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# New ministers sworn in by Amir, take oath in Assembly

MPs call for swift reforms • Charities, Entertainment City, bedoons discussed

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** New ministers appointed in the Cabinet on Monday in a limited reshuffle took the constitutional oath in the National Assembly yesterday after they were sworn in by HH the Amir. The ministers were welcomed by MPs with warnings to quickly take the necessary measures to rectify violations made by previous Cabinet ministers and threatened they will be grilled if they fail to initiate reforms.

Opposition MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei gave the new ministers and the entire Cabinet two months to carry out the needed reforms before filing to grill them. He said Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel in particular will be grilled after two months if he fails to take swift actions in the oil sector. The lawmaker stressed the need for actions by the new minister regarding violations in projects and contracts in the oil sector, adding that MPs will assist the minister and cooperate with him if he takes the necessary reforms. The same applies to other new ministers, Subaei added.

MP Saleh Ashour also threatened to grill the new Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Saad Al-Kharraz if he fails to take action against illegal charity societies, saying that the former minister had said that she ordered the closure of 34 illegal charity organizations, but another 85 were still operating illegally.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said Kuwait has been hailed for its organization of charity work in the country, adding that the Cabinet has taken a decision to shut down all charities operating without a proper license. The minister said the government is following up the delay in the implementation of



**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets new ministers appointed in the Cabinet yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 3)

the decision, adding that the United States and several European countries have considered Kuwait a good example in regulating fundraising operations. Sheikh Sabah said the government has succeeded in safeguarding charity work in the country by regulating it and linking charity organizations with the ministries of

foreign affairs, interior and social affairs and labor.

MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei criticized what he described as laws that are not favorable for foreign companies and capital in the country. Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said the government is taking remarks by lawmakers seriously and noted that

following the recent upgrade of the Kuwaiti bourse, it attracted around \$1 billion in new investments.

Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said a contract by an entertainment company was sent to the public prosecution over suspicions, adding that the Entertainment

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## News in brief

### Injured Kuwaiti student dies

**KUWAIT:** The minister of education expressed his commiserations over the death of Kuwaiti teenager Abdulaziz Al-Rumaih, who passed away after a car accident in the US while completing his college degree on a government grant. Rumaih succumbed to injuries resulting from a November collision on Sunday, Minister Hamed Al-Azmi said. Kuwaiti cultural bureau officials had been in constant contact with US authorities and the hospital treating the youngster, who had undergone several operations. Procedures are now being finalized to transport his remains to Kuwait, where he will be laid to rest, said the minister. — KUNA

### Saudi human rights lawyer freed

**RIYADH:** Saudi authorities have released a prominent human rights lawyer seven months after he was detained in a crackdown on dissent, campaigners said yesterday. Ibrahim Al-Modaimegh, around 80, was released after a "serious deterioration in his health", said Prisoners of Conscience, a Saudi group that tracks political prisoners. Modaimegh's release "is probably a first step in revisiting many of the arrests of activists carried out" in recent months, said Ali Shihabi, head of the pro-Saudi Arabia Foundation think tank in Washington. — AFP

### Top Iran cleric Shahrودي dies

**TEHRAN:** Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, a grand ayatollah who headed Iran's judiciary during fierce crackdowns on dissidents, journalists and activists, died on Monday at the age of 70. Shahroudi was a student of Iran's revolutionary founder Ruhollah Khomeini who went on to hold some of the most powerful positions in the Islamic republic. There were reports last year that he underwent surgery for an unspecified cancer in Germany. Shahroudi was born in Najaf on Aug 18, 1948, and met Khomeini when the latter was exiled to Iraq in the 1960s. — AFP

### Tunisian journo sets self ablaze

**TUNIS:** A Tunisian journalist has died after setting himself on fire, officials said, in a protest over harsh living conditions that prompted overnight clashes with police in the country's west. Police fired tear gas at dozens of people who took to the streets Monday night in the city of Kasserine, 270 km from the capital, setting tyres ablaze and blocking the main street. Abdel Razaq Zorgi, a 32-year-old journalist, died late Monday after setting himself on fire over unemployment and worsening economic conditions. — AFP

## Actor Spacey charged with sexual assault

**NEW YORK:** Oscar-winning US actor Kevin Spacey has been charged with a felony for alleged sexual assault of a teenager in a restaurant in 2016, prosecutors said on Monday. Spacey will be arraigned at Nantucket District Court on Jan 7 on a charge of indecent assault

and battery, according to the district attorney of Cape and Islands, Massachusetts. Prosecutors did not name the alleged victim of the July 2016 incident but former Boston-based television news anchor Heather Unruh told a news conference last year that police were investigating a complaint by her son against the "House of Cards" and "American Beauty" star.



Kevin Spacey

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## Pontiff calls for peace as queen warns of 'tribalism'

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis called for peace and "fraternity" among peoples and Queen Elizabeth II warned against "tribalism", as millions across the world celebrated Christmas yesterday, while US President Donald Trump caused a festive furor by asking a child whether he still believed in Santa Claus. Some 50,000 worshippers gathered at the Vatican to hear the pontiff's sixth "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) message appealing for peace in conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen, whose populations face some of the world's most desperate humanitarian crises.

"My wish for a happy Christmas is a wish for fraternity," he told pilgrims in Saint Peter's Square yesterday. "Fraternity among individuals of every nation and culture. Fraternity among people with different ideas... Fraternity among persons of different religions." Francis, the head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, had earlier used his mass on Monday night to urge people to curb "insatiable greed".



**KUWAIT:** A Muslim woman distributes sweets during Christmas Mass at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City late Monday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The pontiff said he hoped a truce in conflict-ravaged Yemen would end a devastating war that has killed around 10,000 people since 2015 and pushed 14 million Yemenis to the brink of famine. "My thoughts turn to Yemen, in the hope that the truce brokered by the

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## India's longest road-rail bridge bolsters defense

**BOGIBEEL, India:** India yesterday opened its longest rail-road bridge in a poor northeastern state as part of efforts to boost defenses on its sensitive border with China. Prime Minister Narendra Modi drove an inaugural cavalcade along the 4.9-km-long Bogibeel bridge over the Brahmaputra river to inaugurate the project in Assam state, which has taken nearly two decades and \$800 million to complete.

The bridge, near the city of Dibrugarh,

will enable the military to speed up the dispatch of forces to neighboring Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China. With the opening of the bridge, the rail journey from Dibrugarh to the Arunachal Pradesh capital Itanagar has been cut by 750 km. India lost territory in Arunachal Pradesh in a 1962 war with China.

The bridge has been designed to bear the weight of India's heaviest 60 tonne battle tanks and so that fighter jets can land on it. India opened its longest bridge, the 9.1-km Dhola-Sadiya bridge, in 2017 to connect Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, also to boost tactical defenses. Construction of the Bogibeel bridge was agreed by the government as part of a 1985 agreement to end years of deadly agitation by Assamese nationalist groups. — AFP



**DIBRUGARH, India:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates India's longest rail-road bridge yesterday. — AFP

## Kuwait backs moves to steady oil market; eyes output boost

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait fully supports all efforts intended to restore stability and balance to the global oil market, newly-appointed Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel said yesterday. Kuwait is committed to the new deal OPEC hammered out with its non-member partners, in which oil output would be slashed by 1.2 million barrels per day starting in the new year, he told KUNA. He underlined that Kuwait will hold up its end of the bargain when it comes to production cuts, predicting that the deal may help improve conditions in the oil market.

"The oil market is in a better place today than it was a few years ago," the minister said, attributing the progress to "unprecedented" cooperation among key oil producing nations. Kuwait is among the founding members of OPEC and has contributed immensely over the years towards the intergovernmental organization's endeavors, he added. The minister also stressed that Kuwait will also continue to play an important role as an active member of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC) and Joint Technical Committee (JTC) along with other OPEC and non-OPEC members.

Meanwhile, state-run Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) said yesterday Kuwait currently produces around 180,000 barrels of light crude oil per day, in addition to half a billion cubic feet of free gas. Light crude oil production is likely to increase to 250,000 barrels per day, while gas output is expected to spike to 850 million cubic feet in three years, KOC's director of production operations Ali Al-Kandari said during a panel discussion to mark Kuwait's first light crude shipment. As for the distant future, he predicted crude oil output may reach 3.650 million barrels by the 2023. — KUNA

## Local

# Nod to agreement on Philippine domestic workers' employment

## Cabinet reviews national labor recommendations; praises stock exchange promotion

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet reviewed the Legal Affairs Committee's recommendation on a draft decree approving the agreement on the employment of domestic workers between the Government of Kuwait and the Government of the Philippines. The Cabinet approved the draft decree and submitted it to His Highness the Amir, said a statement released by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh following the Cabinet's weekly meeting which took place on Monday at Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

### National labor

Meanwhile, the Cabinet reviewed the recommendation contained in the meeting by the Legal Affairs Committee on a draft law-amending article 14 of Law No. (19) of 2000 regarding the support of national labor and encouraging them to work in non-governmental organizations. The Law intended to aggravate the penalty prescribed to anyone who proves his violation of the provisions of this law to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years and a fine not exceeding KD 5,000 or one of these two penalties and the Cabinet decided to approve the draft law and submitted to His Highness the Amir, for transmission to the National Assembly. The Cabinet discussed the recommendations on the amendment of the decision of the Cabinet regarding the determination of the proportion of national employment in non-governmental sectors and it decided to approve it.

### Stock Exchange promotion

The Cabinet praised the efforts and achievements of state institutions which resulted in the promotion of the Kuwait Stock Exchange into an emerging market within the S&P Dow Jones Index. This step was part of the strategic plan for the future to improve the business environment in Kuwait and to provide investment opportunities and increasing the attractiveness of the market to local and foreign investors in order to transform Kuwait into a financial and economic center.



### Cabinet briefed on Foreign Ministers' visits

Meanwhile, the Cabinet reviewed the recommendations contained in the minutes of the General Services Committee meeting on accelerating the operation of public services in Al-Wafra residential area. The Cabinet decided to entrust the Ministry of Education in coordination with the Ministry of Finance to make the necessary financial funds to accelerate the operation of school buildings neces-

sary for the housing project for the next academic year (2019/2020). The Cabinet also took note of the Committee's recommendation on the periodic report submitted by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare regarding the removal of some obstacles in South Saad Al-Abdullah Housing Project.

### Foreign Ministers' visits

The Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Seif Palace on Monday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah informed the Cabinet with the results of Netherlands' Foreign Minister Steve Blok visit to the country, which aimed to discuss bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries. Netherlands' Foreign Minister expressed gratitude to Kuwait and its role in helping to maintain peace and stability in the region. The visit witnessed the signing of an agreement on aviation services between the two countries. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet with the results of Mongolia' Foreign Minister Damdin Tsogtbaatar visit to the country, which discussed ways to enhancing cooperation between the two friendly countries.

### Regional and global developments

In its meeting, the Cabinet discussed political affairs in the light of reports on the current developments at the Arab and global levels. In this regard, the Cabinet hailed Kuwait's welcome to UN adoption of 2451 resolution on Yemen, which supports the Stockholm agree-



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting. —KUNA

ment reached recently between the Yemeni parties in their consultations held in Sweden recently, which would contribute to reaching a peaceful solution to end the crisis. The Cabinet expressed its deep sorrow at the devastating cyclone that hit the southern coasts of the Indonesian island of Sumatra and West Java recently, which resulted in a number of casualties and missing persons. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti companies eager to expand work in Egypt: Minister

**KUWAIT:** Egypt's Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Tariq Al-Mulla said Monday that Kuwaiti companies investing in the oil sector in his country are eager to expand in light of the good returns and facilities received by the Egyptian government. Mulla noted during a press conference held in Kuwait on the occasion of his visit to the country, that Kuwaiti investors are currently welcoming investment in Egypt due to existing facilities, stable conditions and expected large returns, indicating that these companies have a desire to expand in Egypt. The minister pointed out that during his current visit, he met a number of officials of these companies, including Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) and Kuwait Energy.

Mulla affirmed that he also met with a number of Kuwaiti investors recently in Egypt, where they revived the idea of establishing a Kuwaiti refinery in the Suez Canal area. He noted that Egypt currently imports about 2 million barrels of oil from Kuwait in addition to some petroleum products, including diesel. He pointed out that his country imports from several other countries and that Egypt exports some kinds of oil that do not suit Egyptian refineries.

On the current production of oil from Egypt, he said that the current production is about 660 thousand barrels per day and the target is to reach 670 thousand barrels per day, pointing out that what Egypt consumes oil exceeds production by about 250 thousand barrels per day. The fluctuation of oil prices makes investment reduces the number of investors, pointing out that the gas has seen a boom during the last period because it is not directly related to the fluctuation of oil prices, as the global companies are interested in investing in the exploration and production of gas more than oil, he added. He noted that Egypt reached the self-sufficiency of natural gas in September 2018 whether in the consumption of electricity or other industries or sectors, adding that Egypt is working in the second phase of the development of the field back to reach the production of 3 billion cubic feet per day by next July.

On the exploration carried out by Egypt during the coming period, he said that the Ministry of Petroleum is working on three axes, the first in the Mediterranean Sea and the second with the implementation of international bidding in the Eastern and Western Desert, Gulf of Suez and Sinai, while the third axis is the first bid for the Red Sea. —KUNA

## Al-Zour North One concludes two years of successful operations

**KUWAIT:** Shamal Al-Zour Al-Oula KSC, the owner and operator of Al-Zour North One Power and Water Plant, announced yesterday the successful conclusion of two years of operations of the plant. Al-Zour North One Power and Water Plant is Kuwait's first independently owned power and water facility with a current production capacity of 27 percent of Kuwait's power requirements at peak production (1,539MW) and 35 percent of water generation (107 million gallons per day).

Al-Zour North One Power and Water Plant began operations in November 2016 and is the first stage of the country's plan to significantly increase its capacity over the coming years as part of a larger effort to meet an anticipated peak demand of 25 gigawatts (GW) by 2025. The milestone comes only 42 months after the Operation and Maintenance team took control of the first three gas turbines in June 2015 to provide early power during the construction phase of the site.

Shamal Al-Zour Al-Oula KSC CEO Paul Frain said, "We are proud to reach a key milestone in operations which we could have not have achieved without the incredible hard-work and dedication of our entire team. They are at the heart of our success. Contributing towards the achievement of Kuwait's National Development Plan and Vision 2035 for the past three and a half years we've worked diligently to meet the milestones set and successfully began plant operations two years ago. We look forward to meeting all future goals set in the plant's next phases to keep up with local demand and maintain this commitment in the years to come."

### Al-Zour North One Project Timeline:

- March 2011: Request for proposal (RFP) issued for the Al-Zour North One Plant development.
- March 2012: Preferred bidder was chosen.
- December 2012: Successful bidder announced.
- December 12, 2013: Kuwait's first PPP RFP process was successfully completed, signing ceremony with MEW, and start of construction.
- January 10, 2014: Shamal Al-Zour Al-Oula reaches its financial close.
- March 13, 2015: Key interfaces connection with MEW and KOC: Electricity transmission facilities (MEW); Main fuel connection - Gas (KOC); Backup fuel connection - fuel oil (KOC).
- May 3, 2015: First megawatt of power was gener-



**KUWAIT:** Al-Zour North One Power and Water Plant.



**Al-Zour North One Power and Water Plant's team.**

ated into the national grid of Kuwait.

- June 28, 2015: ECOD 1:1 GTG in SC - 214.3 MW.
- August 11, 2015: ECOD 2:2 GTGs in SC - 440.5 MW (achieved two days early).

- September 18, 2015: ECOD 3:3 GTGs in SC - 664.2 MW (achieved ten days early).
- November 26, 2016: Construction completed, full commercial operation starts.

## Jarallah denies reports about grant to Macedonia

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah vehemently denied on Monday reports on social media that the State of Kuwait provided the Republic of Macedonia a grant to build an entertainment city.

In response to question by KUNA, Jarallah called on all who publish information and spread them to be cautious regarding the accuracy of such information, objective and transparent when spreading information on social networks.

Separately, Jarallah met yesterday with the Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasarian and discussed bilateral relations and latest regional and international developments. The meeting was attended by assistant foreign minister for affairs of the deputy minister's bureau, Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasarian. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti academics tour prehistoric sites in Southern Iraq

**BAGHDAD:** A delegation of academics from Kuwait visited on Monday a number of important archaeological sites in the southern Iraqi province of Thi Qar, where many prehistoric civilizations were founded. "The Kuwaiti delegation included six academics specialized in archeology, headed by Professor of Archeology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Kuwait, Dr. Hassan Ashkanani," Thi Qar Director of Archeology Taher Kowin said.

Taher added that the delegation also visited the historic city of Uor and toured its historical piquant and the historic city of Arredo and received warm welcome and hospitality facilities by the competent government authorities in the province of Thi Qar. Taher noted that the delegation will also visit heritage markets in Al-Nasiriyah in the governorate center and other tourist areas, including 'Chabaish' marshes east of Thi Qar. —KUNA

Local

# Amir urges new ministers to work for best interest of Kuwait and its citizens

Amir commends altruism of Kuwaiti physicians



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks as His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah look on. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Health Minister Dr Basal Al-Hamad, along with the president of Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) Dr Ahmad Al-Enezi and KMA members.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah urged the new cabinet ministers to give top priority to Kuwait's best interest, pay attention to citizens' needs and work on implementing the law and state regulations.

His Highness the Amir made that statement after he received at Bayan Palace yesterday, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who presented to His Highness the Amir new cabinet members. Present were also newly-reshuffled Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services' Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan and Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Ramadan Boushehri.

His Highness the Prime Minister presented Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi, Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel, Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharaz, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shaala and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, who took oath on the occasion of their appointment in their new posts. His Highness the Amir congratulated the new cabinet members, appreciating their acceptance to take part in the new lineup.

The swear-in ceremony was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Director of the Office of His Highness the Amir Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahd and Acting Secretary General for Cabinet Affairs Advisor Wael Al-Asousi.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince congratulated the newly appointed ministers on the precious trust granted to them by His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister, praying to Allah Almighty that they would succeed in carrying their new responsibilities in order to fulfill a comprehensive development of the dear nation under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.



## Crown Prince receives student union members

During the meeting, His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation to their work and achievements, wishing them more success. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir said that he appreciated his compatriot physicians' 'limitless' dedication to the welfare of humanity, commending Kuwaiti doctors for their altruistic tendencies. Amid the encounter, the Kuwaiti health minister suggested designating 'Kuwaiti Doctor Day' as an occasion to appreciate their unwavering commitment towards humanitarian causes.

Introducing an excellence award christened after His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir was also among initiatives considered as part of efforts to support Kuwaiti doctors, Enezi said. KMA Board of Trustees members Ali Al-Mousawi and Ahmad Al-Rashidi were equally grateful as well, hailing the many accomplishments of Kuwaiti physicians in recent years.

Receptions  
His Highness the Amir also met with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the outgoing UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Rahma Hussein Al-Zaabi, as well as the former Deputy Secretary for Regional and

GCC Affairs Hamad Ahmad Al-Amer, who gave His Highness the Amir a two-part book entitled 'The GCC Interests and Challenges.'

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Municipal Council Chairman Osama Humoud Al-Otaibi and his deputy Abdullah Abdulaziz Al-Mehri. During the encounter, the two senior municipal officials presented to His Highness the Crown Prince a copy of a special publication on the history of the Municipal Council since 1932. His Highness the Crown Prince thanked them for the publication, wishing them all the best.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received the representatives of Kuwait's national students union and branch members of Kuwait University, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Egypt, Canada and Australia. His Highness the Crown Prince wished them success in their academic careers, and urged the students to remain diligent in pursuit of their goals, saying that education is the cornerstone of developed societies. His Highness the Crown Prince also reassured the youngsters about the Kuwaiti leadership's unyielding support, urging them to keep pushing forward to attain academic glory. His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan undersecretary for local affairs Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the representatives of Kuwait's national students union and branch members of Kuwait University, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Egypt, Canada and Australia.



Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services' Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan takes oath.



Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi takes oath.



Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Ramadan Boushehri takes oath.



Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharaz takes oath.



Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel takes oath.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shaala takes oath.



Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel takes oath.

# Kuwait Science Club to host 11th Int'l Invention Fair in Middle East on Jan 27

## Second biggest fair in the world thanks to Amir's support: Secretary General

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Science Club (KSC) will be hosting the 11th International Invention Fair in the Middle East from Jan 27 to 30, 2019. The fair is being held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This was announced during a press conference held at the KSC premises on Monday.

Secretary General of KSC Ali Juma appreciated the generous sponsorship of HH the Amir for this fair since the first edition in 2007. "This generous support has made this fair rank as the second biggest and most popular fair for inventors in the world. KSC organizes this fair as part of its strategy that aims to support and develop the creativity of inventors," he noted during the conference.

This fair has many benefits. "The main purpose of this fair is to bring the inventors and investors together. Through organizing this fair, we give an opportunity to Kuwaiti inventors to meet other inventors from all over the world and exchange their experiences. KSC is morally and financially supporting the inventors to turn their creative ideas into inventions. It also helps them meet investors who may transfer their inventions into commercial projects," added Juma.

The winning inventions will receive valuable prizes. "The total value of the prizes is around \$50,000. The main prize is \$15,000, KSC's prize is \$10,000, the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva pres-

ents a \$5,000 prize and the GCC Patent Office presents 50,000 Saudi riyals, in addition to a prize presented by the World Intellectual Property Organization and another prize by the International Federation of Inventors' Associations," concluded Juma.

### Investment and marketing opportunity

Treasurer of KSC Aws Al-Nisef said that the main reason for holding the International Invention Fair in the Middle East is to offer an investment and marketing

opportunity for Kuwaiti inventions to be realized. In the past, the Kuwaiti inventors did not find support or adoption for their inventions to develop into commercial projects, but today they do. From here we inspired the

title of the fair - 'Investors meeting the Inventors,' he explained.

"I invite businessmen, producers, universities and institutions that are willing to adopt inventions to come and visit this fair, as they will find top inventions presented by creative Kuwaiti and international inventors. Also, this fair spreads the culture of inventing among the community, in addition to strengthening the relations between inventors and different companies and authorities," Nisef added.

### Bringing inventors and investors together



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Kuwait Science Club Treasurer Aws Al-Nisef, Secretary General Ali Juma and Head of Development and Competitive Programs Sector Dr Mohammed Al-Saffar attend the press conference.

Head of Development and Competitive Programs Sector at KSC Dr Mohammed Al-Saffar noted that participation in the fair is still open. "Currently we don't have the exact number of participants, as we are still accepting registrations, but we expect the number to be higher than last year. The huge attendance in this fair in the past years reflects its success. We started preparing for this huge event from the end of the previous fair," he pointed out.

The participating inventions must follow certain criteria. "The judging committee consists of specialists from the field with long experience from different institutions and nationalities. Different criteria will be considered for the inventions, including the time since the invention was made, its creativity and ability to be marketed. Also, judges will consider the importance of the invention and which category it serves. The winners will be awarded on the last day of the fair," Saffar said.



**KUWAIT:** Father Emmanuel Benjamin Jacob Gharib, Chairman of the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait and Pastor of the Kuwaiti Presbyterian Church, led a Christmas mass at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City on Christmas Eve. And in a sign of solidarity, a number of Muslim citizens visited the church to greet their fellow Christian residents and offer them gifts and sweets. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## More than 1.4 million NBK followers on social media

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to achieve success on social media with more than 1.4 million followers by 2018 year end, with 66 percent growth in the past three years. NBK had the highest growth rate across all channels which allows it remain the leader in followers amongst competition. NBK maintained its position as the leader of the banking digital platforms through constant engaging content, rapid responses to customer inquiries and ensuring that the content stays on trend with the market.

"NBK's social media has been an official channel of communication between us and our customers," said Abdul Mohsen Al-Rushaid, NBK Public Relations Executive Manager. "More than 1.4 million are now following NBK on our various social media channels including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and LinkedIn."

Rushaid noted that "NBK's social media platforms provide the highest engagement and the quickest response in comparison with competition. NBK social media platforms were the main factor of communication that pushed over 14,000 online registrations for the NBK Walkathon."

NBK actively started using LinkedIn sharing our corporate news and market related reports. NBK CSR awareness campaigns were also covered successfully on Social Media and received a high engagement and reach.

It is worth mentioning some of the NBK CSR awareness campaigns on social media which comprised of breast cancer awareness tips by cancer survivors who talked about ways to prevent or deal with cancer with a positive mindset. During Ramadan, NBK social media channels covered aired health tips with Dr Bader Al-Nasrallah who talked about tackling fasting during the holy month while maintaining a good fitness level and avoiding unhealthy weight gain. The Holy month also covered safety tips in collaboration with Firefighters who talked about the correct way of dealing with a crisis and how to avoid dangerous incidents at home. A Blood Donation Campaign was exclusively on social media and more specifically on Snapchat to raise awareness on the high demand for blood donation for the children at the NBK Hospital. NBK social media channels also promoted health tips on how to stay healthy and avoid heart disease with Dr Mohammad Al-Banna.



**Abdul Mohsen Al-Rushaid**

Local

# Three real estate companies, eight managers suspended on money laundering charges

## Commission wants 72 expats out of Kuwait Municipality

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) recently suspended the licenses and activities of three real estate companies and eight managers over charges of violating law number 106/2013 pertaining money laundering and terrorism funding, and the ministerial resolutions numbers 37/2013 and 430/2016 pertaining the regulation of real estate brokerage. The decision also banned renewing any of the suspects' licenses pending the final sentence in the case filed against them.

**Employment suspended**  
Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) acting CEO Waleed Al-Bader issued a decision suspending all forms of non-approved employment, deputizing and promotion decisions for all positions in KPC and its subsidiary companies until further notice. The employment suspension is believed to extend until a new CEO for the corporation is named, succeeding former CEO Nizar Al-Adsani whose tenure ended recently.



### KPC suspends employment, promotions

**72 expats out**  
Despite the shortage of expat employees Kuwait Municipality already suffers from, namely engineers, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) insists on imposing

the replacement policy on those jobs for the fiscal year 2019-2020, as it recently requested terminating the contracts of 28 out of 179 engineers. Al-Qabas reported yesterday. A letter was sent by the CSC pointing out that 72 out of a total of 536 expat employees in various departments have to be laid off, adding that a study had been made in collaboration with the finance ministry in this regard. Notably, the total workforce of Municipality is 5,522 - 4,986 citizens and 530 non-Kuwaitis.

### Tenders investigated

Well-informed sources said prior to stepping down, the former minister of public works Hossam Al-Roumi issued a decision on forming a new committee headed by civil law professor Dr Ibrahim Al-Humoud to investigate the procedures followed on qualifying contractors for tenders offered for bidding by the Public Authority for Roads and Transport (PART). The sources added that the investigated tenders include building roads, bridges and sewers in South Surra, maintaining the regional highway and the construction and maintenance of roads to serve T4. Meanwhile, Ministry of Public Works' personnel affairs committee decided postponing the tests for leading positions scheduled for next Wednesday without rescheduling them pending appointing an undersecretary.



### Model farms

Although Kuwait Municipality had already contacted the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) so that it could take over the nine-square-kilometer 'F2' site in Wafra to build model farms, horse-rearing stables and a services area, PAAAFR is still avoiding taking it over. Kuwait Municipality's deputy director for Kuwait structure affairs Mohammed Al-Zobi had contacted PAAAFR last December requesting the dispatch of a representative

to check with Kuwait Municipality's land survey department.

### Residential city

Well-informed sources said that the Public Authority for Housing Welfare has not yet received the approvals needed from relevant bodies such as the oil ministry, public works ministry, electricity and water ministry and the traffic department concerning allocating land plots in southern Um Al-Haiman to build a residential city.

## Passenger with 2,500 Tramadol tablets caught



**KUWAIT:** This picture released by the General Customs Department yesterday shows a passenger wearing a vest with pouches he used to try to smuggle drugs into the country yesterday.



The drugs shown after they were taken out of the vest.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Airport customs officers prevented an Asian passenger's attempt to smuggle a large quantity of psychoactive drugs. Special systems at the airport gave signals of the illicit material, and a physical search resulted in 2,500 Tramadol tablets being found. The man, who was arrested on arrival at T4, was sent to concerned authorities.

### Municipality campaign

A Hawally Municipality emergency team carried out a campaign to remove encroachments from state property. Head of the team Ahmad Ramadan said such campaigns will continue in all areas of the governorate. He said the campaigns resulted in issuing 150 warnings and removing 30 encroachments and 500 advertisements from streets and yards.



A municipality bulldozer removes a small garden allegedly built illegally on state property.

## Jahra Governor meets Guyana Ambassador



**KUWAIT:** Jahra Governor Fahd Ahmad Al-Amir met with the Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait Professor Dr Shamir Ally, at his office in the Jahra Governorate. The two sides discussed ways to improve cooperation and exchange of expertise, especially in the educational and cultural fields.

## 37 new rooms at Sabah Hospital's pediatric wards

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Sabah Medical Zone Director Dr Abdul Aziz Al-Farhoud reopened the pediatric wards at Sabah Hospital after their refurbishment. Speaking on the sidelines of the open-

ing ceremony, Sabah Hospital's Director Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Enezi stressed that the wards had been renovated and upgraded to match international developments and the young patients' medical needs of quality services and safety. Enezi added that renovations included 37 new rooms for treating various pediatric diseases. Sabah Hospital's Pediatric Department Manager Dr Eman Al-Onaizi said the hospital plans to build new day clinics to provide all types of treatments, medicine and guidance without having to admit patients.

## Kuwait distributes 2,577 food baskets to 20,000 Yemenis

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), in cooperation with 'Estijabah' Network for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, distributed 2,577 food baskets to some 20,000 people, including women, children and elders in Taiz, Abyan, and Al-Hudaydah governorates of Yemen. Each basket is sufficient enough for a one-month consumption per family and contains rice, sugar, flour, oil, macaroni, beans and milk, Head of KRCS team in Yemen Abdurrahman Al-Oun said yesterday.

Out of the total, 1,000 baskets were distributed around Maafer, Misrakh, and Jabal Habshi districts of Taiz, while another 1,000 distributed in Hays district of Al-Hudaydah, and 577 others around Modiyah, Shuqrah, and Zinjibar districts of Abyan. KRCS is keen on providing all forms of support to the Yemeni people who suffer harsh humanitarian conditions due to the ongoing conflicts in the country, he affirmed. Oun also reiterated the Kuwaiti charity's proactive demeanor in humanitarian, medical, relief, development, and education fields. —KUNA





Gunmen hit Libya  
foreign ministry

## Amnesty says 37 protesters killed in Sudan crackdown

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump speak on the telephone as they answer calls from people calling into the NORAD Santa tracker phone line in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

# Trump accused of sowing Xmas 'chaos'

## US president lashes out at opponents, renews verbal assaults

WASHINGTON: Democratic leaders have accused an isolated President Donald Trump of sowing Christmas "chaos" after the stock market plummeted and the US government shutdown hit a third day. "It's Christmas Eve and President Trump is plunging the country into chaos," Nancy Pelosi, who takes over next month as House speaker, and Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the Republican-led Senate, said in a joint statement. With Congress out of town, there was no chance for progress on the government funding crisis.

Trump's demand for a \$5 billion US-Mexico border wall—a pillar of his election platform—has been rejected by Democrats and some Republicans. In retaliation, Trump refused last week to sign a wider spending bill, temporarily stripping funding from swaths of the government. "Nothing new on the shutdown. We need more security," Trump said at the White House on Monday. Trump tweeted more than 10 times on Monday to lash out at opponents of the wall project and to renew his verbal assaults on the Federal Reserve, which he blames for growing jitters over the US economy. The Dow Jones index sank more than 650 points, the worst ever performance on a Christmas Eve, according to CNBC television.

Outside the White House, Washington's National Christmas Tree became a forlorn symbol of the dysfunction when the National Park Service—one of the government bodies hit by the funding shutdown—briefly

turned off the lights. It was brought back on after help from the service's charity foundation. And the budget standoff could drag on into January, when the new Congress is seated, although negotiations were planned for Thursday, offering a glimmer of hope. Trump, who had to delay his annual Christmas holiday in Florida, tweeted: "I am all alone (poor me) in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come back."

### 'He can't putt!'

The government shutdown adds to uncertainties spooking global stock markets after a tumultuous week in which respected Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned and the president stepped up attacks on the supposedly independent chairman of the Federal Reserve. Last week, the central bank hiked rates, infuriating Trump who has ignored traditional respect for the Fed's independence, calling it "crazy," "out of control" and a greater economic threat than China.

In a tweet Monday, Trump compared the Fed to a blundering golfer "who can't score because he has no touch - he can't putt!" Trump's Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had spent much of the weekend in

damage control mode following reports that Trump had privately asked cabinet members whether he has the authority to fire Fed Chairman Jerome Powell. And domestic issues are just part of the far from merry Christmas picture, with Trump also juggling a trade war with China and fallout from his abrupt decision to pull US troops from Afghanistan and Syria.

### Wall of worry

About three-quarters of the government, including the military, is fully funded through September 2019 but the partial shutdown forced several other major agencies to cease operations from Saturday. The shutdown meant that more than 400,000 federal employees reported to their jobs on Monday without getting paid, while nearly 400,000 others "will be locked out of work with no pay," the American Federation of Government Employees union said. "No private business or company would be permitted to impose on or disrupt the lives of their employees in such a manner," the Federation said in letters to the Senate and House of Representatives.

A deal to end the funding shortfall appears a distant prospect as Congress adjourned on the weekend for

Christmas. "It's very possible that this shutdown will go beyond the 28th and into the new Congress" which takes its seat in early January, White House budget director and incoming acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said. But while trying to pin the blame on Democrats, Mulvaney, speaking on "Fox News Sunday," acknowledged that Trump's hardline stand played a role. "This is what Washington looks like when you have a president who refuses to sort of go along to get along," Mulvaney said.

### Flasher arrested

A choice political gesture, or holiday merriment gone awry? A man has been arrested after exposing himself in front of the White House. Five people were posing together for pictures Sunday at around 1:30 am near the north fence of the White House when a police officer saw more than he wanted from one of them. The man, turning around to face the executive mansion, "proceeded to lower his pants and undergarment exposing his genital to plain view," said the incident report by Washington police. The suspect was arrested for indecent exposure, a misdemeanor. Police did not assign a motive. While it was unlikely that President Donald Trump or his family caught a glimpse of the flasher, the incident came after Trump postponed a holiday trip to Florida due to a political showdown that has partially shut down the US government. — AFP



## Trump's demands \$5 bn border wall

while nearly 400,000 others "will be locked out of work with no pay," the American Federation of Government Employees union said. "No private business or company would be permitted to impose on or disrupt the lives of their employees in such a manner," the Federation said in letters to the Senate and House of Representatives.

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## Life and death choices for Indonesia victims

SOUTH LAMPUNG: Udin Ahok was forced to make a choice that no one would ever want to make: save his wife or his mother and baby. The 46-year-old Indonesian had just gone to sleep on Saturday evening when - without warning - a wall of water smashed into his house in Way Muli village on the coast of Sumatra. Panicked, he fought to reach his sleeping 70-year-old mother and one-year-old son but then he saw his wife about to drown in the swirling waters. He plucked her to safety and they survived the fury of a volcano-triggered tsunami that smashed into Indonesia's coast, killing more than 400 people who had no time to escape. Ahok's mother and baby were found dead under mountains of debris.

"I didn't have time to save my mother and son," a weeping Ahok told AFP from a local shelter for evacuees in one of the stricken region's hardest-hit areas. "I regret it so much. I can only hope they've been given a place in God's hands." Sulistiwati, another Way Muli resident who is six months pregnant, only survived thanks to a neighbor who saw her tumble into the salty water. "Luckily, he spotted me and pulled me out of the wave and we ran to higher ground with our other neighbors," she said. "It was pitch black. I didn't know I could run that fast being preg-



RAJABASA: Residents search for belongings from their collapsed homes in Rajabasa in Lampung province yesterday, three days after a tsunami - caused by activity at a volcano known as the 'child' of Krakatoa - hit the west coast of Indonesia's Java island. — AFP

nant. It was so scary. We waited for a few hours until the water went down."

### 'I can't rebuild'

Across the Sunda Strait in Java island, Saki stood amidst the rubble of what was once Sumber Jaya village and wondered aloud how he would get his life back on track. "I can't rebuild, everything is gone — my clothes, my money," he said. "I had 19 million rupiah (\$1,300) inside the house," said the 60-year-old, who has been left with nothing but his white Muslim skull cap, a t-shirt and a sarong.

"I'm sleeping at the mosque and every day I come back here because I had lots of money that has been lost inside (the house)."

Two people were killed and at least 20 houses destroyed in Saki's neighborhood, according to locals, who spent Christmas Day scouring through what was left of their homes for belongings. The streets of Sumber Jaya are muddy, partly flooded and covered in debris. Here and there mounds of timber, rubbish and bricks have been piled up on the roadside. The army is clearing the area with the aid of heavy machinery. — AFP

## Sick and hungry tsunami survivors cram shelters

CARITA: Desperately-needed aid flowed into a stretch of Indonesia's tsunami-struck coastline yesterday, but humanitarian workers warned that clean water and medicine supplies were dwindling as thousands crammed makeshift evacuation centers. Fears about a public health crisis come as the death toll from Saturday's volcano-triggered disaster topped 400 with thousands more displaced — many left homeless after houses were flattened by the killer wave. "A lot of the children are sick with fevers, headaches and they haven't had enough water," said Rizal Alimin, a doctor working for NGO Aksi Cepat Tanggap, at a local school that was turned into a temporary shelter.

"We have less medicine than usual ... It's not healthy here for evacuees. There isn't enough clean water. They need food and people are sleeping on the floor." The powerful tsunami struck at night and without warning, sweeping over popular beaches on southern

Sumatra and the western edge of Java and inundating tourist hotels and coastal settlements. The latest death toll stood at 429, with 1,485 people injured and another 154 missing. Experts have warned that more deadly waves could slam the stricken region now covered by mountains of overturned cars, boats, furniture and other debris.

Many evacuees are too afraid to return home, fearing another tsunami. "I've been here three days," said Neng Sumarni, 40, who was sleeping with her three children and husband on the school's floor with some three dozen others. "I'm scared because my home is right near the beach." Authorities are using sniffer dogs to try to find any survivors and victims' bodies, while they have turned to drones to survey the devastated coastlines. "We are still searching for victims who might still be buried under the rubble," said Ketut Sukarta, head of the disaster agency in South Lampung on Sumatra.

### 'Can't reach them'

Abu Salim, with volunteer disaster aid group Tagana, said aid workers were scrambling to stabilise the situation. "Today we're focusing on helping the evacuees in shelters by setting up public kitchens and distributing logistics and more tents in suitable places," he said yesterday. — AFP

International

# Gunmen storm Kabul govt compound; at least 43 killed

## One of the deadliest assaults on the Afghan capital

**KABUL:** An hours-long gun and bomb attack on a Kabul government compound killed at least 43 people, officials said yesterday, making it one of the deadliest assaults on the Afghan capital this year. No militant group has claimed responsibility for the raid, which caps a bloody year for Afghanistan as long-suffering civilians and security forces are slaughtered in record numbers. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP the attack had "nothing to do with the militants". Another 27 people were wounded in Monday's massacre on a site where the Ministry of Public Works and an office that handles pensions and benefits for war veterans are located, health ministry spokesman Waheed Majroh said.

Gunmen stormed the compound mid-afternoon after detonating two car bombs at the main entrance, which is opposite residential apartment blocks. As they entered two buildings belonging to the Ministry of Public Works and the organization responsible for supporting war veterans and their families, terrified workers ran for their lives. Some jumped from windows several floors up to escape the militants. The blasts may have been decoys, according to witnesses who told AFP they saw several militants enter the compound through a back gate.

Hundreds were trapped inside for hours as heavily armed security forces swarmed the area, engaging the attackers in a fierce gun battle punctuated by multiple explosions. Public works ministry employee Amdullah Barezai hid under his desk for five hours, listening to gunfire and blasts inside his building. "When the security forces took us from the office, I

saw many bodies covered in blood, lying in the corridors," Barezai said. At least four militants were killed and more than 350 people freed, officials said. Most of the dead and wounded were civilians, who have borne the brunt of the 17-year war. "It was a barbaric attack against humanity," interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish told reporters.

### Taliban blamed

It was the deadliest assault in the Afghan capital since a suicide bomber blew himself up in the middle of a religious gathering last month, killing at least 55 people. President Ashraf Ghani, whose government has been skewered over its security failures, said "terrorists attack civilian targets to hide their defeat on the battleground". Afghanistan's de facto prime minister Abdullah Abdullah also sounded a defiant note as he blamed the Taliban for the attack. "Every attack they carry out against our people, our resolve is further strengthened to eliminate them," he said. But their statements belie the grim reality on the battlefield where the Taliban have the upper hand. Afghanistan's largest militant group has made significant territorial gains this year as its fighters inflict record casualties on government forces.

### Hundreds trapped inside for hours

ened to eliminate them," he said. But their statements belie the grim reality on the battlefield where the Taliban have the upper hand. Afghanistan's largest militant group has made significant territorial gains this year as its fighters inflict record casualties on government forces.

### US staying the course?

The raid followed a tumultuous few days in Afghanistan where officials are reeling from US President Donald Trump's plan to slash troop numbers, which many fear could harm efforts to end the conflict with the Taliban. It also comes after a major

### President vows reform

Meanwhile, Sudan President Omar Al-Bashir vowed "real reforms" yesterday after days of deadly protest which pose one of the biggest challenges he has faced during decades in power. As demonstrations sparked by a hike in bread prices entered their sixth day, doctors went on strike in a country beset by economic woes. Bashir responded by vowing to "take real reforms to guarantee a decent life for citizens," in quotes carried by the official SUNA news agency.

The president's pledge comes after the protest movement spread to around a dozen cities since it began on Wednesday, after the government tripled the price of bread. Hospital workers were the first to take part in the doctors' walkout on Monday morning, according to Mohammed al-Assam, a member of a committee of doctors. The committee said it would submit an official demand for the "president's immediate resignation in response to the uprising by the Sudanese people... (and the) formation of a transitional government".

The walkout comes after a gathering of professionals from various sectors issued a call on Sunday to strike, as protests hit cities including Omdurman, close to the capital Khartoum-late into the evening. As the demonstrations continued on Monday, rallies erupted in two cities in Gezira state, south of Khartoum, which Bashir is expected to visit on Tuesday, according to SUNA. Residents of Manaqil and Rufaa cities told AFP by phone that dozens took to the streets in Manaqil, calling for the fall of Bashir's regime. In Rufaa, protesters blocked the streets and burned tyres.

Witnesses said police armed with batons dispersed the protests. Eight people have died in demonstrations in the eastern cities of Al-Gadaref and Atbara during clashes with security forces, according to officials and witnesses. But others have spoken of higher death tolls. Opposition leader Sadiq al-Mahdi said on Saturday that 22 people had died, denouncing what he called "armed repression" against a legitimate protest movement.



**KABUL:** Afghan policemen stand guard at the entrance gate of the Ministry of Public Works a day after a deadly militant attack in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

security shake-up in Kabul that has placed staunch anti-Taliban and -Pakistan veterans in charge of the police and military. While there has been no official announcement of a US drawdown, the mere suggestion of the United States reducing its military presence has rattled the Afghan capital and potentially undermined peace efforts.

General Scott Miller, the top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, said Sunday he had not

received orders to pull forces out of the country. Trump's decision apparently came yesterday as US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with the Taliban in Abu Dhabi, part of efforts to bring the militants to the negotiating table with Kabul. Many Afghans are worried that Ghani's fragile unity government would collapse if US troops pulled out, enabling the Taliban to sweep back into power and potentially sparking another bloody civil war. —AFP

### 'Political roots'

Mahdi, Sudan's last democratically elected prime minister, was overthrown in a coup that brought Bashir to power in 1989. Pushed into exile several times, Mahdi returned to his homeland on Wednesday, the day the protests began. After initially railing against the high cost of living, some protesters have also adopted the slogan used in the 2011 Arab Spring—"the people want the fall of the regime". Mahdi has also called for the government

to go. "The main reason for the protests is economic and linked to high prices but the roots of the economic crisis are political," said Abdellatif al-Bouni, a political science professor. "The political failures of the government, errors and bad management" explain why people are so angry, he said. In January, protests erupted against the high price of basic foodstuffs, but were quickly quelled by the authorities, which arrested opposition leaders and militants. —Agencies

## 37 protesters killed in Sudan crackdown

**NAIROBI:** Amnesty International said it has received "credible reports" that Sudanese security forces have shot dead 37 protesters in a crackdown on demonstrations roiling the country. Anti-government protests have rattled Sudan since Wednesday after the government tripled the price of a loaf of bread. The authorities say eight protesters have been killed in the unrest, while Sudan's main opposition leader Sadiq al-Mahdi on Saturday put the death toll at 22. The rights group said in a statement late Monday it "has credible reports that 37 protesters have been shot dead by the security forces in five days of anti-government demonstrations".

"The fact that the security forces are using lethal force so indiscriminately against unarmed protesters is extremely troubling," said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty's director for East Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn. "With dozens already dead, the government must rein in this deadly use of force and prevent more unnecessary bloodshed." There was no immediate Sudanese government reaction to the Amnesty statement. Demonstrations have hit a dozen cities across the economically troubled country since the bread price hike last week. President Omar Al-Bashir vowed "real reforms" on Monday in a bid to tamp down a major challenge to his decades-long rule.

Protesters have adopted the slogan used in the 2011 Arab Spring—"the people want the fall of the regime"—and attacked offices of the ruling party. Sudan is mired in economic difficulties including an acute foreign currency shortage and soaring inflation. Inflation is running at close to 70 percent and the Sudanese pound has plunged in value, while shortages have been reported across several cities including Khartoum. Demonstrations broke out in January over the rising cost of food, but they were soon brought under control with the arrest of opposition leaders and activists.

## Gunmen hit Libya foreign ministry

**TRIPOLI:** At least three people were killed and 10 wounded in an attack yesterday on the Libyan foreign ministry in Tripoli, according to an updated toll from the health ministry. A civil servant who headed a department in the foreign ministry was among those killed, a security source said. Gunfire and explosions rocked Libya's foreign ministry as attackers stormed the building in the capital Tripoli.

A car bomb exploded in front of the ministry, after which "three or four assailants" entered, the source told AFP from the scene. A suicide bomber then struck inside and gunfire broke out, according to the source, who said the victim was a civil servant. Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the building as ambulances, paramedics and security forces gathered outside.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Torn apart by power struggles and undermined by chronic insecurity, Libya has become a haven for jihadists since the ouster and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Two competing administrations, rival militias, tribes and jihadists have been competing for control of territory and the country's vast oil wealth. The Islamic State jihadist group (IS) took advantage of the chaos to gain a foothold in the coastal city of Sirte in 2015. Forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) regained control of the city in December 2016 after eight months of deadly fighting.

Since then, some jihadists have returned to the desert in an attempt to regroup and reorganize. In September, IS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the headquarters of Libya's National Oil Company in the heart of Tripoli which left two dead and 10 wounded. Four months earlier, it claimed an attack



**TRIPOLI:** Photo shows ambulances, paramedics, and security officers at the scene of an attack outside the Libyan foreign ministry headquarters in the capital Tripoli yesterday. —AFP

on the electoral commission's headquarters which left 14 dead. In April, the GNA launched an operation to track down IS fighters operating in areas of western Libya under its control. Last month IS claimed responsibility for an attack on militia forces in southeastern Libya in which at least nine people were killed.

The US military has regularly carried out strikes on jihadists in Libya, particularly south of Sirte. The GNA was set up under a 2015 UN-brokered deal, but a rival administration based in the country's east aligned with military strongman Khalifa Haftar refuses to recognize its authority. Rival Libyan leaders had agreed to a Paris-brokered deal in May to hold a nationwide election by the end of the year. But instability, territorial disputes and divisions have delayed plans for elections. Two days of meetings last month in Italy laid bare deep divisions between key players in the crisis with some delegates refusing to sit side by side. —Agencies

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## International

# Accusations of anti-Semitism plague US 'Women's March'

## 'Women's March' movement grappling with infighting

**NEW YORK:** The "Women's March" movement that spearheaded mass protests against Donald Trump's inauguration, is reportedly grappling with infighting as allegations of anti-Semitism overshadow plans for fresh demonstrations next month. Divisions have become so stark that two separate New York marches will now take place the same day in January, one by the original Women's March group characterized as led by women of color, and another planned by "March On," a group emphasizing its condemnation of anti-Semitism, according to The New York Times.

Tensions have apparently been brewing within the movement since it launched after the shock election

of Trump: according to Jewish news outlet Tablet, two of seven women at the first meeting told organizer Vanessa Wruble, who is white and Jewish, that Jewish people must deal with their own role in perpetuating racism.

More than a million people nationwide took to the streets for the Women's March in January 2017, a remarkable protest marked by its size and message of inclusivity. Wruble was however pushed out of the organizing following the event, according to the Times, and accusations of anti-Semitism reportedly have some women questioning whether to continue supporting the group. In January 2018 the second edition of the march

saw both organizations hold demonstrations but without making clear their divisions to the press.

In recent months fresh charges have been leveled against black organizer Tamika Mallory, who participated in an event held by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan—a black activist whom prominent rights groups describe as anti-Semitic. Mallory also has criticized publicly the Anti-Defamation League, a major US organization focused on combating anti-Semitism. Teresa Shook, a white woman from Hawaii who originally suggested the march, last month called for the national co-chairs—Mallory, Bob Bland, Linda Sarsour and Carmen Perez—to step down, saying they have

"steered the Movement away from its true course."

She then launched a petition on the website change.org, signed as of Monday by more than 8,300 people. The allegations of anti-Semitism fall against a backdrop of rising violence and threats against Jewish people, notably October's horrific slaughter of 11 people in a Pittsburgh synagogue. Mallory and Perez rejected charges of anti-Semitism in a statement to the Times, saying Wruble's departure was unrelated to her Jewish background. But the issue has ignited significant social media reaction, with some welcoming the airing of the tensions as others voice concern that the infighting could damage the movement. —AFP

## News in brief

## 5 killed in bus hijacking

**BEIJING:** At least five people were killed and 21 others injured after a man carrying a knife hijacked a bus in the southeastern Chinese city of Longyan in Fujian province yesterday, police said. Longyan police said in a statement that the bus was hijacked mid-afternoon and hit pedestrians along the way as it careened down the street. Police have detained the suspect and case is being investigated, the statement said, without giving details. Pictures on Chinese social media, picked up by some Chinese news outlets, showed a chaotic scene on the street, with crushed motorbikes and injured people on the ground. One video showed police apparently wrestling the suspect to the ground. Reuters was not able to independently verify the footage. —Reuters

## Gunmen kill 17 in Nigeria

**KANO:** Gunmen at the weekend killed 17 people in the latest attack on villages in northern Nigeria's Zamfara state, witnesses and police said yesterday. The assault came just days after 25 people were killed in similar raids on two villages in the region and appeared to be part of a long-running cycle of violence between bandits and local communities. Gunmen on motorcycles stormed Magami village in the Maradun district area on Saturday, shooting indiscriminately as residents fled. "After the attack, we collected 17... bodies, which we buried," Magami resident Kasimu Bello said. "The gunmen entered the village on several motorcycles, shooting people as they tried to flee," he said. Another resident, Umaru Bawa, confirmed the attack, saying "the bandits pursued people like chickens and shot them dead as they ran into the bush." On Wednesday, 25 people were killed when gunmen raided two villages in Birnin Magaji district. —AFP

## MPs approve 2 ministers

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's parliament has approved two more ministers in Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's cabinet but political divisions blocked his attempts to form a complete government as the defense, interior, and justice portfolios remain empty. Intensifying disagreements between the rival Islah and Bina blocs, led by populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr and Iran-backed militia leader Hadi al-Amiri, have prevented the formation of a full government of 22 ministers. Lawmakers were scheduled to vote on the final five remaining empty posts but managed only to approve Shaima Khalil as education minister and Nawfal Moussa as migration minister before the session descended into chaos. Abdul Mahdi was confirmed as premier in October after months of political gridlock that followed an inconclusive May election. He was sworn in with only a partial cabinet and has since been trying to get a full government up and running. —AFP

## Governor, senator killed

**PUEBLA:** The governor of the Mexican state of Puebla and her husband, a senator and former governor, were killed on Monday in a helicopter crash, the country's president said. "My deepest condolences to the relatives of Senator Rafael Moreno Valle and his wife, governor of Puebla Martha Erika Alonso," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador wrote on Twitter. "I assume the commitment to investigate the causes" and "tell the truth about what happened," Lopez Obrador wrote. The helicopter's two pilots and an assistant to the senator also died in the crash. The aircraft went down 10 minutes after taking off in the Santa Maria Coronango area of Puebla, and the cause of the crash is still unknown. Alonso was sworn in as governor on December 14 after an electoral tribunal certified her victory in July polls. She was the first woman to occupy the position in Puebla, where her husband was governor from 2011 to 2017. —AFP

## Drone detectors now deployable across UK

**LONDON:** British Security Minister Ben Wallace said the government can now deploy drone detection systems nationwide, after days of device sightings caused chaos at Gatwick Airport and criticism of the government response. Britain's second-busiest airport was forced to close its only runway repeatedly last Wednesday through Friday due to numerous reports of drones, impacting nearly 140,000 passengers and leading to the deployment of soldiers.

"We are able to now deploy detection systems throughout the UK to combat this threat," Wallace said in a statement. But he warned: "The huge proliferation of such devices, coupled with the challenges of deploying military counter measures into a civilian environment, means there are no easy solutions." Meanwhile police have received around 30 pieces of "useful information" in the last 24 hours, a police-backed charity said Monday.

The tip-offs came after the airport, some 30 miles south of London, on Sunday offered a £50,000 (\$63,000/56,000 euro) reward for information on the incident. "Within the first 24 hours we had close to 30 pieces of useful information that we passed on to police," a spokesman for CrimeStoppers, a charity that helps police solve crimes said. "It's been a good response," he said, adding that it pays out rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators. It launched the new appeal Sunday after police released without charge a

local couple arrested Friday on suspicion of involvement.

Paul Gait and Elaine Kirk, who live in nearby Crawley, said in a statement Monday they felt "completely violated" by their two-day detention. The police rejected criticism of their handling of the incident. A detective admitted it was a "possibility" that no drones had actually been in the area—despite the discovery of a damaged device near the airport perimeter that is now being forensically examined. "We can unequivocally state that there have been numerous illegal drone sightings at the airport over three days from 19 to 21 December," Sussex police deputy chief constable Jo Shiner said on Monday.

"There were numerous reports clustered around 37 occasions where a drone or drones were seen and I am keen for those responsible to be brought to justice," Shiner said. The force provided fresh details on the sightings, noting that five officers were among the witnesses who reported the devices first appearing Wednesday night. Shiner added that police were investigating what would be considered "criminal and reckless behavior" under an aviation and maritime law punishable by a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

## Police field tip-offs

Meanwhile, British police probing the Gatwick Airport drone mystery that grounded Christmas getaway flights last week have received around 30 pieces of "useful information" in the last 24 hours, a police-backed charity said. The tip-offs came after the airport on Sunday began offering a £50,000 (\$63,000, 56,000 euro) reward for information on dozens of drone sightings which led to the three days of disruption. "Within the first 24 hours we had close to 30 pieces of useful information that we passed onto police," a spokesman for CrimeStoppers, a charity that aims to aid police in solving crimes, told AFP.

## Thai prisoner electrocuted during botched jailbreak

**BANGKOK:** A Thai prisoner died yesterday after being electrocuted by high-voltage barbed wire as he attempted to escape, police said. Wiwat Aksorsom, 32, broke free from his cell just after midnight along with two other prisoners and tried to scale the six-metre (20-ft) walls

of his prison in southern Surat Thani province. But he accidentally touched the electrified barbed wire cresting the prison walls killing him instantly, Colonel Wanchai Palawan, superintendent of Chaiya district police, told AFP. "Prison officials found his body on the wall after he was electrocuted," he said.

Wiwat had been arrested in possession of 38 methamphetamine tablets, and was remanded in custody while pending police investigation. The two other prisoners - also jailed for drug offences - made it through without making contact with the fatal wiring. But one was promptly re-arrested after breaking his arm as he landed on the other side of the wall, while the other was found hours later in a police

search around the perimeter.

"They said they are homesick," Wanchai added. Thai prisons are all equipped with high-voltage electrical fencing to serve as a deterrent to escaping prisoners. Most facilities are also massively overcrowded in a country which has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world due to harsh penalties for drug offences. Those push small-time drug dealers and users, including women, behind bars for long periods. Authorities are mulling ways to ease overcrowding including the widespread use of electronic ankle tags. Thailand was criticized in June for putting a 26-year-old convicted murderer to death by lethal injection - its first execution since 2009. —AFP

## Xmas dashed for residents of Sydney 'cracking' tower

**SYDNEY:** Some residents of a recently completed Sydney high-rise apartment block were yesterday spending their Christmas in makeshift camps, after they were evacuated by authorities when "cracking noises" in the building were heard. Hundreds of people in the 38-storey Opal Tower in the Sydney Olympic Park and other nearby buildings were told to leave their homes on Monday after reports of "cracking noises".

Some two-thirds of the units were declared safe to return to Tuesday morning, but 51 others were declared "structurally unsafe", New South Wales state police said. "Residents of these units have been escorted back to gather their belongings and have made their own arrangements for accommodation," police added in a statement. "Engineers and building managers remain on scene." No one was injured during the evacuation.

The building moved "one to two millimetres" during the incident and authorities said they found a crack on the 10th floor. But firefighters said they were confident of the building's integrity, apart from the affected units. "No, there is no risk that the building can collapse. It's just the local structure has been compromised," Superintendent Adam Dewberry of NSW Fire and Rescue told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "What will happen now is the strata manager will work with the local engineers to determine what needs to be done to actually make this building safe and let the full occupancy reoccur."

Residents spoke of how their Christmas plans were thrown into turmoil, with some saying they had to sleep in their cars. Others said they were fearful of living in the block despite their apartment being assessed as safe. "I'm going to be moving, that's for sure. I don't want to spend a second in there that I don't have to. I don't want to die. I wouldn't feel safe sleeping there," 20th floor resident Chris Abram told commercial broadcaster Channel Nine. The 392-unit tower opened this year and is near the site of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. —AFP



**WEST SUSSEX:** An Air Transat aircraft is pictured beyond a CCTV camera as it prepares to land at London Gatwick Airport, south of London, as flights resumed following the closing of the airfield due to drones flying. —AFP

"It's been a good response," he said, adding it pays out rewards if details provided - even anonymously - lead to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators. Gatwick, Britain's second-busiest airport, was forced to close its only runway repeatedly between last Wednesday and Friday due to the drone reports, impacting nearly 140,000 passengers. It launched the new appeal for information Sunday after police released without charge a local couple arrested Friday over the incident. Paul Gait and Elaine Kirk, who live in nearby Crawley, said in a statement Monday they felt "completely violated" by their two-day detention.

The police also on Monday defended themselves against criticism of their handling of the entire incident. It followed a detective admitting it was a "possibility" no drones had actually been in the area - despite the discovery of a damaged device near the airport perimeter now being forensically examined. "We can unequivocally state that there have been



**SYDNEY:** Residents return back to their apartments following an inspection of Opal Tower by engineers and firefighters in Sydney yesterday. Australian police evacuated thousands of people in west Sydney late Christmas Eve, after residents reported hearing a 'loud crack' from a 38-storey building. — AFP



International

# Prayers, fear in tsunami-struck Indonesia towns as toll tops 400

## Rescuers use drones, sniffer dogs to search for survivors

**CARITA, Indonesia:** A small Christmas service was held near a stretch of Indonesia's tsunami-struck coastline yesterday, as panicked residents in one coastal town tried to flee after rumors spread that another deadly wave was about to smash into the coast. It turned out to be a false alarm, but widespread fears about a repeat disaster - and warnings that clean water and medicine supplies were running low - rippled across the region as the death toll from Saturday's volcano-triggered disaster topped 400.

Thousands more have been displaced, with many left homeless after houses were flattened by the killer wave. "A lot of the children are sick with fevers, headaches and they haven't had enough water," said Rizal Alimin, a doctor working for NGO Aksi Cepat Tanggap, at a local school that was turned into a temporary shelter. "We have less medicine than usual ... It's not healthy here for evacuees."

Rescuers used heavy machinery, sniffer dogs, and special cameras to detect and dig bodies out of mud and wreckage along a 100-km stretch of Java's west coast and officials said the search area would be expanded further south. "There are several locations that we previously thought were not affected," said Yusuf Latif, spokesman for the national search and rescue agency. "But now we are reaching more remote areas...and in fact there are many victims there," he added.

The powerful tsunami struck at night and without warning, sweeping over popular beaches on southern Sumatra and the western edge of Java and inundating tourist hotels and coastal settlements. The latest death toll stood at 429, with 1,485 people injured and another 154 still missing. Indonesia is a Muslim majority nation but has a Christian minority, with services held yesterday to celebrate Christmas - and pray for those affected by the

deadly tsunami. Dozens attended a somber service at the Rahmat Carita Pentecostal church near one of the worst-hit areas. "This Christmas is different because we're celebrating it during a disaster," congregant Eliza told AFP. "For me, it's a chance to contemplate."

### Scared to go home

Experts have warned that more deadly waves could slam the stricken region now covered by mountains of overturned cars, boats, furniture and other debris. Many evacuees are too afraid to go home. "I've been here three days," said Neng Sumarni, 40, who was sleeping with her three children and husband on the school's floor with some three dozen others. "I'm scared because my home is right near the beach." Authorities are using sniffer dogs to try to find any survivors and victims' bodies, while they have turned to drones to survey the devastated coastlines. Abu Salim, with volunteer disaster aid group Tagana, said aid workers were scrambling to stabilize the situation by setting up public kitchens and tents for shelter. "(People) still don't have access to running water," he told AFP. "There are many evacuees who fled to higher ground and we still can't reach them." In shattered Way Muli village on Sumatra, Udin Ahok was coming to grips with the horrible choice he was forced to make: save his wife or his mother and baby.

When the tsunami slammed into his house, the panicked Ahok fought to reach his sleeping 70-year-old mother and one-year-old son but then he saw his wife about to drown in the swirling waters. He plucked her to safety. His mother and baby were found dead under mountains of debris. "I didn't have time to save my mother and son," the weeping 46-year-old told AFP from a shelter in one of the stricken region's hardest-hit areas. "I



**RAJABASA, Indonesia:** This picture taken with a long exposure shows lightning bolts striking along the Sunda Strait between the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra in Lampung province yesterday. — AFP

regret it so much. I can only hope they've been given a place in God's hands."

### 'I can't rebuild'

Across the Sunda Strait in Java island, Saki stood amid the rubble of what was once Sumber Jaya village and wondered aloud how he would get his life back on track.

"I can't rebuild, everything is gone - my clothes, my money," said the 60-year-old, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. Officials say the evidence suggested that an eruption of the rumbling Anak Krakatoa volcano, which sits in the middle of the Strait, caused a section of the crater to collapse and slide into the ocean, triggering the tsunami. — Agencies

## Ex-government spokesman who denied Tiananmen deaths dead at 90

**BEIJING:** Former Chinese government spokesman Yuan Mu, the man who told the world no one was killed in the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, has died, an online obituary search showed, while official media has remained mostly silent. A former Communist propaganda official, Yuan defended the Chinese government after soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) fired on unarmed pro-democracy protesters in 1989. Reports of Yuan's death have been unusually muted in China's official media. The Paper, a state-linked newspaper, last week put up an article with a memorial service notice but quickly removed it.

An article on the state-run China News Service said Yuan died on December 13 in Beijing. He was 90. This is in contrast to the recent death of Ismail Amat, a former vice chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, whose passing was widely reported in state media, including a front page obituary in party mouthpiece the People's Daily. Official images had showed Chinese leader Xi Jinping attending the memorial and offering condolences to Amat's wife, but this was conspicuously absent in Yuan's case.

Yuan was born in 1928 in Xinghua city in eastern Jiangsu province. He rose to become a director of the State Council Research Office and also served as spokesman of the State Council, China's cabinet. On June 4, 1989, after student protestors had staged a peaceful seven week sit-in to demand democratic reforms, the Communist Party sent tanks and PLA soldiers in to quell the protest. Yuan had then said no one died on the square but later admitted that 300 soldiers and citizens died around the square with some 7,000 injured, a far lower number than many independent estimates.

The government has since refused to talk about the

number of people who may have been killed, and mentions of the incident are censored on the Chinese internet. Yuan's death comes at a sensitive time, with 2019 marking the 30th anniversary of the bloody crackdown. Tens of thousands gather annually in semi-autonomous Hong Kong to commemorate the event but any mention of the pro-democracy demonstrations remains strictly censored. Yuan's name has also been censored on the Twitter-like Weibo—a search on the platform showed results could not be displayed "according to the relevant laws, regulations and policies".

But a search on an online obituary website turned up an entry for Yuan where visitors can pay to burn virtual incense or leave computerized flowers. A former journalist, the conservative Yuan wrote several articles in his retirement complaining of laxness in the leadership, which he said led to corruption and bourgeois liberalization. In 1998, Yuan denied reports of his own death after several newspapers in Hong Kong reported that he had committed suicide. "I'm not such a fool (to commit suicide). I will not do such a move in my life," the Hong Kong-based Beijing-backed Ta Kung Pao had quoted Yuan as saying. — AFP

## N Korea blasts UN resolution on rights abuse

**SEOUL:** North Korea yesterday hit back at a latest UN resolution that condemned Pyongyang's rights abuses, calling it a "serious... provocation" that would undermine peace efforts on the Korean peninsula. The UN General Assembly adopted last week a resolution—which passed by consensus without a vote—condemning the "systematic, widespread and gross" human rights violations in the isolated North.

The impoverished but nuclear-armed nation, ruled by the Kim family through three generations, has been accused of state-sanctioned abuses including torture, rape and extrajudicial killings. It marked the 14th consecutive year the UN has passed such a document. The North has constantly denied any rights abuses in the country and labeled the UN criticisms as smear campaigns aimed at undermining its leadership. The North's state-run Rodong newspaper slammed the latest resolution as a "serious political provocation against the (North) and a vicious move to tarnish its international image".

"The wicked intention of the US... in getting vocal about the non-existent 'human rights issue' of the DPRK is to broaden the scope of the sanctions and pressure and escalate them," it said in an editorial, using the North's official name. The editorial also lashed out at a "thoughtless" South Korea for backing the UN bill—a move that would be "tarnishing the atmosphere of improving the north-south ties". Washington had separately sought to organize a Security Council meeting on human rights in the North but gave up on the option earlier this month because it was unsure of the support it would get from partners. — AFP

## India races against the clock to rescue 'rat-hole' miners

**NEW DELHI:** Indian rescuers desperately battled rising water levels and a lack of effective machinery yesterday in a race against the clock to reach 15 miners trapped for nearly two weeks in a flooded mineshaft. The so-called "rat-hole" diggers-men who risk their lives working in illegal mines—were lost on December 13 after water gushed in from a nearby river, in the remote northeastern

state of Meghalaya. Dozens of emergency workers have since been racing against time to rescue the miners from a 106 metre (330-foot) shaft. There has been no contact with the workers but their families are clinging to hopes that they are in an air pocket.

Rescue chief S.K. Shastri told AFP nothing has been heard from the miners, but that "in such cases we always presume they are alive." Engineers are struggling with ineffective machinery that cannot cope with the deluge in the pit. "The water level hasn't gone down an inch—it increased after it rained," Shastri said. "The two 25 horsepower pumps were ineffective. We need up to 12 100 horsepower pumps to drain out water." The river is also still pouring into the shaft making it dangerous to send down divers, according to Shastri, who added that the collapse of the tunnel walls could have caused leaks into

other mines. Most of those trapped are said to be migrant laborers from neighboring states.

A miner who survived the flooding told reporters five men escaped as water burst into the pit. "I was about five feet away from the ground that morning and on my way up, when I suddenly felt a lot of air and then saw water," the 21-year-old said. Mining was banned in the mineral-rich state by a federal court in 2014 after local communities said it was polluting water bodies. But the practice continues with locals illegally extracting coal using dangerous "rat hole" mines. This involves digging into the side of hills and then burrowing horizontal tunnels to reach a coal seam. At least 15 miners were killed after they were trapped in another flooded rat-hole mine in Meghalaya in 2012. Their bodies were never recovered. — AFP

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## Analysis

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## Iran's economic challenges go beyond sanctions

Iran's government faces acute economic challenges as it announced its annual budget yesterday, and not all of its problems are the result of US sanctions. The rial has lost around half its value against the dollar since US President Donald Trump announced he was withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal in May and reimposing sanctions. That has driven up prices and blocked much of the foreign investment President Hassan Rouhani had hoped to attract, with the International Monetary Fund now predicting the economy will shrink by 3.6 percent next year. But analysts say many of the country's woes pre-date Trump and the sanctions.

### Banking sector

Iran-based economist Mohammad Mahidashti says the banking system is the "biggest problem - riddled with fictitious assets and non-performing loans". Banks issued huge loans under Rouhani's predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with little apparent care for whether they would be repaid. Parliament's economic commission said in March that half of all these loans - worth around \$27 billion at the time - turned sour.

Desperately short of funds, banks have tried to attract fresh deposits with interest rates of 30 percent or more. While providing a much-needed source of liquidity initially, the interest on these deposits has only added to banks' instability. Rouhani said recently that "unhealthy" banks were being kept afloat by continuously borrowing from the central bank, and the debts of private lenders have doubled in the year to September.

Banks are also saddled with unsellable properties after pumping cash into a construction boom that ran out of steam around 2013. "We have close to two million empty houses in Iran. There is simply no demand out there," said Narges Darvish, an economics lecturer at Tehran's Alzahra University. But the government is loath to let banks fail, fearing a public backlash - especially after the collapse of dodgy credit agencies helped fuel widespread protests a year ago.

### Currency crisis

The US withdrawal from the nuclear deal fuelled a run on the Iranian rial, but was not the only factor behind the currency's weakness. In September, central bank governor Abdolnasser Hemmati instead blamed "horrific growth in money supply". Its data shows that the amount of cash flowing around the Iranian economy has increased 24 percent annually for the past four years. Given that Iran's economy offers few profitable and secure investment opportunities, citizens had already long sought to change rial savings into dollars.

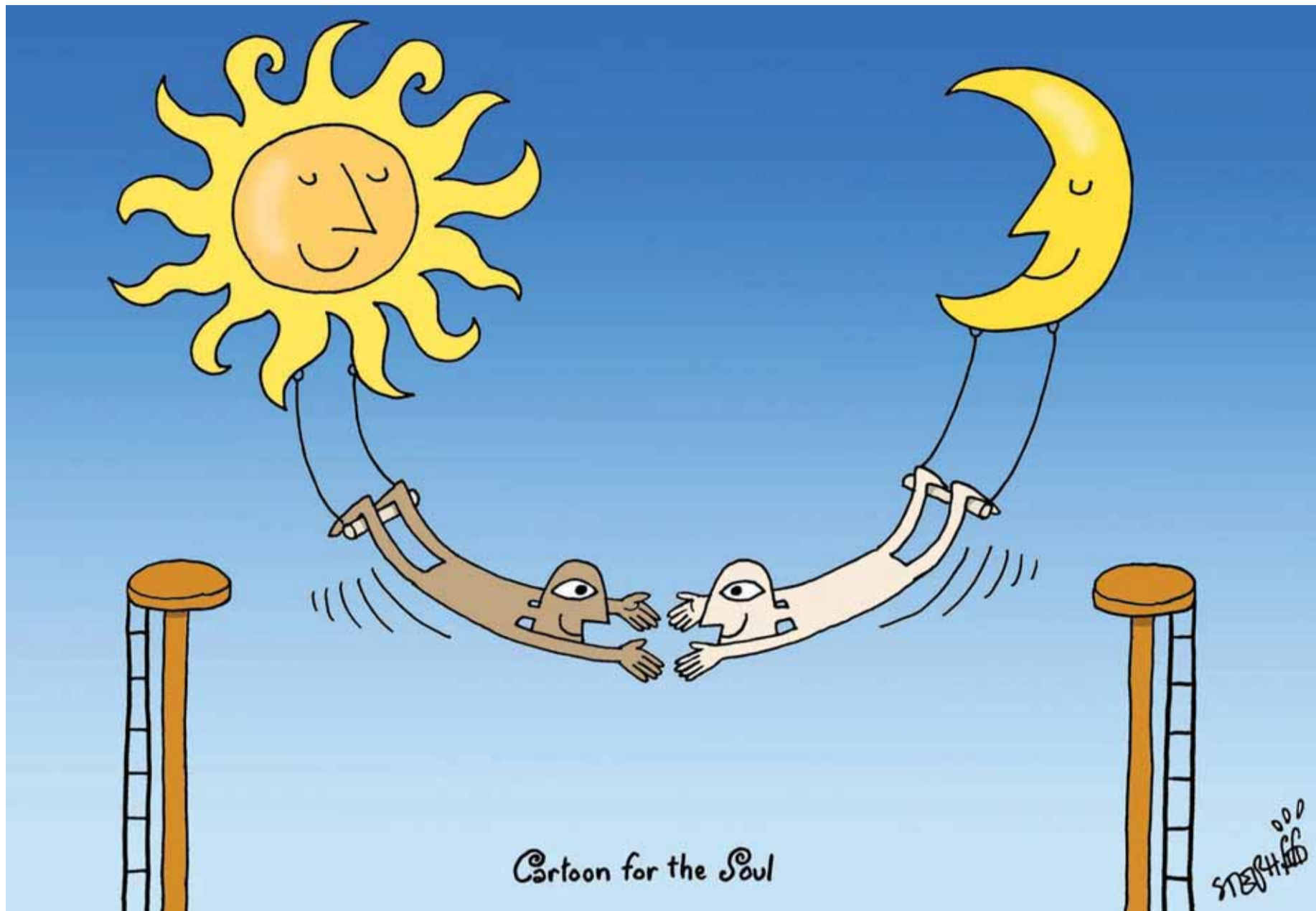
And when rising expectations that the US would re-impose sanctions pressured the rial in earnest in early 2018, the government's reaction was a mess, according to economist Mousa Ghaninezhad. "They claim they believe in the free market but they have no coherent strategy," he told AFP. At one point, in April, the government forcibly shut down exchange houses and tried to fix the rate at 42,000 rials per dollar - which only fuelled panic and drove speculators into the black market.

Recognizing its mistake, the government reopened exchange shops and sacked the central bank governor a few months later. A fierce crackdown was also unleashed on those exploiting the situation, with dozens of traders put on trial and at least three businessmen executed since October. But the damage has been done. Imports are now vastly more expensive at the same time as sanctions make it harder to move goods into the country. Prices have been rising as a result - the cost of food and drink rose 60 percent in the year to November, according to the central bank.

### State control

Despite a privatization drive, much of the economy remains in the hands of the state, either directly, or because groups connected to the government or military are the major shareholders. This has stifled the private sector, which struggles to attract investment and compete for projects, analysts say. Economist Ehsan Soltani says state-controlled industries like steel and petrochemicals benefit from huge subsidies - totalling around \$40 billion a year in fuel and electricity discounts - but create relatively few jobs and returns. "These industries are only wanted because of rent and corruption," he told AFP.

Hopes that the nuclear deal would bring a flood of foreign investment to boost the private sector have been dashed by the return of sanctions. Meanwhile, efforts to bring greater transparency - notably, new laws against money-laundering - have been opposed by powerful vested interests, according to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. "Those places that launder thousands of billions (of rials) are certainly financially capable of spending a few hundred billion on propaganda (against the laws)," Zarif told Khobar Online news agency last month. — AFP



## Trump Syria withdrawal - right idea, wrong time

US President Donald Trump's planned withdrawal of American troops from Syria, a move that prompted the resignation of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, was the right decision in the wrong way and at the wrong time. Unless modified it could have disastrous consequences.

The American military has been overextended in the Middle East since 2003. Invading Iraq was a strategic blunder of the first order, perhaps the most costly in American history. Since 2008, first Barack Obama and now Trump have sought to begin extricating the United States from some of these commitments. Obama announced a pivot to Asia and a new concentration on the rising Chinese challenge. The Trump administration's national security strategy, announced last year, extended this rebalancing in order to prioritize countering Russia as well as China.

Actually engineering these shifts has proved difficult. Places like Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan are sticky. They are not called quagmires for nothing. Commitments are made, obligations undertaken, solemn promises offered, coalitions built, local partners recruited. And everything which results rests upon the good faith and reliability of the United States.

In 2011, Obama pulled the plug on the American military presence in Iraq. He thereby abandoned the Sunni tribal militias that had helped US forces defeat Al-Qaeda and drove the survivors into Syria to the

mercies of a corrupt Shiite-dominated government. In 2014, when those Al-Qaeda remnants, now reorganized as Islamic State, burst out of Syria, nothing appeared to stand between them and Baghdad. Only the combined efforts of the United States and Iran allowed the Iraqi government to hold its capital and eventually retake the rest of its territory.

Trump's desire to withdraw from Syria is consistent with his and his predecessor's national strategies, but the manner in which the decision has been taken is highly counterproductive.

Surprise as a device to throw one's adversaries off balance has utility, but this decision has only discomfited America's friends. The United States leads a multinational military coalition in Syria, none of whom were consulted. Several of Syria's neighbors, notably Israel and Iraq, are going to be negatively affected.

The most immediately impacted will be America's partners on the ground, the Kurdish-dominated militias that have done most of the fighting and dying in the largely successful and still ongoing campaign

against Islamic State. The minimum condition for withdrawal from Syria compatible with America's honor and credibility is to help its Kurdish allies negotiate an arrangement with the Damascus regime (and with Turkey) that affords them some degree of political autonomy and allows them to continue to secure the population and suppress Islamic State in the east of the country.

Simply walking away and allowing these former partners to be crushed between two hostile forces would be the worst debacle for the United States since the fall of South Vietnam. Yet American officials, operating on the assumption that US forces would be remaining a while longer, have been dissuading the Kurds from seeking such an arrangement with the regime in Damascus.

Another collateral victim of this decision is likely to be the peace negotiations on Afghanistan. American officials are currently in talks with the Taliban about an end to that war, an intra-Afghan dialogue leading to the inclusion of the Taliban in an expanded national government and the

withdrawal of American and other NATO forces. Trump's decision on Syria, and his reported desire to also begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, will pull the rug out from under the American and Afghan government negotiators, giving the Taliban every incentive to await a comparable move by the US president on Afghanistan.

Despite his relative inexperience, Trump has so far avoided the kind of military blunders that in the light of history have marred the performance of many of his predecessors - Presidents John F. Kennedy's Bay of Pigs, Lyndon Johnson's post-Tonkin Gulf escalation in Vietnam, Bill Clinton's Black Hawk Down battle in Somalia, George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq and Obama's 2011 withdrawal from Iraq. This may be about to change.

Bob Corker, the Republican chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has asserted that Trump's withdrawal decision was made for political purposes. If true, this would not be the first time for this or any other president. But the apparently impulsive nature of this decision, heedless of evident consequences, uncoordinated with allies or even among the relevant US agencies should be cause for alarm. With the arrival of a new Congress in January, American domestic politics are likely to become even more turbulent. If this turbulence spills over into the realm of national security, we could all be in for a very rough ride. — Reuters



### Decision has discomfited America's friends

## Powerful trio cast a shadow over Congo poll

Elections in Democratic Republic of Congo will ostensibly bring the curtain down on the era of President Joseph Kabila, in charge of the vast resource-rich nation for nearly 18 turbulent years. If elections successfully take place on Sunday, it would mark the first peaceful transition of power in the DRC's post-colonial history. But many analysts strongly doubt that Kabila will quit politics. Instead, they predict he will simply wield influence behind the scenes - a tactic likely to be emulated by two rivals, ex-rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba and Moïse Katumbi, exiled former governor of Katanga province.

### Kabila comeback?

Kabila took power at the age of 29 after his president father, Laurent-Désiré, was assassinated in 2001 by a bodyguard. If Sunday's thrice-postponed vote goes according to plan, Kabila will step down, taking up the senator-for-life position offered to former presidents. Kabila has been vague about his future but, aged only 47, seems to have no plans to shuffle off into retirement. "In life, as in politics, I do not rule anything out," he told foreign media ahead of the polls. He said his political future might be clearer in 2023 - the year the country is set to hold its next presidential polls.

Critics say Kabila plans to have the seat kept warm for him by his hand-picked successor, hardline former interior minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, one of the front-runners wins the election. After nearly 18 years in power, Kabila has also built up a web of supporters in the military and security apparatus, as well as a loyal political vehicle, the Common Front for Congo (FCC), which earlier this year declared him to be its "moral authority". Kabila also reportedly has major stakes in the economy, which would also extend his potential influence. A Bloomberg investigation two years ago found the Kabila family had built up a huge business network with interests across the DRC.

### Bemba: Former warlord

Former militia leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, 56, has been a fixture in DRC's political landscape, and a rival to the Kabila clan, for years. He was once an assistant to Mobutu Sese Seko, but left the country after Kabila's father over-



Supporters of the Democratic Republic of Congo's Union for Democracy and Social Progress gather outside the party headquarters on Dec 21, 2018. — AFP

### Katumbi: Exile-in-waiting?

Millionaire businessman Moïse Katumbi has also been barred from contesting Sunday's election. But the 53-year-old can still count on wielding influence on the DRC's future through his backing for Fulyani. His stronghold is the mineral-rich southeastern province of Katanga where he was once governor. After falling out with Kabila, Katumbi has been living in self-imposed exile in Belgium, the former colonial power, since May 2016. He was handed a three-year sentence for property fraud-a charge that he denies.

In January, he declared he would run in the presidential election but was then accused of hiring mercenaries and charged with offences against state security. In August, he was blocked from entering the DRC as he tried to meet a deadline for filing his election bid. In October, the case was sent to the constitutional court - a procedure likely to take months. — AFP

threw the dictator in 1997. In 1998 he formed his Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) militia in armed opposition to Kabila senior. He became vice president in an interim government in 2003, but in 2006 was defeated by Kabila junior in an election bid. He was elected to the Senate the following year.

In 2008, Bemba was arrested in Brussels on charges of war crimes in the International Criminal Court over atrocities committed by his militia in the neighboring Central African Republic. In 2016, the ICC found him guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity but this year overturned the decision on appeal. But another ICC charge of witness bribery meant he was legally banned from an election bid. Bemba has a major power base, especially in the northwestern DRC, and tens of thousands of cheering supporters turned out for his return in August. Like Katumbi, he has backed Martin Fulyani, a little-known legislator and former oil executive, as a rival candidate to the pro-Kabila Shadary.

## Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2018

**12** Tokyo stocks plunge  
in Christmas rout**14** Toyota named Best Global Automotive Brand in  
Interbrand's '100 Best Global Brands Report'**14** Central bank is US economy's  
'only problem' says, Trump

TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (2nd-R) submits documents outlining his budget for 2018-2019 to Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani (3rd-L). — AFP

# Iran presents budget to counter sanctions

## 'Early this year our foreign exchange cash reserve was practically zero'

TEHRAN: President Hassan Rouhani yesterday unveiled Iran's first annual budget since the return of US sanctions, saying it had been adjusted to take account of Washington's "cruel" measures. The president announced a 20 percent increase in public sector wages in a sign of the economic challenges the Islamic republic has faced since the United States pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal earlier this year. The speech gave only a few general points of the budget — which will now be scrutinized and voted on by parliament — but acknowledged the pressure Iran was under.

"Last year we faced some problems," Rouhani told parliament in a televised speech, referring to the widespread protests that hit the country almost exactly a year ago, sparked by anger over economic and political conditions. "Those events caused the Americans to change their position regarding the Islamic republic and the nuclear deal," he said. "The real objective of the

US in all of this conspiracy and sanction and pressure... is to bring the powerful Islamic republic of Iran to its knees," he said, vowing that the US "will definitely be defeated." The renewed US sanctions include an embargo on Iran's crucial oil sector.

The new budget did not say how many barrels of oil Iran hopes to sell in the next financial year, which starts in late March, but analysts believe it will be considerably less than the approximately 2.5 million it sold per day prior to Trump's withdrawal. The US granted waivers to eight key buyers of Iranian oil — including China, India and Turkey — though this has been a double-edged sword for Iran since it also helped push down the global price.

**Forex 'practically zero'**

Rouhani came to power in 2013 representing the more moderate side of Iran's ruling elite, hoping a com-

promise on the country's nuclear program would reduce tensions with the West and allow foreign investment to boost the stunted private sector. The return of sanctions has ended that hope, and forced Rouhani more towards the self-sufficient "resistance economy" preferred by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Concern over the economy pushed many Iranians to secure their savings in dollars and gold, triggering a run on the Iranian rial, which has lost around half its value since Trump announced the pullout. "At one point early this year our foreign exchange cash reserve was practically zero, forcing the government to take hard decisions to save the country," Rouhani told parliament. The government has pressured exporters to return their dollars to Iran, and Rouhani said they would lose tax incentives if they failed to repatriate their cash.

The central bank has used the returning dollars to shore up the collapsing rial, which has recovered to

around 110,000 per dollar on unofficial exchanges. The rial's fall drove up prices across the board, with food and drink costs up 60 percent in the year to November according to the central bank. The judiciary launched a fierce crackdown on currency speculators, dubbed "economic disruptors" that has seen dozens of traders put on trial and at least three businessmen executed.

The so-called "sultan of coins", Vahid Mazloomi, was hanged in October after being found guilty of amassing two tons of gold coins. But sanctions and fraud are only part of the story in an economy with many long-standing problems. Its banking sector is riddled with bad loans, while many key industries from oil and gas to construction are dominated by semi-state groups with opaque links to the government and military. The budget was delayed several times in recent weeks, with reports that Khamenei had demanded unspecified changes to the final document. — AFP

## Court orders bail for Nissan executive linked to Ghosn

TOKYO: A Tokyo court yesterday granted bail for a Nissan executive accused of a key role in the financial misconduct case involving auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn, who remains in detention. The Tokyo District Court said it had approved a request by lawyers for Greg Kelly and set bail for his release at 70 million yen (\$635,000), which he paid in cash.

Prosecutors appealed the decision, but the court turned them down, paving the way for his release. Once freed, he could check into hospital due to a health problem, Japanese media said. Kelly was granted bail reportedly on condition that he should not leave Japan, make contact with anyone involved in the case, or destroy evidence. He would also need court approval to attend board meetings at Nissan, public broadcaster NHK said.

The 62-year-old American was arrested on November 19 at the same time as Ghosn on allegations he helped him under-report his compensation at Nissan for years. The bail order comes after Kelly's wife issued a video statement saying she was "extremely concerned about his health." Kelly suffers from a spinal condition and was reportedly due to undergo surgery before his arrest in Tokyo.

"Greg was tricked into coming to Japan and betrayed by a group of Nissan executives as part of a political power grab. Their dishonorable motives are clear," Dee Kelly claimed. She said her husband, once Ghosn's right-hand man, had been "caught up in an international plot by some at Nissan to take control".

**Rift in alliance**

Kelly is accused of helping construct an alleged scheme by which



TOKYO: This picture taken on December 21, 2018 shows pedestrians looking at a television news program featuring former Nissan representative director Greg Kelly. — AFP

Ghosn under-reported his salary for a period of eight years. The pair have already been indicted over their alleged involvement in the scheme in the five years to 2015. Prosecutors are still investigating the period from 2015. Ghosn also faces an additional allegation involving claims he shifted a personal investment loss of more than \$16 million to Nissan's books with help from a Saudi acquaintance.

He is expected to remain in detention through Christmas and the start of 2019, with prosecutors able to apply for an additional 10-day extension when his current detention period expires on January 1. Ghosn's fall from power at Nissan has exposed a deep rift in the firm's three-way alliance with Renault and Mitsubishi Motors — which out-sold all of its rival groups last year. While Nissan and Mitsubishi quickly removed Ghosn from his leadership roles after his arrest, Renault has been more cautious about the charges and the case has stoked tensions between the French firm and Nissan. — AFP

## Cameroon rebels issue unique 'virtual currency'

YAOUNDE: Anglophone separatists in Cameroon on Monday announced they had launched a virtual currency, the AmbaCoin, to help fund their campaign for independence and provide humanitarian aid. The bitcoin-like currency, based on the blockchain software principle, is named after the "Republic of Ambazonia," a self-declared independent state in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest Regions.

"The People of Ambazonia has created AmbaCoin, a tradeable digital token that can be used as a currency, a representation of an asset, a virtual share, a proof of patriotic citizenship," according to the currency's website. "All sales of the AmbaCoin will be directed to fund the Ambazonian

Cause, to assist Refugees & Internally Displaced Persons, to rebuild homes destroyed by occupying military forces, and to defend communities from the repressive regime of La Republique Du Cameroun."

According to a clock on the currency's website, the AmbaCoin became operational on Friday. It said there had been more than 28,000 pre-orders for the currency, a figure that could not be verified independently. Buying one "amba" for the "Ambazonian Crypto Bond" costs 25 US cents. In October 2017, radical anglophone leaders declared a "Republic of Ambazonia" in two regions that were incorporated into predominantly French-speaking Cameroon in 1961. The central government in Yaounde launched a crackdown, deploying thousands of troops against armed militants.

More than 200 members of the security forces and at least 500 civilians have been killed, according to the International Crisis Group thinktank, while the UN estimates that more than 437,000 people have fled their homes. The two English-speaking regions were previously ruled by Britain as the Southern Cameroons. — AFP

NBK REPORT: EGYPT OUTLOOK

# Growth outlook promising as govt reforms continue apace

## Growth will remain robust as Egypt's economic reform program continues

**KUWAIT:** The Egyptian economy has been recovering nicely since the adoption of a strong and ambitious economic reform program in late 2016, supported by \$12bn from the IMF. The significant progress made so far won the praise of all and ushers in a new era for Egypt. Indeed, growth has been strong, the budget deficit has contracted, the unemployment rate has started to drop and the public debt dynamics have improved. Egypt is still facing a number of risks, though, including high exposure to external shocks, persistently high inflation, and high debt servicing costs. However, with steadfast implementation of reforms, a more competitive currency, a stronger fiscal position and a lower debt level as well as an improved regulatory environment, the outlook for the next two years is favorable.

### Growth continues its momentum

GDP growth reached 5.3% in the fiscal year 2017/18, the fastest pace in a decade, and continued at the same rate in the first quarter of the FY2018/19 (3Q18). Growth was supported mainly by a strong pick-up in government investment spending, a continued increase in natural gas production and a recovery in the tourism sector. As a result, the unemployment rate fell to 10% in 3Q18 from 11.9% a year earlier.

However, the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), while showing a pick-up in activity over the first quarter of the FY2018/19, (avg. of 50.5 in July-September) fell again into contraction territory in October and November, reaching 48.6 and 49.2, respectively. This suggests some weakness in the recovery of the non-oil private sector, on account of some challenging economic conditions that continued to weigh on demand.

However, in the context of global monetary tightening, concerns about stability across emerging markets, and the planned energy subsidies cut, private consumption and private sector activity will likely remain under pressure during this fiscal year. Continued strong government investment and steady progress on reforms aimed at boosting private investment, including foreign investment, should support growth over the next couple of years. We expect growth to remain robust at around 5.2% in FY2018/19 and 5.0 in FY2019/20.

### Inflation remains higher than expected

Although the fading impact of the currency depreciation has led inflation to fall sharply from a peak of 33% in July 2017, the latest fuel and power subsidy cuts in mid-2018 has pushed up inflation, from 11.4% in May to 17.7% in October 2018, above the CBE target inflation rate of 13% ( $\pm 3\%$ ). This reflected mainly larger-than-expected successive monthly increases in the prices of fruits and vegetables. The headline rate has since decelerated to 15.7% in November, as the price of food and beverages fell by 1.8% compared to the previous month. Core inflation, however, slowed from 8.86% in October to 7.94% in November, its slowest rate since March 2016, providing relative comfort to the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE).

The recent increase in the custom dollar for non-essential goods from EGP16/\$ to the market exchange rate of close to EGP17.9/\$ could push inflation somewhat higher over the coming months or at least moderate

its decline. The recent changes to the foreign exchange repatriation mechanism, whereby foreign investors will need to secure their foreign exchange in the interbank market rather than from the CBE, will likely lead to more flexibility in, and possibly some pressures on, the exchange rate.

Moreover, prices will likely remain susceptible to upward pressures in most of 2019, especially if the fuel subsidies are fully eliminated and the indexation mechanism is introduced as planned. We expect inflation to average 14% in FY2018/19, down from 20.9% in FY2017/18, but there is a lot of uncertainty on what will happen to oil and import prices, and on exchange rate movements, among others.

### Monetary Policy will likely remain tight

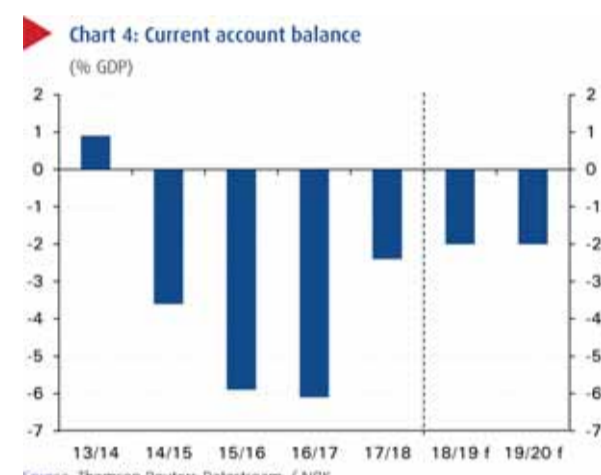
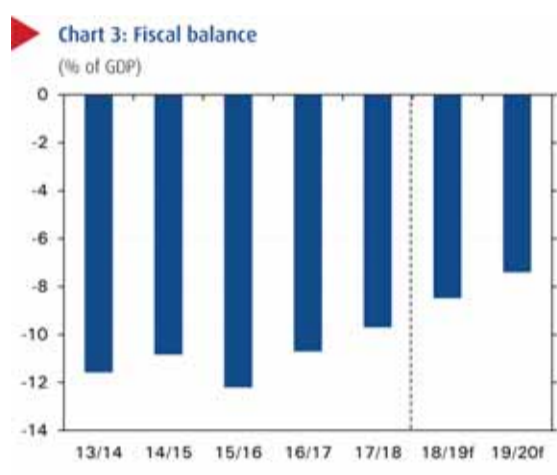
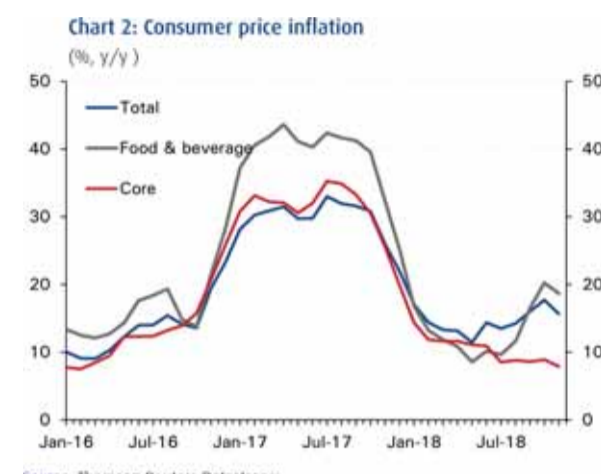
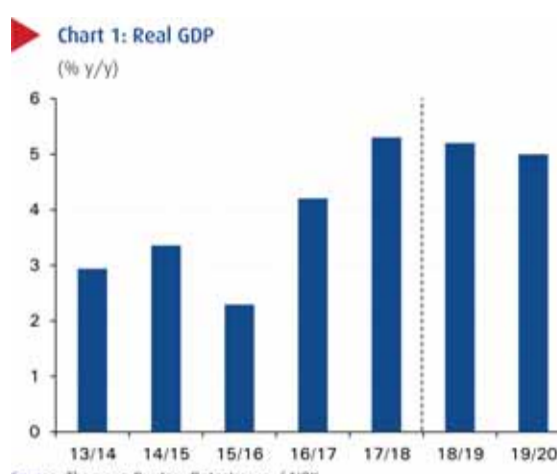
With inflation remaining relatively high, the CBE will likely be more cautious about easing monetary policy; it may keep its interest rates unchanged during this fiscal year at 16.75% for its overnight deposit and 17.75% for its lending rate. In this context, monetary policy faces a difficult dilemma. On one hand, it needs to maintain high interest rates to attract foreign capital to serve its financing needs in foreign currencies. But on the other hand, it wants to reduce the cost of borrowing to encourage investment and boost economic growth, as well as reduce debt service to reach the budget deficit target. However, it would be prudent to maintain and entrench macroeconomic stability first by keeping inflation under control and this would open the door for a later reduction in interest rates and a pick-up in private sector activity.

### Budget deficit narrowing gradually, but still large

Egypt's fiscal position has improved, driven mainly by higher tax revenues, cuts in energy subsidies and containment of the wage bill. The budget deficit narrowed from 10.7% of GDP in FY2016/17 to 9.7% of GDP in FY2017/18, and the recent figures still point to further improvement. Indeed, the fiscal deficit narrowed slightly to 1.9% during the first quarter of FY2018/19, down from 2% during the same period in the last fiscal year. This gives the government more room to meet its budget deficit target of 8.4% of GDP for the current fiscal year and 7% for the FY2019/20.

Given recent trends, we think these targets are achievable, especially after the recent plunge in the price of oil from a high of \$80/bbl to around \$60, which has given Egypt considerable fiscal space. But there are also risks to the downside and Egypt could miss its fiscal targets if oil prices increase above the benchmark oil price set in the budget (between USD 65/b and USD 67/b), or if government debt service costs continue to increase in line with the global increase in interest rates, absent other compensatory measures. In fact, back in September, the CBE had to cancel a number of bond auctions as banks and investors required higher interest rates than the government was willing to pay, in view of the negative impact on their fiscal deficit targets.

As per debt dynamics, the public debt ratio has declined from 108% of GDP in FY2016/17 to an estimated 98% during FY2017/18, driven mainly by the gradual fiscal consolidation underway and combined

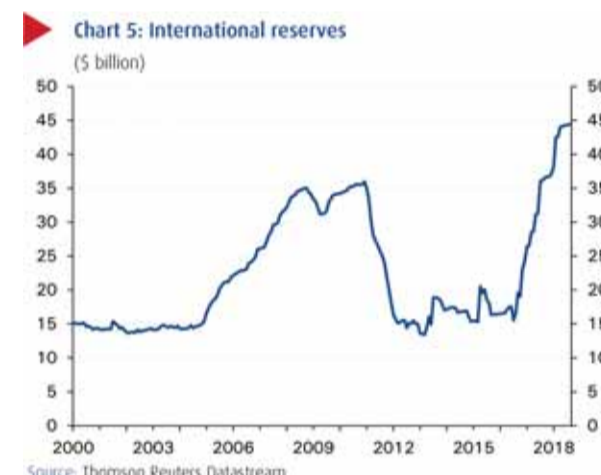


with a further pick-up in real GDP growth. We expect government debt to reach 94% of GDP in the FY2018/19 and 88% next fiscal year, while recent state budget guidelines for FY2019-20 released in October had set a public debt target of 79.3% of GDP by FY2021/22. However, in this context, Egypt has planned to diversify its debt instruments (promoting its international bonds in Asia and issuing green bonds and sovereign Sukuk), as part of its efforts to improve its debt structure and reduce borrowing costs. Therefore, given that the domestic interest rate will remain more expensive than planned by the budget, the ratio of external debt to total debt will likely increase in the coming year.

### Current account deficit keeps narrowing

The external sector has gained considerable strength since the depreciation of the EGP, supported by some export growth due to improved competitiveness as well as lower imports. The current account deficit in fiscal year 2017/18 narrowed by 58.6% to \$6bn, falling to 2.5% of GDP from 6.1% of GDP (\$14 bn) a year ago. We expect the current account deficit to narrow further to about 2% of GDP in 2018/19, helped by decreasing energy imports and continued recovery in the tourism sector.

Meanwhile, the overall balance of payments registered a surplus of \$12.8bn compared with a surplus of \$13.7bn in the same period a year earlier, aided by



large capital inflows. FDI inflows were strong at \$7.7bn (3.2% of GDP) in the fiscal year 2017/18, driven by hydrocarbon investments, while portfolio investment declined recently, as emerging markets witnessed capital flight with some countries experiencing currency crisis (Turkey and Argentina). This improvement in Egypt's external position has led foreign reserves to rise to record levels of USD 44.26bn in FY2017/18, covering about eight months of Egypt's commodity imports.

## EXCHANGE RATES

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.379249	0.393149
Czech Koruna	0.005386	0.014686
Danish Krone	0.042397	0.047397
Euro	0.339567	0.353267
Georgian Lari	0.113162	0.113162
Hungarian 0.000988	0.001178	
Norwegian Krone	0.030702	0.035902
Romanian Leu	0.057816	0.074666
Russian ruble	0.004428	0.004428
Slovakia	0.009090	0.019090
Swedish Krona	0.029605	0.034505
Swiss Franc	0.301934	0.0312934
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.205876	0.217876
New Zealand Dollar	0.198316	0.207816
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.218280	0.227260
US Dollars	0.300100	0.305400
US Dollars Mint	0.300600	0.305400
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003027	0.003828
Chinese Yuan	0.042742	0.046242
Hong Kong Dollar	0.033740	0.039490
Indian Rupee	0.003778	0.004550
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000016	0.000022
Japanese Yen	0.002676	0.002856
Korean Won	0.000260	0.000275
Malaysian Ringgit	0.006945	0.0075045
Nepalese Rupee	0.002608	0.002948
Pakistan Rupee	0.001612	0.002382
Philippine Peso	0.005824	0.006124
Singapore Dollar	0.216113	0.226113
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001373	0.001953
Taiwan	0.009747	0.009927
Thai Baht	0.008986	0.009536
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792326	0.808826
Egyptian Pound	0.014599	0.020317
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000268
Jordanian Dinar	0.424758	0.433756
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000150	0.000250
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021722	0.045722
Omani Riyal	0.783812	0.789492
Qatar Riyal	0.079266	0.084206
Saudi Riyal	0.080033	0.081333
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.097881	0.105881
Turkish Lira	0.051365	0.062865
UAE Dirhams	0.081398	0.083098
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

## Tokyo stocks plunge in Christmas rout

**TOKYO:** Tokyo stocks plunged yesterday as the few Asian markets open on Christmas suffered a holiday rout on fears about the US economy and a government shutdown in Washington. Tokyo markets, which were closed on Monday for a national holiday, plummeted at the open yesterday, with the Nikkei closing down five percent — over 1,000 points. It was the worst finish since April 2017 and followed a brutal holiday-shortened session on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session.

In Asia, many markets were closed for Christmas, including in Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea. US and European markets are also closed for the holiday. But the downturn affected those bourses that remained open, with China's benchmark Shanghai Composite Index tumbling more than two percent during the morning session, though it pared some of its losses to close down 0.9 percent.

## Lebanese bakers with special needs master German rye and Stollen

**BURJ AL SHAMALI:** When Ali Kerdi, who has impaired speech and hearing, was a teenager, he would look on curiously as his mother kneaded and baked their homemade bread. Years later, he would do the same as he worked as a cleaner at a centre in southern Lebanon where people with special needs were being taught how to make German bread. Now, at 35, Kerdi is in charge, running the bakery with two other special needs employees. "First, they wanted to teach me sewing, then

carpentry, then I was running errands. But I would watch them as I worked. If I touched the dough, they would tell me to go away," said Kerdi, who never gave up on his dream of learning to bake. On a rainy day in December, Kerdi and his team were busy making Stollen, rye bread with fruits and nuts that is a Christmas staple in Germany.

The bakery, on the ground floor of the Mosan centre for special needs students, began operating in 2003 after a German charity - Bread Against Misery - donated second-hand baking equipment from Germany. Three German bakers came for three months to teach the staff how to operate the equipment and the principles of making bread the German way. Kerdi now trains a group of students on how to make a variety of German breads that were previously alien to their area of southern Lebanon.

"The main aim of the project was to train them how to make



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a stock indicator board showing the share price of the Tokyo Stock Exchange. —AFP

OANDA, said Trump's spat with the Fed and Mnuchin's call with the banks had "markets running for cover." Investors "have no confidence in the administration. Markets are driven by perception and it is flat-out bad," he told AFP. A stronger yen was adding to the woes for

markets in Japan, he added. "I can't tell you where the bottom will be as there are various risks," said Makoto Sengoku, a market analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute. "There are no signs of selling running its course or big buyers emerging," he said. —AFP

bread, it was not to open a business," said Ali Charafeddine, director of the Mosan centre, which currently has 175 special needs students. But the bakery has become popular among locals and expatriates - even including some UN peacekeepers - and its bread and biscuit products are neatly stacked outside for sale. The bakery provides a taste of home for Maria, a foreigner who has been living in Lebanon for seven years. "This bread is baked in my country, it tastes like from my home. It's very nice," she said, adding that she will not be going home to Belarus for Christmas this year. Kerdi says his journey towards running the bakery has been a special source of pride because his income supports his family. "People were surprised that I was baking. It was the first time they saw this kind of bread. Now they know me as the one who learned here and then became the boss," he said as he showed a student how to fold a pretzel. —AFP

Business

KAMCO GCC REAL ESTATE UPDATE

# GCC real estate transactions down over 30% y-o-y in 9M-18

**KUWAIT:** Real estate sale transactions in the GCC (excluding Bahrain) in 9M-18 declined y-o-y, as total value transacted declined by 30.7% to USD 59.3 Bn, as compared to USD 85.6 Bn in 9M-17, according to KAMCO Research. The number of transactions in the region fell by 8.4% over the same period to reach 342,583 transactions in 9M-18.

The drop in the region's transactions was mainly driven by Dubai and Saudi Arabia, as transacted value in Dubai fell by 36.1% y-o-y in 9M-18, while transacted value in Saudi Arabia fell by 33.8% as compared to 9M-17. Kuwait was the best performing real estate market in the GCC y-o-y, as value transacted increased by 34%, driven by a more than doubling of value in apartment transactions. On the lending side, aggregate credit to the real estate sector disbursed by GCC banks at the end of Q3-18 grew 1.1% q-o-q to reach USD 195.4 Bn.

**Residential continues to search for a bottom; Kuwait office market strong**

Downward pressure on rents in most residential markets in the GCC continued in 2018, as investors continued to search for a bottom in terms of prices, and tenants continued to prefer affordability. Office space landlords continued to offer attractive incentives for tenants in order to keep occupancy rates intact, although incremental office space demand continues to remain soft, as employers across the GCC continue to consolidate and optimize manpower.

On the contrary, Kuwait's office space demand remains robust, particularly for premium office spaces where rents have increased over 2018, as the market tightened. The retail segment in the GCC continues to recalibrate, in the backdrop of lower consumer spending trends; and mall owners are looking at entertainment and F&B as the new drivers to increase footfall. Real Estate equities in the GCC barring Qatar beaten down in 2018 Real estate equities in the GCC continued their underperformance vis a vis the broader market in 2018 YTD.

Structural issues affecting demand for real estate have continued and are reflected in negative sentiment towards real estate equities, as the Thomson Reuters GCC RE index fell by over 27% YTD as of Nov-18. The Dubai RE & Construction index was the main laggard and has plunged by 32.2% YTD until Nov-18. The Real Estate index in Saudi Arabia, which comprises of real estate developers followed and declined by 30.5% YTD as of Nov-18. The Qatar RE sector remained the lone gainer in the GCC, and gained by 11% YTD in Nov-18, as the broader market in Qatar rallied in 2018.

**Sales Transactions**

The average value per transaction in the GCC declined by over 24% to around USD 173,000 in 9M-18 from USD 228,700 per transaction in 9M-17. Saudi Arabia remains the largest contributor to real estate transactions in the GCC contributing to over 44% of the value transacted and 41.3% of the region's number of transactions.

Off-plan sales in Dubai until 9M-18 were also sequentially down y-o-y in terms of number of transactions (-32.9%), even as overall number of transactions in Dubai fell by 32.3% to reach 25,476 transactions over the same period. Kuwait was the best performing real estate market in the GCC with y-o-y increase in transactions in 9M-18, as value transacted increased by 34%, driven by a more than doubling of value transacted in apartment transactions, while volumes traded improved by 9.8% y-o-y.

**Real Estate Credit Lending**

Aggregate credit to the real estate sector disbursed by GCC banks at the end of Q3-18 grew 1.1% q-o-q to reach USD 195.4 Bn. Qatari banks were the largest contributors in Q3-18, as USD 1.39 Bn of net incremental credit was disbursed q-o-q, followed by Saudi Banks (USD 0.86 Bn). Credit disbursed by GCC banks to the real estate and construction sectors - USD Mn.

In terms of mortgage lending, value of mortgages disbursed in Dubai declined by 11% y-o-y to AED 86.0 Bn in 9M-18, while the number of mortgages receded marginally by 7% over the period. In Saudi Arabia, as part of the Sakani program the Ministry of Housing

(MOH) disbursed 91,300 mortgage loans until end Nov-18, representing a growth of 7.4% from 2017.

**KUWAIT**

Statistics from Kuwait's Ministry of Justice (MOJ) show that total real estate sale transactions increased in 9M-18 on a y-o-y basis. Total number of transactions improved by 10% y-o-y to reach 4,481 transactions from 4,081 transactions in 9M-17. Value transacted moved up by around 33% to KWD 2,591.8 Mn. On a q-o-q basis, total number of transactions was down by 5% in Q3-18, while value transacted improved by 6% as compared to Q2-18.

The improvement in sale transactions driven mainly by was apartment sale transactions. Value transacted in apartment transactions jumped by over 109% y-o-y in 9M-18 to reach KWD 1,170 Mn, while number of transactions moved up by 42% y-o-y to 1,277 transactions. Private residential transactions, the other major contributor to real estate transactions in Kuwait, saw the number of transactions improve by 1% y-o-y to 3,031 transactions, while value transacted declined by 6% y-o-y to KWD 946 Mn.

**Residential**

Apartments which constitute a significant portion of the rental market, saw stable rental trends in Q2-18. In the Capital and Hawalli governorates, apartment rents remained stable on a q-o-q basis, as the rental range for 2 BHK apartments remained between KWD 340-390 per month, as per KFJ Local Real Estate Report: Q2-18. The report also stated that the range for larger 3 BHK apartments stayed stable q-o-q at KWD 390-440 per month. However, on a y-o-y basis and when compared to Q4-17, the lower end of the range for both 2 BHK and 3 BHK apartments showed marginal declines, which is an indication that rents for lower quality residences are still yet to be stabilized.

**Office**

Prime office space rents in Kuwait strengthened on limited quality supply available for tenants, as the higher end of asking rents for the CBD area increased to KWD 10/sq.m/month. The gap between the lower-end and higher-end of the band increased to KWD 2/sq.m/month, which shows that landlords are able to command higher rents for quality office spaces.

**UAE RE TRENDS- DUBAI & ABU DHABI**

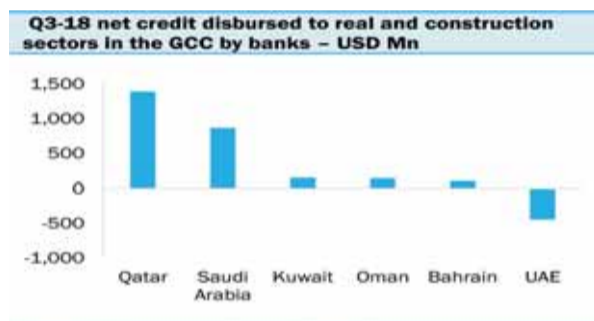
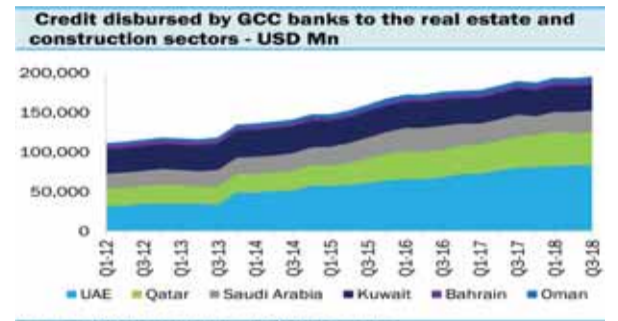
Data from Dubai Land Department (DLD) revealed that real estate sale transactions in 9M-18 receded compared to 9M-17, both in terms of value transacted and number of transactions. The number of transactions in 9M-18 was down 32% y-o-y, and reached 25,476 transactions from 37,632 transactions in 9M-17. Value transacted declined 36.1% over the same period from AED 88.2 Bn in 9M-17 to AED 56.4 Bn in 9M-18.

The decline was mainly driven by land transactions which were down by over 37% y-o-y and reached AED 26.7 Bn from AED 42.5 Bn in 9M-17. Unit transactions were also down by 32% y-o-y and reached AED 25.1 Bn in 9M-18 (9M-17: AED 36.9 Bn). Dubai RE sales transactions breakup - AED Mn

However, the contribution (%) of off-plan transactions overall remained stable y-o-y in 9M-18 at slightly over 30%. In terms of value transacted, around 30.3% of the total sales value transacted in 9M-18 came from off-plan transactions at AED 17.08 Bn. Nevertheless, on a sequential basis, off-plan sales were down from AED 27.62 Bn in 9M-17.

**Residential**

Residential rents in Dubai continued their slide downwards in Q3-18 across categories, from softer demand and pressure caused by upcoming supply, though the commissioning of some of the projects are likely to be delayed. Based on our analysis of rents published by Asteco, the highest declines q-o-q in Q3-18 was witnessed by the affordable segments as affordable 2 BR apartment rents declined by 4.9% q-o-q to reach an average of AED 68,000/year. Downward pressure on rents was also witnessed across Mid-to-High end (-3% q-o-q) and High-to-Luxury end apartments (-2.9%). The villa segment in



Dubai also saw declines, as 4-BR villa rents declined by 2.4% q-o-q to reach AED 202,000/year.

In Abu Dhabi's residential market, the affordable segment was most affected during Q3-18, while apartments at higher end locations and specifications were more stable, as per our analysis of data published by Asteco. Low End 2BR apartment rents declined by 6.0% q-o-q to reach around AED 68,000/year. The declines in High End-2 BR apartments were less pronounced at 2.5% q-o-q, while Prime-2 BR apartments witnessed stable rents as compared to Q2-18.

Our analysis of yields published by Property Monitor from end 2017 to Nov-18 suggests that yields compressed through 2018, albeit marginally in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, mainly driven by a faster rate of decline in rents than the fall in prices. Affordable areas in Dubai have higher yields (Yield: 8.7%), as they include smaller 1BR apartments where demand for renting remains relatively higher than High End (Yield: 5.6%) and Mid End areas (Yield: 6.2%). A similar trend was witnessed in Abu Dhabi, as yields went down in Q1-18 because of higher rental declines than price declines.

**Office**

In Dubai's office market, in a quest to retain tenants, landlord continued to offer more discounted rents and attractive terms such as rent-free period, fit-out contributions and other concessions. As a result, rents in Q3-18 plunged by double digits across office districts from the start of the year, especially in DIFC and Sheikh Zayed Road, as per data from Asteco.

In Abu Dhabi, the office market continues to remain weak with vacancy rates of 23% as of Q3-18, as per JLL. Though vacancy rates remained stable q-o-q, JLL expects another 38,000 sq.m of leasable area to come in by Q4-18, which should further put pressure on vacancy rates and rents. Rents for Prime Fitted office spaces and Quality Fitted spaces remained stable q-o-q at AED 2,000/sq.m/year and AED 1035/sq.m/year respectively.

**SAUDI ARABIA**

Real estate sale transactions recorded by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) statistics show that total sale transactions in Q3-18 and 9M-18 declined on a y-o-y

basis. Total number of transactions over 9M-18 fell by 13% y-o-y to reach 141,581 transactions from 162,406 transactions in 9M-17. The drop in value terms was higher, as value transacted declined by around 34% to SAR 146.63 Bn. On a q-o-q basis, total number of transactions gained by 1% in Q3-18, while value transacted receded by 19%, as compared to Q2-18.

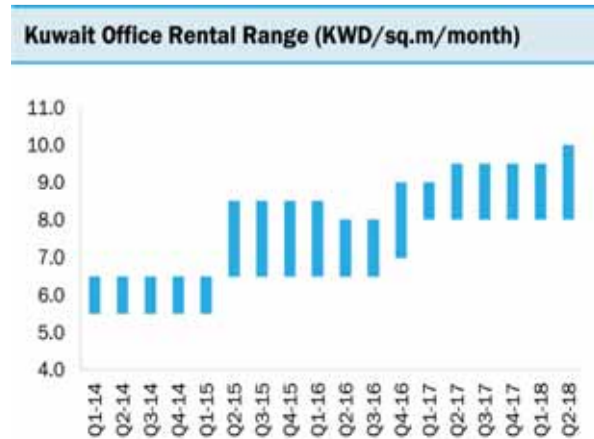
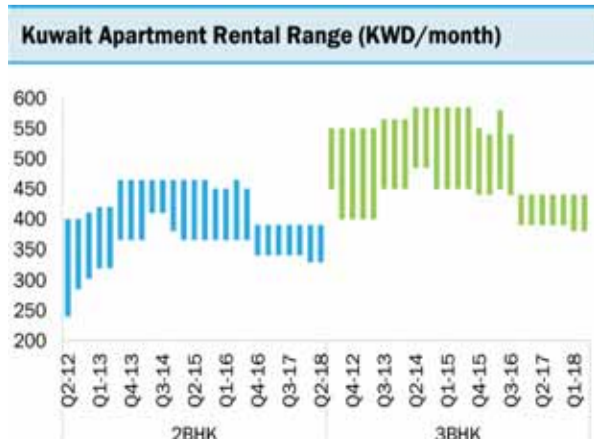
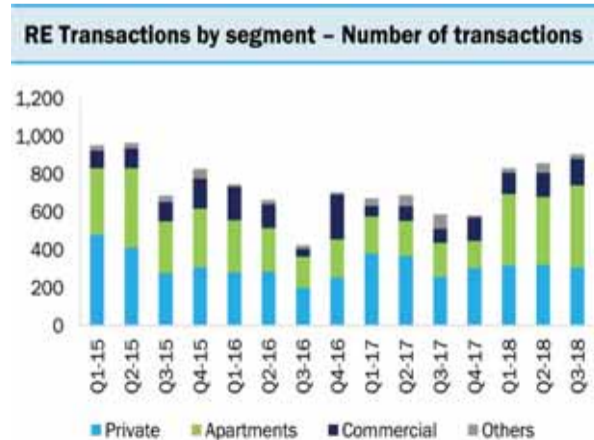
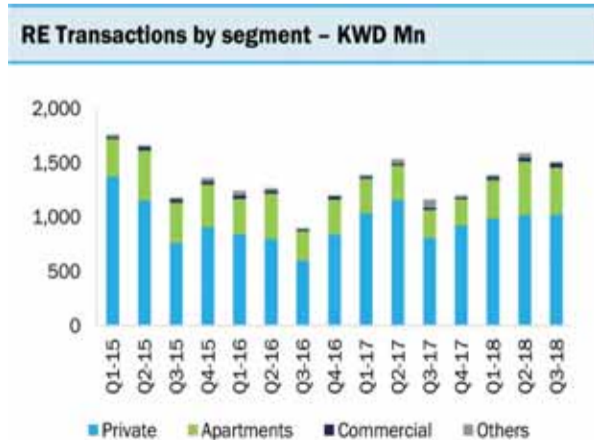
The drop in sale transactions q-o-q in 9M-18, was mostly attributed to lower residential transactions which constituted over 88% of the overall transaction volumes and 71% of the overall value transacted. Residential transaction volumes were down 12% y-o-y in 9M-18 and reached 124,672 transactions, while value transacted declined by 12% y-o-y to reach SAR 69.3 Bn. Commercial transaction volumes declined as well, by 19% y-o-y, to reach 6,212 transactions, while value transacted receded by 45% to SAR 27.7 Bn.

**Residential**

For the year 2018, until Nov-18, as part of the Sakani program by the Ministry of Housing, there were 285,706 residential products which were allocated as compared to 282,744 products in the eleven months in 2017 starting from Feb-17. The residential products allocated in 2018 up until Nov-18 included 91,300 mortgage loans, 98,431 residential units under construction and 79,941 residential lands. Residential rents in Riyadh stayed stable q-o-q in Q3-18 across apartments and villas, despite ongoing downward pressure on rents and soft current market conditions. In Jeddah, rents for both apartments and villas declined by 3.6% q-o-q and 3.4% q-o-q respectively, as per JLL, driven by a slowdown in employment trends.

**Office**

In the office market, average office space rents in Riyadh declined by 3.2% q-o-q to reach SAR 1,248/sq.m, ascribed to a slowdown in economic activity and consolidation of businesses, thereby reducing the requirement for office spaces. Vacancy rates in Riyadh however remained stable at 8%, as of Q3-18. As per JLL, office rents in Jeddah stood at around SAR 1,035/sq.m, representing a decline of 1.9% q-o-q, while vacant office spaces amounted to 20% of total leasable space.





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Sources: KFJ Local RE Report, KAMCO Research

Sources: KFJ Local RE Report, KAMCO Research

## Business

# Toyota named Best Global Automotive Brand in Interbrand's '100 Best Global Brands Report'

## Toyota advances focus on mobility vision

**KUWAIT:** Interbrand recently announced Toyota as the most valuable automotive brand in its 2018 Best Global Brands report. Now in its 19th year, the report's 2018 theme is Activating Brave, and examines the role that brand strength plays in the bold transformation of the world's leading businesses. The Activating Brave report analyzes how the Best Global Brands are achieving bold transformation that drives lasting economic value through brand strength. Key trends include customer-centricity, positive utility, the rise of luxury, and the success of subscription models.

Since its founding as a loom manufacturer, Toyota has been driven by a commitment to contributing to society. Over its long history, the company has grown into an innovative leader that has enabled vehicle electrification on a mass scale with the development of the Prius hybrid electric car 20 years ago and more recently, the Mirai hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle. Toyota sees alternative powertrains, automated cars, mobility-as-a-service, and robotics as significant opportunities to move people and transform the company.

"A decade after the global financial crisis, the brands that are growing fastest are those that intuitively understand their customers and make brave iconic moves that delight and deliver in new ways," commented Interbrand. More than half of the Best Global Brands came from five sectors: Automotive (16), Technology (13), Financial Services (12), Luxury (9), and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (9).

The efforts to improve and increase the diversity of electrified powertrain options is tied directly to Toyota's 'Environmental Challenge 2050,' wherein the company aims to achieve annual electrified vehicle sales of 5.5 million units by 2030. To achieve its goal, Toyota unveiled plans to have 10 Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) models available worldwide by the early 2020s, and from around 2025, the company aims to have an electrified version available for all vehicle models across its global lineup.

### About Interbrand's Best 100

Interbrand's publishes top 100 brands report based on a unique methodology analyzing the many ways a brand touches and benefits an organization, from attracting top talent to delivering on customer



expectation. Three key pieces of analysis form the basis of Interbrand's valuation methodology: The financial performance of the branded products or services, the role the brand plays in purchase decisions, the brand's competitive strength and its ability to create loyalty and, therefore, sustainable demand and profit into the future.

As a Mobility Company, Toyota is Committed to Freedom of "Mobility for All". Toyota believes that mobility goes beyond cars; it is about overcoming challenges and making dreams come true. The 'Start Your Impossible' initiative reflects these values and highlights the company's goal to provide freedom of mobility for all.

As a worldwide partner of the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games, Toyota aims to encourage



creating a peaceful society without discrimination through sports and a commitment to building a sustainable society through mobility. Toyota's values of continuous improvement and respect for people are shared by the Olympic Games, which brings together the entire world in friendship and solidarity to cele-

brate the highest realization of human potential. Interbrand was the first company to have its brand valuation methodology certified as compliant with the requirements of ISO 10668 (requirements for monetary brand valuation) and played a key role in the development of the standard itself.

## Britain bans puppy and kitten sales by pet shops

**LONDON:** Britain is forbidding puppies and kittens from being sold by pet shops in a bid to crack down on animal exploitation and abuse. The government said it will roll out the legislation next year after holding public consultations that showed 95-percent support for the ban. "This will mean that anyone looking to buy or adopt a puppy or kitten under six months must either deal directly with the breeder or with an animal re-homing centre," the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said on Sunday as part of its Christmas animal welfare push.

The measure is commonly called Lucy's Law in honour of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was rescued from a puppy farm in Wales in 2013. She had spent most of her life in a cage and was no longer able to breed because her hips had fused together from lack of movement. A woman named Lisa Garner took her home and launched a social media awareness campaign that changed the way Britons get their pets. The government said the new law will help "end the terrible welfare conditions found in puppy farming and solve a range of existing animal welfare issues". Lucy died in 2016.

### 'Right start in life'

The government believes the ban will keep "high volume low welfare breeders" — both licensed and unlicensed — from flooding pet shops with puppies and kittens raised in unethical conditions. Shops will only be allowed to deal with animal welfare shelters or the primary breeders of the pet. Defra released no figures estimating how many sales the new legislation will affect.

But London's Battersea Dogs Home chief Claire Horton said the rules will "make sure the nation's much-loved pets get the right start in life". Between 1998 and 2006 Battersea produced a popular TV series about pet rescues and care, which reflected Britons' general affection for cats and dogs. Britain's People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) veterinary charity said 49 percent of UK adults owned at least one pet in 2018.

PDSA's estimated cat population of 11.1 million edged out the 8.9 million dogs and 1.0 million rabbits — whose numbers have nearly halved since 2011. The British government has unfurled a number of animal welfare initiatives in the past few months that activists hope other European countries will soon follow. One law in October banned licensed shops from dealing in puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks. Defra is now looking at legislation requiring all non-commercial rescue and re-homing centers to have a license. —AFP

## Central bank is US economy's 'only problem': Trump

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump renewed his verbal assault against the Federal Reserve on Monday, comparing the central bank to a blundering golfer after the stock market tanked yet again. "The only problem our economy has is the Fed," Trump tweeted. "The Fed is like a powerful golfer who can't score because he has no touch - he can't putt!"

The Federal Reserve is meant to be independent from the White House but Trump has trampled those barriers in his frustration at what he sees as the bank's harmful interest rate policies. He has previously called the Fed, which angered him by hiking rates last week, "crazy" and a greater economic threat to the United States than China.

Reports that Trump was even sounding out cabinet members on whether he had authority to fire Fed Chairman Jerome Powell forced Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to spend much of the weekend in damage control mode. A lifelong real estate developer, Trump has touted the booming US economy as one of his presidency's main achievements.

## US 'Plunge Protection Team' to convene amid Wall Street rout

**WASHINGTON:** The Trump administration is arranging a phone call on Monday with top regulators to discuss financial markets amid a rout on Wall Street. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will host the call with the president's Working Group on Financial Markets, known colloquially as the "Plunge Protection team."

### Washington has a plunge protection team?

Yes, although it does not deal exclusively with Wall Street panic. The Working Group dates to March 1988 when Washington was still trying to figure out what was behind the "Black Monday" stock market crash of October 1987. Then-President Ronald Reagan created the group to find ways to keep financial markets operating smoothly. The group also met in 2008 during a profound financial crisis and issued recommendations for overhaul-

ing banking regulations and rules on mortgage lending. The group, however, does not always meet during a crisis. In 1999, the group issued a report asking Congress to change laws on derivatives markets.

### Spooked by 2008

Trump, who has repeatedly taken credit for the market when it rises, is blaming the Federal Reserve for the increasingly dark picture. He is furious at interest rate hikes, which he argues will hold back the economy, and on Monday he accused the Fed of having no "feel for the Market, they don't understand necessary Trade Wars or Strong Dollars or even Democrat Shutdowns over Borders." Even when the Trump administration has tried to calm the markets, that may be backfiring.

Mnuchin called the CEOs of the

country's six largest banks on Sunday to seek reassurance that their liquidity levels are healthy. However, worries about a dangerous run on the banks — like in the financial collapse and subsequent deep recession of 2008 — have not been widely raised previously. So the unusual move by the government left the bankers worried and puzzled, according to US media reports.



WASHINGTON DC: Morning traffic flows up and down North Capitol Street. —AFP

"It just raises more alarm bells for people that maybe there is something

bigger going on' if it's necessary to have phone calls with the six biggest bank CEOs," said Manulife AM senior portfolio manager Nate Thooft. According to Mnuchin's office, the CEOs confirmed "that they have ample liquidity available for lending to consumer, business markets, and all other market operations."

"We continue to see strong economic growth in the US economy with robust activity from consumers and business," Mnuchin said in the statement. —AFP



NEW YORK: Traders and financial professionals work ahead of the closing bell on the floor to the New York Stock Exchange. —AFP

### Why are financial markets so choppy?

Investors are betting US economic growth will slow as a tax cut stimulus fades and as three years of gradual interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve cool purchases made by businesses and households. Slower growth in the global economy is also weighing on the United States. Additionally, Wall Street is on edge over reports that US President Donald Trump has privately discussed firing Powell, who was nominated by Trump to be Fed chairman and

took the helm at the US central bank in February. The Fed's independence from politics is widely seen as vital for its mission of keeping inflation under control.

On top of these concerns, Washington is currently roiled by a partial government shutdown that began on Saturday due to a congressional impasse over Trump's demand for more funds for a wall on the border with Mexico. Financing for about a quarter of federal government programs expired at midnight on Friday. —Reuters

Health

# 'Silent emergency' as heat risks rise in Hong Kong - and globally

'Don't stay indoors for a long time as that's bad for your health'

**HONG KONG:** William Yu is giving a tour of a Hong Kong apartment where each of the three bedrooms has been divided into a separate flat - part of a lab he has set up to show how many families live in small, crowded and hot spaces with no air conditioning or fresh air. "Even if there is a window, there is no ventilation and some flats are very scary," said Yu, of the homes on Hong Kong's Chun Tin street.

Outside the window, black smoke and pounding noises rise from the Hop Lee metal and scrap paper shop on the dead-end street of dilapidated tenement buildings in the Hung Hom district. The World Green Organization Yu founded has set up the apartments to show how some vulnerable families live in one of the most expensive and densely-packed cities on earth - and how they might cope with global warming.

Average summer temperatures in this city of 7.4 million people have risen swiftly over the past century, according to a study by researchers including Emily Chan, who directs the Centre for Global Health at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Temperatures inside these illegally-divided flats are 6 to 7 degrees Celsius hotter than outside, and research shows heat in some of them rising from a former peak of 36C to closer to 40C in the height of summer, according to Yu.

"In the past we used to say, 'Don't stay outdoors for a long time exposed to intensive sunlight, otherwise you will get heatstroke,'" said Yu. "Now we have found the opposite in the subdivided flats: Don't stay indoors for a long time as that's bad for your health." Yu instead tells families to go to a shopping mall with strong air-conditioning and not to keep windows open because of the air pollution outside.

This is but one example of how warming is hitting Hong Kong's vulnerable hardest in this steamy city that last week hosted an international forum on heat risks from climate change. Global experts on health, weather and climate flocked to the former British colony to try to find ways to manage what Joy Shumake-Guillemot, who leads the joint office of the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Switzerland, called "the silent emergency that heat poses to health".

As part of the effort, they launched the Global Health Information Network (GHIN), made up of experts from more than 30 countries, all keen to work out how to deal with growing heat extremes as the world continues to break heatwave records. While typhoons and fires grab headlines, heatwaves kill more people than any other weather-related disaster, though the deaths are rarely attributed to heat, the GHIN said. With more people moving to cities globally, the risks are rising as well, it said. "Heat affects everyone," said Shumake-Guillemot. "From healthy athletes and outdoor workers, to the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions ... many people simply don't realise how serious dehydration and heat stress can be."



HONG KONG: A general view shows residential buildings in Hong Kong. — AFP

**Steamy city**

The subtropical city of Hong Kong has a unique set of heat challenges and opportunities that make it a useful case study. Its dense urban living, combined with a humid climate, means growing heat threats, with average high temperatures in the summer hitting 31 or 32 degrees Celsius. The concrete, skyscrapers and lack of greenery in inner city areas lead to what is coined the "urban heat island" effect, which means the city gets - and stays - hotter than surrounding more rural areas.

That particularly affects the city's most vulnerable living in tiny, subdivided apartments, Yu said. Chan said hospital records showed that an increase in high temperature from 29C to 30C was linked with a 4 percent jump in deaths in urban areas with particular heat vulnerability. The rate of admissions to hospitals also rose 4.5 percent for every jump of 1C above 29C, a study by her team showed. There is "not a single health outcome that is not affected" by soaring heat, Chan said.

Faced with growing heat threats, policy makers, urban planners, academics and non-governmental organizations are working together to tackle the problem, Chan said. The Hong Kong Observatory, for instance, has created a heat index that measures temperature, humidity, wind speed and other measures and warns the public when key thresholds are passed. It is also working with a senior citizens' organi-

sation to see how weather data could help growing numbers of elderly people - who are particularly at risk - cope with temperature extremes. The observatory also works with urban planners to help design effective layouts for the city and plan how buildings fit, taking into account microclimates in different areas. It has plans to install sensors at street level to see how hot and steamy life there gets, as well as use crowdsourcing to create real-time weather forecasts on heat impacts and risks to people.

**Planning ahead**

All of this makes Hong Kong a heat pioneer in Asia, Chan said - and heat experts hope to learn from its experiences and those of other cities as the world becomes increasingly urbanized. "We need to take steps to educate the public on healthy behaviors they should take up, and train medical professionals to be more attentive to heat stress symptoms in patients," said Shumake-Guillemot. Helping cities plan ahead to accommodate extreme temperatures and become more liveable in the face of them, as well as better coordinating emergency preparedness to manage heatwaves, will be key, she said. "The likelihood of falling sick from heat has increased for everyone," Shumake-Guillemot said. Heat experts "are taking this new reality seriously, and are working to find solutions to keep people healthy in a warming world." — Reuters

## Breakthrough of 2018: Cell-by-cell DNA science

**TAMPA:** The US journal Science recently coined as "Breakthrough of the Year" for 2018 new technologies that reveal how DNA cues individual cells to grow through time. Experts say these methods will transform science over the coming decades, allowing an ever clearer picture of the processes behind aging, healing, and disease.

"Just as a music score indicates when strings, brass, percussion, and woodwinds chime in to create a symphony, a combination of technologies is revealing when genes in individual cells switch on, cueing the cells to play their specialized parts," said the report. "The result is the ability to track development of organisms and organs in stunning detail, cell by cell and through time."

Modern methods build on the 2002 Nobel Prize-winning work of John Sulston and colleagues, "who mapped the development of the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans* by painstakingly watching larvae mature cell by cell through microscopes," said Jeremy Berg, editor-in-chief of the Science family of journals. "With today's technologies, especially massively parallel DNA sequencing and advanced fluorescence microscopy, the cells that comprise *C. elegans* have been mapped again using tag-analyze-assemble methods based on gene expression patterns within each cell."

**'Revolution is just starting'**

Scientific papers have been published this year on how a flatworm, a fish, a frog, and other organisms begin to make organs and appendages. International researchers are hard at work, looking for ways to apply these techniques to human cells — how they mature, regenerate, and what goes wrong when cancer, diabetes or even physical malformations occur.

Among the projects underway is an international consortium called the Human Cell Atlas, which is identifying "every human cell type, where each type is located in the body, and how the cells work together to form tissues and organs," said the report. Other scientists are studying kidney cell types, including ones that become cancerous, as well as the interplay between maternal and fetal cells in pregnancy.

A group of 53 institutions and 60 companies across Europe, called the LifeTime consortium, is studying cell by cell how tissues develop cancer, diabetes, and other diseases. "The single-cell revolution is just starting," said the report in Science, which is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The winner was picked after online readers were invited to vote on a dozen pre-picked breakthroughs for the year. Of some 12,000 votes cast, the "clear winner" was techniques that enable scientists to track development at the cellular level, it said. "These technologies create some of the most extraordinary movies ever made, showing how a single cell grows into the intricate tissues and organs of a mature animal," said Tim Appenzeller, Science's news editor. — AFP

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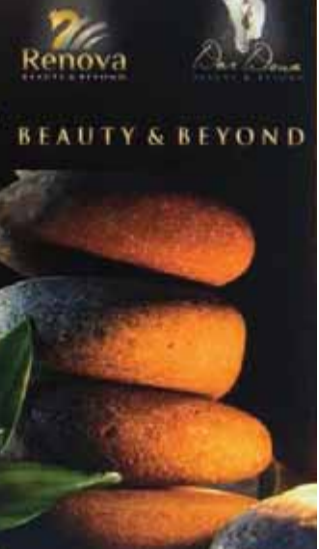
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- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

**مستشفى دار الشفاء  
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**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

**Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368**  
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates - Training**

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228** Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building



What's On

# GUST provides insight into British icon's life in Kuwait

Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Global Studies Center (GSC) announced yesterday that a lecture was held by Alison Shan Price MBE, one of Kuwait's most prolific theater personalities, Founder of One World Actors Centre, UK, and Creative Director of TAQA Productions, Kuwait. The lecture was part of the GSC's ongoing effort to bring outstanding speakers and stimulating topics to GUST and the wider community.

The lecture portrayed the story of Colonel H R P Dickson and his wife Violet who moved to pre-oil Kuwait. The couple lived in Kuwait for 61 years and became an inextricable part of the fabric of Kuwaiti society. They saw the country overcome wars, natural disasters, and even witnessed how the discovery of oil transformed the country into what it is today. What's more, it was Ian Fleming himself, the creator of James Bond, who persuaded Dame Violet to write her autobiography 'Forty Years

In'. It is through recent interviews of surviving friends and authors, access to academic and personal archives, and this autobiography that this unique account of the life of, Dame Violet Dickson, known locally as Um Saud, was told.

Director of the Global Studies Center, Dr Fahed Al-Sumait said, "It is such a treat having someone like Alison helping to bring our local history alive for younger generations. The life of the Dickson's is not just a story about expatriates in Kuwait, but rather a tale about the transformation of our society as illustrated through the experiences of one of our most prominent visiting families."

The presenter, Alison Shan Price, has lived in Kuwait for 33 years working with multi-national artists to bring cross-cultural history to life through original performances. Later this month, Shan Price will portray Dame Freya Stark in a mono-drama entitled 'Freya: Chasing the Horizons', which will include Stark's journeys in Arabia. In 2017, Shan Price was awarded the MBE (Most Excellent



Order of the British Empire - a grade within the British order of chivalry) by Queen Elizabeth II in the New Year's Honors List, for her Services to the Dramatic Arts in Kuwait and the Middle East.

The GSC is a leading research center on global studies, and a vehicle for engaging both internal and external communities through stimulating events and lectures on global issues. The center aims to conduct cutting-edge research on cross-national political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues of critical importance, and share research output and information regionally and globally. The GSC seeks to foster public understanding of global issues with local significance.

Dr Al-Sumait added, "We continually try to find new ways of enhancing the GUST academic experience by organizing events that bring together great minds and present unique viewpoints to learn from. The GSC provides the university with another outlet to showcase its prowess in contributing to academic research." GUST continues to build on its mission to become a knowledge-hub that benefits and engages students, academics, and the wider Kuwait community as a whole.

## KNES organizes bake sale

The Kuwait National English School (KNES) student council organized a Bake Sale and Non-uniform day on October 18, 2018, to raise awareness of breast cancer. The event was a success as students contributed towards the bake sale and the council was able to raise a fairly good amount that would go towards cancer research. The council headed by Ibrahim Al Hadiya (Head boy), Retaj Al Shafei (Head girl) and Bader Saab (Prefect) were ably assisted by

Qais and Iqra (Deputy heads). Both primary and secondary were involved and the whole school turned into a sea of pink.

Students contributed abundantly to the Bake Sale with cakes, muffins, brownies, Pizzas, doughnuts and many other mouth-watering delicacies. Most of the items were sold out by the end of the first break. Well done student council and all class representatives especially Tia Maria of year 7. Special mention must be made of Adam Shedid, PouyaMasjedi, Aringdom Miranda, Randa Akl and Mariam Mansour who helped with the Bake sale. The student council is an active and integral part of the school organization and contributes greatly towards promoting the vision and mission of Kuwait National English School.



## TIES Notice

TIES cordially invites to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) on December 27, 2018 at 7 pm, which will be the first session talking about Prophet Moses (AS). In this class, we will discuss why Moses (AS) is a central figure in both Judaism

and Christianity, how he is viewed by Muslims, and the backdrop against which he was born. We will also examine the tactics Pharaoh resorted to in consolidating his rule in Egypt, why he decided to kill male new-borns in alternate years, and how the Egyptians were influenced by dreams. Finally, we will discuss Moses's genealogy, and why the birth of Aaron - his elder brother - did not stress their mother; eliciting from that many practical lessons.

## St Gregorios Church launches 'Like a Red Rose' book

"Oru Chempaneer Poovu Pole" (Like a Red Rose) is a Biography written in the Malayalam language by Shybi Jacob Karuvilil. The book was released at the St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church (Maha Edavaka), Kuwait by Moran Mor Baselios Marthoma Paulose II (Catholics Of The Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas and Malankara Metropolitan) in the presence of H G Dr Joseph Mar Dionysius (Metropolitan of Kolkata Diocese), Vicar Fr Jacob Thomas, Associate Vicar Fr Giju George, other dignitaries, church managing committee members and parish members.

In his message, Moran Mor Baselios Marthoma Paulose II stated in the book: "Let this book that gratefully documents a mother's love and tolerance for the family, be an inspiration to all readers." Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Viliya Metropolitan also stated, "Let the heavens rejoice about this book that was written by a daughter-in-law about her mother-in-law."

The preface of the book is written by Fr Bobby Jose Kattikkattil Kapuchien, who emphasizes that "the worst misery of human life is passing away without being appreciated. This book challenges that sadness gently and sweetly". Fr. John Mathew Pallippad, Theological Seminary Nagapur provided a briefing about the book "The Fragrance of Flower" to the readers and asserted that "Old age is not to be left alone, but to be celebrated by all, as life is a one-time feast."

This book beautifully explains the chemistry of love that gives life to family relations. A lot of books written about the ideal family life are available to buy. However, these books may often lack experience obtained from true family life. They often describe the inherent intellectual interpretations and psychological aspects of family relations. In contrast, the storyline of this book is a daughter-in-law interpreting her discovery of the source of goodness obtained from the family of her husband.

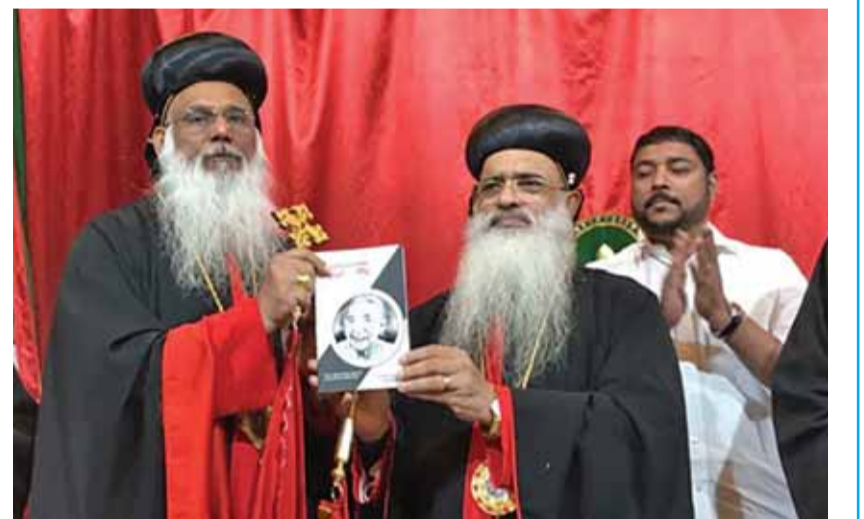
Similarly, the soul of this book is the beauty of love evolved from individual relations and is based on the

author's immense faith in God. The work is made up of 39 short chapters. The book is written as a birthday gift to a mother-in-law who has become a mother and is filled with self-conflicts experienced by the author Shybi Jacob Karuvilil after arriving at her husband's home as a novice bride. In the first chapters of the book, the daughter-in-law clarifies the reason why she wants to give such a birthday gift to her mother-in-law. The writer desires no material gain from an elderly lady who has attained 86 years of age. But, she considers it a symbol of honoring a mother, who has dedicated her entire life to the service of others.

The reason being, most elderly mothers, pass away without hearing a good word about the human efforts carried out by them for the family during a lifetime. They only spend their life doing household chores, taking care of their husbands and raising kids without any material reward. It is simply a work of love, the kind of love that comes from sheer miseries and self-conflicts of life.

The process of introducing mother Sophiya is an effort lasting until the very last page of the book. Throughout this book, one will find a way of appraising with gratitude all the wisdom and goodness received from the mother-in-law and her household. In the first 11 chapters of the book, the author details her early days of arrival at her husband's household. Here one can see the sense of dress, language, and tastes standing out to confront a novice wife.

The piece of advice from the writer's father to her "If the mother becomes a mother-in-law, mother-in-law will become a mother" made her able to deal with many experiences of life with ease and care. In the fourth chapter, other than defining the meaning of mother to "those who strive for things that are not theirs," the writer documents the phase to phase progress in the life of a woman. Further, it is a heart rendering experience that a mother volunteers to go abroad and live life in a foreign land along with her children. One can say that there are no family problems that are not dealt with in this book. To assert this, the tenth chapter is written carrying the pain of having no children in the first four and a half years of the life of the author. Chapters 12 to 18 explain how mother Sophiya's habits and routines imparted goodness and influenced the life of the writer. In the 15th chapter, the writer explains the mother's enthusiasm for giving birthday gifts to grandchildren and also her will to often postpone her birthday to convenient dates to strengthen family ties, which shows her alertness as a true guardian.



## IES clinches bronze in CBSE National Basketball Championship

On December 17, 2018, Indian Educational School (IES), Kuwait, accorded a warm ovation to its formidable basketball team that had literally turned the tables on its rivals in the initial phase of the CBSE National Basketball Championship held at Agra, India, and stormed into the semifinals. Though the team had the sniffing chance of the Championship title, they had to settle for bronze after a humdinger of a semifinal. It was the perfect icing on the cake that Maanas Manoj of Grade 12C bagged a bronze in badminton mixed doubles (under 19 category) in CBSE National Championship.

The players, who were given heroes' welcome, arrived at school with a euphoric sense of triumph that swelled into instant awe and applause from the cheerleaders. On behalf of N K Ramachandran Menon, Chairman of Bhavans Middle East, T Premkumar, Principal of IES, hailed the players, for their phenomenal effort that did the school proud.

He lavished praise on them and added that the results speak for itself and that the bronze medals encapsulate the hard work and gumption of the players. Lalitha Premkumar, Vice Principal (KG & Primary), Meenakshi Nayyar, Vice Principal (CCA), and other Heads of Faculties, beamed with pride and cheered on as the



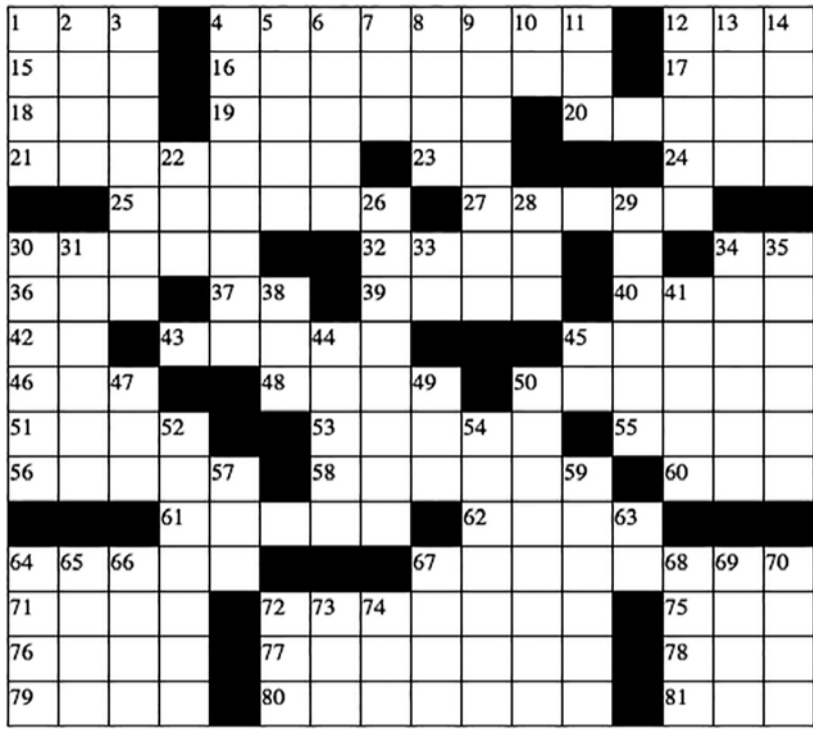
Principal gave away the medals, certificates and basketballs to boot. Murugaiyyan, HoD of Physical Education, proposed the vote of thanks and waxed eloquent on the team's admirable feat. He showered verbal confetti on Mathiyalagan, the basketball coach, for his proactive sessions with the team and for facilitating scrimmages for them prior to the Championship. He expressed his gratitude to the Chairman for recruiting such specialists for games.

Mathiyalagan's mentorship had paid off in a jiffy, he keeps churning out basketball aces. The medalists are not the fledgling unsung heroes anymore- their success is a classic tale of relentless hard work reminiscent of the early days in the life of the basketball legend, Michael Jordan. Murugaiyyan also felicitated the parents for their unstinting support. The rousing reception was wrapped up with an entertainment jig by the cheerleaders.



Stars

CROSSWORD 2094



ACROSS

- 1. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
4. Train to be discriminative.
12. Not divisible by two.
15. (Hawaiian) A small guitar having four strings.
16. Reprehensible acquisitiveness.
17. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
18. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
19. Growing in two parts or in pairs.
20. A major European river carrying more traffic than any other river in the world.
21. Used of old persons or old trees.
23. The square of a body of any size of type.
24. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
25. Included seven times in every 19 years.
27. A river in southeastern France.
30. French romantic writer (1766-1817).
32. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
36. Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
37. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
39. A musical notation written on a staff indicating the pitch of the notes following it.
40. Type genus of the Cracidae.
42. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
43. Building material used as siding or roofing.
46. The compass point midway between west and northwest.
48. A small cake leavened with yeast.
51. (prefix) Outside or outer.
53. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
55. Having the slant of a bevel.
56. (Judeo-Christian religion) Chief spirit of evil and adversary of God.
58. Relating to or characteristic of Arabs.
60. An affirmative.
61. (of language) Transparently clear.
62. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
64. Left-hand page.
71. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
75. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
76. English prelate noted for his pessimistic sermons and articles (1860-1954).
77. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
78. The principal activity in your life that you do to earn money.
79. A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
80. A large crater caused by the violent explosion of a volcano that collapses into a depression.
81. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

- 1. A very large person.
2. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
3. A name for the Old Testament God as transliterated from the Hebrew YHWH.
4. An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
5. Overgrown with ivy.
6. Any of numerous showy orchids of the genus Vanda having many large flowers in loose racemes.
7. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
8. Having relatively few calories.
9. Specify individually.
10. A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
11. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
12. Excessively fat.
13. Flowing in drops.
14. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
22. Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
26. Migratory American songbird.
28. 3 to 30 gigahertz.
29. A narrow zigzag ribbon used as trimming.
31. A psychological state induced by (or as if induced by) a magical incantation.
33. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
34. A severe shortage (especially a shortage of food).
35. A bet that you can pick the first and second finishers in the right order.
38. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
41. The act of relaying something.
44. A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
45. A crystalline metallic element not found in nature.
47. A tumor virus transmitted by leafhoppers.
49. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
50. A curved oriental saber.
52. Any of several seeds that yield oil.
54. (psychology) An urge to withdraw or avoid a situation or an object.
57. A Nilotic language.
59. Melon having yellowish rind and whitish flesh.
63. The 12th letter of the Greek alphabet.
65. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
66. Port city that is the capital and largest city of Latvia.
67. Set down according to a plan.
68. A Hindu prince or king in India.
69. Very dark black.
70. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
72. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
73. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
74. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It may seem as if your life has taken on a somewhat mystical quality at an emotional and instinctive level. You find your dreams take priority over your realities. Forgiveness is on your mind and you long to have harmony in all of your relationships.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Whether a surprise to day is good or bad depends on your interpretation. Look on the positive side of things. Assume the situation will have a good outcome, and then work to make it happen.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Forgiveness and understanding are two awesome qualities to possess. You are able to put both of these to great use today. Both mending fences and repairing relationships are on the top of your priority list.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have the ability to get outside yourself and see what is going on with others. This may mean you see things others are unable to see. It is a gift that could serve you well in journalism or crime detection.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a time of healing in your life. You may see barriers seem to dissolve and relationships repaired. Life is to short to hold grudges and you seem to be willing to do whatever it takes with anyone you feel as wronged you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

People are attracted to your non-judgmental attitude. You always give the benefit of the doubt. This leads people to trust you when you make suggestions for change or improvement.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your close relationships are taking on great importance in your life at this time. Those near and dear to you are your priority and focus. You have a deep emotional desire to feel needed and cared for.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It may seem as if your life has taken on a somewhat mystical quality at an emotional and instinctive level. You find your dreams take priority over your realities. Forgiveness is on your mind and you long to have harmony in all of your relationships.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

It seems as if your job requirements could stifle your sensitivity and hold you back from growing. Do not let all the seriousness take away your emotion. Take special care when handling this situation.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Call it intuition or psychic ability. Whatever label you choose, now is a time you clearly see what the future holds, the next move others are about to make, and the consequences before the action occurs.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Life seems to take on a mystical quality for you now. You may find you develop a greater understanding of just how fragile life is. A wake-up call seems to make you realize each day you are alive is a blessing.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are sensitive and understanding. This makes you a friend that others want to have. Not only do you find others turning to you for advice, but you feel loved and admired.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old West 1

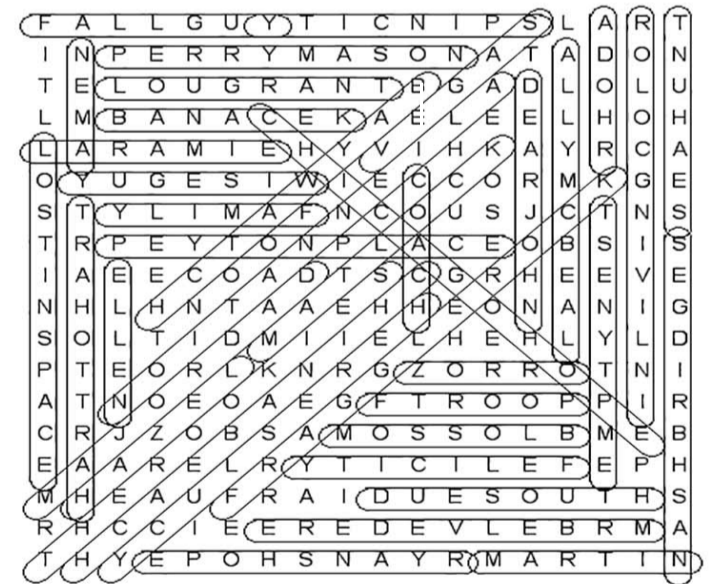
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 25 letters spell a George Eliot quotation.



- BANKER, BARKEEP, BILLY THE KID, BOOT HILL, BRAND, CAMPFIRE, CATTLE DRIVE, CHAPARRAL, COAL, CORRAL, COWBOY, DOC HOLLIDAY, FARRIER, FORT, FURS, GOLD MINE, GOLD PANNING, GRAZE, HIRED GUN, HOGS, HOMESTEAD, HOTEL, JUDGE, LARIAT, LAWMAN, LIVESTOCK, MINER, OUTLAW GANG, PISTOL, PLOW HORSE, POSSE, RAILROAD, RANCH, RATTLESLAKE, RIFLE, SADDLE, SALOON, SHERIFF, SHOPKEEPER, SITTING BULL, STAGECOACH, TELEGRAPH, TRACKER, TRAIL, TRAIN, UNDERTAKER, WATER TANK, WELL.

Yesterday's Solution

Old TV Shows 4



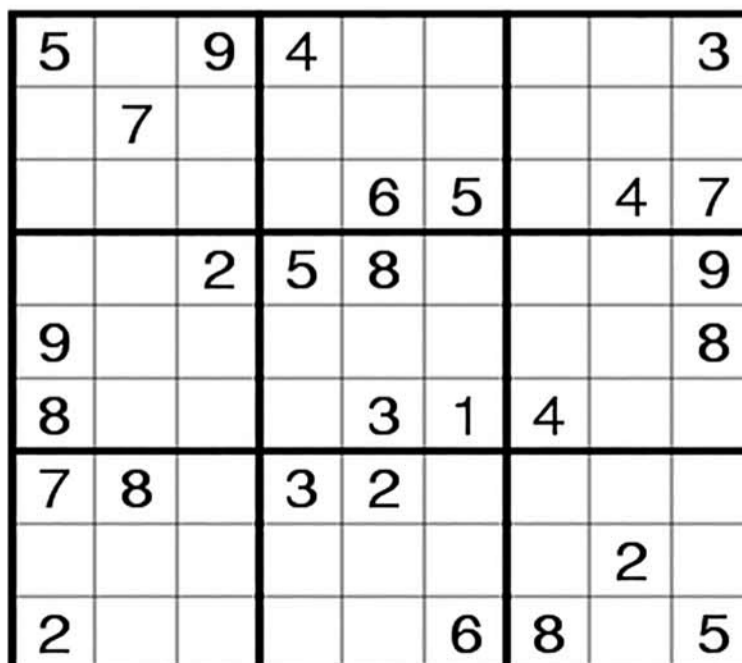
- ALIEN NATION, ALLY MCBEAL, AMEN, BANACEK, BAYWATCH, BLOSSOM, CHICAGO HOPE, CHINA BEACH, COACH, DEAR JOHN, DUE SOUTH, ELLEN, EMPTY NEST, F TROOP, FALL GUY, FAMILY, FELICITY, FRAGGLE ROCK, HART TO HART, HAZEL, HERE'S LUCY, IN LIVING COLOR, LARAMIE, LOST IN SPACE, LOU GRANT, MAJOR DAD, MARTIN, MATLOCK, MR BELVEDERE, NASH BRIDGES, PERRY MASON, PEYTON PLACE, RHODA, RYAN'S HOPE, SEA HUNT, SPIN CITY, THE ROCKIES, VEGAS, WISEGUY, ZORRO.

The hidden TV show is: LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

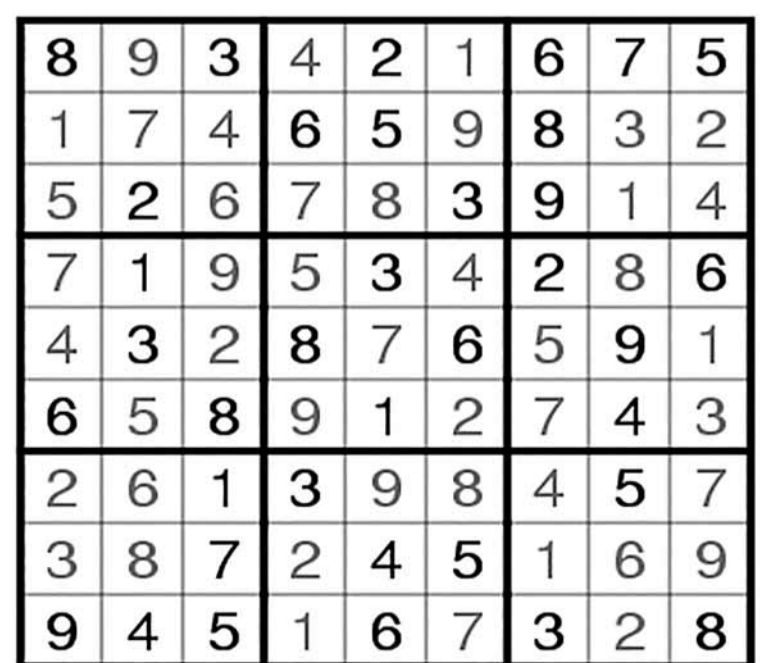
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2018



This picture shows Indonesian Christians attending mass on Christmas Eve at a stadium in Surabaya, the country's second largest city.—AFP

## Britain's Prince Philip misses Christmas Day church service

Britain's Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth's husband, missed a traditional Christmas Day church service yesterday, though a royal source said that the 97-year old was in good health and just wanted to spend the day in private. Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, married Elizabeth in 1947 and has been by his wife's side throughout her reign, the longest in British history. "The duke is in perfectly good health, he is just spending the day privately," the royal source said.

Former naval officer Philip, who had successful hip replacement surgery earlier this year, retired from public life last year, quipping at the time that he was no longer able to "stand up much". Senior members of the royal family traditionally attend a Christmas service at the St Mary Magdalene church in Sandringham,

eastern England. Elizabeth attended, as did Charles, Prince of Wales, heir to the throne. Charles' wife, Camilla, did not attend, according to a Reuters photographer at the church.

Charles' sons, Princes William and Harry, also went to the service with their wives, Kate and Meghan. The US born actress, who is pregnant, exchanged a smile with Kate as they walked to church. Elizabeth will say in her Christmas message that the traditions of peace and goodwill need to be heeded as much as ever, and people should respect each other even when they harbor the most deeply held differences.

According to excerpts released by Buckingham Palace, the 92-year-old monarch will also speak of family and friendship following a year in which her grandson Harry married Meghan at a dazzling ceremony.

The queen has avoided commenting in public on contentious issues, and the excerpts make no mention of the visit in July by U.S. President Donald Trump or the turmoil over Britain's departure from the European Union.

Speaking about the birth of Jesus, she will say: "I believe his message of peace on earth and goodwill to all is never out of date. It can be heeded by everyone; it's needed as much as ever."

"Even with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good step towards greater understanding."—Reuters



Britain's Prince Philip waits for the bridal procession following the wedding of Princess Eugenie of York and Jack Brooksbank in St George's Chapel, near London. — Reuters

## France's Louvre planning Pierre Soulages retrospective next year

France's master of black Pierre Soulages announced Monday that he will be the subject of a vast retrospective at the Louvre museum in Paris next year, and possibly an ambitious show in New York as well. "They're borrowing works from the National Gallery in Washington, the MoMa in New York, the Tate in London. All the great museums are making loans," Soulages said in an interview to mark his 99th birthday.

"They're going to take down everything in the Salon Carre to install my works," he told the Depeche du Midi newspaper, referring to the Louvre's vaunted gallery of Italian masterpieces. The show will open in December and run through March. In another interview with Le Figaro, Soulages said his dealer Emmanuel Perrotin was planning "a crazy project for my 100th birthday." "He wants to bring all my works at the Fabre Museum in Montpellier to his new gallery, which is magnificent, in New York," he said.

"Financially it's madness. I don't know how he'll manage," he added. Considered one of France's greatest painters, Soulages said he continues working every day at his home in Sete, on the Mediterranean coast, on his trademark "Outrenoir" (Beyond Black) works. "It was the colour I chose for my clothes as soon as I was able to. My mother was scandalised, she'd tell me: 'You're already mourning me'," he told the Depeche. "As I often say, the painting that interests me the most is the one I'm going to do," he said.—AFP



In this file photo French painter, engraver and sculptor, Pierre Soulages in the French southwestern city of Rodez.—AFP photos



This file photo shows the Soulages museum in Rodez, southern France.



## Beckham makes his children watch the Queen's Speech

**T**he retired soccer star - who has children Brooklyn, 19, Romeo, 16, Cruz, 13, and Harper, seven, with wife Victoria - is continuing a tradition started by his grandmother when he was growing up. Discussing his festive plans, he said: "We always spend Christmas in London with family. My gran used to make us watch the Queen's speech on Christmas Day, so that's the one thing I make sure I continue with my children." And Victoria admitted December 25 is always "chaos" in their house. She said: "Christmas Day is a great time for the kids - it's chaos in the house. Because I'm undoing boxes and trying to find batteries for Harper's toys, I don't have a lot of time to get ready." But New Year's Eve runs a lot more smoothly and she and her spouse like to get "dressed up" for some quality

family time. She added: "We always spend New Year's Eve with the kids. It's a good time to get dressed up and let your hair down." No doubt the former Spice Girls singer will have a hangover cure on hand for New Year's Day as she recently admitted she was left with a "sore head" after a bash celebrating 10 years on her eponymous brand. She said: "I'm been so lucky that I've been to lots of amazing parties over the years. "But recently, I celebrated 10 years of my brand with a great party with British Vogue and that felt really special. "It was just after my S/S'19 catwalk show, during London Fashion Week and I was surrounded by friends and family. "I had a very sore head the next morning."



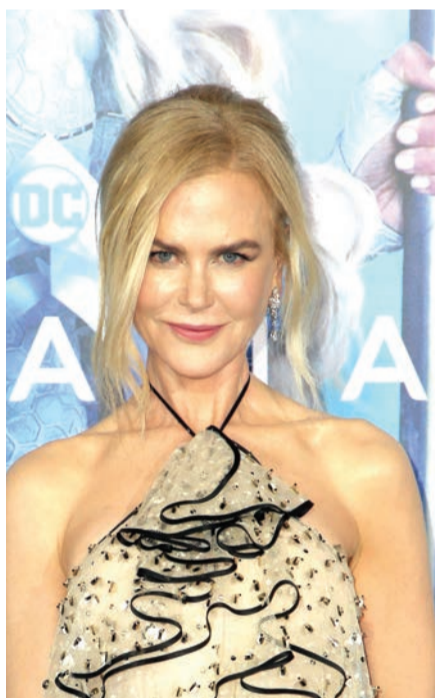
## Olly Murs throws a 1980s

Christmas for his family

**T**he 34-year-old star - who was born on May 14, 1984 - celebrated with his family yesterday and he went all-out to make sure it's a day none of them will ever forget. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "It's an 80s Christmas theme this year, 80s themed dinner, 80s themed outfits, 80s themed decorations. "I'm channeling my inner 80s because I was born in the 80s. The 'Movies' hitmaker revealed he'll even be turning up in fancy dress as a giant Rubik's Cube puzzle, and admitted he's going all out with the "decor". He added: "The decor will be different and I'm going dressed as a Rubik's Cube. I'm not sure how we're going to do an 80s roast dinner but the 80s desserts will be good." His Christmas plans come after Olly recently admitted he hopes he can repair his relationship with his twin brother Ben one day after the pair fell out when the singer had to miss his sibling's wedding because of his 'X Factor' commitments. Speaking earlier this month, he said: "I hope [we make up]. It's mad because every year I think it's nine years, 10 years. I did text him this year for his birthday, I think he's changed his number, but we'll talk again. "We'll figure it out. Life is too short. Christmas is never the same."

## Nicole Kidman celebrates Christmas with a big crowd

**T**he 'Aquaman' actress will return to Australia with her husband Keith Urban and their daughters Sunday, 10, and Faith, seven, for the festive season, while her sister Antonia will travel from Singapore and they have a "lot of fun" catching up with their extended family. She said: "We usually go to Sydney for Christmas. My mother lives there, but as I live in America and my sister lives in Singapore, Momma needs us to go back regularly. It's a big crowd. "We have lots of extended family and we also have people who don't have family who come to be with us, so it's usually about 40 people. It's a lot of fun." While their mother may do the hosting, Nicole and Antonia are happy to get involved with the catering. The 'Big Little Lies' star said: "I do a Christmas Eve party and my sister does Christmas Day. "I do prawns which I get from the fish market and which are delicious, and on the day itself my sister will probably do a turkey and a ham." However, the 51-year-old actress' celebrations are tinged with sadness because her family are still mourning her father Antony, who died in 2014. She said in a recent interview: "It was very sudden. I think that for anyone who has lost a loved one suddenly, it's a very different journey from the one if you'd been able to say goodbye. "And it's very, very hard because you miss a lot of things that you



would have wanted to say to that person. "There are so many things I wanted to say to my dad... But, you know, I do still feel him here around me and it also puts time into a whole different perspective because it makes me realize I don't want to waste any moment of it."

## Matt Willis praises Jamie Oliver for his Christmas cooking skills

**T**he Busted rocker - who has children Isabelle, nine, Ace, seven, and Trixie, two, with wife Emma - will be taking charge in the kitchen on December 25 and he admitted he wouldn't be so "brilliant" at conjuring up the perfect traditional turkey dinner if it wasn't for the celebrity chef's tips. He told OK! magazine: "Emma's family are coming to our house this year. I love Christmas dinner, I do everything and I'm brilliant at it. "A couple of years ago, I bought a Jamie Oliver Christmas Day app and now I've mastered it and I follow that. "Thank you Jamie, you're a genius!" Meanwhile,

Matt recently admitted he's banned his kids from social media until they are much older because he's "addicted" to photo-sharing app Instagram himself. He said: "There is no social media in my home until I decide my children can have it. "When my daughter is at secondary school, she can have a phone so I can contact her. "At the moment they have no access to it and we don't put them on there. "I'm addicted to it myself, I'm constantly checking Instagram. It drives my wife nuts."



## Sir Rod Stewart's Christmas wishes for success for his beloved soccer team

**T**he 73-year-old music star - who is married to model Penny Lancaster - has claimed he already has everything he could ever wish for in life, but he's still hoping for even more success for Celtic Football Club. In a video posted on his Twitter account, Rod is asked what he wants for Christmas this year, and replies: "I've got everything in the world I could possibly have ... I want Celtic FC to do well. "I love Celtic. What would the world be without football?" Despite the glamorous lifestyle she enjoys, Penny recently revealed she wants to "make a difference" as a police volunteer. The 47-year-old model - who has been married to Rod since 2007 - joined the force for Channel 4 reality show 'Famous and Fighting Crime', and she admitted it has lit a fire in her. Penny said: "Being a police volunteer, I felt like I was on the front line and reaching out to those people, and making a difference in their lives." Penny admitted she relished the experience - and the challenges it created.

## Khloe Kardashian praises Kourtney, Scott for vacationing together

**T**he former couple - who have children Mason, nine, Penelope, six and Reign, four, together - are enjoying a holiday in Mexico with their kids and Scott's current girlfriend Sofia Richie, 20, and Khloe has taken to Twitter to praise the "amazing adults" for putting the children first. After a fan tweeted: "This is co-parenting done right!!," Khloe wrote: "Beyond proud of all of them!!!! This is LOVE!! Your children before anything else!! All amazing adults right right!!! (sic)." Meanwhile, it was recently revealed that Sofia is eager to maintain a good relationship with Kourtney, 39, as she is serious about her relationship with Scott, 35. An insider

shared: "There has been and will continue to be things with Scott's family life that bother Sofia, but she is trying to just deal without causing drama. She loves Scott and wants to be with him. "She knows she will always be kind of the outsider, but she loves being around Scott and his kids. "She knows that Kourtney isn't her biggest fan and she understands that. Sofia and Kourtney will never be best friends, but Sofia is happy that she has proved to Kourtney that she is great with her kids. "Sofia is hoping that her relationship with Scott lasts."



Lifestyle | Gossip



## Debby Ryan is engaged to Josh Dun

**T**he 25-year-old actress - who stars in the Netflix comedy-drama series 'Insatiable' - and Josh, 30, have announced the news of their engagement via social media, with the musician posting photos of himself proposing to a tearful Debby on his Instagram account. He captioned the romantic image: "I found a tree house in the woods in New Zealand and proposed to my girl. She my dude for life. I love you Debby (sic)" Josh - who has been dating the actress off and on since 2013 - also posted a snap of Debby's sparkling engagement ring. What's more, Debby has given her fans a behind-the-scenes look at her engagement via her social media accounts. The actress wrote on Twitter: "I said yes! Well technically I said 'NO WAY' twice but I meant yes. (sic)" Debby also shared her husband-to-be's post on her Instagram Story, writing: "Prince of my life." Debby and Ryan - who have been given the collective nickname of 'Jebby' - reportedly split in 2014 before rekindling their romance in 2016. However, during an interview earlier this year, Josh confessed to being "in love" with the actress. He shared: "I'm in love and very happy. We've evolved and grown so much in our careers, in the relationship, as people since we first met." The Twenty One Pilots star admitted that the loved-up duo had developed into "each other's biggest fans" since they first started dating five years ago. Reflecting on how their relationship has evolved over the years, the drummer explained: "It's cool and special to have that support system and we are each other's biggest fans."



## Dua Lipa discontinues capsule collections with Nyden

**T**he 'Electricity' hitmaker has decided to end her partnership with the brand to work on something that is more accessible for her fans in 2019. She tweeted: "Nyden and I have discontinued our work together. I will be announcing something special in the new year that I feel better represents myself and my fans. Thank you for your support xx (sic)" The 23-year-old pop star was set to create four capsules, including a wide range of sizes, with the H&M-owned affordable luxury brand, and the 'One Kiss' singer had been "excited" to get to work on the project because fashion "plays an important role" in her mood both on and off stage. Speaking to Vogue.com in May, she said: "I mean, when I'm on stage, I always feel the most confident, whether that is in a body suit or whether I'm in trackies. "My first love is music, but fashion also plays an important role in my life because I believe it's so vital to self-expression. I look for clothes that reflect strength and fearlessness, but also match up to today's fast pace. So I'm excited to be co-creating with /Nyden on my designs - it's going to be a collection that's completely suited to me, both onstage and off, and for my fans." The 'New Rules' hitmaker is known for her statement outfits on stage and had claimed the brand had allowed her "total freedom" to create the "cool and effortless pieces from the collection and that it was important to create something "simple" that her fans will feel confident in.

## Kimberley Walsh finds it magical to be a mother during Christmas

**T**he former Girls Aloud singer - who has sons Bobby, four, and Cole, two, with husband Justin Scott - is ready for her kids to go "wild" on December 25, but she wouldn't have it any other way. She said: "I'm hosting Christmas at home with the family, so I'll be cooking and trying to look after the kids, who will be going wild - they're very excitable. "It's amazing being a mum at Christmas. "Watching their little faces react to the magic of it all is the best thing ever." The 37-year-old star has no plans to make any specific New Year's resolutions but she's hoping 2019 will be another "really good" year. She added to OK! magazine: "I won't be making any New Year's resolutions - I just want to have another really good year. "In 2018, I went back to my acting roots, which was fun." Meanwhile, Kimberley recently admitted she'd love to have a third child and expects it would be another boy if she did.



## Jennifer Lopez is on a journey of self-discovery



**T**he 'On The Floor' hitmaker - who has twins Max and Emme, now 10, with her ex-husband Marc Anthony - says the birth of her two kids made her realize that she wasn't always as happy as she thought she was and credits them for making her laugh and smile. She said: "When they were born, I realized, 'Wow, I haven't laughed and smiled like this in a long time.' It made me realize that I had spent a lot of my life being happy and doing what I loved, but I had also spent some of my life being unhappy personally and not living in as much happiness and gratitude and the present as I needed to be doing. "I realized that the only person who could guide me out of it was myself. And I had work to do and I had to make myself happy and figure myself out. That was a big turning point in my life. You get a new perspective and a gratitude and you grow into somebody who realizes that your mistakes are not what define you. What defines you is what you do after your mistakes and how you learn what is meant to be learned from those moments." And the 49-year-old singer and actress has finally learned she has the "power" to make her life whatever she wants it to be. She told Vanity Fair magazine: "Everybody has the same feelings where you feel lost at some point in your life and think, 'What am I doing? Is there more? Should I dream bigger? Can I start now? Is it too late?' I just feel like that's why people are responding to this movie in the way that they are. Because it really does make you feel like the only person stopping you from anything in your life is you. And you really have that power to make your life whatever you want it to be." — Bang Showbiz

## Miley Cyrus comforts Ariana Grande after her breakup from Pete Davidson

**T**he 26-year-old star sent her friend a text message of support when it was revealed she had split from her fiancé in October - four months after they got engaged - and she found a unique way to try and cheer her up. Appearing on 'The Howard Stern Show', Miley revealed: "I'm an emoji person so I just sent a bunch of hearts and the little cat with the heart eyes. "I literally think I sent the cat with the heart eyes. I thought it was slightly, maybe even kind of making her feel good, like maybe I was hitting on her a little bit. "It felt like to me, it felt maybe like a little, 'Oh hey, someone loves you. If it's not working, here I am.' "Ariana's sent a similarly wordless reply as she simply responded with a cloud emoji, which Miley felt "said everything" it needed to. She added: "It all said everything. I think she was saying, 'I'm okay, and I'm here. ... Thank you for thinking of me.' That's what I think it meant." Miley's comments come after it was revealed Ariana, 25, is worried about her 25-year-old ex after his recent worrying Instagram post. The comedian - who suffers from bipolar disorder and has previously battled suicidal thoughts - was the subject of a welfare check by the New York Police Department (NYPD) after he wrote on social media that he "doesn't want to be on this earth any more". And Ariana is said to be "frantic" and worried about her former flame's well being.



## Tom Hanks surprises fans at a fast food drive-thru

**T**he 62-year-old star added to his reputation as one of the nicest people in Hollywood over the weekend when he headed to a branch of In-N-Out Burger in Fontana, California and bought food for some lucky customers waiting in line. In videos and photos shared by fans on social media, Tom - who was eating inside the restaurant with his wife Rita Wilson - was seen making time for his fans. One of the fans told E! News: "Tom signed In-N-Out hats and took pictures with everyone. "He was genuinely nice, laughing, talking with everyone and taking selfies! He wished us a Merry Christmas on his way out." The 'Toy Story' actor recently proved his dedication to charity work as it was revealed he was looking to buy and renovate a vintage Polish Syrena vehicle to help raise money for the Pediatric Hospital in Bielsko-Biala, southern Poland. He said on YouTube: "It pays to help out." Meanwhile, it has been reported that the star could be in line to play Geppetto in Disney's live-action remake of 'Pinocchio'. It's said Tom is being eyed for the role as the woodworker who creates the titular puppet - who is then brought

to life by a fairy - in Disney's upcoming remake of the classic 1940 animated movie, which comes as part of the company's live-action remake line. The original Disney 'Pinocchio' film was the second animated movie made by the studio after 1937's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', and was adapted from a story by Italian author Carlo Collodi.



## Claire Richards makes 'too much food' over Christmas

**T**he Steps singer and her husband Reece Hill - who have Charlie, 11, and Daisy, eight, together - are set to host their loved ones on December 25 and the 41-year-old singer doesn't want any of her guests to feel hungry. She said: "It's our turn to host our families. I love cooking for lots of people and, if we're here, we will have about 25 for lunch. I'm often praised for my crispy roast potatoes. "I always make way too much food because I never want anyone to go without." Claire has struggled with her fluctuating weight in the past, and though she's shed six stone in recent years, she won't be restricting her diet over the festive

season because she knows it's just for a few days. She said in a recent interview: "I always indulge in my favorite things at Christmas - just for a couple of days. And if I want to eat a plate of roast potatoes with gravy, then I will. "But then, the next day, I won't. My favorite tippie is prosciutto." And the '5,6,7,8' hitmaker is a big fan of Christmas leftovers. She added: "I'm a creature of habit and Christmas isn't Christmas without a Baileys on ice and a turkey sandwich. "I love Boxing Day too - bubble and squeak with cold meats and pickles."





## A Christmas carol: Unwrapping 'Silent Night' in Austria

The story of 'Silent Night' isn't all church bells and choirs. 200 years since it was first performed in Austria, we follow its snow prints through the country to discover how this simple lullaby of hope became the world's biggest Christmas carol.

On 24 December 1818, hours before Christmas Mass in Oberndorf bei Salzburg, the assistant priest of the local church, Joseph Mohr, passed a six-stanza poem over to the parish organist, Franz Gruber, and asked him to compose a melody to accompany it.

The pair then stood in front of the nativity scene and sang 'Stille Nacht' for the first time, unaware that the peaceful song would still be reverberating around the world two centuries later. But with 30 million copies sold in over 300 different languages, 'Silent Night' has become the planet's definitive Christmas carol. From the divine inspiration to modern interpretation, here's where to unwrap 'Silent Night' in Austria.

### Discover the divine inspiration in Mariapfarr

With glimmering crystalline lakes and a crown of colossal snow-capped mountains, you would expect to see

legions of landscape artists setting up their easels among the dandelion-dotted meadows of Mariapfarr. However, it's a portrait that gets the most attention here.

Inside the Church of Our Beloved Woman, a painting depicting the Three Wise Men visiting a wavy-haired Jesus Christ is thought to be the inspiration behind the 'Silent Night' line 'Holy infant, so tender and mild'. Initially penned as a poem by Joseph Mohr when the young assistant priest was stationed at the village, the original line reads as 'Holder Knab im lockigen Haar' ('The lovely boy with curly hair').

### Sing your lungs out at Salzburg Cathedral

Accentuated by some of the finest architectural achievements of both man and Mother Nature, Salzburg stands out as one of Europe's most seductive fairy-tale cities. It waltzes between bombastic baroque domes, striking cliff-top fortresses, cobbled arcades and the ripped peak of its surrounding.

Without doubt, this is Mozart's city - no matter how hard the Sound of Music skips and yodels - but for 'Silent Night' lovers, it offers a glimpse of the enchanted too. The

original yellowed manuscript of 'Stille Nacht' is quite literally hidden away in the Salzburg Museum - visitors have to unpeel a protective cover to reveal it. For the definitive taste of 'Silent Night' though, catch the Salzburg Cathedral Choir performing the hymn on 24 December to the flickering glow of candlelight and the celestial climbing strings of the orchestra.

### Ponder modern interpretations in Wagrain

Once the snow starts to settle, the town of Wagrain, 80km due south of Salzburg, is pure postcard panoramas as far as the ski goggles can see: alpine chalets, horse-drawn sleighs, glistening slopes that dive down through the treeline. Most visitors will be too busy skiing to take in a gallery, but the new Silent Night Museum, which opened in 2017, is well worth the detour. Wagrain was Mohr's last parish and he is buried in the local church, but rather than just looking back at his life, the museum accesses the impact of 'Silent Night'. —www.lonelyplanet.com



## Military Santa tracker live despite US govt shutdown



US President Donald Trump speaks on the telephone as he answers calls from people calling into the NORAD Santa tracker phone line in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington.

The US government shutdown may have temporarily dimmed Washington's National Christmas Tree but never fear, Santa Claus still came to town—with the military tracking his path across the globe. Just as it has since the 1950s the Canadian and American defense agency NORAD delivered live updates on the man in the red suit's international gift delivery route. NORAD eased the fears of good little boys and girls concerned the tracker might be down, after US lawmakers failed to agree on a budget, triggering a partial shutdown of federal services, including the maintenance of the Christmas tree outside the White House.

"In the event of a government shutdown, NORAD will continue with its 63-year tradition of NORAD Tracks Santa on Dec 24," the agency tweeted of the tracker, the Pentagon's largest public outreach program. "Military personnel who conduct NORAD Tracks Santa are supported by approximately 1,500 volunteers who make the program possible each and every year." The 3-D, interactive website showed Santa on his delivery route, allowing users to click and learn more about the various cities along the way.

Just after 0645 GMT, Father Christmas's reindeer-powered sleigh was headed for



In this photo released by the US Airforce, volunteers work in the 2018 NORAD Tracks Santa Operation Center on Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado. — AFP photos

sands of calls and emails from eager children hoping to probe for details including their Christmas wish lists.

### Do you believe in Santa?

The Trumps, who canceled their holiday trip to Mar a Lago, their residence and club in Florida, in light of the shutdown, took a turn fielding calls from the White House on Monday evening. "Hello, is this Coleman? Merry Christmas. How are you? How old are you?" Trump said when answering one call. But he went on to raise doubts about Santa's existence, asking: "Are you still a believer in Santa Claus? 'Cuz at seven it's marginal, right?"

Melania apparently managed to skirt that sensitive issue in calls she answered. "I want to wish you a Merry Christmas. Thank you. Nice talking to you," she told one caller. The couple later attended a Christmas Eve service at the Washington National Cathedral. The Santa tracker presented by the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) dates to 1955, when a Colorado newspaper adver-

tisement misprinted a phone number to connect children with Santa and mistakenly directed them to the military nerve center hotline.

To avoid disappointing the eager children, NORAD's director of operations at the time, Colonel Harry Shoup, ordered his staff to check the radar to see where Santa might be and update the children on his location. Decades later volunteers are armed with a 14-page playbook with talking points to respond to queries from excited children.

The Defense Department is able to follow Santa's journey thanks to satellites that pick up heat from lead reindeer Rudolph's bright red nose, which "gives off an infrared signature similar to a missile launch," according to Politico magazine. And for those kids skeptical of Santa's existence? "Historical data and more than 60 years of NORAD tracking information lead us to believe Santa Claus is alive and well in the hearts of people throughout the world," the Pentagon's handbook reads.—AFP

## 'Aquaman' makes a big splash to top N American box office

New Warner Bros. release "Aquaman" made the biggest waves in North American theaters over the weekend with \$67.4 million in ticket sales, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations estimated Sunday. That put it well ahead of two other new holiday-timed releases, as Disney's "Mary Poppins Returns" took in \$22.2 million for the three-day weekend, flying slightly higher than Paramount's "Bumblebee" at \$21 million.

Together, the three helped boost the year's domestic box-office revenue toward a record \$11.8 billion, Hollywood Reporter said. "Aquaman" stars Jason Momoa in a title role infused with new swagger by director James Wan, with Variety calling Momoa's Aquaman "a bare-chested Hawaiian super-stud with long, shaggy surfer hair and all-over tribal tattoos." The look seems to work: The film has already taken in some \$410 million outside North America.

"Mary Poppins," while lacking truly boffo opening numbers, is expected to follow past musicals in enjoying a long box-office run. The sequel to the 1964 movie stars Emily Blunt as the stern but kind-hearted nanny (Julie Andrews in the original), backed by Lin-Manuel Miranda of "Hamilton" fame. Dick Van Dyke, Mary Poppins' Cockney-accented friend in the original film, makes a cameo.

"Bumblebee," a prequel to the "Transformers" movies, stars Hailee Steinfeld and John Cena. It drew a lofty 94 percent rating from Rotten Tomatoes as all three of the top grossing new movies earned strong A- ratings from CinemaScores. In fourth was Sony's "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," taking in \$16.7 million. It has Peter Parker making way for Miles Morales as a black, Latino Spider-Man.

And fifth spot went to "The Mule" from Warner Bros., at \$9.3 million. Clint Eastwood, who at 88 says this will be his last acting part, directs and takes the lead role as a destitute 90-year-old who turns to transporting cocaine for a Mexican drug cartel. Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were:

- "Dr. Seuss's The Grinch" (\$8.2 million)
- "Second Act" (\$6.5 million)
- "Ralph Breaks the Internet" (\$4.6 million)
- "Welcome to Marwen" (\$2.4 million)
- "Mary Queen of Scots" (\$2.2 million)—AFP

"Are you still a believer in Santa Claus?"

Monterrey, Mexico, having already delivered more than six billion gifts. In addition to tracking St Nick, volunteers donning military garb and Santa hats also respond to tens of thou-

# Classifieds

Wednesday, December 26, 2018



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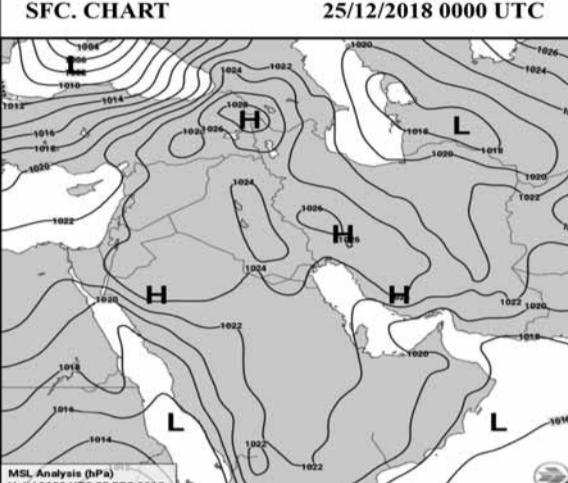
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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Visibility will improve gradually with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

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

WEATHER WARNING			Drop in Visibility	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 25/12/2018 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	13 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	08 °C		
ABDALY	20 °C	06 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	20 °C	09 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	17 °C	11 °C		
SALMIYAH	17 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	17 °C	13 °C		
NUWAISIB	20 °C	11 °C		
WAFRA	20 °C	08 °C		
SALMY	18 °C	07 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	12/26	Partly cloudy	21 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	12/27	Partly cloudy	24 °C	12 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h
Friday	12/28	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain with a chance for rising dust	23 °C	14 °C	SE-NW	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	12/29	Cool	18 °C	09 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:15
Sunrise	06:40
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	14:38
Sunset	16:56
Isha	18:19

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	18 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	100 %
MIN. RH	48 %
MAX. Wind	N 21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
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Salmiya	25746401

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## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

## Flight Schedule

## DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 26/12/2018					Departure Flights on Wednesday 26/12/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
FEG	341	Sohag	00:05	MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:20	IRC	6553
JZR	406	Kochi	00:10	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	MSR	611
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:30	UAE	872
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	GFA	221	Colombo	14:30	RBG	218
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	618	Doha	14:40	KIS	6033
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	412	Bahrain	14:40	IRC	527
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KNE	683	Mashhad	14:40	RBG	554
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KNE	529	Bangkok	15:00	QTR	1079
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:40	KAC	788	Madinah	15:05	KNE	382
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	ETD	303	Jeddah	15:05	Taif	1500
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	222	oha	15:10	MSR	576
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC	562	Colombo	01:50	FDB	060
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	OMA	645	Dubai	01:50	GFA	222
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	KAC	304	Riyadh	01:50	KAC	673
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	142	Amman	01:55	CLX	792
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	857	Muscat	02:00	SVA	501
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	732	Frankfurt	02:25	KAC	775
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SVA	504	Al Najaf	02:30	KAC	743
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	SAW	705	Dubai	02:30	KNE	530
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	152	Cairo	02:30	KNE	684
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	ABY	127	Damascus	02:40	KAC	563
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	118	Mashhad	03:00	KAC	619
KAC	796	Madinah	04:10	JZR	212	Sharjah	03:55	ETD	304
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	New York	03:55	KAC	283
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	542	Jeddah	04:00	OMA	646
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	QTR	1072	Beirut	04:00	KAC	785
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB	051	Cairo	04:05	JZR	261
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	522	Abu Dhabi	04:15	ABY	128
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	114	Doha	04:30	JZR	105
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	SVA	510	Riyadh	04:30	SAW	706
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	GFA	215	Dubai	05:10	SVA	505
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR	214	London	05:10	KAC	503
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	UAE	875	Chennai	05:10	KAC	361
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	FDB	063	Doha	05:30	FDB	052
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	302	Dubai	05:50	UAE	858
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	QTR	1080	Mumbai	06:10	QTR	1073
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	MSR	620	Doha	06:15	KAC	615
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	744	Dubai	06:35	KAC	343
BAW	157	London	07:05	RJA	640	Istanbul	06:40	KAC	331
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	ABY	123	Paris	07:10	JZR	733
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	KAC	156	Bahrain	07:15	SVA	511
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	GFA	217	Amman	08:10	GFA	216
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	776	Rome	08:20	JZR	127
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	FDB	057	Mashhad	08:35	JZR	253
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	104	London	08:50	JZR	403
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	JZR	106	Beirut	09:00	KAC	381
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KNE	381	Jeddah	09:05	FDB	064
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	166	Bahrain	09:05	UAE	876
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	620	Cairo	09:10	MSR	621
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DHX	172	Doha	09:15	QTR	1081
IRC	6511	Lamerd	09:50	OMA	647	Shannon/New York	09:15	RJA	641
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	674	Cairo	09:30	ABY	124
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:10	QTR	1088	Amman	09:40	GFA	218
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	DLH	624	London	09:45	FDB	058
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	RBG	217	Dubai	09:45	KNE	232
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	KAC	172	Sharjah	09:45	JZR	401
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	JAV	621	Mashhad	09:50	KAC	301
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	ETD	307	Dubai	10:00	KAC	353
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	ALK	229	Istanbul	10:05	KAC	357
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	11:55	MEA	402	Riyadh	10:10	OMA	648
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	616	Frankfurt	10:10	DLH	624
MSC	415	Sohag	12:10	KAC	168	Amman	10:10	RBG	214
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	UAE	859	Abu Dhabi	10:35	DHX	171
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	GFA	219	Colombo	10:35	QTR	1089
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KLM	445	Beirut	10:40	ETD	308
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	KAC	564	Jeddah	10:45	JAV	622
IRC	526	Mashhad	13:30	JAI	574	Lamerd	10:45	KAC	1543
KIS	6032	Mashhad	13:30	QTR	1082	Istanbul	11:10	KAC	205
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	ETD	309	Bahrain	11:25	MEA	403
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	AIC	975	Damascus	11:30	ALK	230
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	SVA	514	Jeddah	11:30	GFA	220
RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	KAC	786	Doha	12:00	KAC	383
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	SVA	502	Mangalore	12:10	KLM	445
CLX	792	Luxembourg	14:10	JZR	128	Chennai/Goa	12:15	KAC	783
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	FDB	071	Beirut	12:55	UAE	860
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	JZR	262	Jeddah	12:55	JAI	573
						Doha	13:00	KAC	411
						Abu Dhabi	13:10	ETD	310
						Doha	13:30	QTR	1083
						Riyadh	13:30	SVA	515
						Jeddah	13:35	SVA	503



Indian police patrol on their horses during Christmas celebrations in Kolkata yesterday. — AFP

# Erdogan invites Trump to Turkey amid Syria pullout

**ANKARA:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent more troops to Syria's border ahead of an imminent US withdrawal, as the White House announced he had invited Donald Trump to Ankara. Unlike several other allies of the United States, Turkey has praised President Trump's decision to withdraw 2,000 of his ground forces from Syria, a country where it will now have a freer rein to target Kurdish fighters.

On Monday, Ankara sent more troops to its Syrian border and said an offensive targeting the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia and IS group will be launched in the coming months. Turkey views the YPG as a "terrorist offshoot" of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. But the militia has also been a key US ally in the fight against Islamic State in Syria, working with American forces on the ground there.

"Just as we did not leave our Syrian Arabs to Daesh (IS), we will not leave Syrian Kurds to the cruelty of the PKK," Erdogan said during a speech in Ankara. A Turkish military convoy arrived overnight on Monday at the border with local media reporting that some vehicles had entered Syria. In a telephone conversation Sunday between Trump and Erdogan, which both sides described as "productive", they agreed to avoid a power vacuum in Syria after the US withdrawal.

"President Erdogan invited President Trump to visit Turkey in 2019. While nothing definite is being planned, the President is open to a potential meeting in the future," a White House spokesperson later said on Monday evening. Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told reporters on Monday that a US military delegation would arrive this week to "discuss how to coordinate (the withdrawal) with their counterparts". A Turkish foreign ministry delegation would go to Washington for

talks early January, he added.

Trump stunned the US political establishment and allies last week with his decision, days after Erdogan had warned that Ankara would soon launch an offensive in northern Syria. Critics of Trump's decision fear that thousands of Islamic State (IS) group extremist members are still thought to be in Syria, despite Trump's claim of having defeated IS. The US leader tweeted that Erdogan had told him Ankara would "eradicate" the last IS elements. And Kalin vowed that there was "no question of a step backwards, vulnerability or a slowdown in the fight against Daesh (IS)". He added: "Turkey will show the same determination against Daesh. To beat Daesh, we don't need the PKK or the YPG. We can bring peace to this region."

The Turkish military convoy with howitzers, artillery batteries and several units of the armed forces, was deployed to the border district of Elbeyli in Kilis province, state news agency Anadolu reported on Monday. Parts of the convoy had entered Syria, the private IHA news agency reported, which said the reinforcements would take place "gradually". The deployment began over the weekend with around 100 vehicles, the Hurriyet daily said, and crossed into the Al-Bab region, headed towards Jarabulus and YPG-held Manbij.

Jarabulus and Al-Bab were areas captured from IS during Ankara's first military operation in August 2016 which lasted until March 2017. Military reinforcements had also been sent to the Akcakale border town and Ceylanpinar district, both in the southeastern Sanliurfa province. Turkey conducted a second offensive with Syrian rebels against the YPG in its northwestern enclave of Afrin in January this year. Turkish officials have previously said Ankara has no territorial ambitions in Syria.

As a result, Netflix dropped Spacey from its political thriller series "House of Cards", and he was dumped from his scenes in Ridley Scott's film "All the Money in the World". Spacey is one of the most high-profile figures in the torrent of allegations that have brought down male power players from the worlds of politics, finance, entertainment and journalism, in the wake of accusations against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein 14 months ago.

As the arraignment was announced, a bizarre video was shared by Spacey's Twitter account of the actor apparently addressing his sacking by Netflix - while in character as President Frank Underwood from "House of Cards". "Oh sure, they may have tried to separate us, but what we have is too strong, too powerful. After all, we shared everything, you and I," Spacey says in Underwood's signature southern drawl, in the video entitled titled, "Let Me Be Frank".

"I told you my deepest, darkest secrets. I showed you exactly what people are capable of. I shocked you with my honesty, but mostly I challenged you and made you think. And you trusted me, even though you knew you shouldn't. So we're not done, no matter what anyone says. And besides, I know what you want. You want me back."

The three-minute vignette marks Spacey's first public performance since the allegations against him came to light. "Of course, some believed everything and have been just waiting with bated breath to hear me confess it all. They're just dying to have me declare that everything said is true and that I got what I deserved," he goes on. "Only you and I both know it's never that simple, not in politics and not in life," he says - apparently an allusion to the allegations against both the actor and his Machiavellian character on the show. Netflix declined to comment, and Spacey's representative did not immediately respond when contacted. — Agencies

around KD 20 million and called on the minister to make the decisions to invest in the amusement park.

Speaking on the plight of bedoons or stateless people, MP Subaei said they constitute a time bomb and called for swiftly resolving their problem. The lawmaker inquired why authorities have not naturalized the 34,000 bedoons the government had repeatedly said deserve Kuwaiti citizenship. MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri urged the new ministers to change their attitude, adding that Kuwait "did not die" by the Iraqi invasion, but it appears now it is "going to die" by corruption.



ANKARA: President of Turkey and leader of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan gestures to his supporters during his party's parliamentary group meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey yesterday. — AFP

Trump's move has sparked dismay among many allies and turmoil within his administration. First Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned, then Brett McGurk, the special envoy to the anti-IS coalition, stepped down. American support for the YPG, under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance, has long been a source of tension between NATO allies the US and Turkey.

But relations between the Turkish and American

leaders appear to have improved substantially since a crisis in the summer over the detention of a US pastor, since released. Last week, the US approved the sale of \$3.5 billion in missiles to Turkey, after American outrage over Ankara's major arms purchase from Russia. But there are still strains over the US refusal to extradite Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based Muslim preacher who Turkey says ordered the 2016 failed coup. — AFP

## Actor Spacey charged with...

Continued from Page 1

Unruh told reporters the 59-year-old had sexually assaulted her son on the holiday island of Nantucket after plying him with alcohol late at night in a bar in July 2016. Unruh said her "star struck, straight" son falsely told the actor he was old enough to drink when he met him at the bar. The legal age to drink alcoholic beverages in Massachusetts is 21. "Kevin Spacey bought him drink after drink, and when my son was drunk, Spacey made his move and sexually assaulted him," Unruh told the news conference in Boston. "Spacey stuck his hand inside my son's pants and grabbed his genitals," Unruh said. Her intoxicated son, whom she did not name, panicked and froze. When Spacey left briefly to use the bathroom, he allegedly fled to his grandmother's house, where he is said to have told his sister what had happened.

The charge against Spacey, whose full name is Kevin Spacey Fowler, was filed after a Dec 20 hearing. Cape and Islands District Attorney Michael O'Keefe said. The name on the complaint was Kevin S Fowler. Spacey was considered one of the finest actors of his generation. His career has nosedived following allegations of sexual misconduct by more than a dozen men in the United States and Britain. The first public report of alleged abuse by him came from actor Anthony Rapp, who claimed that Spacey sexually abused him when Rapp was 14, in 1986. Spacey apologized to Rapp, claiming not to remember the incident, but remained silent as accusations against him mushroomed.

## New ministers sworn in by Amir, take oath...

Continued from Page 1

City was closed because it posed a danger to visitors and its refurbishment is very expensive. But MP Safa Al-Hashem objected to this, saying that it needs

## Pontiff calls for peace as queen...

Continued from Page 1

international community may finally bring relief to all those children and people exhausted by war and famine," he said. The pope also spoke of the war in Syria, which has forced millions from their homes and reduced swathes of the country to rubble.

He called for a "political solution" to the conflict "so that the Syrian people, especially all those who were forced to leave their own lands and seek refuge elsewhere, can return to live in peace in their own country". Francis also said he hoped for renewed peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians "that can put an end to a conflict that for over 70 years has rent the land chosen by the Lord to show his face of love."

Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, located near Jerusalem but cut off from the city by Israel's separation barrier, has seen an increase in visitors this season after several down years because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian tourism officials and hotel operators have reported their strongest season in years. "This year is much more calm, much better than last year," said Abeer Nasser, a Palestinian from the nearby town of Beit Sahour celebrating in Bethlehem with her son and daughter. "Every year I feel more in the mood to celebrate despite the political situation," the 37-year-old added, referring to the Israeli occupation.

Beyond Bethlehem, Christians worldwide were marking Christmas, with services held from Indonesia to Iraq. This year's celebrations come after a year of tumult, much of which has come from Washington, where the festive spirit was dampened when the national Christmas tree went dark on the third day of a US government shutdown. One festive service not affected was the military's annual Santa Claus "tracker", which sees North American Aerospace Defense Command's (NORAD) deliver live updates on his international gift delivery route.

Fielding calls from children anxious to know if their presents would arrive on time, Trump risked a spell on Santa's naughty list by telling one young boy that believing in the jolly man in red at age seven was "marginal". But his scepticism is unlikely to have dampened the enthusiasm of many excited youngsters. "Historical data and more than 60 years of NORAD tracking information lead us to believe Santa Claus is alive and well in the hearts of people

throughout the world," the Pentagon's handbook read.

This year in Bethlehem, visitors were also able to view the Church of the Nativity's newly restored mosaics dating to the Crusader era after a major renovation. Visitors from across the world gathered in the "little town" on Christmas Eve for midnight mass, queuing to see the grotto where Jesus (PBUH) is believed to have been born and taking in a festive parade.

While for many who celebrate the festival Christmas is a time to gather with loved ones, many were struggling with unforeseen events and hardships. At a little church just outside Indonesia's tsunami disaster zone, a few dozen congregants gathered on Christmas day to pray for the victims. The tsunami, triggered by a volcanic eruption, left more than 400 people dead when it smashed into popular beaches on southern Sumatra and the western edge of Java, inundating tourist hotels and coastal settlements. "This Christmas is different because we're celebrating it during a disaster," Rahmat Carita congregant Eliza told AFP. "For me, it's a chance to contemplate. God's love is real, we must not forget that."

Queen Elizabeth II warned of religious "tribalism" in a Christmas message yesterday delivered against a backdrop of Britain bickering over its impending exit from the EU. The tone of the 92-year-old monarch's annual TV appearances reflected a somber mood sweeping the island nation as it ponders the perils of leaving the European project after 46 years in March.

British royalty traditionally steer well clear of politics - a unifying position that puts them above the daily fray of Westminster and Downing Street. But the queen came close to breaking that mold on several occasions during a five-minute appearance recorded earlier this month and played simultaneously on Britain's main TV stations.

"Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom. I'd like to think so. Perhaps part of that wisdom is to recognize some of life's baffling paradoxes, such as the way human beings have a huge propensity for good, and yet a capacity for evil," the queen said while seated in front of a fireplace and Christmas tree. "Even the power of faith, which frequently inspires great generosity and self-sacrifice, can fall victim to tribalism," the queen said.

Spain's second-largest city Barcelona was meanwhile on alert after the US State Department warned of the risk of a terrorist attack during the Christmas holidays. And in France, groups of "yellow vest" anti-government demonstrators are spending Christmas day at makeshift protest camps on roundabouts across the country, eating devilled eggs and foie gras with new friends they have made in weeks of rallies against the policies of President Emmanuel Macron. — AFP



## Sports

# Mikaela Shiffrin dominant, Osaka breakthrough: Women's sport in 2018

## Figure skater Zagitova produced a series of jaw-dropping displays

PARIS: Mikaela Shiffrin and Alina Zagitova starred in Pyeongchang to claim Olympic golds, before Naomi Osaka announced her arrival at the top echelon of tennis in style as gymnast Simone Biles rediscovered her best.

Here, AFP Sport takes a look at ten great moments from women's sport in 2018:

### Groundbreaking Kim February 12

American Chloe Kim, then only 17, went into the women's Olympic snowboarding halfpipe competition as a red-hot favourite and did not disappoint. She finished almost 10 points clear of China's silver medallist Liu Jiayu, becoming the youngest woman to land two consecutive 1,080-degree spins at an Olympics.

### Zagitova dazzles February 23

Figure skater Zagitova produced a series of jaw-dropping displays in the 2017/18 season, culminating in a magnificent gold-medal winning performance in Pyeongchang at the age of just 15. The Russian broke the world record in the short programme and narrowly held off compatriot Evgenia Medvedeva after a dramatic free skate competition.

### Shiffrin dominates March 17

Alpine skiing star Shiffrin sealed her second straight overall World Cup title in style, signing off with a 12th victory of the season in the closing slalom in Are, Sweden. The 23-year-old Olympic giant slalom champion has already opened up a 501-point gap in the new campaign after taking her staggering haul of World Cup career wins to 50.

### Lyon's third in a row May 24

Lyon won their third straight women's Champions League crown with a 4-1 extra-time victory over Wolfsburg in Kiev. The French side were held to a

goalless draw in 90 minutes, but Norwegian star Ada Hegerberg was among the scorers as they netted four times in the extra half-hour to add to their 2016 and 2017 titles.

### Ariya hangs on June 3

Thai golfer Ariya Jutanugarn overcame a back-nine collapse to grab her second major title at the US Open. The 23-year-old led by seven shots at the halfway stage of the final round before dropping five shots in the closing holes, only to edge out South Korea's Kim Hyo-joo in a play-off. Ariya will end the year as the world number one.

### Asher-Smith's flying treble August 12

Britain's Dina Asher-Smith delivered on her undoubted potential with a stunning treble of 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay golds at the European athletics championships in Berlin. The then 22-year-old set new world leads and national records in both the individual events, clocking 10.85sec and 21.89sec in the 100 and 200 respectively.

### Osaka stuns Serena September 8

Japanese youngster Osaka announced herself on the world stage by lengthening Serena Williams' wait for a record-equaling 24th tennis Grand Slam singles title. The 21-year-old overpowered the home favourite 6-2, 6-4 to take her first major tournament victory, although the match was overshadowed by Williams' infamous outburst at umpire Carlos Ramos.

### Biles back to her best November 1

Over two years since winning four gold medals at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, pocket dynamo Biles claimed four titles at the artistic gymnastics world championships. The American, who took a one-year hiatus in 2017, suffered with kidney stones the night before the



COURCHEVEL: File photo shows winner Mikaela Shiffrin of the US (C) celebrates on the podium with second-placed Slovakia's Petra Vlhova (L) (2nd) and third-placed Sweden's Frida Hansdotter (R) after the FIS Alpine World Cup Women Slalom on December 22, 2018 in Courchevel, in the French Alps. —AFP

qualification rounds in Doha, but brushed that aside to clinch a record fourth all-around world crown.

### Australia back on top November 24

Australia's women's cricket team won a record-extending fourth World Twenty20 title in the Caribbean, ending a brief barren spell. They avenged their 2016 final loss to the West Indies in the last four, before thrashing England by eight

wickets to lift the trophy.

### Hegerberg wins Ballon d'Or December 3

The 23-year-old Hegerberg was rewarded for her excellent season and Champions League exploits by being named the inaugural women's Ballon d'Or winner. She had to bat away a question from host Martin Solveig asking her if she knew how to 'twerk' at an awkward awards ceremony in Paris. —AFP

## Zain awards winning teams of Li3ib's Football League



Al Hazim with Zain officials, league organizers and winners.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its participation in the conclusion and award ceremony of the Duwaween Football League held at the Public Authority for Sports headquarters. Zain's participation came as part of its Official Sponsorship to the league, which continued from October - December 2018 featuring 10 teams.

Zain took part in awarding the first place winners as well as the league's best players during the ceremony held at the Public Authority for Sports headquarters with the attendance of Director of the Sports for Everyone Management at the Public Authority for Sports Hamed Al Hazim, as well as the league's organizers, sponsors, and participants.

The Duwaween Football League, a joint venture between Kuwaiti sports startups Li3ib and Goalkeeper Station, was held on the Public Authority for Sports' fields, and witnessed the registration of over 100 teams, from which 10 teams were selected to compete. The league witnessed high levels of professionalism and excitement, given the

great popularity football enjoys amongst the youth in Kuwait.

Li3ib, the league's co-organizer, is a success story of the fourth Zain Great Idea startup accelerator program. Li3ib is a sports booking platform that solves two main issues for the casual athlete: where to play and who to play with. The platform allows users to discover new sports venues, select and pay for the specific hour they prefer, and invite their friends all through the convenience of their smartphones. Li3ib's organizing of the Duwaween Football League reflected its successful launch in the Kuwaiti market through the Zain Great Idea startup accelerator program.

Zain believes in supporting of the various initiatives that contribute to the development of the Kuwaiti sports and youth sectors. The company reflects this belief through its support to such distinguished sports events as well as through its support to many Kuwaiti athletes in various sports who proudly represent Kuwait in local and international arenas.

## Burgan Bank continues sponsorship of world wheelchair champion Tareq

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, a strong sports advocate, recently announced its sponsorship of wheelchair fencing titleholder, Tareq Al-Qallaf, for the fifth consecutive year. The homegrown World Champion - a symbol of local pride, patriotism, and inspiration for the special needs community - will represent Kuwait in four upcoming championships across the globe during the first half of 2019.

A truly international sportsman, Tareq Al-Qallaf will kick off his global tour with Charlotte in North Carolina from 4-7 January 2019, preceded by a week of training at the New York camp. The tour will then take him to the grand Arnold Classic tournament in March 2019, after a week's camp in Pennsylvania. In May 2019, Al Qallaf will train in New Jersey to compete in the World Clubs Cup, which will be held in Pennsylvania and will finish the tour in June at the Mississippi Championship.

Driven by the belief that sports is an ideal platform to drive dynamism and self-improvement, Burgan Bank maintains a long-term partnership with Tareq Al-Qallaf. As the lead sponsor in 2018, Burgan Bank helped contribute to Tareq Al-Qallaf's champi-

onships, which earned him eleven World Cup medals. The bank will continue to contribute to the champion's successful road ahead as he raises the Kuwaiti flag high on prestigious international platforms.

The sponsorship is in line with Burgan Bank's CSR strategy, which places sports and active living at its core. Sports serve as a dynamic platform to develop better health, higher self-esteem, and instill lifelong values of discipline, teamwork and resilience, enabling happier and stronger individual and communities.

With his many outstanding achievements across the globe starting with his first win in 1982, Al Qallaf serves as an extraordinary example of hard work and exceptional performance for both the sports community and the special needs segment.

Falling in line with its community program, 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change, Burgan Bank sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti finan-



Tareq Al-Qallaf

cial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

## Hunting and Equestrian Club thanks Amir, Crown Prince

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Secretary of the Hunting and Equestrian Club Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, First Deputy Premier, Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad for supporting sports in general

and equestrian in particular.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser gave thanks to Public Authority for Sports under the leadership of Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and Deputy Director General Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, for the smooth transfer of management headed by Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad and secretary Sabah Al-Fahad. He also thanked the general assembly for having confidence in them.

Al-Nasser lauded the Hunting and Equestrian Club Director General Masoud Hayat, adding that there are no differences with the previous committee, and that the new committee is ready for action.

Meanwhile the horse "Hayes" from Dasman Stable "local breed" won the club's cup for the 1800 meter distance with jockey Morgan in 1.57.7 minutes.



## Russian Olympic biathlete Shipulin retires

MOSCOW: Russian biathlete Anton Shipulin, who won gold at the 2014 Sochi Olympics in the men's 4x7.5 km relay, announced his retirement yesterday as Russian biathlon remains under increased scrutiny.

"I have made a very serious decision to end my professional career," Shipulin, who also won bronze in the 4x7.5 km relay at the 2010 Vancouver Games, said at a press conference in Moscow. "There are several reasons but the main one is that we weren't invited to the 2018 Olympics."

The 31-year-old was not among the four Russian biathletes cleared by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to compete at this year's Pyeongchang Winter Games. Russia was formally banned from this year's Olympics as punishment for alleged

state-sponsored doping at the Sochi Games, but the IOC invited a number of Russian athletes with no history of doping to compete as neutrals.

Shipulin's announcement comes less than two weeks after Austrian police visited the Russian national team at a Biathlon World Cup event in the town of Hochfilzen over possible doping violations. The International Biathlon Union (IBU) later announced that Austrian authorities were investigating five biathlon officials and five athletes from Russia over possible doping-related offences during the 2017 World Championship.

The IBU charged four Russian biathletes with anti-doping rule violations in November, but Shipulin was not among them. —Reuters

# India axe openers, Australia recall Marsh for third Test

## Debutant Mayank Agarwal to open batting with Hanuma Vihari

MELBOURNE: India axed both openers yesterday while Australia recalled allrounder Mitchell Marsh at the expense of struggling batsman Peter Handscomb for the high-stakes third Test. With the four-Test series tied 1-1, much is riding on the Boxing Day showdown at the Melbourne Cricket Ground where up to 90,000 fans are expected, and India can't afford another top order flop.

Murali Vijay and KL Rahul scored just 95 runs between them in eight innings across the opening two Tests in Adelaide and Perth, failing to play their part alongside the likes of Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara. They have paid the price with debutant Mayank Agarwal expected to open the batting with Hanuma Vihari, who is set to be bumped up the order. Experienced No.6 Rohit Sharma was declared fit and resumes his place in the side after missing the Perth Test.

But ace spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who also missed that game, has failed to recover from an abdominal strain, with left-arm finger-spinner Ravindra Jadeja brought in as part of a four-man attack.

Skipper Kohli, who had some testy exchanges in Perth with Australian counterpart Tim Paine, insisted the defeat there was in the past and his team was starting with a new slate in Melbourne.

"As a team, whether you're 2-0 up or 1-0 down, what has happened in the past has no significance to what is going to happen in the next Test," he said before the team was announced.

"So the key is to stay in the moment, stay in the present. We just need to play consistently good cricket and not get too excited or taken aback from situations in the match."

Kohli, who scored a battling century in Perth but was criticised for failing to acknowledge the crowd

when he was controversially given out, also said he would not be looking for confrontations with Paine in Melbourne.

"Both teams are passionate and desperate to win. Obviously, things happen on the field. But as long as the line isn't crossed," he said. "I'm sure Tim and myself understand what happened and we don't want to do something unnecessary. We want to lead our teams well and play good cricket that the public wants to see."

### RELIEVE PRESSURE

Despite winning to level the series in Perth, Australia opted for change by recalling Marsh, whose part-time seamers will help relieve pressure on the home side's pace attack on a pitch that is not expected to offer as much for the bowlers as Adelaide or Perth.

Part of the thinking also revolves around the potentially decisive fourth and final Test in Sydney, with only a three-day recovery period if Melbourne goes the full five-day distance. Handscomb is the fall guy, aged after scoring just 34, 14, 7 and 13 across four innings.

"I'm sure Pete would be upset. I think he's had conversations with the selectors that there's a few things they would like him to work on and Pete is open to that," Paine said. He added that he did not believe dropping a player from a winning XI would impact Australia's momentum.

"No I don't think so, we did it last year during the Ashes as well. The majority of this decision has been based around it's a long series, we've played on a lot of hot days and our bowlers have had a big workload," he said. "We believe Mitch can come in and do a really good job with the bat and obviously he'll give great support to our bowlers."

**Australia** - Marcus Harris, Aaron Finch, Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Travis Head, Mitch Marsh, Tim



MELBOURNE: India's chairman of the selectors MSK Prasad (C) speaks to the media after a training session in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India. — AFP

Paine (capt), Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Starc.

**India** - Mayank Agarwal, Hanuma Vihari, Cheteshwar

Pujara, Virat Kohli (capt), Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah. — AFP

## Woods roars back, 'Moliwood' star in dramatic 2018

PARIS: Tiger Woods snatched plenty of golfing headlines in 2018 with his remarkable comeback after years in the wilderness and will now be eyeing a 15th major title, while British Open champion Francesco Molinari inspired Europe to a Ryder Cup thrashing of the United States in Paris.

It was an eventful year for golf fans, with Woods' return adding a sub-plot to the bigger tournaments, even as many of the younger generation confirmed their respective rises to the top of the game.

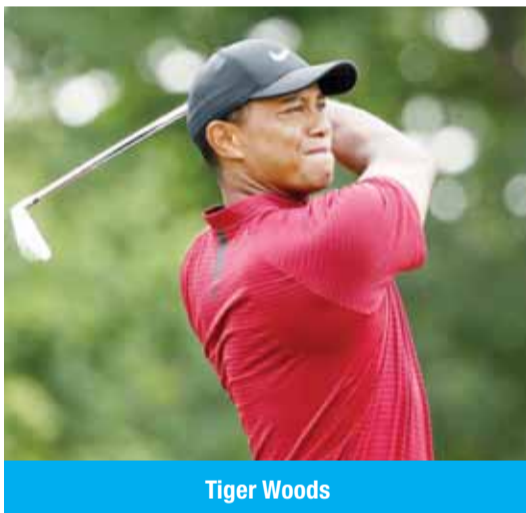
Justin Thomas' spectacular eagle on the final hole at the WGC Mexico Championship kicked off the season in style, and although the 25-year-old lost out to veteran Phil Mickelson that day in a play-off, three major titles went to Americans under the age of 30.

Woods, who claimed his first tournament victory since 2013 in front of raucous galleries at the Tour Championship, ended his year with four straight Ryder Cup losses and a defeat by Mickelson in their overly-hyped and ultimately low-quality \$9 million match in Las Vegas.

But nothing can take away from the impact the 14-time major winner made on his return after over four years spent battling injuries.

The 42-year-old led on the back nine in the fourth round of the British Open at Carnoustie, and also produced a thrilling charge at the USPGA Championship before ending his title drought in the final individual event of the campaign.

As ever, the former world number one will be bullish about his chances of edging closer to Jack Nicklaus' all-time record of 18 major titles in 2019,



Tiger Woods

but Woods has still not lifted one of golf's biggest prizes for a decade.

A rise from outside the top 1,000 in the rankings to world number 13 in less than a year was stunning, though, and Woods will have a chance to put a disastrous Ryder Cup performance behind him when he likely doubles up as captain and player at next year's Presidents Cup in Melbourne.

"I want to compete. I want to play," he said of the December 2019 matches against Ernie Els' International side earlier this month.

### 'MOLIWOOD' STAR ON CENTRE STAGE

The pre-Ryder Cup narrative centred around Woods and the Americans' bid to end a 25-year wait for victory on European soil, but the match-play showdown ended in a familiar one-sided home win as Molinari teamed up with Tommy Fleetwood to devastating effect in September.

'Moliwood' reeled off four straight victories as a partnership, with Thomas Bjorn's hosts ruthlessly grinding down the US to triumph 17.5-10.5 after losing the opening session, before Molinari capped a golden year by becoming the first

European in history to claim a perfect five points.

The Italian won the prestigious BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth, clinched his first PGA Tour title in the States and became the first player from his country to seal a major title before his heroics in France.

"If someone told me I would go on to win Wentworth, win on the PGA Tour, win the Open, five points at the Ryder Cup, I probably would have laughed," he said after adding the European Tour's Race to Dubai crown in November.

Brooks Koepka bristled late in the season at a perceived lack of media attention in his game after a magnificent 2018 which saw the 28-year-old brush off the disappointment of missing the Masters through injury by winning two majors.

He and the likes of Thomas, Rickie Fowler and Masters champion Patrick Reed will be young Americans to watch in the new year, with exciting Spaniard Jon Rahm seeking to continue his incredible rise.

The men's season will have a more truncated feel to it with all four majors being played between April and July after drastic changes to the schedule, with the USPGA to be played before the US Open, making the British Open at Royal Portrush the final major of the year.

### LINDBERG, PARK FIGHT DUEL

It was a strong year for women's golf, with England's Georgia Hall and Swede Pernilla Lindberg sealing thrilling major breakthroughs at the British Open and ANA Inspiration respectively. Hall also teamed up with compatriot Charley Hull to impress in a mixed-gender European Tour event, while Lexi Thompson showcased her skills on the PGA Tour in the QBE Shootout alongside Tony Finau earlier this month. The standout moment of 2018 came back at the start of April, though, when Lindberg denied Park Inbee an eighth major crown in a gruelling eight-hole, sudden-death play-off that started in Sunday-night gloom and ended on the Monday morning. — AFP

## Identical twins strike gold, 163 miles a day

PARIS: One woman ran almost 163 miles in 24 hours, there was a marathon chess duel, while identical twins landed a major international title each in the same sport. Here, AFP Sport also looks at a 16-time world champion and a Hungarian skimmer in five stories you may have missed in 2018:

### ONE DAY... 163 MILES

American Camille Herron smashed the women's world 24-hour and 100-mile records in December in an incredible display of endurance. The 36-year-old ran 162.9 miles (262km) on a track in Phoenix, beating the best-placed male finisher by over five miles.

In an Instagram post, the ultramarathon runner said she used three different pairs of shoes during her record-breaking effort, going "into the pain cave" for the final five to six hours. But Herron was able to come "back from the dead", apparently thanks to some tacos and beer. The 37-year-old later told the BBC that she hopes to see ultramarathon running added to the Olympics in the near future.

### THE GOLDEN IDENTICAL TWINS

Russian Dina Averina was utterly dominant at the 2018 rhythmic gymnastics world championships in Sofia, winning five gold medals of a possible six, including the all-around title for the second straight year.

Her identical twin sister Arina had to settle for bronze, just three months after pipping Dina to the European championships gold medal in Spain. The 20-year-old sisters have now won a remarkable 18 major championship gold medals between them in only two years.

The twins can be told apart by a scar on Arina's forehead, which she sustained after an accident with a club. Dina has done her best to help the audience, though, sporting a new hairstyle in recent competitions.

### RAPID(ISH) CHESS

Magnus Carlsen, world chess champion since 2013, retained his title again



Camille Herron

in November by beating American challenger Fabiano Caruana, but that was only half the story in a marathon battle between the world's two highest-ranked grandmasters. A seven-hour, 115-move draw in the opening game set the tone in London, as the match ended with 12 consecutive draws for the first time in world chess championship history. That meant rapid-chess tiebreakers, and Norwegian star Carlsen reeled off three straight wins to finally see off Caruana.

### A 16-TIME WORLD CHAMPION RETIRES

Darts great Phil Taylor bowed out back on January 1, retiring from the sport at the age of 57. The Englishman finished his career with a staggering 16 world championship titles, with his most recent coming in 2013.

But 'The Power' came agonisingly close to finishing on 17, after a thrilling run to the final in his last event at Alexandra Palace. He came up against an inspired opponent in tournament debutant Rob 'Voltage' Cross, though, as the former electrician powered to a 7-2 victory to claim the £400,000 (\$508,000) prize. — AFP

## Enable, Winx make history as Justify captures Triple Crown

PARIS: Enable and Australia's leading equine lady Winx cemented their places in racing's record books in a 2018 season that produced a landmark Melbourne Cup success for Godolphin and a Triple Crown for Justify.

Over jumps the Grand National was captured by Tiger Roll, the smallest horse in the field displaying the heart of a lion to prevail in a pulsating finish to the world's most famous steeplechase.

Buveur d'Air defended his Champion Hurdle crown with stable-mate Altior taking the Champion Chase but their trainer Nicky Henderson was denied a historic Cheltenham Festival treble when his Might Bite was foiled by Native River in the Gold Cup.

But it was two representatives of the fairer sex that stole the season's headlines. The John Gosden-trained four-year-old filly Enable overcame injury to defend her Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe crown at a renovated Longchamp in Paris in the autumn.

Under the masterful guidance of 48-year-old Italian jockey Frankie Dettori, she then became the first Arc winner to go on to capture the Breeders Cup Turf at Churchill Downs.

"She conquered America!" exclaimed Dettori. Owner Prince Khalid Abdullah has confirmed his superstar stays in training in 2019 with the objective of becoming the first-ever triple Arc winner.

Bookmakers make her a 4-1 shot to succeed where only 2013/2014 winner Treve has tried, the French filly only missing out in 2015 to Golden Horn, trained by Gosden and ridden by Dettori. Australia's wonder mare Winx added a record fourth Cox Plate in October to extend her remarkable run to 29 wins in a row.

"I can't believe it," said long-time jockey Hugh Bowman afterwards. "The electricity that came through my body when I turned into the home straight. "Everyone watching gets so much joy and pleasure out of this wonderful horse," he added.

"The fact that she's been able to do it so many times consecutively just speaks volumes for the management of her."

And, like Enable, the omens are encouraging for racelovers that she will be back racing as an eight-year-old in March. One race Winx will never contest due to stamina limitations is the Melbourne Cup, which this year went to Cross Counter, ending two decades of frustration for Sheikh Mohammed's Godolphin stable, which also enjoyed Epsom Derby success with Masar.

Legendary Irish trainer Aidan O'Brien suffered heartache when his Melbourne Cup contender Cliffs of Moher had to be put down. After last year's heroics in setting a new record for Group/Grade One wins, O'Brien had a quieter 2018 season.

One of the big races he missed out on was the Irish Derby, but he was all smiles despite defeat as he congratulated winner Latrobe's trainer and jockey-his sons Joseph, 25, and Donnacha, 19.

In May, O'Brien had high hopes that Mendelssohn would become Europe's first-ever winner of the Kentucky Derby. But his runner wilted in the 'Run for the Roses', trailing in last behind Justify, with Bob Baffert's colt going on to sweep the Preakness and Belmont Stakes to become the 13th horse to capture the coveted Triple Crown.

Sadly injury intervened to scupper his bid to end his career on a high in the Breeders Cup Classic. A lucrative stud career now beckons. Another major racing figure-human not equine-heading off into well deserved retirement is Luca Cumani.

The Newmarket-based Italian trainer, 69, is bowing out after a career spanning more than 40 years with his haul of major race victories featuring a brace of Epsom Derby triumphs for Kahyasi (1988) and High Rise (1998).

Traillblazing Irish jockey Katie Walsh, who came closest to becoming the first woman to ride a Grand National winner when third on Seabass in 2012, has also decided to withdraw from racing's frontline.

One man not considering imminent retirement is Mark Johnston, the 58-year-old Scotsman who in August sent out his 4,193rd winner to become Britain's record-breaking trainer. That's 600 more than John Dunlop, the English training great who saddled 10 British classic winners and who died aged 78 in July. — AFP

Sports

# Guardiola in new territory with English title fight

## Premier League table heading into busy holiday period

**MANCHESTER:** Pep Guardiola ends the calendar year with his Manchester City side embroiled in what has suddenly become a thrilling title race for the first time in his Premier League managerial career. The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss, seven times a league champion in the three countries in which he has managed, takes City to Leicester on Boxing Day trailing leaders Liverpool by four points.

There is also now unexpected pressure beneath him, with Tottenham's superb 6-2 win at Everton having hauled Mauricio Pochettino's talented side to within two points of City. It is a far cry from last season when, after 18 games, City held a commanding 11-point lead over second-placed Manchester United and were already, in the eyes of most pundits, as good as champions. Twelve months earlier, in Guardiola's first season in English football, City were seven points behind leaders Chelsea at the corresponding stage but in the middle of a run of poor form which would eventually see them end the season in third place, 15 points behind Antonio Conte's title-winners.

City's shock 3-2 home defeat by struggling Crystal Palace on Saturday has certainly put a new perspective on the league table heading into the busy holiday period which culminates with current leaders Liverpool visiting the Etihad to face City a week on Thursday (January 3).

For the first time since his days at Barcelona, Guardiola currently finds himself caught up in a potentially tense and exciting title race, with all that entails. Former Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson, whose Palace side inflicted such an unexpected blow on City at the weekend, believes, however, that Guardiola will have all the necessary perspective to cope with a rare setback.

### 'LONG WAY TO GO YET'

"Pep Guardiola is a very intelligent guy, it means that they haven't caught up those four points but he knows there are 20 matches left to play and one of those is going to be against Liverpool," said Hodgson.

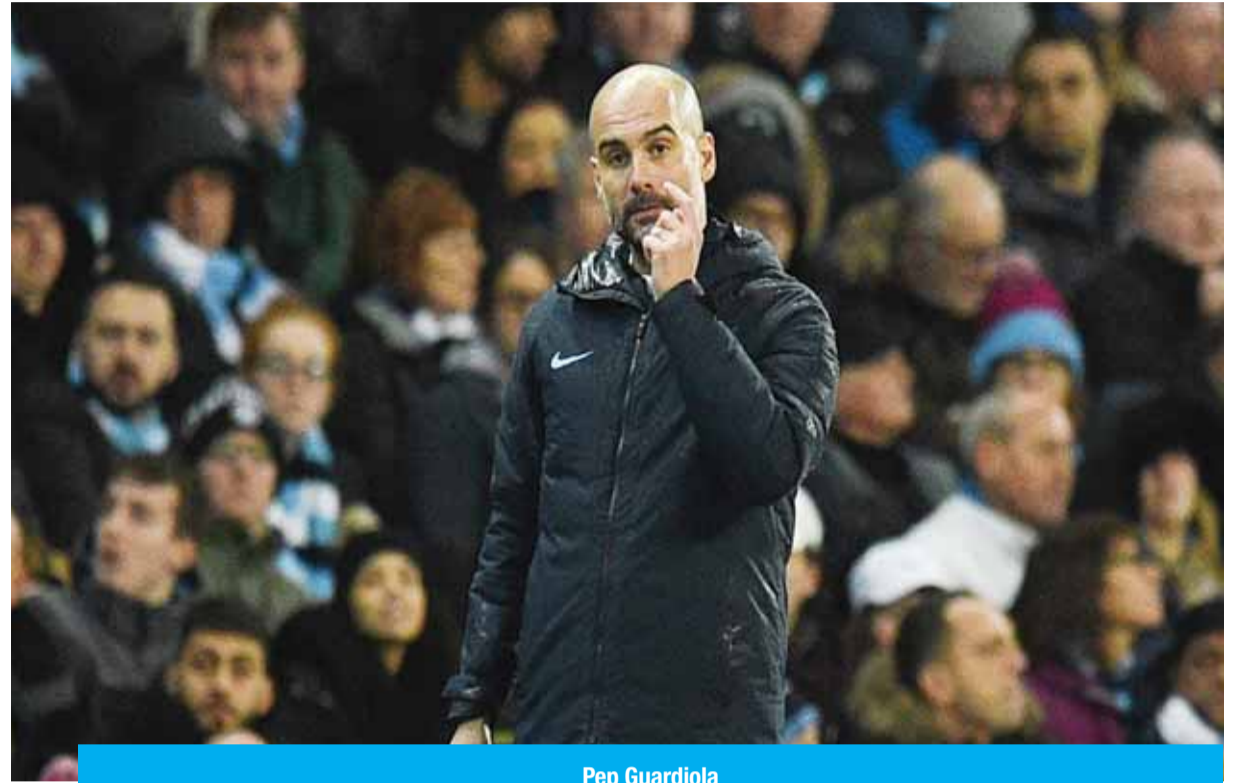
"I don't think he will be concerned about that and he'll know that no matter how Liverpool play they will come up against a game like this. They will go somewhere and someone will beat them against the odds. There is a long way to go yet."

Certainly, Guardiola's three seasons in Germany offered him little in terms of preparation for a close, down to the wire title race, with Bayern winning the league by at least double digits in points in each of his three seasons-including 2014 when Munich beat now Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp's Borussia Dortmund into second place by a staggering 19 points.

But his four seasons in charge of Barcelona were more competitive, given Barca's intense rivalry with Real Madrid, although in his first and last season he won and lost the league, respectively, by nine points.

In 2009/10, however, Barca pipped Real by just three points-Guardiola's closest title race to date-and retained their crown 12 months later, this time by only four. Now Guardiola faces several selection dilemmas over a holiday period which also includes a trip to a suddenly resurgent Southampton before the showdown with Klopp. Holding midfielder Fernandinho missed the Palace defeat with a slight injury concern and proved a major miss, while Guardiola opted to start Kevin De Bruyne and Sergio Agüero-two key attacking players who are returning from injury lay-offs-on the bench.

The pair are likely starters at Leicester, although their manager will clearly also be looking ahead to the



Pep Guardiola

Liverpool game in which victory has now taken on added importance for his side.

Perhaps more alarming for Guardiola was the performance of England right-back Kyle Walker against

Palace, with the City defender badly at fault for two of the opposition's three goals. The City manager may opt to play John Stones in that position to take Walker out of the firing line.— AFP

## Benitez return a memory of Christmas past for Liverpool

**LIVERPOOL:** Rafa Benitez's return to Anfield on Boxing Day is likely to stir memories of an unsuccessful Liverpool challenge for the Premier League title, but Jurgen Klopp is trying to focus on the present.

Klopp's Liverpool hold a four-point lead at the top of the table as Benitez, the club's manager between 2004 and 2010, visits with his relegation-threatened Newcastle United side today. There is a strong sense this could be the season that the English league trophy comes to Anfield for the first time since 1990, although recent history is offering mixed messages as to whether that will happen.

First, the good news for Liverpool: In eight of the past 10 seasons, the leaders on Christmas Day have gone on to win the Premier League. Now, the bad news: On the two occasions it did not happen, the Christmas leaders were Liverpool. In 2008/09, Manchester United won the title; in 2013/14 it was Manchester City.

The late collapse to miss out in 2014 was perhaps the more immediately painful experience for Liverpool fans, but the failure of 2009, under Benitez, maybe offers more reason for regret. Both cases offer lessons that the Merseyside club, however, appear to have absorbed.

Brendan Rodgers' team of 2013/14 were not as balanced as the side current Reds boss Klopp has now. While Rodgers had an outstanding attacking partnership, with Luis Suarez supported by a full-fit Daniel Sturridge, his men were defensively suspect.

The then Liverpool manager had four senior centre-backs-Martin Skrtel, Daniel Agger, Mamadou Sakho and Kolo Toure-yet struggled to settle on a first-choice pairing. A team who scored 101 league goals conceded a whopping 50; far too many for any side with serious championship ambitions.

The class of 2018/19 should avoid that trap: they have the Premier League's best defensive record this season, with only seven goals conceded. Virgil van Dijk's influence has been key; the centre-back, signed for £75 million (\$94.5 million) from Southampton last January, has provided the defensive leadership that Liverpool missed badly following Jamie Carragher's retirement in 2013.

"He's very influential," Klopp said of Van Dijk. "When I met him first, I thought I knew about his personality, I was pretty sure he would be like he is. "After we lost 4-1 at Tottenham in October of last season, we started defending better and conceding less but then Virgil came in on top."

Liverpool's solid defending means they do not have to score as freely to win games, although they are coming up with the goals when needed. Mohamed Salah, after a quiet start to the season, is thriving after being switched from a wide position to a central attacking role. His total of 11 Premier League goals is only one fewer than Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, the competition's leading scorer.

Yet despite that quality, avoiding the fate of the 2008/09 Liverpool team, managed by Benitez, might still need a little luck to go the way of Klopp's men.— AFP

## Marotta rings the changes as crisis-hit Inter tackle Napoli

**MILAN:** Inter Milan's new CEO Giuseppe Marotta has begun to ring the changes at crisis-hit Inter Milan with the axe falling on Belgian bad boy Radja Nainggolan who has been suspended for disciplinary reasons by the club despite today's key Serie A game against Napoli looming.

Marotta arrived at the Chinese-owned Italian club from Juventus this month after an eight-year spell during which the Turin giants won seven Serie A titles and four Italian Cups.

And the 61-year-old Marotta wants to turn the clock back for Inter whose best decade, culminating with the treble of Champions League, Serie A and Italian Cup crowns under Jose Mourinho in 2010, has been followed by the worst.

Nainggolan was suspended after again turning up late to training on Sunday following the team's demoralising 1-1 draw against bottom club Chievo.

The heavily-tattooed 30-year-old was also dropped by previous club Roma in January after posting an Instagram video of himself drinking, smoking and swearing at a New Year's party.

The Belgian joined Inter last summer to link up

## Relish rather than fear Old Trafford, Solskjaer tells Manchester United

**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United return to Old Trafford for the first time under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's management against Huddersfield on Boxing Day with a new-found swagger after scoring five goals in the Premier League for the first time in five years.

The Norwegian's caretaker spell in charge until the end of the season got off to a dream start as United threw off the shackles, that led to turgid football and deteriorating results under Jose Mourinho, to thrash Cardiff 5-1.

United still face a huge challenge to make up an eight-point gap just to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish. But for now the luxury of just being able to enjoy watching a side play with freedom and the attacking principles that have underpinned the club's history is enough to excite United fans again.

"I think the boys are looking forward to playing at Old Trafford and that's important. We should be looking forward to that, they are the best fans in the world," said Solskjaer when questioned whether some of the current United squad have been inhibited by the pressures of playing at home in the famous red shirt.

Solskjaer is certainly a favourite of the United faithful having scored 126 goals in 11 seasons as a player, including the one that famously won the Champions League final in 1999. He was serenaded throughout by the visiting fans in the Welsh capital at the weekend as United hit five for the first time since Alex Ferguson's final game in charge.

"I just hope in the next five months I do a good enough job for them to keep singing my name when someone else comes in," added Solskjaer, whose positivity has immediately lifted a squad downtrodden by Mourinho's mood swings.

"Just to be positive. Take risks," said Jesse Lingard, who scored twice in Cardiff, at what Solskjaer's mes-

sage has been. "If you lose the ball, win it back, and play the United way - attacking football, entertaining football. For us as players, we enjoyed it today."

Rarely has enjoyment ever been top of Mourinho's list of priorities, even in his most successful spells with Porto, Chelsea and Inter Milan.

However, the levels of commitment he demanded from those sides was not evident in the current United squad. For the first time this season, United outran their opponents against Cardiff.

"A Man United team should never ever be out-worked," said Solskjaer to highlight the minimum he expects. "Doesn't matter which team you play. You should run more than them and then your skills will give you the chance to win the game."

A good work ethic should be the minimum required of a Manchester United team, but Mourinho's tactics also didn't help his side's running statistics. Too often the Red Devils were set up to sit deep and try and counter-attack.

Solskjaer instead seems intent on implementing the United way he learned at the heel of Ferguson for so long. "I said the same to these lads as I do back in Molde: work harder than them, enjoy yourselves, pass it forward, run forward, if you lose it, I don't mind as long as you work to win it back and they did."

"When you've got players like this with the quality you are always going to create chances." The best Christmas present for many United fans may be the gift of being able to look forward to games with a sense of anticipation again.— AFP



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

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"When you've got players like this with the quality you are always going to create chances." The best Christmas present for many United fans may be the gift of being able to look forward to games with a sense of anticipation again.— AFP

Live		
Matches on TV		
(Local Timings)		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Fulham FC v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC		15:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Leicester City v Manchester City		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
Liverpool v Newcastle United FC		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Manchester United v Huddersfield Town		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Tottenham Hotspur v Bournemouth FC		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5		
Crystal Palace FC v Cardiff City		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6		
Burnley FC v Everton FC		18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 7		
Brighton & Hove Albion v Arsenal FC		20:15
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Watford v Chelsea FC		22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
Frosinone Calcio v AC Milan		14:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Atalanta v Juventus FC		17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Bologna FC v SS Lazio		17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 8		
ACF Fiorentina v Parma Calcio 1913		17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 9		
UC Sampdoria v AC Chievo Verona		17:00
Eleven Sports 3 HD		
Cagliari Calcio v Genoa CFC		17:00
Eleven Sports 2 HD		
AS Roma v SS Sassuolo Calcio		20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Torino FC v Empoli		20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6		
spal v Udinese Calcio		20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5		
Internazionale Milano v SSC Napoli		22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4		

**25** Mikaela Shiffrin dominant, Osaka breakthrough: Women's sport in 2018



**26** India axe openers, Australia recall Marsh for third Test



**27** Guardiola in new territory with English title fight



OAKLAND: Doug Martin #28 of the Oakland Raiders is tackled by Justin Simmons #31 and Josey Jewell #47 of the Denver Broncos during their NFL game at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum on Monday, in Oakland, California. — AFP

## Raiders rip Broncos in NFL farewell

### 174th Raiders win in their 303rd game at Oakland Coliseum

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Dwayne Harris returned a punt 99 yards for a touchdown and the Oakland Raiders beat the Denver Broncos 27-14 on Monday in what might have been the hosts' final NFL game in Oakland.

Doug Martin and Jalen Richard added touchdown runs for Oakland in a game between teams already eliminated from playoff contention. The Raiders improved to 4-11 but will miss the playoffs for the 15th time in 16 years while Denver fell to 6-9, ensuring back-to-back losing seasons for the first time since 1971-72.

It was the 174th Raiders win in their 303rd game at the Oakland Coliseum, which opened in 1966 and remains the only NFL stadium shared with a Major League Baseball club, the Oakland A's.

A federal anti-trust lawsuit filed by the city of Oakland to recover damages related to the Raiders' planned move to Las Vegas in 2020 prompted the team to retract a one-year lease offer for the 2019 campaign earlier this month, leaving the team's home venue uncertain for next season.

Quarterback Derek Carr and coach Jon Gruden were among the Raiders who after the game went to the "Black Hole"—an area where devoted Raiders fans dress in monster-themed Silver and Black outfits—and exchanged high-five hand slaps with supporters for what might be the last time.

"Raider Nation is tough, gritty and loyal. We've had a lot of good times in that stadium," Carr said. "Raider

Nation is the most loyal fan base in the world. We don't know if we're going to be here next year so I wanted to say thank you to all of them, thanks for having our back."

Gruden added: "Our fans fueled us. To share the victory with them is always special." Options mentioned for Raiders 2019 home games include sharing the NFL San Francisco 49ers stadium in nearby Santa Clara, playing at the home of baseball's San Francisco Giants, striking a deal with Oakland or playing home games in London, England.

The NFL has staged games in London since 2007, playing three contests at Wembley Stadium this year. Raiders owner Mark Davis says he hopes to decide in a

few weeks on the team's home for next season.

Harris opened the scoring 4:50 into the game, matching the second-longest runback in NFL history. Martin added a 24-yard touchdown run and Dan Carlson added a 43-yard field goal for a 17-0 Oakland half-time edge, their biggest lead this season.

Denver answered on Case Keenum's 7-yard touchdown pass to DaeSean Hamilton but the Raiders responded on Richard's 3-yard touchdown run. Keenum flipped a 19-yard touchdown pass to Courtland Sutton with 7:31 remaining, but Carlson added a 45-yard field goal to create the final margin of the Raiders' first Monday night win since 2002 after seven losses in a row. — AFP

## Resurgent Djokovic leads the way as old guard stays on top

**PARIS:** Next Gen poster boy Alexander Zverev's season-ending Tour Finals triumph served up a glimpse into the future of men's tennis although 2018 remained a year dominated once more by the usual, yet aging, suspects as a revitalised Novak Djokovic returned to the peak of his powers.

The Serb tumbled out of the top 10 for the first time in a decade and was ranked as lowly as 22nd in June, slumping to a string of uncharacteristic defeats—including an embarrassing loss to Italian journeyman Marco Cecchinato at the French Open—following elbow surgery to fix a lingering injury.

Over the next few months though Djokovic surged back to his all-conquering best, sweeping to Wimbledon and US Open crowns and completing a historic Masters sweep with an elusive victory in Cincinnati.

"There was always part of me that believed I could make it back and I never thought it was impossible," Djokovic said of his climb back to world number one.

"It turned out to be a perfect five months of the year, with two Grand Slam titles." Roger Federer continued to defy his advancing years as he defended his

Australian Open title and then eclipsed Andre Agassi as the oldest top-ranked player in ATP history, at the age of 36.

Rafael Nadal dominated in typical fashion on clay, swaggering to an 11th Roland Garros title, but the injury-plagued Spaniard limped out of two other Grand Slams before further fitness problems curtailed his season.

He played in just nine tournaments, his fewest since 2002, yet still won five titles and compiled a commanding 45-4 record.

Serena Williams returned to the court after her 14-month maternity leave, battling back from life-saving surgery, but twice fell agonisingly short of landing a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam crown.

She required a series of operations to free her from the risk of blood clots in the wake of giving birth to her daughter in September 2017, a scare that prompted her to sport an eye-catching black catsuit at Roland Garros.

She finished runner-up at both Wimbledon and the US Open, but it was the nature of her defeat in New York that will stick in the memory after a meltdown in the final against Japan's Naomi Osaka.

Williams erupted after a code violation for

receiving coaching from her box, and subsequently called chair umpire Carlos Ramos a "liar and a thief" after she incurred a one-point penalty for racket abuse.

The American later described the decision to then hit her with a game penalty following her tear-filled tirade as "sexist".

An astonishingly poised Osaka held her nerve to seal victory and become the first Japanese woman to win a Grand Slam singles title, but the 20-year-old was reduced to tears when a pro-Williams crowd booed the trophy ceremony announcers.

Fortunately, Williams gracefully intervened and called for them to show the young champion respect. In a season of firsts, Simona Halep eased the pain of three previous major finals defeats, to follow in the footsteps of her manager Virginia Ruzici, 40 years on, by claiming the French Open championship.

Caroline Wozniacki's patience yielded her maiden Grand Slam triumph too, the Dane taking the Australian Open title to briefly return to world number one.

However, she later revealed her battle with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease which causes swelling of the joints and fatigue, following her diagnosis ahead of the US Open. Angelique Kerber completed the third leg of a career Grand Slam by battering past Williams to become the first German woman to win Wimbledon since Steffi Graf in 1996. The season also marked the end of the



Novak Djokovic

118-year Davis Cup in its traditional format, with a revamped version of the competition next November bringing together 18 nations in one place for a week.

Kevin Anderson's 26-24 defeat of John Isner in the fifth set of this year's Wimbledon semi-finals prompted another rethink, leading the All England Club to introduce a tie-

break to settle matches that reach 12—all in the decider.

"It is bucking tradition but I think a lot of people believe that is not a bad thing," Isner said in the wake of the rule change. Similarly, a 10-point tie-break will be used in the final set at the Australian Open, where Federer will eye his 100th career title. — AFP