

Friday Times

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Oman knock Saudis out in upset

UAE advance after goalless draw with Kuwait

By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: The final round of Group A matches of the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup ended in dramatic fashion yesterday, as firm favorites Saudi Arabia were knocked out following a defeat against Oman, while the United Arab Emirates settled for a draw against Kuwait to advance to the semifinals. In the two matches that were played simultaneously, Oman scored twice in the second half to beat Saudi Arabia at Kuwait Stadium, while the UAE vs Kuwait match at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium ended in a goalless draw.

Said Al-Ruzaiqi scored both of Oman's goals in the second half, sending his team to the second round as Group A winners with six points. Saudi Arabia, which looked poised to advance after beating Kuwait in the opening round, finished the group stage in third place with four points. Kuwait finished the tournament in last place of Group A, but not before snagging a point from their encounter with the UAE, which finished the group stage with five points.

Kuwait pressed early to start the match in front of a crowd of 20,538 - sharply down from their previous two

matches - but their early attacks did not pose any real danger to the UAE. The Emiratis regrouped shortly afterwards and had two good chances, including a shot that was stopped by Kuwait's goalkeeper Hameed Yousef. Kuwait kept up the pressure throughout the second half as the UAE settled to defend, seemingly looking for a draw that would put them in the semifinals.

In the other match of the evening, Saudi player Khaled Abdulbaqi unwittingly deflected a rebounding ball off a free kick by Oman player Ruzaiqi into his own net, giving Oman their first goal in the

match in the 58th minute. But Ruzaiqi was not satisfied, and scored what was to prove the winner with a brilliant header to beat the goalkeeper in the 78th minute.

With yesterday's results, Oman move on to face the second-place finalist of Group B, while the UAE play the Group B winners in the semifinals on Tuesday. Iraq, who play Yemen today in Group B action, look to be the favorites to finish first, while a win or draw by Bahrain against Qatar will qualify them for the semifinals. Meanwhile, Qatar have to beat Bahrain to advance, and perhaps hope for an Iraqi blunder to top Group B.

Happy New Year 2018!

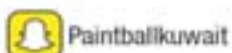
On the occasion of the New Year, Kuwait Times will not be published on Dec 31, 2017 and Jan 1, 2018. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Jan 2, 2018. Happy holidays!



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Local

Tax-free year!



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

We are on the threshold of a new year, and while the Western world is preparing for celebrations, there is not much to do in Kuwait. Often, friends and families gather for a special gala dinner on New Year's Eve. The dinner feast sees conversations about New Year wishes, most importantly about a tax-free year and more money!

I was recently invited to a Christmas dinner by a family friend. The most important wish of the attendees was to get a lot of money to make all their dreams come true. Because all hopes today are usually associated one way or another with money, the wish of a tax-free year comes first. I believe money has turned into a goal to achieve the simplest needs, so we can't blame people who make money their top wish.

I don't think it is easy for us in Kuwait to accept the idea of taxes without knowing what's in it for us in return, because I find that the imposition of taxes must be accompanied with a full understanding and acceptance of the rights of taxpayers, whether citizens or expatriates. In the West, taxpayers are partners and




I wonder if the government has a plan on how to handle this issue

not just statistics. I wonder if we have the same concept of taxpayers as in the West, where people have the right to reject any corrupt deal or spending by the government. At the same time, the government cannot imprison a taxpayer for using this right.

Raising taxes may also create social problems. The first is of those under the poverty line. I wonder if the government has a plan on how to handle this issue. My wish is that the government considers all the mechanisms of the 5 percent value-added tax before implementing it. The finance ministry has done well by postponing the actual application for further study and until all its bodies are ready, to prevent the failure of the project. But other government departments are required to be involved too.

Some opposition voices within the National Assembly have appeared against the VAT law, and this is normal. The tax is expected to be introduced in the second half of next year, or early 2019, after completion of the necessary procedures. Several regulatory aspects must be considered before its implementation, and this may take some time. The application of taxes is dependent on the finalization of regulatory frameworks.


I do not know the basis of the introduction of the tax in Kuwait. This means that the taxpayers will become partners. The government must take into account demographic changes and the protection of people and their rights.



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Local



Thinking comfort food? Think Ethiopian



Story and photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

When you crave comfort food during a cold winter night, you're likely to end up having a nice, warm, yet unhealthy meal with thousands of calories and low nutritional value, unless you're having soup.

The good news is that you can combine the feeling of fullness, comfort and nutritional benefit in one big round platter known as gebeta, a mainstay of Ethiopian cuisine that goes back to the nineteenth century.

The Ethiopians place a large, pancake-textured crepe-like gluten-free bread called injera on top of the platter, made of teff flour, water and yeast.

It comes with various types of water-based stews, or Ethiopian curries. The variety of options that suit all diets reflects the Ethiopian culture of social consolidation, in addition

to the evident generosity in the size of the personal platter. You have to use your right hand to eat after washing it, and if someone gives you a bite of food with their hand, accept it welcomingly, because it stands for compassion.

This is what I experienced at the Habesha restaurant on a not-so-popular street in Hawally. Customers become friends of the restaurant's owners on the first visit. The ambience of the restaurant and its charm make you open up to strangers and exchange cordial conversations with them, as if you have known them for ages.



Local

The 10-year-old eatery is run by an Ethiopian family. The fragrance of their heritage that emanates from the place separates you from the time and the country you live in - it's like being in a time capsule hurtling to an authentic atmosphere not affected by the customs of the surrounding African states. The first thing one notices is the simplicity of the decor - despite the stark colors of the Ethiopian flag that cover the walls and hang in the form of curtains, in addition to pottery pitchers dangling from the ceiling. Every week, a flight from Ethiopia brings the batter mixture for the injera and berbere, an essential spice blend for Ethiopian dishes. The food is mildly spicy, so water is the best beverage to go with it. Do not hesitate to ask for Ethiopian coffee at the end of your meal, which comes in an earthen jug enough for several people. Besides the rich flavor and aroma, it's served with popcorn that comes in a handmade straw bowl on the side along with incense burning in an evaporator.



One waitress told Kuwait Times they love to celebrate their festive holidays by dancing, which is part of their culture. Therefore, they tend to gather with their friends and relatives in their free time to listen to music and dance. "It's the best way to charge our energy for work and uphold our positive spirit for a new day," she said. Interestingly, some Kuwaiti customers frequent the restaurant daily, although Ethiopian cuisine is not known to the Kuwaiti people. I asked one of the diners the reason for his great attachment to the restaurant, because I have seen him more than once there. "I love the hospitable Ethiopian people. I have become fluent in the Ethiopian language, even though I have never travelled to their country!" he enthused.



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Bespoke bags on the cheap



By Ben Garcia

Souq Al-Maqasis in Souq Mubarakia was once a flea market. Today, the souq has modern shops, although every Friday you can still find people selling second-hand items, antique pots and pans, CDs and stone jewelry on the sidewalks. The market is also home to a row of luggage workshops, with bag makers hunched over their sewing machines.

Kuwait Times met Govindor S K, a tailor and sales attendant from Gujarat in India. Only 24, he has already spent nine years in Kuwait as a bag maker. "I came to Kuwait when I was

15, because I needed a job. I wanted to renovate our dilapidated home. Our tailoring shop in India was not making us enough money, so I asked my parents if I could go with my uncle to Kuwait," he said. "I was very young and scared. I didn't know what to expect. I knew the work, but didn't know the people and the language. As a tailor, I only had basic knowledge which I had learned from my mother, but I now I can do anything," he said.

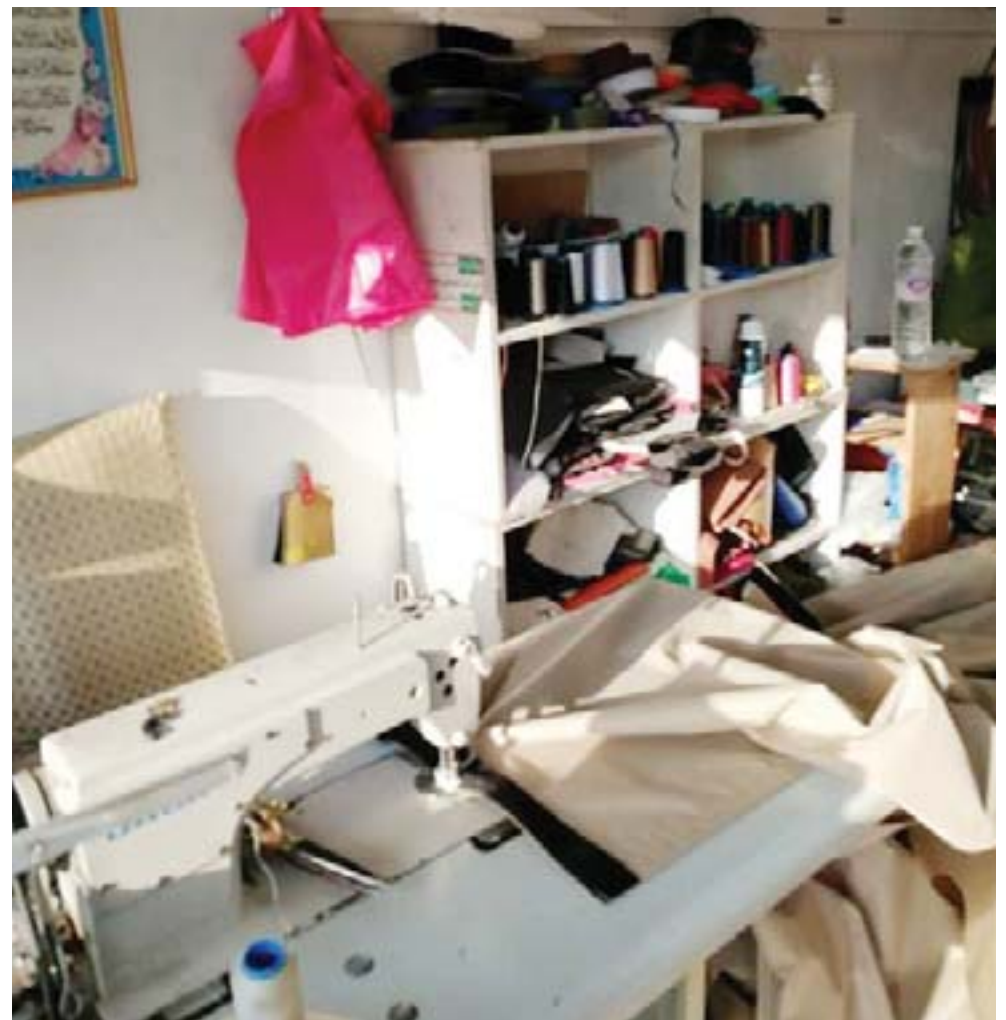
Govindor began working at a shop with his uncle in Mubarakia Market. "I thought it would be hard work, but it is an easy job. I started as a helper. Then my uncle told me that I could start making bags, a few months after landing in Kuwait," he said. Govindor now receives a relatively "good" salary and plans to marry his longtime girlfriend in India. "I like this job. I know I can feed a family with this. I will work hard and save money for my plan of opening a bigger tailoring business with my wife in India."

In a shop of three workers, average daily sales, according to Govindor, can reach up to KD 100. Orders arrive from customers daily, and most of them are bulk orders. "I make 20 bags daily if we have bulk orders, and if they have a simple design. We accept orders for personalized bags from companies for giveaways. Making travel or luggage bags takes longer, depending on the design," he said.

The material for the bags mostly comes from China, but also from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Samples of bags of various designs are displayed at the shops and customers can select from them, or they can provide their own personalized designs. Prices vary depending on the materials used.



Indian tailor Govindor S K works in a luggage shop in Souq Mubarakia.



Fans show full support for the 'Blues'

Supporters disappointed after Kuwait knocked out of Gulf Cup



The Kuwaiti national football team.



By Nawara Fattahova

Everyone in Kuwait was jubilant after the state's football suspension was lifted by FIFA, and people were doubly excited that the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup is being held in Kuwait. Everybody has rushed to support the Kuwaiti national football team in this championship, especially since the team hasn't played competitively for two years.

The information ministry also launched intensive campaigns to encourage the people to support the national team. Besides the great organization of the opening ceremony, the ministry prepared various videos and songs that were broadcast on all TV channels and radio stations, encouraging people to attend the matches. Moreover, entry to the stadiums is free of charge.

Many individuals also announced prizes for the players to encourage them to perform better. Popular social media influencer Aboodka set a prize of KD 1,000 for every Kuwaiti player who scored a goal in the first match. Only one Kuwaiti player - Abdullah Al-Breiki - scored, and



Aboodka sent him the prize the next day. Before the second match, Aboodka set a prize of KD 2,000 for the goalkeeper if no goal was scored against him, in addition to the KD 1,000 prize for the goal-scorers.

Before the tournament, MP Jamal Al-Omar announced a prize of KD 2,000 for every Kuwaiti player who scores a goal

during any match. After the second match, other social media influencers announced financial rewards for goal-scoring players in the coming matches. Meanwhile, some restaurants are running special promotions and offering discounts or special menus during the period of the tournament in support of the national team.

But the massive attendance by fans for the opening match between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia last Friday was the biggest show of support.

The 65,000-seater stadium was completely filled with people more than two hours before the match started. Thousands of other fans were not let in as the stadium was already full beyond capacity. Even after the Blues lost against Saudi Arabia 1-2, Kuwaiti fans rushed to support their team in their second match against Oman on Monday. The match was fully attended and the stadium was completely full again. Unfortunately, Kuwait lost again 0-1 and was knocked out, disappointing all the fans.



Kuwait's Abdulsalam Al-Buraiki celebrates after scoring in the opening match against Saudi Arabia at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium.

Local

Gastroenterologist explains IBD symptoms, treatment

MoH runs awareness campaign on bowel diseases

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health held an awareness campaign on ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease from Dec 21 to 28, 2017 at all the public hospitals and some private hospitals. Kuwait Times met Dr Saqer Al-Sraye, Consultant Gastroenterologist at Farwaniya Hospital, who explained this campaign aimed to spread awareness in the community that there are new medications that will improve symptoms and prevent complications.

"The campaign includes awareness of these diseases, their symptoms, the type of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), when to visit the doctor, what symptoms makes you think that you have an IBD, investigations required for diag-

nosis of the IBD, pregnancy and IBD, complications of IBD, and most importantly, living a normal life with new treatments of IBD," he noted.

Patient with ulcerative colitis usually suffer from bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain and weight loss. They may also be anemic. "Crohn's disease usually affects the GI track from the mouth to the anal canal, not like the ulcerative colitis that just affects the colon, so Crohn's disease usually results in abdominal pain, weight loss, and sometimes diarrhea or bloody diarrhea. Crohn's disease may also result in complications such as perianal disease, non-healing fistula or recurrent fistula, perianal abscess and non-healing fissure. Intestinal obstruction, intra-abdominal abscess, perforation and peri-



Dr Saqer Al-Sraye

tonitis are other symptoms of this disease," Sraye said.

"Investigations in general require colonoscopy and biopsy, general blood work and imaging. Without proper treatment for IBD, the patient will face a very tough life, and will feel he is not normal compared to the general population, and might have anxiety and depression. So our aim is to let these patients live a normal life with normal life expectancy without complications

or symptoms," stressed Sraye. "Treatment depends on the site of the disease, severity, complications and prior exposure to treatment. The most recent treatment is a biological treatment called 'anti-tumor necrosis factor' (ATNF), where they reduce the symptoms of the disease, improve healing of mucosa and prevent complications to enable a patient to live a normal, happy and productive life," he added.

"If one of the parents has the disease, there is a five percent chance of the offspring to have the disease too. If both of them have it, then there's a 30 percent the offspring might have the disease. The disease is mostly diagnosed in patients aged between 15 to 35 years of both genders," concluded Sraye.

Prof highlights humanitarian work by Kuwait

KUWAIT: A leading academic at the Kuwait University has voiced pride of Kuwait's unlimited support to humanitarian work worldwide. Professor of communication disorders at the university's College of Life Sciences Dr Hadeel Ayyad said Kuwait's philanthropic and charity initiatives extended to needy and afflicted people around the globe, which have enhanced the country's status and brought it international recognition as a "humanitarian center".

Ayyad, head of the Abber (express yourself) Club, and an accompanying delegation visited KUNA yesterday, where they met the agency's Deputy Director General for Editorial Sector and Editor-in-Chief Saad Al-Ali. Head of public relations at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Khalid Al-Zeid also attended the meeting. She said that the visit to KUNA with the club's members is an educa-



KUWAIT: KUNA's Saad Al-Ali meets KU's Dr Hadeel Ayyad. — KUNA

tional and exploration journey to closely see work at one of the state's major news outlet.

Ayyad, who is also rapporteur of the media committee at the college, added that they were acquainted with how the news on the club's activities are edited and soundly delivered to readers. Members of

the Abber Club represent the university in a multitude of local and international volunteer events. She said that Zeid offered the club members a detailed account on the significance of voluntary work, and how to represent Kuwait in such activities both at home and overseas. — KUNA

Police arrest cable thieves

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's relations and security media department announced Farwaniya detectives arrested a gang that stole electric cables. Case papers indicate that following several reports about cable thefts, power units were placed under close surveillance. Detectives spotted some suspects trying to get cables out of a power unit's broken gate. The suspects were arrested red-handed and were referred to relevant authorities.



CRIMES

Murderer details crime

KUWAIT: Following up the murder of a 22-year-old woman in Taima in Jahra by her husband, the man said he had some problems with his wife and that those problems had reached a deadlock. The suspect told detectives that he took his wife to the Jahra Club parking lot to settle things, but when they reached there, they argued again, which angered him and made him strangle her to death. The suspect added that he then called his father, who works in the interior ministry and told him what he had done. His father advised him to turn himself in at Taima police station, which he did.

Man assaults wife's foe

A citizen lost his temper on seeing his wife fighting with another woman at a Mangaf shopping mall and got involved in the fight himself to defend her. Security sources said the angry husband assaulted the other woman before leaving the scene with his wife. However, the assaulted woman jotted down his vehicle's license plate number and lodged a complaint, accusing him of assault and sexual abuse. Further investigations are in progress.

Phone abuse

A female citizen lodged a complaint against someone she does not know, saying that she received a call from him, in which he apologized and claimed to have dialed the wrong number. The woman said the unidentified caller then called again, expressing his admiration for her and started sending her indecent images on WhatsApp. The suspect is being summoned to face charges of misusing a mobile phone and instigating indecency.

Phone thief nabbed

A Yemeni was arrested for stealing mobile phones from various showrooms, said security sources, noting that the suspect usually entered showrooms pretending to process a transaction. While the clerk tended to him, he used to steal the clerk's phone kept on the desk and vanished. On getting a report, policemen rushed to a showroom and checked the surveillance cameras. The suspect was soon arrested in a nearby showroom attempting the same. — Translated from the Arabic press

Local

Saudi King, Kuwaiti Defense Minister discuss bilateral ties



Saudi King Salman meets Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a meeting yesterday, discussing ways to further bolster the brotherly ties. King Salman welcomed the Kuwaiti official to the

kingdom, with the latter conveying greetings from HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Saudi monarch. Senior Saudi and Kuwaiti officials attended the meeting. King Salman held a luncheon banquet after the reception. —KUNA

E-media strongly competing against traditional media

KUWAIT: Electronic media have become a strong competitor against their traditional counterparts, Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri said yesterday. The ministry of information said Jabri's statement came during his

reception of the head of Kuwait's Union of Electronic Media (UEM) Faisal Al-Sawaq. Although electronic media is becoming more dominant, it is very important to work within boundaries to make sure that the media message is delivered in a professional and ethical manner, said the minister.

Sawaq said that UEM abided by law 8/2016 concerning electronic media, affirming that it was a national duty that ensures social security and welfare. Jabri also held another meeting yesterday with members of the Kuwait accountants and auditors association, discussing with them ways to bolster cooperation between the ministry and the association. — KUNA

Kuwaitis longed for rain, saved precious water in olden times

KUWAIT: With the beginning of winter, Kuwaitis of yore welcomed the rains that usually fall in the period of November to April. They used to welcome the season with special songs that some of us still sing nowadays, such as 'teg ya matar teg', 'baitna yedeed, merzamna hadeed' (fall rain, our house is new and our rain drainpipe is made of iron) and 'ya um al-ghaith ghetheina, khalli al-matar yey-eena' (oh, mother of rain, help us and let rain fall on us).

Kuwait's arid desert climate forced old Kuwaitis to learn about various weather conditions, types of various clouds and the rain accompanying each type. According to

Kuwaiti heritage researcher Hussein Al-Qattan, Kuwaitis gave different names to different types of rainfall. "They used 'nemaily' for light drizzling rain and 'deemah' for heavy rain that fell continuously for two or three days," he explained, noting that they also used 'sail' for flooding rain and 'sahab' for heavy showers washing away whatever came in their way. Qattan added that Kuwaitis also used the term 'reshrash' for light showers of rain and the term 'mezemat' for lightning and thunderstorms. "They used the term 'Wasm' for the season between autumn and winter" he said.

Due to scarcity of freshwater, Kuwaitis were keen on saving rainwater by building roofs that were slightly inclined to help water flow into a 'barcha'; a trench usually dug in the center of the house, lining its inner walls with cement to conserve the water inside. Kuwaitis also used 'shutters' - thick sail-like sheets of cloth used as canopies hung over the house's inner yard with a hole centered right above the 'barcha' to direct rainwater into it. They saved rainwater falling on roads and alleys by digging special holes and building primitive sand berms to prevent the water from flowing into the sea, and used it for various purposes. — KUNA

Kuwait vows GCC to keep operating; US ties not affected



Khaled Al-Jarallah

KUWAIT: Kuwait's deputy foreign minister said on Wednesday that the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council would continue to operate despite a row among three of its members and Qatar that it has unsuccessfully sought to mediate. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain plus non-GCC member Egypt cut off diplomatic, travel and trade ties with Qatar in June, accusing it of supporting militants and their arch-foe Iran. Doha denies the charges and says their move is aimed at curtailing its sovereignty.

Western nations have called for the countries, which are all close US allies, to settle their differences in talks. The heads of state from the three boycotting countries skipped a GCC summit hosted by Kuwait's ruler in December, and the UAE called for the formation of a bilateral committee with Saudi Arabia on economic, political and military issues.

But Kuwait appears determined to preserve the loose union set up in 1980 as a bulwark

against larger neighbors Iraq and Iran, and said its reconciliation efforts would proceed. Despite the spat which appears to have no end in sight, the GCC's work "will not be frozen or disrupted", Khaled Al-Jarallah was quoted by state news agency KUNA

as telling reporters on the sidelines of a conference in Kuwait. "After the summit in Kuwait, we are not worried about the future of the council," Jarallah added. "Mediation efforts have not stopped, and a breakthrough will be achieved one day."

Jarallah also affirmed Kuwaiti-US relations have not been jeopardized by Kuwaiti opposition to the US recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel. Relations between the two countries are strategic and extend to partnership in various realms, Jarallah told reporters at the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute. Kuwait has clarified its stance and conveyed its concerns to the American side, he noted. On Dec 6, US President Donald Trump recognized the occupied Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and decided to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. On the same day, the Kuwaiti foreign ministry expressed profound regret over the US decision. — Agencies

MoI undersecretary meets ambassadors



Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Mahmoud Al-Doussary meets US Ambassador Laurence Silverman.



Doussary meets Tunisian Ambassador Ahmed bin Al-Sagheer.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Mahmoud Al-Doussary yesterday received US Ambassador to Kuwait Laurence Silverman at his office. The officials discussed bilateral re-

lations and Kuwait's role in supporting regional peace and security. Doussary also received the Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Ahmed bin Al-Sagheer. Both sides discussed issues related to the Tunisian community in Kuwait and bilateral relations between both countries.



Ooredoo Participates in Protégés G7 Graduation

As part of its ongoing support for youth



Ooredoo Kuwait, participated in the graduation of the 7th generation of the Protégés on Wednesday evening in Kuwait National Museum, where it was attended by Ooredoo Kuwait General Manager and CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani and the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudan.

During his speech, Ooredoo Kuwait's CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani noted that: "This is not the first time that we support the youth in such a special program, where we believe that the philosophy of the Protégés program completely matches our

ambitions at Ooredoo Kuwait, in which our corporate social responsibility empowers the youth to make them play a main role in building a better future. This year we wanted to offer a unique experience for the students with the cooperation of the remarkable organizers in the program, where we held the 24 hour challenge which the students spent their day completing a variety of challenges inside the Ooredoo Head Office. These challenges include a number of presentations done in front of Ooredoo Kuwait representatives from a variety of departments, in addition to workshops and inspirational talks by guest speakers. The challenge culminated in a presentation prepared by the students demonstrating their understanding of the telecom market in Kuwait, where they were tasked with launching a mock product with a full-fledged campaign."

Ooredoo Kuwait has also participated in a trip to the two European cities of Berlin and Prague with the 7th generation of the Protégés, the youth development program. Representing Ooredoo during the trip was CSR, Sponsorship and Social Media manager Yousef Al-Shallal, who delivered a number of motivational workshops and speeches for the students centered around risk management, social media, and

entrepreneurship. The trip which was a week long, also included several activities in cultural and educational institutes in the two European cities. All the program participants received free Ooredoo lines with pre-activated Ooredoo Passport roaming plans, to help them get in touch with their families in Kuwait.

The students released their final project 'Kamala', an Arabic card game aimed at educating youth about famous Arab cultural and historic figures, in which the proceeds will be donated to rebuild an educational facility in one of the countries in the Arab world. A statement issued by the seventh generation of the Protégés stressed that the aim of the project is to reconnect youth with their Arab heritage and culture. "We chose to donate the proceeds to an educational facility in one of the countries in the region that will be announced in due time, because we believe that education is the building block of society."

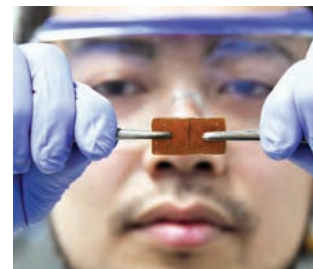
Before the launch of the Kamala card game, the students did a detailed presentation in front of an experienced judging panel for evaluation. In which Corporate Social Responsibility and Sponsorships Manager Sarah AlQabandi and Human Resources Business Partner Sulaf AlHabbash



its core values of caring, connecting, and challenging, in addition to being a direct translation of the recommendations of His Highness the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah who stressed on numerous occasions the importance of investing in youth.

For more information about the program, please visit www.theproteges.org





Self-healing glass:
Cracking discovery
from Japan

Saudi-led coalition raids kill 109 civilians in Yemen

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KABUL: Afghan residents inspect the site of a bomb attack on a Shiite cultural centre in Kabul yesterday. At least 40 people were killed and dozens more wounded in multiple blasts at a Shiite cultural centre in Kabul. — AFP

40 dead in multiple Kabul blasts

Islamic State-claimed attack targets Shiites

KABUL: More than 40 people were killed and dozens wounded in a suicide blast targeting Shiites in Kabul yesterday, officials said, with chaotic scenes at the city's hospitals as anguished families sought loved ones. The Sunni Islamic State group (IS) claimed responsibility for the gruesome assault on the pro-Iranian Tabayan cultural centre, the third deadly attack it has claimed in the Afghan capital this month.

Up to 100 people had gathered at the centre to mark the 38th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It is located in western Kabul, in the same building as affiliated Afghan Voice Agency (AVA), an anti-IS media outlet. "The latest figures we have from this tragic incident shows 41 people have been killed and a further 84 people injured," health ministry spokesman Waheed Majroh told reporters.

Kabul has become one of the deadliest places in war-torn Afghanistan for civilians in recent months, as the Taliban step up their attacks and IS seeks to expand its presence in the country. Yesterday's attack saw chaotic scenes at the Istiqlal hospital where ambulances and police pickups brought victims, including women and children. Many of them had suf-

fered severe burns to their faces and bodies, as well as shrapnel wounds, AFP reporters said. Visibly distressed relatives searching for their loved ones inside the medical facility slapped their heads in fury as they cried and cursed the government for seemingly being unable to end the regular carnage on their streets.

Some were so distraught they crawled on the ground pulling their hair. AFP reporters saw more than a dozen badly burned bodies lying on the floor in a room inside the hospital and wooden coffins being delivered so families could take away the remains of loved ones. Deputy interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi told AFP the attack—the deadliest since a Shiite mosque bombing in October that killed more than 50 worshippers—was followed by two smaller bomb blasts as victims and survivors were leaving the scene. A journalist with AVA, which is located above the cultural centre, said that more than a hundred people were at the event in the building's basement, with a number of AVA staff among the victims.

Yesterday's assault comes days after a suicide bomber killed six civilians in a Christmas Day attack near an Afghan intelligence agency compound in the city, which was also claimed by IS. On Decem-

ber 18 militants from the group stormed an intelligence training compound in Kabul, triggering an intense gunfight with police, two of whom were wounded. The Middle Eastern jihadist outfit has gained ground in Afghanistan since it first appeared in the region in 2015, and has scaled up its attacks in Kabul, including on security installations and the country's Shiite minority.

'Big boom'

A man attending the anniversary ceremony at Tabayan said he heard a "big boom". "When the explosion happened we immediately fled," he told Tolo News. Mohammad Hasan Rezayee, a university student who was also at the ceremony, told Tolo News he had suffered burns to his face in the blast. "We were inside the hall in the second row when there was an explosion behind us. I did not see the bomber," he said from his hospital bed. "After the blast, there was fire and smoke inside the building and everyone was pleading for help."

The attack drew international condemnation, with NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan describing it as "heinous". Amnesty International said it was further evidence that Kabul was not safe. "The

European governments who insist on this dangerous fiction by forcibly returning Afghans are putting their lives in danger," Amnesty International's South Asia director Biraj Patnaik said in a statement. Germany, which has expelled dozens of Afghans in recent months, said "we cry" with the victims of the attack, according to a statement from Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel. Interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish vowed to "avenge the blood" of the victims, many of whom were students.

Authorities would also investigate "possible negligence by police personnel", Danish told reporters. Security in Kabul has been ramped up since May 31 when a massive truck bomb ripped through the diplomatic quarter, killing some 150 people and wounding around 400 others—mostly civilians. No group has yet claimed that attack. Religious attacks in Afghanistan have skyrocketed in the past two years with the minority Shiite community the main target, the United Nations said in November. IS, a Sunni extremist group, has claimed most of the attacks on Shiite worshippers as it seeks to stir up sectarian violence in the country. The Afghan media has also previously been targeted by militants, underlining the risks faced by journalists in the war-torn country. — AFP

International

Saudi-led coalition raids kill 109 civilians in Yemen

Airstrikes at a crowded market leave 54 dead

GENEVA: A Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen has killed 109 civilians in air strikes in the past 10 days, including 54 at a crowded market and 14 members of one family in a farm, the top UN official in the country said yesterday. UN resident coordinator Jamie McGoldrick called the fighting futile and absurd, an unusually direct criticism of the war in which the coalition, backed by the United States, Britain and others, is fighting the Iran-allied Houthi armed movement. Citing initial reports from the UN human rights office, a statement by McGoldrick said air strikes hit a crowded market in Al Hayma sub-district of Attazziah in Taiz governorate on Tuesday, killing 54 and injuring 32.

Eight of the dead and six of the injured were children, according to the reports. On the same day an air strike on a farm in Attohayta district of Hodeidah governorate killed 14, and air strikes elsewhere killed a further 41 civilians and injured 43 over the past 10 days.



UN's coordinator calls the fighting futile and absurd

"These incidents prove the complete disregard for human life that all parties, including the Saudi-led Coalition, continue to show in this absurd war that has only resulted in the destruction of the country and the incommensurate suffering of its people, who are being punished as part of a futile military campaign by both sides," McGoldrick said.

Under international law, the warring sides must spare civilians and civilian infrastructure, he added. The United Nations has no up-to-date estimate of the death toll in Yemen, having said in August 2016 that according to medical centers at least 10,000 people had been killed. The United Nations says Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with about 8 million people on the brink of famine, a cholera epidemic that has infected 1 million people, and economic collapse in what was already one of the Arab world's poorest countries.—Reuters

Palestinian teen in 'slap video' back at the centre of propaganda war

JERUSALEM: Ahed Tamimi is only a teenager, but has repeatedly been at the centre of the seemingly endless propaganda war between Israelis and Palestinians, with a video of her slapping soldiers. Tamimi, 16 and recognizable by her shock of blonde hair, has been held up by Palestinians and other supporters as a brave opponent of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. A years-old photograph of her raising her fist at a soldier was widely published and led to her being received by then Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2012.

She was also photographed while wearing a Tweety Bird shirt and biting the hand of an Israeli soldier in 2015 to try to stop the arrest of a brother. But for Israeli officials, she is being made to star in staged provocations by her family, prominent activists who have been at the forefront of protests in their village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah. The latest incident led to her arrest on December 19 along with that of her mother and cousin. She has been detained since and is due to appear in military court again later. The three appeared in a video that went viral after it was recorded on December 15 in Nabi

Saleh. It showed Tamimi and her cousin approaching two Israeli soldiers before shoving, kicking and slapping them.

The heavily armed soldiers do not respond in the face of what appears to be an attempt to provoke rather than seriously harm them. They then move backwards after Tamimi's mother Nariman becomes involved. Tamimi's father argues that her blonde hair and Western dress have contributed to the attention she has received. "If she was veiled and dark-skinned, would she have got the same attention?" Bassem Tamimi said. "The Zionist propaganda machine always depicts the Palestinian as dark-skinned and ugly, attacking the blonde victim, but now she is blonde."

'Case of public opinion'

Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the United States and currently a deputy minister for diplomacy, accused the Tamimis of using children as pawns, however. "The Tamimi family—which may not be a real family—dresses up kids in American clothes and pays them to provoke (Israeli) troops on camera," he wrote on Twitter. "This cynical and cruel use of children constitutes abuse. Human rights organizations must investigate!" Since her arrest early on December 19, responses from either side could not be further apart. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has called her father and commended the family's resistance against Israel's occupation, official news agency Wafa reported. Supporters have accused Israeli authorities of arresting a teenager who was only standing up for the rights of her fellow Palestinians. The incident occurred during a day of clashes across the West Bank against US President Donald Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.—AFP



SANAA: A Yemeni man takes a picture of the debris following an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition on the guard house of a memorial to Egyptian soldiers in the southern Sanaa neighborhood of Aser. Seven members of a family died in an air raid.—AFP

More patients evacuated from Syria rebel enclave

DOUMA: A second batch of sick Syrian civilians, most of them children, left the besieged rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta, aid officials said yesterday, but hundreds of critical patients remained trapped. Four evacuations took place on Tuesday and another group of 12 made it out late Wednesday, but a top humanitarian envoy questioned a deal under which medical emergencies are used as bargaining chips.

A total of 29 emergency medical cases are expected to be evacuated under a deal with the government that saw rebels release 26 individuals, including workers detained during fierce clashes with the army in March. The numbers are still a far cry from the nearly 500 patients in the Damascus suburb the UN said weeks ago would die if they did not urgently receive better treatment. "Yesterday we evacuated 12 patients together with their family members, the majority of them are children," International Committee of the Red Cross spokeswoman Ingy Sedky said. At the Syrian Red Crescent headquarters in Douma, an AFP

correspondent saw the latest group of evacuees waiting for ambulances to pick them up.

Among them was Abdel Rahman, a seven-month-old baby with respiratory assistance in his mother's arms. A Red Crescent worker tried to make another baby smile. "Most of them suffer from cancer, chronic diseases and heart diseases," Sedky said, adding that the evacuees were transferred to Damascus. From the list of 500 urgent cases announced in November at least 16 have already died for lack of medical assistance. Around 400,000 people live in the Eastern Ghouta area on the edge of the Syrian capital. The enclave is controlled by rebels, the dominant faction among them Jaish Al-Islam (Army of Islam), and has been under siege by the government for four years.

Exchange

Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council and currently a UN special envoy for humanitarian access in Syria, was critical of the deal that allowed the patients to leave. The agreement between the rebels and the government was reached with support from Turkey, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and led to the release of 26 men held by Jaish al-Islam rebels.

It is "not a good agreement if they exchange sick children for detainees that means children become bargaining chips in some tug of war," Egeland told the BBC. "That shouldn't happen.—Agencies

Cracking discovery from Japan: Self-healing glass

Discovery opens the way for super-durable glass

TOKYO: A Japanese researcher has developed-by accident-a new type of glass that can be repaired simply by pressing it back together after it cracks. The discovery opens the way for super-durable glass that could triple the lifespan of everyday products like car windows, construction materials, fish tanks and even toilet seats. Yu Yanagisawa, a chemistry researcher at the University of Tokyo, made the breakthrough by chance while investigating adhesives that can be used on wet surfaces. Does this mean you will soon be able to repair those cracks in your smartphone with a quick press of the fingers? Or surreptitiously piece together a shattered beer glass dropped after one pint too many?

Well, not quite. Not now and in fact, not in the near future. But it does open a window of opportunity for researchers to explore ways to make more durable, lightweight, glass-like items, like car windows. In a lab demonstration for AFP, Yanagisawa broke a glass sample into two pieces. He then held the cross sections of the two pieces together for about 30 seconds until the glass repaired itself, almost resembling its original form. To demonstrate its strength, he then hung a nearly full bottle

of water from the piece of glass-and it stayed intact.

The organic glass, made of a substance called poly-ether thioureas, is closer to acrylic than mineral glass, which is used for tableware and smartphone screens. Other scientists have demonstrated similar properties by using rubber or gel materials but Yanagisawa was the first to demonstrate the self-healing concept with glass. The secret lies in the thiourea, which uses hydrogen bonding to make the edges of the shattered glass self-adhesive, according to Yanagisawa's study. But what use is all this if it cannot produce a self-healing smartphone screen?

"It is not realistically about fixing what is broken, more about making longer-lasting resin glass," Yanagisawa said. Glass products can fracture after years of use due to physical stress and fatigue. "When a material breaks, it has already had many tiny scars that have accumulated to result in major destruction," Yanagisawa said. "What this study showed was a path toward making a safe and long-lasting resin glass", which is used in a wide range of everyday items. "We may be able to double or triple the lifespan of something that currently lasts for 10 or 20 years", he said. —AFP



TOKYO: Yu Yanagisawa, a chemistry researcher at the University of Tokyo, looks at a piece of repaired broken resin glass after pressing the pieces back together at the university's lab. — AFP



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Istanbul tightens New Year security, dozens arrested

Public celebrations banned or cancelled

ISTANBUL: Turkey will more than double the number of police officers on duty in Istanbul to 37,000 and ban public celebrations in key districts on New Year's Eve for security reasons, a year after a gunman killed 39 people in a nightclub, officials said. State media said police had also detained dozens of people for suspected membership of Islamic State (IS) though the arrests were not linked to New Year security preparations. On New Year's Eve a year ago, a man with an assault rifle shot dead Turks and visitors from several Arab nations, India and Canada at the exclusive Reina nightclub.

A year on, 37,000 police officers and some 4,000 gendarmes who maintain security in rural areas would be on duty over New Year, Istanbul governor Vasip

Sahin told reporters yesterday - more than double the usual daily deployment. "Virtually all our teams will be on duty. We will take all possible measures in Istanbul so that our citizens can mark New Year happily in peace," he said. Authorities either banned or cancelled public New Year's Eve celebrations in the central Istanbul districts of Beyoglu, Sisli and Besiktas due to security concerns,



Turkish police detain dozens of Islamic State suspects

officials and media said. Sisli municipality said it cancelled a four-day event after the local governor requested it be curtailed for security reasons. Besiktas council was refused permission to stage an event, Haberturk newspaper said. It said security was also being tightened in Taksim square, reportedly one of the initial sites the gunman last year planned to attack before he decided to target the nightclub. "New Year (security) measures will be at the highest level. There won't be any celebrations," Haberturk cited Beyoglu police chief Ismail Kilic as saying. "Gatherings will not be allowed."

IS claimed responsibility for the nightclub shooting, one of a series of attacks believed to have been carried out by the jihadists and Kurdish militants. A trial of suspects in the Reina attack, including the gunman, began this

month. Turkish police yesterday detained 38 people, some of them Syrian citizens, for suspected Islamic State membership in an operation in the northwestern province of Bursa, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. In raids across Istanbul on Wednesday, police detained six Islamic State-associated foreign nationals believed to be planning an attack, a police statement said.—Reuters



ISTANBUL: Worshippers light candles as they attend Christmas Mass at Saint Antuan Church in the Beyoglu district of Istanbul. — AFP

Rajoy better armed against separatists despite poll rout

MADRID: Despite taking fire for losing a snap election in Catalonia, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy faces the new year better equipped to block a separatist drive in the wealthy region, analysts said. His detractors have called the results of the December 21 election, which saw separatist parties hold on to their majority in the Catalan parliament, a "fiasco" and a "rout" for Rajoy, in power since 2011. Pro-independence parties failed to win a majority of ballots cast but neither did parties in favor of Spanish unity do as well as was hoped for by the majority of Spain's political class.

Rajoy's conservative Popular Party (PP) saw its marginal representation in the 135-seat Catalan parliament reduced even further, to just four seats, from 11 previously. Its main rival, the relative newcomer Ciudadanos, won the most seats with 36, mainly by luring away traditional PP supporters. At first glance Rajoy appeared to have lost his bet by calling the snap polls after he invoked constitution article

155, allowing him to suspend Catalonia's autonomy and impose direct rule in response to the separatists' independence drive.

Rebellion stifled

But political consultant Ignacio Varela said "article 155 played its role which was not to win the elections or improve the PP's results, or make separatism disappear, but rather to stifle a rebellion against the constitution." Catalonia's three separatist parties had approved laws in September to "disconnect" the region from Spain, organized a banned independence referendum on October 1 and then proclaimed independence on October 27. After Rajoy intervened, experts said the separatists recognized that they had underestimated the capacity of the Spanish state to react. They have said they no longer plan to push for independence unilaterally and favour a negotiated settlement instead. "Enacting article 155 broke a taboo, without sparking a rebellion," said Pablo Simon, a politics professor at Madrid's Carlos III University.

Rajoy has warned repeatedly that he will not hesitate to invoke article 155 powers again if separatists once again break the law. Pro-independence parties are now divided over what strategy to follow and may have a hard time capitalizing on their success. —AFP

Ukraine and rebels in mass prisoner swap

GORLIVKA: Ukraine and Russian-backed rebels have swapped hundreds of prisoners in the war-torn east of the country, one of the largest such exchanges since the outbreak of an insurgency almost four years ago. The swap of captives on a dusty road close to the town of Gorlivka, 40 kilometers northeast of the rebels' stronghold of Donetsk on Wednesday was an attempt to revive a tattered peace deal between the Kiev army and rebels from the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. The war in the former Soviet republic broke out in April 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea the previous month. The conflict has already claimed more than 10,000 lives. A series of truce deals has helped lower the level of violence but did not end the bloodshed.

In the first exchange since September 2016, the Russian-backed eastern militia handed 73 prisoners over to Kiev. The Ukrainian side released 233 rebels and their supporters, officials from both sides said. The figures were significantly lower than previously de-

clared, as dozens of prisoners—almost all from the Ukrainian territory—have refused to move to the other side. Two Ukrainians—a man and a woman—also opted to stay on the rebel side. The prisoners massed at the exchange point with their belongings, shivering in zero temperatures, before boarding buses after their names had been called out. Some of the detainees expressed relief after spending long months, and even years, in captivity.

"I was in captivity for two years," said historian Igor Kozlovskiy, 63, who was captured by Donetsk rebels on suspicion of storing weapons. "Still a lot of prisoners remain (behind bars in Donetsk)," he told AFP minutes before he was handed over to the representatives of Ukraine. Hundreds of people turned out at Kiev airport late Wednesday to welcome home the released prisoners, waving national flags, bouquets of flowers and shouting "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to our heroes!" "Hello sweetie. You see, Daddy came back," one soldier said over the phone to a child as his weeping wife hugged him tightly, after 21 months held captive by separatists.

The swap on the eve of the New Year and Orthodox Christmas holidays was agreed following negotiations involving Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's leader Petro Poroshenko. In his comment immediately after the exchange was completed, Poroshenko hailed the persistence of the Ukrainian soldiers. —AFP

International

St Petersburg supermarket bombing an 'act of terror'

Security services ordered to shoot to kill if necessary

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said a bomb blast in a St Petersburg supermarket on Wednesday was an act of terrorism, and that security forces whose lives were threatened by terrorist suspects should shoot to kill if necessary. Putin, who is running for re-election in March, was speaking yesterday at an awards ceremony in the Kremlin for Russian personnel who served in Russia's Syria campaign, which Moscow has framed as an anti-terrorism operation.

"You know that yesterday in St Petersburg a terrorist act was carried out," Putin told the audience, referring to the explosion that injured 13 shoppers in a branch of the Perekrestok supermarket chain. Investigators have opened a criminal case into Wednesday evening's blast, which they say was caused by a homemade bomb packed with pieces of metal. Russian media reports said the bomb was hidden inside a rucksack in a locker where shoppers leave their belongings and said the person who left the bomb, described as being of "non-Slavic appearance", had been caught on CCTV.

No group has claimed responsibility. Russia has repeatedly been the target of attacks by Islamist militant groups, including an attack in April that killed 14 people when an explosion tore through a train carriage in a metro tunnel in

St Petersburg. That attack was claimed by a militant group which said the suicide bomber was acting on the orders of Al-Qaeda. Russian police detained several suspects in that attack from mainly Muslim states in ex-Soviet central Asia.

'Act decisively'

Putin told the ceremony the FSB security service, which he used to run before he became president, had also prevented "another attempted terrorist act". A Kremlin spokesman said Putin was referring to a foiled attack on Kazansky Cathedral, in St Petersburg, Russia's second city. The Kremlin said earlier this month that a US tip-off had helped thwart the attack in a rare public show of cooperation despite deep strains between the two countries.

Bomb hidden inside a rucksack in a locker



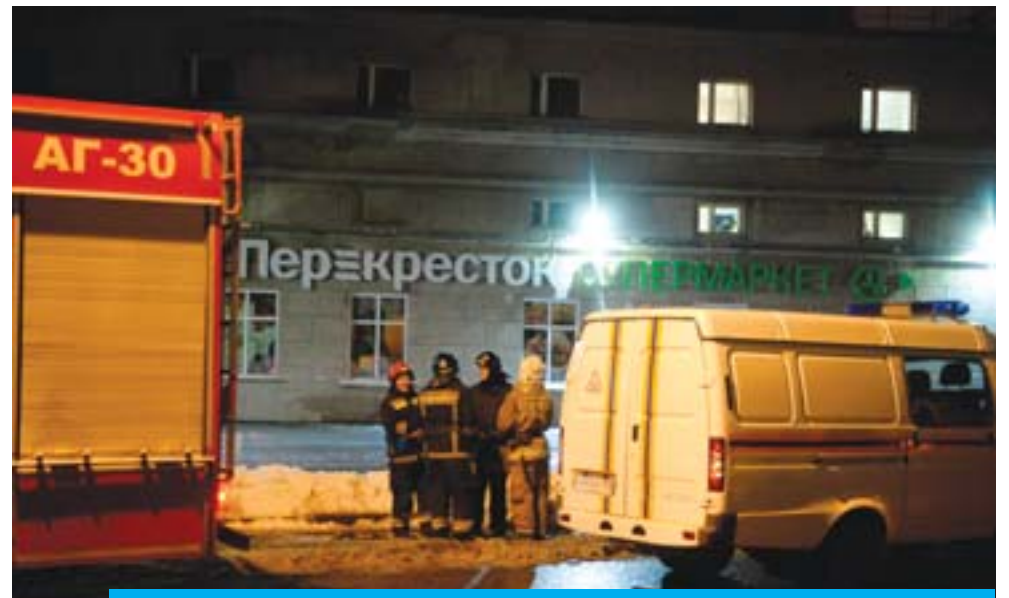
Russian media reported earlier this month that the Federal

Security Service had detained seven members of an Islamic State cell who had been planning the attack. Putin told the same awards ceremony that the security situation in Russia would be much worse if thousands of Russian citizens who fought with Islamic State in Syria had been allowed to return home. "What would have happened if those thousands of people ... returned to us (from Syria). If they returned with good

have been possible in Singapore. "He cannot then come to the courts of the very same jurisdiction to have the acts condoned," the court said.

"This application is in reality an attempt to obtain a desired result ... by walking through the back door of the system when the front door was firmly shut." The child, who is about four years old and is legally an American citizen, will remain in the care of the man. The man, whose name has been withheld because the case involves a minor, is exploring his options in relation to the decision, his team of lawyers said. "The primary reason that motivates him is that like any father he wants the best for his son, he wants his son to be legitimate in the eyes of the law and to ensure that he has all the necessary benefits to set him on the right path," said one of his lawyers, Ivan Cheong.

Cheong said legitimacy would help with any future application for citizenship and access to certain welfare benefits, as well as removing a perceived stigma around illegitimacy "that you can't really place a value on". Prime Minister Lee Hsieng Loong has said the country was not yet ready for same-sex marriage and he was prepared to live with the anti-gay sex law "until social attitudes change". A Singapore lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights group, Pink Dot, said it was dismayed by the ruling. "Singapore has chosen to reject a loving father's application to adopt his own biological son based on an outdated view of what a family should constitute," the group said in a statement.—Reuters



SAINT PETERSBURG: Firefighters stand outside a supermarket after a blast in Saint Petersburg yesterday. —AFP

weapons training ...," he said. Russian security officials have said that thousands of citizens from ex-Soviet Central Asia or from the Muslim-majority North Caucasus region of Russia, which includes Chechnya, travelled to Syria or Iraq to fight with Islamic State. Putin said security forces should take no chances with their

own lives if confronted by terrorist suspects. "I yesterday ordered the FSB director to act within the framework of the law when detaining these bandits of course, but if there is a threat to the life and well-being of our employees ... to act decisively, not take any prisoners, and liquidate the bandits on the spot."—Reuters

Court rejects gay man's bid to adopt his biological son

SINGAPORE: A Singapore court has rejected a gay Singaporean doctor's bid to adopt his biological child because he was born by a surrogate mother in the United States through a procedure not available for unmarried couples in the island state. Singapore is in many ways a vibrant, modern society but it remains socially conservative and sex between consenting males is a punishable crime with a maximum penalty of two years in jail, although prosecution is rare. Singapore is also trying to boost fertility among its citizens, and offers generous incentives to couples to have babies, but in-vitro fertilization is allowed only for married couples and surrogacy services are not available for anyone.

The man, in a homosexual relationship with a partner, paid \$200,000 for a woman to carry his child through in-vitro fertilization in the United States after he had learned he was unlikely to be able to adopt a child in Singapore as a gay man. A Singapore court ruled against his bid to adopt the child this week saying the steps he had taken to have the baby in the United States would not

Pennsylvania and Erie buried under record snowfall

PENNSYLVANIA: A storm that has dumped more than 65 inches (165 cms) of snow this week on Erie, Pennsylvania, is expected to slightly taper off on Wednesday after leaving drifts that buried cars, paralyzed the area and made the county declare an emergency. But the respite for Erie, a city of about 100,000 in northwest Pennsylvania on the shores of Lake Erie, is expected to be short-lived, with a fresh round of winter storms coming Thursday night predicted to bring as much as 10 inches more snow, forecasters said.

"This is a crippling snow event," said Zach Sefcovic, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Cleveland. "They are no strangers to snow in that part of the state, but this much snow in that short a time is just unprecedented," he said in a telephone interview. Large parts of the United States were gripped by freezing weather, with an area stretching

from Montana to Maine expected to see temperatures below 10 degrees Fahrenheit (-12.2 degrees Celsius) early on Thursday, the National Weather Service said.

The winter blast in Erie was caused by cold Arctic air moving over the lake, which had relatively mild water temperatures, forecasters said. The storm broke a 59-year-old record for a two-day snowfall in Pennsylvania, topping the 44 inches that fell in 1958. Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper issued a temporary disaster emergency declaration that mobilized resources to help the area. Pictures of residents on social media showed drifts reaching beyond window-levels in houses and people clearing paths through chest-high accumulations.

"Out of Doritos. Family is arguing. Dogs are getting ornery. It's been 3 days since my last chicken wing. We are out of whiskey," wrote Nicole Massari on her Instagram account @theworldaroundnikki, along with a video showing her Pennsylvania home surrounded by snow. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf deployed 21 Pennsylvania National Guard troops along with some all-terrain military vehicles to the region on Tuesday to help residents dig out and transport emergency responders around the area. —Reuters

International

Bali declares 'garbage emergency' amid sea of waste, plastic flooding

Officials deploy 700 cleaners and 35 trucks

KUTA: Bali's palm-fringed Kuta beach has long been a favorite with tourists seeking sun and surf, but nowadays its golden shoreline is disappearing under a mountain of garbage. Plastic straws and food packaging are strewn between sunbathers, while surfers bobbing behind the waves dodge waste flushed out from rivers or brought in by swirling currents. "When I want to swim, it is not really nice. I see a lot of garbage here every day, every time," Austrian traveler Vanessa Moonshine explains. "It's always coming from the ocean. It's really horrible," she adds.

Often dubbed a paradise on earth, the Indonesian holiday island has become an embarrassing poster child for the country's trash problem. The archipelago of more than 17,000 islands is the world's second biggest contributor to marine debris after China, and a colossal 1.29 million metric tons is estimated to be produced annually by Indonesia.

The waves of plastic flooding into rivers and oceans have been causing problems for years—clogging waterways in cities, increasing the risk of floods, and injuring or killing marine animals who ingest or become trapped by plastic packaging. The problem has grown so bad that officials in Bali last month declared a "garbage emergency" across a six-kilometer (3.7-mile) stretch of coast that included popular beaches Jimbaran, Kuta and Seminyak. Officials deployed 700 cleaners and 35 trucks to remove roughly 100 tons of debris each day to a nearby landfill.

"People with green uniform were collecting the garbage to move it away but the next day I saw the same situation," said German Claus Dig-

nas, who claimed he saw more garbage with each visit to the island. "No one wants to sit on nice beach chairs and facing all this rubbish," he added. Bali's rubbish problem is at its worst during the annual monsoon season, when strong winds push marine flotsam onto the beach and swollen rivers wash rubbish from riverbanks to the coast, according to Putu Eka Merthawan from the local environment agency. "This garbage does not come from people living in Kuta and nearby areas," he said. "It would be suicidal if Kuta people were doing it."

War on waste

Some 72 kilometers from Kuta, Mount Agung has been threatening to erupt for two months, prompting tourists to cancel visits and displacing tens of thousands of villagers living within a 10 kilometer-radius of the volcano's crater. But the island's waste problem is no less of a threat, said I Gede Hendrawan, an environmental oceanography researcher from Bali's Udayana University. "Garbage is aesthetically disturbing to tourists, but plastic waste issue is way more serious," he said.

"Microplastics can contaminate fish which, if eaten by humans, could cause health problems including cancer." Indonesia is one of nearly 40 countries that are part of UN Environment's Clean Seas campaign, which aims to halt the tide of plastic trash polluting the oceans. As part of its commitment, the government has pledged to reduce marine plastic waste by 70 percent by 2025. It plans to boost recycling services, curb the use of plastic bags, launch cleanup cam-



BALI, Indonesia: Rubbish collectors pick up trash on Kuta beach near Denpasar, on Indonesia's tourist island of Bali. —AFP

paigns and raise public awareness. Still, the scale of the problem facing Indonesia is huge, due to its population of more than 250 million and poor waste processing infrastructure.

Hendrawan, who says both locals and tourists are responsible for the island's rubbish problem, urged authorities to invest more re-

sources to tackle the problem. "The Bali government should spare more budget to raise people's awareness to take care of local rivers, not to dump waste," he said. "The central government should boost the campaign to reduce use of plastic packaging and ban free plastic bags at convenient stores."—AFP

Thai teacher turns to DNA to prove \$1m lottery win

BANGKOK: A DNA test will decide the fate of a near \$1 million lottery prize after a Thai teacher said he lost the winning tickets which were later claimed by an ex-cop. A bitter legal wrangle unfolded after 50-year-old teacher Preecha Kraikruan filed a complaint that he had lost the five lottery tickets which won a draw last month. Authorities discovered the 30 million baht (\$920,000) prize had already been collected by retired policemen Charoon Wimon, 62, in western Kanchanaburi province.

With both parties claiming the cash is rightfully theirs, forensic police are now stepping in to determine whose finger prints match the ticket stubs. "No one has been charged yet in this case as we have to wait for the DNA test results," Krissana Sapdet, deputy Kanchanaburi provincial police commander said. A forensic official with the justice department said the results are expected next month. The government-run lottery, which is drawn twice a month, has a fanatical following in a kingdom where nearly all other forms of gambling are banned. Many punters in the superstitious country turn to "lottery numerologists" to choose ticket numbers, often linked to special dates or other auspicious events. —AFP

Zimbabwean ex-army chief sworn in as VP

HARARE: Zimbabwe's former army commander who led a military takeover that helped end Robert Mugabe's 37-year rule was yesterday sworn in as one of the country's two vice presidents. General Constantino Chiwenga, 61, took the oath of office in Harare, pledging to be "faithful" to Zimbabwe and to "obey, uphold and defend the constitution." "I will discharge my duties with all my strength and to the best of my knowledge and ability," said Chiwenga, dressed in a black suit at a ceremony held on the lawns of the presidential residence.

The new president Emmerson Mnangagwa, dozens of government officials, military and police chiefs as well as traditional leaders, attended the event. Chiwenga retired from the military last week, slightly over a month after the army temporarily took control of the country on November 15, culminating in Mugabe's resignation six days later.

Mnangagwa, who had a few weeks earlier been humiliated and sacked from his job as vice president by Mugabe, then took over as the head of state. Mugabe, 93, was ousted from power after the military stepped in following internal feuding and factionalism that escalated in the ruling ZANU-PF party over who would succeed him. Mugabe's wife Grace had expressed an interest in succeeding her husband.

Chiwenga's ascent to the country's second most powerful job has further consolidated the military's power in the po-

litical space of the southern African country. Several other senior army officers have in recent weeks been appointed to ministerial or influential party positions. President Mnangagwa did not give a speech at the inauguration of his deputies, but told journalists that their responsibility is "to drive the ministers." "The performance of the ministers will be reflected by the supervision they give."

Reward for ousting Mugabe

Chiwenga became the face of the rapid transition in Zimbabwe. It started on November 13, two days before the coup, when he went on state television to make a rare statement by the country's military. Surrounded by defense chiefs, Chiwenga called on the ruling party officials to "stop reckless utterances... denigrating the military". The next day tanks rolled out of the barracks onto the streets of the capital. Just before dawn on the following day, the military went on state television saying they were not launching a coup but were "targeting criminals around" Mugabe.

Chiwenga and Kembo Mohadi, a veteran politician and long-serving state security minister, were then named the ruling party's vice presidents. Mohadi was also sworn in as the state second vice president yesterday. The appointment of Chiwenga and several other senior army officers in government and the ruling party is seen as a reward for the army's instrumental role in ending Mugabe's rule. Two other top military officials were also awarded ministerial posts earlier this month. Ex-air force chief Perrance Shiri became the new lands and agriculture minister and the general who announced the military takeover, Sibusiso Moyo, is the new foreign affairs minister. —AFP

International

India's law targets Muslims who instantly divorce wives

Women complain 'triple talaq' violates right to equality

NEW DELHI: The Indian government yesterday introduced a bill in parliament aimed at prosecuting Muslim men who divorce their wives through the "triple talaq", or instant divorce, which women complain violates their right to equality. In August, the Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional the law, which allows Muslim men to divorce their wives simply by uttering the word "talaq" three times.

Muslim women had petitioned the court, arguing the practice of husbands divorcing them through "triple talaq", including by Skype and WhatsApp, not only violated their rights but left many women destitute. "Only a law can explicitly ban triple talaq, we have

to enforce legal procedures to provide allowance and protect custody of children," said Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

The bill, if approved, would make the practice a non-bailable offence with a possible three-year jail term. Muslims are the biggest religious minority in Hindu-majority India and relations

between the communities have been occasionally strained since Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party won a 2014 election. India is one of the few countries where the practice of instant divorce has survived and some Muslim groups have said that while it was wrong, the law should be reviewed by the community itself.

Members of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board said the government had no right to outlaw instant triple talaq, as it was directly interfering with the Muslim personal law. India's civil codes are designed to protect the independence of religious communities. Unlike most Hindu civil

laws, which have been codified and reformed, Muslim personal laws have largely been left untouched. Zakia Soman, founder of a Muslim women's group, the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, said once triple talaq becomes a legal offence, victims could approach the police and the legal system to initiate action against offenders.—Reuters



All India Muslim Personal Law Board fumes

Funding crunch shuts bank that gave hope to Mumbai's sex workers

MUMBAI: On a weekday afternoon in the dusty streets of Mumbai's red light district Kamathipura, Fatima collects 20 rupees (\$0.30) from men to rent a cubicle in her brothel where girls charge them up to 200 rupees for sex. Until last month, Fatima asked the girls to count their money every few days and put it in a bank a couple of streets away that accepted cash deposits as low as five rupees and never asked for any paper work or proof of identity, just a photo. But when the Sangini Women's Co-operative Society bank shut last month amid financial woes after 10 years of being run for sex workers largely by sex worker volunteers, all their savings were returned. "Now they are hiding the money somewhere in the cubicle or are stitching it up in their pillow covers," said Fatima, as she is known in the area and who gave only her first name.

"I used to ask the girls to save money to send it home. They come from all parts of the country. Their families are poor," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, adding that she hoped Sangini would re-open if funds for administration were found. Sangini was modelled on the country's oldest bank for sex workers - Usha

Cooperative - in Kolkata's red light district of Sonagachi and was the first such in Mumbai to help sex workers save money that could help them escape to a different future.

The cooperative bank, that started in India's second largest red light district in 2007, offered fuss-free banking services to sex workers, collecting cash deposits from their doorsteps and even welcoming homeless girls to open savings accounts. The western state of Maharashtra, India's second most populous state with Mumbai as its capital, has for years been a major destination of trafficking victims who are lured with the promise of jobs but sold into sex slavery or domestic servitude. Campaigners say girls enslaved in sex work lead impoverished lives, often with no access to the money they make for the first few years, so it was a welcome move when the bank opened.

Funding woes

"When we started, we were afraid if brothel madams and pimps will allow it to function. So we aimed at opening 100 accounts in the first year," said Shilpa Merchant, former national coordinator of the US-based non-profit Population Services International (PSI) that initially funded the project. "But we opened more than 100 accounts on the bank's opening day itself." Sex workers soon volunteered with the bank to become collection agents, visiting brothels to collect money and handing over receipts. The number of accounts had increased to 5,000 when the bank closed. "Some sex workers could get their children married, some left the profession and started a shop. We documented all this. The bank was giving them alternative options of livelihood," said Merchant.—Reuters



NEW DELHI: Indian school girls take part in a self-defense camp at a police training school in New Delhi. —AFP

India's 'moonwalking' traffic cop turns heads

INDORE: He is inspired by Bollywood and has a Freddie Mercury-style moustache-but it is the Michael Jackson dance moves of traffic cop Ranjeet Singh that grab attention on India's chaotic streets. Heads turn and drivers cannot fail to notice when the 38-year-old moonwalks across busy intersections, avoiding rickshaws and trucks in the centre of Indore, a city of two million people.

"I have been a Michael Jackson fan for years and copied his moonwalk step to halt traffic 12 years ago," Singh said. "Initially, people were surprised, but it worked wonders over the years and has gained popularity." "It's a tiring task maintaining traffic amid noise pollution and reckless motorists but moonwalking amuses commuters and drivers," Singh added, after another tiring day seemingly gliding backwards across the street.

Singh has become a social media phenomenon with nearly 50,000 people following his activities on Facebook while spectators add videos to sharing platforms every day. Singh claims the number of traffic violations at the high court intersection where he spends most days has fallen over the years. An Indian university is studying his methods to see whether he has cut traffic jams too. India's city streets are notorious the world over for gridlock. Drivers,



INDORE: Indian traffic policeman Ranjeet Singh directs traffic while 'moonwalking' at an intersection in Indore. — AFP

ers, already battling crater-pocked roads and faulty traffic signals, often take out their anger on police trying to keep cars moving and pedestrians safe.

Singh said some of India's younger drivers have paid for their recklessness with their lives. "I have picked up the bodies of over 40 youngsters after accidents over the years and I feel terrible," he said.—AFP

International

Fujimori's pardon: Another blow to tackling impunity in Latin America?

Is frail health a get-out-of-jail card for dictators?

MONTEVIDEO: Is frail health a get-out-of-jail card for Latin America's imprisoned dictators and autocrats? Rights groups fear that the pardon granted to Peru's former president Alberto Fujimori is just the latest blow to combating impunity for ex-leaders guilty of crimes. They point to a series of scenes—Fujimori in a hospital bed, late former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in a wheelchair, former Guatemalan president Efraín Ríos Montt immune from sentencing because of alleged dementia—to underline their argument. In Fujimori's case, a presidential pardon that freed him of a 25-year sentence for brutal human rights abuses triggered protests by thousands of angry Peruvians. It also drew sharp criticism from the representative in Latin America of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amerigo Incalcaterra, who called for any situation "that could lead to impunity" to be avoided. Fujimori, said to be ailing from high blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat at age 79, admitted to having "let down" Peru's citizens and asked them "to forgive me with all my heart." It was an oblique reference to crimes he was convicted of, which included the murder of 25 people by death squads he commanded during his 1990–2000 rule. He made the comments in a video from a hospital bed, where he looked visibly weakened and surrounded by medical equipment.

Age as 'mitigating' factor

Seventeen years earlier, General Pinochet, 84 and retired, arrived in a wheelchair at the airport serving Chile's capital. He had just been freed on health grounds after being detained 503 days in

London. But, as soon as he descended from the plane, he got up and walked away, accompanied by his family. Opponents called it a deliberate provocation. "Age is a factor that works as a mitigating circumstance," said Lissell Quiroz-Perez, a specialist in Latin America at Rouen University in France. "These are old men," she said, and "they played it that way too: Fujimori is always seen in bed, Pinochet was the same, he always appeared very weak. That created a feeling of compassion in the population."

In Guatemala, Ríos Montt, a former dictator today aged 91, is waiting to hear the verdict from his closed-door retrial started in October for a massacre by his security forces of 1,770 indigenous people who were accused of supporting leftwing guerrillas during his 1982–1983 reign. But even if convicted, he will not go to prison. The court has been persuaded his mental state has deteriorated too far to countenance such punishment. "He has very few moments of lucidity," his former lawyer Jaime Hernandez stated in October.

'Less impunity' than before

"From a certain point of view, it's regrettable that those who violated human rights... might be protected by those same rights," said Patricio Navia, a Chilean sociologist and academic advisor for the CADAL Center for Openness and Development in Latin America. "But such is democracy." Navia rejected the term "impunity" for Fujimori, who had already spent 12 years in detention. "Fujimori's case harks back to the past, but in a way that happens in a context of greater



MONTEVIDEO: Combo photo shows (left to right) Peruvian former president Alberto Fujimori in Lima; late Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Guatemalan former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Peruvian Fujimori in his hospital bed, Chilean Pinochet in a wheelchair, Guatemalan Ríos Montt and his mental disturbances: despite the crimes committed under his orders, these Latin American leaders of fragile health have benefited from a clemency that is denounced as impunity by human rights' defenders. — AFP

justice against those who violate human rights in Latin America," he said. "There is a lot less impunity than before," he said. "Thirty years ago, no ex-president in Latin America would have gone to prison."

Now, several are behind bars, notably Otto Pérez in Guatemala, pending trial for corruption; and Ollanta Humala in Peru, also on charges of

graft. Gaspard Estrada, director of the OPALC Political Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean at Paris's Sciences Po institute, took a more nuanced view. "Sure, Fujimori was convicted, and he served part of his sentence. But if we want to see impunity reduced and the rule of law progress, creating some exceptions can open the door to other exceptions," he said.—AFP

Can agriculture and the climate fix their 'unhappy marriage'

ROME: After Rene Castro-Salazar attended the first UN-led climate talks in Berlin in 1985 as Costa Rica's environment and energy minister, he tried to talk about agriculture and climate change - but few wanted to join the conversation. "There was always opposition - and we couldn't understand why," said Castro, now assistant director-general at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). To him, the need to tackle the topic was clear.

Agriculture, forestry and other land uses together account for nearly a quarter of the greenhouse gas emissions heating up the planet, according to the FAO. Cutting these is essential if the world is to keep global temperature rise to a manageable level, said Castro. Farms and forests can also store large amounts of carbon, and simple actions by all countries could result in immediate environmental benefits, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In the early years, the climate negotiations focused on reducing emissions from the energy sector - the largest emitter - while the relationship

between agriculture and climate change was not fully understood.

Later on, poor states feared discussing the linkage would result in obligations for them to curb emissions from farming. Rich nations worried they would have to pay for poor farmers to adapt to a changing climate. At November's climate talks in Bonn, the stalemate was finally broken, with nations agreeing to move forward on issues related to agriculture and climate change. "There is now clearly the political will to see this resolved," said Margarita Astralaga, director of environment and climate at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Many hope it will lead to the development of farming systems that are more resilient to weather extremes and can feed a growing population whose diets are shifting to more meat and dairy, without corresponding increases in emissions. Andy Jarvis, research director at the Colombia-based International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), describes the relationship between climate and agriculture as an "unhappy marriage".

"(They) are absolutely intertwined and completely connected to each other but actually pretty antagonistic," he said, pointing to how crops are battered by climate extremes while farming emissions exacerbate global warming.

Scientists have warned that world temperatures are likely to rise by 2 to 4.9 degrees Celsius this century compared with pre-industrial times. —Reuters

Cops ruffle feathers by eating 92 fighting cocks

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian police ruffled feathers yesterday after they killed and ate - 92 roosters that were seized earlier this month during a raid on an illegal cockfighting ring allegedly run by a relative of premier Hun Sen. The birds were rounded up by police after they shuttered the two rural cockfighting dens on December 4 and arrested Hun Sen's nephew-in-law Thai Phany. Thai Phany, a Cambodian-Australian citizen, was charged with running an illegal gambling operation—a rare legal move against a member of Hun Sen's powerful family.

But while the raids were welcomed in a country teeming with official corruption, a court order to slaughter all 92

birds set off a flurry of criticism Thursday as netizens cried foul over the animals being given a harsher sentence than the people involved. Scores of people were initially detained in the police raid, but most have since been released after receiving light suspended sentences, according to local media. "Warrant to kill chickens! Where are the chicken owners, aren't they freed?" Hing Soksan wrote on Facebook, where photos of the slaughter have been circulating.

"The court's achievement by the end of 2017: death sentence for 92 fighting cocks," another Facebook user quipped about a justice system many decry as toothless against the graft underpinning Hun Sen's authoritarian regime. Roen Nara, Kandal province's deputy police chief, confirmed that the birds were killed on Wednesday following a warrant from the provincial court. "We gave the chickens to our forces to eat," he told AFP, brushing off the online criticism. The court document, seen by AFP on Thursday, said the slaughter was ordered "to prevent the offense from happening again and to speed up the investigation proceedings."—AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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A man dressed as Santa Claus with Superman t-shirt takes part in the traditional New Year's Santa Claus race in Sd ckopje. — AFP

**Jordanian graffiti artists
brighten Amman's drab streets**

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Ethiopian pop star **Teddy Afro** delights fans, irks authorities

He may be Ethiopia's biggest pop star but Teddy Afro hasn't held a concert in his country for years, some of his songs have been effectively banned, and the launch party for his last album was broken up by the police. But sitting in the living room of his spacious house outside the capital, Addis Ababa, the 41-year-old musician is relaxed and says he is focused on promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia. "As a child, I remember that we lived as one nation. We knew a nation that is called Ethiopia," Teddy said. "But nowadays, we are identified and called by our ethnic background. And this has already become dangerous."

Ethiopia has been rocked by widespread anti-government protests over the last two years, killing hundreds and leading to a 10-month state of emergency that was only lifted in August. In this context, Teddy's latest album, "Ethiopia", was released in May and shot to the top of Billboard's world music chart—despite his songs not being played on state radio and TV. His lyrics and music videos have often been controversial, and viewed by many as critical of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a formerly Marxist guerrilla movement that has ruled the country since 1991. While fans adore Teddy's catchy melodies and nationalistic, often historical songs, written mostly in the national language Amharic, the authorities—who brook no opposition—view him with suspicion.

Protest anthem

Teddy—real name Tewodros Kassahun—first crossed the authorities in 2005 when his album "Yasteseryal" came out days before an election that descended into violence after the opposition denounced it as rigged. That album was a homage to the country's final emperor from 1930 to 1974, Haile Selassie I, and its lead single "Jah Yasteseryal", questioning whether the government was improving the country, became a protest anthem. In 2008, the musician was jailed for more than a year over an alleged hit-and-run killing in a case that many fans believe was politically motivated. He has always protested his innocence, saying he was not even in the country at the time of the accident.

While Teddy's songs can today be heard blasting from bars and buses across Addis Ababa, Ethiopians still fear playing "Jah

Yasteseryal" in public, lest they be seen as agitating against the government.

In 2012, Teddy released "Tikur Sew", an album that took as its theme Emperor Menelik II, whose victory over 19th century Italian colonial invaders is a defining moment in Ethiopian history. Yet among the country's largest ethnic group the Oromos, "Tikur Sew" was seen as an affront because it glorified an emperor who brutally absorbed Oromo territory into Ethiopia's borders.

The backlash was fierce enough that Heineken—whose beers are popular among Oromos—backed out of a deal to sponsor Teddy's concerts. But Teddy says he is unbowed. "There may be groups that have a negative attitude towards the last Ethiopian kings and history," he said, sitting with a sword belonging to Menelik mounted on a wall nearby. "While respecting their views as a perspective, the fact that they like or dislike my views will not change the truth."

“What we need is the spirit of love, peace and forgiveness”

Break-ups and bans

Ironically, it was the EPRDF's takeover of the country that allowed Teddy's music to flourish, as it ended the brutal communist dictatorship of the Derg, during which nightlife was suppressed. While some musicians went on to reimagine traditional styles of jazz or dabble in rock, Teddy distinguished himself by making nationalism a centerpiece of his compositions. When a rumor spread early in his career that he committed the taboo deed of autographing the breasts of female fans, Teddy batted down the allegation by saying that as an Ethiopian he could never do such a thing, a remark that won him admirers across the country.

His songs have urged harmony between Muslims and Christians and lampooned members of the diaspora who return home with nothing to show. "He's preaching what he's living. We like that, Ethiopians like that," said Eyuel Solomon, program manager for the capital's Afro FM radio station. But the authorities remain firmly opposed to helping Teddy showcase his music. Not only did police halt his launch party for "Ethiopia", but a planned concert to celebrate the Ethiopian new year was refused permission and he is still waiting for approval to play a concert marking Ethiopia's Christmas, in early January.



Photos show Ethiopian singer Teddy Afro reacts during an interview for AFP at his home in Legetafo, a suburb of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. — AFP

He insists the restrictions and setbacks do not damage his resolve to use his music as a force for good in Ethiopia. However, his plans to spread his music more widely are likely to anger the government even more. Teddy says he hopes to perform in the capital of Eritrea, a one-time territory of Ethiopia that is now a bitter foe, believing a performance in Asmara could improve relations between the two countries. "What we need is the spirit of love, peace and forgiveness. This is because the current problems are the results of historical resentments," he said. "We have to shake them off. We have to leave it behind." — AFP

SHAKIRA CANCELS TOUR, HOPES FOR JUNE RETURN

Colombian pop star Shakira on Wednesday cancelled the remainder of her world tour because of a problem with her vocal chords and said she hoped to be back on stage in June of next year. "Though I very much hoped to be able to recover my vocal chords in time to pick the tour back up in January, and after exploring many options to that effect, I have accepted that this is an injury that simply needs more time and care to heal," Shakira said in a statement on her website. The "Hips Don't Lie" star cancelled the European leg of her "El Dorado World Tour" in November.

She said she hoped to resume the tour in June 2018 with concerts in Europe, the United States and Latin America. It's currently due to conclude September 6 in San Jose, California. "I feel for all of you who planned ahead to come to these shows and who have been so patient as I took the time needed to figure out the best course of action with my doctors," Shakira said. "I really can't wait for June!" she added. "I promise to give you all of me and more from the minute I get on that stage and I am counting the days till showtime!" — AFP



This file photo shows Singer/actress Shakira attending the Disney Premiere of Zootopia in Hollywood, California. — AFP

After 8 years Norma Chic is back with a new look

It features a number of qualified bridal hair specialists and makeup artists

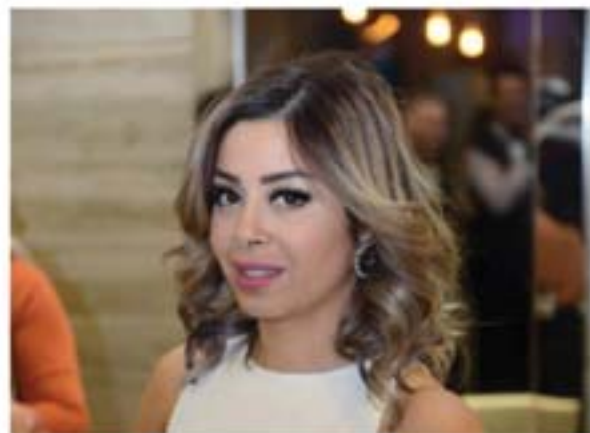


The renowned beauty expert, Norma, announced today the re-opening of the renovated Norma Chic Hair and Beauty Lounge after eight years closure, under the supervision of her daughter Zeina Awada, owner of the beauty lounge in Salmiya. The opening took place in the presence of social figures, media delegates and bloggers, as well as fashionistas who enjoyed the magnificent atmosphere, delightful music and the finest services.

Zeina has long experience in the cosmetics field as she learnt the techniques from her mother, Norma, who is an artist pro in bridal make-up for more than 43 years. Through the hair and beauty lounge, Zeina will be deploying her expertise in the field of cosmetics along with other services, such as hair care and cut, makeup, nails and body care that are

provided by experts.

Commenting on the lounge opening, Zeina Awada said: «We are pleased to offer you the renovated Norma Chic », which is fully equipped with the latest equipment to excel in the care and beauty field, and provide the best services to satisfy our clients. The lounge is also suitably decorated to offer a luxurious experience for all women who are looking to get the perfect look. We have also a specialized center to provide the latest solutions to all hair problems such as hair curling, damage, dryness and brittleness. As well as treatments to dandruff, greasy hair and weak hair roots using the latest technologies and international products. We provide our services by a team of hair specialists and makeup artists who were trained in London and Dubai by the expert Patrick Cameron®





A graffiti mural on a wall in the Jordanian capital Amman. — AFP photos

JORDANIAN GRAFFITI ARTISTS BRIGHTEN AMMAN'S DRAB STREETS

Dreadlocked university student Suhaib Attar clutches a can of spray paint as he sets to work on the latest gloomy corner of Jordan's capital that he has turned into his canvas. The leading light of a tiny group of graffiti artists, the 25-year-old is on a mission—daubing flowers, faces and patterns across Amman to bring more color to the lives of its four million inhabitants. “Our city is beautiful but it needs to be brightened up,” Attar tells AFP. The aim is to “transform these great big walls of dull concrete into an expressive painting that is full of life,” he says.

Built on seven hills that give their names to the main districts, Amman has been home to a small graffiti community for some years. And while they may number fewer than 10, the artists have been busy. Their eye-catching designs have begun popping up around the city center—especially the oldest Jabal Amman and Jabal Al-Lweibdeh neighborhoods where lots of foreigners live.



Suhaib Attar, a 25-year-old graffiti artist and student, picks up a canister of spray paint as he draws a mural on a wall in the Jordanian capital Amman.



A graffiti artist drawing a mural in the Jordanian capital Amman.

Struggle for permission

In a conservative society like Jordan's the graffiti artists have constantly had to challenge convention to carve out a niche for their works. But the art still faces limits like other forms of expression—and Attar says he steers away from politics and religion. "I avoid topics that may shock some people who do not understand this art yet," the street artist explains. Art student Suha Sultan has experienced first hand the suspicion-and hostility—that sometimes meets her work. "I was doing a large portrait of a tribal man and passers-by started questioning me, lecturing to me because I was up a ladder among a group of men," she recounts.

"They interrogated me about the meaning of my graffiti." Sultan says that as she walks around Amman she itches to use her skills to revitalize the many soulless expanses of wall she sees. "But it isn't so simple as to do the graffiti we need to get prior permission from the municipal authorities or the owner of the building," she explains. "Most of the time we end up getting refused and sometimes we face rejection by members of society."



Suha Sultan, a 20-year-old graffiti artist and student, uses a brush to draw a mural on a wall.



A graffiti mural on a wall in the Jordanian capital Amman.

“
Our city is beautiful
but it needs to be
brightened up
”

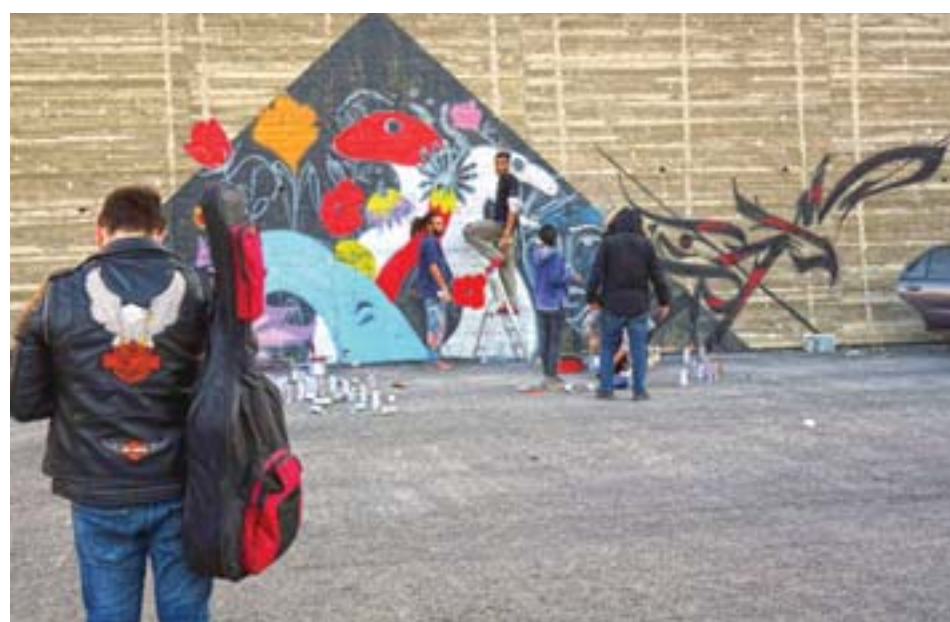
'Red lines'

Painter Wissam Shadid, 42, agrees that there are "red lines" that cannot be crossed in a society steeped in tradition where artistic creation can be curbed. "We paint nature, animals, portraits, but we don't touch at all subject connected to morality," the street artist says. But even that makes for an impressive change around the Jordanian capital.

"Before there were only the names of football clubs, phone numbers or messages from young guys to their friends scrawled on walls," Shadid says. "Now we are trying to make our art more popular." And as graffiti makes inroads in Jordan it is increasingly drawing admiration from some locals and visitors. "It adds color to the city as buildings here can all look alike," says Phoebe Carter, an American studying Arabic in the kingdom. Jordanian Karim Saqr, 22, agrees that the works bring a much-needed splash of excitement. "When I spend the morning near a wall with beautiful graffiti, it fills me with positive energy for the rest of the day." — AFP



Children skateboarding next to graffiti murals in the Jordanian capital Amman.

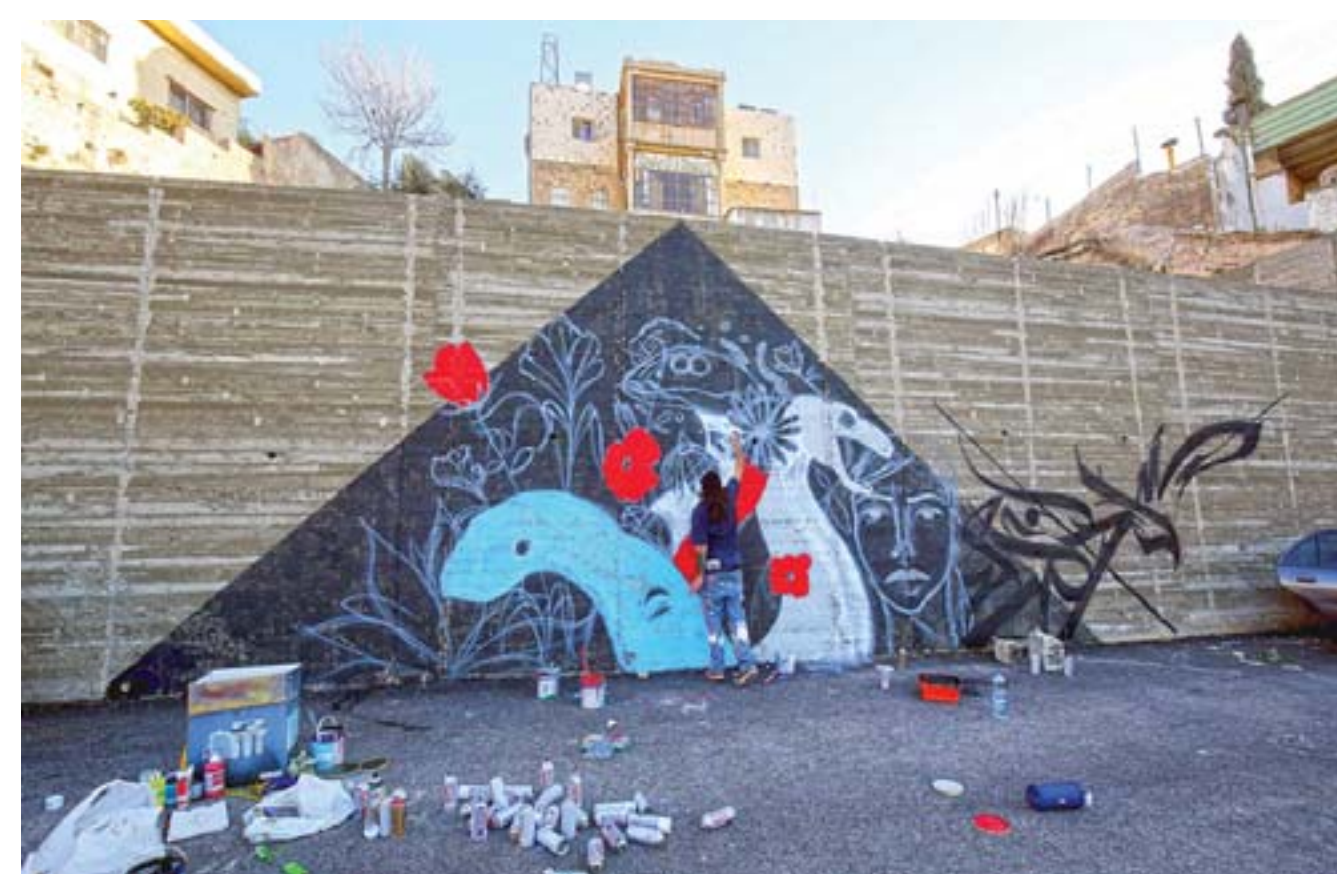


Grffiti artists drawing a mural in the Jordanian capital Amman.

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A graffiti mural on a wall in the Jordanian capital Amman.



Suhaib Attar, a 25-year-old graffiti artist and student, picks up a canister of spray paint as he draws a mural on a wall.

Tibetan film-maker flees China, arrives in United States

A Tibetan film-maker jailed in China for making a film about the Olympics and Tibet has arrived in the United States after escaping from China, an activist group that campaigned for his release said. Dhondup Wangchen was jailed for six years in late 2009 in the western province of Qinghai after he made a documentary in which ordinary Tibetans praised the Dalai Lama and complained about how their culture had been trampled upon. The film, "Leaving Fear Behind", features a series of interviews with Tibetans who talk about how they still love their exiled spiritual leader and thought the 2008 Beijing Olympics would do little to improve their lives.

The film was shown in secret to a small group of foreign reporters in Beijing during the Olympics. In a statement late on Wednesday in Beijing, the group Filming for Tibet said Dhondup Wangchen had arrived in San Francisco that day. "After many years, this is the first time I'm enjoying the feeling of safety and freedom," the group quoted him as saying. "I would like to thank everyone who made it possible for me to hold my wife and children in my arms again. However, I also feel the pain of having left behind my country, Tibet."



Tibetan film-maker Dhondup Wangchen.

Dhondup Wangchen had been released from prison in June 2014 in the Qinghai provincial capital of Xining but remained under tight surveillance with his movements and communications monitored, the group said. "Dhondup Wangchen was able to successfully evade the authorities and flee from his home area in Tibet and then the People's Republic of China altogether," it added, without giving details. Asked about the case, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing that she was not aware of it. The Xining police declined to comment and the Qinghai provincial government did not answer telephone calls.

Qinghai, which borders the Tibet Autonomous Region, is home to a large ethnic Tibetan population and is considered by many Tibetans as part of greater Tibet. It is also the birthplace of exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. Chinese forces entered Buddhist Tibet in 1950 in what the government terms a peaceful liberation, and says its rule has brought prosperity and freedom to what was a backward and feudal society, including freeing a million people from serfdom. China routinely rejects accusations from exiles and rights groups of repression and human rights abuses in the region. There have been sporadic protests against Chinese rule in Tibetan parts of China for the past few years, most seriously in 2008 ahead of the Beijing Olympics. — Reuters

Bono says music is very girly now



Bono thinks music has "gotten very girly". The 57-year-old U2 frontman - whose real name is Paul David Hewson - has had a career spanning almost 41 years with the band and although coming from a rock background, Bono believes men can now only express "anger" through hip-hop. In an interview with Rolling Stone magazine, Bono said: "I think music has gotten very girly. And there are some good things about that, but hip-hop is the only place for young male anger at the moment - and that's not good."

"When I was 16, I had a lot of anger in me. You need to find a place for it and for guitars, whether it is with a drum machine - I don't care. "The moment something becomes preserved, it is over. You might as well put it in formaldehyde. "In the end, what is rock & roll? Rage is at the heart of it. Some great rock & roll tends to have that, which is why the Who were such a great band. Or Pearl Jam. Eddie has that rage." U2 have just dropped their latest album, 'Songs of Experience'. But despite his years of experience, Bono still finds songwriting to be very "demanding". He said: "I gave myself to the singing in new ways, but there wasn't a lot of going out and discovering the places we were playing, the cities that we were playing, which I really love to do. "Stepping inside the songs was more of an ordeal than I thought it would be. They are very demanding in terms of their emotional - what word am I looking for?...?forthrightness. "And then we were preparing for 'Songs of Experience'. All that promotion takes a lot more work than I remember, but if you believe in the songs, you have to defend and present them." — Bang Showbiz

Gigi Hadid doesn't care for skin

Gigi Hadid is "very bad" at looking after her skin. The 22-year-old model shuns traditional beauty rules such as taking off her make-up before she goes to bed, but her make-up artist, Erin Parsons, thinks her client is lucky as it doesn't really matter because she has a "naturally beautiful" complexion. Erin said: "She's very bad at looking after her skin and sometimes sleeps in her make-up. "If you fall asleep in your make-up, using an exfoliant and eye masks can remedy the effects. "But Gigi has naturally beautiful skin. It always looks fresh and buttery." When she isn't working, Gigi - who is dating Zayn Malik - favours a more natural make-up look and admitted she feels "intimidated" by the flawless faces she sees on Instagram.

She said: "I think I've always been intimidated by Instagram generation make-up. "I love it on other girls, but I don't have their make-up skills. And on my days off, I don't want to apply a full face of make-up - that's what I do for my job." But even on a down day, the blonde beauty will always be wearing her beloved nude lipstick. She said in a recent interview: "Everyone has their thing they do before they leave the house - a nude lip is mine. It makes me feel put together, instantly. "On a normal Saturday, when I don't want to wear much make-up, I will do a nude lip and an eye contour they're what I call my bits." Gigi met Erin on a Pirelli calendar shoot when she was just 16 and they always enjoy working together. Erin recalled: "She was a kid back then and had this baby face. "I hadn't heard of her before but when I did her make-up, her face completely transformed. "We started working together on more shoots and just clicked. "We have fun because we're such good friends." — Bang Showbiz



Gigi Hadid



Shrimp paired with pineapple brings elegance and sweetness

By Melissa D'arabian

After all the cooking and shopping that the holidays inspire us to do, I'm looking forward to pulling out some easy recipes that use pantry ingredients that I keep on hand. One of my favorite items to keep in the freezer is frozen shrimp. I keep both cooked and uncooked versions. Raw shrimp cook up in minutes and have more flavor, so I use them for pasta dishes and easy sheet-pan suppers. But cooked shrimp have their place on my menu, too. I love how quickly they thaw for salads and appetizers and other cold preparations.

The downside to pre-cooked shrimp is the texture is a notch softer. My solution is to buy the large shrimp and then cut it in half. I know

this may be counter-shrimp culture, so feel free to leave them large, but the solution works for us. A super easy go-to recipe for shrimp for us is my Shrimp Pineapple Brochette, which uses easy pantry ingredients - you can even use canned pineapple - to create something that still feels high-end.

It's healthy and versatile, working as either a meal when paired with some greens, a first course, or even an appetizer for parties. Shrimp brings protein and elegance, while pineapple balances out with both sweetness and acid. I use prepared pesto for some fat and flavor, and I highly recommend keeping a jar of prepared pesto in the freezer to scoop out for recipes. But, if you don't have any, just substitute a bunch of chopped herbs, olive oil and lemon juice for an

easy, tasty version. And with skewers, I think it goes without saying that you can swap in whatever fruit you have in your kitchen - grapes, grapefruit, orange segments and even canned mango all work beautifully.

Ingredients:

1 pound large cooked shrimp, cleaned, thawed if frozen
 1 cup pineapple cubes, about 1/2-inch each, drained and halved if using typical large canned chunks (grapefruit or orange may be used)
 1 tablespoon prepared pesto sauce
 1 tablespoon lemon or lime juice
 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
 Black pepper
 A pinch (1/8 teaspoon) kosher salt

chopped fresh mint, parsley or basil, optional
 12 small or 8 large skewers, or 24 toothpicks if making appetizer bites

Preparation

Cut shrimp into halves or thirds, depending on size of shrimp. Thread the skewers with alternating shrimp and fruit. Lay the skewers on a platter.

In a small bowl, add the lemon juice to the pesto sauce to thin it and stir. Drizzle the pesto mixture over the skewers, aiming mostly for the shrimp. Drizzle a few drops of olive oil onto the skewers. Top with freshly ground black pepper, the kosher salt and chopped herbs, if desired. Serve as a first course, an appetizer, or with a green salad for a light meal.

Korean Grain Bowl

is built on healthy, filling ingredients



By Sara Moulton

Every New Year, lots of us resolve to lose weight. And every year, lots of us fail. The problem? We go from eating too much food, much of it unhealthy, to eating very little of anything. But after starving ourselves for a while, many of us return to our old habits and regain the weight.

This recipe for a Korean Grain Bowl is built on healthy, filling ingredients - whole grains and vegetable protein - and some good fat. It's a middle ground between empty calories and self-starvation. In Korea, this traditional rice dish is called bibimbap. Usually it consists of white rice topped with meat, vegetables, a raw or cooked egg, a soy-based sauce and some chili paste - all of it tossed together right before eating. My version swaps in a few healthier ingredients and increases the amount of veggies.

Instead of white rice, use your favorite whole grain, such as brown rice, wheat berries or quinoa. Instead of meat, use tofu, a protein-rich bean curd that can be prepared to feature a satisfyingly "meaty" texture. Start with firm tofu, cut it into planks 1/3-inch thick, and weigh it down between paper towels for 20 minutes to remove excess moisture.

Miso sesame sauce, an all-purpose sauce for

many items like sautéed fish and raw vegetables, makes this dish even more substantial. I encourage you to prepare your own, but if you don't have time, just drizzle your bowl with low-sodium soy sauce.

The vegetables specified here - carrots, shiitakes and spinach - could be replaced with vegetables of your choice. Just be sure to pick from different-colored vegetable groups, which will deliver both nutritional and visual benefits. But whatever else you might swap out or lose, don't abandon the lightly fried egg. Breaking the yolk and tossing it with the other ingredients adds a creamy coating to the grains. It's the perfect finishing touch.

Ingredients

For the miso sesame sauce:
 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
 2 tablespoons white or red miso
 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
 1 1/2 tablespoons well-stirred tahini
 1 teaspoon sugar
 For the grain bowl:
 1 cup brown rice, wheat berries or whole grain of your choice (you'll need 3 cups cooked)
 8 ounces firm tofu
 1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 cups coarsely grated carrots
 Kosher salt
 Black pepper
 4 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded and caps cut into 1-inch pieces
 5 ounces baby spinach
 4 large eggs
 1/2 cup thinly sliced scallions
 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
 Korean chili sauce (Gochujang), Sriracha or the hot sauce of your choice
 Kimchi for garnish (optional)

Preparation:

Make the sauce: In a blender combine all of the ingredients with 1 tablespoon water and blend until smooth. Set aside.

Prepare the grain bowl: Cook the rice, wheat berries or whole grain of your choice such as quinoa following the package directions (you should have about 3 cups); keep warm. Slice the tofu into planks 1/3-inch thick.

Place the planks between paper towels on a plate, top the plate with another plate and a weight, such as several cans of tomatoes, and set aside for 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. In a large nonstick skillet heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, season them with

salt and pepper to taste, and cook, stirring, until they are crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Transfer them to a rimmed baking sheet.

Add another 1 1/2 tablespoons oil to the skillet. Add the mushrooms and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, just until tender, about 4 minutes. Add the spinach and another pinch of salt to the mushrooms and cook, stirring, just until wilted, about 3 minutes. Transfer the mixture to the baking sheet with the carrots.

Cut the tofu planks in half and pat the pieces dry. Heat another 1/2 tablespoon of oil in the skillet over medium-high heat; add the tofu. Cook until golden brown, about 3 minutes a side. Transfer the tofu to the baking sheet and put the baking sheet of ingredients in the oven to keep warm while you fry the eggs.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in the skillet over medium heat, add the eggs and fry until cooked to the desired degree of doneness.

To serve, mound 3/4 cup of hot grain into the center of each of 4 shallow bowls.

Arrange one-fourth of the tofu on top along with one egg and one-fourth of the carrots and the spinach mixture. Sprinkle the scallions and sesame seeds over the top and drizzle with the miso sesame sauce and hot sauce. Serve with the kimchi on the side.

Kids

Groundhog Day Word Search

L K Y E N W A T U S X N U P W E V E
 P J P N F O Y R A U R B B F T Q I L
 G X F L W D K W Y D U O L C S T W A
 H R O C I A Y O B M U M W P A T J M
 P Z O M R H D I O L P M W E C B P M
 G L U U P S U G S P R I N G E W V A
 D O E J N U Q T R E S G L Y R K L M
 A W D U N D E R G R O U N D O S S S
 Y A D I L O H E M E R G B E F T B S
 S Y A D Q L L O P R E D I C T I O N
 I S S F V Y K H G K C V W O R R U B
 X B E A W I Z M R O D E N T X D N P
 T E T A N R E B I H A R E T N I W L
 E B P W E B U B I F W E A T H E R I
 J S P E N N S Y L V A N I A M J V H
 S E H L G O E Y E O Y Z F R T S Y P
 X K B I T J R Y V X H J P X C Y G U
 L K S I H K O P O B Q E X Z Z O H C

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------|
| burrow | hibernate | shadow |
| cloudy | hole | sign |
| cold | holiday | six weeks |
| day | mammal | spring |
| emerge | Pennsylvania | underground |
| February | prediction | weather |
| forecast | Punxsutawney Phil | winter |
| groundhog | rodent | |



Disney FROZEN

CAN YOU HELP SVEN FIND OLAF?



Did you know?

Winter is one of the four seasons. The four seasons include Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Winter begins on the Winter Solstice. In the Northern Hemisphere (live above the equator) this happens in December around the 21st. In you live in the Southern Hemisphere (live below the equator) this happens in June. The Winter Solstice marks the shortest day of the year. Not the shortest hours, but the shortest hours of daylight. The Earth orbits around the Sun. It takes

365 days for the Earth to make its trip around the sun. While the Earth is orbiting the Sun it is tilted on its axis. During the Winter the Earth is tilted away from the sun. Because the Earth is titled away from the Sun, The rays from the sun to have to travel further through the atmosphere before it reaches the Earth's surface. Since it takes longer, the hours of daylight are shorter and the temperature is colder.



Jokes

CHICKEN PARM-ASAURUS

Recipe



Ingredients:
 2 12 oz. boxes frozen dino chicken nuggets
 1 c. marinara or pizza sauce
 kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper
 2 c. shredded mozzarella
 Chopped fresh basil or parsley, for garnish

Directions:
 Preheat oven to 400°. In a large baking dish, layer frozen chicken nuggets. Spoon over marinara and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle all over with mozzarella. Bake until cooked through, 30 minutes. Garnish with basil and serve.

Sudoku

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

Solution

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

Color Me



Lifestyle | Book

Middle East, Middle Class: Pain and Privilege in Hala Alyan's 'Salt Houses'

By Ilana Masad

Back in 2014, author Taiye Selasi helped organize a panel at McNally Jackson, an independent bookstore in New York City. Part of Selasi's discussion had to do with her novel *Ghana Must Go*, which is about a family that occupies several spaces over the course of time: Ghana, Nigeria, and the United States. Selasi spoke at this panel about the importance of portraying African nations as something more than poverty stricken, war torn, or corruption filled. She wanted to show the kind of family she grew up in: Ghanaian, Nigerian, American, and middle class.

Just as not all of North America could possibly be portrayed in Hollywood films, neither could all of Africa - a huge continent whose countries we tend to ignorantly lump together, or perceive to be accurately represented by Amnesty International posters and brochures. Debut novelist Hala Alyan is doing something similar in *Salt Houses*, which, in brief, is about the displacement of a Palestinian family and the places they move as successive generations are born and flourish.

But just as Selasi avoided the cliché too d and oversimplified images of her nations, so does Alyan avoid the ideas people may have when thinking of displacement - especially during a time when we're aware of multiple refugee crises. But this is not a novel of refugees, of tent cities or starvation. Instead, it is a novel that examines the middle class and the very real pain that the loss of home has even on the privileged.

The first chapter opens with the point of view of Salma, the matriarch of the Palestinian family that Alyan follows throughout the book. The year is 1963, and the family is in Nablus, Palestine, having fled years earlier from Jaffa, which has become part of the then still-new Israel. Salma's eldest daughter, Widad, was most affected by the move but suffered silently:

She walked around their new house in Nablus wanly, sat through meals without speaking. She never mentioned Jaffa, and when her father, already ailing, told her it was time to marry, she didn't protest. Only with Salma did she cry, tears falling as she sat in the garden, her body hunched over the steam from her teacup.

Salma is also grieving, dearly missing the orange groves on her family's land in Jaffa, holding all the pain of the homesick. Still she does the best she can in Nablus, caring for her children after her husband's death. In these opening pages, Salma moves between those painful memories and her current joy - her youngest daughter Alia's marriage to Atef, best friend of Salma's middle child, Mustafa.

The novel is of saga-length structure though it is only a little over 300 pages. Each chapter shifts perspective, sticking close to the character, and with every new chapter, years pass in the life of the family. The second chapter, for example, is set in 1965 from the viewpoint of son Mustafa, while the third moves to 1967 and to daughter Alia, who is living in Kuwait City. The next jumps 10 years to 1977.

What Alyan makes clear is that her characters are firmly in the upper middle class - money is not going to be an issue for any of them. Like Selasi, she uses a situation that audiences are vaguely familiar with - in this case, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict - as the jumping off point for her characters' lives. But these are not the refugees or working poor that we often imagine when we think of the uprooted; these are people who may have left land behind but whose bank accounts are not depleted. This makes a great difference in the way her story can move forward as well as which parts of the tale she chooses to tell.

In Mustafa's chapter - some characters have more than one of their own, but this is his only - we see a man who looks like he is being radicalized. Alyan draws on our common idea of what such young men look like and uses our contemporary perceptions to great effect. We see his enjoyment of his time at the mosque, his practicing of the speech he has been asked to perform, and the ways in which he and Atef become heated, discussing the politics of their displacement; all the while, Mustafa is enjoying his life.

He has a simple job and lives in the big house his mother left him when she moved to Amman to be with her extended family. "Brothers," he says aloud. "We must recognize the battle ahead." Mustafa's words may sound fiery but unlike the common Western fear revolving around the image of men shouting praise to god while committing acts of violence, Mustafa is a lover of community, of his fellows. His faith is, in this way, apparently flawed:

Mustafa has a slight belief in Allah, an avowal that he recognizes in more honest moments as tactical. If there is ever a sweeping of believers into one room and the rest into the other, he doesn't want to be on the wrong side of the door. But he loves the mosque for its dusty smell, for the carpet prickling his feet, for the predictable hum of the muezzin more than anything celestial. The mosque is for Mustafa another home.

The decision to portray Mustafa and his possible turn to violence is clearly a calculated one, meant to humanize the true nature of young, single, Muslim men. They are just people like any other, full of the range of human emotion, from vim and vigor to pettiness to kindness to love. Mustafa's big weakness, we see, is a working-class woman named Aya, whom he keeps secret from his family. Only his best friend and brother-in-law Atef knows about her, and asks Mustafa why he won't marry her, which for Mustafa brings up only his "mother's horrified expression at her son marrying beneath him; Alia's perplexity at his choice."



He knows that "[t]he aunts and neighbors would talk for years. Even the men at the mosque, most of them educated and well off, would be taken aback; for all their talk of solidarity with the poor, they are repelled by them." Here again, Alyan is showing us the mosque as a place of privilege and education, along with the ignorance and blind spots that often come with this. Later in the book, after Nablus has been conquered and folded into Israel, we're taken to Kuwait City, where Alia and Atef now live in mourning for Mustafa.

Atef writes letters to his dead friend while Alia suffers in the unbearable heat of a city she hates and wishes she could leave. Over time, they have three children, two girls and a boy, and as the offspring grow up we see the generational differences as well as the way the trauma of being forced to leave a place lingers. In Atef's first chapter, set in 1977, he complains of the influx of Westerners to the Arab neighborhood that he and Alia and the children live in, but also insists on sending their children to international schools. Like Mustafa contemplating which side of the spiritual door he'd end up on, Atef sees a similar dilemma: instead of the sides being God-fearing folk versus heretics, it's those who play nicely with ajanib (foreigners) over those who don't.

Alyan also breaks the misconceptions that non-Middle Eastern readers may have about issues of female modesty among Muslim families. The women in this book are largely unveiled, starting with Alia who breaks her mother and older sister's mold by going bareheaded. This doesn't stop Alia from criticizing her younger daughter, Souad, for the way she dresses, but the following passage

could refer to a mother and daughter of almost any modern and familiar landscape:

[Women] no longer wear the short skirts and feathered hair of previous decades, the style Alia had grown up with - tight sweaters, eyeliner, frosty lipstick - and still favors. Instead the women dress as Souad does, in too-tight jeans and leather. Alia finds it unattractive, pushy. While Alyan may or may not be purposefully bringing to light the realities of Muslim women in such passages, the fact remains that she is doing so, and in a time when it is vital that Americans understand one another's humanity across nationalities and faiths.

Alyan doesn't shrink from portraying more religious women either. In mirror image to Alia's own minor teenage rebellion - removing the veil from her hair - one of her own daughters becomes more devout than she ever was. Riham, Alia's eldest daughter, makes a connection with her grandmother Salma as well as her faith, and dons the veil. This doesn't make her perfect or boring, though, as sometimes characters wrapped in the comfort of faith can be. She still retains some childhood insecurity and imagination in her morning calisthenics routine, which she performs alone in her room. Alyan describes Alia's beautiful vulnerability:

She likes to pretend she is a ballerina warming up before a performance, though she is over thirty and corpulent, to put it nicely. Still, she tells herself - in defiance of the body she was given, the tepid Amman morning outside the window - for these few minutes she is transformed, a Russian soloist prepping for the stage, her hair sweeping against her knees as she bends, as far as she can, an audience of well-dressed people waiting for her to walk into the spotlight.

Riham's perspective is also where we get a glimpse of the kind of displaced people many readers may expect in a work that is largely about the loss of and reconfiguration of home. In Amman, Riham's husband is a doctor and a generous one at that, allowing the "desperate and moneyless [...] sent by family in other countries" to come to an outhouse next to his own residence, where he would "suture wounds, clean out gunshots, without taking a single dinar." But Riham, though proud at first, becomes increasingly impatient: "Selfishly, she wanted her house, her husband to herself.

She watched the lives of her friends, wives of other doctors, with envy - the men home for dinner, no stink of unwashed bodies in their yards." Riham's reaction is a natural one as well as a candid and honest portrayal of someone of faith. Alyan doesn't treat her as a holy, untouchable ornament, but rather as all too human. The West makes its own appearance in the book as Alia and Atef's unrulier daughter, Souad, moves first to Paris and then to the United States, though she ultimately returns to the Middle East, specifically to Beirut with her own children. The novel goes all the way into this fourth generation, but the restless search for home never ends.

In many ways, then, this is a novel about privilege. Alyan takes groups we often see as disadvantaged, demonstrates their advantages, but shows us that privilege is still relative, and that trauma can still be experienced within such constructs. Like in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, there is a shattering of white audience expectations. Pain still comes from expected places, but the book is about the more personal pain, not only the kind that is caused by discrimination and displacement. This is also a book about mourning - for what is lost, for who is lost, and for where is lost.

It examines a part of this conflict and these lives that is rarely discussed in Western fiction, while not discounting the way people's roots and their lack of a stable home can affect them. It allows for insight into nuanced generational and inherited trauma within the middle class. Alyan is doing important work through this novel, even without the discussion of these deeper meanings. Thus, *Salt Houses* can be read very simply as a family drama, proving Alyan's talent as a master of both the family drama genre as well as the depths and complexities of the Palestinian displacement.

Comic

WORD SEARCH

Fish 2

Find and circle all of the fish that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Benjamin Franklin quotation.

C S A Y G R O P C R O C K F I S H O
O H S I F R A E P S U H A D D O C K
B A P N P T O R A M B E R J A C K H
I D U Y P I M U A H T N S P I B S G
A E M D O L C T P U S N P S I I W O
D B P L L L E K O E A I C E F K E L
A U K A L I N R E P R O F D R F E D
E R I F O G T T P R W L N E L C O F
H B N F C E L E A Y E U I O T H H I
L O S U K U R W E H O L U N S I E S
E T E B Y L E L N H S N R I G Y H H
E P E S I B L N S I D I F L E C B W
T R D I K O E A D E H K F L R O O F
S A I S W H B E R P A P L E N A S D
O C T T T U N N Y E R A L I E S H W
L M A R L I N E W E W A T O A H N C
E I H S I F L I A S T O T B D W S O
L C A N I F W O B R E K A O R C T S

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| AMBERJACK | CROAKER | PIKEREL | SOLE |
| BASS | DOLPHIN | PIKE | SPEARFISH |
| BLUEGILL | FLOUNDER | POLLOCK | STEELHEAD |
| BONITO | GOLDFISH | PORGY | TARPON |
| BOWFIN | GROUPE | PUMPKINSEED | TROUT |
| BUFFALO | HADDOCK | ROCKFISH | TUNNY |
| BURBOT | HOUNDFISH | SAILFISH | WALLEYE |
| CARP | LINGCOD | SHAD | WEAKFISH |
| CHAR | MARLIN | SHEEPFISH | WHITEFISH |
| CISCO | PERCH | SNAPPER | YELLOWTAIL |
| CORBA | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Fish 1

M U R D F S I L I A T E L P I R T
H S H A A N T L E M S B D D V C N
T A T I R E G U A S U S S O E R U
U I I B M I H T R L O A A L P A R G
O P M L R U S S L G D S L L O P G
M A R U E U S H P U E A M Y M P H
R L E E N R E K C E V O O V P I S
A I P P F D A E A E E E D N A A E I
W T T I D F R K R L A H O R N S F
W S M S E R I C C R L D S L O H T
H A S H A R K S O A L U G E L A O
S L H B U H C O H E M C N N I L R
I R O O S T E R F I S H N G T I R
F H R E O H S I F E N O B R E B A
W C A T F I S H B A D D N A S U P
E A N U T H G R A Y L I N G E T D
J K O O N S W O R D F I S H A Y S

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| BARRACUDA | DORADO | PARROTFISH | SMELT |
| BLUEFISH | DRUM | PERMIT | SNOOK |
| BONEFISH | GAR | POMPANO | STURGEON |
| BULLHEAD | GRAYLING | REDFISH | SUNFISH |
| CATFISH | GRUNT | ROOSTERFISH | SWORDFISH |
| CHUB | HALIBUT | SALMON | TILAPIA |
| COD | JEWFISH | SAND DAB | TRIPLETAIL |
| CRAPPIE | MACKEREL | SAUGER | TUNA |
| CREVALLE | MUSKELLUNGE | SHARK | WAHOO |
| DOLLY VARDEN | PADDOLEFISH | SHEEPSHEAD | WARMOUTH |

The hidden sentence is: FISH AND VISITORS SMELL IN THREE DAYS

CROSSWORD 1797



ACROSS

- A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
- An ugly evil-looking old woman.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- A quality of refined gracefulness and good taste.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
- Fine meal made from cereal grain especially wheat.
- (astronomy) An indistinct surface feature of Mars once thought to be a system of channels.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
- Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
- Red pear-shaped tropical fruit with poisonous seeds.
- Someone who expresses in language.
- An alloy of copper and zinc.
- In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
- A fit of shivering.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- An informal term for a father.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A state in the eastern United States.
- Produced from an egg.
- Related on the mother's side.
- Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
- Either of two large African antelopes of the genus Taurotragus having short spirally twisted horns in both sexes.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- The cry made by sheep.
- Small genus of Eurasian herbs.
- Filled with a great quantity.
- One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- Step on it.
- An approximate calculation of quantity or degree or worth.
- (computer science) Memory whose contents can be accessed and read but cannot be changed.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).

DOWN

- A magic power or magic spell.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Mar or spoil the appearance of.
- A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
- The third canonical hour.
- Moving quickly and lightly.
- Something causes misery or death.
- Based on or exemplifying anagoge.
- A white trivalent metallic element.
- An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- Offering fun and gaiety.
- Without moral standards or principles.
- A dialect of Chinese spoken in southeastern China.
- A colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
- A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
- Pertaining to or resembling amoebae.
- Ctenophore having tentacles only in the immature stage.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- Of surpassing excellence.
- A cylindrical drawstring bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
- A flexible container with a single opening.
- Covered with a firm surface.
- Having undesirable or negative qualities.
- A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- Comb-plate or locomotor organ consisting of a row of strong cilia whose bases are fused.
- Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
- The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
- The act of scanning.
- A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
- Lower in esteem.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A person eating a meal (especially in a restaurant).
- A hardy cabbage with coarse curly leaves that do not form a head.
- On or toward the lee.
- Wife or mistress of Zeus and mother of Apollo and Artemis in ancient mythology.
- A genus of Mustelidae.
- Highly excited.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- A crystalline rock that can be cut and polished for jewelry.
- The basic unit of electric current adopted under the System International d'Unites.
- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.

Yesterday's Solution

R B C A C A D E M I A S A C
A R A M O N O R A I L A L A
J A B I N S P I R I T N A D
A G A M A H E S S A B A S E
L A B A D A B I L A
C S A T A R L A C E U S
L I B R A B A A L E R N E
O N O K A S A I I M P A C T
A B O M A S A L T B J U T
C A O L E P A S A A R E
A D A R T A A M I C A B L E
F R A U D R A D A R
S E R I A L T R E S P A S S
G R I G R I D H A W A R N A
M I C A P E D I C A B C A B
L E A N A N T A K Y A A G A

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

22:40 Britain's Bloody Crown: War Of The Roses
23:30 Hunting Hitler



00:45 Places We Go
01:10 Carnival Eats
01:40 Seoul: Capital Of K-Pop (Inside K-Pop)
02:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
03:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
04:25 Poh & Co.
04:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
05:20 Maximum Foodie
05:45 Stepping Out
06:15 Bad Trip
07:10 Seoul: Capital Of K-Pop (Inside K-Pop)
08:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
09:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
09:55 Poh & Co.
10:20 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
10:50 Maximum Foodie
11:15 Stepping Out
11:45 Bad Trip
12:40 Rustic Adventures Italy
13:05 Rustic Adventures Italy
13:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
14:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
15:25 Poh & Co.
15:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
17:15 Bad Trip
18:10 Bad Trip
19:05 Poh & Co.
19:30 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
21:00 Bad Trip
22:55 Rustic Adventures Italy
23:20 Rustic Adventures Italy
23:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea



00:10 Machine Impossible
01:00 Supercar Megabuild
02:00 To Catch A Smuggler
03:00 Science Of Stupid Engineering
04:00 Machine Impossible
05:00 Crowd Control
06:00 Supercar Megabuild
07:00 X: The Generation That Changed The World
08:00 Seconds From Disaster
09:00 Crash Science
10:00 To Catch A Smuggler
11:00 Kung Fu Motion
12:00 Brain Games
12:30 What Would Happen If
13:00 Supercar Megabuild
14:00 Seconds From Disaster
15:00 X: The Generation That Changed The World
16:00 To Catch A Smuggler
17:00 Taboo
18:00 Taboo
19:00 X: The Generation That Changed The World
20:00 To Catch A Smuggler
20:50 Taboo
21:40 Taboo
22:30 X: The Generation That Changed The World
23:20 Brain Games
23:45 What Would Happen If



00:20 World's Deadliest: Jaws & Sins
01:10 Jobs That Bite!
02:00 Incredible Fangs
02:50 Animal Fight Club 4.5
03:45 My Life Is A Zoo
04:40 Secret Life Of Predators
05:35 Incredible Fangs
06:30 Animal Fight Club 4.5
07:25 My Life Is A Zoo
08:20 Secret Life Of Predators

09:15 Search For King Cobra
10:10 The New Sperm Whale
11:05 The Naked Superhero
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Africa's Blood River
13:50 Animal Fight Club 4.5
14:45 World's Deadliest
15:40 Secret Life Of Predators
16:35 Asia's Deadliest Snakes
17:30 Badlands
18:25 Little Monkey House
19:20 World's Deadliest
20:10 Secret Life Of Predators
21:00 Asia's Deadliest Snakes
21:50 Badlands
22:40 Little Monkey House
23:30 Shark Men



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Legends Of The Hidden Temple
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Sanjay And Craig
13:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
15:48 Escape From Mr. Lemoncello's Library
17:00 Sanjay And Craig
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Ride
20:36 Ride
21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Sanjay And Craig
21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:16 Shimmer And Shine
00:39 Shimmer And Shine
01:02 Max & Ruby
01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:34 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:45 The Day Henry Met
01:50 The Day Henry Met
01:55 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:40 Zack & Quack
02:51 Kid-E-Cats
02:56 Kid-E-Cats

03:03 Shimmer And Shine
03:25 Nella The Princess Knight
03:37 Paw Patrol
04:00 Little Charmers
04:12 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
04:23 Dora The Explorer
04:46 Max & Ruby
05:07 The Day Henry Met
05:13 Nella The Princess Knight
05:36 Shimmer And Shine
05:59 Wallykazam!
06:22 Zack & Quack
06:32 The Day Henry Met
06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
07:00 Rusty Rivets
07:12 Paw Patrol
07:37 Dora The Explorer
08:00 Nella The Princess Knight
08:10 Kid-E-Cats
08:15 Kid-E-Cats
08:21 Bubble Guppies
08:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
09:07 Paw Patrol
09:30 Shimmer And Shine
09:53 Nella The Princess Knight
10:15 The Day Henry Met
10:22 Paw Patrol
10:45 Rusty Rivets
11:05 Wallykazam!
11:28 Bubble Guppies
11:52 Team Umizoomi
12:15 Shimmer And Shine
12:39 Shimmer And Shine
13:01 Max & Ruby
13:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom

13:47 The Day Henry Met
13:52 The Day Henry Met
13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:41 Zack & Quack
14:52 Kid-E-Cats
14:58 Kid-E-Cats
15:04 Shimmer And Shine
15:26 Nella The Princess Knight
15:38 Paw Patrol
16:01 Little Charmers
16:13 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
16:24 Dora The Explorer
16:46 Max & Ruby
17:06 The Day Henry Met
17:11 Nella The Princess Knight
17:35 Shimmer And Shine
17:59 Wallykazam!
18:21 Zack & Quack
18:32 The Day Henry Met
18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
19:00 Rusty Rivets
19:13 Paw Patrol
19:37 Dora The Explorer
20:00 Nella The Princess Knight
20:10 Kid-E-Cats
20:15 Kid-E-Cats
20:21 Bubble Guppies
20:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
21:07 Paw Patrol
21:30 Shimmer And Shine
21:53 Nella The Princess Knight
22:15 The Day Henry Met
22:22 Paw Patrol
22:45 Rusty Rivets
23:05 Wallykazam!
23:28 Bubble Guppies
23:52 Team Umizoomi



OSN Movies Family HD
00:45 Big Baby
02:10 The Little Rascals
03:35 We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story
04:50 Pet Pals In Windland
06:20 Big Baby
07:50 Further Adventures Of Professor Branestawn
09:00 Ice Age
10:25 The Little Rascals
11:50 Kung Fu Panda
13:25 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs
15:05 A Simple Wish
16:55 Mostly Ghostly: One Night

In Doom House
18:25 Molly Moon And The Incredible Book Of Hypnotism
20:05 Kung Fu Panda
21:40 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs
23:20 Mostly Ghostly: One Night In Doom House



01:15 We're No Angels
03:15 Dad's Army
05:05 Guess Who
07:00 Spy Hard
08:30 Once I Was A Beehive
10:30 The Duff
12:15 Dad's Army
14:05 Spy Hard
15:35 The Guilt Trip
17:15 The Bucket List
18:55 Kindergarten Cop 2
20:40 The Boss
22:20 The Late Bloomer



00:30 On My Way
02:30 Antwone Fisher
04:40 Wildlike
06:35 My Sister
08:35 The Best Of Me
10:40 Antwone Fisher
12:50 East Side Sushi
14:50 No God No Master
16:30 Fort McCoy
18:15 The Benefactor
19:50 Dead Poets Society
22:00 Danny Collins
23:55 The Birdcage



01:40 Twigson Ties The Knot
03:10 Last Wizard
04:35 Swan Princess: Royally Undercover
06:00 Dinofroz The Origin
07:30 Felix The Toy Rabbit And The Time Machine
09:00 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
10:40 The Fairy Tales Tree
12:05 The Adventures Of The American Rabbit
13:35 Twigson Ties The Knot
15:05 Last Wizard
16:30 Space Dogs 2: Adventure To The Moon
17:55 The Fairy Tales Tree
19:20 Pacific Pirates
20:50 A Town Called Panic
22:15 Space Dogs 2: Adventure To The Moon
23:40 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest



01:10 Neighbors
02:50 Fast & Furious 7
05:10 Twins
07:00 The Theory Of Everything
09:05 Mr. Popper's Penguins
10:45 We Bought A Zoo
12:50 Fast & Furious 7
15:10 Unbroken
17:30 The Blind Side
19:40 Dracula Untold
21:15 We Bought A Zoo
23:20 Indecent Proposal



00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory USA
02:20 Street Science
02:45 Street Science
03:10 Cosmic Collisions
04:00 How We Invented The World
04:48 Mythbusters
05:36 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Food Factory USA

06:24 Street Science
06:48 Street Science
07:12 Cosmic Collisions
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 How We Invented The World
09:14 Mythbusters
10:02 Cosmic Collisions
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 Food Factory USA
11:38 Street Science
12:02 Street Science
12:26 How We Invented The World
13:14 Mythbusters
14:02 How Do They Do It?
14:26 Food Factory USA
14:50 Cosmic Collisions
15:38 How We Invented The World
16:26 Street Science
16:50 Street Science
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 Cosmic Collisions
18:50 How We Invented The World
19:40 Mythbusters
20:30 Gamechangers: Inventing The World
21:20 How Do They Do It?
21:45 Food Factory USA
22:10 Alien Storms
23:00 You Have Been Warned
23:50 How We Invented The World



01:15 02:22
03:00 Autumn In New York
04:45 The Painted Veil
07:00 Nothing But The Truth
08:40 Ride
10:15 Bad Santa
11:45 The Dead Girl
13:15 Strangerland
15:15 02:22
17:00 The Accidental Husband
18:30 Union Square
20:00 Scary Movie 3
21:30 A Long Way Down
23:00 White Rider



00:00 Married At First Sight
01:00 Married At First Sight
02:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
02:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
03:00 The Fashion Fund
04:00 Project Runway All Stars
05:00 House Of DVF
06:00 Married At First Sight
07:00 Married At First Sight
08:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
08:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
09:00 The Fashion Fund
10:00 Project Runway All Stars
11:00 House Of DVF
12:00 Married At First Sight
13:00 Married At First Sight
14:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
14:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
15:00 The Fashion Fund
16:00 Project Runway All Stars
17:00 Mistresses
18:00 Devious Maids
19:00 Devious Maids
20:00 Making Mr. Right
21:00 Grey's Anatomy
22:00 Grey's Anatomy
23:00 Grey's Anatomy



00:20 Say Yes To The Dress UK
00:42 Say Yes To The Dress UK
01:05 90 Day Fianc?: Happily Ever After?
01:50 The Spouse House
02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
03:20 Little People, Big World
04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras
04:50 Your Style In His Hands
05:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK
06:00 Little People, Big World
06:45 Little People, Big World
08:15 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
09:00 Say Yes To The Dress UK
09:25 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners

10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
10:55 Love At First Swipe
11:17 Love At First Swipe
11:40 Love At First Swipe
12:02 Love At First Swipe
12:25 Love At First Swipe
12:47 Love At First Swipe
13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
14:40 Cake Boss
15:02 Cake Boss
15:25 Cake Boss
15:47 Cake Boss
16:10 Cake Boss
16:35 Cake Boss
17:00 Big & Little
17:50 Meet The Putmans
18:50 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
19:40 Cake Boss
20:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
20:35 Say Yes To The Dress UK
21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
21:50 The Rarest Boy In The World
22:40 My Giant Life
23:30 Born Without Limbs Travel Channel



00:00 When Ghosts Attack
01:00 Ghost Hunters International
02:00 Mysteries At The Museum
03:00 Booze Traveler On The Rocks
04:00 The Best Place To Be
05:00 When Ghosts Attack
06:00 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
06:30 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
08:00 House Hunters International
08:30 House Hunters International
09:00 House Hunters International
09:30 House Hunters International
10:00 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
11:00 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
18:00 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
19:00 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
20:00 House Hunters International
20:30 House Hunters International
21:00 House Hunters International
21:30 House Hunters International
22:00 Salvage Dawgs
22:30 Salvage Dawgs
23:00 Barnwood Builders



00:05 Graves
00:35 Idiotsitter
01:00 Tosh.0
01:22 Tosh.0
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 Chappelle's Show
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Idiotsitter
03:50 Lip Sync Battle UK
04:15 Lip Sync Battle UK
04:40 Workaholics
05:05 Workaholics
05:30 Workaholics
05:55 Workaholics
06:20 Workaholics
06:50 I Live With Models
07:15 Brotherhood
07:40 Brotherhood
08:05 Brotherhood
08:30 Brotherhood
08:55 Punk'd (Bet)
09:20 Punk'd (Bet)
09:45 Important Things With Demetri Martin
10:10 Important Things With Demetri Martin
10:35 Important Things With Demetri Martin
11:00 Kroll Show
11:25 Kroll Show
11:50 Kroll Show

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You discover that you are good at using your own mind to make good choices and to think through things clearly. Career decisions are constant and easy to make. You see your way through ideas and concepts. You can communicate and express these ideas to others. Mental work is especially favored this afternoon. You get into the flow of work and enjoy the progress that you make. You are encouraged and you encourage others. Most of the places where you have worked have not given you this much of a feeling of accomplishment. This is a genuinely nice time. Later today you take time to purchase what you need in order to get your camera ready for a workout; tonight will bring you some fun photo opportunities.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your horizons are opening up and you are on the right path as far as your professional life is concerned. You will accomplish a lot before noon. This could be a banner day for those of you working in sales; almost all the things sold this morning seem to be big-ticket items. There is a positive accent on matters in the afternoon but progress is slow. Someone that you are close to is going to need your help and guidance concerning important personal issues. Tensions calm as the day moves along. Looking for new ways to bring the old traditions back into your life keeps you busy this afternoon; perhaps a little shopping is in order. You plan the details of the next holiday gathering. Company may drop by unexpectedly this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a very good time to organize the company party or to bring together and organize your affairs or to restructure your work schedule. Professional associations and associates push you to be the best you can be. Rise to the occasion and meet the challenge. Barriers or obstacles that might have been keeping you from realizing your full potential will become less meaningful. You make friends easily and may find yourself with plenty of co-workers to help you. A positive attitude benefits you greatly. Let optimism lead you to a happy outcome in this endeavor. You may see value or love for an older person or someone in authority. There is a lot of energy and drive available to accomplish just about anything that you feel is necessary.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Feeling in touch or in harmony with those around you helps you to realize that all lines of communication are wide open for you. Trust is strong among you and your co-workers, so when you give your word, the people with whom you work hold a high respect for you. You should expect a little encouragement. This afternoon you may find enjoyment in reading a romantic book or taking in a movie or video. Ideas and thoughts just seem to hold more meaning and form at this time. Others may find you quite charismatic or commanding in speech. People will have no problem in understanding just what you mean. Your optimism and faith will be strong and carry you through to many successes. Expect a whirlwind of fun at a social gathering tonight.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may feel a need to broaden your range of vision. The sort of thing that motivates you into action now might be politics, law, education, travel or religion. You long for new challenges and experiences. Metaphysical or philosophical musings could capture your attention as well. This should be a really super day for getting things accomplished—just about any task runs smoothly. You may even feel like exercising and getting out and about this afternoon. Good news about a financial investment makes you want to splurge on some item you have had your eye on for some time. It would be better to wait on the financial investment to mature but the energies are working in your favor. Show your appreciation to a loved one this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You should find this a nearly perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career determinations. You have all of the drive and energy that you could possibly want and it should not be too hard to channel. The path is wide-open and clear. The chances are very good for understanding those around you and having a special time with someone you love or care for a great deal. General harmonious feelings from those around you make this a very productive and happy time. Appreciating things of value and even the idea of value itself is in order. This is possibly a time of great material gain—most assuredly a time when material things have a great deal of importance for you. Make an honest attempt to budget.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This should be remembered as a time of great mental activity and heightened communication with others. Knowledge, the exchange of ideas and the idea of being smart as a fox are the kind of things that have special importance and appeal for you now. Figuring out new ways to communicate or an easy manner is what makes conversations and interactions go well. Being able to sympathize and understand others takes on greater importance. You appreciate knowledge, but do realize that it is wisdom that really counts the most. Accepting things from the past or putting yourself in touch with anything mysterious or spiritual is the thing that gives you a great deal of satisfaction. Your investment choices are wise ones at this time.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Freedom, as well as anything unusual or different, is of interest to you now. You may enjoy opportunities to get away from the regular routine—a change of pace. You have a clear perception into your own inner sense of values, how you acknowledge and love. It should be a good time to examine and give thought as to what is really important and of lasting value. Ideas will be flowing to you easily—you will have a lot to talk about. Your mind is quite clear and natural. Taking a different approach to things, assessing new ideas and a breakthrough in thinking are right up your alley at this time. Don't take an important relationship for granted this evening. Show your appreciation to this person... Results are positive.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Being included on a special outing with co-workers is gratifying. Being sensitive to and understanding the needs of others gives you insight into how you communicate regarding group activities and brotherhood in general. Your unique and unusual capabilities are trying to evolve. It's a good probability that someone close to you will understand and be supportive of your ideas. Allowing the creative and intuitive parts of your personality to come forth could surprise you. Home-based activities are a focus this evening. Before going to sleep this night you may decide to listen to one of the hypnotic relaxation tapes. You will absorb into yourself positive thoughts. Consider a nutritional consultation... Balancing out your physical needs.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You will soon be receiving helpful advice regarding a business or a financial concern. This could be a time you discover some new and different reasons or ways to appreciate and applaud life. A kind of mini-revolution may find you developing your value system—allowing you to like new things. There is a different approach to love and compassion available to you now. Someone that you are close to could look up to you for guidance with regard to a very personal issue. You will have no difficulty in understanding the situation and helping this person to see a new way of thinking. Your ability to cut to the chase and get at what lies beneath the surface is highly beneficial to the conclusion of any difficulties. A friend is very appreciative.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

It's important that you think about what you are going to say before you say it, or you may find circumstances going against your own best interests today. You could find a situation that is difficult when it comes to an older person or one in authority. This will pass and you will benefit from your patience. Choose your words as though you may have to eat each one, and try to avoid choking or bringing on heartburn in the process. A clear-minded insight into your own plans is available to you now. It's a good time to help others to understand some quandary in the technical field. It is also a good time to conclude the decision-making and move forward. Look carefully at some type of reorganization that will allow you more freedom. Relax this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You should find it a rather fortunate day for making plans or decisions and finding your way through just about any problem that you may discover. You should be feeling successful and have no problem in solving any difficulties that should come up at this time. Good advice from a guide or older person may be forthcoming. Expect a good day. Anything of a domestic nature or having to do with things from the past helps you recognize your need for security and a feeling of having attachments. The family, home, relatives and real property all could be playing a larger part in your life. It is essential to your wellbeing to know that you belong on a private, intimate, personal level, to be needed and to feel that it is okay to have needs.

COUNTRY CODES

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

Health

Innovative medical aid for Gabon's poor

LIBREVILLE: "Here you're in the heart of precarious living," one of Gabon's first medical responders says in Kolo Ngoum, a grubby shanty suburb of Libreville that has seen no doctors in ages. Residents initially express surprise at the arrival of an ambulance belonging to the SAMU-Social (Service for Urgent Medical Aid), but once they see stethoscopes and other common instruments, they smile with reassurance. "This is a good initiative," says Natanael, in his 30s and sporting dreadlocks. "We thought all this

was reserved for other people." Launched five months ago, the Gabonese SAMU-Social is starting to take roots in the capital. It offers free medicines and healthcare along with lodging and psychological aid for the "poorest of the poorest", according to its founder and chief coordinator, Wenceslas Yaba. One of the teams was making a local visit to Kolo Ngoum, where makeshift homes cling to a bushy, filthy hillside. "Everyone here lives in the dregs,"

Natanael explains. "Carrying the sick up to the road on our backs is really hard." Medical staff tramp sinuous alleys to seek out ailing people with no chance of a taxi fare, let alone a hospital fee. One nurse calls to an obese elderly woman "who hasn't moved from her bed for weeks", according to her roommate. The nurse notes that the woman "is suffering from hypertension and at risk of getting bedsores".—AFP

CLINIC PAGE

Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT NEWS IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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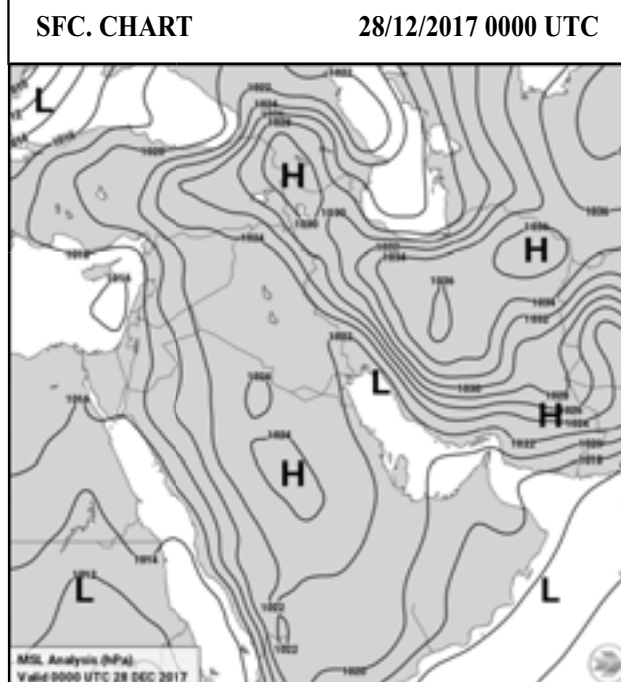
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm and with light to moderate north westerly wind to northerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

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

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	15 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	24 °C	11 °C
ABDALY	24 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	25 °C	10 °C
JAHRA	24 °C	13 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	14 °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	16 °C
AHMADI	22 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	23 °C	12 °C
SALMY	21 °C	07 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/29	Warm	25 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Saturday	12/30	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	10 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Sunday	12/31	Warm	27 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 32 km/h
Monday	01/01	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	14 °C	SE	15 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:16
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	14:39
Sunset	16:58
Isha	18:20

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	87 %
MIN. RH	29 %
MAX. Wind	NW 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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AIRLINES

American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Air Slovakia	22434940
Olympic Airways	22420002/9
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
Reservation	22433388
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

Business

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2017

39 Watchdog slams Lufthansa over 'algorithm' price hikes



Bitcoin falls on S Korea digital currency curbs

SEOUL: Bitcoin fell more than 11 percent after South Korea said yesterday it would ban anonymous trading of virtual currencies and crack down on money laundering activities using them. The announcement came as the hyper-wired South emerged as a hotbed for cryptocurrency trading, accounting for some 20 percent of global bitcoin transactions—about 10 times the country's share of the world economy.

The new rules announced by Seoul include a ban on opening anonymous cryptocurrency accounts and new legislation to allow regulators to close virtual currency exchanges if necessary. "Officials share the view that virtual currency trading is overheating irrationally ... and we can no longer overlook this abnormal speculative situation," the government said in a statement.

All anonymous accounts currently in use will be closed next month, it added. The policy package also includes stepping up crack-downs on money laundering activities and financial fraud—including price manipulation—using digital currency trades. "We will ... resolutely respond to such crimes by slapping maximum sentences possible on offenders," it said, vowing to "leave all policy options open, including closure of a cryptocurrency exchange when deemed necessary." The announcement came two weeks after Seoul banned its financial firms from dealing in virtual currencies, most notably bitcoin, as their prices soared, sparking concerns of a bubble largely fuelled by retail speculators. The digital unit hit a record

around \$19,500 earlier this month, meaning it had increased more than 25-fold from its 2017 low in mid-January. About one million South Koreans, many of them small-time investors, are estimated to own bitcoin. Demand is so high that prices for the unit are around 20 percent higher than in the US, its biggest market.

Seoul also warned yesterday that most cryptocurrencies are being traded in the country at prices far higher than elsewhere in the world, blaming factors including "blind speculation".

The price of bitcoin fell 11.6 percent to \$13,827 after Thursday's announcement. In a case highlighting the risks of cryptocurrency, a Seoul virtual currency exchange declared itself bankrupt last week after being hacked for the second time this year. The Yobit exchange became the first South Korean cryptocurrency exchange to close after the hacking attack that stole 17 percent of its assets. There have been numerous warnings about a possible blowout in the bitcoin market. Bank of Japan governor Haruhiko Kuroda said last week that the price surge of the virtual currency was "abnormal," while Singapore's central bank advised investors to "act with extreme caution". The vice president of the European Central Bank has also expressed concern about the relentless rise in the value of bitcoin and the potential risk accompanying the trend. Bitcoin, the biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, has dwarfed any gains in traditional financial markets this year, with a more than 1,400 percent rise. — Agencies



HAPPY NEW YEAR

ABK wishes His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the people and residents of Kuwait a Happy New Year.

On this occasion, the Bank will be closed on Sunday 31 December 2017 and Monday 1 January 2018. Business will resume as usual on Tuesday 2 January 2018.

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Business

Apple, Epson face French legal pressure over 'obsolescence'

Consumer groups make use of country's law against the practice

NANTERRE, France: US tech giant Apple and Japanese printer maker Epson face growing legal pressure in France over alleged planned obsolescence in their products as consumer groups make use of the country's law against the practice. The association Stop Planned Obsolescence (HOP or Halte à l'Obsolescence Programmée) said it had filed a complaint against Apple after the company admitted to intentionally slowing down its iPhones as they age.

"Apple has put in place a global program of planned obsolescence with a view to increasing its sales," the association said in a statement issued on Wednesday. Yesterday, the group hailed a breakthrough in a separate case against printer manufacturers when prosecutors opened a probe into Epson over claims that it was tricking consumers into changing ink cartridges before they were empty.

"It's very good news. For the first time in France and to our knowledge in the world, judicial authorities of a country have taken up a case of planned obsolescence," the association's lawyer, Emile Meunier, told AFP. Planned obsolescence is a widely criticized commercial practice in which manufacturers build in the expiry of their products so that consumers will be forced to replace them.

It is decried by consumer groups as being unethical and is suspected of being particularly

prevalent in the electronics industry, which produces mountains of unrecyclable waste each year.

'Hamon's law'

To tackle the problem, France passed landmark legislation in 2015 known as "Hamon's law" which made the practice illegal and—in theory—obliged retailers to say whether replacement parts were available. The law stipulates that a company found to be deliberately shortening the life of its products can be fined up to five percent of its annual sales while executives can face up to two years in jail.

The Epson case—if the initial legal inquiry finds enough evidence for a trial—could lead to the first prosecution for planned obsolescence, which lawyers warn is a difficult charge to prove in court.

HOP filed a legal complaint against printer manufacturers Canon, HP, Brother and Epson in September, claiming that their devices forced users to change their ink cartridges before they were empty. Printer companies earn far higher margins on replacement cartridges than on printers, which are often sold cheaply. Earlier this month, Apple confirmed what critics had suspected for years: that it intentionally slows performance of older iPhones as their batteries weaken from age. The company said this was to



Epson faced criticisms over claims that it was tricking consumers into changing ink cartridges before they were empty.

extend the performance of the phone, which uses less power when running at slower speeds, and was to prevent unexpected shutdowns due to a low battery charge.

Critics accused it of nudging iPhone users to upgrade to newer models by letting them think it was the handsets that needed replacing, rather than just the battery. —AFP

Protests in Iran second city over high prices

TEHRAN: Hundreds took to the streets of Iran's second city Mashhad and other towns yesterday to protest high prices and unemployment, a reformist media group reported. The protests were mostly directed at President Hassan Rouhani's government, the Nazar media network reported.

"The demonstration was illegal yet the police confronted them with a lot of tolerance," Mashhad governor Mohammad Rahim Norouzian said, according to the semi-official ISNA news agency.

Videos on Nazar's Telegram channel showed people in Mashhad, an important religious centre in the northeast of Iran, chanting "Death to Rouhani".

But they also showed chants of "Death to the dictator" and "Not Gaza, not Lebanon, my life for Iran"—a reference to anger in some circles that the government

is focusing on the wider region rather than improving conditions at home.

The Mashhad governor said a number of people were arrested for "trying to damage public property".

Nazar also reported smaller protests in Yazd in southern Iran, Shahroud in the north and Kashmar in the northeast.

Videos appearing to show protests in Neyshabour, near Mashhad, were also shared on social media. "It's not clear what person or group has organized these protests but most of the slogans are against Rouhani," wrote Payam Parhiz, Nazar's editor-in-chief, in a tweet.

A message calling for "No to high prices" protests was circulated recently on Telegram, he wrote in another tweet. The promise of rebuilding the economy—shattered by years of sanctions and maladministration—has been the central plank of Rouhani's government since he first won power in 2013, and helped him win a second term in May.

He has succeeded in bringing inflation down to single digits—from highs of more than 40 percent under his hardline predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

But the economy is still struggling from lack of investment, with unemployment officially at 12 percent and likely much higher in real terms, according to analysts. —AFP

US consumer confidence dampens in December

NEW YORK: US consumer confidence dampened in December, retreating from a 17-year high in November as optimism about the short-term outlook fell sharply, according to a closely-watched monthly survey released on Wednesday.

While sentiment about current conditions were more positive than last month, consumers were more pessimistic about the situation for business and jobs six months out, the Conference Board reported.

The consumer confidence index fell to 122.1 from 128.6 in November, which was revised down from the originally reported 129.5, but still was the highest since 2000. The high confidence last month matched reports of solid sales in the holiday shopping season.

"The decline in confidence was fueled by a somewhat less optimistic outlook for business and job prospects in the coming months," said Lynn Franco, head of indicators at the Conference Board, which produces the survey, in a statement. However, Franco said, "Despite the decline in confidence, consumers' expectations remain at historically strong levels, suggesting economic growth will continue well into 2018."

Consumers' feelings about present-day conditions were slightly more positive in December, as the percentage saying business conditions are "good" increased marginally to 35.2 percent, while those saying business conditions are "bad" decreased very slightly to 12.1 percent.

However, optimism about the short-term outlook declined sharply, as those anticipating business conditions will improve over the next six months declined to 20.2 percent from 23.1 percent, while those expecting business conditions to worsen increased to 9.2 percent from 6.7 percent.

The outlook for the job market also was less upbeat than in November. The proportion expecting more jobs in the months ahead decreased to 18.4 percent from 21.3 percent, while those anticipating fewer jobs rose to 16.3 percent from 12.1 percent.

Analysts agreed with Franco that the decline in December should not detract from high levels of optimism, even though the consensus forecast expected a modest decline in the headline index to 128.0. James Bohner of IHS Markit said some of the drop could be due to uncertainty about the massive tax reform passed by Congress December 20. The cutoff date for the Conference Board survey was December 15.

"Consumer Confidence fell dramatically in December, but the details show that there is no fundamental reason to be concerned about confidence," Bohner said in a research note.

"The present situation index is a far better indicator of consumers' ability to spend, and is underpinned by the best job market in nearly two decades," added to the repeated new records in the stock market, which have "given stock-owners and upper income households even more reason to be optimistic." —AFP

Business

Watchdog slams Lufthansa over 'algorithm' price hikes

FCO probing complaints of jacking up fares

FRANKFURT: Germany's competition watchdog yesterday rubbished Lufthansa's claim that recent price hikes on domestic routes were purely down to automated booking software, saying companies shouldn't "hide behind algorithms". Germany's Federal Cartel Office (FCO) is currently probing complaints that Lufthansa fares shot up on some routes after bankrupt rival Air Berlin stopped flying in late October.

Lufthansa has denied changing its pricing methods, arguing that its fully-automated booking system was simply responding to a spike in demand following the Air Berlin collapse and displaying higher average prices as a result. But in an interview with the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily, FCO president An-

dreas Mundt said that justification didn't hold up. "That's beside the point. These algorithms aren't written by dear God in heaven," he said.

"Companies can't hide behind algorithms." Industry experts say Lufthansa ticket prices have jumped by 30 percent on some routes, according to German media.

The airline, however, has repeatedly denied cashing in on its dominant position and has promised to make more seats available on popular routes.

In a statement sent to AFP, Lufthansa said it had not introduced any fare hikes in Germany or Europe "for over a year". The disappearance of Air Berlin has led to major bottlenecks, it said, causing flights to be booked up faster.



Airfares skyrocket on routes flown by Air Berlin



DUSSELDORF: This file photo shows an airplane operated by German airline Air Berlin rolling on the tarmac past a Lufthansa plane at Dusseldorf airport, western Germany. — AFP

US, S Korea to hold trade talks next week

WASHINGTON: US and South Korean delegates will meet in Washington on January 5 for talks on possible amendments to their free trade agreement, officials announced yesterday.

The Trump administration initiated talks to renegotiate the United States-Korea (KORUS) free trade agreement in July, arguing the 2012 deal was lopsided because American's bilateral trade deficit had ballooned under it. It will be the third such session after previous meetings in Seoul in August and Washington in October.

According to the office of Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, the US exported less to

South Korea in 2016 (\$42.3 billion) than it did before the agreement was signed in 2011 (\$43.5 billion), a decline of 2.7 percent. Over the same period, South Korean imports in the United States rose by nearly \$20 billion, meaning the US trade deficit in goods rose from \$13.2 billion to \$27.6 billion. The US deficit in the autos sector alone now stands at \$24 billion, an increase of 77 percent since 2011, a statement from Lighthizer's office added. Since assuming office a year ago, US President Donald Trump has railed against free trade deals, describing them as bad for US jobs. One of his first moves was to pull US support for the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, an American-led initiative with 11 Asia-Pacific countries that deliberately excluded Washington's big regional rival China.

His administration is currently involved in bumpy negotiations over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with neighboring Canada and Mexico, which Trump has repeatedly threatened to scrap altogether. —AFP

"And so it can happen that for last-minute reservations on some routes only the comparatively more expensive booking classes are available." Competition in Germany is expected to increase again once easyJet begins operating from January some of the Air Berlin assets it has acquired. Lufthansa too has set its sights on some of the Air Berlin spoils, though it was

forced to scale back its ambitions in the face of EU competition concerns. After making some concessions, particularly in renouncing some of Air Berlin's prized airport slots, Lufthansa last week won approval from EU regulators to snap up the defunct carrier's LGW subsidiary. The regional carrier comprises some 30 leased planes and around 800 employees. —AFP

ABK Wishes Everyone in Kuwait a Happy New Year



ABK announced that during the New Year holiday, its Branches and the Head Office will be closed on Sunday 31st December 2017 and Monday 1st January 2018. The Bank will resume its regular working hours on Tuesday 2nd January 2018. ABK's online services and Call Center will be available 24 hours a day during the holiday and can be reached by contacting a customer

service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 18998999.

On the occasion of the New Year, ABK's Board Members, Management & Staff, would like to extend its warmest wishes to the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti government and its people.

Business

VietJet stands by controversial calendar in face of criticism

Models pose provocatively in bikinis in airline colors

HANOI/SINGAPORE: Vietnam's VietJet Aviation said yesterday it was standing by a controversial "bikini" calendar, a marketing ploy featuring scantily clad female models that has prompted criticism in conservative Southeast Asia and beyond.

The annual calendar, which has gone viral online, is part of a broader marketing push by VietJet that has propelled the start-up airline's rapid growth, as it has taken market share from Vietnam Airlines. The publication of the 2018 calendar - which critics



Coffee, tea or bikini? A marketing ploy

say overly sexualizes the image of flight attendants and other airline staff - comes as there is a growing debate in the global airlines industry about sexual harassment and in-flight assault of both passengers and employees.

VietJet, founded by Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao - Vietnam's first female billionaire and one of a handful of women running a major airline globally - said the calendar emphasized free choice of people to wear whatever they wanted.

"We are not upset when people associate us with the bikini image. If that makes people delighted and happy, then we'll be happy," Luu Duc Khanh, VietJet's managing director, said in

emailed comments to Reuters.

When asked about the views of Thao, Khanh said the CEO thought people "have the right to wear whatever they like, bikini or traditional ao dai", referring to the traditional Vietnamese long dress. Thao was unavailable for interview.

The calendar has caused an online storm in Vietnam, with some people criticizing and others defending the campaign. The 2018 calendar and a YouTube video of the photo shoot have been viewed more than 910,000 times since first appearing at the end of last month.

"I think (the calendar) is beautiful, not unpleasant at all," one user posted on Facebook under the avatar Mai Co. Another person, named as Van Nhi, said the airline was "creating scandal to gain attention. It's getting more unpleasant." Critics say VietJet's risqué marketing, including the calendar and bikini fashion shows on board planes, presented an archaic and sexist image of cabin crew, even as the risk of harassment and assault go widely underreported.

VietJet is "taking us back 50 years by hypersexualising a female dominated work group in order to make a few bucks off a couple of



cheesy calendars," said Heather Poole, a veteran U.S. flight attendant and author of a book about working the not-always-friendly skies.

"Women have to work so hard to be taken seriously, and in this case it's a woman in charge taking us back to the days of 'Coffee, Tea or Me?'," she added, alluding to a 1960s book about two fictitious female flight attendants that emphasised their sexual appetite.

Khanh said VietJet flight attendants have been trained to handle sexual harassment situations. VietJet is not the first firm to use racy calendars to raise its profile. Italian tire maker

Pirelli - known for its calendars of glamorous female models - has overhauled the annual offering in recent years with less of a focus on nudity. Irish budget carrier Ryanair Holdings PLC in 2014 scrapped an annual charity calendar featuring female cabin crew posing in bikinis in favour of more family-friendly images.

Khanh, who said the proceeds from sales of the VietJet calendar go to charity, acknowledged that there could be big changes in the content for the next version. "Male models is a good idea for us to introduce in our calendars next year," he said. — Reuters

World stocks in year-end rally as dollar retreats

LONDON: Buoyant commodity prices alongside a pullback in US bond yields and the dollar propelled world stocks to new record highs yesterday, signaling the rally would likely extend into 2018.

MSCI's world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, has risen about 22 percent this year and looks set for a record 14th straight month of gains. US stock futures too rose, indicating a stronger day ahead on Wall Street. This year's equity rally has been led by the bumper performance in Asia, which is on track for its best year since 2009, with MSCI's index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan approaching late-2007 highs.

Equity markets have fed off this year's recovery in world trade and economic growth, which have in turn lifted company earnings

and commodity prices, with copper futures at new four-year highs for an annual gain of over 30 percent. Oil prices meanwhile are near 2-1/2-year highs and gold climbed to a one-month top. Traders anticipate the equity rally continuing into next year, especially if US tax cuts further boost growth in the world's largest economy. "Commodities are driving trade in the final days of 2017," analysts at London Capital Group said in a note. "(Copper) has rallied 25 percent since the beginning of June, and with this in mind Dr Copper is telling us we could be in for a strong 2018," they added, referring to the perception of copper as a key barometer of economic growth. Another tailwind for world stocks is the fact that US tax cuts, which will lead to significantly higher borrowing in coming years, have not so far translated into higher borrowing costs.

In fact, US 10-year Treasury yields have retreated after briefly last week breaking above the key 2.50 percent level, falling as much as seven basis points on Wednesday.

Two-year yields too are off nine-year highs after showed US consumer confidence tumbling from 17-year highs. Brokerage FXTM noted that 10-year yields had reversed almost half the gains they had made since mid-December.—Reuters

Moody's slashes Steinhoff credit rating

JOHANNESBURG: Credit ratings agency Moody's downgraded debt held by embattled South Africa-based home retail giant Steinhoff yesterday and warned of further downgrades amid "increasing pressure" on the company's cashflow. Moody's said in a statement it was cutting Steinhoff's credit rating from "B1", or speculative with a high credit risk, to "Caal", or poor quality and a very high risk.

Earlier this month, Steinhoff revealed it was under criminal and tax investigations over suspicions of accounting irregularities, with a reported six billion euro (\$7 billion) hole in its accounts. German investigators have been conducting an inquiry into possible "falsification of a balance sheet" since the European summer, according to media there.

That news sent the stocks of the Frankfurt-listed firm tumbling more than 80 percent, with South African authorities, where the company has a secondary listing, calling for action against the company. Moody's had already cut Steinhoff's credit rating by four notches to "B1" after the scandal was revealed. Moody's said that the de-

cision to further cut Steinhoff's credit worthiness to "Caal" was intended to "reflect the increasing pressure on the company's liquidity profile".

"The situation has been compounded by its operating companies placing an additional liquidity burden on Steinhoff's centralized treasury," the statement said.

"Moody's notes that the operating companies have experienced a reduction or cancellation of credit insurance lines in recent weeks, with credit facilities increasingly being suspended or withdrawn." Steinhoff had been a darling of fund managers with its eclectic, sprawling, consumer-focused empire with outposts in 30 countries. Its businesses include British high street discounter Poundland, France's Ligue 1 sponsor Conforama and Pep Africa, which runs the continent's largest clothing factory.

Chief executive Markus Jooste and chairman Christo Wiese both resigned in the wake of the scandal. David Shapiro, the deputy chairman of the Sasfin Securities brokerage, told the eNCA broadcaster that Steinhoff remains mired in uncertainty following the downgrade.

"This is big. We've had other (corporate scandals) but this is big... They're not quite sure the magnitude of these irregularities," he said. "So you sit back and say 'hold on a second, what happened around those board tables?'" On Tuesday December 5, Steinhoff shares were changing hands for three euros a piece in Frankfurt, but by the market open yesterday they were selling for just 30 cents. — AFP

Business

Debts lurking in China's shadow banking system

China's leaders fret over obscure shadow lending

SHANGHAI/BEIJING/HONG KONG: In March 2013, retired chemical company employee Anne Xing, her older sister and their husbands visited a China Everbright Bank branch on the outskirts of Shanghai. A private wealth manager at the bank had a special deal to offer them.

"He said there is a high-quality product," Xing recalls. "Only elite customers can buy it. We asked him if there was any risk. He said there was no risk." The two couples sank about 5 million yuan (about \$762,000) into the investment product, which offered 9.5 percent annual interest over two years - substantially higher than the 3.75 percent they could earn on a fixed, two-year deposit at the same bank. Xing's sister said she sold a property for 3 million yuan to fund her investment. The two families say they didn't know exactly where the money was going at the time. When the contracts arrived weeks later, it turned out they had entered China's \$9.8 trillion shadow banking industry.

By December 2015, the interest payment for the second year was already well overdue and the couples were worried. "Then the sky came crashing down," Xing said. "The money was gone, a couple of million."

Everbright had actually sold the two couples a stake in Chang'an Trust Coal Industry Resource Investment Fund Three - A Collective Investment Fund Plan. Their money had been lent to a coal miner that soon went bust. The Chang'an Trust product was one of countless so-called wealth management products sold to investors to help raise money for a massive wave of lending in China that began in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis.

The widely publicized default burned Anne Xing and other investors who now are suing Chang'an. "I've become like the mentally ill, really," says Xing. Amid the acrimony over the loss, Xing says, her sister divorced her husband.

Everbright did not respond to several requests from Reuters for comment. In a written response, Chang'an said: "This case is currently being processed by the courts. Please wait for the judgment."

Conducted outside the normal banking system, lending like this is at the heart of China's massive shadow banking industry. For China's rulers, the fear is that there may be more bad loans in the shadows of the financial system. The danger is that a big default or series of loan losses could cascade through the world's second-biggest economy, leading to a sudden halt in bank lending.

Top leaders in Beijing have acknowledged that the colossal volume of complex and potentially risky lending obscured in shadow banking compounds the threat posed by the economy's tremendous accumulation of debt since the global financial crisis. So far there have been relatively few defaults like the Chang'an product. Some regional banks have been restructured

after a spike in shadow loan failures. Financial risk also poses a formidable challenge for the Communist Party. At a top level conference in July, party leader Xi Jinping declared that financial security was vital to national security. Economic pain from shadow banking could also test the political climate for an authoritarian regime that justifies its one-party rule as the price the country must pay for stability and prosperity. Middle-income and high-income earners, the core of support for the Communist Party, have invested heavily in wealth management products, according to surveys of investors.

Regulators take action

Inside and outside China, alarms are now sounding about mounting debt. Zhou Xiaochuan, the head of China's central bank, the People's Bank of China, has openly warned that authorities need to curb financial risks that might lead to a "Minsky Moment" - a sudden collapse of asset prices, sparked by debt or currency pressures, after a long period of growth. Zhou said corporate debt levels were relatively high and household debt was rising fast, in remarks in October on the sidelines of the Communist Party's 19th congress in Beijing. "We should focus on preventing a dramatic adjustment," he said.

Earlier this year, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's downgraded China's sovereign rating, citing concerns over the nation's rising debt.

Countries with close trading ties to China are monitoring efforts to re-

strain shadow banking and the accumulation of debt. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) warned in its October Financial Stability Review that "financial stability risks in China remain high." The RBA acknowledged that Chinese authorities were taking steps to curb risk. "But the more that leverage and risky lending grow, the more likely that China's economic transition will include a significant disruption of some form," the bank said.

A blizzard of regulations, high-profile arrests and official warnings over the last 18 months have sent a clear signal that authorities are attempting to reign in excesses. A veteran of the country's financial reforms, Guo Shuqing, was appointed in February to head the China Banking Regulatory Commission. Guo almost immediately issued a flurry of directives aimed at forcing banks to improve risk management and curb the sale of complex, high-yielding wealth management products to investors.

In November, Beijing set up the Financial Stability and Development Committee, a top-level panel of regulators tasked with policing tougher rules and closing loopholes that allow risky lending. Days later, the People's Bank of China and financial regulators jointly issued new draft rules to govern the wealth management industry. There are signs it is working. The growth of shadow banking, particularly the sale of wealth management products, slowed over the



BEIJING: Top leaders in Beijing have acknowledged that the colossal volume of potentially risky lending obscured in shadow banking compounds the threat posed by the economy's tremendous accumulation of debt since the global financial crisis.

first half of 2017, according to reports from Moody's and Fitch Ratings.

But this too presents a political challenge: An overzealous crackdown could lead to financial and economic disruption, economists say. Shadow lending plays a major role in maintaining the 6.5 percent annual growth target that Xi Jinping has set for China's economy. Slower growth may also expose less profitable borrowers to a higher danger of default, potentially creating the conditions for an upheaval. And smaller banks, which have benefitted from the explosion of shadow banking, are resisting the new wealth management rules.

China's banking regulator and the central bank did not respond to questions from Reuters about the risks of shadow banking. In the case of the product sold to Xing and her relatives, the money raised through the Chang'an Trust fund had been lent via a complicated series of transactions to Shanxi Loujun Mining, a subsidiary of coal miner Liansheng Energy. Liansheng went bust in late 2013, before the loan matured. The Liansheng failure was one of the first defaults that exposed the risks in shadow banking. It was widely covered in China's state-controlled media.

At first, Anne Xing says, they thought they were buying an Everbright Bank product. If she had known what she was really getting, she said, "I one hundred percent would not have bought it."

Before the 2008 financial crisis, there was very little shadow banking in China. In the aftermath of that shock, Chinese authorities launched a massive effort to stimulate the economy, mostly through a huge increase in lending. This led to a boom in property and infrastructure spending that continues today. Demand for credit increased sharply, especially from local and municipal government-owned companies.

To meet this demand, banks began selling wealth management products offering higher interest rates than normal deposits. Many in-

vestors believed these products were implicitly guaranteed by the issuer, even if it was not expressly stated in the contract. Banks also borrowed cash from other banks and companies.

For banks, these funds can then be lent to borrowers prepared to pay higher rates. But the banks want to sidestep rules designed to restrict lending to overheated sectors including property, mining and other resources. So, people in the shadow banking industry say, these loans are often disguised by directing them through a complex chain of intermediaries, including trusts, securities companies, other banks and asset managers. To earn interest on these loans, a bank will buy a financial product from one of the intermediaries, which directs earnings back to the bank. That allows the bank to describe what is really a loan as an investment on its books. This type of lending can be more profitable because banks can set aside much less capital than they are required to hold for regular loans as a safeguard against defaults.

"We want to grow quickly"

By the end of 2015, shadow lending was growing faster than traditional bank lending, and was equivalent to 57 percent of total bank loans, according to a 2016 report from investment bank CLSA. This dramatically accelerated the speed at which overall debt expanded in China's financial system. Moody's said in a November report that China's shadow banking assets grew more than 20 percent in 2016 to 64 trillion yuan (\$9.8 trillion), equivalent to 86.5 percent of gross domestic product. To fund this lending, there is intense pressure on staff selling wealth management products who earn small salaries and rely on commission for most of their income. A typical base salary would be about 5,000 yuan (\$763) a month, according to an employee of a Shanghai-based trust, who spoke on condition of anonymity. —Reuters



China's shadow banking industry worth \$9.8 trillion

Sports

Shooting federations thank Amir for his continuous support

Meeting discuss latest preparations by subcommittees

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Mnahi Al-Osaimi thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his continued support of shooters at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club (KSSC) and his encouragement for them to continue making achievements in all regional, international and Olympic arenas.

Al-Osaimi was speaking during a meeting of the Higher Organizing Committee (HOC) of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Seventh International Shooting Grand Prix at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

The meeting discussed the latest preparations by the subcommittees each with its duties. He said all preparations must be made early as delegations will be arriving ahead of time for

training camps, so activities and other procedures must go on smoothly from the minute the delegation arrives until departure.

Al-Osaimi said Kuwait is known for its outstanding organization of major events and HH the Amir Grand Prix is no exception and is now on the international agenda and attracts well known shooters from all over the world.

Heads of committees gave detailed explanations on what has been done so far and presented their plans and duties of the committees' members and the mechanism of coordinating with other committees.

Obaid Al-Osaimi expressed his confidence in all committees due to their experience in organizing such an event. Al-Osaimi thanked all those who attended the meeting and urged to exert all efforts in order to come out with this championship the way that fits the name of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Obaid Al-Osaimi (right) chairing the meeting

Worcester sign Anton Bresler

LONDON: English Premiership side Worcester signed second row Anton Bresler yesterday and announced Christian Scotland-Williamson is leaving to chase his NFL dream. Scotland-Williamson will go to Florida to work with NFL coaches over the next few months in the hope of earning a place on one of the 32 teams for the 2018 season.

The 24-year-old made 23 appearances for Worcester after joining them in 2014, with his time at the club disrupted by injuries. Scotland-Williamson said: "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me and one that I simply can't turn down.

"I'm incredibly excited about testing myself and trying to get on the team roster at an NFL club." Filling the gap left by his exit is Namibian-born Bresler, who arrives from Edinburgh. Bresler, 29, who made 61 appearances for Edinburgh after joining them in 2014 from Super Rugby outfit The Sharks, said: "I'm genuinely excited at the prospect of playing Aviva Premiership rugby and can't wait to get out on the field to show what I can do." —AFP



Anton Bresler

Ex-sumo champion charged over assault scandal

TOKYO: Former sumo grand champion Harumafuji was charged yesterday for a brutal assault on a rival wrestler while out drinking in a scandal that has humiliated Japan's ancient sport. The Mongolian former "yokozuna", sumo's highest rank, however, faced a summary indictment, a spokesman with a local public prosecutors office told AFP, meaning he was expected to be fined but exempted from standing trial.

Prosecutors decided to impose the lighter penalty on him considering his retirement to take responsibility for the scandal, Jiji Press said. The indictment came nearly a month after he stepped down, apologising for the embarrassment caused by a violent outburst in October that left countryman Takanoiwa with a fractured skull.

"I'm truly sorry for hurting Takanoiwa mentally and physically," Harumafuji told police, according to Jiji Press. Harumafuji's exit mirrors that of another Mongolian star, Asashoryu, who stepped down in 2010 after being accused of breaking a man's nose in a drunken brawl outside a Tokyo nightclub.

Yokozuna are expected to be beyond moral reproach but the writing was on the wall for Harumafuji after he confessed to hitting Takanoiwa for texting his girlfriend while he was scolding him over his poor attitude.

The 33-year-old Harumafuji, who reached sumo's hallowed rank five years ago, denied reports he had used a beer bottle in the attack but admitted punching Takanoiwa and bashing him with a karaoke remote control.

Takanoiwa, 27, was hospitalised after suffering concussion and a fractured skull base in the fight, which broke out at a bar in the western Japanese city of Tottori in late October, according to local media.

His stable-master subsequently reported the incident to police, who invited Harumafuji in for questioning. The furore has reopened old wounds in the closeted world of sumo after an increase in violence, allegations of illegal betting, links with crime syndicates and drug busts shook the roly-poly sport in recent years.



TOKYO: This photo taken on January 6, 2017 shows Mongolian-born sumo grand champion or "yokozuna" Harumafuji performing a ring-entering ceremony at Meiji Shrine in Tokyo. — AFP

A sumo stable-master was sentenced to six years in prison in 2007 after a trainee wrestler was beaten to death, triggering outrage across Japan. The 135-kilo (298-pound) Harumafuji, whose nifty technique makes up for his relative lack of size, won nine Emperor's Cups before his fall from grace. — AFP

Sports

Cook's record double ends Australia's whitewash hopes

Alastair betters Wally Hammond's 200 set back in 1928

MELBOURNE: Alastair Cook reeled off a record-breaking double century to put England in full control of the fourth Ashes Test with a formidable 164-run innings lead in Melbourne yesterday. The phlegmatic opener emphatically bounced back after a lean run of scores to finish the day unconquered on 244 off 409 balls. At the close, England were 491 for nine. Along the way, Cook surpassed the highest score by a visiting batsman in a Test match at the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground, bettering the 208 by West Indian great Viv Richards in 1984.

He earlier bettered Wally Hammond's 200 set back in 1928 as the highest Test score at the MCG by an Englishman. Cook's fifth double-century in 151 Test matches also catapulted him above West Indian Brian Lara to become the sixth highest run-getter in Test cricket with 11,956. "It's probably one of the more emotional (ones) from where I'd been on this tour," Cook admitted. "It meant a lot last night and then today I was quite proud that I managed to back it up after all the emotion came out yesterday to get a real big one for the team was really important."

"It's just a shame it's three or four weeks too late. I'll have to live with that for a long time, but it's nice to score a few." Australia, who already have won back the Ashes with an unassailable 3-0 lead, looked unable to stem the flow of runs in the final session as Stuart Broad supported Cook to take the game away from the hosts.

'WE'RE BEING OUTPLAYED'

Coach Darren Lehmann virtually conceded Australia could not win even with two days remain-

ing, meaning hopes of a 5-0 series whitewash were over. "We are just being outplayed by a better side at the moment," Lehmann said. "We are 164 runs behind, we would have to score 450 runs in a day, we have to worry about getting past them first."

Broad, who survived a series of hair-raising short-pitched balls at the onset of his innings, thrived in his partnership with Cook, pushing the tourists close to 500 on a lifeless pitch. It needed multiple replays before Broad was finally given out for 56 off 63 balls to a sprawling outfielder catch by Usman Khawaja off Pat Cummins, ending a demoralising 100-run stand off 110 balls with Cook.

Cook cashed in on two dropped catches by Australia skipper Steve Smith along the way to add to the home side's misery. Smith, who dropped Cook on 66 in the slips on Wednesday, put down the former England skipper for the second time on 153 in a sharp right-handed chance at square leg.

The tourists lost seven wickets for 299 on the dominant third day with captain Joe Root again failing to convert a half-century into three figures when he top-edged a hook shot off Cummins to Lyon at deep square leg.

Root reached his third half-century of the series but was clearly furious with himself when he holed out on 61 in the morning session. Dawid Malan, a century-maker in the third Test in Perth, was out leg before wicket with Josh Hazlewood's second delivery of the second new ball for 14.

Malan conferred with Cook before deciding not to review, yet replays showed a distinct 'Hot Spot' nick on his bat which would have kept him at the crease if he had challenged the decision. —AFP

Kohli set for biggest year as Afghanistan make Test bow

PARIS: Virat Kohli's India dominated 2017 in Test cricket as they shored up top spot in the rankings, but will face far tougher challenges in South Africa and England next year while Afghanistan and Ireland start a new Test era.

The 29-year-old Kohli racked up three double hundreds as his team extended their winning streak to nine Test series as Bangladesh and Australia were beaten, with Sri Lanka seen off home and away.

India have never won in South Africa, though, while the two-time World Cup champions were well beaten on their last two visits to England — 3-1 in 2015 and 4-0 in 2011. But this is a fantastic side that many have hailed as India's greatest ever, with Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara and Murali

Vijay piling on the runs and spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja wreaking havoc. Despite sitting second in the rankings, South Africa are not the force they once were and lost at home to a Ben Stokes-inspired England in 2016, while Joe Root's men showed plenty of cracks in their armour during the meek surrender of the Ashes Down Under.

Until last week Kohli held both the number one spot in the ODI and Twenty20 batting rankings, and has developed into one of the best young Test captains in the world, at a time when 26-year-old Root and Australia's Steve Smith, 28, have also taken charge of their countries.

"I'd say Virat is one of the best captains at the moment, the most improved — there's a big change from when I first saw him captaining to now," said Proteas batsman AB de Villiers ahead of their first Test against India in Cape Town on January 5. On a personal level, though, the biggest tour of 2018 for Kohli will be when he takes his team to England for a Test series in August. Despite having scored three hundreds against England in two home series, Kohli had possibly his worst ever tour when he visited the UK three years ago. —AFP



SCOREBOARD

MELBOURNE: Scoreboard at the close on day three in the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England in Melbourne yesterday:

Australia first innings 327 (D. Warner 103, S. Smith 76; S. Broad 4-51)	T. Curran c Paine b Hazlewood	4
	S. Broad c Khawaja b Cummins	56
	J. Anderson not out	0
	Extras (b4, lb5, nb3)	12
	Total (9 wickets; 144 overs)	491
England first innings (overnight 192-2)	Fall of wickets: 1-35 (Stoneman), 2-80 (Vince), 3-218 (Root), 4-246 (Malan), 5-279 (Baird), 6-307 (Ali), 7-366 (Woakes), 8-373 (Curran), 9-473 (Broad).	
A. Cook not out	244	
M. Stoneman c and b Lyon	15	
J. Vince lbw Hazlewood	17	
J. Root c Lyon b Cummins	61	
D. Malan lbw b Hazlewood	14	
J. Bairstow c Paine b Lyon	22	
M. Ali c S. Marsh b Lyon	20	
C. Woakes c Paine b Cummins	26	
	Bowling: Hazlewood 30-5-95-3, Bird 30-5-108-0 (3nb), Lyon 42-9-109-3, Cummins 29-1-117-3, M. Marsh 12-1-42-0, Smith 1-0-11-0.	



MELBOURNE: England's batsman Alastair Cook (L) cuts a ball away as Australia's Cameron Bancroft (C) and Tim Paine (R) look on, on the third day of the fourth Ashes cricket Test match at the MCG in Melbourne YESTERDAY. —AFP

Sports

Subban made 27 saves as Vegas defeat Ducks 4-1

Win move Predators past Blues into first place

WASHINGTON: Shea Theodore, Cody Eakin, William Karlsson and David Perron registered goals, and Malcolm Subban made 27 saves as the Vegas Golden Knights defeated the Anaheim Ducks 4-1 on Wednesday night. Vegas won its fifth consecutive game and remained undefeated in regulation play through 10 games (9-0-1), the longest point streak by a team in its inaugural NHL season. Anaheim had a two-game winning streak snapped. Rickard Rakell registered the lone Ducks' goal, and John Gibson made 24 saves.

COYOTES 3, AVALANCHE 1

Tobias Rieder, Alex Goligoski and Lawson Crouse scored goals, Antti Raanta made 25 saves, and Arizona defeated Colorado. The Coyotes won for the second time in three games after going 1-8-2 in their previous 11 contests. Mikko Rantanen had a goal and Semyon Varlamov stopped 24 shots for the Avalanche, who lost home games to the two worst teams in the league this month. The Buffalo Sabres beat Colorado 4-2 on Dec. 5.

JETS 4, OILERS 3

Winnipeg may have picked up a valuable two points with a victory over Edmonton, but it also lost offensive leader Mark Scheifele with a serious arm or shoulder injury. After assisting on a goal, Scheifele was taken hard into the end boards. The Jets' second-leading scorer fell awkwardly, immediately grabbed his right shoulder and writhed on the ice for about 30 seconds. He finally got up under his own power and went straight to the dressing room. He did not return. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 21 shots in picking up his 13th win of the season for the Jets while Cam Talbot got in front of 35 shots directed his way at the other end of the ice for the Oilers.

WILD 4, STARS 2

Mikael Granlund's second-period goal stood up as the game-winner, and Alex Stalock made 24 saves as Minnesota held on for a victory over Dallas. Jared Spurgeon and Eric Staal added goals for the Wild and Charlie Coyle had a pair of assists. Tyler Seguin and Mattias Janmark scored for the Stars, but it wasn't enough as Dallas saw its two-game winning streak snapped. Ben Bishop kept his team within striking distance with 27 saves.

PREDATORS 2, BLUES 1

Pekka Rinne stopped 29 shots and Nashville got goals from Craig Smith and Calle Jarnkrok in a win over St. Louis. The win moved the Predators past the Blues into first place in the Central Division. The Blues fell behind 2-0 after the first two periods before ruining Rinne's bid for his fourth shutout of the season on a goal by Vladimir Sobotka, who deflected a shot by Kyle Brodziak with 6:23 to go in the third period.

RANGERS 1, CAPITALS 0 (SO)

Mats Zuccarello and Mika Zibanejad scored during a shootout as New York defeated Washington. Both backup goaltenders kept the game scoreless through regulation and overtime. The Rangers' Ondrej Pavelec turned aside 27 shots through the first 60 minutes, three more in overtime and two during the shootout. The Capitals Philipp Grubauer stopped 37 shots, including 18 in the third period and one in overtime. Grubauer was beaten on both of New York's shootout attempts.

BRUINS 5, SENATORS 1

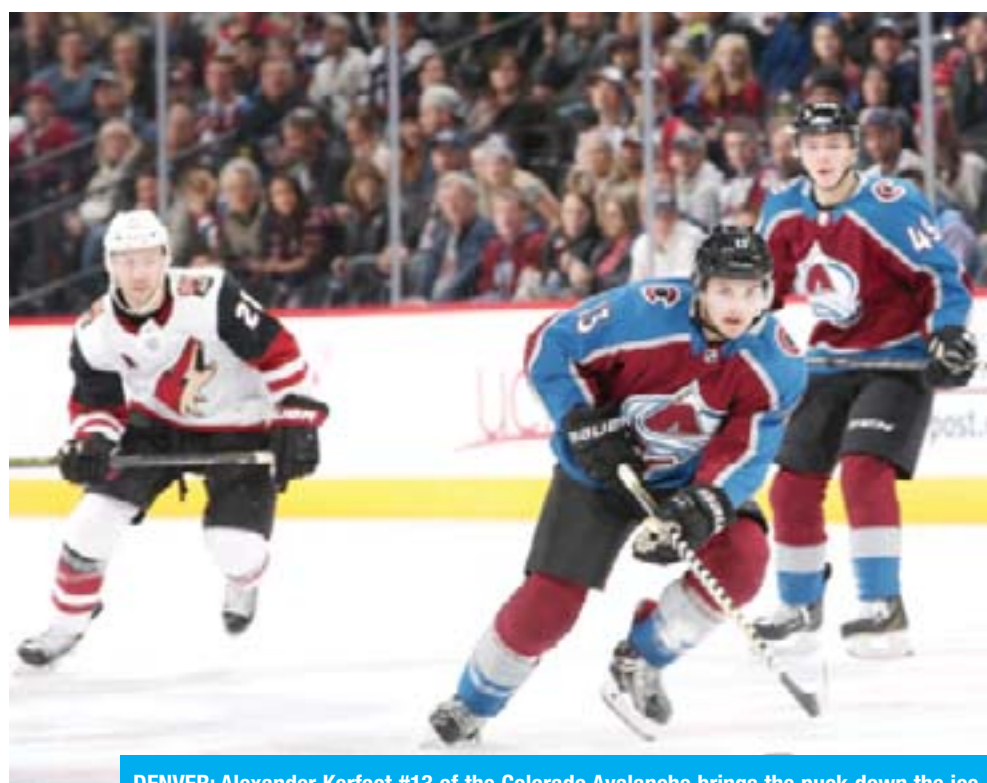
Riley Nash scored his first two goals since Nov. 28 and added an assist, and Boston came out of the holiday break with a convincing victory over Ottawa. Nash matched his career high for points in a single game. Tuukka Rask made 25 saves to go to 9-0-1 in his past 10 starts. David Backes and Danton Heinen both posted a goal and an assist, and Kevan Miller scored his first goal in 35 games, and defenseman Matt Grzelcyk had two assists for Boston. Thomas Chabot scored the lone goal for the Senators on a slap shot.

ISLANDERS 3, SABRES 2 (OT)

Mathew Barzal scored 1:08 into overtime as New York mounted a late comeback to beat Buffalo. Josh Bailey forced overtime by scoring with 1:09 left in regulation for the Islanders, who won two straight for the first time this month. Jason Chimera scored in the second period and Jaroslav Halak made 35 saves. Zemgus Girgensoons and Kyle Okposo scored for the Sabres, who have lost 11 of 14 (3-7-4). Robin Lehner made 31 saves.

DEVILS 3, RED WINGS 1

Rookie Nico Hischier scored two goals, and



DENVER: Alexander Kerfoot #13 of the Colorado Avalanche brings the puck down the ice against the Arizona Coyotes at the Pepsi Center on Wednesday in Denver, Colorado.—AFP

Cory Schneider made 31 saves as New Jersey extended its winning streak to a season-high five games with a victory over Detroit. Hischier, the top pick in the 2017 draft, scored twice in the first period, the second two-goal game of his young career. The Red Wings answered back in the second period with a Justin Abdelkader goal but could not score the equalizer against an exceptionally sharp Schneider. The Devils' Sami Vatanen collected an empty-net goal to close out the scoring in the final minute.

PENGUINS 5, BLUE JACKETS 4 (SO)

Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby scored in a shootout as Pittsburgh overcame three two-goal deficits to beat Columbus. The Penguins' Jake Guentzel scored with 1:40 left in the third period to force a 4-4 tie. Conor Sheary, Phil Kessel and Malkin also scored for the Penguins.

Sonny Milano and Boone Jenner staked the Blue Jackets to a 2-0 lead in the first before leading scorer Artemi Panarin scored once in the second and once in the third.

HURRICANES 3, CANADIENS 1

Sebastian Aho, the third member of Carolina to put a shot on goal in a five-second sequence, scored the winning goal against Montreal. Aho's go-ahead power-play goal came with 10:45 remaining. He added an empty-netter with 1:24 to play, giving him 10 goals this season. Teuvo Teravainen opened the scoring for the Hurricanes, who won six of their last seven games. Alex Galchenyuk scored for the Canadiens, who began a stretch of three road games in four nights. Cam Ward, who made a third consecutive start for the first time this season, was credited with 23 saves. — Reuters

‘Winning Six Nations top priority’

PARIS: New France coach Jacques Brunel told AFP that his immediate ambition is to win the Six Nations and end the negative spiral which has enveloped the struggling national team. Bordeaux boss Brunel, 63, takes over from Guy

Noves who became the first French coach to be sacked on Wednesday after a meagre seven wins from 22 matches alongside 14 defeats and a humiliating home draw with 2019 World Cup hosts Japan.

Under his watch, France lost six consecutive games between June and November this year. “Our aim is to win the Six Nations,” former Italy coach Brunel told AFP. “Perhaps in the past, we were too focused on winning the World Cup and not enough on the present moment and that is the Six Nations. Every year, France must be competitive for the final victory.”

Brunel cautioned against making the same er-

rors which jinxed Noves who called up 74 players during his time at the helm. “There are still two years before the World Cup. For the Six Nations, we must take the best players, the fittest players. In any team, you need a mix of young and more experienced players.

“There are quality young players—but you have to find that balance.” Brunel joins the national set-up from Top 14 side Bordeaux-Begles just five weeks before France face Ireland in their Six Nations opener. His contract stretches to the 2019 World Cup.

“We have to go back to the simple things,” added Brunel with the Six Nations opener

against Ireland just five weeks away. Brunel admitted that he had initially hesitated to take the job when it was offered with his Bordeaux team within touching distance of the Top 14 play-offs. “It was a surprise. Never in my life did I expect to be asked,” he said.

“On the one hand, I couldn’t imagine what was going to happen with Guy Noves, although I know that as a coach we are subject to these hazards. “On the other hand, I have a job at Bordeaux-Begles so I didn’t know if I could release myself. Also, I have made three World Cups (as assistant coach to the French team and as coach of Italy), —AFP

Sports

Durant leads Warriors over Utah, Cavaliers fall to Kings

Chicago rallies to beat New York 92-87

UTAH: Kevin Durant ignited a third-quarter runaway with consecutive dunks, propelling Golden State to a victory over Utah. Durant had 21 points, six rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots without playing in the fourth quarter. The Warriors improved to 9-1 since Stephen Curry left the lineup with a sprained right ankle earlier this month. Playing their second road game in two nights, the Jazz led by as many as seven points in the second quarter and trailed only 48-47 at halftime. Rodney Hood paced Utah with 26 points.

by Caris LeVert with 22 points. Davis also had a season-high six blocks and tied a career high with four made 3-pointers.

KINGS 109, CAVALIERS 95

Vince Carter scored 24 points in Sacramento's improbable win over Cleveland. The 40-year-old guard, who missed the team's previous three games—two by coach's decision and one as a result of rib pain—received multiple standing ovations from the Golden 1 Center crowd. He finished 10 of 12 from the field and had big-time shots to answer almost every time Cleveland tried to cut into the lead. Cleveland's LeBron James had a triple-double of 16 points, 14 assists and 10 rebounds.

BULLS 92, KNICKS 87

Kris Dunn scored 17 points and hit a pair of free throws with 7.8 seconds remaining, and Lauri Markkanen finished with 12 points as Chicago rallied to beat New York. Robin Lopez finished with 11 points for Chicago, which has won nine of its last 11 games. Justin Holiday, who capped the victory with two free throws



NEW ORLEANS: E'Twaun Moore #55 of the New Orleans Pelicans shoots the ball over Nik Stauskas #2 of the Brooklyn Nets at the Smoothie King Center on Wednesday in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

in the closing seconds, also finished with 11 points in the victory. Kristaps Porzingis led New York with 23 points to go along with 17 by Courtney Lee and 11 by Jarrett Jack. The Knicks lost their third straight game.

TIMBERWOLVES 128, NUGGETS 125 (OT)

Jimmy Butler scored 12 of his game-high 39 points in overtime to help Minnesota top Denver. Butler picked up the slack in overtime after Karl-Anthony Towns and Taj Gibson fouled out and point guard Jeff Teague exited with an injury. The Timberwolves won their fifth game in

a row while halting the Nuggets' winning streak at three games. Denver got 28 points from Will Barton.

THUNDER 124, RAPTORS 107

Paul George had 33 points, and Russell Westbrook added 30 points and 13 assists as Oklahoma City beat Toronto. Carmelo Anthony and Steven Adams contributed 18 points apiece for the Thunder. C.J. Miles led the Raptors with 20 points, and Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points. DeMar DeRozan had 15 points but made just four of 16 shots from the floor. — Reuters

PELICANS 128, NETS 113

Anthony Davis scored a team-high 33 points, DeMarcus Cousins had 27 points and 14 rebounds, and Rajon Rondo dished out a career-high 25 assists to power the New Orleans Pelicans to a 128-113 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Wednesday night at the Smoothie King Center. Jrue Holiday added 23 points and E'Twaun Moore had 20 for the Pelicans, who won their third consecutive game. The Nets lost for the seventh time in eight games. Brooklyn was led



Westbrook adds 30 points and 13 assists

Fitness comes first for returning Murray, Djokovic

LONDON: Former world number ones Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic are relishing their return to competition after serious injuries cut their last campaigns short, but the overriding aim for both players in the New Year is to stay fit and healthy.

Murray, who has struggled with a persistent hip injury since the Briton's quarter-final exit at Wimbledon in July, pulled out of the US Open and dropped to 16th in the world rankings. The 30-year-old is scheduled to participate in the Brisbane International which starts on Dec. 31 as he gears up for the Australian Open, but a season blighted by injury has changed the double Wimbledon champion's outlook.

"When I was fit and healthy last year (2016), you think about winning all the major events, getting to number one and winning every competition that you are in and that is

what drives you," Murray told Sky Sports.

"When you miss four or five months and there has been a bit of uncertainty about my hip (that changes). The goals change and I remember now how much I loved playing tennis—it isn't about winning every match I play in the future or winning more slams.

"I want to get back to playing tennis, I want to be fit and healthy and that is what is driving me just now... I was pretty unhealthy for most of this year and I am getting there but it is a slow process."

Djokovic suffered a year-long dip in form before an elbow injury forced him to retire in the Wimbledon quarter-finals. The Serb has not played competitively since and underwent surgery. "It's been a real roller-coaster ride for me for a year and a half with this issue," world number 12 Djokovic told Sport360 in an interview ahead of his return at the World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi.

"I've never had surgery in my life, I've never had any major injuries that kept me away from the tour for such a long time... I've learned a lesson because I really want to avoid getting to that stage of an injury ever in my career after this.

"I can't wait to get back on the competition level but it was a great experience for me to have. And it was a somewhat necessary experience because I got maybe too comfortable with not having major injuries." — Reuters

NBA results/standings

Golden State 126, Utah 101; Memphis 109, LA Lakers 99; Sacramento 109, Cleveland 95; Chicago 92, NY Knicks 87; Minnesota 128, Denver 125 (OT); New Orleans 128, Brooklyn 113; Oklahoma City 124, Toronto 107; Atlanta 113, Washington 99; Boston 102, Charlotte 91; Dallas 98, Indiana 94.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Boston	28	10	.737	-	Minnesota	22	13	.629	-
Toronto	23	10	.697	2.5	Oklahoma City	20	15	.571	2
NY Knicks	17	17	.500	9	Denver	19	16	.543	3
Philadelphia	15	18	.455	10.5	Portland	17	16	.515	4
Brooklyn	12	22	.353	14	Utah	15	21	.417	7.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	24	11	.686	-	Golden State	28	7	.800	-
Detroit	19	14	.576	4	LA Clippers	14	19	.424	13
Indiana	19	16	.543	5	Phoenix	13	23	.361	15.5
Milwaukee	17	15	.531	5.5	Sacramento	12	22	.353	15.5
Chicago	12	22	.353	11.5	LA Lakers	11	22	.333	16
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	19	16	.543	-	Houston	25	7	.781	-
Miami	18	16	.529	0.5	San Antonio	24	11	.686	2.5
Charlotte	12	22	.353	6.5	New Orleans	18	16	.529	8
Orlando	11	24	.314	8	Memphis	11	24	.314	15.5
Atlanta	9	25	.265	9.5	Dallas	11	25	.306	16

Sports

Record breaker Tottenham striker Kane fuelled by doubters

LONDON: Tottenham striker Harry Kane says his record-breaking year was fuelled by a desire to silence the doubters by earning his place alongside Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Kane's hat-trick in Tottenham's 5-2 win over Southampton on Tuesday proved a landmark moment for the England star.

His 39 goals in 36 games smashes Alan Shearer's record for Premier League goals scored in a calendar year, after Shearer managed 36 in 42 games back in 1995. Perhaps even more impressively, Kane will finish this year with 56 goals for club and country, which is two better than Barcelona's Messi has managed and three more than Real Madrid's Ronaldo.

Kane is the first player ever to finish a calendar year with six Premier League hat-tricks. Tottenham fans revelled in their hero's success with a song mocking those that branded Kane a one-

season wonder after he exploded onto the scene with 21 league goals in 2014-15.

Kane scored 25 and 29 in his next two campaigns and has 18 already this term. "Does that still spur me on? Probably, it's always in the back of my mind," Kane said. "I've always said that when people doubt me I want to prove

them wrong whether it's at a young age or now, that's just my mindset, something in me since a young age.

"I'll keep getting better, keep trying to improve. It's a funny song for our fans to sing and I'll keep doing it for nine, 10 seasons and see where it takes me." Kane is a

stickler for targets and rarely unaware of records he is told he may be about to break.

But passing Messi and Ronaldo this year gives the 24-year-old particular satisfaction and he accepts the challenge is now to match the historic duo's longevity. —AFP

“**When people doubt me I want to prove them wrong**”

Preview of EPL matches

LONDON: Match-by-match facts and statistics ahead of the Premier League fixtures on Dec. 30-Dec. 31.

SATURDAY, DEC. 30 BOURNEMOUTH V EVERTON

•Bournemouth's only victory in five Premier League meetings with Everton came in 2016.

•Everton are unbeaten in the last seven league matches, collecting 15 points from a possible 21 to sit ninth in the table with 27 points.

•Eddie Howe's side are winless in eight games, losing four in that period, and are 18th in the table with 17 points.

•Bournemouth have conceded 12 goals in their last four games and have scored three in reply.

•Everton have taken 186 shots on goal this season. Only promoted Brighton and Hove Albion (176) and basement side Swansea City (171) have fewer.

CHELSEA V STOKE CITY

•The two teams have played each other 19 times in the Premier League with Chelsea winning 14 times.

•Third-placed Chelsea have lost once in the last 12 games.

•Stoke have climbed to 13th in the table after a victory over West Bromwich Albion and a draw at Huddersfield in their last two games.

Stoke skipper Ryan Shawcross and Bruno Martins Indi are out injured while on-loan defender Kurt Zouma is not eligible to face his parent club.

•Chelsea's players have made 362 tackles in

the league so far. Only Huddersfield Town (391) have made more.

HUDDERSFIELD TOWN V BURNLEY

•The two teams played out a goalless draw in their only Premier League meeting earlier this season.

•Huddersfield last beat Burnley in 2013, when both teams were in the Championship (second tier).

•Huddersfield Town are 11th in the table with 23 points, 10 points behind Burnley in seventh.

•Burnley have conceded five penalties so far this season.

Only West Ham United (6) have conceded more.

•Burnley have made 114 blocks so far this season, the most by any team.

LIVERPOOL V LEICESTER CITY

•Liverpool have won 11 of the 23 Premier League games they have played against Leicester.

•The last five league encounters between the two teams have produced 17 goals.

•Jurgen Klopp's fourth-placed Liverpool come into the game on the back of a 5-0 win over Swansea City. Eighth-placed Leicester were beaten 2-1 by Watford.

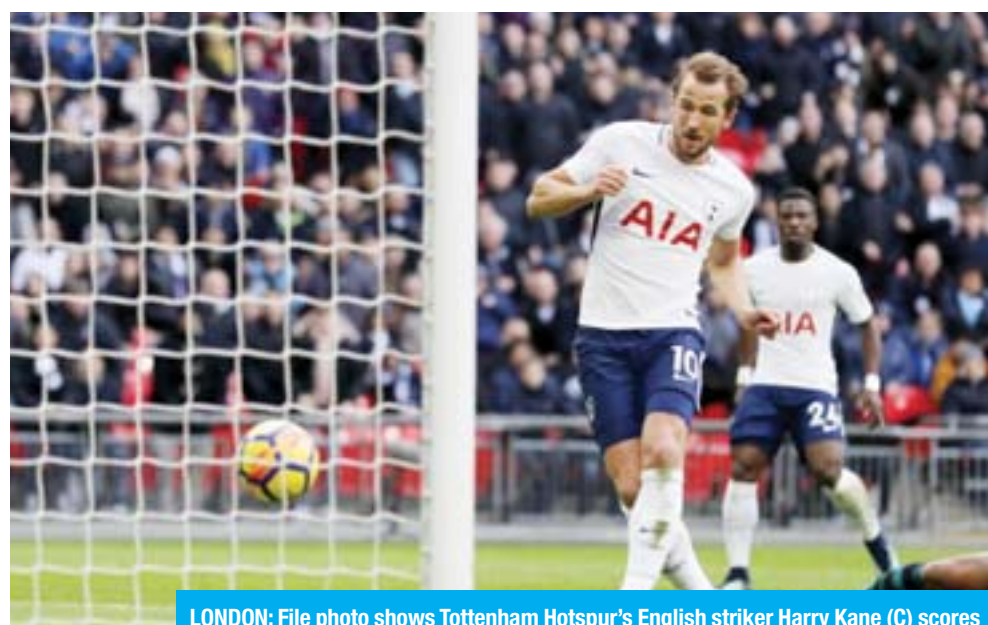
•Leicester midfielder Wilfred Ndidi has made 83 tackles in the league so far, the highest among all players.

•Liverpool midfielder Jordan Henderson and defender Alberto Moreno will miss at least two more league games due to injury while Leicester will be without defender Danny Simpson.

Newcastle United v Brighton and Hove Albion

•Brighton beat Newcastle 1-0 in their only Premier League meeting earlier this season.

•Chris Hughton's Brighton have lost their last four away matches without scoring a single



LONDON: File photo shows Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (C) scores his team's second goal of the English Premier League football match. —AFP

goal.

•Brighton defender Lewis Dunk has made the most blocks with 32 from 20 appearances so far this season.

•Newcastle have lost nine of their last 11 league games.

WATFORD V SWANSEA CITY

•Watford have beaten basement side Swansea three times in five previous Premier League meetings.

•Tenth-placed Watford ended a run of four losses with a win over Leicester City in their last game on Tuesday.

•Watford midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure and striker Richarlison have combined to score 11 league goals this season, the same as the entire Swansea team.

•Swansea goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski has made the most saves this season with 80, ahead of Manchester United's David de Gea (70) and Southampton's Fraser Foster (68).

•Swansea have lost their last seven away matches in the league.

MANCHESTER UNITED V SOUTHAMPTON

•United, currently second in the league table, have recorded eight wins, one draw and one defeat in their 10 league matches at Old Trafford this season.

•Mauricio Pellegrino's Southampton have failed to record a victory in their last seven away league matches.

•United have claimed three wins and one draw in all competitions against Southampton since suffering a 1-0 defeat at Old Trafford in Jan. 2016.

•United goalkeeper David De Gea has made 70 saves in the league this season, second only to Swansea City shot-stopper Lukasz Fabianski (80)

•Jose Mourinho's United have conceded five goals in 10 league games at Old Trafford, the best defensive record at home in the league.

SUNDAY, DEC. 31 CRYSTAL PALACE V MANCHESTER CITY

•City have won their last seven matches in all competitions against Crystal Palace, including their last two league wins with a 5-0 scoreline.

•Pep Guardiola's City have claimed victories in their last 18 league matches.

•City midfielders Kevin de Bruyne, Leroy Sane and David Silva have combined to produce 25 assists in the league so far this season.

•Roy Hodgson's Palace are unbeaten in their last eight league matches with three wins and five draws.

•Palace have scored 16 league goals this season, three more than City's top scorer Raheem Sterling and four more than Sergio Aguero.

WEST BROMWICH ALBION V ARSENAL

•West Brom have won their last two matches at home against Arsenal, scoring five goals and conceding two.

•Arsenal's Arsene Wenger will take charge of his 811th game as a Premier League manager at West Brom, beating Alex Ferguson's record with Manchester United.

•Alan Pardew is yet to record a victory as West Brom manager, having managed three draws and three defeats in his first six matches.

•West Brom striker Salomon Rondon is a doubt for Sunday's clash after suffering a hamstring injury during 0-0 draw against Everton on Tuesday.

•Arsenal's Nacho Monreal, Aaron Ramsey and Olivier Giroud will remain on the sidelines with injuries for the trip to the Hawthorns. — Reuters

Sports

Sterling sparkles as City claim 18th successive win

Guardiola's side look certain to lift title

NEWCASTLE: Manchester City surged 15 points clear at the top of the Premier League as Raheem Sterling fired the runaway leaders to a 1-0 win at Newcastle on Wednesday. Pep Guardiola's side look certain to lift the title after extending their Premier League record winning streak to 18 matches.

Sterling's 31st minute goal ensured City took advantage of second placed Manchester United's costly draw with Burnley on Tuesday. The only club in Europe's five biggest leagues to have had a longer winning run is Bayern Munich, who earned 19 consecutive victories under Guardiola in 2013-14.

City can equal Bayern's mark in their next match at Crystal Palace on December 31. Unbeaten City have also won a record-equalling 11 successive away matches in the English top-flight, a total matched only by Chelsea in 2008. Only Everton have prevented City from collecting maximum points this season, and ultra-defensive Newcastle, who for long spells had 11 men behind the ball, rarely looked like adding their name to that select group once Sterling poked home.

That the winger's fourth strike in three games was the visitors' only goal was a major surprise

as they underlined the gulf in class between the top flight elite and the rest of the division. They wouldn't have been flattered by a five-goal interval advantage as they posted a 20th consecutive unbeaten league game against their hosts.

Sergio Aguero could easily have had a hat-trick, as the Argentina striker struck the post with a close-range volley from a Fernandinho pass. Aguero also saw his goal-bound header from a Kevin De Bruyne free-kick brilliantly saved by Rob Elliot, although the busy Newcastle goalkeeper could do little to prevent City from almost inevitably claiming the deadlock-breaking goal.

Sterling swapped passes with De Bruyne, whose lofted pass perfectly met the England international's run into the area to beat Elliot with a low shot which found the net off the foot of a post from a narrow angle.

Newcastle briefly threatened an equaliser when, after a slip by England full-back Kyle Walker, Nicolas Otamendi had to head Rolando Aarons' chip off the line under pressure from Joselu.

ONE WAY TRAFFIC

It was a rare threat from the hosts, whose negative approach contributed to a fifth succes-

Sterling swapped passes with De Bruyne



NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: Newcastle United's English defender Jamaal Lascelles (L) challenges Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus (R) during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Manchester City at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. — AFP

sive home defeat, the club's worst run at St James' Park for 64 years to leave them a point above the relegation zone.

The loss of injury-prone skipper Vincent Kompany early in the first-half to a recurrence of a long-term calf problem proved to be the

only downside for Guardiola. The Spaniard was able to breathe a sigh of relief when City's Ilkay Gundogan escaped a serious injury when Newcastle winger Jacob Murphy somehow went unpunished for a reckless challenge on the midfielder. — AFP

Brotherly gloves as Donnarumma senior stars in Milan win

MILAN: Teenager Patrick Cutrone scored an extra-time winner and goalkeeper Antonio Donnarumma emerged from the shadow of his star brother Gianluigi as Milan dumped city rivals Inter out of the Italian Cup on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old Cutrone broke through after 104 minutes at the San Siro after the match had ended 0-0 in regular time to set up a two-legged semi-final against Lazio, who saw off Fiorentina 1-0 on Tuesday.

But Milan's third-choice goalkeeper Antonio Donnarumma, 27, elder brother of the regular keeper Gianluigi, 18, played a key role on his debut, after his sibling was ruled out with an injury and second-choice Marco

Storari, 40, pulled out during the warm-up.

The video assistant referee saved Donnarumma's blushes after he put the ball into his own net, but otherwise it was an assured debut for a player previously branded a "parasite" by Milan's hardcore ultra fans.

"When I heard Marco was injured, I was a little stunned, but I told myself to take this chance and have fun," Donnarumma told Milan TV. "I always trained well, I always did my work in silence. Work pays off and fortunately it went well, I could not have asked for a better debut. It was a dream Milan debut."

The victory was also a welcome relief for under-pressure new Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso, who had likened the clash to "a World Cup final". "This game doesn't solve our problems, I would be hypocritical if I said the opposite. However, it gives us confidence and allows us to work with more serenity," said former Milan player Gattuso.

Milan are 11th in Serie A, a massive 21 points behind league leaders Napoli, meaning the Italian Cup and the Europa League, where they have made the last 32, are their only avenues to silverware this season. Both Chinese-owned sides were coming off two consecutive defeats going into the derby, which was played in rain and in front of 50,000 passionate fans. — AFP

Guardiola refuses to start fresh Mourinho war of words

NEWCASTLE: Pep Guardiola refused to be drawn into a war of words with Jose Mourinho after Manchester City maintained their impressive progress towards the Premier League title.

City stretched their commanding advantage at the top to 15 points over Manchester United as Raheem Sterling sealed a 1-0 win at Newcastle to record an 18th consecutive league victory, one short of Bayern Munich's current best for Europe's top five leagues of 19 straight wins.

United manager Mourinho attempted to provoke Guardiola on Tuesday after pointing to their rivals' huge spending power by claiming "City buy full-backs for the price of strikers" and insisting that the £300 million (\$402 million) he has spent

since taking charge at Old Trafford 18 months ago as "not enough".

Mourinho paid £93 million to sign France midfielder Paul Pogba, while also recruiting £30 million defender Eric Bailly, and midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan for £26.3 million. This year, United spent £75 million on striker Romelu Lukaku, as well as £31 million on defender Victor Lindelof and £40 million for midfielder Nemanja Matic.

In comparison, City bought three defenders—Kyle Walker from Tottenham for an initial £45 million, Benjamin Mendy from Monaco for £52 million and Danilo from Real Madrid for £26.5 million as part of a summer outlay that topped £200 million.

When asked about the comments made by the Portuguese, Guardiola said: "I'm so delighted to be here to speak about what happened on the pitch. "About what happened with my colleague speaking off the pitch in the press conference, I'm not the right guy. You want to talk about what happened today on the pitch, I will answer."

City remain on course to win the title in record time after equalling Chelsea's English top flight record of 11 consecutive away wins. But Guardiola will await medical updates on Vincent Kompany, after the injury-prone skipper limped off with a recurrence of a long-term calf problem. —AFP

Wild Oats stripped of Sydney-Hobart title

It is just the third time the result was decided by a protest

SYDNEY: LDV Comanche was named the line honours winner of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race in dramatic circumstances yesterday when Wild Oats XI was stripped of the title over a near-collision.

Wild Oats crossed the line in record time late Wednesday, but an international jury handed the crew a one-hour penalty after Comanche protested over an incident between the 100-footers early in the race.

It is just the third time the result of the annual race, which has been held since 1945, was decided by a protest, and the first since 1990. Comanche owner and skipper Jim Cooney said the complaint was about a near-miss involving his super-yacht and Wild Oats, which appeared to tack too late when exiting Sydney Heads on Tuesday.

An international jury convened on Thursday heard evidence from both crews before finding in favour of Comanche, saying Wild Oats had "failed to keep clear (of Comanche) while tacking". The jury's chairman John Rountree said Wild Oats also did not comply with the rules requiring the super-yacht to make a two-turn penalty after breaking the initial rule. "Wild Oats XI is... penalised a time penalty of one hour to be added to her elapsed time," he told reporters in Hobart.

Comanche finished 26min and 34sec behind Wild Oats' 1 day, 8hrs, 48min and 50sec, enough to seal victory after the one-hour penalty was imposed. Comanche's time of 1 day, 9hrs, 15min, 24sec now stands as the new race record, breaking the previous time set last year by several hours.

Cooney said the jury's decision was "an enormous relief... to feel that we did deserve to win". "I didn't expect to protest in order to win the race," he said, adding that the "rules are there to protect people's lives... and if we can't rely on that it's a difficulty in the sport".

Wild Oats skipper Mark Richards said his crew was "very disappointed" but that they would "take it on the chin". The protest denied Wild Oats its ninth line honours victory in the 628-nautical mile (1,163-kilometre) bluewater classic. Richards denied the situation had been dangerous, but added that he could "see the jury's point of view". "The whole situation was under control. It was just one of those tricky situations in a yacht race and that's what happens, and we all paid the price."

The decision is a blow to Wild Oats' owners, the Oatley family, after the super-yacht was forced to retire from the last two races. "We'd just like to congratulate Jim Cooney and his crew for their success, and move forward," owner Sandy Oatley said.

This is the second time in three years that Comanche has won line honours, although the 2015 triumph was under the ownership of Netscape founder Jim Clark and wife Kristy Hinze.

Cooney purchased the supermaxi from American Clark just two weeks ago, and had handled Comanche only a small number of times before the start of this year's race on Boxing Day.

On board with the Sydneysider was his daughter Julia and son James. Attention now turns to the Tattersall Cup awarded to the overall winner, with Matt Allen's new TP52 Ichi Ban among the favourites. —AFP

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