



### 3 Court order compels Cabinet to ban water gun celebrations



### 6 Blocked from reaching Europe, migrants settling in Morocco



### 15 Iraq beat Qatar, Bahrain blank Yemen in Gulf Cup



### 16 Kane treble shatters English Premier League goal record



# Lawmaker warns of Qatar-like blockade, calls for readiness

## Opposition MPs clash with govt • Five arrested over offending video

### Israelis seeking compensation after Saudi chess snub

**JERUSALEM:** The Israel Chess Federation said yesterday it is seeking compensation from the organizers of a tournament in Saudi Arabia, after the Gulf state refused to issue visas for its players. The King Salman World Rapid and Blitz Championships is the first international chess competition held in Saudi Arabia, perceived as a display of the conservative kingdom's growing openness to the West. The regulations of the organisers, the World Chess Federation (FIDE), stipulate that no player should be refused the opportunity to participate, but players from three states - Iran, Qatar, and Israel, had initially not received visas.

On Monday, FIDE announced it had "secured visas for Qatar and Iran," with officials from the world chess body failing to reach an agreement with the Saudis to allow the Israelis to enter the kingdom for the games. Fatimah Baeshen, a spokeswoman for the Saudi embassy in Washington, indicated on Twitter that the Israelis were refused visas because the kingdom does not have diplomatic ties with their country. "The kingdom has allowed the participation of all citizens. The exception is whereby KSA (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) has historically not had diplomatic ties with a specific country—thus has maintained its policy," she wrote.

The Israel Chess Federation accused Saudi Arabia of misleading FIDE to enable hosting the tournament, which began yesterday. "All their previous statements were to the contrary," spokesman Lior Aizenberg said. Aizenberg said the Israelis were seeking financial compensation from FIDE for the seven players who "were professionally and financially damaged" by the saga. In addition, they wanted assurances that FIDE would never repeat such conduct, and "every country hosting an international event will commit to hosting Israeli chess players, even if it's an Arab state."

Finally, the Israel Chess Federation was demanding FIDE competitions set to take place in Saudi over the next two years "be immediately cancelled," Aizenberg said in a statement. FIDE did not respond to requests for comment. Israel and Saudi Arabia have no official relations. — AFP

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Opposition lawmaker Hamdan Al-Azemi yesterday said that Kuwait could face a Qatar-like blockade and called on the government to take precautionary measures to face any eventuality. "Isn't possible for Kuwait to face the same scenario like Qatar?" questioned Azemi during the debate of the Amiri address made at the opening of the current National Assembly term on Oct 24.

In early June this year, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed economic and political sanctions on the Gulf state, coupled with a blockade by air, sea and land, accusing it of backing radical Islamist groups. Qatar has denied

the charges. HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been leading efforts to mediate a settlement. The efforts have succeeded in containing the rift from escalating, but a resolution to the crisis appears to be far away.

"I expect Kuwait to come under siege like what happened with Qatar. What has the government prepared for such a possibility?" Azemi asked. He however did not elaborate on his prediction and did not specify which countries could impose a blockade on Kuwait. "What preparations has the Kuwaiti government made to face any risks amid the highly volatile situation in the region? I call on the government to prepare, learn and benefit from the Gulf crisis before it's too late," the lawmaker warned. He added that

nothing has been prepared because "our ports are in a dire situation and we have a fleet of passenger planes that we don't actually own".

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that there are attempts to form a committee to "alter" future grillings against ministers, adding that such attempts will be totally rejected. He called on the Assembly speaker to be neutral and not to be with the government, "as he was in the previous Assembly". Adasani claimed that there are disputes between sheikhs, merchants and MPs, adding that processing illegal transactions is the root cause of corruption in the country and that any minister who accepts such transactions is effectively taking part in corruption.

Continued on Page 11



Hamdan Al-Azemi

### Displaced Syrians survive war but face battle against cold

**AIN ISSA, Syria:** Khadija Alloush made it out alive from Syria's battle-ravaged Raqqa with her five children, but she lost her seven-year-old son to the biting cold of life in a displacement camp. As temperatures drop, tens of thousands of civilians forced out of their homes by Syria's war are spending yet another winter in flimsy plastic tents or abandoned half-finished buildings. And without heating, blankets and warm clothes, or access to proper medical care, even a simple cold can turn deadly. "My son died because of the cold," weeps Khadija, 35, her features drawn and exhausted a week after the sudden death of little Abdel Ilah.

After fleeing fighting in the Islamic State group's former bastion Raqqa, Khadija's family sought refuge in the Ain Issa camp about 50 km north. Now nighttime temperatures are plummeting to just four degrees Celsius. "He coughed and had a fever in the middle of the night. The next day, he was dead," Khadija tells AFP, drawing her four young children close to her. "May God spare us in this cold," she says. More than 17,000 people have sought refuge in the Ain Issa camp's 2,550 tents, set up in neat rows exposed to the elements.

Most of the residents fled assaults against IS in Raqqa, as well as Syria's province of Deir Ezzor to the southeast. Many of their homes have been flattened, their towns and villages reduced to ruins without electricity or running



A displaced Syrian child is seen at the Ain Issa camp on Dec 18, 2017.— AFP

water. Returning is not an option. According to the United Nations, which supports the camp, there is no new health care clinic to cater for expanding areas of the sprawling facility. More than half of the residents say their tents need repairs or maintenance to protect against the cold.

To keep the inside of their tents dry, many in the camp have put up an extra layer of nylon tarps and resort to

using rocks to weigh down plastic sheeting to prevent water seeping in. Camp manager Jalal al-Ayyaf acknowledged there was a "lack of medication" available to displaced families in Ain Issa. "There are no statistics on infant mortality, but deaths have been caused by illnesses" exacerbated by the cold, Ayyaf said.

Continued on Page 11

### Schoolgirls in Tunisia rebel against uniforms

**BIZERTE, Tunisia:** In Tunisian high schools, the dress code is not uniform. Actually, it is: but only for girls. Boys can wear what they like, and now the girls are up in arms. One morning, instead of turning up for class wearing the regulation navy blue smock, a defiant group of adolescent girls came to school in white T-shirts instead, demanding an "end to discrimination". At the elite Bizerte public school in the north, as is the case in most high schools in the North African country, pupils have to sign a school rule stipulating that wearing a uniform applies to girls only.

One day in September, supervisors reminded senior female students who did not abide by this rule that if they did not wear the smock, a loose-fitting, long gilet, they would be sent home. Ironically, the warning was passed on during a philosophy class - about the human body. This "injustice" inspired many of the girls to take to social networks and vent their feelings, 18-year-old Siwar Tebourbi told AFP.

She said the girls agreed to take collective action from the following day "to demand that this discrimination must cease". So dozens duly turned up for class, wearing white. Several boys did the same, in solidarity with their classmates. How did the school authorities react? By saying nothing. Thus was born the "Manish Labsetha" ("I won't wear it") campaign, referring to the offending garment.

It was the culmination of a dispute that had been brewing for years. Outraged that the navy blue was imposed on everyone in primary and secondary school but was compulsory in high school only for girls, pupils regularly appeared without it, risking expulsion or seeing their parents summoned. Monia Ben Jemia, head of the Association



BIZERTE, Tunisia: Siwar Tebourbi (center), an 18-year-old Tunisian schoolgirl, walks with classmates as they leave school on Nov 30, 2017.— AFP

of Democratic Women of Tunisia, an independent feminist group, called the smock rule "a terrible message" because it implies that young girls' bodies can have a disruptive effect on their peers. She called it a complete aberration, especially since the country's new constitution of 2014 says that men and women are equal.

The high school students who launched the campaign, both male and female, are also against what they perceive as a wider "hypocrisy". "They drill into us at school that men and women are equal, but in practice this is not the case," said Adam Garci, 17. That the navy gilet is actually supposed to erase social inequalities between pupils is a

source of some amusement to Tebourbi. "If it was really meant to conceal any differences between rich and poor, then boys as well as girls would have to wear it," she smiled.

Imposing the blue uniform on girls at a time when their bodies are undergoing change is not a trivial issue, said her friend Farah Ben Jemaa. "One supervisor told me I couldn't wear leggings without a smock because I was 'shapely', and another told us 'It bothers the men teachers'," Ben Jemaa said. The whole affair would appear to be somewhat embarrassing for the authorities.

Continued on Page 11

#### News in brief

##### Some Saudi detainees freed

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia has released 23 of the 200-or-so powerful individuals detained since November on corruption charges after they reached deals with the government, Okaz newspaper reported yesterday. The report did not name those involved in what appeared to be the first large-scale release since the royals, business people and government officials were detained in a crackdown spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Video posted on social media showed a smiling Saoud Al-Daweesh, the former chief executive of Saudi Telecom, telling well-wishers he had been treated decently. "Private Affairs (a unit of the Royal Court) brought us a full lamb dish day and night. They treated us well and did a good job," he said.

##### Egypt hangs 15 militants

**CAIRO:** Egypt hanged 15 men convicted of attacks that killed security forces in the Sinai Peninsula, security sources said yesterday, in what appears to be the largest number of executions on a single day since President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi took office in 2014. The hangings took place at two prisons in the north of the country early yesterday, the sources said. A military court issued the sentences and interior ministry officials carried out the executions simultaneously at Borj Al-Arab and Wadi Al-Natroun prisons, the sources said. Most of the militants were from Sinai region and were accused of "joining militant groups and taking part in carrying out, planning and assisting in killing a number of army and police personnel in Sinai," the sources said.

# Amir receives KFAS Awards' winners



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with KFAS Director General Dr Adnan Shehab Eddin and winners of the 2017 KFAS Awards. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Bruneian Ambassador to Kuwait Pengiran Mustapa Aliuddin.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) Director General Dr Adnan Shehab Eddin and winners of the 2017 KFAS Awards. The winners included Dr Talal Al-Azmi (Physical Sciences and Mathematics); Dr Raed Al-Roughani (Medical Sciences and Allied Health Science); Dr Fayez Al-Thufairi (Social Sciences and Humanities) and Dr Meshari Al-Fereih (Administration and Economics). His Highness the Amir lauded the winners for their scientific achievements, hoping that they would further contribute to the development of their country. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah wished the winners the best in their future endeavors.

Meanwhile, the winners of the KFAS Awards thanked His Highness the Amir for his sincere sentiments and wishes for success, stressing that they would do their best to contribute to Kuwait's welfare and progression. Acting Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Amiri Diwan Advisor and member of KFAS Board of Directors Dr Yousef Al-Ibrahim attended the reception.

In other news, His Highness the Amir received the outgoing Bruneian Ambassador to Kuwait Pengiran Mustapa Aliuddin. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the outgoing envoy.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Sheikh Dr Fahad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah who handed His Highness a copy of his PhD thesis on conflict management in the Middle East. His Highness the Amir also received Shima Al-Mulla who presented His Highness with a book on Kuwaiti history. Mulla also presented a copy of her book to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received Sheikh Dr Suad Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah as well as the Capital Governor Thabet Al-Muhanna and heads of the district's areas. — KUNA



Sheikh Dr Fahad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah hands over a copy of his PhD thesis to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Capital Governor Thabet Al-Muhanna and heads of the district's areas.



Shima Al-Mulla presents a book on Kuwaiti history to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

## Zain main sponsor of Kuwait's Public Relations, Customer Service Prize

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of Kuwait's Public Relations and Customer Service Prize for the third consecutive year. The prize, hosted by Kuwait's Public Relations Association, comes under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from December 26, 2017 to February 4, 2018.

Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah visited Zain's booth during the opening ceremony as he expressed his admiration of the company's leading role in the Public Relations and Customer Service fields as well as the tremendous efforts the company exerts in enriching its social role within the community on a continuous basis.

Kuwait's Public Relations Association dedicates this prize to shed light on the distinguished efforts and achievements of companies and organizations in the fields of public relations and customer service across all industries from both the public and private sectors. The

event also features a number of workshops about the strategies of public relations and customer service targeted at employees of ministries and organizations.

The judging committee - responsible for selecting the winners - consists of local and international PR and Customer Service experts to evaluate the participating entities as per the highest international standards. The standards include serving customers while meeting their needs, distinguished social contributions, excellent media presence, and more.

During December 2017, Zain proudly received four titles as part of the fifth Advertising Creativity Award. The award, organized by the Arab Media Forum, recognized Zain's achievements in the Influence Category Award for Zain's Ramadan 2017 TVC, the National Campaigns Category Award for Zain's Kuwait National Day 2017 TVC, the Direction Category Award for Zain's Eid 2017 TVC, as well as the Public Relations and Corporate Sustainability Creativity Award for the company's long-list of initiatives and programs launched during 2017.

Zain's sponsorship of Kuwait's Public Relations and Customer Service Prize for the third consecutive year showcases its distinguished PR and media involvement, and further strengthens the company's role as a leading private sector company launching several public relations and marketing campaigns all year round. Zain will continue supporting this very important field which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole, whether through traditional or modern media tools.



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Jamal Al-Nasrallah, Chairman of Kuwait Public Relations Association, visit Zain's booth.

## Newspaper calls for nominating Amir for Nobel

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Wasat has called for nominating His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the Nobel Prize for Peace. The paper yesterday announced choosing His Highness the Amir as 'Man of the Year,' describing him as a 'man of peace.' In a special supplement, Al-Wasat reviewed His Highness the Amir's tireless efforts for dissolving disagreements in the Gulf region, as well as disputes in the

region at large. It pointed to His Highness the Amir's humanitarian initiatives, highly appreciated on the local, regional and international scenes.

"His Highness the Amir is a sagacious leader, a man of peace and a humanitarian leader, who elgibly deserves the Nobel Prize for Peace for the initiatives he offered the Arab nation and the entire humanity," the paper wrote in yesterday's editorial. His Highness the Amir does not spare the least effort for assisting Muslims, the paper said. His Highness the Amir is the leader who has most attended the Gulf, Arab and Islamic events. The paper pointed to His Highness the Amir's firm vision and stances that "aim to found a new concept for Arab and Muslim citizenship. His Highness the Amir's achievements bear witness on this." His Highness the Amir has linked Kuwait diplomatically and strategically to the world, it stressed. — KUNA



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Local

# Kuwait, Oman postpone value added tax until 2019

## Court order compels Cabinet to ban water gun celebrations

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Oman's finance ministry decided to postpone the implementation of the Value Added Tax (VAT) until 2019, and transitive tax until mid-2018. Meanwhile, a CNBC Arabiya TV said that Kuwait has also decided to defer applying VAT until 2019, likely to give the National Assembly enough time to vote on the unified Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to enforce the tax in all member states. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have already decided to put the tax into practice by January 1, 2018. VAT is a tax imposed on the difference between products' cost and sale prices. It is an indirect tax imposed on all goods and services except those exempted by an official decision.

### Water gun ban

The administrative court recently issued a verdict by powers of which the Cabinet is to issue a decision banning the usage of water guns in National and Liberation Days' celebrations. The verdict was made in response to a case filed by lawyer Mona Al-Arbash demanding the ban for public interest, on grounds that thousands of water gallons are wasted every year during national celebrations, costing the country - which is already poor on natural water resources - a lot of money. Use of water guns and water cannons during national celebrations have become very popular in recent years after the government banned the use of spray foam for environmental reasons.

Director of the Public Authority for Road and Land Transport Ahmed Al-Hessan

requested removing some Wafra farms located in the area to be used for the regional highway project. In a letter he sent to Kuwait Municipality concerning the study, design and supervision of phase one of the Southern Regional Highway project, Hessian stressed that some farms are blocking the project's execution and will lead to the delay in offering the project for public bidding.

**Oil sector manpower**  
Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) sta-



**2,900 non-Kuwaitis working in oil sector**

istics showed that the total value of wages paid to KPC and its subsidiaries' employees in the period between April 30 and September 30, 2017 was KD 640 million.

The same statistics also showed that there were 2,000 job vacancies in the 2017-2018 budget and the total number of oil sector employees by the end of this fiscal year would be 21,509. Statistics also showed that the total number of operational jobs is 17,524 in addition to 233 capital jobs and 1,066 in the training and development sector. Statistics showed

that 85 percent of the manpower were nationals including 9,200 in Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), 6,100 in Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), 500 in the Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), 650 in Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC), 60 in Kuwait Aviation Fuelling Company (KAFCO), 718 in the head office, 240 in Kuwait Integrated Petrochemical Industries Company (KIPIC) and three in the Oil Sector Services Company (OSSC). Figures also showed that the total number of non-Kuwaitis working in the oil sector is 2,900.

### 'Kuwaitization'

Kuwait Municipality's deputy director for financial and administrative affairs Waleed Al-Jassem called for assessing all employees as per the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) decision number 11/2017 pertaining with 'Kuwaitizing' government jobs. Jassem requested lists of various expat employees indicating those recommended to keep their jobs and those who could be laid off and stressed that the lists should be handed over within a week and dealt with in confidence.

### Scholarships suspended

The Ministry of Higher Education temporarily suspended sending students on scholarship to Malaysian universities as decided by the former minister Dr Mohammed Al-Fares upon a recommendation from the academic accreditation bureau with the aim of reassessing Malaysian educational facilities. The decision excluded students already enrolled in those universities and



those who received accreditation from Kuwait's cultural office in Australia to start studying for the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Meanwhile, the

accreditation bureau has sent delegations to reassess Egyptian and Jordanian universities to make sure they were internationally accredited and ranked.

## Ministry protects Kuwait's interests at all levels: FM

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday that the Foreign Ministry is exerting great efforts to protect Kuwait's interests at all levels.

In response to a parliamentary query during the National Assembly's ordinary session, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the

ministry is committed to execute its duties in terms of international relations.

He noted that the ministry spoke with Saudi Arabia regarding online tweets posted by Saudis, adding that the kingdom assured Kuwait it had taken serious legal measures against those involved, and will not allow posting negative comments against Gulf states online. — KUNA

### CRIMES

#### Disabled child's guardian awarded KD 27,400 in allowances

**KUWAIT:** A mother who cares for a disabled person was awarded KD 27,400 by a court ruling against the Disabled Public Authority, which confirmed her right for allowances to be paid retroactively since the child's birth.

#### Family held hostage

Policemen rescued a family from their son, who held them hostage inside their house in Andalus while being in an abnormal condition. Police received a call from a family member saying that the suspect pulled a knife on them, so they went to the house and arrested the man.

#### Drunk drivers' busted

Police arrested two citizens who were caught in an abnormal condition inside a vehicle that was pulled over on King Fahad Road, while three bottles of liquor were found in their possession. Patrol officers pulled over a sports-utility-vehicle (SUV), but the driver hit the patrol vehicle and drove off into a desert area in Al-Zoor. However, his vehicle got stuck in sand dunes, allowing police to arrest him and his companion. The two carried no IDs with them, and were sent to concerned authorities for further action. In a separate case, police sent a citizen and his companion to the relevant authorities after he was arrested near a famous hotel for harassing women and passersby. Policemen found the two being in an abnormal condition, and discovered that one of them was wanted to serve a jail sentence. They also had an imported liquor bottle in their car.

#### Thief caught

A uniformed man caught a person trying to break into his car while going for Isha prayers in Faiha. The thief, Syrian, was taken to the police station for questioning. Meanwhile, Jahra detectives are looking for a 2012 model SUV that was stolen in front of a citizen's house in Qasar. The citizen did not accuse anyone of the theft.

#### Assault

A female citizen told Jabriya police that she was beaten up by two expatriate women, which left her with several injuries. When summoned, both women accused the complainant of attacking them first. Investigations are ongoing.

#### Embezzlement

Detectives are looking for an Egyptian man and two others accused by a citizen of embezzlement. The citizen gave the Egyptian man KD 22,000 based on an agreement to buy a factory. The man then disappeared, prompting the citizen to lodge a complaint at Khaitan police station.

#### Child's kidnap

A female citizen lodged a complaint against her ex-husband, accusing him of kidnapping their child. The woman told police that her ex-husband failed to return her child to her after visitation, explaining that she has custody over her son. Separately, a female citizen accused her husband of assault, and the man was summoned for questioning. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Anbaa

## No injuries in diesel tankers' fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Three diesel tankers caught fire in Kabd, prompting firefighters from the Kabd, Wafra, hazardous materials and back-up fire stations to respond. Firefighters used foam to extinguish the blaze and keep the diesel drums cooled down while the flames were being tackled. No injuries were reported in the incident. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to reveal the circumstances behind the fire.

### Leave forgery

The criminal court yesterday abstained from penalizing 32 citizens working in various ministries and settled on fining them KD 500 each over charges of forging fake sick leaves.

## 24 imams referred for investigations over rule violations

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Mohammad Al-Afasi said yesterday that 24 imams have been referred for investigation for violating the Charter of the Mosques.

In response to a parliamentary question during a parliamentary session, Afasi stressed that "necessary measures will be taken against anyone who does not abide by this charter, which regulates works of imams."

He also stressed his ministry's keenness to protect youth and spread the values of moderate Islam in its centers. The Mosque Charter stipulates the use of appropriate words and not abusing people, bodies, sects or states. — KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A gardener plants flowers on a sidewalk as Kuwait Towers are seen in the background. —KUNA

# Touristic Enterprises Company introduces 'The Golden Age' circus

## Developed with the world-renowned Cirque Madona Bouglione

**KUWAIT:** At a press conference held at its head office yesterday, the Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC) unveiled one of its biggest projects in recent years: The Golden Age Circus, a contemporary circus spectacle developed in partnership with the internationally renowned Cirque Madona Bouglione. Taking place at Entertainment City in Doha, the Golden Age Circus is slated for a three-month run, starting January 18th until March 31st, 2018.

The Golden Age Circus is a unique, artistic and never-before-seen circus show that has been created and imagined exclusively for Kuwait. Far from being a standard or traditional circus, The Golden Age is a showcase of the captivating artistry and creativity of the circus, combining acrobatics, music, dance, drama, comedy, horse shows, and much more. The show will feature more than a dozen international circus performance acts, from clowns and acrobats, to stunt bikers and various equestrian displays.

Speaking at the press conference, Yaqoub Anwar Al-Khabbaz, Assistant CEO for Technical Affairs at TEC, called the show a creative spectacle heralding a new era for entertainment in Kuwait. "Today, we are working on developing and implementing long-term strategic plans which focus on rejuvenating the tourism and entertainment sectors in Kuwait. We have a number of ambitious and game-changing projects lined up, which we are carrying out in collaboration with world-renowned consultants and partners, including some of the biggest names in the tourism, entertainment and leisure sectors from around the world. The Golden Age Circus is simply the first of these projects," said Khabbaz.



Ghazi Faisal Al-Hajeri, Assistant CEO for Recreational Affairs at TEC, said: "To bring this thrilling experience to Kuwait, we partnered with Cirque Madona Bouglione, a celebrated modern circus that combines traditional circus arts with elements of innovation and modern technology, to create unique contemporary shows. The bespoke show

has been crafted specifically for Kuwait, bringing world-class artistic entertainment right to our home."

Open to audiences of all ages, the Golden Age Circus will include one show a day during weekdays, from Monday to Thursday, and two shows during the weekends, on Friday and Saturday. The circus is also set to

feature a special limited-run show during February's National Day celebrations. Tickets will be available for sale online via KuwaitTourism.com and at all TEC facilities. "We guarantee that The Golden Age is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that no one will want to miss," concluded Hajeri.



## Promenade, Cubical Services launch first retail incubator in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** As part of their commitment to supporting entrepreneurial development, The Promenade and Cubical Services have collaborated to bring you SoapBox, Kuwait's first retail incubator. The press conference announced the launch of [www.applyforabox.com](http://www.applyforabox.com), an online portal where entrepreneurs can submit applications for retail space at SoapBox. Held at the Promenade Culture Centre, the event was attended by representatives of The Promenade, Cubical Services Business Incubator, Ministry of Youth, and Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development.

Located at The Promenade, Soapbox is a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs: offering fully-fitted shop space, with low overhead and flexible terms. SoapBox will also feature an e-commerce portal for tenants to reach an even wider audience and market their products and services online. In addition, tenants at SoapBox will have access to Cubical Services' expert consultation and support services for SMEs.

The Promenade Management Team commented: "At

The Promenade, we endeavor to harness talent, creativity, and the entrepreneurial spirit, and therefore we are very pleased to be launching SoapBox in partnership with Cubical Services. Our vision has been to create a space where entrepreneurs have a platform to be heard and to succeed, therefore SoapBox offers young businesses a vibrant space to be creative and to be able to easily elevate their business models for greater exposure. With the support of Cubical Services, Ministry of Youth, and the Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development, we are confident this will be a successful venture and benefit the local entrepreneurial community."

"Cubical Services is proud to be launching the first ever retail incubator in Kuwait, in collaboration with The Promenade. This business model is the only one of its kind where entrepreneurs can receive constant support, guidance, and advice to ensure that their businesses grow and reach their full potential. Our commitment has been to ensure that the local business community in Kuwait thrives, and we are pleased that SoapBox supports that vision," stated the management of Cubical Services Business Incubator.

Ministry of Youth stated: "The Ministry of Youth is pleased to be supporting initiatives in Kuwait that benefit the youth of Kuwait. There has been a much needed space for young entrepreneurs to be able to grow their business and harness their talents in a supportive environment such as SoapBox. We look forward to supporting The Promenade and Cubical Services Business Incubator in making SoapBox a great success in Kuwait."

"Kuwait in 2017 is living an eventful and young era for the Arabic youth, and Kuwait is the capital of Arabic youth



where they are proving their capabilities to take responsibilities generation after generation," the Ministry of Youth added.

In addition to offering shop spaces, SoapBox will also

feature a community space where workshops for entrepreneurs, events, and activities will be held throughout the year. To apply for a space at SoapBox, please visit [www.applyforabox.com](http://www.applyforabox.com).

Local

Legalese

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

To my avid readers, those who are celebrating, I hope you had a Merry Christmas, and to all my readers, I hope you have a wonderful year ahead of you. Many people use this time to reflect on their actions, feelings and their lives. Each person is on a different journey, and each person has different needs and different wants, and I am not one to preach, but let us keep this in mind this holiday season. Let us understand that different people have had different experiences that shape the person that they are. Let us forgive and be kind to one another.

Freedom of religion

**Question:** Do people have the freedom to practice their religion in Kuwait freely?

**Fajer:** This is a really tough question to answer. I have said this repeatedly in my column, but feel the need to share it again. We are very lucky in Kuwait to have such a diverse community.

The Kuwaiti constitution states in Article 35 [Freedom of Religion and Belief]: Freedom of belief is absolute. The state protects the freedom of practicing religion in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals. This unfortunately has been interpreted differently by different organizations and parliament members, and is probably why you have heard negative remarks about adherents of other religions practicing their beliefs in Kuwait. We have mosques and churches in Kuwait, but I do hope in the future we see more official worshipping spaces for all the other religions that are present in Kuwait.

Dropping the cases

**Question:** I read your previous articles where you mention forgiveness. I have cases against family members and want to forgive them. What can I do, as I also want to protect myself in the future? Can I drop the case?

**Fajer:** I understand that when we have differences, it is good to have the option of being able to go to a professional for advice or even to court, but in my opinion, it is good to be able to settle things amicably. It will save you money and energy.

Now to answer your question of if you can drop the case or not, this depends on the type of case. For example, you can drop civil cases, but you cannot drop some criminal cases, as the public prosecution is involved in the case as well. So by law, the case can only be dropped by the public prosecution even if the crime happened against you. Also, depending on the case, it might be wise to draft an agreement or have an undertaking for the future. With that said, let us remember to be kind, thoughtful and considerate, and let us forgive. Happy holidays!

Should you have any questions or concerns, or you require a consultation, please email me at ask@fajertlawyer.com.

Russian Embassy meets Kuwaitis who took part in youth festival

Russian parliamentary mission visits Kuwait late Jan: Envoy

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Kuwait received yesterday a delegation of Kuwaiti youth who participated in the World Festival of Youth and Students in the Russian city of Sochi. The delegation included representatives of the Kuwait Democratic Youth Forum and other organizations. During the meeting, Russian Ambassador Alexey Solomatin said the festival was held for the third time in Russia. "It gives power to the youth. The future is for the youth. Young people are supposed to spread peace around the world. I am glad that the Kuwaiti youth got a chance to discover Russia," he said.

"Since the past few years, the embassy has been promoting Russian culture in Kuwait and has made serious efforts in changing the stereotypes about Russia in Kuwaitis' mind, which often associate Russia with the mafia and gangs. But now since the Kuwaiti youth have discovered Russia, they have an opportunity to tell what they experienced," Solomatin noted.

He affirmed that Russia is looking to improve economic and trade relations between the two countries and enhance the already close defense, economic, educational and cultural ties. "Russia will send a parliamentary mission at the end of January 2018 to meet Kuwait officials and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Also, Kuwait and Russia along with other Security Council members will be discussing Middle East and GCC crises' files," Solomatin said.

Regarding the international isolation of the United States over the Jerusalem issue, he said Russia voted and rejected the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, adding the Russia's position has been and will remain unchanged on this subject.



**KUWAIT:** Russian Ambassador Alexey Solomatin (center) poses with Kuwaiti youth who participated in the World Festival of Youth and Students in the Russian city of Sochi. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

World Cup

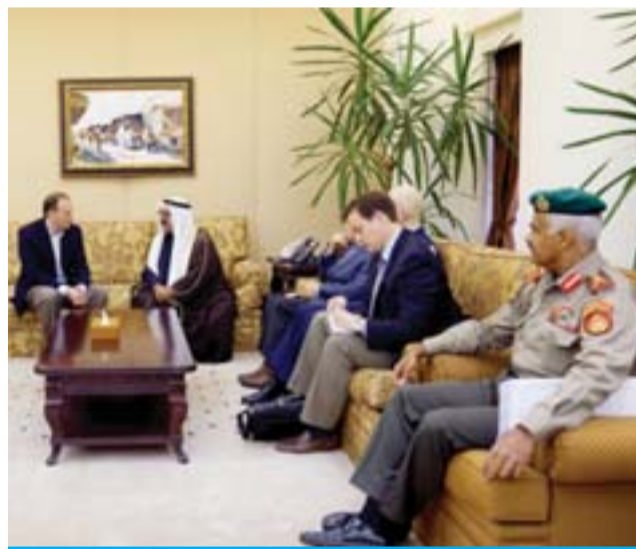
Solomatin pointed out that Russia is preparing for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, and has developed the infrastructure and transportation between the cities that will host the matches. About visas, Solomatin announced that 2017 witnessed a 50 percent increase in Kuwaiti tourists - the embassy issued 2,000 visas this year. He stressed on the ease of the procedures for the issuance of the visa, where it can be issued to Kuwaitis in 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the representatives of the Kuwait Democratic Youth forum shared their impressions about the event and Russia. "Twenty-three citizens and

residents of Kuwait participated for the first time in the World Festival of Youth and Students from October 14 to 22, 2017," said Khalid Al-Azmi, head of delegation. He added that his team represented sports, art and literature of Kuwait. "The workshops were helpful and covered all aspects. We are looking forward to visiting Russia again and the beautiful city of Sochi." The festival hosted around 20,000 youths between the ages of 18 and 35 from 150 countries. The theme of the festival was: "For peace, solidarity and social justice, we struggle against imperialism. Honoring our past, we build the future!"

Defense, Foreign Ministers receive US delegation

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received yesterday a visiting delegation from the United States House of Representatives. Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and the US delegation touched on issues of mutual interests as well as topics connected with defensive cooperation. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also met with US delegation, and they discussed means to bolster relations on all possible levels. The US delegation included Brian Fitzpatrick, Lee Zeldin, David Cicilline, and Mike Coffman. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with a visiting delegation from the United States House of Representatives. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with a visiting delegation from the United States House of Representatives.

Schwarzkopf: Liberator of Kuwait, American hero

**WASHINGTON:** US General H Norman Schwarzkopf, who passed away five years ago at the age of 78, led the six-week military campaign in 1991 that liberated Kuwait from occupation by the forces of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. After a trade embargo and warnings failed to force an Iraqi withdrawal, and after a deadline passed on January 15, 1991, then US President George H.W. Bush ordered a military response. Schwarzkopf, who later earned the nickname "Stormin' Norman," moved his military headquarters to Riyadh. There he put in place hundreds of ships, thousands of aircraft and 765,000 allied troops, including 540,000 Americans and Arab forces under Saudi Prince Khaled bin Sultan, who was co-commander in the Gulf War. Thus began what became the first largely televised war, with live scenes of missiles striking targets and fighter jets departing from aircraft carriers.

'Left hook'

The ground war was over in a few days due to what Schwarzkopf described as a 'left hook' strategy, in which he placed forces behind enemy lines for a decisive attack. In Operation Desert Storm, Schwarzkopf's plan was built around a global coalition of forces and overwhelming air superiority that routed Saddam's Republican Guard and destroyed most of Iraq's infrastructure while minimizing allied losses. However, critics of the war pointed to the fact that when it ended, Saddam had been left in power. Subsequent analysis of the war data also showed that most of Iraq's elite Republican Guard, whose destruction had been a goal of war planners, had escaped and had not been pursued because of Bush's decision to halt the ground war after 100 hours.



**KUWAIT:** An archive photo showing US General H Norman Schwarzkopf (left) with former Kuwaiti Defense Minister the late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. — KUNA

It wasn't until 2003, when a coalition led by the US invaded Iraq under the administration of Bush's son, President George W Bush, that Saddam was deposed. The dictator was captured while hiding in Iraq in December of that year, and executed by hanging in December 2006. Schwarzkopf retired soon after the Gulf War and lived in Tampa, Florida. President George HW Bush gave him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest US civilian award, and Schwarzkopf remained a popular American hero in the US during the early 1990s.

Republicans in Florida urged him to run for the US Senate, and a movement also began to draft him to run for president. At one point he said he would not rule out a White House run, but he never did enter the political arena.

Biography

Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf Jr was born on August 22, 1934, in Trenton, New Jersey. As a boy, he attended Bordentown Military Institute near Trenton. From 1946 to 1950, he lived in Iran, Switzerland, Germany and Italy with his father. Fluent in French and German by the age of 17, he enrolled at Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

At the US Military Academy at West Point, he loved history and dreamed of leading men in battle. "He saw himself as Alexander the Great, and we didn't laugh when he said it," recalled

General Leroy Suddath, his West Point roommate. In 1956, Schwarzkopf graduated 43rd in a West Point class of 480.

After infantry and airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Schwarzkopf served two years with airborne units in the US and Europe. He took a two-year assignment in Berlin and a career-officer course at Fort Benning, then earned a master's degree in guided-missile engineering in 1964 from the University of Southern California. Schwarzkopf served two battlefield tours during the Vietnam War, in 1965-66 and 1969-70. During his second tour of duty in Vietnam, he was wounded twice and won three Silver Stars for bravery. He became a colonel in 1975, a brigadier general in 1978, a major general in 1982 and a lieutenant general in 1986.

In 1983, during the administration of President Ronald Reagan, Schwarzkopf coordinated American-landing forces in the US invasion of Grenada. In 1988, Schwarzkopf was awarded his fourth star and named commander of US Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, supervising military activities in 19 countries in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Gulf. He developed contingency plans for war in Iraq-which were needed two years later. Schwarzkopf died in Tampa on Dec. 27, 2012, of complications from pneumonia. —KUNA

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South Africa blighted by racially charged farm murders

## US federal agents found fetuses in a warehouse

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RABAT: Migrant vendors sell cell phones on a sidewalk in the Moroccan capital Rabat. — AFP

# Blocked from Europe, migrants settle in Morocco

## Morocco - from transit country into a host country

RABAT: Unable to reach Europe in search of a better life, Aliou Ndiaye settled in Morocco instead, giving up on his original goal like thousands of other sub-Saharan African migrants. "Everyone has the right to go to another country to try their luck," the 31-year-old former fish exporter from Senegal told AFP. "Lots of people are trying to reach Europe, but some end up staying to make a living." Seven out of 10 West Africa-born migrants stay on the continent, according to a December study by the Moroccan think tank OCP Policy Center.

Discouraged by the danger of passing through countries such as Libya and by harsh policies aimed at preventing migrants going to Europe, many settle in "transit" countries including Morocco. Ndiaye said he gave up after he realized reaching Spain was "too hard". He took on several informal jobs and finally set himself up as a street vendor in Rabat, where he expects to remain. His story illustrates a trend that has gained increasing attention from Moroccan politicians, civil society and researchers.

Morocco has turned from a transit country into a host country for immigrants, according to the government's High Commission for Planning. "The Moroccan authorities have switched from a security approach,

which criminalized illegal immigration, to a discourse of integration," said Mehdi Alioua, former head of a group that helped migrants. He said the new approach involves moving migrants from border regions to the country's big cities, taking them further from their ultimate goal-reaching Europe. That has meant that many stay on in Morocco. Rabat has become home to many sub-Saharan Africans who work at informal markets in the capital, while others, still hoping to make it to Europe, live in informal camps near bus stations and eke out a living by begging.

### Tensions

But their growing numbers have created tensions. In November, residents clashed with sub-Saharan youths living in a camp in Casablanca. "You can't be welcomed with open arms everywhere you go," said

Olivier Foutou, a 34-year-old Congolese. But he called Morocco "the most welcoming country in Africa" and criticized fellow migrants "who think only of Europe and do not want to integrate". Like many West Africans, he

originally headed to Morocco for study, attracted by the quality of the education system and the possibility of scholarships.

He has stayed ever since, and sings in the choir at Rabat's cathedral, a meeting point for the city's small Catholic community. Another choir member, Jean Baptiste Dago-Gnahou, fled war-ravaged Ivory Coast years ago and

ended up in Rabat by "destiny". In his 40s, he is teaching French and currently has no plans to return to his homeland. Papa Demba Mbaye left his job as a teacher in Senegal seven years ago to "live the adventure in Morocco".

He was attracted by promises of work at a call centre, a growing sector in need of French-speakers. He soon discovered that it was a "job with no future", and has since established himself as a French teacher. He has written two books—"The life of a Senegalese in Morocco" and "Seven reasons why I love Morocco". Keen to build links between sub-Saharan Africans and Moroccans, he also runs a theatre troupe on the outskirts of Rabat. Despite Morocco's new migration policies and the kingdom's efforts to re-integrate with the African Union after decades outside the bloc, it is hard to gain permanent residency.

"I heard the king say on the radio that it would be a lot easier, but I have the impression that he was not heard," Mbaye said. The authorities are currently processing some 25,000 residency applications. A similar "regularisation" campaign in 2014 saw around 23,000 people gain renewable residency. It is hard to estimate how many African migrants are living in Morocco, especially as many are clandestine. Official statistics show that around 35,000 had residency in 2014, according to the OCP Policy Center. That is slightly above the number of European migrants who came for work or seeking a retirement home under the Moroccan sun. — AFP



Growing numbers of migrants create tensions, unease

## India accuses Pakistan of harassing family of 'spy' on death row

NEW DELHI: India denounced Pakistan yesterday for its handling of the visit of the wife and mother of an Indian man on death row, saying they were harassed and prevented from talking to the prisoner freely. Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav, a former officer in the Indian navy, was arrested in March 2016 in the Pakistan province of Baluchistan, where there has been a long-running conflict between security forces and separatists, and convicted of planning espionage and sabotage.

His wife and mother were allowed to meet him behind a glass window on Monday eight months after he was sentenced to death but that gesture of goodwill appeared to have quickly descended into acrimony. Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said Jadhav's family was subjected to harassment when they arrived to meet

him. "The Pakistani press was allowed on multiple occasions to approach family members closely, harass and hector them and hurl false and motivated accusations about (Shri) Jadhav," Kumar said in a statement.

Ties between the nuclear-armed neighbors are in a deep chill and Jadhav's case has added to long running tensions with each accusing the other of supporting cross-border violence. India says Jadhav is innocent and won an injunction from the World Court to delay his execution, arguing he was denied diplomatic assistance during his trial by a military court. Pakistan authorities say Jadhav confessed to being assigned by India's intelligence service to plan, coordinate and organize espionage and sabotage activities in Baluchistan "aiming to destabilize and wage war against Pakistan".

On Monday, Pakistan released a picture of Jadhav's mother, Avanti, and wife, Chetankul, seated at a desk and speaking to him from behind the glass partition. Islamabad said it had honored its commitment to give access to the family. But India said the two women were asked to change their dress and remove personal jewelry and the red dot that Hindus wear on their foreheads on the pretext of security. Jadhav's mother was not allowed to speak in her native Marathi language and was frequently interrupted. — Reuters

## Troops kill top militant in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Government forces have killed the commander of a Pakistan-based militant group in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said yesterday, as the disputed territory ended its deadliest year for a decade. Noor Mohammad Tantray, the head in the Kashmir valley of the Jaish-e-Mohammad group, was trapped in a house outside the main city of Srinagar on Monday evening along with his associates, triggering a fierce overnight gunbattle. Police described the operation as a "significant breakthrough" after Tantray's body was found under debris yesterday. Police and troops cordoned off a group of houses at Samboora, "which resulted in a fierce gunbattle leading to elimination of top JeM commander Noor Mohammad Tantray," police said in a statement.

Tantray's two associates managed to escape, a police official said on condition of anonymity. The 47-year-old JeM commander, who was only three feet tall according to police reports, was described by officials as a new "security headache" when he took over as head of the group in Indian Kashmir last year. According to police he spent 12 years in jail after being convicted in a case of militancy in 2003, but jumped parole two years later to rejoin JeM. As the news of Tantray's death spread, hundreds of residents shouting "Go, India, go back!" spilt



KASHMIR: Kashmiri villagers surround the body of militant commander Noor Mohammad Tantray during his funeral in the Aripal village of Tral district yesterday. — AFP

onto the streets, throwing stones and clashing with government forces who fired tear gas and pellet guns.

At least six protesters were injured, a police officer said. Kashmir was divided between India and Pakistan at the end of British colonial rule over the subcontinent in 1947. Both claim the entire Muslim-majority territory in full. Since 1989 rebel groups including JeM have been fighting Indian troops and police deployed in the Himalayan

territory. They seek its merger with Pakistan or its independence. The fighting has left tens of thousands, mostly civilians, dead. Violence had steadily decreased during the last decade but this year some 350 deaths have been reported following the Indian army's anti-militant offensive dubbed "Operation All-Out". Officials and rights groups say 210 suspected rebels, mostly locals, 57 civilians and 82 troops or police have been killed this year. — AFP

International

# South Africa blighted by racially charged murders

## Rural crime epidemic inflames political, racial tensions

**TZANEEN:** "They beat him with a pole... and you could hear the bones breaking," said Debbie Turner, recounting her husband's murder in a slow, defiant voice. She refuses to talk about him in the past tense and sleeps with a photo of him close by. "I miss him so terribly—it's just so hard," she said, sitting in front of the frail-care unit that has been her home since the attack at their farm. Robert "Oki" Turner, 66, was beaten to death before her eyes six months ago on their isolated stretch of mountain land in South Africa's northeastern Limpopo province. He was one of the latest victims of a long campaign of violence against the country's farmers who are largely white.

The rural crime epidemic has inflamed political and racial tensions nearly a quarter-of-a-century after the fall of apartheid. Farm murders are just one issue that reveals how South Africa is struggling with violence, an economic slowdown and divisions along race lines. The Turners moved to the verdant region, half-way between Kruger national park and Zimbabwe, some 30 years ago. On their property, which spans dozens of acres, they grew gum trees which they sold to craftsmen or for firewood.

"Until about four or five years ago, we were very open. We didn't have a key for our house—we would go away and nothing would have happened," she said. But then the extreme violence that had long afflicted major cities engulfed rural areas like theirs. Break-ins, hostage takings and killings became common—with attackers often making off with just a few hundred rand (less than \$20), a mobile phone or a hunting rifle. The Turners were targeted after nightfall on June 14 when two armed men stormed their farm. Debbie was alone after her husband stepped out to fix a water tap.

### Savagely beaten

"They said 'we want money'. I said I haven't got money," recounted Debbie. "They dragged me all over the house and put me under the shower and turned it on and left me for 15 minutes." Then they decided to try to rape me. I said 'please don't rape me, I've got HIV.'" Some time

later, Oki was found slumped motionless covered in blood after being savagely beaten by the attackers searching for the key to the couple's safe. He died in hospital a few hours later. Dozens of white farmers are murdered in similar circumstances in South Africa every year. In the absence of detailed statistics, the scope and scale of the crimes has become a battleground.

AfriForum, a pressure group that advocates on behalf of the country's nine-percent-strong white population, is one of the forces seeking to shape the debate around farm murders. "Farmers are living in remote areas, they are far from police stations," said the group's vice president, Ernst Roets. "There are political factors that play a role here. We

are concerned about hate speech, political leaders who... would say for example 'the white farmers should be blamed for everything'." He is particularly damning of Julius Malema, the firebrand leader of South Africa's radical left, who has called on his followers to "retake the land" from whites.

In 2012 President Jacob Zuma sang a struggle-era song containing the words "shoot the farmer, shoot the Boer". Agriculture, like much of South Africa's economy, remains in the hands of the white descendants of colonial-era settlers. White farmers control 73 percent of arable land in the country compared with 85 percent when apartheid ended in 1994, according to a recent study. Calls for "radical economic transformation" to benefit the black majority have gained traction as unemployment has soared. They are frequently coupled with accusations that the white minority control a disproportionate share of the nation's wealth.

### 'We built this country'

That narrative has alarmed many white rural communities. "We're being hunted," said Pauli, a 43-year-old farmer who declined to give her surname. More militant white farmers describe the violence they face as "genocide" and use the casually racist rhetoric of the apartheid era. "They (black people) truly think that we have stolen the country from them," Limpopo-based farmer Gerhardus Harmse



**TZANEEN:** Craig Koppen of private security company Canine Security takes the dogs out for a training session in Tzaneen, South Africa. A long campaign of violence against the country's farmers, who are largely white, has inflamed political and racial tensions nearly a quarter-of-a-century after the fall of apartheid.—AFP

said. "We built this country, show me anything, any place that the blacks built there isn't any. They cannot build, they destroy." The radical fringe has become increasingly vocal. Last month, some supporters flew the flag of the old white-minority government during a protest against farm murders. The demonstration called on the government to guarantee farmers special protection—something that police minister Fikile Mbalula categorically refused.

"All deaths of all South Africans must be met with disgust," wrote Mbalula in a Twitter post. "My problem is that farm murders are radicalized and politicized." While black farmers have so far been largely reluctant to march with their white colleagues, they face many of the same risks. "We don't feel protected by the government," said Vuyo Mahlali, president of the African Farmers Association of South Africa. "We need to deal with every-

one trying to utilize farming as a centre of a right-wing political discourse. That we are not going to allow."

### 'I will go back'

Feeling abandoned by the government, many white farmers have taken steps to protect themselves. Some patrol their land under moonlight, pistols tucked into their belts, to deter would-be attackers. Others undergo commando training in anticipation of the worst. Among them is Mari Swanepoel, 37, who owns a farm in Limpopo. "You have to be prepared. You have to protect yourself," said the mother-of-three. Hans Bergmann was recently assaulted on his farm, but takes a different approach. Some weeks ago, armed men broke in to rob his safe, tied him up and shot him in the foot. "In South Africa everybody thinks farmers have a lot of money," he said.—AFP

## Russian government defends opposition leader's election ban

**MOSCOW:** The Kremlin yesterday rejected concerns that its decision to ban opposition leader Alexei Navalny from running against President Vladimir Putin in a March election could undermine the vote's legitimacy. The European Union weighed in to the controversy meanwhile, warning that the ban cast "serious doubt" on the election. Russia's Central Election Commission on Monday rejected Navalny's bid to take on Putin in the March presidential poll, citing a controversial embezzlement conviction.

The 41-year-old lawyer maintains that the case against him is politically motivated. He urged his supporters to stage a "vote strike" instead. Navalny is seen by many as the only Russian opposition leader who stands a fighting chance of challenging Putin. Observers have expressed concern that barring Navalny from running would affect the legitimacy of the March poll and could affect voter turnout. "We cannot agree with this point of view," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday. He insisted that barring Navalny from running "can in no way affect the legitimacy of the election".

Peskov also said any calls to boycott the election should be "rigorously studied"—a thinly veiled threat of punishment. EU external services spokeswoman Maja Kocijancic said the ban on Navalny "casts a serious doubt on political pluralism in Russia and the prospect of democratic elections next year", in a statement yesterday. "Politically-motivated charges should not be used against political participation," she said. "We



**MOSCOW:** Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny walks along a street in Moscow, after the election commission rejected his presidential bid.—AFP

expect the Russian authorities to ensure that there is a level playing field, including in the presidential elections that will take place on 18 March."

Navalny has built a robust protest movement in the face of persistent harassment and jumped through multiple hoops as he stumped for votes across the country. On Sunday, more than 15,000 supporters from 20 cities formally endorsed his nomination bid. Earlier this month, Putin clearly indicated that Navalny would not be allowed to run. Asked why, Putin—who has refused to mention Navalny by name in public—said the opposition was hoping for a "coup" but would not succeed.—AFP

## Mexican police arrest suspect in journalist murder

**MEXICO CITY:** A man alleged to be behind the murder this year of a crime reporter in northern Mexico has been arrested by federal police, Chihuahua state Governor Javier Corral said in a statement yesterday. The suspect, identified as Juan Carlos Moreno Ochoa, alias "El Larry", was detained in the neighboring border state of Sonora on Monday and was allegedly the "intellectual author" of the

murder of journalist Miroslava Breach, the statement said. Breach was shot several times as she drove out of her garage on March 23. One of her children was with her in the car, but was not hurt.

A man alleged to be the gunman in Breach's murder, Ramon Andres Zavala, was assassinated last week in Sonora, Corral's statement said. Moreno Ochoa was scheduled to be brought before a judge later on Monday to begin proceedings against him, the statement said. Reuters was unable to locate Moreno Ochoa's lawyer. At least 16 journalists have been killed in Mexico in the last three years, and 43 since 1992, making Mexico one of the world's most dangerous countries for reporters, according to the Committee to Project Journalists.—Reuters

## Jihadists kill 45 since 'liberation' of Iraq's Hawija

**KIRKUK:** Jihadists have killed 45 people around the Iraqi town of Hawija in the nearly three months since the government declared its "liberation" from the Islamic State group, police said yesterday. The Iraqi government declared victory at the start of October over IS jihadists in Hawija, their last urban stronghold in the country located about 300 kilometers north of Baghdad. Since then, "at least 45 members of the security forces and civilians have been killed in IS attacks," said a senior police officer in Kirkuk province.

Over the same period, "the Hashed al-Shaabi pro-government militia, police and paramilitary units have killed 288 jihadists and arrested another 55," the officer told AFP. Iraqi military expert Sarmad al-Bayati said the presence of the jihadists "still represents a real threat to the region". Bayati said the IS extremists hide during day but "have total control of certain areas at night." According to jihadist expert Hisham Al-Hashemi, around 3,000 members of the Iraqi security forces were stretched thin over 18,000 square kilometers — an area larger than Kuwait.

Bayati said the jihadists were still carrying out "attacks and kidnappings and because of that, many displaced people are refusing to return home". A senior police official who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity said Iraqi forces had "concentrated on the town and main roads during the operation to liberate Hawija". "Some jihadists surrendered" during the assault but others took refuge in the Hamrin mountains, valleys and underground hideouts, the official added. Those who stayed behind had no other choice but to fight to the death, according to an Iraqi army general who also wanted to remain anonymous.

They "threaten residents who have family members in the security forces or who provide information to the troops. They have already killed several," said the general.—AFP

## Nigeria army thwarts Boko Haram attack

**KANO:** Boko Haram jihadists made a failed Christmas Day attempt to attack Nigeria's major northeast city of Maiduguri as they were pushed out by Nigerian soldiers after a prolonged gun battle, military and militia sources said. The jihadists in "several" pickup trucks opened fire on a military checkpoint on the Molai outskirts of the city at around 5:30 pm on Monday, triggering a gun fight that lasted for more than an hour. "The terrorists came in several pickups and engaged troops at Molai who fought and repelled the attack with aerial support," said a senior military officer in Maiduguri. "It was clear they wanted to overrun the checkpoint and enter the city to cause mayhem," said the military officer who requested anonymity.

The gunmen used the cover of a convoy of civilian vehicles under military escort returning from the town of Dambao, 90 kilometers away, to launch the attack, said Ibrahim Liman, a militia leader assisting the Nigerian army in fighting the Islamists. "One of the Boko Haram vehicles infiltrated the middle section of a civilian convoy...and engaged soldiers," Liman said. Boko Haram reinforcements lurk-

ing in the nearby Cashew Plantation and Jiddari Polo areas joined in the battle, Liman added. The fighting prompted Molai residents to flee into Maiduguri and the influx caused panic among residents.

Troop reinforcements from the city were deployed to Molar and helped in repelling the attack, the military source said. It was not possible to immediately establish the number of casualties as the scene of the fighting was cordoned off by troops after the gunmen were pushed out at 7:20 pm, Liman said. Security had been tightened in Maiduguri for the Christmas weekend in anticipation of possible Boko Haram attacks. Police issued a statement asking residents to be vigilant and report suspicious persons and abandoned objects to security personnel.

Earlier Monday, troops in nearby Yobe state gunned down 10 jihadists who tried to attack a military post on a highway linking the two states, according to militia leader Mustapha Karimbe. "Soldiers killed 10 of the terrorists and recovered four pickups while the rest fled," Karimbe said. Boko Haram's eight-year insurgency has killed 20,000 people and displaced 2.6 million more in Nigeria. In recent months attacks on military and civilian targets as well as raids on remote villages in the northeast have increased. The surge in attacks has been attributed to Boko Haram's desperate search for much-needed weapons and food supplies following military offensives which cut off the militants' supply routes.—AFP

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## International

# Liberians head to the polls in historic and delayed election

## Former world footballer squaring up against vice president

MONROVIA: Liberia went to the polls yesterday for a presidential election that voters hope will mark the country's first democratic transfer of power in over seven decades, despite it being tarnished by allegations of fraud. Former world footballer of the year George Weah is squaring up against vice president Joseph Boakai, with both men promising a break with a heritage of poverty and corruption in a country where most citizens have no reliable electricity or clean drinking water. They are bidding to succeed Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in a run-off vote delayed for over a month after Boakai and third-placed Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party alleged widespread fraud in October's first-round vote, a challenge that the Supreme Court rejected this month.

There were no early reports of violence as voting proceeded under sunny skies in the capital Monrovia, with polling stations opening at 0800 GMT and election agents telling Reuters their first indications pointed to a lower turnout than in the first round. "It is great day for Liberia - a test day for democracy," said Boakai after casting his vote in Paynesville. "We will accept the results provided they meet all the standards." Johnson Sirleaf's 12-year rule cemented peace in the West African country after civil war ended in 2003, and brought in much needed aid.

But critics, including much of the country's youth, say her administration was marred by corruption and that she did little to raise most Liberians out of dire poverty. Liberia was also racked by the Ebola crisis, which killed

thousands in the country between 2014 and 2016, while a drop in iron ore prices since 2014 has dented export revenues. Yesterday's poll follows a month of political tensions fuelled by claims that the first-round poll was rigged in Weah's favor. Weah, world footballer of the year in 1995, won with 38 percent versus Boakai's 29 percent.

"I voted George Weah because I believe that he will do better for me and my country. I want change," said Miama Kamara, a 32-year-old businesswoman, before casting her ballot in the capital. Boakai's ruling Unity Party had accused Johnson Sirleaf, who is herself a member of the party, of interfering in the October vote by holding private meetings with election magistrates. Boakai has found it harder to convince voters that he will bring change, given that he worked alongside Johnson Sirleaf for 12 years. Weah, by contrast, has won the hearts of mostly young Liberians through his star performances for Europe's biggest football teams in the 1990s.

His arrival at a polling station in Paynesville was met with cheers by a crowd of supporters. "My focus now is to win," he told reporters. "From there, I am going to get on the drawing board with my team and then we'll put a plan together to move our country forward." Some however are wary of Weah's lack of political experience, education and concrete policy. "Boakai understands diplomacy," said McArthur Nuah Kermah, a school registrar in Paynesville. "Weah is not experienced and doesn't know the workings of government." —Reuters



MONROVIA: Liberian voters queue at a polling station in Monrovia as they prepare to cast their votes for the second round of presidential elections yesterday. —AFP



### First democratic transfer of power in over 7 decades

#### News in brief

##### Bangladesh activist arrested

DHAKA: Bangladesh police arrested a 25-year-old social media activist as he tried to leave the country on charges that he defamed Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, (PBUH) authorities said yesterday. Immigration police detained Asaduzzaman Noor, known as Asad Noor on his YouTube channel, at Dhaka airport on Monday evening, inspector Mohammad Shahidullah said. "The charge against him is that he hurt religious feeling by mocking Prophet Mohammed and made bad comments against Islam, the prophet and the Koran on Facebook and YouTube," he said. Shahidullah said hundreds of Muslims staged demonstrations against Noor this year in the southern coastal town of Amtali after the head of an Islamic seminary filed a case against him. Noor was charged under Bangladesh's strict internet laws and could face up to 14 years in jail if found guilty. Rights groups have accused the Bangladesh government of muzzling dissent and targeting atheist bloggers who have used social media to criticize religion.

##### Avalanche kills die

ZURICH: Three people have died in separate avalanche accidents in the Swiss Alps, police said yesterday. A man who was skiing close to the 2,844-metre high Hofthorn, in the southern canton of Wallis, died after being carried away by an avalanche on Monday morning. The 39-year-old from the Wallis region was quickly found and recovered by his friends but was confirmed dead at the scene by emergency services. Police in Graubunden, in the east of Switzerland, said a tourist who went missing on Saturday had also been found dead. The 31-year-old Frenchman had tried to climb the Glatzwang mountain alone on Saturday afternoon after skiing with his girlfriend. When he did not return, a search was launched and the man's body was found in a ravine on Sunday morning. Police said he had triggered an avalanche on his descent which carried him more than a kilometer over rocky terrain.

##### EFCC targets suspects

LAGOS: The former campaign chief of Nigeria's ex-president Goodluck Jonathan has been arrested for allegedly stealing \$48.5 million from state coffers to fund his failed 2015 re-election bid, an official said yesterday. Ngozi Olojeme was head of Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) and siphoned off this amount from the fund, an official from the national anti-corruption agency EFCC said. "She is in our custody for an alleged fraud totaling \$48,485,127 belonging to NSITF," he said, and added that the EFCC had also seized 38 properties traced to Olojeme. "The properties have been placed under an interim forfeiture in line with a court injunction pending further investigation and trial," he said. Key members of the Jonathan administration have been arrested and charged with corruption by the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, who won the 2015 election. Buhari's electoral pledges included a promise to rid Nigeria of endemic corruption which has stunted its growth.

##### Gunmen kill 10 villagers

KANO: Gunmen have killed 10 people in attacks on two Christian-dominated villages in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna, a hotbed of ethnic and religious strife, officials said yesterday. On Christmas Eve, six people were killed when gunmen suspected to be ethnic Fulani Muslims stormed Ungwan Mailafiya, they said. The killings followed an attack in nearby Nindem late Friday where gunmen opened fire on a congregation, killing four and injuring 10, said a local lawmaker. "While we were mourning the deaths at Nindem ... the security personnel received distress calls of another attack at Ungwan Mailafiya", parliamentarian Shehu Nicholas Garba said in a statement. "By daybreak on Christmas, six persons had been confirmed killed, including a child of about six years old, and many others injured," he said. A spokesman from the state government said troops had been deployed to prevent further violence.

## Boakai: Liberia vice president shaking off sleepy image

MONROVIA: Vice-president since 2005, Joseph Boakai has campaigned for president as a natural transition candidate after helping to ensure peace has prevailed in Liberia after back-to-back civil wars. Boakai went head-to-head with former football star George Weah yesterday's long-delayed run-off for the presidency after trailing him in most of the country in the first round of voting. Weah won 38.4 percent of votes on October 10, while Boakai came in second with 28.8 percent, triggering a second round as neither man had more than 50 percent of the vote.

Boakai has since led a losing Supreme Court battle against the National Elections Commission (NEC) alleging fraud and irregularities marred the vote. The failed complaint delayed the second round for seven weeks. He has also accused President Ellen Sirleaf, a member of his own party, of supporting Weah—a claim bolstered by a joint public event held by

## Federal agents found fetuses in warehouse

WASHINGTON: Federal agents discovered four preserved fetuses in the Detroit warehouse of a man who sold human body parts, confidential photographs reviewed by Reuters show. The fetuses were found during a December 2013 raid of businessman Arthur Rathburn's warehouse. The fetuses, which appear to have been in their second trimester, were submerged in a liquid that included human brain tissue.

Rathburn, a former body broker, is accused of defrauding customers by sending them diseased body parts. He has pleaded not guilty and his trial is set for January. How Rathburn acquired the fetuses and what he intended to do with them is unclear. Rathburn's lawyers did not respond to requests for comment, and neither the indictment nor other documents made public in his case mention the fetuses. "This needs to be reviewed," said US Representative Marsha Blackburn, a Republican from Tennessee who recently chaired a special US House committee on the use of fetal tissue.

Blackburn recoiled when a Reuters reporter showed her some of the photographs, taken by government officials involved in the raid. In four of the photos, a crime scene investigator in a hazmat suit uses forceps to lift a different fetus from the brownish liquid. In three other photos, a marker that includes a government evidence identification number lies beside a fetus. "The actions depicted in these photos are an insult to human dignity," said US Representative Bob Goodlatte, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

A Republican from Virginia, Goodlatte said that if individuals "violate federal laws and traffic in body parts of unborn children

the president and the footballer on Thursday. Presenting himself as an everyman who transcended his humble beginnings, Boakai has attempted to craft a more energetic image after earning the unfortunate title of "Sleepy Joe" for his propensity to fall asleep at public events.

Boakai, 72, has also had to undertake a delicate balancing act to promote his record in government while his feud with Sirleaf has cracked into the open. His Unity Party has struggled to deliver economic prosperity alongside peace, and Boakai has pledged to invest in infrastructure and to alleviate the extreme poverty still suffered by most Liberians. "We need to assure the people that this time they are going to see progress, that they will see corruption going away," he said in an interview.

Born in a village in northern Lofa County as the fifth of six children, Boakai passed through a succession of family members' homes while growing up, leaving behind his disabled mother and soon learning to take care of himself. Against the odds he secured a good education by working as a cleaner to pay his fees, before chancing upon Sirleaf's sons in the same dormitory at university. Boakai then served as agriculture minister under former president Samuel Doe, who was brutally murdered in 1990.

A father of four, Boakai benefits from the backing of older voters who value the stability his party has brought after living through civil wars between 1989 and 2003. "He will be able to continue where this outgoing government left off," explained supporter Samuel Gbazeki, 64. "To rebuild after war is very costly. This government has done some tremendous things," he said. Others are concerned that

for monetary gain," they should be "held accountable." Blackburn said the discoveries in Rathburn's warehouse raise questions about the practices of body brokers across America. Such brokers take cadavers donated to science, dismember them and sell them for parts, typically for use in medical research and education. The multimillion-dollar industry has been built largely on the poor, who donate their bodies in return for a free cremation of leftover body parts.

The buying and selling of cadavers and other body parts - with the exception of organs used in transplants - is legal and virtually unregulated in America. But trading in fetal tissue violates US law. In most states, including Michigan, public health authorities are not required to regularly inspect body broker facilities. As a result, it's impossible to know whether body brokers who deal in adult donors are acquiring and profiting from fetuses.

Blackburn's call for action came in response to a Reuters series that exposed abuses in the human body trade and what Blackburn called "lax oversight" and "lax enforcement" of the industry. Photos from inside Rathburn's warehouse offered a stark example of government failures to police the industry. They include images of rotting human heads, some floating face up in a plastic cooler. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has been investigating Rathburn and other body brokers, declined to comment.

Blackburn said she found other Reuters stories about the body trade disturbing. As part of the news agency's examination of the industry, for example, a Reuters reporter was able to purchase two human heads and a cervical spine from Restore Life USA, a broker based in Blackburn's home state of Tennessee. The deals were struck after just a few emails, at a cost of \$900 plus shipping. "It is sickening" how easily Restore Life sold the parts to Reuters, Blackburn said. Told of Blackburn's concerns, Restore Life owner James Byrd said his company has "invited her to tour our facility and to review the policy and procedures we have in place." —Reuters



MONROVIA: Liberia's vice president and candidate in the presidential election, Joseph Nyumah Boakai (right) arrives to a meeting with members of the Poulhe community in Monrovia. —AFP

his court battle has distracted from his message of dependability and continuity in a country with a history of electoral violence. "I know that the outcome of the court has somehow demoralized some partisans," said supporter Herbert Nagbe. "Now that the court has clarified things we have no option but to go for the political fight," he added. —AFP

## Weah: Ex-football star who could be Liberia next leader

MONROVIA: George Weah emerged from Liberia's slums to become a superstar footballer in the 1990s, and has leveraged his status as a revered figure among the country's young and poor in his second run for the presidency. Weah faced Vice President Joseph Boakai in yesterday's presidential run-off, the culmination of 12 years spent building political credibility to match his huge popularity. "You know I've been in competitions—tough ones too and I came out victorious."

So I know Boakai cannot defeat me," Weah said ahead of the vote. "I have the people on my side." The first African player to win both FIFA's World Player of the Year trophy and the Ballon d'Or, Weah was largely absent from Liberia during the 1989-2003 civil war period, playing for a string of top-flight European teams including Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan.

After running unsuccessfully for the presidency in 2005, when he was defeated by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Weah says he has "gained experience" since becoming a senator in 2014. Another fruitless run for the vice-presidency on the ticket of presidential candidate Winston Tubman in 2011 brought him to further prominence among the nation's voters, many of whom say this time it is "Weah's turn".

Weah, 51, has put education, job creation and infrastructure at the centre of his platform—in line with Boakai—and won 38.4 percent of votes in the first round election on October 10, while Boakai came second with 28.8 percent.



George Weah

### Beloved by young and poor

Younger voters overwhelmingly favor Weah, who is idolized in his country as "Mister George". A member of the Kru ethnic group, Weah was raised by his grandmother on a reclaimed swamp in one of the worst slums of the capital Monrovia. "Grassroots citizens identify with George Weah, considering that he is close to their day-to-day experience," explained Ibrahim Al-Bakri Nyei, a Liberian political analyst at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

His critics say the high school dropout, who later completed a degree, is unprepared to lead a country. "George Weah is a good, humble and respectful person that should not be given the Liberian presidency, because he is being controlled by an evil hand," said Benoni Urey, a losing presidential candidate who switched his allegiance to Boakai. Urey and others say Weah is being manipulated by Sirleaf so she can continue to push an agenda when she steps down after 12 years in power. But many voters see a poor boy from the slums who made good against the odds. "I believe that whenever we give him a chance, he will be able to give a better Liberia to the youth and the homeless," Andrew Janjay Johnson, a shoeshiner in a Monrovia market said.

### 'Vague' platform

Critics also accuse Weah's Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) of having too vague a political platform, and have challenged his long absences from the senate since being elected in a race he won over Sirleaf's son. Weah has also fended off barbs over his vice-presidential pick, Jewel Howard-Taylor, the ex-wife of jailed former president and warlord Charles Taylor. Howard-Taylor however is also a respected senator in her own right, bringing him important votes in the key county of Bong, and along with Sirleaf is one of few powerful women in Liberian public life. —AFP



International

# China, Pakistan, Afghanistan agree on terror cooperation

## Three nations eye \$57 billion economic corridor

**BEIJING:** Ministers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and China met in Beijing yesterday where they agreed to work together to tackle the threat of terrorism tied to China's vast western Xinjiang region. The first trilateral meeting of foreign ministers from the countries comes as China steps up its investment in its neighboring nations as part of its trillion-dollar One Belt One Road investment initiative. China depends on Afghanistan and Pakistan to help control Xinjiang's borders, where analysts say Beijing's repressive policies have engendered riots and terrorist attacks by members of the mostly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority that calls the area home, although China disputes the claim.

Beijing regularly accuses exiled Uighur separatist groups such as the shadowy East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) of orchestrating attacks in resource-rich Xinjiang and other parts of China. It has expressed concern about Uighur militants finding sanctuary in Afghanistan and Pakistan. "We agreed to cooperate in fighting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and without any distinctions of any sort," said Afghan foreign minister Salahuddin Rabbani after the meeting. Afghanistan will continue its "resolute fight against ETIM and their support groups and networks, and overall counterterrorism cooperation", he added.

China has long pushed the international community for support in addressing the problem, which it says stems

from the infiltration of "radical" religious groups into Xinjiang. In response, Beijing has placed strict controls on religious practice in the region, turning it into a virtual police state, in a campaign that analysts say has enflamed separatist sentiment. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said the three parties had reached complete consensus in fighting terrorism, adding that China would also "fully leverage" Xinjiang as a base for economic cooperation with the bordering countries.

China's Belt and Road infrastructure project seeks to revive ancient trade routes, including a massive overland network stretching through Xinjiang and neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan towards Europe. China's expanding economic presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan has also brought some terrorism related setbacks. This summer two Chinese citizens travelling on business visas to Pakistan

were kidnapped in Quetta, the provincial capital of mineral-rich Balochistan province.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for killing them. Pakistan said at the time that the two had been engaged in illegal preaching.

China and Pakistan will look at extending their \$57 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, Chinese Foreign Minister said yesterday, part of China's ambitious Belt and Road plan linking China with Asia,



**BEIJING:** China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi (center), Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani (left) and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif take part in a joint press conference after the first China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue yesterday. —AFP

Europe and beyond. China has tried to position itself as a helpful party to promote talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan, both uneasy neighbors ever since Pakistan's independence in 1947. Their ties have been poisoned in recent years by Afghan accusations that Pakistan is supporting Taliban insurgents fighting the US-backed Kabul in order to limit the influence of its old rival, India, in Afghanistan.

Pakistan denies that and says it wants to see a peaceful,

stable Afghanistan. Speaking after the first trilateral meeting between the foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Wang said China hoped the economic corridor could benefit the whole region and act as an impetus for development. Afghanistan has urgent need to develop and improve people's lives and hopes it can join inter-connectivity initiatives, Wang told reporters, as he announced that Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to mend their strained relations.—Agencies



### China steps up its investment in its neighboring nations

## Philippines investigates firms over deadly fire

**MANILA:** The Philippines said yesterday it would investigate whether safety regulations were ignored at an office where a fire killed 37 call centre employees and vowed to impose sanctions if firms had not met standards. The remains of 37 employees of the US-based Research Now SSI killed by Saturday's fire in Davao City have been recovered and a criminal investigation will be launched by the Justice Department. Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello said he had instructed the government's workplace health and safety agency and the Labor Ministry's regional office in Davao, President Rodrigo Duterte's hometown, to investigate if there were lapses in safety standards.

The fire broke out at a furniture store on the third level of the 14-year-old New City Commercial Center and quickly engulfed an outsourcing business on the upper floor, based on an initial report from the city government. "We will immediately look into possible violations of some safety and health standards," Bello said. "We may not issue any clearance to operate," he said when asked to clarify sanctions that could be imposed on the mall or call centre management if culpable. The fire is a setback for the Philippines' \$23 billion business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, which is an economic lifeline in the country of more than 100 million. The sector employs about 1.15 million people, with jobs forecast to grow to 1.8 million by 2025.

Along with remittances from overseas workers, BPO revenues are a major earner of foreign exchange for the country, driving what is one of Asia's fastest-growing economies. The BPO Industry Employees Network (BIEN) has expressed concern about postings on social media that said the building was made of sub-standard materials, had locked its fire exits, and had not held fire drills. It was not possible to immediately check the accuracy of the postings. BIEN said the government should look into every BPO firm's compliance with occupational health and safety standards.

#### Seeking justice

"Justice must be served to the victims and those accountable must be penalized so as to avoid future workplace



**DAVAO:** A funeral worker looks at the body bags of mall fire victims after forensic processing at a funeral house in Davao City on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao yesterday. —AFP

deaths," BIEN said in a statement. On Monday night, Duterte told relatives of victims that the National Bureau of Investigation, police and fire protection bureau would get to the bottom of the disaster. "The truth will come out," he said.

Research Now SSI has confirmed 37 of its 500 employees in its Davao call centre were "lost" in the fire. It did not immediately respond to a Reuters query on Tuesday about safety protocols at its Davao office. The company has offices in Texas, California, New York and Toronto and more than 3,500 market research, consulting, media, healthcare and corporate clients. In a Sunday statement, it said it was helping to support funeral arrangements and would create a fund for contributions to help victims' families.

The Call Centre Association of the Philippines (CCAP) said it was waiting for a full report from Research Now SSI, but saw no problem with its members meeting workplace safety standards. "We always comply with government safety regulations because our priority is the welfare of all our employees," CCAP President Jojo Uligan said. But the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) said safety standards were not being adhered to and the labor department and companies were not living up to their responsibilities to enforce and comply. "This deaths-causing fire could have been minimized to the barest damage to property," ALU-TUCP spokesman Alan Tanjusay said.—Reuters

## China hands down harshest sentence yet in crackdown on activists

**BEIJING:** China sentenced a prominent rights activist to eight years in jail for subversion yesterday, his lawyer said, the harshest sentence passed in a government crackdown on activism that began more than two years ago. In a separate case, a rights lawyer avoided criminal punishment despite being found guilty of inciting subversion, because he admitted his crimes, the Chinese court trying him said. Wu Gan, a blogger better known by his online name "Super Vulgar Butcher", plans to appeal against the eight-year sentence handed down by the Tianjin Municipality's No 2 Intermediate People's Court, his lawyer, Yan Xin said. The harshness of the sentence prompted the German embassy in Beijing to issue a statement expressing disappointment.

Wu regularly championed sensitive cases of government abuses of power, both online and in street protests. He was detained in May 2015 and charged with subversion. The activist criticized China's political system online and used performance art to create disturbances, as well as insulting people and spreading false information, according to a statement from the court posted on its website. "He carried out a string of criminal actions to subvert state power and overthrow the socialist system

and seriously harmed state security and social stability," the court said.

Before his arrest, Wu used his platform to cast doubt on the official version of events in an incident in early May 2015, in which a police officer shot a petitioner in a train station in northern Heilongjiang province. Wu's refusal to bow to pressure or admit guilt likely explains his harsh sentence, said Kit Chan, Hong Kong-based director of China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group. "Wu Gan is being punished for his non-conformity," she said. His sentence is the most severe in what rights groups have called an unprecedented attack on China's rights activists and lawyers, known as the 709 crackdown, which began in full force on July 9, 2015.

The hardline approach to rights activism has shown no sign of softening as Chinese President Xi Jinping enters his second five-year term in office. In the other case concluded yesterday, rights lawyer Xie Yang received no punishment after being found guilty of inciting subversion and disrupting court order, the Changsha Intermediate People's Court said on social media. The court released a video of the proceedings, in which Xie said he accepted the outcome and would not appeal. He also thanked authorities and said he will be a law-abiding citizen.

Xie had worked on numerous cases deemed sensitive by Chinese authorities, such as defending supporters of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests. In May, he confessed to the charges against him in what rights groups called a scripted "sham" trial. In January, Xie's wife and lawyer released detailed accounts of tor-



**TIANJIN:** Yan Xin (left) and Ge Yongxi, lawyers for activist Wu Gan known by the online pseudonym 'Super Vulgar Butcher', sit at a hotel after Wu was sentenced at a court in Tianjin yesterday. —AFP

ture suffered by Xie at the hands of the authorities, which were widely reported on in the international media. Chinese state media branded those reports "fake news" and said the accounts were concocted as a means of gaining attention. Xie's lawyer told Reuters he stands by the account.

"In both cases these have been serious concerns about violations of due process of law," the German embassy in Beijing said in a statement. The decision to hand down both sentences the day

after Christmas, when there would likely be less attention from diplomats and international observers, "reeks of cynical political calculation", said Patrick Poon, Hong Kong-based researcher for Amnesty International. Asked about the verdicts, China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing that Amnesty is biased when it comes to China and should not be believed, adding that China abides by the rule of law.—Reuters

## Peru former leader ask for forgiveness

**LIMA:** Peru's ailing ex-president Alberto Fujimori yesterday asked the public for forgiveness, two days after receiving a controversial pardon from the country's current leader. "I am aware that the results of my government were well received on one side, but I admit that I have let down other compatriots, and I ask them to forgive me with all my heart," Fujimori said in a Facebook video filmed from his hospital bed. The 79-year-old had been serving a 25-year sentence for corruption and human rights abuses committed during his time in office from 1990 to 2000. He was transferred from his prison cell to a hospital on Saturday after suffering from low blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat, the latest in a string of hospitalizations for the ex-leader.

Peruvian police on Monday fired tear gas and clashed with protesters marching against the pardon of ailing ex-president Alberto Fujimori, who was serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses. Current President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski ordered the pardon of Fujimori and seven other prisoners on Sunday on humanitarian grounds, once again placing himself in the middle of a political crisis just days after he avoided impeachment. On Monday, protesters called for the departure from office of Kuczynski, who later defended his decision in a televised message to the nation.

"Out, out PPK! Out, out PPK!" angry demonstrators chanted in reference to the president, who had promised during his electoral campaign the previous year that he would not free Fujimori. "Fujimori, murderer and thief. No to the pardon!" read one of the signs held by the protesters, some of whom also carried a giant Peruvian flag. Relatives of victims of Fujimori's brutal rule took part in the march. "We are here as relatives to reject this illegal pardon, because it does not correspond to the gravity of the crimes," Gisella Ortiz, representative of a group of families of victims, told reporters.

A strong force of anti-riot police moved through the streets of Lima and sought to prevent the demonstrators from heading to the clinic where Fujimori is hospitalized, firing tear gas canisters and erecting barricades to disperse them. A cameraman from the state television station TV Peru was beaten by police and was being treated in hospital, the station's president Hugo Coya wrote on Twitter.

#### Failed impeachment bid

On Monday night, Kuczynski defended his decision to pardon Fujimori. "I am convinced that those of us who feel democratic should not allow Alberto Fujimori to die in prison, because justice is not revenge," Kuczynski said. "It is about the health and chances of life of a former president of Peru who, having committed excesses and grave errors, was sentenced and has already completed 12 years" in prison, he said. The president had earlier said his decision to grant the pardon relied on a medical evaluation that Fujimori suffered a progressive and incurable illness and that conditions in prison "represent a grave risk to his life."

But the move came after Fujimori's son Kenji drained votes away from a parliamentary bid Thursday to impeach Kuczynski on suspicion of corruption, sparking speculation the pardon was political. The condition of Alberto Fujimori, 79, was "delicate" and "a decision will be made" based on how he responds to treatment at the Centenario Clinic, a doctor at the facility, Alejandro Aguinaga, told reporters. He said there was no prospect of Fujimori leaving soon.

Fujimori was transferred from his cell to a clinic Saturday suffering from low blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat. "He remains in intensive care. His condition is favorable but other tests are necessary," Aguinaga said. He said the ex-president had already undergone scans of his brain and heart, and stated that the cardiac problem was accentuating "various degenerative pathologies."

Fujimori has been hospitalized on several previous occasions, the last time in September, and has had heart, back and stomach trouble as well as several operations to remove cancerous growths from his tongue.—Agencies

## Analysis

Kuwait Times  
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CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24835619  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Voters warm to secret services

In the early hours of Tuesday in the northern UK cities of Sheffield and Chesterfield, armed police blew open doors of homes and a Muslim community center, arresting four men aged between 22 and 41. Scanty information given to the news media spoke of a planned "Christmas bomb attack," now presumably averted. The police, it emerged, were acting on information given by the secret services, probably the domestic service, MI5.

Britain has suffered four Islamist militant attacks this year, with 35 people killed, 22 of these mainly young people at a concert in Manchester. There has been one apparent "revenge" attack, when a man drove into a crowd of worshippers outside of a London mosque, killing one. Nine allegedly planned attacks have been averted by the secret services - which, with the police, are monitoring some 3,000 people who might prove dangerous. Law enforcers cannot, as they constantly repeat, always foil every plot, but so far they may have stopped the worst.

Fear of attacks - however infrequently they occur - has changed public perceptions of security agencies. The fear prompts support for, even dependence on, the work of the secret services; institutions which now, in the Western world, stand high in popular esteem and with strong public support for more resources and powers.

## Skepticism

Security forces not been uniformly admired, and usually not at all in liberal society, which maintains a suspicion of their methods and motive. Liberals and leftists can see them - as Noam Chomsky has said of the CIA - as agencies existing to do "ugly stuff". Skepticism of the services' actions has a long and honorable history, rooted in the fear of loss of democratic control.

In his memoirs, the former US Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1949-53) wrote that he warned President Harry Truman that the CIA, which came into existence in his presidency (1945-53), would become too powerful - "neither he, the National Security Council nor anyone else would be in a position to know what it was doing or to control it."

These anxieties were neither groundless nor misplaced. America, unlike several European countries, did not have an organized spy agency until World War Two, and the country's congenial bias against an overweening state, as well as the brutal examples of both the Nazi SS and the Soviet Union's KGB, lay behind Acheson's warning.

Thus, though constrained by politicians, the judiciary and the press, the US intelligence services remain on constant probation. It is an attitude of suspicion justified, many believed, by the 2014 revelations of Edward Snowden, who disclosed that the National Security Agency was collecting the phone records of millions of Americans and had tapped directly into the servers of international firms like Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Yahoo.

## Extraordinary Shift

The protests over the surveillance have been largely forgotten. In an extraordinary shift in public sentiment, the American secret services, battered by a president who veers between praise and vitriol for the agencies, have now emerged as defenders of constitutional propriety, and thus democracy. To this add the role they and police forces play in uncovering and averting terrorist attacks - with many more successes after the 9/11 attacks to concentrate minds - and the result is an implicit agreement between most of the left and the right that the secret services are the nation's stalwart defenders.

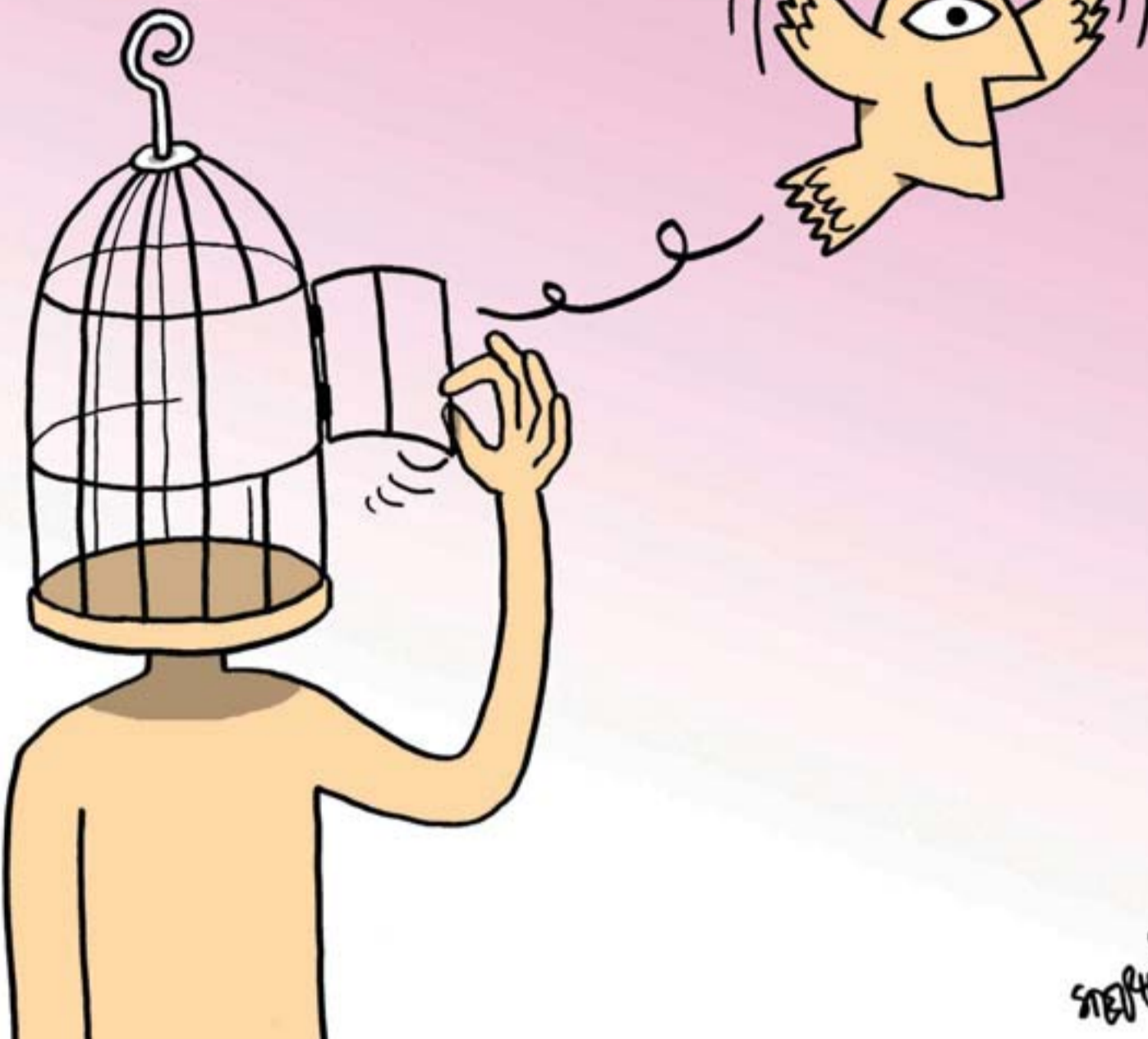
So it is in much of Western Europe. The heads of the British agencies, traditionally men and women who lived in the deepest obscurity, now from time to time give speeches - usually, as Andrew Parker, head of MI5 did in October, to warn that the "terrorist threat from Islamist extremists" is increasing. "That threat is multidimensional, evolving rapidly, and operating at a scale and pace we've not seen before," said Parker. These warnings, whether by design or not, increase public dependence on the agencies - which have, over the past few years, seen a huge increase in staffing and resources.

European agencies go through similar cycles: French spies, once rocked by accusations of spying on journalists and political rivals on the secret orders of President Nicolas Sarkozy, now claim to have won independence from presidential meddling and are recognized as among the best agents in the world. They are aggressively recruiting communications specialists and linguists to assist them in preventing the kind of extremist attacks that made 2015 and 2016 into some of the bloodiest in Europe.

The German government is greatly increasing the budgets of both its domestic and foreign agencies, and pouring much of the increased money into wider and closer surveillance of communications - a move that sparked sharp debate in a country still sensitive to accusations of secret service power, but usually obtaining wide public support.

In Italy, a 2007 law ended the deep and sometimes venomous divisions between the Italian services, placing them under control of a Security Intelligence Department, itself responsible to the prime minister. The agencies now claim that "past memories of ... inefficiencies" are distant (an optimistic boast), as are alleged secret service links to the 1980 bombing of the Bologna train station that killed 85. The security services, the object of vast amounts of fiction, good and bad, have emerged in the past year as a democratic fact. —Reuters

## Cartoon for the Soul



## Zimbabwe farmers brace for return of pests

Farmers in Zimbabwe are anxiously watching their crops, fearing the return of a plethora of new pests that recently spread to the southern African nation and devastated harvests this year. Many cannot afford pesticide - or lack the knowledge - to control fall armyworm, tomato leafminer, cotton mealybug and other newcomer pests that arrived as climate change creates warmer, more conducive conditions. "We don't know what is happening," said Lovemore Muradzikwa, a small-scale maize farmer in the Mafuke area of eastern Zimbabwe, who said he has already seen some of the pests return. "There are small worms destroying our crops. They are eating even wild plants. We don't know what they are," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Shifting weather patterns linked to climate change - including longer droughts and more intense rainfall - are making farming more uncertain across much of southern Africa. And the arrival of new pests - some of them adapted to the changing conditions - is making life even harder for the region's embattled farmers. "A few farmers have done research about these pests and many poor farmers don't know what to do. We don't know why we are now experiencing these pests which we never experienced before," said Muradzikwa.

## Squashing Worms

Fall armyworm destroyed 20 percent of the country's maize crop last season, according to government figures, at a

time when the country was recovering from devastating drought that had left more than 4 million people dependent on food aid. The pest is a native of the Americas and was first spotted in Africa in 2016. It has since spread across the continent. Zimbabwe's Deputy Agriculture Minister Davis Mharapira said the country is prepared for a possible out-

break this season. "Our agricultural extension officers are on the ground teaching farmers across the country about fall armyworm. We are advising farmers to report any sightings of fall armyworm as soon as possible," Mharapira said in a telephone interview. Fall armyworm was first seen in Zimbabwe in September 2016, and became more prevalent in January and February when it was spotted across the country, according

to a joint report by the government and UN agencies. Some farmers "resorted to handpicking and squashing the worms in an attempt to control them", or used pesticides. But 60 percent of farms affected by the pests did not take any measures to control them, resulting in extensive damage to crops, the 2017 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report said. Many countries in Africa have reported other new crop pests and diseases including banana bunchy top virus in Mozambique, South Africa and Malawi, and maize lethal necrosis in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, and elsewhere.

Globally, the spread of pests and diseases across borders has increased dramatically in recent years with trade playing a role as well as climate change, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Lawrence Nyagwande, a plant expert and the Manicaland manager of Environment Africa, a non-governmental organization, said climate change in Zimbabwe was creating warmer conditions conducive for new crop pests and diseases. "Agriculture extension officers must work hard to educate farmers about these new pests," he said.

Blessing Zimunya, a farmer and traditional leader in Chitoro area, south of Mutare in eastern Zimbabwe's Manicaland Province, said farmers fear the return of fall armyworm this season. "We are not sure yet whether we will face the same armyworm problem this season. Many farmers were caught unawares ... Farmers do not have knowledge about these new pests," Zimunya said. —Reuters

“ Farmers do not have knowledge about these new pests ”

break this season. "Our agricultural extension officers are on the ground teaching farmers across the country about fall armyworm. We are advising farmers to report any sightings of fall armyworm as soon as possible," Mharapira said in a telephone interview. Fall armyworm was first seen in Zimbabwe in September 2016, and became more prevalent in January and February when it was spotted across the country, according

## From big screen to big impact: Five celebrities who give back

Popularity and awareness of social enterprises - businesses that trade to address social problems - has flourished in recent years. From A-list actors to celebrity chefs, here are five famous faces running businesses with a mission to do good:

## Hugh Jackman

Famous for playing character Wolverine in the "X-Men" series of films, Australian actor Hugh Jackman first stuck his tungsten talons into social enterprise in 2011 after a trip to Ethiopia. On the trip Jackman helped out local coffee farmer Dukale for a day and saw coffee traded, sparking an interest in fair trade which ensures growers get a fair price for their crop. Laughing Man coffee was founded in 2011 to trade directly with growers, with a Laughing Man coffee shop opening in New York's Manhattan.

Next came a tie-up with Keurig, a popular coffee machine in the United States with Laughing Man pods now available. Keurig then introduced Jackman to Kroger, a major US supermarket chain, according to CBS News. Laughing Man coffee is now available in 1,800 stores across the United States. All the profits go towards education, community development and new business development projects in the developing world, according to the Laughing Man website.

## Rosario Dawson

US actress Rosario Dawson, star of "Men in Black II" and "Sin City", launched her social enterprise Studio 189 with best friend Abrima Erwiah in 2013 after travelling in Africa, according to the project's website. Studio 189 sells clothes that challenge the idea of cheap, mass produced, fast fashion with the garments handmade in Ghana with a focus on African patterns and fabrics while paying a

decent wage to the people who create them. Studio 189 is a part of the United Nations Ethical Fashion Initiative which aims to build a responsible fashion industry where workers earn a living wage in good conditions while also protecting the environment.

## Pharrell Williams

The Grammy award-winning US producer and performer Pharrell Williams has been creative director of social enterprise Bionic since 2010. Bionic takes plastic, shreds it, heats it and spins it into two types of yarn used to make everything from jeans to the roof linings and car seat covers. To date Bionic said by email that it has recycled nine million bottles by making the material. This number will grow as Bionic has partnered with the charity Waterkeeper's Alliance to use plastic found in the sea and washing up on the coast. The United Nations has warned that if current pollution rates continue, there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050.

## Michael Sheen

It was at Social Saturday, an annual event that encourages people to spend money on goods and services that have a positive social impact, that Welsh actor Michael Sheen declared his interest in social enterprise. Donning a Social Saturday T-shirt in 2016, the actor, famous for his roles in the "Twilight Saga" and Oscar nominated film "Frost/Nixon", said he wanted to understand how social enterprise might be useful to his home country.

In April 2017 it was announced that he would become a patron of industry body Social Enterprise UK. At an awards event in November he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation he would launch his own social enterprise in 2018. "Social enterprise is one of those tools for communities that want to create their own opportunities, like where I come from in the South Wales valleys," Sheen said. He plans to start a "community hub" in Port Talbot to help people start community-owned businesses and services, as threats to the steel industry have put traditional jobs at risk.

## Jamie Oliver

British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver started his restaurant Fifteen in London in 2002 when he was just 26. It was named after the number of disadvantaged young people Oliver attempted to train as chefs there. The first group were all unemployed; some were truants who'd left school without qualifications, others had anger management issues. To date, a third of all





Emirati men release their Arabian Saluki dogs during a race at the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert near the city of Madinat Zayed, 150 km west of Abu Dhabi, yesterday. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a camel beauty contest, a display of UAE handcrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

## Egypt jails Briton for smuggling Tramadol pills

CAIRO: An Egyptian court sentenced a British woman to three years in prison yesterday for smuggling around 300 painkiller tablets into the country, in a ruling her defense team said she would appeal to have overturned or commuted. Laura Plummer, a 33-year-old shop worker from Hull, was arrested in October after the Tramadol tablets were found in her suitcase. Her family told British newspapers she bought the tablets for her Egyptian partner living in the Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

Plummer attended a hearing in her case on Monday, before yesterday's sentencing. The court also ruled that she must pay a fine of 100,000 Egyptian pounds (\$5,600). Tramadol is a legal, prescription medicine in Britain, but it is banned in Egypt. Plummer was arrested on arrival from Britain in October, and her detention was extended twice prior to her court appearance. Plummer's family said on

yesterday they were disgusted by the way the trial had been conducted.

"From day one, this has been a complete nightmare. Yesterday in the court she wasn't even allowed her own interpreter. She had to get the court's interpreter who was interpreting the wrong answers," her sister Jayne Synclair said, speaking on BBC television. The family said Plummer had also been forced to sign Arabic-language documents which she did not understand. "She's on the verge of a mental breakdown... It's just horrendous," her sister said.

Her lawyer said Plummer would appeal, seeking to reverse the verdict or get a commuted sentence, which is possible in the two months after sentencing. He added that she did not know Tramadol was banned in Egypt. Speaking to the court on behalf of Plummer, the lawyer, said she had no criminal intent in bringing in the painkillers. On Monday the lawyer, Mohamed Othman, told Reuters: "It is illogical that she was dealing in Tramadol. She had only 320 pills. Even the plane ticket is almost double the price of those pills."

A spokesman from Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office said: "We will continue to provide assistance to Laura and her family following the court ruling in Egypt, and our embassy is in regular contact with the Egyptian authorities." — Reuters

## Schoolgirls in Tunisia rebel...

Continued from Page 1

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one senior education official found it difficult to explain exactly what was happening. He acknowledged the sensitivity of the subject, even though Tunisia is considered to be a pioneer in North Africa and the Middle East in the field of women's rights. If the official line is that equality between men and women is an asset, large sections of Tunisian society remain conservative and "there is resistance", said Ben Jemia, at the Association of Democratic Women of Tunisia.

In the courtyard of another school in Bizerte, the Habib Thameur Lycee, equality is a topic for passionate debate among students. Of around 15 boys asked about it, just one - Nader - spoke up for the traditional view. "Girls must cover the shape of their bodies," he said. "That's how we have been raised. It's our mentality, and it should stay that way." The others were firm backers of the campaign. One final year pupil tried to argue with a supervisor seeking to enforce the rules. "But

madame," he asked. "What if the regulation is wrong?" She thought for a moment. "For me, it's not unfair, it's the rules. That's the way it is," she murmured.

School director Iadh Toulgui admitted that the supervisor's view was unlikely to sway pupils who had lived through the revolution of 2011, which toppled a 23-year police state and brought about freedom of expression. "This is a revolutionary generation, open to the world. When you try to impose something on them it doesn't work," he said. It is a view shared by Ben Jemia. "These young people are much more aware of their rights - they have grown up with freedom of expression," she said. "This is the revolution generation, and it is incredible."

For Bizerte's regional education commissioner Nabil Smadhi, discussion is the way ahead. "It is time to address this issue in a national dialogue" involving the education ministry, parents, trade unions and civil society, he said. "This agitation is effective, not just in the public high school but in the majority of establishments in Bizerte and in several high schools" across the country, he said. In the meantime, Siwar Tebourbi, Farah Ben Jemaa and girls like them still come to school without the regulation uniform. "We're not doing it just for us," said Ben Jemaa. "Next year we'll be gone. But it's important for the generations who follow." — AFP

## Displaced Syrians survive war but...

Continued from Page 1

Children dash between the camp's makeshift alleyways, some of them barefoot despite the chill. A few are wrapped up in oversized sweaters and jackets. In a part of the camp set up as a market, groups of women are gathered around a pile of secondhand clothing, examining jackets and trousers. Without enough winter clothes, families are using blankets to fashion coats and other warm garments, says International Committee of the Red Cross spokeswoman Ingy Sedky. "In winter time, children become even more vulnerable and exposed to additional health hazards," she says.

Zeinab Khalil, a mother of four from Syria's eastern Albu Kamal, says they are being treated well at the camp, "but we need heating, blankets". "Because of the cold, my children and I haven't stopped coughing since we arrived," says the 35-year-old. Crouching in front of her tent, Umm Youssef boils water in a large black pot over a bonfire to bathe her grandchildren. "The most important thing is that the children can be warm," says the 55-year-old, her face

shielded from the wind by a purple shawl with black polka dots. "Because of the cold, we're constantly looking after the children." "We spent 10 days without mattresses or blankets. There's no heating and it's freezing," says Umm Omar, 50, a native of Syria's Deir Ezzor who sought refuge in the camp two months ago with her family. Despite the cold, Umm Omar sits outside her tent chopping vegetables for lunch. "We have nothing in the tents, we sleep one on top of the other. They gave us five blankets but we're seven people," she says, describing aid distributions as increasingly irregular.

Since Syria's conflict erupted in 2011, more than six million people have been displaced internally, many of them multiple times as fighting engulfed the country. Some 750,000 of them live in camps, transit centers, and other buildings like schools or warehouses, according to the UN. A half-destroyed school in a rebel bastion outside of Damascus is home to about 100 people, including 71-year-old Abu Mohammad Shahhad.

He escaped fighting near his house in Hosh Al-Dawahira to take refuge in the school building in Hammuriya, both areas in the rebel bastion of Eastern Ghouta. A four-year government siege of the area has made it almost impossible for 400,000 residents to get desperately needed goods and medicine. "There are no window frames or even glass" to protect from the cold, says Abu Mohammad. "We even burn plastic here to stay warm." — AFP

## Lawmaker warns of Qatar-like...

Continued from Page 1

The lawmaker said the country is not posting any actual deficit because oil revenues are over KD 15 billion and insisted that embezzlements are the main problem in the country.

Islamist opposition MP Mohammad Al-Dallal warned the government that any attempt to weaken the grilling tool of the Assembly "will have a very heavy price", adding that reform cannot be done by stripping the Assembly of its legislative and monitoring powers. Dallal charged that certain quarters in the government are trying to reduce the powers enjoyed by MPs by amending the internal charter, warning that this will result in a confrontation with the lawmakers and voters.

MP Yousef Al-Fadhlah strongly lashed out at Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, charging that

he is part of the problem and should be called the head of the government. The lawmaker claimed that the prime minister has conceded his powers to Ghanem and that ministers are afraid to object to him, because they will face the same fate of Jamal Al-Harbi, the former health minister, who was not retained in the new Cabinet.

A number of opposition MPs also called for debating a letter from MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, who are in jail after being convicted along with 65 opposition activists of storming the Assembly. The lawmakers said that Harbash and Tabtabaei should not be in jail because they enjoy parliamentary immunity. But the government refused, saying that if the Assembly debates the issue, it will ask for the letter to be sent to the constitutional court. The Assembly will continue today the debate of the Amiri address and is expected to debate a number of draft laws.

Separately, authorities arrested five suspects accused of posting a video on social media considered offensive to HH the Crown Prince, the interior ministry said yesterday. The accused were government employees with positions at "important institutions within the state", the ministry said.

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## Sports

# Batsman Warner enjoys late Christmas gift on Boxing Day

## Broad breaks wicket drought

**MELBOURNE:** Opening batsman David Warner enjoyed a gift-wrapped century after being reprieved on 99 as Australia emerged on top at the close of a meandering first day of the Boxing Day test against England yesterday. Warner was caught at mid-on on the cusp of his 21st test hundred, and first of the ongoing Ashes, but the wicket was cancelled to the delight of a festive Melbourne Cricket Ground when the replay showed England's debutant paceman Tom Curran had overstepped.

The home vice-captain reached his ton on the next ball and while he was unable to push on much further his 103 helped drive Australia to 244 for three at stumps, a strong position after skipper Steve Smith won the toss and opted to bat on a slow, flat wicket. Warner said he was delighted to be given another life on 99. "Getting recalled was obviously fantastic," he told reporters. "It was a bit of a roller coaster of emotions between those two deliveries, that's for sure." Smith's brilliant series continued, the Australian captain 65 not out at the close, with Shaun Marsh also unbeaten on 31. The pair steered Australia to safety with an unbroken partnership of 84 after Stuart Broad ended a 70-over wicket drought to have Usman Khawaja caught behind for 17. Smith now remains unbeaten in three consecutive Boxing Day tests, having scored a total of 434 runs in matches against West Indies, Pakistan and now England. Australia reclaimed the Ashes in the third test in Perth and hold an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series but 88,172 spectators packed the MCG to witness a peculiar day's play.

### Choice words

After Warner and fellow opener Cameron Bancroft piled on 102 runs to lunch, Australia added only 43 in the second session as England rallied with two wickets in brilliant sunshine. All-



**MELBOURNE:** Australia's batsman David Warner (C) falls over while trying to take a quick single as England bowler Stuart Broad (R) and fellow batsman Cameron Bancroft (L) look on, during the first day of the fourth Ashes Test cricket match at the MCG in Melbourne. — AFP

rounder Chris Woakes broke Warner and Bancroft's 122-run partnership by having Bancroft lbw for 26. Warner was caught on 99 just before the drinks break, a clumsy pull-shot off Curran's no-ball lobbing to Broad at mid-on. He raised his hundred with a single on the next ball and celebrated with his customary running jump and fist-pump before offering Curran some choice words, angering England wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow.

Veteran paceman James Anderson then removed Warner with a fine delivery that jagged back off the seam to catch an edge on the way through to Bairstow. The wicket drew Anderson level with West Indies great Courtney Walsh on 519 test victims, equal fifth on the all-time list. It was tough going for the bowlers, however, and Anderson felt the bumper crowd was short-

changed by the pitch. "You'd think the 90,000 that turned up today don't want to see 240 for three (at stumps)," the 35-year-old said. "People want to see exciting cricket ... It wasn't that exciting to play when it's that attritional."

After dismissing Khawaja, Broad very nearly trapped new batsman Marsh in front but the lbw appeal was turned down. Root reviewed but the decision remained the umpire's call, with the tracking technology showing it clipping the bails. Marsh survived another big shout for lbw but England's brief moment of ascendancy disappeared as the left-hander dug in with Smith. The skipper raised his 22nd test half-century by driving part-time spinner Dawid Malan for two runs through the covers before he and Marsh saw Australia to the safety of stumps.— Reuters



### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day in the fourth Test between Australia and England yesterday in Melbourne, Australia.

Australia 1st innings		Fall of wickets: 1-122 C. Bancroft, 2-135 D. Warner, 3-160 U. Khawaja	
C. Bancroft lbw b Woakes	26	To bat: T. Paine, M. Marsh, P. Cummins, J. Hazlewood, N. Lyon, J. Bird	
D. Warner c Bairstow b Anderson	103	Bowling: J. Anderson 21-8-43-1; S. Broad 19-6-41-1; C. Woakes 19-4-60-1; M. Ali 6-0-35-0; T. Curran 17-5-44-0(nb-1); D. Malan 7-1-20-0.	
U. Khawaja c Bairstow b Broad	17		
S. Smith not out	65		
S. Marsh not out	31		
Extras (lb-1 nb-1)	2		
Total (for 3 wickets, 89 overs)	244		

## Lambs abroad? Buoyant India target maiden win in S Africa

**NEW DELHI:** Virat Kohli's India head for a grueling tour of South Africa today looking for a record-breaking tenth straight Test series triumph, but they will have to overcome a reputation for being bad travelers. India, who beat New Zealand, England and Australia in a powerful home season to consolidate their number one Test ranking, celebrated their last major away victory in 2008-2009 when they beat the Kiwis 1-0 in a three-Test series.

"Looking forward to the South Africa tour, it's going to be a different challenge," said Rohit Sharma, who captained the Indian limited-overs side in Kohli's recent absence. "But I want to reiterate about our home season, it's never easy to beat anyone. We were challenged at different times and we came back." Overseas success against weakened West Indies and Sri Lanka sides in the past two years, and India's invincibility at home, has led pundits to back Kohli's side to put up a strong challenge to South Africa, who are second in the Test rankings and have never lost to India at home. India will play three Tests, six one-day internationals and three Twenty20 matches during the two-month tour. The series begins with the first Test in Cape Town on January 5. "They had a very good 2017. They have to carry on with the good work overseas also, away from Asia. At any given time you cannot sit on your past laurels," former captain Bishan Singh Bedi said. "To prove it to yourself, not to the world, that you are worthy of the number one position. It's not easy to get there but even more difficult to stay there," the ex-spinner added.

Apart from hosts Australia losing to South Africa 2-1 in 2016-2017, and visiting England beating the Proteas in 2015-2016, the top Test-playing nations have enjoyed hegemony on home turf. The Indians, once labelled "tigers at home and lambs abroad" in Test cricket, have a chance of breaking new ground in South Africa's den. "Most teams are doing well at home and struggling overseas. So this is an opportunity for India to move away from the pack," veteran sports journalist Ayaz Memon said. "South Africa lost badly to India when they came here in 2015. India may have won the odd Test but they have never won a series in South Africa and Australia," he added.

### Verbal bouncers

India are pinning their hopes on the pace quartet of Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma and Bhuvneshwar Kumar to make an impact on fast-paced South African tracks. The fast bowlers played a significant role during India's 1-0 win over Sri Lanka as they equalled Australia's record of nine Test series victories between 2005-2008. Promising fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who awaits his Test debut, and Hardik Pandya also add to India's pace brigade to match Proteas' attack of Vernon Philander, Kagiso Rabada and Dale Steyn.

But the 71-year-old Bedi said the Indian team "shouldn't get carried away" after recent praise of its pacemen. "Very happy situation that Indians, given an opportunity, now will be able to retaliate with their pace department," he said. But "good bowling, whether it's fast or spin, is getting the opposition out twice", he warned. "Not so much of verbal bouncers or any sort of intimidation and even if you do it, first do your job of getting wickets," said Bedi, who is known for his forthright views. On the batting front, vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane's form also seems to be of concern for a team whose batting is led by the prolific Kohli.—AFP

## Windies batsmen blamed for another series loss to NZ

**CHRISTCHURCH:** The West Indies were again left searching for ways to handle New Zealand's bowlers after crumbling to a 66-run defeat in the third one-day international in Christchurch yesterday. The comprehensive win in a rain-abbreviated match extended New Zealand's unbeaten run over the tourists, giving them a 3-0 sweep of the ODIs after winning both Tests inside four days earlier this month.

With the defeats mounting, West Indies skipper Jason Holder has repeatedly blamed a batting unit that has failed to adapt to New Zealand conditions. In the third ODI, the West Indies were set a revised target of 166 in 23 overs after a lengthy rain break restricted New Zealand to 131 for four in 23 overs. But the tourists collapsed in the first four overs as New Zealand's pace pair Trent Boult and Matt Henry took five wickets for nine runs. A valiant 34 by Holder helped the Windies reach 99 for nine by the end of the innings, with Boult producing figures of three for 18 and spinner Mitchell Santner taking three for 15.

"It's unfortunate with the batting, we lost wickets up front again and were not able to build momentum," Holder said. His batting talisman Chris Gayle started the slide when he was out for four in the first over. "It's not an easy place to start with the ball swinging, but we've got to give ourselves a bit more of a chance to get started," the West Indies captain added. A dejected Holder also saw critical problems in his bowling line-up after New Zealand were restricted to 83 for three in 19 overs when the rain set in and then cracked 48 in four overs after the resumption.

"I think our death bowling can be a lot better," he said, with Shannon Gabriel's final over yielding 15 runs. New Zealand rested senior batsman Kane Williamson and bowler Tim Southee, and stand-in skipper Tom Latham said less experienced players were stepping up, which was promising for the future. "Obviously it was an outstanding performance today," Latham said. "It was nice that ... we managed to scrap to a total and the way the boys came out and did the job with the ball was outstanding." The West Indies end their tour with three Twenty20 matches starting in Nelson on Friday.— AFP

## Cycling: Turkish star quits Israeli team over 'Jerusalem'

**ISTANBUL:** One of Turkey's best known professional cyclists has joined a homegrown Turkish team after quitting his Israeli outfit due to the controversy generated by the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, reports said yesterday. Ahmet Orken,



**HAGLEY OVAL:** West Indies wicketkeeper Shai Hope (L) stumps New Zealand's Tom Latham (R) during the third one-day international (ODI) cricket match between New Zealand and the West Indies at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Completed scoreboard in the rain-shortened third one-day international between New Zealand and the West Indies in Christchurch yesterday.

New Zealand		K. Hope lbw Henry	
G. Worker b Cottrell	2	J. Mohammed b Boult	1
C. Munro c Gayle b Holder	21	J. Holder c Broom b Santner	34
N. Broom c Gayle b Cottrell	2	R. Powell c Ferguson b Santner	11
R. Taylor not out	47	A. Nurse b Astle	1
T. Latham st S. Hope b Miller	37	N. Miller not out	20
H. Nicholls not out	18	S. Cottrell c Henry b Santner	3
Extras: (lb2, w2)	4	S. Gabriel not out	12
Total: (for 4 wickets, 23.0 overs)	131	Extras:(w10)	10
Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Worker), 2-26 (Broom), 3-26 (Munro), 4-99 (Latham)		Total: (for 9 wickets, 23 overs)	99
Bowling: Cottrell 6-0-19-2 (1w), Holder 6-2-21-1, Miller 5-0-26-1 (1w), Gabriel 4-0-37-0, Nurse 2-0-26-0.		Fall of wickets: 1-4 (Gayle), 2-6 (S. Hope), 3-7 (K. Hope), 4-8 (Mohammed), 5-9 (Walton), 6-57 (Powell), 7-58 (Nurse), 8-64 (Holder), 9-73 (Cottrell)	
<b>West Indies</b>		Bowling: Henry 5-1-18-2, Boult 5-0-18-3, Ferguson 4-0-24-0 (4w), Santner 5-0-15-3, Astle 4-0-24-1.	
C. Gayle c Munro b Henry	4	Result: New Zealand won by 66 runs	
C. Walton b Boult	0	Series: New Zealand 3-0	
S. Hope c Taylor b Boult	2		

who will now cycle for Salcano Sakarya Buyuksehir in the Turkish Black Sea region of Sakarya, cited pressures on his family following the Jerusalem recognition as the reason for his departure.

Turkey, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has strongly opposed Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, calling a summit of Islamic countries that declared East Jerusalem the Palestinian capital. Ankara has full diplomatic ties with Israel, although the relationship is only now recovering from the deadly 2010 storming by Israeli commanders of a Turkish vessel bound for Gaza. Erdogan has in recent weeks bitterly criticized Israel.

"It was a difficult period in the last two weeks," Orken said, quoted by the Dogan news agency, as he signed the contract in Sakarya on Monday. "I took the decision so as not to worry about my country and my

family. This is a decision that I have taken myself," said the multiple Turkish time trial champion. Israel Cycling Academy, the Pro Continental team with whom Orken had signed a two-year agreement in September, said it had agreed to release Orken from his contract.

"While we are disappointed by his decision, we only want what is best for him and his family. The doors of Israel Cycling Academy will be open for Ahmet and we certainly hope to see him rejoin us," said the team's general manager Ran Margalit. The team cited Orken as saying his family in the Anatolian Turkish city of Konya—a religiously conservative area—had "found themselves in a dire situation". The issue is far from the only controversy for the Israeli cycling world after Trump's move with disputes also raging over the decision to start the 2018 Giro d'Italia from Jerusalem.—AFP

Sports

# Warriors down Cavaliers as Thunder, Wizards win

## Thunder extend season-long winning streak to 5 games

**NEW YORK:** Kevin Durant scored 25 points, Klay Thompson added 24 and both made crucial plays in the final seconds Monday, lifting the NBA champion Golden State Warriors over Cleveland 99-92. In a Christmas rematch of the NBA Finals that marked their third consecutive meeting on the holiday, the host Warriors won for the 12th time in 13 games to reach 27-7 while the Cavaliers fell to 24-10. Golden State grabbed a 90-81 edge, the Warriors' biggest of the night, before the Cavaliers answered with an 11-2 run, pulling level at 92-92 on a LeBron James layup with two minutes remaining. Thompson sank a 3-pointer to put Golden State ahead to stay and tough defensive pressure by Durant forced James to lose the ball out of bounds. "He wants to guard him," coach Steve Kerr said of Durant's desire to defend James. "It just so happens that KD is the right matchup for us and he wants the job."

“Kevin was great, he made a big play on LeBron”

The Cavaliers got the ball back after the Warriors missed two 3-point shots. James drove to the basket and appeared to be fouled, but no whistle was blown and the ball was ruled to have gone out of bounds off James. "He fouled me twice," James said. "But whatever. What are you going to do about it?" Durant said his moves were clean. "He's too big," Durant said. "He's too big for that. He's too big. That ain't no foul." The Cavs were forced to foul to stop the clock and Thompson sank four late free throws to seal the triumph. "Klay was great down the stretch and we were able to pull this game out," said Warriors forward Draymond Green.

"Kevin was great. He made a big play on LeBron. He was able to put his heart out there and make the big play and get us the ball." Green contributed 12 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple double of the season. Cleveland's Kevin Love had game highs of 31 points and 18 rebounds while James added 20 points but made a game-high seven turnovers. The Warriors were without Stephen Curry, who has missed three weeks with an ankle injury and could miss another week, while the Cavaliers were without Isaiah Thomas,

who has been sidelined since being obtained in a trade with Boston involving Kyrie Irving.

### SIXERS 105, KNICKS 98

Joel Embiid had 25 points and 16 rebounds, and JJ Redick added 24 points with four 3-pointers as Philadelphia snapped its season-high five-game losing streak. Enes Kanter had 31 points—including 14 in the third quarter—and 22 rebounds, and Kristaps Porzingis added 22 points for the Knicks, who have lost three of four after winning four straight. Ben Simmons, who struggled offensively and finished with eight points, had a crucial steal and breakaway dunk with 1 minute, 6 seconds left, jumping in front of a Porzingis pass and taking it the other way to give the 76ers an eight-point cushion. He then forced a turnover on New York's next possession, and Philadelphia was able to

juice the clock late.

### WIZARDS 111, CELTICS 103

Kelly Oubre Jr and Bradley Beal both scored five straight points during a late 12-0 run, leading Washington past Boston. It was the first time the Celtics played at home on Christmas, and they were fighting an uphill battle throughout the game. They wiped out an 11-point third-quarter deficit and led by five before the Wizards (19-15) caught fire. Beal scored 25 points and grabbed eight rebounds and John Wall had 21 points, 14 assists and five boards. Kyrie Irving and Jayson Tatum led the Celtics with 20 points apiece.

### THUNDER 112, ROCKETS 107

Russell Westbrook scored 31 points to lift Oklahoma City over Houston. Westbrook outdueled James Harden, who finished with 29 points. Paul George added 24 and Carmelo Anthony 20 for the Thunder, who extended their season-long winning streak to five games. Trevor Ariza and Eric Gordon scored 20 for the Rockets, who lost for the third consecutive time after winning 14 consecutive games.



OAKLAND: Kyle Korver #26 of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots over Patrick McCaw #0 of the Golden State Warriors during an NBA basketball game at ORACLE Arena on Monday in Oakland, California. — AFP

### TIMBERWOLVES 121, LAKERS 104

Taj Gibson and Jimmy Butler scored 24 points apiece and Minnesota continued its best start in 14 years with a victory against Los Angeles. Karl-Anthony Towns had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Jamal

Crawford contributed 19 points off the bench for the Timberwolves, who shot a season-high 58.3 percent from the floor. Kyle Kuzma made 6 of 11 3-pointers and scored 31 points to lead the Lakers. Jordan Clarkson added 17 points and Julius Randle scored 16 off the bench.—Agencies

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Sports

# Lingard rescues Man Utd as Burnley add to Mourinho woes

## Ashley Barnes fired Burnley ahead in the first-half

**LONDON:** Jose Mourinho's troubles mounted as Manchester United needed a 91st minute equaliser from substitute Jesse Lingard to rescue a point in a thrilling 2-2 draw with Burnley yesterday.

First-half goals from Ashley Barnes and Steven Defour had put Burnley on course for their first victory at Old Trafford in over 55 years. But, after pulling United back into contention with his first goal on 53 minutes, Lingard struck a dramatic equaliser in the first of five added minutes. A Juan Mata free-kick was only cleared to the edge of the area by Ben Mee and Ashley Young's shot took a kind deflection, into the path of Lingard who converted clinically through a crowded area.

Second placed United are now 12 points behind runaway leaders Manchester City, who can extend their advantage at Newcastle today. Burnley took barely two minutes to take the lead, from a free-kick conceded by Marcos Rojo, who was booked for his trouble, after he brought down Jeff Hendrick as he sprinted down the left.

Icelandic international Johann Berg Gudmundson took the set-piece which badly exposed United's current defensive frailties as the ball struck Romelu Lukaku in the chest and, with his team mates slow to respond, it was left for Barnes to poke the ball in from close range.

Worse would follow after 36 minutes when Ashley Young tripped Scott Arfield, 25 yards out and dead centre in front of the United goal, presenting Defour with the perfect opportunity to send a magnificent right-foot free-kick

soaring into the top left-hand corner.

After Mourinho had been enraged by his team conceding a late equaliser at Leicester at the weekend, the United manager must have been equally angered by the first half effort here. Lingard reduced arrears with a sublime finish, back-heeling Young's right-wing cross past his marker Kevin Long and into the corner of the Burnley net to set up the grandstand finale. But there was no disguising the setback this draw handed Mourinho, with a handful of supporters booing the team off at the interval.

Even before doubling their lead, Burnley might have had a second when Arfield's first-time volley clipped the bar on its way over the home goal. United handed a first start since early April to Zlatan Ibrahimovic, back from his knee ligament injury, and he partnered Lukaku up front.

But it was not until the midpoint of the first half that United put the visitors under any pressure when Paul Pogba's goal bound header was turned away, one-handed, by Nick Pope.

United responded more quickly, after going down to a second goal, and within seconds defender Ben Mee was required to clear a Marcus Rashford effort of the Burnley line. Mourinho responded with a double substitution at the break, bringing on Lingard and Henrikh Mkhitaryan for Ibrahimovic and Rojo, and the move almost paid instant dividends. Young's 50th minute cross was met by Lingard who somehow struck his shot against Pope from inside the six-yard area then saw the ricochet loop up, hit the bar and fly to safety.—AFP

“Lingard scores with back-heel flick in 53rd minute”



**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United's English striker Marcus Rashford (C) tangles Burnley's English-born Scottish defender Phil Bardsley (R) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Burnley. — AFP

## Chelsea close on United after Brighton win

**LONDON:** Alvaro Morata struck his 10th goal of the Premier League campaign as Chelsea secured a 2-0 victory over Brighton that moved Antonio Conte's side to within one point of second-placed Manchester United.

After struggling to break down Chris Hughton's side during a poor first half, the Blues took control with Morata heading the opening goal immediately after the restart before Marcos Alonso added the second on the hour. The home side dominated the second period and the margin of victory could have been much more convincing if Conte's team had taken their chances. The game, though, provided further evidence of the importance of Morata to Conte's side, who struggled to break down Everton three days previously when the Spain international served a one-match suspension. Conte wasted no time in restoring Morata to his starting line-up and the Chelsea head coach was forced into a change at the other end of the pitch with Gary Cahill coming in for Andreas Christensen, who was ruled out with illness.

Brighton arrived at Stamford Bridge having been lifted by the weekend win against Watford, their first victory in eight games. But with meetings with Newcastle and Bournemouth—both teams in the bottom half of the table—to come over the holiday period, Albion manager Chris Hughton opted to make four changes to his line-up. Saturday's matchwinner Pascal Gross was held back on the bench, along with winger Anthony Knockaert and skipper Bruno Saltor. The changes, though, appeared to have little effect on Hughton's side, who quickly demonstrated they were capable of making life hard for Conte's men. And had striker Tomer Hemed not mistimed his jump when he rose to meet Markus Suttner's cross, they might have taken an early lead.

### CHelsea STRUGGLE

Chelsea struggled to find their momentum although they should have gone ahead in the 19th minute when Antonio Rudiger headed Cesc Fabregas's cross into the path of Tiemoue Bakayoko, who stabbed the ball wide from just four yards out.

Fabregas was also the architect of Chelsea's other main chance during the opening 45 minutes when he chipped a pass into the path of Victor Moses as the



**LONDON:** Brighton's Austrian defender Markus Suttner takes a freekick during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Brighton and Hove Albion at Stamford Bridge in London. —AFP

wing-back sped into the Albion area before drawing a good save from keeper Mat Ryan.

Brighton held their shape and showed the defensive organisation that has underpinned their progress during the first half of the season. Hazard was closed down quickly whenever he embarked on a run and Morata was well shackled by the Brighton centre-backs Lewis Dunk and Shane Duffy. However, the visitors offered little going forward and when Chelsea made the perfect start to the second half, the outcome was never in question. Conte was clearly unhappy with his side's first half display but the Italian could not have been more pleased with their response at the start of the second period.

Just 40 seconds had elapsed when Cesar Azpilicueta floated the ball over the Brighton defence towards Morata, whose close-range header was strong enough

to beat Ryan despite the keeper getting his hand to the ball. The pressure that had been building on the home side lifted immediately and Hazard almost added a second four minutes later when he sent a shot narrowly wide. Ryan was then forced to twice deny Alonso, first from a free-kick and then when the left-back connected with a near-post header from the resulting corner. A second goal was inevitable and it came in the 60th minute when Alonso finally found a way past Ryan, this time with a header from Fabregas's corner. Brighton had barely got out of their own half and Chelsea should have killed the game off quickly but were guilty of failing to convert a succession of good chances.

Dunk pulled off a superb goalline clearance to deny Hazard and then Bakayoko produced his second miscue of the match when he sliced wide after being set up by Hazard's backheel. —AFP

## Schmeichel own goal gives Watford 2-1 win over Leicester

**WATFORD:** Watford snapped their four-game losing streak and celebrated their first Premier League win in seven matches after an own goal by keeper Kasper Schmeichel gave them a 2-1 home win over Leicester City yesterday.

Schmeichel made a simple mistake at the far post in the 65th minute as an Abdoulaye Doucoure cut-back from a tight angle came off his chest and trickled under him over the line, allowing the home side to complete their comeback after falling behind.

Leicester dominated the opening half and looked set to extend their unbeaten away run to eight games when Riyad Mahrez gave them the lead with a firm header after Marc Albrighton's cross from the left.

But Watford equalised against the run of play on the stroke of halftime as Mali defender Molla Wague bundled in his first Premier League goal from close range before Tom Cleverley's inswinging free kick led to the home team's winner.

Earlier, West Bromwich Albion failed to make the most of their opportunities in front of goal as they were held to a goalless draw by Everton in the Premier League yesterday.

The hosts made a blistering start at the Hawthorns and could have broken the deadlock from a whipped cross by Jay Rodriguez but striker Salomon Rondon missed the target from close range in the sixth minute.

Defender Craig Dawson headed another West Brom chance over the bar from inside the six-yard box as Everton continued to struggle against crosses put into the penalty area for the majority of the encounter. Everton, who were without their top scorer Wayne Rooney, lacked the attacking firepower to test West Brom goalkeeper Ben Foster but a resolute defensive display on the other end of the pitch ensured they remain unbeaten in the six league games since new manager Sam Allardyce took charge.

Alan Pardew continues to wait for his first victory as West Brom boss with all of his team's three points this month coming along with a 0-0 scoreline. — Reuters

## Bahrain beat Yemen 1-0 in Gulf tourney

**KUWAIT:** Bahrain yesterday beat Yemen in the second round of competitions in Group B of the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup held in Kuwait.

Bahraini players, in the first half of the match played at Kuwait Sports Club, dominated the pitch but missed chances to score until minute 37th, when they earned a penalty, with Jamal Rashed scoring the single and winning goal.

In the second half, the Yemenis sneaked the Bahraini lines several times, but neither they nor the Bahrainis who also attacked repeatedly could score. Bahrain, with this win, has boosted its chances to qualify for the semi-final, with four points in the pocket. The Yemenis' qualifying hopes have almost vanished.—KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Bahrain's defender Sayed Mahdi Baqir (2nd-L) heads the ball away from the goal as he repels Yemen's midfielder Abdulwasea Al-Matari (3rd-L) during their 2017 Gulf Cup of Nations group match at Al Kuwait Sports Club Stadium. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

**Live**

**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

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**ITALIAN CUP**

Milan v Internazionale Milano 22:45  
beIN SPORTS

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**ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE**

Newcastle United v Manchester City 22:45  
beIN SPORTS HD 2

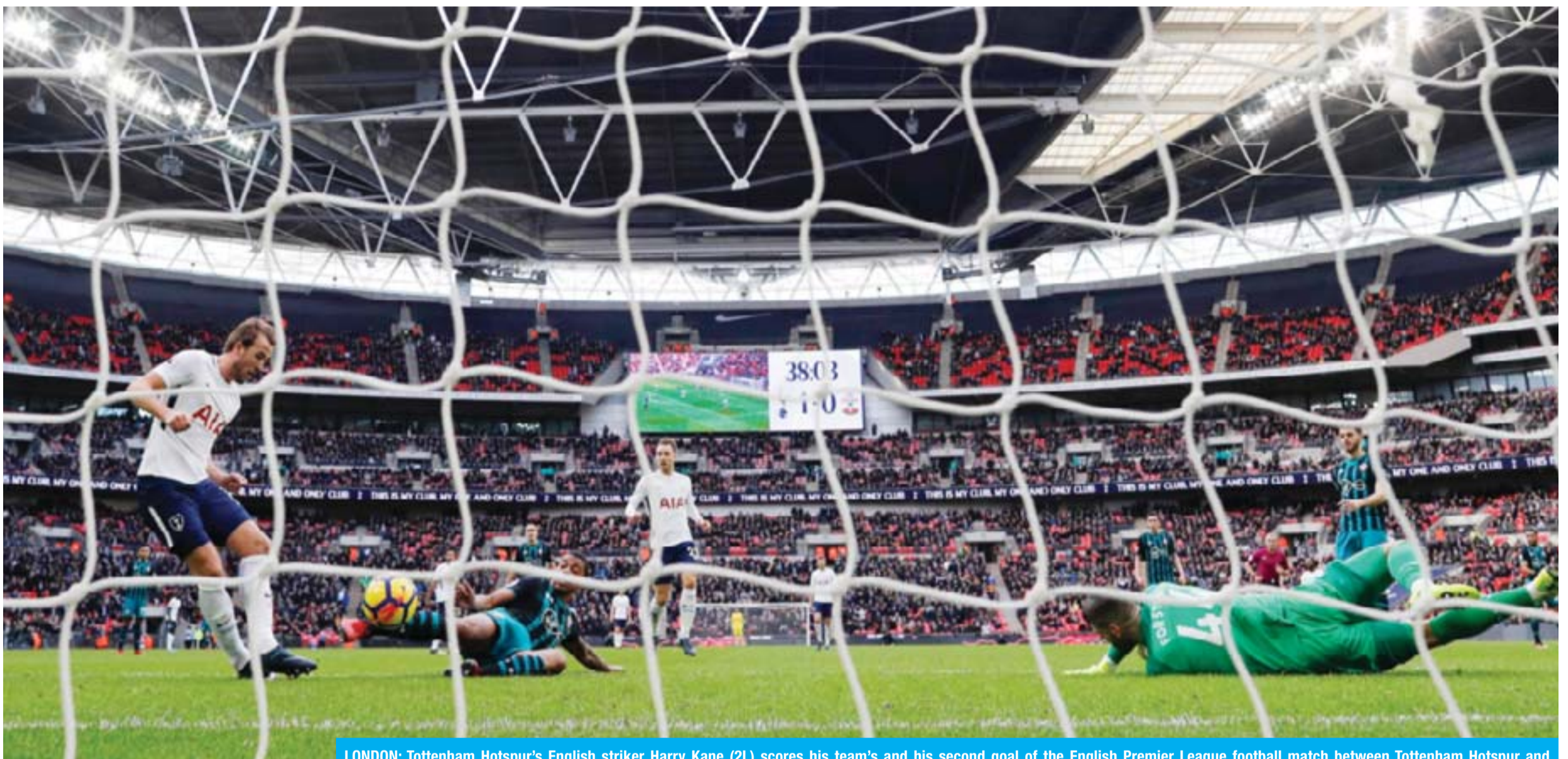
**12** Batsman Warner enjoys late Christmas gift on Boxing Day



**14** Eagles rip Raiders, clinch the No 1 seed in the NFC



**15** Lingard rescues Man Utd as Burnley add to Mourinho woes



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (2L) scores his team's and his second goal of the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Southampton. — AFP

## Kane strikes historic hat-trick

### Spurs hammer Southampton 5-2

LONDON: Harry Kane rounded off a sensational 2017 by scoring a record number of Premier League goals and hat-tricks in a calendar year, as well as toppling Lionel Messi as the top scorer in Europe as a rampant Tottenham Hotspur thrashed Southampton 5-2 yesterday. The England striker followed up his treble over Burnley on Saturday by heading in a Christian Eriksen free kick in the 22nd minute for his 37th league goal of 2017, beating Alan Shearer's 22-year-old record for the most goals in England's top flight in a calendar year.

Kane then overtook Messi as the top scorer of the year in Europe for club and country by tapping in Son Heung-min's low cross in the 39th minute. He also became the first player in seven years outside of Messi

and Cristiano Ronaldo to finish top scorer in the continent. "I think both achievements are massive," said Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino. "He beats Shearer then if you see the list of the last seven years it's Cristiano and Messi, today it's a player from Tottenham. We feel this achievement also belongs to us, it's fantastic for Harry, he wanted to share that happiness with all of us."

In the second half, Kane scored his side's fifth goal of the game to become the first player to hit six Premier League hat-tricks in one year. "For me he is world class, Messi and Ronaldo have different characteristics, but if you think about a striker in his position, who is better than him?", Pochettino added when asked if Kane could

be compared to the Portuguese and the Argentine. "It's difficult to say who is the best but he has showed everyone that he is one of the best."

#### CONSOLATION

Impressive strikes from Dele Alli and Son had further stretched Tottenham's lead in the second half, while Sofiane Boufal hit back for struggling Southampton to make it 4-1, before the relentless Kane struck once again with a classy chipped finish over Fraser Forster in the 67th minute.

Substitute Dusan Tadic got another consolation goal for the visitors, who are 13th on 19 points and only three clear of the relegation zone. Spurs provisionally

climbed up to fourth on 37 points, although Liverpool could overtake them again if they beat Swansea City later. Southampton were without top scorer Charlie Austin following a suspension for violent conduct, while coach Mauricio Pellegrino again left defender Virgil van Dijk out of the squad.

The Argentine had to face the away supporters calling him for him to be sacked during the game, and he criticised his players for their attitude. "I want to see a team with character fighting and playing for the ball," he said. "Sometimes you do well, sometimes you do not but the minimum is to show this from the beginning. The wrong thing is we waited until the Tottenham goal to react." —Reuters

### Coutinho inspires Liverpool rout

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool playmaker Philippe Coutinho underlined his importance to the Reds ahead of the transfer window with a fine individual display in a comfortable 5-0 win over Premier League strugglers Swansea City yesterday.

The Brazil international scored his 12th goal of the season with a fine curling effort and provided an assist for compatriot Roberto Firmino. Coutinho, who was strongly linked with a move to Barcelona in the build-up to the season, has enjoyed his most prolific goalscoring month in a Liverpool shirt, finding the net seven times in December.

Trent Alexander-Arnold's determination saw him score Liverpool's third after half-time before Firmino and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain finished from close range. Liverpool's victory ensured they remain in the thick of the battle for the Champions League places in fourth spot-five points behind second-placed Manchester United.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp had made four changes from the side that drew 3-3 against Arsenal. Joel Matip and Alexander-Arnold came into the defence, while Georginio Wijnaldum and Oxlade-Chamberlain both started in midfield. It did not take Liverpool long to assert their authority against the Premier League's bottom club.

The tireless Firmino dispossessed Jordan Ayew in midfield and rolled the ball into the path of Mohamed Salah who in turn fed Coutinho just outside the penalty area. Coutinho, restored to an advanced role in

Liverpool's attacking triumvirate, cut inside onto his right foot and curled a sumptuous shot into the top right corner of the net, which Swansea goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski could only stand and admire.

Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet, who retained his place despite a high-profile blunder against Arsenal, was called into action shortly afterwards. A deep cross picked out Ayew at the back post and the Swansea striker's header brought a smart save out of the Belgium international. With the atmosphere at Anfield flat and Swansea happy to pack men behind the ball, the remainder of the first half lacked any real intensity. Liverpool continued to pose the greater threat with Emre Can, Oxlade-Chamberlain and Firmino all trying their luck from distance to no avail. The Reds squandered a golden chance to add to their advantage on the stroke of half-time when Salah nabbed the ball in midfield and put Firmino through on goal, only for the Liverpool forward to drag his shot wide.

Six minutes into the second half Firmino made amends as he found the net and Liverpool effectively ended the game as a contest. Coutinho, in his 200th appearance for Liverpool, turned supplier-his delivery from a free-kick picked out his compatriot's run to the back post and Firmino sweetly volleyed home from close range. Swansea's Oliver McBurnie, on his first Premier League start, cut an increasingly isolated figure in attack and was withdrawn just after the hour for on-loan Chelsea striker Tammy Abraham. However, it was Liverpool who posed the greater threat in the box and two goals in the space of 90 seconds enabled the hosts to cruise through the remainder of the game.

First, Alexander-Arnold netted his first Premier League goal then Firmino was able to tap into an empty net after Salah had unselfishly squared the ball to him inside the six-yard box. —AFP



LIVERPOOL: Swansea City's English striker Oli McBurnie (L) jumps against Liverpool's Estonian defender Ragnar Klavan (R) during the English Premier League football match. —AFP

### Iraq tops Gulf Cup Group B with triumph over Qatar

KUWAIT: Iraq topped its Gulf Cup group after a 2-1 win over Qatar yesterday, but with one group match left, it remains to be seen which two teams will progress to the semifinal.

Ali Husni Faisal broke the deadlock in the 65th minute for Iraq after defender Ali Faez Atiyah's wonderfully executed spot kick at the end of the first half put the Lions of Mesopotamia level. Qatar were first to score through clever counter attack play that saw Al Moazz Ali Abdullah easily slotting home.

Despite the victory giving Iraq four points at the group's summit, an earlier triumph for Bahrain means both sides are equal on points and goal difference, but the Iraqis have a one-goal advantage.

Qatar, in the meantime, trail with three points and still have equal progression chances with Bahrain, who both enter a showdown in the final group match. Meanwhile, Iraq next faces the easier task of bottom-of-the-group Yemen, who have lost their last two matches. The 23rd edition of the dual-group regional tournament is being hosted by Kuwait, and includes eight participating teams. —KUNA



# Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2017

**18** Oman's real GDP expected to pick up to 2.4% in 2018

**19** Japan's jobless rate dips to its lowest level since 1993

**21** Stand out in the New Year with signature Infiniti Q30



LONDON: Shoppers are reflected in the windows of shops on Oxford Street in central London yesterday during the post-Christmas, Boxing Day sales. — AFP

## Venezuelans reel from currency crisis

Consumers scramble to survive as merchants demand dollars

**CARACAS/CIUDAD GUAYANA, Venezuela:** There was no way Jose Ramon Garcia, a food transporter in Venezuela, could afford new tires for his van at \$350 each. Whether he opted to pay in US currency or in the devalued local bolivar currency at the equivalent black market price, Garcia would have had to save up for years. Though used to expensive repairs, this one was too much and put him out of business. "Repairs cost an arm and a leg in Venezuela," said the now-unemployed 42-year-old Garcia, who has a wife and two children to support in the southern city of Guayana. "There's no point keeping bolivars." For a decade and a half, strict exchange controls have severely limited access to dollars. A black market in hard currency has spread in response, and as once-sky-high oil revenue runs dry, Venezuela's economy is in free-fall.

The practice adopted by gourmet and design stores in Caracas over the last couple of years to charge in dollars to a select group of expatriates or Venezuelans with access to greenbacks is fast spreading. Food sellers, dental and medical clinics, and others are starting to charge in dollars or their black mar-

ket equivalent - putting many basic goods and services out of reach for a large number of Venezuelans. According to the opposition-led National Assembly, November's rise in prices topped academics' traditional benchmark for hyperinflation of more than 50 percent a month - and could end the year at 2,000 per-

**“ There's no point keeping bolivars ”**

cent. The government has not published inflation data for more than a year.

"I can't think in bolivars anymore, because you have to give a different price every hour," said Yoselin Aguirre, 27, who makes and sells jewelry in the Paraguana peninsula and has recently pegged prices to the dollar. "To sur-

vive, you have to dollarize."

The socialist government of the late president Hugo Chavez in 2003 brought in the strict controls in order to curb capital flight, as the wealthy sought to move money out of Venezuela after a coup attempt and major oil strike the previous year.

Oil revenue was initially able to bolster artificial exchange rates, though the black market grew and now is becoming unmanageable for the government.

### Trim the tree with Bolivars

President Nicolas Maduro has maintained his predecessor's policies on capital controls. Yet, the spread between the strongest official rate, of some 10 bolivars per dollar, and the black market rate, of around 110,000 per dollar, is now huge.

While sellers see a shift to hard currency as necessary, buyers sometimes blame them for speculating. Rafael Vetencourt, 55, a steel worker in Ciudad Guayana, needed a prostate operation priced at \$250. "We don't earn in dollars. It's abusive to charge in dollars!" said Vetencourt, who had to decimate his savings to pay for the surgery. — Reuters

## India to become fifth largest economy in 2018: Report

**NEW DELHI:** India is set to overtake the United Kingdom and France to become the world's fifth largest economy next year, a report said yesterday. Currently ranked seventh, India will move up to fifth place in 2018 and vault to third spot by 2032, the Centre for Economics and Business Research, a London-based consultancy, said in its annual rankings.

The Indian economy hit a three-year low in the first quarter of the current financial year, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's snap decision in November 2016 to scrap high-value banknotes and following a tax overhaul. Growth slumped to 5.7 percent for



MUMBAI: Indian workers holding balloons gather outside the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) to celebrate the benchmark 30-share index SENSEX crossing 34,000 points in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

the three months ending June but recovered slightly to 6.3 percent for the quarter ending September.

"Despite temporary setbacks... India's economy has still caught up with that of France and the UK and in 2018 will have overtaken them both to become the world's fifth largest economy in dollar terms," said CEBR deputy chairman Douglas McWilliams.

Cheap energy and a digital revolution will drive economic growth globally, the report said. The world's growth will be dominated by Asian economies, including India, China and Japan. The United States, the world's largest economy, will be overtaken by China in 2030, the report forecast, adding India would take that spot "at some time in the second half of this century." — AFP

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## Business

# Japan's jobless rate dips to its lowest level since 1993

## World's third largest economy is on track to recovery

**TOKYO:** Japan's unemployment rate in November dipped to its lowest level since November 1993, official data showed yesterday, offering another sign that the world's third-largest economy is on track to recovery even if the pace is slow.

Figures released by the government showed unemployment stood at 2.7 percent last month while the jobs-to-applicants ratio improved slightly, up 0.01 percent from the previous month to 1.56 in November—the highest level in almost 44 years. The latest data come as Japan has notched up seven straight quarters of economic growth—the longest positive run for 16 years—with the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games giving the economy a shot in the arm. "Japan's economy is expected to keep expanding through the first half of next year," Masaki Kuwahara, senior economist at Nomura Securities, told AFP.

Confidence among Japan's biggest manufacturers is also at an 11-year high, a key central bank survey showed earlier this month, as the world's number-three economy picks up pace. However, consumer spending has remained weak and deflation continues to stalk the economy. Japan has battled deflation for many years and the central bank's ultra-loose monetary policy appears to be having limited impact. Other data showed yesterday that Japan's consumer prices rose for the 11th straight month in November, but inflation was still far from the Bank of Japan's (BoJ) two-percent inflation target seen as crucial to revive the

world's third-largest economy. The core inflation rate was a 0.9 percent rise year-on-year in November, according to data published by the internal affairs ministry, far below the two-percent target set by the BoJ.

Market consensus was a 0.8 percent rise, according to data compiled by Bloomberg News. When the volatile prices for fresh food and energy were stripped out, prices rose by

be a reaction to the weak October figure that had reflected "bad weather at the time, Kuwahara said.

"But as shown in the low unemployment rate and the number of jobs expanding, the labor market conditions are favorable and household income keeps gradually rising," he said.

But he warned strong inflation without sufficient rise in wages "hurts domestic demand, having negative impact on the economy". Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has pressed the country's major companies to raise their employees' salaries in an annual wage negotiations, often dubbed as the "government-made labour offensive". Japan's weak inflation stands in sharp contrast to other major economies whose central bankers are looking to wind up their easing policies.

The US Federal Reserve last week announced a widely expected quarter point rate hike, and US policymakers have forecast another three rate hikes in 2018. Meanwhile, the European Central Bank has announced it would halve its massive bond purchases from January as the eurozone recovery gathers pace, allowing the Frankfurt institution to begin winding down its crisis-era stimulus measures.

### Stocks flat

Tokyo stocks were flat yesterday, with investors keeping to the sidelines as major global markets remained closed for the Christmas holidays. The benchmark Nikkei 225 was virtual-



### Tokyo stocks flat on tepid Xmas trading

even less — 0.3 percent, the ministry said.

### 'Government-made' wage increase

November household spending—seen as key for exiting deflation—expanded 1.7 percent from the same month a year earlier—much stronger than market consensus of a 0.5 percent rise.

Household spending had remained flat in October after falling by 0.3 percent in September and rising by 0.6 percent in August. Strong household spending in November "may



TOKYO: Japan's economy is showing signs of recovery. — AFP

ly unchanged at 22,938.40 by the break—just 0.78 points down—while the broader Topix index was down 0.08 percent, or 1.43 points, at 1,830.50. "It is difficult to see a clear direction in the market as foreign investors are absent from trade with a transaction volume low," Okasan Online Securities said in a commentary.

Investors are awaiting tomorrow's minutes of the Bank of Japan's policy meeting last week for clues to the central bank's future course of poli-

cy decisions, it said. The dollar changed hands at 113.29 yen, almost unchanged from 113.25 yen in Tokyo late Monday.

Some blue-chip shares were lower, with Nintendo losing 0.80 percent at 42,020 yen and Canon trading down 0.29 percent at 4,406 yen. Mitsubishi UFJ Financial was down 0.40 percent at 836.4 yen while its rival Sumitomo Mitsui Financial slipped 0.71 percent to 4,882 yen. — Agencies

## Oil trades above \$65 on Libyan pipeline blast, Forties restart weighs

**LONDON:** Oil traded above \$65 a barrel yesterday, within sight of its highest since mid-2015, supported by an explosion on a crude pipeline in Libya and voluntary OPEC-led supply cuts.

The move towards restart of a key North Sea pipeline, Forties, capped the rally. The pipeline is being tested after repairs and full flows should resume in early January, its operator said on Monday.

Brent crude, the international benchmark for oil prices, rose 10 cents to \$65.35 a barrel at 1346 GMT. Prices hit \$65.83 on Dec. 12, the highest since June 2015. U.S. crude added 12 cents at \$58.59. "The confirmation that Forties is coming back ...has the potential for capping

Brent," said Olivier Jakob, analyst at Petromatrix. Trading activity was thin due to the Christmas holiday in many countries.

Oil turned positive following the explosion at the Libyan pipeline, which feeds the Es Sider terminal. It was not immediately clear what impact the blast will have on Libyan output, which has been recovering in recent months after being hampered for years by conflict and unrest.

Brent has risen 17 percent in 2017. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, plus Russia and other non-members, have been withholding output since Jan. 1 to get rid of a glut. The producers have extended the supply cut agreement to cover

all of 2018. Iraq's oil minister said on Monday there would be a balance between supply and demand by the first quarter, leading to a boost in prices. Global oil inventories have decreased to an acceptable level, he added.

That is earlier than predicted in OPEC's latest official forecast, which calls for a balanced market by late 2018. While the OPEC action has lent support to prices all year, the unplanned shutdown of the Forties pipeline on Dec. 11 pushed Brent to its mid-2015 high.

Forties plays an important role in the global market as it is the biggest of the five North Sea crude streams underpinning Brent, the benchmark for oil trading in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Rising production in the United States is offsetting some of the OPEC-led cuts. The US rig count, an early indicator of future output, held at 747 in the week to Dec. 22, according to the latest weekly report by Baker Hughes. — Reuters

## China lifts yuan midpoint to 3-1/2-month high

**SHANGHAI:** China's central bank yesterday lifted its official yuan midpoint to the highest level in 3-1/2 months at 6.5416 per dollar, reflecting a strong spot yuan performance a day earlier.

Yesterday's official midpoint, 267 pips or 0.41 percent firmer than the previous fix of 6.5683 on Monday, was the strongest since Sept. 13. China's yuan strengthened through the day in holiday-thinned trading on Monday, reaching its highest level in over three months against the dollar at the official local close, following a much strengthened official midpoint. China stocks rise, led by financials and property firms. Meanwhile, China stocks ended firmer yesterday, led by financial and real estate firms, though trading was thin as year-end nears. At the close, the Shanghai Composite index was up 25.43 points or 0.78 percent at 3,305.89. The blue-chip CSI300 index was up 0.31 percent, with its financial sector sub-index higher by 0.8 percent, the consumer staples sector down 1.46 percent, the real estate index up 0.77 percent and healthcare sub-index down 0.61 percent.

The smaller Shenzhen index ended up 0.43 percent and the start-up board ChiNext Composite index was higher by 0.17 percent. Around the region, MSCI's Asia ex-Japan stock index was weaker by 0.19 percent while Japan's Nikkei index closed down 0.20 percent. The yuan was quoted at 6.5491 per US



BEIJING: A worker paints at a construction site in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

dollar, 0.13 percent weaker than the previous close of 6.5408. The largest percentage gainers in the main Shanghai Composite index were Changchun Gas Co Ltd up 10.06 percent, followed by Jiangsu Wuzhong Industrial Co Ltd and Yabao Pharmaceutical Group Co Ltd, both up by 10.04 percent.

The largest percentage losses in the Shanghai index were Tongwei Co Ltd down 4.56 percent, followed by Yangmei Chemical Co Ltd losing 4.5 percent and Jiangsu Lugang Culture Co Ltd down 4.21 percent. About 14.24 billion shares were traded on the

Shanghai exchange, roughly 91.0 percent of the market's 30-day moving average of 15.66 billion shares a day. The volume in the previous trading session was 14.69 billion.

The Shanghai stock index is below its 50-day moving average and above its 200-day moving average.

The price-to-earnings ratio of the Shanghai index was 14.77 as of the last full trading day while the dividend yield was 2 percent. So far this week, the market capitalization of the Shanghai stock index has fallen by 0.42 percent to 28.67 trillion yuan. — Reuters

## Sudan to devalue pound currency to 18 per dollar in Jan

**KHARTOUM:** Sudan is to devalue its currency to 18 Sudanese pounds per dollar in January from the current exchange rate of 6.7, Finance Minister Mohamed Othman Rukabi told Reuters yesterday.

The devaluation which includes the customs exchange rate - the rate used to calculate customs duties - is timed to take place when the 2018 budget begins, in the first week of

January, he said. Traders said the black market rate jumped to 27 SDG per dollar from 25 SDG per dollar after the devaluation was announced. The Sudanese pound has weakened sharply against the dollar since Washington lifted 20-year-old economic sanctions in October, encouraging traders to step up imports and putting pressure on scarce hard currency. Businesses are unable to

secure their hard currency needs at the official peg of 6.7 pounds to the dollar and are forced to resort to a parallel market. To stem the flow of scarce currency out of the banking system, Sudan announced emergency measures last month after the pound fell to a record low of 27 against the dollar on the black market.

The country also imposed tight restrictions on imports of luxury goods, directing remaining liquidity toward "sectors that boost growth", the central bank said. The import-dependent country has suffered both from the sanctions and from the secession of the south in 2011, when it lost three-quarters of its oil output, its main source of foreign currency. — Reuters

## Bitcoin rises 10%, recovers from brutal sell-off

**SINGAPORE/TOKYO:** Bitcoin extended its recovery in holiday-thinned trading yesterday, rising 10 percent to be up more than a third from last week's lows of below \$12,000.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, fell nearly 30 percent at one stage on Friday to \$11,159.93 and, despite a late recovery, had its worst week since 2013. At 0445 GMT yesterday, it was quoted around \$15,049 on the Luxembourg-based Bitstamp exchange.

The digital currency had risen around twentyfold since the start of the year, climbing from less than \$1,000 to as high as \$19,666 on Dec. 17 on Bitstamp and to over \$20,000 on other exchanges. But it has posted heavy declines since. While bitcoin investors and analysts believe the decline in its value was a natural correction after a heady run-up in prices, there have been further warnings from market regulators and central banks.

"There is no right current price which would reflect the right current valuation," said Andrei Popescu, Singapore-based co-

founder of COSS, which describes itself as a platform that encompasses all features of a digital economy based on cryptocurrency.

"Taking profit is right, while buying into a long term projection is also right. You don't have to be right in this market, just less wrong than the rest," Popescu said. Shmuel Hauser, the chairman of the Israel Securities Authority, said on Monday he will propose regulation to ban companies based on bitcoin and other digital currencies from trading on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Singapore's central bank last week issued a warning against investment in cryptocurrencies, saying it considers the recent surge in their prices to be driven by speculation and that the risk of a sharp fall in prices is high. Prices of rival cryptocurrencies, which slid along with bitcoin last week, have also recovered, with Ethereum, the second-biggest cryptocurrency by market size, quoted around \$771, up from Sunday's low of \$689 but still far from highs around \$900 hit last week.

Bitcoin held its overnight gains in early US trading yesterday as the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency rebounded on light trading volume from its worst week since 2013. At 8:33 am (1333 GMT), the digital currency was last up almost 10 percent at \$15,300.00 on the Luxembourg-based Bitstamp exchange. It lost nearly 30 percent at one point last Friday at \$11,159.93. — Reuters

## Thailand Nov tourist arrivals jump 23.2%

**BANGKOK:** Thailand welcomed three million foreign tourists in November, the tourism ministry said on Monday, 23.2 percent more than the same month a year earlier. The kingdom saw a total of 31.85 million foreign tourist arrivals in the period from January to November, up 8.1 percent from the previous year, Pongpanu Svetarundra, permanent-sec-

retary of the tourism and sports ministry, said in a statement.

Pongpanu said Thailand expects a record 35.4 million visitors in total this year, up 9 percent from the previous year. Around 10 million of those visitors are expected to be Chinese, he said.

Thailand's tourism industry is a major employer and accounts for 12 percent of Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy. In 2016, there were a record 32.6 million visitors.

The tourism sector has weathered more than a decade of political upheavals in Thailand including several rounds of anti and pro-government street demonstrations and two military coups. Tourist arrivals are driven by visitors from China. — Reuters



MEXICO CITY: A fruit vendor poses for a picture at the "Central de Abasto" wholesale market in Mexico City. Some 500,000 people and 62,000 vehicles a day visit the Central de Abasto market on the east side of Mexico City to buy and sell avocados, tomatoes and about 15,000 other products. — AFP

Business

Apple drags Wall St lower, Asia lackluster

NEW YORK: Wall Street's main indexes came under pressure yesterday following a 2.8 percent drop in Apple's shares on a report of weak iPhone X demand.

That, along with some bearish brokerage calls on iPhone X demand, put its shares on track for their worst single-day percentage fall since Aug 10.

The S&P technology index fell 0.9 percent, the only loser among the 11 major S&P 500 sectors. Most markets around the world, including parts of Europe and Asia, were shut yesterday.

At 9.34 am ET (1434 GMT), the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 8.32 points, or 0.03 percent, at 24,745.74 and the S&P 500 was down 2.4 points, or 0.09 percent, at

2,680.94. The Nasdaq Composite was down 29.11 points, or 0.42 percent, at 6,930.86. Sucampo Pharma surged 6 percent after Mallinckrodt said it would acquire the drug-maker for \$1.2 billion, to gain access to its constipation drug Amitiza.

Bitcoin traded up more than 12 percent at \$15,715 recovering from last week's selloff, which saw the cryptocurrency fall below \$12,000. Shares of Riot Blockchain, Longfin Corp and Overstock.com rose between 3 percent and 17 percent.

early yesterday on positive sentiment about the holiday shopping season, while Apple fell following a report of weak demand for its new smartphone.

Department stores Macy's and Kohl's both jumped more than three percent, while Target rose 1.2 percent on indications that the early strength in the holiday shopping season persisted through Christmas.

About 15 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up slightly at 24,757.10. The broad-based S&P 500 dipped

0.1 percent to 2,680.57, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index fell 0.6 percent to 6,921.04. Analysts were anticipating a quiet period of trading after markets were closed Monday.

Key data releases this week include the Conference Board's report on consumer confidence for December. Home prices in the 20 biggest cities rose 0.2 percent in October from the prior month, according to the S&P Case-Shiller index.

Tokyo stocks fell yesterday on late profit-taking, with investors keeping to the sidelines as major global markets remained closed for the Christmas holidays.— Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday 26 December 2017. Includes tables for Index, Trades, and various market sectors like Oil & Gas, Industrials, and Consumer Goods.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Global Bond Yields.

Business

# Stand out in the New Year with signature Infiniti Q30

## Q30 forays into the segment of premium compact vehicles

**KUWAIT:** The Q30 is Infiniti's daring foray into the new fast-growing segment of premium compact vehicles that youngsters desire. It evolves Infiniti's new signature design cues into a more stylish and fluid profile that alludes dynamism. One of the prominent styling touches of the Q30 is its double-arch grille with a unique 3D mesh. The signature C-pillar arcs forward in a dynamic crescent shape that emphasizes motion, even when stationary. The contrast of the long, low-slung roof-line, conjuring an image of a rakish shooting brake in silhouette, and elevated stance add to the visual impact. This also adds to a sleek look that gives the impression of the car being in motion even when standing still. The balance of sculptural shapes moving past one another creates a harmonious design that can be appreciated at a glance.



**Vehicle equipped with a wide range of gizmos**

The Q30's elevated stance makes for an important characteristic that makes it stand out amongst the crowd. The height (1,495mm) allows for a higher hip point (531mm), which aids ingress and egress. The A-pillar design is intentionally slim, contributing to enhanced visibility for a confident driving experience.

Technologically, the Q30 is equipped with a wide range of gizmos making it the best in the segment. Assistive technology aids such as Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection, Forward Collision Warning with Forward Emergency Braking and Blind Spot Warning are geared to make the enthralling driving experience safer. The Intelligent Parking Assist - a segment first - can adapt to the three key parking situations - tight parallel parking, 90-degree backing-in, and angular parking. The technology uses 12 sensors

strategically located around the car automatically steers the Q30 into place while the driver only controls the brake and accelerator.

Under the hood, the INFINITI Q30 will be powered by 1.6L or 2.0L Turbo engines in a 2WD configuration. For enthusiasts, the 2.0L Turbo is also offered with an optional AWD drivetrain. The 2.0L Turbo engine is a power-horse as it delivers 208hp and 350Nm torque. At peak performance, the Infiniti Q30 blasts from 0-to-100kph in 7.3 seconds.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to explore the unique features of the Q30 by visiting the Infiniti showroom located in Al-Rai. The showroom is open daily except Fridays.



## HMD Global celebrates one year as the new home of Nokia phones

**KUWAIT:** HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, today celebrates its first birthday. In just 12 months, the start-up has made 12 major announcements including the introduction of eleven new devices, and global partnerships with industry heavyweights such as ZEISS. Throughout this fast-paced period, the home of Nokia phones has been guided and motivated by the enthusiasm of its rapidly expanding fan base.

With the ambition of being truly global from day one, HMD Global has already released its new portfolio of six Nokia smartphones and five feature phones in over 80 markets with activations in 170 countries, delivering websites in 48 languages and setting up solid foundations for future growth.

### Fast paced growth and scale

HMD Global arrived on the scene to incredible fanfare, marked by the return of the Nokia 3310 at Mobile World Congress 2017, and the introduction of its first, global wave of Android smartphones. The new portfolio won over 20 awards at the show and sold out across markets. Today, Nokia phones are on sale across more than 80 countries on 45 local websites across 48 languages. Devices have already been activated in more than 170 countries.

During its first year, HMD Global has forged major strategic partnerships with industry leaders, including Nokia, Google, Foxconn and ZEISS. Over the next year, the company's commitment to those partnerships aims to deliver purposeful innovation to fans and set new standards for what you can expect from a smartphone.

### Overwhelming response from fans

Demonstrating incredible passion, engagement, and enthusiasm for the new portfolio, the response from fans around the world has been humbling. More than a million people watched the livestream from the launch of the Nokia 3310 and Nokia 3, Nokia 5 and Nokia 6 at MWC 2017. Online, there have been more than 200 million video views

## VIVA to offer Huawei Mate 10 & Mate 10 Pro in Stores

**KUWAIT:** VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced it will offer the Huawei Mate 10 and Mate 10 Pro devices with KD 13.5 and KD 15 postpaid plans, with the world's first AI processor inside, in its stores.

The new Huawei Mate 10 comes with exclusive features that packs the punch with a combination of power and speed, amazing cutting edge technology making it adaptive to the customers' needs, in addition to 5.9-inch screen and HDR10 technology for intensely vivid and bright colors.

As for Huawei Mate 10 Pro, it comes with a host of exclusive features making it powerful, elegant and lightning fast, water resistant, cutting edge technology that makes it adaptive to the customers' needs, in addition to 6-inch screen and HDR10 technology for intensely vivid and bright colors.

Both devices feature ergonomically curved glass, 10 nm tech, 8-core CPU and 12-core GPU, industry-leading 4000 mAh battery, SuperCharge tech for whole day's use with 20-minute charge, new Leica Dual Lens with f/1.6 aperture for beautiful shallow depth of field pictures, blur-free shots of objects on the move, 20MP monochrome sensor and 12MP RGB sensor, intelligent cell search to stay connected, even when traveling at high speed.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things 'More' for its customers by transforming communication, information and

and 87 million website visits over the past year. And with a 2.2 million-strong following on Facebook, fans are vocal and engaged.

Florian Seiche, CEO of HMD Global, said: "After the amazing year we've had, I first want to thank our fans for such an incredible response. Their engagement, enthusiasm and love for our new Nokia phones and what we're trying to achieve has been what's made each and every major announcement possible. It really demonstrates the value of reaching out to people, building communities and listening to what they want to see in their phones. With the progress we've made and the response we've received, I know I speak for everyone when I say I'm thrilled to see what 2018 holds for us and our fans."

Sanmeet Kochhar, General Manager, Middle East, at HMD Global, said: "The Middle East represents a key growth market for HMD, and it has been exciting to witness how digital technology is transforming lives throughout the region. Our entire product portfolio has been designed in alignment with what our fans want from our devices in terms of features and design, and our aim is to provide an innovative and unique experience. We have been inspired by the response we've received from consumers in the past year, and we are looking forward to seeing what the upcoming 12 months have in store for us."

### Product commitment and achievements

With a comprehensive and differentiated product portfolio delivered in just one year, HMD Global has maintained its commitment to delivering pure Android to all its smartphones. Staying true to the famous design heritage of Nokia phones, each device is crafted with three guiding principles in mind - technology with purpose, human design, and pure, secure and up-to-date Android.

The home of Nokia phones is also delighted to now bring Android One™ to its portfolio. Starting with Nokia 8, the update rolls out to fans in even more countries today, complementing the pure Android ethos with features like Android Instant Apps and Background Limits.

Juho Sarvikas, Chief Product Officer of HMD Global, said: "We started our journey with huge expectations from fans and huge responsibility to deliver on the legacy of Nokia phones. True to our Scandinavian roots, we designed beautiful devices adhering to the build-quality you expect from the heritage of Nokia phones. We took no shortcuts in integrating the latest technology to enhance your real-life experiences. At the same time, we delivered innovative propositions such as the Dual-Sight experience on Nokia 8 and the extraordinary 2-day battery life on Nokia 2."

entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established an unrivalled position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions: a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service. VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation of the most advanced fourth generation (4G LTE) network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability.



## Decoding the enigma of bitcoin mining

By Dr Wafa Sbaiti

A boy asked his dad to buy him 1 bitcoin as a present for his birthday. Dad: "What? You mean \$15,554 for a birthday present? \$14,354 is a lot of money young man! What do you need \$16,872 for anyway?"

Unless you've been living under a rock for the past year or so, you must have heard of bitcoin. The digital currency has been making headlines everywhere and one of the most searched for terms on Google in 2017.

The crypto currency has greatly exceeded all expectations and risen to levels that no one could have imagined. However, bitcoin has also received a good deal of criticism, mainly because of its highly volatile nature. If you've heard of bitcoin but don't know enough, this article will help you get up to speed with the crypto currency mania that is sweeping across the world.



### What is bitcoin

At its core, Bitcoin is a currency that is based entirely online. Bitcoin was started in 2009 by programmers and technology geeks, mainly from Japan. Though no one is quite sure of who was the original creator, the mysterious name of Satoshi Nakamoto is often credited for having designed the system. Mining operations and transaction servers were set up first in Japan followed by US and elsewhere. According to crypto experts, Bitcoin started as a hobby for tech-geeks more than an attempt to create a digital currency. Bitcoin supporters claim that it has all the characteristics of regular fiat money. It is a store of value, medium of exchange for trading and easily measurable against other commodities. It is divisible into smaller units and a liquid asset.

### The block chain technology

Bitcoin is based on the block chain technology. Block chain is a ledger of accounts that records how many bitcoins are in existence and who owns what amount. The ledger is maintained by a network of bitcoin servers spread around the world. Every time someone tries to make a transaction in the currency, a query is sent to the network to authenticate it. Resolving the query requires solving a complex mathematical equation. The first mining server that resolves the query in the most efficient manner authenticates the transaction and adds it to the ledger as a new block. Computers on the whole network then update their own record.

In order to get bitcoin, you need an 'electronic wallet', which is a bitcoin address specifically assigned to a person. You can get bitcoin by mining or buying them from someone who already has some bitcoins to sell.

### The fluctuations in bitcoin

The one good (or bad?) thing about internet is that it speeds up everything. Bitcoin is based entirely online and the quick-paced nature of the internet affects it as well. Bitcoin was designed to be a decentralized form of currency and there is no central bank or government to control the money supply. This is the reason why the crypto currency is more susceptible to rising and falling demand. Its value goes up and down more than any other fiat currency in circulation.

The Bitcoin protocol also makes it impossible to add more Bitcoin into the ecosystem to cope with rising demand. The maximum number of Bitcoin that can be added through mining is fixed at 21 million and the number that gets mined every 10 minutes diminishes with time. The value of Bitcoin is completely dependent on the market's demand factor.

When there is an upsurge in demand due to rising awareness and interest, the price shoots through the roof, which can be good for investors.

When people start selling because of bad news in the media, no central authority can step in to keep it from falling which is equally bad. Bitcoin perfectly incorporates the free

market economic model which makes it a libertarian dream come true. But this also makes the currency very volatile and a risky proposition invest and hold.

### The risks associated with bitcoin

Bitcoin skeptics give four main reasons to be wary of the digital currency. First, many skeptics have pointed out that the currency is made entirely out of thin air. It is nothing more than a record of historic transaction. Some CEO's and financial analysts have called it a 'fraud' and compared it to the Tulip Mania craze that gripped the Dutch during the seventeenth century.

Second, the currency is not backed or accepted by governments around the world. Many have pointed out that the national central banks will never accept bitcoin because they cannot control it. This was one of the strengths of bitcoin as investors buying bitcoin wanted freedom from government control. However, in the long run, it might turn out to be one of the hurdles in its widespread acceptance. Third, critics point out that bitcoin is in a speculative bubble. The sharp increase in bitcoin price over the last year is unprecedented in recent history. Bitcoin jumped

from \$1,000 at the start of 2017 to over \$17,000 by the year-end. That is an increase of 1700 percent, and skeptics believe that it will crash soon. Lastly, IT experts have also raised questions on the security measures of the block chain protocol. The online currency will become a target of cyber-attacks and hacking, if its value keeps rising the way it is going. Bitcoin transactions are completely anonymous with no way of tracking hackers and thieves.

### Government regulations

Most governments around the world have not been happy with the digital currency and attempted to regulate it. China banned Crypto currency exchanges operating inside the country in September. This caused a huge drop in international bitcoin trading from that country. Russia has similarly warned its citizens from trading in bitcoin, calling it a risky and dangerous investment.

Japan and South Korea have been more receptive to bitcoin. Some banks in Japan offer bitcoin deposit accounts and also provide digital currency trading services. Investors from South Korea have been aggressively buying the coin and considered responsible for the price hike. United States is leading the way in bitcoin trade. The country has more than 500 bitcoin ATMs and trading volumes from the US alone account for roughly 40 percent of international bitcoin trade.

### Future options trading in bitcoin

Recently bitcoin received a great boost in credibility and recognition when its real-world trading launched for the first time at US exchanges. Two of the biggest future contract market makers, Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) and Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) had announced plans to offer bitcoin future options for their client in mid-December. Bitcoin launched at CBOE on the 10th of December to a roaring success. Bitcoin which was trading online at around \$15,000 online at that time jumped to over \$18,000 in the futures market. Bitcoin spot price gradually rose through the week to coincide with the price in the futures market at roughly \$17,500. Financial investors expect great things to happen for the digital currency after it is added to CME, the biggest futures market in the world, on the 18th of December.

### Future predictions about Bitcoin

The coin has seen a rollercoaster ride through 2017. Both supporters and skeptics of bitcoin have predicted many things for the crypto currency over time. Supporters had claimed during the year that bitcoin will hit \$10,000 before the end of 2017. The coin reached and surpassed that by a long stretch. It is currently trading in the market around \$17,900 and may very well end the year over \$20,000.

While some of the outspoken critics believe that bitcoin will bust and drop to zero soon, some of the more enthusiastic supporters predict that the coin will reach \$100,000 by 2020. The digital currency is so volatile that either one could be correct. — Dr Wafa Sbaiti, Professor of Finance, American University of Kuwait

## Technology

## Friendly 'robocop' set to help police in Hungary

'It grabs the attention more if a robot is talking'



SZOLNOK: School children listen to a presentation about the internet security given by 'Robi, the robot' in their classroom of a primary school. — AFP photos

**SZOLNOK, Hungary:** A talkative little robot has been enlisted by police in Hungary to help bring an electric jolt to presentations in schools and pensioner clubs. "Hi kids!" said robot "Robi" to a class of primary school children in Szolnok, 100 kilometers east of Budapest. "Some things you need to be careful with when using the internet..." he continued in a tinny voice.

About 40 centimeters tall and 20 wide and weighing 1.6 kilograms, Robi's 16-part body stood on a table, gesturing as he talks. "It grabs the attention more if a robot is talking," Robi's programmer Csaba Erdos, a police educational instructor, told AFP. "It's a new way of communicating and presenting," he said. Robi has been operational in the Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county since May, and

Erdos, 38, said there are plans to have similar robots jumping into action soon around the country. Most weeks Erdos takes Robi with him to help at presentations to school kids and elderly people on themes like crime prevention, digital security and road safety.

During a break to recharge — after 30 minutes of talking Robi needed more power — one boy at the Tiszaparti school told AFP

that he hadn't seen a talking robot before, apart from in the "Transformers" cartoon.

"His voice took a while to get used to but I loved it, he was very clever," said 10-year-old Milan Markus.

After the talk, the children laughed as they all tried to mirror his robot moves. Occasionally Robi also greets reporters at press conferences, where he gives advice on

how to avoid crimes like break-ins. He can even answer questions, "as long as they are pre-programmed," said Erdos. Sporting a police logo on his chest, the friendly Robi can also help engender trust in the police, Erdos said. "Robots can be a force for good, helping and supporting people, rather than replacing or threatening them, as they are sometimes portrayed in films, he said. — AFP

## Top small-cap funds of 2017 focus on tech in year ahead

**NEW YORK:** Healthcare, technology and Japanese small-cap stocks look poised to outperform the broader market in the year ahead, according to some of the best performing US-based stock fund managers of 2017.

Small-cap stocks should be among the largest winners of the newly-signed Republican-led tax law, which slashed corporate taxes at home and made it cheaper for companies to bring back their profits from overseas. Yet small-cap fund managers from Loomis Sayles, Federated Investors and Wasatch Advisors whose funds are up 30 percent or more for the year say that a bigger factor in the year ahead will be continued global growth.

## Lower valuations

"The tax bill is going to make some balance sheets look better on the margin, but we think the larger factor is that the recovery is still going on internationally," said Kenneth Korngiebel, a co-portfolio manager of the \$335-million Wasatch Micro Cap fund, which is up 36.1 percent year-to-date. That performance makes it the 13th best small-cap fund of the year, according to Lipper data, which tracks about 1,800 small-cap funds. As a result, Korngiebel is shifting more of his portfolio into international stocks, which often

trade at lower valuations than their US counterparts and have better growth characteristics, he said.

Korngiebel is adding to stocks like Japanese outsourcing company UT Group Co Ltd, whose shares are up 243 percent for the year to date, and which he expects to grow its revenue by more than 30 percent in the year ahead. He is also adding to his position in US-based Tabula Rasa Healthcare Inc, which helps doctors screen for potential drug interactions. Shares of the company are up 97 percent in 2017.

"The percentage of the population who take five or more medication is going up and adverse drug events are expensive and can lead to loss of life. What we see here is opportunity to take advantage of an under-covered company that is unique and meets a large need," he said. Overall, companies in the small-cap benchmark Russell 2000 index pay a median effective tax rate of 31.9 percent, while the larger, multinational companies in the S&P 500 pay a median effective tax rate of 28 percent, according to Thomson Reuters data. The median for the 30 mega-cap stocks in the Dow Jones Industrial Average is 23.8 percent.

Some of the benefits of the tax cut are already reflected in stock prices. The iShares

Russell 2000 ETF, which tracks the benchmark Russell 2000 index of small-cap shares, is up 14 percent for the year to date, with about half of that gain coming over the last three months as Republicans rolled out their tax plan.

John Slavik, a co-portfolio manager of the \$18-million Loomis Sayles Small/Mid Cap Growth fund, the 16th best performing small-cap fund this year, said that industrial machinery companies such as Gardner Denver Holdings Inc should benefit if corporations reinvest part of their tax windfalls into improving their factories.

## Global growth

The fund's largest position is in supply chain company XPO Logistics Inc, which Slavik expects to gain from both corporate capital reinvestment and global economic growth. Shares of the company are up 78 percent for the year, and now trade at a trailing price to earnings ratio of 65.9, but Slavik said that he expects its revenues and cash flow to accelerate as the global manufacturing sector continues to expand. "The valuation of the stock has been more challenging but we still think it works into the future," he said.

He has also been selling his position in clear-braces maker Align Technology Inc, whose shares are up 135 percent this year and now trade at a market value of more than \$18 billion, making it too large for his fund. "This is a company that has done very well for us but we are looking to start to redeploy that cash elsewhere," he said.

Stephen DeNichilo, a portfolio manager of



NEW YORK: A video board displays the numbers after the closing bell of the Dow Jones Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange. — AFP

the \$872 million Federated Kaufmann Small Cap fund, the 9th best small-cap fund this year, said that fund holdings such as plastics molding manufacturer Milacron Holdings Corp will benefit from a pickup in capital spending because its products help improve a factory's efficiency. "This kind of investment pays for itself very quickly," he said. Yet he has a larger position overall in biotech companies, which have greater growth potential, he said. He has been adding to his position in

Nektar Therapeutics, which is developing in abuse-proof opioid medication, and gene-therapy drug maker Spark Therapeutics Inc.

He also added a position in retailer Floor & Decor Holdings Inc shortly after its initial public offering in April as a play on consumer spending on home renovation. Shares of the company, which makes high-end floor tiles, are up 37.8 percent for the year. "This a traditional brick and mortar retailer that has built a better mouse trap," he said. — Reuters

## Charges dropped against journalists jailed for flying drone

**YANGON:** Foreign and local journalists jailed for flying a drone near Myanmar's parliament could be released from prison in early January after police dropped additional charges that carried at least three more years behind bars, their lawyers said yesterday. Lau Hon Meng from Singapore and Mok Choy Lin from Malaysia, who were on assignment for Turkish state broadcaster TRT, were detained late October along with Myanmar journalist Aung Naing Soe and driver Hla Tin while shooting a documentary in the capital Naypyidaw.

Expecting to receive a fine, they confessed to flying the drone but were instead sentenced to two months in jail under Myanmar's aircraft act. They faced an additional three years after being accused of violating Myanmar's import-export law, while the two foreign journalists were also charged with immigration offences that carried a maximum five-year prison term. But police dropped those extra charges "as the defendants didn't compromise state security", defence lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP yesterday.

The judge is now expected to dismiss the



Singaporean journalist Lau Hon Meng, center left, and Malaysian journalist Mok Choy Lin, both jailed for flying drones illegally over parliament buildings, are escorted during their trial at a court in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, Nov. 10, 2017. — AP

removal of content that it deems offensive, but there has been little sign of it silencing criticism when the companies providing the platforms are global. Its neighbor China, in contrast, allows only local internet companies operating under strict rules. The number of staff compares with the 6,000 reportedly employed by North Korea. However, the general's comments suggest its force may be focused largely on domestic internet users whereas North Korea is internationally focused because the internet is not available to the public at large.

In August, Vietnam's president said the country needed to pay greater attention to

controlling "news sites and blogs with bad and dangerous content". Vietnam, one of the top 10 countries for Facebook users by numbers, has also drafted an internet security bill asking for local placement of Facebook and Google servers, but the bill has been the subject of heated debate at the National Assembly and is still pending assembly approval.

Cyber security firm FireEye Inc said Vietnam had "built up considerable cyber espionage capabilities in a region with relatively weak defenses". "Vietnam is certainly not alone. FireEye has observed a proliferation in offensive capabilities ... This proliferation has implications for many parties, includ-

ing governments, journalists, activists and even multinational firms," a spokesman at FireEye, who requested anonymity, told Reuters. "Cyber espionage is increasingly attractive to nation states, in part because it can provide access to a significant amount of information with a modest investment, plausible deniability and limited risk," he added. Vietnam denies such charges. Vietnam has in recent months stepped up measures to silence critics. A court last month jailed a blogger for seven years for "conducting propaganda against the state". In a separate, similar case last month, a court upheld a 10-year jail sentence for a prominent blogger. — Reuters

## iPhone X might not be a hot cake as expected

**PAULO ALTO:** Ahead of the launch of the Apple iPhone X, the company's flagship smartphone model, there was a widespread belief that Apple would ship a lot of iPhone X models during calendar year 2017 but that demand would be so high it wouldn't reach supply to-demand balance on the iPhone X until sometime in the first half of 2018.

The reality, at least with respect to supply-to-demand balance, seems to be different. Apple appeared to reach supply to-demand balance for the iPhone X earlier this month.

Now, reaching supply to-demand balance earlier than expected isn't necessarily a negative—it could indicate that Apple was able to resolve production bottlenecks and significantly boost manufacturing output of the device. However, if Apple reached supply to-demand balance because demand simply wasn't as strong as expected, then

that'd be a negative for Apple. According to a new report from DigiTimes, demand for the iPhone X—at least in some important regions—appears to have fallen short of expectations.

DigiTimes, citing "sources from the semiconductor packaging and testing service industry," says Apple will ship between 30 million and 35 million iPhone X models during the fourth quarter of 2017. This does seem to indicate that Apple shipped significantly more iPhone X units than some originally expected.

KGI Securities analyst Ming-Chi Kuo, for example, said back in late November that he expected Apple to ship between 25 million and 30 million units of the iPhone X during the fourth quarter of 2017. However, DigiTimes' sources don't seem to be as sanguine about iPhone X demand.

"The sources pointed out that pre-orders for the iPhone X in a number of markets such as Taiwan, the US, and Singapore are not as strong as expected," DigiTimes reports.

Perhaps iPhone demand in those regions is lower than expected, or maybe potential iPhone buyers in those regions opted for Apple's iPhone 8-series models instead. Moving on, DigiTimes' sources also claim that iPhone X shipments are expected to "stay flat or drop slightly in the first quarter of 2018."

## Vietnam unveils cyber unit to combat 'wrong views'

**HANOI:** Vietnam has unveiled a new, 10,000-strong military cyber warfare unit to counter "wrong" views on the Internet, media reported, amid a widening crackdown on critics of the one-party state. The cyber unit, named Force 47, is already in operation in several sectors. Tuoi Tre newspaper quoted Lieutenant General Nguyen Trong Nghia, deputy head of the military's political department, as saying at

a conference of the Central Propaganda Department on Monday in the commercial hub of Ho Chi Minh City. "In every hour, minute, and second we must be ready to fight proactively against the wrong views," the paper quoted the general as saying.

Communist-ruled Vietnam has stepped up attempts to tame the internet, calling for closer watch over social networks and for the

Health

# France to probe Lactalis baby milk salmonella scare

The group has now recalled all of its production

**PARIS:** French prosecutors have opened a probe into salmonella contamination and a major international recall of baby milk produced by dairy giant Lactalis, a legal source said yesterday. The investigation will focus on possible charges of causing involuntary injuries and endangering the lives of others but also possible cheating and failures in carrying out a product recall, the source said.

Reports of some 20 children falling sick after consuming Lactalis powdered milk-sold under several different brand names in France and abroad, including Picot and Milumel-first emerged in early December. The company, one of the world's largest producers of dairy products, ordered a first major recall on December 10 of nearly 7,000 tons of packets produced by a contaminated factory in Craon, northwest France. At the time, it said it did not know how much of the potentially dangerous powder had been consumed or was in shops around the world and it announced a second, wider recall on December 21.

The group has now recalled all of its production from the Craon factory since February 15, blaming the contamination on renovation work carried out earlier this year. Lactalis could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The product withdrawals have affected consumers in countries as far afield as



**CRAON:** This file photo taken on December 4, 2017 shows the Celia dairy company's infant milk factory that belongs to the LNS Lactalis group. — AFP

China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Britain and Sudan, underlining the company's global reach and the difficulty in tracing all the potentially at-risk powder. Salmonella symptoms include severe diarrhea, stomach cramps and vomiting. The illness-caused by intestinal bacteria from farm

animals-is especially dangerous for the very young and elderly because it can cause severe dehydration.

The baby milk industry was shaken by a huge scare in China in 2008 when local manufacturers were found to be bulking their product with an industrial chemical.

Six babies died and around 300,000 others were made ill. The scare in the vast and growing Chinese market benefited rival companies such as Lactalis and fellow French giant Danone, which were more expensive but were seen by consumers as safe and high quality.

**Sixteen babies hospitalized**

A total of 35 infants have fallen sick with salmonella poisoning in France since August including 16 who were hospitalized, an unusually high number that sparked fears of an epidemic. Of these, 31 were found to have consumed Lactalis products from its factory in Craon, which was shut down on December 8 for a major cleaning.

The company believes the salmonella outbreak can be traced to an evaporation tower used to dry out the milk at the factory it acquired in 2006. The plant had suffered salmonella contamination the previous year.

Quentin Guillemain, the father of a three-month-old baby who drank the milk but did not fall ill, has filed a complaint against Lactalis and the UFC Que Choisir consumer association announced plans to do so. Guillemain has set up a support group for the families of infants sickened by the milk. The legal probe was opened by prosecutors in Paris specialised in public health issues. — AFP

## Giant marine reptile lived in Antarctic 150m years ago

**BUENOS AIRES:** Scientists in Argentina have found the remains of a giant carnivorous marine reptile, or plesiosaur, that lived 150 million years ago in Antarctica. The four-finned reptile, which measured up to 12 meters long, dates from the late Jurassic period and is the most ancient creature ever discovered on the continent.

Soledad Cavalli, a paleontologist at Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council, said: "At this site, you can find a great diversity of fish, ammonites, some bivalves, but we did not expect to find such an ancient plesiosaur." The "surprising" discovery has never been documented, according to a statement from the National University of La Matanza, near Buenos Aires. "The discovery is pretty extraordinary, because the rock types at the site weren't thought conducive to the preservation of bones, like the vertebrae of this marine reptile," Cavalli said.

The discovery site was a two-hour helicopter journey from Argentina's Marambio Base on the tip of Antarctica, with the researchers set to continue their work in January, during the southern hemisphere's summer.

Marcelo Reguero of the Argentine Antarctic Institute (IAA) added that Antarctica was at the time part of the Gondwana continent, which also included Australia, New Zealand, India, Madagascar, Africa and South America, before continental drift pushed them apart. — AFP

## Gaza zookeeper puts lion cubs up for sale

**GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories:** The owner of a private zoo in the impoverished Gaza Strip has put three lion cubs up for sale, saying he can no longer afford to

feed them. Mohammad Ahmad Jumaa took to social media to advertise the animals at 3,500 Jordanian dinars (\$5,000) each. "Because of the bad economic situation and the difficulty of finding food and drink (for the animals), I was forced to put up for sale three cubs born around a month ago," he said.

He said he needed the money to pay for the upkeep of the rest of his pride-two male and three female lions. Jumaa, who has owned the animal park in Rafah on the border with Egypt for 23 years, said feeding his animals costs around \$345 a

month. He had named the cubs Palestine, Al-Quds (Jerusalem in Arabic), and Erdogan (after Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan). He had received calls about the advert on Facebook but had not so far sold any of the cubs. In 2016, a tiger, two turtles, two eagles, two porcupines, a pelican, an emu and a deer were transferred from a dilapidated Gaza zoo to new homes in South Africa, Jordan and Israel. Many other animals died because of poor conditions as the owners ran out of money in the enclave hit by three wars with Israel since 2008 and a decade-long Israeli blockade. — AFP

CLINIC  
PAGE

248 33 199

## Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader

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## What's On

# Alghanim Lotus displays iconic Evora 400 at Al Hamra Mall

Alghanim Lotus displayed its latest sports iconic car, the 2018 Evora 400, at Al Hamra Mall from December 15 to 22, 2017, giving visitors and car enthusiasts a closer experience as well as an exclusive offering on the top-of-the-range sports car, which has redefined driving, speed and pure advanced engineering.

Always committing to adding value to customers' experience and providing them with the best quality of service and products, the exclusive offering gave customers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to own of the limited number of Lotus Evora 400 hand-built this year, with competitive financing solutions starting from KD 625 monthly installments, in addition to the three-year unlimited mileage warranty which includes three years of free service and a one-year full coverage insurance policy for free. In a unique display worthy of the advanced engineering of Lotus cars, visitors and enthusiasts also experienced the fastest and most luxurious car in the world in a virtual reality (VR) simulation during the display.

## About the legendary Evora 400

The new Lotus Evora 400 is one of the latest pure and focused supercars engineered by Lotus, combining high performance with the legendary Lotus benchmark handling. With a maximum speed of 300 kilometers per hour, and an acceleration of 0-100 kilometers in 4.2 seconds, the new Evora is a more agile and involving drive that enables it to lap the challenging test track at



the Lotus Headquarters in Hethel, Norfolk, at a scintillating six seconds faster than previous models.

Over two thirds of the Lotus Evora 400 is new, including its supercharged and charge-cooled mid-mounted 3.5-liter V6 engine that produces a horsepower of 400 and 410 Nm of torque. A new aluminum chassis incorporates a new interior, and the lightweight composite body has changed significantly both in the front and rear of the miracle car. The new Evora is 22 kilograms lighter, an accomplishment that has been achieved through careful and clever design and



attention to details. This weight reduction is even more impressive considering that the supercar has more power and a higher standard specification than before. Alghanim Motors, the mother company of Alghanim Lotus, is dedicated to providing customers with superior products, outstanding services and features that continue to position the company as a leader in the automotive market.

Experience the purity of speed and unique experience of the 2018 model of Lotus Evora 400 by visiting Araya Mall in Sharq, Kuwait City, before the end of

the month to take advantage of an unprecedented sports car engineering experience and exclusive offers. Car enthusiasts can also be the first to know what is new by following Alghanim Motors on Instagram at @AlghanimLotusKW. Car enthusiasts can experience the purity of speed and unique engineering of Lotus cars at the Alghanim Lotus showroom located in Shuwaikh Industrial, block 1, street 7 next to Xerox and Kromozone on Saturday to Thursday starting from 9 AM to 12:30 PM and from 4:30 PM to 8:30 PM.

## LAPA overjoyed with Gulf Cup performance

The head of LAPA's Dancing department, Teni Matian expressed her joy with the success achieved by LAPA young dancers on presenting dancing formations on the inauguration of the 23rd GCC Soccer Championship ceremonies. "It is a great honor for us that our youth present such a profound performance before HH the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed, high-ranking state officials and GCC representatives", she stressed noting that feedback about the ceremonies were still flowing and ranking them parallel to many other international ones. Matian added that LAPA's 38 dancers and the 12 professional dancers from France amazed the fans with their performances designed by Hafez Ziknani and Celine Karo from France and directed by Liolen Hamm in a background of joy, light effects and fireworks.



## KU Department of Information Science at GCC eHealth Workforce Conference

Dr Dari Alhuwail, a faculty member at the Department of Information Science at the College of Computing Sciences and Engineering at Kuwait University, joined the Scientific Committee of the GCC eHealth Workforce Development

Conference to be held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on March 27-29, 2018. Dr Alhuwail said that submissions are open to all specialists through submitting an abstract via the conference website (<http://www.gccehealth.org>) and the deadline for submissions is 20 January 2018. Dr Alhuwail stated that the Scientific Committee welcomes many important topics, including but not limited to, artificial intelligence, health informatics, academic programs, professional certification, challenges and opportunities in the development of the digital health workforce in the GCC, health data governance, and legal/ethical issues.



Dr Osama El Hassan, member of the Advisory Board and Coordinator of the GCC Taskforce on Workforce Development in Digital Healthcare, said that the conference will discuss many scientific issues related to planning and managing the workforce in the field of digital health to achieve and maintain an integrated health system based on providing optimal health care. Dr El Hassan stated that the conference simulates policy makers, universities, training institutions, health service providers, companies, and all professionals and specialists in the field of digital health in the Gulf States. Dr El Hassan added that the GCC Taskforce on Workforce Development in Digital Healthcare seeks to prepare the e-health workforce in the GCC through putting forward competency-based training that includes up-skilling, cross-skilling and on job-training programs.

## Boursa Kuwait holds team bonding event

Boursa Kuwait has recently held an annual gathering for its employees, where everyone enjoyed a day full of motivating, challenging and ice breaking activities. Held at Kuwait Regency Hotel, the team bonding event witnessed a positive participation of Boursa Kuwait employees, a gesture

which reflects the company's appreciation to its employees, whom without their efforts and dedication the company wouldn't have achieved its goals and objectives. Activities conducted throughout the day aimed at improving personal relationships between employees, reinforcing synergy and dynamics of effective teams, maintaining and raising awareness of the company's vision, mission and values. The activity comes in-line with the company's internal strategy which focuses on investing in its employees and providing an ideal environment for them to be productive and trainings to further excel in their jobs and develop their skills.

## Indonesian trade delegation participates in Business Forum

A trade mission from Indonesia visited Kuwait from 5 to 8 December 2017. The Indonesian Chamber of Commerce was the Chairman of the Indonesia-Kuwait Business Council. Some 15 Indonesian companies participated in the mission, which were keen to do business with Kuwait, to seek partners to develop mutually beneficial relations, including in the area of trade and investment.

The visit lasted for four days. During the visit, the mission sought to establish contacts with its Kuwaiti counterparts. First, they paid a courtesy call to Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and visited Kuwait National Fund for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. The aim of these meetings and this forum is to promote mutual understanding between Indonesia and Kuwait and take a step forward to promote bilateral economic relations to the next level.

The trade delegation participated in the Business Forum held at the Jumeirah Beach Resort and Spa on 6 December 2017. The Indonesian delegation discussed how to enhance economic relations between Indonesia and Kuwait. The forum followed the meeting between the Indonesian companies and the private sector which found a good welcome between both parties.





TV

AM MOVIES ACTION
00:50 The Darkest Hour
02:35 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation

ANIMAL PLANET HD
00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Treachous Masters
02:40 America's Cutest...

BBC FIRST
00:35 Eastenders
01:05 Call The Midwife: Christmas Special 2017

crime & investigation network
00:00 O.J.: Guilty In Vegas
02:00 It Takes A Killer

COMEDY CENTRAL
00:05 The Half Hour
00:30 The Half Hour
00:55 Sean Lock - Purple Van Man

Discovery Family
20:12 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

Discovery Family
00:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
04:40 Incredible Food Race
05:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things

ID
00:50 Village Of The Damned
01:45 The Real Story With Maria Elena Salinas

Disney HD
00:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

COMEDY CENTRAL
00:05 The Half Hour
00:30 The Half Hour
00:55 Sean Lock - Purple Van Man

Disney Junior
00:10 Unbungeable
00:15 PJ Masks

Discovery Channel HD
00:20 Street Outlaws
01:05 Madiba
01:50 Bushcraft Build-Off

Discovery Channel HD
00:20 Street Outlaws
01:05 Madiba
01:50 Bushcraft Build-Off

Disney XD
06:00 Disney II
06:25 Supa Strikas

Discovery Channel HD
00:20 Ultimate Wheels
01:00 American Pickers
02:10 Swamp People

EHD
00:50 Botched
02:50 Celebrity Style Story

Discovery Channel HD
09:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
09:55 My Fabulous Me

Discovery Channel HD
00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Man Fire Food

Discovery Channel HD
00:10 Chopping Block
01:00 Emmerdale
02:30 Coronation Street

Discovery Channel HD
00:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
01:00 Ancient Discoveries
02:00 Clash Of Warriors

NAT GEO people HD
00:15 What's For Sale?
00:45 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia

Discovery Channel HD
01:40 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
02:05 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
02:35 Ariana's Persian Kitchen

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 Cold Water Gold
01:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 World's Deadliest GPU
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Tiger On The Run

nick HD
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig

nick Jr
00:17 Shimmer And Shine
01:02 Max & Ruby
01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 Cold Water Gold
01:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 World's Deadliest GPU
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Tiger On The Run

nick HD
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig

Discovery Channel HD
07:20 Valentine's Day
09:25 Norbit

Discovery Channel HD
00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory USA

STAR MOVIES HD
00:30 Terri
02:15 Tadpole

STAR WORLD HD
00:00 Grey's Anatomy
01:00 Grey's Anatomy
02:00 Grey's Anatomy

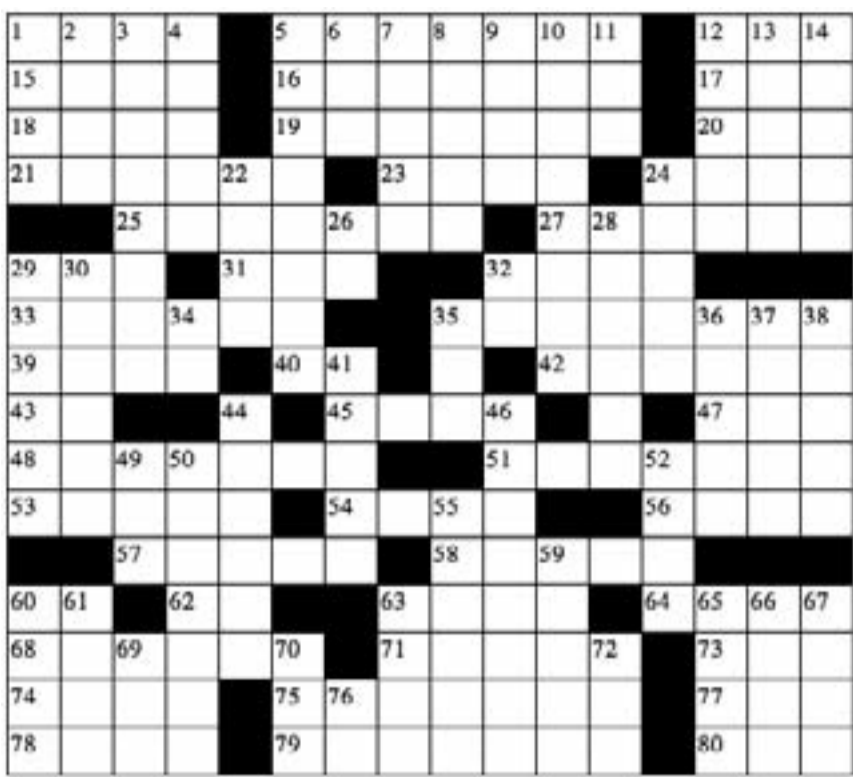
TLC
00:20 My Giant Life
01:05 Fat Chance

AM MOVIES HD COMEDY
01:15 The Colossal Failure Of The Modern Relationship

travel CHANNEL
00:00 Bizarre Foods America
01:00 Booze Traveler

Stars

CROSSWORD 1795



ACROSS

- 1. Largest known toad species.
5. Subject to or caused by an earthquake or earth vibration.
12. What you can repeat immediately after perceiving it.
15. Of a quality, as in.
16. A depository containing historical records and documents.
17. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
18. (prefix) Within.
19. Sweet liqueur made from wine and brandy flavored with plum or peach or apricot kernels and bitter almonds.
20. An associate degree in applied science.
21. A city in south central Mexico (south-east of Mexico City) on the edge of central Mexican plateau.
23. A message received and understood that reduces the recipient's uncertainty.
25. Male roe deer.
27. Norwegian explorer of the Arctic and director of the League of Nations relief program for refugees of World War I (1861-1930).
29. The cry made by sheep.
31. (British) Your grandmother.
33. Roman Emperor who was the adoptive son of Trajan.
39. Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
40. A Mid-Atlantic state.
42. The part of a garment that is attached at armhole and provides a cloth covering for the arm.
43. A bluish-white lustrous metallic element.
45. A boy or man.
47. Legal document setting forth rules governing a particular kind of activity.
48. Letters and packages that are transported by aircraft.
51. Build up to a level by depositing sediment.
53. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
54. Chief port of Yemen.
56. United States chemist who discovered deuterium (1893-1981).
57. An extended area of land.
58. Scar where the umbilical cord was attached.
60. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
62. A state in north central United States.
64. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
68. Evergreen trees or shrubs of mountains of Australia and Tasmania.
71. A city in central New York.
73. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
74. Type genus of the Amidae.
75. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
77. A fluorocarbon with chlorine.
78. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
79. Dried bark of the cascara buckthorn used as a laxative.
80. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.

- the tibia and fibula with the femur and protected in front by the patella.
3. (sports) With hand brought forward and up from below shoulder level.
4. (Philippine) A dish of marinated vegetables and meat or fish.
5. Music composed for dancing the saraband.
6. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
7. Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
8. A cut of meat (beef or veal or mutton or lamb) from the upper part of the leg.
9. A state of irritation or annoyance.
10. Science and technology of electronic systems and devices for aeronautics and astronautics.
11. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
12. A large number or amount.
13. Relating to or used in or intended for trade or commerce.
14. A family of Amerindian languages spoken in Washington and British Columbia.
22. A Russian river.
24. Give qualities or abilities to.
26. An organization of independent states to promote international peace and security.
28. (electronics) Of a circuit or device having an output that is proportional to the input.
30. Any handsome young man.
32. A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.
34. A state in midwestern United States.
35. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
36. Big-eyed scud.
37. Avoid or try to avoid, as of duties, questions and issues.
38. American pragmatic philosopher who advocated progressive education (1859-1952).
41. Enthusiastic approval.
44. The face or front of a building.
46. Low stingless nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
49. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
50. A law officer having duties similar to those of a sheriff in carrying out the judgments of a court of law.
52. A principle or condition that customarily governs behavior.
55. Related on the mother's side.
59. A Roman Catholic priest who acts for another higher-ranking clergyman.
61. Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
63. The froth produced by soaps or detergents.
65. The rate of moving (especially walking or running).
66. The handle of a weapon or tool.
67. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
69. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
70. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
76. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

DOWN

- 1. A city in northwestern Syria.
2. Hinge joint in the human leg connecting

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The energies that surround you now will be working in your favor toward organizing and disciplining your mind toward a new technical invention. Perhaps this is more of a time for a more stress-free time. You don't seem to be able to stop your brain so you work through the afternoon creating a blueprint of this new invention. Figuring out ways to make your nest egg grow can be a preoccupation later today. You have a really good heart when it comes to helping your friends. You help your friends often. You listen, discern what is needed and get to the heart of most any matter. Your intuitiveness and understanding will be instrumental in helping to solve many a frustrating issue. You could make a wish on a falling star.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Someone older than yourself could be engrossed in a conversation with you this day. You may find yourself a bit more talkative. Figuring out some new ways to tackle a work issue takes less time than you expected. You are elated to find that a senior can be so articulate and patient with good suggestions that are current. You may find that you learn more than just the technical issue of the day. You learn to copy this senior when you are instructing or explaining something to the young people that come to you for help. Since you are interested in things political, you will find the experiences of this day improve your standing. Music may take on a newfound importance, or you may just find yourself enjoying it more. A play or a concert is worth your time.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You will find rewards for your work efforts this day. Present your ideas at work to a person in authority; you will have positive results. Your philosophy and psyche are in a state of flux now. A new way of looking at life may have you spending a lot of time in a meditation mode. You could have difficulty in sleeping for the next few evenings, but this is only an indication that a change is taking place. How exciting... New energies of positive change are on the horizon. Acceptance of those who have conflicting attitudes and priorities is a must. Listen to others, but do not waste precious time and energy on argument. This is a favorable time for either holiday or business travel. Relaxing this evening to your favorite pastime could be most enjoyable.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This may be stacking up as an extremely mundane type of a day in the workplace—lacking in imagination. You are a natural in your persuasiveness with others. When your heart and determination are in your product, you could sell a phone to the telephone company. The result of today is, essentially, a satisfying day. You have a brilliant intuitive and inventive mind and you can create important ways in which one group of people can help another group of people. There may be an issue concerning business that would direct your energies. There may be many people looking to you with hopes of getting help. It is not likely that you will lose yourself in a great book or movie so you may decide to shop for a few winter items.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Personal situations at work are resolved amicably. New inventions and technologies have your attention, as usual. You may seem a little eccentric to those around you. You value anything that is unique and unusual and want desperately to change some things in your life. Someone will realize just how much your creative and intuitive nature benefits you, and will be quite supportive of your eccentricities. Good things, in the form of new solutions or inventions, come to you today—dare to be different. New ways to better health are gaining your attention; you may feel there is no time for a concentrated exercise routine. However, walking can be invigorating and restores your energy. Your self-expression accommodates your particular ideas and thoughts.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You should find others responding to your way of thinking because you are very expressive through your communication skills. Expect to hold a pleasant conversation with someone you love. You just somehow seem to understand what the masses want at this time and could find yourself making decisions that affect others. People that get to know you, value your ability to make commonsense determinations on their behalf. Your emotions may be very present but very much under control. Stability and dependability take care of a deep emotional need. You may feel the need to cook this evening and perhaps prepare food to can or preserve. There are plenty of friendly people all around. Romance is also possible.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Farm

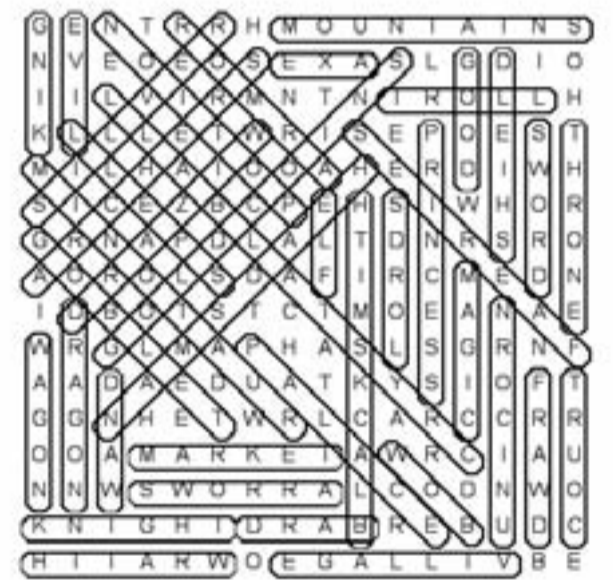
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a common farm animal.



- BALER, FARMER, HOUSE, SOWING SEED, BARN, FENCE, LIVESTOCK, STABLES, BUTTER, FERTILIZER, MILK, TRACTOR, CAT, GOATS, PASTURE, TROUGH, CHEESE, GRAIN, PIG, TURKEYS, CORN, HARROW, PLOW, WEATHERVANE, COW, HARVEST, PRODUCE, WEEDS, CREAM, HAY, ROOSTER, WELL, DAIRY, HEN, SEEDS, WHEAT, DOG, HORSE, SOIL

Yesterday's Solution

Fantasy World 2



- ARCHERS, DWARF, LORDS, SPELL, ARMOR, ELF, MAGIC, SWORD, ARROWS, EVIL, MARKET, THRONE, AXE, FAERIES, MOUNTAINS, TROLL, BARD, GOBLET, UNICORN, VILLAGE, BLACKSMITH, GOLD COINS, PALACE, WAGON, BOW, GOOD, POTION, WAND, COURT, HEADSMAN, PRINCESS, WIZARD, CRYSTAL BALL, KING, SHIELD, WIZARD, DRAGON, KNIGHT, SILVER, WRAITH

The hidden message is: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





RODNEY TURNER/MCT

# TOUGH, YET PRECIOUS

## Facts, tips and trivia about diamonds

### 1. What is a diamond?

Once believed to be the tears of God or splinters of stars, a diamond is carbon in its most concentrated form. The graphite in your pencil is made of the same molecules as your diamond, the atoms are just more compact.

### 2. Where does the word "diamond" come from?

"Diamond" started with the Greek word "adamas" meaning unconquerable; fitting since it is the hardest natural substance on Earth.

### 3. Why are diamonds the ultimate symbol of love?

Diamonds have long been associated with romance and love because they are rare, precious and — almost — indestructible. Legends say Cupid's arrows were tipped with diamonds, while the Greeks believed the fire in the diamond reflected the constant flame of love.

### 4. Where did the tradition of diamond engagement rings begin?

The modern tradition gets its strength from successful advertising campaigns. But Archduke Maximilian of Austria set the trend in 1477 when he gave Mary of Burgundy a diamond engagement ring.

### 5. What else are diamonds traditionally used to celebrate?

Diamonds are April's birthstone. The 10th, 60th and 75th wedding anniversaries are also associated with diamonds.

### 6. Where do diamonds come from?

Natural diamonds are found in kimberlites, or diamond pipes, which were formed by powerful magma eruptions millions of years ago. An estimated 65 percent of the world's diamonds are found in Africa, but other big deposits are found in Australia and Russia.

### 7. What are the "four C's"?

Knowing the four C's is essential for choosing a quality diamond, not just one that looks good under the jewelry store's lights.

■ **Color:** Most diamonds appear colorless, but almost all contain varying degrees of yellow or brown, sometimes called champagne diamonds. "Fancies" are colored diamonds, which can be found in pink, red, blue, green, amber or black.

■ **Cut:** The cut allows a diamond to make the best use of light. When a diamond is cut to good proportions, light is reflected from one facet to another and then dispersed through the top of the stone. Cut too deep or too shallow and the stone can appear duller. The most common shape is the round brilliant, but you can choose from a marquise, pear, emerald, cushion, oval, baguette, princess, heart or the new flower cuts.

■ **Carat Weight:** Like all precious stones, the weight of a diamond is expressed in carats; a tradition since jewelers weighed gemstones in relation to the seeds of the carob tree. Now standardized, one carat is equal to 0.2 grams. One carat is divided into 100 "points," so that a diamond of 25 points is described as 0.25 carats. Less than 5 percent of all the diamonds made into jewelry are larger than one carat.

■ **Clarity:** Almost all diamonds contain tiny traces of non-diamond crystals, but most are invisible to the naked eye. These hiccups in your diamonds perfection are called inclusions. The fewer inclusions, the more rare and desirable the stone.

### 8. How do I pick a jeweler to buy my diamonds from?

A good jeweler should be happy to explain the four C's to you, the difference between various qualities of diamonds and how these differences affect the price. To find a jeweler you can trust, ask for recommendations from family and friends. Or, ask the Jewelers of America ([www.jewelers.org](http://www.jewelers.org)) or the American Gem Society ([www.americangemsociety.org](http://www.americangemsociety.org)) for a recommendation.

### 9. What are conflict diamonds?

Also called blood diamonds, conflict diamonds are mined in war-torn countries to fund rebel causes. Amnesty International estimates that the smuggling of conflict diamonds is responsible for 3.7 million deaths in Africa.

### 10. How do I know my diamond isn't a conflict diamond?

The Kimberley Process is an international initiative to regulate trade in rough diamonds. Kimberley members must meet extensive requirements to call their diamonds "conflict-free." To avoid buying a conflict diamond, only buy diamonds that have guarantees. Reputable jewelers, if abiding by the Kimberley Process, will only buy from suppliers who provide guarantees, which should be recorded in their invoices. The store also should have a clear and firm policy on conflict diamonds.

### 11. How much was the most expensive diamond sold at auction?

Sheikh Fitaichi of Saudi Arabia, an international collector, bought "The Star of the Season" diamond for \$16.5 million at a Sotheby's auction in 1995.

### 12. How much should I expect to spend on a quality diamond?

Diamonds will not lose value over time — a good reason to buy the best you can afford. For engagement rings in particular, jewelers say the general guideline is anywhere from one-month's to three-months' salary.

### 13. Is bigger really better?

Size is only one of the four C's for assessing diamonds. A small, high-clarity, high-color diamond can cost more than a large, low-clarity, low-color diamond. You can find a one-carat diamond for as low as a few hundred dollars, but it won't be as pretty as a smaller, better quality one.

### 14. What is the world's largest diamond?

The world's largest diamond on record is the 3,106-carat Cullinan, found in South Africa in 1905. The Cullinan was eventually cut into nine large stones and about 100 smaller ones. The two largest, called the Star of Africa I and II, are on display in the Tower of London.

### 15. Why are diamonds so expensive?

They are rare — period. Only a few diamonds survived the violent eruptions that brought the billion-year-old stones within our reach. Estimates show that only 500 tons have been mined throughout history. To add to their rarity, only 50 percent of mined diamonds are gem-quality. Even fewer are big enough to be polished into diamonds not much bigger than the head of a match.

### 16. What is the difference between a synthetic diamond and a simulant?

Synthetic diamonds are real and simulants are fake. Lab-created, or synthetic, diamonds have the same chemical composition, brilliance, hardness and atomic structure as natural stones. Scientists can grow diamonds in a matter of days by recreating the same conditions of intense heat and pressure that formed natural diamonds billions of years ago. A good jeweler will tell you whether a diamond is natural or synthetic. But because it is hard to identify synthetics, many diamond buyers get reassurance from an identification report from a gemological laboratory, like the Gemological Institute of America. The Federal Trade Commission now requires all synthetic diamonds have a laser inscription. Diamond simulants, such as cubic zirconia or moissanite, do not have the same brilliance, hardness or chemical properties of a diamond.

### 17. How can I tell between a real and a fake?

At roughly \$5 a carat, cubic zirconia is a very cheap diamond substitute. It's also easy to recognize as a fake. For instance, it is about twice as heavy as a real diamond and it has a light blue cast. Moissanite, however, is almost as hard as diamond and even more brilliant. At about \$600 a carat, it can fool many professionals. If you still can't tell if your diamond is authentic, you can spend \$50 to \$75 to have it professionally appraised.

### 18. How can I clean my diamonds?

Keeping your diamonds clean will help them reflect light better and look bigger. Because diamonds tend to attract grease, they should be cleaned once a month with a toothbrush in a mix of warm water and any mild liquid detergent. Rinse them under warm running water then pat dry with a soft, lintless cloth. Or do a cold-water soak in half water and half ammonia for 30 minutes, then tap with a brush, swish in the solution one more time and drain on paper (no rinsing required).

### 19. How can I maintain my diamond?

To protect your investment, don't wear your diamonds when you're cleaning or doing rough work. Diamonds are highly durable but chlorine bleach will deteriorate mountings and a hard blow can chip a diamond. And don't throw all of your jewels together in a box, since diamonds will scratch other diamonds and the rest of your jewelry. An annual check-up at your jeweler will help you keep an eye on loose settings and signs of wear.

### 20. What else, other than jewelry, are diamonds used for?

Industrial quality diamonds are small, lower-quality stones. Diamonds are used as a cutting tool, abrasives or turned to powder or paste for grinding and polishing. As new methods for growing diamonds emerge, so do new ways to take advantage of the stone's properties from super electronics to unscratchable surfaces.

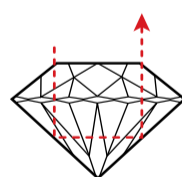
— Compiled and written by Allison Baker, McClatchy-Tribune Information Services

## Exploring a diamond's cut

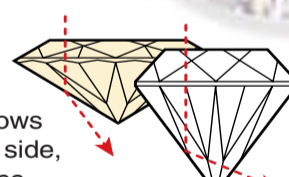
The cut of a diamond determines how well it reflects light.

### Proportion

A well cut and proportioned diamond should reflect light side to side and back toward you.



A diamond cut too shallow or deep allows light to leak out the side, reducing its brilliance.

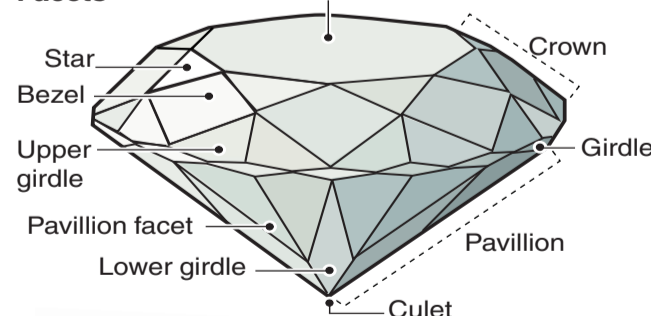


### Shape

A diamond's cut also refers to its shape. The most common shape is the round brilliant cut. More than any other shape, its symmetry allows it to reflect nearly all the light that enters it.

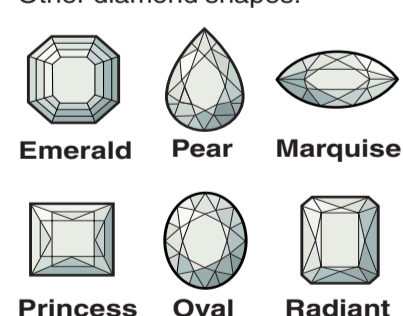
### Round brilliant cut

#### Facets



### Selected cuts

Other diamond shapes:



The round brilliant cut reflects more light than any other diamond cut.

SOURCE: DE BEERS, CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF GEMMOLOGY, WWW.ADIAMONDISFOREVER.COM, MCT

ILLUSTRATIONS: JUTTA SCHEIBE, ISABEL SONDERGAARD AND ANGELA SMITH/MCT

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUE NILE

SOURCES: WWW.KIMBERLEYDIAMONDS.COM.AU, WWW.NATIONALJEWELERSSUPPLIES.COM, WWW.JCKONLINE.COM, WWW.HISTORY.COM, WWW.GEMESSENCEDESIGNS.COM, WWW.USATODAY.COM, WWW.DIAMONDFACTS.ORG, WWW.DIAMONDCUTTERSINTL.COM, WWW.STOPBLOODDIAMONDS.ORG, WWW.KIMBERLEYPROCESS.COM, WWW.DIAMONDS.NET, WWW.CNET.COM



## KENDRICK LAMAR TO FEATURE ON BLACK PANTHER SOUNDTRACK?

**K**endrick Lamar has hinted he's set to feature on the 'Black Panther' movie soundtrack. The much-anticipated new film is due to hit cinema screens in 2018 and Kendrick has suggested he could play a part with the Marvel movie, dropping a major hint in his new 'Love' music video. In one particular scene, the audience can see a clapperboard featuring the words: "B.Panther soundtrack coming soon." The video itself sees Kendrick - who released his most recent album, 'DAMN', earlier this year - trying to resolve relationship issues with his on-screen girlfriend. Kendrick is

already one of the best-selling musicians in the world and the rap star recently claimed that hip-hop culture determines "what's cool and what's not cool". The American has a deep-rooted love of hip-hop culture and Kendrick believes it is the most influential genre of music in his home country. He said: "Hip-hop has always been the ultimate genre. Yeah. Even when these numbers wasn't out. Even when the stats wasn't out we always moved the needle. We always ... we were the culture. "You can debate me on this all day you want. We say what's cool and what's not cool. We say what we like." Kendrick, 30,

also revealed he is amazed that anyone ever doubted the longevity of the genre. He explained: "My mom told me, I couldn't believe when she told me this. She said 1987, the year I was born, [people were saying] hip-hop was going to last six months to a year ... that tripped me out. "And now you fast forward and you see Jay-Z up there, you know? [Song]writers' Hall of Fame. This is us. This is who I am. He's from the projects. You dig what I'm saying?"

## Martine McCutcheon can't watch Love Actually scenes

**M**artine McCutcheon can't watch herself in 'Love Actually'. The hit ensemble movie is a huge favorite over the festive season, and thought it was a "dream come true" for the 41-year-old singer-and-actress to star opposite Hugh Grant in the film, she can't bring herself to sit through her own scenes. She said: "It's a dream come true. I wanted to marry Hugh Grant when he was in 'Four Weddings and a Funeral!' "I'm fine watching the others, but the minute I'm on screen, I walk out of the room. I can't bear it." But Martine had a great time working with her former castmates on a special reunion for Comic Relief earlier this year. She said in a recent interview: "Doing the Comic Relief 'Love Actually' reunion in March was amazing. "Richard Curtis (director) threw a Supper Actually at his house for us all. They're the loveliest team of people." Meanwhile, Martine's co-star in the film, Kris Marshall - who portrayed unlucky-in-love Colin Frissell - previously admitted the cast are all "baffled" the movie was such a huge favorite. He said: "When I see the cast, we're always baffled it became such a big thing. "In America, they watch it in November for Thanksgiving, then it's on constantly until Christmas. "It's great to be part of people's traditions too. "I've just been out in America filming and got called 'Colin' every time I walked into a bar."



## The Script feared for Danny O'Donoghue's voice

**T**he Script were all "worried" frontman Danny O'Donoghue would lose his voice for good. The 37-year-old singer was unable to talk for two months after having surgery to remove nodules from his vocal cords and his bandmate Glen Power admitted he and guitarist Mark Sheehan felt anxious when they first started rehearsing again. The drummer said: "We all had a worry for him because being a singer his instrument is his voice. I definitely felt for him when we were coming back. "But when it came to the punch he had to step up to the microphone to sing. There is that moment of, 'I hope he's going to be OK'. I knew once he was rehearsing he was fine and just needed a

few gigs under his belt to realize he was fine." And the 'Hall of Fame' hitmaker thinks his friend has bounced back stronger than ever. He exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "Fair play to him, my hat is off to him because he's come back stronger than ever. We've been on the American tour and it's like he's just ice skating, he's flying through the gigs. He says I feel amazing and my voice is back stronger than ever. "It was good that luckily he solved the problem that was there and had time to address it. We were able to let that happen and come back and still have a job." Danny previously admitted his throat problems were a result of taking on too much work and partying hard. He said: "It was from partying and burning the candle from both ends. We'd done like 300 shows in one year and all those other days we were travelling. Fame came to us at a later stage so were grateful for everything we have, and we just weren't able to say no to anything - because we didn't know if it was going to come again or going to stop. So God has a way of making you kind of stop. I'm really lucky to have come out the other end."



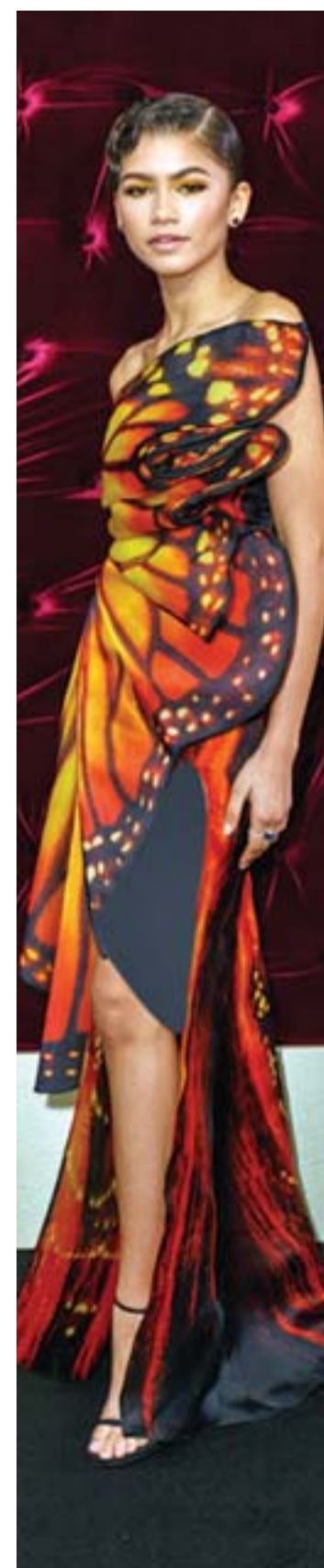
## Andrew Jay Cohen wants House sequel

**A**ndrew Jay Cohen wants to make a sequel to 'The House'. The screenwriter-and-director had a great time working on the comedy - which starred Will Ferrell and Amy Poehler as a couple who opened an underground casino in their friend's house to fund their daughter's college tuition - and thinks there's scope to make a follow-up. He said: "I would love to do a sequel. As she is going to college who knows what will happen. The head of the studio set up his own casino in is dorm room so who knows." The US filmmaker also revealed a surprising inspiration for the movie was the gritty dramas made by Martin Scorsese. He told BANG Showbiz: "I really thought it was hysterical if we treated them with some epic vision Scorsese would. It veers in tone and that was so much fun. I've been watching Scorsese movies and studying what made them resonant and make that in a comedy." While Andrew had a "strong script" in place for the movie, he was happy to let his cast improvise if they felt it made the dialogue seem more natural. He said: "I believe that you need a strong script. I do believe in that and a great blue print and game plan. But once I'm on set, if an actor can't say those prepositions in that way then we find other ways. "I find that irresistible and it is the spirit of writing. I love going down the rabbit hole with actors. There is a feeling of authenticity. It's like you are filming two people interacting rather than something created."

## JOHNSON IS 'BLOWN AWAY' BY REACTION TO 'JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE'

**D**wayne Johnson is "blown away" by the positive reactions to 'Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle'. The 45-year-old actor feels "grateful" and overwhelmed by the feedback he has received from fans about his latest project, which sees him portray Doctor Smolder Bravestone in the fantasy action movie, alongside Kevin Hart, Karen Gillan and Jack Black. The star - who is also known as The Rock, which is a moniker he acquired when he was a professional wrestler - shared a short video on social media to thank his supporters. He captioned the post: "Grateful and blown away by your reactions after watching #JUMANJI. (sic)." Dwayne - who has 16-year-old daughter Simone with his former partner Dany Garcia, as well as two-year-old Jasmine with his wife Lauren Hashian, who is pregnant with their second child together - has revealed he wanted the production to be a "fun Christmas movie" that will be a timeless classic for families worldwide, like

the 1995 classic starring the late Robin Williams has become. He continued: "I wanted to make a fun Christmas movie for generations of families to enjoy around the world. (sic)." The muscular hunk has also dedicated the new release to "all the lovers out there", and he hopes it will cause a baby boom. He concluded his post: "I also wanted to make a movie for all the lovers out there.. when the sun goes down, the sexy smoldering eyebrow goes up when you see the movie. "Yup, 9 months from now they'll all be delivered... #JumanjiBabies Enjoy the movie! (sic)." Dwayne continued to thank the audience for rating the film so highly, and he has joked he will allow couples who love make watching the movie to name their children after him. Speaking in the clip, he said: "The biggest weekend of 2017 is among us, we have Christmas weekend, we have 'Jumanji' weekend, Christmas and 'Jumanji' all wrapped up in one. I want to say guys thank you so much for loving 'Jumanji'. This is our third day out in theatres and already you have made it a must see movie. Thank you so much. "You have given us an A-cinema score, which is amazing. Our core audience family gave us an A-cinema score, incredible across the board. And I am so grateful. "I wanted to make a movie, a special Christmas movie, a movie for families, a movie for the kids, but also wanted to make a movie for an adult. A little date night movie, in a subtle, sexy movie. You are going to see the sexy smoulder tonight. You know what that means when you see this [smouldering face]. Lot of 'Jumanji' babies being made. You can name them Dwayne, you can name them Dwayneta. Jumanji babies, enjoy the movie - in many ways."



## Efron and Zendaya were 'so bruised' after filming The Greatest Showman

**Z**ac Efron and Zendaya were "so bruised" after filming 'The Greatest Showman'. The 21-year-old actress - who portrays trapeze artist Anna Wheeler - and her 30-year-old co-star - who plays Phillip Carlyle in the production - struggled filming scenes in the circus where they were intended to gracefully glide past one another, because they would accidentally "slam" into each other when they were whizzing around the arena, which left them battered and sore. Speaking to Entertainment Weekly, the movie's director, Michael Gracey, said: "Rewrite the Stars" was incredibly challenging. You'd have this beautiful shot of Zendaya flying around Zac and Zac's in the foreground and it's just perfect. And just as she's about to sing the line that you need in that moment, the rope twists and her whole body moves and that line you want, she's facing away from camera. It's things like that you're like, 'Ughhh!' "And also a lot of the jumping and swinging and the two of them coming together, there are so many takes of that being so awkward and so clunky as they don't quite swing past each other, they just slam into each other. All of a sudden what's meant to be balletic and slow and wonderful effortless feel, all of a sudden becomes incredibly brutal and violent as these bodies go slamming into each other. That was a lot of takes and a credit to Zac and Zendaya - they were so bruised." However, the pair were adamant they were going to get the perfect shot and would clamber up on the rope to try "again and again and again" until they captured the desired look. Gracey added: "But they just kept going again and again and again." Meanwhile Gracey, who made his directorial debut with the new release, thinks his film has the ability to be turned into a theatre production. He explained: "When I was pitching the film, the great thing about doing a musical film is you have this amazing piece that could then go straight to Broadway. Instead of CG animals, you could do puppets like 'War Horse' or 'The Lion King'. I think that's an incredibly appealing idea. It would depend on the success of the film but I do believe it would make an incredible stage production."

Lifestyle | Gossip



**Niall Horan:** 'I was probably the worst-dressed man on the planet'

**N**iall Horan believes he was the "worst-dressed man on the planet" when he was in One Direction. The 24-year-old singer has claimed he had no sense of fashion when he was in the group, which embarked on a hiatus in 2015, alongside Harry styles, Zayn Malik, Louis Tomlinson and Liam Payne, and despite experimenting with various garments, on reflection, he has realized he was not able to pull off certain outfits. Speaking to Esquire magazine, the 'Slow Hands' hitmaker said: "A while ago I was probably the worst-dressed man on the planet. Obviously some people can pull it off, and some people can't. I happen to be one of those people that can't. But I was 16 and 17, so you kind of let yourself get away with that. "When we were in the band, it was something that I never really thought about. You could obviously tell that Harry was probably into it a little more than me at the time; it was something that he focused on more than I did." And one of the items Niall felt did not work for him was the wide brim hat he donned at this year's American Music Awards (AMAs). He explained: "To be honest, I thought it was a lot smaller. I didn't realise how big the brim was until I got onto the stage and there were mirrors on either side of the stage. I literally shouted at my drummer, 'Is the brim on this hat too big?' He just said no, obviously, because we were just about to go live on TV." Niall has described his style as "Classic American Irish" and a nod to his Irish heritage because of the boots and headgear he wears. He said: "It's kind of an extension of me being Irish. A lot of boots. A lot of hats. And all different types of jackets-denim, leather, all different types of materials that I'm trying to get into. "I guess what I'm saying is kind of classic. Classic American rock. They did it pretty good back in the day", the '70s and '80s. Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty and bands like The Eagles, they always looked really cool and really suited to that time. And I think that time in fashion is coming back again."

**Brooke Shields** reveals her secret to youthful skin

**B**rooke Shields relies on face masks to keep her skin looking youthful. The 52-year-old actress "always" uses a skincare sheet on her face, but the "new thing" she swears by to give her a glowing complexion is a roller she scrubs at her skin with to open up her pores. Speaking about her beauty hacks to Health.com, she said: "I always put on a mask of some kind. I just found this new thing, where I could have just bought a plot of land on the water. It's one of those rollers, and oh my God, I love it. It's so crazy. It doesn't feel like a miracle. It just opens up your pores for whatever you put on after." The 'Lipstick Jungle' also relies on a variety of moisturizers, although she feels there are times when she "needs" to apply "a chemical or two" to her face. She said: "I like Neova cream that my doctor gave me. I'll use a bit of Renova at night for resurfacing. I use Drunk Elephant C-Firma Day Serum. At times I need a chemical or two to make sure it really, really works. If it stings, I feel like it's a good thing. Which is horrible, right?" Meanwhile, Brooke - who has Rowan, 14, and Grier, 11 with her

husband Chris Henchy - has revealed her daughters have encouraged her to flash more flesh. She explained: "The part of it I appreciate is that I never celebrated myself or my body. It felt indulgent or wrong, so there was a disconnect. I was wearing a bathing suit over the summer-I always wear bathing suits that cover everything, the bottoms in particular - and my older daughter said, 'You know what? You cannot wear that bottom. It goes all the way under your butt and [makes it look] so much bigger.' And I said, 'I'm not going to have my ass hanging out!' And she goes, 'You know what? You are.' So she finds me a new bathing suit, where that whole little shelf was out, and I was horrified, but my husband said, 'That bathing suit looks great. Rowan's right. If you show a little bit more, it's actually more flattering.' So, I had to learn from her. She said, 'Mom, face it, you've got a great butt. I don't know why you try to hide it.' And that type of validation is a big deal for me, because in the next breath, she hates me."



**SANDERS** WEARS MAKE-UP TO MAKE HER EYES 'STAND OUT'

**J**asmine Sanders really likes for her eyes to "stand out". The 26-year-old model has admitted when she is applying her make-up products she likes to have the emphasis on her eyes, and for her festive look she will wear an "amazing" gold-coloured eyeshadow and lashings of mascara to draw attention to her facial feature. Speaking in a video for Teen Vogue about her beauty hacks, which the star has also shared on her Instagram account, she said: "It's Jasmine Sander, aka Golden Barbie. "And I am going to show you my holiday Golden look, using just my fingers. "My first step is starting with this amazing gold eyeshadow by Pat McGrath. [Do] little little strokes with your fingers and blend it out. "Step two: mascara "I like to wiggle a little at the root. "I really like my eyes to stand out." Jasmine will then apply blusher to her cheeks, as well as highlighter, but she will always sample the products on her hand first to double check the outcome before she is committed and applies the cosmetic product directly to her face. She explained: "I'm going to start with my blush, I like to apply it on the apple of my cheek. "Step number four: highlighter "If you notice, I put everything on the top of my hand to see what it is going to look like before it apply it to my face." And to complete Jasmine's look she relies on a classic staple - a clear lip gloss. She said: "So my final step is to get a good old clear lip gloss." And the star has revealed for her hair she swears by Moroccan Oil's Curl Defining Cream, because it tames her locks. Alongside a separate post, which was shared on her photo-sharing site, she wrote: "As always the @moroccanoil Curl Defining Cream is everything my curls need! The styling products are keeping my curls defined and frizz-free again this winter! #ArganEveryday (sic)."

**Snow** had a 'big issue' with exercise and eating



**B**rittany Snow used to have a "big issue" with exercise and eating. The 31-year-old actress has admitted she used to strive to look like slender models she would see on the front of fitness magazines because she felt that was the epitome of "happiness", and the 'Pitch Perfect' star has admitted she used to feel "frustrated" when she did not drop weight. Speaking to Shape magazine about her body and her battle with anorexia, the star said: "I had a big issue with working out and dieting. I wanted to be like the girls I saw in fitness magazines so badly. I thought that was the ideal of happiness. "I used to be frustrated by my body type as a kid. I had muscles without trying and failed when I attempted to lose weight." But it wasn't until Brittany hit the 30 milestone she changed her ways because she wanted to put her "health and happiness" first. She explained: "When I turned 30, I looked at my life and realized that I'd always been on a diet and working out to be the size of a model. I thought, I'm 5'3", and I inherited my mom's beautiful muscular body-it's just not going to happen. "I began eating well to take care of myself-I'm almost 100 per cent vegan, and I'm off dairy and gluten. I realized that my health and happiness were way more important than being at the gym all the time." And Brittany has now embraced her athletic body shape. She said: "It's strong not only physically, but also emotionally. Now I've come to appreciate the fact that I'm an athlete." The 'John Tucker Must Die' beauty thinks social media is partly to blame for negatively impacting on people's self-esteem as she believes people look on the online platforms and "compare" themselves to others. She explained: "I think that as a society we're always looking to social media to compare ourselves with how other people look and eat. I put Instagram and Twitter in a separate category in my phone, so I don't check them all the time and am not constantly aware of what other people are doing. I think people use social media to compare themselves with others too much, and it has really negative effects on the psyche."

**Taylor Hill** keeps her tags on her clothes

**T**aylor Hill keeps the tags on all of her clothes. The 21-year-old model has revealed she still keeps the labels on her garments, even after she has worn them, because she likes to keep her personal items "exactly" how she bought them, although she has acknowledged that is a "weird" habit of hers. Speaking in a video for Vogue.com, where she gave viewers a sneak peek inside her closet, she said: "Hi I'm Taylor Hill and welcome to my closet. "All leather Alexander Wang dress. I was so obsessed with it that I wore it almost every night during Fashion Week because I didn't have a stylist yet, and I didn't know what was fashionably appropriate to wear to things. "And I actually still have the tag on. Sometimes I like to keep things exactly how I got them, I'm, weird like that." And the Victoria's Secret Angel has revealed one of her most prized possession is a vintage "kimono/bath robe" from the lingerie label, which also has the tag on. She

said: "Recently I was sent this in the mail, a vintage 1992 Victoria's Secret kimono/bath robe. It actually still had the tag on when it was sent to me. It's Made out of 100 per cent silk, and it is one of the most beautiful things I ever got, and you should remake this if you're watching." Taylor also has an "obsession" with any merchandise from Acne Studios, as well as knit sweaters and sunglasses. She explained: "This is from Acne [Studios], which you will see I have a lot of in my closet. I have an obsession. This is one of my favorite coats of all time and I will never ever get rid of it. It's winter in New York right now, so you know this is coming out of the closet. "First of all I have an obsession with knit sweaters. It was right after I broke out of my buy only black phase. "I love sunglasses, I love to hunt for them, I have people send me them."



**Kylie Jenner's** Kylie Cosmetics products to become 'collector's items'

**K**ylie Jenner's products in her beauty range Kylie Cosmetics are thought to become "collector's items" one day, according to make-up artist Mario Dedivanovic. The beauty mogul has been working closely with the Kardashian/Jenner family for many years, and he has revealed he "hoards" the 20-year-old reality star's make-up products she releases under her eponymous brand because he thinks they will be very valuable later in life. Speaking to Coveeteur.com, Mario said: "I kind of hoard Kylie make-up. I love the packaging - I think it's so cute. It's just one of those brands that I need to save and not use them because one day I know they'll be a collector's item." However, Mario does use the Kylie Cosmetics gel eyeliners, which are his

ultimate "favorite" products. He said: "I do use her gel liners. They're actually my favorites in my kit." Mario has racked up a vast collection of cosmetic items, and his array of products makes his family jealous as he does not pass over any merchandise he has to them, although he may gift "a few lipsticks" to his sister if it is a special occasion. He said: "My sister and I get into so many fights over Kylie because she wants all the lipsticks and I won't give them to her. So for Christmas or her birthday I'll surprise her and give her a few lipsticks." Mario has not only teamed up with Kylie, but he has also been working with her half-sister Kim Kardashian West on her new beauty show titled Glam Masters, and has helped her to create the shades for the contour kits in her own

namesake make-up line KKW Beauty. And Mario has teased the duo will be launching even more merchandise in 2018, to mark a decade of working together, but he has remained tight lipped about the products. He said: "I can't say what the products are, but it's going to be a really fun collection that comes out 2018. Next year, 2018, is going to be 10 years, a decade, of working together [with Kim]. We've kind of had a pretty heavy influence in beauty in the past 10 years, so the collection is going to reflect that."

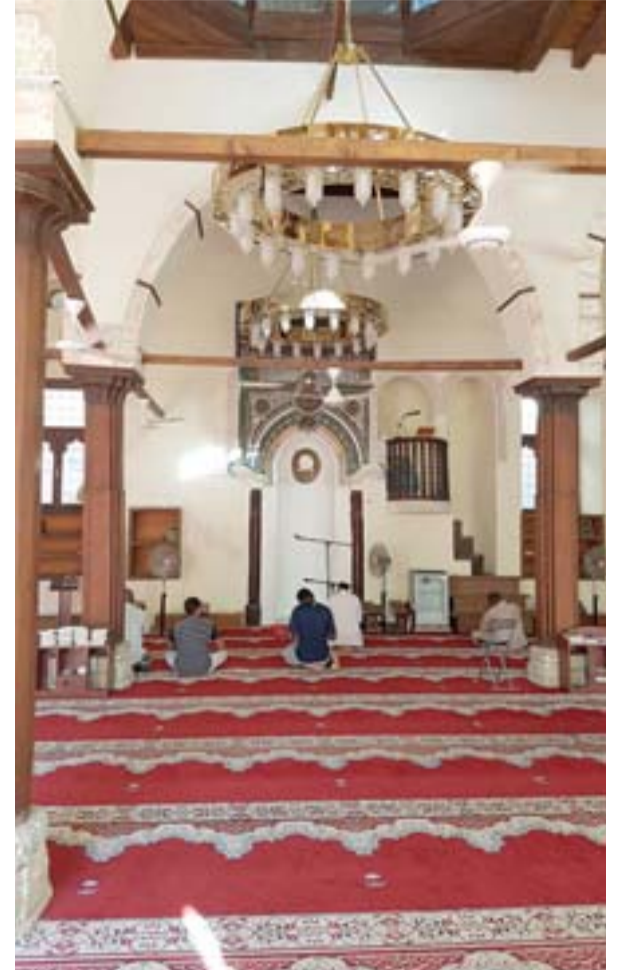




Nasseef House.



Al-Matbouli House museum are the most famous landmarks in the old town that attract many visitors searching for historic Jeddah people's lifestyle.  
— Photos by Nasser Al-Otaibi



Al-Shafi'i Mosque are the most famous landmarks in the old town that attract many visitors searching for historic Jeddah people's lifestyle.

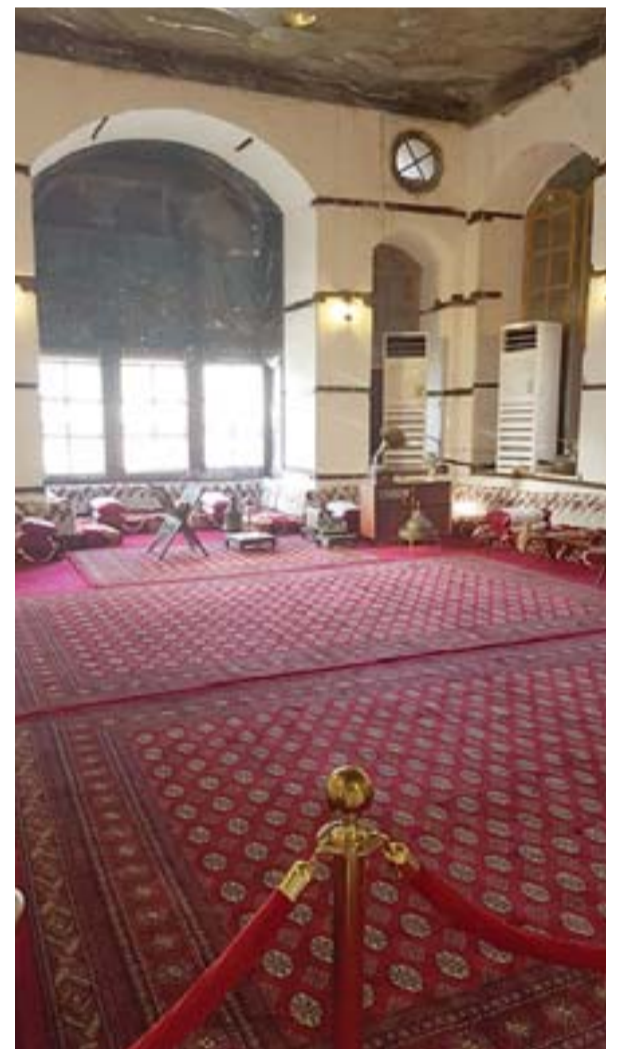
## HISTORIC JEDDAH ... UNIQUE HIJAZI STYLE

**B**uildings of the historic Jeddah city in Saudi Arabia is characterized with a distinctive architectural Hijazi style, with beechwood and limestone being the main materials used. Nasseef House, Al-Matbouli House museum and Al-Shafi'i Mosque are the most famous landmarks in the old town that attract many visitors searching for historic Jeddah people's lifestyle, espe-

cially after the UNESCO's approval of the city to be on the World Heritage List in 2014. Nasseef House was built in 1872 and finished by 1881, where King Abdulaziz Al-Saud stayed in for 10 years. During his stay, he used it as royal residence and received guests.-KUNA



Nasseef House was built in 1872 and finished by 1881, where King Abdulaziz Al-Saud stayed in for 10 years.



## Survey finds traffic jams and bored kids most irritating while driving at Christmas

**A** new survey has found traffic jams is the top reason for family travel tension during the Christmas break. On average around 93 per cent of families will be travelling during the festive season - with most tackling the journey on Boxing Day - and, according to the survey completed by DisneyLife, 75 per cent of parents use digital devices to stop their children being bored. The survey has also found a list of the top ten reasons for travel tension include needing the toilet, being late and issues with the vehicle. Now DisneyLife has launched the ultimate driving home for Christmas collection, which has been designed to help make travelling more entertaining, and the app features the most down-

loaded movies and TV shows for Christmas. Chiara Cipriani from DisneyLife said, "Travelling to see the family at Christmas is a well-known journey for many parents across the UK - bringing with it both moments of joy and tension! "It seems that many families take advantage of digital entertainment to make the journey a little more fun, so we're excited to launch the ultimate driving home for Christmas collection on DisneyLife. "With DisneyLife's library of hundreds of TV shows, books and music, hopefully we can help parents and kids alike enjoy the journey even more together." Here is the top ten reasons why people dislike travelling over Christmas:

1. Traffic jams (47 per cent)
2. Kids getting bored (40 per cent)
3. Complaining about needing the loo (24 per cent)
4. Trying to fit everything in the car (23 per cent)
5. Complaining about being hungry (22 per cent)
6. Kids disagreeing (20 per cent)
7. Being late for family occasions (19 per cent)
8. Parents getting bored (18 per cent)
9. Car breaking down/mechanic problems (18 per cent)
10. Talking over the radio (15 per cent)-Bang Showbiz



## Woman spends nearly £20,000 to become real-life porcelain doll

**A** woman has spent around £18,000 to try and look like a porcelain doll. Jade Smith, 21, is pursuing her dream to become a real life 'Lolita' lookalike and is believed to have spent around £10,000 to have the same outfits to match the toy, as well as £8,000 on shoes, the Mirror Online has reported. The female - who started dressing in this fashion at the age of 11 - also has a £20 a month budget for glitter and often has to wake up at 4am to start getting ready.

She said: "I've spent around £10,000 just on my clothes. I normally get my clothing shipped in from Japan and Korea. "I have roughly around 40 pairs of shoes and I have around 40 key chains. The money has also gone into my toy collection." Jade - who is also known as Princess Jadette on social media - still lives with her family and said they call her a "hoarder". She said: "My family call me a hoarder and they really wish I would downsize and become more minimalistic. "They wish I would wear something a bit normal but they just accept me for who I am now."-Bang Showbiz

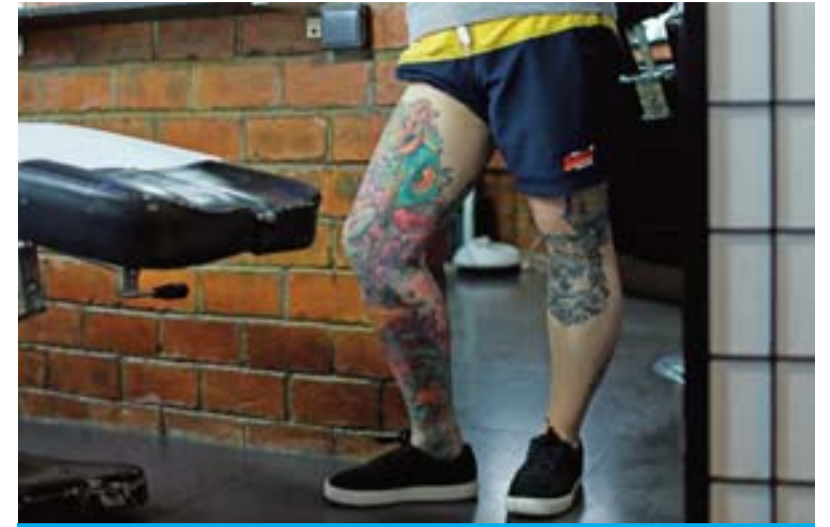




Wang Qi (right), a web designer and tattoo enthusiast, getting new ink on her right thigh at a studio in Shanghai.



A mannequin with tattoo designs displayed at a studio in Shanghai.



Tattoos on the legs of Wang Qi, a web designer and tattoo enthusiast, at a studio.

# TATTOOED AND PROUD: CHINESE WOMEN PEEL AWAY STIGMAS

Once the mark of criminals or sex workers, for centuries tattoos have been stigmatized in China but the growing influence of celebrity culture is changing all that—particularly for women. Nowhere is the trend more evident than in Shanghai, China's most cosmopolitan city and recently dubbed "China's tattoo hub" by the country's state media. Body art for women has long been frowned upon in socially conservative China, but studios are mushrooming throughout the city of 24 million. Zhuo Danting, widely considered one of China's top tattoo artists, has witnessed first-hand how the industry has exploded.

The 35-year-old has 70 percent of her body tattooed and has been operating her own Shanghai studio for 11 years. Inspired by celebrities and sports stars, unprecedented numbers of mostly younger Chinese are getting inked, Zhuo said at her shop, Shanghai Tattoo. "At the beginning, of course, they just give you a weird look, they're freaking out," Zhuo, who also has multiple piercings and dyed green hair, said of the reaction she gets on the street. "But now there are a lot of people getting tattoos, it's getting more and more popular. People see them everywhere so they don't see it as a big deal," she added. Zhuo, who got her first tattoo at 16 and has inked both her parents, is originally from Harbin, a city in China's far north. There is a growing body art scene there too, she said.



A tattoo artist (left) preparing a design for web designer and tattoo enthusiast Wang Qi (right) at a studio.

increasingly experimenting with their body art.

"Before, when you saw a woman with a tattoo, it was usually just a small one," she explained, adding: "But now you can see everywhere that they are having full sleeves, or chest, or full back."

### 'Pretty and artsy'

Wang Qi, a web designer, is about to have Zhuo tattoo her already heavily inked right leg. The 29-year-old has several body designs, including an hourglass to remind her of the preciousness of time, and a sailboat and light-house inspired by her love of the sea, as well as tattoos of a snake's head and a crocodile's eye. Her latest inking: the Chinese characters for her grandmother's name on the inside of her thigh. "Ten years ago, only 10 percent of people could accept women doing this. But now at least 60 to 70 percent of people can," Wang said, while adding that quality can vary widely.

The trend has spawned extreme examples, including a couple in northeastern China who covered themselves in patriotic artwork, including a Chinese flag on the man's face. Reliable figures are elusive, but Hu Deliang, former head of the China Association of Tattoo Artists, estimates there are about 200,000 such artists in the country. The Shanghai tattooist said women now account for at least 60 percent of his customers.

"Back in 2002, only about 20 percent were female and most of them worked as escorts in nightclubs or that kind of industry," Hu said. China's increasing prosperity, meanwhile, means more women now can afford tattoos, which can cost thousands of yuan (hundreds of dollars) and previously would have been considered an unjustified splurge. Peng Lin, who has the Italian phrase "La vita e bella" (Life is beautiful) among her three tattoos, is one of the few in her circle of women friends with a tattoo, but many are considering it, she said. "Before, people may think women getting tattoos is sort of off-the-mainstream behavior, but now they all appreciate them when they found out that tattoos can be pretty and artsy," said Peng, 31, who works in advertising in Shanghai.

### Touch-ups

Tattoos are still frowned upon in government positions and at many companies, however, while some women complain that their husbands or partners object.



Wang Qi (left), a web designer and tattoo enthusiast, looking at her smartphone as she gets new ink on her right thigh at a tattoo studio in Shanghai.

### A cool thing

"There is a lot of change. Before, not many people get tattoos. They thought that people with tattoos, that person must have been in jail or you are a bad person. "Now it's a cool thing, to represent yourself as different." In imperial times, convicts were sometimes tattooed as a lifelong reminder of their crimes, and tattoos later were used by Chinese triads to signify gang loyalties. But Zhuo said attitudes towards women with tattoos have changed rapidly in the last three years, and the Chinese are



A tattoo displayed on the neck of a tattoo artist at a studio in Shanghai. — AFP photos

"Even now people are judging, they don't think that people should get big tattoos, especially women," said Zhuo, who has tattoos across both sides of her scalp. "Still, people think it's more acceptable for men to get a tattoo than women and some get smaller ones to hide it from older family members or work."

Zhuo said lack of official oversight makes it "too easy"

to open a parlour. She often sees customers who ask her to fix shoddy work done elsewhere. "Sometimes I can see some good work, but not much. The percentage of good tattoos is quite low right now," she said. "Tattoo is still a new thing in China. A lot of new people become tattoo artists pretty soon, but there's still a lot to learn." — AFP



Sketches of tattoo designs displayed on the wall at a tattoo studio in Shanghai.



Tattoo inks at a studio in Shanghai.



Wang Qi (right), a web designer and tattoo enthusiast, getting new ink on her right thigh at a studio in Shanghai.

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2017



Members of a Lebanese water ski club perform while dressed in Santa Clause outfits in the bay of Jounieh.— AFP

## WITH A GREEN LIGHT FROM KARACHI, PAKISTAN'S WOMEN-ONLY TAXIS EYE NEW CITIES

Braving whistles, catcalls and vulgar remarks, Karachi's female taxi drivers are determined to stay on the road to ferry women safely around the teeming city - from home to the office, to college and even to late night wedding parties. Since March, women in Pakistan's commercial hub have been able to hail the pink taxis - called Paxis - by phone, app or simply by flagging one down on the street. The women drivers say they have faced harassment from other road users, but will persevere with the service. "This (harassment) that we face is the occupational hazard of this job. It's best to ignore such people, they will get used to sharing the roads with us!" said Shamina Bano, 43, a mother of grown-up sons and one of the drivers with the first ever gender-segregated taxi service.

Wearing a hot pink headscarf, Bano said she left her previous job as a personal secretary after her boss started making "untoward advances". "Working in an all-female environment feels so much more comfortable; I don't have to look over my shoulder anymore," she said. The app asks potential riders the number of passengers and if there are any men accompanying them. If the man is between 12 and 70 years old, the request will be turned down.

Mehreen Faizan, 28, also a Paxis driver, had initially applied to work for another taxi service. "When I found out I'd have to chauffeur male clients as well, my husband was not very happy about it. He then suggested I apply here," she said. Commuting in the sweltering city of 20 million is often an ordeal for women. A report by Karachi's Urban Resource Center found most female commuters experience some form of sexual harassment while using public transport.

And before the pink taxis, getting a cab in Karachi could also be unpleasant for women. From sitting in "messy and smelly cars" to being driven by drivers who are lost but refuse to use the GPS system, to being stared at through the rear view mirror or driven too fast, there is a long list of complaints women commuters have against male taxi drivers. Women drivers, however, are careful

and happy to accept directions, said regular pink taxi users. "It's very reassuring and comfortable," said Sobia Athar, a college lecturer, who uses the service regularly despite it being a bit more expensive than other taxis.

### Ready for expansion

Bano said during the wedding season from December to March she is busy shuttling women to festivities which may continue till very late at night. Nuzhat Siddiqi, an environmentalist and working mother said she prefers the idea of women drivers for her family. "I would certainly not be too keen to send kids and young maids or teenaged daughters with male taxi drivers alone," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. By the end of this year the company would have doubled its fleet of cars from 15 at its launch to 30.

And Paxis are soon to appear on the streets of Sukkur in Sindh province and then to Peshawar close to Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, said Shaikh M. Zahid, the founder of the service. Peshawar lies in the highly conservative province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where strict purdah is observed. "It has a much higher ratio of educated women, but due to lack of a safe transport system, their mobility is greatly compromised and their full potential to be productive citizens gets somewhat lost," said Zahid.

"I got very good vibes from informal talks I've been conducting with women there who say they would love having women drivers ferry them across the city," said Zahid, who has also held informal talks with religious leaders to explain the advantages of a women-only transport service. The challenge is finding enough female drivers. "It was initially difficult to convince parents and families to let their womenfolk take this up in Karachi," said Zahid. "Today, these same women have become such strong role models for others and the response has been amazing." — Reuters

### Bizarre news

#### Man tells girlfriend not to accept promotion due to being on more money

A man was overheard telling his girlfriend not to accept a promotion at work - because she'd be on more money than him. The unnamed couple were heard having an argument in an airport and one woman documented the whole conversation on Twitter. She wrote: "Couple beside me at the airport is arguing over money. He just told her if she loved him she'd turn down the promotion because everyone would know she'd be making more money than him and he'd be humiliated. Holy s\*\*t is that really still a thing? (sic)" The man apparently told his girlfriend that when they are married with kids she wouldn't be working so "no point focusing on her career". After detailing the conversation, the woman ended revealing the girlfriend was applauded by onlookers when she walked away. The Twitter user then wrote a tweet directly to the woman saying: "Dear Brave Airport Lady, if you ever see this, just know that although I'm sorry you went through this (esp during the holidays), I hope that, one day, you look back on this as a defining moment in your life. Never settle. Follow your heart. You are a goddess (sic)"



#### Magazine dubs Christmas Day present opening vulgar

Apparently opening Christmas presents before breakfast is considered "vulgar". London-based fashion magazine Tatler featured a columnist who dubbed the Christmas Day tradition as "vulgar and unbridled." The columnist read: "Are you one of those families who open their presents before breakfast on Christmas Day? 'Oh dear. That's considered a bit vulgar and unbridled. Sorry, we didn't make the rules, it just is.' For presents under the tree it is generally considered more acceptable to wait until that lull between the morning church service and lunch. 'If you're very grand, you may even wait until after lunch and a bracing walk, but this also requires you to have children with the self-control of an ancient yogi.'"



#### Star Wars fans try flying to fictional planet

'Star Wars' fans have been trying to visit the fictional planet of Ahch-to. Kiwi.com has found the British public are desperately searching for the fictional land, which doesn't exist, as they have noticed hundreds of people have searched for the fictional planet where exiled Jedi Master Luke Skywalker lives in 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The real location is Skellig Michael in the southern coast of Ireland, but Stephen Davis - who works at the flight booking site - has admitted he can-

not take passengers to Ahch-to but offers flights to the real-life island where the movie is filmed instead. He said: "'Star Wars' continues to influence holidaymakers to plan trips that are truly out of this world. 'It's clear The Force is strong with the latest episode, with Brits



keen to fly to Luke Skywalker's home to learn the ways of the Jedi first hand. 'Although we can't fly you to Ahch-to, we have plenty of flights to the southern coast of Ireland, where the picturesque filming location Luke calls home is situated.'"

#### Brits prefer Game of Thrones over Queen's Speech

A study has found over half of British people would prefer to watch 'Game of Thrones' than the Queen's speech this Christmas. According to new research, which was carried out by EMP, 56 per cent of UK residents are more interested in watching the hit HBO show than tuning in to the annual Christmas message from the Royal family, while 24 per cent of people have admitted they are more familiar with the show than the nativity story. Although 'Game of Thrones', which sees Kit Harington portray Jon Snow in the production, came to an end this summer, it is still popular among the nation as over 20 per cent of the public would do anything to receive merchandise relating to the program this Christmas. Ajay Nassa - who is the managing director at EMP - said: "Nobody could have predicted that the 'Game of Thrones' phenomenon would take on such huge Christmas traditions - and win - but it's clear that 'Game of Thrones' fans eat, sleep, breathe (and wear!) their favorite show with pride. 'Traditional Christmas gifts are certainly not off the table, but at EMP we are here to give everything a 'Thrones' twist and enable you to give someone a gift they will really love this Christmas.'"

#### Santa teams up with easyJet to surprise passengers

Santa Claus will be taking to the skies this Christmas on EasyJet's in-flight grottos. Father Christmas has been flying around the world for more than 1,700 years, but the legendary festive figure is set to meet 20,000 passengers in person in advance of Christmas Day as part of the British airline's latest initiative. EasyJet are set to launch over 100 flights across Europe over the festive period, and to celebrate this Saint Nicholas will surprise children and families on board a flight to help travellers get into the "festive feeling". Tina Milton - who is the head of the EasyJet's cabin crew said: "We fly millions of people home or on holiday over the Christmas period and we want to get the festive feeling started on board. 'We have hired the world's most famous pilot to fly on more than 100 selected flights and give over 20,000 passengers an incredible surprise.'"



— Bang Showbiz



A sign welcomes visitors to "Arbo &amp; Santa's Dog Park", a residential front yard full of Christmas decorations set up by "Mr Holiday", a resident of Washington, DC who celebrates every single holiday of the year.— AFP