

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 173413

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Local

Christmas wishes



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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This article is dedicated to all our Christian friends celebrating Christmas - Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with love and peace! This happy occasion is not confined to Christians only - many Muslims share with their Christian friends the joy of this occasion because they remember that these Christians exchange greetings and congratulations with them on Islamic occasions. Joy is a universal sentiment and there's no embarrassment or shame in it.

After Christmas celebrations, we are approaching a new year. This occasion also makes us remember what we lack to complete our happiness, whether money, children, success or marriage. It is wishful thinking, but happy occasions are very few in the turbulent, volatile and worrisome world of today.

I believe social media has become a partner on these occasions and not only a transmitter. These days, social media is a yard through which any individual can express their opinion and present congratulations and wishes for various holidays and events, and this is clear on Twitter. For example, Egyptian newspaper Al-Dustour posted Christmas and New Year wishes with a hashtag on Twitter from various people. The diversity of wishes by Twitter users were funny, reflecting simple human wishes. The most prominent was 'Love, iPhone X and Al-Aqsa Mosque', while another person made a wish to fall in love and work outside Egypt.

I met some friends recently and we were talking about Christmas and the New Year. We all agreed that praying and hoping for peace is the goal of all people regardless of religion and origins. Security and peace are no longer easy to have. It is good to see that many Muslims love to share this occasion with their friends by buying simple gifts and decorating their homes with Christmas trees, because it reflects the joy of an approaching new year. A friend said she is always keen to buy decorations and a Christmas tree to cheer up the house during the end of the year, because it gives her hope to achieve her wishes. New Year celebrations are not only fun for Christians!

Gift markets around the world witness large crowds during Christmastime, New Year and seasons of love, because young people, children and girls like to buy gifts to celebrate the year and the occasion. I was recently at a market, and realized it is rare that there's no objection from conservatives to displaying Christmas gifts. Is there a change in society? I find it positive. Last year, there was a video of an extremist man who rejected the presence of a Christmas tree in one of the markets and the minister of social affairs removed it. This led to a debate between supporters and opponents.

This year, everything is going quietly and smoothly, but I would like to say that Christians in Kuwait, both citizens and expatriates, have the right to celebrate and that the Kuwaiti constitution guarantees freedom of belief. The state protects the practice of worship, which has been actively taking place for over half a century. I think that as we defend our beliefs, it is the right of non-Muslims to defend themselves and their religion. But they do not have a strong voice, so we have to stand with them. The Christmas period shows our strong cohesion and acceptance of the other in one nation.

It is a joyful time. Happy holidays!

Photo of the Day



Street sweepers clean Shuwaikh beach while enjoying a golden sunset. — Photo by Jarrah Al-Harbash

Should I get a master's degree?



IN MY VIEW

By Salman Al Mutawa

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“You only use 5 percent of the stuff they teach you in school,” is a statement I have heard multiple people from different countries say. I have had younger students ask me, is it worth it to go for a master's degree in my major? The answer to this question is: it depends. Have you decided to spend the rest of your working life in an academic or research track? If so, then by all means yes. If you decide to get a job, like the vast majority of individuals, then the answer to that is no, with the exception of medicine. This isn't to say that you will not learn or grow during your year or two getting your master's, you definitely will. This issue at hand is: has the amount of time and energy spent given you it's worth?

Think of it this way. An average apple tree takes five to eight years to bear fruit. If you decide to plant an apple tree, and put in the money and effort to take care of it for...say, 15 years. After year 15, it produces five very good apples. Was planting the tree worth it? No.

To the apple planting community, please be advised that this is purely an analogy and is in no way, shape, or form an attack on your way of life. I also have not been paid by any parties of interest to cast a shadow on any specific apples or any initiative pertaining to the planting of said apples.

The maximum a master's degree can offer you in the job market is an interview opportunity. If that is what you wanted

in the first place, then good for you. By all means make the most of it. However, do not assume that the knowledge received during your master's degree will far outweigh your knowledge in your bachelors, this is not a PhD. A master's degree is an incremental increase of knowledge to the base of information that was built during your undergrad. It is nothing more. Furthermore, some ask if doing a master's degree straight out of undergrad is better than taking a few years off to work then returning to study.

For the knowledge that you will receive, and for the potential value that you can obtain, to maximize the usefulness of the information you obtain in your masters it is ultimately better to work for a year or two and then return to your studies. HOWEVER, many people who begin work with that idea experience the comfortable lifestyle and upgrade in standard of living that comes along with a paycheck. This acts as a sedative and makes leaving your job to go back to school especially difficult. Again, this is not the case for everyone. People who choose to do this have also said that the “maximum value” mentioned earlier in this paragraph is not a large enough increment than the value they would have gotten when they were fresh out of undergrad, filled with energy and still used to the study lifestyle.

It seems to be that the main issue at hand with post-bachelor's education is the pure effectiveness of the education itself. For the most part, given the opportunities in Kuwait and Middle East, it does not seem to always be worth it. The current educational system is reaching a point of impracticality and obsolescence that is unheard of, and I am not bashing Kuwait, this applies to western education as well. Join me next week as I analyze what exactly is wrong with the educational system from a student's perspective, and what the results this system has produced.

Kuwait  Times

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Local



Where youth go, posters follow!



Story and photographs
by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Have you tried to count the number of times you skipped an ad on Snapchat, Instagram, or Facebook? You often feel weary when the ads get repetitive, and resort to the magical “hide this ad” button. It seems digital advertising on social media platforms has reached a point of saturation. Online advertising has proliferated due to the ease of the process and cheaper costs, but this could be counterproductive. Apparently, due to the large number of advertisements, it’s difficult to reach the target segments.

Some ad campaigns have begun combining their digital with real life campaigns, especially those targeting the youth. Interesting and creatively new graffiti and posters can be found where the youth like to mingle and hang out, like Mayar Complex, Shuwaikh Market, Lilly Center, Seef restaurants area and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street. Some of these commercial campaigns may seem like social and political commentaries, while others are based on graphic design and photography. Yet, they are all directing passersby, aka the target audience, to their social media accounts.

The use of posters and graffiti is not new to the Kuwaiti culture. These have been used to stir public opinion by enthusiastic individuals.

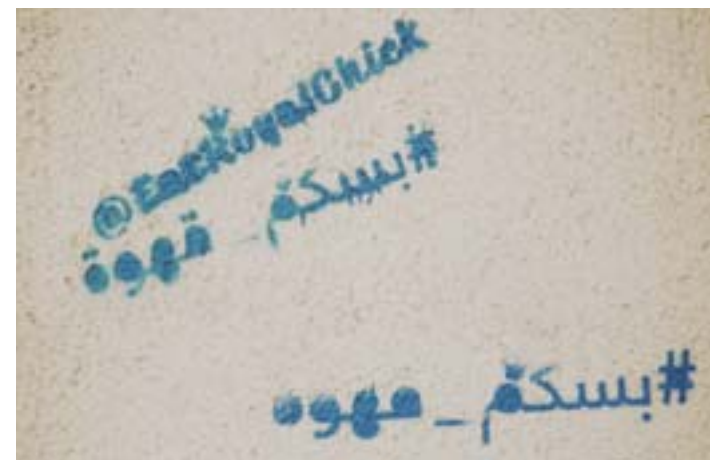
But for some reason, individual efforts are virtually non-existent in the light of the emergence of commercial posters and graffiti work. Therefore, it’s early to say that there is a growing poster culture in Kuwait.

Graphic and poster designer Tala Al-Maian said there has been a growth in the graffiti movement in Kuwait in the past few years, along with social acceptance of it. “I believe in the next three years, we will see more posters on walls than graffiti because they’re simple and easy to print. You can call it the cheap people’s art!”



Local

Friday, December 22, 2017



Some of these commercial campaigns may seem like social and political commentaries, while others are based on graphic design and photography.



Local

It's A Scam!

By Nawara Fattahova

Although various kinds of scams through phone calls, text messages, emails and other media have been around for decades, people still believe in these scammers and fall in their trap. Email scams were the first attempts at electronic fraud before there were smartphones. Scams took many different forms. Some emails promoted money laundering. Other were supposedly sent by multinational companies telling the respondents they had won a luxury car or a cash prize and demanding their personal information including contacts and bank details.

Over time, the scammers changed their tactics. The emails shifted to humanitarian stories calling for help and offering huge sums of money in return. Senders usually presented themselves as relatives of a former president or dictator who was killed or had died, claiming to have millions of dollars but unable to access it and looking for an intermediary. They requested bank account details to transfer the money for a 10 percent commission of the amount. Other senders claimed they had inherited a few million dollars and also needed to transfer it for a certain percentage, as they live in a war zone and can't handle the money themselves.

But now many scammers try their luck using phone calls, especially with WhatsApp and Viber. People in Kuwait are regularly targeted with such scams, usually people calling to say they've won a prize and to collect need to pay a small fee or give over their banking details. Here are a few of the scams circulating in the region currently.

Merisel, 30, received a phone call recently from a number starting with the code +22. The caller claimed to be an employee of Dubai Duty Free, telling her she had won \$20,000 in a monthly raffle draw. "The caller told me to go to the nearest exchange office to receive my prize, but before doing this, I had to buy two Cash-U cards and send him the serial numbers. When I told him that I hadn't traveled to Dubai, he insisted that my phone number had won in the raffle, and urged me to go immediately to the exchange office. I told him I would, but I didn't go as I knew it was a scam since I hadn't traveled to Dubai," she told Kuwait Times.

Abdulhadi, a 55-year-old expat, received three messages last month offering him a master's degree in various majors including engineering from an international university without studying, for just a small fee. "I didn't even bother searching if the university was real or fake, as I'm already old and not interested in any degree. Also I know it's a scam, as engineering can't be learned through distance learning," he remarked.

Farah, 45, received a call from an African man two months ago, warning her of the great danger she might be facing if she didn't pay a sorcerer to break a magic spell cast against her. "The guy claimed to be a sorcerer and said some people who hate me have cast a spell on me that will soon bring on me or somebody from my family death or serious injuries. He asked for only \$3,000 to dispel the witchcraft and rescue



me. I told him I will try to collect the money and hung up. Initially, I was scared as he mentioned some events that

the Internet app Viber claiming she had won the main prize of some competition - a brand new vehicle. "The sender asked for my name, civil ID number and bank account details. I told my son about it, who warned me not to respond to this message as it's a scam," she noted.

Other people have received calls through various applications, with the callers claiming they are calling from a telecommunication company to inform them they have won a prize in a draw and requesting their personal information to transfer the money to their accounts. All banks in Kuwait keep warning their clients through messages

and emails not to respond to any caller or sender demanding their bank account numbers or passwords. Yet the scammers keep trying, and gullible people keep believing in them.

“**Scammers turn up heat on would-be victims by calling through mobile apps.**”

had happened to me, although I knew these were randomly said. But I realized it was a scam and didn't pay him anything and blocked his number," she said.

Ghanima received a message through



Local

Niqashna holds debate on 'separation of religion and state'

Secularism not a solution for Muslim majority countries: Sharia professor

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Niqashna held a civilized debate entitled 'the separation of religion and state' on Wednesday at promenade culture center in Promenade Ball in Hawally. Niqashna (our debate) is a community platform for open debates in Kuwait. It aims to tackle an array of important social and political issues by engaging all members of society. The negative team was represented by Dr Mutlaq Al-Jasser, who is a Sharia Faculty professor at Kuwait University (KU).

He stated that he is against the separation of religion and state because Islam has the answer to most laws, and the other issues are covered by civil laws such as work and traffic laws. "I am against secularism because it is a failure to ignore your belief in God and the prophet and follow people's orders. Who created me is the only one to control me. Secularism cannot be a solution for countries with a Muslim majority or even a sizeable minority, for it requires people to replace their God-given beliefs with an entirely different set of man-made beliefs," he said.

Responding to the sayings that there are no religious countries and Islam is not fair to all, Jasser affirmed that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his fair leadership for all religions where under his lead all religions lived in peace. However, sharia is an all-encompassing program for every aspect of life, including the governance of the state.

He argues that the separation of religion and state is un-Islamic, adding that the world needs the real version of Islam, not the Islam of extremists like the Islamic State (IS) group. "Islam cannot be separated from the state because it guides us through every detail of running the



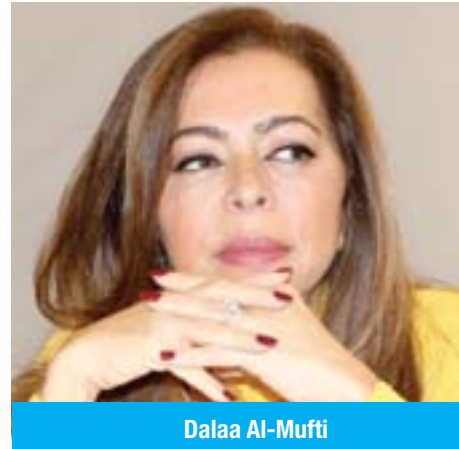
Mutlaq Al-Jasser

state and our lives. Muslims have no choice but to reject secularism for it excludes the law of Allah," he said.

Cannot be imposed

Supporters of the secular state argued that the values of one religion cannot be imposed on members of different religions that are present in our countries. They pointed out that under the law of Islam, other religions are not prohibited. At the same time, people are provided with doctrines for legislation and running of the state that will protect people of all faiths living in the state.

Writer Dalaa Al-Mufti, supporter of the separation of religion and state said, "We have to admit that there is no such thing as a religious country. Countries do not pray; people do. We cannot force the people to follow our religion." She explained that secularism is not a religion; it is neutral. It gives people the right to follow whatever religion and beliefs they



Dalaa Al-Mufti

want. She also suggested that religious people must keep their distance from politics, not to protect the politics but to protect the image of religion as religion is a spiritual thing between a person and God, so one must avoid showing it off or take advantage of it.

Mufti noted that people need to face the hard reality that even so-called moderate or mainstream Islam presents huge problems because it calls for religion to have a major influence on political decision-making. "The partnership of religion and government in much of the world is troubling because it involves government policies being influenced by myth, superstition and supernaturalism and an absurd argument about God. It is one thing to believe that there is some kind of power or source beyond our understanding and quite another to believe that any religious hierarchy should influence legislation or governance. The latter leads us down a dangerous path," she added.

Illegalities in social media

By Jeri Al-Jeri



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In Kuwait, everyone is vocal about their political disagreements, religious or ideological stand points. Naturally, the line between having a public discussion and venting steam in the comfort of our homes is clear to everyone, at least in the real world.

But when tapping on a screen, we tweet, post or reply with the awareness that we got the whole world's attention, and our uploads and comment may stay as long as the internet. Perverts, extremists and zealots have a chance to slander and disturb more victims than they can possibly imagine.

In response, many countries have passed 'cyber' laws to fight these socially destructive activities, but do they really work? And what about the cyber laws in the Gulf states? Are people even aware of them?

On Twitter, I have received multiple messages from various accounts of people calling themselves "spiritual healers", inviting me to break "the evil eye", or to get the one I love to marry me only for KD 5, as if throwing away money would be helpful in trying to get married, or to tell me about the future. It is frustrating to me when I remember that not everyone is aware that they are able to report these tricksters who rob their hard earned money, both in Twitter and in a real life court. Sexual extortion is another matter that needs to be discussed, as well.

People talk about how funny and tragic it was, when an elderly man stripped himself for a young girl's webcam after she promised to do the same, then it turned out to be a mischievous male teen from another continent, who recorded all of that artless "humanity" that appeared on his screen. Ashamed and defeated, the 60 years old had to pay that youngster the equivalent of \$10,000. Unfortunately, international laws are not yet fully aligned with each other to secure and protect social media users from such ordeals, yet within the borders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, if such a deal was made, the users will be fined heavily for posting or commenting any suggestive or explicitly sexual materials, other than these of educational purposes. What about politics?

Everyone is talking about the head lining stories of this famous snapchat user going to jail for insulting official government members, or the instgrammer who intentionally wanted to mock a famous singer only to get fined thousands of dinars. Surely, it isn't debatable that insults or verbal abuse should not be tolerated?

But what if a comment simply challenges the status quo? What about these vague sexually oriented engagements that cannot be detected? And what about other kinds of tricksters, who have degrees in psychology or cosmetics, yet do not sell or offer a legitimate service to their customers? Most of all, what about buying fake "likes" and "retweets"? Such inquires, will be satisfyingly answered in my next article.



KUWAIT: A general view of people in attendance. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Lawyer not optimistic on lifting Olympic sports ban

Kuwait Bar Association hosts symposium

KUWAIT: After two years of sports suspension on Kuwait, the ban on football was finally lifted recently by the International Football Federation FIFA, which approved a new sports law that was passed by the Kuwaiti parliament. However, the suspension imposed on other sports is yet to be lifted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

"The ban on football, which is the most popular sport in Kuwait, was lifted, yet it was not lifted for the rest of the sports and I am not very optimistic," said MP and lawyer Al-Hamidi Al-Sabei during a symposium held at the Kuwait Bar Association on Wednesday. "Sports is a very important issue and His Highness the Amir has tried his best to solve this problem. These problems started in 2007, when the parliament in Kuwait started interfering and changing the law. Few years later, sports clubs were dissolved and Kuwait was suspended from participating in international competitions."

According to Sabei, the new law was not proposed by Kuwaitis. "We proposed a law that would abide with the rules and regulation of FIFA, and gave some powers to the Public Authority of Sports (PAY), but it was not passed by the parliament. The new law which resulted in lifting the ban was formulated by FIFA. I assume, which gives no power to PAYS," he added.



KUWAIT: Saqer Al-Mulla (left) speaks during a symposium with MP and lawyer Al-Hamidi Al-Sabei (right) and lawyer Sultan Al-Qahtani. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

"I believe that issues related to sports should be solved by the sports bodies and not the parliament," stated Sabei. "In the 1960s, Kuwait faced sports suspension and the Minister of Social Affairs at that time resolved the issue. Now that the ban has been lifted, work related to sports should be done without any interference from MPs. We have also heard rumors of a possible return of the suspension on football, and I hope they are not true."

Saqer Al-Mulla, Teacher at the Education College, Physical Education section, disagreed with Sabei, saying, "The negotiations and forming of the new law took place in Qatar, which also participated in lifting the

suspension. Kuwaitis were a part of it and I was one of them. The FIFA officials demanded slight changes in the draft law that was submitted in 2016. So, the new law is the modification of that law. FIFA also demanded that court cases are dropped, and changing the conditions of the general assembly at the sports clubs and of the founding members," he added. Mulla also disagreed with Sabei on the role of MPs in the sports suspension issue, saying the problem started from a complaint sent from Kuwait to the IOC by one person. He also called for cooperation between all authorities to solve the issue completely.

Inflammatory bowel disease on the rise

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health of Kuwait held a press conference to announce an awareness campaign for inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) entitled 'Return to your life, live without restrictions' yesterday at its premises in Sulaibikhat. The event was held under the auspices of Minister of Health Dr Basel Al-Sabah, and was sponsored by AbbVie Pharmaceuticals

Dr Ahmad Al-Fadhli, consultant of gastrointestinal system and liver and head of digestive unit in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, said that there has been an obvious increase in inflammatory bowel disease patients in the last 15 years. "It is time to pay attention towards this disease and spread awareness as it affects people between the ages of 15 to 35 years," he added.

Fadhli added that the campaign aims to focus on spreading awareness among people about the disease, develop medical treatments and get local, regional, and international experts to speak about it in conferences that will be soon held in Kuwait. Dr



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group photo during a press conference to announce an awareness campaign for inflammatory bowel diseases. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Dr Ahmad Al-Fadhli

Fahad Al-Ibrahim, gastrointestinal system and liver consultant at Amiri Hospital, pointed out that the most common symptoms of the disease are diarrhea, abdominal pain, cramps, weight loss, fatigue, blood in stool, pale appearance, fever, joint

problems and skin problems.

Inflammatory bowel disease can be subdivided into two types: Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis. Although the exact causes of Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis are not really known, certain contributory fac-

tors have been identified. Genetic factors, abnormal responses of the digestive system to non-pathogenic of harmless germs, smoking, diet and oral contraceptives are often considered as risk factors but not proven to be so in the development of inflammatory diseases, and stress.

The conditions and causes of which are currently poorly understood, progress by episodes of sudden attacks and settle of the disease. The symptoms are primarily gastro-intestinal, with abdominal pain and diarrhea. They can have serious health consequences such as significant weight loss under nutrition and growth retardation in children. IBD often has an impact on daily, family and professional life due to its severe and chronic nature. Treatment and medical monitoring is very essential for IBD patients.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amir congratulates Saudi King on anniversary

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a congratulatory cable to Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the third anniversary of his ascension to the throne. In the cable, His Highness the Amir extolled the deep and firm fraternal relations between Kuwait and the Kingdom, and lauded the prominent development renaissance involving various fields under the leadership of the Saudi monarch. His Highness the Amir also wished the Saudi King wellbeing and success in pursuing development in the kingdom and serving both Arab and Muslim worlds. Two cables of similar sentiments were sent to the Saudi King by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Speaker receives officials

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Speaker Ghanem wished Minister Nasser Al-Sabah all the success in his current post.

Meanwhile, Ghanem received Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Alireza Enayati, who handed him an invitation from Iranian parliament Speaker Dr Ali Larijani to the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), which is scheduled in Tehran mid-January.

In other news, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh lauded yesterday the exceptional ties linking Kuwait and the United States. This statement came during Saleh's reception of US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. According to a ministerial press release, Minister Saleh expressed to Silverman Kuwait's eagerness to bolster relations with the US on all possible domains. — KUNA

Development achieves peace: Kuwait

NEW YORK: Kuwait stressed the importance of achieving development and protecting human rights to end conflicts and attain world peace. The statement was made by head of the State of Kuwait's Mission to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during an open discussion session chaired by Japan at the UN Security Council late Wednesday. The session is titled "resolving the complicated modern challenges facing world peace and security." Otaibi affirmed the need of serious cooperation among all countries and UN bodies in order to achieve the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals. Kuwait's policy had always relied on peaceful resolutions to conflicts and crises, he noted. The country also supports protecting human rights, mainly in conflict zones, he added. Otaibi meanwhile hailed the UN's approval of a resolution to boost the work and efforts of the UN Security Council to achieve global peace and security earlier Wednesday. The resolution is part of the UN Secretary General's efforts to make the UN more transparent and effective in executing its duties. — KUNA

Local

Mechanic saved in 12-hour rescue mission

Bogus domestic help office busted

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: A rescue mission was carried out to ensure the safety of an Arab mechanic who was trapped under a 200-ton crane that collapsed in the wood scrapyards in Amgharah. Firemen had to secure the crane, before cutting the metal and rescuing the man who was later handed over to paramedics. The rescue operation lasted for 12 hours, and was carried out by teams from occupational Jahra, technical rescue and backup fire stations.

Fake office busted

Residency detectives busted a bogus domestic help office and arrested a number of people who used it to run illegal activities. Detectives received information about one of the suspects, and then set him up in a trap in which he agreed to provide a domestic helper to an informant in exchange of money. Police also arrested eight women who confessed that they have absconded from their original employers.

False claims

Hawally detectives uncovered the false claims to a Ukrainian woman who attempted to implicate her estranged husband in the fake-kidnapping of their children, as he had to travel with them when the mother refused to take them before he traveled, Al-Rai reported. The woman went to Salmiya police station and told officers there that her divorced Egyptian husband kidnapped her daughters, aged 3 and 4, and left to his country. The husband was summoned by Hawally detectives, and he went to them with his two daughters. He said he took the girls for visitation, then when it was time to bring them back, he called the mother but she refused to receive them. Then as he had to travel, and could not leave them in a safe place, he was forced to take them with him, then brought them back when he returned to Kuwait. Detectives' investigations revealed that he was saying the truth, and found out that there are several complaints by the woman against her divorcee who was ready to hand

the girls over to their mother.

Fugitives nabbed

A Jordanian man was arrested in Sabah Al-Salem after police discovered that he is wanted to serve five years in jail over drug charges, reported Al-Rai. The man was detained after showing strong resistance. Meanwhile, a teenager was arrested after a car chase as he

drove a vehicle recklessly without license plates in Qairawan area. In other news, a girl who was reported missing four years ago was arrested by police who busted her while she was driving a car at dawn in Shuwaikh. She was sent to Sabah Al-Salem police station where a missing person's report was filed back in 2013. She was held for questioning before being handed back to her family.



Former MP decries high domestic help recruitment fees

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Former MP Kamel Al-Awadhi expressed his disappointment over reports indicating that a state-owned company established this year to handle domestic help recruitment duties was demanding high fees similar to those required by local recruitment offices. The former lawmaker was commenting on a recent an-

nouncement by Al-Durra Domestic Help Company, saying that it started receiving applications to hire female domestic helpers from Sri Lanka for KD 990 per application. The news has since sparked a wave of public criticism as citizens were hoping that the newly-established firm would help control recruitment rates which has reached up to KD 1,200 in recent years.

Awadhi held the government and National Assembly responsible for such practices and keeping silent about it. He also lauded the quick moves made by Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and Commerce and Industry Minister Khalid Al-Roudhan, warning office owners to maintain acceptable prices. He said the rates mentioned by the company are totally different compared to the rates mentioned in official letters submitted by Kuwait's ambassadors in the largest domestic help exporting countries such as India, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

ASAR – Al Ruwayeh & Partners recognized for exceptional service in respect to the Investment Grade Bond Deal of the Year and Trade and Export Finance Deal of the Year at the Bonds, Loans and Sukuk Awards in Dubai

Recognized for its exceptional service in the Middle East's Credit Market

ASAR - Al Ruwayeh & Partners (ASAR), Kuwait's leading and most prominent corporate law firm, and one of the region's top tier firms, is pleased to announce that it was recognized for its exceptional service in relation to the Investment Grade Bond Deal of the Year Award and the Trade and Export Finance Deal of the Year Award at the Bonds, Loans and Sukuk Awards ceremony which was held on 7 December 2017 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dubai.

In respect to the Investment Grade Bond Deal of the Year, ASAR acted as Kuwait law counsel to the managing banks in relation to the establishment of, and US\$2.25 billion debut issuance under, the GMTN Programme for the EQUATE Petrochemical Group in Kuwait.

In addition, ASAR was also at the same awards ceremony recognized for its exceptional service in relation to the Trade and Export Finance Deal of the Year Award, where ASAR acted as Kuwait law counsel to the global finance parties in relation to the US\$6.245 billion ECA backed facility of Kuwait National Petroleum Company. Mr. Sam Habbas – Senior Partner at ASAR noted that: "It was a successful evening for the firm at this year's Bonds, Loans and Sukuk Awards ceremony in Dubai. We are delighted to have been recognized for our exceptional service in respect to the Investment Grade Bond Deal of the Year and Trade and Export Finance Deal of the Year Awards. We feel that this is a testament to the strength of our position as market leaders in the legal industry in Kuwait and Bahrain. It is also a reflection of our consistent diligence and commitment in providing quality legal services of the highest caliber."

Ahmed Barakat – Managing Partner at ASAR noted that: "It is a great honor for



our firm to have been well recognized at the awards evening in Dubai. These awards affirm our legal expertise in the debt capital markets and banking and finance arenas and highlight the nature and extent to which we continue to forge ahead in leading the market in Kuwait. These awards reflect the strength and depth of our practice and the extra-ordinary efforts of all of our lawyers in ASAR. Always putting our client's first is a non-negotiable principle of our firm; their success is our success."

With dedicated offices in Kuwait and Bahrain coupled with its associated offices and relationships, ASAR provides clients across an extensive range of industry sectors with comprehensive legal advice and support for their business activities in Kuwait, Bahrain, across the GCC and beyond.

The firm has been consistently rated as the leading corporate and commercial law firm in Kuwait by reputable legal guides such as the Chambers Global Guide, International Financial Law Review (IFLR) and the Legal 500. In 2017, ASAR was awarded with the "IFLR National Law Firm of the Year Award"; an award which ASAR has been delighted to receive for the 9th consecutive year. Also in 2017, the firm won the "IFLR M&A Deal of the Year Award" and the "IFLR Restructuring Deal of the Year Award".

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Car ploughs into crowd in Melbourne

Catalans vote to solve independence crisis

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump speaks about the passage of tax reform legislation on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. —AFP

Donald Trump tastes victory—at last

The greatest victory of tumultuous young presidency

WASHINGTON: Looking out over the South Lawn of the White House, flanked by the lawmakers who had just handed him the greatest victory of his tumultuous young presidency, Donald Trump drank in the scene. For this most unconventional of presidents—impulsive, unpredictable, so often frustrated by the exercise of power—it was payback time at last.

In the chill December air, under a pale sky dotted with clouds, Trump was celebrating passage of the sweeping tax reform he promised to push through if American voters delivered him to the Oval Office. The much-anticipated event had been staged with care: lawmakers and advisors, primed to cheer and applaud, surrounded him at the lectern, and packed the majestic staircases that framed the scene. But the relief was plain to see in Trump's face as the businessman-turned-president—whose need for recognition appears to know no bounds—took the stand.

Forgotten, for now, was the bitter failure to repeal Obamacare, his predecessor's flagship health reform. Forgotten the vicious tweets and jabs pitting the president against members of his own Republican family, who now stood united behind congressional leaders Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan, slapping each other on the back. Forgotten the setbacks of recent polls—chief among them the defeat of Trump's candidate in Alabama, Roy Moore—which raised the specter of

losing Republican control of Congress in the 2018 mid-term elections. For the 71-year-old president, it was a day for rejoicing, flanked by his daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner—as well as Gary Cohn, Trump's economic advisor, ex-Goldman Sachs banker and chief architect of the tax reform.

'Always fun when you win'

Trump had no speech as such to deliver—launching instead, with gusto, into a series of off-the-cuff remarks. He spoke of the "tremendous enthusiasm right now in this country," cracked jokes about the ups and downs of power, how it's "always fun when you win." "What does it mean? It means jobs, jobs, jobs," he quipped, promising the tax cuts will deliver a shot in the arm for the US economy.

The president dished out smiles, pumped lawmakers' hands—singled out this "friend" or that "special person." And the Republicans returned the favor, taking turns to sing his praises. Setting the tone, House Speaker Paul Ryan credited Trump's "exquisite presidential leadership" for the success of the contentious tax plan, assailed by Democrats as a giveaway to the wealthiest that risks blowing a hole in the national debt.

Not to be outdone, Vice President Mike Pence doubled down with a superlative description of Trump's accomplishments—including a tax cut he dubbed "a middle class miracle."

"President Donald Trump is a man of his word. He's a man of action," said Pence. "President Trump has been making history since the first day of this administration." For the real estate magnate, elected president with no prior experience of politics, it was a sweet victory indeed.

When Trump first vowed to push through the Republican tax reform before Christmas, it raised amused eyebrows in Washington where many expected it to fall foul of president's inexperience and divisions within his own camp. But several lawmakers admitted—in no uncertain terms—that tax reform was a make-or-break issue for the Republican party ahead of next year's elections. "This will indeed be a very big day, when people look back at our country," Trump concluded, before heading back to the Oval Office.

Earlier Wednesday Trump had promised a press conference to celebrate the bill's adoption. As it turned out, he took no questions. The president's team is hoping this could mark a turning point for a leader whose popularity rating lags far below any of his predecessors this early in his term. But for now, the 45th president of the United States is preparing to spend Christmas break at his Mar-a-Lago golf resort, the "Winter White House," basking in the Florida sunshine and the glow of his first legislative victory. As for 2018, that is another story. —AFP

International

Syria's war-ravaged Homs relishes in Christmas spirit

Scars of battles that gripped Homs still visible

HOMS: The metallic green Christmas tree towers over the bombed-out heart of Syria's third city Homs, where residents are relishing a holiday cheer they haven't felt in years. They have been busy putting the final decorative touches on the tree in Hamidiyah, a neighborhood in the ravaged Old City of Homs, where ferocious street battles pitted regime forces against rebels between 2011 and 2014. One volunteer hammered a metal platform in place ahead of a choir concert and children's shows, and the futuristic artificial Christmas tree is to be lit up yesterday.

"In 2014, when we had just returned to this destroyed neighborhood, our Christmas tree was made of rubble," said Roula Barjour, the executive director of charity NGO Bayti, or "My House," in Arabic. "But this year, with the return of residents and of life, people are finding cheer again," the 46-year-old told AFP, between delegating tasks to young volunteers. One stood out: Abdo Al-Yussefi was well into his sixties, but the local resident insisted on joining the holiday preparations. He pulled crates of Christmas decorations up to the tree, already spruced up with curling blue and silver garlands. "The Christmas tree used to be a joy just for children, but now it's for everyone, young and old," said Yussefi, wiping his brow with a white napkin "The tree gathers us all around it."

'Happiness has come back'

The scars of the battles that gripped Homs

are still visible: partially-destroyed buildings, collapsed or pockmarked walls, and piles of sandbags can be found across the Old City. When Syria's conflict began in 2011, mass demonstrations rocked Homs, which activists dubbed the "capital of the revolution". But after years of government siege and bombardment, rebels agreed in 2014 to a deal that brought most of the city under regime control.

A second pact earlier this year put the rest of Homs fully in government hands. Grinning, Yussefi gestured to the volunteers around him: "As you can see, all the neighbourhood's residents are working together, smiling like little kids." He asked one to snap a photograph of him near the Christmas tree to send to

his children, now living in Germany. "I want to ask them to come back, because happiness has come back to Homs," Yussefi exclaimed.

Many of its 800,000 residents fled when war erupted, but tens of thousands have trickled back, including to the Old City. Across the street, construction workers have been repairing damaged homes. A nearby wall was dotted with posters bearing photos of men, young and old, killed in the Homs fighting.

Some of the posters on the "Wall of Honor," as it is labeled, have been torn and faded by several winters. But the picture of Dutch priest Father Frans van der Lugt, killed inside Homs's Jesuit monastery by unknown assailants in April 2014, remains vivid. He was buried at the

Relief and Rescue Organisation, Morteza Salimi, said 97 people were injured. Khaledi said around 50 of those were admitted to hospital. The quake caused no major damage but tens of thousands of people spent the night outside for fear of aftershocks.

Many of them did so in their vehicles with the engines switched on for warmth in the wintry conditions, exacerbating the thick smog that has enveloped the capital all week. Petrol purchases in the six hours after the quake reached 10 million litres (2.64 million gallons), more than double the average full day sales even though it was in the middle of the night, the national fuel distribution company said.

Average airborne concentration of the finest and most hazardous particles (PM2.5) rose to 170 micrograms per cubic meter, with peaks of 194 micrograms in some neighborhoods, Tehran municipality said. That is some seven times higher than the World Health Organization recommended maximum of 25 micrograms per m3 over a 24-hour period. Iran sits atop several fault lines, and Wednesday's quake is the latest in a series to have hit the country in recent weeks. —AFP

Two die in Iran quake panic

TEHRAN: An elderly woman and a young girl died and nearly 100 people were injured as a 5.2 magnitude earthquake sparked panic in the Iranian capital and neighboring areas, officials said yesterday. The epicenter of the quake, which struck shortly before 11:30 pm (2000 GMT) on Wednesday, was just 40 kilometers west of the capital, according to the seismological centre of the University of Tehran.

"A 70-year-old woman died after suffering a heart attack and a 10-year-old died of elevated stress," the head of Iran's hospital emergency services, Mojtaba Khaledi, told the ISNA news agency. The head of the Iranian Red Crescent's



HOMS: Syrians walk past a Christmas tree being decorated in the Christian-majority neighborhood of Hamidiyah. —AFP

monastery, which has become a pilgrimage site for Syrians.

'End of mourning'

Homs's Old City had a significant Christian population before the war and is home to several ancient churches, including the celebrated St Mary Church of the Holy Belt, named after a venerated relic said to be a section of the belt of Mary, mother of Jesus. Inside the silver-stoned structure, young people erect a nativity scene depicting the birth of Jesus.

"There was always a sadness in past holidays,

because of the people that were killed and the destruction of the churches. We'd pray over rubble," said church caretaker Imad Houry. "But today, the church has been restored and the decorations are back. Our celebration this year feels like those from before the war."

Clashes heavily damaged part of the Church of the Holy Belt and left another section burned, and the road leading to it remains punctured by a huge crater. But inside, restoration is almost complete, with new wooden benches, a large icon of the Virgin Mary perched in a corner, and decorative red stars dangling from the ceiling. —AFP

US drone kills Qaeda propaganda chief in Yemen

ADEN: The propaganda chief of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was among six jihadists killed in two separate US drone strikes in Yemen, tribal sources said yesterday. The Wednesday evening strikes came as Washington revealed that US forces have carried out more than 120 air strikes against jihadists in Yemen this year as part of a long-running campaign that has intensified since President Donald Trump took office.

Saudi-born Abu Hajar Al-Makki and three other AQAP militants were killed when a drone blew up their vehicle in the Wadi

Obeida district of Marib province, east of the capital Sanaa, tribal sources said. A separate strike on a second vehicle killed two other AQAP militants in the same area, they added. Washington says its strikes have killed a number of senior AQAP figures in recent months, including Mujahid Al-Adani, who was killed on November 20.

It considers AQAP to be the worldwide jihadist network's most dangerous branch. The Sunni extremist group has thrived in the chaos of nearly three years of civil war between the Saudi-backed government and Shiite rebels who control the capital. In addition to the air strikes, mostly carried out by drones, US special forces have conducted a number of ground raids against AQAP. The Pentagon has also been attacking a local branch of the Islamic State group, which it says has doubled in size over the past year. —AFP

Catalans vote to solve independence crisis

BARCELONA: Catalans voted yesterday in a crucial election that could mark a turning point for their region, just two months after a failed secession bid triggered Spain's worst political crisis in decades. High turnout was expected in a vote pitting leaders of the wealthy northeastern region's separatist movement against parties that want to remain in Spain.

Will voters again hand victory to pro-independence parties that tried to break Catalonia from Spain, one of whose candidates is in jail and the other in self-imposed exile in Belgium? Or will they lose the absolute parliamentary majority of 72 seats they won in 2015? Catalans on both sides of the divide saw the day as a potential moment of truth for their region, following weeks of upheaval and protests unseen since democracy was reinstated following the death in 1975 of dictator Franco. "Today's vote is about whether we say yes or no to independence in Catalonia," said Gloria Garcia, a telephone operator in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, a working class suburb of Barcelona.

What next for separatists?

While the independence question is far from new, it was the banned referendum on October 1 — and a heavy police crackdown on

voters—that focused the world's attention on the region. Some 5.5 million people are registered to vote in yesterday's election which is likely to see seven parties winning mandates in the 135-seat regional parliament. Polls showed that around a million voters remained undecided on the eve of election day, with many Catalans exhausted of the crisis and yearning for a return to normality.

The Spanish government called the vote after stripping Catalonia of its treasured autonomy, in response to a failed independence declaration by the region's parliament on October 27. But the secession bid was short-lived as Madrid sacked Catalonia's government, dissolved its parliament and called snap elections. Crucially, however, even if the pro-independence camp wins, it is not expected to attempt another breakaway from Spain but rather try to enter into negotiations with Madrid.

To separatists, the vote is in part an opportunity to strengthen their hand in the standoff with Madrid. In the staunchly pro-independence town of Vic, 49-year-old professor Alex Arroyo said he had never really supported the separatist cause. But he changed his mind "because of the Spanish state's radical positions" and because of the "violence ... on referendum day". Supporters of the pro-unity camp also



BARCELONA: Center-right party Ciudadanos (Citizens) candidate Ines Arrimadas casts her ballot for the Catalan regional election at a polling station in Barcelona yesterday. —AFP

see the election as crucial, with the centrist Ciudadanos expected to win the most seats out of the anti-independence parties.

"The issue for me is that we are all Spanish,

and Ciudadanos can be the change we need to firmly maintain the unity of Spain," said Garcia, the telephone operator, wearing the red-and-yellow Spanish flag around her neck. —AFP



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International

Man on trial for bomb on Dortmund team bus

Elaborate bid to make a fortune on the stock market

DORTMUND: A German-Russian man went on trial yesterday accused of carrying out a bomb attack on the Borussia Dortmund football team's bus in an elaborate bid to make a fortune on the stock market. The blasts eight months ago shattered the bus windows, leaving Spanish international Marc Bartra, 26, with a broken wrist. A police officer also suffered inner ear damage in the April 11 assault.

The suspect—named only as Sergei W., 28—was arrested 10 days after he allegedly remotely set off the three explosive devices hidden in a hedge as the bus was leaving the team hotel for a Champions League match. His alleged motive was greed. Prosecutors charge he had sought to profit from an anticipated plunge in the club's stock market value after the attack, by cashing in on so-called put options.

Investigators had first feared a jihadist link after letters suggesting an Islamist motive were found at the scene. But questions quickly arose over their authenticity and an Iraqi man taken into custody was soon cleared of involvement. Days later, police swooped on the suspect, an electrical technician, and charged him with 28 counts of attempted murder, triggering explosions and causing serious bodily harm. He was

staying in the same Dortmund hotel as the players, had a view of where the fragmentation bombs went off and had bought the put options on the team's shares on the day of the attack, prosecutors said. Dortmund, also known as BVB, is the only football club in Germany that is listed on the stock exchange.

'Stock market manipulation'

For his money-making scheme, W. had apparently taken out around 50,000 euros (\$59,000) of credit to finance the purchase of options. They could have been sold at a pre-determined price by June 17, more than two months after the attack, when a sharp fall in the share price would have promised a high profit.

Prosecutors said "a significant drop in the price could have been expected if, as a result of the attack, players had been seriously injured or even killed". The suspect could have pocketed up to 500,000 euros in profit if the plan came off, they believe. He however sold the options in the days after the attack, making just 5,900 euros. The head of Germany's federal criminal police, Holger Muench, said: "We have never experienced such an attack that turned out in the end to be such a perfidious form of stock market manipulation."



Set off the three explosive devices

German far-right says churches 'in Nazi era'

BERLIN: Germany's far-right AfD party fired back yesterday at criticism from church leaders charging them with taking on the same "disreputable role they played" during the Nazi era. Religious leaders have spoken out against the anti-migrant and anti-Islam Alternative for Germany party—remarks the AfD sees as collusion with Chancellor Angela Merkel's government.

"We now know that the official churches, whether Protestant or Catholic, are politicised through and through," Alice Weidel, party co-chair, told weekly news magazine Focus. "The separation of church and state is no longer respected," said Weidel in a pre-released excerpt of an article to be published Saturday. "With a few exceptions, large parts of the churches play exactly the same disreputable role that they played in the Third Reich," added Weidel, whose party regularly

makes polemical remarks about Germany's Nazi past.

Protestant and Catholic institutions in Germany did not put up organized resistance to the 1933-45 National Socialist regime, although individual pastors and priests opposed the Nazi rise. In recent months, Christian leaders have urged AfD members to rethink their positions. Weidel asserted that the AfD "is the only Christian party that still exists" in Germany and criticized Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) by charging that "the C of the CDU has become absurd". "Christian values no longer matter there," she said.

The AfD came in third in Germany's general elections in September, with nearly 13 percent of the vote. Although it began as an anti-euro party, its rhetoric has veered right to primarily rail against immigration and Islam. Key AfD members have challenged Germany's culture of atonement over World War II and the slaughter of six million Jews in the Holocaust. During its electoral campaign, the AfD rolled out provocative posters declaring "Burkas? We prefer bikinis" and "New Germans? Let's make them ourselves", featuring a heavily pregnant white woman. —AFP



DORTMUND: The German-Russian suspect, only known as Sergei W., (2ndR) who is accused of having carried out a bomb attack on the Borussia Dortmund football team's bus, waits next to his lawyers Christus Psaltiros (R) und Carl Heidenreich (L) for the start of his trial on December 21, 2017 at the district courthouse. — AFP

Game only a day later

W. faces life in prison if found guilty, although in Germany parole is usually granted after 15 years. Citing unnamed investigators, Bild newspaper said police believed the suspect was capable of building a remotely-triggered bomb, having won an educational award in electronics and engineering in 2005. Prosecutors say the bombs each contained up to a kilogramme of a hydrogen

peroxide fuel mixture and around 65 metal bolts.

W. drew attention at the hotel, reported Bild, first by insisting on a window room facing the front and then, in the pandemonium after the blasts, by calmly walking into its restaurant to order a steak. Defence lawyers in their opening statement charged that media leaks of investigation details had prejudiced the case against their client. —AFP

Crews make progress on California wildfire

LOS ANGELES: Strong wind gusts may challenge crews battling a sprawling wildfire in Southern California which threatens to become the biggest in state history. Firefighters have halted the spread of the so-called Thomas fire at 272,000 acres and carved containment lines around 60 percent of its perimeter over the last couple of days, fire and police said. But wind gusts from the north were expected to accelerate to 50 miles per hour yesterday morning, creating extreme fire danger conditions for Santa Barbara County, the National Weather Service said.

Ventura County, which has taken the brunt of the fire, is likely to experience 40 to 50 mph (64 to 80 kph) winds on Thursday and Friday, it said. Fire managers were cautiously optimistic that they could protect populated areas against the predicted return of stronger winds, but were not letting their guard down. Firefighters have been able to secure the

Santa Barbara side of the fire, Battalion Chief Chris Childers of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department said during a community meeting on Wednesday night. "This has been a nightmare of a fire for a lot of people," he said. "The wind test is coming tonight and it will be the true test to see that we have done our job correctly."

With progress being made against the blaze—which has scorched the dry coastal mountains, foothills and canyons of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties northwest of Los Angeles—officials said they had cut the number of firefighters to 6,500 from a peak of 8,500 over the past few days. The Thomas blaze, which became California's second largest wildfire on Tuesday, is nearly as large as the 2003 Cedar fire in San Diego County, which consumed a record 273,246 acres (110,579 hectares) and killed 15 people.

More than 1,000 homes and other buildings have gone up in flames, and about 18,000 structures remained listed as threatened since the fire started on Dec. 4. The cause has not been determined. One firefighter died last Thursday near the town of Fillmore in Ventura County. The Thomas fire was initially stoked by hot, dry Santa Ana winds blowing with rare hurricane force from the eastern desert, spreading flames across miles of drought-parched chaparral and brush in California's rugged coastal terrain. —Reuters

Peru's President Pablo to face Congress impeachment threat

Highest-profile political figure to be punished

LIMA: Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski is set to face his country's Congress over allegations of graft and covering up ties to a disgraced Brazilian construction group, with many lawmakers seeking to impeach him. If Peru's Congress sets the impeachment process in motion it would make Kuczynski the highest-profile political figure to be punished in the expanding scandal surrounding Odebrecht, a Brazilian engineering and construction firm that admitted to paying millions of dollars in bribes in several Latin American countries to secure public works contracts.

"I will defend my moral capacity," Kuczynski, 79, said of Thursday's congressional session. "The constitution, and democracy are under attack. We are facing a coup disguised as a couple of supposedly legitimate interpretations of the law," he said, joined by his vice presidents Martin Vizcarra and Mercedes Araoz. Earlier he lodged a judicial appeal to try to prevent Congress from moving ahead, arguing that "I have been convicted in advance," according to Peruvian media publishing a copy of his challenge. The outcome of the appeal was not immediately clear.

Meanwhile thousands of Peruvians took to the streets in Lima marching against corruption and all those bribed by Odebrecht. The odds appear stacked against Kuczynski's survival. The number of lawmakers demanding impeachment on grounds of "permanent moral incapacity" exceeds the vote threshold needed in the 130-seat Congress to pass the motion.

Peru's First Vice President Vizcarra flew back to Lima on Wednesday from Canada, where he is

ambassador. "The president ordered me to return today and here I am, by the president's side," Vizcarra said on arrival. Political analyst Luis Benavente predicted the center-right head of state's impeachment, telling AFP: "President Kuczynski's luck has run out." Ecuador's vice president, Jorge Glas, was last week sentenced to six years in prison for taking kickbacks in connection with Odebrecht. Investigations and court cases are taking place in other countries.

'I am not corrupt'

The charges against Kuczynski revolve around \$5 million he received from Odebrecht between 2004 and 2013. For part of that period, Kuczynski was economy minister and head of cabinet for then-president Alejandro Toledo, whom Odebrecht said it paid \$20 million in kickbacks to

win a contract managing a highway project. Both Kuczynski and the Brazilian company insist the \$5 million was for legitimate consulting fees. However, payment of fictitious "advisory fees" was one technique the Brazilian company has admitted to using to funnel bribes to officials. And Peru's president, a former Wall Street banker who took office in July 2016, initially denied that he received any money from Odebrecht. It was only when the Brazilian company revealed the payments that he acknowledged that he had taken them, but denied any wrongdoing. "I did not lie. I am not corrupt," Kuczynski has repeated.

He has asked the Organization for American States, a cooperative forum for nations across the

Many lawmakers seeking to impeach him



LIMA: People protest against Fujimorism and corruption. —AFP

Americas, to send observers to monitor the moves towards impeachment. The head of the OAS, Luis Almagro, said on Twitter he was looking to dispatch a delegation. Analysts warn that the political uncertainty hanging over Peru could deal a "strong impact" to its economy, Latin America's seventh-biggest. Kuczynski is due to make his defense before Congress at 9:00 am (1400 GMT). The legislature is dominated by opposition deputies, making it seem all but certain that an impeachment vote would be carried.

Such a step requires 87 lawmakers to back it and 93 have already called for the process to happen. One opposition party, the Popular Force, had

demanding that Kuczynski resign to avoid being impeached.

However suspicions related to Odebrecht are also leveled at the head of the Popular Force, Keiko Fujimori, daughter of a former president imprisoned for corruption and human rights crimes. She was to have given a statement to prosecutors on Wednesday, but postponed the testimony. Odebrecht, a Latin American powerhouse, had its own dedicated corporate department to manage the bribes it paid. It ultimately agreed to pay \$2.6 billion in fines to the Brazilian, Swiss and US governments for the corrupt practice. —AFP

Prankster pleads guilty to fatally shooting boyfriend

CHICAGO: A YouTube prankster from the US state of Minnesota has admitted fatally shooting her boyfriend in a botched video stunt she hoped would go viral. Monalisa Perez, a 20-year-old mother-of-two, believed her husband Pedro Ruiz would be shielded by a thick book as she took aim from close range in front of onlookers.

She pleaded guilty Friday to second-degree manslaughter and agreed to serve a six-month sentence. She will face a sentencing hearing in February. Perez and Ruiz, 22, were recording the stunt in June for their YouTube channel, where they published videos of their

daily lives and pranks they performed. Ruiz convinced Perez to shoot him with a pistol as he held the tome in front of his chest. He presented her another book with a bullet hole on one side and no exit hole as proof his plan would work, police said.

"Me and Pedro are probably going to shoot one of the most dangerous videos ever," Perez wrote on Twitter prior to performing the stunt. "HIS idea not MINE." With video cameras recording, Perez, who was pregnant with the couple's second child, pulled the trigger from about a foot away, according to authorities. The bullet pierced the book and fatally wounded Ruiz. He died at the scene of a single gunshot wound to the chest.

Family and friends said at the time that the death was an accident and that Ruiz had been talking about performing the stunt for some time.

"I said, 'Don't do it, don't do it,'" Claudia Ruiz, the young man's aunt, told local TV station KVLV in June, adding that his response was, "We want more viewers."

In a deal with prosecutors, Perez agreed to serve three months in jail in one-month increments over three years, and then serve the other three months under house arrest. She will also be subject to 10 years of probation and a lifetime ban from possessing firearms.

Although Perez has already agreed to the sentence with prosecutors, a judge can ignore the deal and impose a longer sentence. In such cases, defendants usually have the right to rescind their guilty plea and go on trial. Ruiz was a railroad worker, who had lived with foster parents before graduating high school, according to a published obituary. He met Perez in 2012 and they had their first child two years later.

"Everyone that knew him, knew that he never hesitated to try something new, always pushing things to their limits," the obituary said. The couple's YouTube channel was still active and its 18 videos have generated 4.7 million views. As part of her plea deal, Perez agreed to not seek financial gain from her case. —AFP

Bodies found hanging in Mexico tourism hotspot

LA PAZ: Six bodies were found hanging from bridges Wednesday in Mexico's Baja California, a region known for its pristine beaches and popular with foreign tourists, authorities said. Grisly killings were once rare in the country's tourism hotspots but have risen in recent years as organized crime has grown. The bodies were discovered along highways leading to international airports in La Paz, San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, nicknamed the Los Cabos area.

It is a massive international Pacific resort area popular with Americans, Canadians and Europeans. The bodies were spread across three bridges, two on each, the local prosecutor said. The victims have not yet been identified. A total of 409 people were murdered in the area from January through October—more than double for all of 2016. Drug gangs are fighting over routes on which they move drugs to the United States, as well as over turf on which they sell drugs to tourists from overseas. More than 196,000 people have been killed in Mexico since late 2006 when the federal government launched a controversial military-led antidrug offensive. —AFP

International

4 dead, 11 missing as ferry capsizes off Philippines

Over 200 passengers and crew were plucked to safety

MANILA: Four people were killed and 11 others were missing yesterday after a ferry with hundreds on board capsized in stormy weather off the Philippines, rescuers said. Over 200 passengers and crew were plucked to safety after the Mercraft 3 keeled over in heavy seas en route to a remote island, officials said.

"The wind suddenly picked up and the boat was forced to stop when the bow started taking in water. Passengers ran to the side just before it tipped over," student Donel Mendiola told DZMM radio. "Some of us swam, but I saw some old people who were apparently already dead," Mendiola said. Two men and two women were killed, while the search for those still missing has been suspended for the night, Ron Crisostomo, a civil defence official in Infanta town near Real told AFP. "It was rainy and the wind was up. It

was no longer safe for the rescuers, but they will continue tomorrow," Crisostomo said.

Janet Balili, a local council member, told ABS-CBN television 11 people remain missing. The station aired footage of rescuers taking injured survivors to a hospital. Four body bags were also seen being laid out on the floor. The boat tipped over between the remote island of Polillo and Real town, about 70 kilometers east of Manila, shortly before noon (0400 GMT), the coastguard said.

It said the ferry was carrying 251 passengers

and crew when it left the port of Real for Polillo, a 2.5-hour trip. "We believe the weather was a big factor" in the accident, coastguard spokesman Armand Balilo told a news confer-

ence in Manila. The ferry sailed as Tropical Storm Tembin loomed over the southern Philippines, nearly a thousand kilometres away.

The vessel, which is licensed to carry up to 286 people, was allowed to sail as there were no storm warnings at or around Real or Polillo, Balilo said. The government had advised Filipinos planning to return to their home provinces for Christmas to do so earlier than

usual to avoid heavy weather forecast to hit ahead of the holidays. Another storm killed more than 40 people in the central Philippines last weekend.

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, is plagued by poor sea transport, with its badly regulated boats and ships prone to overcrowding and accidents. The latest incident occurred 30 years after another Philippine ferry, the Dona Paz, collided with an oil tanker in a pre-Christmas accident that claimed more than 4,000 lives in the world's worst peacetime disaster at sea. More recently, the Kim Nirvana ferry capsized shortly after departure off the city of Ormoc in the central Philippines in 2015, killing 61 people. The accident was thought to have been due to overcrowding. —AFP

“ The weather was a big factor ”

18 dead in fitness centre blaze in Seoul

SEOUL: At least 18 people were killed and 24 injured yesterday in a major blaze at a building housing a sports centre and public bath in the South Korean city of Jecheon, officials said. The fire broke out around 4:00pm local time (0700 GMT) and quickly engulfed the entire eight-storey building, leaving many trapped inside. Sixteen victims were found at a public sauna and two elsewhere in the building, the National Fire Agency said.

Television footage showed the building consumed by flames and issuing dark plumes of smoke, as several people stood waiting to be rescued from an outdoor terrace. The fire—believed to have started in a parking lot on the first floor—has been mostly put out, but the death toll may rise further as firefighters continue to search the building, an agency spokesman said. "The fire produced so much toxic smoke so quickly, leaving many people unable to evacuate," the spokesman said.

Jecheon is in central South Korea, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) southeast of the capital Seoul. President Moon Jae-In expressed regret over the accident and urged officials 'utmost efforts' for rescue and search operations, his office said. The worst fire accident ever to hit the modern South Korea was an arson attack on a subway station in the southeastern city of Daegu that killed 192 people in 2003. —AFP



SEOUL: Flames and smoke billow from an eight-storey building after a fire broke out. —AFP

N Korean soldier defects to South

SEOUL: A North Korean soldier escaped to the South yesterday across the heavily-guarded Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula, triggering gunfire on both sides of the tense border in the second defection in successive months. The "low-ranking" soldier was spotted by South Korean soldiers using surveillance equipment as he crossed the land border near Yeoncheon in thick fog and made his way to a guard post, a spokesman for Seoul's defence ministry said.

There were no shots at the time, he said, but about 80 minutes later South Korean troops fired around 20 rounds from a K-3 machine gun to warn off Northern guards who approached the border apparently looking for their comrade. Two bursts of gunfire were later heard in the North, the spokesman said, but there were no indications of any bullets crossing the border.

The incident came a month after a rare and dramatic defection by a Northern soldier under a hail of bullets from his own side at Panmunjom, the truce village where opposing forces confront each other across a concrete dividing line. On that occasion the defector drove to the heavily-guarded border at speed and ran across the border as North Korean troops fired at him. He was hit at least four times.

Footage showed the badly injured man being pulled to safety by two South Korean soldiers who crawled to reach him just south of the demarcation line. He has since been recovering in hospital in the South. Yeoncheon, where yesterday's defection happened, is in the midwestern part of the DMZ, in Gyeonggi province. Away from Panmunjom, the rest of the 4-kilometre



This file photo taken on November 27, 2017 shows North Korean soldiers staring at South Korean soldiers at the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas. —AFP

(2.5-mile)-wide DMZ bristles with barbed wire and is littered with minefields, making any crossing extremely hazardous.

Uncertain fate

The latest defection was the fourth by a soldier across the DMZ this year. But Kim Dong-Yub, defence analyst at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University in Seoul, said the sample size was too small to draw conclusions about a trend. Two North Korean civilians also defected this week after being found drifting in a rickety engineless boat off the South's eastern coast, Yonhap news agency reported, citing the Unification Ministry, which handles relations with the North.

They were spotted by a South Korean surveillance aircraft and picked up by a nearby navy vessel, it said. The developments bring this year's total for the number

of people defecting directly to the South to 15, a Joint Chiefs of Staff tally showed—three times as many as in 2016. Around 30,000 North Koreans have fled repression and poverty in their homeland to reach the South over the decades since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

According to Unification ministry data, 1,418 did so in 2016, but in the first 10 months of this year numbers fell 16.8 percent. Analyst Kim told AFP: "The North's chronic food shortages, which in the past were the prime reason for North Koreans to flee from the country, have not been so bad in recent years." The vast majority of defectors go first to China, with which the North shares a long border, and where they face the risk of being repatriated to an uncertain fate if caught. They travel on to the South later, usually via another country. —AFP

International

India acquits ex-telco minister of corruption

One of the country's biggest-ever political scandals

NEW DELHI: India's former telecoms minister was cleared yesterday of his alleged role in a multi-billion dollar fraud that ballooned into one of the country's biggest-ever political scandals. A special court in New Delhi acquitted A. Raja of corruption and also dropped charges against a slew of other bureaucrats and corporate executives implicated in the 2008 scandal that cost the state billions in lost revenue.

Judge OP Saini said India's federal investigators, who brought the explosive charges against the high-profile defendants, could not prove allegations of criminality. "I have absolutely no hesitation in holding that (the) prosecution has miserably failed to prove any charge

against any accused," Saini told a packed courtroom. Raja, who appeared in court alongside the other accused, waved and smiled after the verdict as his supporters let off firecrackers outside.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which brought the case, said it would appeal the judgment in the Delhi High Court. "The court has not appreciated (the) evidence in proper perspective. The CBI will be taking necessary legal remedies in the matter," spokesman Abhishek Dayal told reporters. The so-called "2G spectrum scam" came to light in 2010 when a government auditor estimated it cost the treasury as much as \$39 billion in lost revenues — equal to India's defense budget.



India's then-ruling Congress party was accused of under-pricing licenses and favoring certain firms, seriously damaging the administration of former prime minister Manmohan Singh. In 2012, India's top court cancelled 122 licenses for eight firms amid allegations of bribery and wholesale fraud. Time Magazine in 2011 included the scam on a list of historic scandals alongside "Watergate", which brought down US president Richard Nixon in 1974.

Scandal that cost the state billions

Political fallout

Analysts say the fallout weakened the Congress party and contributed to its heavy defeat at the 2014 general elections. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won that poll in a landslide, campaigning in part on a pledge to clean up corruption. Singh, who was not linked to the scandal but was accused of turning a blind eye as prime minister, said the Congress party finally stood vindicated.

"I am glad that the court has announced unambiguously that all this massive propaganda... was being done against the UPA (Congress-led alliance) without any foundation," he told reporters after the verdict. Senior Congress politician Shashi Tharoor said it was clear that "innocent people have been wronged". "Justice has worked as it is supposed to work in our country," he said. But top officials from the



CHENNAI: Indian Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party working President MK Stalin distributes sweets to party supporters at the home of party leader Karunanidhi. —AFP

ruling BJP called for an appeal. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said Congress should not treat the verdict as "a badge of honor".

"That this was a corrupt, dishonest policy has already been held by the Supreme Court," he told reporters. Subramanian Swamy, a senior BJP politician whose legal challenge of the tender process sparked the criminal investigation, was confident the acquittal would be reversed. "This is not a setback but an

aberration... This judgment will definitely be set aside," he said.

Raja, a politician from southern Tamil Nadu state, resigned as a minister in 2010 but always maintained his innocence. He was arrested the next year before being released on bail in 2012. A lawyer by training, Raja argued his own case and questioned witnesses throughout the trial as it dragged on for years through India's glacial legal system. —AFP

Backlash grows over HK's immigration 'blacklist'

HONG KONG: A string of figures critical of China's Communist Party say they have been denied visas to Hong Kong, sparking accusations of a secret "blacklist" that bears signs of Beijing's growing influence over the city. Taiwanese scholars Wu Rwei-ren and Wu Jieh-min of Taipei's prestigious Academia Sinica, due to speak at a conference in Hong Kong Friday, were the latest to say their visa applications had been rejected without explanation.

Their cases followed a high-profile incident in October when British activist Benedict Rogers, deputy chairman of the governing Conservative Party's human rights commission, was turned away by immigration after landing for what he said was a private trip. Rogers has previously criticised the jailing of democracy campaigners in Hong Kong, calling it "one of the most grotesque miscarriages of justice I have seen."

Semi-autonomous Hong Kong enjoys free-

doms unseen on the mainland since being handed back to China by Britain in 1997, under a "one country, two systems" deal. But there are rising concerns that those liberties are under threat. The city's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, stipulates immigration affairs are managed internally, but analysts say decisions over who is allowed in are increasingly arbitrary and non-transparent, sparking concern that immigration is becoming a political battleground. "Things that were not considered a threat are now seen as threats," said Edmund Cheng, assistant professor of government and international studies at Hong Kong Baptist University.

In a controversial response to media questions over the Rogers case, city leader Carrie Lam refused to provide details about why he was refused entry but suggested that matters of immigration can involve diplomatic considerations, for which Beijing is responsible. "This redefines some of the boundaries in 'one country, two systems'," said Cheng of Lam's comments. China banned a cross-party delegation of British MPs from entering Hong Kong in 2014, at the height of the mass pro-democracy Umbrella Movement rallies.

That visit was part of a foreign affairs committee examination of the former colony's relations with the United Kingdom. Pro-democracy lawmaker Claudia Mo said she believed Hong Kong was "giving up" its own authority on immigration

issues. "The whole thing was unthinkable 10 years ago, but now it's happening," Mo told AFP.

Academics targeted

Rejected Taiwanese scholar Wu Rwei-ren accused the Hong Kong government of having a "blacklist" which was expanding to academics. Lawmakers from Taiwan's ruling Beijing-sceptic Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the island's leading anti-China activists have also previously been rejected from entering Hong Kong. "Taiwan's academics have actively participated in social movements," Wu told AFP.

He believes Beijing wants to block communication between Taiwanese groups and opposition forces in Hong Kong "to isolate its civil society and render it helpless". Wu is co-author of a book on Hong Kong nationalism and took part in Taiwan's Sunflower Movement in 2014, which saw a dramatic occupation of parliament to protest a China trade pact. He said he could not get an entry permit when he applied online to attend a seminar in Hong Kong this month, although he had previously been permitted to visit the city.

The other Taiwanese scholar rejected this month, Wu Jieh-min, is also critical of Beijing and Hong Kong authorities, and participated in various social movements. Taiwan is a self-ruling democracy with a fully-fledged civil society, but Beijing sees it as part of its territory to be reuni-

fied. Ties have become increasingly frosty since DPP leader Tsai Ing-wen took office as president last year. Taiwanese academics, campaigners and lawmakers have consistently declared public support for Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp, and the city's high-profile young campaigners frequently visit the island.

Meanwhile Chinese authorities have issued warnings about challenges to its sovereignty, particularly incensed by an emerging independence movement in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's immigration department said it could not comment on individual cases when asked about the Taiwanese scholars recently rejected, saying only that it would "consider all the factors" when assessing an application. The department did not respond specifically to queries about allegations of a blacklist.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which deals with cross-strait relations, expressed "regret and dissatisfaction" over the barring of its citizens. Taiwanese social activist and DPP supporter T.C Chang, who also says he was denied entry at Hong Kong's airport this month on his way to a cultural forum, recalls how he felt "honored" to edit a magazine in the city in the past and had frequently gone back and forth since. "It's saddening if I can't go to Hong Kong anymore," he said in a Facebook post, but added he would not be stopped. "My connection with Hong Kong won't be cut off by you." —AFP

International

19 hurt as car ploughs into crowd in Melbourne: Police

‘Deliberate act’ but not terror related

MELBOURNE: A car ploughed into a crowd in Australia’s second-largest city yesterday injuring 19 people in what police said was a “deliberate act” but one they did not believe was terror related. Witnesses said people were thrown through the air after being hit by the vehicle, which did not appear to be trying to stop as it “mowed everybody down” at a busy intersection in downtown Melbourne.

Victoria state police said the 32-year-old driver, an Australian of Afghan descent, was known to authorities for traffic and “minor assault” offences and had mental health issues. The car was driven “intentionally” through the intersection and collided with a “large number” of pedestrians, Acting Chief Commissioner Shane Patton told reporters in Melbourne.

The driver “has a history of drug use and mental health issues... At this time we do not have any evidence or intelligence to indicate a connection with terrorism” or extremism, he said. The man was arrested after a tussle with an off-duty police officer. Investigators were waiting to interview the driver, who was in hospital under police guard. Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews, called the incident an “evil, deliberate, cowardly act” that left 19 people hurt—four of them critically.

“It just mowed everybody down”

‘Thump, thump’

In a tweet, police appealed to members of the public to upload any images they might have of the incident to help assist with their investigation. A witness, named only as Sue, told Melbourne radio station 3AW that she heard screams and saw “people flying everywhere”.

“We could hear this noise, as we looked left, we saw this white car, it just mowed everybody down,” she said. “People are flying everywhere. We heard thump, thump. People are running everywhere.” Another witness, John, told ABC Radio Melbourne that he saw an “SUV coming at high speed”. “(I) really just heard the collision with people with bags and what must be shopping trolleys—and I hope not prams,” he said. “I’ve really never seen anything like this before and I haven’t stopped shaking.”

The intersection is one of Melbourne’s busiest, a local shop owner told national broadcaster ABC, and is particularly crowded at this time of the year ahead of the Christmas break, with school holidays under way.

Vehicle attacks

The incident came after a car mowed down pedestrians in Melbourne’s busiest mall in January, killing six people. The driver, whose case



MELBOURNE: The street outside Flinders Street station is cordoned off by Australian police at the scene where a car ran over pedestrians in downtown Melbourne. —AFP

is still being heard in court, had been pursued by police prior to the rampage after he had allegedly stabbed his brother. Canberra has become increasingly worried about homegrown extremism and officials say they have prevented 13 terror attacks on home soil in the past few years.

The Australian government in August unveiled a strategy aimed at preventing vehicle attacks in crowded public places. Suggested steps include deterrent options like fencing and

closed circuit cameras, and delaying approaches such as trees and bollards to slow down vehicles. Melbourne has also been installing a public siren system and more security cameras to warn people of a possible terrorist attack or other serious threats.

Andrews said there would be an inquiry into the incident, and whether any further changes to Melbourne’s security measures needed to be made. Over the next few days, hundreds more police would patrol the city, he added. —AFP

Indonesia police warn Islamists against Santa raids

JAKARTA: Indonesian police appealed yesterday for tolerance and respect for other people’s religious celebrations after an Islamist group threatened to raid businesses to check for Muslims being forced to wear Santa Claus hats or other Christmas garb. The hardline Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) said this week it would conduct “sweeping operations” in the world’s biggest Muslim-majority country, and that forcing Muslims to wear Christmas attire was a violation of their human rights.

Indonesia is home to several religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and people who follow traditional beliefs. The constitution guarantees freedom of religion in an officially secular state though tension between followers of different faiths can flare. “There can be no sweeping operations ... members of the public should respect other religions that are carrying out celebrations,” national police chief Tito Karnavian told police during a security exercise in the capital, Jakarta. The FPI said it aimed to enforce a fatwa, or decree, issued by Indonesia’s Islamic Clerical Council in 2016 prohibiting business own-

ers from forcing employees to wear Christmas clothing. “We will raid businesses in anticipation of them being stubborn about this and we will be accompanied by police,” said Novel Bakmukmin, head of the FPI’s Jakarta chapter. Employers forcing staff to wear Christmas clothes were violating their rights. “Businesses should be aware that there should be no forcing,” he said. The Islamic Clerical Council’s decrees are not legally binding but serve as guidelines for Indonesian Muslims.

Christmas is widely celebrated across Indonesia and holiday decorations are ubiquitous, especially at shops, restaurants and malls where many enthusiastic workers - even Muslims - don Santa hats or elf costumes. The FPI built its reputation with raids on restaurants and bars serving alcohol during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. In recent years, it has turned its attention to Christian celebrations. The group has also said it wants the Jakarta city government to stop sponsoring New Year celebrations, which attract many thousands of people.

About 90,000 police officers will be on duty cross the country during the end-of-year holidays, in an operation largely aimed at preventing militant attacks. Attacks on churches in Jakarta and elsewhere on Christmas Eve in 2000, killed nearly 20 people. Ever since, authorities have stepped up security at churches and tourist spots for the holiday. —Reuters

China sentences 44 Taiwanese for telecom fraud

BEIJING: China sentenced 44 Taiwanese to prison yesterday for telecom fraud following their extradition from Kenya, in a move likely to further sour cross-strait ties. The Taiwanese were among a group sentenced to between 21 months and 15 years in prison and slapped with fines, the Beijing Second Intermediate People’s Court said on its official account on China’s Twitter-like Weibo.

The question of how to deal with Taiwanese arrested abroad has become a sensitive diplomatic issue, with Taipei protesting that suspects should be returned to the self-ruled island, rather than the mainland. China and Taiwan split after a civil war in 1949 and the island sees itself as a sovereign nation, but Beijing considers it a breakaway province that is part of its territory—a stance that most countries around the world recognize.

Ties between Beijing and Taipei have worsened since President Tsai Ing-wen took office last year over her refusal to

acknowledge the island as part of “one China”. Taipei has in the past accused Beijing of “abducting” Taiwanese suspected of committing fraud abroad and taking them to China. Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council spokesman Chiu Chui-cheng expressed “deep regret and dissatisfaction” over the sentencing.

“We insist that Taiwanese suspects involved in cross-border telecom fraud cases should return to Taiwan to face investigation, trial and serve the sentence according to the law,” he said at a regular press briefing yesterday. “We urge the Chinese side to communicate and negotiate with us for the interests of the people to seek resolutions in terms of joint crime-fighting to eradicate fraud groups.”

The council has stated that it has intelligence on “the key suspect behind the crime” and called on China to cooperate with Taiwan security authorities “as soon as possible”. The telecom case is the latest to involve the international deportation of Taiwanese suspects, and analysts see the cases as part of Beijing’s bid to pile pressure on Tsai. A Spanish court said last week it had also decided to allow the extradition of Taiwanese fraud suspects to China despite protests by Taipei, which hoped to take back its citizens. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2017

www.kuwaittimes.net



A man dressed as Santa Claus rides a camel along Jerusalem's Old City Ottoman walls. — AFP

Star's suicide highlights dark side of the K-pop dream

Lifestyle | Features



A Thai fan of the late South Korean band SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun puts up a note for him during a memorial held by the boyband's Thai fanclub at a Buddhist temple in Bangkok yesterday. —AFP photos



Family members and friends of late SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun carry out his coffin during a funeral at a hospital in Seoul.

Star's suicide highlights dark side of the K-pop dream 'inevitable outcome'

Known for its ultra-competitive, pressure-cooker society, South Korea has one of the world's highest suicide rates. And this week the even higher stresses in the country's lucrative showbiz industry took their toll on a K-pop superstar. Kim Jong-Hyun, a 27-year-old lead singer of the hugely popular boy band SHINee, took his own life in a Seoul hotel room on Monday, with his death sending shockwaves through fans around the world. Five-member SHINee were at the forefront of the "Korean Wave" that has seen South Korean pop culture sweep Asia by storm in the past decade and lap at shores even further afield.

The band has found fame and fortune with multiple chart-topping albums and sold-out concerts at home and abroad since their debut in 2008. But a grittier reality lies beneath the glitz and glamour of the K-pop scene—cutthroat competition, a lack of privacy, online bullying and relentless public pressure to maintain a wholesome image at all times and at any cost. Many stars like Kim are picked up by agencies at a young age, usually in their early or mid-teens, their lives then taken over by grueling singing and dancing training, with the ever-present risk of falling foul of a cutthroat screening process.

Holidays are rare and privacy an unaffordable luxury as many live with other band mates in dorm-like apartments provided by their agents, who dictate everything from music styles and diet regimen to mobile phone use—and normally impose dating bans. Many struggle with a constant lack of

sleep and privacy. Kim Se-Jeong, a popular K-pop singer, confessed of once sleeping a total of one hour for four days. "I had to perform on stage, appear in TV shows and shoot ad commercials all at the same time," she told a television interviewer earlier this year.

Kang Daniel, of the popular boy band Wanna One, admitted that his biggest wish was "having just one day of rest". "For months ahead of my debut, I usually woke up four or five in the morning... practiced until two or three in the morning the following day," Kang said in a television interview aired in August. He was "grateful" to get a chance at fame, he added—but the grueling schedule eventually affected his health and the 21-year-old cancelled all public appearances earlier this month.



The hearse carrying the body of late SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun leaves as fans watch at a hospital.



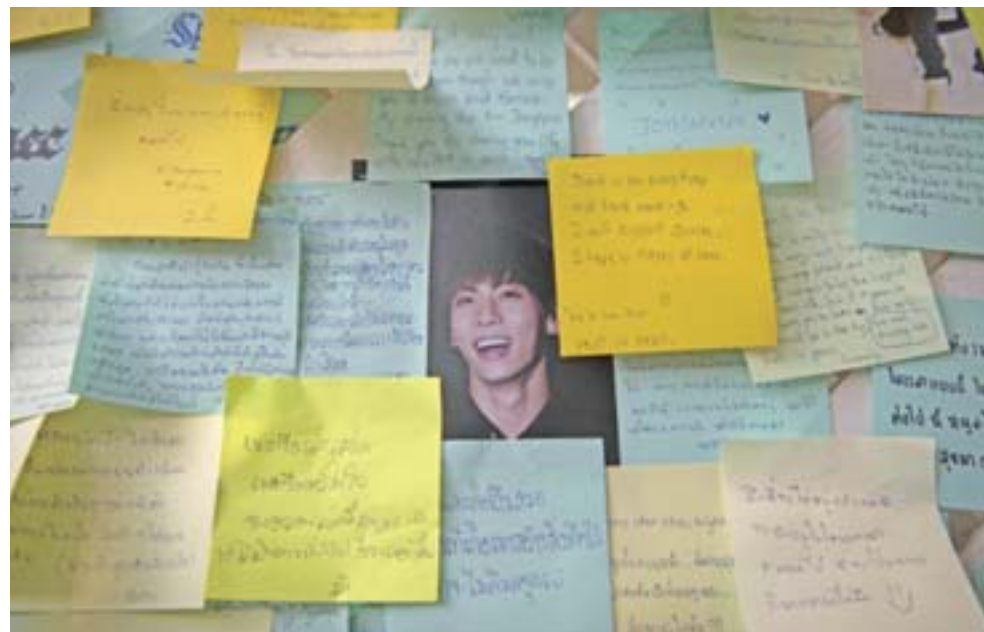
Family members and friends of late SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun cry as they carry out his coffin during a funeral at a hospital in Seoul.



Fans of late SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun cry as the hearse carrying the body of Kim Jong-Hyun leaves from a hospital.



Fans of late SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun cry as the hearse carrying the body of Kim Jong-Hyun leaves from a hospital.



Notes for the late South Korean band SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun are seen on a whiteboard during a memorial held by the boyband's Thai fanclub.

Smiley happy face

Many K-pop stars face tremendous pressure to look and behave perfectly in an industry powered by so-called "fandoms"—groups of well-organized admirers who spend enormous amounts of time and money to help their favored stars climb up the charts and attack their perceived rivals. In return, the stars are expected to tread carefully in an industry where today's most-fervent fans can be tomorrow's most vicious critics if their idols fail to meet their expectations—or "betray" them.

Drug use or drunken driving are seen as career-breakers, while behavior that causes a "stir"—anything from a social media gaffe to a failure to smile ceaselessly at public appearances—could be criticized for years. Many are constantly chased by paparazzi and camera-touting fans who share or sell every single detail and images of the stars' daily lives online for public scrutiny. "These 'idols' virtually live in a fishbowl and are pressed to put on a smiley, happy face while behaving nicely 24/7," said cultural commentator Kim Seong-Soo, adding the strain could "cripple them emotionally".

Such challenges are common among celebrities around the world, he told AFP, but are amplified in the hyper-wired South, which has some of the world's fastest internet speeds and highest smartphone usage, and a society where pressure to conform is high. Taboos about mental illness dissuade many from seeking medical help, including public figures, he added.

Winner takes all

Kim's death is unusual for a K-pop musician at the height of his popularity, but is the latest in a long list of showbiz suicides. In 2010, Park Yong-Ha, a top actor who had huge followings at home and in Japan and China, hanged himself, and former actor Kim Sung-Min, whose career was ru-

A Thai fan of the late South Korean band SHINee singer Kim Jong-Hyun puts up a note for him during a memorial held by the boyband's Thai fanclub at a Buddhist temple in Bangkok yesterday. —AFP photos



ined by a jail term for drug abuse, did the same last year. In the most shocking series of suicides, actress Choi Jin-Sil - a household name - hanged herself in 2008, her actions blamed on online bullying. Her brother, also an actor, killed himself two years later, and her ex-husband, former baseball star Cho Sung-Min, followed suit in 2013.

Actress Park Jin-Hee interviewed hundreds of actors and actresses for her master's thesis in 2009 and said that 40 percent had considered suicide at least once due to a lack of privacy, online bullying or unstable incomes. But celebrity suicides are only a microcosm of South Korea's wider social problems, including cutthroat com-

petition in areas from education to workplaces and a lack of safety nets, said commentator Kim, calling depression an "inevitable outcome" of living under such strain. "Our country has an extreme form of winner-take-all system where those who fail can hardly make a comeback, or even survive." — AFP

Robot DJ puts the tech into techno for Czech clubbers

These days artificial intelligence is so advanced that robots trade shares, make restaurant suggestions and diagnose diseases. But can a robot get a dance floor jumping? It is a question that Prague's Karlovy Lazne Music Club has endeavored to answer by employing a specially adapted former automotive industry robot as a DJ in the popular

nightspot. The robot is shaped like a giant arm capped with a pincer, and has shared deck duties at the club with its human programmer in an hourly rotation each night for the last three weeks.

"People are excited (about the robot), because they haven't seen anything like this around Europe, and I am not sure if there is something similar in the world," club man-

ager Adam Lipsansky told Reuters.

The DJ robot was created after the club's management challenged a robotics firm to the task. Equipped with special software to help it choose songs and mounted on a stage above the club's dance floor, the robot selects discs from nearby racks and puts them into one of three music players in front of it. It can scratch

records and also dances. While some clubbers told Reuters that they enjoyed the robot's musical efforts, others remained unconvinced. "I don't like the robot," said Marcia Lopes, 24, a tourist from Mexico. "It can't feel what the people want to dance to. There is no emotion behind the music. When there is a real person, they know, what fun is like." — Reuters

Lifestyle | Features



A picture shows dolls and a doll house at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon. — AFP photos



Manuela Cutileiro, owner of the Doll Hospital, dresses up a doll in front of drawers of doll parts at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.

A new lease of life for cherished toys at Lisbon doll hospital



Drawers with different doll parts at the Doll Hospital.



A picture shows doll heads inside a drawer at the Doll Hospital.

In the heart of old Lisbon, there's a "hospital" that treats patients who are small and fragile, often mangled and battered, and sometimes more than 100 years old. This rare facility mends the cracked head, broken limb or missing eye of many a child's favorite toy—their doll. The loving care given at Lisbon's doll hospital has been going on for five generations. "We have clients from all over the world and all ages. There are museums which ask us to restore pieces, also private collectors, but the vast majority of our clients are individuals—people who are sentimentally attached" to their dolls, says Manuela Cutileiro, 72, the hospital's owner.

The dolls all have a patient file and are painstakingly restored by the skilled hands of three women "surgeons", who give them a new body part or hair, chosen from drawers full of pieces of dolls, a macabre collection of heads, limbs and eyes. The establishment, known as Hospital de Bonecas, was founded in 1830 and is described in the tourist guides to Portugal's capital as one of the oldest doll hospitals still in operation.

"They say we are among the last in the world to do this work," says Cutileiro, a former school teacher. But she shrugs off accolades. "We do our work in our little corner, without worrying about records or statistics." Some 4,000 dolls can be found inside. There are 100-year-old dolls with porcelain heads, along with dolls dressed in costumes from different regions of Portugal, as well as some modern Barbies.

"For us a contemporary doll is 20 or 30 years old. The old ones are those which are already centenarians," says Cutileiro, carrying on the family enterprise. Its origins go back to the 19th century when "a little old lady", Carlota da Silva Luz, would make rag dolls, sitting in front of her herb shop in Praca da Figueira, where there was a large outdoor market. Over time, the aromatic and medicinal herbs gave way to shelves of dolls, which today fill a window display at the entrance to the hospital, with a museum dedicated to them on the first floor. And it seems as if the pace of times past continues at the doll surgery. No rush procedures here. "We make sure that time passes less quickly here than it does outside," says Cutileiro. "People have to wait." — AFP



Dolls are displayed at the Doll Hospital.



A picture shows doll hands inside a drawer at the Doll Hospital.



A woman repairs a doll at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.



A mannequin is displayed in front of shelves of doll parts at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.



Several Barbie dolls and Action Man figures waiting to be repaired lie on a net.



Dolls inside a drawer at the Doll Hospital.



A woman repairs a doll at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.



A tag with instructions is attached to the feet of a doll waiting to be repaired at the Doll Hospital.



A picture shows doll heads inside a drawer at the Doll Hospital.



A doll is displayed at the Doll Hospital.



A picture shows doll heads at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.



A picture shows doll heads at the Doll Hospital in Lisbon.

Lifestyle

Fashion mourns as cult Paris store Colette closes

They may not yet be weeping in the streets, but for French fashionistas, the closure Wednesday of Colette, the concept store which has become a Paris style institution, ranks nothing short of a national tragedy. "I cannot believe it is closing," said style commentator Melody Thomas in one of a blizzard of articles and blog posts mourning the passing of the mother of all lifestyle stores, where Madonna, Kim Kardashian and Katy Perry shopped for quirky objects of desire. The three-storey boutique on chi-chi Rue Saint-Honore, founded by Colette Rous-saux 20 years ago, was far more than a gadget or design store to its many celebrity fans.

It pioneered limited-edition collaborations between luxury brands and street fashion stars, and cheekily poked fun at Saint Laurent with the T-shirt "Ain't Laurent Without Yves" when the label stopped using its founder's first name. With a basement Water Bar where you could sip iceberg melt water or anti-ageing spirulina seaweed cocktails, it soon sparked imita-



People walk past the entrance of the Colette concept store in Paris on December 16, 2017, ahead of its definitive closure. — AFP

She had got to "the age to take your time—and Colette cannot exist without Colette," the store said. "All good things come to an end." While style lovers applauded her for not selling out, they were heartbro-

lette closed for good, shoppers thronged the store, flitting between its trademark mix of humble and luxury wares—a novelty sponge selling for four euros next to a 9,990-euro Saint Laurent jacket. —AFP

Borsalino, Italy's hatmaker to the stars, declared bankrupt

Famed Italian hatmaker Borsalino, the company behind Humphrey Bogart's fedora in "Casablanca" and Harrison Ford's lucky headgear in the "Indiana Jones" movies, was declared bankrupt on Monday, a trade union said. A court in Alessandria in northern Italy threw out a rescue plan for the legendary company and put it into administration, Elio Bricola from the UIL labour union told AFP. He said that while "it is likely industrial activity will continue" for now, "employees are angry and worried about their future".

Michael Jackson loved Borsalino hats, trend-setting music star Pharrell Williams is a contemporary fan and David Bowie opted for one of the Italian house's black fedoras for what was to prove his final photo shoot. The 1970 French gangster film "Borsalino" was also named after the distinctive fedora-style hats worn by heartthrob actors Alain Delon and Jean-Paul Belmondo. But even the endorsement of film and music royalty could not protect the 160-year-old company from the consequences of reckless management.

The Haeres Equita investment fund took control of the ailing company in 2015 in the hope of turning the situation around, despite a debt of 30 million euros (\$35 million). The hatter's former boss Marco Marengo, who was on the run from fraud and tax evasion charges, was arrested in 2015 in Switzerland. A judge initially approved Haeres Equita's proposals for repaying Borsalino's creditors, giving the green light for a new chapter in the history of a company that produced two million hats a year in the 1920s. But the plan to save the business



This file photo taken on March 17, 2016 shows a hat in a "Borsalino" flag-ship store in Florence. —AFP

and its estimated 120 employees was later rejected by the court and a second

such plan, presented a few weeks ago, was also thrown out. — AFP



French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier (left) poses next to a wax sculpture of himself during its inauguration at the Musee Grevin wax museum in Paris. — AFP

Investor takes stake in Rolling Stone, keeping on owner

Media investor Jay Pense on Wednesday announced a stake in Rolling Stone to revive the financial health of the iconic magazine of music and counterculture, with founder Jann Wenner preserving a role. The investor's Pense Media Corp. did not reveal terms of the deal but several media outlets including Variety, one of his titles, said the media company was spending \$100 million for a controlling stake.

BandLab Technologies, a Singaporean start-up headed by Kuok Meng Ru, the scion of one of Asia's richest families, will keep its 49 percent stake in Rolling Stone bought last year, Pense said. Wenner launched Rolling Stone in 1967 through a family loan when he was a hippie student in Berkeley, California. Within years he turned the magazine into a bible of rock music coverage and a platform for left-wing politics and experimental journalism by writers such as gonzo reporter Hunter S. Thompson.

But even as Rolling Stone's reviews remain among the most closely watched in the music industry, the publication has struggled in an era when independent magazines find it difficult to stay afloat. Rolling Stone suffered a major blow when it retracted a 2014 story about an alleged gang rape at the University of Virginia, with a review finding that the magazine ignored basic journalistic practices. Pense said he hoped to ensure that Rolling Stone "continues to ascend for decades across multiple media platforms."

"Our interest in Rolling Stone is driven by its people, its cultural significance and the globally recognized brand that has no peer in its areas of influence," Pense said in a statement. Wenner will move from serving as Rolling Stone's publisher to a new role of editorial director. Gus Wenner, Jann's son, will keep his position of president and chief operating officer of Wenner Media and join the advisory board of Pense Media Corp., the statement said.

Jann Wenner called Pense "the ideal match for us to thrive in today's media landscape." Founded by Jay Pense in 2003, his company has amassed major titles in entertainment and culture including Variety, one of the most influential outlets in Hollywood, the lighter film site Deadline.com and the fashion business trend-setter Women's Wear Daily. Pense has also entered the Indian market with India.com, a portal with news on technology and Bollywood that is a joint venture with Mumbai-based Zee Entertainment. Wenner Media earlier this year sold two magazines, US Weekly and Men's Journal, to American Media, Inc., the right-leaning publisher of The National Enquirer and other supermarket tabloids. —AFP





A relative of Song Song-Hui (lower left) sings during a family gathering at her apartment in Pyongyang. — AFP photos



Song Song-Hui (center) sings during a family gathering at her apartment in Pyongyang.

Of Cabbages and Kims: Korea's changing kimchis

North and South Korea are radically different societies, one ruled by the same family for decades and the other a freewheeling democracy and thriving economy. But one thing unites them—their love of fermented cabbage. Kimchi, originally a means of preserving the vegetable during winter and which can vary from mild to fiery, has been a staple part of virtually every meal on the now-divided peninsula for centuries. In the North, where UN statistics say around 40 percent of people are chronically undernourished, it flavors the rice that is the mainstay of the diet. In the South, it accompanies cuisines from American to Vietnamese. But while authorities on both sides of the border proclaim their commitment to reunification, after more than 70 years of total separation without even post or telephone links, the two countries are far more different than were East and West Germany when the Berlin Wall fell.

And even their kimchis have changed. They were listed separately on UNESCO's roster of the world's intangible cultural heritage, with the South's inscribed first, but in her central Pyongyang flat, Song Song Hui offers a patriotic defense of the Northern variety's superiority. "I have never tried kimchi from the south but I think the Pyongyang kimchi is much better than the kimchi from the south," Song said.

Taste divides

Kimchi has always had regional variations—it is saltier and stronger in the South, says Park Chae-Rin, a researcher at grandly-named World Institute of Kimchi (WIKIM) in Seoul, as the warmer climate made cabbage harder to store. According to Park, technological advances in the South—many households have specialized kimchi fridges—and greater access to spices and condiments have made the North-South flavor gap more pronounced. "North Korean kimchi is similar to the kimchi eaten before modernization when there was no refrigerator and a lack of ingredients," she said. "In South Korea, that type of kimchi has completely disappeared."

Nevertheless, the kimjang—kimchi-making-season remains a family tradition on both sides of the border as temperatures fall towards zero. In Song's flat, her cousin Yu Yang Hui—a chef by profession—mixed together sliced radish, garlic, pieces of pollock, and a red pepper paste, before spreading the concoction between the leaves of cabbages soaked in salt water for 24 hours to soften. Packed into plas-

tic buckets to ferment on the balcony—in rural tradition the containers are buried—it would be ready to eat in a week, and at its best in a month.

"Korean people can eat rice only with kimchi," said Yu, adding a family of four could get through a kilo a day. A request to see a North Korean family in full kimjang mode had resulted in the visit to Song's apartment, which overlooks the giant statues of founding leader Kim Il-Sung and his son and successor Kim Jong-Il that dominate the capital. The Song family are undoubtedly members of the North Korean elite — Song's father founded the Pyongyang Glasses Factory before handing it over to the state, and it made the red glass torch that stands atop the Juche Tower monument in the city. Song's piano was given to her by Kim Jong-Il, and a formal group photograph in the living room shows her standing directly behind current leader Kim Jong-Un, the third of the dynasty to rule.

Mother's memory

Kimchi is not the only cultural component that divides Korean opinions. A few years ago The Economist caused a stir in the South by suggesting its beer was inferior to those produced by the North's Taedonggang brewery. More fundamentally, seven



Song Song-Hui (center) sits with relatives as gather at her apartment in Pyongyang.



Yu Yang Hui (center) makes kimchi at the apartment of Song Song-Hui (top center), in Pyongyang.

decades of political and economic division have seen linguistic divisions begin to emerge — North and South spell and pronounce some Korean words differently, and use different systems to transliterate into English. Some terms common in the North are no longer used in the South, where young people are constantly coming up with new words — so much so that North Korean defectors are given language lessons as part of their assimilation course. As far as kimchi goes, WIKIM's Park believes debates on flavor and quality are as much about memory as taste. "The kimchi that tastes most like their mother's kimchi, the one that they grew up eating, is what people find most delicious."

WIKIM is funded by the Seoul government and has nearly 100 staff to promote the industry—although the cabbage and spices for commercial South Korean kimchis actually come from China. Claims—sometimes outlandish—for the food's health benefits are regularly made in the South, where authorities organize giant kimchi-making festivals, but for Park kimchi retains a role as a national identifier. "Kimchi carries a kind of common sentimental element that ties together all Koreans," she said. — AFP

**Ingredients**

Two large petite beef filets
 1/4 pound thin sliced prosciutto
 1/4 cup pesto
 1/4 cup thin red pepper strips
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth

Succulent petite beef filet for a holiday dinner

By Sara Moulton

Want to serve a fancy roast for Christmas dinner without breaking the bank? Try a petite beef filet. Cut from the shoulder, long and thin, and weighing between 8-10 ounces, the petite filet looks like a mini tenderloin of beef - one of the priciest and most popular of roasts. But it's much less expensive and more flavorful than the tenderloin. And tender, too.

Here we've rolled it up and stuffed it with prosciutto, as well as with pesto and roasted red peppers. The latter two ingredients - one green, the other red - echo the signature colors of the holiday even as they delight the taste buds. And, bonus! You can buy them by the jar in the supermarket, which makes the prep that much easier.

The only tricky part of this recipe is double-butter flying the roast - that is, cutting the filet

in such a way that it becomes a big flat rectangle. Start by looking for the largest petite filets you can find. They're the easiest to slice and they hold more stuffing. Then, before commencing your butterfly surgery, read the instructions several times. The goal is to avoid cutting a hole in the meat as you butterfly it, although it's not a problem even if you do.

The roast will still hold together after the meat is pounded, lined with prosciutto, rolled and tied. And tying it isn't that difficult. If you need help, there are several terrific videos online that will take you through it step by step.

This recipe doesn't need to be made at the last minute. You can cut, roll and tie the roast ahead of time and chill it for several hours. Then, when you're 25 minutes or so from sitting down to dinner, brown it, pop it in the oven and let it rest for the requisite 10 minutes. Whip up the sauce while the roast is resting. You will look like a culinary genius as you plate up a singularly el-

legant and festive holiday meal.
 Prosciutto and Red Pepper Stuffed Petite Filet

Preparation

1: Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
 2: Butterfly the petite filet roasts: Working with one filet at a time, place the filet on a cutting board with one of the short ends facing you. Start cutting the roast along the left long side about 2/3 of the way down from the top of the filet, cutting through almost to the other side but stopping about 1/2 inch from the other side. Flip the roast over so that the cut side is now on the right. Repeat the procedure on the left side again, slicing about 2/3 of the way down from the top of the filet, cutting to within 1/2-inch of the other side. Open up the two flaps that you have just cut in the filet so it is the shape of a rectangle. Pound the meat between two sheets of plastic wrap, sprinkled with water until it is about 1/4-inch thick all over.

3: Arrange half the prosciutto over the inside of each roast, leaving a 1/2-inch border on all sides. Spread half of the pesto on top of the prosciutto and arrange the red pepper strips down the middle. Starting with the long end, roll up the beef to form a cylinder and tie it with twine at 1-inch lengths.

4: In a medium ovenproof skillet heat the oil over medium high heat, add the meat, seasoned all over with salt and pepper and brown it on all sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer the pan to the middle shelf of the oven and roast the filets for 10 minutes for medium-rare meat. Transfer the roasts to a plate, cover them loosely with foil and let them rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

5: Meanwhile, add the chicken broth and any juices from the resting meat and simmer for 3 minutes.

6: To serve: Remove the strings, slice the meat and arrange it on four plates. Spoon some of the pan juices over each portion.

Spanish-style **crispy** **potatoes** for New Year's party



Ingredients

2 pounds medium Yukon gold potatoes, sliced crosswise 1/2-inch thick
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 4 tablespoons olive oil
 Kosher salt
 For the sauce:
 1/3 cup mayonnaise
 1/4 cup chopped roasted red pepper
 2 teaspoons vinegar
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
 Pinch of cayenne

By Sara Moulton

The classic New Year's libation is champagne, but what to eat is a matter of broader choice. This year why not make it a tapas party - a feast of various little bites? And, if indeed that's how you choose to roll, one of those dishes should be these crispy baked potatoes with a garlicky red pepper mayo sauce.

Spanish Style Crispy Potatoes with Garlicky Red Pepper Sauce is a streamlined take on a Spanish classic called patatas bravas - deep-fried chunks of potato with a spicy tomato sauce and/or aioli - sort of like the Spanish equivalent of french fries. But given that most folks aren't keen on firing up a big vat of boiling oil, I've engineered a baked version. It's not quite as crispy as the fried, but it comes close.

How to make crispy potatoes without frying? Here are a few tricks: First, partially cook the potato slices in simmering water with a bit of baking soda, which makes the exteriors of the potatoes slightly mushy and releases their starch and sugar.

Then toss the hot potatoes in a bowl with oil and salt, which encourages a starchy film to accumulate on the potatoes' exterior. When the potatoes are roasted, all of that starch and sugar on the outside helps to form a crispy brown crust. As for the lip-smacking sauce - a mix of pureed red peppers, smoky paprika and garlic mayo - you can drizzle it on top of the potatoes or set it on the side as a dip. However, there's no reason to reserve this recipe for a special occasion like New Year's. It will make a very satisfying side dish whenever you serve it.

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Adjust an oven rack to the lowest position. In a Dutch oven or large saucepan combine the potatoes and baking soda with enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Bring to boil, reduce to a simmer and cook until the exterior part of the slices has softened but the centers are still slightly firm when pricked with a knife, about 5 minutes.

While the potatoes are simmering, place a rimmed sheet pan on the bottom rack of the oven to heat up. Drain the potatoes and return them to the saucepan. Cook over medium heat a few minutes, shaking the pan until there is no excess water on the surface of the potatoes. Transfer them to large bowl. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the oil and 1/2 teaspoon salt; toss well to combine. Drizzle with another 1 table-

spoon oil and continue to toss until coated with a starchy paste.

Carefully remove the sheet pan from the oven and pour the remaining tablespoon of oil onto it, tilting the pan to coat the bottom. Add the potatoes and spread them out in one layer (the end pieces should be placed skin side up). Bake until the bottoms are golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes, rotating the pan after 10 minutes. Flip the potatoes and brown them on the second side, 15 to 20 minutes. Sprinkle with salt to taste.

Make the sauce: In a blender puree the peppers. Add the remaining ingredients and blend, scraping down the sides several times, until smooth.

To serve: Transfer the potatoes to a bowl and drizzle with the sauce, or serve the sauce on the side.

Lifestyle



Sudoku

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

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

DID YOU KNOW?

When you see a snowy owl, it's clear how the bird probably got its name: they're snow-white. Males are generally whiter than females. As males grow older, they get whiter. The females never become completely white—remaining brownish with darker markings.

These large owls mainly live in the Arctic in open, treeless areas called tundra. Snowy owls perch on the ground or on short posts. From there they patiently watch for prey. Their favorite target is lemmings—small mouse like rodents—but they also hunt for other small rodents, rabbits, birds, and fish.

Snowy owls have excellent eyesight, but they obviously can't see their prey when it's underneath snow or a thick layer of plants. To capture those meals, the owl relies on its other keen sense: hearing.

In flight, snowy owls generally cruise low to the ground. Once they spot their prey, they approach it from the air, and snatch it up using the large, sharp talons, or claws, on their feet.

Most owls sleep during the day and hunt at night, but the snowy owl is active during the day, especially in the summertime. They tend to be most ac-

tive at dawn and dusk.

Snowy owl pairs usually mate for life. Female snowy owls lay from 3 to 11 eggs at a time, in a nest built on the ground. When there is plenty of food available, snowy owls tend to lay more eggs than when food is scarce.

Lemmings make up the main part of the snowy owls' diet, and lemming population numbers rise and fall naturally. Sometimes, if there is not enough prey around to feed baby owls, the adult pair won't lay any eggs at all until the supply of food improves.

The female snowy owl sits on her eggs until they hatch. The male feeds her while she keeps their eggs warm and safe. After about one month, the eggs hatch.

Babies are covered in soft white down when they hatch. As new feathers replace the down, the birds become light brown.

The young leave the nest less than a month after they hatch. By the time they're about a month and a half old, the young owls can fly well, but their parents take care of them for another ten weeks or more.



Lifestyle | Kids

CROSS WORD

Articles of Clothing

<input type="checkbox"/> boots	<input type="checkbox"/> gloves	<input type="checkbox"/> hat	<input type="checkbox"/> mittens	<input type="checkbox"/> overalls
<input type="checkbox"/> pants	<input type="checkbox"/> pyjamas	<input type="checkbox"/> raincoat	<input type="checkbox"/> shirt	<input type="checkbox"/> shoes
<input type="checkbox"/> shorts	<input type="checkbox"/> skirt	<input type="checkbox"/> slippers	<input type="checkbox"/> sweater	<input type="checkbox"/> underwear

RECIPE

Chicken Avocado Roll-Ups



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 avocados, cubed
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 cup Shredded chicken
- 1 bell peppers, seeds and cores removed, chopped
- 1/2 small red onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup Shredded Monterey Jack
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar
- 2 tbsp. sour cream
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped chives
- 4 large flour tortillas

DIRECTIONS:

In a medium bowl, combine avocado and lime juice and mash until only small chunks of avocado remain. Add chicken, bell pepper, red onion, Monterey Jack, cheddar, sour cream and chives and stir until evenly combined. Spread a thin layer of the chicken avocado mixture onto a large tortilla, leaving a small border around the edges. Roll the tortilla up tightly, then cut off the edges and slice into 1" rolls. Repeat with remaining ingredients. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Maze

Minnie Mouse Maze
Help Minnie ski her way to the finish line!

JOKES

- Q: What do you call a dinosaur with no eyes?
A: Doyouthinkysaraus
- Q: What do you call a sleeping dinosaur?
A: A dino-snore!
- Q: How do you know if there is a dinosaur in your refrigerator?
A: The door won't shut!
- Q: What dinosaur would Harry Potter be?
A: The Dinosorcerer
- Q: How can you best raise a baby dinosaur?
A: With a crane!
- Q: What did the dinosaur put on her steak?
A: Dinosauce

Mysteries Unfold in a Land of Minarets and Magic Carpets

By Suzanne Joinson

S.A. Chakraborty's novel, *The City of Brass*, opens with a veiled woman fortunetelling in what appears to be 18th-century Cairo. We quickly learn that Nahri earns her money as a thief and a leader of zars (rituals for the exorcism of bad spirits), and speaks a language, inherited from her long-dead parents, whose name she doesn't know. It seems we are about to be plunged into a cultural mash-up of "The Thousand and One Nights" and any number of young adult novels with plucky female protagonists, but when Nahri walks through Cairo's spooky cemetery things take a speculative turn. Puff!

A warrior in robes emerges from among the gravestones, flashing his scimitar, bows and arrows aquirer. Next come ghoulish zombies: "The tattered remains of burial shrouds hung from their desiccated frames, the scent of rot filling the air." Nahri and the warrior must escape, but how? A flying carpet, of course, and when Nahri responds, "A rug? How is a rug going to help us?" it's clear we're in the hands of a playful writer. The warrior is a type of spirit called a daeva, his name is Dara and, as luck would have it, he's "frighteningly beautiful," with the "type of allure Nahri imagined a tiger held right before it ripped out your throat." As kidnapper-rescuers go, he's hot as hell.

Also, he knows the answer to the mystery of Nahri's origins: She's a shafit, descendant of an ancient half-human, half-magical tribe thought to have become extinct. A birdlike creature then explains that Nahri is in danger and that her handsome protector must take her away to the city of Daevabad. Thus their adventure begins, complete with snowy plains, forbidding mountain ranges and fierce confrontations.

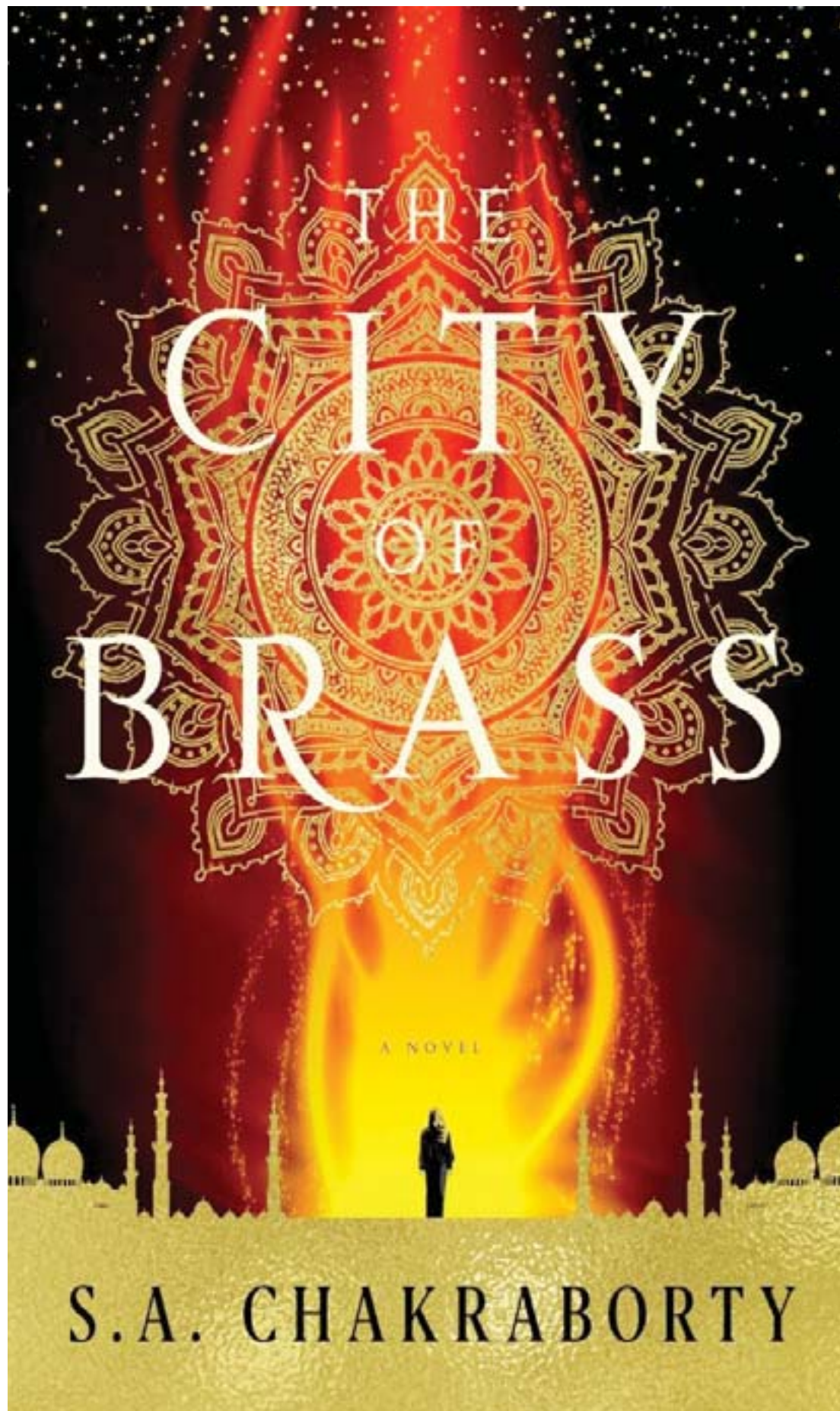
The city's name, Daevabad, with its Persian suffix of -abad, makes reference

to exotic-sounding cities like Islamabad or Hyderabad and signals what comes next: the sound of the call to prayer, views of citadels and minarets, the bustle of grand bazaars. To Nahri, who sees "a man pass by with an enormous python settled over his shoulders," the people of the city look "wild." Its streets are full of strollers in glowing robes wearing headdresses of glittering stones; there are even shape-shifters among them. Chakraborty doesn't hold back on the Eastern glitz.

The Muslim world is no stranger to speculative fiction, though that label wouldn't be used there. Islamic folklore and narratives are full of flying machines, impossible journeys, skewed time frames and stories that illuminate cultural or scientific theories. It's clear that Chakraborty has great fun alluding to these tales, though in storytelling terms "The City of Brass" is standard, fast-paced fantasy fare.

On the journey, Nahri gains access to Dara's memories and figures out that he's a slave, even as her personal trajectory involves explorations of her own identity. Most enjoyable is the gusto with which everything is thrown into her story, from massacres to zombies to djinns. If there are stereotypes, they're consciously acknowledged and mischievously inhabited.

At the moment, speculative fiction has an exciting relationship with protest fiction and feminist narratives, and while "The City of Brass" doesn't blow away cultural notions of difference or reconfigure the male-female divide, it does exploit the genre's penchant for inclusion. In fact, the novel feels like a friendly hand held out across the world. (I hope very much that it will be translated into Arabic and Farsi.) It reads like an invitation for readers from Baghdad to Fairbanks to meet across impossibly divergent worlds through the shared language and images of the fantastical.



Comic

WORD SEARCH

Fairy Tales

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

CHILCHICKENLITTLELOH
 RORRIMALLEREDNICKCAJ
 OSODATTTTEOERGGEBEARS
 NRFESSTUHTIROSEFDEBS
 WEPFRAGQLIUAHKRRNHIN
 UTBEAWIHENMCCOETIPGI
 GSBEOWWPDMOBGCOPREBK
 LIKNAWDMELEPEMOIMSAS
 YSSIOUONILRRDLNNEEDT
 DPENNTTDEITOMCIHINWL
 UESVHGLYNVGTASNAPOI
 CTEELOMCNYESIIWARLT
 KSRFGEEIRASSWLSDIEFS
 LDOOHGNIDIRDERELTTIL
 IRYTAIATNAIGLEPESNGE
 NCEADDFSELESNAHTMRURP
 GODDESHOEMAKERLIAHEM
 KLATSNAEBLEZNUPARLTU
 GLESDOOGNEDLOGUNDINER
 ASTEPMOTHERHSINBADLT

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| ALADDIN | FROG PRINCE | LAMP | SINBAD |
| BEANSTALK | GENIE | LITTLE MERMAID | SNOW QUEEN |
| BEARS | GIANT | LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD | SNOW WHITE |
| BEAST | GOLDEN GOOSE | MIRROR | STEPMOTHER |
| BEAUTY | GOLDOLOCKS | PEA | STEPSISTERS |
| BIG BAD WOLF | GRANDMOTHER | PINOCCHIO | SWAN |
| CACKEN LITTLE | GRETEL | PRINCESS | THREE LITTLE PIGS |
| CINDERELLA | HANSEL | RAPUNZEL | THUMBELINA |
| ELVES | HUNTER | RUMPELSTILTSKIN | UGLY DUCKLING |
| EMPEROR | JACK | SEVEN DWARFS | URGINE |
| FAIRY GODMOTHER | KING MIDAS | SHOEMAKER | WISHES |

Yesterday's Solution

Elvis

UOYNOKCUTSCLAMBAKEYO
 GNIKEHTROCKABILLYUCB
 DNIAIRYKCUKNEKASNDUAL
 OSNYEGODDNUOHOOTHBSLU
 NAREHITURNTOSENDERUDEE
 TGUISVINGTIBJGARTRTH
 BEORIEUYATMUALOLNOOA
 EVYASRCCRSAPYOLICHW
 CSTMENROUALOREDSNEKA
 RAOALOFOLOMTEKSLHGRAI
 ULNSTNISOODIUDUOLNEI
 EASITCEUDNRRAHCOGOURY
 LVELLUSNEGRECKKVSBP
 LIHPLEATCENULFCUESTTP
 EYSBRLERNIMOPHPMIRA
 POTOEEMEDGOVYMRASUHAH
 SGCCCEOEHOAARONRABPEL
 OKAVLRTTSYDALDMLKMR
 GROEINTHREGHETTOUEESI
 GLUEDESROUSTABOUTMAG
 DRAFTEDALLICSTRPHOES

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| AARON | GOOD LUCK CHARM | LITTLE SISTER | STUCK ON YOU |
| ALL SHOOK UP | GOSPEL | LOVE ME TENDER | SUN RECORDS |
| BLUE HAWAII | GRACELAND | MEMPHIS | SURRENDER |
| BURNING LOVE | GYRATING | ONE NIGHT | SUSPICIOUS MINDS |
| CLAMBAKE | HEARTBREAK HOTEL | PRISCILLA | THE KING |
| COLONEL PARKER | HOUND DOG | ROCK | TOO MUCH |
| DON'T BE CRUEL | IN THE GHETTO | RETURN TO SENDER | TUPELO |
| DRAFTED | JAILHOUSE ROCK | ROCKABILLY | U.S. ARMY |
| G.I. BLUES | KENTUCKY RAIN | ROUSTABOUT | VERNON |
| GIRL HAPPY | KING CREOLE | SHE'S NOT YOU | VIVA LAS VEGAS |
| GLADYS | LISA MARIE | | |

The hidden sentence is: YOU CAN DO ANYTHING BUT LAY OFF OF MY BLUE SUEDÉ SHOES

CROSSWORD 1785



ACROSS

- A case for containing a set of articles.
- A city in southeastern Spain.
- Lie adjacent to another.
- The capital and largest city of Japan.
- Cheese melted with ale or beer served over toast.
- Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
- Minor or subordinate.
- A subsonic jet airliner operated over short distances.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- Unable to see.
- The capital and largest city of Kenya.
- A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
- Pasture grass of plains of South America and western North America.
- A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
- A group of trees and shrubs and herbs mostly with polypetalous flowers.
- Chew the fat.
- Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
- Baby bed with high sides.
- The unit of measurement for the proportion of gold in an alloy.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- A member of the Shoshonean people of Utah and Colorado and New Mexico.
- Showing favoritism.
- United States politician and orator (1782-1817).
- The basic unit of money in Iran.
- Lower in esteem.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- Slender bristlelike appendage found on the bracts of grasses.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of four and one.
- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A person who eats human flesh.
- A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
- Rate of revolution of a motor.
- Edible east Asian mushroom having a golden or dark brown to blackish cap and an inedible stipe.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- An episode of such pastoral or romantic charm as to qualify as the subject of a poetic idyll.
- Having a toe or toes of a specified kind.
- The father of your father or mother.
- Water falling in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere.
- A person who organizes.
- A long projecting or anterior elongation of an animal's head.
- A loss of will power.
- Remove offensive capability from.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- A unit of weight used in east Asia approximately equal to 1.3 ounces.
- A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
- (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
- An utterance expressing pain or disapproval.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
- A proud stiff pompous gait.
- Made warm or hot.
- A blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body.
- Of or relating to Oman or its people.
- Antibacterial consisting of any of several synthetic organic compounds capable of inhibiting the growth of bacteria that require PABA.
- The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
- Jordan's port.
- Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
- A sudden numbing dread.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- An overwhelming feeling of wonder or admiration.
- A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
- Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
- (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- Hit hard.
- A standard or model or pattern regarded as typical.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- Not only so, but.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- The general activity of selling.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- God of love and erotic desire.
- Black tropical American cuckoo.
- The shorter of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

Yesterday's Solution

BBS MARASCAUMBO
 LACIRANIAN NARC
 ABANAMTARUSCUT
 BABEWEILLLOASA
 TINEASHAWWAL
 BCAMCABHN
 LADPEDICABSTM
 ARERERADADSHOE
 TEBALDICC COHUNE
 TEATLEIGHOAST
 ARRACKSAHARA
 FRANCIRELAND
 BLAEHOLLAYEAH
 RESEDA LILLE SPA
 AECESPALIEROPV
 TRHSHORTESTPYA

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

MOVIES HD ACTION

- 01:10 The Call Up
- 02:50 The Net
- 04:55 Face/Off
- 07:10 6 Ways To Sundown
- 08:55 The Net
- 11:00 The Call Up
- 12:35 Street
- 14:05 Face/Off
- 16:30 Life On The Line
- 18:10 Kingsglave: Final Fantasy XV
- 20:10 The Haunting
- 22:10 Zero Tolerance
- 23:45 Everly

MOVIES HD THRILLER

- 00:40 Abducted
- 02:15 Sugar Mountain
- 04:10 A Kind Of Murder
- 06:00 Big Sky
- 07:40 Abducted
- 09:15 Sugar Mountain
- 11:15 A Kind Of Murder
- 13:05 The Pack
- 14:50 The Hollow One
- 16:35 A Kind Of Magic
- 18:15 Unbreakable
- 20:15 The Visit
- 22:00 Joy Ride
- 23:50 The Hollow One

MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 00:55 Further Adventures Of Professor Branestawn
- 02:00 Little Loopers
- 03:35 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 05:05 Pirates Who Don't Do Anything
- 06:35 Further Adventures Of Professor Branestawn
- 07:40 Little Loopers
- 09:15 Scooby-Doo! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon
- 10:40 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 12:10 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 13:30 Rio
- 15:10 Pan
- 17:05 Step Dogs
- 18:35 The Sound Of Music Live!
- 20:55 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 22:25 Rio

MOVIES HD FIRST

- 00:20 Rings
- 02:05 Bleed For This
- 04:05 Spotlight
- 04:30 Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2
- 06:45 Karen Kingsbury's The Bridge
- 08:15 Spotlight
- 08:40 A Monster Calls
- 10:30 Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them
- 12:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2
- 15:10 Finding Dory
- 17:00 Alice Through The Looking Glass
- 19:00 Assassin's Creed
- 21:00 The Space Between Us
- 23:05 Underworld: Blood Wars

MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 01:10 What's Your Number?
- 03:05 Jeff, Who Lives At Home
- 04:30 Big Stone Gap
- 06:20 A Thousand Words
- 08:00 Fan Girl
- 09:35 The Family Fang
- 11:25 Big Stone Gap
- 13:10 A Thousand Words
- 14:45 Who Gets The Dog?
- 16:25 Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins
- 18:20 Outside Bet
- 20:05 Boomerang
- 22:05 Ted 2

MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 01:00 Cobain
- 03:15 The Challenger
- 05:00 An Inconvenient Truth
- 06:45 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete
- 08:35 The Salesman
- 10:45 The Challenger
- 12:30 The Better Angels
- 14:10 The Manchurian Candidate
- 16:20 The Great Gatsby
- 18:45 Rushmore
- 20:20 Margot At The Wedding
- 22:00 Frankie And Johnny

MOVIES KIDS

- 00:40 Quest For A Heart
- 02:10 Twigson Ties The Knot
- 03:40 Ethel & Ernest
- 05:20 Teo: The Intergalactic Hunter
- 07:00 Felix All Around The World
- 08:40 Funny Little Cars
- 09:50 Two Buddies And A Badger
- 11:15 Dinofroz - An Island In The Sky
- 12:50 Twigson Ties The Knot
- 14:20 Ethel & Ernest
- 16:00 Swan Princess: Rolly Undercover
- 17:25 Two Buddies And A Badger
- 18:50 Ivan The Incredible
- 20:20 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
- 22:05 Swan Princess: Rolly Undercover
- 23:30 Funny Little Cars

MOVIES HD

- 01:55 Hudson Hawk
- 03:40 Concussion
- 05:45 Zoolander 2
- 07:30 Little Man Tate
- 09:15 Hudson Hawk
- 11:00 Max
- 12:55 Concussion
- 15:00 Spotlight
- 17:10 Dan In Real Life
- 18:50 13 Going On 30
- 20:30 I Am Number Four
- 22:25 Ex Machina



- 00:20 Trading Places
- 02:15 Murphy's Law (1986)
- 04:00 Hollywood On Set
- 07:15 Trip To Bountiful
- 08:46 Gone (2011)
- 10:16 The Finest Hour
- 12:00 Days Of Our Lives S12
- 15:20 Napoleon Dynamite
- 16:55 The Freshman
- 18:35 Ella Enchanted
- 20:10 Minority Report
- 22:35 Trading Places



- 00:15 Mrs. Miracle
- 01:45 Get Over It
- 03:15 Runaway Bride
- 05:15 Love And Other Impossible Pursuits
- 07:00 Find Me Guilty
- 09:00 Foreverland
- 10:45 The Rewrite
- 12:45 Tale Of Tales
- 15:00 Get Over It
- 16:30 Heartbreakers
- 18:30 Mrs. Miracle
- 20:00 Scary Movie 2
- 21:30 Tiptoes
- 23:00 Into The Woods

SUNDANCE TV

- 00:00 Falling Awake
- 02:00 Acceptable Risk
- 03:00 The Code
- 04:00 This Changes Everything
- 05:30 Countdown To Zero
- 07:00 United
- 08:35 Salt Of This Sea
- 10:30 Burt's Buzz
- 12:00 Don't Stop Believin: Everyman's Journey
- 13:50 Rounders
- 15:50 Proof
- 17:30 United
- 19:05 Le Reste EST L'ivresse De L'homme
- 19:25 Unauthorized: Harvey Weinstein Project
- 21:00 Movie Talk Legends: Paul Newman
- 21:30 Movie Talk
- 22:00 English Patient, The

SERIES HD COMEDY

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

SERIES HD FIRST

- 00:40 Lethal Weapon
- 01:30 S.W.A.T.
- 02:20 Outlander
- 03:20 Grey's Anatomy
- 04:10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 05:00 Good Morning America
- 07:00 The View
- 07:45 The Chew
- 08:30 Wanted
- 09:20 Grey's Anatomy
- 10:10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 11:00 Scandal
- 11:45 Lethal Weapon
- 12:30 The View
- 13:15 The Chew
- 14:00 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America

- 17:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 18:00 Scandal
- 19:00 Survivor: Heroes V. Healers V. Hustlers
- 21:00 This Is Us
- 22:00 Falling Water
- 23:00 Scandal
- 23:50 The Americans



- 00:05 The Knick
- 01:00 Girls
- 01:30 Girls
- 02:05 Big Little Lies
- 03:00 Richard Jeni: A Big Steaming Pile Of Me
- 04:05 The Words That Built America
- 05:00 Wartorn 1861-2010
- 06:15 Einstein And Eddington
- 07:55 Lackawanna Blues
- 09:30 Living With Lincoln
- 10:40 Lansky
- 12:40 Earthly Possessions
- 14:25 My House In Umbria
- 16:10 Confirmation
- 18:00 Imposters
- 18:50 Kareem: Minority Of One
- 20:20 Brillo Box
- 21:00 Chance
- 22:00 Berlin Station
- 22:55 Wanda Sykes: I'ma Be Me



- 00:00 Outlander
- 01:00 Scandal
- 01:45 Good Girls Revolt
- 02:40 Lethal Weapon
- 03:30 S.W.A.T.
- 04:20 Outlander
- 05:20 Grey's Anatomy
- 06:10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 07:00 Good Morning America
- 09:00 The View
- 09:45 The Chew
- 10:30 Wanted
- 11:20 Grey's Anatomy
- 12:10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 13:00 Scandal
- 13:45 Lethal Weapon
- 14:30 The View
- 15:15 The Chew
- 16:00 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
- 17:00 Live Good Morning America
- 19:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 20:00 Scandal
- 21:00 Survivor: Heroes V. Healers V. Hustlers
- 23:00 WWE Experience



- 00:45 Zoombies
- 02:20 The Magicians
- 03:10 Riddick
- 05:10 Warehouse 13
- 06:00 Stargate SG-1
- 11:00 Smallville
- 15:10 Face Off
- 16:00 Face Off
- 16:50 Ella Enchanted
- 18:30 Dark Matter
- 19:20 Wizard Wars
- 20:10 Wizard Wars
- 21:00 The Mummy: Tomb Of The Dragon Emperor
- 23:00 Riddick



- 00:00 Eastenders
- 00:30 Holby City
- 01:25 Stella: Christmas Special 2016
- 02:55 Line Of Duty
- 03:55 Doctor Who
- 04:40 Eastenders
- 05:10 Death In Paradise
- 06:00 Doctor Who: The Return Of Doctor Mysterio

- 07:00 Holby City
- 07:55 Death In Paradise
- 08:50 Death In Paradise
- 09:45 Doctors
- 10:15 Doctors
- 10:45 Doctor Who: The Return Of Doctor Mysterio
- 11:50 Holby City
- 12:45 Eastenders
- 13:10 Eastenders
- 13:45 Eastenders
- 14:15 Eastenders
- 14:45 Doctor Who: The Return Of Doctor Mysterio
- 15:45 Death In Paradise
- 16:40 Death In Paradise
- 17:30 Doctors
- 18:00 Doctors
- 18:30 Doctor Who: The Return Of Doctor Mysterio
- 19:30 The Detectorists
- 20:00 Poldark
- 21:00 Poldark
- 22:00 Line Of Duty
- 23:00 War And Peace
- 23:45 I Want My Wife Back



- 00:00 Island Life
- 00:30 Island Life
- 01:00 Renovation Raiders
- 02:00 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
- 02:30 Island Life
- 03:00 Caribbean Life
- 03:30 Caribbean Life
- 04:00 Island Life
- 04:30 Island Life
- 05:00 Caribbean Life
- 05:30 Hawaii Life
- 06:00 Extreme Homes
- 07:00 House Hunters
- 07:30 House Hunters
- 08:00 House Hunters
- 08:30 House Hunters
- 09:00 Giada At Home
- 09:30 Giada At Home
- 10:00 Desperate Landscapes
- 10:30 Desperate Landscapes
- 11:00 Cousins On Call
- 11:30 Cousins On Call
- 12:00 Flea Market Flip
- 12:30 Flea Market Flip
- 13:00 Tiny House, Big Living
- 13:30 Tiny House, Big Living
- 14:00 House Hunters
- 14:30 House Hunters
- 15:00 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
- 15:30 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
- 16:00 The High Low Project
- 16:30 The High Low Project
- 17:00 Renovation Raiders
- 18:00 Going Yard
- 18:30 Going Yard
- 19:00 Vacation House For Free
- 20:00 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
- 20:30 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
- 21:00 Yard Crashers
- 21:30 Yard Crashers
- 22:00 House Hunters
- 22:30 House Hunters
- 23:00 Giada Entertains
- 23:30 Giada Entertains



- 00:00 Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy
- 00:30 Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy
- 01:00 Private Chef
- 01:30 Private Chef
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Chopped Junior
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 06:25 Barefoot Contessa
- 06:50 Bake With Anna Olson
- 07:15 The Kitchen
- 08:05 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:55 Siba's Table
- 09:25 Siba's Table
- 09:55 Bake With Anna Olson

- 10:25 Bake With Anna Olson
- 10:55 The Kitchen
- 11:45 Cooking For Real
- 12:10 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:35 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table
- 13:30 Siba's Table
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 Bake With Anna Olson
- 17:30 Bake With Anna Olson
- 18:00 Chopped Junior
- 19:00 Holiday Baking Championship
- 20:00 Extreme Cake Wars
- 21:00 Beach Bites With Katie Lee
- 21:30 Beach Bites With Katie Lee
- 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:00 Chopped



- 00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Coronation Street
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 The Chase
- 03:25 The Family Chase
- 04:20 Tonight At The London Palladium
- 05:15 Murdoch Mysteries
- 06:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 07:05 The Chase
- 08:00 The Family Chase
- 09:00 Tonight At The London Palladium
- 10:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 10:55 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 11:50 The Chase
- 12:45 Emmerdale
- 13:15 Emmerdale
- 13:45 Coronation Street
- 14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 15:10 The Chase
- 16:00 The Family Chase
- 17:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 17:50 Murdoch Mysteries
- 18:45 Emmerdale
- 19:15 Emmerdale
- 19:45 Coronation Street
- 20:10 The Chase
- 21:00 The Family Chase
- 22:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 22:50 Emmerdale
- 23:15 Emmerdale
- 23:40 Coronation Street



- 00:00 Married At First Sight
- 01:00 Married At First Sight
- 02:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 02:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 03:00 The Fashion Fund
- 04:00 Who Lives Here?
- 04:30 Who Lives Here?
- 05:00 House Of DVF
- 06:00 Married At First Sight
- 07:00 Married At First Sight
- 08:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 08:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 09:00 The Fashion Fund
- 10:00 Who Lives Here?
- 10:30 Who Lives Here?
- 11:00 House Of DVF
- 12:00 Married At First Sight
- 14:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 15:00 The Fashion Fund
- 16:00 Who Lives Here?
- 16:30 Who Lives Here?
- 17:00 Mistresses
- 18:00 Project Runway
- 20:00 Making Mr. Right



- 00:20 Say Yes To The Dress UK
- 01:05 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 01:50 The Spouse House
- 02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 03:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras

TV Listings

04:50 Dare To Wear
 05:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 06:00 Little People, Big World
 06:45 Little People, Big World
 07:30 Little People, Big World
 08:15 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 09:00 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 09:25 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
 10:55 Love At First Swipe
 11:17 Love At First Swipe
 11:40 Love At First Swipe
 12:02 Love At First Swipe
 12:25 Love, Lust Or Run
 12:47 Love At First Swipe
 13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 14:40 Cake Boss
 15:02 Cake Boss
 15:25 Cake Boss
 15:47 Cake Boss
 16:10 Cake Boss
 16:35 Cake Boss
 17:00 Big & Little
 17:50 Meet The Putmans
 18:50 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 19:40 Cake Boss
 20:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 20:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 21:50 The Boy Who Wants His Leg Cut Off
 22:40 My Giant Life
 23:30 Return To Amish



00:05 Chappelle's Show
 00:30 Idiotsitter
 00:55 Tosh.0
 01:40 Graves
 02:10 Chappelle's Show
 02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
 03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 03:25 Idiotsitter
 03:50 Lip Sync Battle UK
 04:40 Workaholics
 06:50 I Live With Models
 08:55 Punk'd (Bet)
 09:45 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 10:10 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 11:00 Kroll Show
 13:05 Disaster Date
 13:55 The Dude Perfect Show
 14:45 Ridiculousness Arabia
 16:00 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 16:50 Lip Sync Battle UK
 17:40 Friends
 19:45 Idiotsitter
 20:07 Workaholics
 20:30 Graves
 21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 21:30 Russell Howard's Stand Up
 Central
 22:00 Sean Lock - Purple Van Man
 22:50 Comedy Central Roast: Justin Bieber



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
 01:45 Treehouse Masters
 02:40 Cats 101
 03:35 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 04:00 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 04:25 Whale Wars
 05:15 Whale Wars
 06:02 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
 06:49 Untamed & Uncut
 07:36 Meet The Penguins
 08:00 Meet The Penguins
 08:25 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 08:50 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 09:15 Treehouse Masters
 10:10 Cats 101
 11:05 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
 12:00 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 12:28 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 12:55 Whale Wars
 13:50 Whale Wars
 14:45 Cats 101

15:40 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
 16:35 Untamed & Uncut
 17:30 Treehouse Masters
 18:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger
 19:20 Wildest Africa
 20:15 Cats 101
 21:10 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 21:38 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
 22:05 Keeping Up With The Kruger
 23:00 Wildest Africa
 23:55 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia



00:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
 01:00 The First 48
 02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 03:00 It Takes A Killer
 03:30 It Takes A Killer
 04:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
 05:00 The First 48
 06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 07:00 Homicide Hunter
 08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
 09:00 It Takes A Killer
 09:30 It Takes A Killer
 10:00 Homicide Hunter
 11:00 Cold Case Files
 12:00 Escaping Polygamy
 13:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
 14:00 It Takes A Killer
 14:30 It Takes A Killer
 15:00 Homicide Hunter
 16:00 Cold Case Files
 17:00 The First 48
 18:00 It Takes A Killer
 18:30 It Takes A Killer
 19:00 Homicide Hunter
 20:00 Homicide Hunter
 21:00 Homicide Hunter
 22:00 Cold Case Files
 23:00 Killer Kids



00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
 00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
 01:20 NASA's Unexplained Files
 02:10 Tallest Tower: Building The Shard
 03:00 Ultimate Survival
 03:50 Destroyed In Seconds
 04:15 Destroyed In Seconds
 04:40 How It's Made
 05:05 How It's Made
 05:30 North America
 06:20 Science Of The Movies
 07:00 Destroyed In Seconds
 07:50 North America
 09:30 Science Of The Movies
 10:20 Ultimate Survival
 11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
 11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
 12:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
 12:50 How It's Made
 13:40 Science Of The Movies
 14:30 Destroyed In Seconds
 15:20 North America
 16:10 Ultimate Survival
 17:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
 17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
 18:40 Science Of The Movies
 19:30 How It's Made
 20:20 Destroyed In Seconds
 21:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
 21:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
 22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
 22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
 22:50 Ultimate Survival
 23:40 North America



00:50 Guilty Rich
 01:45 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
 02:40 Murder By Numbers
 03:35 Reasonable Doubt
 04:30 Guilty Rich
 05:25 The Locator
 05:50 The Locator

06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
 07:10 American Monster
 08:00 The Locator
 08:25 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
 09:15 The Locator
 09:40 The Locator
 10:10 American Monster
 11:05 Forbidden: Dying For Love
 12:00 Evil Stepmothers
 12:55 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
 14:45 American Monster
 15:40 Forbidden: Dying For Love
 16:35 The Perfect Murder
 17:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
 18:25 The Locator
 18:50 The Locator
 19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
 20:15 American Monster
 21:10 Evil Lives Here
 22:05 Murder Calls
 23:00 American Monster
 23:55 I Speak For The Dead



00:20 Street Outlaws
 01:05 Finding Escobar's Millions
 01:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
 02:35 The Wheel: Survival Games
 03:20 Misfit Garage
 04:05 Deadliest Catch
 05:35 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Strip The City
 06:45 Boy To Man
 07:30 How Do They Do It?
 07:53 How Do They Do It?
 08:15 Boy To Man
 09:00 Gold Divers
 09:45 Strip The City
 10:30 Auction Kings
 11:00 Auction Kings
 11:25 How Do They Do It?
 11:50 How Do They Do It?
 12:17 Auction Kings
 12:47 Fast N' Loud
 13:37 Fast N' Loud
 14:27 Misfit Garage
 15:17 Street Customs 2008
 16:02 Street Customs 2008
 17:32 Fast N' Loud
 18:22 Fast N' Loud
 19:12 Garage Gold
 19:42 Garage Gold
 20:10 Gold Rush
 21:00 Street Outlaws
 21:50 Garage Rehab
 22:40 Misfit Garage
 23:30 Gold Rush



00:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
 00:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
 01:00 Ancient Discoveries
 02:00 Clash Of Warriors
 03:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
 03:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
 04:40 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color
 05:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
 05:55 Smartest Guy In The Room
 06:20 Ancient Discoveries
 07:10 The Universe
 08:00 Clash Of Warriors
 09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
 10:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
 11:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
 12:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
 12:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
 13:00 Ancient Discoveries
 14:00 Clash Of Warriors
 15:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
 16:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
 17:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
 18:00 The Universe
 19:00 Ancient Discoveries
 20:00 Clash Of Warriors
 21:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
 22:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
 23:00 Cowboys & Outlaws

00:21 Ultimate Wheels
 01:11 American Pickers
 02:00 Swamp People
 02:50 Counting Cars
 03:15 American Pickers
 04:05 Time Team
 05:00 Counting Cars
 05:25 Counting Cars
 06:00 Aussie Pickers
 06:50 Aussie Pickers
 07:40 Ultimate Wheels
 08:30 Hunting Hitler
 09:20 Hunting Hitler
 10:10 Hunting Hitler
 11:00 Aussie Pickers
 11:50 Aussie Pickers
 12:40 Alone: Lost And Found
 13:30 Pawn Stars South Africa
 13:55 Pawn Stars South Africa
 14:20 Ice Road Truckers
 15:10 Ice Road Truckers
 16:00 Ice Road Truckers
 16:48 Billion Dollar Wreck
 17:40 Billion Dollar Wreck
 18:30 Ultimate Wheels
 19:20 Car Nation
 21:00 The Warfighters
 21:50 JFK Declassified: Hunting Oswald
 22:40 Britain's Bloody Crown: War Of The Roses
 23:30 Hunting Hitler



00:45 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
 01:10 Food School
 01:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 02:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 02:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 03:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 04:25 Poh & Co.
 04:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 05:20 Stepping Out
 05:45 Stepping Out
 06:15 Bad Trip
 07:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 07:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 08:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 09:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 09:55 Poh & Co.
 10:20 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 10:50 Stepping Out
 11:15 Stepping Out
 11:45 Bad Trip
 12:40 Seoul: Capital Of K-Pop (Inside K-Pop)
 13:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 14:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 15:25 Poh & Co.
 15:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 16:20 Maximum Foodie
 16:45 Stepping Out
 17:15 Bad Trip
 18:10 Bad Trip
 19:05 Poh & Co.
 19:30 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 20:00 Maximum Foodie
 20:30 Stepping Out
 21:00 Bad Trip
 22:00 Bad Trip
 22:55 Seoul: Capital Of K-Pop (Inside K-Pop)
 23:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea



00:10 Machine Impossible
 01:00 Supercar Megabuild
 02:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5

03:00 Science Of Stupid
 03:30 Science Of Stupid
 04:00 Machine Impossible
 05:00 Crowd Control
 05:30 Crowd Control
 06:00 Supercar Megabuild
 07:00 X: The Generation That Changed The World
 08:00 Seconds From Disaster
 09:00 Crowd Control
 09:30 Crowd Control
 10:00 Airport Security: Colombia 2.5
 11:00 Kung Fu Motion
 12:00 Brain Games
 12:30 What Would Happen If
 13:00 Supercar Megabuild
 14:00 Seconds From Disaster
 15:00 X: The Generation That Changed The World
 16:00 To Catch A Smuggler
 17:00 Taboo
 18:00 The Long Road Home
 19:00 Heroes Of The Long Road Home
 20:00 To Catch A Smuggler
 20:50 Taboo
 21:40 The Long Road Home
 22:30 Heroes Of The Long Road Home
 23:20 Brain Games
 23:45 What Would Happen If



00:20 Snow Leopard Of Afghanistan
 01:10 Jobs That Bite!
 02:00 Deadly Super Cat
 02:50 Animal Fight Club 4.5
 03:45 My Life Is A Zoo
 04:40 Photo Ark
 05:35 Deadly Super Cat
 06:30 Animal Fight Club 4.5
 07:25 My Life Is A Zoo
 08:20 Photo Ark
 09:15 Snake City Compilations
 10:10 Siberia's Wild Year
 11:05 Secrets Of The Giant Manta Ray
 12:00 Shark Men
 12:55 Incredible Fangs
 13:50 Animal Fight Club 4.5
 14:45 My Life Is A Zoo
 15:40 Secret Life Of Predators
 16:35 Search For King Cobra
 17:30 The New Sperm Whale
 18:25 The Naked Superhero
 19:20 My Life Is A Zoo
 20:10 Secret Life Of Predators
 21:00 Search For King Cobra
 21:50 The New Sperm Whale
 22:40 The Naked Superhero
 23:30 Shark Men



00:40 Mythbusters
 01:30 How Do They Do It?
 01:55 Food Factory USA
 02:20 Street Science
 02:45 Street Science
 03:10 Strip The Cosmos
 04:00 The Big Brain Theory
 04:48 Mythbusters
 05:36 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Food Factory USA
 06:24 Street Science
 06:48 Street Science
 07:12 Strip The Cosmos
 08:00 How Do They Do It?
 08:26 The Big Brain Theory
 09:14 Mythbusters
 10:02 Strip The Cosmos
 10:50 How Do They Do It?
 11:14 Food Factory USA
 11:38 Street Science
 12:02 Street Science
 12:26 The Big Brain Theory
 13:14 Mythbusters
 14:02 How Do They Do It?
 14:26 Food Factory USA
 14:50 Strip The Cosmos
 15:38 The Big Brain Theory
 16:26 Street Science
 16:50 Street Science
 17:14 Mythbusters
 18:02 Strip The Cosmos
 18:50 The Big Brain Theory
 19:40 Mythbusters
 20:30 Gamechangers: Inventing The World

21:20 How Do They Do It?
 21:45 Food Factory USA
 22:10 Strip The Cosmos
 23:00 You Have Been Warned
 23:50 The Big Brain Theory



05:00 Bali
 05:15 Looped
 05:40 Om Nom Stories
 05:50 Kids Crafting
 05:55 Boj
 06:10 Lucky Fred
 06:25 Thomas And Friends
 06:40 Chirp
 06:55 My Little Pony
 07:20 Angelina Ballerina
 07:35 Sandra, The Fairytale Detective
 07:50 Playdate
 08:00 Barney And Friends
 08:30 64 Zoo Lane
 08:45 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 09:10 Om Nom Stories
 09:20 Kids Crafting
 09:25 Littlest Pet Shop
 09:50 Franny's Feet
 10:15 Mouk
 10:30 Boj
 10:45 Kit 'n' Kate
 10:55 What's The Big Idea?
 11:00 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 11:25 Bali
 11:40 My Little Pony
 12:05 Lucky Fred
 12:20 Thomas And Friends
 12:35 Angelina Ballerina
 12:50 Looped
 13:15 Barney And Friends
 13:45 64 Zoo Lane
 14:00 Chirp
 14:15 What's The Big Idea?
 14:25 Kit 'n' Kate
 14:30 Playdate
 14:40 Franny's Feet
 15:05 Thomas And Friends
 15:20 Mouk
 15:35 Boj
 15:50 Sandra, The Fairytale Detective
 16:05 Littlest Pet Shop
 16:30 My Little Pony
 16:55 Looped
 17:10 Barney And Friends
 17:40 Angelina Ballerina
 17:55 Lucky Fred
 18:10 Qumi Qumi
 18:25 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 18:50 What's The Big Idea?
 19:00 Bali
 19:15 Kit 'n' Kate
 19:25 Littlest Pet Shop
 19:50 Sandra, The Fairytale Detective
 20:05 64 Zoo Lane
 20:20 Chirp
 20:35 Mouk
 20:50 Playdate
 21:00 Franny's Feet
 21:25 Little Duck's Dream



00:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
 00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
 01:00 Hank Zipzer
 01:25 Alex & Co.
 01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
 01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
 03:30 Binny And The Ghost
 03:55 Hank Zipzer
 04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
 04:20 Hank Zipzer
 04:45 Alex & Co.
 05:10 Alex & Co.
 05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 06:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

Stars

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

Haste does indeed make waste, and you've definitely been known to act hastily from time to time. Try to slow down now and get your bearings before taking any action. You need to take all the input available into account. In particular, you need to balance the effects of your demanding intuition and your equally demanding intellect. How can they both be right? Sort that out and you're on your way.

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

Those who think of you as a stick-in-the-mud are getting really surprised right now. Your ability to think outside the box is quite impressive, and so is your unique way of expressing your ideas -- and then putting them into action! Cultivate these innovative approaches -- at work, at home, on dates, everywhere -- and you should soon be reaping some pretty amazing rewards.

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

Those who think of you as a stick-in-the-mud are getting really surprised right now. Your ability to think outside the box is quite impressive, and so is your unique way of expressing your ideas -- and then putting them into action! Cultivate these innovative approaches -- at work, at home, on dates, everywhere -- and you should soon be reaping some pretty amazing rewards.

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

Being as sensitive as you are is all too often considered a negative trait, but it also means that you're totally engaged with the world -- with all your senses and all your heart. Now is the time to let go of your fears and let those sensitive nerve endings be totally exposed. You may always wonder what could have been otherwise -- and you're much, much stronger than you think.

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

Your energy flow has been a bit impeded lately, which has had you feel like the universe just isn't cooperating with your best efforts. Get ready to start moving again, because now things are starting to flow properly once again. Be proactive -- at work, in love, even with little personal projects -- because you can see amazing results. Let the good times roll!

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

Your energy flow has been a bit impeded lately, which has had you feel like the universe just isn't cooperating with your best efforts. Get ready to start moving again, because now things are starting to flow properly once again. Be proactive -- at work, in love, even with little personal projects -- because you can see amazing results. Let the good times roll!

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

If you've been looking for fresh inspiration, here it comes! It may nothing at all like what you expected it to be -- in fact, something (or someone!) rather ordinary could transform into something that can challenge you in a life-changing way. It may more than a little rattling at first, but once you get used to it, you feel incredible.

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

While those around you are losing their heads, yours is firmly planted right where it belongs. What seems insurmountable to mere mortals just whets your appetite for discovering amazingly creative solutions using your intense determination, penetrating intelligence, investigative probing and, of course, all your secret talents. Everyone else is trying to retreat -- you're the only one ready to move forward.

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

Get out your list of places you must visit in this lifetime and add a few new ones -- those in your personal zeitgeist, which keep coming up over and over and sound simply amazing. Now is the right time for you to reprioritize your travel desires. If you could go anywhere right now, which would win out? Move it to the top, then figure out which others are close enough to hit in one trip. Find the time -- as soon as possible.

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

Get out your list of places you must visit in this lifetime and add a few new ones -- those in your personal zeitgeist, which keep coming up over and over and sound simply amazing. Now is the right time for you to reprioritize your travel desires. If you could go anywhere right now, which would win out? Move it to the top, then figure out which others are close enough to hit in one trip. Find the time -- as soon as possible.

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

You know that life's not a popularity contest, but if it were, you'd definitely be an odds-on favorite now! People are engaging your intellectual side and catching your interest more than ever, and when you're engaged and interested, your charm turns into a superpower. Whether you're channeling all this good social energy into excellence at work, into an existing relationship or into something brand-new is totally up to you.

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

Money mixed with love can make a sticky mess, and a little of this kind of stickiness is on the way. If you're shy about dealing with it, you're likely to create even more of a mess, along with debt and resentment. Table your emotions for now and just get the figures on the table so that everyone involved has a clear idea of what's really going on. It may be hard to get started, but you should feel better once you do.

COUNTRY CODES

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

Health

US woman delivers baby from embryo frozen for 24 years

MIAMI: An American woman has given birth to a healthy baby girl from an embryo that was frozen a quarter century ago, in what hospital officials say may be a world record.

The baby, named Emma Wren Gibson, was born November 25, according to the National Embryo Donation Center (NEDC) in Knoxville, Tennessee, which revealed the birth announcement this week.

The embryo was conceived by another couple and frozen on October 14, 1992. Tina Gibson, the woman who just gave birth to Emma Wren, was born in 1991, NEDC marketing director Mark Mellinger told AFP on Wednesday. By

some measures, that would make the embryo that became Emma Wren only about a year younger than her mother. "We could have been best friends," said Gibson, now 26, in an interview with local television WBIR.

Gibson said she wasn't told by doctors until she was pregnant that the embryo had been frozen more than 24 years earlier. "I just stared at them, I was like, what? Are you kidding?"

Mellinger said Gibson and her husband selected the embryo based on a profile of genetic characteristics, but was not told how long the embryo had been frozen. Gibson was implanted with three embryos, and only one survived, he

added. There remain two more cryopreserved embryos from the same biological parents. The case marks the "longest-frozen embryo to successfully come to birth," said the NEDC, citing the research staff at the University of Tennessee Preston Medical Library as a source. However, some experts expressed caution about proclaiming such a record.

US companies are not required to report the age of the embryos, just the outcome of the pregnancies, Zaher Merhi, director of IVF research and development at New Hope Fertility Center in New York, told CNN.

"Nobody has these records," he said. The

previous record-holder was believed to be a baby boy frozen for 20 years, born to a New York woman in 2011. The embryo was stored by the NEDC, a Christian organization that describes itself as "the world's leading comprehensive embryo adoption program," with 686 babies born to date.

Its mission is to "protect the lives and dignity of frozen embryos that would not be used by their genetic parents and to help other couples build the families they have longed for via donated embryos." Gibson and her husband were unable to conceive a child on their own, and are thrilled with their new baby. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAFP. PEM



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EMERGENCY



112

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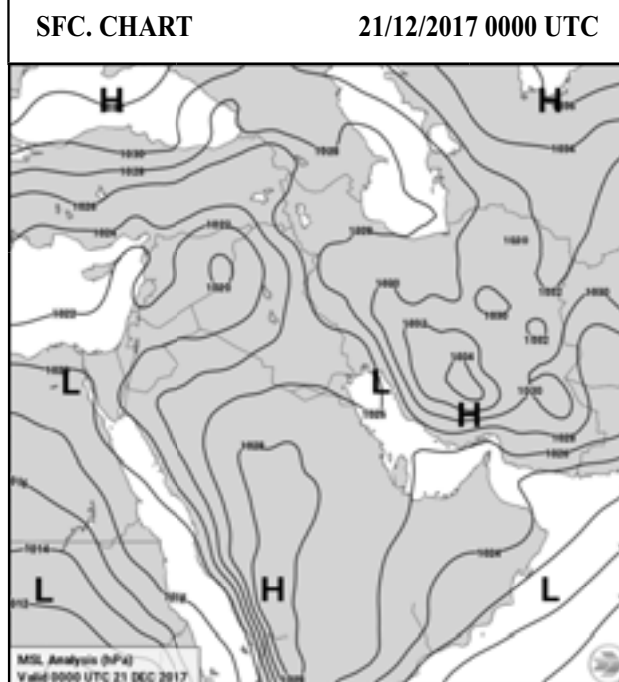
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
------------------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	26 °C	15 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	26 °C	09 °C
ABDALY	27 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	24 °C	12 °C
JAHRA	27 °C	13 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	12 °C
SALMIYAH	23 °C	16 °C
AHMADI	24 °C	15 °C
NUWAISIB	26 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	26 °C	11 °C
SALMY	26 °C	13 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/22	Warm and some high clouds will appear	26 °C	09 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Saturday	12/23	Partly cloudy to cloudy	27 °C	09 °C	S-SE	12 - 32 km/h
Sunday	12/24	Partly cloudy to cloudy	28 °C	11 °C	SE-S	15 - 35 km/h
Monday	12/25	Partly cloudy to cloudy	30 °C	12 °C	S-NW	15 - 42 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	14:36
Sunset	16:54
Isha	18:16

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	67 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	S 21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

AIRLINES

American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Air Slovakia	22434940
Olympic Airways	22420002/9
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
Reservation	22433388
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Alitalia	22414427
Balkan Airlines	22416474
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Czech Airlines	22417901/
	2433141
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

Business

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2017

38 US Q3 economic growth slashed; jobless claims rise



39 EU okays Lufthansa buyout of Air Berlin assets



41 US hopes tax plan will bring corporate profits home



CAIRO: This file photo shows an elevated view of Al-Attaba district on the edge of downtown Cairo, Egypt. Egypt is the most populated country in the Arab world with some 96 million inhabitants and the numbers are rising by 1.6 million every year. —AFP

Egypt battles population ‘catastrophe’

Country’s population to hit 119 million in 2030

CAIRO: Ali Abdelaziz sees children as a “gift from God”, so much so that he has 10 of his own, even as Egypt’s government struggles to stem a “catastrophic” population boom.

Abdelaziz works in the capital as a doorman, but his children stay in a village with their mother in the southern province of Minya where life is cheaper. Egypt’s overpopulation is adding pressure on the economy.

With 96 million inhabitants—and 9.4 million expatriates—the Arab world’s most populous country adds 1.6 million people every year to its population. At the current rate, Egypt’s population will reach 119 million in 2030, according to a May report by the United Nations Population Fund. With 95 percent of Egypt’s land uninhabitable desert, the population is concentrated around the narrow Nile valley and Nile Delta, with smaller numbers along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts.

A fall in mortality rates in the early 1970s further boosted the population growth. In Cairo, a megalopolis of nearly 20 million inhabitants, the population density is around 50,000 inhabitants

per square kilometer, or nearly 10 times that of London.

‘Two are enough’

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has said population growth is “a challenge as critical as that of terrorism”. The government launched a new family planning campaign this year under the slogan “two are enough”, to try to contain the phenomenon. “Children are protection: they care for their parents when they grow older,” said Abdelaziz, the doorman, unconvinced of the campaign. But Hayam Mohamed, a mother of three, does not want more children and uses a government family planning center in Umm Khenan village of Giza province. “I don’t want my children to feel deprived,” Mohamed, 32, said after receiving her contraception pills,



Overpopulation adding pressure on economy

free of charge, from the centre’s doctor, like many others in her village.

“Education is expensive, and life has become difficult with the rising prices.” Fardous Hamed, a doctor at the center, told AFP that the number of people seeking its services has risen with the latest round of price increases since authorities floated the pound in November 2016.

“Awareness grew among people here,” said Hamed. Following the currency flotation, the pound lost more than half its value and inflation jumped to 33 percent in September. “If I give birth to five or six children, I won’t even be able to provide them food,” said Mohamed.

Soaring prices

Abu Bakr el-Gendy, the head of Egypt’s state statistics bureau which carried out the latest

census, described the current rate of population growth as a “catastrophe”. He said the annual rate accelerated between 2005 and 2014, before stabilizing in 2016 at around 2.6 percent.

The rate must be at least three times lower than economic growth for people’s living standards not to deteriorate, according to Gendy. But “the more poverty increases, the more the reproduction rate increases because parents consider children as a source of income,” with many children joining the labor market at an early age, he said.

Magued Osman, the head of Baseera, a private public opinion research center, said Egypt’s population growth amounts to “collective suicide”. It is the result of “politicians neglecting the issue since the middle of the previous decade”, said Mona Abu el-Ghar, an obstetrics and gynecology professor at Cairo University.

“The problem needs to be taken more seriously with constant media campaigns on radio and television to raise awareness on the importance of family planning,” said Abu el-Ghar. — AFP

Business

US Q3 economic growth slashed; jobless claims rise

Business spending on equipment revised higher

WASHINGTON: The US economy grew at its fastest pace in more than two years in the third quarter, powered by robust business spending, and is poised for what could be a modest lift next year from sweeping tax cuts passed by Congress this week.

Other data yesterday showed a jump in the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits last week. The underlying trend in jobless claims, however, remained consistent with a tightening labor market. Gross domestic product expanded at a 3.2 percent annualized rate last quarter, the Commerce Department said in its third GDP estimate for the period. While that was slightly down from the 3.3 percent reported last month, it was the quickest pace since the first quarter of 2015 and was a pickup from the second quarter's 3.1 percent growth rate.

It also marked the first time since 2014 that the economy experienced growth of 3 percent or more for two straight quarters. But the expansion in the July-September period likely overstated the health of the economy. An alternate measure of growth, gross domestic income, rose at a 2.0 percent rate in the third quarter. GDI was previously reported to have increased at a 2.5 percent rate.

The average of GDP and GDI, also referred to as gross domestic output and considered a better

measure of economic growth, increased at a 2.6 percent rate instead of the previously reported 2.9 percent. Republicans in the US Congress this week approved a broad package of tax cuts in what was the largest overhaul of the tax code in 30 years, handing President Donald Trump a major legislative victory. Trump is expected to soon sign the legislation, which has \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts.

Economists are forecasting a modest economic boost from the overhaul, which includes slashing the corporate income tax rate to 21 percent from 35 percent. The fiscal stimulus will come while the economy is at full employment, which raises the risk of it overheating.

"Longer run, the tax cuts will add little to the economy but will add significantly to the government's deficits and debt load," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Prices of US Treasuries mostly held steady at higher levels after the data, while the dollar pared gains against the yen and euro. US stock index futures were trading slightly higher.



Consumer spending growth slows

Robust spending

Growth in the third quarter was also boosted by an accumulation of unsold goods and a rebound in government investment. Growth in business investment in equipment was raised to a 10.8 percent pace, the fastest in three years, from the previously reported 10.4 percent.

Growth in consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the US economy, was revised down by one-tenth of a percentage point to a 2.2 percent rate in the third quarter. Consumer spending increased at a robust 3.3 percent rate in the second quarter. The government said after-tax corporate profits surged at a 5.7 percent rate last quarter instead of the previously reported 5.8 percent. Profits rose at only a 0.1 percent pace in the second quarter. Undistributed profits jumped at a 13.9 percent rate after declining for two straight quarters, suggesting that companies were anticipating deep tax cuts.

In a separate report, the Labor Department

said initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 20,000 to a seasonally adjusted 245,000 for the week ended Dec. 16. Last week marked the 146th straight week that claims remained below the 300,000 threshold, which is associated with a strong labor market. That is the longest such stretch since 1970, when the labor market was smaller.

The labor market is near full employment, with the jobless rate at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent. Labor market tightness and a strengthening economy encouraged the Federal Reserve to increase interest rates last week for a third time this year. The U.S. central bank has forecast three rate hikes for 2018.

Last week, the four-week moving average of initial claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, rose only 1,250 to 236,000.

The claims data covered the survey period for December's nonfarm payrolls. The four-week average of claims fell 4,000 between the November and December survey weeks, suggesting another month of strong job growth.

The economy added 228,000 jobs in November. It needs to create 75,000 to 100,000 jobs per month to keep up with growth in the working-age population. —Reuters

US House unveils stop-gap funding bill to avert shutdown

WASHINGTON: Republicans in the US Congress yesterday advanced legislation to keep the federal government operating past Friday when funding expires, adding some "emergency" money for the military in a bid to gain the support of conservatives in the House of Representatives.

House Republican leaders unveiled a new version of a bill they hope to pass before Friday's midnight deadline and keep federal agencies humming along at current funding levels through Jan. 19, averting a shutdown that would create political havoc in Washington. But as of early yesterday, it was unclear whether House Speaker Paul Ryan had secured enough votes for passage. Any measure approved by the House would then have to be considered by the Senate.

Representative Steny Hoyer, the No. 2 House Democrat, described a paralyzed Congress during early-morning testimony to a House committee. "You have 36 hours to keep the government open," he said. "We don't have the votes to keep the government open. We don't have the votes to shut it down."

The House also was aiming to approve an \$81 billion disaster aid bill to help Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and several states recover from this year's hurricanes and wildfires. The House bill, released online by the House Rules Committee, calls for an additional \$4.7 billion for the Department of Defense to be used for missile defense and ship repair.

Many House Republicans were pushing for a much more significant increase in military funding, despite staunch opposition in the Senate, which wants to leave that fight for early next year. —Reuters

Ryanair says formally recognizes Irish pilots' union

DUBLIN: Irish no-frills airline Ryanair said yesterday that it is formally recognizing an Irish pilots' trade union in a bid to resolve a long-running row, but still faces strike threats elsewhere.

"Ryanair has this morning written to the Impact union confirming in writing that it is recognizing Impact and its Ryanair company pilot council," the carrier said in a statement. "Ryanair has also submitted a set of proposals on pay and conditions, procedures and dispute resolution for its Irish-based pilots, and looks forward to concluding an early agreement on these issues with its Irish Ryanair pilot company council."

Impact added in a separate statement that it would meet with management on January 3 to hammer out a "comprehensive recognition agreement". And the union added that the danger of strikes by Irish pilots had now receded for the time being. "Ryanair management has today confirmed in writing that it now recognized Impact as the representative of the airline's pilots for collective bargaining purposes, with immediate effect," Impact said in a statement. The union cautioned that it ex-



DUBLIN: This file photo shows a Ryanair plane parked on the tarmac at Dublin Airport.—AFP

pected management to reach agreement on procedures quickly so that the parties could move on to negotiate "substantial issues" around pilots' pay and working conditions. On that basis, the company's confirmation meant the danger of industrial action had "receded for the present," the union added.

Impact official Ashley Connolly welcomed what she described as a "breakthrough". "This is good news for Ryanair pilots, passengers and shareholders," she said. Ryanair had held initial discussions

with Impact on Tuesday evening. Those were the first since Ryanair had offered on Friday to recognize trade unions, prompting the suspension of strike action planned over the busy festive period—when many travellers head abroad for Christmas and New Year celebrations.

The Dublin discussions marked the opening of a season of talks for Ryanair around the region. The airline is also meeting German pilots this week before other appointments around Europe, including Italy, in early 2018. —AFP

Business

Mexico, EU push back new trade deal to 2018

Bloc fails to take stand against Trump policies

BRUSSELS: Mexico and the EU yesterday pushed back an agreement on a revamp of their 17-year-old trade deal to 2018, missing a chance to make a stand against the protectionist policies of Donald Trump. The two sides have been in talks on updating the trade deal since May 2016 and had set the end of this year as deadline to seal the accord.

Hopes were raised after rapid progress on issues including market access and intellectual property during talks in Mexico earlier this month, but high-level negotiators could not close the deal.

"We are very close to a deal but we are not really there yet," said EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom at a news conference with Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo.

"It's in sight but we do need some additional work at the beginning of next year." Both sides are eager to come to terms

and mark a contrast with the bumpy negotiations between the United States, Mexico and Canada on updating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Uncertainty over the future of that 1994 deal—which US President Donald Trump has made a ritual of attacking—is weighing on the Mexican economy, which depends heavily on trade with the United States. "A strong objective (of a deal this year) has put us where we are, which is close to a

deal," said Guajardo, who headed a team of about 50 negotiators from Mexico.

"We need a little more time to make sure that we get it right," he said, though he refused to set a new deadline. Mexico, which sends some 80 percent of its exports to the US, is looking to diversify its trading partners to cope with the new political reality across the border. EU-Mexico trade has nearly tripled to \$61.7 billion under the deal. But that is still dwarfed by US-Mexico trade, which came in at \$523.8 billion last year.

Meanwhile leaders of the South American trade bloc Mercosur met yesterday in greater political unity following the expulsion of Venezuela, but their biggest aim of a free trade deal with the European Union still eludes them.

A shift from leftist to right-of-center governments in Argentina and Brazil has given the group that also includes Paraguay and Uruguay greater ideological coherence and it has focused more on trade and less on politics. "We have revitalized Mercosur by recovering its original vocation as a trade bloc based on solid democratic and human rights foundations," Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes told a news conference on Wednesday.

Mercosur triggered its democratic clause earlier this year and expelled Venezuela because



BRUSSELS: Mexico's Minister of Economy Ildefonso Guajardo (left) and European Union (EU) Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom give a joint press conference after their meeting focused on trade relations between the EU and Mexico, yesterday at the European Commission in Brussels. —AFP



Mercosur gains strength, misses EU deal

A shift from leftist to right-of-center governments in Argentina and

Brazil has given the group that also includes Paraguay and Uruguay greater ideological coherence and it has focused more on trade and less on politics. "We have revitalized Mercosur by recovering its original vocation as a trade bloc based on solid democratic and human rights foundations," Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes told a news conference on Wednesday.

Mercosur triggered its democratic clause earlier this year and expelled Venezuela because

of authoritarian actions of President Nicolas Maduro in delaying elections and jailing opposition leaders.

Negotiations with the European Union gained speed and were almost concluded this month after nearly two decades of wrangling, but stumbled on a EU delay in presenting improved offers for imports of Mercosur beef and ethanol. "There is very little left to do. We are very close," Nunes said. But he made clear the ball was in the European court and that Mercosur is waiting for an EU reply after

the South Americans presented their offer covering 90 percent of goods traded.

Not everything is rosy within Mercosur. At Wednesday's ministerial meeting, there was disagreement on adopting a common policy for government procurement of goods and services, with Paraguay adamantly opposing the proposal.

A move by Uruguay to slap a customs duty on all imports except oil and capital goods as of Jan. 1 annoyed its partners, not least because trade with Mexico was exempted. —Agenies

EU okays Lufthansa buyout of Air Berlin assets

BRUSSELS: German carrier Lufthansa clinched EU approval yesterday for its scaled back bid to snap up assets of bankrupt Air Berlin, a European Union statement said. Responding to signals that the EU would veto its initial plans, the German behemoth last week ditched its bid to buy Air Berlin's Austrian unit Niki, focusing instead on the acquisition of the failed airline's smaller LGW subsidiary.

"Our job is to make sure that mergers do not make European consumers worse off," EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said. "Lufthansa has put forward improved remedies that make sure the effects of its LGW acquisition on competition are limited," she added.

Lufthansa also accepted to forgo some of Air Berlin's prized Duesseldorf airport slots in order to win the greenlight from Brussels. The more modest offer, which won the EU's backing, will see Lufthansa acquire the operations of LGW, a regional carrier employing some 500 people. That includes taking over the roughly 30 planes flown by LGW but leased from other companies, a source familiar with the bid has told AFP.

The European Commission, the EU's anti-trust authority, earlier this month approved the purchase of Air Berlin's operations at the German capital's Tegel Airport by British low-cost carrier easyJet.

Under the deal, easyJet will spend some 40 million euros (\$47 million) to enter into leases for up to 25 aircraft and take over slots in Berlin. The fire sale began in August when Air Berlin suddenly lost a cash lifeline from main shareholder Etihad Airways after years of



This file photo shows an airplane operated by German airline Air Berlin rolling on the tarmac past a Lufthansa plane at Duesseldorf airport. —AFP

losses, triggering bankruptcy proceedings.

In the ensuing carve-up Germany's second-biggest airline, it was Lufthansa's attempt to claim the lion's share of the assets that most worried competition authorities.

Lufthansa—which already owns low-cost Eurowings as well as Swiss, Austrian and Brussels Airlines—initially set its sights on scooping up 81 aircraft from Air Berlin's 140-strong fleet, including all of Niki's planes plus its valuable slots. But fearful of the dominant position that could give Lufthansa on some routes, the Commission stated "deep competition concerns" about the Frankfurt-based carrier's plans and the effect on ticket prices. Lufthansa then announced last Wednesday that it was dropping its plan to buy Niki.

The shock move meant Niki lost the bridge financing that had kept it flying in anticipation of the Lufthansa acquisition, forcing it to file for insolvency. Lufthansa is also eyeing a chunk of struggling Alitalia's fleet, in the latest sign of consolidation in the industry. —AFP

Indonesia wins Fitch ratings upgrade

JAKARTA: The Fitch ratings agency raised Indonesia's sovereign rating to its second-lowest investment grade yesterday, providing a welcome boost to reform efforts in Southeast Asia's largest economy. The move reflected Indonesia's improved ability to weather external shocks, after years of slowing economic growth hampered by falling global demand for the country's key commodities exports, the agency said. Fitch lifted Indonesia's long-term, foreign currency-denominated debt ratings to "BBB" from "BBB-", with a stable outlook. It noted in a statement that Indonesia's "macro-economic policies have consistently been geared towards maintaining stability", with strong foreign cash reserves also a key factor.

The upgrade comes after Standard & Poor's raised Indonesia's sovereign credit rating from junk status to investment grade in May. President Joko Widodo has been seeking to attract more foreign investment and strengthen economic performance despite the commodities downturn. —AFP

Business

Bank of Japan holds rates as inflation remains low

Japan-EU trade deal seen boosting Japan's GDP by 1%

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan kept its ultra-loose monetary policy in place yesterday as inflation remains stubbornly low in the world's third-biggest economy, bucking a trend of gradually tighter policy in major economies. The bank said it would purchase 10-year government bonds so that long-term interest rates would remain "at around zero percent".

The BoJ will also keep charging a negative interest rate on some accounts held by financial institutions at the central bank in a bid to prompt lending by commercial banks.

BoJ chief Haruhiko Kuroda later yesterday gave few clues about any timeline for pulling back the bank's huge asset-buying program.

"We won't raise interest rates just because our economy is doing well ... We'll consider further easing if there's a risk that the momentum (towards achieving the two-percent inflation target) isn't maintained," he told reporters.

Investors were also watching out for possible indications on whether Kuroda will stay on as he nears the end of his five-year term. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has reportedly asked him

to stay on. However, Kuroda was coy on this subject, saying he was not in a position to comment on personnel issues.

Meanwhile, A free trade deal with the European Union would boost Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) by 1 percent annually once the benefits fully kick in over 10-20 years, a government estimate showed yesterday.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been promoting free trade as a pillar of his growth strategy. Japan and the EU, which concluded negotiations on the trade pact, hope that it will go into effect early 2019, media reports say. The Cabinet office estimated that the trade pact would lift Japan's GDP by 5 trillion yen (\$44 billion) per year, or

about 1 percent, and create an additional 290,000 jobs, according to the estimate by the Cabinet Office.

However, Japan's farmers would be hit as tariffs on wheat, beef and other food imports will be slashed, intensifying competition with domestic producers. The Cabinet office estimated that domestic farm production would drop by 60 billion to 110 billion yen.

The deal will remove the EU's 10 percent tariffs on Japanese cars and 3 percent typically applied to car parts.

The agreement will also scrap Japanese duties of 30 percent on EU cheese and 15 percent on wines as well as allowing it to increase its beef and pork exports.

The Cabinet Office also estimated the 11-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership - which requires more works after the United States pulled out of it early this year - would boost Japan's GDP by about 1.5 percent annually, or 8 trillion yen, and create 460,000 jobs.

In November, the countries remaining in the TPP agreed on the core elements to move ahead without the United States but more work need to be done before it is finalized. The Cabinet Office also showed the TPP 11 would cut Japan's farm production by 90 billion to 150 billion yen.

In 2015, the government predicted the 12-nation TPP, including the US, would increase Japan's GDP by 2.6 percent, or 13.6 trillion yen, and would add 795,000 jobs. It would also lower farm output by as much as 210 billion yen. Japan's economy grew an annualized 2.5 percent in the third quarter to mark a seventh straight quarter of expansion thanks to a business spending splurge and buoyant exports. —Agencies



BoJ to buy 10-year govt bonds



TOKYO: Bank of Japan (BOJ) Governor Haruhiko Kuroda gestures during a press conference at the BOJ headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

JP Morgan 'seriously breached anti-money laundering rules'

ZURICH: JP Morgan Chase's Swiss unit "seriously breached anti-money laundering regulations" in its dealings with Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB, the Swiss financial markets watchdog found yesterday.

The US bank's subsidiary "failed to adequately identify the increased money laundering risks in some of the business relationships related to this case", the FINMA body said, referring to a money-laundering scandal that has shaken the Malaysian political establishment.

"The bank seriously breached anti-money laundering regulations by failing to screen adequately transactions and business relationships booked in Switzerland associated with the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB and one of its business partners," FINMA said in a statement.

Despite its findings, FINMA said it would not seek legal proceedings against any individuals and there would be no fines against JP Morgan. The US Justice Department alleges in civil lawsuits that \$4.5 billion was looted from 1MDB in an audacious campaign of fraud and money-laundering.



The scandal has rocked the administration of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, the founder of 1MDB, who must call elections by mid-2018. He has responded by purging critics from his government and curbing domestic investigations. Celebrities have been sucked into the scandal, with the Justice Department alleging stolen 1MDB money was used to buy jewelry worth millions of dollars for Miranda Kerr as well as gifts for Leonardo DiCaprio.

Authorities in several countries as still investigating the complex deals involving the Malaysian fund and other entities. In April 2016 1MDB defaulted on \$1.75 billion in bonds after missing an interest payment of \$50 million.

While JP Morgan Chase's Swiss unit has escaped fines, FINMA said yesterday it will now conduct an in-depth review of the bank's anti-money laundering systems. —AFP

Ukraine says London court freezes top tycoon assets

KIEV: Ukraine yesterday welcomed a decision by a London court to freeze the assets of billionaire Igor Kolomoyskiy following a high-profile case that led to the state's takeover of the country's largest bank.

Kolomoyskiy, the ex-Soviet country's second-richest man worth \$1.3 billion according to Forbes' 2016 ratings, was the owner of Ukraine's largest lender PrivatBank.

The lender was nationalized last December after authorities blamed Kolomoyskiy and other PrivatBank owners for issuing bad loans to cronies and having insufficient capital to stay afloat.

"The ministry of finance of Ukraine welcomes the English High Court order on worldwide asset freezing against Kolomoyskiy and (Gennadiy) Bogolyubov, as well as against six companies they are believed to own or control,"

the ministry said in statement yesterday.

"The state has already spent almost 140 billion hryvnias (around \$5 billion) on recapitalization of PrivatBank to cover the losses caused by the extraction of money from the bank and poorly secured loans given out before nationalization," it said.

"These 140 billion hryvnias are the money of each Ukrainian citizen, each Ukrainian taxpayer and these funds must be returned to the state budget."

Late on Wednesday, PrivatBank, which holds more than a third of Ukraine's deposits and whose takeover by the state was welcomed by the West, said it had begun legal proceedings in the High Court in London against former owners Kolomoyskiy and Bogolyubov.

"The freezing order was granted on the basis of detailed evidence put to the court that Kolomoyskiy and Bogolyubov have extracted almost \$2 billion from the bank through a particular series of dishonest transactions," the lender said.

PrivatBank added that through the legal proceedings it was seeking to recover over \$2.5 billion.

Kolomoyskiy, who has fought to challenge the nationalization, stressed the ruling was a temporary measure. "This is a temporary arrest for the time of the trial," he told local media. —AFP

Business

US officials hope tax plan will bring corporate profits home

Tech, pharmaceutical firms accumulated profits offshore

WASHINGTON: The sweeping tax cuts adopted Wednesday by US lawmakers while reducing rates on corporations, also aim to encourage multinational businesses to repatriate huge earnings amassed abroad. US corporations, notably in the tech and pharmaceutical sectors, have for years accumulated profits offshore to avoid the comparatively high US tax rates of 35 percent, although most companies in reality pay much less.

The stockpile of cash now stands at about \$2.5 trillion, according to the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation. In 2016, for example, Apple stashed more than \$200 billion abroad, while Microsoft parked \$100 billion, and Cisco, Oracle and General Electric all followed suit.

Some firms resorted to so-called corporate inversions, reverse mergers allowing them to be incorporated in low-tax countries, avoiding the US tax system altogether.

Last year, several inversion efforts, including the merger attempt by drug companies Pfizer and Allergan, drew the ire of American officials. By dropping the top corporate rate to 21 percent from 35 percent and taxing only profits earned US territory, the reform represents an effort to make the United States more enticing to major corporations.

"Money frozen overseas and in parts of world and some of them don't even like us," President Donald Trump said Wednesday in remarks celebrating the tax bill's passage.

"And they had the money. Now they won't have the money long." To help encourage earnings repatriation, the tax package includes a one-time, across-the-board tax break for companies that bring the cash back.

Apple wins big with US tax bill but faces snag on patents

WASHINGTON: The US Republican tax overhaul passed by Congress this week will allow Apple Inc to bring back its \$252.3 billion foreign cash pile without a major tax hit - a long-standing company goal.

Other provisions of the bill, namely the cut in the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, are also a big boon for Apple. But not everything went the company's way. A critical difference between the Senate version of the bill and the final version could actually raise the amount of cash taxes that Apple pays on profits from patents held abroad, tax experts said.

The treatment of foreign patent profits is important to Apple because shifting those profits overseas was a cornerstone of its tax practices for decades. In effect, the company attributes a large portion of

The incentive remains?

Businesses will have to make a one-time payment of eight percent or 15.5 percent, on repatriated foreign profits, depending on whether the assets are cash or investments. This could bring \$220 billion to the Treasury, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. But Eric Toder, co-director of the Tax Policy Center, this particular policy measure would reward overseas investment. "We are taxing them less on their foreign profits than on their US profits if they invest in low-tax countries," he told AFP. After the tax bill is enacted, foreign profits will be taxed at a minimum of 10.5 percent-including amounts collected by local authorities-a level well below the 21 percent US rate.

Toder said congressional scorekeepers were assuming the lower taxes would result in higher revenues, given the larger volume of repatriated profits. But this still encourages companies to invest abroad, he said. "They have an incentive to report and invest income in low tax countries." Industrial companies, such as makers of semiconductors, an industry prone to off-shoring like many that trade in intellectual property, welcome the new rules. "We would have preferred lower repatriation rates but overall it's a strong bill for the semiconductor industry," Joe Pasetti, a senior lobbyist at the Semiconductor Industry Association, told AFP.

Will it work?

The tax plan also aims to encourage companies to be active again on US soil, in particular those in IP-reliant industries, he explains. US revenues derived from foreign sales of patented products will be processed for tax purposes as

the value of its products to patents and other intellectual property such as trademarks. Apple then assigns some of that IP, proportional to overseas sales, to subsidiaries in countries with low tax rates and assesses substantial patent royalties on sales. Those royalties then flow back to those low-tax locations, like Ireland.

The bill has a pair of provisions designed to make that maneuver less alluring. One creates a minimum tax on foreign patent income that is expected to come to about 13 percent, said Gavin Elkins, a research economist with the Tax Foundation. At the same time, a tax break for patents held in the United States will lower the tax on licensing income from the standard corporate rate of 21 percent to 13.1 percent - about the same as if the patents were held abroad.

Congressional Republicans "don't want the tax rate to be a consideration in where you put your intellectual property," Elkins said. "The whole intention (of the measures) is to bring back that intellectual property to the United States."

Parts of the scheme are similar "patent boxes" employed in countries like the United Kingdom to encourage firms to generate and keep their innovations at home. But the final bill omits any explicit

way for patents held overseas to be returned to the United States without being taxed. Congress "screwed it up," said Ed Kleinbard, a tax professor at the University of California and former chief of staff of the US Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation. "It's kind of weird that they created the patent box, but didn't give a pass to bring things back."

For those patents that remain overseas, the minimum tax on foreign patent profits means Apple might actually face higher cash taxes abroad. "I'm willing to bet a dollar that 13.1 percent is higher than Apple's actual non-US tax rate," said Kleinbard. "It's entirely possible their cash tax bill going forward would go up based on this alone."

Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook has said the company intends to bring some overseas cash home, but the company declined to comment on precisely how much or how it would use the funds. Gary Hufbauer, a fellow with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said the tax cut is not likely to spur Apple to start building iPhones in the United States. However, Apple's U.S. suppliers, which the company said it spent \$50 billion with in 2016, will also see lower taxes. —Reuters



WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump speaks about the passage of tax reform legislation on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on Wednesday—AFP

if they were earned by foreign subsidiaries, at a rate of 10.5 percent rather than the new corporate rate of 21 percent.

"It's really competitive, much more competitive than the current system," Pasetti said. The US Chamber of Commerce believes the benefits will be shared widely following the disappearance of the "outdated" former tax system. "Our tax system will now welcome capital within our borders for myriad uses such as job creation, wage growth, and invest-

ment," Caroline Harris, vice president for tax policy at the chamber, told AFP. However, critics are skeptical the higher profits will be used for those purposes. In 2004, under then-president George W. Bush, Congress approved a similar tax break to encourage the repatriation of profits, and companies brought back about \$312 billion, subject to a 5.3 percent rate. But studies showed these funds were in large part used for share buybacks rather than for investments. —AFP

Spanish bond yields nudge lower as Catalonia goes to the polls

LONDON: The premium investors demand for holding Spanish bonds over top-rated German peers held close to its narrowest levels in three months yesterday, as Catalonia holds an election that Spain's government hopes will end the wealthy region's independence bid.

After two days of heavy selling in US and European bond markets, euro zone bond yields held near multi-week highs as the US House of Representatives approved a sweeping overhaul of the US tax code. Spain's government hopes that the Catalonia election will strip pro-independence parties of their control of the Catalan parliament and end their campaign to force a split with Spain.

But while final polls showed separatist and unionist parties running neck-and-neck, an effective pro-independence majority remains a likely outcome. "It (the election) cannot be ignored going into year-end," said Orlando Green, European fixed income strategist at Credit Agricole. "But the secession movement has been significantly diminished and would need a decisive move to revive it." —Reuters

Sports

Birmingham named as 2022 Commonwealth Games host city

Next year's Games will be staged on Australia's Gold Coast

LONDON: The English city of Birmingham was yesterday confirmed as the host of the 2022 Commonwealth Games after a troubled bidding process. "We warmly congratulate Birmingham and England on today's announcement—it is a defining moment for this truly Commonwealth city," Commonwealth Games Federation president Louise Martin told a press conference at Birmingham's Arena Academy.

The Games were originally awarded to Durban in 2015, but the South African city had the event taken away earlier this year for financial reasons. The quadrennial multisport event, involving members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, last took place in the United Kingdom in Glasgow in 2014.

After Durban was taken out of the running, Birmingham defeated a rival British bid from Liverpool to secure the support of the government in September. But the Midlands city has had to wait almost three months to have its victory confirmed.

The CGF extended the deadline for bids until the end of November, saying Birmingham's candidacy was "not fully compliant", and then announced a further delay as it sought guarantees from the city and government.

The CGF is believed to have encouraged

rival bids from Canada and Malaysia, both of which failed to materialise. But Martin thanked the two countries—and Australia—for their interest in hosting future Games and said all three countries had expressed interest in staging either the 2026 or 2030 event.

The budget for the 2022 Games, which is expected to run from July 27 to August 7, is reported to be £750 million (\$1 billion, 845 million euros). The existing Alexander Stadium will be re-developed and will host the athletics event.

"The vast majority of the Games venues are in place and with extensive experience in the UK of hosting successful major events—including Manchester 2002, London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 — the CGF looks forward to a

truly spectacular Games that delivers not only for the 2.4 billion citizens across the Commonwealth, but the wider world, too," Martin added.

"Today is a fantastic day for Birmingham, global Britain and our resurgent Commonwealth Sports Movement." British sports minister Tracey Crouch said: "The UK has a brilliant track record for putting on the biggest sport events in the world and it is great news that Birmingham has

“ It is a defining moment for this truly Commonwealth city ”



BIRMINGHAM: Commonwealth Games Federation President Louise Martin announces the winning bid for the 2022 games in Birmingham, Britain yesterday.

been selected to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games."

Next year's Games will be staged on Australia's Gold Coast. The Games are open

to countries that are members of the Commonwealth, a collection of nations and territories that were mainly once part of the British empire. —AFP

Premiership strikes landmark China TV deal

LONDON: The English Premiership will become the first club rugby union tournament to air on Chinese national television after a four-year deal with free-to-air sports broadcaster CCTV5+ was announced today. Beginning with Sunday's clash between Leicester and Saracens, CCTV5+ will show at least 25 Premiership matches a season in China, along with the semi-final and final. Previously, the 2015 Rugby World Cup was the only rugby tournament to have been broadcast on Chinese television.

"This is a very significant day in the history of Premiership Rugby," said Dominic Hayes, commercial director at Premiership Rugby, in a press release. "Launching on free-to-air TV in China is part of our strategic goal of increasing the global impact of Premiership Rugby and helping to grow the game in new countries around the world. "CCTV5+ reaches 400 million households and this will lead to a huge increase in rugby's exposure, in a new and very exciting market." —AFP

Hamilton scores in third period to lead Flames over Blues

LOS ANGELES: Dougie Hamilton scored at 7:57 of the third period to lead the Calgary Flames to a 2-1 win over the St. Louis Blues at the Scotiabank Saddledome on Wednesday night. Michael Frolik also scored for the Flames, who have won two games in a row, and Mike Smith made 21 saves. Brayden Schenn scored for the Blues, while goalie Carter Hutton finished with 31 saves.

FLYERS 4, RED WINGS 3

Sean Couturier scored his career-high 16th goal early in the third period and it stood up as the game-winner in Philadelphia's victory over Detroit. Dale Weise, Wayne Simmonds and Robert Hagg also scored for the Flyers, who won for the seventh time in eight games following a 10-game losing streak. Martin Frk, Mike Green and Gustav Nyquist scored for the Red Wings, who lost in regulation for the first time in five games (2-1-2). Jimmy Howard stopped 27 shots.

BLUE JACKETS 4, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Seth Jones scored an unassisted goal and assisted on a rare Columbus power-play goal to help the team end a two-game losing streak with a victory over Toronto. Jones' goal came in the first period, and he



NEW YORK: File photo shows Dylan Larkin #71 of the Detroit Red Wings skates against the New York Islanders at the Barclays Center on December 19, 2017 in the Brooklyn. —AFP

also was credited with an assist on Pierre-Luc Dubois' second-period goal. In the past four games, Jones has three goals to give him six for the season and 19 points. Lukas Sedlak scored the Blue Jackets' first goal in the opening period with an assist from Matt Calvert. Alexander Wennberg expanded the

Columbus lead with a third-period goal, and Cam Atkinson contributed two assists. —Reuters

The Maple Leafs' goals came from Jake Gardiner in the second period and Mitch Marner in the third period of Toronto's second game in two days. Gardiner also had an assist. —Reuters

Sports

Lakers end Rockets' 14-game winning streak with a 122-116 upset victory

Warriors limit Memphis to 10 field goals

LOS ANGELES: Rookie Kyle Kuzma scored 38 points, and the Los Angeles Lakers snapped the Houston Rockets' 14-game winning streak with a 122-116 upset victory Wednesday night. Houston had its streak end despite James Harden pouring in 51 points and adding nine assists. The Rockets also lost for the first time with guard Chris Paul in their lineup. Paul departed early in the fourth quarter with a sore left leg and did not return after posting eight points, five assists and five rebounds over 25 minutes. Los Angeles snapped its three-game skid by torching Houston's defense, with Kuzma scoring 24 of his 38 points in the first half on 9-for-9 shooting. The Lakers, playing without starters Brook Lopez (ankle) and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope (personal reasons), had six double-digit scorers, with reserve forward Corey Brewer tallying a season-high 21 points.



Utah ends six-game road trip with another loss

thony Towns also scored 25 and grabbed 10 rebounds, Jamal Crawford had 20 points and seven assists, and Jeff Teague contributed 16 points and eight assists for Minnesota, which overcame a 14-point deficit. Denver's Nikola Jokic returned to the starting lineup after coming off the bench the previous two games. He finished with 22 points but also committed 10 turnovers. Jamal Murray led Denver with 30 points, and Mason Plumlee had 13 points and 10 rebounds.

SPURS 93, TRAIL BLAZERS 91
LaMarcus Aldridge had 22 points and eight rebounds, and Pau Gasol

collected 20 points, 17 rebounds and five assists as San Antonio seized a victory over Portland. Aldridge sank 1 of 2 at the line to give the Spurs a 93-91 advantage with 15.4 seconds left before CJ McCollum missed a pair of shots in the closing seconds. Damian Lillard scored 17 points for the Trail Blazers, who lost for the fifth straight time at home.

MAVERICKS 110, PISTONS 93

Dennis Smith Jr. scored 15 points in his return to spark Dallas to a win over Detroit. Smith, who added five assists and five rebounds in 21 minutes, missed the previous six games with a hip strain, and the Mavericks had lost three straight. Mavs forward Harrison Barnes led all scorers with 25 points. Anthony Tolliver paced Detroit, which had won three straight, with 18 points.

Pacers 105, Hawks 95

Bojan Bogdanovic, who made the errant pass that cost Indiana a victory against NBA East-leading Boston on Monday, scored 19 points in the win over Atlanta. The Pacers were led by Victor Oladipo with 23 points, including three 3-pointers. Oladipo scored 13 points in the second half. Myles Turner added 20 points. The Hawks were led by rookie John Collins with 18 points and nine rebounds. Marco Belinelli and Kent Bazemore each scored 13.

CLIPPERS 108, SUNS 95

Austin Rivers scored 21 points, while Lou Williams had 18 off the bench as Los Angeles ran away with a victory over Phoenix. The Clippers held Phoenix to 31.9 percent shooting in the first half and 36.1 percent for the game. Los Angeles' DeAndre Jordan hauled down 20 rebounds and added 12 points. TJ Warren finished with 22 points and 10 rebounds, while Josh Jackson had 17 for the Suns, who saw their two-game win streak end. They have yet to win three consecutive games this season.

BULLS 112, MAGIC 94

Denzel Valentine scored 16 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, Kris Dunn and Nikola Mirotic each scored 15 points, and Chicago never trailed in defeating Orlando for its seventh straight win. The Bulls' Bobby Portis finished with 14 points, Jerian Grant had 13, and Robin Lopez scored 10. Mirotic also grabbed 10 rebounds.

WARRIORS 97, GRIZZLIES 84

Golden State limited Memphis to 10 field goals in the second half, allowing the defending NBA champs to gradually pull away for a hard-earned victory, their 10th win in a row. Klay Thompson had a game-high 29 points and Kevin Durant added 22 for the Warriors, but the duo combined for just nine points in the second half, when Golden State's defense dominated the game. Memphis lost for the 16th time in 18 games. Marc Gasol overcame 5-for-15 shooting to score a team-high 21 points for the Grizzlies.

HEAT 90, CELTICS 89

Kelly Olynyk scored a career-high 32 points to lead undermanned Miami to a stunning upset of Boston. Celtics star Kyrie Irving missed an open 20-foot jumper at the buzzer. He helped Boston recover from a late 11-point deficit and finished with 33 points. Olynyk, who had 25 points in the second half, played the first four years of his NBA career with the Celtics before signing a four-year, \$50 million contract with the Heat. Josh Richardson added 19 points for the Heat, who were playing without four starters.

THUNDER 107, JAZZ 79

Russell Westbrook finished three assists shy of his 11th triple-double of the season — 24 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists—and Oklahoma City defeated Utah to move over .500 for the first time since Halloween. Carmelo Anthony and Paul George finished with 18 points each for the Thunder, whose eight wins through the first three weeks of December match their total through the first two months of the season. Rodney Hood scored 17 points to lead the Jazz, who have lost seven of eight. Utah ended a six-game road trip with another loss—its 13th in 16 games away from home this season.

TIMBERWOLVES 112, DENVER 104

Jimmy Butler had 25 points, including nine during a key stretch of the fourth quarter, and the Minnesota rallied to beat Denver. Karl-An-



LOS ANGELES: Mike James #55 of the Phoenix Suns scores on a layup between Willie Reed #35, Montrezl Harrell #5 and Sam Dekker #7 of the LA Clippers during a 108-95 Clipper win at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 18 points and 10 rebounds while Elfrid Payton and D.J. Augustin finished with 14 points. Orlando was playing without three opening-night starters.

KINGS 104, NETS 99

Zach Randolph scored 21 points and became the 39th player in NBA history to get 10,000 career rebounds as Sacramento nearly blew a 21-point lead before holding on for a victory over Brooklyn. It was the second milestone this month for Randolph, who shot 8 of 11 and finished with eight rebounds. On Dec. 2 at Milwaukee, he became the 11th active player with 18,000 points. George Hill led the Kings with 22 points after

missing Tuesday's comeback win in Philadelphia with an illness. Spencer Dinwiddie led the Nets with 16 points while DeMarre Carroll added 15 as Brooklyn lost its fourth straight game.

RAPTORS 129, HORNETS 111

DeMar DeRozan led the way with 28 points despite not playing in the fourth quarter, Serge Ibaka scored 24, and Toronto routed Charlotte. OG Anunoby added 20 points, including 6-of-7 shooting from 3-point range for the Raptors. Jeremy Lamb led the Hornets with a career-high 32 points. Kemba Walker and Dwight Howard finished with 15 points apiece for Charlotte, which has lost 11 of 14. —Reuters

NBA results/standings

Golden State 97, Memphis 84; LA Clippers 108, Phoenix 95; San Antonio 93, Portland 91; Minnesota 112, Denver 104; Dallas 110, Detroit 93; Chicago 112, Orlando 94; LA Lakers 122, Houston 116; Oklahoma City 107, Utah 79; Indiana 105, Atlanta 95; Miami 90, Boston 89; Sacramento 104, Brooklyn 99; Toronto 129, Charlotte 111.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division					
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Boston	26	8	.765	-	Minnesota	19	13	.594	-
Toronto	21	8	.724	2.5	Portland	16	15	.516	2.5
NY Knicks	16	14	.533	8	Oklahoma City	16	15	.516	2.5
Philadelphia	14	16	.467	10	Denver	16	15	.516	2.5
Brooklyn	11	19	.367	13	Utah	14	18	.438	5
Central Division				Pacific Division					
Cleveland	23	9	.719	-	Golden State	25	6	.806	-
Indiana	18	14	.563	5	LA Clippers	12	18	.400	12.5
Milwaukee	16	13	.552	5.5	LA Lakers	11	18	.379	13
Detroit	17	14	.548	5.5	Sacramento	11	20	.355	14
Chicago	10	20	.333	12	Phoenix	11	22	.333	15
Southeast Division				Southwest Division					
Washington	17	14	.548	-	Houston	25	5	.833	-
Miami	16	15	.516	1	San Antonio	22	10	.688	4
Charlotte	11	20	.355	6	New Orleans	15	16	.484	10.5
Orlando	11	21	.344	6.5	Memphis	9	22	.290	16.5
Atlanta	7	24	.226	10	Dallas	9	23	.281	17

Sports

Protect England tail from 'bodyline', former captain Atherton tells umpires

Smith calls it 'over-the-top'

MELBOURNE: Umpires should invoke cricket's laws and protect England's tailenders from Australia's relentless "bodyline" bowling in the ongoing Ashes series, former England captain Michael Atherton has said.

Australia have reclaimed the urn with an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five Test series, their fiery pace battery of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins singeing England's frontline batsmen in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

The pace trio have not spared the tailenders. England's number 10 batsman Jake Ball was subjected to a bouncer barrage in the Brisbane opener and number 11 James Anderson suffered a sickening blow to the side of his helmet in the third Test at Perth.

Atherton conceded Australia were clearly the better team and that any side with such ammunition would have attacked the tailenders for practical and psychological reasons. "That said, I did wonder aloud at the time why the umpires were so reluctant to act to protect Ball," Atherton wrote in the Times newspaper.

The law states that short pitched bowling is dangerous if the umpire considers it likely to inflict physical injury when measured against a

batsman's skill. "Test cricket or not, the Law and the playing conditions are there to protect batsmen incapable of protecting themselves," Atherton added.

"Cricket is an odd game in that it has three distinct disciplines and, within that, you have the unusual situation where someone who is

totally useless in one area can face a world-class performer in another - with potentially harmful consequences.

"Batsmen who cannot bowl are not required to bowl to great players, but the opposite is obviously the case - precisely why the Law is framed as it

is, as built-in protection for the incompetent. "No one wants to see the game sanitised, but the Law is there for a reason. The umpires should make use of it," added Atherton, who played 115 tests between 1989-2001.

Australia captain Steve Smith found Atherton's claims "a bit over the top." "No doubt, if they had the kind of pace that our bowlers can generate, they'd probably do the same thing," Smith said at Melbourne Park where he had a hit with tennis' former world number three Milos Raonic.

"We were (always) going to bowl a lot of short stuff to those guys, much like we did back

“ Batsmen who cannot bowl are not required to bowl to great players ”



MELBOURNE: Tennis player Milos Raonic of Canada (R) and Australia cricket team captain Steve Smith pose for photos during a media call for the upcoming Australia Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. —AFP

in 2013." Smith returned a few of Canadian Raonic's serves but struggled with one aimed at his body. "Now I know how Jimmy Anderson

feels," joked Smith, the leading scorer of the ongoing series which resumes in Melbourne on Tuesday. —Reuters

Steyn plays down hopes of wickets record

PAARL: Dale Steyn doesn't want to talk about the possibility of becoming South Africa's all-time leading wicket-taker, he said during a steady comeback to long-form cricket on Wednesday.

Steyn was not among the wickets for a South African Invitation team on the first day of a three-day day-night match against the touring Zimbabweans at Boland Park, but was happy with his rhythm ahead of an expected Test comeback against Zimbabwe in a day-night clash in Port Elizabeth, starting on Tuesday.

Steyn, 34, needs just five wickets to overtake Shaun Pollock's record of 421 Test wickets-but it has been more than a year since he took his 417th wicket, shortly before breaking down with a freak shoulder fracture against Australia in November 2016.

It was his third major injury in just over a year. He has only played in four of South Africa's last 25 Tests. The Zimbabweans struggled to

196 all out, with only the experienced Hamilton Masakadza playing a substantial innings.

Masakadza survived an early dropped chance against Steyn and went on to make 79. The next highest score was 26 by the uncapped Rod Burl. Steyn bowled 12 overs in four spells, including one with the new pink ball, conceding 16 runs. He started by bowling three consecutive maiden overs with the new ball, having a confident appeal against Solomon Mire turned down and then having Masakadza dropped at point on one.

Steyn said he was fully fit and pain-free. He had not tried to bowl at express pace on Wednesday, concentrating on finding his rhythm without revealing too much to the Zimbabweans in case he was picked for the Test.

That, though, seems likely because Steyn will only play the first two days of the current game before joining the South African Test squad in Port Elizabeth. "I am still fitter than the youngest guys in the side," he said. "It was just about getting through this year and trying to decide whether I still wanted to do it... I'll play until I'm not good enough or someone's better than me."

"Every time someone talks about a record I get injured," he added. "So I'm not bothered. Let's just go play. Let's see what happens." —AFP

Push for Pyeongchang starts on concrete

BATH: The push for Winter Olympic glory becomes concrete right from the start for Britain's aspiring bobsleigh and skeleton athletes. The dry push-start track at Bath University in south-west England gave Amy Williams, skeleton gold medalist at the 2010 Vancouver Games, a first taste of the sport and Sochi 2014 champion Lizzy Yarnold has honed her technique there.

Shelley Rudman, 2006 Olympic skeleton silver medalist, also graduated from the undulating 140-metre run, on the campus edge alongside muddy playing fields and across the road from a cats and dogs home.

On a dank December morning, under a steady drizzle and occasional hail bouncing off the concrete surrounds, a group of athletes practised their starts in circumstances far removed from the icy World Cup venues.

Sam Blanchet, a former rugby professional who played for the Exeter Chiefs and Bedford Blues as well as England in the 2014 Hong Kong Sevens before falling out of love with the contact sport, was one of them.

Working his way back from a recent injury sustained in a bobsleigh crash in Whistler, Blanchet pushed a makeshift welded metal sled on wheels

as fast as he could along a set of rails from a standing start. "We never really push this thing over the winter because we're normally away (competing)," the Montreal-born athlete told Reuters. "I can tell you it's far better during the summer. (But) the Olympics are definitely the end goal and it does drive you on," added the 25-year-old. "It could be worse, I could be on a rugby field getting beaten up for 80 minutes."

TEST EVENT

Blanchet raced the two-man bob at last February's world championships in Koenigssee, Germany, and has also competed on Pyeongchang's Olympic track. His immediate focus now is a test push at the Bath track at the end of the month that he hopes could put him back into contention for Korea.

"As a brakeman, you're ranked on how well you start a bobsleigh. So if I was to go out for the second half of the season, I'd have to do well in the push starts," explained Blanchet. "There's still a lot to do."

Built in 2001 with lottery funding, the push-start track was refurbished in 2015. "Because we don't have our own sliding track, this is the place where we spend seven months of the year, in the gym, grinding all the training out," Yarnold told Reuters on Wednesday.

"The dry push track that we have here at the university is only practising the start element, where you are running next to the sled and jumping on. Then we come back up to the top and do it all again." —Reuters

Sports

Birthday boy Mbappe stars as PSG down Caen in Ligue 1

Mbappe, sporting dyed white hair for his birthday

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe celebrated his 19th birthday on Wednesday with a goal and an assist as Paris Saint-Germain cruised to a 3-1 victory over Caen in Ligue 1. The French teenager has enjoyed a stratospheric rise in 2017 and rounded out a memorable year in style by setting up Edinson Cavani to fire PSG ahead on 21 minutes, before adding a goal of his own on the hour. Spanish left-back Yuri Berchiche netted his first goal for the club since arriving from Real Sociedad as PSG strolled to a 10th straight home league win despite conceding a late Ivan Santini penalty.

Unai Emery's team head into the winter break nine points clear of defending champions Monaco and Lyon, with both of those sides claiming 2-1 wins over Rennes and Toulouse respectively. "It's a good win to finish with 50 points, but the goal we conceded is something we want to work on after the holidays," Emery said. "I think the team has had a very good first half of the season," he added. "We've accomplished our goals of being first in our Champions League group and being top of the league with a sizeable cushion." Marseille responded to losing their 12-match unbeaten run at the weekend by coming from a goal behind to defeat Troyes 3-1 at the Velodrome to stay within three points of the Champions League spots.

PSG captain Thiago Silva returned from injury at the Parc des Princes to solidify a defence without the suspended Dani Alves and Presnel Kimpembe, while Neymar shrugged off a bout of illness that forced him to miss training on Tuesday.

Mbappe, sporting dyed white hair for his birthday, was instru-

mental as PSG surged in front midway through the first half, bursting down the right wing before crossing for Cavani to flick majestically beyond Remy Vercoutre.

IBRA RECORD IN SIGHT

It was the Uruguayan's league-leading 19th goal of the season and drew him to within one of Zlatan Ibrahimovic's club record of 156 — achieved in just four prolific seasons in the French capital.

Giovani Lo Celso, filling in for the banned Marco Verratti in central midfield, created the hosts' second goal on 57 minutes, getting to the byline and delivering a cross for Mbappe to confidently sweep home. Neymar went close to adding a third when he broke clear of the Caen defence, but the Brazilian was denied by a terrific low stop from Vercoutre as the veteran goalkeeper tipped the ball onto

the post. Berchiche put the game beyond reach on 81 minutes after collecting a pass from Neymar and hammering low into the far corner, although Croatia striker Santini pulled a goal back from the spot late on after Silva was penalised for a handball.

Radamel Falcao struck for the 15th time this campaign as Monaco won at home to Rennes thanks to an 81st-minute goal from Keita Balde after Wahbi Khazri had levelled for the visitors.

Nabil Fekir converted a first-half penalty and former Manchester United full-back Rafael scored in stoppage time as Lyon beat Toulouse despite a last-gasp spot-kick from Max-Alain Gradel.

"PSG are setting a fairly high pace. For us the main goal is to

“

I think the team has had a very good season”

”



DOHA: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe holds a press conference in Doha yesterday, during a winter training camp in Qatar. — AFP

finish on the podium and to carry on in the second half of the season like we finished the first," Lyon captain Fekir said. Bryan Pele put Troyes ahead at Marseille, but Rudi Garcia's men roared back with goals from Dimitri Payet, Luiz Gustavo and Valere Germain, while Emiliano Sala grabbed a 92nd-minute winner for Nantes in a 1-0 victory at Amiens. —AFP

Firing the coach pays dividends for Italian pair

MILAN: Having lost their unbeaten record and Serie A leadership in defeat to Udinese last week, Inter Milan must face another team who are enjoying a new lease of life after changing coach when they visit Sassuolo tomorrow.

Inter will have further reason to be wary of Sassuolo, the team from the smallest town ever to be represented in Serie A — they have lost four of their last eight meetings against them. Udinese and Sassuolo both made poor starts to the season and opted for the time-honoured solution of firing their coaches in order to turn their respective campaigns around.

Proud owners of one of the most modern stadiums in Serie A, Udinese gave Luigi Delneri his marching orders in mid-November after losing eight of their first 12 games and brought in the relatively inexperienced Massimo Oddo.

Although Oddo's only previous stint in Serie A ended abruptly when he was fired by Pescara in February with his side bottom of the table, he has transformed Udinese by making the most of his team's physical strength.

They have responded by winning three of their four games under him, capping their run with a 3-1 win at Inter last Saturday when they gave a lesson in quick

counter-attacking. "I've always said that the coach has to find the team for his players, not the other way round," said Oddo, 41.

"This team is very different team from the one I had at Pescara with different characteristics. There is a great deal of power, physical presence and stamina, so I try to make the most of that." Udinese host Verona on Saturday although Oddo warned against getting carried away. "We are getting great results but the worst thing we can do now is to start dreaming," he said.

Sassuolo, meanwhile, have won two out of three league games since swapping Cristian Bucchi for the wily and much-travelled Giuseppe Iachini, who is at his 11th Italian club but has yet to coach any of the top teams.

They won 1-0 at sixth-placed Sampdoria on Sunday despite missing the fifth penalty of seven they have been awarded this season. "We've only been together for three weeks," said Iachini. "I'm convinced that if we continue to work like this, with this intensity in both attack and defence, we can make further progress.

"Everyone has shown great willingness and we're improving but I know we can do better. We haven't been so good with our final passes." Sassuolo made their top flight debut in the 2013/14 season and were thumped 7-0 at home in their first meeting with Inter. But in seven meetings since then, Inter have won only three to Sassuolo's four.

Inter, who went through their first 16 games unbeaten, are third with 40 points, two behind leaders Napoli, who host Sampdoria. Titleholders Juventus, who host fourth-placed Roma on Saturday, are second with 41 points. — Reuters

Brazil-Argentina clubs to clash in Copa Sudamericana

LUQUE: Brazilian and Argentinian clubs will lock horns once more in the opening round of the 2018 Copa Sudamericana it was confirmed Wednesday, a week after the violence-marred finale to this year's competition.

The pick of the first phase ties will see Argentina's San Lorenzo—the first winners of the tournament in 2002 — take on 2013 champions Atletico Mineiro from Brazil.

Other ties involving Argentinian and Brazilian clubs include Newell's Old Boys against Atletico Paranaense and Rosario Central's meeting with Brazilian giants Sao Paulo.

The draw followed last week's stormy conclusion to the 2017 Copa Sudamericana, which was won 3-2 on aggregate by Argentina's Independiente after a second leg 1-1 draw with Brazilian side Flamengo. The final witnessed fighting both inside and outside the Maracana Stadium in Rio. Riot police used tear gas and stun grenades to quell the violence. Brazil and Argentina have six teams each in the opening round of the Sudamericana, which is the junior continental club competition in South America after the more prestigious Copa Libertadores.

The identities of three teams in the opening round—one from Chile, and two from Bolivia, are still to be decided. The 2018 edition will kick off on February 14 with the final to be played over two legs on December 5 and 12.

Sports

Bristol City dump holders Man Utd out of League Cup

Bristol have beaten four Premier League sides

LONDON: English Championship side Bristol City dumped Manchester United out of the League Cup on Wednesday, scoring with seconds remaining to beat the holders 2-1 as Chelsea also progressed to the semi-finals after late drama of their own.

United, second in the Premier League, made 10 changes from their weekend victory against West Brom but still boasted a star-studded line-up including a fearsome front three of Marcus Rashford, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Anthony Martial against the second-division high-flyers. But as the match appeared to be drifting towards extra time with the score at 1-1, unfancied Bristol dug deep to fashion one last chance and Korey Smith's strike sparked scenes of wild celebration at Ashton Gate. Bristol, third in the Championship, have now beaten four Premier League sides on their march to the last four of the League Cup and their reward is an even-more daunting-looking two-legged tie against run-away Premier League leaders Manchester City.

The other semi-final next month sees an all-London clash between Chelsea and Arsenal. "It's an overwhelming feeling of pride, to beat Manchester United is incredible," said manager Lee Johnson. "They are a special group. It has been a long time since we had a result like that at Ashton Gate. "The lads didn't want to go into extra time and the scenes

that winner set off were unbelievable. My dad always says he's the most successful Bristol City manager so I have maybe pushed him close tonight." The home side took the lead after an even first half, Joe Bryan firing the home side ahead in the 51st minute with a left-foot shot that arched into the net past the despairing dive of Sergio Romero.

United were only behind for a few minutes before Ibrahimovic blasted the ball through the wall after a softish-looking free-kick awarded for a foul on Paul Pogba in a central position. Manager Jose Mourinho threw on even more attackers as he pushed for victory, with Romelu Lukaku replacing Daley Blind while Henrikh Mkhitaryan came on for Ibrahimovic.

But despite pressure from the away side, Bristol held their nerve, taking advantage of some sloppy defensive play from United to score deep into injury time through Smith, who burst into the area, chested the ball down and finished coolly with his left foot.

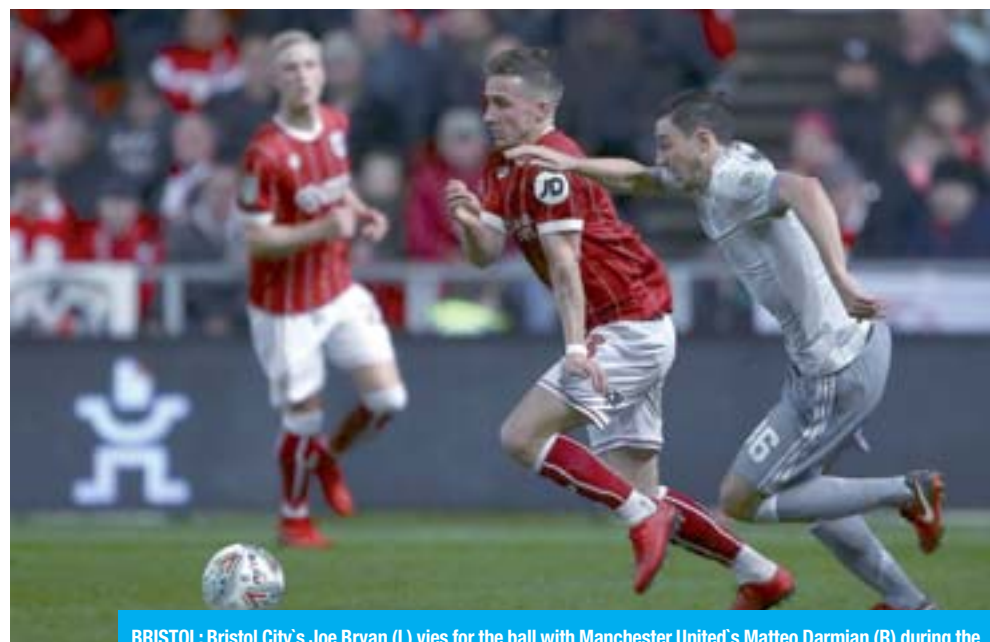
United surged forward for one last push but it was

too late and at the final whistle joyous fans streamed onto the pitch.

'UNBELIEVABLE'

"Unbelievable, I don't know what to say," said matchwinner Smith. "We played brilliantly like we have all season. I wasn't being tracked when I made

“ We played brilliantly like we have all season ”



BRISTOL: Bristol City's Joe Bryan (L) vies for the ball with Manchester United's Matteo Darmian (R) during the English League Cup quarter-final football match between Bristol City and Manchester United in Bristol. —AFP

the runs forward, I was gutted with the one in the first half but it was a great tackle to be fair.

"I joined when we were in League One with three stands. We have been brilliant this season." United welcomed midfielder Pogba back into the side after the three-match suspension he picked up against Arsenal earlier this month and Ibrahimovic,

36, made his first start since damaging knee ligaments in April. Mourinho said Bristol were lucky but praised them for their performance. "They played brilliantly, they fought like it was the game of their lives which probably it was," he said. "A beautiful day for football. A team from the lower division won. A big day for them. —AFP

Mueller helps Bayern battle past Dortmund

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller scored the decisive goal as Bayern Munich fought to a 2-1 victory over rivals Borussia Dortmund to reach the German Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday. Goals from Jerome Boateng and Mueller gave Bayern a comfortable lead before half-time, but Andriy Yarmolenko's second-half header made it a nervy last 15 minutes for Bayern.

"We've stumbled into the quarter-finals," said Bayern defender Boateng. "We played well in the first half, but we should have decided it earlier." After several gilt-edged chances in the opening minutes, Boateng headed Bayern into the lead on 12 minutes. Niklas Suele guided a James Rodriguez free-kick onto the bar, before Boateng emerged to nod the ball past Roman Buerki.

With star striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang out injured, it wasn't until the 35th minute that Dortmund created a significant chance. Stand-in front man Yarmolenko found space in the box, only to see his shot cleared off the line by David Alaba.

Minutes later, Bayern doubled their lead in style. Played through by Robert Lewandowski on the right wing, Mueller sent an elegant chip over Buerki and into the far corner. Two brilliant saves from Buerki kept Bayern from running riot just after half-time, but Bayern looked ever more comfortable as the game wore on. When Franck Ribery was substituted off on the hour mark, the win appeared to be secure.

Bayern were shocked into life on 76 minutes, though, when Yarmolenko pulled a goal back for Dortmund. Shinji Kagawa whipped in a cross, and home goalkeeper Sven Ulreich couldn't deny the Ukrainian at the far post.

Dortmund could muster little more than a handful of half-chances as they pushed for the equaliser. Only in injury time did they create a golden opportunity, as Alexander Isak's shot was deflected just inches past the post. "If we had played the whole game like we did in the last half an hour, we might have taken something away from this game," said Dortmund defender Marcel Schmelzer.

Elsewhere, Leon Bailey netted the winner as Bayer Leverkusen beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 1-0 to book their place in the quarters. Goalless until the 71st minute, the game burst into life when Bailey broke down the left to pick up Kevin Volland's through ball and fire past Yann Sommer. —AFP

Struggling Swansea sack manager Clement

LONDON: Swansea City sacked manager Paul Clement on Wednesday after less than a year at the helm as the Premier League's bottom club desperately search for a way out of the relegation mire. As the season approaches its halfway point, the Welsh side are already four points adrift of safety following Monday's 3-1 defeat at Everton, with just three wins in their first 18 Premier League matches. "We can confirm that the club has tonight parted company with head coach Paul Clement," the club said on its Twitter account. Clement is the sixth Premier League manager to lose his job so far this season, following the dismissals of Frank de Boer (Crystal Palace), Craig Shakespeare (Leicester City), Ronald Koeman (Everton), Slaven Bilic (West Ham) and Tony Pulis (West Brom).

Swansea's owners will be banking on fresh impetus from a new boss to lift the team up the table, with the likes of Leicester and Everton boosted by new appointments in recent weeks.

"To change the manager, especially at only the halfway point of the season, is the last

thing we wanted to do as a club," said Swansea City chairman Huw Jenkins in a statement.

"We had three different managers last season and as a result we all wanted to give Paul as much time as possible to turn things around. "But we felt we couldn't leave it any longer and needed to make a change to give us the best chance of an uplift and a turnaround in fortunes with the club bottom of the Premier League."

Jenkins praised Clement's role in helping keep the club in the English top flight last season. He took over at Swansea in January, replacing Bob Bradley, with the club bottom of the Premier League and tipped as odds-on favourites for relegation. But he master-minded four wins from his first six games, including an impressive victory at Liverpool, to earn himself the Premier League manager of the month award for January.

Swansea lost last season's leading scorer Fernando Llorente and midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson during the summer transfer window, severely weakening their squad. Former Derby manager Clement arrived at Swansea with a wealth of experience after working with some of the biggest teams in Europe as assistant manager to Carlo Ancelotti at Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain. Former West Brom boss Pulis and Manchester United legend Ryan Giggs are among the favourites to replace him. —AFP

All-time Gulf Cup champions Kuwait seeks 11th title

Al-Jabri asks sectors to harness all potentials for Gulf Cup



Kuwait national team training at the Al Yarmouk sports club.

KUWAIT: Despite a short preparation period, Gulf Cup hosts and all-time champions Kuwait are hungry to win the illustrious football title for a record 11th time. Kuwait enters its first competition after a two-year competitive ban was lifted by football's world governing body FIFA earlier this month. Al-Azrag, led by Serb manager Boris Bunjak, have been undergoing extensive training over two periods a day, a senior team official told a news conference on Wednesday.

"The players are ready to give their all in order to take the national team badge to the top of the podium for an 11th time," said Fahad Awadh. Kuwait SC winger Fahad Al-Enezi, who has won 43 caps for his country, said the mood was high in the dressing room, and the fact that the competition is being held on home soil will be a huge boost for the squad.

The event's opening match at Jaber International Stadium will witness a mouth-watering Group A encounter between the hosts and World Cup qualified nation and three-time Gulf Cup winner, Saudi Arabia.

Group A is arguably the tougher of the dual-group competition, which also includes the United Arab Emirates and Oman, while Group B comprises champions Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Yemen. All four Group A nations hold a total 16 cups amongst them over 22 competitions held thus far.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri directed all the ministry's sectors to harness all capabilities to transmit matches and events of the 23rd Gulf Cup to be launched today.

The ministry will work to ensure a distinguished transmission of the event in a manner, which reflects Kuwait's stature and heritage, Al-Jabri told reporters in remarks

Group Stage				
Day and Date	Matches	Venue	Time	Group
Friday December 22, 2017	Opening ceremony	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	17:30	
	Kuwait vs Saudi Arabia	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	18:30	A
	Oman vs the UAE	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	21:00	A
Saturday December 23, 2017	Qatar vs Yemen	Kuwait SC Stadium	17:30	B
	Bahrain vs Iraq	Kuwait SC Stadium	20:00	B
Monday December 25, 2017	UAE vs Saudi Arabia	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	18:30	A
	Kuwait vs Oman	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	21:00	A
Tuesday December 26, 2017	Yemen vs Bahrain	Kuwait SC Stadium	17:30	B
	Iraq vs Qatar	Kuwait SC Stadium	20:00	B
Thursday December 28, 2017	Saudi Arabia vs Oman	Kuwait SC Stadium	18:30	A
	Kuwait vs UAE	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	21:00	A
Friday December 29, 2017	Qatar vs Bahrain	Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium	17:30	B
	Iraq vs Yemen	Kuwait SC Stadium	20:00	B
Semifinals				
Day and Date	Matches	Time	Venue	
Tuesday January 2, 2018	Group A winner vs Group B runner-up	To be determined	later	
	Group B winner vs Group A runner-up	To be determined	later	
Final				
Day and Date	Match	Time	Venue	
Friday January 5, 2018	Winners of the two semifinal matches	To be determined	later	

while inspecting Jaber al-Ahmad International Stadium. He noted that the political leadership provided all potentials for the success of this important sports event. There is close cooperation among the ministry, the organizing committee, the Kuwait Football Association and all relevant bodies in order to ensure the success of the championship, the minister stressed.

There are 20 outside broadcast vehicles equipped with the latest technology to

broadcast the encounters, in addition to 250 HD cameras, Al-Jabri revealed. He expressed his thanks and appreciations to the ministry's staff for their efforts in preparation of a wonderful coverage of the tournament. The event comprises two groups: Group A is arguably the tougher of the dual-group competition, which also includes the United Arab Emirates and Oman, while Group B comprises champions Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Yemen. —KUNA

Amir to attend Gulf Cup inauguration ceremony today

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will patronize and attend the opening ceremony for the 23rd Gulf Cup for football today at 5:15 pm at Jaber International Stadium.

Football fans and enthusiast from region and the world will set their gaze at the opening of 23rd Gulf Cup football tournament today.

The prestigious tournament, held until January 5, will see Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain and the UAE competing for the title.

Kuwaiti fans, in particular, are ready to see their team compete again after lifting the FIFA ban. The tournament, held under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, will have Kuwait and Saudi Arabia face-off at 05:30 pm local-time in first match of Group 1.

The Saudi-Kuwaiti match will be followed by another encounter pitting the UAE against Oman. The Group 2 matches will kick start tomorrow with a match between Qatar and Yemen and another match between Bahrain and Iraq.

Kuwait previously hosted the tournament in 1974, 1990, and 2003. The Kuwaiti team won 10 Gulf Cup titles since the tournament's inception in 1970. —KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal v Liverpool 22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA

Real Betis v Athletic de Bilbao 21:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3
Espanyol v Atletico de Madrid 23:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Chievo Verona v Bologna 20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4
Cagliari Calcio v Fiorentina 22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 4

Sport Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2017

www.kuwaittimes.net



All-time Gulf Cup champions Kuwait seeks 11th title