



**5** Kuwait 49th among 109 states in attracting investments: Dhaman



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# Egypt forces kill 40 militants in crackdown after bus attack

Three Vietnamese tourists, Egyptian guide killed • Amir condemns deadly bombing

**GIZA, Egypt:** Egyptian police killed 40 suspects in a crackdown yesterday after a roadside bomb hit a tour bus claiming the lives of three Vietnamese holidaymakers and an Egyptian guide. Thirty alleged "terrorists" were killed in separate raids in Giza governorate, home to Egypt's famed pyramids and the scene of Friday's deadly bombing, while 10 others were killed in the restive North Sinai, the interior ministry said without directly linking them to the attack.

It said authorities had received information the suspects were preparing a spate of attacks "targeting state institutions, particularly economic ones, as well as tourism, armed forces, police and Christian places of worship". The ministry did not give any details about the suspects' identity or whether there had been any casualties or injuries among the security forces. The statement said the three raids took place simultaneously. The ministry published photos of bloodied bodies with their faces concealed and assault rifles and shotguns lying on the floor beside them.

A security source said the raids took place early yesterday morning, hours after Friday evening's roadside bombing which officials said hit a tour bus in the Al-Haram district near the Giza pyramids, killing the three Vietnamese holidaymakers and their Egyptian guide. Eleven other tourists from Vietnam and an Egyptian bus driver were wounded, the public prosecutor's office said. Saigon Tourist, the company that organized the trip, said the tourists were "on their way

to a restaurant for dinner" when the bomb exploded.

Company officials were heading to Cairo yesterday and plans were made to allow some relatives of the victims to also fly to Egypt. One of them was Nguyen Nguyen Vu whose sister Nguyen Thuy Quynh, 56, died in the bombing, while her husband, Le Duc Minh, was wounded. The couple, both aged 56, were in the seafood business, Quynh's younger brother said. "We were all very shocked... My sister and her husband travel quite a lot and they are quite experienced in travelling abroad," Vu told AFP. He said he was applying for a visa for Egypt and hoped to travel yesterday. "Our wish is that we could bring my sister back home."

Vietnam's foreign ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang thanked Egyptians who were caring for the survivors. "Vietnam is very angry and strongly condemns the terrorist act that killed and injured many innocent Vietnamese and has asked Egypt to soon open an investigation, chase and give harsh punishment to those who carried out these terrorist act," she said in a statement.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Egyptian President Abdelattah Al-Sisi to express strong denunciation of the bomb attack on the tourist bus. The attack is morally despicable and runs counter to all religious and humanitarian values as it targeted innocent civilians and left scores of casualties, he stressed.

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**SAQQARA, Egypt:** A tourist bus which was attacked is towed away from the scene in Giza province south of the capital Cairo on Friday. — AFP

## Municipality open to BBQing in parks with conditions

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Municipality expressed readiness to handle waste left over after barbecuing in public parks if the previous instructions it had received on banning barbecuing in parks are rescinded. The municipality's assistant director for Ahmadi and Jabra affairs Faisal Al-Jumaa said that the municipality initially agreed to allowing barbecuing in parks on the condition that the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, the body

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## Amir congratulates officers for flying Kuwaiti flag high



**DOHA:** Officers in the Kuwaiti army Lt Col Fahd Al-Yaqoub, Lt Col Salem Al-Mell and Maj Nasser Fawaz Al-Sabah hold a 63-sq-meter Kuwaiti flag at an altitude of 13,000 feet on Friday during their record-breaking jump. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent cables of congratulations yesterday to officers in the Kuwaiti army Lt Col Fahd Al-Yaqoub, Lt Col Salem Al-Mell and Maj Nasser Fawaz Al-Sabah. The three free-fall skydivers managed to hold a 63-sq-meter Kuwaiti flag at an altitude of 13,000 feet on Friday. The record-breaking jump took place at Skydive Qatar, a world-class skydiving facility that integrates advanced training programs with the enjoyment of skydiving.

Representatives from the Guinness World Records will honor the trio during a special ceremony in Kuwait

today, said Major Al-Sabah. On what drove the team to pursue such an endeavor, he said it was to prove that Kuwaiti youth are always up to the challenge. He pointed out that it was a personal project that was two years in the making, while the special material for the flag was manufactured in Spain. He dedicated the achievement to the Kuwaiti leadership and people.

In his cables, HH the Amir congratulated the officers on their achievement to register the new record. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the

officers. First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Friday also congratulated the three army officers.

The ministry of defense said in a statement that Sheikh Nasser expressed pride in the officers' global accomplishment and raising the national flag high, urging them to persevere for serving Kuwait. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also sent cables of congratulations yesterday to the army officers. He praised their great accomplishment that depicted great capacities among the Kuwaiti youth and their achievements at various levels. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Man jumps to death

**KUWAIT:** An Arab expat died instantly in the early hours of yesterday after jumping from the fifth floor of a Farwaniya building. Security sources said the fire department was summoned to the scene before midnight on Friday, as the man was threatening to commit suicide. Rescue men failed to talk him out of ending his life and he finally jumped, plunging to his death. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

#### Ban on carcinogenic containers

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan issued a ban on the importation of thermosetting containers containing asbestos. The ban, to be implemented early next year, aims to protect public health and consumer safety, the ministry said in a press release yesterday. The decision includes banning the import of all materials containing asbestos, including containers that come in contact with food and for keeping beverages cold and hot. The statement noted the ministry will start an inspection campaign to take random samples from local markets to ensure that they are free of any substances harmful to consumer health. — KUNA

#### No papers on Saturdays

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti daily newspapers Al-Qabas, Al-Rai, Al-Jarida and Al-Anbaa will stop publishing every Saturday from Jan 5. Al-Qabas said in its yesterday's edition that it agreed with the other newspapers to stop printing every Saturday, thus their staff will be off duty on Fridays. Al-Jarida, Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa said their websites and social media services will be updated on Saturdays. — KUNA

## We're not in crisis: New Saudi foreign minister takes reins

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's new foreign minister struck a note of defiance Friday in the face of international outrage over critic Jamal Khashoggi's murder, denying the kingdom was in crisis and that his predecessor had been demoted. Ibrahim Al-Assaf, a former veteran finance minister who was briefly detained last year in what Riyadh said was an anti-corruption sweep, replaced Adel Al-Jubeir as foreign minister in a major government shake-up on Thursday ordered by King Salman.

The surprise reshuffle was seen partly as an attempt to elevate the kingdom's marginalized old guard, adding a veneer of checks and balances to the policy decisions of 33-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who



**RIYADH:** Ibrahim Al-Assaf, the new Saudi foreign minister, speaks to AFP at his residence in the Saudi capital on Friday. — AFP

faces intense global scrutiny over the Oct 2 murder of journalist Khashoggi. But speaking to AFP in his first interview since his appointment, Assaf insisted the restructuring was motivated not by the Khashoggi affair, but the need to

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## US arrests Jewish sect members for kidnapping kids

**NEW YORK:** Four members of an extremist Jewish sect based in Guatemala have been arrested in New York on charges of kidnapping two children, federal prosecutors have said. According to a statement issued Friday by the US Attorney's Office from the Southern District of New York, the four men are members of Lev Ahor, which practices a form of ultra-Orthodox Judaism with teachings that include veiling women from head to toe in black tunics.

One of the men, Aron Rosner, 45, who lives in Brooklyn, was arrested on Dec 23. The other three - Nachman Helbrans, 36, alleged to be the leader of the sect, and Mayer Rosner and Jacob Rosner, aged 42 and

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## WhatsApp Safety Tips

Your privacy, security, and safety is important to WhatsApp. It's why we've also developed some additional features that can help you stay safe on WhatsApp.



### Control Your Privacy Settings

Set your profile photo, last seen, and about, to be seen by everyone, contacts only, or no one.



### Block Unwanted Users

Stop someone from contacting you directly from a chat.



### Leave a Group

Exit a group at any time.



### Delete and Report Spam

Report spam from inside the app.



### Turn Off Read Receipts

Choose if someone can see if you've read their message



### Enable Two-Step Verification

Create a six-digit pin to enable extra security.



For step by step instructions, please visit the FAQ section on [whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com)

Local

# Two children dead, nine injured in Wafra farms road crash

## Family sedan collides with water tanker; investigations underway

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Two children were killed and nine others were injured in a collision along Wafra farms road, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's public relations and media department said in a statement. Firefighters responded to a report Thursday night about a collision between a water tanker and sedan carrying a family. Sources said five children were immediately rushed to hospital with serious injuries, where two of them died, while the others are undergoing medical treatment. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the accident.

### Smuggling foiled

Customs inspectors at Kuwait International Airport discovered large amounts of drugs smuggled in a food supplement shipment arriving as a cargo from a European country. Security sources said the recipient did not show up to collect the shipment, so the drugs were confiscated pending further investigations.




**KUWAIT:** Wrecked family sedan and water tanker pictured after the accident.



**Drugs found inside supplement containers imported to Kuwait.**

local spotlight

## Demographic imbalance



By Muna Al-Fuzai  
Muna@kuwaittimes.net

The problem of demographic imbalance has become the talk of the hour with every change in the ministerial or parliamentary formation in Kuwait. Until now there are only a lot of media statements, but we have not seen an actual plan on how to resolve this issue.

It is unfortunate that when someone talks about the imbalance in demography, the quickest solution that makes the headlines is to reduce the number of expatriates! I personally feel that the imbalance in the population is not caused by expatriates, but by granting Kuwaiti nationality to ineligible people. Isn't this a security threat, and what are the criteria for eligibility?

I am certainly not against naturalization of non-Kuwaitis, but only for those who have provided great services to the country, especially Arab expats like teachers, for example, and others who came to Kuwait in the early part of the last century and made a real imprint on the emergence of the modern state. But when citizenship - which is a sovereign right - becomes a political means of satisfaction or punishment, this creates anger amongst some Kuwaitis.

Abdullah Al-Roumi is a member of the National Assembly from the first district. He has strong opinions against the naturalization of undeserving persons and has expressed a lot of views against politicizing the subject of nationality. When statistics mention a decline in the proportion of Kuwaitis compared to expatriates, the solution does not necessarily mean the abolition of effective employment of expats.

We need comprehensive treatment based on two things - the naturalization issue and the subject of the residencies and fictitious companies that traffic in human beings. Because bringing in thousands of people for the purpose of making money is a clear violation punishable by law. I think the solutions must not only focus on the ratio of expats, because they did not come by themselves but through visas. The companies that bring in large number of workers without real work must be stopped and punished.

I think a real treatment requires the removal of marginal employment and ending phantom companies. The naturalization of bedoons must be part of the issue of demographic imbalance and the government should be clear to those who conceal their original citizenship and demand Kuwaiti nationality.

The fact is that the problem of the imbalance in the demographic structure is an old one, but it remained unresolved until it turned into a complicated and divisive topic. When current statistics indicate low numbers of Kuwaitis versus expats, we need to admit that this is a result of the absence of strategic plans in determining the type of employment that is needed and those whom we don't want.

Many Gulf countries are experiencing the same phenomenon in the composition of the population, and perhaps the proportion of their citizens is lower than it is in Kuwait, but with the presence of strategic plans, they have been able to avoid the negative effects of this imbalance. I believe that the solution is simple and linked to a clear vision, so we need a lot of work and fewer statements. This imbalance has clear effects on the state and needs a serious ending.

Happy New Year.

## 162 restaurants cited for 'not wearing uniform'

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition's (PAFN) assistant secretary for fines Bader Al-Aradah said 162 citations had been issued to restaurants and cafes for staff not wearing the place's official uniform, noting that a single uniform fine can

reach up to KD 500 unless the owner contests or reconciles within 60 days. Aradah added that uniform fines usually vary between KD 100 and 500. He noted that some serious violations had been detected, including not having health certificates.

### 4,000 registered

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) said that 4,000 citizens had registered in the 65th batch of citizens to be employed in state departments, adding that 300 of the applicants are still working on submitting all the needed documents.

### Storage regulations

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi

sales department employee manipulated the issue of tickets with the above value, noting that the case was referred to public prosecution, the employee's contract was terminated and the embezzled funds were retrieved. KAC also explained that a court order was passed on December 24, 2018 sentencing the suspect to prison and dismissal. —KAC

### Training plan for hospital staff

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital Director Dr Nadia Al-Jumaa revealed that a three-year training plan will be launched to train the entire hospital's medical staff, ie 3,000 to 5,000 people. Speaking on the sidelines of an awareness day on quality management held under the title of 'Quality is Shared Responsibility', Jumaa said that all types of work had to follow specific bases, policies and protocols. She added that since she became the hospital's deputy director before her promotion, she was assigned with the duty of the head of the quality department, whose team was carefully selected and trained in collaboration with the hospital management. She added that the three-year training plan had been set by all heads of departments with the ultimate goal of providing high quality medical services to all patients. —By Meshal Al-Enezi

## Five companies charged with human trafficking

**KUWAIT:** Well-informed sources told local daily Al-Jarida that security forces referred five companies to the public prosecution over human trafficking charges. The sources added that initial investigations showed that the companies had sold fake visas to around 2,000 workers and collected hundreds of thousands of dinars from them in return. The sources explained that 10 similar cases involving large numbers of laborers, some of whom already arrived in Kuwait while others were still to do so, had been referred to the prosecution in 2018. —Al-Jarida

### Embezzled KAC money returned

Responding to social media reports about discovering the embezzlement of KD 63,217,450 of its funds, Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) explained that the case goes back to 2013 when a non-Kuwaiti



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said inspection campaigns targeting street vendors and commercial stores in Hasawi will continue to track various violations including unlicensed ads, waste and violation of state property. Farwaniya cleaning department manager Saad Al-Khrainej said that the campaigns had so far resulted in removing 24 cubic meters of goods that were unlawfully displayed for sale on government property.

announced setting a charter to regulate storage on state-owned property, including storing machinery, equipment and labor dormitories on any construction site. In a letter he addressed to the finance ministry's assistant undersecretary for state property, Manfouhi expressed hope that the municipality will be allowed to issue temporary licenses for such sites. Meanwhile, municipality official Faisal Al-Jumaa stressed that the new organizational structure will include two locations to build two new cemeteries to serve new residential cities in the north and south of the country. Responding to a proposal by municipal council member Humoud Al-Enezi to build a cemetery in Sabah Al-Ahmed City, Jumaa noted that the two new cemeteries are included in the fourth (2040) organizational structure of Kuwait.

Legalese

## Happy holidays



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

A topic that I really like to write about at this time of the year is celebrating different religious holidays, as well as celebrating the New Year and taking time off work. I understand that many people have left their homes to be in Kuwait and may be away from loved ones for the holiday season, and I can only imagine how tough that may be. Thank you to everyone who has worked over the holidays or what might be their religious celebrations and I wish everyone a Happy New Year!

### Celebrating Christmas

**Question:** Is celebrating Christmas illegal in Kuwait?

**Fajer:** I find this question really weird, but unfortunately I keep getting questions like this. Regardless of what people say on social media, Kuwait is a very inclusive country that includes many religions and cultures, so please do celebrate your religion, just as long as you follow the country's laws and do not hurt anyone else. There is no law in Kuwait that makes celebrating other religious festivals illegal. There may be bylaws that restrict celebrations in certain ways, especially in commercial areas, but there is nothing that makes it illegal.

### One day off

**Question:** I understand that in Kuwait we only have one day off for New Year and not New Year's Eve - is this correct?

**Fajer:** Yes, the Gregorian New Year is a day off, and this year it will be on a Tuesday. I hope the above was helpful and I hope you have a wonderful New Year.

### Overtime

**Question:** I am working on New Year and New Year's Eve - am I entitled to overtime?

**Fajer:** Article 68 of Kuwait labor law states: "Fully-paid official holidays are as follows:

- a- Hegira New Year: 1 day
- b- Israa and Meraj day: 1 day
- c- Eid Al-Fitr: 3 days
- d- Waqfat Arafat: 1 day
- e- Eid Al-Adha: 3 days
- f- Prophet's (PBUH) Birthday (Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi): 1 day
- g- National Day: 1 day
- h- Gregorian New Year: 1 day

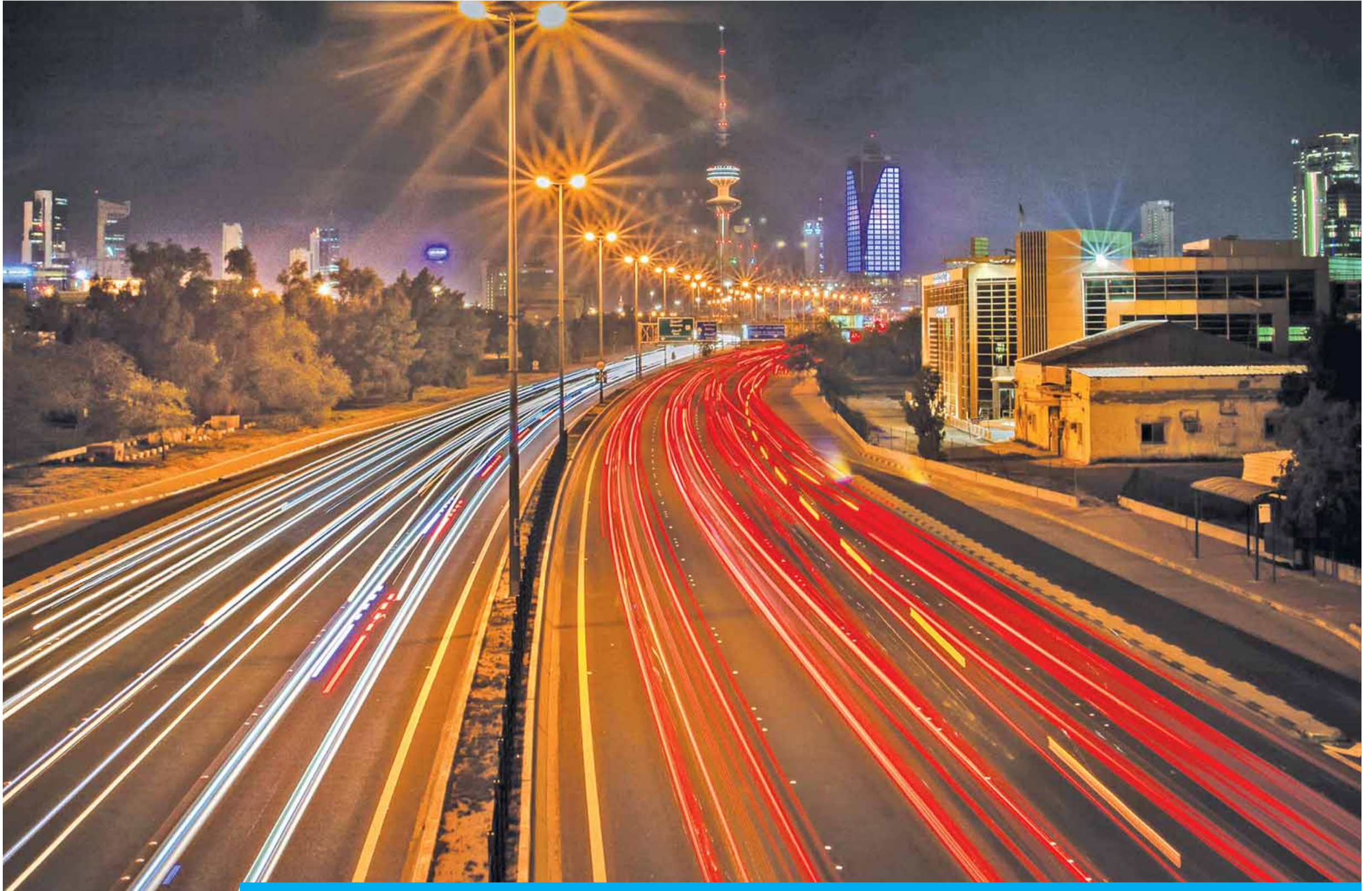
In the event where a worker is required to work during any of the abovementioned holidays, they shall be entitled to double remuneration and an additional day off."

I think the law is extremely clear that you should be compensated with double your daily wage, which is your monthly salary divided by 26, as well as an additional day off! With that said, should you agree to two days off or three days off for working on Eid, it is up to you. The court always looks at what is best for the employees and some employees prefer off days instead of overtime.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@tl-legal.com.

## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Traffic moving in and out of Kuwait City. — Photo by Hassan Jalool (KUNA)

# NBK grants Haidar and Shinan's wish to become air ambulance paramedics

## NBK gives top priority to children through its commitment to the society

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its 'I Dream to Be' initiative, a first-of-its-kind initiative that aims at granting wishes for children with cancer, giving them the chance to live their dreams.

Haidar Bahlawani and Shinan Fares, who are undergoing treatment at NBK Hospital, have always dreamt to become Paramedics, in the skies to reach patients. NBK helped in making their dream come true in collaboration with Air Ambulance forces to teach them the basics of emergency and the medical treatment. NBK arranged a visit for Haidar and Shinan to the Air Ambulance forces who provided the children with a two-hour training and tour in a helicopter.

"Haidar and Shinan's dream to become paramedics is yet another wish granted through NBK's 'I Dream to Be' initiative. We are proud to be a part of the children's dreams and expand our support to them as much as possible," said Joanne Al-Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public Relations Officer.

"The 'I Dream to Be' initiative is a lifetime experience for children not only with life-threatening conditions but children with special needs as well," she added. "This initiative is a great way to spread joy and show that there's always a positive side to a difficult situation. We ask children what they want to be and try to fulfill that for them."

NBK gives top priority to children through its commitment to its corporate social responsibility. NBK works closely with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH), Bayt Abdullah for the Care of Children in Hospice (BACCH) and several other special needs organizations to maximize its reach to all the children in numerous hospitals and schools.

NBK has been at the forefront of supporting Kuwait's community through a range of initiatives towards education, health, sports and social responsibilities. The establishment of NBK's Children Hospital for Oncology and Hematology at Al Sabah Medical Area stands as one of many ongoing corporate social initiatives towards health and children. 'I Dream to Be' aims at focusing and supporting NBK's efforts towards children and addressing their needs as much as possible.



Joanne Al-Abdul Jaleel

Local

# Kuwait 49th among 109 states in luring investments: Authority

## 15.2 billion accumulated assets for direct foreign investments lured till 2017

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is in the 49th rank among 109 business-lucrative states globally, says a leading entrepreneur. The Gulf country had lured \$15.2 billion worth of accumulated assets for direct foreign investments till 2017, according to estimates by UNCTAD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, said Fahad Al-Ibrahim, Director-General of the Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhman). Moreover, it has succeeded in attracting 466 foreign companies from 2003 till last October. They have executed 387 enterprises at a cost estimated at \$13 billion, he said, noting that 205 Kuwaiti companies invested \$80 billion, during the same period, in 500 ventures worldwide.

Kuwait, an active state in commerce, trades in commodities and services, also according to UNCTAD, at a proportion of 95 percent of the gross domestic product, with commodity trade accounting to 73 percent of the GDP. It posted surplus in commodity trade, exceeding \$21 billion, with exports worth \$55 billion and imports at \$34 billion in 2017, added the corporation director general in an exclusive interview.



Fahad Al-Ibrahim



### Oil exports

Oil constitutes approximately 80 percent of Kuwait's overall commodity exports. Commerce with Arab countries some 15 percent of the external commodity trade. The commodity exports accounted to 46 percent of the national product, after the latter's growth by 18.7 percent in 2017. Manufactured products accounted to 7.8 percent of the total commodity exports, with an average export per capita estimated at \$978 per annum. With respect of Arab states, Ibrahim said the corporation has recently observed demand increase for insurance concerning mega infrastructural ventures in some troubled Arab countries, thus forecasting hike in funding and insurance — concluding that the corporation may have an opportunity for "playing a larger role" in these countries.

Dhman has observed some improvement in the investment environments in the Arab countries, since the 80s, he says, however their share in the inflow of direct foreign investments, globally, has not exceeded 3.5 percent, between 2000 and 2017. Value of Arab commodity commerce and services reached \$2.1 trillion in 2017, five percent of the global trade. The Arab region used to benefit from the commodity trade, with a surplus in exports, as compared to imports, however, this glut turned into deficit due to the oil prices' decline — for the crude oil accounts to 58 percent of the Arab commodity exports.

"Regrettably, all Arab states incur deficit in the industrial products' trade, exporting products worth \$234 billion, less than two percent of the global industrial products worldwide," Ibrahim elaborates. Although the inter-Arab trade grew to \$108 billion per annum, it remained less than 15 percent of the total external Arab trade. Moreover, two thirds of the inter-Arab trade is actually among the Gulf countries. Economies of the Gulf countries continue to hinge on the oil prices and production, as the crude has remained accounting to 58 percent of the region exports and more than 60 percent of the governments' income — higher by 35 percent of the national product.

### Common worry

Elaborating further, Ibrahim believes that instability and security concerns remain a common worry for the Arab countries, opining that development schemes have been implemented at a slow pace. Likewise, the case with the income diversification strategies, in addition to a chain of other factors, namely decline of scientific research, education, human development, low productivity, weak production and exportation in the non-oil sectors. As to Dhman's activities, Al-Ibrahim says it has insured a number of enterprises in Arab countries, namely in agriculture, transport, cement, medicine, pharmaceuticals, communication, tourism, oil and energy.

The corporation, with 575 accredited banks throughout the world, has launched operations worth \$11.2 billion since 2011, at an annual rate of \$1.4 billion, some 60 percent of the accumulated assets since its establishment in 1974 — worth \$18.6 billion, 25 percent of which for insuring investments and 75 percent as exports' credits. It has paid compensations estimated at \$175 million for exporters and entrepreneurs as well as Arab banks. Dhman was founded in 1974 as an Arab authority, owned by Arab governments and four financial authorities headquartered in Kuwait. It encourages Arab and foreign investments in the Arab countries by insurance coverage against non-commercial hazards for investors, Arab and foreign financiers. — KUNA



### 466 foreign companies attracted

## 4 in 5 Mideast professionals might change their careers

**KUWAIT:** A new poll conducted by Bayt.com - the Middle East's largest Job Site - reveals that more than four in five (83 percent) professionals have considered "changing their career path completely," with nearly two thirds (64.2 percent) saying that it is "very easy" to change jobs in the region.

Shifting to a new job (or choosing a totally different career) isn't always about the salary. When asked why professionals may change their careers entirely, "to find their real passion" was the most common reason (57.7 percent), followed by "better compensation" (18.1 percent), opportunities to "learn and challenge themselves" (14.2 percent) and entering industries with a higher hiring activity (8.1 percent). "Changing careers is a big step but if the job seeker has thought it through, they can set themselves up for a future that aligns with their personal goals and financial expectations. Professionals switch jobs all the time - often the switch is to something related, and other times the career path swerves in a completely different direction. Currently, Bayt.com features more than 20,000 jobs to highlight the diverse range of opportunities available in a job market that is evolving and growing continuously," said Suhail Masri, VP of Employer Solutions at Bayt.com. "We also work with over 34,000,000 professionals regularly to help them embark on new career opportunities."

When people switch jobs, it seems only natural that they would look to do something related. After all, skills or experience in one area can carry over to another. According to Bayt.com survey, the biggest challenge associated with changing careers is "transferring skills and relevant experience" (76.4 percent), "finding relevant jobs" (9.5 percent), "understanding a new industry or job role" (2.8 percent), "recreating CV and cover letter" (1.3 percent) and all of the aforementioned factors (8 percent).

While many professionals change employers, they tend to remain in the same (or very similar) occupations. More than half (54.6 percent) of the respondents deem it necessary to work in the same field as their educational background but 43 percent are open to working in different fields. A majority of the respondents (63.8 percent) believe that it is not necessary to obtain additional education/training before



changing careers, 20.3 percent believe it is important in some cases and 14.5 percent believe that it is always important to gain new skills before switching jobs. However, when professionals have the skills that are vital for businesses to succeed, making big career shifts becomes a more manageable task.

Today's workforce may be more mobile but they still are strategic and thorough about the process of switching careers. Nearly half of respondents (47.1 percent) believe that they should stay in their current role for at least a year before they switch to another one, 10 percent believe they should stay between one and two years, 19.1 percent think they stay between two and three years before making the change, while 18.8 percent say "it doesn't matter" how long you stay in one job.

That said, professionals in the Middle East typically switch careers in the early stages of their work life - 70.2 percent in the first five years, 19.2 percent between five and ten years, while people in senior management are least likely to switch careers entirely with only 7 percent doing it after ten years in the same field.

### Conducting the Perfect Job Search

Switching careers requires certain tools and preparation to help the professional in the transition process. Whilst looking for a new role, most jobseekers agree that they need to "rewrite their CV" (85.5 percent). Respondents also state that in order to change careers successfully, they mostly need help in professional CV writing (53 percent), identifying new career opportunities (19 percent), and market /industry knowledge and research (4 percent).

The initial steps in successfully switching careers are to create a new CV for the target industry (81.4 percent), learning missing key skills (6.4 percent), assessing whether the switch is a practical option given past experience (4.5 percent) and researching the market trends and opportunities (5.3 percent).

According to the poll respondents, the role of online job sites in providing support as professionals begin a new career switch are diverse and include "finding new jobs", "learning new skills", "learning about industries", and providing "professional CV writing."

Data for the Bayt.com's survey about switching careers in the Middle East and North Africa was collected online from September 23 to November 21, 2018. Results are based on a sample of 8,380 respondents. Countries assessed include UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Iraq, Algeria and Tunisia, and others.

## KFSD conducts fire drills at medical center, bank

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

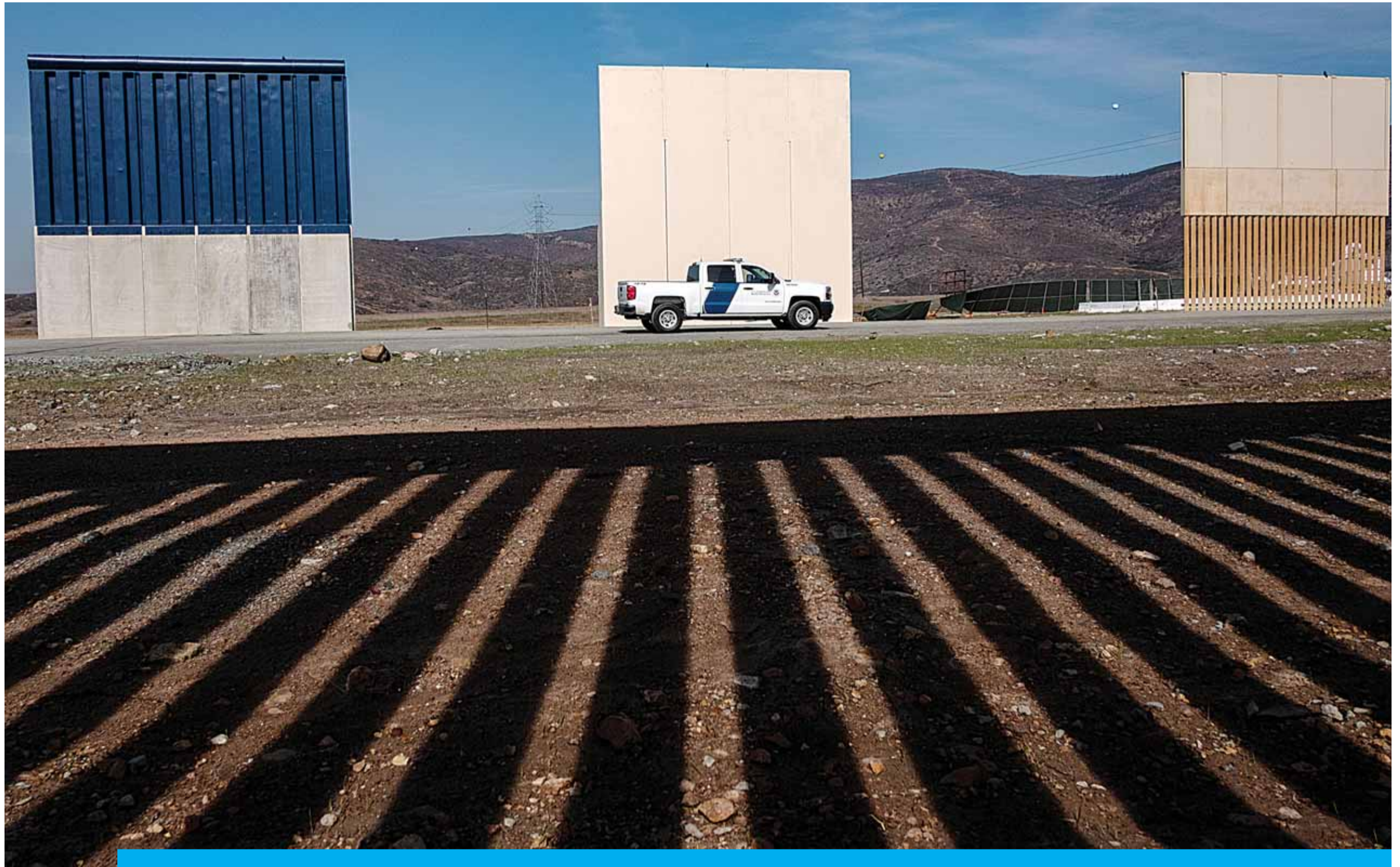
**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) conducted a fire drill on Thursday at Ghanima Al-Ghanem medical center to train the center's staff members on the procedure to follow in case a fire breaks out. The drill included evacuating everybody, dealing with injuries and fighting the fire. Another fire drill was conducted Thursday at Burgan Bank's headquarters in Sharq, said KFSD, noting that the drill included dealing with a fire on the helipad on the roof and another on the fifteenth floor with thick smoke and a person trapped. The drill also included evacuating the building, rescuing the trapped person and fighting the fire.





600k deployed for Bangladesh election shackled by violence

## Row in France over Macron bodyguard's diplomatic passports



In this file photo taken on December 12, 2018, a US Customs and Border protection vehicle passes by wall prototypes, as seen from behind the Mexico-US border fence in Tijuana, Mexico. —AFP

# Trump: Build wall or I'll seal border

## Threat yet again upped the ante in this political row

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump threatened Friday to seal the US-Mexico border "entirely" if Congress does not approve billions of dollars in funding for a wall. In a burst of early morning tweets, the president said the alternative to funding his controversial wall project would be total separation from Mexico — including making US car companies pull out their factories based on the other side of the frontier.

The threat yet again upped the ante in a political row that has led to a partial shutdown of the US government and seems set to dominate the start to the third year of Trump's presidency. "We will be forced to close the Southern Border entirely if the Obstructionist Democrats do not give us the money to finish the Wall," Trump tweeted. Trump said he would then take US-Mexican relations back to the days before the NAFTA agreement opened free trade across Canada, Mexico and the United States.

That would "bring our car industry back into the United States where it belongs," he said. It was not clear how separating the two huge neighbors would work. Bilateral trade totaled an estimated \$615.9 billion in 2017, according to US government figures. Neither did Trump make any mention of the new free trade agreement, known as the USMCA, which he only

recently signed with the two neighboring countries to replace NAFTA and which he has repeatedly praised as a huge boost for American commerce. In Mexico, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sidestepped Trump's threat, telling journalists: "We don't want to be imprudent and we don't think we should get into this."

### \$5 billion question

Trump wants \$5 billion in funding for a wall along the more than 2,000-mile border, which he says is currently too porous to stop illegal immigration and which he claims has become a magnet for criminals, drugs and even terrorists. Opponents — especially in the Democratic party but also some in Trump's Republican party — say that a physical wall is impractical and that the idea is being used as a political tool to whip up xenophobia in Trump's right-wing voter base.

Both sides have dug in. Democrats refuse to approve funding and the president — who has made headline immigration policies a centerpiece of his presidency — has retaliated by refusing to sign off on a wider spending bill, leaving some 800,000 federal employees without pay. Negotiations on lifting that partial government shutdown, perhaps by providing

some border security funding, have sputtered out and no new debate is scheduled before next Wednesday.

The president, who had already scrapped a Christmas visit to his Florida golf resort, has also "canceled his plans for New Year's," his incoming chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, said on Fox News. Asked about the startling rhetoric, Mulvaney told Fox that Trump "is trying to draw light to the fact this is a crazy discussion to be having." For one Republican Congress member, Brad Wenstrup, the paralysis over the wall reflected "a lot of political posturing. I would hope that it could be ended soon," he told CNN television. "If you sit down and talk about that, why is that such a hard thing to do?"

### Caravan 'invasion'

Experts are divided on solutions to policing the long, often inhospitable border separating the world's biggest economy from the far poorer countries to its south. Although there is a huge cross-border drug trade and immigrants often enter illegally, others have genuine claims for asylum. Central Americans are also deeply integrated in the US economy, often performing physically demanding, low-pay jobs in construction, agriculture and other vital sectors.

Trump has consistently painted the asylum seekers and economic migrants in outlandish terms, raising the specter of rapists, gang members and people with infectious diseases roaming freely across the border. Trump has latched particularly on to what have become known as the "caravans" — groups of several hundred or even more migrants who make epic treks across Central America and Mexico to try to reach the United States. According to Trump, the "caravans" amount to organized attempts at invading the United States. In one tweet Friday, Trump warned: "word is that a new Caravan is forming in Honduras and they are doing nothing about it." As a result, he said, "we will be cutting off all aid" to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The impoverished, often dangerous countries have long received American assistance to boost democracy, human rights, education and security. But according to State Department figures, the aid is already dropping steeply. Honduras is currently set to receive \$65.7 million in 2019, down from \$105.6 million in 2017, while Guatemala is slated for \$69.4 million, down from \$145 million. El Salvador received \$88 million in 2017 and is set for \$45.7 million next year. —AFP

## Syrian army deploys to Manbij in new alliance with Kurds

BEIRUT: Syrian troops deployed in support of Kurdish forces around a strategic northern city on Friday, in a shift of alliances hastened by last week's announcement of a US military withdrawal. Nearly eight years into Syria's deadly conflict, the move marked another key step in President Bashar al-Assad's Russian-backed drive to reassert control over the country.

The Syrian army announced that it had raised the flag in Manbij, a strategic city close to the Turkish border where Kurdish forces have been deployed since 2016 and where US-led coalition forces are also stationed. A military spokesman said in a televised announcement that the army would be bent on "crushing terrorism and defeating all invaders and occupiers". More than 300 government forces deployed in the Manbij area, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Nura Al-Hamed, deputy head of the Manbij local authority, told AFP that the regime deployment was the result of Russian-sponsored negotiations. "The regime forces will not enter the city of Manbij itself but will deploy on the demarcation line" with Turkish-backed Syrian groups, she said. Hamed said that US and French coalition forces stationed there remained at their positions and continued to conduct patrols. The US military said the Syrian army had not entered the city itself.

"Despite incorrect information about changes to the mili-

tary forces in Manbij city, (the US-led coalition) has seen no indication of these claims being true," US Central Command spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Earl Brown said.

### Kurdish shift

The Syrian army's deployment creates a regime buffer arching across northern Syria that fully separates the Turkish army and its proxies from the Kurds. Turkey reacted to the deployment by warning "all sides to stay away from provocative actions" while a large convoy of its Syrian auxiliaries were seen moving closer to the western edge of Manbij later on Friday.

US President Donald Trump's shock withdrawal announcement last week left the Kurds in the cold. The People's Protection Units (YPG) have been the backbone of an alliance that has spearheaded the US-backed fight against the Islamic State group in Syria. They are currently battling the last remnants of the jihadists' once sprawling "caliphate" in the country's far east, near the border with Iraq.

A US withdrawal will leave them exposed to an assault by Turkey, which has thousands of proxy fighters in northern Syria and wants to crush Kurdish forces it considers terrorists. The Kurds welcomed the regime advance, a pragmatic shift in alliances that will dash their aspirations for autonomy but could help them cut their losses.

"We invite the Syrian government forces... to assert control over the areas our forces have withdrawn from, particularly in Manbij, and to protect these areas against a Turkish invasion," the YPG said in a statement. After Manbij, the focus is likely to move to Raqa, a mostly Arab city that the Kurds liberated from IS last year and that the regime has vowed to retake.



MANBIJ: A Syrian woman carries poultry above her head in the northern Syrian town of Manbij, controlled by Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces. —AFP

Turkey said Syrian Kurds "don't have the right" to seek regime help but Russia, the main foreign player in Syria since it intervened to rescue Assad in 2015, hailed the latest development. "Of course, this will help in stabilising the situation. The enlargement of the zone under the control of government forces... is without doubt a positive trend," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Peskov said the situation would be discussed yesterday during a visit to Moscow by the Turkish foreign and defense ministers, to "clarify" the situation and "synchronize actions" between the two countries. This year the regime retook large swathes of territory with the help of Russian firepower, after three years ago controlling less than a third of the country. —AFP

## Four terror suspects held in Netherlands

THE HAGUE: Dutch security forces arrested four people in the port city of Rotterdam yesterday on suspicion of preparing for a "terrorist crime", police said. Elite counter-terrorism units and police arrested the men and carried out searches at the locations where they were detained. Rotterdam police said. "They are suspected of involvement in the preparation of a terrorist crime," a brief police statement said. "Investigations will continue in the coming days, with the emphasis on further investigation of the nature and scale of the terrorist threat."

Further details on the suspects and the crime they were allegedly preparing for were not immediately available. The Netherlands has been largely spared the kind of terror attacks which have rocked its closest European neighbors in the past few years, but there has been a series of recent scares. In August a 19-year-old Afghan with a German residence permit stabbed and injured two American tourists at Amsterdam's busy Central Station before being shot and wounded. In September Dutch investigators said they had arrested seven people and foiled a "major attack" on civilians at a major event in the Netherlands. They said they had found a large quantity of bomb-making materials including fertilizer likely to be used in a car bomb. The men were arrested in the cities of Arnhem and Weert. In June two terror suspects were arrested while close to carrying out attacks including at an iconic bridge in Rotterdam and in France, prosecutors said. —AFP

International

# Israeli PM, Brazil's Bolsonaro hail budding 'brotherhood'

## First-ever visit by an Israeli prime minister to Brazil

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Brazil's President-elect Jair Bolsonaro on Friday announced a nascent "brotherhood" between their countries that will boost economic, military and technological cooperation. The two issued the warm words to the media after a meeting in a century-old military fort on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach, at the beginning of the first-ever visit by an Israeli prime minister to Brazil. Netanyahu said Bolsonaro had accepted an invitation to make his own visit to Israel, without giving a date. The Israeli leader is to stay on through Tuesday to join other foreign dignitaries at the inauguration in Brasilia of Bolsonaro, a far-right, security-conscious politician and former army officer elected in October on pledges to crack down on endemic crime and corruption.

Bolsonaro, sometimes called the "Trump of the tropics" for a similar style to US President Donald Trump and rejection of multilateral diplomacy, emphasized the bond he wants to build with Netanyahu, a firm US ally. "More than partners, we will be brothers in the future, in economy, technology, all that can bring benefit to our two countries," Bolsonaro said. He also spoke of cooperation in military and agriculture matters. Netanyahu, calling his visit "historic," also spoke of "the brotherhood, the alliance" the two planned as something that "can carry us to great heights. It's hard to believe that we had no such contacts before," he said.

### Embassy move

However there was no mention of Bolsonaro's post-election declaration — later walked back — that he intended to follow Trump in moving his country's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Netanyahu had told reporters on his flight to Brazil that "you can be certain I will speak with him about that in our first meeting." But neither man raised the topic in their comments to

media, and no questions were taken.

An embassy move could put at risk lucrative Brazilian poultry and halal meat exports to Arab countries, which fiercely oppose any unilateral steps seen as cementing Israel's claim to all of Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, and most countries in the world back a longstanding consensus that Jerusalem's status can only be resolved through negotiations and as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Nearly 20 percent of Brazil's \$5 billion beef exports go to 17 Arab countries. Brazil-Israel trade currently amounts to \$1.2 billion. Bolsonaro said Tuesday he is looking to import Israeli technology to produce water for Brazil's parched northeast.

### Rightward shift

Bolsonaro's ascent to the presidency represents a dramatic, rightward shift in Brazil's politics. For decades, the country has been under center-left and center-right rule and resolutely sought to carve out foreign policy independent of the United States. In 2010, the country recognized a Palestinian state, and it nurtured trade and investment relations with China. But Bolsonaro has spoken with hostility of China's investments in Brazil, and he and one of his politician sons have reached out to Trump and people in his orbit.

He and his team have also excluded the far-left leaders of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua from attending the inauguration in Brasilia, although Bolivia's leftwing President Evo Morales received an invitation. Other VIPs attending include conservative Chilean President Sebastian Piner, Hungary's far-right Prime Minister Viktor Orban and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Bolsonaro later Friday attended a Rio synagogue with Netanyahu and told the congregation that Brazil intended to move forward in the



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** This handout picture released by Agencia Brasil shows Brazil's President-elect Jair Bolsonaro (C-L) and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C-R) holding a meeting at the Copacabana fort. —AFP

world not only with Israel "but with other countries such as the United States that think and have a similar ideology to our own."

### Meeting Pompeo

Netanyahu made his Brazil trip despite domestic political turmoil in Israel and a spike in military volatility in neighboring Syria. Pompeo and Netanyahu are to discuss Syria on the sidelines of Bolsonaro's swearing-in, an Israeli official and the US State Department said. US allies including Israel were caught by surprise by Trump's

abrupt announcement last week that he was pulling US troops out of Syria, where Israel's arch-foe Iran has built up a significant military and political presence.

Israel has made several aerial strikes in Syria against positions held by Iran and its Lebanese militia Hezbollah. Domestically, Netanyahu is maneuvering to extend his reign in Israel despite a slew of corruption allegations. On Wednesday, Israel's parliament approved a government decision to call early elections for April 9. The Israeli prime minister also serves as his country's foreign minister. Last year he visited Argentina, Colombia and Mexico. —AFP

## Syria: The Kurdish position since 2011

**BEIRUT:** Syria's Kurds have changed their stance since the start of the conflict in 2011, from cautious support for the uprising against the regime to calling for its help to counter a threatened Turkish offensive. Here is a recap of key events that have impacted the Kurds in Syria, who live mostly in the north of the country and represent 15 percent of the population, according to estimates.

### Protests

On April 1, 2011 several hundred people protest peacefully in northeastern Syria, the first time Kurds take to the streets since the pro-reform protests erupted in mid-March. They call for the right to citizenship and "freedom as well", according to witness accounts. In 1962, 20 percent of Kurds in Syria lost their citizenship following a controversial census. The issue has long poisoned relations between the government and Syria's Kurds.

### Naturalization

On April 7, 2011 Syria's President Bashar al-Assad issues "a decree granting Arab Syrian citizenship to people registered as foreigners in the (governorate of Hasakeh)," the SANA state news agency reports. The decree concerns about 300,000 Kurds. The next day protests take place in several areas in northern Syria in support of the abolition of the emergency law and the release of prisoners. Several more demonstrations in the north involving thousands of people take place in the months that follow.

## Yemen rebels begin withdrawal from Hodeida port: UN

**HODEIDA:** Yemeni rebels have begun to withdraw from the port of Hodeida, the country's key aid lifeline, under an agreement reached in Sweden earlier this month, a UN official said yesterday. The official, who requested anonymity, said the Houthi rebels began to pull back from the Red Sea port at midnight, the Houthis began "the first phase of redeployment from the Hodeida port", a rebel official told the Houthi-run Saba news agency.

The rebels held a ceremony to mark the occasion, an AFP correspondent reported. The rebel withdrawal from the port, which is the point of entry for food aid to some 14 million Yemenis UN agencies say are on the brink of famine, is a key part of a ceasefire that went

### Assassination

On October 7, 2011 the prominent Kurdish opposition figure Meshaal Tamo is killed by four masked gunmen in the northeastern city of Qamishli. Tamo was a member of the newly formed Syrian National Council opposition grouping. Shortly before his assassination he had been released after three and a half years in prison. The day after Tamo's killing, security forces open fire on a large crowd that had gathered for his funeral.

### Army retreat

In June 2012 the Free Syrian Army, after the defection of some of its Syrian soldiers, calls on the Kurds to join the uprising. But the Kurds, wary of the opposition they believe unlikely to recognise their specific case, try to protect their regions from the violence. In July the army retreats from fighting in some Kurdish regions where fighters close to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) are deployed, provoking suspicions of collusion with the regime. Turkey accuses Damascus of confiding several areas in northern Syria to the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the political branch of the powerful People's Protection Units (YPG).

### Semi-autonomous region

On November 12, 2013 the PYD and other Kurdish groups announce the establishment of a semi-autonomous region, divided into three zones. The announcement comes after victories on the ground by Kurdish fighters against rebels and jihadists.

### US ally

In September 2014 a US-led coalition launches its first raids against the Islamic



**In this file photo taken on April 28, 2017 US forces, accompanied by Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) fighters, drive their armored vehicles near the northern Syrian village of Darbasayah, on the border with Turkey. —AFP**

State group (IS), after the jihadists earlier in the year capture large swathes of northern and eastern Syria. In October the US State Department reveals that American officials met for the first time Kurds from the PYD, as part of Washington's strategy against IS.

At the start of 2015 Kurdish forces supported by coalition strikes oust IS from Kobane on the Turkish border. In June the YPG takes control of Tal Abyad, also on the border with Turkey. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of 25,000 Kurdish fighters and 5,000 Arabs — all Syrian — is created in October 2015. Dominated by the Kurdish YPG, the alliance receives aid from

the US, in the form of arms and air support for their operations. Since then the SDF has overrun IS' de facto Syrian capital, Raqa, and a large part of Deir Ezzor province.

### Call for regime help

On December 28, 2018 the YPG call on Syrian government troops to deploy alongside their own forces in the north to help counter a threatened Turkish offensive. The call comes days after Washington's surprise announcement it would be pulling its troops out of the country. The Syrian army is deployed around Manbij, a key city about 30 kilometers south of the Turkish border. —AFP



**HODEIDA:** Yemeni pro-government forces gather at the eastern entrance of the port city of Hodeida. —AFP

two sides accusing each other of violations. A resident reached by telephone yesterday told AFP pro-government and rebel forces had exchanged fire briefly overnight. The resident added that coalition jets were heard overhead yesterday morning. The war between the Shiite Houthi rebels and troops loyal

to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi escalated in March 2015, when he fled into Saudi exile and the Saudi-led coalition intervened. Since then, the war has killed some 10,000 people, according to the World Health Organization, although human rights groups say the real death toll could be five times as high. —AFP

## Turkey probes prominent TV anchor

**ISTANBUL:** A Turkish prosecutor on Friday launched an investigation into a prominent TV news presenter less than two weeks after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lambasted the journalist, local media reported. The prosecutor's office said it was investigating Turkey's Fox Haber channel's Fatih Portakal for "openly inciting others to commit a crime" after the journalist speculated whether Turks could protest like those in the "Yellow Vest" movement in France, Hurriyet and Milliyet dailies said.

"Come on, let's have a peaceful protest, a protest against ... rising natural gas fees. Come on, let's do it. Would we be able to do it?" the journalist who has over six million followers on Twitter asked. "For the love of God, tell me how many people would come out?" Portakal demanded as he speculated about the impact of Turks' fears of protesting in a news program on December 10.

During anti-government protests in 2013, Erdogan was criticized for the police's heavy-handed crackdown against demonstrators. Portakal's comments were interpreted by Turkish officials as a call for protests as the country is suffering high inflation. Consumer prices reached over 25 percent in October before falling to 21.62 percent in November.

Portakal had made the comments during a news segment about France's "yellow vest" movement, which started as a demonstration against fuel price hikes in November but has since snowballed into broader anti-government opposition. Erdogan has repeatedly criticized the journalist for his comments, saying in mid-December: "He is calling people to get out on the street. Know your place! If you don't know your place, the people will teach you a lesson."

Earlier this week, Turkey's audiovisual authority RTUK fined Fox Haber Turkey for an undisclosed amount and said the channel had to suspend three future broadcasts of the primetime news show. Fox Haber Turkey gives greater coverage to the opposition parties than other mainstream channels in an increasingly constricted media landscape in Turkey under the rule of Erdogan.

Fox Haber, which means Fox News in Turkish, is not linked to the Fox News Channel in the United States. The investigation comes after two famous Turkish actors were accused of insulting Erdogan during a television program on Halk TV last week. An Istanbul court on Monday released the two men on conditional bail after they were summoned to give statements to prosecutors. Turkey's allies and human rights defenders have raised concerns over a clamp-down on freedom of expression under Erdogan, with dozens of journalists and civil society activists imprisoned. —AFP

## Canadian drug smuggler faces retrial as China says 15 yrs too lenient

**BEIJING:** A Chinese court said yesterday that a 15-year jail sentence for a Canadian national charged with drug smuggling was too "lenient" and remanded his case for a retrial. The decision comes as Beijing and Ottawa remain

embroiled in a diplomatic row triggered by Canada's early December arrest of a senior executive from Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei.

The high court in Liaoning, which heard Robert Lloyd Schellenberg's appeal Saturday, said in a statement that a previous ruling in November, which sentenced him to 15 years in jail and a 150,000 yuan (\$21,800) forfeiture, was "obviously inappropriate" given the severity of his crimes. Schellenberg played an "important role" in drug smuggling and was potentially involved in international organized drug trafficking activities, said the court, and

passed his case back to the lower Dalian court for a retrial without specifying a date.

The high court in Liaoning did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. China exercises a zero-tolerance policy towards drug trafficking, and has handed death sentences to foreigners found guilty of smuggling large quantities of illicit drugs. In 2014, a Japanese national sentenced in Dalian city in northeastern Liaoning province was put to death for drug offences, according to Tokyo diplomats and media reports. Four other Japanese were executed in China in

2010 for drugs offences.

China also sentenced a Filipina drug trafficker to death in 2013, according to the Philippine foreign department, ignoring Manila's request to spare her life. A harsher punishment for Schellenberg, such as the death penalty, could further strain ties between Beijing and Ottawa. The two countries are in diplomatic dire straits after China detained two Canadians — former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and China-based businessman Michael Spavor — whom they accuse of engaging in activities that "endanger China's security". —AFP

## International

# Donors cutting aid to Tanzania as rights crackdown continues

## Measures being taken to sanction repressive policies

**NAIROBI:** Tanzania's tough-talking president John Magufuli has earned respect by fighting corruption, but international donors are now concerned by crackdowns on human rights. The European Union, Tanzania's biggest development partner, and the World Bank have recently taken measures to sanction repressive policies.

Magufuli's reputation was boosted when he battled corruption after winning election in 2015. But accusations of repression are growing and donors and former allies are increasingly frustrated at what they say are moves that stifle dissent and create obstacles for journalists and rights activists. "The European Union and some of its member countries, as well as the United States, have repeatedly drawn the attention of the government to the human rights situation," said a European diplomat in Dar es Salaam on condition of anonymity. "Even so, the situation continues to deteriorate, so we have had to move up a gear."

In October, the governor of Dar es Salaam, Paul Makonda, vowed to track down people suspected of engaging in homosexuality — which is illegal in Tanzania. In November, the EU said it would thoroughly review its financial support — more than \$100 million (88 million euros) a year — in response to moves that undermined human rights and the rule of law.

### Aid as political pressure

The EU, which also recalled its ambassador, said it was worried by "a shrinking of public space in Tanzania through the tightening of restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations, the media and many political parties." Washington accused the Tanzanian government of fostering "an atmosphere of violence, intimidation and discrimination."

The EU's decision to reconsider its aid coincided with one by the World Bank to freeze a \$300 million

(265 million euro) loan for girls' education in protest against a move to expel pregnant girls from school and forbid them to continue their education after giving birth. Meanwhile, Denmark announced the withdrawal of \$10 million in aid owing to "unacceptable homophobic remarks".

In mid-December, four US senators called for the creation of a common front with "diplomatic partners" to put pressure on the Tanzanian government. Magufuli has sought to shrug off the cuts, boasting that "Tanzania is on the right track". The government also insisted that the anti-gay crackdown in Dar es Salaam was not official policy, but rather the "personal views" of the city's governor. Many donors remain unconvinced however.

Magufuli, who says the diplomatic freeze is only with "those who do not want good to our country", has moved to flatter China. "The Chinese are our friends, true long-time friends," he said recently while inaugurating a state-of-the-art library built with aid from Beijing. Chinese funds are provided without conditions, he noted.

### Poorest hit hardest

But observers say neither Magufuli nor donors want the situation to get any worse. "It is possible that he (Magufuli) changes his course, that he shows flexibility if the pressure is maintained", suggested Jenerali Ulimwengu, an influential lawyer and a former Tanzanian diplomat. "He cannot in any case rely only on the Chinese, who... cannot provide all the necessary help."

As for the European diplomat in Dar es Salaam, donors are well aware that cuts hit the poorest the hardest. "But it is possible to send aid through other channels, including civil society organizations," the diplomat added. "Bridges are not cut, discussions are underway and we hope that the Tanzanian government



**DAR ES SALAAM:** A Tanzanian gay man of 21-year-old, poses for photo on November 8, 2018 after the Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda launched an anti-gay crackdown, threatening to arrest people suspected of being gay. —AFP

will eventually understand that development and respect for human rights must go together."

Others warn that using aid to influence government policy could do more harm than good. "Suddenly halting or stopping aid can have dire unintended consequences for complex and important projects helping vulnerable people," wrote Irish

senator Fintan Warfield, an openly gay LGBT activist, in response to calls for Dublin to review its support. "It is only through continued support to the Tanzanian people and being a critical friend that we can hope to improve the human rights situation in Tanzania, and end the persecution of our LGBT+ brothers and sisters." —AFP

## Experts accuse Congo warlord of mass rape

**UNITED NATIONS:** UN experts are accusing a warlord in the Democratic Republic of Congo of leading horrific gang rapes in South Kivu during which women were held captive in a cave and treated like sex slaves, according to a confidential report obtained by AFP on Friday. The group of experts on the DR Congo said in the report to the Security Council that the overall situation was "volatile" as the country heads toward elections to be held today.

"While the upcoming elections have continued to raise security concerns, the group has not found evidence of direct involvement of armed actors in the electoral process," said the 61-page report sent to the council earlier this month. Based on interviews with victims, a witness, local authorities and other sources, the experts found that the Raia Mutomboki Kokodikoko faction had gang-raped 17 women in September and subjected them to torture and sexual slavery.

"The group concluded that Masudi Alimasi Kokodikoko, leader of a Raia Mutomboki faction in Shabunda territory, was a lead perpetrator of the gang rapes of at least 17 women in September 2018," said the report. The armed group abducted the women, aged between 15 and 70, during raids on villages in the Lubila region of South Kivu on September 8-9, the report said. The women and girls were held captive in "a big stone cave" in the forest and repeatedly raped during four days by the Raia Mutomboki fighters, it said. "They also introduced various tools into the vaginas of several of the women, severely injuring some. Women who had resisted being assaulted were additionally mistreated," said the report.

### Dancing and singing

"Raia Mutomboki elements shouting 'Tchai!Tchai!' (Tea!Teal) usually announced the beginning of the rapes." Rebels would then dance and sing songs "described as full of insults" and praising their chief. "Kokodikoko chose the women he preferred, usually selecting the youngest ones, and raped them first. He raped at least nine women. It was only after he had raped the selected women that he authorized or ordered his elements to rape the women," the report said.

The mass rapes allegedly involved child soldiers, according to victims who said boys aged 15 and 16 were in the cave during the violence. South Kivu has been wracked by sexual violence in the decades of conflict involving armed groups in the eastern DR Congo. Congolese surgeon Denis Mukwege was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year for helping women recover from the trauma of rape.

During a phone call with the UN experts, Kokodikoko denied any wrongdoing and rejected allegations of mass rapes by his faction, the report said. The experts recalled that perpetrators of sexual violence could face sanctions under UN resolutions and urged authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible.

Earlier on Friday, the DR Congo army said it had arrested a militia chief accused of systematic rapes in South Kivu. Isaac Chirambiza, who was detained on Tuesday, heads another faction of Raia Mutomboki, which portrays itself as defenders of the Congolese against the FDLR, a Rwandan Hutu group that has been fighting in eastern DR Congo for decades. —AFP

## Row in France over Macron bodyguard's diplomatic passports

**PARIS:** Accusations flew in France on Friday between the office of President Emmanuel Macron and his disgraced ex-bodyguard Alexandre Benalla over diplomatic passports he was supposed to hand over when he was sacked. Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian is set to refer the case to prosecutors after reports that Benalla repeatedly used the passports following his dismissal in August.

Any use of these passports after he was sacked "would be against the law", the foreign ministry warned in a statement. Benalla, in a letter to Macron's chief of staff Patrick Strzoda, of which AFP has obtained a copy, acknowledged that he had been in contact with Elysee staff since his departure. But he insisted that none of his subsequent activities had had anything to do with the government.

"At all times while carrying out the functions entrusted to me by the Elysee, I never carried out personal and private missions and certainly never received payment as a result, directly or indirectly," he added. "I have never used any recommendation or support from the presidency in the context of my new activities", he wrote.

To suggest so would be a complete lie and defamatory, he added. Benalla, Macron's campaign bodyguard who was granted a senior security job following the centrist's election victory last year, had twice been requested to give the passports back, the foreign ministry statement said. But Benalla's



**PARIS:** In this file photo taken on February 24, 2018 French President Emmanuel Macron (C,L) flanked by Elysee senior security officer Alexandre Benalla (C,R) visits the 55th International Agriculture Fair (Salon de l'Agriculture) at the Porte de Versailles exhibition center. —AFP

entourage told AFP the passports were returned to him after he was sacked.

He left them in his "office at the Elysee, and then they were given back", a source close to Benalla said, accusing opponents of seeking to "destroy his reputation". His entourage refused to comment on how Benalla may have used the passports. On Thursday, investigative website Mediapart reported that Benalla used a diplomatic passport to enter

several African countries as well as Israel in recent weeks.

Benalla was at the centre of a major scandal this summer after it emerged in July that he roughed up protesters during a May Day demonstration in Paris while wearing a police helmet. He was not fired until after the media revelations, prompting a wave of accusations from government opponents of a presidential cover-up. —AFP

## Sudan police stop protests as oppn leader arrested

**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese police broke up several protests held after Friday prayers, as security agents arrested a top opposition leader following calls for more demonstrations against a

rise in bread prices. Angry crowds have taken to the streets in Khartoum and other cities since December 19 after a government decision to hike the cost of bread.

Nineteen people have been killed so far in the protests, the government said, and the UN on Friday called on the authorities in Sudan to investigate the deaths. Police fired tear gas at hundreds of worshippers who staged demonstrations after Friday prayers in several cities, including Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman on the west bank of the Nile, witnesses said.

Photographs posted by activists on social media networks showed thick plumes of smoke rising from some neighborhoods in Khartoum as protesters burnt garbage

and tires. In Omdurman, crowds of worshippers chanted "Freedom, Peace, Justice" as they poured out of a mosque belonging to main opposition National Umma Party, a witness said. But they were quickly confronted by anti-riot police, the witness added.

The protests came as opposition groups called for more anti-government rallies to be held over the next few days. A group of opposition parties met late on Thursday and agreed to "push for more protests" in the coming days, the Sudanese Communist Party said in a statement. Several opposition party members have been arrested amid a crackdown on demonstrations. —AFP

## Juncker doubts Romania can assume EU presidency

**BERLIN:** European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker voiced doubts yesterday about Romania's ability to take over the EU's six-month rotating presidency next month, amid tensions between Bucharest and Brussels. Even if the country is "technically well prepared", the "Bucharest government has not fully understood what it means to preside over the countries of the EU," Juncker said in an interview with the newspaper die Welt.

He said the EU presidency "requires a willingness to listen to others and a willingness to put one's own concerns in the background. I have some doubts about this". He also questioned the capacity of the country, faced with internal political tensions, to

appear as a "compact unit" in Europe. Romania assumes the EU's rotating presidency on January 1 for the first time since it joined the bloc in 2007, succeeding Austria.

It comes as the EU is at loggerheads with the increasingly populist government in Bucharest on multiple fronts. Romania's left-wing government has recently begun to adopt the sort of nationalist rhetoric expounded by nearby Hungary and Poland. Liviu Dragnea, head of the ruling Social Democrats (PSD) and widely seen as Romania's most powerful man, has slammed the EU as "unfair", claiming Brussels is seeking to deny Bucharest the "right to hold its own opinions".

One of the main reasons for the cooling of relations between Bucharest and Brussels is the PSD's planned overhaul of Romania's judiciary, which the government says is aimed at clamping down on "abuses" by judges and magistrates. The European Commission has called for the reforms to be scrapped, saying they undermine the fight against corruption in one of the EU's most graft-prone states.

Moreover, Romania may find it difficult



**BRUSSELS:** In this file photo taken on February 21, 2018, EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (R) welcomes Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila before their bilateral meeting at the EU headquarters. —AFP

to speak with a united voice, given the tug-of-war between the government of Viorica Dancila — the third PSD prime minister since 2016 — and centre-right President

Klaus Iohannis. A staunch pro-European who has frequently clashed with the government, Iohannis represents Romania on the European Council. —AFP



International

# 600k deployed for Bangladesh election shackled by violence

## A deadly campaign of clashes and the arrests of opposition activists

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh tightened security yesterday for an election expected to see Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina win a record fourth term but dominated by opposition claims that they have been shackled by a government clampdown. Authorities have deployed around 600,000 police, army and other security forces ahead of today's vote, a senior official said, following a deadly campaign of clashes and the arrests of opposition activists.

The forces — which also include the elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), navy, border and coast guards and auxiliary police units — will guard some 40,000 election booths across the poor South Asian nation. "We have ensured the highest level of security in Bangladesh as per the capacity of the country," Rafiqul Islam of the election commission told AFP. "We hope there will be a peaceful atmosphere," he said.

Bangladesh's telecoms regulator also ordered the country's mobile operators to shut down 3G and 4G services until midnight on Sunday "to prevent the spread of rumors", that could trigger unrest, a spokesman said. A heavy police presence was evident on the streets of the capital Dhaka ahead of the polls opening at 8:00 am (0200 GMT) Sunday but residents appeared undeterred. "Voting is important because as a citizen of Bangladesh it is my duty. I'll cast my vote for my chosen candidate," Siam Ahmed told AFP.

ing Hasina an easy victory — says its supporters have been deliberately targeted in a bid to deter them from voting, clearing the prime minister's path for a new term. The 71-year-old Hasina has called for voters to back her to further bolster the economy which has shown impressive growth during her decade in power. She has rejected accusations of growing authoritarianism. The BNP — the main player in an alliance headed by Kamal Hossain, an 82-year-old Oxford educated lawyer who drew up Bangladesh's constitution — has accused the election commission of bias during the campaign.

The opposition says more than 14,000 of its activists have been detained since the election was announced on November 8. The BNP said over 1,100 people were rounded up on Friday alone. The party also alleges that around 12,000 activists were injured in attacks by ruling party followers. The Awami League denies the allegation. Sixteen international human rights groups released a joint statement yesterday saying the crackdown "compromises the integrity" of the vote. The United States has raised concerns about the elections while the United Nations called for greater efforts to make the vote fair. Rafiqul Islam said election authorities were still hopeful the country's 11th parliamentary polls since independence from Pakistan in 1971 would be credible.



DHAKA: A Bangladeshi electoral official stands next to polling materials at a distributing center. —AFP

### Deaths

Clashes have gripped the Muslim majority country of 165 million in the run-up to the vote, in which the ruling Awami League and opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are leading their own alliances. Thirteen people have been killed and thousands injured in skirmishes between supporters of Hasina and activists of the BNP, whose leader Khaleda Zia is serving 17 years in prison on graft charges.

The BNP — which boycotted the 2014 election, hand-

### Arrests

"We're trying our best to have a free and fair election," he said. A spokesman for the RAB, Bangladesh's elite security force, said yesterday they had arrested eight men for spreading rumors on social media ahead of Sunday's poll. Forty-eight people have been detained by the force in 2018 for spreading "false information and mocking" Hasina, the spokesman said.

The election commission has also imposed restrictions

on public transport and cars on polling day in an effort to maintain security for a smooth election, said Islam. Hasina, daughter of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and now its longest-serving leader, is seeking a third-straight term since winning a landslide in December 2008.

She has been praised for presiding over healthy GDP

expansion, with the country set to graduate from a least developed country to a middle income nation, and lauded for opening Bangladesh's doors to around one million Rohingya refugees fleeing a military crackdown in Myanmar. But critics accuse her of muzzling free speech and clamping down on dissent, including through a draconian anti-press law toughened this year. —AFP

## Cambodia strongman derides 'democracy'

**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia's strongman leader Hun Sen lashed out at Western governments for pushing "democracy and human rights" on his country, capping off a tumultuous political year with a fiery speech yesterday. The 66-year-old prime minister has ruled Cambodia for over three decades, with the Southeast Asian country tilting towards China in recent years thanks to loans for infrastructure and few complaints on human rights issues.

His administration was renewed for another five years in July following elections critics condemned as a sham, inciting threats from the European Union to revoke duty-free access to EU countries. But Hun Sen remained defiant yesterday as he inaugurated a monument with carvings showcasing his government's achievements. "Don't make war by using what is called democracy and

human rights, in which democratic countries used to make the mistake of supporting Lon Nol's coup," he said in a speech to thousands of officials.

Lon Nol's US-backed regime was ousted by the ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge in 1975, jumpstarting four years of horror as Cambodians were forced to live on farming communes, endure hard labor, and were tortured and murdered if they were suspected of plotting against leader Pol Pot. Hun Sen was a former Khmer Rouge cadre who defected and had a role in toppling the genocidal regime in 1979, although the US later sought to keep the ousted Khmer Rouge at the table in the United Nations.

"You as a democratic country ... supported Pol Pot, who used to kill people with no regards for respecting human rights," Hun Sen said, without naming the US. "You supported them to keep a seat at the UN." Cambodia's government dissolved the main opposition party and jailed its leader ahead of July elections in which it won every seat in parliament, transforming the nation into a one-party state. —AFP



PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen (L) looks at sculptures during the inauguration of the "Win Win" monument. —AFP

## Spike in bomb, grenade attacks in South Thailand

**BANGKOK:** Junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha decried "opportunists" yesterday after a wave of coordinated bomb attacks by suspected insurgents hit Thailand's Muslim-majority "deep south" in the lead-up to the New Year holidays. The region bordering Malaysia has been in the grip of a low-level but bloody insurgency for more than a decade as ethnic Malay militants battle the Buddhist-majority state for greater autonomy.

Since 2004, insurgents armed with homemade bombs and grenades have clashed with Thailand's powerful military, killing nearly 7,000 people, mostly civilians, of both Muslim and Buddhist faith. However, 2017 saw a record low of 235 people killed in clashes. The latest attacks occurred Friday night in a series of seven separate incidents in three different districts of Narathiwat province, said police commander Major General Dussadee Choosungkit. Two bomb attacks occurred in Sri Sakhon district, four in Chanee district, and militants "ambushed a base in Rangae district" using grenades, he said. The homemade bombs were "detonated by radio", he said, adding that no one was injured. The attacks prolong a bout of violence that began late Monday evening when a policeman died in an explosion from a detonated roadside bomb hidden in a gas cylinder.

In nearby Songkhla province on Wednesday night, two bombs rocked popular tourist site Simila beach, causing no fatalities but damaging to two seaside statues. Songkhla provincial police are still investigating the beach bombings, and no arrest has been made, police told AFP yesterday. Major General Dussadee said the Songkhla bombings were not connected to his province's troubles — which he said is payback for a December 12 raid on the insurgents' camp in Narathiwat. —AFP

## Philippines quake triggers tsunami

**MANILA:** A 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck off the Philippine island of Mindanao yesterday triggering a brief tsunami warning. The quake struck southeast of Davao City at a depth of 59 kilometers, the US Geological Survey said, a week after a volcano-triggered tsunami killed more than 400 people in neighboring Indonesia.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center warned "hazardous tsunami waves from this earthquake are possible" along the coasts of Indonesia and the

Philippines. However, waves were forecast to be less than 30 cm above tide level, it said, while Philippine monitors warned that "minor sea level disturbances" were to be expected.

The Philippine government's seismology institute initially advised people to "stay away from the beach and not to go to the coast fronting the Philippine Sea," for about two hours after the quake. But it later cancelled the tsunami advisory, saying that wave heights had returned to normal. Although people rushed out of buildings during the quake, the civil defense office said it expected no damage or aftershocks.

The office said cities in the south of the country felt "moderately strong" shaking but the authorities in the affected areas said they had no immediate

reports of damage or casualties from the quake. The Philippines and Indonesia lie on the so-called Ring of Fire, a vast Pacific Ocean region where many earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur. The most recent major quake disaster to strike the Philippines was in 2013 when a 7.1-magnitude quake left more than 220 people dead and destroyed historic churches in the central islands.

Indonesia has been hit by two major tsunamis this year. More than 400 people were killed last weekend after an erupting volcano triggered a deadly wave that struck the coastlines of western Java island and south Sumatra. A quake-tsunami in September killed around 2,200 people in Palu on Sulawesi island, with thousands more missing and presumed dead. —AFP

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## US migration dream of Guatemalans from the village

Emigrating to the United States to escape poverty back home is the dream of many residents of the Mayan indigenous community in Yalambojoch, western Guatemala. It was the dream that ultimately cost eight-year-old Felipe Gomez his life after he crossed into the US with his father Agustin. The child fell ill while in US border control custody and died in hospital on Christmas Eve of an unspecified infection. His 31-year-old mother, Catarina Alonzo, has been left distraught by the loss.

With reddened eyes and a distant gaze, Alonzo remembers the vow her son gave before leaving for the promised land. "I'm going with my dad, mummy. I'm going there to study and after that I'll work to send you money," she said in the Chuj language as her step-daughter, also called Catarina, translated into Spanish. From her humble home in the mountainous Chuj village, Alonzo said "no one's to blame" for her son's death. But now, all she wants is to repatriate his body. She acknowledged that she and her 47-year-old husband agreed young Felipe would make the journey because life in Yalambojoch "is tough".

Employment is scarce in the remote Nentun municipality where the village is located, close to the Mexico border some 185 km northeast of the capital Guatemala City. Felipe's sister says her father heard he would have a better chance of remaining in the US if he took the child with him, but insisted her brother wanted to go. "The child was happy, he was excited by the prospect of going there to study and to better himself," said the 21-year-old. In the family home, an altar has been set up in Felipe's memory with flowers, candles and photographs.

## Lack of work

Yalambojoch is a place where the benefits of migration to the United States are starkly visible. Precarious homes made of wooden boards teeter next to more solid structures built with concrete paid for by the remittances sent home by US immigrants. "Every person who goes and manages to stay in the US, the first thing they do is save up their money and send it to start building" and helping the family left behind, said local mayor Lucas Perez, 45.

He lamented the fact that locals feel obliged to migrate due to a lack of work, while even farmers earn only \$4.50 to \$6.50 a day. Those doing "a little better" are builders, who can make up to \$13 a day. The staple diet in this Maya village of 1,500 people is beans and corn wraps, while most people try to raise a pig every year to sell, said Perez.

According to official statistics, more than 59 percent of Guatemala's 16 million people live in poverty, but that figure rises to 80 percent in indigenous villages, mostly in the north and west. They're the ones most likely to embark on the long route to the US in the hope of migrating. Over the years, remittances mostly sent from the US have become an important pillar of Guatemala's economy, equivalent to 70 percent of its exports and bringing in \$11 billion a year. "Here we don't count on help from the government or governor, much less the municipality," complained Perez.

Politicians "come during the campaign, but once they're in power, no one remembers" the community. Quite apart from poverty, Yalambojoch suffered greatly from military repression during the 1960-96 civil war and in 1982 the village was abandoned when its inhabitants fled over the border into Mexico.

## Funds needed

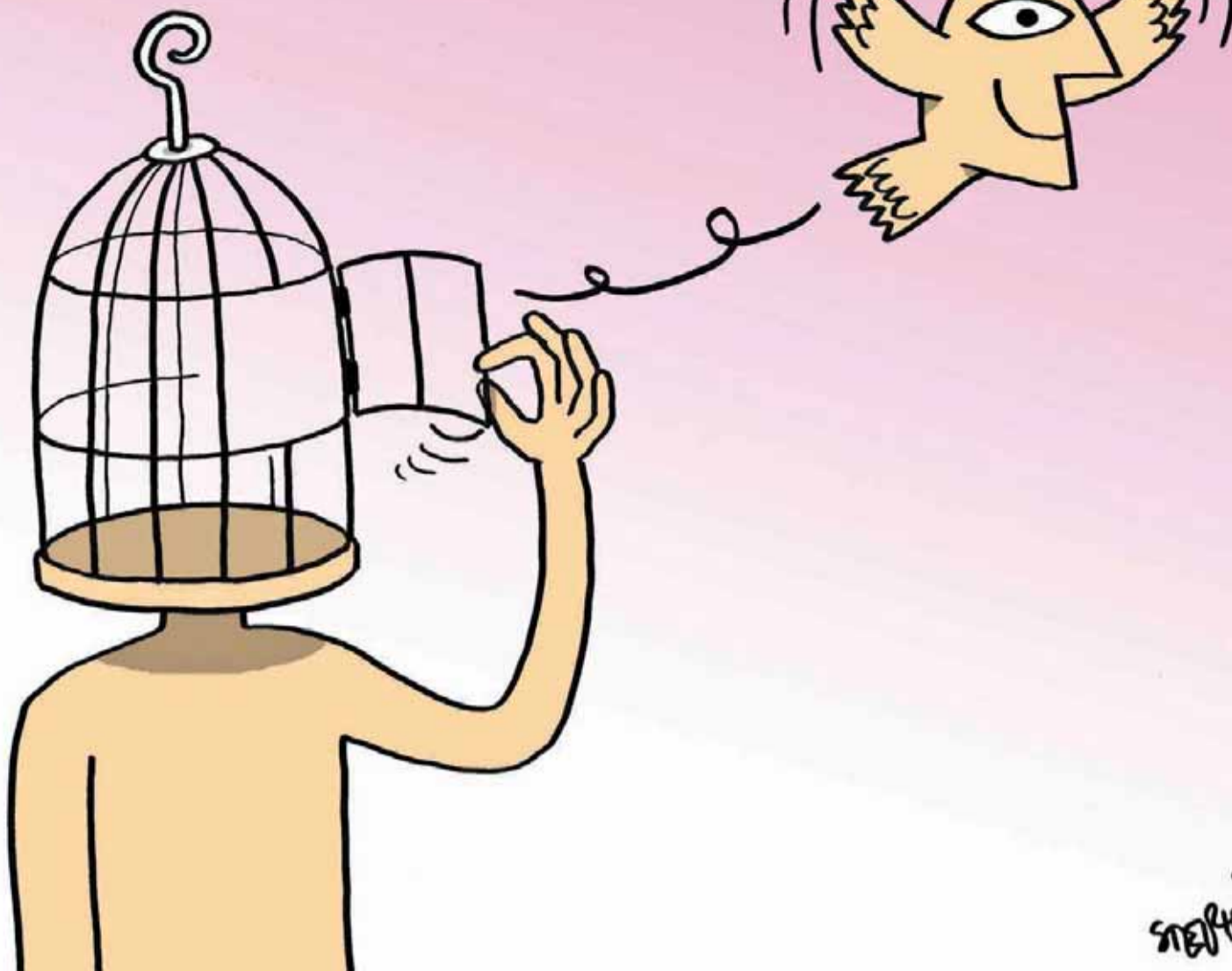
Felipe's death wasn't the only one affecting an indigenous Guatemalan child migrant to the United States this month. He died the same day that seven-year-old Jakelin Caal was buried after also dying on December 8, possibly from dehydration, in a US hospital after she and her 29-year-old father Nery were apprehended by border police when chasing the "American Dream". They came from the Q'eqchi community - one of the largest Mayan groups in the country - in Raxruha, 145 km to the north of Guatemala City.

Following the deaths of the migrant children, the US Department of Homeland Security said all minors in border control would be given thorough medical screening. Meanwhile, the head of border security, Kevin McAleenan appealed for more funds to deal with the "enormous flow" of families crossing from Mexico. — AFP



Catarina Alonzo, mother of eight-year-old migrant Felipe Gomez, who died in a medical center in the US on Dec 24 while in custody of US Customs and Border Protection officers, stands near her children Catarina and Oliver outside their house in Yalambojoch village on Friday. — AFP

## Cartoon for the Soul



## Washington Watch

## Looking backward (2018) and forward (2019)

By Dr James J Zogby

Many years ago, I came across a pre-Islamic Arabic poem describing a camel running across the desert. Suddenly, the camel freezes in mid-stride. First, it looks backward in fear of what it was running from, and then it turns its glance forward - also in fear - toward the unknown that is its destination. It was this image that came to mind as 2018 came to an end and I sat down to write about the year that was and what we expect might unfold in the new year.

By any measure, 2018 was a tumultuous year, in no small way owing to President Trump's unpredictable behavior. He has been, in a word, exhausting. We began and ended 2018 with a short government shutdown owing to Trump's insistence that Congress agree to fund the wall on the Mexican border, despite opposition from Democrats and some leaders in his own party. When Democrats offered the White House partial funding of the wall in an effort to secure a compromise on immigration reform, Trump balked and upped the ante demanding, in addition to his wall, an end to the diversity lottery and family unification - making disparaging remarks about immigrants from the African continent in the process.

He also dramatically reduced the number of refugees admitted to the US and imposed new hardships on those seeking asylum. Added to this has been the administration's "family separation" policy which produced the nightmarish result of thousands of little children being taken from their parents at the border and sent to far-away locations. At year's end, we once again have a government shutdown, no wall, and no indication that the White House is willing to compromise.

In 2018, Trump also repeatedly upset international relations alienating allies both East and West. He frustrated Europe by unilaterally walking away from the Iran nuclear deal; outraged Arabs by moving the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem; imposed stiff new tariffs on imported steel and aluminum; once again acted unilaterally with a bizarre "love fest" with North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-un and Russian President Vladimir Putin causing unease with NATO and South Korea and Japan; and then, at year's end, surprised everyone by announcing that he was pulling all US forces out of Syria and drawing down US forces in Afghanistan.

2018 also witnessed upheaval within the Administration, itself. Trump lost or fired his Secretaries of State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, and Interior, the Attorney General, the Administrator of the Environmental

Protection Agency, the National Security Advisor, the United Nations Ambassador, the White House Chief of Staff, Legal Counsel, and Director of Communications, and a dozen other senior White House officials.

During all this time, Trump spent the year besieged by the growing threat to his presidency posed by the investigation being conducted by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. The Mueller probe and ancillary investigations have thus far taken a hefty toll. Five individuals who worked with the Trump campaign have been found guilty of crimes ranging from conspiracy to making false statements under oath. Add to this, Trump's long-time personal attorney pleaded guilty to a number of financial crimes in which he implicated Trump. And the investigation is still underway.

## Tweeting

If this were not enough, the president has compounded the exhaustion with his incessant tweeting. Each morning a wary public awakens to see what outrageous charges, defamatory rants or insults Trump has to offer. The news networks have unfortunately been accommodating since they spend the better part of each day amplifying his tweets discussing them as if they were "Breaking News."

In the midst of this chaos, Trump has been successful in pursuing his agenda of undoing much of President Obama's accomplishments. There was: A tax cut that resulted in a massive upward redistribution of wealth; a dismantling of regulations that protected consumers, the environment, natural resources, air and water, health and safety; an end to Obama-era education-related policies; and the gutting of Obama's signature legislation reforming health insurance - which is now in danger of completely unraveling. Not everything has been bad news. Trump did lend his support to a significant criminal justice reform bill that passed with bipartisan support. And he did renegotiate a new trade agreement with Mexico and Canada.

Despite these accomplishments, some good, mostly bad, it is the chaos that has dominated the news - and for this, the President can only blame himself. I am reminded of a line in T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" where he describes the faces of passengers on the London Underground being "distracted from distractions, by distractions." This has been our fate in 2018. We are almost unable to focus on one crisis before our attention is diverted by yet another: a mass shooting (once again in 2018, there has been almost one a day); upheaval in the White House; new Mueller indictments; or an incendiary Trump tweet. The result has been a near perpetual state of

nervous anxiety. So much for looking backward at the year we are leaving behind. The problem, of course, is that, like that camel in the poem, we can only feel apprehension as we now run head-long into the year that awaits us - 2019. I learned a long time ago, that the true test we face in life is not how we accomplish the goals we set for ourselves, but how we confront the unexpected challenges that lay before us. We can only predict some of what 2019 will bring.

Democrats will be in control of the House of Representatives and they will not give Trump an easy time. They will begin the year with an inherited government shutdown and a president still insisting that they find \$5 billion in the budget to build his wall (the one he had insisted would be paid for by Mexico). Any compromise they may reach with the White House will still need to be approved by the Republican-controlled Senate.

The New Year will also bring forward the results of Mueller's investigation into Trump campaign collusion with the Russians during the 2016 election and whether or not Trump attempted to obstruct justice by impeding the investigation. Whether or not Democrats want to hold hearings on White House activities related to these or other matters, the Congress will, of necessity, have to react to the Mueller findings or to the Administration's reactions to it (for example, by firing Mueller or attempting to bury his report). The immigration crisis on our southern border will not let up, nor will the challenges to health care reform resulting from a number of court decisions which have put the stability of the current system in limbo. Then there are crises in the world with which we'll have to contend. These we can't predict. Will Turkey take advantage of the US departure to attack Kurdish forces in Syria? Will Israel attack Lebanon? Will the unconscionable behavior of the Iranian-backed militias in recently "liberated" areas of Iraq provoke a resurgence of Daesh2.0? Will the Taliban see the US draw-down as an opportunity and launch a spring offensive?

Will Netanyahu win again, will he be indicted, and will Palestinians react to the unbearable pressure they face at the hands of the Israeli occupation? Will the "Deal of the Century" ever see the light of day? And will Congress, as expected, continue to apply pressure Saudi Arabia, and what impact will that have on the continuing devastating war in Yemen? And then there's China's expansionist moves, Iran's regional meddling, Russia's continuing aggression in Ukraine, and what about Brexit?

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

## Sixty years on, Miami Cubans have brought Caribbean flair

Underpinning Miami, Florida, is sixty years of Castroism in Cuba: The island's diaspora has transformed the city into a towering skyline, where smells of fried "croquetas" and sounds of Spanish fill the air. Roughly 370 kilometers apart, Havana and Miami were already closely connected by trade and tourism at the turn of the 20th century. But 1959 and the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution saw an end to that - and the Cuban diaspora was born.

The first Cuban exiles to leave the island in the 1960s are now around 80 years old. They once dreamed of liberating their country - but now live between frustration and nostalgia, having spent decades conspiring over dominoes on the porches of their pastel-colored homes. "We were losing everything our family had worked for for years. We couldn't accept it," said 78-year-old Johnny Lopez de la Cruz, a member of the 2506 Brigade, a group of CIA-sponsored Cuban exiles who tried to invade Cuba's Bay of Pigs in 1961.

"Those of us who had left Cuba at that time wanted to return to bring democracy and freedom to the Cuban people again," said Lopez, now president of the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association. But their greatest enemy was John F Kennedy, the former US president who "betrayed" them by withdrawing CIA support mid-operation, in an attempt to keep America's involvement under wraps. "Almost all of us were captured," said Lopez. Prison, torture and exile followed. Cubans like Lopez have anti-Castro sentiment coursing through their veins. To them, detente between Washington and Havana equals surrendering - a view simmering among most of Miami's Cuban community older set.

## Tropical flair

As the years went by, the diaspora grew and southern Florida was irrevocably altered: Cuban sandwiches became a permanent fixture, coffee was known as "colada" or "cafecito," and English was relegated from its spot as default language. It's a common local joke that Miami is the only foreign city Americans can visit without a passport. According to the US census, 67 percent of Miami's population was Hispanic in 2017 - with more than half of those Cuban-Americans.

The community holds major clout. Business leader Jorge Mas' support, for example, has proved key to a divisive stadium project from soccer star David Beckham having even a chance of success. "Cubans turned parts of sub-tropical Miami into a city with tropical flair, a



Decorative rooster statues painted with colorful designs and patterns welcome visitors to Calle Ocho in the heart of Little Havana in Miami on Dec 22, 2018. — AFP

Caribbean-like ciudad alegre," wrote historian Anthony Maingot in his 2015 book "Miami: a Cultural History".

And when superstar Cuban-American singer Celia Cruz died in 2003, tens of thousands of people paid their respects to her at Freedom Tower, a monument to the exiles among downtown's skyscrapers. However, despite that flair it's still distinctly American. "The city's welcome Latinization is counterbalanced by the forces of an America which has always encouraged renovation and

change," Maurice Ferre, six-time Miami mayor, wrote in the book's prologue.

Caught in the middle of the cultural crossover are the community's children and grandchildren. Giancarlo Sopo, 35, is the son of a 2506 Brigade veteran. He was born at the "peak" of the mass exodus of Cubans in the 1980s. At the time, popular culture recorded the booming Cuban influence in Miami in the form of hits such as Gloria Estefan's "Conga" and the film "Scarface" with Al Pacino. — AFP

## Business

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NASHIK: Farmers wait for the auction of onions at Lasalgaon market in Nashik district in the western state of Maharashtra. — Reuters

## Onion prices may hit Modi's poll prospects

Farmers lament as onion and potato prices crash as much as 86%

**HIVARGAON/MUJAHIDPUR, India:** A spike in the price of onions has led to the ouster of governments in Indian elections in the past. Now, prices of the staple have collapsed, and many impoverished farmers are saying they will make Prime Minister Narendra Modi pay in next year's general election.

Steep drops in recent weeks in the prices of onions and potatoes, both staple foods for India's 1.3 billion people, have badly hit the rural economy in large states.

In interviews with dozens of farmers last week, Reuters reporters found resentment welling against Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for not helping support incomes in the countryside, where a majority of the population lives.

The Indian government on Friday doubled export incentives for onion farmers to 10 percent, following steep drops in recent weeks in the prices for onions, a staple food in India. The move will result in better prices for onions in the domestic market, the government said in a statement.

The export incentive program allows farmers to get a credit from the government, which can be used to pay various taxes.

"Whatever they do in the coming months, I will vote against the BJP. I won't repeat the 2014 mistake," said Madhukar Nagare, an onion grower from Nashik in Maharashtra state, referring to his backing the BJP at the last general election.

In the 1998 state elections, a sharp spike in onion prices led to the fall of the BJP government in the capital New Delhi. In the 1980 general election, sky-high onion prices helped former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi dislodge a coalition government that had included politicians who later formed the BJP.

In recent weeks, loss-stricken farmers have staged protests, blocked highways and dumped onions on the

road after prices plunged to as low as one rupee (1.4 US cents) per kg for a crop that costs about 8 rupees a kg to produce.

But because of large cuts taken by middlemen, consumers have not benefited from the low prices.

In Maharashtra, the top onion producing state, farm prices have fallen 83 percent, dragged down by surplus supplies from the previous season's crop and lower export orders from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

And in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, which was crucial in Modi's election win in 2014, there is a similar problem with low potato prices.

Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are both dominated by rural voters and together send 128 lawmakers to the 545-member lower house of parliament. It means that big losses in these two states could either see Modi lose the next election which is due by May or his party be forced to form a coalition government.

Farmers say shortcomings in a government crop support programme, and weak overseas demand have combined to produce the current glut of onions. And as prices have plunged, fertiliser and crop nutrient costs have risen, thanks in part to a weak rupee.

Perhaps most important of all, the BJP came into office in 2014 determined to shift away from subsidies. That may have been fine when crop prices were relatively high but as they crashed it has exposed the party in farm areas.

The prime minister's office did not respond to a request for comment on this story.

**Not 'good days'**

Many farmers blame Modi for not fixing a price protection program which barely covers 7 percent of India's 263 million farmers, leaving most growers at the mercy of middlemen. They also criticize him for not set-

ting up more food processing and cold storage facilities, which would allow them to store their crops without having to sell immediately after the harvest.

"Expecting good days, as promised by Modi, we voted for the BJP, but now we are going through the worst phase," onion farmer Madhav Pawase said, pointing to his rotting crop stocked in a temporary shed in Hivargaon village, about 230 km (140 miles) northeast of Mumbai, India's financial hub.

"I've spent more than 80,000 rupees to produce 15 tons of onions from my two acres of land, but I won't recover more than 3,000 rupees at the current market price," he said.

Some farmers have decided to let onions rot in the field, saying that harvesting and transporting the produce to wholesale markets would only add to their losses.

The BJP was defeated by the opposition Congress party in three major states in local elections this month because of rural anger, and Modi's government is under pressure to come up with measures to placate farmers. Congress wrote off farmers' loans in the three states which it won and has demanded the federal government do the same across the country.

Although the BJP has so far not commented on the issue of farm loan waivers, Rajiv Kumar, the head of government think-tank NITI Aayog, has said that writing off debt is not the solution for the problems of the farm sector.

Syed Zafar Islam, a spokesman for the BJP, said the government had initiated a number of steps to help farmers get remunerative prices, including a project to electronically provide farmers with real-time market prices and help them directly sell to buyers, eliminating middlemen.

"It's an ongoing process and the results will not just

start reflecting in four years," he said. In a sign that the Modi administration is beginning to take the crisis seriously, the government on Friday doubled export incentives for onion farmers to 10 percent. The move will result in better prices for onions in the domestic market, the government said in a statement.

**Potato prices**

In Mujahidpur village of Uttar Pradesh, India's biggest potato growing state, farmers lamented that prices have dropped by 86 percent to 2,500 rupees a ton. "I lost my entire investment of 100,000 rupees to grow potatoes on one hectare," said Gopi Chand, 55, sitting next to bright yellow mustard fields. He said he and some other farmers in the area had dumped potatoes in favour of growing mustard.

Farmers in the two states also complained of rising operating costs.

Prices of crop nutrient diammonium phosphate, popularly called DAP, have gone up by 400 rupees to 1,450 rupees for a bag of 50 kg, said Babloo Singh in Mujahidpur village. DAP rates have gone up because of higher overseas prices and India's weaker currency.

"Higher input costs and record low potato prices have left us in deep debt," said Singh. "The situation would have been different had there been more cold storage facilities and food processing plants in our state." The crash in vegetable prices hasn't helped consumers either thanks to the chain of middlemen.

In Lasalgaon, the country's largest onion trading hub, most farmers are selling their produce at 2 rupees a kg. But consumers in Mumbai are still shelling out 20 rupees. Between Lasalgaon and Mumbai, a distance of 220 km (135 miles), traders say onions pass through at least four layers of middlemen, adding a hefty margin at every stage. — Reuters

## Business

# 'Reality' bites: Cuba plans more austerity as finances worsen

## Sluggish bureaucracy under pressure to tighten its belt and cut red tape

**HAVANA:** Cash-strapped Cuba plans fresh austerity measures and will pressure the sluggish bureaucracy to tighten its belt and cut red tape to address weak growth, falling export earnings and rising debt.

The economy has averaged 1 percent annual growth over the last three years, compared with a 5 percent to 7 percent rate economists say is needed to recover fully from a 1990s depression caused by the fall of its former benefactor, the Soviet Union. The communist-run country has more recently been hit by the economic collapse of its new sponsor and strategic ally, Venezuela, which began to send fuel and cash its way in exchange for doctors and medicine 18 years ago.

Other external shocks, such as Hurricane Irma in late 2017 and the Trump administration's tightening of U.S. sanctions, have also weighed on the Caribbean island nation's economy.

"The 2019 plan is one of adjustment to current realities. We cannot spend more than we earn," Economy Minister Alejandro Gil Fernandez said at a session of the National Assembly last week.

State-run companies account for and control most economic activity, including finances and foreign trade, through a planned economy. Cuba last reported its foreign debt at \$15.8 billion in 2015. It began delaying payments to some suppliers and investors in 2016, with western diplomats and businessmen estimating the short-term debt accumulated since then at more than \$1.5 billion. President Miguel Diaz-Canel told the Assembly that next year the country would slightly reduce the backlog of overdue payments through austerity measures and by drawing on a glut of inventory and emergency reserves.

Diaz-Canel and Gil said plans for the economy to grow 1.5 percent, after an anemic 1.2 percent this year, were based in part on doing away with bureaucratic habits and cutting waste and theft.

"The plan must be executed immediately. We have to review the system to insure there is no room for bureaucrats to maneuver," Diaz-Canel said, threatening to replace them if they stuck to their old ways.

### Crisis to continue

Venezuelan oil deliveries have fallen at least 40 percent since 2014, forcing Cuba to import from Russia and Algeria. Cuba imports more than half the fuel it consumes.

Gil said fuel consumption would be cut from 91 metric tons per million pesos in gross domestic product this year to 84 tons in 2019.

Foreign trade fell around 25 percent from 2013 through 2017, with annual imports dropping to \$11.3 billion from \$15.6 billion, according to the government. Gil said trade declined further in 2018, without providing figures. The minister said exports would increase 6 percent next year while imports would be slashed 11 percent compared with the 2018 plan, in an economy heavily dependent on raw materials and machinery from abroad for nearly everything it produces.

Economist Pavel Vidal, a former central bank analyst who teaches at the Universidad Javeriana Cali in Colombia, called the 1.5 percent growth target "reasonable" as sugar, agriculture and tourism had a particularly bad 2018 due to Hurricane Irma, meaning that growth would come from a low starting point. "What is most worrisome is the payment crisis, which continues



**HAVANA:** Cash-strapped Cuba plans fresh austerity measures and will pressure the sluggish bureaucracy to tighten its belt and cut red tape to address weak growth, falling export earnings and rising debt.

to grow, and creditors are losing patience," said Vidal, who has authored various reports on Cuba in conjunction with international lending institutions.

Western diplomats who met with top officials recently said the Cubans said little about how they

planned to surmount the crisis and gave no indication they would allow more private initiative and capital accumulation by citizens. "Obtaining inputs and credit on the international market will be more difficult in 2019," Vidal said. —Reuters

## Ryanair cabin crew in Spain to strike in January

**MADRID:** Unions for Ryanair's 1,800 cabin crew in Spain threatened Friday to strike in January unless the Irish low-cost airline agrees to improve work and pay conditions.

It was just the latest setback for the airline, which has faced a wave of strikes in several European countries in recent months. The two unions representing the staff, USO and Sitcpa, called for 24-hour strikes on January 8, 10 and 13 because Ryanair had failed to reach an agreement with them during mediation. The unions are demanding local contracts under local law rather than the Irish contracts Ryanair uses widely.

It was "disgusting" that Ryanair "continues to refuse to accept national law with all its consequences", USO representative Jairo Gonzalo said in a statement.

Europe's biggest low-cost airline only began recognizing unions for the first time in its 30-year history in December last year, to avert mass strikes during the busy Christmas period.

In July, strikes by cockpit and cabin crew disrupted 600 flights in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, affecting 100,000 travellers. Then on September 28, cabin crew walked out again in Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain and in some countries pilots' unions also took action.

The budget carrier has so far managed to clinch labor agreements with staff in several countries including Britain, Germany, Portugal and Italy. Spain is Ryanair's third biggest market. The airline has 13 of its 89 bases in the country. —AFP

## China to restrict imports of scrap steel, aluminum from July

**SHANGHAI:** China will restrict imports of scrap steel and aluminum from July 1, the environment ministry said yesterday.

Scrap steel and aluminum would be moved from an unrestricted import list of solid waste products usable as raw materials to a restricted import list, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in a statement.

Relevant departments were researching the formulation of standards for recycled copper and aluminum, it said.

Copper and aluminum raw materials meeting relevant national standards would not be considered solid waste, and can be imported as regular goods, it said.

China's imports of solid waste fell more than half between January and mid-November compared with the same period a year earlier, as the country tightened a ban on solid waste imports.

The restrictions on waste imports are part of a "war on pollution" begun in 2017 that aims to clean up the economy and encourage domestic firms to recycle. —Reuters

## World stock markets struggle to finish strong after wild week

**NEW YORK:** Investors gravitated to safe-haven assets on Friday as worries about the world economy persisted, cutting short a two-day rebound in US stocks. US stocks see-sawed, making it difficult for world equity indexes to end one of the most brutal December selloffs in memory on a high note.

"Markets will likely remain treacherous in the New Year," Marc Chandler at Bannockburn securities told clients. After fluctuating most of the morning, at midday the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 43.89 points, or 0.19 percent, to 23,182.71, the S&P 500 gained 6.85 points, or 0.28 percent, to 2,495.68 and the Nasdaq Composite added 21.03 points, or 0.32 percent, to 6,600.53.

The pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 1.85 percent and MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe gained 0.58 percent to bring the global benchmark to a weekly gain over 1 percent.

Markets have swung wildly in a week shortened by the Christmas holiday. But even a late Santa Claus rally will do little to salve the 8 percent declines for the

MSCI index this month and a year that brought gains for very few categories of financial assets, from stocks to bonds and commodities.

The dollar index fell 0.1 percent, with the euro up 0.1 percent to \$1.1441 and Japanese yen strengthening 0.57 percent versus the greenback at 110.39 per dollar. The greenback is down about 0.9 percent this month.

That has boosted gold, a traditional safe haven whose appeal this year was hit by a stronger dollar, which makes the metal more expensive to buyers with other currencies. The metal is perched at six-month highs of \$1,279.18 an ounce.

The steady drum beat of disappointing economic data has continued to reinforce caution, with Japan's industrial output contracting in November and retail sales showing sharply.

In Europe, German annual inflation slowed sharply in December, while in the United States, National Association of Realtors data showed contracts to buy previously owned homes fell unexpectedly in November, the latest sign of weakness in the US housing market.

Chris Bailey, a strategist at brokerage Raymond James, said dollar weakness was good news for non-US assets. "My feeling is... if we get the transmission mechanism of a lower dollar, stocks outside the US are set up for a good 2019," Bailey said. "Once people get their heads around the fact the US is not going to have yet another double-digit return year in 2019, you can look elsewhere."

That would be a relief to world markets that largely underperformed the

## Much-awaited holiday cheer finally arrives to UK markets

**LONDON:** British shares leaped off multi-year lows on Friday boosted by initial relief spilling over from the United States, where stocks sprang back following steep losses as a turbulent 2018 neared its end.

The FTSE 100 was up 2.27 percent and the FTSE 250 was up 2.19 percent, with just one more trading day left in the year. All sectors bagged gains with the FTSE 100 recording its best day since April.

Both indexes had sunk to their lowest in more than two years in the previous session with the mid-cap bourse closing just shy of confirming a bear market over concerns about the global economy.

The UK indexes defended most gains on Friday, despite the Wall Street turning sour again by 1530 GMT. Oil majors BP and Shell were among the biggest boosts to the FTSE, up 3.5 percent and 2.3 percent respectively as oil prices rebounded.

Shares in exporter companies also climbed, led by British American Tobacco which rose 4.3 percent.

Pharmaceutical giants AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline and financial heavyweights HSBC, Prudential all added between 1.9 and 3.4 percent.

Britain's mid-cap index, which is more exposed to uncertainties at home, was aided by strength in industrials and bank shares.

In single moves, the biggest support to the index was a 6.3 percent surge in shares of CYBG, the owner of Clydesdale Bank and Yorkshire Bank. The United States and China are locked in a trade war that has disrupted the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars of goods, but while trade relations between the U.S. and China were still fraught, some saw signs of progress in recent days.



**FRANKFURT AM MAIN:** Traders work in front of a board displaying the chart of Germany's share index DAX (background) on Friday at the stock exchange in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. —AFP

United States in 2018.

US Treasuries did not see a huge flight-to-safety move. Bonds have been helped in recent weeks by risk aversion, but also face a glut of supply as the US government finances its growing deficit. Short and medium-term bonds were little changed on Friday. The 30-year Treasury bond last fell 6/32 in price to yield 3.0383 percent, from 3.029 percent late on Thursday. US crude oil futures managed to lift a bit further off 2-year lows after a near-40 percent decline this quarter. The Energy Information Administration reported US crude stocks fell modestly last week.

Brent crude futures fell 3 cents to \$52.13 a barrel, a 0.1 percent loss, by 12:28 p.m. EST (1728 GMT). US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 54 cents to \$45.15 a barrel, a 1.2 percent gain.

In Italy, 10-year yields are set for their biggest monthly drop since July 2015. In the last auction of the year, investors were willing to buy 10-year government bonds at 2.70 percent, down from 3.24 percent last month. The auction could be a sign Italy has turned a corner after months of consternation over fractious talks on its spending plans with the European Union. —Reuters



"The Chinese have liberalized, they've set up for more discussions in January. It's not going to be a straight road but I think there's a little bit of cause for optimism there," Chris Bailey, Raymond James analyst, said. Persisting worries over a slowdown in the global economy compounded by the trade spat have put US bourses and their UK counterparts on course for their worst yearly losses since the 2008 financial crisis.

With a US government shutdown also ongoing and Brexit uncertainties remaining unresolved, the FTSE 100 was on track for its worst quarterly fall since 2011, when Europe was battling a sovereign debt crisis.

It was down 10.3 percent this quarter. Among a handful of stocks in the red, Xaar, which makes ink jets for printers, hit its lowest in over eight years, underperforming the rest of the small-cap index with an 8 per-

cent fall after a disappointing trading update.

In more bad news for the retail sector's already subdued festive spirit, entertainment retailer HMV Retail said it would appoint administrators, with Sky News saying that would put about 2,200 jobs at risk.

Data had separately showed sales on Boxing Day - a key day for the retail industry - dipped.

HMV, among Britain's best-known high street names, said it was calling in the administrators for the second time in six years, and it blamed a worsening market for CDs and DVDs.

HMV joins the likes of Toys R Us, House of Fraser and Mothercare on the list of high-profile household names that have gone under this year amid Brexit jitters, lower consumer spending and rising labor costs. —Reuters

## Business

## NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

# Saudi growth outlook positive amid record govt spending

## Oil output rebounds but non-oil activity to drive growth

**KUWAIT:** The Saudi economy has recovered after last year's contraction, and is forecast to expand by 2.3 percent in 2018 on the back of record high oil production since mid-2018 and increases in non-oil sector activity. However, domestic and private sector demand has been sub-optimal, having been adversely affected by lackluster credit growth and rising costs such as the VAT, expatriate levies and higher cost of funds in the context of rising interest rates, as well as by the net loss of almost a million expatriate workers since 2017. At the same time, the Saudi unemployment rate has crept up, to 12.9 percent in 2018. But fiscal reform has, however, proceeded broadly in line with the government's Fiscal Balance Program, accruing savings and generating greater non-oil revenues. The fiscal deficit, has consequently, narrowed to 4.6 percent of GDP in 2018; public debt, though, has edged up to 19.4 percent of GDP.

Looking ahead to 2020, in view of Saudi Arabia's participation in a further round of OPEC+ production cuts, which will cap oil GDP growth, the non-oil sector will increasingly take the lead, with annual average gains of 3.2 percent expected thanks to elevated government spending, private sector stimulus and ongoing Vision 2030 business reforms. But the economy is likely to have to operate in an environment of softer oil prices, which could cause the fiscal deficit to widen in 2019.

### Oil sector output

Saudi oil sector output in 2018 benefitted greatly from the OPEC+ decision in mid-2018 to boost crude production to offset falling Venezuelan and Iranian supplies, the latter due to US President Trump's decision to reinstate stringent energy sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Saudi crude production hit an all-time high of 11.09 mb/d in November, helping to realize real oil growth of around 2.8 percent in 2018.

However, with Saudi Arabia signing up to another round of OPEC+ production cuts for the duration of IH19 in order to stabilize oil prices that had dropped by more than 30 percent since October, crude output is not expected to increase above 10.2-10.3 mb/d. Consequently, oil GDP gains in 2019 and 2020, at 0.2 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, will be limited, and reflect primarily increased gas production and crude flows to feed expanding refinery operations, namely the 400,000 b/d Jazan refinery, which went on line in 2018.

Nevertheless, it is on the non-oil sector that the kingdom's economic fortunes will ultimately rest.

Saudi non-oil activity has been increasing amid record budget outlays of SR1 trillion-plus and a renewed government focus on the private sector—the second phase of the SR72 billion (\$19bn), four-year private sector stimulus plan was launched in November—and on capital intensive projects. Billions have been pledged on housing, tourism, transportation, power and education projects.

Sectoral data released during the year confirmed the improvement in non-oil activity, with the manufacturing component of the industrial production index, up 16.4 percent y/y in 2Q18, and real manufacturing GDP growth increasing to 3.2 percent y/y. Real estate and financial services were also positive contributors, rising by 4.2 percent y/y. In terms of business and consumer activity, the value of point-of-sale (POS) transactions in October had increased by 17.3 percent y/y and the headline figure in the Saudi Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was up at a 2018-high of 55.2 in November.

Despite the gains, consumer activity remains below potential. The average PMI for 2018, at 53.7, is the lowest in the history of the survey—and well below 2011's avg. of 60—and private sector credit growth, though rising last October to a twenty-two month high of 1.7 percent y/y, is still a long way off the double digit growth rates of 2011-2015.

Still-subdued consumer confidence amid rising household costs—fuel and utilities, expatriate levies, tobacco and soft drinks and the 5 percent VAT—have undoubtedly played a part. Consumption was also affected by the net loss of almost a million expatriate workers since the start of 2017 in the face of rising expatriate fees and an acceleration in the government's Saudization policy.

Recognizing the adverse effect on demand, the government created the citizens' and household allowance programs to mitigate some of the additional cost burdens and augmented citizen's take home with SR1000 (\$266) in monthly allowances and, from 2019, bonus payments for public sector workers independent of performance. The government is also reportedly considering slowing down the scheduled rate of increase in expatriate fees to ease the cost burden on both expatriates (currently SR200 per expatriate dependent per month but due to double to SR400 by 2020) and firms (currently SR400 per month for every expat worker that exceeds a Saudi employee and due to rise to SR700-800 per month by 2020). Of course, firms also face the reality of hiring costlier Saudi workers, given their higher salary expectations.

Moreover, the Saudi unemployment rate continues to creep up. The government's Vision 2030 reform drive sought to reduce the rate to 7.0 percent from 11.6 percent in 2015. As of 2Q18, the figure had reached 12.9 percent—the fifth consecutive quarterly rise—as the Saudi labor force growth outpaces employment growth.

### Inflation easing

Inflation has moderated since the authorities rolled out the 5 percent value added tax (VAT) and instituted the second round of energy price hikes in January. Having been as high as 4.0 percent y/y in February, headline inflation slowed to 2.8 percent y/y in October 2018 on falling housing/utilities costs (25 percent of the CPI basket). We are not expecting inflation to increase much above 2 percent on average in 2019, from 2.5 percent in 2018, with inflationary impulses coming mainly from higher food, restaurant and transportation costs and in line with a pick-up in economic activity underpinned by the government's expansionary fiscal stance.

### Fiscal deficit to narrow by 2020

The kingdom has made considerable improvement over the last few years in rationalizing public spending, creating viable non-oil revenue streams and, ultimately, bringing down the fiscal deficit from a peak of 15.1 percent of GDP in 2015 to an estimated 4.6 percent of GDP in 2018.

### Source: Ministry of Finance, NBK estimates

The narrower fiscal deficit of 2018 was the result of revenue growth (+29 percent y/y to SR895bn) significantly outpacing expenditure growth (+11 percent y/y to SR1,029bn). Not only did the kingdom capitalize on higher oil prices (+35 percent y/y at an avg. of \$71/bbl) and greater volumes exports, it was also able to substantially raise non-oil revenues (+12 percent y/y) from

freefall after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the subsequent outbreak of a pro-Russian insurgency in the eastern Donbass region. Since then, Russia has banned imports of beer, vodka, juice, wallpaper and confectionery from Ukraine.

Moscow said on Saturday items included in the new ban included industrial goods as well as some agricultural products, raw materials and food. "Ukraine periodically imposes sanctions against both Russian individuals and legal entities, and for specific Russian goods," a Russian government statement said. "Since the introduction of measures to ban imports from Russia of certain types of agricultural products, the Ukrainian sanctions list has been expanded to 18 types of products," it added. Russia's Economy Ministry said on Saturday in a comment on the government decree that the value of Ukrainian goods included in the updated ban was estimated at around \$50 million in 2018. Ukraine has filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization challenging the Russian trade curbs on its beverages and sweets. — Reuters

ing. Trading from quantitative hedge funds relying on computer models now accounts for 28.7 percent of overall volumes in the United States, according to the Tabb Group consultancy. That is more than twice the share from five years ago and, since 2017, above the percentage held by individual investors.

JPMorgan Chase analyst Marko Kolanovic has estimated that only about one-third of the assets in the stock market are actively managed and that only 10 percent of the daily trading volume is the result of specific deliberation. But while the rise of automated trading is undeniable, it is less clear that it is responsible for increased market turmoil. Tabb Group Founder Larry Tabb said most electronic trading firms employ algorithms that identify and take advantage of price discrepancies between the price of a given security and what it fetches elsewhere.

"They are looking to buy the cheap ones," Tabb said, adding, "most models actually dampen volatility rather than enhance volatility."

At the same time, Tabb concedes that the proliferation of exchanges where stocks are bought and sold can result in limited liquidity on platforms. That can make markets vulnerable to a "flash crash," although this possibility was mitigated with circuit breakers instituted after 2010.

The system of automated trading is "all about supply and demand like it's always been," Tabb said. "It's just a supply and demand at a quicker pace." Another oft-cited risk is the tendency for computers to behave with "herd"-like behavior because they are engineered in a similar fashion. "Because of the design similarities, they tend to buy and sell futures at similar price levels," said Peter Hahn, co-founder of Bridgeton Research Group. — AFP

Table 1: Key economic indicators

		2017	2018e	2019f	2020f
Real GDP	% y/y	-0.9	2.3	2.0	2.5
- Oil	% y/y	-0.2	2.8	0.2	1.2
- Non-oil	% y/y	1.0	2.3	3.2	3.3
Inflation	% y/y	-0.8	2.5	2.1	2.2
Budget balance	% of GDP	-8.9	-4.6	-6.4	-4.1
Public debt	% of GDP	17.2	19.4	22.2	23.7

Source: Official sources, NBK estimates

excise duties (tobacco etc.), expatriate levies and of course the VAT. Non-oil revenues as a share of GDP reached a high of 10 percent.

The authorities, recently announcing another record budget, of SR1,106bn (\$295bn), for 2019 are committed to supporting the non-oil economy through austerity-mitigating social allowances and through more productive infrastructure investments. They plan to increase spending by 7.4 percent over actual 2018 outlays.

While the government is broadly on track to achieve its balanced budget objective by 2023, 2019 could see the deficit widen, to 6.4 percent of GDP, rather than narrow. This is because we expect both oil prices to be softer than in 2018 and the government to continue with its expansionary fiscal policy. We believe that the government will be obliged to pare back some of its intended expenditure outlays to keep the deficit in check.

### Public debt to rise

The government continues to finance the deficit through a combination of debt issuance (e.g. bonds, sukuk, loans) and reserve drawdowns. Public debt reached an estimated 19.4 percent of GDP (SR563bn) at the end of 2018, and is forecast to rise to 22.2 percent of GDP in 2019 and to 23.7 percent of GDP by 2020 (See Chart 4.) We put the government's financing requirement at around SR188bn (\$50.3bn) in 2019, higher than the government's own forecast of SR118bn (\$31.5bn), due to our lower oil price estimate. Saudi debt is still low by international standards. Meanwhile, central government

deposits and reserves are estimated to have fallen to SR523bn at end-2018, a drop of SR66bn y/y (-11 percent), equal to half of 2018's fiscal deficit.

Total bank deposit growth rose by 1.2 percent y/y in October, while deposits of businesses and individuals grew by 1.9 percent y/y. While weak by pre-2014 standards, it is an improvement on the negative deposit growth seen in 2017. Funding costs, however, are on the rise, which could stifle still-weak consumer/business borrowing. SAMA just raised, for the fourth time in 2018 following the US Fed's lead, its key policy rates, the repo and reverse repo, by 25 bps to 3.0 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively. Two further hikes are now expected in 2019. Interbank rates (SAIBOR) have also trended upwards in 2018, by about 100 bps to 2.91 percent as of 19 December 2018, as the Saudi central bank (SAMA) works to maintain a positive spread with US Libor in order to stem capital outflows.

### Outlook is positive

Government investment is expected to continue spearheading the kingdom's development and diversification plan. While visible improvements have been made by in the fiscal, economic and regulatory spheres, the outlook is still very dependent on the trajectory of oil prices. Retaining the confidence of businesses and foreign investors is paramount. Feeding into that, however, the authorities are sure to have recognized the value of managing expectations and perceptions.

## Russia widens ban on Ukrainian imports in tit-for-tat sanctions row

**MOSCOW:** Russia expanded a ban on imported goods from Ukraine yesterday, saying it would halt some \$500 million worth of annual imports of mainly industrial products in retaliation for economic sanctions by Kiev.

Earlier this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the government to prepare a list of measures against Ukraine after Kiev announced economic sanctions on a list of Russian companies and business figures. Relations between Ukraine and Russia went into

## Spotlight on role of automated trading amid Wall St swoon

**NEW YORK:** The recent tumult in financial markets has shined a light on the rising role of automated trading on Wall Street and whether it is exacerbating volatility.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, investors have increasingly turned to computerized trading systems that have been programmed to render quickfire "buy" and "sell" orders based on economic data, utterances of central bankers or complex artificial intelligence software that employ algorithms. Though set up by humans, these trades are based on a snap assessment that lacks the subtle discernment of the human eye. Whenever an unexpected lurch on Wall Street slams investors, fingers are pointed at such systems that increasingly dominate trading.

Critics have questioned whether the market's recent swoon—which could result in the worst December since the Great Depression—is due to a liquidity drain and other unanticipated effects of the computerization of trading, rather than fundamental economic factors at a time when US unemployment is low and economic growth is solid.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, in a recent interview with Bloomberg, blamed the uptick in volatility on the surge in high-frequency trading, a type of automated trad-



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

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

The Bank will be operating during its normal working hours on Monday 31 December 2018. However, there will be no evening shift for branches.

The Bank will be closed on Tuesday 1 January 2019 and will resume business as usual on Wednesday 2 January 2019.

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## Business

# Burgan Bank successfully issues KD100m bonds in local market

## Bonds well-received by institutional investors, high net-worth individuals

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank, the second largest local conventional bank by assets size in Kuwait, announced yesterday the successful private placement issuance of KD 100 million bonds in the local market. The bonds have a three-years tenor, and carry a fixed interest rate of 4.125 percent per annum.

This transaction, which represents the first of its type to be undertaken by a Kuwaiti bank in the local market, was oversubscribed, being well-received by both institutional investors and high net-worth individuals alike.

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, the Chairman of Burgan Bank commented: "We are pleased with the trust and confidence placed in us by the investors in our bonds. This issuance is testament to Burgan's commitment to support the continued development of the local debt capital market."

"We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the country's regulators for their diligence and professionalism throughout the transaction process," added Al-Ajeel.



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel

Raed Al-Haqhaq

The Chief Executive Officer- Kuwait of Burgan Bank, Raed Al-Haqhaq, commented: "we are very pleased to

close this inaugural benchmark transaction. The support provided by our transaction's advisors was indispensable to the success of this initiative."

"This transaction demonstrates Burgan's on-going strategy to diversify the Bank's sources of funds, support the Bank's balance sheet with secure long term funding, and meet regulatory liquidity requirements, which include the NSFR (Net Stable Funding Ratio). This type of bond creates a new asset class for banks in the local market," added Al-Haqhaq. Issuance proceeds will be used for general corporate purposes. Burgan Bank has affirmed credit ratings of A+ by Fitch, A3 by Moody's, and BBB+ by S&P underlying the credit strength of the Bank.

NBK Capital and KAMCO Investment Company acted as Joint Lead Managers and Placement Agents on the transaction. International Counsel Bureau and ASAR - Al-Ruwayh & Partners acted as the legal advisors to the Bank and the Joint Lead Managers, respectively, on the transaction.



## KIB awarded 'Fastest Growing Islamic Bank MENA' 2018

**KUWAIT:** For the third consecutive year, KIB was awarded 'Fastest Growing Islamic Bank MENA' 2018 by Capital Finance International (CFI.co), an organization specializing in the finance and banking sectors.

KIB received this award based on the result of a judging panel, which included a group of specialized editors. Accordingly, the Bank was recognized for its remarkable growth in the banking sector and the success of its new strategy. This new strategy has been a key component driving the Bank's fast-paced growth and expansion in the banking sector, propelling KIB to the forefront of the sector locally and regionally. The Bank was judged against several

key criteria, namely financial performance, risk management, corporate governance, customer service, innovation, corporate social responsibility, market leadership, transparency, response to market demands, and number of votes.

On this occasion, Chairman of KIB, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, congratulated all KIB staff for winning this prestigious award, saying: "We have made great strides with our new strategy, making KIB a partner in every aspect of people's lives, particularly our customers." Al-Jarrah added saying: "This new strategy focuses on enhancing the overall customer banking experience, thereby ensuring customer satisfaction by providing them with the latest innovative technological banking services and improving the Bank's efficiency. By doing so, we are able to expand and grow despite the highly-competitive market."

Al-Jarrah also noted that KIB continues to adopt a solid strategy to develop and strategically market its products and services, aiming at meeting diverse needs of the community. The Bank has also built a strategic network of relationships with both public and private institutions across Kuwait and the region. Additionally, KIB actively contributes to the financing of local development projects; a core component of the Bank's operations.

CFI.co is an international, independent assessment body specializing in finance and banking. A prominent, London-based organization, CFI.co is dedicated to recognizing both individuals and institutions that demonstrate high standards of innovation and performance excellence in the global financial market. The organization also sheds light on leading institutions across various specialized fields that display outstanding performance amidst challenges in the financial sector.

## Burgan Bank airport branch open during New Year's holiday

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced yesterday that its airport branch will resume normal working hours during the upcoming New Year holiday, on Tuesday 1st January 2019. The branch will commence operations from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm, in an effort to accommodate banking requirements for travellers' during the public holiday. For more information on any products or services, customers are required to contact Burgan Bank's call center 1804080 during the holiday. On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public on the arrival of the New Year.

## Oman Air increases another frequency to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Commencing 1st April 2019, Oman Air, the national carrier of Sultanate of Oman, has increased its frequencies between Kuwait and Muscat, following a significant increase in passenger demand. With this, Oman Air will be flying four daily flights between Kuwait and Muscat, providing its passengers with even more flexibility and choice to onward destinations.

The new service to Muscat is part of the award-winning airline's continued expansion in Kuwait. The new flight, WY 641, will depart from Muscat at 0750 and arrive in Kuwait at 0900 and from Kuwait WY 642 will leave at 1000 and arrive in Muscat at 1310, all time local time.

Mustapha El Hamoui, Country Manager of Oman Air in Kuwait, said: "We are delighted to announce the addition of a fourth flight between Kuwait and Muscat in addition to the current flights we have. Except on Sundays, the additional service will be operated on all the other days which will take the number of weekly flights between Muscat and Kuwait to 27. The new frequency offers excel-



Mustapha Elhamoui

lent connectivity to Europe and also to certain select destinations in India subcontinent."

2018 has been a stellar year for Oman Air. Apart from winning a multitude of awards and accolades, Oman Air also added 8 brand new aircraft to its growing fleet and opened three new destinations namely, Istanbul in Turkey, Casablanca in Morocco and Moscow in Russia, as well as resuming operations to Maldives.

## Clock ticks for Italy to pass budget after EU standoff

**ROME:** Italy's populist government was racing yesterday to get a revised 2019 budget through parliament before year end despite complaints it was written by Brussels and being rammed through without debate. Key measures in the big-spending budget have been watered down as the government tries to avoid being punished by the European Commission and the markets. Senators passed the draft last week in a vote of confidence that avoided discussing around 700 amendments put forward by the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the anti-immigration League coalition but provoked acrimonious scenes over the lack of substantive debate.

Similar scenes were repeated on Friday in the lower house, where the session was suspended after copies of the budget were thrown around, and the government will again resort to a vote of confidence yesterday or today. If next year's budget is not passed before December 31,

the government will continue to function on a monthly basis using the 2018 budget. "There was no deliberate wish by the government to avoid discussion," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told an end of year press conference on Friday as the opposition Democratic Party filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court over the sidelining of parliament.

Conte, a lawyer, is not a member of either of the ruling parties and has worked to achieve compromises between the parties and with Brussels since the government was formed in June. In a historic first, in October the European Commission rejected Italy's big-spending budget, which promised a universal basic income and scrapped pension reform.

But Italy last week agreed to reduce the cost of both of its landmark measures, and is now committed to not adding to its colossal two-trillion euro debt load next year.

In the latest hiccup to the tightly balanced revised budget, charities were on Thursday up in arms over a sudden decision to double their tax rate from 12 to 24 percent.

M5S leader and Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio bore the brunt of criticism as he had said the budget would "end poverty". He said there was no time to remove the measure before the end of the year and so the law would have to be changed again in January. Deputy Prime Minister

Matteo Salvini's League has also had to climb down on costly pension reform. The government has struggled to come up with a budget that pleases their voters, Brussels and the market, with many Italians complaining about measures being watered down to placate the European Commission.

The EU and Italy negotiated intensely with both sides worried that a protracted feud would alarm the markets and ignite a debt crisis in the eurozone's third biggest economy.

Without the compromise, Italy would have ultimately faced a fine of up to 0.2 percent of the nation's GDP after a long and rancorous process with its eurozone partners.

The talks centered on the so-called structural deficit, which includes all public spending minus debt payments. Italy's first budget was set to blow through commitments made by the previous government, and require Rome raising even more debt.

Last week's deal anticipates that this will now be balanced, with the overall deficit target lowered to 2.04 percent of GDP. "It's not at all true that the budget was written in Brussels, it was written in Italy," Conte insisted on Friday.

Italy's public debt is a big problem and now sits at a huge 2.3 trillion euros (\$2.6 trillion), or 131 percent of Italy's GDP-way above the 60 percent EU ceiling. — AFP



## Renault union calls for more transparency over Dutch holding

**PARIS:** France's CGT union has called for more transparency at Renault and its Dutch holding company and asked the French government, one of the carmaker's shareholders, to try to shed light on its workings, a CGT repre-

sentative said. Renault, and its alliance with Nissan Motor Co, has been in the spotlight after the partnership's architect Carlos Ghosn was arrested in mid-November in Japan amid allegations his Nissan income was understated. The CGT wrote to French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire in early December questioning the way Renault had handled the affair and to denounce a lack of transparency at RNBV, a joint Renault-Nissan holding company based in the Netherlands. FranceInfo reported on Thursday.

A CGT spokesman confirmed the union had reached out to Le Maire and to Renault's deputy CEO Thierry Bollore, adding it was calling for clarity on additional wage payments made via RNBV to an unidentified member of the French carmaker's executive committee.

"Workers have no information about RNBV," the CGT

## Drop in US consumer confidence stokes fears of slowdown

**WASHINGTON:** A measure of US consumer confidence posted its sharpest decline in more than three years in December, rattling investors already nervous about the prospect that a global economic slowdown was spilling over into the United States.

In a sign households were growing more worried about the economy, the Conference Board said its consumer confidence index fell this month by 8.3 points to a reading of 136.4, the largest one-month drop since July 2015.

Other data released by the Labor Department, however, showed the number of new applications for jobless benefits dipping in the latest week. US stocks, which enjoyed a huge rally on Wednesday, were trading sharply lower after Thursday's data, with the S&P 500 index down about 1.8 percent early in the afternoon. Prices of US Treasuries were higher, while the US dollar was weaker against a basket of currencies.

US stock prices have plunged in December as investors worried the US economy could face headwinds due to the global economic slowdown. Adding to those concerns on Thursday was data showing earnings at China's industrial firms dropped in November for the first time in nearly three years.

Whipsawing financial markets could lead to further drops in consumer confidence, which could eventually make consumers more shy about spending, said Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Amherst Pierpont Securities. It will definitely be worthwhile to keep a close eye on the various measures of consumer attitudes, Stanley said.

The drop in consumer confidence in December was mostly fueled by falling measures of expectations, with more people expecting jobs will become more scarce.

### Labor market strength

The labor market, however, appears to still be strong. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 1,000 to a seasonally adjusted 216,000 for the week ended Dec. 22, the Labor Department reported.

Initial claims have now fallen in three of the last four weeks and are just above the 49-year low of 202,000 reached in the week ended Sept. 15.

After several years of near-steady falls, claims trended higher between mid-September and mid-December, prompting concern the US economy was losing momentum.

It remains unclear how much of that increase was related to the difficulty government statisticians have in adjusting the claims data for seasonal swings. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims increasing to 217,000 in the latest week. The latest claims data signals improvement in the labor market relative to a few weeks ago, but softening in conditions relative to a few months ago, said Daniel Silver, an economist at JPMorgan.

Worries about the economy have also been stoked by signs of weakness in the housing market.

US home prices rose just 0.3 percent in October, leaving the year-over-year increase at 5.7 percent, the smallest gain in more than two years, data from the US Federal Housing Finance Agency showed on Thursday. A report on new home sales in November will not be released on Thursday as previously scheduled due to a partial shutdown of the federal government.

The Federal Reserve raised interest rates last week for the fourth time this year, but forecast fewer rate hikes next year and signaled its tightening cycle is nearing an end in the face of financial market volatility and slowing global growth. — Reuters

spokesman said. Spokesmen for Le Maire and for Renault declined to comment. The French state owns 15 percent of Renault. Executives from both carmakers in the Renault-Nissan alliance looked at least twice at legal ways to pay Ghosn undisclosed income through the partners' shared finances, including via RNBV, Reuters reported earlier in December.

The two efforts discussed were ultimately abandoned. Ghosn, who remains Renault's chairman and chief executive but was ousted as Nissan's chairman, has been in a Tokyo jail since mid-November. He had been expected to possibly go free on bail last Friday but was re-arrested by Japanese prosecutors on new allegations of making Nissan shoulder \$16.6 million in personal investment losses. — Reuters



Health & Technology

# Chinese firms offer subsidies on Huawei phones in show of support

## Companies discourage buying US brands

**SHANGHAI:** Chinese firms are encouraging staff to buy Huawei smartphones following Canada's arrest of a top Huawei executive on a US extradition request, which has triggered an outpouring of nationalist support.

Several companies are offering employees subsidies for Huawei phone purchases, while others have even warned staff against buying Apple products. In eastern China, Fuchun Technology said "nearly sixty" out of its 200 employees have taken advantage of 100 to 500 yuan (\$15 to \$29) Huawei phone subsidies as of yesterday.

Another tech firm, Chengdu RYD Information Technology, has offered 15 percent subsidies, though it declined to disclose how many employees have actually taken advantage of the benefits. "We are supportive of good China-made brands," a spokeswoman told AFP, adding that the subsidies are part of employee benefits and were not "guided by the government." One company has even threatened to fine employees

who buy iPhones, charging them 100 percent of the smartphone's market price.

"Stop buying US brands for company equipment," Shenzhen-based Menpad said in an internal notice, confirmed by AFP. The surge of patriotism began after Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, was detained in Canada on December 1 on a US extradition request linked to sanctions-breaking business dealings with Iran.

She has since been released on bail pending her US extradition hearing, and is now living under electronic surveillance in a luxury home in Vancouver. Ottawa has repeatedly said Meng's arrest was not political but rather part of a judicial process in keeping with an extradition treaty with Washington.

But some in China see Meng's arrest as part of a broader conspiracy to suppress China's high-tech enterprises, with nationalist tabloid Global Times accusing Washington of "resorting

to a despicable rogue's approach" because it cannot stop Huawei's progress in the 5G market.

The internal notices announcing the Huawei subsidies started circulating on China's Twitter-like Weibo earlier this month, and have split Chinese internet opinion.

Some users were in favor of buying phones in the name of patriotism, while others questioned whether or not Chinese firms were simply leveraging Huawei's case as a marketing strategy or branding opportunity. "Those companies are conscientious for standing by Huawei's side," praised one Weibo user, using a thumb's up emoji. "The government should also publish an official document to support domestic brands."

But another user, who said they supported Huawei, criticised the practise of punishing staff who purchase Apple products. To win respect, domestic tech brands should "keep fighting despite setbacks and adopt an attitude of not accepting defeat," they said. — AFP



BEIJING: A man looks at a Huawei smartphone at the brand's store in Beijing on Friday. — AFP

## NASA spaceship closes in on distant world

**TAMPA:** NASA's unmanned New Horizons spacecraft is closing in on its historic New Year's flyby target, the most distant world ever studied, a frozen relic of the solar system some four billion miles (6.4 billion kilometers) away.

The cosmic object, known as Ultima Thule, is about the size of the US capital, Washington, and orbits in the dark and frigid Kuiper Belt about a billion miles beyond the dwarf planet, Pluto.

The spacecraft's closest approach to this primitive space rock comes January 1 at 12:33 am ET (0533 GMT). Until then, what it looks like, and what it is made of, remain a mystery.

"This is a time capsule that is going to take us back four and a half billion years to the birth of the solar system," said Alan Stern, the principal investigator on the project at the Southwest Research Institute, during a press briefing Friday.

A camera on board the New Horizons spacecraft is currently zooming in on Ultima Thule, so scientists can get a better sense of its shape and configuration—whether it is one object or several.

"We've never been to a type of object like this before," said Kelsi Singer, New Horizons co-investigator at the Southwest Research Institute.

About a day prior, "we will start to see what the actual shape of the object is," she said. The spacecraft entered "encounter mode" on December 26, and is "very healthy," added Stern.

Communicating with a spacecraft that is so far away takes six hours and eight minutes each way—or about 12 hours and 15 minutes round trip. New Horizons' eagerly awaited "phone home" command, indicating if it survived the close pass-at a distance of



This artist's illustration obtained from NASA shows the New Horizons spacecraft encountering 2014 MU69 - nicknamed "Ultima Thule" - a Kuiper Belt object that orbits one billion miles beyond Pluto. — AFP

just 2,200 miles (3,500 kilometers) — is expected January 1 at 10:29 am (1529 GMT). Until then, the New Horizons spacecraft continues speeding through space at 32,000 miles (51,500 kilometers) per hour, traveling almost a million miles per day. And NASA scientists are eagerly awaiting the first images. "Because this is a flyby mission, we only have one chance to get it right," said Alice Bowman, missions operations manager for New Horizons. The spacecraft, which launched in 2006, captured stunning images of Pluto when it flew by the dwarf planet in 2015. — AFP

## India to send three-person crew on landmark space mission

**NEW DELHI:** India will send a three-member team into orbit for up to a week when it launches its first manned space mission expected in 2022, the government announced Friday.

India ministers approved \$1.4 billion to provide technology and infrastructure for the program, according to a government statement. The sum would make India's one of the cheapest manned space programs, stepping up its space rivalry with China. But the statement said India also hopes to take part in "global" space projects.

India will become the fourth nation after Russia, the United States and China to send a manned mission into space.

Ministers approved financing to launch an Indian-developed craft into a "low earth orbit" for a duration ranging from one orbital period to a maximum of seven days, the statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in August that India will launch a manned space flight by 2022 with at least one astronaut. The cabinet had not approved the project however.

There will be two unmanned and one manned flights to launch the Gaganyaan (Sky-Vehicle) Program, the statement said. Without giving a date for the blast off, the government said the manned flight would be "within 40 months" of Friday's meeting.

Modi has hailed the national space program as a prestige project. The government has stated that space flights will boost the economy, generate jobs and enhance capabilities in areas such as medicine, agriculture and fighting pollution.

A successful manned mission would allow India to become a "collaborating partner in future global space exploration initiatives with long term national benefits," said the statement. The country has invested heavily in its space program in the past decade. The Indian Space Research Organization announced in July that it planned to send an unmanned mission to the moon in 2019.

India launched an orbiter to Mars in 2013 which is still operational and last year launched a record 104 satellites in one blast-off. New Delhi is competing with other international players for a greater share of the satellite market, and hopes its low-cost space program will give it an edge.

China put its first humans into space in 2003 but its Shenzhou program cost more than \$2.3 billion. Experts say the United States spent the equivalent of about \$110 billion at current values on preparatory flights and the mission to put the first man on the moon in 1969. — AFP

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What's On



# CBK reviews its social responsibility in 2018



Amani Al-Wer'a

2018 was an absolutely another outstanding year for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in terms of its social responsibility and was full of activities showing its commitment to its social responsibility towards the whole society and NGOs. Speaking on the occasion, CBK's deputy director for corporate communication, Amani Al-Wer'a stressed that CBK is keen on activating its role in social and humanitarian responsibilities related to the environment and sustainability.

Al-Wer'a added that CBK had sponsored a variety of activities for people with special needs at Khalifa and Al-Raja'a Schools as well as Kuwait Down Syndrome Society cooperated with various charities during Ramadan, sponsored Gurgai'an ceremonies for children, namely those hospitalized at the Amiri hospital, celebrated the World Arabic Language Day, Kuwait National Anniversaries by receiving visitors at Kuwait Airport, sponsored the GCC traffic week and national initiatives to encourage citizens join the private sector.

Al-Wer'a added that Hawwen Alaihom creative campaign was launched seven years ago with the aim of lending a helping hand to construction and cleaning labor working in harsh conditions in the open by distributing various gifts to them on various occasions. CBK also distributed Suhor and Iftar meals to workers during the Holy month of Ramadan. In addition, CBK provided full support to various social, cultural, educational, sports and environmental activities organized by Kuwait's six governorates.

Moreover, CBK's PR and publicity department continued organizing 'Ya Zein Torathna' campaign for the seventh year in a row to highlight Kuwaiti traditions and heritage. The campaign included activities such as launching the 'Tijari Neighborhood' in many shopping malls to introduce the heritage to visitors in addition to wonderful cultural events at the Martyrs Park that included high-lighting ancient Kuwaiti profession and performing some old songs.



## IBPC presents meritorious students awards

Indian Business and Professional Council, Kuwait organized a function on December 15, 2018, at the auditorium of Salmiya Indian Model School (SIMS), Salmiya in order to felicitate the meritorious Indian students of class X and Class XII. Awardees were selected based on the CBSE examination results declared for the academic year 2017 - 2018, from all Indian schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to the

CBSE system of education of India.

Gold/silver medals and certificate of merit were presented to the students who scored highest and second highest aggregates in science and commerce streams. Silver medals with certificates were presented to the students who scored 100 percent marks in any subject. Bronze medals and certificates were dispersed to those awardees who scored an aggregate of 95 percent or above.

Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of India Rajgopal Singh was the chief guest while S K Wadhawan was the guest of honor. At the outset, IBPC Chairman, Shivy Bhasin welcomed the guests and the audience and introduced the program and encouraged the students. He was followed by the guest of honor, Surinder K

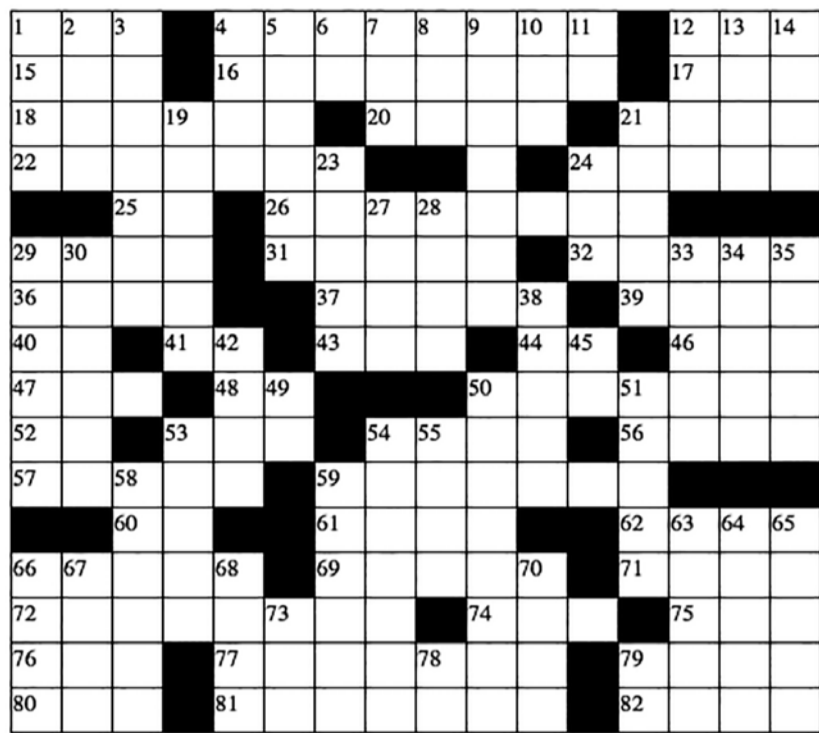
Wadhawan who appreciated IBPC's efforts in encouraging students and schools.

Indian Community School, Kuwait was adjudged as the winner of 'IBPC Best Academic Performance Award' for both class X and Class XII of year 2017-2018. Best performing schools are selected on the weighted average method. Rolling trophies and mementos were presented to the school by the chief guest, guest of honor and members of Executive Committee of IBPC.

Muqlis Moiz, Ashwathy Mathew, Catherine Ann John, Sabah Faez, Diya Ajay, Deon Prince D'Souza, Rachel Suzen Cibbu and Efrem Joseph Charls compered the awards distribution ceremony. Umesh Sharma proposed a vote of thanks.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2017



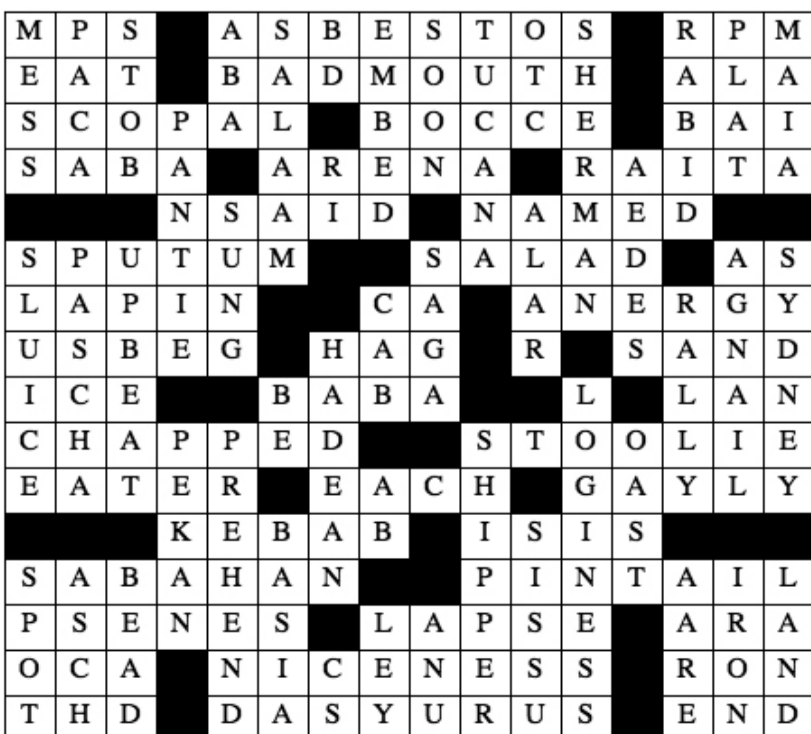
ACROSS

1. A flexible container with a single opening.
4. The quality of being alien.
12. A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
15. A Nilotic language.
16. French symbolist poet noted for his free verse (1842-1898).
17. A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
18. Order by virtue of superior authority.
20. A fabric made by knitting.
22. A steep descent of the water of a river.
25. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
26. A metric unit of length equal to one ten billionth of a meter (or 0.0001 micron).
29. An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.
31. A member of the Uniat Church.
32. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
36. Scottish sea captain who was hired to protect British shipping in the Indian Ocean and then was accused of piracy and hanged (1645-1701).
37. A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
39. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
40. A metric unit of volume equal to one thousandth of a liter.
41. Half the width of an cm.
43. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
44. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
46. The sound made by a gentle blow.
47. A slippery or viscous liquid or liquefiable substance not miscible with water.
48. The square of a body of any size of type.
52. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
56. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
57. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
60. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
61. (Babylonian) A goddess of the watery deep and daughter of Ea.
62. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
66. Valuable fiber plant of East Indies now widespread in cultivation.
69. Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus *Atriplex* that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
71. Advanced in years.
72. Outer membrane covering an axon.
74. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
75. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
76. A unit of time equal to 60 seconds or 1/60th of an hour.
77. (informal terms) Small and of little importance.
80. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
81. Having escaped, especially from confinement.
82. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. A group of countries in special alliance.
2. A sensation (as of a cold breeze or bright light) that precedes the onset of certain disorders such as a migraine attack or epileptic seizure.
3. A sudden unexpected piece of good fortune.
4. Type genus of the Amidiidae.
5. Soviet physicist who worked on low temperature physics (1908-1968).
6. Being nine more than forty.
7. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
8. (British) Your grandmother.
9. A short aria.
10. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
11. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
12. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
13. A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
14. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
19. Submit or yield to another's wish or opinion.
21. Engraving or carving in low relief on a stone (as in a brooch or ring).
23. The feeling of being bored by something tedious.
24. A licensed medical practitioner.
27. An ancient Egyptian city on the west bank of the Nile opposite Cairo.
28. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
30. Of or relating to cilia projecting from the surface of a cell.
33. Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
34. God of wealth and love.
35. 20 aspers equal 1 kuru.
38. A Bantu language spoken by the Kamba people in Kenya.
42. Large semi-evergreen tree of East India.
45. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
49. Informal terms for a mother.
50. Thin flat or tubular green algae.
51. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
53. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
54. Epithet of Siva.
55. The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
58. Type genus of the Annonaceae.
59. Relating to or containing gnomes.
63. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
67. The upper angle between an axis and an offshoot such as a branch or leaf-stalk.
68. An elaborate party (often outdoors).
70. Occupied or in the control of.
73. A form of address for a married woman.
78. The sciences concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying recorded information.
79. A Russian river.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today is a day you may find yourself extremely understanding and sympathetic to others. There have been many times in your life you have made decisions that others didn't understand and didn't seem to agree with. You know that there are reasons people do the things they do that might be obvious to others. Becoming the friend to others you have always desired that someone be to you is helping you see beyond the surface of other's actions. You may find taking the time to be a true friend and getting to the root of other's problems draws people closer to you. You may find yourself taking more time to get to know your co-workers, peers, and friends on a much more intimate level. This seems to help you come to grips with a much more spiritual side of yourself than usual.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are fully aware you are not getting any younger. A desire to make the most of this life you have been given is a driving force for you. You have been too strict with yourself in the past. It is time to let your hair down and live a little. You tend to dismiss anyone and anything that does not conform to your way of thinking. This is a great time for you to surround yourself with your friends from other cultures, religions, and races. This could be an eye opener for you. A new outlook on life is what you need. Step out of your box and experience something new.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your main focus seems to be family. You crave a solid foundation and know that the root of your success and happiness begins and ends with your family. You have needs and you want to be needed by your family and those closest to you. This is a strong desire you have for your life and you are extremely focused on these relationships. You seem to be holding yourself to the highest possible standards and are extremely strict on yourself. You seem to dismiss anything that does not contribute to your goals. You may find that this is not the best of times to try and get your point across to others. You feel as if you encounter a bit of a block when trying to communicate with others today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find yourself tense and anxious about a situation you have found yourself in. You may feel under pressure and feel somewhat anxious. This may lead to you mentally checking out. You may use this as a coping mechanism for the stress you are under. An out of body feeling in a dreamy state may be the way your mind chooses to handle this conflict. Others may not be fond of this side of you and this could result in conflict with someone close to you. You will find your way and through your ability to get to the root of your problems, this too will be solved. Cancer. Set your mind on a solution and make it happen.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Don't be alarmed if you feel as if the hair on the back of your neck is standing on end. Something is leaving you with an unsettled feeling. Suspicions are high. Your mind is in overdrive and you will find your words come quick and sharp. You may find yourself in some type of conflict today. This could be with someone or just a feeling of conflicting emotions. You have a deep insight emotionally and may find yourself lost in your thoughts. You may find friends are not very supportive of the mood you are in and your actions today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a day you will crave all eyes to be on you. You crave attention. From the way you dress, to the way you carry yourself, the center of attention is what you can expect to be. All eyes are on you. You will shine today. It seems as if everything conspires to bring out your more unique and unusual qualities. It may seem as if things work in your favor today. Solutions to old problems will come easy. This is a great day to spend some time working on a new invention.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Surround yourself with all that is beautiful today. You may put yourself in the spotlight today. Don't push responsibilities to the side today. Take care of business, this will be beneficial later and will help you to avoid conflict today. Don't be surprised to find yourself being challenged by someone today. Libra. Today may be a day you find it necessary to put the feelings of someone close to you ahead of your own. This may be a small sacrifice with great reward.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Romance is in the air and what your heart desires today. An emotional release is on the horizon. This is one of those days your heart is full. There is no more room inside and these emotions have to be shared with someone who is very special to you. A candlelit meal, a long talk, or cuddling on the couch with that special someone is in order. You may find you develop and even stronger bond this evening with someone close to you. Focus on the future and the one you want to spend it with Scorpio. It is a time of nurturing and love for you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may be feeling drawn and even turned on by that which is taboo. Sex, power, and the pursuit of wealth are beginning to be a driving force behind your emotions. You are fascinated by people. What makes the do the things they do? What makes them tick? You desire a fresh start in your life and major changes. You know this may only be accomplished by turning your back on all you believed and starting over with an open mind and a new outlook on life in general.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may feel as if you wake up living in a fairy tale today. Everything seems to be going in your favor. An almost magical world surrounds you. A world where your dreams are becoming realities and you long for nothing. You are absolutely glowing and others will be drawn to you. Your smile is contagious. There is no better feeling than spreading joy. Always remember the gifts and blessings you receive are meant to be shared with others. Enjoy your magical day as you are surrounded with happiness and love.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is your time to shine. You are full of pride and proud of your accomplishments. You are being noticed in the workplace and have been excelling at your job. You are very observant of the feelings of those around you and are able to make them feel good about themselves. You feel much support from your peers and family. Everything in your world is beginning to feel healthy and come natural. You begin to feel as if something doesn't come from the heart it is irrelevant in your world. You surround yourself with people you feel are real and true friends. This is a great time for you and others begin to admire you not only for your accomplishments that the way you make them feel about themselves.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

People sometimes wonder about the secret to your contentment. It's not something you think about. You just go about each day being helpful and kind. You consider being reliable a part of who you are. You are not working at being happy, but happiness is a by-product of your lifestyle. If you could bottle and sell it, you might become financially rich. But you know that money is not the key to riches. You reap your rewards by continuing to invest in others.

Wordsearch Puzzle

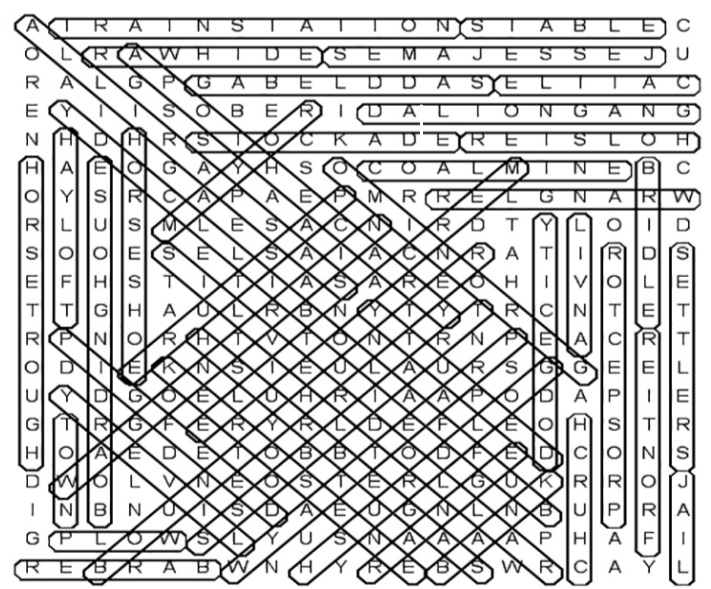
Oliver Twist

Find and circle all of the words and names from *Oliver Twist*. The remaining letters spell the title of the first chapter of *Oliver Twist*.



- |               |              |             |              |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| AGNES FLEMING | DODGER       | LIMBKINS    | ORPHAN       |
| BARNEY        | DUFF         | LOCKET      | PICKPOCKET   |
| BEADLE        | FAGIN        | LONDON      | PISTOL       |
| BLATHERS      | GALLOWES     | LOSBERNE    | ROSE MAYLIE  |
| BOLTER        | GAMFIELD     | MAGISTRATE  | SIKES        |
| BRITTLES      | GILES        | MOWKS       | SOWERBERRY   |
| BROWNLOW      | GRIMWIG      | MR. FANG    | SURGEON      |
| BULL'S-EYE    | GRUEL        | MRS. BEDWIN | TOBY CRACKIT |
| BUMBLE        | HANDKERCHIEF | MRS. CORNEY | TOM CHITLING |
| CHARLEY BATES | HARRY MAYLIE | MRS. MANN   | TRAPS        |
| CHARLOTTE     | HOUSEBREAKER | NANCY       | UNDERTAKER   |
| COACH         | INHERITANCE  | NOAH        | WAISTCOAT    |
| COURT         | JAIL         | OLD SALLY   | WILL         |
| DICKENS       | DOCTOR       | LEEFORD     | OLIVER TWIST |
|               |              |             | WORKHOUSE    |

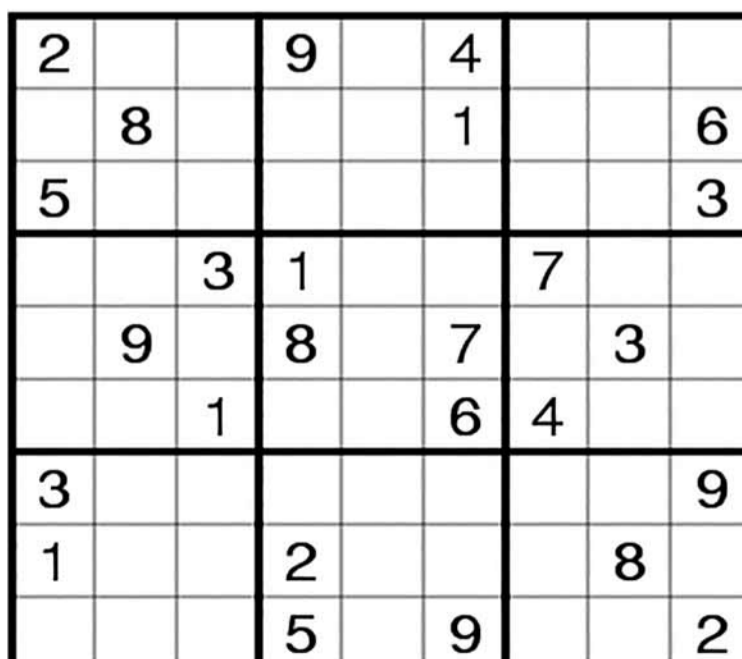
Friday's Solution



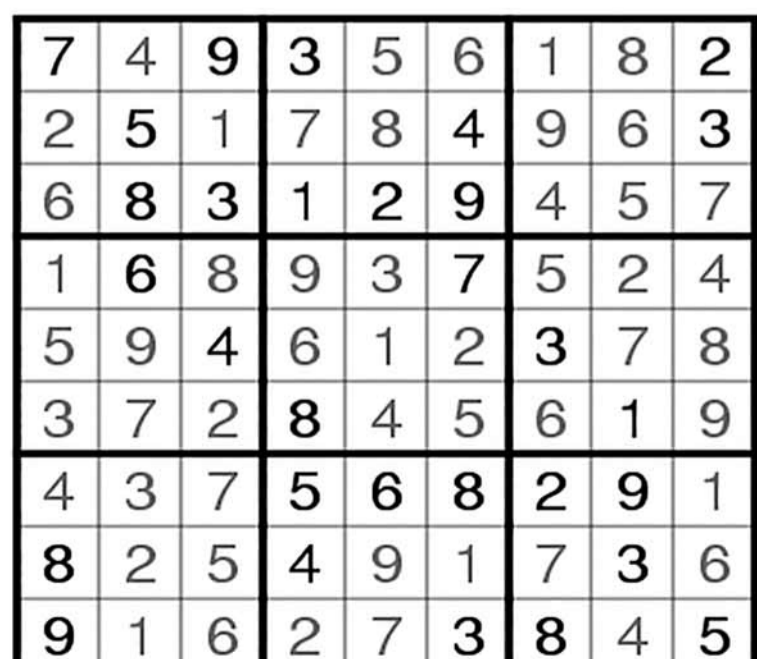
- |                |              |             |               |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| ANVIL          | DEPUTY       | LIVERY      | SETTLERS      |
| APOTHECARY     | DODGE CITY   | MAYOR       | SILVER DOLLAR |
| BANK           | FRONTIER     | MERCANTILE  | STABLE        |
| BARBER         | GERONIMO     | PASTURE     | STOCKADE      |
| BOARDING HOUSE | GOLD RUSH    | PIG FEED    | TOWN          |
| BOUNTY HUNTER  | HAYLOFT      | FLOW        | TRAIL BOSS    |
| BRIDLE         | HOLSTER      | PROSPECTOR  | TRAIN STATION |
| BUFFALO BILL   | CODY         | RANGE       | WAGON TRAIN   |
| CATTLE         | HORSE TROUGH | RAWHIDE     | WRANGLER      |
| CHURCH         | HORSESHOE    | SADDLEBAG   | WYATT EARP    |
| COAL MINE      | JAIL         | SAGEBRUSH   |               |
| DALTON GANG    | JESSE JAMES  | SASPARRILLA |               |
|                | KEROSENE     |             |               |

The hidden message is:  
COURAGE IS BEING SCARED TO DEATH AND SADDLING UP ANYWAY

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2018



Fans of Marvel comic book legend Stan Lee gather at his Hollywood Walk of Fame Star, to pay tribute on his birthday, which is his first since his death in November 2018, in Hollywood, California.—AFP

## Revered Israeli writer **Amos Oz** dies at 79

Renowned Israeli writer Amos Oz, a passionate peace advocate whose stirring memoir "A Tale of Love and Darkness" became a worldwide bestseller, died on Friday aged 79, his daughter said. Fania Oz-Salzberger said on Twitter that her father had died and offered thanks to "those who loved him". "My beloved father, Amos Oz, a wonderful family man, an author, a man of peace and moderation, died today peacefully after a short battle with cancer," she wrote.

Tributes poured in for Oz, including from Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon, who called his death "a loss for us all and for the world". While Oz's writing is widely acclaimed, he is perhaps equally known as one of the earliest and most forceful critics of Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands captured in the Six-Day War of 1967. In recent years, Oz spoke out against the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, shunning official Israeli functions abroad in protest at what he called the "growing extremism" of his country's government.

Many viewed him as a conscience of the nation, although he was repeatedly the target of criticism from Israel's far right. But while he was a consistent advocate of the creation of a Palestinian state, Oz also took a hard line against those sworn to Israel's destruction and condemned every variety of religious fanaticism. He had little time for Western analysts who "assume that the Israelis and the Palestinians need to get to know each other better" to resolve the Middle East conflict.

"It must be resolved through a painful compromise, and not through having coffee together," he told the Paris Review in a 1996 interview. "Rivers of coffee drunk together cannot extinguish the tragedy of two peoples regarding the same little country as their own and only homeland. We need to divide it. We need to work out a mutually acceptable compromise."

### From kibbutz to fame

Oz was born Amos Klausner in Jerusalem in 1939, the only child of parents who emigrated from Russia and Poland to help establish a homeland for the Jews. His austere childhood in the final years of British-mandate Palestine—haunted by the Holocaust and the threat of war for the land claimed by two peoples—would serve as a major theme of his literary works. So would the suicide of his mother when he was 12, the topic of his heart-wrenching memoir "A Tale of Love and Darkness", which has sold more than a million copies and was adapted into a film by Hollywood actress Natalie Portman.

Seeking a break from his life in Jerusalem, he moved to a kibbutz collective farm at the age of 15 and changed his last name to Oz, Hebrew for strength and bravery. It was while living on the kibbutz, where he would remain on and off for the next 25 years, that Oz emerged as a writer, focusing on daily life and family tribulations. "My work is the comedy of unhappy families, not tragedy," he has said.

His early works, many of which were published in Hebrew by the Israeli Labor Party's publishing house, included "Where the Jackals Howl" (1965) and "My Michael" (1968). Other works of fiction include "Black Box" in 1987, while "A Tale of Love and Darkness", the autobiographical story that portrayed three generations of Jewish life in Jerusalem, was published in 2002. His novel "Judas", published in Hebrew in 2014, was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize following its English translation.

Oz has received numerous awards for his work, including the Israel Prize for Literature in 1998 and Germany's Goethe Prize in 2005, but the Nobel Prize in Literature eluded him despite widespread speculation he would win the prestigious accolade. Like many Israelis, Oz served several stints in the military, including in a Sinai tank unit during the Six-



Day War of 1967 and during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

He was an early critic of Israel's occupation of the territories it captured in the 1967 war—the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, from Jordan; the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt; and the Golan Heights from Syria. As virtually all Israelis hailed their country's military triumph, Oz wrote to a local newspaper that holding on to the territories would exact an unbearable moral toll, saying that "even unavoidable occupation is a corrupting occupation".

### 'Always a bit funny'

In 1978, Oz co-founded Peace Now, Israel's premier anti-settlement peace movement, and in the 1990s left Labor to join the more left-leaning Meretz party. In 2006, he surprised many when he came out in support of that summer's war, in which Israel invaded Lebanon after that country's Shiite Hezbollah militia seized two soldiers in a deadly cross-border raid.

"This time, the battle is not over Israeli expansion and colonization. There is no Lebanese territory occupied by Israel. There are no territorial claims from either side," he wrote in an editorial a week into the war. His political views often overshadowed the humor and imagination of his writing, which has served as an antidote to the frequently bitter and uncompromising discourse of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "I have never once in my life seen a fanatic with a sense of humor, nor have I ever seen a person with a sense of humor become a fanatic, unless he or she has lost that sense of humor," Oz wrote.—AFP

In this file photo Israeli writer Amos Oz, center, talks with Palestinian men after picking olives in the West Bank village of Aqraba, south of Nablus. — AFP photos



In this file photo Israeli writer Amos Oz listens to a journalist's question during his press conference of the 17th International Book Festival (IBF) in the Millenar's Culture Center of Budapest.

Netanyahu on Friday celebrated Oz as "among the greatest writers from the state of Israel". "Despite our diverging views on numerous issues, I have deeply appreciated his contribution to the Hebrew language and the revival of Hebrew literature," the premier said in a statement released by his office. Oz was described as a "literary great" by Israel's President Reuven Rivlin. "A tale of love and light and henceforth, great darkness," he wrote on Twitter.

## Lifestyle | Gossip

## Female actors face pressure to strip onscreen: Dominic West

Female actors are facing increasing pressure to strip off for "pornographic" television roles, British star Dominic West said. He praised the #MeToo campaign against harassment but said treatment of women on the small screen has "taken a big step back" over the last 20 years in an interview with the Radio Times magazine published on Friday. "Television has become more pornographic and the burden of that falls squarely on young women," he said.

"The parts young actresses get, particularly pretty ones, involve violent rape." His comments come after the #MeToo campaign last year which saw women come forward with a slew of allegations against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, and others, in a scandal that sparked a wider global debate over sexual abuse and harassment.

Weinstein has denied wrongdoing.

West said he became more aware of gender discrimination after Ruth Wilson, his former co-star on US show *The Affair*, said earlier year that she was "sure" she was being paid less than him. He said he had never considered who was paid what, adding, "I never realized the disparity and the injustice." The actor said the #MeToo campaign had created a noticeable change within the industry and male actors and directors were now less able to harass women.

"There was one guy in particular whose behavior was disgusting," he said. "Particularly to young females in minor roles. I tried to counter it on several occasions. But now, it wouldn't be so hard to get rid of them." Studies have found that women are still often sidelined and

shown in stereotyped roles across both television and film. Women took only 40 percent of speaking roles on prime-time US television shows in 2017-18 and were much more likely to play "personal life-oriented roles", such as wife and mother, the "Boxed In" report from San Diego State University found.

Across the 100 top-grossing films of 2017, women accounted for less than a third of speaking roles, according to analysis by the University of Southern California. It also found a quarter of releases featured female characters in skimpy clothing or nude, compared to less than 10 percent showing men in a similar state of undress. — Reuters



This file photo shows actors Keira Knightley and Dominic West attend the 'Colette' premiere during the 2018 Sundance Film Festival at Eccles Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP



Former first lady Michelle Obama signs copies of her memoir 'Becoming' at the Seminary Coop Bookstore in Chicago, Illinois. — Reuters

## Michelle Obama tops Hillary Clinton as America's most admired woman

Former First Lady Hillary Clinton's 17-year run as the woman Americans admire most is over. Another former First Lady, Michelle Obama, has deposed Clinton as America's most admired woman, according to a Gallup poll published on Thursday. Former president Barack Obama was named the man Americans admire most for the 11th year in a row, Gallup said. President Donald Trump finished second in the poll for the fourth year in a row.

Gallup has conducted the annual poll every year since 1946 with the exception of 1976. Fifteen percent of the 1,025 Americans polled said the woman they admire most is Michelle Obama, who is currently on a tour promoting her book "Becoming." Talk show host Oprah

Winfrey was second with five percent followed by Hillary Clinton and First Lady Melania Trump with four percent.

Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee and a former US senator and secretary of state, has topped the list 22 times including the past 17 years in a row. Nineteen percent of those polled said Barack Obama was the man they admired most. Trump was second with 13 percent followed by former president George W. Bush and Pope Francis, who were tied with two percent. Gallup said the survey conducted December 3-12 had a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points. — AFP

## Award-winning lyricist behind 'Killing Me Softly' dead at 91

Norman Gimbel, the Oscar and Grammy-winning lyricist behind "Killing Me Softly," "The Girl From Ipanema" and the theme from iconic sitcom "Happy Days" has died aged 91. His death was announced on Friday by BMI, which described him as "a truly gifted and prolific writer" who will be greatly missed by friends and fans at the music rights organization. The Brooklyn native died at his home in Montecito, California, on December 19, his son Tony Gimbel told *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Norman Gimbel won an Academy Award for Best Original Song alongside co-composer David Shire for Jennifer Warnes' "It Goes Like It Goes" in the 1979 film "Norma Rae." He also wrote Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly" with his long-time collaborator Charles Fox, winning the Song of the Year Grammy in 1973. The hit was later famously covered by 1990s hip hop group the Fugees.

Gimbel's English lyrics for Brazilian bossa nova hit "The Girl from Ipanema," which won the Grammy for Record of the Year in 1965, made the jazz standard one of the most covered songs of all time. But it was his work for television where Gimbel was best known, including the themes to "Happy Days," "Wonder Woman," and "Laverne & Shirley." The lyricist was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1984.

Writing on Facebook, one of Gimbel's co-writers Robert Folk, who collaborated on about 15 songs with him, said: "Norman was an incredible talent; brilliant in every way, and one who had successfully navigated every genre in popular music. 'I remember one of countless moments with Norman so fondly, when after a playback via phone of a newly finished song for a prominent filmmaker, he said to me privately.... 'Don't ever tell them how easy this work is for us, and how much fun we've had writing these songs!... Or else they'll never pay us all this money again!'" Gimbel is survived by his children Tony, Nelly, Peter and Hannah, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. — AFP

## Ariana Grande cancels Las Vegas concert

Ariana Grande has canceled a Las Vegas concert due to "health issues," the singer said on Friday. The 25-year-old singer, one of the most popular in the United States, was set to perform at The Cosmopolitan hotel on Saturday. "Vegas, I'm currently working through some health issues and am beyond sorry I won't be able to see you this weekend, she wrote on Instagram. Entertainment website TMZ reported that Grande had bronchitis, citing

sources close to the singer. A representative for Grande was not immediately available for comment. Grande finished 2018 with her song "Thank U, Next" at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the sixth week. Her year also saw the death of ex-boyfriend and rapper Mac Miller in September and her breakup with fiancé Pete Davidson in October. — Reuters

## Celine Dion, John Legend to perform at Aretha Franklin tribute concert

Celine Dion, Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Hudson and John Legend will be among a host of singers to perform at a tribute concert for the late Aretha Franklin in January, the Recording Academy and other groups announced on Thursday. Alicia Keys, Yolanda Adams, Patti LaBelle and Janelle Monae will also do songs from the repertoire of the Queen of Soul at the concert, to be hosted by filmmaker Tyler Perry on Jan. 13 in Los Angeles.

Franklin, an 18-time Grammy winner and considered by many the greatest US gospel and soul singer, died in August of pancreatic cancer

at the age of 76. Her six-hour long funeral in her Detroit hometown, featuring tributes by former US President Bill Clinton and dozens of singers, was broadcast live on US television.

The tribute concert in Los Angeles is a joint venture of the Recording Academy, which selects Grammy winners, Franklin's long-time record producer Clive Davis, concert promoter AEG, and CBS television. The concert will be shown on CBS television at a later date still to be announced. "Aretha was more than the Queen of Soul; she was a national treasure. This unique concert, featuring many of today's greatest artists, will celebrate Aretha in a spectacular manner befitting her once-in-a-lifetime talent," Davis said in a statement. Tickets for the concert go on sale on Dec 31. — Reuters



In this file photo visitors walk through 'The Story of the Sixties and Woodstock' at the Museum at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, a gallery built on the site of the 1969 Woodstock music festival, in Bethel, New York. — AFP photos



In this file photo a general view of the field where the 1969 Woodstock music festival took place.

## 'Back to the garden': Festival to mark Woodstock's 50th

Fifty years after the Woodstock festival became a highpoint of 1960s counter-culture, featuring performances by Jimi Hendrix, Joe Cocker, Janis Joplin and other icons of the era, an anniversary event is planned at the same site in New York. The Bethel Woods Center for the Arts announced on its website "a new festival of music, culture, and community" from August 16-18 next year at the original location of the 1969 concert, which took place on Max Yasgur's farm about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of New York city.

In conjunction with major concert promoter Live

Nation, the event will span the same dates as the original festival and will include live performances from "prominent and emerging artists spanning multiple genres and decades," alongside TED-style talks from leading futurists and "retro-tech experts," the website said.

"Fifty years ago, people gathered peacefully on our site inspired to change the world through music. As the stewards of this historic site, we remain committed to preserving this rich history and spirit, and to educating and inspiring new generations to contribute positively to the world through music, culture, and community,"

Darlene Fedun, chief executive officer of the Bethel Woods Center, said on the website.

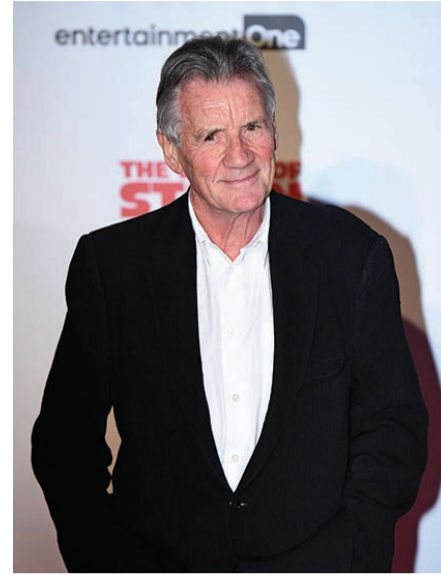
While stars like Joplin and Hendrix died soon after Woodstock, other legendary artists from the original event—including Joan Baez and The Who—are still performing. The Bethel Woods Center did not reveal who will play at the anniversary event but said details will come soon. Michael Lang, one of the promoters of the original Woodstock, told a local newspaper that he also intended to mark the anniversary, although no details have been announced.

Woodstock took place in a United States convulsed

over its involvement in the war in Vietnam, the sexual revolution, the emergence of a drug culture, and the Black Power movement. The concert, which expected fewer than 50,000 people, eventually drew about half a million, a crowd which overwhelmed organizers, who turned it into a free show that took place largely in peace. In August, 2009, a 40th anniversary event in Bethel, New York, included Joe McDonald and Canned Heat among performers who sang at the original event. — AFP



In this file photo British divers involved in the Tham Luang cave rescue in Thailand, (L-R) Chris Jewell, Connor Roe, Jim Waryn and Rob Harper, pose for a photograph at a reception hosted by Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge at Buckingham Palace in London. — AFP photos



Actor Michael Palin



British director Christopher Nolan

# Thai cave divers, Twiggy, Monty Python's Palin on UK honors list



Novelist Margaret Atwood

A team of British divers who helped save a junior football team stranded in a flooded cave in Thailand were awarded in Britain's traditional New Year Honors alongside former supermodel Twiggy and Monty Python's Michael Palin. The seven underwater specialists involved in the remarkable rescue were also joined on the prestigious annual achievement list—announced on Friday—by Hollywood filmmaker Christopher Nolan, Jim Carter from "Downton Abbey", best-selling author Philip Pullman and leading Brexit lawyer John Redwood.

Four of the divers were given awards for exceptional bravery while the three others were made Members of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). Richard Stanton and John Volanthen—the first of the divers to reach the 12 stricken children and their coach—were awarded the George Medal, the country's second highest civilian gallantry award. Stanton had already been made an MBE in 2012 for his rescue services.

Fellow divers Christopher Jewell and Jason Mallinson receive the Queen's Gallantry Medal, while Joshua Bratchley, Connor Roe and Vernon Unsworth were decorated with MBEs. "For me, after saving the boys, this is the icing on the cake," said Unsworth, who has also risen in fame after suing Tesla entrepreneur Elon Musk for labeling him a "pedo guy". "This was a team effort and I'm very honored to have been recognized, particularly as you don't engage in a major rescue expecting this outcome," he added.

### 'It makes me giggle'

Sixties it-girl Lesley Lawson, better known as Twiggy, was once again on the front-pages of the national newspapers on Saturday after it was announced she would receive a damehood for services to fashion following a decades-spanning career modeling, singing and acting. The 69-year-old told Britain's Press Association that the recognition was "wonderful, but it makes me giggle". "The hardest thing has been keeping it a secret," she said.

Acclaimed director Nolan, an Oscar nominee this year for "Dunkirk"—as well as in 2011 for "Inception" and in 2002 for "Memento"—gets a CBE for services to film. After graduating from low-budget independent movies, he has directed some of the biggest blockbusters ever made—including several "Batman" films—and become renowned for his technical and narrative daring. Pullman, the creator of the hugely successful "His Dark Materials" trilogy, receives a knighthood for services to literature. The 72-

year-old said he was "very surprised and honored" by the acknowledgement.

### Brexit lawyer wins knighthood

Palin, 75, becomes the first of Monty Python's revered comedy cast to receive a knighthood. The veteran actor, who has reinvented himself as a travel documentary maker and writer in later life, gets a knighthood for his international contributions to travel, culture and geography. He said news of the accolade had yet to sink in. "I don't think it will be until I see the envelopes addressing me as Sir Michael Palin," he added.

Meanwhile, as Britain prepares to leave the European



Chairman of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) Bill Beaumont

Union in March after decades of membership, John Redwood—one of parliament's most prominent eurosceptics—was made a knight. The veteran Conservative lawmaker—a vocal opponent of Prime Minister Theresa May's draft Brexit deal, set to be voted on in mid-January—was among three MPs awarded knighthoods. There had been speculation this year's honors could be deployed to try to win support for May's plan—but it appears unlikely with Redwood. Earlier this week he published a blog outlining "eight things wrong with the withdrawal agreement".

In sport, England football manager Gareth Southgate was awarded an OBE, while captain Harry Kane received an MBE following the team's memorable run to the World Cup semi-finals in Russia. Kane tweeted that he was "very passionate about our country and very patriotic so to get an MBE makes me immensely proud." Former England cricket captain Alistair Cook will receive a knighthood,



British former model Twiggy

putting the cap on a remarkable year in which he retired as the country's top Test run scorer, hitting an emotional century in his farewell match. Overall, 1,148 recipients were named in Queen Elizabeth II's 2019 New Year Honors List. — AFP



Britain's Geraint Thomas



Jockey Richard Johnson



England's coach Gareth Southgate



England's forward Harry Kane



England's Alastair Cook

## Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo a creation by Spanish designer Oteyza is displayed during the exhibition 'Modus,' on in Madrid. — AFP photos



Creation by Spanish designer Cristobal Balenciaga



Creation by Spanish designer Pedro Rodriguez

## The new black: Young Spanish designers reclaim traditions

Young Spanish designers are reclaiming their "Spanishness": age-old traditions, religious imagery and even the color black, which centuries ago was a signature of the country's all-powerful monarchy. That is one of the messages at the "Modus" exhibition currently running in Madrid, which explores the influence of Spanish history and tradition on global fashion, including up-and-coming designers.

"It's a very important moment (for Spain) with designers like Palomo Spain, Leandro Cano, ManeMane, who are reclaiming Spain's position in fashion," says exhibition curator Raul Marina. "Young designers are making noise again, and they're doing so via inspiration that is totally Spanish."

### Black and side hoops

Take black, a color that has come to symbolize French chic as epitomized by Coco Chanel's 1920s little black dress. Its use in fashion actually originated in 16th century Spain. Before that, it had been a difficult color to wear. After multiple washes or through constant use, the dye would just subside and turn into a grayish, brownish mush. But then Spain conquered the Americas, and more specifically Mexico in the 16th century. There Spaniards discovered a tree called logwood. It held a secret—from its wood could be made an intense and lasting black dye.

At the time, Spain was a major economic and political power. King Felipe II adopted that intense black as his own and the fashion statement soon spread. The monarchy was "a reference for all its European counterparts, as was its austere black gown which would become the expression of maximum elegance," Amalia Descalzo, an expert in clothing history at Spain's ISEM Fashion Business School, writes in the exhibition booklet.

And so it has continued. Foreign and Spanish designers like Cristobal Balenciaga embraced black in their creations and the younger guard are doing so too, in their own way. On show at Madrid's Sala Canal de Isabel II is ManeMane's black bodice and skirt, complete with a hat typical of the southwestern region of Extremadura, where brand founder Miguel Becer comes from. The same centu-



Creation by Spanish designer Leandro Cano



Creation by Spanish designer Lorenzo Caprile

ry that Spain promoted black, it also created the "verdugado", a structure worn under a skirt that held it into a fashionable shape.

That fashion statement also spread Europe-wide. Later Spain unleashed another trend—the "guardainfante", loosely translated as "infant-guard," side hoops that extended the skirt at the sides. "They said it hid ladies' pregnancies," says Marina. The quirky "guardainfante" was famously immortalized in painter Diego Velazquez's masterpiece "Las Meninas." That influence is visible in Juanjo Oliva's yellow, bell-shaped velvet dress, on show in the exhibit.

### Bullfighting, flamenco

Then come Spain's world-famous exports—flamenco and bullfighting have inspired designers from other countries. A Givenchy bullfighting-style jacket made out of black velvet with arabesque-like red embroideries and pearls. A black Lanvin dress with a cascade of ruffles and

cream-colored polka dots inspired by southern Andalusia's flamenco tradition. "It's often said that internationally, foreign designers have soaked up and felt prouder about Spanishness than us," says Marina.

But that's changing, he adds. Religion, tradition are making a comeback. Palomo Spain, whose flowery gown was worn by Beyonce in July 2017 for her first shot with her newborn twins, has a short white silk dress with a halo-shaped headpiece on show. Leandro Cano's white tutu-shaped dress with flower prints—as once worn by Lady Gaga—takes inspiration from the reign of King Felipe III. ManeMane's creations on show are influenced by craftwork from Extremadura.

### Awakening

Fashion consultant Marta Blanco says there is an "awakening" in an industry she feels was marked by a sense that "anything Spanish harked back to the Franco

regime." But 43 years after the death of right-wing dictator Francisco Franco, that's waning. "Someone like Leandro Cano can get inspiration from Spanish bullfighting, from religious imagery... without it evoking fascism," says Blanco. She believes there is also an "awakening" among Spanish consumers who feel "pride" in their country.

Spain's superstar chef Ferran Adria created a global revolution in gastronomy. Spain won the World Cup in 2010, Euro in 2008 and 2012, Rafael Nadal is a major tennis star. Spanish brand Zara is everywhere... "That creates empowerment," says Blanco. "Ferran Adria took away our insecurities, and now it's happening in fashion." —AFP



Visitors look at giant lanterns installed at the Foucaud Park in Gaillac, southwestern France, during the Lantern Festival. — AFP photos

## Chinese lanterns dazzle in ancient French town

As darkness falls each winter night in the little French town of Gaillac, the glow of dusk is replaced with another—that of a thousand colorful Chinese silk lanterns. The thousand-year-old town in the southwestern Tarn region, known for its wines, was not the most obvious place to launch what it trumpets as "the biggest Chinese event in France." But Gaillac happens to be twinned with Zigong, a city in China's Sichuan province which is famous for its lantern festival.

For the second winter running Gaillac has transformed into a miniature version of its Sichuan twin, lighting up nightly with a dazzling array of giant lanterns in the form of dragons, flowers, birds and pandas. Among the delighted spectators was a 90-year-old who gave her name as Simone, taking photographs of the imperial palace stretching 75 meters long.

"I want to show my grandchildren all these wonders from another world," she said. Gaillac's Mayor Patrice Gausserand was on a trip to China in February 2017 when the idea of twinning with a Chinese town was born. "I naturally turned towards Sichuan province, which is twinned with our Occitanie region," Gausserand said. "And that's how I found Zigong." Bringing the famous lanterns to Gaillac was "a mad gamble", he said.

Zigong's own festival, in February, has been running for centuries and attracts millions of visitors each year. In Gaillac, a town of 18,000, Gausserand had to find private sponsors to cover the costs, and he wasn't even sure if people would come. But 250,000 people attended last year's inaugural edition—an "enormous surprise" to town authorities which brought a windfall of one million euros.

### China-mania

This year the mayor expects even more to flood in—by December 15, the town had already sold three times as many tickets than at the same time in 2017. "The festival creates a strong bond between town staff, volunteers and about 80 Chinese workers who come to Gaillac for two months to put up the lanterns," he said. Shop windows, hairdressers, bars and residents' balconies all have red lanterns and dragons on display at a time of year when most French stores sport Christmas decorations.

China fever has also reached the bookshop, which has filled its window with fiction, graphic novels and tourist guides on China. Extra footfall from the festival, which runs from December 1 until February 6, is a huge boost for local hotels, restaurants and shops. For Marion Duclot, a senior official in the Gaillac Graulhet local authority, the visitors are especially welcome in a season when the regional economy is "usually flat". And local landlords are celebrating too—the Tarn villa rental association is delighted by a doubling in winter bookings over the past two years.—AFP



# Classifieds

Sunday, December 30, 2018

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 29/12/2018 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	18 °C	13 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	19 °C	09 °C			
ABDALY	19 °C	07 °C			
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C			
JAHRA	19 °C	09 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	11 °C			
SALMIYAH	18 °C	14 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	13 °C			
NUWAISIB	22 °C	11 °C			
WAFRA	21 °C	09 °C			
SALMY	17 °C	06 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	12/30	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	18 °C	08 °C	NW-N	08 - 40 km/h
Monday	12/31	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	19 °C	10 °C	NE-VRB	08 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	01/01	Partly cloudy	19 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	01/02	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	20 °C	11 °C	NE-SE	08 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:17
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	14:40
Sunset	16:58
Isha	18:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	75 %
MIN. RH	44 %
MAX. Wind	S 46 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
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

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**OLIVEANO**  
 For Italian Restaurant in Jahra Ala Miah Mall  
**WE NEED URGENT**  
 1. Chef Italian Food (Asian nationality)  
 2. Assistant Cook (Should be experienced in Italian food)  
 3. Waitress (Only Filipino)  
**Transferable residence**  
 Please call Shams 90025211

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
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

## Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 30/12/2018				Departure Flights on Sunday 30/12/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	JZR	407	Ahmedabad	00:05
FEG	1241	Alexandria	00:30	MEA	405	Kochi	12:45
JZR	254	Amman	00:35	QTR	1075	Beirut	12:55
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	JZR	113	Doha	13:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	SAV	702	Damascus	13:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	123	Doha	13:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	FEG	1442	Asyut	14:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	JZR	103	Bahrain	14:40
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
RBG	551	Alexandria	02:25	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	SAV	501	Jeddah	15:45
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
RJA	648	Amman	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:10	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
JZR	722	Alexandria	03:30	KAC	283	Doha	16:30
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	JZR	261	Beirut	16:40
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	SAV	706	Damascus	17:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	675	Dubai	17:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	SAV	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	626	Doha	18:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
QTR	8511	Doha	06:25	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	JZR	253	Amman	19:15
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:35
IRC	528	Ahwaz	10:00	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
SAV	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	FEG	1344	Sohag	21:45
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
FEG	1343	Sohag	13:00	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
				JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
				KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20



Saudi and Emirati participants prepare a camp at the Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert, 150 km west of the United Arab Emirates' capital Abu Dhabi, on Dec 27, 2018. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a camel beauty contest, a display of UAE handicrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

## Winter storms batter large swathes of US; six killed

**CHICAGO:** At least six deaths were attributed to severe weather in the US as heavy snow and high winds snarled air and ground transportation during a busy holiday travel period. More than 500 flight cancellations and 5,700 delays were reported Friday as the winter storm blanketed areas from the north central plains and the Midwest with eight to 12 inches (20-30 cm) of snow.

As much snow, if not more, was forecast to fall in the coming days in the southwestern state of New Mexico, along with a deluge of rain in some southern and eastern states - ruining New Year travel plans for thousands of Americans. Millions more in the South were warned of potential flooding from heavy rains.

A 58-year-old woman in Louisiana was killed Wednesday evening when lightning struck a tree which then fell on her home, according to TV station WDSU. In Kansas, police said icy roads caused a fatal car crash Thursday on an interstate highway. Another crash

involving a snowplow and a car in North Dakota claimed one life. A woman on a camping trip in Tennessee with two men died while attempting to cross a creek in the state's Marion County, a local ABC affiliate reported.

Two people were killed in Minnesota. A 51-year-old man died Thursday when his car was struck by a pickup truck with a plow blade in poor visibility conditions, a local Fox affiliate quoted officials as saying. A 47-year-old woman meanwhile died in the state's Sherburne County after a bus she was on collided with an SUV on Thursday, a CBS affiliate station said. Nine others were injured.

More than 6,500 flights were delayed and some 800 more were canceled on Thursday, according to the flight tracking website FlightAware. Some airline passengers reported being stranded for days. "I didn't want to spend three days in the airport, missing out on the holidays - New Year's and all that," Anthony Scott

told Texas television station KDFW at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. "I have to go back to work the first of the year. So this is my time," he said. "This was my little vacation. I'm not trying to spend it in the airport."

### Road travel treacherous

Numerous roads were closed Thursday in the Dakotas, Minnesota, Kansas and Iowa. Ground crews worked to clear affected areas, but many remained packed with snow and ice Friday. The South Dakota Department of Transportation said advisories warning against travel remained in effect. "Roads are icy, blowing snow is still limiting visibility," the agency said. "Crews are working but mother nature is making safe travel tough."

North Dakota on Friday lifted a no-travel advisory that had been issued for the entire east side of the state, even as drifting snow continued to frustrate drivers.

National Weather Service (NWS) officials in Minnesota cautioned that roads in the upper Midwestern state were cloaked in snow. The weather service predicted the treacherous conditions would continue through the weekend across the country. Heavy snow was expected in the southwestern state of New Mexico from a new storm, with as much as 18 inches possible, NWS said.

To the south, heavy rains were forecast in the central Gulf Coast, in the Florida Panhandle, and stretching east to the mid-Atlantic. A risk of flash flooding was possible in a few areas. The nasty weather was still no match for a colossal blizzard that smothered the eastern United States in January 2016. That storm shut down New York and Washington, leaving 15 people dead and impacting some 85 million residents. Forecasters said the storm - dubbed "Snowzilla" - dumped 22.2 inches in Washington and 25.1 inches in New York's Central Park, the third highest accumulation since records began in 1869. — AFP

## Municipality open to BBQing in parks...

Continued from Page 1

responsible for parks, sets the locations and conditions to be followed. "We have already contacted PAAAFR to determine the designated parks," he said, noting that like in other countries, barbequing in parks should be allowed according to certain environmental conditions. Responding to a question about collecting fees for barbequing in parks, he stressed that the municipality cannot collect fees for public services

and it is PAAAFR that should impose such fees if it desires to do so.

Capital municipality cleaning department manager Meshaal Al-Azmi said policing barbequing in parks is the responsibility of the Environment Public Authority and the environment police and that the municipality has no right to fine people for barbequing there. "On the other hand, the municipality applies law number 190 pertaining barbequing in public places in case of barbequing on beaches," he added. Hawally municipality's cleaning department manager Saad Al-Jalawi said despite the lack of a clear law against barbequing in parks, the municipality has every right to levy a fine of KD 300 on those disposing the charcoal used in the process in sites allocated for garbage.

sites and in airports. It is also planning to open a major museum near the Giza pyramids - the only surviving structures of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

In July 2017, two German tourists were stabbed to death by a suspected militant at the Red Sea resort of Hurghada. In Oct 2015, a bomb claimed by a local affiliate of the Islamic State group killed 224 people on board a passenger jet carrying Russian tourists home from the Sinai Peninsula. Before Friday's bombing, security forces were already on high alert ahead of New Year celebrations and the Coptic Christmas on Jan 7.

Pope Francis said he was "deeply saddened" by the attack on holidaymakers, in a telegram to the Egyptian presidency which was signed by his number two Pietro Parolin. "In deploring this senseless and brutal act, he prays for the victims and their families, for the injured and for the emergency personnel who generously came to their aid," the telegram said. A spokesman for Britain's Thomas Cook travel group said it had cancelled day trips to Cairo from Hurghada following the attack and it would continue to review the security situation.

The blast and the subsequent police raids come as Egypt battles a persistent insurgency in the North Sinai, which surged after the 2013 overthrow by the army of Mubarak's Islamist successor Mohamed Morsi. Militants linked to the Islamic State group have claimed responsibility for previous attacks, including against Egypt's Coptic Christian minority who make up about 10 percent of the population. The army launched a large-scale operation dubbed "Sinai 2018" in February to rid the Sinai of militants after an attack on a mosque in the north of the peninsula killed more than 300 people. The army says that hundreds of suspected jihadists have been killed since the campaign was launched. — Agencies

## US arrests Jewish sect members for...

Continued from Page 1

20 respectively, all living in Guatemala - were deported on Thursday from Mexico, where they had taken the children, and arrested on their arrival in New York the same day. They stand accused of organizing the kidnapping on Dec 8 of a 14-year-old girl and her brother, 12, in the village of Woodridge, about 150 km north of New York.

## We're not in crisis: New Saudi foreign...

Continued from Page 1

make the government machinery more efficient. "The issue of Jamal Khashoggi... really saddened us, all of us," Assaf told AFP at his residence in Riyadh, adorned with mahogany furniture, a wall-mounted elephant tusk and other hunting trophies. "But all in all, we are not going through a crisis, we are going through a transformation," he added, referring to social and economic reforms spearheaded by the crown prince.

Assaf, 69, inherits the ministry after a series of combative foreign policy moves by the crown prince, who along with regional allies imposed a blockade on neighboring Qatar, launched a military campaign in Yemen and engaged in a bitter diplomatic row with Canada. Topping it all, Khashoggi's murder in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate by what it calls "rogue" agents is testing relations with key ally Washington.

When asked whether his biggest foreign policy challenge was to repair the kingdom's tarnished reputation, Assaf replied: "I wouldn't say 'repair' because the relationship between my country and a vast majority of countries in the world is in excellent shape." Before him, Jubeir also sought to vigorously defend the government and the crown prince, widely known as MBS, on the international stage over Khashoggi's murder.

In Thursday's reshuffle, Jubeir was appointed minister of state for foreign affairs, fuelling speculation that he had been demoted after he failed to quell global criticism over Khashoggi. "This is far from the truth," Assaf said. Jubeir's new role, he insisted, was tantamount to a division of labor and not a demotion, in a bid to accelerate the task of remaking a ministry

Approximately six weeks earlier, their mother had fled the sect in Guatemala fearing for her family's safety. She had previously been a "voluntary member" of the group which was founded by her father, but believed it would become even more extreme under its new leader, her brother Nachman Helbrans. The four suspects devised a plan to kidnap the victims to take them back to Guatemala via Mexico and flew the children out from a small airport outside Scranton, Pennsylvania. The children were recovered on Friday with the assistance of Mexican authorities in the town of Tenango del Air before being brought back to their mother. Each of the suspects are charged with one count of kidnapping, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. — AFP

known to be overly bureaucratic. "Adel represented Saudi Arabia and will continue to represent Saudi Arabia... around the world," Assaf said. "We complement each other." Jubeir was not immediately reachable for comment.

A seasoned bureaucrat, Assaf was briefly held in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel last year along with hundreds of elite princes and businessmen, in what the government called a crackdown on corruption. Saudi officials say he was released after being cleared of any wrongdoing, and he subsequently led a government delegation to the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this year. His reappointment to a cabinet role indicates the government is seeking to slowly "rehabilitate" the experienced old guard, widely seen to be sidelined by the young prince, observers say.

"King Salman is seeking to bolster his son by appointing seasoned technocrats like Assaf who are not from MBS' inner circle, indirectly reinstating an internal system of checks and balances that was swept away in (MBS's) drive to consolidate power," said Becca Wasser. "Adding experienced government hands from an older generation, will serve to check some of MBS's impulses," the policy analyst at the US-based RAND Corporation told AFP.

The elevation of seasoned allies in Thursday's reshuffle has bolstered the authority of Prince Mohammed after the removal of younger aides in his inner circle implicated in Khashoggi's murder, including former royal court advisor Saud Al-Qahtani. Assaf, who is on the boards of state oil giant Aramco and the vast Public Investment Fund, said his appointment as the top diplomat would help bring his financial experience to foreign affairs amid a current "dip" in the economy. The top crude exporter, facing a sharp fall in oil prices, is scrambling to restore confidence in foreign investors rattled by a series of what many see as rash foreign policy decisions. "Economic relationships now dominate foreign" affairs, Assaf said. — AFP

## Egypt forces kill 40 militants in...

Continued from Page 1

HH the Amir reaffirmed Kuwait's firm support to the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt in whatever measures it might take to protect its security and stability. He expressed sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wished the injured quick recovery.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Egyptian leader. An official of the Kuwaiti foreign ministry said Kuwait denounces in strong terms the bomb attack on the tourist bus. Such terrorist attacks that target civilians and put in peril the safety of innocent people highlight the need of doubling international efforts to combat terrorism, the official said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing, the first attack to target tourists since 2017. Friday's attack was the latest blow to Egypt's vital tourism industry, which has been reeling from turmoil set off by the 2011 uprising that forced veteran president Hosni Mubarak from power. While tourism has picked up since 2011, the 8.2 million people who visited Egypt in 2017 are still a far cry from the 14.7 million who visited in the year before the uprising.

"Yesterday's attack undermines the Egyptian government's very determined message that the country is safe for tourists," said Zack Gold, a US-based expert on Middle East security issues. Egypt has been seeking to lure tourists back by touting new archaeological discoveries and bolstering security around archaeological



Sports

# Mikaela Shiffrin collects record 15th World Cup victory in a year

## In the slalom standings, Shiffrin has a perfect 500 points, Vlhova has 400

**SEMMERING:** American Mikaela Shiffrin cruised to victory in the slalom in Semmering, Austria, yesterday for a record 15th World Cup triumph in a year

It was also the American's 36th slalom victory, also a record. She finished 0.29sec ahead of the Slovak Petra Vlhova, winner of Friday's giant slalom, and the Swiss Wendy Holdener.

After a disappointing fifth place the day before, Shiffrin reasserted her domination of the World Cup slopes as she broke the record for World Cup victories she had briefly shared with the Austrian Marcel Hirscher who has won 14 this year. Neither will race again before January 1.

Swedish slalom great Ingemar Stenmark won 13 races in both 1977 and 1979. Shiffrin also ensured she stands alone in women's World Cup slalom history. She broke a tie with the legendary Austrian Marlies Schild, who won 35 slaloms between 2004 and 2014.

Shiffrin has won 13 of the last 14 World Cup slaloms, including two parallels, and all five run this season, including one parallel. At 23, she has already won 51 World Cup races.

Under clear skies in Semmering, she built a 0.49sec lead over Vlhova in the first leg and, skiing last in the second leg, was able to cruise to victory by 0.29sec. On Friday, after winning for the first time this season, Vlhova reacted with relief to a rare victory over Shiffrin.

"I'm always second. Second, second and second. Then seeing her behind me I feel pride," Vlhova said.

yesterday she was second again. She is also second in the overall World Cup standings. Shiffrin has 1,034 points, Vlhova has 568, although she is comfortably ahead of Ragnhild Mowinckel, in third on 396.

In the slalom standings, Shiffrin has a perfect 500 points while Vlhova has 400 for finishing second every time. Holdener was third, 0.38sec behind Shiffrin for the career 18th podium finish in her specialist event. The women and men slalom skiers open the New Year with a "City Event" through Oslo on January 1.

### WOMEN'S WORLD CUP RESULTS

Results and standings after the women's World Cup slalom event at Semmering:

### OVERALL WORLD CUP STANDINGS:

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 1034pts, 2. Petra Vlhova (SVK) 568, 3. Ragnhild Mowinckel (NOR) 396, 4. Wendy Holdener (SUI) 394, 5. Viktoria Rebensburg (GER) 366, 6. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 359, 7. Federica Brignone (ITA) 357, 8. Michelle Gisin (SUI) 316, 9. Ilka Stuhec (SLO) 302, 10. Katharina Liensberger (AUT) 279

### WORLD CUP SLALOM STANDINGS:

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 500pts, 2. Petra Vlhova (SVK) 400, 3. Wendy Holdener (SUI) 255, 4. Katharina Liensberger (AUT) 199, 5. Frida Hansdotter (SWE) 171. — AFP



**SEMMERING:** (L-R) Second placed Petra Vlhova of Slovakia, winner Mikaela Shiffrin of the US and third placed Wendy Holdener of Switzerland celebrate on the podium after the Women's Slalom event at the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Semmering, Austria, yesterday. — AFP

## Maple Leafs take down Jackets

**COLUMBUS:** John Tavares scored two goals, Mitch Marner had a goal and two assists, and the visiting Toronto Maple Leafs defeated the Columbus Blue Jackets 4-2 Friday night. Frederik Gauthier also scored for the Maple Leafs, who won their fifth game in a row and stopped the five-game winning streak by the Blue Jackets. Nick Foligno and Artemi Panarin scored for the Blue Jackets, who were playing their second game in two nights while the Maple Leafs were playing for the first time since Sunday. Garret Sparks, Toronto's backup goaltender, made 27 saves. Blue Jackets goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky made 25 saves in defeat.

### CANADIENS 5, PANTHERS 3

Tomas Tatar scored two goals—including the go-ahead tally with 11:06 left in the third period—as Montreal won in Sunrise, Fla. Nicolas Deslauriers, Artturi Lehkonen and Jonathan Drouin also scored for Montreal, and Antti Niemi made 23 saves. Niemi was playing for Carey Price, who missed the game due to a lower-body injury. Florida got early goals from a pair of 21-year-olds, Henrik Borgstrom and Denis Malgin, and a late score from veteran defenseman Keith Yandle. Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo made 23 saves. Florida entered the game having won four of its previous five games.

### ISLANDERS 6, SENATORS 3

New York scored five unanswered goals to come back for a resounding win over visiting Ottawa. Mathew Barzal scored the go-ahead and insurance goals for the Islanders, who have won two straight and five of six. Josh Bailey, Anders Lee, Johnny Boychuk and Casey Cizikas also scored for New York. Robin Lehner earned the win by stopping all 10 shots he faced in relief of Thomas Greiss, who was pulled after giving up three goals on 17 shots. Mark Stone, Matt Duchene and Cody Ceci scored for the Senators,



**COLUMBUS:** Igor Ozhiginov #92 of the Toronto Maple Leafs attempts to knock the puck away from Josh Anderson #77 of the Columbus Blue Jackets during the second period on Friday at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio. — AFP

who have lost three straight and four of five. Mike McKenna recorded 33 saves.

Meanwhile, NHL on Friday suspended Boston Bruins forward David Backes three games without pay for what the league called "an illegal check to the head" of New Jersey Devils forward Blake Coleman.

The hit happened during the Devils' 5-2 victory in Boston on Thursday. With two minutes remaining in the game, Backes skated from the left circle into the slot and put his shoulder into Coleman's face as Coleman cleared the puck. Backes drew a minor penalty on the play.

It is Backes' second three-game suspension in the 2018 calendar year, the first coming in March for a late hit on Detroit's Frans Nielsen.

He will forfeit \$219,512.19 during the suspension. The suspension will also keep Backes out of the NHL's marquee game of the regular season.

The Bruins play the Chicago Blackhawks on New Year's Day in the Winter Classic at Notre Dame Stadium in South Bend, Ind. The annual outdoor showcase is the second of the three games Backes will miss.

Boston plays at Buffalo on Saturday and hosts Calgary on Thursday. Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy told reporters on Friday that forward Brad Marchand will likely miss the game against the Sabres after taking a couple of high hits against the Devils.

"We'll have a much better idea on him (Saturday)," Cassidy said. "Doesn't look likely for him (Saturday), would be my guess. But he's traveling with us, so that could change." And the team placed defenseman Charlie McAvoy on injured reserve with a lower-body injury. He will miss the game Saturday but will travel and could play in the Winter Classic. — Reuters

## For relaxed Mayweather, Japan fight 'all about entertainment'

**TOKYO:** US boxing legend Floyd "Money" Mayweather said yesterday his focus was on entertaining the fans during his New Year's Eve fight with Japanese kickboxing prodigy Tenshin Nasukawa near Tokyo. The 41-year-old unbeaten champion has been tempted out of retirement—again—for a one-off "exhibition" in Saitama, north of Tokyo, against "Ninja Boy" Nasukawa, a fighter more than half his age at 20.

"It is all about entertainment. I don't worry about anything," Mayweather told reporters in a news conference devoid of the hyped-up rhetoric that usually accompanies pre-fight events. Tomorrow's bout will be held under boxing rules over three three-minute rounds, which the veteran Mayweather said he could complete "in his sleep."

The exhibition will not have an official winner or loser if it goes the distance, meaning both men can keep their treasured unbeaten records in the absence of a knock-out. Mayweather has also said there will be no official judges and the bout will not count on the official record of either athlete.

However, the relaxed American said he would not even be concerned if he were to be floored by his Japanese opponent. "Me getting knocked out or me getting knocked down ... I don't worry about it at all. If that does happen, I mean that's entertainment. That's all we need to see," said Mayweather.

For his part, Nasukawa said he did not feel the rules of the bout were "unfair," even though he will be deprived of his kicking skills. "All I have to do is to give 100 percent ... Since Mayweather is expected to dodge my offense, I really want to hit him," said the 20-year-old.

The fight was first announced in early November but Mayweather then abruptly called it off following what was later described as a "misunderstanding" over the rules of the fight, according to mixed martial arts promoter RIZIN.

RIZIN boss Nobuyuki Sakakibara flew to Los Angeles for talks with the



**TOKYO:** US boxing superstar Floyd Mayweather Jr speaks to the media during a press conference at a Tokyo hotel yesterday. Mayweather will fight against Japanese kickboxer Tenshin "Ninja Boy" Nasukawa in Saitama tomorrow. — AFP

American boxer and won him round, finally agreeing the terms for the three-round contest. Sakakibara has stressed that tomorrow's bout will be far from a sparring match, adding: "They will fight aiming to knock out."

"Money" Mayweather came out of a two-year retirement in 2017 and knocked out mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor in the 10th round of a super-hyped boxing match.

There are also rumours Mayweather could take on reigning UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov, who said last month any match-up would be "twice as interesting" as the McGregor fight.

Nasukawa is considered something of a prodigy in Japanese fighting circles and began learning karate at the age of five. Like Mayweather, he is unbeaten, boasting a 28-0 record as a professional kickboxer with 21 wins by knockout. He has four wins from four matches in mixed martial arts. — AFP

## Paris completes Bormio double with Super-G win

**BORMIO:** Dominik Paris snatched victory in the men's World Cup Super-G on home snow at Bormio yesterday just 24 hours after a rampaging downhill win. The 29-year-old clocked 1min 29.95sec down the icy Stelvio piste in the Italian Alps to edge Austria's Matthias Mayer by a razor thin 0.01sec margin with Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde third at 0.46sec.

It was Paris' 11th World Cup win—nine downhill and two Super-G—and 26th podium finish, including two third-place finishes at Lake Louise in the downhill and the Super-G in Beaver Creek this season.

"I'm speechless, unbelievable. I couldn't have dreamed of two wins in a row," said Paris. "Today was even more difficult. I made a mistake at the Carcentina, then I started to give it everything, gaining confidence. Two fantastic days." Paris' only previous Super-G win was in Kitzbuehel, Austria in January 2015. He won the downhill in Bormio for a third time on Friday to add to his successes in 2012 and 2017.

Fellow Italian Christof Innerhofer, who had finished second in the downhill on Friday, started with the No. 1 bib, immediately making a serious error that compromised his race. Paris started No. 16 which made the difference especially in the second part of the piste which was more streamlined.

The race was briefly interrupted by the nasty crash of the Norwegian Stian Saugerstad coming into the Carcentina diagonal, one of the most spectacular and difficult parts of the Stelvio. However, the athlete stood up alone before being transported to hospital. — AFP

## WADA discussing date for lab visit as deadline nears

**MOSCOW:** Moscow and the World Anti-Doping Agency are discussing a date for WADA experts to visit and receive laboratory data, Russia's sports minister said yesterday, as Russia's anti-doping agency, RUSADA, stands on the verge of suspension.

RUSADA was stripped of its accreditation in 2015 after a WADA-commissioned report found evidence of widespread state-sponsored doping in Russian athletics, but conditionally - and controversially - reinstated in September.

If judicial authorities fail to hand over laboratory data by the end of the year, it will again lose its status, raising the prospect of Russia being banned from a second consecutive Olympics and remaining shut out of international athletics.

The minister, Pavel Kolobkov, said his ministry had received a letter from WADA president Craig Reedie outlining "the options for organising the process of copying the data from the Moscow anti-doping laboratory" and specifying the equipment to be used.

A WADA team returned from Moscow empty-handed this month after Russian authorities said their equipment was not certified under Russian law.

WADA has said its Compliance Review Committee will review a report by the team when it meets on Jan. 14-15 in Montreal.

"In parallel we continue to make efforts to retrieve the lab data and as such we remain in contact with the Russian authorities in that regard," it said in an e-mail yesterday.

Kolobkov said that Russia's Investigative Committee, which is holding the data for its own probe, had approved the equipment to be used.

He said WADA and Russia had a "mutual understanding" on the issue, adding: "We are currently discussing a date for the next visit." Russia was barred from competing at this year's Pyeongchang Olympics by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) after it was found to have run a state-sponsored doping cover-up scheme at the 2014 Games in the Russian city of Sochi.

Some Russians with no history of doping were invited to compete as neutrals, however. The world athletics federation, the IAAF, has also cleared some Russians to compete internationally as neutrals. Moscow has denied any involvement in state-sponsored doping but has acknowledged some issues in its enforcement of anti-doping regulations.

RUSADA head Yuri Ganus urged President Vladimir Putin this week to ensure the laboratory data were handed over to prevent Russia being further isolated on the global sports stage. — Reuters

## Sports

# India set to take 2-1 series lead to finale in Sydney

## Australia bats fail for second time in match

MELBOURNE: India moved within two wickets of an emphatic victory in the third Test after reducing Australia to 258 for eight at the close of day four yesterday as the home side's batsmen suffered a familiar spate of failures.

Having set a daunting victory target of 399 shortly before lunch, Virat Kohli's team attacked with precision and intensity to leave Australia on life support at the end of a muggy and overcast day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The lion-hearted Pat Cummins thwarted India's hopes of closing out the win with a day to spare, anchoring some stubborn tail-end resistance after the top order crumbled.

The seamer was 61 not out, a personal best, with Nathan Lyon on six, and Australia still 141 runs short of victory.

Some rain is forecast on day five, but after dominating with bat and ball, the tourists will almost certainly head to the Sydney finale with a 2-1 series lead and a genuine belief they can become the first Indian team to win a series Down Under.

"Obviously we wanted to finish it today but our

bowlers will get enough breaks and hopefully finish it off tomorrow in the first hour," said India number three Cheteshwar Pujara, whose 106 in the first innings was his second century of the series.

"We have a very good chance of winning the series and the last Test match will be crucial for us. But first things first, we will look to finish the job early tomorrow."

On a grim day for Australian cricket, Cummins was the only shining light, impressing with the bat after registering career-best figures of 6-27 before Kohli declared India's second innings at 106-8 in the morning.

However, the paceman's heroics will likely be consigned to a foot-note, squandered as they were by the specialist batsmen that came before him.

### LYON'S PRIDE

Where straight bats were required to provide a platform of resistance, Aaron Finch got his team off to the worst possible start by throwing away his wicket for three with an unsightly cut shot off Jasprit Bumrah that was gobbled in the slips.



MELBOURNE: Australia's batsman Pat Cummins (R) plays a shot as India's wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant looks on during day four of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Scorecard at stumps on day four of the third Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

**India 1st innings 443-7 dec** (C. Pujara 106, V. Kohli 82, R. Sharma 63 no; P. Cummins 3-72)

**Australia first innings 151** (M. Harris 22, T. Paine 22; J. Bumrah 6-33)

**India 2nd innings (overnight 54-5)**

M. Agarwal b Cummins	42
H. Vihari c Khawaja b Cummins	13
C. Pujara c Harris b Cummins	0
V. Kohli c Harris b Cummins	0
A. Rahane c Paine b Cummins	1
R. Sharma c S. Marsh b Hazlewood	5
R. Pant c Paine b Hazlewood	33
R. Jadeja c Khawaja b Cummins	5
M. Shami not out	0
Extras: (lb1 b5, w1)	7
<b>Total:</b> (eight wickets declared, 37.3 overs)	106
<b>Did not bat:</b> Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-28 (Vihari), 2-28 (Pujara), 3-28 (Kohli), 4-32 (Rahane), 5-44 (Sharma), 6-83 (Agarwal), 7-100 (Jadeja), 8-106 (Pant)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Starc 3-1-11-0, Hazlewood 10.3-3-22-2, Cummins 11-3-27-6, Lyon 13-1-40-0.	

**Australia 2nd innings**

M. Harris c Aggarwal b Jadeja	13
A. Finch c Kohli b Bumrah	3
U. Khawaja lbw b Shami	33
S. Marsh lbw b Bumrah	44
T. Head b Sharma	34
M. Marsh c Kohli b Jadeja	10
T. Paine c Pant b Jadeja	26
P. Cummins not out	61
M. Starc b Shami	18
N. Lyon not out	6
Extras: (lb6, b2, w2)	10
<b>Total:</b> (eight wickets, 85 overs)	258
<b>To bat:</b> Josh Hazlewood	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-6 (Finch), 2-33 (Harris), 3063 (Khawaja), 4-114 (S. Marsh), 5-135 (M. Marsh), 6-157 (Head), 7-176 (Paine), 8-215 (Starc)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Bumrah 17-1-53-2, Sharma 12-0-37-1, Jadeja 32-6-82-3, Shami 21-2-71-2, Vihari 3-1-7-0.	

## New Zealand eye victory as Wagner rocks Sri Lanka

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand were eyeing an historic victory as injury and a barrage of Neil Wagner bouncers left Sri Lanka in tatters at the close of day four of the second Test in Christchurch yesterday.

The conditions were tailor-made for short-ball specialist Wagner, New Zealand bowling coach Shane Jurgensen said, as Sri Lanka were 231 for six at stumps. At most they have only four wickets left, but with doubt whether the injured Angelo Mathews



CHRISTCHURCH: Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis plays a shot as New Zealand's Henry Nicholls attempts to catch the ball during day four of the second cricket Test match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Hagley Park Oval in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on day four of the second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Christchurch yesterday:

**New Zealand first innings 178** (T. Southee 68, B. Watling 46; Lakmal 5-54)

**Sri Lanka first innings 104** (A. Mathews 33no; Boult 6-30, Southee 3-35)

**New Zealand second innings 585-4 dec** (I. Latham 176, H. Nicholls 162no, C. de Grandhomme 7no, J. Raval 74; Kumara 2-134)

<b>Sri Lanka second innings (overnight 24-2)</b>	
D. Gunathilaka c Watling b Southee	4
D. Karunaratne c Watling b Boult	0
D. Chandimal c Nicholls b Wagner	56
K. Mendis c sub (Henry) b Wagner	67
A. Mathews retired hurt	22
R. Silva c Watling b Wagner	18
N. Dickwell b Southee	19
D. Perera not out	22
S. Lakmal not out	16
Extras: (b 4, lb 2, wd 1) 7 Total: (for 6 wickets, 104 overs) 231	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-1 (Karunaratne), 2-9 (Gunathilaka), 3-126 (Mendis), 4-158 (Chandimal), 5-181 (Dickwell), 6-208 (Silva)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Boult 27-11-73-1, Southee 27-13-61-2, de Grandhomme 10-1-23-0 (fw), Wagner 28-10-47-3, Patel 12-9-21-0.	

will return to help them survive the final day.

At the crease were Dilruwan Perera on 22 and Suranga Lakmal on 16 with their 660-run target out of sight. Wagner, who had little success earlier in the series, broke through stubborn Sri Lankan resistance, with figures of three for 47 from a marathon 28 overs.

"I think he showed what he could do once he had a little bit more bounce on offer. I thought he bowled with really good pace and really questioned the Sri Lankan batsmen," Jurgensen said. "I was commenting in our viewing area saying I think this day is set up for Neil.

"He was really licking his lips today to have a good crack and he certainly had that." After rain

ensured a drawn first Test in Wellington, a win in the Christchurch decider would give New Zealand a fourth consecutive series win for the first time after beating the West Indies, England and Pakistan earlier this year. Despite losing both openers in the first two overs of their second innings, Sri Lanka fought to stay in the game until Wagner came into the frame. Skipper Dinesh Chandimal and Kusal Mendis produced stubborn resistance for 53 overs for the third wicket before Mendis went for 67.

They had seen off the swing and seam of New Zealand strike bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult at the start of the day, were untroubled by spinner Ajaz Patel, and initially they dodged the barrage aimed at the ribs by Wagner. — AFP

## Former England captains Cook, Beaumont knighted

LONDON: Former England cricket and rugby captains Alastair Cook and Bill Beaumont headlined sporting personalities in the New Years Honours List with both men receiving knighthoods from Queen Elizabeth II. Cook—who has more Test centuries (33) and runs (12,472) than any other England player accrued during a record 161 Test matches—is the first cricketer to be knighted since legendary all-rounder Ian Botham in 2007.

The 34-year-old opening batsman finished his Test career in the best possible manner with a century against India at The Oval despite having declared there "was nothing left in the tank". "It's a fitting tribute to a man who has led with distinction on and off the pitch every since he made his England debut," England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Colin Graves said in a statement to Press Association Sport.

Beaumont—chairman of the sport's governing body, World Rugby, — skippered England to the

1980 Five Nations Grand Slam as well as captaining the British and Irish Lions. Following his retirement as a player the 66-year-old became a much loved face on BBC television, his avuncular style adapting well to captaining a team in Question of Sport.

"I am honoured and humbled to receive this accolade from Her Majesty the Queen for services to rugby," Beaumont told World Rugby. "I have always viewed my work in the sport as an administrator as that of a guardian, driven by a passion to do the very best I can for rugby."

Football did not miss out, with England manager Gareth Southgate and captain Harry Kane rewarded for the national side's run to this year's World Cup semi-finals. Southgate, whose sartorial elegance in Russia saw sales of waistcoats rocket, received the middle-ranking Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) whilst Tottenham Hotspur sharpshooter Kane garnered the lesser Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Kane, who won the World Cup Golden Boot for finishing top scorer with six goals, said he learnt of his award from his fiancée Kate just prior to a Premier League game with Southampton in early December. "We got a letter to the house, Kate opened the letter," he told Spurs TV.

"Normally we'd talk a little but she would never call me just before the match. I had a missed call



Alastair Cook

and she texted me 'could you answer?'. "I thought something was wrong! But Kate was excited and told me that we'd had a letter from the Queen saying we'd get an MBE."

Another British sporting success story of the year Welshman Geraint Thomas received an OBE after winning road cycling's showpiece event, the Tour de France. Beaumont was not the only rugby personality to be honoured with former Scotland lock Doddie Weir, whose courageous battle with motor neurone disease has helped to raise its profile through his 'My Name's Doddie Foundation' (attn eds: correct), being awarded an OBE. — AFP

## Wife of former England cricket chief Strauss dies

LONDON: Ruth Strauss, whose cancer diagnosis prompted her husband Andrew Strauss to step down from his role as England's director of cricket, has died, her family announced in a statement yesterday.

The statement said Ruth had died aged 46 of the rare form of lung cancer she suffered from in her home country of Australia. Strauss, a former England cricket captain, announced in early October he was standing down permanently as the national side's director of cricket following a period of compassionate leave.

Ruth was diagnosed with cancer during the Ashes in December 2017 and he took a break from his position earlier this year after she began a new course of treatment. "It is with great sadness and immense grief that we have to announce that Ruth passed away today as a result of her rare lung cancer," read the statement issued by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on behalf of the Strauss family.

"Sam, Luca and I will miss her terribly. "Anyone who has met Ruth will know how loving, caring and passionately protective she was of her family and it gives us huge comfort that she was in Australia, the land of her birth, surrounded by those who love her, in her final moments."

The Strauss family thanked the medical team who had treated her and said they would be helping others with the disease. "Ruth desperately wanted to help those affected by this terrible disease," read the statement. "We will be launching a foundation in due course to raise much needed funds to aid research and also to offer support to patients and their families." — AFP

## Bancroft ban expires and back in Perth Scorchers squad

MELBOURNE: Cameron Bancroft's ban for ball-tampering expired yesterday and he was immediately rushed into the Perth Scorchers squad for their Big Bash League clash with the Hobart Hurricanes.

The 26-year-old opener was suspended from international and state cricket for nine months after attempting to alter the ball in a Test against South Africa in March. Then-Australian captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were exiled for a year with their suspensions due to run out in late March.

"What a journey this has been over the last nine months," Bancroft wrote on Instagram. "Grateful of where I am and the person I continue to grow to be. Thank you to every person, group, team and community I have come across over the last nine months. You know who you are."

Bancroft re-emerged into public life with an explosive television interview on Wednesday in which he confirmed Warner asked him to use sandpaper to rough up the ball. He claimed he went along with it "to fit in" and because he "didn't know any better".

Smith also gave a recent interview, admitting he failed as a captain by turning a blind eye to what went on. A number of high-profile former players have blasted them for dragging the issue back into the spotlight and detracting from the ongoing third Test against India in Melbourne.

Bancroft could make his comeback in Australia's Twenty20 domestic league on Sunday against the Hurricanes in Launceston after being included in the Scorchers' 13-man squad. "It's great to have Cam back in the squad again. It's been a long year for him and now he can move forward and get back to playing cricket at a high level," said Perth coach Adam Voges. "He's been pretty excited to be back so he'll bring energy and experience into our batting line up." — AFP

Sports

# Ronaldo double seals new Juve record, Balde rescues Inter Milan

## Inter Milan are third two points behind Napoli

**MILAN:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as voracious Italian champions Juventus finished 2018 on a high with a 2-1 win over Sampdoria to set a new points record in Serie A before the winter break as Inter Milan's Senegalese winger Keita Balde scored the only goal in a win over Empoli days after the club were embroiled in a racism controversy.

Ronaldo curled in the opener after just two minutes in Turin adding a second from the penalty spot on 65 minutes, putting the Portuguese top of Serie A's scoring charts on 14 goals. Fabio Quagliarella pulled the Genoa outfit level with a penalty on 33 minutes, but a late Riccardo Saponara goal was ruled offside after consultation with the video assistant referee.

"It was important to end the year on a high and it wasn't at all easy," said coach Massimiliano Allegri. VAR proved decisive in the game with Sampdoria coach Marco Giampaolo, dismissing Ronaldo's penalty as "a gift," adding "that Saponara goal should never have been cancelled". "Juventus are strong, they consume everything. They are a cannibal," said Giampaolo. "For me, morally, the game was 2-2." Juventus open up a 12-point lead at the top of Serie A ahead of Napoli who can reduce the gap when they host Bologna later.

Inter Milan are third two points behind Napoli. Seven-time reigning champions Juventus also have a record number of points before the three-week winter break with 53 from 19 games.

"Records are meaningless, if not to improve and raise the bar," said Allegri. The reigning champions have dropped points just twice, being held 1-1 by Genoa at home in October and 2-2 against Atalanta midweek, and

are firmly on track for an eighth consecutive Scudetto.

"With Ronaldo, the perception is different. He's the best player in the world," continued Allegri. "37 points, give or take a few, are missing for the Scudetto."

Ronaldo had come off the bench to score in Bergamo last Wednesday but returned to the starting line-up in the Allianz Stadium. And the Portuguese striker found a way through early, picking up a Paulo Dybala cross to fire in past Sampdoria's on loan Juventus goalkeeper Emil Audero.

Sampdoria pulled level following a penalty awarded following an Emre Can handball with Quagliarella making no mistake beating Mattia Perin in the Juventus goal. The 35-year-old became the first player to score in nine consecutive Serie A games since David Trezeguet for Juventus in 2005. Audero deflected over a Ronaldo header on the hour but the hosts went ahead when the referee pointed to the spot for an Alex Ferrari handball off a corner after a VAR viewing.

Substitute Saponara looked to have grabbed a point deep into injury time but VAR ruled he was in an offside. "The first half of the season has gone really well," said Ronaldo, "but there's still a long way to go. We must stay focused and keep working away if we want to achieve great things." In Tuscany, Inter Milan earned back-to-back wins with Balde scoring on 72 minutes to move closer to Napoli, who they beat by the same scoreline amid controversy three days ago.

Luciano Spalletti's side were playing without their fans after racist abuse aimed at Napoli's Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly in Milan. "It was fundamental that we win this match," said Spalletti. — AFP



**TURIN:** Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo shoots to score a penalty kick during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Sampdoria yesterday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

## Fulham beat Huddersfield

**LONDON:** Fulham boosted their Premier League survival hopes after Aleksandar Mitrovic scored a stoppage time winner to give them a 1-0 win over bottom team Huddersfield Town at Craven Cottage yesterday.

The result lifted Fulham one place up to 18th on 14 points from 20 games, two more than Burnley who are at home to West Ham United in one of today's four fixtures. Huddersfield have 11 points after suffering their seventh successive defeat.

Having had a bullet of a header saved by Jonas Lossel, who also kept out an Aboubakar Kamara penalty, Mitrovic delighted the home fans after taking a Ryan Sessegnon pass in his stride and firing it past the visiting keeper.

Kamara will have been particularly relieved with the outcome as he snatched the ball away from Mitrovic to take the spot kick he earned after Chris Lowe handled the French forward's attempt to control the ball.

Kamara was booed by the home fans every time he touched the ball in the closing stages and just when it seemed he would be left to rue his ill-judged perseverance, Mitrovic spared his blushes with a superb finish.

Huddersfield launched a dangerous raid at the other end and after Fulham cleared the danger, they launched a quick breakaway move with Sessegnon feeding Mitrovic to rifle the ball past Lossel from just inside the penalty box.

### WATFORD DRAW

Earlier, Abdoulaye Doucoure came off the bench to bundle home the equaliser and then almost grab a winner as Watford secured a 1-1 draw with Newcastle United at Vicarage Road in the Premier League yesterday.

The French midfielder was brought on at the start of the second half as Watford went all out to avoid a sixth home league defeat this season.

Doucoure met Gerard Deulofeu's cross with a superb header in the 82nd minute to set up a frantic final few minutes. Newcastle had led for much of the game after Salomon Rondon, who had been left out of their 4-0 defeat at Liverpool on Wednesday, headed home Matt Ritchie's centre cross.

The goal was Rondon's fifth in eight league games and the Venezuelan almost had another soon after but this time his effort was disallowed for a fractional offside. Fifteenth-placed Newcastle looked on course to secure the league double over Javi Gracia's inconsistent side before Doucoure, who has been heavily linked with a move away in January, struck the equaliser and then headed wide from four metres in injury time. — Reuters

## Davis scores 48 as Pelicans nip Mavs

**NEW ORLEANS:** Anthony Davis scored a season-high 48 points and grabbed 17 rebounds as the host New Orleans Pelicans ended a five-game losing streak by beating the Dallas Mavericks 114-112 on Friday night. Julius Randle added 22 points and 12 rebounds, and Jrue Holiday scored 18 for the Pelicans. Rookie Luka Doncic scored 34 points, Harrison Barnes added 21, Dennis Smith Jr. had 14, Dirk Nowitzki 11 and Dwight Powell 10 for the Mavericks, who ended a six-game losing streak by beating the Pelicans 122-119 on Wednesday in Dallas. It was Smith's first game back after missing six games because of a sprained right wrist.

### NUGGETS 102, SPURS 99

Jamal Murray scored 31 points and Nikola Jokic had 21 points, nine rebounds and nine assists as host Denver held on to beat San Antonio. Malik Beasley scored 21 before leaving the game with an undisclosed injury for Denver, which snapped a two-game losing streak. LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points, DeMar DeRozan had 15 and Bryn Forbes scored 13 for the Spurs.

### THUNDER 118, SUNS 102

Russell Westbrook recorded 40 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists to lead Oklahoma City past host Phoenix. Dennis Schroder scored 14 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter as the Thunder prevailed without star forward Paul George (quadriceps). It marked the first game George has missed this season. Abdel Nader scored a career-best 18 points off the bench for Oklahoma City, which halted a two-game slide. Devin Booker contributed 25 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds for the Suns, who had won five of their previous seven games.

## Cardiff win with late Camarasa strike

**LEICESTER:** A 92nd-minute goal from midfielder Victor Camarasa and a penalty save from goalkeeper Neil Etheridge ensured Cardiff City beat Leicester City 1-0 for their first away victory of the Premier League season yesterday.

Claude Puel's Leicester, carrying momentum from consecutive wins against Chelsea and Manchester City, dominated the early exchanges at the King Power Stadium and came close with long-range efforts from James Maddison and Ricardo Pereira.

Leicester had their best chance of the first half in the closing stages when Jamie Vardy was slipped through by Maddison, only for the striker to shoot straight at Etheridge.

The hosts looked certain to claim consecutive home wins for the first time this season when Maddison was clipped inside the box by defender Sean Morrison but they were denied thanks to Etheridge's heroics. With Leicester supporters heading towards the exit, Camarasa curled the ball past goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel from the edge of the box to secure a dramatic win for the Welsh side.

The victory takes Neil Warnock's Cardiff up to 16th place in the league standings, four points clear of the relegation zone.

### BRIGHTON WIN OVER EVERTON

Brighton & Hove Albion's Dutch striker Juergen Locadia pounced just before the hour as they carved out a 1-0 home win against an unlucky Everton side who hit the woodwork twice in their Premier League clash yesterday.

After a pedestrian opening 45 minutes, tempers flared in the second half of Everton's 4,500th game in the English top flight when their forward Richarlison went down injured and Brighton declined to put



**NEW ORLEANS:** Dwight Powell #7 of the Dallas Mavericks goes to the basket against the New Orleans Pelicans on Friday at the Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

### CLIPPERS 118, LAKERS 107

Lou Williams scored a season-high 36 points off the bench for the Clippers, who took over with a 22-0 run that started late in the third quarter in winning the first meeting this season between the Los Angeles rivals. Danilo Gallinari added 19 points for the Clippers. After a slow start, Montrezl Harrell had 12 points. Gallinari and Tobias Harris each added 10 rebounds. Kyle Kuzma scored 24 points and Lonzo Ball added 19 for the Lakers, who were playing without LeBron James (groin injury) and Rajon Rondo (finger injury). James is listed as day-to-day, while Rondo is expected to miss at least a month.

### HEAT 118, CAVALIERS 94

Justise Winslow led a balanced offense for host Miami, whose defense wore down short-handed Cleveland. Winslow finished with 24 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists. He has had only eight 20-point games in his career,

six of them in December. Bam Adebayo added 18 points on 8-for-8 shooting, plus nine boards and five assists. Because of injuries, Cleveland had only nine players available. Jordan Clarkson scored 18 points and Alec Burks added 17. Miami has won six of seven while Cleveland has lost five straight.

### MAGIC 116, RAPTORS 87

Nikola Vucevic recorded 30 points, 20 rebounds and eight assists to help host Orlando thrash Toronto. D.J. Augustin added 17 points as Orlando halted a four-game slide. Kawhi Leonard scored 21 points for the Raptors, who saw their NBA-best record fall to 26-11. Serge Ibaka added 17 points, eight rebounds and four blocked shots, while Fred VanVleet tallied 11 points for Toronto, which played without point guard Kyle Lowry (back). Vucevic connected on 12 of 17 shots while posting a 30-point, 20-rebound performance for the third time in his career. It also was his eighth career 20-rebound contest. — Reuters

## Emirates look to thrive on home soil in Omar's absence

**SYDNEY:** Alberto Zaccheroni knows what it takes to win an Asian Cup but if he is to succeed with the United Arab Emirates as he did with Japan in 2011, the Italian coach will have to do it without one of the host nation's outstanding talents.

Omar Abdulrahman's delightful touch helped drive his country to third place in Australia four years ago but a knee injury sustained playing club soccer means the midfielder will be in a moonboot on the sidelines for the Jan. 5-Feb. 1 tournament.

Zaccheroni, though, has always been known for his tactical creativity—he had Japan playing a 4-2-3-1 formation in 2011 — and any squad in the charge of the former Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus boss can be relied upon to play an attacking style.

There was also a pre-tournament boost with Al Ain showing that Emirati players can compete at the highest level by getting past Esperance and River Plate to reach the final of the Club World Cup on home soil in December.

Seven players from the country's most successful club made Zaccheroni's 23-man squad for the Asian Cup, including goalkeeper Khalid Essa and Omar's brothers Amer and Mohamed Abdulrahman.

It likely to be the forward pairing of Al Ahli's Ahmed Khalil and Al

Jazira's Ali Mabkhout, however, that will decide whether the Italian's fulfils his mission of getting the hosts to the final.

Khalil, who preceded Omar Abdulrahman as Asian Player of the Year in 2015 after helping Al Ahli to the Asian Champions League final, has a tally of a goal every other game over his 97-match international career.

Four of his 49 goals came at the last Asian Cup finals and only Mabkhout, who notched five, prevented him from finishing as the tournament's top scorer. That firepower should easily be enough to get the hosts out of a Group A also featuring Thailand, India and Bahrain but whether the 2019 squad can match their 1996 forebears by reaching the final on home soil might rely more on defence.

Essa showed he is a mighty shot-stopper as Al Ain reached the Club World Cup final but for all their doggedness, the Emiratis were taken apart 4-1 by Real Madrid in the title decider.

Certainly, the national team will not face the same quality opposition at any stage of the Asian Cup but Zaccheroni's tactical flexibility and emphasis on attack have sometimes come at the cost of defensive solidity. — Reuters

the ball out of play after winning it back.

The home side took the lead in bizarre fashion as a Pascal Gross corner struck Everton midfielder Andre Gomes, with the ball dropping to Locadia who swivelled before smashing it home.

The goal was initially disallowed as Locadia was in an offside position, but referee Andrew Madley reversed his decision after consulting his assistant, ruling that no Brighton player had touched the ball before Locadia struck. Despite having a tough afternoon against Brighton centre-backs Shane Duffy and Lewis Dunk, Brazilian Richarlison almost hit back immediately for the visitors, but his wicked shot was deflected onto a post by keeper David Button.

Kurt Zouma also hit the woodwork for Everton, sending his header from Gylfi Sigurdsson's free kick onto the crossbar in the dying minutes as the Blues slumped to their fourth defeat in seven league games in December. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>		
Crystal Palace FC v Chelsea FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	12:00
Southampton FC v Manchester City	beIN SPORTS HD 2	14:15
Burnley FC v West Ham United	beIN SPORTS	14:15
Manchester United v Bournemouth FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	16:30

**25** Mikaela Shiffrin collects record 15th World Cup victory in a year



**26** India set to take 2-1 series lead to finale in Sydney



**27** Ronaldo double seals new Juve record, Balde rescues Inter Milan



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen (C) vies with Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Ruben Neves (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Wembley Stadium in London, yesterday. — AFP

## Tottenhams stunned by Wolves

### Spurs Premier League title hopes hit by defeat

LONDON: Tottenham's Premier League title hopes took a major hit yesterday when Wolves beat them 3-1 at Wembley to end their winning run.

Spurs took the lead with a Harry Kane pile-driver in the first half but the visitors staged a ferocious comeback through Willy Boly, Raul Jimenez and substitute Helder Costa.

Mauricio Pochettino's team found themselves in the title picture thanks to five straight league wins and a mini-collapse from defending champions Manchester City.

With league leaders Liverpool not in action against Arsenal until later on Saturday, Spurs knew they had a chance to crank up the pressure on Jurgen Klopp's unbeaten side.

But Tottenham—who had scored 11 goals in their

previous two festive fixtures, will be bitterly disappointed that they did not beat Wolves after dominating the first half.

The first few minutes of the match were scrappy as both teams looked for rhythm but Spurs gradually exerted control, Christian Eriksen and the returning Dele Alli probing for openings around the edge of the box.

The in-form Son Heung-min, with four goals in his previous two league games, was a constant threat with his pace and tried his luck from distance in the eighth minute after patient build-up play.

Kieran Trippier hit a free-kick into the arms of Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patricio after Kane was fouled and Eriksen then tested Patricio from distance.

Spurs were finally rewarded midway through the

first half when Son fed Kane, who marauded forward down the right.

Just before he reached the edge of the Wolves box he checked back onto his left foot and hit an unstoppable shot into the far corner past the despairing Patricio.

But Tottenham were unable to add to their lead before the break and Wolves sporadically threatened, especially when Adama Traore was on the ball.

Traore was substituted with just over half an hour to go but the visitors were seeing more of the ball and the Spurs fans became increasingly edgy as the second half progressed.

Wolves, urged on by a sizeable travelling support, disrupted Tottenham's smooth passing game, denying their creative players time on the ball.

The equaliser came in the 72nd minute after a period of pressure from Wolves earned a corner.

Substitute Moutinho swung in the corner and Boly rose to head it past Hugo Lloris. Kane was booked for diving as Spurs poured forward looking for a winner but Wolves scored again when Jimenez struck the ball right-footed from the centre of the box past Lloris in the 83rd minute.

Four minutes later they extended their lead as substitute Costa struck to leave Spurs with a mountain to climb.

The defeat leaves Spurs on 45 points after 20 games, with 15 wins and five defeats. Liverpool had 51 points from 19 games before they kicked off against Arsenal while Manchester City, in action today, have 44 points from 19 matches. — AFP

### Australia down France at Hopman

PERTH: Local favourite Matthew Ebden's come-from-behind win ensured Australia beat France on the opening day of the mixed teams Hopman Cup in Perth yesterday. Ebden came from a set down to beat the higher ranked Lucas Pouille as he and Ashleigh Barty beat the French duo of Pouille and Alize Cornet 2-1 in their Group A tie.

World number 15 Barty had given Australia the early ascendancy with a polished straight-sets win over Cornet, a former Hopman Cup winner. Ebden then secured the tie for the host nation by coming from a set down to beat Pouille, who went cold after a blistering start.

Ranked 46th in the world, Ebden was playing in

front of his hometown crowd and turned the match by snaring the second set tie-breaker after looking likely to be blown away by Pouille early. Ebden raced to a 6-2 lead in the tiebreaker and then held off the 32nd-ranked Frenchman to level the match. He continued that good form into the third set, claiming two breaks of serve to win 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

Ebden was delighted to secure the win in front of family and friends. "It means so much to be out here playing," he said. "There wasn't much rhythm until the second set, I was able to get a little bit more aggressive."

Barty is Australia's top-ranked singles player and had too much class for the cagey Cornet, winning 7-5, 6-3 against the world number 45. France won the dead mixed doubles rubber in straight sets.

Earlier, unheralded Brit Cameron Norrie produced the first shock result of the tournament by beating star Greek youngster Stefanos Tsitsipas to inspire Britain to a 2-1 victory in the opening tie.

Norrie secured the biggest scalp of his career to

upset the exciting Tsitsipas in the opening men's singles to put his team on the way to victory, winning 7-6 (10-8), 6-4. Tsitsipas is one of the hottest young talents in world tennis, having shot from 91st in the world at the start of the year to his current lofty heights of 15th.

He beat superstar Novak Djokovic earlier this year and reached the fourth round at Wimbledon, but looked rusty in his first outing of the new season, although he showed flashes of his best form and held set points in the first set.

The left-handed Norrie said it was one of his best wins. "He came up with some big shots, but so did I and managed to hold my nerve," he said. "The second set I stayed solid and played well at the end."

In the women's singles, Maria Sakkari squared the tie with a three-set win over Katie Boulter, 6-0, 4-6, 6-2. In the deciding mixed doubles, played under the match tiebreak format, the Greeks had multiple match points, but it was the Brits who prevailed in three sets, 4-3 (5/0), 3-4 (2/5), 4-3 (5/4). — AFP



PERTH: Ashleigh Barty of Australia hits a return against Alize Cornet of France during their second session women's singles match on day one of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP