitigation agency said. The miners had been digging out sand and stones from a steep cliff when they were engulfed. Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said in a statement. "There could be more miners buried by the landslide, but it's unclear because the number working at the mine is also unclear," said Nugroho, noting that despite previous landslides in the area the practice had persisted. Heavy equipment had been brought in to help search for victims at the site, about 50 km north of the city of Yogyakarta. In many parts of Indonesia, there is little or no regulation of so-called traditional mining, resulting in poor safety standards. Nugroho said mining had persisted in the area even though landslides had occurred there before. Sitting on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, Indonesia has nearly 130 active volcanoes, more than any other country.

Rohingya families rescued from slavery in India

MUMBAI: Three Rohingya families from Myanmar comprising 13 people were rescued in the northern Indian city of Agra at the weekend after being enslaved for a year as rag pickers, authorities said. The three families came to India after an agent at a refugee camp in Bangladesh promised them jobs, but they worked long hours for no pay, according to activists who alerted the authorities. United Nations officials have warned that refugee camps in Bangladesh are fertile territory for human traffickers and the scale of a recent influx from Myanmar was putting more people at risk.

"The employers had paid these agents money and did not pay them any wages saying the amount was being adjusted against the work they were doing," said Nirmal Gorana, convener of the National Campaign Committee for Eradication of Bonded Labor, that took part in the rescue. "They came to India thinking they would find a job and safety ... but they lived in a polythene hut, the rent for which was being deducted from their non-existent wages." Officials said no police case against the employer has been filed with an investigation underway but confirmed the refugees were enslaved. "The men collected plastic bottles from garbage piles. They were in a poor state when we went to rescue them," said Raju Kumar, a judicial magistrate in Agra.

Almost 870,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh, including about 660,000 who arrived after Aug. 25, when Rohingya militants attacked security posts and the Myanmar army launched a counter-offensive. But their influx into India started years before with close to 40,000

Billionaire Pinera returns as Chile president

SANTIAGO: Billionaire Sebastian Pinera will return to power as Chile's president next year, according to virtually complete results from a runoff election held Sunday. Electoral authorities said the 68-year-old conservative, who previously led the South American nation from 2010-2014, had 55 percent of the vote, with 98 percent of ballots counted. His leftist rival Alejandro Guillier, a 64-year-old TV presenter turned senator who ran as an independent backed by outgoing center-left President Michelle Bachelet, conceded after receiving 45 percent. "We have suffered a tough defeat," Guillier said. He called for the opposition to "defend" reforms started under Bachelet.

He said Pinera walked away with "a solid and impeccable triumph." Pinera will lead the country—the world's top copper producer—for four years starting in March 2018. He will once again take over from Bachelet, who was barred by the constitution from running for re-election. Bachelet and Pinera have tag-teamed the presidency since Bachelet first took office in 2006. Since then, they have alternated in power, switching Chile's politics between center-left and center-right each time. Pinera supporters were gathered outside his election headquarters in anticipation of his victory speech.

Uncertain race

The outcome of the runoff had been far

from certain after Pinera scored a much lower than expected 37 percent in the first round of the election held November 19. Analysts had speculated that Guillier could bolster his 22 percent from that round by getting votes from other leftist candidates who were defeated. But in the end, most voters appeared to come down in favor of the experience of Pinera, who is worth some \$2.7 billion and painted himself as a safe pair of hands for Latin America's fifth-biggest economy.

Voting had taken place under a somber cloud Sunday, following the deaths of five people and the disappearance of 18 more in a mudslide in the country's south. Both candidates had projected confidence, with Pinera stating as he cast his ballot: "I have the firm conviction that we are going to win these elections and that better times are going to come for all Chilean households." With no recent reliable voter surveys in the weeks before Sunday's runoff, however, the outcome had been seen as wide open. Marco Moreno, of Central University, had called it "the most uncertain election since the return of democracy" after the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990.

Lower growth

Although copper exports, which contribute greatly to Chile's wealth, are increasing thanks to demand from China and from the burgeoning manufacture of electric cars, the country is struggling relative to previous years. Its GDP is forecast to expand a modest 1.4 percent this year, the slowest pace in eight years. Forecasts suggest it will grow 2.8 percent next year.



SABRANG: Rohingya Muslim refugees sail a makeshift raft made from jerrycans and bamboo across the Naf River into Bangladesh at Sabrang, Teknaf district.—AFP

Rohingya Muslims living in India after fleeing Myanmar over the past decade. Officials said Agra, the home of the Taj Mahal, is densely populated and it is hard to identify the refugees among locals. Activists have called for a sur-

vey of Rohingya families in India to see if more people are trapped in similar situations and have demanded that India's laws against bonded labour be applied in these cases as well.—Reuters



SANTIAGO: Chilean president elect Sebastian Pinera greets President Michelle Bachelet (left) upon arrival at his residence in Santiago yesterday.—AFP

Pinera and Guillier also promised to expand free university tuition brought in under Bachelet—a measure with historical resonance in Chile because paid tuition was introduced under Pinochet's 1973-1990 rule. For Pinera, the vow was a U-turn, contradicting an earlier statement he had made that "free things mean less commitment."

The president-elect was often accompanied by his wife Cecilia Morel while campaigning, and also by their four children and several of their nine grandchil-

dren. Their presence softened his public character, according to a member of his entourage who requested anonymity. As much as he is known as a demanding businessman—who had to divest investments including an airline and a football team for his first mandate—he also has a reputation for being cultivated, humorous and full of ideas. He hasn't hidden his wealth, even wearing an ostentatious watch in the red of his campaign color. But he has also sought to project an image of someone concerned about injustice and ordinary people.—AFP

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People walk along a street decorated for the holidays in downtown Moscow yesterday. —AFP

Israeli appeals court ruling...

Continued from Page 1

The ruling was sharply criticized by German government officials and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, which said the Kuwaiti law was reminiscent of Nazi policies. Three German state parliaments in Bavaria, Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia, have passed resolutions condemning the airline for its policy. Acting Transportation Minister Christian Schmidt also raised concerns about the issue in a

letter to Kuwaiti officials, saying it was "fundamentally unacceptable to exclude citizens because of their nationality," according to the Lawfare Project.

No comment was immediately available from Schmidt's office. A foreign ministry spokesman said Germany's ambassador to Kuwait had met Kuwaiti officials on Nov 28 to deliver the letter and discuss the issue. A spate of anti-Semitic acts in Germany in recent weeks, including the burning of Israeli flags, have triggered concern and calls by top officials to put more emphasis on the Holocaust in integration courses for migrants. Rights groups say anti-Semitism and violent acts have increased in recent years amid growing support for far-right political groups and the influx of over a million migrants from Syria and other countries that are at war with Israel. — Reuters

Lebanese Uber driver arrested...

Continued from Page 1

killing Dykes after she resisted when he sexually assaulted her, it said. A senior official in the judiciary said that she had booked her vehicle using the Uber app, whose driver identification and rating system is seen by many, especially women, as offering better safety guarantees than when hailing a cab off the street in Lebanon. The driver "tried to rape her and when she resisted he strangled her... took her wallet and threw her in a dump-

ster," the official said.

Such crime is rare in the Lebanese capital, a city which is considered generally safe, including for tourists and foreign residents. A senior official had stressed that the murder was "not politically motivated". A picture of the young woman, who worked at the British government's Department for International Development (DFID), was on the front pages of many UK papers yesterday.

The British ambassador in Beirut, Hugo Shorter, expressed his grief in a statement and messages of support for her family and colleagues poured in from Beirut's shell-shocked diplomatic and aid community. "We are devastated by the loss of our beloved Rebecca. We are doing all we can to understand what happened," the family said in a statement passed on by the Foreign Office. — Agencies

Modi steers party to state...

Continued from Page 1

"I thank the people of Gujarat and Himachal with all my heart for the love they showed me," tweeted Rahul, the sixth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to head Congress.

The BJP has ruled Gujarat for 22 years - more than half under Modi as state leader. Some experts had forecast a backlash against Modi over unpopular economic reforms that hit Gujarati businesses hard, including a controversial cash ban and roll out of a national goods and services tax. "They have certainly lost a lot of ground, but Congress should have actually won this election, given the anger in the state against the BJP," political commentator Manisha Priyam told AFP.

Rahul made frequent stops at temples while campaign-

ing in the BJP heartland, inviting ridicule from detractors who accused him of trying to lure Hindu voters. Congress, a secular party, gained 17 seats this election, taking its total to 77. Campaigning in Gujarat took ugly turns as the battle intensified. Modi, who thundered from the pulpit at BJP rallies across Gujarat, accused senior Congress figures, including a former prime minister, of colluding with India's archrival Pakistan to meddle in the state vote. A Congress party veteran was suspended after using a Hindi slur to describe Modi as low class, remarks the BJP seized to cast Congress as elitist.

In declaring victory, BJP chief Amit Shah credited Modi for prevailing over "family politics" - a thinly-veiled sleight against Rahul and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that has led Congress for generations. As the results trickled in, BJP supporters danced, threw rose petals and chanted "Long live Modi" in Delhi. "This (victory) was expected... It is a tremendous victory and Modi has come out as the single most popular leader," BJP supporter Sandeep Kapoor told AFP. India's Senex plunged in opening trade yesterday but recovered throughout the day as results turned in favor of the BJP. — AFP

ANC elects Ramaphosa...

Continued from Page 1

launch legal appeals against the result. "I hope you will cooperate with the new leadership... as we move to the 2019 elections" Baleka Mbete, party chairwoman, told delegates.

The ANC, which has ruled since 1994 when Nelson Mandela won the first multiracial vote, could struggle to retain its grip on power in the 2019 election due to falling public support. Ramaphosa, 65, is a former trade unionist leader who led talks to end white-minority rule in the early 1990s and then became a multi-millionaire businessman before returning to politics. He is often accused of failing to confront Zuma while serving as his

deputy since 2014.

Dlamini-Zuma was head of the African Union commission until earlier this year and a former interior, foreign affairs and health minister. She had four children with Zuma before divorcing in 1998. Allegations swirled of delegates being targeted with bribes, but ANC spokesman Khusela Sangoni earlier told reporters that the process had proceeded "smoothly". Zuma, who could face prosecution for corruption charges, will step down as party chief at the conference but will remain as head of state ahead of the 2019 vote.

"I'm bowing out very happy because I think... I made my contribution, so I'm very happy," said Zuma on Monday as he walked around the vast conference center hosting the event. Soaring unemployment and state corruption have fuelled frustration at the ANC among millions of poor black South Africans who face dire housing, inadequate education and continuing racial inequality. — AFP

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Sports

Suarez and Ronaldo hit top form in time for Clasico

Clasico showdown between the two heavyweight clubs

MADRID: Barcelona striker Luis Suarez and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo were heavily criticised during the opening phase of the season but the two forwards have hit their strides ahead of Saturday's Clasico showdown between the two heavyweight clubs.

Ronaldo rifled in the only goal against Brazilian side Gremio to help Madrid lift the Club World Cup on Saturday, while Luis Suarez struck twice as Barcelona thumped Deportivo La Coruna 4-0 on Sunday, stretching their lead at the top of the table.

When the bitter rivals meet at the Santiago Bernabeu, Barcelona will be looking to increase their 11 point lead on fourth-placed Madrid, who have played one match less. Madrid's disappointing start to the league season was influenced by Ronaldo's poor form, although he has now turned a corner.

The Portuguese scored just one goal in his first eight league games, but has hit form at the right time, scoring eight goals in his last seven matches across all competitions.

"Cristiano is Cristiano and you must never doubt him," said defender Raphael Varane after the Club World Cup triumph in Abu Dhabi. Ronaldo, who turns 33 in February, insisted he is responding to criticism with his performances and he is desperate to catch Barcelona at the top of the table.

"I hope we win that game so that the league is still

alive for Real Madrid," said Ronaldo. "I'm having a great season. I talk on the pitch, I try to give my best so people enjoy my football."

In contrast to Madrid, Barcelona are flying. Unbeaten in La Liga and the Champions League, the Catalans made light work of Deportivo in one of their best performances of the season.

Although the team has been carried by Lionel Messi for much of the season, Suarez was a crucial component of this victory, netting twice, hitting the post and being denied his hat-trick when his rabona shot appeared to cross the line but was not awarded as a goal.

"The rabona goal was clear. It went in. I saw it clearly because I was right there," said Suarez, who, like Ronaldo, is only thinking about a Clasico victory. "It would give us a boost in the competition, although there are other rivals like Atletico and Valencia," he added.

After a lean spell of scoring two goals in eight games in all competitions at the start of the season, Suarez now has six in his last seven.

The Uruguayan's fortunes changed after his national team agreed to give him a rest in November, not calling him up for the international break. With Messi misfiring against Deportivo, hitting the woodwork three times and missing a penalty, Suarez has come into form at the right time. —Reuters



ABU DHABI: File photo shows Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (L) is awarded the 2017 FIFA Club World Cup Silver Ball by FIFA President Gianni Infantino. —AFP

“Cristiano is Cristiano and you must never doubt him”

Klopp sets sights on top four finish

BOURNEMOUTH: Jurgen Klopp admits Manchester City will be almost impossible to catch at the top of the Premier League, but the Liverpool boss would happily settle for a top-four finish as a lucrative consolation prize. Goals from Philippe Coutinho, Mohamed Salah, Dejan Lovren and Roberto Firmino sent the free-scoring Reds up to fourth place. They are 18 points behind runaway leaders City, but Klopp is happy with his team's current form as they chase a place in next season's Champions League.

"Can City be caught? I don't know. I don't have a crystal ball. But if they struggle, like maybe nobody with their quality has struggled before, then someone should be there to use it," Klopp said.

"I don't see it but if I stopped working hard the moment I couldn't be a league champion, I wouldn't be here. "We have so many things to play for. It's really hard, really intense in this league, and it'll be unbelievable the number of points you'll need at the end of the season to get anything."

"A lot of teams are in good shape, but City are winning all their games." Liverpool's win over Bournemouth, their fourth consecutive victory on the road, leaves Klopp's side only four points adrift of third-placed Chelsea.

They now have 34 points from 18 games, largely on target to match the 76 points they reached last season to finish fourth.

RESPECT FOR SALAH

Egypt winger Salah has been a revelation since arriving from Roma, but Klopp is reluctant to talk up individuals. "He's got 20 goals but what happens if he doesn't score from now on? He didn't score against West Brom, when we needed it more than today," Klopp said.

"You always talk about Mo. He knows how much I respect and like him. But I don't go home and think: 'How good is he?' That's not how it works. "He's a very important player for us, like the others. But I'm very satisfied with how we played in this game."



BOURNEMOUTH: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (L) and Liverpool's English midfielder Adam Lallana embrace on the pitch after the English Premier League football match between Bournemouth and Liverpool. —AFP

Bournemouth manager Eddie Howe, whose team are in 16th place and only one point above the relegation zone, said: "There's not been many times since I've been Bournemouth manager that I've felt quite like this

after a match. It was a disappointing watch.

"I have to say we were well off it. We looked flat in every way. Credit to Liverpool because they played well but we're disappointed with ourselves." — AFP

with opponents intent on trying to intimidate them.

They proved that point with a 2-0 win at Leicester earlier this season and will be expected to repeat that victory if Guardiola fields a strong team in Tuesday's Cup tie following a 4-1 rout of Tottenham on Saturday that made it 16 successive league victories.

With the League Cup final scheduled for February 2018, the tournament gives Guardiola his earliest chance this season to get his hands on the first silverware of his City reign. Leicester, three-time League Cup winners, last made the final in 2000, but their boss Claude Puel knows how to mastermind a run in the competition after leading Southampton to last season's final.

United face unfamiliar foe on road to Wembley. Forced to play second fiddle to their hated neighbours this season, Manchester United need to amass as much silverware as possible outside the Premier League to stop City taking all the bragging rights. Jose Mourinho's side, 2-1 winners at West Bromwich Albion in the league on Sunday, lifted the League Cup last season and the next stop on their road back to Wembley will be an unfamiliar one.

For the first time since 1979, United travel to Ashton Gate to face a Bristol City side who haven't beaten the Manchester giants for 39 years. City are on the up in the Championship, sitting in third place after beating Nottingham Forest for their fourth successive second-tier win on Saturday.

A sell-out crowd awaits United in the west country

and City assistant manager Dean Holden said: "Manchester United at home doesn't happen too often does it? "It's going to a fantastic night for the whole city of Bristol." Arsenal eye League Cup redemption

For a club with such an illustrious history, the League Cup has been barren territory for Arsenal, who have won the competition just twice and not since 1993. The Gunners, who last made the final in 2011, haven't been helped by boss Arsene Wenger's habit of using the League Cup as a proving ground for his club's emerging youngsters.

West Ham's visit to the Emirates Stadium is unlikely to be treated so lightly by Wenger, who knows trophies are essential to placate a fanbase frustrated by another failed challenge in the league. He might find room in the team for 20-year-old Ainsley Maitland-Niles after the midfielder's impressive showing during Saturday's 1-0 win over Newcastle. "That's just the start of what's to come for us," Maitland-Niles said. Chelsea want Cup consolation Aware that City's dominance makes a repeat of last season's title triumph unlikely for Chelsea, Blues goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois has called on his team to sweep up the rest of the silverware this season. That mission starts at home to Bournemouth and, speaking after Saturday's 1-0 league win over Southampton, Courtois said: "It's important to win in the League Cup, to go through to the semi-final. "The FA Cup will start in January. We have chances to win and go further." — AFP

Kuwait receives trophy of Gulf Cup from Qatar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association said yesterday it received the trophy of the Gulf Cup from Qatar, the winner of the 22nd tournament, part of KFA preparations for the 23rd Gulf Cup, to be held in Kuwait next Friday. KFA Secretary General and 23rd Gulf Cup Director, Mohammad Khalil, received the trophy from Hamad Al-Mannaie, chairman of competitions committee at Qatar's football association, KFA said in a statement. Khalil thanked Al-Mannaie for bringing the trophy from Doha. The Gulf Cup will begin with a clash between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia at Jaber International Stadium. The game will be followed by an encounter between Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Defending champion, Qatar, will start its matches against Bahrain on Saturday.

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait Football Association (KFA) said the higher committee tasked with organizing the 23rd Gulf Cup was exerting every possible effort to bring about success for the tournament, fully backed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Al-Sabah said the committee members, chaired by Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, have been meeting regularly to remove all hurdles facing teams preparing for the Gulf Cup, which would begin on December 22. The committee's vice-chairman is Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister of State for Youth Khaled Al-Roudhan. Sheikh Ahmad, in an interview with Kuwait TV, said Al-Saleh and Al-Roudhan were facilitating all procedures that would pave way for a successful tournament, which would conclude on January 5.

Al-Saleh, in a statement earlier, announced that His Highness the Amir has decided to personally bear the costs of the Gulf Cup. Sheikh Ahmad, meanwhile, said the GCC countries, Iraq and Yemen sent their approvals to participate in the Gulf Cup two days after His Highness the Amir instructed that Kuwait host the event. Sheikh Ahmad thanked Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for visiting the players yesterday, which had positive impacts.

He added that more than 20 TV channels and over 3,000 journalists would be in Kuwait to cover the Gulf Cup. Sheikh Ahmad said His Highness the Amir would attend the opening game between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which would be held at Jaber International Stadium. — KUNA

Red-hot City chase League Cup glory

LONDON: With Manchester City romping away with the Premier League title race, this week's League Cup quarter-final action offers Pep Guardiola's side the chance to remain on course for a domestic treble.

City head to Leicester hoping to reach only the second semi-final of Guardiola's 18-month reign after losing in the FA Cup last four against Arsenal in April. The League Cup also provides hope of silverware for the teams trailing in City's wake.

Holders Manchester United travel to Bristol City to face the only team from outside the top flight still alive in the competition. Arsenal host London rivals West Ham, while Chelsea take on Bournemouth.

Guardiola learns lesson of Leicester loss Pep Guardiola's first experience of Leicester's frenetic style of play memorably prompted the Spaniard to declare he "didn't coach tackles" after City were roughed up in a 4-2 defeat at the King Power Stadium 12 months ago. Guardiola has heeded the lesson of that chastening experience, assembling a City side now more than capable of slugging it out

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ITALIAN CUP		
Napoli v Udinese Calcio	beIN SPORTS	23:00
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Levante v Leganes	beIN SPORTS HD 3	23:30

13 'Exceptional' Australia claim
Ashes as Smith seeks whitewash



14 James sparks Cleveland Cavaliers
to win over Washington Wizards



15 Klopp sets sights
on top four finish



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) poses with the rest of award winners after receiving the Alfredo Diestefano award for the 2017 leading goalscorer 'Pichichi' of the Spanish league, in Barcelona yesterday. —AFP

Messi picks up Pichichi, Stefano trophy

BARCELONA: Barcelona star Lionel Messi has added even more trophies to his massive collection after receiving two awards from Spanish sports newspaper Marca yesterday.

The Argentine, following the Catalan giants' 4-0 victory over Deportivo on Sunday, was pictured celebrating with the Pichichi award and the Alfredo Di Stefano award at a ceremony in Barcelona.

The Pichichi trophy, named after the Athletic Bilbao striker Rafael 'Pichichi' Moreno Aranzadi, is awarded by Marca to the top goalscorer of each La Liga season.

Messi added to his trophy haul after scoring a remarkable 37 goals in 34 league games last season, two more than Barcelona team-mate Luis Suarez. Meanwhile, the 30-year-old also picked up the

Alfredo Di Stefano award yesterday, which is won by the best player in La Liga.

Messi was also pictured posing with team-mate Andres Iniesta, who won Spain's Most Valuable Player award, at the Marca Sports Journal Award ceremony.

The Argentine star and the other award winners show off their prizes in Barcelona. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has enjoyed a successful couple of

days after helping Barcelona thrash Deportivo 4-0 in La Liga on Sunday at the Nou Camp.

The victory has ensured Ernesto Valverde's side sit six points clear of second-placed Atletico Madrid in the Spanish top flight ahead of their highly anticipated clash with arch rivals Real Madrid on Saturday afternoon. The Catalan giants, having played a game more, currently lie 11 points clear of the Bernabeu outfit.



BOGOTA: Millonarios players celebrate with the trophy after winning their Colombian Football League final match against Santa Fe and becoming champions at Nemesio Camacho El Campin stadium in Bogota, Colombia. — AFP

Millonarios win 15th Colombian title

BOGOTA: Millonarios have won their 15th Colombian league title after a 2-2 draw against their Bogota city rivals Santa Fe in a playoff. Henry Rojas scored the

decisive goal for Millonarios in the 85th minute on Sunday after Santa Fe had gone into a 2-0 lead with two goals from Wilson Morelo before Andres Cadavid pulled a goal back.

Millonarios, who celebrate their first title since 2012, had won the first leg 1-0. The club now qualify for the group phase of the 2018 Copa Libertadores, the South American equivalent of the Champions League. They are now one title away from equalising the record of 16 won by Medellin-based Atletico Nacional. — AFP

Farah shock winner of BBC award

PARIS: Britain's four-time Olympic gold medallist Mo Farah was named BBC sports personality of the year for the first time on Sunday, edging out motorcycling champion Jonathan Rea to the award. Farah, 34, successfully defended his 10,000-metre title at the World Championships in August, although he missed out on another distance double after taking silver in the 5,000m.

He retired from the track later that same month to focus on road racing and has said he could run the marathon at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Farah earned 83,524 votes — 2,957 more than Northern Irishman Rea, who became the first rider to win three consecutive World Superbike titles, while double Paralympic champion Jonnie Peacock came third.

Heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua, the bookies' favourite to land the prize, finished fourth in a year that saw the 28-year-old defeat Ukraine's Wladimir Klitschko in an epic world title fight. "It is pretty amazing and hard to think about," Farah, who was not present at the awards ceremony in Liverpool, told those in attendance via video link.

"I didn't imagine I was ever going to win this but anything can happen. If you work hard you can achieve your dreams. "I just cannot believe I have won."

Roger Federer was voted BBC overseas sports personality of the year for a record fourth time earlier in the week after an astonishing season during which he picked up two more Grand Slam titles. — AFP



Mo Farah

Business

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18 Japan's exports boom, but inflation not following script**19** Atlanta airport, world's busiest, struggles after major power cut**21** Zain Group, Cisco blaze innovation trail to drive network transformation

KUWAIT: Investment Studies Institute (ISI) in collaboration with EY holds a seminar on VAT. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait poised to introduce VAT

Govts in Mideast toying with idea of new taxation methods: Expert

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Governments in the Middle East and North Africa are experimenting with new taxation methods in a bid to ratchet up their assets and maintain economic stability, an international tax expert said yesterday at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce. The tax advisory service agent at Ernst and Young (EY) Alok Chugh said Kuwait will start preparations to impose value added tax (VAT).

Speaking at a seminar organized by the Investment Studies Institute (ISI) in collaboration with EY about VAT, Chugh explained that EY is the tax advisor on VAT for GCC states and that the new tax would be in effect by the beginning of 2018, with educational and banking services and basic foodstuff exempted, adding that the law is to be referred to parliament today.

The GCC unified VAT agreement was published on April 21, 2017, which forms the basis of national VAT legislation in the six GCC member states. Considering KSA and UAE will implement VAT from January 1, 2018, the GCC will witness a new tax landscape. This evolving landscape brings in queries and uncertainties in the mind of business owners and new taxpayers across Kuwait and abroad, directly and indirectly.

Chugh noted that there are some very important and bold regulatory changes in Kuwait. Some of the

hottest topics for discussions include VAT, where all the six countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have signed the master framework for the agreement for implementation of VAT in the GCC. "Based on our understanding from discussions with government officials, the 5 percent GCC VAT will be applicable on goods and services by 2018," he said. "The tax registration number and forms were recently updated and the Ministry of Finance has set up a Tax Development Follow-Up Unit (TDFU) within the Department of Inspection and Tax Claims (DIT). Kuwait is also looking to introduce new business profit taxes. Based on our understanding, all Kuwaiti and foreign companies operating in Kuwait may be subject to 10 percent business profit tax under the proposed Business Profit Tax (BPT) law. The BPT is yet to be approved by the Kuwait parliament. However, considering the recent developments in the GCC relating to the introduction of value added tax, it

is our current understanding that BPT is not likely to be approved before 2019," Chugh pointed out. He stated that the Kuwaiti authorities are working on the implementation of an economic diversification strategy. This task has become quite pressing, taking into account the current financial position of Kuwait. A number of fiscal and regulatory reforms being implemented aim at reducing the economic burdens of doing business in Kuwait. The two new regimes: Kuwait direct investment promotion

law and institutionalized public-private partnerships may contribute to this process both in terms of attracting foreign investment into the country and for the diversification of the economy.

Director of Union Investment Companies (UIC) Fadwa Darwish said the seminar was organized to shed more light on how VAT would be imposed on investment companies and financial establishments in Kuwait.



ISI holds seminar on taxation



Alok Chugh

Saudi budget deficit narrows after oil income recovers

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia appears set to post a lower-than-expected budget deficit this year as oil revenues rebounded and the kingdom kept public spending in check, official figures showed yesterday.

Faced by a persistent budget shortfall, the world's largest oil exporter has embarked on an ambitious reform program to curb expenditure and lessen its dependence on crude.

The kingdom will today announce the financial results for 2017 and next year's budget, with experts predicting the Saudi economy has shrunk for the first time since 2009. Slightly rosier finance min-

istry data Monday put the shortfall for the first nine months of 2017 at \$32.4 billion, just 61 percent of the \$52.8 billion deficit projected for the whole year. That was thanks to revenues in the first nine months rising to \$120 billion, a 23 percent surge compared to last year, while public spending remained unchanged at \$152.4 billion.

The revenue boost was mainly due to a 33 percent jump in oil income to \$82 billion as crude prices rebounded to above \$60 a barrel thanks to an output cut by major OPEC and non-OPEC producers.

Non-oil income rose six percent to \$38.1 billion, but there was a massive third quarter surge of 80 percent after the introduction of fees on the dependents of expatriates and duty on cigarettes, power and soft drinks. Riyadh's reform program has already cut fuel and power subsidies as the authorities seek to contain spending. To further boost income the kingdom plans to introduce a five-percent value-added tax (VAT) in the new year. — AFP

IMF hails Iran recovery, calls for bank reform

DUBAI: Iran's economy is starting to recover more rapidly from years of international sanctions but the country urgently needs to shore up its banks, a senior International Monetary Fund official said yesterday.

Gross domestic product growth soared to 12.5 percent in the year through last March 20, but that was almost entirely due to a leap in oil exports, after most sanctions were removed under a deal with world powers on Tehran's nuclear program. Oil exports are no longer growing nearly as fast. But the economic recovery is now beginning to extend to non-oil areas, said Catriona Purfield, head of an IMF team which held annual consultations with the Iranian government this month.

"Growth has begun to broaden to the non-oil sec-

tor," Purfield said in a statement, predicting GDP would expand 4.2 percent in the current fiscal year and that growth could rise towards 4.5 percent in subsequent years with financial reforms. Official statistics in Iran are often incomplete and released only slowly, and the policy-making process can be opaque, so Iran's consultations with the IMF provide one of the clearest glimpses into its economy.

The country's recovery has been slowed by tensions with the United States, where President Donald Trump has raised the possibility that sanctions could be reimposed or new sanctions introduced. This has deterred many banks and other foreign companies from operating in Iran.

Purfield said that given such uncertainty and the increasing vulnerability of Iran's financial system, the government urgently needed to restructure and recapitalize banks and credit institutions.

"An asset quality review, related-party lending assessment, and a time-bound action plan to recapitalize banks and address non-performing loans should start immediately," she said, adding that the cost of recapitalizing banks could be covered with long-term government bond issues.—Reuters

Business

Atlanta airport, world's busiest, struggles after major power cut

Electricity out for 11 hours; thousands stranded

WASHINGTON: The world's busiest airport, in the US city of Atlanta, struggled to resume normal operations yesterday, facing criticism after a power cut stranded thousands of passengers.

With electricity out for about 11 hours, some passengers were unable to disembark from their planes after landing, while those already inside the terminal crowded the darkened concourses where even some water fountains had reportedly stopped working.

"Still on plane for going on 5th hour," tweeted Anthony Foxx, former transportation secretary under president Barack Obama. "Whatever the cause, it feels like this one was compounded by confusion and poor communication."

US carrier Delta, whose largest hub is in the southern city, said it expected 300 more flight cancellations yesterday, mostly morning arrivals, "to give the operation there an opportunity to more quickly return to normal."

Delta said it had to scrap about 900 flights on Sunday but expected its Atlanta schedule would return to normal by yesterday afternoon.

Another carrier, Southwest, said it planned on operating a regular Atlanta schedule yesterday after it, and all other carriers using the airport, were affected by the power cut. Flightview.com, which tracks air travel data, listed hundreds of flights as delayed, canceled or diverted during the outage, but yesterday it showed an increasing number of scheduled departures as well as arrivals.

"Power has been restored on all concourses," the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport said on its Twitter account, about 11 hours after first

reporting the electrical disruption.

Giving an idea of how many people were affected, the airport added: "5,000+ meals are being delivered to passengers." The Georgia Power company, in a statement, said "power had been restored for all essential airport activities including all concourses and flight operations."

It described the outage as "very rare." Although the exact cause is not yet known, Georgia Power said preliminary investigation suggested that a fire damaged cables in the backup power system. "No personnel or passengers were in danger at any time," the company said.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed issued an apology "to the thousands of passengers whose day has been disrupted." The Atlanta Journal Constitution reported on its website. Photos and videos from the airport showed people walking or sitting in crowded airport corridors, with windows only partially cutting through the gloom. Numerous airplanes could be seen parked on the airport tarmac.

Those stranded were not amused



A woman said she was waiting in the security line when "they turned off the lights—a few times they went off, and then finally they shut off completely." One passenger, Mike Vizdos, told AFP that he and others got trapped on their aircraft because the power went out just as it reached the terminal gate after arriving from Costa Rica. "Sat on the plane for six hours and then cleared customs and immigration," Vizdos said, still hoping to reach his home in Richmond, Virginia the following day.

"There are thousands of stories," he said. The air-



ATLANTA: This picture obtained on the twitter account of Mike Vizdos and taken on Sunday shows passengers waiting in the terminal of the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson airport in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

port earlier announced that it "sustained a power outage shortly after 1:00 pm today (Sunday)."

That led the Federal Aviation Administration to place a "ground stop" on flights inbound for Atlanta, meaning they were held at the airports from which they were to depart. "The FAA Tower can operate normally, however, departures are delayed because airport equipment in the terminals is not working," it said.

Those stranded were not amused. "I haven't eaten since 8AM central," one person tweeted. Others said they were waiting on the tarmac: "Atlanta airport doesn't have power. I'm trapped on the runway. I'm hungry, and slightly buzzed.... Send help!!!" Some said people were not being permitted to leave the airport, including a mother who tweeted: "My kid is trapped with the others at the Atlanta airport. No one is allowed to leave." —AFP

To thwart Amazon, Kroger and Walmart lure shoppers with curbside pickup

LOS ANGELES: As Amazon.com looks to upend the US grocery market with home delivery, some veteran supermarket operators are betting on a different strategy: curbside pickup. Americans have long loved the convenience of drive-through service for burgers and coffee. Kroger Co and Walmart Inc are tweaking that formula for groceries.

The companies have invested heavily in online systems that allow customers to order ahead from their neighborhood store. Workers pick and pack the products, then run them out to shoppers in the parking lot, the grocery version of carry out pizza. For the retailers, the service is cheaper than delivery, because customers do the driving. For shoppers, it means skipping crowds and queues at their local market, and no worries about missing packages or melted ice cream if they are not at home to meet the delivery guy.

Tony Sacco, who lives in the Los Angeles beach community of Playa Del Rey, is a regular user of the service at a nearby Ralphs supermarket, owned by Cincinnati-based Kroger. Each pickup costs \$6.95, but the time-crunched married father of three says it is worth it.

"This is easy. Time is money," said Sacco, 47, as a worker loaded bags into his SUV on a recent morning. Retaining customers like Sacco is critical for traditional grocery retailers as they battle an array of upstarts bent on turning groceries into the next home-delivery juggernaut.

New entrants such as meal-kit company Blue Apron and organic food seller Thrive Market are peeling off coveted slices of their business. Amazon, the nation's largest online retailer, has amassed an 18 percent share of the \$12.6 billion US online grocery market mainly through the sale of packaged goods such as pasta and diapers. It is the largest player in a sector that is expected to grow to \$41.7 billion by 2022, according to market research firm Packaged Facts.

But even mighty Amazon has struggled with the trickiest part of the trade: delivering fresh produce, meat, dairy and other perishables. Its AmazonFresh service started more than a decade ago, but has yet to make a major mark. Amazon is making another run at it with its \$13.7 billion purchase of upscale grocery chain Whole Foods earlier this year. Amazon has said little about its plans. But analysts expect it will use Whole Foods' 450 locations as distribution hubs for home delivery, opening a new front in its campaign to disrupt the \$700-billion US grocery industry.

Old-line players are responding with some new moves of their own. Kroger and Walmart are experimenting with delivery. But they are wagering that pickup is the true sweet spot in the industry's online evolution. Both are rolling out the service in thousands of their stores.

"The way people are going to shop for groceries is going to be curbside, not delivery," said Jason Goldberg, a senior vice president at digital marketing firm SapientRazorfish. —Reuters

ThaiBev buys majority stake in Vietnam's biggest brewer

HANOI: ThaiBev took a majority stake worth \$4.8 billion in Vietnam's largest brewer, Sabeco, at a highly-anticipated auction yesterday for shares of the state-owned beer behemoth. Through its domestic unit Vietnam Beverage, Thai Beverage was the only company to bid for 343.662 million shares, or a 53.59 percent stake, in the company, the Ministry of Industry and Trade said earlier. An unnamed domestic individual also bid on 20,000 shares, it added. They were the only two investors listed.

The Ho Chi Minh City Stock Exchange confirmed in a report after the sale yesterday the sole investors were "successful" in their bids. Sabeco, the country's largest brewer which produces the popular Saigon Special and 333, announced late last month it would sell off a nearly 54 percent stake in the company for \$14.10 per share, and that foreign ownership would be capped at 49 percent. The company is already 10 percent foreign-owned.

The majority of ThaiBev's recently-established



HO CHI MINH CITY: Members of Sabeco's management board attend the auction of the brewer's shares at the Ho Chi Minh City stock exchange yesterday. —AFP

Vietnam Beverage is domestically owned, and it is considered a local company. Analysts said the share price, foreign ownership cap and a short time span likely turned off potential international bidders who were given less than three weeks to conduct due diligence. The Vietnamese government may have also tapped ThaiBev for the sale, said Kevin Snowball, CEO of PXP Vietnam Asset Management in Ho Chi Minh City. "I think that

they preferred ThaiBev, I don't think it was a particularly open auction," he told AFP.

Sabeco shares closed at \$13.60 yesterday, down slightly from earlier in the day. The much-delayed sale comes as Vietnam's cash-strapped government is seeking to raise funds by "equitising" hundreds of state-owned enterprises—its term for privatization—including its crown-jewel beer makers. —AFP

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Business

US tax cut outlook propels stocks

NEW YORK: The major US stock indexes hit record highs in a broad rally yesterday as the long-awaited bill to lower taxes looked set to be passed into law and buoyed by about \$11 billion in corporate deal-making.

US stocks have enjoyed a near year-long rally, of late powered by increasing expectations of the promised tax overhaul, which aims to lower corporate taxes to 21 percent from 35 percent, coming to fruition.

"The market is going to continue its rally based on the belief that we're going to see the Congress pass tax reform," said Robert Pavlik, Chief Investment Strategist at SlateStone Wealth in New York.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 index was up 0.9 percent, less than 2 percent off a two-year high hit at the start of November.

Germany's DAX index rose 1.6 percent, with the UK's FTSE 100 up 0.4 percent.

With little in the way of major economic data this week, the tax bill was likely to remain in focus for stock market investors, according to Mike van Dulken, head of research at Accendo Markets.

"Ahead of bill being signed into law, any more updated guidance from US corporates, showing potential

earnings improvement from the reform, will be closely watched," he said. The dollar index fell 0.2 percent against a basket of major currencies, however, with strategists saying forex traders had adopted more of a wait-and-see attitude to the bill.

Portugal in demand

In fixed income markets, Portuguese bonds were the stand-out performers, with yields hitting their lowest since early 2015 after an unprecedented two-notch sovereign credit upgrade from Fitch.

Friday's shift means the country now holds an investment grade from two of the three major rating agencies and could soon return to major bond indices. Portugal's ten-year bond traded decisively below its Italian equivalent yesterday. The last time it did so for a sustained period was in early 2010.

"There is very much a shift in the architecture in the European government bond market," said DZ Bank rates strategist Daniel Lenz.

Futures of soaring cryptocurrency bitcoin received a lukewarm reception at their launch on the CME Group exchange late on Sunday. The front-month contract dropped as much as 6 percent before recovering to trade up 1.3 percent.

Indian stock markets opened weaker, with the 50-share NSE index down almost 2 percent as early trends showed a close contest in Gujarat.

But stocks reversed the losses later - the 50-share NSE index was trading up 0.7 percent at 0455 GMT.

The partially convertible rupee was trading at 64.32/33 to the dollar versus its previous close of 64.04. The rupee had dropped to a low of 64.74 in early trade.

Oil prices rose amid an ongoing North Sea pipeline outage and as a strike by Nigerian oil workers threatened the country's crude exports. — Reuters



MUMBAI: An Indian stock dealer trades shares during intra-day trade at a brokerage house in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report table with columns for Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, Volume, Value (KWD), Trades, Last, and Change. Includes sections for Traded, Basic Materials, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Consumer Services, Telecommunications, and Banks.

From worm toilets to solar lamps, social innovations keep women safer

MUMBAI: Going from village to village in India to promote the use of toilets that use worms to break down fecal matter, the team from the Institute for Transformative Technologies (ITT) found young girls to be their biggest champions.

"We found the family is very influenced by the girl child's opinion on these toilets, and that they are also instrumental in changing the family's behavior, which is key to their use and adoption," said Nupur Kapoor, head of ITT's India operations.

Hundreds of Tiger Toilets have been installed in rural homes in India. They are among several social innovations that are benefiting villagers while also empowering women and making them feel safer, even if these are not the primary goals.

Lighting

Rural electrification can improve the safety of women who avoid moving around after dark for fear of violence. It can also free up time for activities that generate income by reducing the amount of time women spend on domestic chores and by lengthening their day.

Nearly a fourth of India's population has no electricity, while many more Indians - particularly in rural areas - don't have reliable access to power. Extending the main grid to rural areas is a challenge.

Solar mini-grids can improve electricity access in villages more quickly and cheaply than extending the main grid, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) said in a report this month.

Children studied longer and businesses made more money in villages with mini-grids, REEEP said, citing the Rockefeller Foundation's data from Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Even a small solar lamp improves the mobility and safety of women, who can also work longer hours and earn an additional income. This benefits the family, with more spent on children's education and healthcare, and better nutrition.

Solar lamps are particularly suited for women, as they are largely sold with microfinance initiatives through self-help groups, where women are more empowered to take decisions.

"Defining appliances with women's preferences in mind" is essential to the well-being of the entire family, and having women involved in the sale and maintenance of these appliances increases their adoption by other women.



CHENNAI: An Indian laborer paints iron rods at an under-construction site yesterday. — AFP

Business

Zain Group, Cisco blaze innovation trail to drive network transformation

Collaboration supports next wave of innovation for Zain Group

KUWAIT: Zain Group and Cisco announced yesterday that they have successfully achieved a key milestone in expanding the telecommunications operator's IP/MPLS network with cutting edge technologies, setting the groundwork for new opportunities and business models to be developed.

As a telecommunications operator serving over 45 million customers across eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Zain Group's network infrastructure faces an increase of expectations and workloads driven by the growth of devices and connections. The annual Cisco Visual Networking Index (Cisco VNI) forecast projects a 12-fold increase in Middle East and Africa mobile data traffic from 2016 to 2021, a compound annual growth rate of 65 percent.

This unprecedented growth requires service providers to transform their networks. Zain Group is leveraging Cisco advanced segment routing platforms and WAN automation to bring the benefits of distributed intelligence and centralized control to its network. Cisco's industry leading innovation around cloud-scale and automation will deliver next-generation network capabilities to Zain Group to enable simplification, scalability and open innovation that drive business results.

"The demands of the digital era means that we must prioritize improving speed and efficiency, defining a growth strategy based on

new services, and ensuring security," said Henri Kassab, Managing Director, International, Wholesale and Roaming, Zain Group. "These are the building blocks of our innovation that support our transformation in becoming an integrated digital lifestyle operator. With the support of Cisco's leading tech-

improved end user experience that defines the network of the future. Cisco's technology will also help Zain Group optimize network operations and offer a richer suite of differentiated services.

"The capabilities of Cisco's segment routing, automation and our best of breed routing engines enable Zain Group to implement a programmable network that allows them to rapidly adapt to future customer needs," said Ali Amer, Managing Director, Global Service Provider Sales, Cisco Middle East and Africa. "By fast tracking their network automation, Zain Group are future-proofing their network with an agile, scalable and secure architecture that supports their growth strategy and enhances their competitive-

nology, our future-ready network architecture positions us well to drive tangible business outcomes and meet the evolving demands of our customers."

The deployment is a bold move toward network automation and represents a significant step towards a more resilient network that delivers high bandwidth, enhanced application intelligence for 5G, and a significantly

ness." Other benefits Zain Group will gain by modernizing their global IP/MPLS architecture include simplified operations, programmaticity, scalability and increased network availability.

The Cisco Visual Networking Index (Cisco VNI) forecasts that by 2021, the Middle East and Africa will have 2.4 billion networked devices (up from 1.7 billion in 2016) and 1.4



KUWAIT: Jihad Khoueir, Regional Sales Manager, Head of Sales for Zain Group at Cisco shakes hands with Henri Kassab, Managing Director, International, Wholesale and Roaming, Zain Group.

networked devices per capita, while 75 percent of all networked devices will be mobile-connected in 2021.

Cisco is leading the disruption in the industry with our technology innovations in systems, silicon, optics, services and security, and

our unrivalled expertise in mass-scale networking, automation, optical, cable access, video, and mobility. This enables service providers, media and web companies to reduce cost and complexity, help secure their networks, and grow revenue.



Key milestone in expanding Zain Group's IP/MPLS network

Honda Alghanim partners with INJAZ Kuwait in Job Shadow program

KUWAIT: Following the start of its partnership with the non-profit youth development organization INJAZ Kuwait, Honda Alghanim hosted the Job Shadow program in its showroom, training 21 students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) on customer service and the operations of the service center and showroom sales.

The students, who are majoring in Business Management, received hands-on training and experience from the professionals at Honda Alghanim who maintain an advanced level of service from sales to after-sales following international servicing standards and provide a smooth and unique experience in line with Honda's customer service culture.

With the completion of the first program in its partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, Honda Alghanim continues to commit to supporting the youth in the country, contributing to the promotion of knowledge, professional growth, skills and career development.

The Job Shadow program also held a brainstorming session where students developed new innovative ideas on how to improve the quality of work and service.

The partnership with INJAZ Kuwait comes as part of Honda's philosophy "Power of Dreams", which reflects the belief that dreams should be combined with skill in order to be achieved. Honda was fond of saying "If you can dream it, you can build it. If you use your imagination and pair that with sound and innovative engineering, you can achieve what other people can only dream about." The partnership with INJAZ is a means to cultivate that same power of dreams to empower the youth to achieve their goals.

As part of the partnership, Honda Alghanim will also



host the rest of the organization's programs throughout the year and focus on providing participating students with the opportunity to learn more about entrepreneurship and acquire the knowledge and skills to prepare them for their future career.

Honda Alghanim's commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit different segments of the society comes in line with its commitment to offering the high level of technology and design, giving customers the opportunity to enjoy a car that meets their lifestyle while maintaining the high-

est levels of safety and technology.

Customers can take any of Honda's wide range of cars on a test drive by visiting one of the two Honda Alghanim showrooms located in Al-Rai and Shuwaikh. The Honda Alghanim showroom in Al-Rai area operates from 9 am to 10 pm, Saturday to Thursday, and from 9.30 am until 10 pm on Fridays. The Shuwaikh showroom operates from 9 am to 10 pm. The cars service center waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers, digital satellite TV, free wireless internet and relaxing massage chairs.



Burgan Bank announces 3 winners of Youth Account

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently announced the names of the three lucky winners of its Youth Account quarterly draw. First place winner, Mariam Eissa Hasan Dashti, took home a cash prize of KD 1,000, while second and third place winners, Azbi Nayef Ahmad Sheshtar and Dhari Majeed Awdh Aldhafeeri, each received a remarkable 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.

The Youth Account is designed for young

customers, between the ages of 15 - 25, who seek to attain a successful future. There is no KD limit to open an account, and no minimum balance required to maintain it. Furthermore, account holders will receive free prepaid card and an ATM card which entitles them to discounts at selected merchants along with an exclusive discount at Grand Cinemas Theatres in Al-Hamra Mall and The Gate Mall.



VIVA covers 'More' with its retail expansion

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced the continuation of its expansion plan to open new locations mainly in the cooperative societies, to be closer to its customers.

VIVA has recently inaugurated 24 new branches in the cooperative societies throughout all Kuwait's governorates and a new branch at Sultan Center at The Promenade Mall in Hawally area. All these new branches joined VIVA's new branch network in Kuwait to cover all residential areas.

Commenting on this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "For us at VIVA, we differentiate ourselves by maintaining superior levels of

customer experience, customer service and continued expansion of our network. Our strategy revolves around relevance and convenience to our customers. This specific achievement is part of our persistent focus on expansion and investment in the right areas."

He added: "VIVA aims through these new branches to be closer to its customers and provide them convenience, satisfy their needs and requirements and keep them posted regularly with the latest VIVA products and services."

In addition to our branch services, VIVA's customer care line at 102 is ready round the clock and up to public holidays, to provide outstanding service to our valued customers through a team of specialties."



Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa

Ithmaar Bank wins Best Innovation in Retail Banking and Best Islamic Bank awards

KUWAIT: Ithmaar Bank, a Bahrain-based Islamic retail bank, received awards in two categories, Best Innovation in Retail Banking (Bahrain) and Best Islamic Bank of the Year (Bahrain) at UK-based International Banker's 2017 Banking Awards. Standout institutions working within retail, commercial, investment and private banking in the Middle East and Africa compete for the prestigious annual prizes. The two awards were received on behalf of Ithmaar Bank by Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Abdul Rahim, who said that this high level industry recognition is further evidence of the soundness of the Bank's strong customer focus.



Ahmed Abdul Rahim

"In line with our vision to become the region's premier Islamic retail bank, Ithmaar Bank's business model is customer-centric with an ongoing objective to exceed expectations by offering innovation and a high level of efficiency," said Abdul Rahim. "We have invested in new technologies that have reduced waiting times for customers and turnaround times for financing requests, while implementing state-of-the-art security systems that maintain the confidentiality of private information," he said.

"Winning these awards is evidence that this strategy, which was spelled out by our Board of Directors, led by the Chairman, Prince Amr Al-Faisal, are being translated into a tangible reality," said Abdul Rahim. "Customers have also recognized these enhancements, rewarding us with continued growth in our core retail banking business," he said.

The Banking Awards honor institutions that have set the bar for industry excellence by driving global economic growth, creating capital and opportunities for economic growth, and setting benchmarks for technological advancement and customer service, while at the same time maintaining high levels of regulatory compliance and corporate governance. Finance Publishing Editor-in-Chief, Simon Brown congratulated Ithmaar Bank on winning the award, wishing the Bank continued success in helping to raise regional banking standards.

"A review of Ithmaar Bank's performance during 2017 is highlighted by the launch of many new and innovative banking products and services, as well as a clear enhancement in its speed of delivery. Ongoing improvements of processes and technology have reduced waiting periods, with customers being provided with a range of service delivery channels, including a 24-hour a day, 7 days a week call centre, eBanking and convenient payments solutions, such as EasyPay, Mobile banking and MobiCash. The turnaround time for approval of financing requests is ensured to be the shortest possible, albeit with comprehensive underwriting of risks," he said. International Banker is the flagship brand of Finance Publishing, one of the world's leading sources of authoritative analysis on finance, international banking and world affairs.

China opens major economic conference

BEIJING: China opened a major economic planning conference yesterday as the country tries to pivot away from its no-holds-barred growth model. The annual Central Economic Work Conference gives leaders the opportunity to review past economic policy and plan for 2018.

The pursuit of high growth propelled China to the number two spot on a list of the world's largest economies, but led to heavy pollution, rampant waste, and a mountain of debt.

President Xi Jinping has indicated the country would move in a new direction, telling the Communist Party Congress in October that China needs to shift from high growth to high quality development. Implementing Xi's new approach will be the focus of the behind-closed-doors meeting, state news agency Xinhua said. The "three tough battles" for 2018 will be curbing major risks, eradicating poverty and pollution control. Xinhua reported, repeating Xi's directions to the party congress. —AFP

Technology

Ooredoo initiates partnership with Al-Zayani for 'Nukhba'

Exclusive collaboration first of its kind in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network, announced their exclusive partnership with Al-Zayani Company, official dealer of Bentley, Bugatti, Ferrari, Maserati and Jaguar cars in Kuwait, which took place last week when representatives from Al-Zayani officially visited and toured Ooredoo's Nukhba VIP lounge in the head office. Under this partnership, Ooredoo's Nukhba customers will receive exclusive offers and discounts on the latest cars offered exclusively by Zayani, aiming to enrich the customers' experience in line with their expectations, needs and VIP lifestyle.

Commenting on the partnership, Jassem Abdulrahim, Director of VIP and Direct Sales at Ooredoo, said: "This partnership demonstrates the company's commitment to enriching our customers' experience and offering them tailored to what they desire, driven by the company's core values of which is aligned with our core values of caring, connecting and challenging. We are also proud to be the first telecommunication company to initiate this

one of a kind partnership with a rooted company that needs no introduction such as Al-Zayani, aspiring for further cooperation in the near future."

Abdulrahim added, "We have seen great similarities in the type of services that we aspire to offer to our customers through the Nukhba Program that strives to provide a VIP experience tailored to a particular kind customer that are looking for quality services that match their extravagant lifestyle. In which we found Al-Zayani to be the most fitting partner to achieve this shared goal of building a truly luxurious and exclusive customer experience."

Ooredoo offers exclusive benefits to Nukhba customers with the Shamil Premium postpaid package, believing in enriching the customers' experience. Customers can benefit from exclusive offers, as well as getting latest smart phones with Nukhba premium packages.

Ooredoo's operations in Kuwait date back to December 1999 when it launched wireless services as



Al-Zayani reps visit Ooredoo's Nukhba VIP lounge



the second operator. The company today provides mobile, broadband internet and corporate managed services tailored to the needs of customers and businesses. Ooredoo Kuwait -which is an enlisted company in the Kuwait Stock Exchange Market - operates a number of telecom service providers in the region, such as Ooredoo Algeria, Ooredoo Tunisia, Ooredoo Maldives, and Wataniya Palestine. Ooredoo Kuwait is a member of the international Ooredoo Group based in Doha, Qatar.

Huawei hosts ICT industry leaders at Kuwait Huawei Day



Huawei key player in digital transformation: KDIPA official

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Mohammed Yacoub, Assistant Director General for Business Development, Kuwait Direct Investment Public Authority (KDIPA), said that activities of Huawei Technologies are impressive. "It's great to see that Huawei Technologies, despite being a foreign company, is holding all these useful activities including the ICT Skill Competition, that helps in digital transformation. This is one of the main goals of KDIPA," he told the Kuwait Times yesterday.

This event gathered many experts from the public and private sectors under one roof. "These experts can discuss the future of technology in Kuwait. Also the programs hosted by Huawei, served as a model for other companies in terms of transforming and localizing technology," he added.

"Such activities and programs encourage young people to invest in new enterprises. All three programs held by Huawei including establishing the technology center at the Hamra Tower, holding Seeds program in cooperation with the Kuwait University, and the ICT Skill Competition, encourage young people to be creative and improve their skills. This will result in a completely new generation of technology experts," explained Mohammed Yacoub. Today, technology is critical to all investments. "Huawei is excelling in all kind of technologies and is motivating the youth. It plays a key role in the market as a foreign investor in Kuwait," he concluded.

Mohammed Yacoub



KUWAIT: Huawei Technologies Kuwait, a leading global Information and Communication Technology solutions provider, held Kuwait Huawei Day, a high level forum under the theme 'Leading New ICT: The Road to Digital Transformation' aiming to raise awareness of the role of ICT in driving digital transformation across a number of key industries and showcase Huawei's latest solutions.

Huawei dedicated the day to showcasing the role of innovation, exploration, and openness in creating advanced knowledge-based economies, in line with Kuwait's national development agenda. Industry partners and business experts joined forces to discuss Kuwait's digitization strategy, trends and the future of the ICT sector, innovative solutions for Smart and Safe Cities, Agile Network, Cloud Datacenter, the future of IoT, and best practices for digital transformation in the government and Oil & Gas sector.

Commenting on Kuwait Huawei Day, Trevor Liu, Huawei Kuwait CEO said: "Digital transformation is a government priority and we remain committed to working with government authorities to drive this forward, in collaboration with our partners. Digitization will bring exciting opportunities, as well as new challenges, to all industries and will create new impetus for sustainable growth and enhanced efficiency. Public safety, banking, Oil & Gas, education, government and others are all beginning to feel the full effects of what it means to be better connected and smart, so we must continue to harness the power of emerging technologies. Platforms such as these are imperative to unfold areas of potential partnerships to achieve shared successes."

The event also served as a platform to announce the winners of Huawei's coveted ICT Skill Competition, a global nation-wide championship launched for the very first time in Kuwait this year, in strategic partnership with KDIPA. Aimed at increasing the digital fluency of the young technological leaders of tomorrow, the ICT competition enables Kuwait's finest ICT talent to learn about the latest technology innovations and compete globally. Zainab Al Baqsamiof Kuwait University, Saad Al Sheetanand Khaled Al-Metairiof American University of Middle East are the Kuwait's finalists who will now compete in the global championship that takes place at Huawei's Headquarters in Shenzhen, China between 23 to 27 December 2017.

Winners of the Kuwait Finals will also be granted traineeship or employment opportunities with Huawei, as part of its Enterprise Business Group, where they will be exposed to a combination of innovative technologies, including cloud computing, Software-Defined Networking (SDN), Big Data, and Internet of Things (IoT) and interact with ICT experts from different industries such as government, oil & gas and banking. All competition winners will be rewarded with Huawei's latest laptops and smartphones.

Kuwait Huawei Day, that took place at Four Seasons Hotel in Kuwait City, brought together senior government officials, industry leaders, business experts, foreign dignitaries and media representatives, including: Mohammed Yacoub, Assistant Director General for Business Development, KDIPA; Qusai Al-Shatti, Acting Director, Central Agency for



Information Technology (CAIT):AbdulkarimTaqi, Acting General Manager, Public Authority for Industry; Abdulaziz Alduaij, Manager - Information Technology, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), Alaa Ali AliElshimy, Managing Director and Vice President, Huawei Enterprise Business, Middle East Region; Sanjay Kumar Sainani, Vice President, Data Center Solution, Huawei Middle East Region; Hazem Mahmoud Mostafa Bazan, VP Channels & Commercial Sales, Enterprise Business, Huawei Middle East Region; and Trevor Liu, CEO Huawei Kuwait.

The event is a first of a series as Huawei remains committed to encouraging further dialogue with industry partners and government stakeholders about the crucial role of ICT in securing economic growth through advancement of critical industries with the ultimate goal of enriching societies and achieving Kuwait's vision of becoming a Smart City.

Health

Tiny stem cell companies close in on major heart disease goals

This would be considered one of the big advances of this century

NEW YORK: The early hope that stem cell therapy would make the paralyzed walk, the blind see and cure diabetes have given way to a long list of failures, highlighted by early stem cell champion Geron Corp abandoning the field in 2011. But two small companies, Athersys Inc and Mesoblast Ltd, are beginning final stage trials in hundreds of patients that they - along with loyal investors - say could change the course of devastating stroke and heart failure. Both have overcome major hurdles to manufacturing stem cell treatments on a large scale that are off-the-shelf products derived from healthy donor bone marrow and do not face immune system rejection issues.

Cleveland-based Athersys, with a market value of about \$200 million, demonstrated evidence in a midstage trial that its therapy may be able to expand the emergency treatment window for major strokes to up to 36 hours, compared with about four hours with current drugs, potentially allowing many more patients to avoid crippling disabilities. Australia's Mesoblast, with a market value of about \$500 million, is attempting to alter advanced heart failure, a leading cause of hospitalizations and deaths and an enormous cost burden.

They are among the farthest along in the stem cell industry at a time when Wall Street investors have focused on potentially big payoffs from immune-system based cancer therapies and rare disease treatments. Perception of the field has also been hurt by unscrupulous actors selling unap-

proved, possibly unsterile cell therapies for everything from cancer to lung disease and ALS, prompting a US crackdown this past summer.

"The market tends to test these companies sometimes to the brink," said Tom Dobell, who manages a fund for UK-based M&G Investment Management that specializes in supporting promising companies during difficult periods. "We're comfortable that the progress that's going on is going to be worth it." M&G is a long-time holder of Mesoblast, with about a 15 percent stake, and Athersys, with about 4 percent. Athersys's experimental Multistem treatment was one of the first companies to be designated by the US Food and Drug Administration as a promising cell-based therapy with potential to address unmet needs for serious or life threatening conditions, potentially easing the approval process.

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said in a recent interview the agency is seeking an approval pathway for legitimate stem cell therapies "that's not overly burdensome." "The regenerative medicine space has been a tough road clinically and Athersys is one of the bright, shining stars," said Steven Martin, managing member of Chicago-based Aspire Capital and a long-time holder of Athersys shares.

Reducing the risks

Athersys believes Multistem - 1.2 billion cells delivered via simple intravenous drip - dampens the immune system's

hyper-inflammatory reaction to signals that the brain is under attack during stroke, and promotes healing. The body's reaction to stroke may also severely deplete the immune system, leading to later complications beyond paralysis or speech impairment. In the Phase II trial, Multistem patients had significantly fewer incidents of pneumonia, acute pulmonary distress and other serious complications.

That trial, attempting to extend the treatment window to 48 hours, failed. But researchers were encouraged by patients treated up to 36 hours post stroke. "It's reason to be cautiously optimistic," said Dr Ken Uchino, a leading Multistem investigator from Cleveland Clinic. The company plans to begin a 300-patient Phase III study of Multistem in early 2018, aiming for US and European approval after regulators agreed to protocols for one pivotal trial.

"This reinforces and cements an efficient path forward for us," Athersys Chief Executive Gil Van Bokkelen said. A separate 220-patient Multistem trial in Japan for that market began enrolling patients through partner Healios KK. "Of the many entities in this field, they have been careful and deliberate in their movement forward" and do not engage in "overwrought claims," said Dr S. Thomas Carmichael, co-director of UCLA Broad Stem Cell Center, who was not involved in Multistem trials.

Mesoblast's MPC-150-IM therapy aims to mitigate advanced heart failure, a progressive condition in which the heart cannot pump enough blood to efficiently serve the

body. The company believes the therapy reduces inflammation, increases blood flow and spurs blood vessel formation that helps repair the heart muscle. A single dose consists of 150 million highly purified stem cells delivered directly to the heart's left ventricle by injection or catheter.

An ongoing Phase III trial of 600 advanced heart failure patients is currently enrolling. Reducing the severity of a patient's heart failure "would give them back potentially many years of good quality life," said Mesoblast CEO Silviu Itescu. Independent monitors who oversee and can halt blinded clinical trials for futility gave a green light to continue the Mesoblast study in April after a review of the first 270 treated patients, suggesting the therapy might be effective.

A separate US National Institutes of Health-sponsored Phase II study of 159 end-stage heart failure patients dependent on an implanted pumping assist device completed enrollment in September, with results expected in the first quarter of 2018. Some 250,000 people in the United States alone have been diagnosed with most serious class IV heart failure, and only about 9,000 receive a transplant or left ventricular assist device (LVAD) each year, Itescu said. If such patients can recover enough to again rely on their own heart, said Dr Joseph Woo, a heart surgeon at Stanford University and an investigator of the NIH trial, "this would be considered one of the big advances of this century."—Reuters

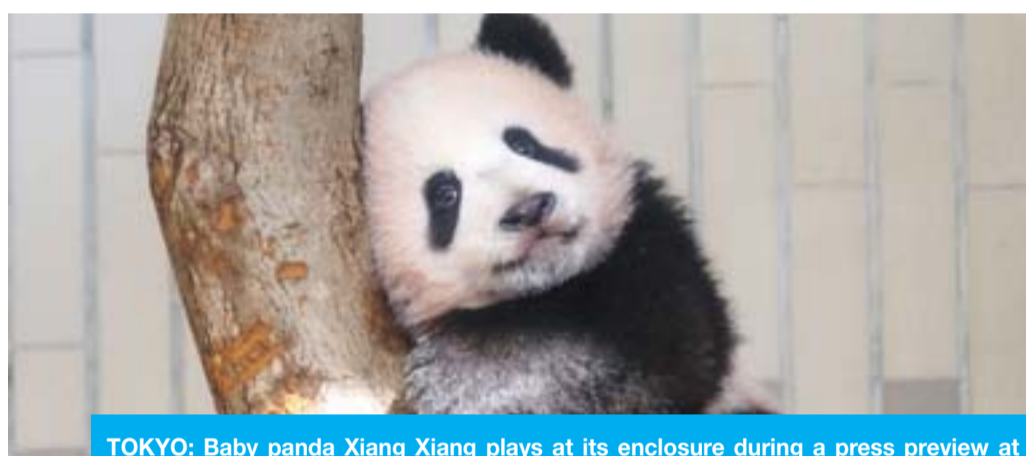
Baby panda makes press debut at Japan zoo

TOKYO: A baby panda born six months ago made its debut before the cameras in Japan yesterday, a day before a dotting public gets an eagerly-awaited glimpse of the cuddly animal. The panda named Xiang Xiang, derived from the Chinese character for "fragrance" — has sparked a media frenzy since its birth on June 12 at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo. Broadcasters aired live footage of the cub nimbly climbing a tree and chomping on

bamboo in a special cage. Along with local schoolchildren, selected media were permitted to watch and film the panda through a glass shield.

The public will get their first chance to see Xiang Xiang tomorrow, the zoo's first baby panda exhibition since 1988. "Xiang Xiang has been thriving with the loving nurturing by mum Shin Shin," Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said at a ceremony, describing the baby as "a new treasure of Tokyo". The panda cub weighs 12.3 kilos (27 pounds) and is the size of a medium-sized dog, zoo officials said, adding that it is in good health. In order to reduce stress on the panda and avoid crowds, the zoo will limit the maximum number of visitors to 2,000 a day for a one-to two-minute slot until the end of January.

The zoo received nearly 250,000 applications for a lottery to see Xiang Xiang. For avid panda fans who miss out, the zoo will offer a live stream of Xiang Xiang's daily life from tomorrow for a year. Mum Shin Shin, which mated with Ri Ri in February, had previously given birth in 2012 — the zoo's first panda delivery in 24 years—only for the cub to die from pneumonia six days later. Zookeepers have since given the adult pandas some private space in a bid to create an environment for the bashful creatures to mate successfully—a notoriously difficult process. Until recently considered an endangered species, it is estimated that around 2,000 giant pandas remain in the wild, in three provinces in central China.—AFP



TOKYO: Baby panda Xiang Xiang plays at its enclosure during a press preview at Ueno Zoo in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE

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What's On

Jumeirah Group to enter three new markets with extensive global expansion plans for 2018

At least five new hotels including debut properties in Bahrain, Oman and Bali



Jumeirah Royal Saray



Jumeirah Muscat Bay



Jumeirah Bali

Jumeirah Group, the global luxury hotel company, yesterday announced widespread expansion plans for 2018 which will see the brand enter three new markets and open further properties in the UAE and China. The announcement was made to partners and stakeholders at its annual Middle East Roadshow held at Burj Al-Arab Jumeirah, Dubai in collaboration with Emirates, Dubai Parks and Resorts and Royal Caribbean.

Jumeirah's ambitious expansion plans will feature at least 5 new luxury hotel openings in addition to the refurbishment and re-opening of Jumeirah Beach Hotel ahead of its 21st birthday in late 2018. New properties include:

- Jumeirah Royal Saray, Bahrain

- Jumeirah Sa'adiyah Island, Abu Dhabi
- Jumeirah Bali, Indonesia
- Jumeirah Nanjing, China
- Jumeirah Muscat Bay, Oman

The news followed Jumeirah Group reporting a strong performance in 2017, with an overall 5 percent increase in the number of room nights and 6 percent increase in room revenues compared to the same period last year. The hotel group also maintained stable year on year occupancy matching the same period in 2016. The GCC region accounted for 21 percent of the overall occupancy throughout the year.

Linda Lewis, Vice President Global Sales MEASA and ASPAC for Jumeirah Group commented: "Jumeirah con-

tinues to strengthen its position as one of the most successful, UAE home-grown brands on a global scale. Our strong performance in 2017 is evidence of our robust and forward-looking business strategy and we are confident of continuing the success story in new markets in 2018. We believe that our strength lies in our ability to understand the needs of our guests and in creating bespoke luxury inspired by Arabic hospitality and charm. This achievement comes with the support and vision of the UAE's leadership whose continued focus on building the tourism and hospitality sector has helped us to deliver business success."

This year also saw Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts receive more than 75 prestigious accolades. Amongst

the most coveted awards were: Jumeirah Group being named Best Employer in UAE by AON; and a number of awards at the World Travel Awards including Middle East's Leading Luxury Hotel Brand 2017, World's Leading MICE Hotel 2017 for Madinat Jumeirah, World's Best Resort Spa for Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, World's Leading Luxury Hotel 2017 for Burj Al-Arab, Indian Ocean's Leading Luxury Hotel Villa 2017 for Jumeirah Vittaveli and Middle East's Leading Business Hotel 2017 for Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa in Kuwait. Jumeirah Al-Naseem won the Hot List of the World's Top Hotel Openings award of Conde Nast Traveler 2017 and Shang-high restaurant at Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai has been awarded a coveted 1 Michelin star.

English Language Unit holds professional development day



The English Language Unit at Kuwait University's College of Computer Sciences and Engineering recently held its professional development day. Dr Mohammed Etedali, the head of the English Language Unit conducted a training program on Constructing Effective Language Tests for the English Language Instructors of the College of Computing Sciences and Engineering on November 27, 2017. The program dealt broadly with the construction of language tests. During the session, the parameters involved in test conception and the characteristics of an effective English language test were explained in detail. The session continued by giving different short tasks to participants, and a lively interactive session during which the reliability, validity and practicality of a number of test items were discussed. Furthermore, the need for teachers to practically analyze test questions and take decisions on their relevance in an educational setting were stressed. The session ended with a period of questions and answers.

KGL, AWL celebrated Thanksgiving with US Army personnel

Lawrence Silverman, Ambassador of the United States to Kuwait reaffirmed the long standing cooperation between Kuwait and the US, and expects this cooperation to grow further in the coming period.

On the sidelines of the Thanksgiving Ceremony organized by the American Women's League and Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (KGL), to honor some members of the US Army in Kuwait for their efforts in defending and protecting Kuwait, the US Ambassador said that the cooperation between two countries aims to achieve security for both Americans and Kuwaitis through the war against ISIS, and the prevention of terrorist financing in Kuwait. He praised the Thanksgiving ceremony for gathering families under one roof. He noted that families gather for Thanksgiving, just like they do on a weekly basis in Kuwait, is a good tradition. He also praised the humanitarian activities of the American Women's League in Kuwait, noting that the conference, which was held about a month ago to create awareness about cancer, has had good results.

KGL's Chairman Office Manager and Head of Communication and Public Relations, Toufic Jawhara, reaffirmed KGL's keenness, for the third year in a row, to support the AWL in Kuwait in organizing the Thanksgiving dinner with the participation of a large number of US military personnel, who were spending this very special occasion away from their families and loved ones for the sake of their duty. He also noted the strong relationship that KGL has with the US government and with the US army, which are present in the region since the 1990s, where the company has and still is working on several projects and contracts with the US



military. He also announced the offering, by KGL, of an annual scholarship "The 'KGL Veterans Endowed Scholarship'" that is offered to US soldiers who served in Kuwait to pursue their education at University of the Pacific in California. For more than 60 years, KGL has played a major role in the development of the various sectors it operates in, especially in the field of transportation, logistics, and supply chain management, which contributed to the development of the economic struc-

ture of the State of Kuwait in general. KGL thrives to develop its business and expand in Kuwait and the Gulf countries, to support projects aimed at Kuwait's development, and to create more work opportunities for Kuwaiti nationals. KGL's corporate social responsibility strategy is aimed on focusing all its activities and commercial projects to serve the different segments of the Kuwaiti society. In addition, it sponsors many of the social, educational and sports activities, environmental, cultural and health initiatives. This comes from the company's belief in the importance of the private sector's role in serving the society to achieve sustainable development and to support government efforts and civil society institutions as well as NGOs. In the same context, Nadya Mayyahi, the president of the American Women's League in Kuwait, thanked all the participants, 200 of whom were AWL members; she also added that AWL had organized an awareness campaign about cancer.

Meanwhile, the Managing Partner of Activate Event Marketing Company Camille Bacha said that they started organizing this ceremony in 2015 with 100 US soldiers attending; in 2016, that number reached 200 US Soldiers only to reach 250 soldiers participating in this year's celebration.

Center for Continuing Education receives international recognition

The Center of Continuing Education (CCE) at AUK has obtained international certification from the HR Certification Institute (HRCI), and accreditation from the Cambridge Assessment International Education in October and November 2017, respectively. Obtaining international recognition comes as part of CCE's vision to create partnerships and collaborations that aim at developing Kuwait's professional society.

Headquartered in the USA, the HRCI, is the premier credentialing organization for the human resources profession, setting the standard for HR mastery and excellence around the globe for over 40 years. The recently acquired HRCI certification authorizes CCE to add to their Career Development courses the HRCI's Professional in Human Resources International (PHRI), an international exam preparation course for HR professionals.

"This American international certification presents the latest development opportunity for modern HR professionals, who seek a career advancement and professional credibility in the organization that they work for," said Buthaina Al-Khubaizi, Director of CCE.

The Cambridge Assessment International Education, part of the University of Cambridge, is a non-profit organization that offers programs and qualifications that set the global standard for international education. They also offer Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications for teachers and trainers. Through this accreditation, CCE has added to their Teacher Development courses the Cambridge International Certificate in Teaching and Learning, which explores different aspects of educational practice, from designing a curriculum to improving the quality of classroom activity. According to Khubaizi, Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications are internationally recognized as a mark of excellence for individual teachers or leaders, helping to improve their professional profiles and career devel-



Heather Rennison (CCE Training Operations Manager) presenting CCE's international programs.



(From Left) Buthaina Al-Khubaizi (CCE Director), Raed Brahedni (Senior Manager - Cambridge Assessment International Education), and Heather Rennison (CCE Training Operations Manager), during the certification visit in Kuwait.

opment. "The Cambridge International Certificate in Teaching and Learning helps teachers and leaders improve the quality of their practice by engaging with international best practices and teaching principles to apply new ideas and approaches, develop reflective practice and employ a wide range of active learning strategies," she said. In addition to CCE's diverse signature courses, the two new courses are now available for registration through the CCE website www.auk.edu.kw/cce.

Oriental, Western arts meet in LAPA concert

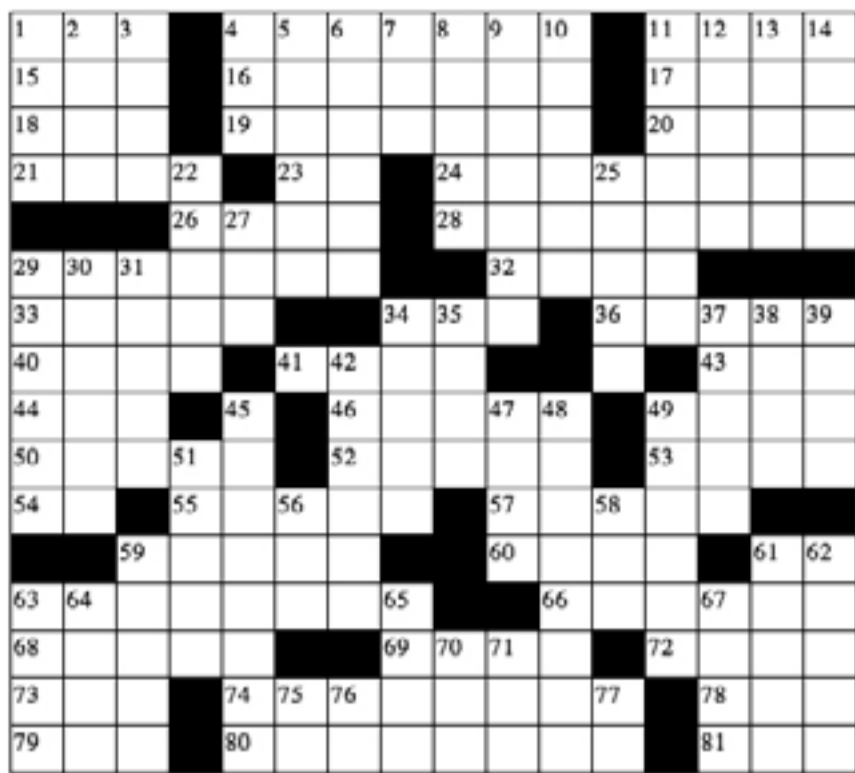


Oriental and Western creative arts were both featured in a concert organized at Abdul Hussein Abdul Redha Theatre by LOYAC's Academy of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and the French Institute in Kuwait.

The concert, titled 'Oriental-Western,' witnessed outstanding performances from LAPA musical band and the French Arties band. The concert was attended by officials from LOYAC, the French Institute in Kuwait and NCCAL, including in-charge of the music and heritage department Reem Al-Ahabash. The concert started with a performance by Arties band, who played three pieces by Gotai Herman,

Matilda Charlotte, Hugh Michael and Roman Fredrick. Next, the Arabic heritage band joined Arties in an exceptional performance of brothers Rabhani's music, led by maestro Yousif Bara. Commenting on the event, LAPA's music department manager Nisreen Nasr said that it took a year to prepare for the event and come up with an idea on how to mix classical western and oriental music. She added that further cooperation would take place between LAPA and Arties on the one hand, and between NCCAL and the French institute on the other. Also speaking on the occasion, the French cultural attache Zilda Wahbe said that the concert was the result of fruitful cooperation between LOYAC and the French Institute in Kuwait.

CROSSWORD 1788



ACROSS

- 1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. The face veil worn by Muslim women.
11. Area around the altar of a church for the clergy and choir.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
17. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
18. Having leadership guidance.
19. The pilot who positions his aircraft outside and behind (on the wing of) the leader of a flying formation.
20. A beautiful and graceful girl.
21. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
23. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
24. A railroad employee responsible for a train's brakes.
26. Again but in a new or different way.
28. Breed of large wiry-coated terrier bred in Yorkshire.
29. Forming viscous or glutinous threads.
32. A small cake leavened with yeast.
33. Extremely exciting as if by alcohol or a narcotic.
36. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
40. An elaborate song for solo voice.
41. Armor plate that protects the chest.
43. A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
44. A broad flat muscle on either side of the back.
46. (Greek mythology) The rarified fluid said to flow in the veins of the Gods.
50. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinted fruit.
52. An area of sand sloping down to the water of a sea or lake.
53. A primeval personification of air and breath.
54. A public promotion of some product or service.
55. Frogs, toads, tree toads.
57. Leafless East Indian vine.
60. (computer science) A standardized language for the descriptive markup of documents.
63. A natural elevation (especially a rocky one that juts out into the sea).
66. A port city in southwestern Iran.
68. Trade name for an oral contraceptive containing estradiol and norgestrel.
69. Lacking sufficient water or rainfall.
72. A quantity of no importance.
73. A zodiacal constellation in northern hemisphere between Cancer and Virgo.
74. Made more desirable or valuable or profitable.
78. A widely distributed system consisting of all the cells able to ingest bacteria or colloidal particles etc. except for certain white blood cells.
79. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
80. A pocket-size case for holding papers and paper money.
81. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.

DOWN

- 1. A master's degree in library science.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. An erratic deflection from an intended course.
5. (botany) Of some seeds.
6. (of meat) Full of sinews.
7. Hormone produced early in pregnancy by the placenta.
8. Arboreal snake of central and southern Africa whose bite is often fatal.
9. Brazilian tree with handsomely marked wood.
10. A historical region of southwestern India on the west coast.
11. Having two feet.
12. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
13. Relating to principles of right and wrong.
14. Place in a line or arrange so as to be parallel.
22. English monk and scholar (672-735).
25. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. A negative.
30. (formal) A person who announces important news.
31. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
34. A genus of temperate and arctic evergreen trees (see spruce).
35. A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
37. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
38. Produced by a manufacturing process.
39. Affording unobstructed entrance and exit.
42. United States writer (born in Lebanon) (1883-1931).
45. A crystalline compound found in vanilla beans and some balsam resins.
47. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
48. Cracks or fissures in the skin (especially around the mouth or anus).
49. (Arthurian legend) The battlefield where King Arthur was mortally wounded.
51. A Dravidian language spoken in south central India.
56. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
58. The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
59. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
61. Having lost freshness or brilliance of color.
62. Squash bugs.
64. At any time.
65. A challenge to do something dangerous or foolhardy.
67. An Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan.
70. Mythical bird of prey having enormous size and strength.
71. Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus Iva with small greenish flowers.
75. A polyvalent metallic element that resembles chromium and tungsten in its properties.
76. A heavy precious metallic element.
77. A Mid-Atlantic state.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Work ethics are very important to you and should you choose to take time away from work today, you might allow yourself the time and call it a vacation day. Keep a good attitude about competition and prepare for some extra projects.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find a physical move or some other type of major change is being discussed today. This may mean that higher-ups in your workplace are looking for a place to relocate the company.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Watch out—an independent streak seems to be surfacing at this time. Others will admire your unique and rather unusual way of perceiving things. Your sense of humor simply shines and added to your rather eccentric behavior, should set you apart from the crowd.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may be feeling very good about yourself just now and appreciating your own better qualities. Creative writing projects can be used in the workplace to introduce better advertising jingles.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Now is a good time for that one-on-one with a higher-up, or supervisor. This is the time that you can express your desire for a new position within the company. Perhaps you could be in management.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Expect some challenges in the workplace from time to time. You find you are appreciated for your talent in getting things done. It would be appropriate to ask for help. You are disciplined, work hard and are good at getting others to work with and for you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Taking the novel approach, trying out new ideas and breakthroughs in thinking could be what life is all about. You just simply feel like being different, trying out something new and unusual.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may have to use a great deal of diplomacy around others. There may be some problems with a negotiation, but the event will end positively. You would just love to be out and about and enjoying the company of your friends.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

On this day, your humor may be overshadowed, but only by your rather eccentric behavior. Your independence and unique qualities are appreciated by those around you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find yourself working extra hard to get things and people organized. Wanting and needing to feel respected is an emotionally charged issue in your life. Achieving things, working especially hard and having a strong ambition are all things that are important this day.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You should find yourself in top condition when it comes to any kind of mental activity. You are full of wit and sharp ideas. This could be a time when you find some real discoveries in the idea department.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Extra support comes your way now. You may have the feeling that you are very much in touch and have a good connection with those around you. Conversations have never been so interesting.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Easter

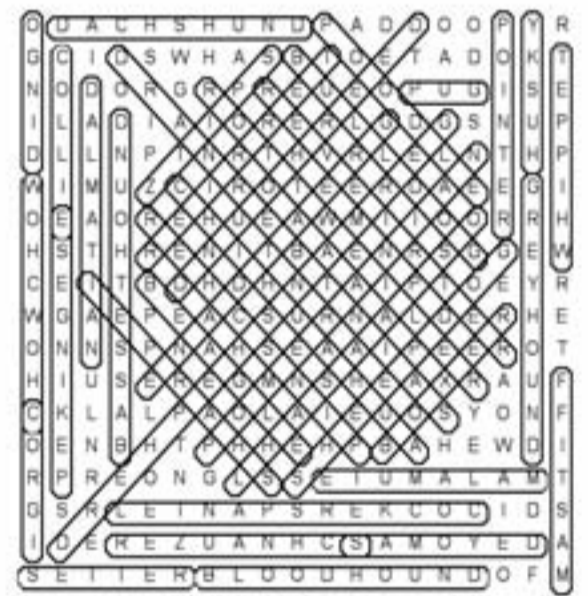
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.



Word list for Easter puzzle: ASH WEDNESDAY, BREAD, BUNNY, CALVARY, CELEBRATION, CHOCOLATE, CHRIST, CHURCH, CROSS, CRUCIFIXION, CUSTOM, DEATH, DISCIPLES, EGG HUNT, EGGS, EUCHARIST, FAMILY, FASTING, FESTIVAL, FRIDAY, HOLIDAY, HOLY WEEK, JESUS, LAST SUPPER, LENT, MARY, MASS, MEAL, NEW TESTAMENT, PALMS, PARADE, PASSOVER, PENANCE, PENITENCE, PRAYER, RESURRECTION, ROAST, SACRAMENT, SATURDAY, SUNDAY, THURSDAY, TOMB, TRADITION, VIGIL.

Yesterday's Solution

Dogs



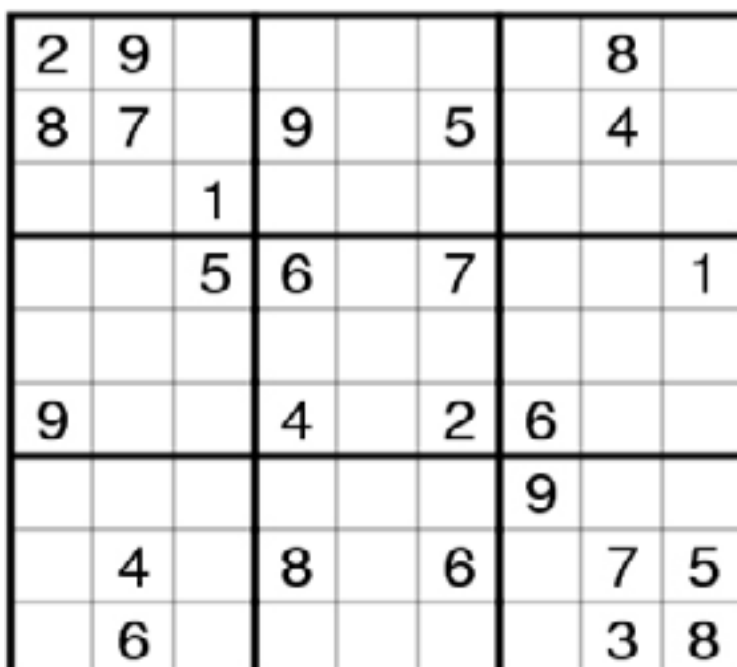
Word list for Dogs puzzle: BAGSET HOUND, BEAGLE, BLOODHOUND, BOXER, BULLDOG, CHIHUAHUA, CHOW CHOW, COCKER SPANIEL, COLLIE, COON, DACHSHUND, DALMATIAN, DEERHOUND, DINGO, GERMAN SHEPHERD, GREAT DANE, GREYHOUND, HUSKY, LHASA APSO, MALAMUTE, HASTIFF, PEKINGESE, PINSCHER, POINTER, POMERANIAN, POODLE, PUG, RETRIEVER, ROTTWEILER, SAINT BERNARD, SAMOYED, SCHAUZER, SETTER, SHAR PEI, SHEPPOG, SPITZ, TERRIER, WHIPPET.

The hidden sentence is: A DOOR IS WHAT A DOG IS PERPETUALLY ON THE WRONG SIDE OF.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



How to make a beautiful bow

Make your gifts stand out with a proper topper

BY NICOLE TSONG
The Seattle Times

A premade, self-adhesive bow fished out of a plastic bag just doesn't impress in the age of Martha Stewart.

Although most wrappers are guilty of slapping on a stiff, awkward bow in a last-minute frenzy, making a beautiful bow is possible even for the least crafty among us.

Simple bow solutions abound. The easiest one is to tie a bow the way you tie shoelaces, then add a novelty ribbon in contrasting colors, like stripes or polka dots, to make your present pop, said Ann Conway, owner of Swee Swee Paperie & Studio in Seattle. Other ideas include adding a small ornament for dimension or even making a bow out of newspaper by pleating it accordion-style.

But for a slightly more ambitious project, we enlisted Conway's gift-wrapping expertise. She

showed us a bow that is voluminous, textured and pretty, yet also simple to make. Wire ribbon gives the bow structure, and sheer and silky ribbons add texture. You can add more ribbons or take some away depending on the size of the gift.

"You can manipulate your ribbons so many ways using this technique," Conway said.

Plan ahead when shopping, picking up ribbon in addition to your wrapping paper. Conway recommends investing in at least one roll of pricier wire ribbon to add some structure.

But be a little forgiving, too. Everyone thinks his or her bows don't look good, she said. Just keep tweaking and practicing, and you'll soon find yourself making ones worthy of Martha.

Here, Conway shows step-by-step how to create a bow.



PHOTOS BY ELLEN BANNER/THE SEATTLE TIMES

CREATING A BOW

Supplies

- Ribbon to tie around the box
- Two 1 1/2-yard-long ribbons or three 1-yard-long ribbons for the bow, including at least one wire ribbon
- A twist-tie or wire
- Scissors



1 Tie a piece of ribbon around the package to cover the seam, knotting it on top. You also can do a more traditional criss-cross pattern, tying it together on top.



2 Set the ribboned box aside. Cut the two ribbons for the bow into 1 1/2-yard-long pieces, then match up the ends and hold them in one hand.



3 Anchor the ribbons in your hand and loop them evenly two to three times until you run out of ribbon, making sure not to tangle them. The loop for this bow measured 8 inches in length.



4 Fold the bow in half to measure the center; cinch the middle with your fingers.



5 Secure the center with flexible wire or a twist-tie.



6 Tie the bow to the box with ribbon.



7 Fluff the bow, pulling out loops one at a time and twisting one forward then one back. Repeat. Tweak until the bow looks right.



8 Voila!

Stock up on paper — this is one big gift

Figuring out how to wrap unwieldy gifts is a time-honored tradition in households that like to give big. Big as in a plasma-screen TV, big as in a bicycle, big as in a canoe.

But some of us are new to big, or not so good at it.

So we asked some gift-wrapping experts for their help on some cumbersome gifts.

For these massive gifts, Andie Wurster, assistant manager at Paper Source in Bellevue, Wash., suggests:

■ **Canoe:** For the most ambitious, connect several boxes to cover the entire canoe, then wrap it in traditional paper and add a bow. For those with less time, find some cheap fabric in a good pattern to cover up the canoe, and add a bow.

■ **Dollhouses:** For an innovative wrap job, find or sew a red Santa bag to cover the dollhouse. It might actually disguise the present.



MCT

If you're trying to surprise the recipient, saddle a recliner in glossy metallic fabric.

■ **Recliner:** Swaddle the chair in glossy metallic fabric, then add a huge bow.

If you don't care about the element of surprise, just add a generous bow. Try burlap bows if you can't find wide ribbon.

Ann Conway, of Swee Swee Paperie & Studio in Seattle, offered these additional suggestions:

■ **Television:** Keep it in the box, and wrap that. For another twist, make the gift into a treasure hunt. Wrap related items separately, like popcorn, a DVD, a television guide and the remote control, making sure they open the remote control last. Keep the TV out of sight until the last moment.



MCT

■ **Sleds:** Pop a sled in one of the brown bags sold for leaves and other yard waste. The bags can be found at hardware stores. Let the sled stick out the top with a bow on top.

■ **Bicycles:** Buy some inexpensive fabric in a good pattern, drape it over the bicycle and add a bow. Alternatives: Buy lightweight painter's canvas at an art store, paint on a bow and wrap the present; or try bubble wrap or paint tarps with large red bows on top.



MCT

Bicycles can be covered by patterned fabric or painter's canvas.

Lifestyle | Gossip



David Guetta's song wish

David Guetta wants his own song to be played at his funeral. The 50-year-old DJ produced the Black Eyed Peas' 2009 single 'I Gotta Feeling' and says the track is so special to him, that its release was one of the happiest moments of his life and he wants it played when he died. When asked by The Guardian 'What song would you like played at your funeral?', he replied: "I Gotta Feeling".

And in response to the question, "When were you happiest?", he said: "When I had my first kid and when I had my first big success with 'I Gotta Feeling'." David is also proud of himself for "giving DJ culture more respect", something he calls his "greatest achievement". However, his career has not been all positive; he admitted that his most embarrassing moment was when he did a live stream to launch one of his albums. David explained: "When I was doing a live stream to launch my album. Millions of people were watching and the first audio file didn't work. I was the biggest DJ in the world and I couldn't even play one record. It was horrible." And he revealed that he takes criticism of his work badly. The star - who admits "losing inspiration" is his biggest fear - said: "Every time I put out a record, I feel like it's the best. So when a record is not successful it's very painful."

Stormzy wants Stevie Wonder duet

Stormzy wants to collaborate with Stevie Wonder. The 'Big For Your Boots' rapper has given up hope on duetting with Adele because she never does feature tracks, but he'd love to get into the studio with the 67-year-old Motown legend. The 24-year-

reason why I say no is because she doesn't do features - and she needs to keep it like that. "I am rooting for her legacy to stay as phenomenal as possible. "She hasn't got to worry about what her next album does. "All she has to do is go to the studio, lay down whatever pain or emotion or feeling she's got and the rest will service itself." And on who else is on his wish list, he told the Metro newspaper: "Stevie Wonder ... That would be..." Meanwhile, Stormzy - who has won countless awards thanks to his critically-acclaimed LP 'Gangz, Signs & Prayers' - says the most important thing looking forward is ensuring he maintains being at the "top of [his] game". He said: "I've got to worry about making music and staying at the top of my game ... focusing on what my actual trade is, being a musician and delivering incredible art." The 'Blinded By Your Grace' star is expected to sweep up plenty of prizes at 2018's BRIT Awards. He will reportedly be joined by the likes of Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith at the annual ceremony at London's The O2 in February. A source said recently: "Show chiefs were desperate to secure Ed, Sam and Stormzy as they're the biggest names in UK music right now. "The combined record and streaming figures are insane and the booking is bound to add numbers on the viewing figures too. "It's shaping up to be a top night." The 2017 bash, sponsored by Mastercard, saw Stormzy and Ed perform together, with the grime star joining his pal for a remix of the 26-year-old singer's hit single 'Shape Of You'.

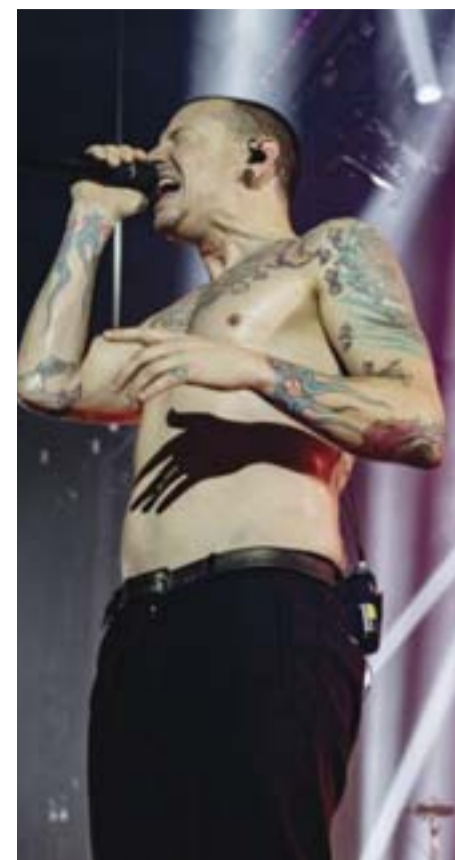


old grime star - whose real name is Michael Omari Owuo, Jr. - thinks Adele should carry on not having other artists on her tracks to continue her "phenomenal legacy". When asked about working with the 'Hello' hitmaker - who dedicated 'Make Me Feel My Love' to him at her London show last year - Stormzy said: "The

Shinoda rules out Bennington hologram show

Mike Shinoda has ruled out Linkin Park ever performing with a hologram of Chester Bennington. The 'Numb' hitmakers were left devastated when their friend took his own life in July aged 41, and the 40-year-old musician insists it would be "awful" to take to the stage with a hologram version of the singer. In an Instagram Live, he said: "I can't even wrap my head around the idea of a holographic Chester. I've actually heard other people outside the band suggest that, and there's absolutely no way. I cannot deal with that. "I can't do a hologram Chester: that would be the worst. For any of you guys who have lost a loved one, best friend, family member, can you imagine having a hologram of them? Ugh. [It would be] awful. I can't do it." Mike also recently admitted he "doesn't know what comes next" for Linkin Park - who are also made up of Rob Bourdon, Brad Delson, Dave Farrell and Joe Hahn - following the release of 'One More Night Live' last week, their first record since Chester's passing. He told Billboard: "It's a really nice way to showcase what a special experience each night was. And while I don't know what comes next for us

together or individually, this album is certainly a beautiful way of looking back at the body of work we created with Chester. "Grief is a non-linear process. It doesn't have 'stages' that go in order, it has phases that come and go at random. Some people are having sad days, others are having good days, others are having angry days...add the constant stress and fear of things like the news cycle, and you've got some exceptional chaos on your hands. "So I've tried to make it a point to share how I'm doing, mostly on Instagram and sometimes Twitter, especially when I feel like I'm making progress. "Coping with the end of this chapter is obviously devastating, but at the same time, it's also the beginning of the next story." Mike was forced to leave an Instagram Live listening party early because he couldn't carry on hearing the rocker's vocals without getting upset. He wrote on Instagram: "I did a listening party on Instagram Live today for the new album. I left early, and didn't really give a reason. To be honest, it was because it's hard for me to listen to Chester's voice for that long. I'm fine, I just wanted you to know. Thanks for understanding. (sic)



Grimes teases new music is coming 'soon'



Grimes has teased new music is coming "soon". The 29-year-old pop star - real name Claire Boucher - has kept her fans waiting two years for the much-anticipated follow-up to 2015's 'Art Angels', but she has now revealed she has played new material to her record label, and they "really dig it". Replying to a follower on Twitter over the weekend, she wrote: "just played label new music they rly dig it so hopefully smthn soon (sic)." In August, the 'Venus Fly' singer said reassured fans that she was spending "every day" working on her fifth studio album. The singer/songwriter said at the time that she just needed a bit more time for "pure unadulterated creativity". She wrote on Instagram: "I know i've been quiet lately - in the studio every day trying to legit make something you've never heard before. unexplored sonic landscapes. i need another month or 2 of pure unadulterated creativity at which point i will begin finishing tracks. won't let u down (sic)" Grimes gave the album update in a social media post announcing she'd been included in Harper's Bazaar's Icons list. She posted a short video revealing the news and added the caption: "moving up in the world guys! tomorrow Grimes will be included in the #bazaaricons list! (sic)" Meanwhile, the 'Oblivion' hitmaker previously insisted being a famous artist is mostly down to luck, and even if she wasn't well-known she would still be making music. She said: "For anyone who is successful in art, it's 90 per cent luck and chance. "If you're talented and you're not getting anywhere, you shouldn't feel bad. It's not just hard work and talent. "I'd still be able to make records because I own all the equipment and I have all the skills."



Smith to perform at first ever Global Awards

Sam Smith and Kasabian will perform at the inaugural Global Awards. Launched this week by radio brand Global, the new ceremony will combine its diverse roster of stations - Capital, Capital XTRA, Heart, Classic FM, Smooth, Radio X, Gold and LBC - to create a platform to recognise the best in music, entertainment and news. The 'Too Good At Goodbyes' hitmaker and the indie rock band - fronted by Tom Meighan - have already been confirmed for the event, which will take place on March 1, 2018 at London's Hammersmith Eventim Apollo. The likes of Rita Ora, Andrea Bocelli and Martin Garrix are also on the star-studded bill. Ashley Tabor OBE, Global's Founder & Executive President, said: "At Global, we've built some of the UK's biggest radio stations and media brands. "Through their reach, we're in the privileged position of entertaining and engaging more than half the UK population every single week. "This means we're perfectly placed to create the biggest and best music and entertainment awards the UK has ever seen, supported by Global's incredible listeners who will be voting for some of their favorite artists in popular categories." Recipients of Global Awards will be voted for by both the public and a panel of industry experts, with the full categories and longlists for the public vote being announced on Wednesday. Tickets for the bash go on sale in January 2018 from global.com/awards.

Charli XCX unsure about releasing more albums

Charli XCX isn't sure if she will release any more albums. The 'Boys' singer has just dropped the mixtape 'Pop 2', which features Carly Rae Jepsen, Tove Lo, Caroline Polachek, Cupcakke, Mykki Blanco and Jay Park and she admitted she prefers the immediacy of a mixtape, over the long drawn-out process of creating an album. She told Vulture: "With the album, I don't really know when I'm gonna put it out. Or even if I'm gonna put out an album. I just don't know. And I think that's what leads me toward making mixtapes. The way that I work and write is so fast, and releasing these mixtapes is very beneficial to that. I get so frustrated having to sit on music. I've been sitting on music for my album for so long now that people hacked me and leaked some music. For me to keep on being creative, doing these mixtapes is good. Generally, I don't even really tell people when I'm working on it. It just happens. I'll tell fans the week before the release, and I'll tell the label two months before." And Charli revealed her latest mixtape only took two weeks to make. She explained: "This one started happening just before I went on tour with Halsey when I was in London. Me and [producer] A.G. Cook do so much work together now and he's so fast, so we were just like, 'we should do another mixtape.' We had this studio session where we made a few ideas, and then we went out and partied at this PC Music night. We didn't do anymore work, but we knew we had some good ideas and we should probably finish them. He flew over to New York for these really hectic, mental four or five days where we would stay in the studio until 4 a.m. It was all being done while I was still on tour. In total, it took maybe two weeks. I would go into studios in LA, Boston,



Chicago, Austin, wherever and cut vocals. At the same time, I was sending s**t to other artists asking them to jump on songs. I guess it was a longer period than No. 1 Angel just because there are more features. Honestly, I feel really sorry for A.G. He kept killing himself trying to finish this back in London, staying up for 24 hours for a week. He's really the hero of this mixtape."

Robbie Williams couldn't stay retired

Robbie Williams soon realized he'd made a mistake when he retired from music more than a decade ago - because his brain was turning to "Swiss cheese". The 'Let Me Entertain You' hitmaker decided to call it quits following the release of his flop seventh studio album 'Rudebox' in 2006, but after spending a lot of time sitting on the sofa watching bad TV he decided he had to come back and did so in 2009 with his LP 'Reality Killed The Video Star' - produced by Trevor Horn. Speaking to The Sun newspaper, he admitted: "Yeah, 2006 happened, I went on tour and that just fried my brains and I decided that I retired. I didn't tell anybody because I knew I'd probably been lying to myself. I took to my home, stayed there and grew a beard, chased UFOs, watched 'The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills', Orange County, New Jersey, Atlanta,

even Dallas ... And in those three years off my brain turned to Swiss cheese. A man needs a purpose, which is why I came back." Robbie - who has spent time in rehab on numerous occasions throughout his career for alcoholism, substance abuse, depression and even an addiction to energy drinks Lucozade and Red Bull - has previously credited meeting his wife Ayda Field in 2006 with putting him back on track. The pop star launched his career as a member of Take That and after quitting in 1995 he joined the boys in 2010 for a new album 'Progress' and tour. Robbie, 43, is open to rejoining the band - which now tours as a trio, Gary Barlow, Howard Donald and Mark Owen following Jason Orange's departure - in the future because he had so much fun with the guys, even though it is hard work being part of their all-action shows. Asked if he'd return to Take That, he said: "Yeah I would. Don't know when that would be. I'm constantly having ideas about my own stuff that I want to fulfil. It's a big commitment to re-join the band, go and promo the album for months then go on tour - it's a whole 18 months out of my life. Last time was the perfect storm in the best way."



Lifestyle | Gossip



Kevin Lima has no plans for Enchanted sequel

Kevin Lima didn't want there to be an 'Enchanted' sequel. The 55-year-old filmmaker helmed the 2007 Disney movie and now, 10 years later, the studio is looking to make a sequel and Amy Adams reportedly has signed up to reprise her role as Princess Giselle. However, Lima has stepped away from the sequel and said he thinks his original movie is "complete in and of itself". Speaking to Den of Geek, Lima said: "I always find that I'm heading off into the world looking for new adventures. The idea of making a sequel isn't the most intriguing for me. At the same time, I haven't been able to even suggest a sequel to them. 'Enchanted' feels like a movie that's complete in and of itself. I'm sure if I was forced to stick my nose to the grindstone I could work something out. I don't have a story that feels compelling, though. Nothing's come to me. I tend not to dwell on it. I

keep thinking what's next? What other stories can I tell?" The follow up - known as 'Disenchanted' - will be set 10 years after the original and feature Giselle "questioning her happily ever after, and accidentally triggering events that make everyone's lives turn upside down in both the real world and in the animated kingdom of Andalasia". In the first movie Giselle rejected Prince Edward (James Marsden) in order to remain in New York with Robert Phillip (Patrick Dempsey), a divorce lawyer she fell in love with, and his daughter Morgan. It is not yet clear if Dempsey or Marsden will return for the sequel. The sequel was originally due to be filmed in 2010 and is now set to begin filming in 2017, 10 years on from its original release. 'Rock of Ages' director Adam Shankman will helm the project, while David Stem and David Weiss have written the script.

Spurlock's film dropped from Sundance

Morgan Spurlock's 'Super Size Me 2: Holy Chicken!' has been dropped from the Sundance Film Festival. The 47-year-old filmmaker's former company Warrior Poets has pulled the documentary movie from the schedule at the upcoming event after the screenwriter admitted he is "part of the problem" of sexual misconduct. The company said in a statement: "Due to Morgan Spurlock stepping down from Warrior Poets, we, the partners, have decided that this is not the appropriate time for Super Size Me 2: Holy Chicken! to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. Therefore, we will be removing the documentary from the festival's slate." The Sundance Institute added in a statement: "We fully support these decisions by the film's teams. We were saddened to read Morgan Spurlock's recent admissions. We empathize deeply with the many people affected - especially the women who were impacted." Last week, Morgan admitted the current climate in Hollywood has left him wondering about his own past, because he is not an "inno-



cent bystander". He explained: "As I sit around watching hero after hero, man after man, fall at the realization of their past indiscretions, I don't sit by and wonder 'Who will be next?' I wonder, 'When will they come for me?' "You see, I've come to understand after months of these revelations, that I am not some innocent bystander, I am also a part of the problem." The CNN presenter admitted he had paid to settle a "verbal" sexual harassment allegation from his former assistant. He admitted: "I would call my female assistant 'hot pants' or 'sex pants' when I was yelling to her from the other side of the office. "Something I thought was funny at the time, but then realized I had completely demeaned and belittled her to a place of non-existence. "So, when she decided to quit, she came to me and said if I didn't pay her a settlement, she would tell everyone. Being who I was, it was the last thing I wanted, so of course, I paid. "I paid for peace of mind. I paid for her silence and cooperation. Most of all, I paid so I could remain who I was." The Sundance Film Festival 2018 will take place from January 18-28 in Park City, Utah.



Isaac in talks for The Addams Family

Oscar Isaac is in line to voice a starring role in the new animated movie adaptation of 'The Addams Family'. The 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi' actor will lend his vocal talents to the head of the family, Gomez Addams, if talks with MGM are successful, according to Variety. The studio has just confirmed the latest big-screen incarnation of the comedy horror clan is going ahead, announcing a release date of October 11, 2019. Conrad Vernon - director of the Seth Rogen adult animation 'Sausage Party' - is on board to helm the new Addams Family project from a screenplay by Pamela Pettler, who worked as a writer on Tim Burton's 'The Corpse Bride'. Oscar, 38, made his Hollywood breakthrough in the award-winning Coen Brothers' movie 'Inside Llewyn Davis' and is now best known for his role as X-wing pilot Poe Dameron in the new 'Star Wars' franchise. The new movie will be based on Charles Addams' original cartoons of 'The Addams Family' - a spooky and eccentric family - which were published in The New Yorker between 1938 and 1988, when the artist died. 'The Addams Family' have appeared on the big and small screen several times over the years, first being made into a hit TV sitcom in 1964 starring Carolyn Jones and John Astin as Morticia and Gomez Addams. A live-action film titled 'The Addams Family' was released in 1991 starring Anjelica Huston and Raul Julia as Morticia and Gomez, and a young Christina Ricci as their daughter Wednesday. Gomez and Morticia Addams live in a haunted mansion with their children Wednesday and Pugsley, Uncle Fester, Grandmama, their butler Lurch, a disembodied hand called Thing, and their hairy Cousin Itt.



Doug Liman crashed wedding to secure rights for The Bourne Identity

Doug Liman crashed a wedding when trying to secure to film rights to 'The Bourne Identity' franchise. The 52-year-old filmmaker directed the first installment of the Matt Damon franchise back in 2002 and although the 'Bourne' franchise spawned four subsequent films, Liman didn't act as the director but instead as executive producer. In a recent interview, Liman has spoken on the lengths he went to in order to secure the rights to the book - which was written by Robert Ludlum - which included crashing a wedding to try and speak to Terry Semel of Warner Bros. Studios. Speaking to Den of Geek, Liman said: "I'd loved 'The Bourne Identity' since high school. After 'Swingers' was a pretty big hit, people were asking me what movie I want to make. I said 'The Bourne Identity'. And Hollywood said, no, what kind of small comedy do you want to make? I really wanted to make 'The Bourne Identity' and Hollywood was not ready to give me the opportunity. I never stopped pursuing the chance to do the book myself. I crashed a wedding where Terry Semel of Warner Bros was because I thought Warner Bros had the rights, I was ashamed in my pursuit of the rights, and I eventually found Ludlum's lawyer and he told me the rights were about to revert to Ludlum from Warner Bros." Liman arranged to meet him in Glacier National Park after just becoming a pilot and buying himself an airplane. After spending a weekend with the spy author, Liman won him over and eventually secured the rights to the now successful movie franchise. Liman also recently spoke about how he was worried he was making a "poor man's spy movie" and didn't think it would be as successful as Tom Cruise's 'Mission: Impossible'. He said: "I felt so insecure

while I was making 'The Bourne Identity' that I was making a poor man's spy movie. "There was someone of the set who had the 'Mission: Impossible' ring tone on his phone, and every time his phone rang it drove me nuts because I was afraid my movie was never going to be as good as 'Mission: Impossible'. "It was never going to be as good as James Bond. So it was really surreal afterwards to go and see the next James Bond film, and be like, 'Oh, I did make a James Bond film, because now the James Bond film looks like 'The Bourne Identity'."



Mark Hamill voices an alien in Star Wars: The Last Jedi

Mark Hamill voices an alien in 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi' as well as playing Luke Skywalker. The 66-year-old actor appears as the Jedi Master in the eighth installment of the popular sci-fi franchise but he also lent his voice to a CGI character known as Dobby Scay. However, Hamill has refused to give any more details about his new character because he loves "the mystery of it all". Speaking at a post-screening on the movie, Hamill said: "I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not telling. I like playing the mystery of it all. I said I'd love to do a CGI thing and he said sure. And I got to go to the set of the casino and see in detail 150 extras in jaw-dropping costumes." Hamill is a veteran voice actor having won numerous plaudits for voicing The Joker in 'Batman: The Animated Series' and numerous feature length animations based on DC Comics stories, including 'The Killing Joke'. Although Hamill shot to fame in the original 'Star Wars' trilogy as Luke

Skywalker, he recently admitted it may have been more fun to play Darth Vader or Han Solo, although he likes playing "bland" Luke because he is the "one centered character" to be a contrast to all the other characters in a galaxy far, far away. He said: "When I first read the screenplay of 'A New Hope', I felt it would be much more fun to play the cynical pirate who's always making wisecracks or Darth Vader, who has such an interesting role, or C-3PO, who is hilarious. Luke is so bland! He doesn't have as much color as the other characters. "But it's like Dorothy in 'The Wizard of Oz' - there has to be one centered character to provide contrast to all the other characters around them, even if I would rather play the Cowardly Lion or the Tin Man or even The Wizard than Dorothy. "And Luke makes people feel at ease. He's not scary like a pirate. He's not spectacularly talented or super intelligent, he is just an average farm boy. And that is a nice thing."



Kidman can't bear rejection

Nicole Kidman still finds rejection hurtful. The 50-year-old actress admits she has no "control" over her career but she is right for a particular project, and even after several decades in Hollywood, she still gets upset if casting directors are not "interested" in her. She said: "Any actor will tell you that as much as we'd love to say we're in control of our own destiny, we're not. "So much of our time is still spent asking, 'Are they interested in me?' And most of the time, your agent will say no. You learn about rejection early, and it's personal and it hurts." But the 'Big Little Lies' star - who has kids Isabella, 25, and Conor, 22, with ex-husband Tom Cruise, and Sunday, nine, and six-year-old Faith with spouse Keith Urban - has had an incredibly successful 2017, and she is much more "appreciative" of that now than she was when she was

younger. She said: "It blows my mind actually, because it's all so unexpected. "And it means more now. I'm so much more appreciative than I was about success in my twenties. "Because of the roller-coaster life I've had, with ups and downs and contrasts, I know more of what life deals you at different times. "But it's also important not to be attached to the success. That's the kiss of death." The 'Killing of a Sacred Deer' actress admitted there is a lot of "fear" attached to her work but she likes to push through and make bold choices without worrying about the consequences. She said: "There's an enormous amount of fear. It's just whether I can overcome the fear or push through it. But I probably don't think of consequences. I don't play things out. I like to jump off the cliff. "I just say to myself, 'What is the worst that can happen?' So people don't like it, so I fall flat on my face - that's OK."

Fisher's death almost changed The Last Jedi

Rian Johnson considered changing 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi' following the shock death of Carrie Fisher. The 44-year-old filmmaker wrote and directed the eighth installment of the sci-fi franchise, which sees the return saga legends Fisher and Mark Hamill as sister and brother



General Leia Organa and Luke Skywalker. Last December, Fisher died at the age of 60 and although she had shot all the scenes for 'The Last Jedi', Johnson admitted he was unsure about whether to change the movie's plot following her passing as she would no longer be able to be part of 'Episode IX'. Speaking to Entertainment Weekly, Johnson

said: "That was the very first conversation I had with Lucasfilm head Kathleen Kennedy after we came back, after New Year's. I kind of looked through the footage. That was the very first question. I felt really strongly that what we have here is so beautiful and the way that the character develops, the way it's paid off, and not only that, the horror of trying to manufacture something that - I don't even know what it would have been, but something for the end of this movie that leaves it in a place where the transition is easier, the idea of, 'Oh God, how would you fake something like that and how would it not be terrible?' "Given that we have a beautiful, complete performance from her that I think audiences deserve to see, and I think it will mean a lot for them, that ray of hope from Leia. For all of those reasons I felt really strongly that we had to let this fly. Luckily we have a fantastic storyteller in J.J. Abrams who is going to figure out a way to bring it home in the end, that's going to be satisfying. I know he's going to. "With this movie I just wanted audiences to have this performance." Abrams, 51, directed and co-wrote the first film in the new trilogy, 'The Force Awakens', and has been brought back to create the final part of the new story following Colin Trevorrow's departure from the project.

Lifestyle | Music & Movies



(From left) Actors Jeremy Strong, Bill Camp, Poker player Molly Bloom, Michael Cera, Jessica Chastain, Director Aaron Sorkin, and Madison McKinley attend "Molly's Game" New York Premiere at AMC Loews Lincoln Square in New York City.

Chastain on the rise and fall of Hollywood's 'poker princess'

Jessica Chastain struggled initially to relate to Molly Bloom, the former ski champion turned "poker princess" hostess to the rich and famous at Hollywood's most exclusive high stakes card tables. It wasn't until Chastain met Tinseltown's goddess of gambling as part

halt to her dreams and she turned her attention to underground poker.

She earned a fortune hosting illegal gambling for Hollywood stars like Leonardo DiCaprio and Matt Damon, as well as politicians and Wall Street titans, taking eye-watering stakes from her illustrious clientele, fueled by cocaine. At her height, Bloom claimed to be making \$4 million a year, but things fell apart when she made the mistake of insisting on a cut of the pot, rather than just making her living from tips, which pushed her activities into the bracket of organized crime. Her dealings also came to the notice of Mafia mobsters, who began demanding their own share, before one of her games was raided by FBI agents and all her possessions were seized.

"To understand how she got trapped by these people, this was hard and I think I was guilty of some judgment," California native Chastain told AFP. "We as a society have fallen to the pattern of blaming women for things, the way they look, dismissing them, shaming them for revealing their bodies. I absolutely had that judgment before I met her."

Uncompromising

Chastain, 40, nominated for a best actress Golden Globe for her turn as the hostess, said she came to see Bloom as "a creation from this patriarchy" who did what was necessary to "be visible, to be heard" in a man's world. "It comes from her childhood. Her dad made it clear that he made the rules," the actress said in an interview in Beverly Hills. "She would have to follow them until she makes her own money. So she goes for an industry where she feels she can get that liberty." Valued for her discretion and able to earn millions of dollars a year at her peak, Bloom was privy to some of the darkest and most valuable

secrets of the rich and famous.

The movie, due for release on Christmas Day, does not name or represent onscreen any specific personalities, but Bloom's 2014 memoir shocked and amused Hollywood with its tales of A-list poker parties. Charmed by Ben Affleck - "he's nice to everyone," she says - Bloom was less impressed by Spider-Man actor Tobey Maguire, describing him as "the worst tipper, the best player and the absolute worst loser." Bloom wrote that the "Seabiscuit" star once told her to "bark like a seal who wants a fish" for a \$1,000 chip. She refused. Dressed

“ Be visible, to be heard in a man's world ”

simply in stylish gray pants and a white shirt, her porcelain features a study in placid composure, Chastain exudes a personal style that is the antithesis of the brash outfits and thick makeup Bloom wears in the film.

Iron-willed

The flame-haired actress, who already has a Golden Globe for military thriller "Zero Dark Thirty" and two Oscar nominations, made her name in 2011 with "The Tree of Life" and "The Help." She has been one of the most

vocal proponents of the #MeToo social media campaign against sexual assault, set up after veteran producer Harvey Weinstein was brought down by more than 100 allegations of misconduct. Sweetly-spoken but iron-willed, the tenacious graduate of prestigious New York performing arts conservatory the Juilliard School says she learns her lines methodically until they flow "like music."

Chastain says "Molly's Game" director Aaron Sorkin, celebrated for his sharp, back-and-forth dialogue in "The West Wing," "A Social Network" and "Steve Jobs," may well be the best screenwriter in Hollywood. "I studied the classics-Shakespeare, Chekhov and Ibsen-and he has this way, he has a rhythm just like Shakespeare had," said Chastain. "Aaron's dialogue is like that. So if you drop the ball on that pace, you lose it. So I wanted to be word perfect on his script." At the heart of the "Molly's Game" is the relationship between Molly and her lawyer Charlie Jaffey (Idris Elba), who encourages her to cooperate with the police and give up her celebrity former clients. "She gives away piece after piece of who she is and she goes to Charlie Jaffey's office and you kind of see this shell of this person: 'They took all my money so they could give it back to me for all this gossip,'" said Chastain.

Bloom stopped cooperating but avoided jail time when she was sentenced in 2014 to a year probation after admitting to being a key player in an illegal \$100 million gambling ring. "She goes, 'My name is Molly Bloom-this is who I am-' and it's the first time in the movie she does that," said Chastain, explaining Bloom's change of heart. "I don't see it as protecting others, I see it as, for the first time, protecting herself and her integrity." -AFP



Actress Jessica Chastain attends "Molly's Game" New York Premiere at AMC Loews Lincoln Square on December 13, 2017 in New York City. — AFP photos

of her research into playing Bloom in upcoming biopic "Molly's Game" that she began to understand the high-rolling impresario's motivations. Growing up in Colorado, Bloom seemed destined to follow her Olympian brother Jeremy into elite level skiing, until an injury brought a

'In the Fade' star Diane Kruger on her real-life agony

It is the most intense, critically-acclaimed role of her career, but Diane Kruger hardly had to act at all to play a grief-stricken woman robbed of her family in a bombing. Kruger was filming "In the Fade" -Fatih Akin's German thriller about a woman who seeks revenge on the neo-Nazis who killed her husband and son-when she was told her stepfather had died. Wolfgang Pichler-her mother's longtime partner since Kruger's parents divorced when she was a teenager-had been a crucial part of her life, often pictured with her on the red carpet. She channeled her grief into the role.



"I felt like I was drowning in sorrow and grief. It just felt like there was no way out, ever," the German-born 41-year-old, best known for blockbusters such as "Troy" and "Inglourious Basterds," told AFP. "In the Fade" was filmed chronologically, allowing Kruger to tap into her character's fluctuating state of mind, and her own

fraught emotions were heightened by visiting grieving relatives of real-life murder victims. "I never felt like that tension, those feelings, like I could push them aside at night, or on weekends," Kruger said in an interview at the plush Four Seasons hotel in Beverly Hills. Kruger's work as the tattooed, drug-taking Katja has earned her critical acclaim and the best actress award at the Cannes Film Festival in May. The movie was nominated for best foreign language film at the Golden Globes, and three days later it was named among nine overseas films advancing to the next round of voting in the Oscars.

'Dream director'

Kruger was on the Cannes jury in 2012 when she met Akin, an acclaimed German-Turkish auteur known for hits such as "Head On" and "Edge of Heaven," at a beach party. "He was definitely my dream director, I'd seen all of his movies. I went up to him and said, 'If you ever have anything, please remember me.' It took five years but he did," she said. Kruger moved to Hamburg a few months before shooting, contributing to the casting process and meeting two dozen people who had lost a loved one, mostly families of murder victims, in special workshops. — AFP

Ridley Scott knew he had to reshoot All the Money in the World

Sir Ridley Scott knew within "36 hours" he needed to reshoot "All the Money in the World". The 80-year-old filmmaker has helmed the new John Paul Getty biopic which original starred Kevin Spacey as Getty Oil Company magnate J. Paul Getty. In the past several weeks, Spacey, 58, has been accused by multiple men of sexual harassment and assault and as soon as Scott became aware of the scandal he came to the decision to drop the actor from his project and recast Christopher Plummer in the role.

Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight', Scott said: "I knew as soon as they hit Kevin it was going to blow wide open and I contacted my partners and said, 'We should recast this right now. We shoot right now, we'll be out the same day.'"

Within 36 hours, I knew what I was going to do. Once I got his [Plummer] agreement, everything else was a matter of efficiency. I got a really efficient group." The motion picture tells the story of his character, oilman John Paul Getty, who refused to pay a ransom after his grandson, John Paul Getty III, was kidnapped. Fortunately for Scott most of the scenes in the thriller film involve Getty III's mother Gail Harris (Michelle Williams), and Getty's advisory (Mark Wahlberg) rather than Getty himself. Spacey is said to have worked around eight to 10 days on the movie set.

\$2.9 million to free him

Plummer - who is best known for starring as Captain Von Trapp in 'The Sound of Music' - agreed to join the movie because he "wanted to



work" with Scott. The 88-year-old actor said: "I really would have said yes anyway if I hadn't read it, because I wanted to work with him very much. I did read it, and said yes, and boom we were off to the races."

John Paul Getty III was just 16 when he was grabbed during a night out in the Piazza Farnese in Rome, Italy, on 10 July 1973 and then kept chained in a cave for six months with a ransom note demanding \$17 million delivered to the family.

Initially his grandfather believed that his grandson may have staged the kidnap himself and refused to pay anything, also fearing if he paid up then all of his other grandchildren would be targets.

He also ignored the pleas of his own son, John Paul Getty Jr to free him, and the pleas of John Paul's mother Gail as she had divorced his son and had refused his money to raise her family alone, however, when one of his ears was sent through the post to a newspaper along with a lock of his hair

the tycoon eventually paid \$2.9 million to free him. Nine of the kidnapers were eventually arrested and two were sent to prison. But John Paul - whose son is actor Balthazar Getty - never fully recovered from the harrowing ordeal becoming an alcoholic and drug addict. He eventually died at the age of 54 following a long battle with ill health which began when he took a cocktail of Valium, methadone and alcohol in 1981 which caused liver failure and induced a stroke which left him a quadriplegic and nearly blind. — Bang Showbiz

Mariah Carey Xmas Song IS MOST STREAMED ON SPOTIFY

Mariah Carey's 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' is Spotify's most streamed Christmas song of all time. The 46-year-old singer's 1994 single - which she wrote and produced with Walter Afanasieff - has been streamed globally over 217 million times, and is followed close behind by Wham!'s 'Last Christmas' in second place, with Michael Buble's 'It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas' third. Festive hit-releasing machine Buble features five times, with his covers of 'White Christmas' (Featuring Shania Twain), 'All I Want For Christmas Is You', 'Holly Jolly Christmas' and 'Santa Claus Is Coming To Town' also dominating the list.



'Mistletoe' by Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande's 'Santa Tell Me' are also popular Yuletide tracks. Mariah recently said she had no idea she'd be able to build an empire around 'All I Want For Christmas'. The 'Hero' singer has been "surprised" by how well the track has stood the test of time, and how it becomes more and more popular each year around the festive period. Asked if she knew the hit would bring her so much success and revenue, she said: "Oh my gosh, no, no, never, no. I feel like this is something small compared to the rest

of my catalogue. This song just continues to surprise me." Mariah - who has six-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe with ex-husband Nick Cannon - loves it when she hears how the song has resonated with her fans. She said: "I'm very thankful that people seem to still have an attachment to it. "It makes me feel good when people tell me that it's part of their lives."

Spotify's Top 20 Christmas songs globally are as follows:

1. Mariah Carey - 'All I Want For Christmas Is You'
2. Wham! - 'Last Christmas'
3. Michael Buble - 'It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas'
4. Justin Bieber - 'Mistletoe'
5. Ariana Grande - 'Santa Tell Me'
6. Andy Williams - 'It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year'
7. Band Aid - 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' (1984 Version)
8. The Pogues - 'Fairytale of New York' (feat. Kirsty MacColl)
9. Bing Crosby - 'White Christmas'
10. Frank Sinatra - 'Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!'
11. Michael Buble - 'White Christmas' (Duet With Shania Twain)
12. Bobby Helms - 'Jingle Bell Rock'
13. Michael Buble - 'All I Want For Christmas Is You'
14. Elvis Presley - 'Blue Christmas'
15. Jose Feliciano - 'Feliz Navidad'
16. Michael Buble - 'Holly Jolly Christmas'
17. Coldplay - 'Christmas Lights'
18. Chris Rea - 'Driving Home For Christmas'
19. Nat King Cole - 'The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas To You)'
20. Michael Buble - 'Santa Claus Is Coming To Town'

— Bang Showbiz

Gallagher joined by ex-Oasis guitarist Bonehead at Manchester Arena

Liam Gallagher performed with his former Oasis bandmate Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs at his hometown show at the Manchester Arena on Saturday night. The Britpop group's former frontman wrapped up his UK headline solo tour, in support of his debut LP 'As You Were', by bringing out the 52-year-old guitarist at Manchester Arena for the encore of 'Cigarettes & Alcohol', 'Wonderwall' and an acoustic rendition of 'Live Forever'.

Bonehead's appearance was no doubt a surprise as the night before the concert, Liam tweeted a fan to say the 52-year-old musician is "too old" for rock 'n' roll and has bad hearing. In response to a follower who posted, "Get Arthurs onstage with you again (sic)", Liam replied: "He's too old for all this RnR he's deaf as well (sic)" Having Bonehead on stage brings the tour full circle as the original Oasis member played 'Be Here Now' with Liam, 45, at his debut solo gig at Manchester's O2 Ritz venue, a benefit gig held to raise money for the victims of the terror attack at Ariana Grande's concert back in May.

The pair were reunited back in October 2013 when Bonehead joined Liam and his former band Beady Eye to perform at the 'A Night For Jon Brookes' tribute concert at The Royal Albert Hall, organised by The Charlatans to pay tribute to their late drummer. Whilst Liam has occasionally brought out original strummer Bonehead, his estranged brother and former bandmate Noel has had Bonehead's replacement Gem Archer performing in his High Flying Birds group.

Gem, 51, joined the 'Supersonic' rockers in 1999 after Bonehead quit and had been a member of Beady Eye, which Liam formed with other members of Oasis, including Andy Bell and Chris Sharrock, after Noel, 50, quit the band in August 2009 following a backstage row with his younger sibling. Beady Eye eventually disbanded in October 2014 after releasing two albums, 'Different Gear, Still Speeding' and 'BE'. As



Liam Gallagher

well as playing guitar in Oasis, Gem also contributed several songs, including 'Hung in a Bad Place' from 2002 album 'Heaven Chemistry', which was the first track not penned by a Gallagher brother to feature on one of the group's LPs.

Liam Gallagher's Manchester Arena setlist was as follows:

- 'Rock 'n' Roll Star'
- 'Morning Glory'
- 'Greedy Soul'
- 'Wall of Glass'
- 'Paper Crown'
- 'Bold'
- 'For What It's Worth'
- 'Rockin' Chair'
- 'Some Might Say'
- 'Slide Away'
- 'D'You Know What I Mean?'
- 'I'm Outta Time'
- 'Come Back to Me'
- 'You Better Run'
- 'Universal Glam'
- 'Supersonic'
- 'Be Here Now' — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



This file photo shows men belonging to historical groups dressed as centurions walking by Rome's statue of emperor Augustus to mark the anniversary of the legendary foundation in 753 BC of the eternal city on April 21, 2014. — AFP

Exiled for his sense of humor, poet Ovid has last laugh

Two thousand years after being banished from Rome, Ovid has been rehabilitated in a victory for the famous poet whose cheek riled one of history's most powerful emperors. The Rome city council unanimously approved a motion to "repair the serious wrong" suffered by Ovid, best known for his "Metamorphoses" and "Ars Amatoria", or the Art of Love, who was exiled by the Emperor Augustus to Romania in the year AD 8. The reason for his banishment to the town of Tomis on the Black Sea coast is one of literature's biggest mysteries, as there are no surviving contemporary sources which give details about it, so all historians have is Ovid's word.

The poet rather cryptically claims it was due to "carmen et error", or "a poem and a mistake"—the poem being the Ars Amatoria, a subversively witty poem instructing men how to get and keep a girlfriend. Augustus is assumed to have been less than pleased, having recently passed a series of laws against adultery.

Scandal in the senate

"Although the poem doesn't overtly advocate adultery, it sails quite close to the wind," Rebecca Armstrong, a Fellow in Classics at Oxford University, told AFP. "It definitely displays an irreverent tone towards traditional moral attitudes as well as the emperor and his family. For example, Ovid recommends several of the public monuments built by Augustus and his family as excellent spots to pick up girls," she said. It is unlikely to have been the poem alone that angered Augustus enough to drive Ovid out, as it was published several years before he was sent away.

But after irritating the emperor, experts believe the poet's mysterious "error" was the last straw. "It's quite often suggested that it might have been something to do with the scandal surrounding Augustus's granddaughter, Julia, who was exiled in AD 8 for an adulterous affair with a Roman senator," Armstrong said. The writer hated the "wild frontier" of Tomis and pleaded endlessly to be allowed to return to Rome—to no avail.

'Would have been pleased'

He did not help himself by partly apologizing for the Ars Amatoria in the poem Tristia II, but "making it clear that he believes Augustus to be an unsophisticated reader of poetry and someone who can't take a joke." "An interesting strategy for someone hoping to be recalled!" Armstrong said. The decision to revoke Ovid's exile comes on the 2,000th anniversary of the poet's death in AD 17. He is not the only famous figure to whom Italy has recently apologized: In 2008 Florence asked forgiveness for persecuting the poet Dante, who fled into exile after he was sentenced to death for his political beliefs.

Armstrong said she thought Ovid "would have been pleased" by last week's council ruling, particularly "by the knowledge that people care who he was and are still reading his poetry so many years later". And not only has his jocular guide to dating been avenged, he may also have pulled one of the biggest pranks in history. Most critics are dubious, but "on the basis that there is so little evidence available, some have even argued that Ovid was never exiled at all, and that his exile poetry is, rather, a kind of experimental literature." — AFP



This photo taken at an undisclosed location shows manuscripts, historic letters, notes and musical scores of the Aristophile collection, before the collection is to be liquidated through a process of hundreds of auctions over at least the next six years.

France dubs '120 Days of Sodom' a national treasure to stop sale

The French government stepped in yesterday to declare the manuscript of the Marquis de Sade's "120 Days of Sodom" a national treasure as it was about to be sold at auction in Paris. Officials ordered that the 18th-century erotic masterpiece be withdrawn from the sale, along with Andre Breton's "Surrealist Manifestos", banning their export from France, the Aguttes auction house told AFP. They were part of a vast sale of historic documents owned by the French investment firm Aristophil, which was shut down in scandal two years ago, taking (\$1 billion) of its investors' money with it. "120 Days of Sodom" was expected to go for up to six million euros, while Breton's highly influential manifestos on modern art were estimated at around four million euros.

Sade wrote the controversial work about four rich libertines in search of the ultimate form of sexual gratification on a roll made from bits of parchment he had smuggled into his cell in the Bastille. When the Paris prison was stormed at the beginning of the French revolution on July 14, 1789, the famously dissolute aristocrat was freed, but he was swept out by the mob without his manuscript. Sade believed it had been lost to the looters and wept "tears of blood" over it, but the unfinished manuscript turned up decades later. Even so, the book languished unpublished for more than a century and was banned in Britain until the 1950s. — AFP



This picture shows a Pakistani smoker holding a match to a clump of hashish to soften it before mixing it with cigarette tobacco in Peshawar. — AFP photos

High and dry: Pakistan's penchant for hash

Niaz Ali is a deeply religious man: He prays five times a day and visits the mosque as frequently as possible. But he also loves to smoke hashish—lots of it. Despite it being forbidden by his faith, the 50 year-old estimates he spends about 30 percent of his earnings as a cab driver on the habit. His love affair with cannabis began as an occasional puff with friends when he was a teenager, but has since morphed into a full-blown addiction for the father-of-nine. "It is a sacred plant. A sacred intoxication," says Ali, who asked to use a pseudonym, after taking a fresh rip off a hookah packed with pungent hash in Pakistan's bustling northwestern town of Peshawar.



A Pakistani man smoking hashish in a chillum pipe near a shrine in Peshawar.

"It's like a second wife, this addiction," he sighs. While Ali freely acknowledges using hash runs counter to the tenets of Islam, he insists it has its advantages. "We know that it is haram but it's an intoxication that doesn't harm anyone else," he explains. In conservative Pakistan, an Islamic republic, the consumption of alcohol is strictly forbidden for Muslims. Any semblance of a sybaritic nightlife takes place at home behind closed doors, where the country's elite have been known to quaff booze.

But many Pakistanis are surprisingly open to using cannabis, with the spongy, black hash made from marijuana grown in the country's tribal belt and neighboring Afghanistan the preferred variant of the drug. Whereas alcohol is explicitly forbidden in Islamic scripture, hash seemingly straddles a theological gray zone, which could explain its popularity in the country. Even if most observant Muslims in Pakistan scoff at the idea of drinking, a prod into their feelings on marijuana often triggers a wry smile followed by a trite maxim about how good it makes food taste or how restful sleep can be after a toke.

'No compromise on hash'

People have been smoking hash on the subcontinent for centuries. It predates the arrival of Islam in the region, with reference to cannabis appearing in the sacred Hindu Atharva Veda text describing its medicinal and ritual uses. According to a 2013 UN survey, cannabis was the most widely consumed drug in Pakistan with around four million users, representing 3.6 percent of the population—a figure that has drawn skepticism in a country where reliable data can be hard to come by. "It's an underestimation," says Dr Parveen Azam Khan, president of the Dost Welfare Foundation,



This picture shows Maulana Mohammad Tayyab Qureshi (right), the imam of the main Peshawar mosque, teaching with an Islamic book to his son at the mosque in Peshawar.



A Pakistani smoker putting hashish into a chillum pipe before smoking in Peshawar.

a nonprofit that treats drug addicts in Peshawar. Despite its widespread consumption, not all are happy about hash's prevalence in the so-called "Land of the Pure". "There is no compromise with hashish," says Maulana Mohammad Tayyab Qureshi, the imam of the main Peshawar mosque. According to Qureshi, anything that causes intoxication or bodily harm is strictly forbidden in the faith. He chalks up marijuana's popularity in Pakistan as a law enforcement issue. Public health experts also warn the ubiquitous availability of cheap hash in Pakistan's northwest has been especially harmful to impoverished children, who increasingly use the drug to deal with the hardships of poverty and trauma from years of militant violence.

"For children, it's the drug of choice," says Dr Khan, blaming the vicious nexus between the region's narco-funded insurgencies and widespread drug use for the scourge. Pakistan also remains wholly unequipped to handle the problem, with the UN survey saying a dearth of treatment clinics and prohibitive costs keeps users from seeking help.

'Wakes up your mind'

But in Islamic shrines salted across the country others see cannabis as more benign. At the Bari Badshah shrine in the heart of Peshawar, followers of the Sufi sect of Islam gather in a small courtyard nightly, where they smoke copious amounts of hash

and listen to devotional music while draining tea by the kettle. Conversations are fluid, only to be interrupted by hard drags off hash pipes with the occasional song performed by one of the devotees. "The basic work of hash... it wakes up new corners in your mind," says Mohammed Amin, 50.

According to Sayeed Asjid, 27, such shrines are welcome to members of any faith and in Peshawar are frequented by high-level bureaucrats, police officers and members of security agencies. "It's a deep relaxation," says Asjid of the cannabis high as he exhales clouds of marijuana smoke. But Sufi shrines have been the frequent target over the years by Taliban militants and sectarian extremists like the Islamic State group, who view the mystical sect as heretical.

"That was only to spread fear and havoc," says Asjid of the attacks, while expressing his faith in the power of the shrine to protect. The herb is not only enjoyed by free-spirited Sufi mystics, Mehwish, a single mother of three, says the occasional joint helps manage the stress that comes with the daily grind. "You can use hash when you are alone... then you can think in a relaxed way," says Mehwish, whose name has been changed on request. Although she admits most of her family are unaware of her habit, the 26-year-old is a firm believer in its benefits. She adds: "When you feel good and you're active and it puts a smile on your face then nobody minds." — AFP



A Pakistani woman smoking a hashish cigarette in Peshawar.



A Pakistani smoker putting hashish into a chillum pipe before smoking in Peshawar.

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2017



An artist draws the Palestinian flag on a wall on the southern Lebanese border with Israel near Fatima's Gate, in response to the United States' decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel.—AFP

Nigeria turns the page on literary past

Mention Nigerian literature and the first names likely to spring to mind are Chinua Achebe, the author of "Things Fall Apart", or the venerable Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. But Africa's most populous nation has a new crop of writers whose work is a far cry from the post-colonial era of their esteemed predecessors. Olumide Popoola's novel "When We Speak Of Nothing", for example, tells the story of a gay teenager seeking the father he never knew in the southern oil city of Port Harcourt.

The book, which was published earlier this year, is written in a language mixing African pidgin with London slang, and includes comical descriptions and textspeak. For Emeka Nwankwo, from Nigerian publisher Cassava Republic, breaking conventions and expectations about literature is a way of reflecting how the

country has changed. "We are looking for an alternative way to tell African stories, funny, subversive stories," he said at the launch of Popoola's novel. "What's going on now in Nigeria is very fascinating. New voices are coming out after a long period of quiet."

The most famous voice to emerge in recent years is the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who made her name with "Half of a Yellow Sun" (2006) and "Americanah" (2013). Both stories have since been translated into dozens of languages while the first was adapted for cinema in 2013, starring Hollywood actors Thandie Newton and Chiwetel Ejiofor.

'Thirst for literature'

Cassava Republic, which was launched in 2006 in Abuja and now has an office in London,

is leading the literary revolution with other local publishers such as Farafina and Bookcraft. In just over a decade, it has published some 50 books. The bestseller, "In Dependence", by Sarah Ladipo Manyika, has sold 1.7 million copies in Nigeria and overseas. No genre is excluded from Cassava Republic and it has published books from science fiction and crime to homosexuality and eroticism.

Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's "Season of Crimson Blossoms" tells the story of an improbable affair between an ageing widow and a petty drug dealer in the conservative, Muslim-majority north. Instead of provoking a scandal, the novel won last year the country's top literary award, the Nigeria Prize for Literature and the author \$100,000 (85,000 euros). In another category entirely is "Longthroat Memoirs: Soups, Sex and Nigerian Taste Buds", an eccentric ode to local cuisine and its supposed aphrodisiac properties.

With evocative chapter headings such as "Afang Soup and Hairy Legs" and "Eating Dog", the author Yemisi Aribisala reveals the sensual power of yams and well-cooked fish beloved of Nigerians. Others such as Leye Adenle ("Easy Motion Tourist") take the reader on a heart-stopping journey to the beating heart of Nigeria's sprawling megacity, Lagos, and encounters with corruption, prostitution and drugs. The literary revival in Nigeria has seen more bookshops springing up in working-class areas and shopping centers across the country.

It is also taking off online. E-book application Okadabooks has some 200,000 users and one million downloads. "There is a thirst for literature in Nigeria and publishers are now responding," said Lola Shoneyin, who organizes the Ake Festival every November. The event, held in the southwestern city of Abeokuta, has become a must for booklovers, many of them under the age of 30.

'Anti-intellectual policies'

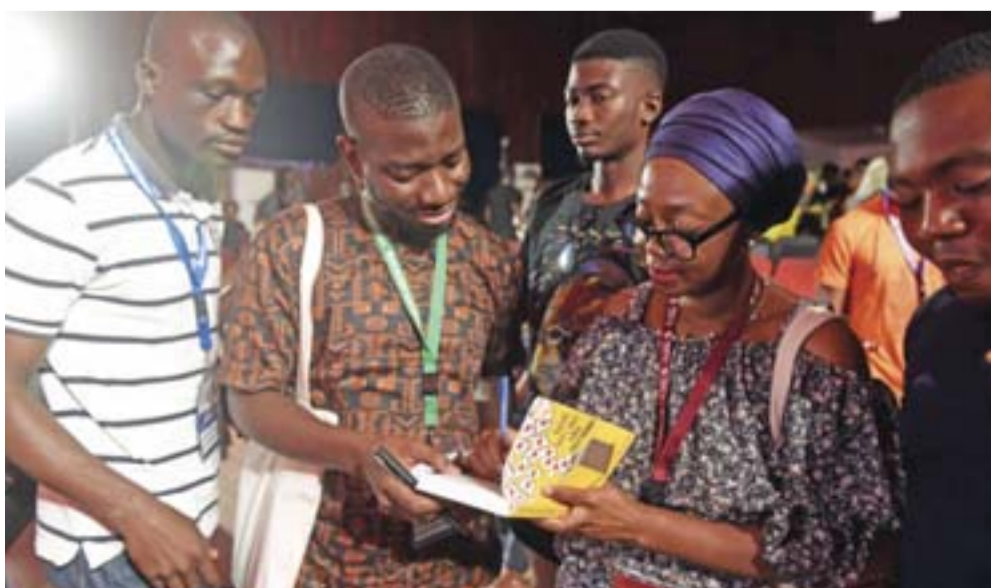
The expansion of literature in Nigeria in the 1960s and 70s was driven by British publishers, said Shoneyin, who is also a poet and writer. But successive military governments in that time "frustrated the book industry", stifling creativity with "anti-intellectual policies", she added. The current challenges faced by Nigerian publishers today are different but no less daunting. Most printing, for example, is done at low cost in China or India, although some publishers are starting to bring production back home because of improved quality.

Books are not immune from the huge bootleg industry that affects Nigeria's entire cultural sector from cinema to music. Badly photocopied books are hawked on the streets or in markets. Distribution-from transporting books to finding reliable points of sale also remains "a challenging experience", said Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, the founder of Cassava Republic.

But she views the situation with an unswerving Nigerian optimism. "A lack of infrastructure can also be an opportunity, as it allows you to think more creatively and flexibly about how to meet challenges, rather than being hampered by existing and often outdated structures that struggle to move with the time and respond to new buying and consumption patterns," she said.—AFP



This file photo taken in Abeokuta, southwest Nigeria shows Moderator Molara Wood (center) flanked by authors Ayisha Osori (left) and Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, posing with their books after a discourse on "Disrupting culture: women in politics" during the Ake Arts and Book festival.—AFP photos



This file photo in Abeokuta, southwest Nigeria shows author of book "Love Does Not Win Election" Ayisha Osori (right) signing autographs during the Ake Arts and Book festival.—AFP

Bizarre news

An electrician finds dinosaur skeleton



An electrician has found a dinosaur skeleton. The worker was cleaning out a derelict substation in Jaspur, India, when he came across the skeleton of what is believed to be the prehistoric creature, the Mirror Online has reported. But the finding

has puzzled scientists as the bones are surrounded by flesh, which has sparked a debate among researchers who claim that it is not possible for skin to remain considering dinosaurs became extinct over 60 million years. Speaking about the sighting, Dr Parag Madhukar Dhakate - who is a Conservator with the Indian Forest Service - said: "It looks like a dinosaur, but we can't say anything until all the tests are done."

Pub turns into gingerbread house

A village pub has been transformed into a giant gingerbread house to celebrate Christmas, although the ornaments are not edible. The Queen Victoria Inn, in Somerset, has been designed with giant candy canes, sherbet, lollipops, liquorice allsorts, the ginger-flavored biscuit, as well as other sweet treats to bring a smile to the faces of guests who enter and even passersby, the Metro newspaper has reported.

The venue's landlord, Mark Walton, came up with the idea after having a few drinks with some friends in January this year. And though the owner decided on the idea months in advance of the festive period, he only put his plan in action recently, which took almost four weeks to install. Speaking about the ornate decorations, Mark said: "My electrician - who did the lights - was hanging off the roof for a whole day. "We've got the lot - giant candy canes, sherbet, Quality Street, bubble gum, lollipops and even the occasional drumstick and it's all made out of polystyrene, drain pipes, beach balls - everything. "So no, it's not edible but it is amazing and it looks fantastic."



Man distributes business cards to people questioning him on his height



A man has created business cards to distribute to people who question him about his height. A male, who is six foot 10 inches, has revealed his height is a regular topic of conversation, but being asked whether he has clothes to fit his

long frame has started to wear thin on him, which is why he has printed a card with his personal details on for those who stop him and pose irritating queries. A photograph of the note, which has been shared on Reddit, reads: "Yes I am tall. I am 6' 10" (No I'm not kidding. Yes, That is tall.) "No I do not play basketball, I play volleyball. "Yes, seeing the tops of everyone's head is weird "Yes, the weather is nice up here "this has been a great conversation (sic)."

Gran decorates Christmas tree with glittery G-strings

A woman was left in hysterics after finding out her grandmother decorates her Christmas tree with baubles filled with G-strings. Alex Bermingham, from Ireland, helped her grandparent to put the festive ornaments on the tree and around the house when she discovered what the items contained. And upon further inspection Alex noticed the circular objects were actually festively-packaged underwear. She posted pictures of the decoration on Twitter, which she captioned: "My 74-year-old grandmother bought Christmas baubles in Dunnes Stores, which I have just realized upon decorating her tree that unbeknownst to her upon purchase, they are in fact, lavender glitter G-strings. "She relied with 'Jesus Al yer man in the shop must have thought I was very kinky sure I bought six of them'. Crying. "Wishing everyone a kinky Christmas this holiday season. (sic)."

