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Opposition MPs walk out as new ministers take oath

VAT law referred to finance panel • Minister warned over expat health fees

By B Izzak

Saudis intercept Houthi missile over Riyadh

RIYADH: Saudi air defenses intercepted a ballistic missile fired towards the capital Riyadh yesterday, the Saudi-led coalition said, the latest attack by a Yemeni group that could escalate a proxy war between the kingdom and regional rival Tehran. There was no immediate report of casualties or damages. The Iran-aligned Houthi movement said the missile targeted the royal court at Al-Yamama palace, where a meeting of Saudi leaders was under way, describing the attack as a new chapter in the conflict.

The Saudi-led coalition said the missile was directed at residential areas and there were no damages, the Saudi state news agency SPA reported. Quoting a statement from the coalition, SPA said Iranian-made missiles were a threat to regional and international security, and accused the Houthis of using humanitarian entry points to import missiles from Saudi Arabia's arch-foe Iran. "Coalition forces confirm intercepting an Iranian-Houthi missile targeting (the) south of Riyadh."

Continued on Page 11

KUWAIT: About 11 opposition MPs walked out of a National Assembly session yesterday - the first regular meeting since the term opener on Oct 25 - when new Cabinet ministers began taking the oath to become members of the Assembly. The lawmakers were protesting against the government for taking no action towards the jailing of two opposition MPs - Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei - after they were convicted for storming the Assembly in Nov 2011. The lawmakers protested the fact that their colleagues were sent to jail although they still enjoyed parliamentary immunity.

MP Adel Al-Damkhi submitted a letter on behalf of the opposition MPs criticizing the inaction of the Assembly and the government over the jailing of the two lawmakers. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghneim said he discussed the issue with the Assembly's constitutional experts and it was decided to refer the letter to the legal and legislative committee.

Damkhi criticized the interior ministry for arresting the two MPs even though they are members of the Assembly. Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said the ministry did not arrest Harbash or Tabtabaei, as they gave themselves up to police, while a third MP, Mohammad Al-Mutair, is still outside the country.

During the debate, the Assembly agreed to refer a draft law on value-added tax (VAT) to the financial and economic affairs committee from the legal committee to study the contents of the law, which is part of the GCC agreement. The VAT law stipulates imposing a five per-



KUWAIT: Opposition MPs stage a walkout during a parliament session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

cent tax on almost all products to raise non-oil revenues. Saudi Arabia and UAE are planning to start imposing the tax in January, while Kuwait must get the approval of the Assembly before imposing it.

During the session, MP Khalil Al-Saleh called on the new health minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah to study the decision raising medical charges on expatriates "very

carefully". The warning came after the minister said the decision will be reevaluated after three months of imposing it. The Assembly also rejected with a comfortable majority a request to establish a committee for combating vice and promoting virtue, as only 17 MPs out of 47 present approved the request.

Continued on Page 11

PAINTBALL KUWAIT

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Amir meets newly-appointed ambassadors to Kuwait



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the ambassador of Turkey. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the ambassador of France.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the credentials of the newly appointed ambassadors of Turkey, France, Fiji, Macedonia, Angola, and Ireland to the State of Kuwait. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, head of His Highness the Amir's office Fahad Al-Fahad, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, head of Amiri Protocols Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols' Affairs Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, and head of the Amiri Guard Authority Brigadier Fahad Al-Zayed attended the reception. In other news, His Highness the Amir received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser, as well as Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the ambassador of Fiji.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the ambassador of Macedonia.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the ambassador of Angola.

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Kuwaiti, Canadian Defense ministers discuss cooperation



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Canadian Minister of National Defense Harjit Sajjan. —KUNA

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the visiting Canadian Minister of National Defense Harjit Sajjan discussed during a meeting yesterday ways to enhance defense cooperation. The Defense Ministry's Public Relation Department indicated that

Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomed the Canadian official on his Kuwait, saying that continuous meetings of such nature will boost relations within the defensive domain. Meanwhile, Minister Sajjan thanked the Kuwaiti official for his sincere sentiments and invited him to visit Canada at his convenience. —KUNA

Kuwait, Sudan boost judicial ties



KHARTOUM: Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawa meets with Sudan's First Vice President and Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Saleh. —KUNA

KHARTOUM: Sudan's First Vice President and Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Saleh yesterday reiterated Khartoum's eagerness to boost ties with Kuwait in all fields. Receiving Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawa and an accompanying delegation, Saleh lauded the activation of bilateral relations. He also stressed judicial independence to enhance justice in both countries. The meeting has reaffirmed the deep-rooted special ties between Kuwait and the Sudan in all fields, Mutawa said.

Chief Justice of the Republic of Sudan, and President of the national Supreme Court Haider

Ahmed Daifalla said that the visit reaffirmed the solid and eternal bilateral ties. The two countries have cut a long path toward the formation of joint committee and concluding joint agendas.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Khartoum Bassam Mohammed Al-Qabandi described the visit as 'fruitful,' saying it was crowned with signing a joint agenda that will, no doubt, help realize more progress in judicial cooperation. The Kuwaiti delegation arrived in Khartoum Saturday on a three-day visit to enhance cooperation between the judicial institutions in both countries. —KUNA

Local

Premier stresses need for new stage of cooperation between Cabinet, parliament

Adjusting parliamentary practice cannot be delayed: PM

KUWAIT: Landing on clear means to reach a new stage of cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities is needed in order for national ambitions to be attained, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday.

The government will present to parliament its action program in parallel with the state's development plan, including work strategies and deadlines, said His Highness the Premier in a speech after the new cabinet took oath before the National Assembly.

Addressing His Highness the Amir, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak vowed to "abide by the oath and rise to the occasion of shouldering the responsibility, as well as exerting utmost efforts to cooperate with MPs so as to manifest His Highness the Amir's directions for the wellbeing of the state and interests of citizens."

"Adjusting the parliamentary practice is an objective that cannot be delayed or procrastinated in order to preserve national gains; as pointed out by His Highness the Amir in his speech," the Premier said.

Principles of the Constitution and the by-laws of the National Assembly, as well as decisions of the Constitutional Court, has established basis of parliamentary and monitoring work; enacting the true democratic practice, said His Highness the Premier in his speech.

"These principles would buttress the state's potentials and unite Kuwaitis under the genuine virtue of respecting the other's opinion in order to have a pure and vibrant democratic practice," His Highness pointed out. "We need to rise to the level of the responsibility and raise the bar in face of major challenges; aware of its implications and determined to confront it with all



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addresses yesterday's National Assembly session. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes an oath during yesterday's parliament session.

our power to maintain Kuwait's safety and stability." In this vein, His Highness stressed that "in light of Kuwait 2035 vision, the government, along with the National Assembly, the private sector and civil society institutions, are geared to apply reforms and achieve strategic

developmental projects in the sectors of oil, transportation and communication, power and water, education, health, housing and environment.

"Also, the Kuwaiti islands' development and the 'Silk City' projects are among the most vital in the plan in

terms of the state's economic strategy that aims to sustain its position in global competitiveness levels and improve outcomes of the educational system and link it to job market requirements," His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak concluded. — KUNA

Kuwait to support Palestine at UNSC: FM



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks during yesterday's parliament session. — KUNA

KUWAIT/NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait will highlight the Palestinian cause during its tenure as a non-permanent member of UNSC, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's statement came during his participation at the regular session of the National Assembly.

The US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the step to move the American embassy to the holy city will be strongly protested, affirmed Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. He indicated that the decision violated several UNSC resolutions on Palestine and it violated all international laws and norms.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the decision, if implemented, would crush all hopes for peace in the Middle East and it will be a direct slap towards the Arab peace initiative. Kuwait stands in solidarity with the Palestinians and it will support all efforts to establish a Palestinian state. In regards to the US veto of a UNSC resolution condemning the Jerusalem decision late Monday, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled indicated that the resolution was a clear indication of the world's disapproval of the American decision. He hoped that the US would reconsider the situation and back down from this unjust policy.

Global rejection

Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had stated on Monday that the 14 UN Security Council members' support of a draft resolution on Jerusalem, against a US veto, reflected 'global rejection' of the American unilateral decision over the occupied city.

The US vetoed an Egyptian-sponsored UN draft resolution rejecting US President Donald Trump's decision earlier this month to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied city. The vote by the UNSC members "sends a clear message over the international overwhelming consensus that rejected" any unilateral move that considered Jerusalem a capital of the Zionist entity, Ghanem said in a statement shortly after the vote.

Ghanem thanked Egypt for sponsoring the resolution, which he considered "an international referendum over the rejection of political manipulation of the status of (Jerusalem)." Ghanem, addressing an urgent meeting of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union in Morocco few days ago, called for a united Arab action vis-a-vis the US move.

Kuwait regrets veto

Kuwait Ambassador to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi expressed regret on Monday over the US veto of the UN draft resolution on Jerusalem, but said the US move was expected. The Egyptian-sponsored draft resolution was balanced and reaffirmed status of Jerusalem as listed in previous UN Security Council resolutions, Otaibi said following the vote.

The US veto is a "negative development that may promote more violence and tension, and abort chances of a permanent and just solution in the Middle East," he added. The US bias to Israel, recognition of Jerusalem as capital of the Jewish state and transfer of the embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied city are violating UN resolutions and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, he said. Otaibi said East Jerusalem was an occupied Palestinian land and the US decision would not have "any legal effect."

The status of Jerusalem has been determined by many resolutions and the city is among the final status issues that should be resolved via negotiations," he said. Otaibi said the Arab group to the UN would table a resolution to the UN General Assembly in few days to affirm status of Jerusalem. "It is our responsibility to continue to act in international arenas to rally support against the American decision and isolate it," he said. — KUNA

Kuwait Times

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* This campaign is limited to participants in Kuwait only. Ministries and their departments, companies and NGOs cannot enter the festival.
* Kuwait Times employees, spouses and their second-degree relatives also cannot participate.

Local

Zain sponsors World Arabic Language Day initiative

In collaboration with Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation



KUWAIT: Director of the National Library of Kuwait Kamel Al-Abduljalil (left) honors Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan.



Officials pose for a group photo during the event.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, sponsored a cultural initiative organized by the National Library of Kuwait in collaboration with Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation represented in the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuwait. The event came on the occasion of the World Arabic Language Day celebrated on December 18 of every year.

The event witnessed the presence of Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan, Director of Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation Saif Al-Mansouri, and Director of the National Library of Kuwait Kamel Al-Abduljalil. Zain's support to the event came in line with its keenness to support the various cultural initiatives and activities, especially those that aim at preserving and encouraging the use of the Arabic language on both the regional and international levels.

The initiative featured a number of programs that aimed at developing and enriching the various linguistic skills of children, including reading

short stories in Arabic, reading Arabic novels, Arabic calligraphy sessions, learning Arabic basics via visual aids, and more.

within the community through communicating with all segments of the society. By sponsoring such events, Zain showcases the leading role it plays in contributing to the further progress of cultural and social areas.

This initiative, launched by Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, is an annual multiple-day event that comes in the occasion of the international celebrations of the World Arabic Language Day set by the United Nations on the 18th of December of each year. The first edition was launched in 2014 with the aim of encouraging Arab

users to use their mother language on the Internet, especially on social media platforms and by supporting the Arabic language on mobile applications and online web pages.



Organized by
National
Library of
Kuwait

Zain's support to this event highlights its commitment towards its social responsibility. The company, being a leading national institution, is keen on enriching the cultural aspect



Unions eye organized medical framework: Expert

KUWAIT: Several medical unions in Kuwait are seeking government support to form an independent dispute settlement center, a specialized court that unifies judicial verdicts and a committee that revises laws related to medical errors, a legal expert said on Monday. Speaking at the conclusion of a forum on medical errors from a legal standpoint, legal consultant Hussain Boureki said a legal framework targeting medical errors was currently being revised.

The forum, organized by Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, grouped consultants and experts specialized in criminal law and medical investigations. Boureki stressed the need for an independent law on medical responsibility, due to its varied ramifications. "It is wrong to hold doctors accountable over a 57-year-old law that

has not been developed," he said. As no legal framework organizing the medical occupation currently exists this puts doctors at risk of unfair accountability, he viewed. Doctors are sometimes wrongfully convicted by forensics investigators who are not specialized, he added. This ruins the reputation of doctors, said Boureki, adding, "therefore, there should be an independent authority, which is technically-efficient and is undisputed by ministries of health and interior officials." The authority should be able to guarantee the principles of disclosure and transparency to doctors at times they are found in wrongdoing or acquittal. Boureki went on to point out that Kuwaiti laws only incriminate doctors on one article, those who operate without a license.

"The United Arab Emirates, for instance, has a law including 45 articles, while the French law has enacted four laws on medical responsibility." Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior's head of medical forensics Assad Taher said there was a need to differentiate between medical errors and medical complications resulting from therapy. The number of civil and criminal cases referred to the medical forensics go up to 450 a month. From 2004 to 2017, medical responsibility cases have increased by 900 percent, mentioned Taher. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group photo during a forum on medical errors from a legal standpoint, organized by Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies. —KUNA

NBK honors state departments for supporting walkathon

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Emergency Medical Services for their continuous help and recent support during NBK's 23rd Annual Walkathon.

NBK Group Chief Executive Officer, Isam Al-Sager and NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO Sulaiman Barrak Al-Marzouq thanked Major Ahmad Abdallah Abalkhayl and Major Ahmad Haydar ben Haydar as well as supporting officers for their help and support during the walkathon, which took place in December 9th.

Sager and Marzouq also honored the Department of Emergency Medical Services represented by General Commander Hawally Rescuer Team Mohammad Majid Al-Qattan for the efforts showed and great dedication towards participants as well as the helpful hand offered to NBK team.

NBK has a long tradition supporting social and community oriented activities in the country. NBK continues to promote a range of philanthropic missions and social welfare programs as part of its corporate social responsibility to assert its leadership in supporting Kuwait's social development, standing as a model in serving all aspects of the community.



Local

Security, medical preparations completed for 23rd Gulf Cup

Gates open at 1:00 pm on Friday

KUWAIT: All security measures are completed in preparation for the 23rd Gulf Cup football tournament, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. Director of Public Relations Brigadier General Adel Al-Hashash said that the Ministry was ready to secure the tournament, which will be held between December 22, 2017 and January 5, 2018.



Adel Al-Hashash

The ministry's highest authority called for paying attention to security during the course of the tournament, said the official who called on spectators to abide by rules and regulations concerning fireworks and other hazardous materials. The gates of the Jaber International Stadium will be opened at 1:00 pm on Friday to receive legions of fans and football enthusiasts. The opening ceremony of the tournament is slated for 5:30 pm while the opening match between Kuwait against Saudi Arabia kicks off at 6:30 pm.

Meanwhile, Minister of Health Dr Bassel Al-Sabah said that medical preparations for the tournament are completed, adding that two aircrafts, seven field clinics, and various kinds of vehicles were prepared for any emergency at Jaber International Stadium. The 23rd Gulf Cup will see national teams of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, and the UAE compete for the title. —KUNA



A map released by the Interior Ministry yesterday showing the main parking lots allocated for fans who plan to attend 23rd Gulf Cup matches.



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Bassel Al-Sabah checks on preparations for the 23rd Gulf Cup at the Jaber International Stadium yesterday. —KUNA

Former health minister defends his decisions

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Former Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi said that he took successful decisions to serve the country and its citizens. Speaking during an honoring ceremony held by several citizens in Mubarak Al-Abdullah, Harbi said that many issues were dealt with when he was minister, including issues pertaining with the treatment overseas program, besides other important and sensitive issues including fighting corruption. Harbi also thanked all those who participated in his honoring ceremony. The

former minister's popularity has skyrocketed following his decision to impose new fees on health services offered to expatriates in public medical facilities. Many citizens credit Harbi's instructions for a reported significant drop in the number of patients visiting the overcrowded public hospitals ever since his decision went into effect on October 1st. In other news, State Minister for Housing Affairs and Minister of Services Affairs Dr Jinan Bushehri said that work on housing affairs will be followed up and implemented quickly. She said during a meeting with Mutlaa area residents that popular demands will be met and contracts for new areas have been signed with concerned authorities.

Iraq conference

Kuwait is set to host a conference on rebuilding areas in Iraq liberated from the Islamic State (IS). The conference that was called for by Kuwait will be attended by representatives of countries from around

the world, and invitations will be sent with the knowledge of Kuwait and Iraq. An Iraqi delegation visited Kuwait earlier this week to discuss preparations for the conference.

Co-op suspended

The Finance Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for State Legal and Property Affairs Dr Ghazi Al-Ayyash asked Kuwait Municipality to stop all procedures of Dasma and Bneid Al-Qar Co-operative Society as it failed to contact the ministry to complete some legal procedures. Al-Ayyash said all procedures must be stopped until the ministry issues a letter to the municipality to resume the operations.



Dr Jamal Al-Harbi

National Guard honors sign language course instructors

KUWAIT: Deputy chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah recently honored the instructors who took part in the first sign language preparation training course held at the military education department's computer and languages section in collaboration with the education ministry's private education department. The honoring ceremony was also attended by KNG Undersecretary Lt Gen Hashim Al-Refaie. Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Meshaal congratulated the honorees and stressed the importance of learning sign language in order to communicate with people from all social sects.

No injuries in Salmiya hotel blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: A fire broke out at a hotel in Salmiya on Monday night, and it was tackled before spreading or causing any injuries. Firefighters from two different fire stations rushed to the scene as soon as the blaze was reported, and they managed to control the flames which had spread through the second floor of a restaurant in the hotel. No casualties were reported.



KUWAIT: Damage left by a blaze reported in a Salmiya hotel on Monday night.

Terminated

The Interior Ministry terminated the contract of an employee who appeared in video footage circulated on social media threatening to 'cut off the hand of whoever assaults' him. The termination order came over accusations of instigating violence, showing disrespect towards the country's laws and disturbing general order. The suspect, Egyptian, was reported to senior ministry officials who ultimately made the decision to terminate his contract.

Adjourned

The criminal court adjourned hearing the murder case of Kuwaiti propagandist Abdul Rahman Al-Sanafi till January 7, 2018, pending summoning the officer in charge of the case and hearing his and other witnesses' testimony. Case papers go back to August when the 39-year-old victim was lured by a 21-year-old citizen and his friend before being stabbed and dumped outside Al-Sabah Hospital. The suspect admitted to the crime after returning home.

Suicide

A Filipina housemaid was found hanging dead at her sponsor's house in Reqqa, in a case filed as suicide. The house lady checked on her maid when she was unusually late and found her hanging motionless from the ceiling in her bedroom, a security source said. Investigations are

ongoing in the case. Separately, an Ethiopian housemaid was rushed to Al-Sabah Hospital with serious forehead injuries she sustained by banging her head to a wall several times in an attempt to commit suicide at her sponsor's house in Sulaibikhat.

Swindling

Hawalli detectives arrested an expat for swindling KD 10,000 from four citizens to open a restaurant and cafe. After receiving the money, the suspect vanished and stopped answering the citizens' calls. On checking the place the suspect claimed to have rented for the project, the citizens found out that it belonged to someone else. A fraud case was filed and the suspect was arrested pending further investigations.

Identity theft

Police arrested a citizen sentenced to four years in jail over forgery charges he was found guilty of. Case papers indicate that detectives were tipped off on how the suspect has been escaping arrest using his twin brother's ID. The suspect was later stopped at a check point where detectives checked his fingerprints to identify him despite resistance. In another case, a female citizen, who had been wanted for financial claims, was arrested in Farwaniya. Case papers indicate that a police patrol suspected a vehicle parked in a dark spot with a girl in it. On approaching the vehicle, detectives found out that the girl was wanted and had heroin on her. A case was filed.

KFSD chief meets Oman college delegation



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Director Lt Gen Khaled Rakan Al-Mekrad received a delegation from Oman's International College for

Engineering and Administration including the college board chairman Haitham Makki and CEO Affan Al-Akhzami at his office yesterday. Both sides discussed the role of science and education in building societies and the role of bodies concerning firefighting and civil defense.

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N Korea blamed for 'WannaCry'

A year after Xmas attack, Germany admits failings



MILDENHALL: A handout picture released by the US Air Force shows a KC-135 Stratotanker taking off for an aerial refueling mission over the North Sea from Royal Air Force (RAF) Mildenhall in east England. British police arrested a man at a US air base in eastern England on Monday after a car apparently drove into a checkpoint gate, prompting military personnel to open fire, various sources said on December 18, 2017. — AFP

US military imagines war without GPS

Spy cameras scooping up intel from the heavens

WASHINGTON: With GPS-guided bombs, armed drones beaming footage via satellite and spy cameras scooping up intel from the heavens, America's military machine is growing ever more reliant on space-based technology. But what would happen if an enemy were to target the military's satellites, or somehow jam their signals? The disastrous scenario is one the Pentagon knows all too well could happen, and for which it is actively preparing.

"Our force structure today is built around the assumption that we have GPS and we have satellite communications. We are very lethal when we have those things," said Colonel Richard Zellmann, commander of the 1st Space Brigade based in Colorado. "But when you start taking away those combat multipliers, we need to go back then to the days of the industrial-age army where you have to have three times as many people as the adversary does." About 70 percent of the Army's major combat systems depend on signals being beamed from space, Zellmann said, a fact that has

not slipped the attention of other countries.

"Militaries around the world have begun to understand the advantages that the US has enjoyed because of uncontested access to the space domain," Zellmann recently told reporters. Russia and China are both developing satellites capable of maneuvering through space, potentially allowing them to smash into another orbiting object. America, too, has acquired satellites that can move in orbit and inspect or monitor other space objects. But Zellmann noted it is far cheaper and simpler for an enemy to disrupt or damage US military satellites than to develop their own orbital platforms. For instance, low-cost jammers placed at the right location can wreak havoc with incoming GPS signals, which are often quite weak.

Sailing by star

Already, the Army has brought back training to keep soldiers current on how to

read paper maps, and the Navy is teaching sailors how to navigate by the stars with the help of sextants, first used in the 18th century. Army operations centers have map boards that show where troops are on the



Machine growing more reliant on space-based technology

ground, so if a "Blue Force tracker" that watches soldiers with GPS is disrupted, "we still know where all of our units are," Zellmann said. The old-school, analog technologies are also being augmented by new

science designed to replicate satellites, only from Earth.

The military's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, better known as DARPA, which innovates and develops new technologies for the Pentagon, has stated it wants a new generation of precise navigation and timing tools that can work without GPS. One such system uses "pseudolites"—ground-based devices that beam GPS-like signals and are already being used in the commercial sector. Another technology that is used in aircraft is an "inertial navigation system" that deploys a series of sensors and gyroscopes to calculate a plane's or a missile's location.

But the accuracy of these systems is prone to drift a bit over time without calibration, usually done by GPS, something which the military is attempting to improve. The Pentagon is also investing in a new generation of satellites that will provide the military with better accuracy

and have better anti-jamming capabilities. Lieutenant General John Thompson, commander of the Space and Missile Systems Center based in Los Angeles, said space has become crowded, and the military is all too aware that the days of having superiority in orbit are over.

"Our weapon systems of today were built primarily anticipating a benign space environment (that)... is now contested and congested," he said. "We have to be able to operate in that domain." President Donald Trump on Monday unveiled his first National Security Strategy, which specifically addressed the military importance of America's space infrastructure. "The United States considers unfettered access to and freedom to operate in space to be a vital interest," the document states. "Any harmful interference with or an attack upon critical components of our space architecture that directly affects this vital US interest will be met with a deliberate response at a time, place, manner and domain of our choosing." — AFP

65 journalists, media workers killed globally

PARIS: Sixty-five journalists and media workers were killed worldwide in 2017, according to annual figures published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) yesterday. Among them were 50 professional reporters, the lowest toll in 14 years. However, the downward trend is due at least in part to journalists giving up working in the world's deadliest spots. War-torn Syria remains the most dangerous country in the world for journalists, RSF said, with 12 reporters killed, followed by Mexico where 11 were assassinated.

They included Javier Valdez, one of the most prominent chroniclers of Mexico's deadly drug war, whose murder in May sparked a public outcry. The 50-year-old AFP contributor was shot dead in broad daylight in the street in the violent northwestern state of Sinaloa. His last book, "Narco-journalism," recounted the tribulations of Mexican reporters who try to cover the country's extremely violent "narcos" drug cartels. RSF said Mexico was the deadliest country not at war,

saying those who "cover political corruption or organised crime are often systematically targeted, threatened and gunned down."

'Alarming comments'

The Philippines has become Asia's most dangerous country for reporters, with at least five journalists being shot in the last year, four of whom died of their injuries. The rise comes after what RSF called an "alarming comment" by President Rodrigo Duterte who said in May that "just because you're a journalist you are not exempted from assassination if you're a son of a bitch." No journalists were killed in the country the previous year. The overall number of professional reporters slain worldwide, however, fell to its lowest number in 14 years, RSF said.

Of the 65 killed, the report said 39 were murdered, while the rest died in the line of duty—collateral victims of deadly circumstances like air strikes or suicide bombings. The group said that the drop in the death rate may be because journalists were now being better trained and protected for war zones. "The downward trend is also due to journalists abandoning countries that have become too dangerous," it added. "Countries such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya have been hemorrhaging journalists." But the trend is not confined to countries at war, RSF added. — AFP

Defeated militarily, Islamic State still a global threat

PARIS: The year 2017 saw significant destruction to the Islamic State (IS), which lost almost all of its self-proclaimed "Caliphate" in Iraq and Syria, but experts warn the group is adapting and continues to be a threat. Within hours of the start of the year, an Uzbek who described himself as a "Caliphate Soldier" opened fire at a nightclub in Istanbul in Turkey, murdering 39 New Year's Eve revelers.

Through directly arming jihadists or by luring them with online propaganda, IS has committed or inspired dozens of deadly attacks, especially during the first half of the year, including in Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Somalia and Great Britain. Among them was suicide bomber Salman Abedi, a young British man of Libyan origin, who killed 22 people—including many children—by blowing up a homemade bomb at the exit of an Ariana Grande pop concert in Manchester on May 22. Vehicle attacks, committed by jihadists inspired by IS orders, have brought bloodshed to the streets of Jerusalem, London, Stockholm, New York and Barcelona—and remain very difficult to prevent.

'From the ashes'

The attacks, which claimed several thousand



MOSUL: Photo shows a general view of the destruction in Mosul's Old City. 2017 will be remembered as the year the Islamic State organization's ultra-violent experiment in statehood was terminated but Iraq and Syria are left staring at ruined cities and daunting challenges. — AFP

lives overall, took place despite the almost complete dismantling of the organization in Iraq and Syria, following a coordinated offensive launched in autumn 2016. IS—also known by the Arabic acronym Daesh—had set up a base to manage its networks abroad, recruit soldiers, finance and coordinate their actions. But its physical disappearance did not put an end to the attacks. "IS certainly is defeated militarily," former anti-terrorist analyst, Yves Trotignon said. "While it has about 3,000 fighters in Syria and Iraq, which is a lot, it should be remembered that in 2009 the predecessor of the Islamic State of Iraq had been militarily defeat-

ed. But it took them only two and a half years to take advantage of the Syrian revolution and rise again from the ashes."

'Very menacing'

The way in which the post-IS world is managed in the coming months and years will prove crucial in preventing the Sunni community from creating another jihadist movement claiming to defend its interests, according to experts. And in the meantime, the long list of atrocities, attacks or failed attempts of 2017 proves that the global jihadist movement—including Al-Qaeda remains resilient. — AFP

International

Iran summons Swiss envoy over 'irresponsible' claim

Saudi-led air strikes kill 136 civilians in Yemen

ANKARA: Iran summoned the Swiss ambassador yesterday to condemn what it called an "irresponsible" claim by the US Ambassador to the UN that Tehran supplied a missile fired at Saudi Arabia from Yemen on Nov 4. Iran's Tasnim news agency reported. The Swiss embassy represents US interests in Tehran, where Washington has had no mission since 1980, when Iranian students took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. "Iran's strong protest at (Nikki) Haley's baseless and provocative claim was conveyed to the Swiss ambassador," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi was quoted as saying by Tasnim.

Haley on Thursday presented pieces of what she said were Iranian weapons supplied to the Iran-aligned Houthi militia in Yemen, describing it as conclusive evidence that Tehran was violating UN resolutions. Iran has denied the claim. Under a UN resolution that enshrines a nuclear deal reached between Iran and world powers in 2015, Tehran is prohibited from supplying, selling or transferring weapons outside the country unless

approved by the UN Security Council. Washington acknowledged it could not say precisely when the weapons were transferred to the Houthis, and, in some cases, could not say when they were used.

Saudi-led air strikes

Meanwhile, the UN human rights spokesman said yesterday that air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen have killed at least 136 civilians and non-combatants since Dec 6. Other UN officials said the coalition was maintaining tight restrictions on ships reaching Yemen even though 8 million Yemenis are on the brink of famine with the country relying on imports for the bulk of its food, fuel and medicine. "We are deeply concerned at the recent surge in civilian casualties in Yemen as a result of intensified air strikes by the ... coalition, following the killing of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in Sanaa on Dec 4," human rights spokesman Rupert Colville told a news briefing.

Incidents verified by the UN human rights office included seven air strikes on a prison in the

Shaub district of Sanaa on Dec 13 that killed at least 45 detainees thought to be loyal to President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who is backed by Saudi Arabia. "One can assume that was a mistake, they weren't intending to kill prisoners from their own side," Colville said. "It's an illustration of lack of due precaution." Other air strikes killed 14 children and six adults in a farmhouse in Hodeidah governorate on Dec 15, as well as a woman and nine children returning from a wedding party in Marib governorate on Dec 16, he said.

Air strikes verified by the UN rights office in Sanaa, Saada, Hodeidah and Taiz governorates also injured 87 civilians. "If in a specific event due precaution is not taken or civilians are deliberately targeted, that can easily be a war crime," Colville said. It is up to a court to make a ruling, he said, but there had been so many similar incidents in Yemen, it would be hard to conclude war crimes had not taken place.

Yesterday Saudi air defenses intercepted a ballistic missile fired towards the capital Riyadh

but there were no reports of casualties, the coalition said, the latest in a series of attacks by the Iran-aligned Houthi group in Yemen. The restrictions on access to Yemen imposed by the coalition became a total blockade on Nov 6 though conditions were eased on Nov

25 to allow aid ships and some commercial cargoes to reach the shattered Arabian Peninsula country. The UN World Food Program has brought in enough food for 1.8 million people for two months, but far more is needed.—Agencies

Protests rock Iraqi Kurdistan for second day

SULAIMANIYAH: Protesters in Iraqi Kurdistan torched a mayor's office and stormed a ruling party building yesterday as anger raged for a second day over the disastrous fallout from an independence vote. The September referendum delivered a resounding "yes" for independence but drew sweeping reprisals from Baghdad which dealt a heavy blow to the autonomous region's already flagging economy. In its second largest city Sulaimaniyah, security forces fired in the air to disperse demonstrators marching on the central Saray Square, an AFP correspondent reported. Roadblocks sprang up across the city on major roads and around the offices of the main political parties.

Sulaimaniyah is a bastion of opposition to former regional president Massoud Barzani, who organized the independence vote, but all five of the region's

main political parties saw their offices attacked on Monday. Protests were also held in the Sulaimaniyah province towns of Rania and Kifri, and in Halabja and Koyseinjaq in neighboring Arbil province. In Koyseinjaq, demonstrators set fire to the mayor's office, while in Kifri hundreds stormed the offices of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party after pelting the building with stones, witnesses said.

"You're incapable-incapable of defending the disputed areas and incapable of ruling the Kurdistan region," one demonstrator shouted. The disputed areas are a large swathe of historically Kurdish-majority territory outside the autonomous region that Kurdish leaders have long wanted to incorporate in it. The Kurds took control of many of them during the fightback against the Islamic State group from 2014. But after the independence referendum, federal forces retook nearly all of them, including the large city of Kirkuk and its nearby oilfields, which accounted for a major part of the autonomous government's revenues.

'Against all'

After his gamble on the referendum backfired spectacularly, Barzani announced he was stepping down in late October. Legislative and presidential

elections in the region due on November 1 were postponed because of the turmoil. Prime minister Nechirvan Barzani, the ex-president's nephew, has pledged to hold the polls over the next three months.

Issam Al-Fayli, professor of political science at Baghdad's Mustansiriyah University, said the explosion of anger was directed against the political status quo that has dominated Iraqi Kurdistan for years. "These demonstrations are targeting all politicians because the people believe that they make them live without justice," he said. "This is the first time that there are demonstrations against all Kurdish figures across the board and I believe that we are headed for a radical change as there is currently no politician capable of leading."

Residents in the regional capital Arbil said that salaries have been slashed since September and that the price of kerosene for heating has reached new highs. There are only four hours of electricity each day and many people are unable to cover the costs of running generators, they said. The federal government appears to be giving short shift to the worsening economic crunch facing the Kurds, with Baghdad looking to cut the share of the national budget allocated to the region from 17 to 12.6 percent. —AFP

Ramaphosa faces battles as head of South Africa's ANC

JOHANNESBURG: South African deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa faced wide-ranging challenges yesterday after being elected to lead South Africa's ruling party as it grapples with corruption allegations and disunity. He narrowly won the vote to become head of the African National Congress (ANC) on Monday after a bruising race that exposed rifts within the organization that led the fight against apartheid. Thousands of raucous Ramaphosa supporters sang and chanted in the conference hall as rival backers of defeated candidate Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma appeared dejected.

The victory puts Ramaphosa in line to succeed President Jacob Zuma, whose reign has been plagued by corruption scandals, a slowing economy and anger at the once-omnipotent ANC. Zuma, who faces prosecution for alleged fraud, is now predicted to step down as national president next year after ruling since 2009. "He is unlikely to hold out until the end of his term... as this will damage the party ahead of the 2019 election," political risk consultancy Eurasia said. "Zuma is thus likely to end his tenure sometime in the second half of 2018."

Poisoned chalice?

Ramaphosa is set to enjoy a brief honeymoon period—the rand currency rose four percent against the dollar, suggesting investor confidence in the wealthy former businessman, before pairing gains. But he still faces unenviable challenges on public sector cuts to control the ballooning budget and how to battle Zuma-era corruption.

Political analyst Richard Calland warned that Ramaphosa would be constrained by allies of Zuma who were also elected into top ANC positions on Monday's vote. "The winner has inherited a mixed blessing, possibly a poisoned chalice," Calland said. "It's going to be very difficult for him to maneu-

ver, he'll have to reach compromise at every step." A vast image of the ANC's new leader was unfurled as long applause and loud singing greeted the election result at the party conference venue outside Johannesburg. Outside the hall, ANC supporters blocked a road leading to the conference centre, dancing and singing party songs.

Ramaphosa is due to make his first speech as leader today as the conference draws to a close. Zuma was seen as backing the campaign of Dlamini-Zuma, his former wife, allegedly to try to secure protection from prosecution after he leaves office.

The ANC, which has ruled since 1994 when Nelson Mandela won the first multi-racial vote, could struggle to retain its grip on power in the 2019 election due to falling public support. "I hope you will cooperate with the new leadership... as we move to the 2019 elections," Baleka Mbete, outgoing party chairwoman, told nearly 5,000 delegates who voted for the new ANC leadership.

Frustration at ANC

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. "Ramaphosa will work to bring back the principles of liberal politics in the party," Amanda Gouws, politics professor at Stellenbosch University said. "The outcome of the vote was not easy to call. What is at stake here is unity—the new leaders need to forge unity and rebuild the image of the party."

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. "Our people are not happy with the state of the ANC," Zuma said as he stepped down as party chief at the conference, blaming perceptions of being "soft on corruption, self-serving and arrogant." The party recorded its worst-ever results in last year's local elections and will face threats from the centre-right Democratic Alliance and radical left Economic Freedom Fighters parties at the 2019 poll.—AFP



JOHANNESBURG: ANC ruling party's newly elected president Cyril Ramaphosa arrives to take part in the fourth day of the party's annual national conference yesterday. —AFP

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ALNASSER

International

China and Russia slam US 'imperialist character' and 'Cold War mentality'

Trump unveils first National Security Strategy

BEIJING: China and Russia yesterday decried President Donald Trump's first National Security Strategy—which pilloried both nations as challengers to US power—as a “Cold War mentality” with an “imperialist character”. The two global powerhouses hit back hours after the Trump administration unveiled its approach to the world with biting language framing Beijing and Moscow as global competitors. “We urge the United States to stop intentionally distorting China’s strategic intentions and to abandon outdated notions such as the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game, otherwise it will only harm itself or others,” Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

Moscow issued its own denunciation moments later. “The imperialist character of this document is obvious, as is the refusal to renounce a unipolar world, an insistent refusal,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. The report’s tough tone contrasts sharply with Trump’s friendlier face-to-face encounters with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin. “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity,” the document says.



68-page strategy is a litany of US grievances

“They were able to apprehend these terrorists before the event with no loss of life and that’s a great thing, and the way it’s supposed to work,” Trump said, offering the prospect of better ties.

Trump’s presidential campaign is being investigated for possible collusion with Russia in the run-up to his shock 2016 election win—allegations the 45th president has dubbed “fake news”. His security strategy warns that Russian nuclear weapons are “the most significant existential threat to the United States”. It also describes the Kremlin as a power that “seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders”. “Russia aims to weaken US influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners,” it warns. The Kremlin’s Peskov responded that Russia “cannot accept” being described as a threat to US security.

ing. “At the same time we will never give up our legitimate rights and interests.”

Trump received a lavish welcome during his first state visit to Beijing in November and was full of praise for Xi. But the two countries have been locked in an increasingly acrimonious battle over trade issues, with Washington taking unprecedented steps to investigate and add tariffs to Chinese-made goods. There are also lingering US concerns over China’s military activities in the disputed South China Sea, while Washington has angered Beijing with its arms sales to self-ruled Taiwan.

Softer on Russia

Speaking on Monday after the report’s release, Trump took a strikingly softer tone on Russia, lauding the benefits of counterterrorism cooperation with Moscow. Trump claimed that a recent CIA tip-off about a terror attack on a cathedral in Putin’s home town of Saint Petersburg had prevented deaths “in the thousands”.



WASHINGTON: Members of the military and national security staffs attend a speech by US President Donald Trump about his administration’s National Security Strategy at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center on December 18, 2017.—AFP

But Peskov praised “modest” positive features in the report, pointing to what he said was Washington’s readiness to cooperate with Russia in areas such as an exchange of security information.

Two administrations

The national security document – 11 months in the making – is required by law and is designed to form a framework for how America approaches the world. Previous national

security strategies have been released without much fanfare and served as guideposts, rather than doctrinal commandments. But in this unorthodox administration, the document had taken on extra significance. Foreign officials in Washington often complain that there are effectively “two administrations”—one that they hear from day-to-day in contacts with the State Department and Pentagon and another coming from Trump, often via Twitter in 280 characters or fewer.—AFP

News in brief

Sarah Palin’s son charged

ANCHORAGE: The elder son of former Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin has been charged with assault and burglary in a violent confrontation with his father in which the two men struggled over a handgun at his parents’ Alaska home, court records showed on Monday. According to the criminal complaint and supporting documents, Track Palin, 28, broke through a window of the house in Wasilla, Alaska, and scuffled with his father, Todd Palin, on Saturday night in a clash that stemmed from a family dispute over a truck. The altercation left Todd Palin bloodied and former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin visibly shaken, police said in an affidavit filed with the charging documents in state court. The incident marked the latest in a string of run-ins with the law by the politician’s elder son, a US Army Reserve veteran who served a 2008 tour of duty in Iraq.

Russia detains Norwegian

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday it had detained a Norwegian national on suspicion of espionage amid a spike in tensions between the two neighbors. Moscow’s Lefortovsky court ruled to detain for at least two months Norwegian citizen Frode Berg on suspicion of spying for a foreign state, spokeswoman Ekaterina Krasnova said. The hearing had taken place on December 6 and Berg would remain in custody until at least February 5, she added without providing more details. Russian media reported that Berg had been detained during a sting operation conducted by Russia’s FSB security agency in Moscow while receiving classified documents concerning the country’s navy. Citing investigators, media said that Berg had received the documents from a Russian national, Alexei Zhitnyuk, who himself had been earlier arrested for treason.

Ugandan MPs fight

KAMPALA: Uganda’s parliament abruptly adjourned a debate yesterday over extending President Yoweri Museveni’s decades in power after a lawmaker said soldiers had entered the building and members of parliament scuffled with police. “There were so many, I saw them. They were in the chaplaincy,” legislator Gaffa Mbwatekamwa, among several in Museveni’s ruling party who oppose the move, told a local television station. Scuffles broke out between lawmakers and police shortly after speaker Rebecca Kadaga adjourned the debate. It was unclear what triggered the confrontation. Television footage showed chaotic images of lawmakers and police both trying to address the cameras. The incident followed a similar disruption to an attempt to debate the issue in September. The army did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Police spokesman Emilian Kayima said they had no immediate comment but would issue a statement later.

Convicted Italian bomber

ROME: An Italian arrested in Portugal after fleeing a life sentence for a deadly 1974 bombing was extradited to Rome yesterday, Italian police said. Maurizio Tramonte, 65, a former secret service informant, was sentenced in 2015 to life behind bars, 41 years after the attack that killed eight people and wounded 102 in Brescia in northern Italy. He was run to ground in the Portuguese city of Fatima in June. Press reports at the time said he was nabbed by police as he prayed. The former leader of the neo-fascist Ordine Nuovo (New Order) organization, 82-year old Carlo Maria Maggi, was also given a life sentence for the attack on a trade union rally. The bombing was one of a clutch of terror attacks by hardline rightwing and leftwing groups in Italy across more than a decade from the late 1960s. That period of violent turmoil, which saw hundreds of killings, has been dubbed the “Years of Lead”.

Separatism, unity, deadlock? What’s next for Catalonia

MADRID: Catalan voters will decide tomorrow whether to return the separatists to power or to bring in a pro-unity government, as their region’s independence crisis nears its moment of truth. Here are the possible outcomes of the December 21 regional vote:

A pro-unity revolt?

Ciudadanos, a centrist anti-independence party formed in 2006, could win, with its charismatic 36-year-old candidate Ines Arrimadas taking the reins of power in the wealthy region. Such an outcome would be momentous for Catalonia, where nationalists have dominated since democracy was reinstated in Spain following the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. Arrimadas has pledged to enter into “dialogue” with her rivals, in a bid to overcome the divisions in Catalan society. She has also promised to focus on social problems, which she claims were ignored under axed president Carles Puigdemont. A regional government led by Ciudadanos would likely please the ruling conservative Popular Party (PP) in Madrid, which has stopped at nothing to put the brakes on the independence drive. But ultimately, it could also turn into a national threat to the PP, attracting voters in search of an alternative to the bipartisan politics that have long dominated Spain.

A president in exile?

Puigdemont left for Belgium at the end of October. He now faces charges of sedition, rebellion and misuse of public funds over his government’s independence drive and could be jailed before his trial. But in a surreal twist to the crisis, he announced his candidacy from exile, pledging to recover the “dignity” of the Catalan people after being “humiliated” by Madrid. Victory for Puigdemont would be a blow to Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who deposed him after the Catalan parliament declared inde-

A year after Xmas attack, Germany admits failings

BERLIN: Germany’s president admitted yesterday that the government failed to provide adequate support and comfort to relatives of victims in last year’s devastating Christmas market attack, and admitted security gaps in the run-up to the atrocity. A year after rejected Tunisian asylum seeker Anis Amri rammed a truck into the crowded market at Breitscheidplatz, killing 12 and wounding 70 others, the authorities have come under fire over security failings and their clumsy handling of the aftermath of the assault. “It is true that some support came late and remained unsatisfactory,” President Frank-Walter Steinmeier told the bereaved and emergency workers at a private church memorial for the victims.

“Many family members and injured—many of you—felt abandoned by the state,” he said, recalling the words of a mother who had lost her daughter and said no-one had comforted her after the attack. “I can’t get those words out of my head,” he admitted, saying that the relatives’ appeal to be heard had “triggered something and set it in motion.” In the hours following the assault, politicians had put on a brave front and repeated the mantra that Germany

would not be cowed by terror. But Steinmeier acknowledged such rhetoric had done little for the victims. “So soon after the attack ... these words don’t sound simply defiant and self-confident, but also strangely cold and detached,” he said.

‘We can only apologize’

To mark the anniversary, the popular Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz will stay shut all day out of respect for the victims. At midday, Chancellor Angela Merkel was to inaugurate a memorial—a 14-metre golden crack in the ground engraved with the victims’ names. And during the evening, there will be a public ecumenical prayer at 8:02 pm – the exact time when Amri rammed his truck into the crowded square a year ago, when people can light candles and the church’s bells will chime for 12 minutes. But the run-up to the commemoration has been marred by criticism of the authorities by families of the victims.

A wrenching open letter by some of the bereaved accused Merkel of failing to personally offer condolences. The chancellor held her first meeting with relatives only on Monday. Acknowledging the criticism, Merkel said: “It is clear to me that their suffering, this complete transformation of their lives, cannot be put right. “But nevertheless we can show compassion and will improve the things that must be improved.” In an editorial in Tagesspiegel daily, Justice Minister Heiko Maas apologized. “We were not sufficiently prepared to deal with the



BARCELONA: People walk by electoral posters for the upcoming Catalan regional election in Barcelona yesterday.—AFP

pendence on October 27 following a banned referendum. While Spain eventually dropped an international arrest warrant for Puigdemont, he will still be detained if he returns to the country, raising the question of how he might govern should he win.

A leader behind bars?

Oriol Junqueras, deputy president under Puigdemont’s deposed leadership, was remanded in custody on November 2 over his role in the independence bid. His ERC party has a narrow lead over Ciudadanos in the

polls, and should it win, secretary-general Marta Rovira would likely be tasked with running the day-to-day affairs of government. Rovira, however, also faces the threat of detention.

Earlier this month, the Supreme Court in Madrid ordered an expansion of a probe to target members—including Rovira—of a “strategic committee” allegedly set up to achieve independence in Catalonia. With none of the leading candidates expected to win a majority, any one of the winners will need to secure backing from rival parties in order to rule.—AFP



BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel holds a candle during the inauguration of the memorial for the victims of last year’s deadly truck attack at the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin.—AFP

consequences of such a terror attack,” he wrote. “For that, we can only apologise to the victims and their surviving relatives.”

‘Taxi costs not reimbursed’

Kurt Beck, who was commissioned by the government to look into the handling of the aftermath, last week outlined a litany of official failings, including taking up to three days to

inform anxious relatives that their loved ones had perished and even sending the bereaved autopsy bills complete with late payment warnings. Further adding to the embarrassment, Bild daily said the letter inviting relatives to Tuesday’s commemoration was accompanied by an information sheet stating that “taxi costs will not be reimbursed!” and urging them to use public transport instead.—AFP



BASRA: Iraqi newlyweds ride a boat near the Shaheed (martyr) Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr Bridge on Monday. — AFP

River cruise weddings return to Iraq's Basra

BASRA: To the sound of drums and trumpets, an Iraqi groom and his bride this week stepped hand-in-hand onto a speedboat on the river in Basra to celebrate. Their wedding on Monday was the first such celebration to be held on the Shatt Al-Arab waterway running through the southern city since the 1980s. Aboard the small speed boat decorated with tinsel and balloons, laborer Hussein Ali Jabbar and his wife donned captain hats and posed for the camera.

Their guests danced away their one-hour ride on four larger vessels to tunes belted out by the brass band and blaring from the television. It was the first wedding on the river since the devastating 1980-1988 war between Iraq and Iran. Many continued to avoid the river afterwards, deeming it unsafe amid tensions with neighboring Iran and Kuwait, and fearing insurgent attacks after the US-led invasion of 2003.

"Everybody in town remembers the river weddings in the past," said Talib Al-Bdairy, spokesman for the state company behind the relaunch. "We want to bring back to life these wonderful memories on these modern safe boats," he said. The General Company of Maritime Transports did not charge for Monday's wedding cruise as the bride's father was killed this year in the northern



city of Mosul fighting the Islamic State group. But the going rate for future celebrations will be 2,000 Iraqi dinars (or \$1.5) per head.

It was the groom's idea to have a wedding on the water. "A wedding on the river makes everyone happy... It's much better than being stuck in traffic in the city," he said. His uncle, Karim Mohammed, offered another reason to celebrate on the Shatt Al-Arab. It "avoids the gunshots in the air that are often how we celebrate a happy event here but often end in tragedy," he said. — AFP

Saudis intercept Houthi missile...

Continued from Page 1

There are no reported casualties at this time," the government-run Center for International Communication wrote on its Twitter account.

A Kuwaiti foreign ministry source said Kuwait strongly condemns the Houthis' firing of the ballistic missile, which aimed at terrorizing civilians. This cowardly act shows anew how the Houthis are defying the will of the international community, violating UN resolutions and undermining the security and stability of the region, added the source. Kuwait, said the source, stands fully behind Saudi Arabia and supports all measures aimed at preserving security and stability. Kuwait, he added, is committed to supporting the legitimate leadership in Yemen.

Saudi palaces, military and oil facilities are within range of such missiles fired from Yemen, the Houthis said, according to a statement distributed via their television channel Al-Masirah. "In exchange for a thousand days of bombardment with internationally banned weapons, there has been a thousand days of steadfastness in which our people have demonstrated that their resolve will not be broken," rebel chief Abdulmalik Al-Houthi said in a speech yesterday. "Today our people reached the heart of Riyadh - the government palace - with a ballistic missile."

In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman said the United States was aware of the reported missile attack. "We are working closely with our Saudi partners ... to ensure that our Saudi partners have the resources they need to defend their territory against indiscriminate attacks against civilian-inhabited areas," he said.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are locked in struggle for influence in the Middle East. Riyadh is especially sensi-

tive to the civil war in its backyard Yemen, a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people and displaced over two million. The United Arab Emirates, a close ally of Saudi Arabia and part of the coalition, said the latest Houthi attack underscored the need to keep the military campaign in Yemen going. "With every Iranian missile fired by the Houthi militia against civilian targets, the necessity of (Operation) Decisive Storm becomes clear," United Arab Emirates minister of state for foreign affairs, Anwar Gargash, wrote on his Twitter account.

A Saudi-backed coalition has launched thousands of air strikes against the Houthis and allied forces since intervening in the war on behalf of the government nominally based in Aden. The Houthis for their part have fired several missiles at the kingdom, mostly in the south since 2015, but not caused any serious damage, in their bid to pressure Saudi Arabia, a strategic US ally and the world's biggest oil exporter. Yesterday's attack took place hours before Saudi Arabia was due to announce the country's annual budget in a news conference expected to be attended by senior ministers.

Residents in the Saudi capital reported hearing a loud explosion and seeing smoke after yesterday's attack. "I was in my office when I heard a big bang," said Tomas Kompikan, one of the many foreign workers in Riyadh. "Suddenly after around 30 to 45 seconds I heard a next sound... and we saw a white smoke." Houthi missiles are often modified by reducing payloads and rarely hit their targets. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has described what Riyadh says is Iran's supply of rockets to the Houthis as "direct military aggression" that could be an act of war.

Iran, Saudi Arabia's regional foe, has denied supplying such weaponry to the Houthis who have taken over the Yemeni capital Sanaa and other parts of the country during its civil war. Saudi Arabia said on Nov 4 it had intercepted a ballistic missile over Riyadh's King Khalid Airport, an attack that stirred regional tensions and led the coalition to close Yemeni ports. On Nov 30 Saudi Arabia shot down another missile near the southwestern city of Khamis Mushait. — Agencies

Opposition MPs walk out...

Continued from Page 1

Several MPs opposed to the committee said there was no need for it as it did not do anything in the past.

The Assembly then approved two motions to debate the US decision to transfer its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and national reconciliation. The first topic was debated, while the other was deferred until today. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah briefed the Assembly about the measures Kuwait has taken against the US decision and the contacts made by the government. MPs who spoke praised HH the Amir and the government for the measures taken to support Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.



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Sports

Slick Shiffrin storms to a convincing victory in World Cup giant slalom

Shiffrin's 34th victory on the World Cup circuit in short career

COURCHEVEL: American Mikaela Shiffrin stormed to a convincing victory in the World Cup giant slalom event in Courchevel yesterday, finishing almost a full second ahead of her key Olympic rival, France's two-time world champion Tessa Worley.

"My biggest goal with my skiing is to ski my best and push the limits of the sport," said Shiffrin. "I was pushing my limits and I'm really proud of that. I was aggressive and proud today." In front of raucous home support, Worley laid down the fastest second run after finishing in eighth place in the first of two legs.

It looked like the Frenchwoman, who has an Australian father, might have done enough for a surprise victory as six higher-ranked racers all finished slower down the Emile Allais course. But then came the turn of 22-year-old Shiffrin, the three-time world champion and 2014 Olympic slalom gold medalist.

And she made no mistake, setting off with a massive 1.42sec lead over Worley and clocking 1min 01.10sec for a combined total of 2:02.40.

Despite a slight error in the bottom third, Shiffrin's winning margin was 0.99sec over Worley, world giant slalom gold medalist in 2017 and 2013. It was Shiffrin's 34th victory on the World Cup circuit in her short career, and fifth in the giant slalom.

The American skipped Val d'Isere last weekend, preferring instead to rest up in Norway. "There were snowstorms everywhere in Europe," she said of the choice to go north. "It was really good and actually

very nice to get away from everything a bit. "I found out I was actually really tired, so it was exactly what I needed.

CAME TO BE AGGRESSIVE

"I came here and was ready to be aggressive," Worley added: "On the top section of the second run I didn't feel really good, but I knew I could change and attack most importantly the last part.

"I'm really happy I did it because it was quite bumpy and dark and that's what made the difference. "Everything has happened today like I wanted it to." Italy's Manuela Moelgg, 34, was third, 0.02sec adrift with Norwegian Ragnhild Mowinckel a mere 0.01sec behind in fourth as the rivals start to measure up for the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, in February.

Shiffrin's US teammate Lindsey Vonn, winner of a super-G in Val d'Isere on the weekend but absent here after pinging her knee, was obviously following the race from the United States.

"Congrats @MikaelaShiffrin and impressive 2nd run @TessaWorley. Manu

keeping it real for the old ladies," Vonn tweeted alongside icons of hands raised in celebration and a flexed bicep.

Hopes for a US medal rush at the Olympics were played down by Shiffrin, who has this season already won in the slalom, giant slalom and downhill disciplines. "The Olympics, well I treat them like it's just another



COURCHEVEL: Winner US Mikaela Shiffrin (C) celebrates with the US ski team on the podium after winning the FIS Alpine Women's World Cup Giant Slalom yesterday in Courchevel, French Alps.— AFP

“ I was aggressive and proud today ”

Gatlin sacks coach after doping claim

LONDON: World 100 metres champion Justin Gatlin said yesterday he was "shocked and surprised" at doping allegations made against his coach Dennis Mitchell, like Gatlin a convicted doper, but added that he had sacked him as soon as he heard about the issue.

Britain's Daily Telegraph set up a sting where they claim Mitchell, the American former medal-winning sprinter who was previously banned for doping, and sports agent Robert Wagner had offered to supply performance-enhancing drugs to undercover reporters claiming to be making a movie featuring a doped athlete.

Gatlin, 35, who won the world title in London this year against a backdrop of jeering relating to his two doping bans, issued a statement via Instagram where he said: "I am not using and have not used PEDs (performance-enhancing drugs). "I was shocked and surprised to learn that my coach would have anything to do with even the appearance of these current accusations. I fired him as soon as I found out about this.

"All legal options are on the table as I will not allow others to lie about me like this." The Athletics Integrity Unit and the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) have both said they are investigating the claims. USADA said in a statement:

"Investigations stemming from tips and whistleblowers play a critical role in anti-doping efforts. We are presently coordinating with the Athletics Integrity Unit in order to investigate these claims fully." The International Olympic Committee said yesterday: "The IOC has full confidence that WADA will look very carefully into this matter." The Telegraph quoted International Association of Athletics Federations president Seb Coe as saying: "These allegations are extremely serious and I know the independent Athletics Integrity Unit will investigate in accordance with its mandate."

In a statement to the Telegraph, Mitchell, who confessed on oath to using banned substances during his career, said: "I never suggested in any way that any of my current athletes used any banned substances or that I was familiar with training any of my current athletes with those substances."

Wagner also denied being involved in doping but said he "played along" in the sting because he knew what was going on. Gatlin has been a divisive figure in the sport throughout his career, which brought him Olympic 100m gold in 2004 and a host of other global medals. He served two doping bans for offences he has always denied and after his second comeback, was widely painted by the media as the bad guy going up against the sport's darling, Usain Bolt.

In August, in Bolt's final individual championship race, Gatlin took the 100m gold at the World Championships in London, with the Jamaican finishing third.— Reuters



ABK staff during the bowling tournament.

ABK organizes second successful bowling tourney

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) organised its second successful bowling tournament for its staff, which was aimed at strengthening employee relationships and

building team spirit in a stress-free environment. The fun-filled tournament was held at the bowling hall in Ahmed Al Bisher Al Roumi High School.

ABK strongly believes that healthy social activities are crucial to build effective employee relationships. Such interactions encourage people to be themselves in a relaxed environment; and contribute to happier and healthier work relationships.

Recording high levels of participation from all ABK staff, the bowling tournament saw

Mario Santos as the top male scorer with a total of 402 for 2 games and Shahad Al Kharaz as the top female scorer with 261 points. In addition, the first place in the female category was bagged by Shahad Al Kharaz and the second place by Ghadeer Al Sarraf. The winning team consisted of Mario Santos, Marvin Macayana, Muhammed H. Koyama and Shanawaz Qureshi, while the runners up were: Farid Gabriel, Mohammed Al Ghareeb, Ramy Oraby and Jassim Al Haydar.

KIB sponsors Al-Fadel at the Jet Ski King's Cup - World Cup 2017

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored Kuwaiti national Jet Ski champion, Abdullah Al-Fadel, at the International Jet Ski World Cup 2017, which was recently held in Pattaya City, Thailand. After a thrilling competition between a large group of high-ranking world champions from across continents, Al-Fadel won second place in one of the competition's largest and most challenging categories: the Pro Ski King's Cup for professional riders.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia congratulated the young Kuwaiti champion on this great achievement as well as his continuous efforts to boost Kuwait's standing in the sport on an international level. Najia further praised Al-Fadel's impressive athleticism and unwavering dedication, especially as he remains committed to an ongoing training program throughout the year. Najia added saying: "KIB has always been a dedicated supporter of talented local youth, particularly Abdullah Al-Fadel who has been shining bright in his sport. We strongly believe in this young man's athletic talent and are supremely confident in his ability to continue garnering prestigious achievements and



awards. Simply put, we are proud of what he has achieved to date, as he continues to proudly represent Kuwait on the regional and global scenes."

It is worth noting that KIB is always dedicated to supporting and sponsoring community-based activities, particularly those relat-

ed to youth, culture, and sports. The Bank believes that these initiatives will nurture a healthier younger generation - in both body and mind. Additionally, KIB continues to utilize its utmost capabilities to strengthen its engagement with all segments across the local community.



LONDON: File photo shows US athlete Justin Gatlin kneels in front of Jamaica's Usain Bolt after Gatlin won the final of the men's 100m athletics event at the 2017 IAAF World Championships at the London Stadium in London on August 5, 2017.— AFP

Sports

The new Bradman? Quirky Smith rises to exalted heights

Smith single-handedly batted Root's team out of the series

SYDNEY: Steve Smith has broken English hearts and smashed records with his phenomenal Ashes batting and is being acclaimed as the best Australian batsman since the greatest of all, Don Bradman.

That is rarefied company for the quirky 28-year-old skipper, who led Australia to reclaiming the Ashes with an imperious 239 — his highest Test score in Australia's mammoth first innings 662 for nine declared in the third Perth Test victory on Monday.

Ashes-winning skipper Smith has almost single-handedly batted Joe Root's team out of the series, accumulating 426 runs in just four innings at an average of 142, which allowed his bowlers to do the rest. Smith, whose idiosyncratic style-moving across his stumps as the bowler delivers-flies in the face of cricket's purists, has a career average of 62.32 from 59 Tests.

That places him second only in Test history to Bradman, whose average of 99.94 at the pinnacle was forged from 1928-48.

Records have tumbled for the cricket-obsessive Smith, who broke into the Test arena as a leg-spin bowler all-rounder batting at number eight in 2010. Since then Smith has reeled off the milestones to draw comparison with the greatest batsman the game has ever seen.

UNCONVENTIONAL STYLE

He has amassed 22 Test centuries, 14 of them in 29 Tests as captain.

Bradman made 14 hundreds in 24 Tests as skipper. Smith is only the fifth Australian captain, one of them being Bradman, to have scored two Ashes double hundreds. Rival skipper Root has tried everything during the current series to dislodge Smith, to get him out of

his "bubble", but to little effect.

Over the 15 days of the one-sided series Smith has batted for more than three full days. He has simply been the difference.

Much has been said about Smith's unconventional batting technique, in some ways similar to Bradman, who would bring his bat down in a rotary movement.

Smith is similarly unique and possesses rapier-like reflexes. He rarely hits the ball in the air, cutting down risk and making him even harder to set fields against.

"You wouldn't coach a young player to hold a bat like he does with such a strong bottom hand or move around quite as much," observed former England captain Nasser Hussain. "But when his bat comes down in contact with the ball it is the full face and his hand-eye coordination is just phenomenal." Former Australia captain Mark Taylor added: "At the moment his bat looks six-foot wide.

"Smith has got an insatiable appetite for runs. You can see when he bats, he gets in that little bubble.

"He's almost oblivious to everything that's going on around him, except the ball that is coming out of the bowler's hand." Such is Smith's attention to detail that he gets his fiancée Dani Willis to act as a bowling-machine operator in their backyard for extra batting practice. "He sets everything up and I just load the balls," she revealed. Smith is a notorious fidgety character while at the batting crease.

MAVERICK MOMENTS

Host broadcaster Channel 9 counted 23 different ticks, fidgets and movements by him during his routine preparation before facing the bowler.

Other maverick moments have come to light during

Places Smith second only in Test history



PERTH: Australia's captain Steve Smith (2nd L) looks on as groundstaff attempt to dry the wet playing pitch prior to a start on day five of the third Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia in Perth.—AFP

the Ashes series. At a Perth drinks break while Smith was batting in his 399-ball epic, team support staff brought a chair onto the WACA Ground so Smith could sit down-not to rest, but redress. As with tennis superstar Rafael Nadal's fastidious obsession with the precise placement of his water bottles by his court-side chair, Smith also has a peculiarity where he is distracted by the sight of his shoelaces.

As Smith sat on the chair, he had the laces re-taped to avoid seeing them. "I have always had an issue with

looking at my shoelaces when I'm batting," Smith said of his habit earlier this year.

He said the sight of laces "would sort of do my head in a bit". "So I ended up getting a physio to tape my shoelaces to my socks. I just like just seeing my shoes and everything to look sort of clean ... just no shoelaces." Another of Smith's oddities is that he changes his batting gloves every 20 to 30 minutes during an innings, and has up to 15 pairs of gloves in his kit. — AFP

England face postmortem after Ashes capitulation

PERTH: England will have to make some tough decisions about the futures of some of their most decorated senior players after they were ruthlessly exposed by Australia in a 15-day Ashes capitulation.

Joe Root's team head to Melbourne 3-0 down in the five-match series after being subjected to an innings and 41-run hiding in the third test at the WACA, where opener Alastair Cook and paceman Stuart Broad failed to deliver yet again.

English hopes that Cook could channel the Herculean effort that saw him score 766 runs in their 2010/11 triumph Down Under have proved forlorn. The veteran left-hander has instead reprised his form from the away series of 2013/14 when he stumbled through a 5-0 whitewash under the yoke of captaincy.

Despite being relieved of the leadership burden this time around, Cook has 'supported' his successor Root with only 83 runs at an average of 13.83 this series, comfortably the lowest of England's specialist batsmen. Broad, meanwhile, has managed only five wickets at an average of 61.80 and suffered the worst test figures of his career at the WACA, where he went wicketless for 142 runs. His pace partner James Anderson has battled manfully through a difficult campaign, but at the age of 35 the long-serving Lancastrian may not be able or willing to lead England's pace attack far into the future.

A TOUR TOO FAR

Australia has often proved to be a tour too far for veteran England players, as was shown by the 2013/14 debacle which ended the careers of Graeme Swann, Matt Prior and Kevin Pietersen.

That whitewash also led to the departure of director Andy Flower, but current coach Trevor Bayliss says he is still the right man to lead the team. "You may not (think that), but I think our performances have gone pretty well over the last couple of years," he told reporters at the WACA.

"That's for people above my pay grade to make that decision," Bayliss has, however, offered no bright ideas on how to rejuvenate England or find faster bowlers that can compete on Australian pitches where they have now lost eight straight matches.

"I haven't got the answers," said the Australian. "Over the last couple of years we've certainly been on the lookout for a few positions in the team and no one until this tour has stood out." In Somerset seamer Craig Overton, who bowled with vigour in Adelaide and Perth until suffering a rib injury, England have at least unearthed an encouraging prospect.

But the raw 23-year-old can scarcely be expected to cover the gaping hole which the absence of Anderson and Broad's 900-odd wickets of test experience would leave. Middle order batsman Dawid Malan staked his place in the team with his maiden test century at the WACA, backing up his 140 with a half-century in the second innings.

Cook, by comparison, contributed only 21 runs in his two innings at the WACA. A fine servant of English cricket with over 11,000 Test runs, Cook will be 33 when he lines up for the Melbourne test on Boxing Day. After 150 tests, Bayliss said, he would know the right time to step down. — Reuters

Zimbabwe seek to end underdog tag

PAARL: Zimbabwe cricket coach Heath Streak said yesterday he wanted his players to play "winning cricket" when they meet South Africa in a one-off day-night Test next week. "We'd rather lose trying to play a winning brand of cricket than just compete," said Streak of a Test South Africa are expected to win comfortably.

"The main thing is belief and shaking off that underdog mentality we had," he said in Paarl, the western Cape town where Zimbabwe begin a three-day warm-up match against a South African Invitation team today.

Zimbabwe have played just ten Tests since they last met South Africa in Harare in August 2014, losing nine and drawing one. "It's well documented how little Test cricket we play," said Streak. "I think for us it's less about the type of cricket than about playing at international level.

"Whether it's playing Tests or one-day internationals, it's the gaps in between that are the biggest challenge for us." The contest with South Africa will be

Overton says England will fight until the last in two Tests

LONDON: All-rounder Craig Overton said England have not been good enough in the Ashes series but insists the chastened tourists will be throwing everything at the last two Tests to avoid a whitewash. Australia regained the urn on Monday when they polished off Joe Root's side to win the third test at the WACA by an innings and 41 runs and take a 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

All England have left to play for is pride in Melbourne and Sydney, but Overton says the series is not over as they try to halt an eight-match losing sequence in tests in Australia.

"We have not been good enough for long enough in this series and have let chances slip, and because of that we have lost the Ashes before Christmas," he said in The Times yesterday.

"We are gutted but don't for a second think that there will be divisions in the camp or that we see the series as over. "We will be throwing everything we have at the Melbourne and Sydney Tests—we are desperate to make a mark on the series, even if it's too late to win.

"We will fight until the very last to do so." Whether or not Overton will be fit to play a part is another matter entirely after he suffered a hairline fracture of a rib while diving in the field at Perth.

"I am nursing a hairline fracture to my rib but the doctor warned me it could become much worse if I landed the wrong way — a proper fracture, or even a punctured lung. No one needs that," Overton said. "I've been brought up to fight through the pain, and I'm not the sort to leave the field for nothing."

Zimbabwe's first day-night Test and captain Graeme Cremer admitted: "We haven't played with a pink ball and we haven't played a lot under lights."

Cremer said this week's day-night match at Boland Park was a crucial part of his team's preparation for the Test. "We've had two sessions under lights to see how it (the pink ball) reacts," said Cremer.

"At twilight, when it's starting to get dark a little more seems to happen off the wicket. "This warm-up game will give us a good idea of what to expect and there will be lots of discussion before the Test."

Both Streak and Cremer are looking forward to playing in the first scheduled four-day Test in more than four decades. "The so-called bigger teams will probably have to score a bit quicker and give the lesser teams more opportunities to take wickets. The game will move a lot quicker, I think," said Cremer.

Streak said that with 98 overs a day instead of the usual 90, there would be plenty of time to achieve results. "With 98 overs a day, it makes it a four-and-a-half day Test and the twilight conditions will be more challenging for batters," he said.

Cremer said Zimbabwe needed to play consistently well throughout a Test match and avoid the off periods that have cost them previous series. "We tend to lose Test matches in a certain period, say in an afternoon or in one day of the Test match.

"But we've played a lot of good cricket. It's usually



Heath Streak

been the first innings with the batting that we have struggled so we're hoping to change that." — AFP



Craig Overton

Somerset seamer Overton enjoyed a dream start to his test career when he picked up the wicket of Australian captain Steve Smith in the second test in Adelaide. With six wickets to his name in his two tests and an impressive 41 not out with the bat in Adelaide, Overton was one of the few England players to emerge with much credit. He said he is desperate to play in the

Melbourne test which begins on Dec. 26. "I won't rule myself out of Melbourne. I accept it's unlikely, but I'm so desperate to play that I won't accept I'm not going to until the doctors tell me absolutely otherwise.

"I'll be weaning myself off the strong painkillers, just a few paracetamol to help me sleep. "And no golf! It'll be beach time for me." — Reuters

Sports

Sigurdsson stunner for Everton helps sink struggling Swansea

Rooney's second spot kick wrap up victory

LIVERPOOL: Everton's revival under Sam Allardyce continued with a 3-1 victory over bottom club Swansea City helped by a stunning Gylfi Sigurdsson goal at a foggy Goodison Park as they moved up to ninth in the Premier League on Monday.

The hosts went behind after a sluggish start but goals from Dominic Calvert-Lewin before halftime, Sigurdsson's outstanding strike just past the hour and a late penalty by Wayne Rooney, who hit the post with an earlier spot kick, secured the points.

The Merseyside club are unbeaten in four league games since Allardyce took charge this month and, while it was hardly a sparkling display by his side against the struggling Welsh outfit, the manager's trademark organisation was evident.

Swansea, who have now lost six away games in a row, suffered an early blow when striker Wilfried Bony, their only scorer in the last seven games, limped off after four minutes with a muscle problem to be replaced by Tammy Abraham. Despite that setback, the visitors went ahead in the 35th minute, taking advantage of the poor defending as Leroy Fer lost his marker to slot home a Tom Carroll corner from close range.

Everton looked short of inspiration but they got on level terms just before the break when they were awarded a penalty after Aaron Lennon went down

under Roque Mesa's challenge.

Rooney's spot kick was pushed against the post by Lukasz Fabianski but Calvert-Lewin reacted quickly and drove home the rebound to the relief of the former England captain.

Sigurdsson's move from Swansea to Everton in August, for a reported fee of 45 million pounds (\$60.23 million), has been questioned, in terms of its value, by many observers but the Iceland forward showed his quality with a superb solo goal.

After Rooney found him on the left flank, Sigurdsson cut inside on to his right foot and unleashed an unstoppable drive past Fabianski and into the far corner of the net in the 64th. Everton were awarded a second penalty after 73 minutes, which Swansea complained about with some justification. Martin Olsson was ruled to have tripped Jonjo Kenny but replays showed the foul had been committed outside the area.

Rooney, undeterred by his earlier miss, strode up to blast the ball home from the spot and wrap up the points for Everton, who now have 25 points from 18 games. The defeat left Paul Clement's Swansea side rooted to the foot of the table with 12 points, four points adrift of the safety zone and facing a long battle for top-flight survival. — Reuters



LIVERPOOL: Everton's English striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin (C) takes a shot during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Swansea City at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England on Monday.— AFP



Striker Bony went off injured in fourth minute

Chinese footballers come to Brazil for extra polish

PORTO FELIZ: Arriving in Brazil, Chinese footballer Long Yushuo took on the more easily pronounced name Thomas, but it's the locals' skills with the ball that he's really hoping to adopt. Thomas, 16, is one of a squad of youth players from Chinese team Shandong Luneng dispatched to polish their game at Desportivo Brasil club in Porto Feliz, near Sao Paulo, which Shandong bought in 2014. The idea is that the 22,400-mile (36,000-kilometer) round trip will enable these youngsters to bring back something that all the money and desire in China's burgeoning football scene cannot otherwise get—Brazilian footballing magic. When Thomas and another 22 players from the under-16 side arrived from Jinan, capital of Shandong province, in April, they knew little of Brazil. Along with football practice, they study Portuguese in the quiet town of 50,000 people. But Thomas, who picked his name in honor of Bayern Munich's Thomas Muller, is clear about what his principal lesson has been in Porto Feliz. "Technique," he said, alongside his teammates, who all wore Shandong's orange strip. China may not have much footballing pedigree but, encour-

aged by President Xi Jinping and lavish spending, it is working to catch up quickly. Luneng, a subsidiary of the chief national electricity company, is one of the big investors in the expansion plan, which has made China the world's fifth biggest transfer market in 2016. Of all the foreign imports to the Super League, the 21 Brazilian players comprise the biggest contingent. The national team, though, has yet to see much benefit. China lags in 60th place in FIFA rankings and did not qualify for next year's World Cup. So China's strategists decided to try to unpick the secrets of Brazilian football so that the next generation can get the missing edge.

"This exchange was created so that they can achieve a similar quality to that of the players here," Desportivo Brasil technical coordinator Rodrigo Pignataro told AFP. "They are very disciplined, but they lack nous, cheekiness and flexibility and autonomy. That's what the Brazilian boys have." Desportivo Brasil is not an ordinary club, but more like a training academy, so the Chinese are in good hands.

The club hosts another five Chinese players from the under-20 team as well as 130 Brazilian players ranging in age from 14 to the club's own third regional division professional team, all seeking the excellence that will let them break through to the top level.

For the youngsters in Porto Feliz, where Brazilian and Chinese flags fly side by side, the future should be bright. "This is the group the Chinese government wants to serve as the core of a team for the Tokyo



SAO PAULO: File photo shows Young Chinese players sent by China's Shandong Luneng football club attend a training session at the Luneng Brazil Sports Center located in Porto Feliz, some 120 km from Sao Paulo, Brazil on November 13, 2017. — AFP

2020 Olympics and the World Cup in 2022. We have a heavy responsibility," Pignataro said. After swotting over history books and other academic classes in the mornings, the main focus is getting out onto the training field. Vitinho, a skilful forward, has done three seasons in Porto Feliz and is now part of the under-20 team. Given how integrated the 18-year-old is—even becoming a fan of Brazilian funk music—few remember that his real name is Liu Chaoyang.

"I want to play in Europe, but I need to work a lot to improve," he said in fluent Portuguese. The same might be said for the

whole Chinese experiment, but Zhao Shuo, a 25-year-old assistant coach, says he's ready to take the time. He's spent two months following his Brazilian counterparts around and says the only area where he might have the advantage is in the iron discipline associated with Asian teams. "Football needs time because it's a kind of education and education is not a short-term thing. Maybe we will need 10 or 20 years or more," he said in English, pointing to Japan as an example. "We have to learn from our neighbors and be patient," he said, never taking his eyes off the action on the field. — AFP

La Liga chases Asian cash with early Clasico kick-off

MADRID: For the first time, Spanish football's showpiece event, El Clasico between giants Real Madrid and Barcelona, has been scheduled for a lunchtime kick-off on Saturday as La Liga seeks to capture Asia's attention and its cash. "We are keen to provide our fans in Asia the opportunity to watch Real Madrid and Barcelona face off at a time that is convenient to them," La Liga's Chief Communications Officer Joris Evers told AFP.

With a potential television audience of 650 million people, according to La Liga, El Clasico is the most watched club match around the world thanks to its unique mixture of star protagonists and a fierce rivalry fostered over decades both on the field and off it by the distinct cultural differences between Catalonia and Madrid.

"It is the ideal shop window, the marquee match to show to people Spanish football," Jose Maria Gay de Liebana, professor of economics at Barcelona University and an expert in Spanish football finances, said to AFP.

However, it is not just a boom in lucrative television rights that La Liga and its two biggest clubs are seeking with an early start this weekend, but a showcase for all of their lucrative sponsorship contracts.

Last year Barcelona signed a club record shirt sponsorship deal worth a minimum of 220 million euros (\$258 million) over four years with Japanese online retailer Rakuten. "They want to sell their products to international markets, above all in Asia," added Gay de Liebana.

According to a study carried out by consumer analytics specialists Nielsen Sports, last season's corresponding first La Liga Clasico of the season generated more than \$42.5 million in media value for sponsors. "The kick-off of the next El Clasico on December 23 is at 1300 Madrid time, 2000 in Shanghai, 1900 in Jakarta and 1730 in New Delhi," continued Evers.

"These are all locations where we know there are many La Liga fans and where we will be hosting events to cele-



Spanish football's showpiece event, El Clasico between giants Real Madrid and Barcelona, has been scheduled for kick-off on Saturday.

brate El Clasico. "Additional events are being held in various locations around Asia. Through this and other initiatives we want to make existing fans even bigger La Liga supporters and, of course, we want to attract new supporters as well." Such events are a sign of La Liga's awareness of how the Spanish top flight lags behind England's cash rich Premier League in the battle for Asian based fans. The Premier League's estimated \$3.9 billion income from domestic and international TV rights a season dwarfs La Liga's \$1.9 billion revenue. Moreover, whilst Asia is the Premier League's biggest international market, it trails behind the Americas and the rest of Europe in La Liga's rights deals. "We have changed kick-off schedules so that they can be seen at reasonable times here in Asia and we will continue to take steps to ensure that this part of the world can enjoy La Liga as much as possible," La

Liga president Javier Tebas said at the opening of the league's new Singapore office earlier this year, just one of a series of new La Liga bases across the world.

Tebas is acutely aware that Spain's privileged position at the top of the European game is coming under threat from the Premier League's economic power. He has repeatedly warned the Premier League could become the NBA of European football, capable of poaching Barca and Madrid's stars like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo in the same way Barca were powerless to stop Qatar-backed Paris Saint Germain paying a world record 222 million euros for Neymar in August.

Madrid and Barca have combined to win the Champions League in seven of the past 12 years. However, for the first time ever England will have five of the last 16 of the competition in 2018. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP			
Chelsea v Bournemouth	beIN SPORTS HD 1		22:45
Bristol City v Manchester United	beIN SPORTS HD 2		23:00
ITALIAN CUP			
Atalanta v Sassuolo Calcio	AD SPORTS 4 HD		17:00
Roma v Torino	AD SPORTS 3 HD		19:30
Juventus v Genoa	AD SPORTS 3 HD		22:45
GERMAN LEAGUE			
Werder Bremen v Freiburg	beIN SPORTS		20:30
Borussia Monchengladbach v Leverkusen	beIN SPORTS HD 4		20:30
Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund	beIN SPORTS HD 5		22:45
Heidenheim v Eintracht Frankfurt	beIN SPORTS		22:45
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Getafe v Las Palmas	beIN SPORTS HD 3		21:30
Real Sociedad v Sevilla	beIN SPORTS HD 3		23:30

Dortmund's Stoeger eyes Bayern scalp in German Cup

BERLIN: New Borussia Dortmund coach Peter Stoeger has his sights set on glory as his team prepares for a heavyweight round of 16 German Cup tie with Bayern Munich today.

Cup holders Dortmund have won two games in two since Stoeger took over from Peter Bosz earlier this month, rediscovering their winning ways just in time to face Bayern in Munich this week. Faced with his biggest test yet as Dortmund coach, Stoeger is allowing himself to dream of silverware, as Dortmund look to retain the German Cup. "I don't know how many chances I will get to reach a cup final," the Austrian said. "Ideally, I would like to win the trophy." There is a place in the quarter-final at stake today, but with Bayern and Dortmund facing each other so early on, the winner will surely be the favourite to go on and win the German Cup. Having overcome title rivals RB Leipzig in the last round, favourites Bayern will face yet another unusually tough test when they host Dortmund. The two teams have met in the cup in each of the last six seasons, each winning three ties, and have contested three finals since 2012. It is Dortmund who have had the upper hand recently, eliminating Bayern in the semi-final twice in the last three years. "We have always played well against Bayern in the cup over the last few years," said Dortmund defender Sokratis. "They will be favourites today, but everything is possible in one game."

Bayern won 3-1 in Dortmund in a Bundesliga fixture last month, and the two teams have had conflicting fortunes in recent months. While Bayern have pulled 11 points clear at the top of the Bundesliga under Jupp Heynckes, Dortmund endured eight games without a win until Stoeger's recent arrival. Yet Bayern insist that they are not going to underestimate their rivals. "We must assume that we have an extremely difficult game ahead of us today," said defender Joshua Kimmich. "It is an absolute highlight, and we absolutely have to win it."

Both sides are struggling with injury problems, with several key players set to miss out. Arjen Robben, Thiago and Manuel Neuer are still sidelined for Bayern, while Dortmund will be without Marco Reus, Mario Goetze, Maximilian Philipp and Gonzalo Castro. — AFP

12 Shiffrin storms to a convincing victory in WCup giant slalom



12 Gatlin sacks coach after doping claim



15 Chinese footballers come to Brazil for extra polish



TAMPA: Kicker Matt Bryant #3 of the Atlanta Falcons gets a hold from punter Matt Boshers #5 and protection from tight end Austin Hooper #81 of the Atlanta Falcons as he kicks a 57-yard field goal while getting pressure from cornerback Ryan Smith #29 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the second quarter of an NFL football game on Monday at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

Falcons edge Bucs to boost playoff bid

Winston complete three passes on Tampa Bay's final drive

MIAMI: The Atlanta Falcons pulled within a game of the NFC South lead thanks to a 24-21 victory against the injury-plagued Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Monday night at Raymond James Stadium. Tampa Bay kicker Patrick Murray was wide right on a 54-yard field-goal attempt as time expired.

The defending NFC champion Falcons (9-5) would win the division title if they defeat the New Orleans Saints (10-4) on Sunday and the Carolina Panthers (10-4) on Dec. 31. The Bucs (4-10), who entered the game without three injured defensive starters, had six more players ruled out after getting hurt Monday night.

Falcons running back Devonta Freeman (22 carries, 126 yards) provided a 24-14 margin with a 32-yard touchdown run on third-and-2 with 7:58 remaining. The

Bucs answered on Jameis Winston's 16-yard pass to Adam Humphries with 4:07 to play. From there, Tampa Bay eventually regained possession when Bucs defensive tackle Clinton McDonald dumped quarterback Matt Ryan for a 3-yard sack on third-and-9 just past the two-minute warning.

Winston completed three passes on Tampa Bay's final drive, driving the Bucs from their 29-yard line to Atlanta's 36, setting up Murray's

unsuccessful attempt to force overtime. Winston completed 27 of 35 passes for 299 yards and three touchdowns in his most efficient effort of the season. Ryan was 17 of 31 for 212 yards and one score.

In the third quarter, the Bucs pulled within 17-14 on Winston's 42-yard pass to Mike Evans, who outfought two defenders in the end zone. Tampa Bay preserved that three-point deficit when Will Gholston blocked Matt Bryant's 33-yard field-goal

attempt. The Falcons led 17-7 at halftime, pulling away with a 10-point second quarter.

Atlanta gained its advantage when Freeman lost a fumble at the 1-yard line, but tight end Levine Toilolo recovered in the end zone for a touchdown. The Bucs tried to answer back, but Peyton Barber lost a fumble at Atlanta's 5-yard line and Falcons defensive tackle Dontari Poe recovered.

The Falcons tacked on a 57-yard field goal by Bryant with 3:12 remaining in the half for a 17-7 lead. Atlanta opened the scoring with Ryan's 6-yard pass to Justin Hardy. On the ensuing drive, Tampa Bay pulled into a 7-7 tie with Winston's 30-yard scoring pass to rookie tight end O.J. Howard, who sustained a game-ending ankle injury on the play. — Reuters



Falcons tacked on a 57-yard field goal by Bryant

Atletico report Barca for illegal Griezmann approach

MADRID: Atletico Madrid reported Barcelona to football's governing body FIFA over illegal contact made to star forward Antoine Griezmann. Atletico club sources confirmed yesterday. "The complaint has been presented for repeated contact between Barcelona, the player and his team," an Atletico source told AFP.

Griezmann renewed his contract until 2022 in June and Atletico consider contact made by Barcelona not only breaks FIFA's rules, but could also affect the integrity of La Liga. Barcelona lead the league with Atletico their closest challengers six points behind in second. "He is a player under a long contract and this can't happen. Moreover, the club considers that it could affect the competition where Barca are currently top

and Atletico second," added the Atletico source.

Barca were slapped with a one-year transfer ban for the illegal recruitment of foreign minors by FIFA that was served in 2015. Should the Catalan giants be found guilty, they could be handed another ban on registering new players.

Barcelona-based sports daily Mundo Deportivo reported on Sunday that Barca's president Josep Maria Bartomeu had recently met with Griezmann's family. The Catalan giants are expected to be willing to pay the French international's 100 million euro (\$117.8 million) buyout clause at the end of the season to avoid negotiating with Atletico.

Barca's director of institutional relations Guillermo Amor turned down the opportunity to deny a meeting had taken place later on Sunday after Barca's 4-0 thrashing of Deportivo la Coruna. "If the paper says it then it is possible it is like that," Amor told Movistar TV. "There could have been a coming together."

Griezmann, 26, agreed to sign a new contract with Atletico in June after the club had an appeal against a transfer ban rejected. Top scorer at Euro 2016, Griezmann said it would have been "dirty" to walk out

on the club when they couldn't replace him until January.

However, Atletico coach Diego Simeone accepted last week that Griezmann's departure at some point in the future is inevitable. "Of course Griezmann will be able to leave at some point, as Diego Costa, Diego Ribas and Arda Turan have gone," Simeone told French sports daily L'Equipe.

"If a player comes to me and says, 'coach, I have a chance of a lifetime and want to leave', and if he's left everything on the pitch for me like Griezmann, I'll say, 'no problem'." Griezmann has scored 90 goals in 179 games for Atletico since joining from Real Sociedad in 2014 and led Los Rojiblancos to the 2016 Champions League final, scoring twice to eliminated Barca in the quarter-finals.

However, he was also caught up in a Twitter storm on Sunday after posting a picture of himself blacked up and mimicking a Harlem Globetrotter basketball player from the 1980s. "I recognise that it was clumsy of me. If I have offended people, I apologise," he wrote shortly after and deleted the photo after receiving a wave of criticism. — AFP



Antoine Griezmann

Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2017

18 Kuwait's current account records a surplus of KD 424m in Q3 2017**20** Central banks and bubbles threaten 2018 status quo**21** Ooredoo partners with Ericsson to deliver advanced IoT solutions

RIYADH: Head of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, speaks during an interview at the commission's headquarters in Riyadh yesterday.—AFP

We're not just oil traders: Saudi Prince

Saudis welcome the world, to issue tourist visas in Q1 2018

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will begin issuing tourist visas in the first quarter of 2018, its top tourism official said, a first for the kingdom as it undergoes major economic and social reforms.

Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz told AFP that "all government approvals" are in place for the launch of electronic visas next year to "all nationals whose countries allow their citizens to visit" the Gulf state.

"We are now just preparing the regulations—who is eligible for the visas and how to obtain them," added the head of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, who is a son of King Salman. Saudi projects budget deficit for fifth year running

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said yesterday it expects to post a budget deficit for the fifth year in a row in 2018, forecasting a shortfall of \$52 billion due to low oil prices.

Revenues are estimated to be 783 billion riyals (\$208.8 billion) and spending is expected to be 978 billion riyals (\$260.8 billion), the highest in the oil-rich kingdom's history, according to official statements carried by Saudi TV.

The new budget was announced during a cabinet meeting chaired by King Salman who said the world's top oil exporter would "continue to decrease its dependence on oil to reach just 50 percent" of total revenues. The Saudi finance ministry said the budget

deficit for 2017 came in at \$61.3 billion, higher than the expected \$53 billion but still lower than the \$82 billion shortfall in the previous year.

Actual revenues for the current fiscal year rose by a healthy 34 percent compared with 2016 to \$185.6 billion due a sharp hike in both oil and non-oil revenues.

The kingdom has posted a budget deficit every year since 2014 when the price of oil, which contributed about 90 percent of revenues, crashed. Riyadh has resorted to a string of austerity measures to contain spending and imposed a variety of subsidy cuts and rises in prices of services.

Opening up

The move to open up its tourism sector is a major shift for Saudi Arabia as powerful Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman seeks to radically overhaul the country's oil-dependent economy and shed its ultra-conservative image. Apart from the millions of Muslims

who travel to Saudi Arabia annually for the Hajj pilgrimage, most visitors face an arduous process and steep fees. Saudi Arabia currently grants tourist visas for a

limited number of countries, but even those applications involve a range of restrictions, including requirements to travel through an accredited company and stay at designated hotels. Prince Sultan said the cost of the new tourist visa had not yet been settled, but stressed that it would be "as low as possible, because we believe the

cumulative economic impact is greater than the cash from the visa". Saudi Arabia, despite being richly endowed with natural beauty, is notorious worldwide for its long-standing bans on the mixing of the sexes, alcohol consumption and women driving-making it an undesirable destination for many.

'Not at any price'

In recent months, it has broken with some of its most

rigid rules—lifting a cinema ban, allowing genders to mix at a national celebration and announcing that women will be allowed to drive from next June. Prince Mohammed in August announced a massive tourism project to turn 50 islands and a string of sites on the Red Sea into luxury resorts.

"The kingdom is a very big treasure. People know it only in the narrowest possible terms," Prince Sultan said, describing the vast country's mountains, beaches and hundreds of islands along the Red Sea coast. "We're not just oil traders," he added, an outlook in line with that of the powerful crown prince who is working to revamp perceptions of the kingdom.

There will be "guidelines" for the tourism sector, however. "We do not want to lose or give up our culture and our local values," said Prince Sultan.

The kingdom, which takes legitimacy from the guardianship of Islam's holiest sites—as well as billions of dollars in revenues from annual Muslim pilgrimages—will not be lifting its total ban on alcohol. "We are the country of the Two Holy Mosques, the country of Islam, and this enormous advantage cannot be relinquished... for the sake of driving up tourism figures," he said.

Tourists are coming to get "the Saudi experience", Prince Sultan said, adding: "There is a limit, as in any other country... and we do not want tourism to come at any price." —AFP



Riyadh projects \$52 billion budget deficit

German business morale falls as political impasse clouds outlook

BERLIN: German business morale deteriorated unexpectedly in December after hitting an all-time high in the previous month, a survey showed yesterday, suggesting that political deadlock in Europe's economic powerhouse is clouding the outlook.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is struggling to form a stable government after her conservatives lost voters to the far right in September's election and her attempt at a tricky three-way alliance with two smaller parties failed last month. The Munich-based Ifo economic institute said its business climate index, based on a monthly sur-

vey of some 7,000 firms, edged down to 117.2 from an upwardly revised reading of 117.6 in November which was the highest on record. The December reading came in lower than a Reuters consensus forecast for a value of 117.5. The slight drop in the headline figure was driven by managers' less optimistic business expectations while their assessments of the current situation were more positive. Overall business morale remained on a relatively high level, Ifo chief Clemens Fuest said, adding: "German businesses are full of festive spirits."

Ifo economist Klaus Wohlrabe warned against over-interpreting the drop. "If the situation is already very good it is even more difficult to expect better business," he said. Wohlrabe said that uncertainty among German businesses over the shape of the new government, which is likely to include Merkel's conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), had risen slightly. Michael Holstein from DZ Bank pointed out that the December figure was still the second-highest Ifo reading on record, adding: "The German upswing will continue, 2018 is likely to be another year with a growth rate of more than 2 percent." —Reuters

UK employers keep hiring but see Brexit risks ahead

LONDON: British employers plan to hire more workers and raise pay more quickly in 2018, but they also fear that Brexit will make the country a less attractive place to do business, a survey showed yesterday. Fifty-one percent of employers expect to expand their workforce next year, the survey by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and recruitment firm Perteremps showed, up from 41 percent in last year's survey.

Strong job creation has been a bright spot in Britain's economy in recent years, but recent official data has shown a fall in employment, leading some economists to wonder if the labor market is about to weaken.

Slightly more than half of businesses expected to raise pay next year in line with or above the rate of retail price inflation, which could mean increases of around 3

percent, up from about 2.5 percent now, the survey showed. Such an increase would be in line with the Bank of England's forecasts.

The failure of pay to pick up quickly, even as unemployment falls fast, has puzzled central banks in many rich countries. Britain's problem is made more acute by the spike in inflation caused by the pound's decline in value after the Brexit vote in 2016.

The CBI survey, which was conducted before Prime Minister Theresa May secured an agreement from Brussels to move Brexit talks to a second phase, showed companies were worried about the outlook for Britain's economy further ahead.

May has said she will no longer uphold the European Union's freedom of movement rules which allow workers from countries in the bloc to seek work in any EU country.

"Firms are concerned about finding the right staff in the future, and this is damaging the outlook for investment in the longer term," said Neil Carberry, the CBI's managing director for people policy.

Almost 90 percent of companies said continued access to skills and labor from the EU was important or vital. "The worst thing we could do would be to undermine the many EU nationals already here and contributing to our businesses and public services," Carberry said.— Reuters

Ooredoo partners with Ericsson to deliver advanced IoT solutions

Agreement to bolster Ooredoo's network across Kuwait



KUWAIT: Reiterating its leading position as a supporter of telecommunication technology, Ooredoo signed a memorandum of understanding with Ericsson to deliver the best IoT solutions. The agreement aims to bolster Ooredoo's network across Kuwait, readying it for delivering the best services for customers.

Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Senior Director of B2B Sales at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We were pleased to have partnered with Ericsson as our digital transformation partner. They have great experience in delivering advanced solutions in the areas of IoT and ICT, and we believe that they are the most capable organization to implement this project within our network."

Mohamad Dergham, Head of Ericsson Levant and global customer Unit Ooredoo said: "At Ericsson, we are striving to leverage on our IoT experience and capabilities and collaborate on advanced solutions for Ooredoo Kuwait which in turn will help them to provide the best of solutions for their customers. With this partnership, we will successfully be able to enable cities

across Kuwait to better serve the needs of smart citizens and enterprises.

Ooredoo recently announced that it is sponsoring the Internet of Things (IoT) Conference and Expo 2017 from 19th to 21st December at Jumeriah Hotel Kuwait. The event is an initiative led by Ooredoo Business, and is in collaboration with the Ministerial Council's Central Agency of Information Technology and IoT Asia.

The event aims to shed light on the challenges and obstacles that come with the emerging new technology of Internet of Things, which is projected to

have substantial leading growth by the year 2020. The technology is expected to play an integral part in a variety of sectors, such as healthcare, transportation, and services sector.

The conference is also aiming to pose solutions for the various logistic and security solutions that are expected to materialize with the leading of this technology. Over the span of three days, the event will feature talks and discussions led by a consortium of professionals and entrepreneurs, to shed light on their experience and the different ways to overcome obstacles in this thriving mode of usage for information technology. Speakers will also highlight the ways different sectors collaborate to better serve individuals and users of this technology.



Abdulaziz Al-Babtain



Mohamad Dergham



IoT Conference and Expo being held in Kuwait



and users of this technology.

Commenting on this conference, Ooredoo stated: "We are very eager to lead the discussion of IoT in Kuwait today, as the Kuwaiti market is one of the fastest markets to adopt the latest trends in technology. This echoes our core values of caring, connecting, and challenging, and we strongly believe that it is important for all telecom service providers to innovate within the modes of usage of telecommunications today, namely the IoT which will play a vital part in the near future."

Ooredoo Kuwait is committed to bringing users the best and most advanced services, to fulfil its mission of enriching people's lives through technology and embracing digitalization.

Ahli United Bank wins 'Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait 2017' award

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) has won the prestigious "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait 2017" award from Islamic Business and Finance Magazine. The award was based on a number of achievements that AUB has realized recently, including being one of the safest Islamic banks in Kuwait.

Richard Groves, the CEO of Ahli United Bank, received the award on behalf of the Bank at the Islamic Business & Finance awards ceremony, held recently at the Emirates Towers Hotel in Dubai. Over 200 guests attended the ceremony which was hosted by senior executives from CPI Financial, the magazine's publishers. Amongst the guests were well-known Islamic Banking experts as well as distinguished members of various banks and insurance companies (takaful) from many different countries.

On this occasion, Richard Groves, AUB's CEO, commented "We are very proud to have received a number of prestigious industry awards this year, which reflect the Bank's leadership position across the Kuwaiti banking sector, combined with our ability to provide innovative products that accommodate our customers' varied needs. I am especially pleased to receive this "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait" award



Richard Groves receives the award

from Islamic Business and Finance. These awards also reflect AUB's solid reputation, highlighting that the Bank's continuous success is driven by our customers' confidence in our ability and our employees' efforts to provide the best services."

Groves further reiterated the Bank's sustainable vision is based on providing added value banking products and services, whilst also investing heavily in digital and technology capabilities, effective human capital, efficient banking operations and focus on providing the best customer service, there by further strengthening the relationship with our customers.

Al-Tijari launches the innovative 'InstaPay' service

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced a new and free of charge "InstaPay" service to be added to its online electronic service package.

Commenting on the new e-service added by the Bank to its multiple electronic services, Sahar Al-Rumaih, Acting GM - Retail Banking Division and GM - Corporate Credit Division in Commercial Bank of Kuwait said "The Bank endeavors to keep up with the latest technology associated with electronic and digital services offered by banks. Drawing on this, the Bank took the lead and launched the excellent e-service "InstaPay". Al-Rumaih stated that, through this around the clock service, Al-Tijari customers can easily collect funds from any person holding a local bank debit card via "Al-Tijari Online" or "Al-Tijari Mobile".

Al-Rumaih added that this process would be in the form of a text message sent to the payer and upon his approval, he will be redirected to the K-Net payment gateway where he can pay using

any local debit card. Once the transaction is successful, the amount will be instantly credited to the customer's account with Al-Tijari.

Al-Rumaih explained that this service would facilitate the collection of funds for Bank's customers and is secured with the highest safety and protection standards and provides 24-hour collection of funds for a maximum amount of KD 2,000 per day, thus reducing the effort and time for customers' convenience. Al-Rumaih indicated that the Bank is always close to its customers through its branch network prevailed throughout Kuwait and via the electronic service channels available to customers, and always endeavors to offer superior and excellent offers and services, noting that customer's satisfaction is a goal that the Bank is always keen to achieve, thus stepping up its efforts to develop and improve the services provided to customers in general and the e-services in particular.

Al-Rumaih concluded her statement by inviting the Bank's customers to get further information on this e-service "InstaPay" as well as the several services and offers provided by commercial Bank of Kuwait to its customers by visiting the Bank's website www.CBK.com



Sahar Al-Rumaih

5 amazing things you need to know about Huawei Mate 10 and Huawei Mate 10 Pro!

KUWAIT: Did you recently get the Huawei Mate 10 or Huawei Mate 10 Pro? These phones are the best smartphones you could ever get: elegant, intelligent and super-fast, they run the latest Android 8.0 Oreo with Huawei's new EMUI 8.0 skin on top of them. EMUI 8.0 stands for Emotion User Interface: it is a customized "skin" on top of Android on most Huawei phones that provides features for users to run their smartphones faster and more efficiently, and therefore create a more personalized experience. If you're not familiar with the EMUI 8.0, here are 5 amazing things you need to know about it! Let's get started!

1. The EMUI 8.0 is intelligent and can predict your behavior!
"Born Fast, Stay Fast" has been a Huawei

mantra since 2016. The aim of Huawei is to guarantee that your phone stays fast a year or two down the line when you first bought the device. Intuitive and simple, the all-new EMUI 8.0 takes usability to new levels. Packing groundbreaking features, HUAWEI Mate and Huawei Mate 10 Pro's EMUI 8.0 is fast and responsive: it understands your behavior faster and can predict the apps you want to use. With this knowledge, the EMUI 8.0 can manage resources based on your behavior; this helps you to save time by opening your most-used apps more quickly.

2. All you need is a knuckle gesture!
Huawei's phones are the only ones to offer this innovative technology. With the strike of your knuckle, you can take screenshots or record the screen in few seconds, without the need to hold the shortcut keys. With this feature, multi-tasking becomes easier as you can launch two applications at the same time with the Split-Screen Function, and also support a long screenshot for articles or web pages by drawing on the screen. Moreover, you can take a screenshot of the content you want by dragging your knuckle around the area you'd like to capture on the screen.

3. Shifting between different accounts is a piece of cake!
Are you using two smartphones to keep track of your personal and business social accounts? No need to do that anymore as the Huawei Mate 10 and Huawei Mate 10

Pro's all-new EMUI 8.0 offers you the app twin feature. With this feature, you can log into the same app with different accounts at the same time. Even if you've got two different phone numbers and you want to stay keyed into, this feature allows you to double your favorite apps and launch them separately with different accounts.

4. Private space to keep things personal!
Who said smartphones can't be private? The new Huawei Mate 10 and Mat 10 Pro offer you the Private Space feature so that you keep your personal documents and pictures just for you. Once you hide your personal files in the Private Space, you can show your friends or colleagues your gallery and everything on your phone without the risk of them seeing your personal documents or pictures.

5. Huawei share: practical, easy and fast!
Sharing files can be a real headache if your connection is poor or your files are too big. With Huawei Mate 10 and Huawei Mate 10 Pro, sharing is easy and fast, and no need for an Internet connection: the Huawei EMUI 8.0 allows you to share your photos and documents; it's 100 times faster than Bluetooth and it does not require any setting as it pairs automatically with other devices. Moreover, the Huawei Mate 10 and Huawei Mate 10 Pro offer you the phone clone feature, which allows you to move very quickly your data from an old phone (IOS or Android) to a new one.

Nissan Patrol 2018 now in Kuwait!

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait, has unveiled the 2018 Nissan Patrol in Kuwait, placing it on the lead ahead of its competition. The refreshed powerful, spacious and renowned SUV comes with an exclusive package this season to accommodate customers' different needs. Owning the new Nissan Patrol can be made possible at an affordable price. Nissan Al-Babtain offers a special package upon the purchase of Nissan

Patrol 2018 which comes with a one-year comprehensive insurance and 3rd party insurance, free body/paint protection, window tinting and free traffic registration and 5 years of free unlimited mileage warranty.

Eager customers can now own the "King of the off road" - the Nissan Patrol V8 that comes equipped with an immense 400 HP engine with 560Nm of torque, direct injection gasoline to give the driver all the power. The V8 is furnished with a luxurious interior of tan leather, wooden panel and chrome trims to convey a premium comfort that caters to the unique tastes of its customers. Integrated with superior levels of styling, and cutting edge technology that boasts a multi system entertainment DVD screen featuring home LCD quality in-vehicle with the 8-inch class-leading navigation system.

Technology

GE's digital industrial solutions enhance reliability, reduce costs, offer insights

Digital transformation of Kuwait's power sector

By Chidi Emmanuel

KUWAIT: As part of its sweeping digital transformation of the electricity landscape, General Electric (GE) is implementing Predix-based digital industrial solutions to help its customers deliver more reliable and efficient electricity. In its latest digital transformation, connected machines, equipped with data sensors, collect vast amounts of information into a centralized and secured data platform, which is analyzed to predict and diagnose equipment problems.

"This is all about making sure that the customers get as much value as possible. The idea is to identify the problems before they cause a fault," Steven Martin, Vice President & Chief Digital Officer Power Digital GE told Kuwait Times. GE has developed end-to-end software and cloud solutions to support power customers' digitization efforts. This includes the activation of product, service and solution roadmaps, and designing new customer experiences and business models.

"The digitization of assets strengthens reliability, offers predictive insights, reduces costs and increases efficiency. It also has long-term strategic advantages," Steven Martin explained. On the digital twin, he said they are dynamic digital representations of physical assets based on rich profiles, data, and analytics. "Digital twin intelligence is the key to understand, predict, and optimize asset performance," he added.

"GE's Asset Performance Management (APM) digital solution has helped customers improve the reliability of power generating machines, reducing unplanned downtime by up to five percent," explained Bhanu Shekhar, Chief Digital Officer for GE Power in the Middle East and Africa. "It has also reduced false positive alerts by up to 75 percent and reduced operations and maintenance costs by up to 25 percent."

More sustainable costs

In another development, GE Power completed, ahead of schedule, the digital transformation of Kuwait Ministry of Electricity & Water's 2,000 megawatts (MW) Sabiya Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) Power Station. This will help to make the site's operations more reliable, while contributing to its enhanced performance at lower, more sustainable costs. The project marks the first time that GE's Predix-based software applications for industry are being used in Kuwait and represents the beginning of the digitization of the country's power sector.

Engineer Mohammed Boshetri, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity & Water, said, "Our goal is to support the nation's focus on strengthening the energy infrastructure and helping achieve Vision 2035 to transform Kuwait into a regional leader in all sectors. Delivering reliable power and ensuring that we have

highly productive power assets is a key in accomplishing our goals. The digital transformation of Sabiya CCGT, using GE's advanced digital technologies, aims to further strengthen resource utilization and productivity."

Several plant assets at Sabiya CCGT, including combustion turbines, hydrogen-cooled generators, heat recovery steam generators, steam turbines, and condensers, among others, were brought onto GE's Asset Performance Management (APM) software application. The software leverages advanced data analytics to predict and reduce unplanned downtime, improving power plant availability and output.



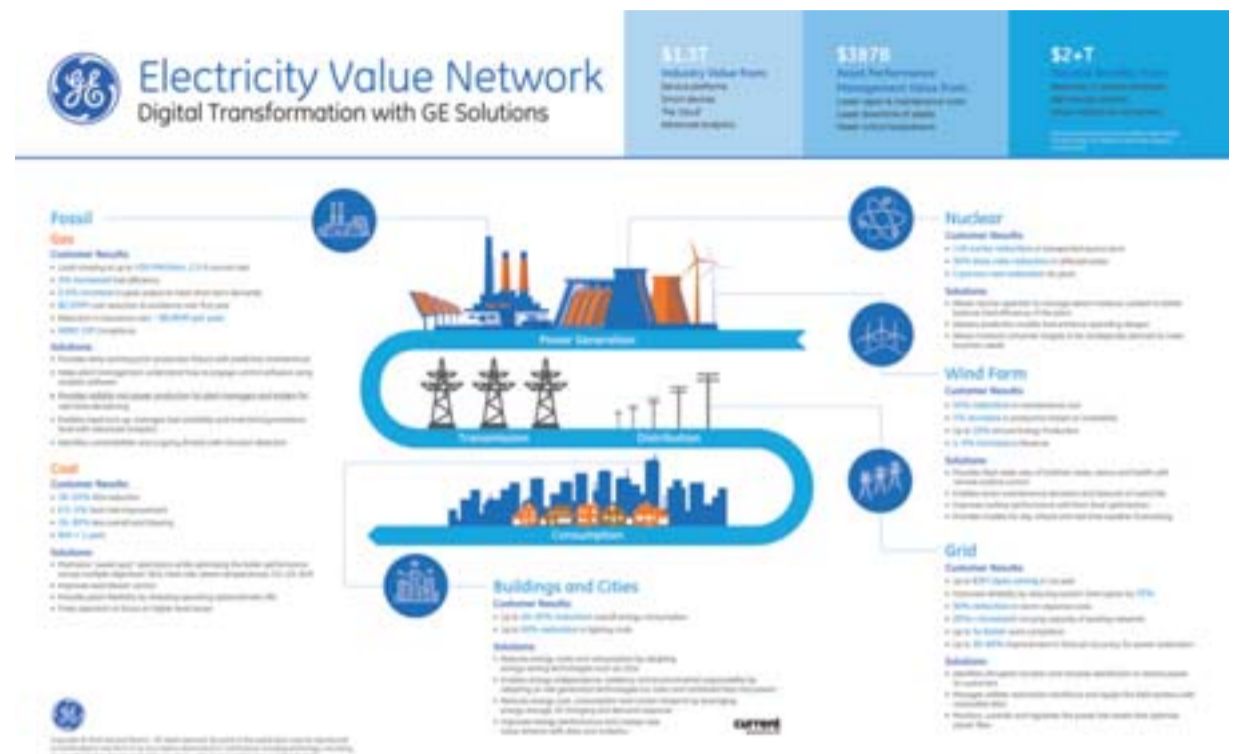
Steven Martin

Digital migration

As part of the digital migration, GE installed APM's Machine & Equipment Health Module, Reliability Management Module and Monitoring & Diagnostics Services. "The digital transformation of Sabiya CCGT Power Station highlights our commitment to help unlock the true potential of Kuwait's power infrastructure," said Joseph Anis, President and CEO of GE's Power Services business in the Middle East and Africa. "Digitizing power plants presents an opportunity for both growth and cost savings and we are proud to have completed this landmark project ahead of schedule to increase the plant's uptime and enhance its performance."

APM, powered by Predix, gives industrial businesses a complete, integrated view of their assets and equipment. Predix is GE's industrial application development platform and was purpose-built to meet the scale, complexity, speed, and security requirements of industry. The APM solution enables the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity and Water to boost asset reliability and availability at Sabiya CCGT. The connected machines, equipped with data sensors, collect vast amounts of information into a centralized and secured data platform. The analysis of this data provides insights to predict and diagnose equipment problems before they happen, thus reducing unplanned downtime.

The project builds on GE's strong legacy of contributions towards the development of Kuwait's power generation sector. GE's investments in Kuwait include the GE Kuwait Technology Center, that serves three core areas for energy sector customers across the Middle East and Africa: training, tooling, and engineering. GE technol-



gies deliver over a third of Kuwait's power today and the company creates employment for more than 250 people in the country.

General Electric is the world's Digital Industrial Company, transforming industry with software-defined machines and solutions that are connected, responsive, and predictive. GE is organized around a global exchange

of knowledge, the 'GE Store,' through which each business shares and accesses the same technology, markets, structure, and intellect. Each invention further fuels innovation and application across our industrial sectors. With people, services, technology, and scale, GE delivers better outcomes for customers by speaking the language of industry.

Facebook abused dominant position: German cartel office

FRANKFURT: Germany's cartel office has found that Facebook abused its dominant market position, challenging the US social network's model of monetizing the personal data of its 2 billion users worldwide through targeted advertising. Presenting preliminary findings of its 20-month-old probe, the Federal Cartel Office said Facebook held a dominant position among social networks - a characterisation the company dismissed as "inaccurate".

The case is being closely watched in Germany, where concerns over data privacy are strong due to a history of state surveillance under Nazi and Communist rule. Facebook has been running an ad campaign to try to allay those fears. Separately, Berlin will introduce a law in the new year imposing fines of up to 50 million euros (\$59 million) on social media platforms that fail quickly to remove posts that propagate hate speech - a crime in Germany.

The competition authority objected to Facebook's requirement that it gain access to third-party data when an account is opened - including from its own WhatsApp and Instagram products - as well as how it tracks which sites its users access. "Above all we see the collection of data outside the Facebook social network and its inclusion in the Facebook account as problematic," cartel office President Andreas Mundt said in a statement.

This happens when a Facebook user views a page with a Facebook 'Like' button embedded in it - even if they don't click on the button itself, he added. On Monday, France's data privacy watchdog said it may fine WhatsApp, the encrypted messaging app, if it does not comply with an order to bring its sharing of user data with Facebook into line with French privacy law.

'Inaccurate picture'

Responding, Facebook said the cartel office had "painted an inaccurate picture" but said it would cooperate with the German investigation. "Although we are popular in Germany, we are not dominant," its head of data protection, Yvonne Cunneane, said in a blog post. About 41 percent of Germans have active Facebook accounts, below the 66 percent in the United States, 64 percent in Britain and 56 percent in France, according to a survey by social media agencies Hootsuite and We Are Social.

"A dominant company operates in a world where customers don't have alternatives," said Cunneane, adding that the average smartphone user now accesses seven different communications apps or services. Facebook, founded by CEO Mark Zuckerberg and fellow Harvard students in 2004, has grown exponentially to become the world's top social network and is valued on the stock market at \$255 billion. —Reuters

Language of Rohingya poised to go digital

TEKNAF, Bangladesh: For decades the Rohingya have been denied recognition in Myanmar but the persecuted minority is close to securing a crucial symbol of their identity — their own unique digital alphabet. The language of the stateless Muslim people has been included in the planned upgrade to the Unicode Standard, the global coding system that turns written script into digital characters and numbers.

It would allow the Rohingya to write emails, send texts and post on social media in their own language — a major step for a people who had no written script until the 1980s. Victims of violent oppression in Myanmar that has been likened to ethnic cleansing, many Rohingya face far more pressing concerns than searching Google or sending a tweet, and most lack not just the technology but the literacy to do so. But experts say imparting the Rohingya a digital script of their own is hugely symbolic for the recognition and survival of the marginalized people, even if it is not adopted quickly.

"If a people do not have a written language of their own, it is easier to say that as an ethnic group you don't exist," said Mohammad Hanif, who developed the writing system for the Rohingya language in the 1980s. "It is easier to repress them," the Rohingya madrasa teacher living in Bangladesh told AFP. This is especially the case with the Rohingya, with Myanmar even refusing to use their name.

Myanmar refers to them as "Bengalis" instead, painting them as interlopers from Bangladesh even though many of them have lived in the country for generations. Experts say language is part of the issue, with Rohingya speaking a dialect of Bengali understood in Bangladesh's southeastern Chittagong region, but foreign to the Buddhist majority in Myanmar. The minority group has been driven out of Myanmar's westernmost Rakhine state in waves of systematic violence, most recently in an army campaign that Doctors Without Borders say killed at least 6,700 Rohingya Muslims in its first month. Nearly 650,000 Rohingya have arrived in Bangladesh since the military crackdown began in August, escaping arson, rape and murder in their homeland.

'It is revolutionary'

The Rohingya had no written script until Hanif — an Islamic scholar who fled Rakhine in an earlier surge of violence — began studying the nuances of the language. Hanif said around 50 books have now been written using the script which is also taught in some



COX'S BAZZAR: In this photograph taken on October 20, 2017, Myanmar Rohingya Islamic scholar Muhammed Hanif shows an example of a textbook as he speaks during an interview with AFP at a madrasa. —AFP

faith schools catering to the Rohingya in Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Canada.

Other attempts at developing a writing system had used Arabic, Urdu and English scripts, the latter known as "Rohingya-lish". But "Hanifi Rohingya" may be the one to be encoded by the Unicode Consortium — a nonprofit that oversees the global standardization of digital characters and numbers. A representative for the US-based consortium told AFP by email that Hanifi Rohingya was one of the scripts being considered in the next version, but a final decision would be made in February.

If approved, it would allow the global Rohingya diaspora — including, eventually, the more than 800,000 refugees in Bangladesh — to also send messages through chat services like WhatsApp using their digital alphabet. "(This) legitimizes the struggle of the Rohingya language and its much persecuted people," said Muhammad Noor, a software engineer who built a computer typeface for "Hanifi Rohingya" compatible with word processing, but not online usage.

Translators Without Borders, a nonprofit providing translation services for charities in crisis zones, said the importance of taking the Rohingya language into the digital realm could not be overstated. "It is revolutionary," the charity's Rebecca Petras told AFP in Cox's Bazar, where the Rohingya camps are located. "In order

for the language to survive, a script is necessary. This would strengthen the language and go a long way to preserve it."

Fading out

But the denial of education to most Rohingya in Myanmar means many cannot read or write the script, posing enormous hurdles for its survival in cyber space. The minority of Rohingya afforded an education in Rakhine were instructed in Burmese, and even religious schools were not permitted to teach the written Rohingya script. Those seeking to save it from obsolescence are looking to the next generation in makeshift schools across Bangladesh's teeming refugee camps.

More than half the new arrivals since August are children, and experts say unless they learn the written Rohingya script, it will wither away. Rohingya groups are pushing for its inclusion in schools, but many children are quickly adopting Bengali instead, finding the local language more useful than their mother tongue. Schools have also focused on Burmese and English, throwing up another roadblock for those fighting for the language's survival. "The UN schools are our only hope to introduce the written script to half a million children in the camps. But there is no attempt to teach Rohingya language, which is unfair," said Rohingya activist Rafique bin Habib. —AFP

Health

A donkey's tale: Nigeria becomes hide export hub

Demand from China are greatly increasing prices

WARRI: Abubakar Ya'u digs sand from vast, sweeping dunes and loads heavy hessian sacks of the fine, golden bounty onto the backs of donkeys which carry it to market. Rampant demand for the beasts of burden in China, where their skins are believed to have medicinal properties, has caused prices to soar—creating a dilemma for Ya'u and his fellow excavators in Kano, northern Nigeria. "Two years ago we were buying donkeys strong enough for our trade for between 15,000 and 18,000 naira (between \$42 and \$50) — but now to get a good donkey you will require 70,000 to 75,000," he said, wearing dusty sandals, jeans and a T-shirt. "The reason for this is the huge purchase of donkeys which are transported to the south where their meat is consumed and their skin exported," he explained. "To us, it is a calamity because as a sand digger if you lose your donkey, you can hardly raise the money to replace it." Fellow sand digger Abdurrahman Garba, who has been in the business for 30 years, added that export bans by some of Nigeria's neighbors had made the situation worse.



Animal pens are being made every month

'Alarming rate'
"Now that Niger has banned donkey exports to save its stock, the Chinese have turned to our stock-depleting them at an alarming rate," said Garba, 40. Botswana, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Gambia all impose restrictions on the trade, while Zimbabwean authorities blocked a private donkey slaughterhouse under construction and Ethiopia closed its only functioning abattoir. Garba admitted that the temptation to sell the animals for short-term gain could be overwhelming. "I was offered 95,000 naira for my biggest

donkey but I fought hard to resist the temptation to sell it because I knew I will not be able to replace it," he said. "We blame the Chinese for this disturbing situation." The animals are increasingly being transported, sometimes covertly, from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and northern Nigeria to the southeast where they are then typically slaughtered.

Donkeys are relatively cheaper in the Muslim-majority north as they are typically not slaughtered for their meat, tempering demand. But the north-south trade route for donkeys was already well established as consumption has traditionally been relatively high in the south where some communities have long eaten the animals. At a market in Ughelli, Delta State—the centre of the Nigerian donkey trade—hundreds of donkeys are crammed into pens under the burning sun as they await their fate. Some are skeletally thin, all are quiet.

New animal pens are being made every month as the demand for donkey hides and meat is met with a steadily growing supply from the north. From Delta state on Nigeria's southern coast, hides are shipped to China where they are stewed to render the coveted gelatin known as "Ejiao" in Chinese. The buyers, who believe that soluble Ejiao gum is an effective remedy for troubles ranging from colds to aging, comprise a market thought to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars every year. "The medicine is popularly referred to as a blood tonic and helps to fortify the body, particularly in conditions like anaemia," said Oliver Emekpor, a butcher handling donkey meat at the Ughelli market. "It comes in blocks of dried pieces which are melted down into a brew



VILLENEUVE-SUR-LOT: A farmer takes a donkey farming course at the "national school of donkey farming" (Enam), on November 15, 2017. —AFP

of herbal mixture to drink and sells for up to \$390 (330 euros) per kilo." Nothing is wasted. To maximize profits, donkey dealers often sell the remaining meat to unwary consumers as beef, a practice described by a local trade association as "criminal". Hooves are used to make shoes and donkey bones are used to manufacture plates.

'Scarcity of donkeys'

Simon Pope, a campaigner at the Donkey Sanctuary, a British animal welfare charity, said that the scale of the donkey trade is almost impossible to estimate. "Each donkey hide produces one kilogram of Ejiao and there is a huge uncertainty about how many hides are being used annually," he said.

Yemi Adebayo, an official at Nigeria's trade ministry, acknowledged that donkey hide sales to China are booming, but refused to confirm if any deal had been struck to facilitate shipments. "Different countries either support or oppose the trade in different ways," he said, but the status of the activity in Nigeria remained unclear.

Dong-E E-Jiao is China's market leader for the manufacture and sale of Ejiao, controlling 70 percent of the market. The firm posted pre-tax profits of \$295 million (250 million euros) in 2016 and handled roughly 700,000 donkey hides in 2014 alone. Donkey numbers in China have nearly halved from 11 million in the 1990s to six million in 2013, according to official statistics. China produces 5,000 tons of Ejiao each year, requiring some four million hides, according to the China Daily. "The strong players will get stronger amid the scarcity of donkeys and decreasing supply of donkey hide," wrote BOCOM International financial services in a research note for investors.

The Donkey Sanctuary's investigation into the trade, "Under the Skin," revealed that the explosion in demand had led to a surge in donkey thefts in Africa, Asia and South America. "Donkeys may soon go extinct if they continue to be killed," said Garba, the veteran sand digger. "Once they are finished, our trade will suffer." —AFP

100 new species found in Mekong region



A Vietnamese crocodile lizard

A Vietnamese 'crocodile lizard' and a Thai turtle found on sale in a local market are among more than 100 new species discovered in the ecologically diverse but threatened Mekong region last year, researchers said yesterday. The Southeast Asian countries flanking the Mekong river, which snakes down from the Tibetan plateau to the South China Sea, are among the most bio-diverse in the world. Each year, scientists announce scores of new species discovered in the region, which includes Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

"While the global trends are worrisome, and the threats against species and their habitats here in the Greater Mekong are massive, these new species discoveries give us enormous hope," said WWF's Lee Poston. "But we have to do more to protect their habitat and prevent them from entering the illegal wildlife trade," he added. The Crocodile Lizard, a scaly reptile that hails from northern Vietnam's evergreen forests, was also among the new species announced yesterday. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

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What's On

KFH holds Network Leadership program for senior management



Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held a special program on Network Leadership for senior management positions as part of an effort to further improve Enterprise Leadership Development and effectively drive organization performance. The 3-day structured program was hosted by IMD Switzerland; a top ranked business school for leadership and strategy and expert in transforming organizations and creating immediate and long-term positive impact. KFH-Group

CEO Mazin Alnahedh inaugurated the program held in Hilton Kuwait Resort. The program provided multiple modules delivered by a constellation of international lead authorities like Professor Michael Yaziji and Dr Anand Narasimhan.

The program aimed at improving the network leadership capabilities and strategic thinking through a series of cases, a unique IMD simulation and other practical activities leveraging strengths and focus on

success. It also focused on driving performance through teams by creating and leading highly effective teams by establishing strong network performance. Being part of a series of three programs on Enterprise Leadership to follow in 2018, Network Leadership contributed to the mobilization of organization energy, creating a work climate fostering communication, empowerment, trust, sharing, and collaboration while building the network.

Through its smart structure, the program was able to build a self-awakening momentum with the executives when toward the end everyone was able to recognize his own network contribution change path, and how working in an enterprise team can affect its success. The program was a great success and the IMD way was the main catalyst to its uniqueness and to its contribution to the broader learning path of the Enterprise Leader at KFH.

Culinary competition for professional chefs in Mais Alghanim

Mais Alghanim group recently held the third cooking competition for chefs in the kitchen team the kitchen of Mais Alghanim restaurant Sharq. It was attended by a selected jury of judges to review and give their opinions about the competitors. The competition included the preparation of various types of dishes like appetizers, salads, main courses and desserts where the participants competed to show their skills in cooking and preparing delicious dishes, which won the hearts of the jury.

The competition was prepared and coordinated by the Corporate Executive Chef for Mais Alghanim Group Ziad Hilal and it was well organized by the human resources department and the management of Barakat Foods Company, where in everything needed was provided to the competitors from cooking equipment and all required ingredients. The judges presiding over the competition were Thamer Al Dakheel, Yamen Tehfi, Chef Jonathan Spiteri and Chef Hassan Al Jjali.

The competition is the third held by the Mais Alghanim restaurants group in order to give the kitchen team the freedom to show their creativity and their ability to cook and also to create exciting and competitive environment so that each contestant can show from their knowledge and skills in



working with the kitchen team. In addition to this, also identify new dishes from different international cuisines and give them the freedom to choose which category they wish to compete in.

Speaking to Chawki Barakat, he said that "the third culinary competition falls under a group of different activities done by Barakat Foods to identify the employee's efficiency and to showcase their inspiration by giving them freedom to practice their talent in cook-

ing". He also added "We are trying as much as possible to develop staff skills through training in various modern culinary sector and the latest techniques as well as the opportunity to develop their skills and personal development to achieve career success that they wish for". Worth noting that Mais Alghanim Group, which was founded in 1953 is one of the most prestigious institutions dealing with hospitality services in Kuwait, with branches located across Kuwait.



Khaen music of the Lao people

The khaen music of the Lao people is played with a mouth organ that resembles panpipes but made with bamboo tubes of varying lengths, each with a metal reed. The player blows into the instrument through an air chamber and the sound produced depends on the size of the tube. Khaen music is popular in all regions of the Lao People's Democratic Republic due to its harmonic richness. It is usually part of village festivals and it is customary for

people listening to it to become active participants in the songs and dances, rather than merely spectators. Khaen music is an integral part of Lao life that promotes family and social cohesion. Thanks to the use of bamboo, the practice is also linked to natural agriculture and healthy lifestyles. Families play an important role in transmitting the art and khaen player associations exist in many local communities where young people can learn the art. To maintain the practice in spite of lifestyle changes - including urbanization - several local communities, associations and groups have begun various initiatives to consolidate and promote it through formal and non-formal education. In 2005, the Association of Khaen Arts was established and various festivals are organized to promote and enhance the art.



GBK concludes children's workshops with Al Sadu Society

Gulf Bank successfully concluded its sponsorship of the year-long series of educational workshops with the Al Sadu Society. The workshops, entitled 'Fun with Textiles,' helped children develop their skills in crafts and textile art all while preserving Kuwaiti traditions and heritage. The workshops, which were free of charge, were open to children between 6-12 years of age. A total of 12 sessions were conducted over the program's duration with 145 children from various nationalities participating. The children were able to develop their

creative skills in a relaxed and stimulating environment, under the supervision of trained instructors.

Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We were delighted to partner with Al Sadu Society for the 'Fun with Textiles' children's workshops. Gulf Bank strongly supports the preservation of Kuwaiti tradition and heritage, and this program brings the traditions of Sadu to the younger generation in a fun and exciting environment. Furthermore, as the workshops were all conducted in the beautiful Al Sadu House, the children were exposed to the traditional exhibitions on the premises."

Sheikha Bibi Al-Sabah, Chair of Al Sadu Society, noted: "Our aim was to encourage children to learn more about our country's traditions and the diverse textile heritage of Kuwaiti Bedouins in an enjoyable and creative atmosphere. We were pleased with Gulf Bank support for these workshops and we look forward to conducting similar programs to fulfill our vision as an organization"

During these workshops, children

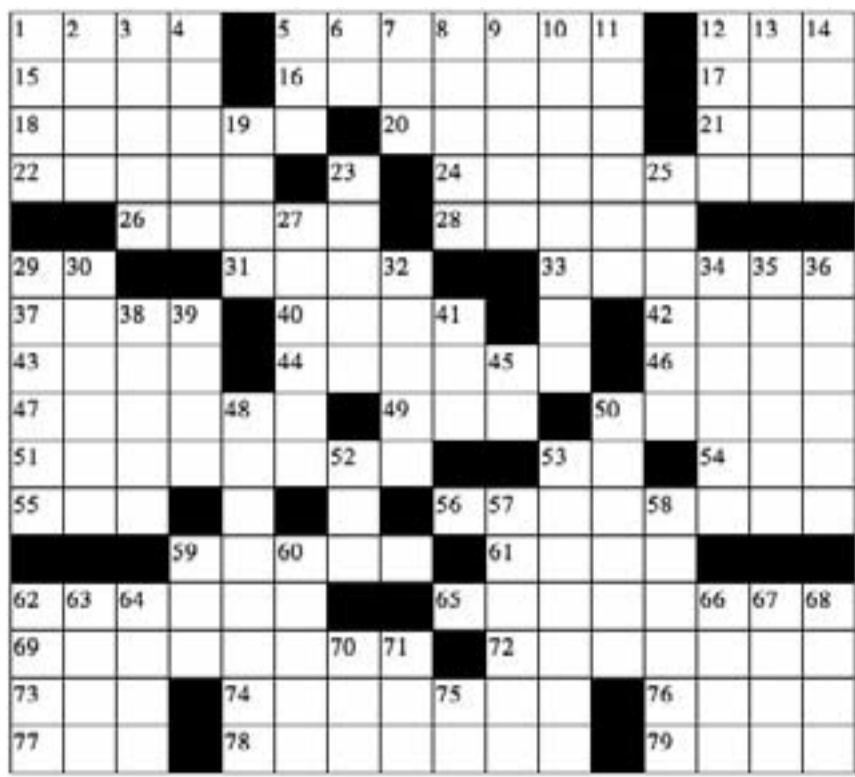


undertook different projects, learned new skills and used new tools, children were given a guided choice of colors, designs and techniques, through which they will be able to develop their creative skills while having fun. Instructors were present in each session to encourage children and guide them in their creations. Through drawing, painting,

weaving, and other crafts, the children created wallets, kites, tote bags, lanterns, dreamcatchers to name a few. Al Sadu Society started in 1978, as a private initiative, by a group of concerned Kuwaitis who wished to preserve a fast disappearing, yet intrinsic, cultural heritage. Learn more about Al Sadu through its social media channel @SaduHouse.



CROSSWORD 1789



ACROSS

1. A city in east central Texas.
5. A city in southeastern Spain.
12. A sharp change in direction.
15. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
16. Any agent (physical or environmental) that can induce a genetic mutation or can increase the rate of mutation.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. The trees and other plants in a large densely wooded area.
20. Either of two muscles of the abdomen and pelvis that flex the trunk and rotate the thigh.
21. The 26th letter of the Roman alphabet.
22. A squeeze with the fingers.
24. No alternation of generations the medusoid phase being entirely suppressed.
26. A case or sheath especially a pollen sac or moss capsule.
28. Hungarian composer of light operas (1870-1948).
29. A bachelor's degree in religion.
31. A correctional institution used to detain persons who are in the lawful custody of the government (either accused persons awaiting trial or convicted persons serving a sentence).
33. Irish abbess.
37. The sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage.
40. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
42. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
43. In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
44. In the Arabian Nights a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.
46. An unforeseen obstacle.
47. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
49. (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
51. A fast sailboat with 3 parallel hulls.
54. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
55. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
56. An alkaloid with anticholinergic effects that is used as a sedative and to treat nausea and to dilate the pupils in ophthalmic procedures.
61. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
62. The capital of Eritrea.
65. An oblique or slanting asymmetry.
69. (trademark) A game in which words are formed from letters in patterns similar to a crossword puzzle.
72. Genus of widely distributed agarics that have white spores and are poisonous with few exceptions.
73. A member of a nomadic people who invaded Europe in the 4th century.
74. The largest island of the central Ryukyu Islands.
76. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
77. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
78. Worker in a railway yard.
79. Informal terms for a meal.

DOWN

1. A long flag.
2. Beside one another in a row or rank.
3. A mark used by an author or editor to indicate where something is to be inserted into a text.
4. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
5. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
6. A rare polyvalent metallic element of the platinum group.
7. A nucleotide derived from adenosine that occurs in muscle tissue.
8. Of or in or relating to the nose.
9. Gone by.
10. The last few hours before death.
11. (Babylonian) Father of the gods.
12. Empty rhetoric or insincere or exaggerated talk.
13. A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
14. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
19. A brace that extends from the rear of the keel to support the rudderpost.
23. The mother-in-law of Ruth whose story is told in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament.
25. State in eastern India on the Bay of Bengal.
27. Conqueror of Gaul and master of Italy (100-44 BC).
30. Affectedly modest or shy especially in a playful or provocative way.
32. A fabric woven with fibers from the flax plant.
34. Daughter of Nehru who served as Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 (1917-1984).
35. A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
36. Source of a tough elastic wood.
38. The dialect of Ancient Greek spoken in Thessaly and Boeotia and Aeolis.
39. Used of milk and milk products from which the cream has been removed.
41. A mature blood cell that contains hemoglobin to carry oxygen to the bodily tissues.
45. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
48. A boy who sells or delivers newspapers.
50. 100 peswas equal 1 cedi.
52. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
53. A person who exercises control over workers.
57. Japanese mathematical physicist who proposed that nuclear forces are mediated by massive particles called mesons which are analogous to the photon in mediating electromagnetic forces (1907-1981).
58. Ancient city is southeastern Italy where Hannibal defeated the Romans in 216 BC.
59. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
60. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
63. Flesh of fish found in colder waters of northern Atlantic coast of the United States.
64. The template for protein synthesis.
66. A genus of Mustelidae.
68. An impudent or insolent rejoinder.
70. (Irish) The sea personified.
71. Either extremity of something that has length.
75. Before noon.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Go ahead and let yourself dream this morning; these times do not come too often. You may be working at another desk or perhaps station today. You are in a position to help others that want to take a little time away from work for a winter vacation and you are pleased to help. It is good to know that you can fit into most positions of responsibility and not have to ask about protocol. This action on your part may also either increase your business or put you in a better position with your supervisor. You and a loving friend are on the same pleasant wavelength this afternoon; perhaps you will enjoy a shopping spree or a visit over tea and a small snack. This evening there is plenty of time to relax and share a massage with a loved one.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find your life's direction or career putting some real pressure on your home and emotional life just now. Obviously you cannot live without both, so some kind of self-control on your part is indicated. Know that this process is temporary. You are making great strides in many areas of your life. Those around you may appreciate your ability to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and get work accomplished. You might want to take a little time this evening before you socialize to think about your goals for this next year. Everything points to your taking the initiative in many areas of your life. You could feel great support from those around you. You may decide this is a good evening to enjoy a take home meal.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Being with others and working together should be particularly nice. Someone in authority may come to you with a plan for a particular job, because this person is familiar with your business talents. Being able to understand those around you almost assures you of a special time with someone you love. Good feelings and a sense of support and harmony makes this a pleasant time. Your charismatic behavior and eloquence in communication and speech should find others following your lead, wherever you go. Things are really unconstrained for self-expression, which works very well with your special ideas and thoughts. You are willing to lend a hand in some community project. Expect good things to happen when you volunteer.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Work of a collaborative nature is particularly favored this morning. Today finds you efficient and sharp-witted. Work-related discussions go very well. Later, you could be looking deeper within yourself for some answers to spiritual questions that you have. This should be a good time for personal analysis, as you should be able to discover whole new areas of your inner self or mind that have before now, been closed. Expect insights into dreams and ideals. Your commonsense and emotions are accentuated. Expect a sense of support and goodwill from those around you, especially family. Others may seek you out for your psychological insight and understanding. Tonight is a special night with loved ones and it is positive.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This morning you may quickly get into the workplace in order to have a head start, perhaps on some unfinished business from yesterday. It could also be because the energy present is so upbeat, rushed and enthusiastic since visitors are coming that will need special attention. You may be the one chosen for this job, and anything you can do to represent your part of a particular company in a good light becomes successful. You expand your mental horizons by foreseeing the right path to take, the right words to say, the important information that is needed to pass on to others. You make good use of your time—this day ends in that type of sigh that comes when you know you have done your job well. Curiosity takes you into some fun places tonight.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Striving to be the very best that you can be is uppermost in your awareness of self. You just want to expand your knowledge and that could have you delving into politics, law, travel, religion, to name but a few of the possibilities open to you now. Some of the things that you do could be the result of longing to be the center of attention. You are a deeply feeling, conscientious person who loves to give gifts; you like to feel appreciated for what you do. You have nothing to worry about—other people love to show your appreciation. Dreams of some form of honor or fame and respect are granted... Especially among family members. You may find this an intriguing, intuitive and possibly even a romantic time in which you will feel a lot of pride.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Electronics

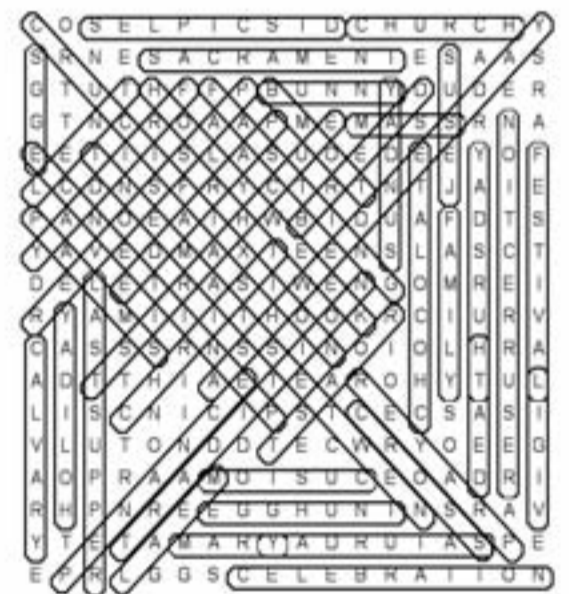
Find and circle all of the Electronics related terms that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a common electronic component.



- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| AMPERE | CURRENT | INDUCTANCE | SOLDER |
| ANALOG | DIGITAL | INSULATORS | SWITCHES |
| ANODE | DIODE | LEAD | THRISTOR |
| CAPACITOR | ELECTRICITY | NEGATIVE | TINNING |
| CATHODE | ELECTRODE | OHMS | TRANSFORMER |
| CELLS | ELECTRON | POSITIVE | TRANSISTOR |
| CHIP | FARADS | POWER | VACUUM TUBE |
| CIRCUIT | FLUX | RESISTANCE | VOLTAGE |
| CONDUCTOR | GATE | RESISTOR | WATT |
| CONTACTS | IMPEDANCE | SILICON | WIRE |

Yesterday's Solution

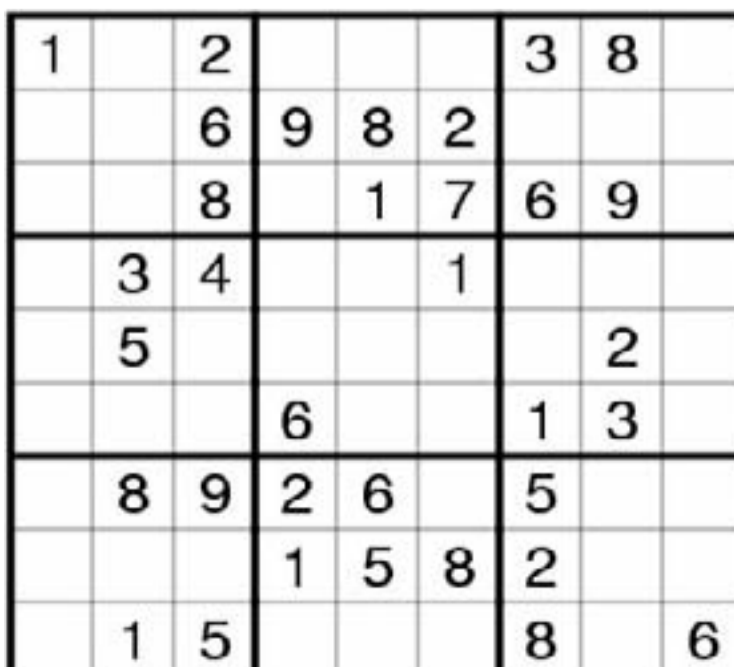
Easter



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

The hidden message is: ONE EASTER TRADITION IS TO DECORATE EGGS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



GROCERY GUIDE

Learn healthy shopping tips

By Amy Bertrand
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

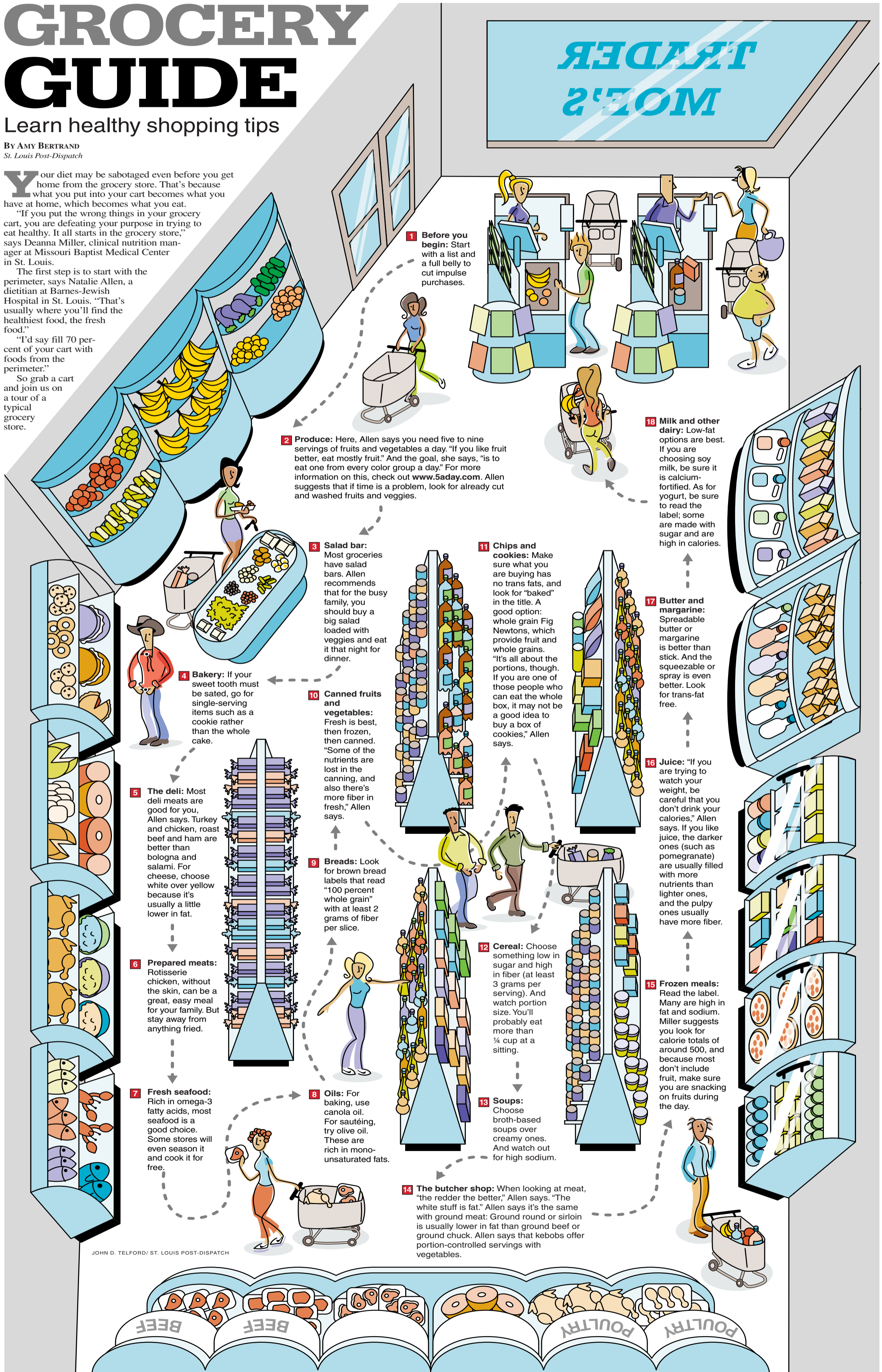
Your diet may be sabotaged even before you get home from the grocery store. That's because what you put into your cart becomes what you have at home, which becomes what you eat.

"If you put the wrong things in your grocery cart, you are defeating your purpose in trying to eat healthy. It all starts in the grocery store," says Deanna Miller, clinical nutrition manager at Missouri Baptist Medical Center in St. Louis.

The first step is to start with the perimeter, says Natalie Allen, a dietitian at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. "That's usually where you'll find the healthiest food, the fresh food."

"I'd say fill 70 percent of your cart with foods from the perimeter."

So grab a cart and join us on a tour of a typical grocery store.



JOHN D. TELFORD/ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Lifestyle | Gossip

Ed Sheeran announced for charity gig in Camden



Ed Sheeran is set to perform at a special charity gig in London next summer hosted by Dermot O'Leary. The 26-year-old singer/songwriter, whose grandparents are Irish, will play his biggest hits for 400 lucky fans at the London Irish Centre in Camden, London on June 19, 2018, to help raise money to help transform the lives of vulnerable Irish communities living in the British capital. Speaking ahead of the concert, which fans can enter a competition to win tickets to for a donation of just £10, the 'Galway Girl' hitmaker said: "My Irish heritage is something of which I've always been aware and very proud, so this gig feels like a natural fit. "I love what the London Irish Centre do in terms of being at the heart of Irish culture and community in London, and their plans are really exciting. "I'm hoping that people like Dermot O'Leary, myself, and others can help them to grow. We're all very excited about the summer 2018 show - this is going to be something very special." 'X Factor' host Dermot, who holds dual British and Irish citizenship, commented: "it's a big honor for me to be patron of the London Irish Centre. I'm very proud of my Irish heritage, my parents were part of the post war generation of immigrants who came to London to find a new life, so the London Irish community is one that is very close to my heart. "I'm looking forward to helping the London Irish Centre both promote Irish culture and support vulnerable people." Sean Kennedy, the CEO of the London Irish Centre Charity, added: "We are hugely excited to be announcing this very special event to kick off our annual Christmas appeal. We are deeply grateful to our patron Dermot O'Leary and our newest supporter, global superstar, Ed Sheeran for supporting our work with the Irish in London." Full details of the event will be released early next year.



Zayn Malik registers new song Hurt

Zayn Malik has registered a new song called 'Hurt'. The former One Direction star appears as the owner of the track on a BMI listing, whilst a host of major songwriters and producer BURNS have been credited for their involvement. Among the names are Andrew Watt and Ali Tamposi - who co-wrote Camila Cabello's huge hit 'Havana' - Chloe Angelides who has worked with Selena Gomez and Demi Lovato, and Britney Spears collaborator The DJ Burns. The track when released will follow two mega collaborations from the 24-year-old musician in the form of 'Dusk Till Dawn' with Sia and 'I Don't Wanna Live Forever' with Taylor Swift. Zayn promised fans earlier this year that a tour is "definitely on the cards" for his second album. The 'Pillowtalk' hitmaker didn't head out on the road in promotion of his debut solo record 'Mind of Mine' in 2016, but now he has more material under his belt with the new LP on the way, he's "excited to start rehearsing" his live show. When asked what happened to touring plans for his first album, Zayn said: "We did a few auditions for the band, and we got a band together, but I just wasn't feeling it. The first record, I didn't feel like there was enough material to do a proper show. So I just waved it off until the second album, so I can get the best of both. I think my confidence is definitely improved now, so a tour is definitely on the cards. I'm excited to start rehearsing." The dark-haired hunk was scheduled to perform a few shows last year, including Capital's Summertime Ball in London, which were cancelled after he suffered with crippling anxiety which prevented him from appearing on stage. Zayn has been keeping his cards close to his chest when it comes to his second album and hasn't revealed details of a title or release date, but has admitted he's "kind of finalized it". He said: "This record, I've kind of finalized it. But there's always ideas. Every day I find another song that I'm swapping out with another one. That's why the album date hasn't really come yet. Even though the album is pretty much there, and I have the material, I'm still changing things here and there. It's not necessary in my head when I work on a song whether it's for a new project or whether it's for this."

Mariah Carey's All I Want For Christmas Is You enters Billboard 100 top 10 for first time



Mariah Carey's 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' has made it into the top 10 of the Billboard 100 chart for the first time ever. The festive song was released 23 years ago in 1994, and despite being played on radio stations around the world and streamed globally on Spotify over 217 million times, it never topped charts in the UK or US. The 47-year-old star is overjoyed by the [Billboard] position, which is currently number nine, and says it's the best Christmas present she could have ever wished for. Mariah - who wrote and produced the track with Walter Afanasieff - told Billboard: "This is such an amazing Christmas gift! "As a songwriter, I feel so honored to have this song reach Billboard's [Hot 100] top 10 for the first time. "I honestly never thought we'd be talking about this happening, but I'm so thankful to everyone who embraces this song as part of their holiday tradition. "It truly warms my heart, and I am proud of this song that I wrote basically as a kid on my little Casio keyboard." Last week, the song made it to number two in the Official UK Chart. On Monday it was revealed as Spotify's most streamed Christmas song of all time. Mariah recently said she had no idea she'd be able to build an empire around one single. 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."

Eminem: I was so scatterbrained that people thought I had brain damage

Eminem's mind was once so foggy from drugs that people thought he had brain damage. The 45-year-old rapper - whose real name is Marshall Bruce Mathers III - has opened up about the quality of each of his albums, including 'Relapse' which was written at the end of his rehabilitation for addiction to prescription sleeping medication, and was recorded between the period of 2007 and 2009. The 'Walk On Water' hitmaker said he was so "scatterbrained", he felt like he would have to learn how to rap again. In a candid interview with Vulture magazine, he admitted: "Encore' was mediocre. "And with 'Relapse' - it was the best I could do at that point in time. [Relapse] was a funny album for me because I was just starting back rapping after coming out of addiction. "I was so scatterbrained that the people around me thought that I might have given myself brain damage. "I was in this weird fog for months. Like, literally I wasn't making sense: it had been so long since I'd done vocals without a ton of Valium and Vicodin. I almost had to relearn how to rap." The 'Lose Yourself' hitmaker is back with new LP 'Revival', and says whether people like his new music or not, he feels he's the "best at rhyming" he's ever been. However, he admits that he felt there was a lot of pressure to beat the success of 2000's 'The Marshall Mathers LP', which featured the star's biggest hits such as 'Stan' featuring Dido, 'Real Slim Shady' and 'Kim'. Asked if he still has a competitive streak in him, Marshall said: "I am forever chasing 'The Marshall Mathers LP'. "That was the height of what I could do. I just don't have the rage I did back then. "If I did, the music would be the same, and I hope it's changed. "And if I still had that rage it would mean I wouldn't have grown as an artist or a human being. Technically I feel like I'm better at rhyming than I've ever been."



Dickinson's voice 'a bit better' since cancer battle

Bruce Dickinson's vocals are "a little bit better" since he battled cancer. The Iron Maiden frontman underwent a seven-week course of chemotherapy and radiology after a cancerous tumor was discovered at the back of his tongue, and now the "top end" of his voice is "a little bit better" than before his treatment. He said: "Two things are slightly different. One is my saliva, which obviously lubricates your throat a little bit, is a bit less than it used to be. Although, back ten years ago, if I had the same cancer, I wouldn't be making any saliva. "But now, I'm probably 70 percent, which is great. Thanks very much, everybody upstairs. And the other things is that I think that the shape of possibly the back of my tongue, which forms vowel sounds and things like that, might have changed shape slightly, because, obviously, it had a big lump in it, and the lump's gone. "So maybe the surface has changed shape. So I notice a few differences. Funnily enough, the top end of my voice is maybe even a little bit better than it was before." The 59-year-old singer couldn't believe it when he was told the tumor had disappeared. Speaking on Swedish TV show 'Malou Efter Tio', he said: "I was amazed. My cancer was a 3.5cm tumor in my throat and a 2.5cm one in my lymph node, and that was the one that I could feel - that was the sec-



ondary one. "But I did 33 sessions of radiation and nine weeks of chemo at the same time, which is fairly standard therapy for it. And it was gone. "And I said to my oncologist, 'What do you mean it's gone? Where has it gone?' And he said, 'Well, your body just gets rid of it.' A body is an amazing thing."

Rak-Su working with Wyclef Jean again

Rak-Su are set to collaborate with Wyclef Jean again. The popular four piece - made up of childhood friends Mustafa Rahimulla, Ashley Fongho, Jamaal Shurland and Myles Stephenson - have clearly found a winning formula with the Haitian rapper after their 'X Factor' single 'Dimelo', featuring the Fugees star and producer Naughty Boy, shot straight to number one in the iTunes chart within 24 hours of them being crowned winners of the ITV talent show earlier this month. The foursome have now revealed they are helping their pal revive his career, with another hit song in the works. Ashley told the Daily Star newspaper: "Wyclef is someone you grew up watching on The Box and MTV Base, it's just crazy, when you listen to any sort R&B hip-hop you know it's part of the Fugees." Jamaal added: "Wyclef said he really feels our energy, he really feels our vibe. "He said, 'Uncle Wyclef is always here to work on future projects', he just seems to get it, get us. "I'm so excited he is back, and he seems excited about us, so it just works." Meanwhile, the group recently hinted they could be collaborating with fellow 'X Factor' stars

Little Mix. They received advice from the girl group who won the competition in 2011, and would love the chance to team up with them on a track. Speaking about the tips they got from Leigh-Anne Pinnock from the 'Shout Out To My Ex' group, they said: "The Girls from Little Mix have actually been really helpful. There's not been a great deal of interaction. I think you bumped into Leigh-Anne [Pinnock] once, didn't you?! yeah, I bumped into her and she was just saying just kinda trust the process. There can be a lot going on but just keep your head down and keep working hard." The lads have set their sights high on collaborators for the future, with the likes of Jay-Z, Frank Ocean and Camila Cabello on their wish-list. When asked who they'd like to duet with, the foursome told music show 'BeBox': "There are so many artists we'd like to work with, in the future. "All the people we kinda grew up listening to and that our tastes have been molded by like Usher, Babyface, Jay-Z, Skepta, Frank Ocean, Camilla Cabello. I mean she's good init, Little Mix there's actually so many."



Rowland addresses Destiny's Child reunion rumors

Kelly Rowland has silenced rumors Destiny's Child are set for a reunion. The 36-year-old singer has claimed she has "no idea" about any plans for the 'Say My Name' girl group - which was more commonly known for featuring Beyonce, Michelle Williams and Kelly - to join forces again at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in April 2018, which is set to be headlined by the 'Lemonade' hitmaker. Speaking to PEOPLE, she said: "I have no idea about any of that." And the 'Motivation' artist has revealed she even took it upon herself to speak with fans about the rumor. She continued: "I just asked a fan about that. They were like because it's just cool." Kelly has revealed during her conversation the American hitmakers were described as "legends", which is a title the star "gladly accepts", although she insists that does not mean the trio, nor any previous members of the band, will reform. She added: "They used the L word and said legends. I mean, I gladly accept that very much but it's nothing that we recently talked about." This news comes after Beyonce, 36, recently shared a photograph of her wearing an AC/DC t-shirt on social media, but covered the AC section with her hair to only show DC, which is the abbreviation of the band's name. Beyonce's post coincided with an upload Kelly posted in which she teased what her Super Bowl outfit will be, and simply posted a bee emoji alongside the upload, which is a nod to the 'Halo' singer's nickname. Alongside the two clues came a post from former member LaTavia Jackson, who shared an old photo of the original Destiny's Child members, while LeToya Tucket teased she was working on a secret project. Although Kelly has shut down those rumors, she has revealed she will be releasing more solo music in the New Year. She said: "2018 new music. What I'm excited about [fans] most to hear is probably stories I've never told on this album. I haven't released a record in five years."



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Kevin Hart eyes Mrs Doubtfire remake



Kevin Hart wants to star in a 'Mrs Doubtfire' remake. The 38-year-old actor would love a chance to remake the hit 1993 movie - which starred the late Robin Williams - after he was in 2017's 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle', which Williams had also previously starred in. Speaking to CinemaBlend, Kevin said: "I'll stay on the Robin Williams train and say that if I could jump into 'Mrs Doubtfire', That was a very amazing performance on both ends for him. I think that's one I'd love to get to play in." Meanwhile, Kevin previously admitted he struggled filming scenes for 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle' because he is terrified of spiders. He said: "I didn't like it at all. I particularly didn't like the jungle. I am not an outdoors guy because there are too many spiders and centipedes." And Dwayne Johnson - who also stars in the movie - admitted he is pleased with the "new take" on the original movie, which starred the late Robin Williams, and has revealed the creative team wanted their version to be "respectful" to the film legend. He explained: "We wanted to do something that was respectful of the work of Robin Williams as well as creating something fresh. Once we figured out the new take on it, we just did it." And Johnson hopes Williams is "proud" of 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle'. He said: "It's an honor. I don't say that lightly, we all feel that way. The first one is a beloved title and we really wanted to make a movie that the world will hopefully enjoy and that we had a great time making it and you know, not to sound over earnest about it, but we truly mean this, is something that would make Robin proud. Robin influenced us tremendously, and his family as well."

Anna Kendrick's fake smile

Anna Kendrick and her 'Pitch Perfect' co-stars had to put fake smiles on when they filmed the final scenes for 'Pitch Perfect 3'. The 32-year-old actress - who plays Beca in the movie franchise - says the whole cast were distraught when they were filming the movie's final scenes and were even told by the director Trish Sie to be "a little less emotional". Anna said: "This was the last day of filming, which never happens - you never film in order like that, so we were just in our feelings. Our director at one point was like, 'OK, it's great, but you guys do look like you all just found out you have cancer! Now, maybe a little lighter, let's send out the audience on a high, maybe, something like that. A little less emotional!'" And whilst the future of the hit movies hang in the balance, Anna would be up for at least four more movies and said it would go on and on "if it was up to her". She added to US breakfast show Today: "If it were up to us, we'd be like, four, five, six, seven [films], but it's probably good that it's not up to us because we don't have ideas! "But we wanted to make it a satisfying ending [for Pitch Perfect 3], if it is the ending, so we're treating it like the ending and hopefully we will get to work together again someday." Meanwhile, Rebel Wilson - who also stars in the movie - previously revealed she is confident she will work with 'Pitch Perfect' scribe Kay Cannon again. She said: "I'm sure I'll work with Kay again. She's so brilliant. And now she's directing her own movies. I'm sure our paths will cross again. She actually sent me the original 'Pitch Perfect' script on Facebook after seeing some of my outtakes from 'Bridesmaids'. That's how I was the first person cast."



G.I. Joe 3 gets release date

G.I. Joe 3 has got the green light and will be released on March 27, 2020. The action sequel based on Hasbro's world military toy range was delayed due to lead star Dwayne Johnson's hectic shooting schedule on his other movies. But now Paramount has confirmed that 'G.I. Joe 3' is coming and will hit cinemas in just over two years' time. It is not yet known if Johnson, 45, will be reprising his role as Marvin F. Hinton/ Roadblock or if any of the characters from the first two films will feature, such as Channing Tatum as Conrad S. Hauser / Duke or Ray Park as G.I. Joe Team member Snake Eyes. Paramount Pictures has also announced that the 'Dungeons & Dragons' franchise - based on the fantasy role playing game - is being rebooted and a 'Micronauts' film about the robot toy range is being created with both films coming out in 2021. An untitled Hasbro film is scheduled for release in October 2021 and rumours are rife that it will be the long mooted 'M.A.S.K.' movie, based on the 1980s cartoon series about the battle between criminal organization V.E.N.O.M (Vicious Evil Network Of Mayhem) and M.A.S.K (Mobile Armored Strike Command). The toy range was comprised of super-powered vehicles and the characters from the show who wore super-powered masks. A new 'Dungeons & Dragons' film - directed by Rob Letterman from a script by 'The Conjuring 2' writer David Leslie Johnson - was originally being developed by Warner Bros. Pictures with Ansel Elgort is in talks to star. But the Paramount project is a new venture based on the tactical war game originally designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, and first published in 1974 by Tactical Studies Rules, Inc. (TSR). The 'Dungeons & Dragons' world was previously brought to life on the big screen in 2000 and the film starred Jeremy Irons, Marlon Wayans and Zoe McLellan. However, it attracted negative reviews and performed poorly at the box office and the two sequels were not released in cinemas.

Willem Dafoe to receive Palm Springs International Film Festival Icon Award



Willem Dafoe will be presented with the Icon Award at the Palm Springs International Film Festival. The 62-year-old actor will be handed the accolade at the annual gala on January 2, 2018, after appearing in more than 100 movies throughout his career, including 'Platoon' and 'The English Patient'. According to Deadline, Palm Springs International Film Festival Chairman Harold Matzner said Dafoe "delivers a career defining performance" in 'Florida Project'. In the motion picture, he portrays beleaguered Orlando motel manager Bobby Hicks who has to deal with a group of youngsters constantly getting into trouble in his building. Dafoe will follow in the footsteps of the likes of Michael Douglas, Robert Duvall, Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep when he picks up the accolade. It might not be the only gong the Hollywood star wins next year because he has been nominated for an array of Best Supporting Actor accolades for his 'Florida Project' portrayal. Dafoe is up for a Golden Globe, Critics Choice and Screen Actors Guild Award for the film. This comes after he won Best Supporting Actor prizes for the part this year at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards, New York Film Critics Circle Awards and Boston Society of Film Critics Awards among others. Dafoe recently admitted he likes to try to appear in movies which "engage" him and he loves to try out different types of roles he's never played before. He said: "Something that really taps into a sense of curiosity or wonder. "I'd say the basic condition is to say you're going to do something you've never done before and no matter how it turns out, it's going to be interesting and if you're open to it, something's going to happen. "You aren't always guaranteed what that's going to be but it's going to be something - you're not just going to make another movie, you're going to make a movie you have a stake in."



Gillan is 'the biggest fan' of 'Jumanji'



Karen Gillan is "the biggest fan" of the original 'Jumanji' movie. The 30-year-old actress has admitted she jumped at the chance to star in the forthcoming film 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle' alongside Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black and Kevin Hart because the 1995 classic was one of her "top three films of all time" when she was younger. Speaking to WWD, she said: "I almost dropped everything in hands because I am the biggest fan of the original ever. It's in my top three films of all time." Although Karen - who portrays Ruby Roundhouse in the production - was eager to feature in the film, she was also "terrified and then protective" over it because she didn't want to upset fellow fans of the original version, which starred the late Robin Williams. She continued: "And I was instantly terrified and then protective over it. It is its own movie in its own right and it pays enough homage to the original, but it's going to keep fans of the original happy. I think - it certainly did for me." Karen's character has sparked uproar with some viewers because of her skimpy ensemble, but the star has revealed the costume was a conscious move by the creative team who wanted to "make fun" of the sexist trope. When asked about the reaction to her attire in the movie, she said: "I think gender equality is very much at the forefront of our conversation right now and that makes me really happy, so it's good that people are talking about it. Then along comes this photo where all the men are covered and then the girl is like scantily clad, of course it's going to. When you look at it out of context, it's sort of ridiculous. So I'm not surprised by people's reaction at all actually. "We're actually aware of that trope and we're sort of making fun of it. And my character is so unhappy about it. But yeah, it's not necessarily a negative thing that people are talking about it-it gets to reinforce it."



Ora always eats the same meal for breakfast

Rita Ora eats salmon and egg whites "every morning without fail". The 27-year-old singer boasts a healthy eating plan, as she always starts the day with a piece of fish and eggs, which are either scrambled or boiled, although if they are scrambled she makes sure they are without the yolk. Speaking about her diet to PEOPLE, the 'Your Song' hitmaker said: "I always have egg whites with salmon every morning without fail, I don't eat anything else. Or I have like boiled eggs with salmon. I always have a bit of protein and I don't have normal scrambled eggs, I do egg whites." The 'Fifty Shades of Grey' actress - who portrays Mia Grey in the franchise - has revealed she also feasts on chicken and vegetables, which she washes down with "a lot" of juices or water. She said: "And I just have like chicken, and vegetables and I drink a lot of juices and a lot of water." And the star is adamant she will not eat any carbohydrates or breads, and she has found a new love for cauliflower rice because it has "no carbs". She added: "I don't have any breads. "I'm not the best cook, but I definitely have my go-to meals. Right now I'm doing like chicken and cauliflower rice - cauliflower rice is my new discovery by the way because it's like rice but with no carbs. That's major." However, Rita does allow herself some carbohydrates and will compromise her eating regime by eating "half a sandwich" if needs be. She said: "If I want a sandwich or whatever I'll do like half a sandwich, take half of the bread off and do like an Italian open type of sandwich vibe." But Rita has admitted she has not always been so conscious about her food intake, as when she has been on tour she used to "binge" eat fast food. She said: "I've done the whole binge thing. I've been on tour. 'Stop at a fast food restaurant' thing and it just does not feel good, like it feels good in the moment and then an hour later you're like 'Oh my god I feel sick'. And I don't have time to get sick."

Newton says her grey hair is her 'badge of honor'

Thandie Newton says her grey hair is her "badge of honor". The 45-year-old actress has admitted when she visits the hair salon and they try to yank out any silver strands of hair, she is furious and tells the hairdresser not to touch her tresses because she is proud of them and views them as a symbol of her "wisdom". Speaking to PEOPLE, the 'Westworld' star - who has Ripley, 17, Nico, 13, and Booker, three - said: "When I sit in a hairdresser's chair, if a hairdresser goes to pull a grey, I'm like, 'Whoa don't you touch that!' They just assume that I wouldn't want that. But, this is my antenna to the greys out there! This is my wisdom, my badge of honor." And Thandie has admitted she wants to keep her grey hairs because they remind her time is "running out" and she needs to make the most of her life. She continued: "And I want to see these greys so it reminds me every day that time is running out and that is something to celebrate; not to be afraid of." However, Thandie never used to be so at ease with the signs of ageing that she claimed to see when she used to replay episodes of her in the HBO thriller series. She said: "I was watching the footage of 'Westworld' the end of the first season before it aired and I was like, 'Ahh the shadows under my eyes! But Evan [Rachel Wood] looks blah, blah, blah!' But then I was like, 'Thandie, it's because you got more years on you, of course.'" But Thandie has since embraced her appearance, although she didn't "allow [herself] to celebrate" her flaws when she was younger. She said: "I didn't allow myself to celebrate those shadows and lines because were all encouraged to say the same as we were at 20. But that's not life." — Bang Showbiz



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A picture shows a woman visiting the Costume Gallery, a permanent exhibition highlighting the clothes dating from the 18th century, most of which belonged to the Romanov dynasty that ruled until 1917, at the Hermitage's Staraya Derevnya restoration center in northern Saint Petersburg. — AFP



A woman visiting the Costume Gallery, a permanent exhibition highlighting the clothes dating from the 18th century.

Russia's Hermitage puts rare collection of tsars' clothes on show

From Peter the Great's doublet to the wedding dress of the last tsar's wife Alexandra, Russia's renowned Hermitage museum has put on display highlights from its vast and unique costume archive. A new Costume Gallery opened this month as a permanent exhibition in a huge modern building in northern Saint Petersburg that houses the Hermitage's conservation and restoration center. A long gallery with panoramic glass cases features 130 mannequins wearing clothes dating from the 18th century, most of which belonged to the Romanov dynasty that ruled until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. "The costume department takes up 600 square meters (6,460 square feet). Behind the mannequins that are on show there are cupboards and dressers where we keep our collection of 24,000 pieces," said Nina Tarasova, the display's curator.

"What's on show is just three percent of our collection," she added. "For example, we have 280 personal items that belonged to Peter the Great this is the most important collection of 18th-century men's clothing in the world." Ruling in the 17th and 18th centuries, the tsar who founded Saint Petersburg was extremely tall for his day at around two meters (6.5 feet) and was known for his simple tastes.

From peasants to aristocrats

The exhibition's focus is on the Romanovs, from Peter the Great to the last tsar Nicholas II and his family, who were killed by the Bolsheviks in 1918 after his abdication. But it also gives a

broader picture of society, from the traditional clothes worn by peasants in various regions of Russia to the ball gowns donned by aristocrats in Saint Petersburg. "Thanks to these items, we can learn not only about the fashions of the time but also about what size the Romanov family members were and even what they were like as people," said Tarasova. A ceremonial robe worn by tsar Alexander I (who ruled from 1777 to 1825), shows that he was tall and slender, while the plump Alexander III, who ruled from 1845 to

1894 and was reputed to be indifferent to fashion, is represented by a plaid suit.

A simple green wool doublet, a kind of padded fitted jacket, worn by Peter the Great, rubs shoulders with a magnificent blue dress with silver brocade that Catherine the Great, who ruled between 1729 and 1792, used to wear to review the troops. "It took many months to create some of these dresses," said Tarasova. This was particularly true of a white lace dress decorated with fine embroidery, created for the



A woman visiting the Costume Gallery, a permanent exhibition highlighting the clothes dating from the 18th century.



A woman visiting the Costume Gallery, a permanent exhibition highlighting the clothes dating from the 18th century.

wedding of tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra Fyodorovna in 1894, shortly after he took the throne. Dressmakers and lacemakers spent more than six months creating the dress.

'They look new, trendy'

"This is very impressive. Most of all because all these dresses and items come from the 18th and 19th centuries, yet they look new and are even sometimes very trendy," said one visitor, Anna Gryaznova, who was photographing

Louis Vuitton suitcases from 1902. To keep the very fragile clothing in perfect condition, there is a strict temperature regime of precisely 21 degrees Celsius (around 70 degrees Fahrenheit) with humidity of 46 percent, and there are no windows to prevent sun damage. Also at the Staraya restoration center, visitors can view items of furniture and even carriages. Visitors need to sign up in advance for a guided tour of the restoration center, with details on the Hermitage's website. — AFP



(From left) Niecey Nash, Laura Dern, Kristen Wiig and Hong Chau attend the premiere of Paramount Pictures' "Downsizing" at Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, California. — AFP

'Downsizing' star Hong Chau shines in huge role as tiny exile

Film academic Rajendra Roy recently introduced the star of "Downsizing" with the claim: "This is the last day in your life when you'll ask the question, 'Who is Hong Chau?'" The endorsement ahead of a recent Los Angeles screening proved astonishingly precise: within a week, the actress had been nominated for some of the biggest awards in Hollywood for her role in Alexander Payne's satire. "After you see this movie you will never ask that question again, because she will be the brightest star in your universe, as she is for all of us who have experienced this," gushed Roy, chief film curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

If the tribute sounds over-the-top, it is an assessment shared by the film industry and critics alike. Chau, 38, has amassed best supporting actress nominations for the Screen Actors Guild Awards—seen as the most reliable predictor of Oscars glory—as well as the Critics Choice Awards and the prestigious Golden Globes. Don't expect elaborate navel-gazing about her method or motivation, however, because Chau doesn't see movie acting as a particularly complicated job. "I never like to sit and discuss my character, the other character, our relationship or anything like that," said the "Big Little Lies" actress, who was born in a refugee camp in Thailand. "I feel like I did my job and I trust that the other person has done theirs, you just go on set, play around with it, chew the scene for a little bit, then we roll and that's it."

Environmental catastrophe

The "other person" in "Downsizing" is Matt Damon, who stars alongside the Asian American actress in a near-future world where scientists have found a way to literally reduce humanity's environmental footprint by shrinking humans to five-inch (12.5-centimetre) versions of themselves. A combination of ecological and material motivations for being downsized appeals to Paul Safranek (Damon), a frustrated but well-meaning therapist, and his wife Audrey, played by Kristen Wiig. They sign up for the surgery, but she gets cold feet at the last minute, leaving Damon to embark alone on his adventure in the miniaturized world.

Enter Chau, a Vietnamese cleaner who was forcibly miniaturized after being imprisoned as a dissident in her homeland and has lost a leg below the knee as a result of being smuggled into the United States in a television box. Safranek strikes up a friendship with her, taking the film in an unexpected romantic direction that allows Payne to explore the idea of searching for a better life amid impending environmental catastrophe. — AFP

SLEEPLESS LOCALS TIRE OF BUDAPEST PARTY PARADISE

Bigger than Prague and some say more beautiful, Budapest's belle époque boulevards, cafes and locals playing chess in steaming outdoor thermal spas have long attracted tourists. But for some locals the city's tourism sector is booming too literally. "My walls shake from music at night, it's impossible to sleep," says Dora Garai, a weary resident of the Hungarian capital's inner seventh district, these days called the "party quarter". "In the morning I often have to clean vomit off my car," she says, the flat where she has lived all her life a beer can's throw away from a raucous 2,000-capacity all-night bar complex.

The 32-year-old now fronts a residents' group that has held marches in protest at the situation, mirroring unease in other European cities from Barcelona to Amsterdam. The main attraction for the revelers is that Budapest gives more bang for your buck. Melanie Kay Smith, a Budapest-based academic at the Corvinus University, told AFP. Hundreds of visitors interviewed for an upcoming report by Smith's students said they chose Budapest, within easy reach on dozens of budget flights daily, for the "cheap alcohol" and "the party". "We get so much here for so little," a group of young Danes told AFP, beaming, on a recent night out. Hedonistic thermal bath parties, and all-night opening hours add to the lure for

thirsty youth, mostly hailing from expensive northern Europe, and often Brits on stag nights. Offers on the pissup.com website, for example, include the "Killer Attila Warrior Weekend", or steaks and beers followed by a "sensational lesbian show".

Moving out

Annual arrivals have almost doubled since 2009 to 3.5 million last year, with Athens the only large city forecast to grow faster in 2017, according to Euromonitor. Even in winter the neighborhood is choked with taxis and rickshaws transporting revelers. The Corvinus study counted 800 bars and restaurants, double the number just five years ago. "Are you ready to party?" roared a young Hungarian through a megaphone at his foreign student pub-crawl group.

"People can always move out if it bothers them," he shrugged. Some of the estimated 15,000 residents of the area's compact grid of 19th-century streets, traditionally called the Jewish district after its many synagogues, have done just that. No official data exist yet but one in five people of some 300 residents told Corvinus that they were "considering moving out" due to noise, litter and public urination. "People used to live here," reads an ominous bronze plaque put up near a party hostel in the heart of the zone.



Men walk and dance on the streets of Budapest downtown. — AFP

Despite soaring property prices driven by investor demand for rental apartments many live in council accommodation and cannot sell, said Dora Garai, or, like her, refuse to budge. "Why should I move out just because people come here for a few days to behave how they like," she said.

Midnight closing?

Garai's group, set up in April, now has over 1,000 members who share experiences on Facebook. "Last night a drunk Englishman looking for his Airbnb apartment rang every doorbell in our building," one said. Bars should shut by midnight, not the current 6:00 am, the group demands, while City Hall should create a party zone outside the downtown. But midnight closing would put him out of business, said Abel Zsendovits, manager of the popular Szimpla

Kert (a grungy "ruin bar" in a formerly derelict building), dubbed one of the world's best pubs by Lonely Planet in 2014.

"Yes, the situation outside is unsustainable now," he admitted. "So bring in fines for anti-social behavior, more police, street cleaning and public toilets". At weekends his colleagues don green jackets and try to calm down street noise, part of a "Night Mayor" idea launched by an association of bars. The residents though are unconvinced that such a business-led initiative will end their woes. Nor would a proposed local referendum on midnight closing that would likely see low turnout given the outer part of the district is unaffected by the problems. Ultimately, Budapest needs to upgrade from low-budget "laissez-faire" tourism, says Smith. "Prices will have to go up somehow". — AFP

'The Last Jedi' rakes in \$450.8m worldwide in opening

Star Wars: The Last Jedi—the latest episode in the blockbuster space saga—has raked in more than \$450 million worldwide since hitting theaters, Disney said Monday—a major success for the most-hyped movie of the year. The film directed by Rian Johnson—which features the late Carrie Fisher's final performance as Princess Leia—took in \$220 million in North America, and another \$230.8 million overseas, a Disney spokesman said. It was the fifth biggest global box office debut in history, the company said.

It was also the second biggest opening in US history and in December-only behind "Star Wars: The Force Awakens"—the opener of the saga's sequel trilogy that took \$248 million on its debut weekend. "The Last Jedi" sees the return of the characters introduced in "The Force Awakens"—with Rey (Daisy Ridley) looking to Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) to teach her about The Force. One of the film's key draws for fans is to find out the fate of Leia. Fisher died in December 2016 at the age of 60, shortly after wrapping up filming her scenes. In November, Disney—which acquired

Lucasfilm five years ago—announced plans for a new "Star Wars" trilogy, the fourth, as well as a live-action television series. "We have big ambitions for the Star Wars franchise," Disney chief executive Robert Iger said at the time. Johnson, who directed "The Last Jedi," will develop the new films. "Star Wars"—the brain child of George Lucas—has

grown into the most lucrative and influential movie franchise of all time since the original film was released in 1977.

Animated films take second, third place In second place at the North American box office was "Ferdinand," a computer-animated comedy about a bull with a big heart often mistaken for a dangerous beast, which

took \$13.4 million on what was also its debut weekend, according to final industry figures. Last weekend's number one "Coco," a colorful Pixar movie about Mexico's Day of the Dead traditions, dropped down to third place with \$9.9 million, according to Exhibitor Relations. It has now earned \$150.7 million in North America since its release four weeks ago.

Feel-good film "Wonder" starring Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson and Jacob Tremblay—the story of a determined fifth-grade boy with a facial deformity who must deal with bullying—slid to fourth place, taking in \$5.2 million. Warner Bros superhero film "Justice League"—featuring Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, Ben Affleck as Batman, Henry Cavill as Superman and Jason Momoa as Aquaman, plus Ciaran Hinds as a supervillain—fell to fifth with \$4.3 million. Rounding out the top ten were: "Daddy's Home 2" (\$3.8 million) "Thor: Ragnarok" (\$3.1 million) "The Disaster Artist" (\$2.7 million) "Murder On The Orient Express" (\$2.5 million) "Lady Bird" (\$2.1 million) —AFP



This file photo shows Stormtroopers on the red carpet for the European Premiere of Star Wars: The Last Jedi at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP

Turkey's dervishes whirl for Rumi anniversary

'A lot of people like his poetry because it comes from the heart, from his soul'



Whirling dervishes perform a "Sema" ritual during a ceremony.



Arms crossed over their hearts, hands resting on their shoulders, the dervishes start their dance. They turn on themselves, slowly sliding their hands along their bodies before raising them, embracing the universe. But far from being only an act of introvert worship, the dance of the whirling dervishes is now a huge spectacle in Turkey, attracting flocks of tourists every year. Every December, the Turkish city of Konya organizes 10 days of celebrations to commemorate the death on December 17, 1273, of Jalal ud-Din Muhammad Rumi, the Sufi mystic who is one of the world's most beloved poets.

It was Rumi's followers who founded the brotherhood of whirling dervishes, so-called for the trance-like dance which is a central part of their worship. The Mevlana museum ("our master", a title given to Rumi) in Konya—which houses his tomb—was the most visited museum in Turkey with 2.43 million visitors, well ahead of Topkapi museum (1.46 million) and the Hagia Sofia (1.43 million), both in Istanbul.

Abdussettar Yarar, director of Konya Culture and Tourism, hopes to do even better this year. During the celebrations between December 7 and 17, between 60-65,000 people came to watch the "Sema" (the dervishes' dance), around 10,000 more than last year, he said. But the figures do not include the visitors to the museum and other events—conferences, plays, exhibitions—organized in the city. These figures increase each year, Yarar said, thanks to promotional efforts by Turkish cultural and tourist authorities at fairs and exhibitions around the world.

'Comes from the heart'

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic, the fraternities were officially banned in Turkey in 1925. This led to the closure of the "tekke" (dervish lodges) around the country. But many were later reopened as museums, as was the case in Konya. The authorities also allowed the whirling dervish ceremonies to resume in the 1950s, recognizing their cultural value and potential in terms of tourism. The silhouette of the whirling dervishes with their long white out-

fit and their tall cap—one hand pointed towards the sky and another towards the earth—has become one of the most famous symbols of Turkey. The audience watched entranced at a dance which copies the movement of planets against a background of Sufi music that filled the large Konya Sports and Congress Centre.

"A lot of people like his poetry because it comes from the heart, from his soul. And in his soul, he was with Allah," said Andrey Zhuravlyov who came from Latvia for the third time. At Rumi's mausoleum—recognizable by its turquoise-tiled dome—tourists jostle each other, reflect deeply and some weep profusely at the tomb of the poet. "Each time I visit, I feel different emotions," said Alper Ali Atik, adding the first time he visited, he left with a better understanding of human beings and how to be close to others.

'Different feeling'

Rumi was born in 1207 in the town of Balkh in the northwest of modern day Afghanistan. He wrote mainly in Persian, but also in other languages including in Arabic, and died in Konya. This has left Afghans, Iranians and Turks over the years claiming him as theirs, although some pre-



A picture in Konya, central Turkey shows the Mevlana Museum (left), the mausoleum of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the father of Sufism who lived in the 13th century.



fer to stress he left a legacy for all humanity. Around 10 percent of tourists visiting Konya for the celebrations in December are foreigners, above all, Iranians, Yarar said. This is the case for Maryam, an Iranian who previously visited Istanbul and the Mediterranean resort of Antalya, but finds in Konya, "there is a different feeling".

Her compatriot Shams added that she really loves the Mevlana. "He is a great Iranian poet," she said, with a big smile. "When we say Konya, we think of Mevlana and when we say Mevlana, Konya comes to mind," Yarar said. Murat Cengiz, a tourist guide for almost 20 years, has seen growing interest in this Sufi mystic, whom he believes impacts more than just Muslims and Turks. It is an opportunity, he said, "for the protection of the heritage and the development of Konya". In front of the museum's shadirvan (ablution fountain), Chinese tourists take a photo. "It's very beautiful, a feeling that I cannot describe," enthuses Sally, who is on holiday from Beijing. — AFP



Whirling dervishes perform a "Sema" ritual during a ceremony.



People visit Mevlana Museum, the mausoleum of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the father of Sufism who lived in the 13th century.



In Konya, central Turkey shows an inside view of the Mevlana Museum, the mausoleum of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the father of Sufism who lived in the 13th century.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017



A man dressed as a Santa Claus descends from the roof of the Pediatric Clinic in Ljubljana yesterday. — AFP

K-pop star reveals loneliness in suicide note

GLASS PROTEGEE FINDS MUSIC'S EMOTION IN TECHNOLOGY

Wearing a dress made of 100 speakers might seem to be a fashion statement. But for composer Pauchi Sasaki, the aesthetic goes deeper—it is a way to express humanity. The Peruvian artist and chosen protegee of Philip Glass, one of the world's most influential living composers, had first covered herself with amplification equipment when she played her violin in the ancient Pachacamac temple near Lima and found herself without an electrical outlet. She has since developed the concept into the "speaker dress," a shoulder-to-knee wall of 100 speakers the size found on shelf stereos, and made it an instrument itself.



Peruvian Composer and performer Pauchi Sasaki poses for a portrait following an interview with AFP in New York.

She performed on speaker dress as she recently premiered her latest piece, "GAMA XVI," in the presence of Glass at New York's Carnegie Hall. "I realized that it had a very iconic power and people want to reduce the object and say, 'Oh, that looks cool,'" Sasaki said of the speaker dress. "But I really wanted to bring out the spirit of the instrument because every instrument, like a violin or a piano, has a spirit," she told AFP. The speaker dress does not in itself have an acoustic capacity; it is connected to programming by Sasaki.

Yet she plays it with pitch, tone and intensity variations like a classic instrument, with a mouthpiece or physical touch triggering software, which in turn sends back processed sounds to speakers on her body. She finds the layer of computerization especially apt for the 21st century, when so many human experiences and interactions are filtered through smartphones, speakers or other

technology. "I don't create an object that makes things; I build extensions for human gestures," she said. "I want to be able to deliver nuances through the instrument. And what I mean with that is that human emotion is not only about randomness or about will, it's also about fragile moments, it's about doubt and it's about strength a wide range." The speaker dress was all too real the first time she performed it—her hair caught fire. She has since fine-tuned the wiring and is confident about its safety.

Year with Glass

Sasaki has composed film scores in Peru and worked extensively in Japan, where she traces her ancestry, and had been considering an academic career until a year ago. Then, under a mentorship program sponsored by luxury watchmaker Rolex, she was selected to spend a year in New York studying with Glass, who interviewed her to make the final cut. Performing "GAMA XVI," her new work, at Carnegie Hall with the American Composers Orchestra, Sasaki explored not only the physicality of her instrument but also that of her performance.

Sasaki entered the hall from the back, with the initial blurt from the speaker dress causing much of the audience to look around in befuddlement, fearing perhaps that someone had not turned off a cellphone. Instead, Sasaki slowly made her way to the stage, the electronic sounds and the strings gradually merging together into a nebulous unison, with flickering projections of slender rectangles reinforcing the sense of being in a space out of time. By the third movement, in a structural nod to Glass, "GAMA XVI" builds into full balance as a melody emerges, a repeating motif inspired by Andean folk music played by violin soloist Tim Fain.

Glass, addressing the audience after the premiere, described Sasaki's compositions as "music that people should hear." "It's work that's inspired, it's very natural and it has its own sound. You can't be taught to write that music," the composer said. Glass credited his own musical relationship in the 1960s with sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar as critical to his career. But the 80-year-old composer said he was still figuring out how to be a mentor. "I suppose that I never doubted her or her talent," he said of Sasaki. "But I doubted my ability to do anything about it." — AFP

Top K-pop star wrote in a suicide note that he was "broken from inside" and "engulfed" by depression, it emerged yesterday as his death sent shockwaves among fans worldwide. Kim Jong-Hyun, 27-year-old lead singer of the hugely popular K-pop boyband SHINee, was found in a hotel room in the South Korean capital Seoul in what police said was suicide. A coal briquette was burning on a frying pan—a common method of self-killing in South Korea, an ultra-competitive society with one of the world's highest suicide rates.

Kim's close friend, musician Nain9, released a suicide note on her Instagram account, saying he had asked her to publish the message in the event of his death. "I am broken from inside. The depression that gnawed on me slowly has finally engulfed me entirely," it said, adding he "couldn't defeat it anymore." "I was so alone," he went on. "The act of ending is difficult. I've lived until now because of that difficulty." "Please tell me I did a good job," he implored, ending the note with: "You've worked hard. You've really gone through a lot. Goodbye."

Number Ones

The five-member SHINee debuted in 2008 and went on to lead the "Korean Wave" that saw South Korean pop culture develop a fan base across Asia and beyond. Known for peppy songs and carefully-choreographed dance numbers performed with military precision, SHINee have become one of the world's best-known K-pop acts. The band have released five albums that swept charts at home and abroad, with some of them reaching Number 1 on the US Billboard World Albums chart.

Kim was seen as a model K-pop celebrity, who boasted flawless singing and dancing skills and rarely made headlines with the romantic relationships, drink-driving or drug use that derailed the careers of many other artists. He released his first solo album in 2015, topping the Billboard World Albums chart, and performed at solo concerts in Seoul only last week. K-pop stars undergo cut-throat competition and grueling years-long training at the hands of their agents, who dictate everything from music style to diet and



The portrait of Kim Jong-Hyun, a 27-year-old lead singer of the massively popular K-pop boyband SHINee, is seen on a mourning altar at a hospital in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

even mobile phone use. Many are also under pressure to maintain a squeaky-clean and wholesome image at all times. A master's thesis by a prominent Seoul actress in 2009 said that 40 percent of actors or actresses had considered suicide at least once due to a lack of privacy, online bullying or unstable incomes. Hundreds of Kim's tearful fans paid their respects at a mourning altar in the Seoul hospital where his body lay. "I came here to say the last farewell... since we fans apparently couldn't be there for him when he needed help most," said Jung Min-Kyung, 19. "I think our country has very high expectations of celebrities," she added.

'Last farewell'

Social media was flooded by thousands of messages of mourning, and in the hours after his death it was the top trending topic on China's Twitter-like Weibo, with more than 140 million views. "I really can't believe that you're gone," wrote one poster. "Wish you can rest in peace in heaven, be an ordinary person in your next life

and smile happily." China is a major K-pop market and songs written or performed by Kim packed the Korean top 10 charts on Xiami.com, one of the country's most popular music websites. In the Chilean capital Santiago, photos showed throngs of fans sobbing near a makeshift memorial outside the Korean embassy.

Many other K-pop stars in the stable of SHINee's agents SM Entertainment—which dominates K-pop—cancelled public appearances to visit the mourning altar in Seoul. Kim's funeral would be held on Thursday, the firm said in a statement, adding: "Other members of SHINee as well as other artists at our company are all mourning his death amid deep sorrow and shock." Seoul police said it seemed "certain" that Kim's death was a suicide and they planned to close the case without an autopsy as requested by his family. He was pronounced dead shortly after being moved to a hospital. Authorities were alerted by his sister, after he sent her text messages reading: "This is my last farewell" and "Please let me go and say I did a good job." — AFP



Tearful fans gather to visit the mourning altar for Kim Jong-Hyun, a 27-year-old lead singer of the massively popular K-pop boyband SHINee, at a hospital in Seoul yesterday.



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