

**2** Flashback 2018: Major events in Kuwait



**4** Fire Service Directorate closes 15 establishments



**6** Hasina heading for landslide win in Bangladesh; 14 die in violence



# Nine lawmakers urge quick discussion on debt relief

## MP warns of meat crisis over 'possible' Australian export ban

### Kuwaiti skydivers set Guinness world record



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Kuwaiti lieutenant colonels Nasser Al-Sabah, Fahad Al-Yaqoub and Salem Al-Mell pose with their Guinness World Record certificate for breaking a Guinness skydiving world record by leaping 13,000 feet while carrying aloft a 63-square-meter Kuwaiti flag. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** A trio of Kuwaiti army officers have broken a Guinness skydiving world record in Qatar by leaping 13,000 feet while carrying aloft a 63-square-meter Kuwaiti flag, Kuwaiti lieutenant colonels Fahad Al-Yaqoub, Salem Al-Mell and Nasser Al-Sabah have set a skydiving world record through this notable achievement, according to

Guinness judge Ahmad Jabar. Upon receiving his official Guinness World Record certificate, Al-Yaqoub expressed his happiness over breaking a world record, saying what started as an ambitious idea morphed into a huge accomplishment. Al-Mell echoed his compatriot's sentiments, attributing the accolade to the trio's diligence. — KUNA

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Nine lawmakers yesterday submitted a letter calling on the Legal and Legislative Committee to quickly review a proposal stipulating that the government purchases bank debt owed by Kuwaiti citizens.

MP Majed Al-Mutairi, who renewed a year's-old proposal that was rejected in the past, said nine lawmakers signed a letter asking the Legal Committee to clear the constitutional aspects of the proposal. If approved,

it will go to the financial and economic affairs committee to study details and cost of the proposal. The initiative calls on the government to purchase all consumer and installment loans owed by Kuwaiti citizens to help them meet rising cost of living demands.

Mutairi said earlier that the proposal will not cost state coffers anything since the government will use its huge deposits with local banks and investment companies. The lawmaker said that state deposits at local banks, about KD 10 billion according to unofficial

estimates, are placed at very low interest rates and if the government raises those rates slightly it can utilize the difference in paying for citizens' loans over several years. As of now, there are no official estimates of citizens' loans at banks but previously they were put at around KD 4 billion. Mutairi said his proposal had received impressive backing from within the National Assembly.

MP Osama Al-Shaheen yesterday warned of an imminent crisis of lamb meat in the

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### Duterte under fire for saying he 'touched' maid

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte drew outrage yesterday after saying he "touched" his maid when he was a teenager, with women's rights groups accusing him of attempted rape and encouraging sexual abuse. Duterte frequently sparks uproar with his comments on women, including rape jokes and boasting about adultery.

In his latest remarks, Duterte recounted a confession he had with a priest in high school, detailing how he had entered the room of his maid while she was sleeping. "I lifted the blanket... I tried to touch" Duterte said in a speech late Saturday.

"I was touching. She woke up. So I left the



President Rodrigo Duterte

room." Duterte recounted telling the priest that he had then returned to the maid's room and again tried to molest her. Women's rights political party Gabriela denounced Duterte's "repulsive" comments and called for him to resign, saying he had confessed to attempted rape.

"Rape does not happen only through penile insertion. If it is a finger or an object it is considered rape," said Joms Salvador, sec-

retary general of Gabriela. Responding to the criticism, Duterte's spokesman said yesterday that the president had "made up" and "added and spliced" the story.

"He has made up a laughable anecdote to dramatize the fact of sexual abuse that was inflicted on him and his fellow students when they were in high school," said Salvador Pano. Duterte, 73, made the remarks as he blasted the Catholic Church over allegations of sexually abusing children.

The president, who brands the church the "most hypocritical institution" in the mainly Catholic nation, said Saturday that he and his classmates at school were molested during confession. It was his latest tirade against bishops and priests who have been critical of his drug war which has left more than 5,000 people dead, according to official figures.

Duterte and his aides often dismiss his controversial statements about women as a "joke" or insist they are taken out of context.

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### News in brief

#### Rescue crew killed in UAE

**DUBAI:** A rescue helicopter crashed on Saturday in the emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah, killing all crew members, the United Arab Emirates state news agency WAM said. Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al-Qasimi, ruler of Ras Al-Khaimah, ordered an investigation into the incident that took place at 5:50 pm (1350 GMT). "The General Civil Aviation Authority announced the crash of an Agusta 139 helicopter during a rescue mission in Jebel Jais in Ras Al-Khaimah," said the report. The UAE's National Search and Rescue Centre said there were four people on board. The UAE comprises the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al-Qaiwain. — AFP

#### Indian filmmaker Sen dead

**NEW DELHI:** Veteran Indian filmmaker Mrinal Sen passed away in Kolkata yesterday after a prolonged battle with age-related ailments. He was 95 and is survived by his son Kunal. Mrinal Sen was considered to be one of the greatest makers of parallel films in Bengali along with his contemporary Satyajit Ray. Mrinal made his directorial debut with the feature film Raat Bhor starring Uttam Kumar in 1955. Ek Din Achanak, Bhuvan Shome, Padatik, Neel Akasher Neecheyand Calcutta 71 are some of his most acclaimed films. He also made short films and documentaries. — Agencies



Mrinal Sen

#### Brazil embassy move

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that Brazil's President-elect Jair Bolsonaro told him that it was a matter of "when, not if" he moves his country's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. The far-right Bolsonaro, who takes office on Tuesday and is hosting Netanyahu and the leaders of other countries for his inauguration, has said he would like to follow the lead of US President Donald Trump and move the embassy. — Reuters

### Philippine cyclone leaves 22 dead

**MANILA:** At least 22 people have died due to landslides and flooding triggered by a tropical cyclone that brought heavy rains to central Philippines, a disaster agency official said yesterday.

The people, including a three-year-old boy, were reported dead as of yesterday morning, said disaster agency spokesman Edgar Posadas, after a tropical cyclone barreled through the eastern Visayas and Bicol regions on Saturday. "The wind was not strong but it caused flooding and landslides," Posadas said.

The number of casualties could rise as rescue and retrieval operations continue. Local media have reported dozens missing or trapped by the landslides. A regional office of the disaster agency said it was working to confirm the deaths of 38 people in the Bicol region, located south of the main island of Luzon. Thousands of passengers were stranded at seaports, airports and bus terminals as dozens of inter-island trips were cancelled.

The tropical depression, which has since been downgraded to a low pressure area, left the Philippines yesterday afternoon. About 20 tropical cyclones hit the Philippines every year. — AFP

### Despite pullout notice, US flag flies in Manbij

**MANBIJ, Syria:** The Stars and Stripes fluttered above four US armored vehicles driving through drizzle in the Syrian city of Manbij yesterday, each visibly carrying an armed soldier on lookout duty. The US patrol inside the strategic city near the Turkish border comes despite President Donald Trump's shock announcement this month that he is pulling American troops out of the war-torn country.

Almost eight years into Syria's civil war, a Kurdish-led alliance called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) controls a large swathe of territory in the country's northeast, including Manbij.

The unexpected US pullout announcement left Syria's Kurds scram-

bling to find a new ally in the Damascus regime, as they feared losing US support would leave them exposed to a long-threatened Turkish assault. But inside Manbij yesterday, American troops did not appear to have left yet, an AFP correspondent said, and residents were relieved to have spotted at least two US patrols.

"The Americans' presence is reassuring for people, as the situation has become tense since we heard about their decision to withdraw," said Mohammed Ahmad, a 28-year-old shop owner. Yesterday, men and women milled between stalls at a nearby vegetable market, wearing coats to keep out the rain.

A woman clutched a toddler on her hip, while another appeared to be carrying a baby swaddled in a thick blanket.

"The presence of the US-led coalition is a strength for Manbij," Ahmad said. But US troops "departing would leave it weak in front of Turkey" and Ankara's proxies. "If they do pull out, the (Syrian)



**BAAO, the Philippines:** This general view shows a flooded area in the town of Baao in Camarines Sur province yesterday. — AFP



**MANBIJ:** A line of US military vehicles in Syria's northern city of Manbij yesterday. — AFP

regime's return to the city would be better" than pro-Turkish rebels, added the young man, whose shop sells warm socks and other winter accessories. In a war that has killed more than 360,000 people, the Damascus regime-long on the back foot-has wrested back control of almost two-thirds of the country since

Moscow intervened in its favor in 2015. Damascus now has its eye on regaining oil-rich areas held by the SDF. Trump has said he will pull all 2,000 troops from Syria, declaring that Washington had achieved its objective of victory over the Islamic State group.

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## Local

## Major local events in Kuwait in 2018



BEIJING: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah participates in the eighth ministerial meeting of the Arab-China cooperation forum, held in Beijing, China on July 9, 2018.

KUWAIT: Kuwait witnessed many events at the local level throughout 2018. The following are the main events:

• **His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah:**

Jan. 23: His Highness the Amir received Lebanese President Michel Aoun during his official visit to the country.

Jan. 29: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended the flag-hoisting ceremony over Bayan Palace, on the 12th anniversary of his assumption of office, the 57th anniversary of National Day and the 27th anniversary of Liberation Day.

Feb. 5: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended the ceremony of inaugurating Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Feb. 14: His Highness the Amir inaugurated Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq.

Feb. 18: His Highness the Amir ordered the payment of debts for citizens and expatriates held in prison that comes in coincidence with the country's celebrations of national days.

Feb. 19: His Highness the Amir ordered giving financial grants, at his personal expense, to the orphans on occasion of the country's celebrations of national days.

Feb. 21: Under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir, the ceremony of honoring winners of the 21st Kuwait's Quran Memorization and Recitation Grand Competition was held.

March 13: His Highness the Amir received Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov during his official visit to Kuwait.

March 18: His Highness the Amir decorated Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko with the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Medal during his official visit to the country. The Ukrainian President also decorated His Highness the Amir with Yaroslav Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, the country's highest order.

March 20: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended the inauguration of the second Kuwait Investment Forum.

March 28: His Highness the Amir sponsored and attended the opening Kuwait Motor Town.

April 2: His Highness the Amir received President of the Comoros Azali Assoumani and the two exchanges memorials highlighting distinguished bilateral relations.

April 4: His Highness the Amir sponsored and attends national celebration ceremony "Ajeeba Haddeera" at Bayan Theater.

April 15: His Highness the Amir headed to Saudi Arabia, heading the Kuwaiti delegation in Arab League Council 29th session conference, at Dhahran.

April 16: Under the auspices of His Highness the Amir and his attendance the concluding ceremony for military rallies took place, as part of joint training to Gulf Shield 1 training in Sammit field.

April 18: His Highness the Amir sponsors and attends concluding ceremony of Kuwait International Award to Holy Quran Recitation 9th session at Bayan Palace.

April 25: His Highness the Amir sponsors and attends a ceremony honoring teachers in World Teachers Day for the year 2016-17.

May 18: His Highness the Amir arrives in Istanbul city to attend the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) extraordinary summit.

May 27: His Highness the Amir sponsors and attends a ceremony honoring the new expansion made to the ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the opening of the new grand hall.

May 28: His Highness the Amir receives Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

June 6: His Highness the Amir delivers a speech during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan, calling on all to realize changes in the region, and current developments and dangers.

June 11: His Highness the Amir arrives in Holy city of Makkah to partake in a joint meeting to find ways to support Jordan recover from an economic crisis.

June 12: His Highness the Amir receives Jordanian King Abdullah II.

June 30: His Highness the Amir visits First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad in Germany where he received treatment.

July 2: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended opening of Al-Jahra Medical City.

July 4: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended opening of Kuwait International Airport's Terminal Four (T4).

July 7: His Highness the Amir arrived in China on an official visit aimed at further cementing relations and cooperation.

July 10: His Highness the Amir addressed Arab-China Cooperation Forum and said cooperation between Arab countries and China would contribute to regional and global security and stability.

Aug. 21: His Highness the Amir arrived in Britain to inquire about health condition of First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Sept. 4: His Highness the Amir arrived in Washington on a state visit for summit talks with US President Donald Trump.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) participates in the Gulf Cooperation Council's Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on December 9, 2018.

Sept. 6: His Highness the Amir met in Washington with chief executives of big American companies.

Sept. 30: His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace Saudi Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz.

Oct. 25: His Highness the Amir named Kuwait Diplomatic Institute after late Sheikh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah.

Nov. 7: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended a ceremony marking exporting of shipment of light crude oil.

Nov. 7: His Highness the Amir held summit talks with visiting Iraqi President Barham Salem.

Nov. 13: His Highness the Amir held talks with visiting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Nov. 26: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended His Highness Sheikh Salem Ali Al-Sabah's Informatics Award.

Nov. 28: His Highness the Amir attended opening of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital.

Dec. 3: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah represented His Highness the Amir at the funeral of former US President George Bush.

Dec. 9: His Highness the Amir participated in the Gulf Cooperation Council's Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Dec. 10: His Highness the Amir left hospital after undergoing regular medical examinations.

• **His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah:**

Feb. 9: Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince headed to Saudi Arabia to attend the 32nd session of Al-Janadriyah cultural and folkloric festival.

March 26: Under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince, Kuwait University (KU) held its annual graduation ceremony for the academic year 2016-17.

April 17: His Highness the Crown Prince travelled to the US to carry out medical checkups.

Sept. 30: His Highness the Crown Prince and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Mohammad bin Salman, held bilateral talks during the latter's visit to Kuwait.

Nov. 13: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas honored His Highness the Crown Prince, during a visit to Kuwait.

Nov. 19: His Highness the Crown Prince patronized the Waqf conference.

• **National Assembly:**

Jan. 7: National Assembly's public facilities committee approved amendments on the municipal elections law and referred them to the parliament for voting.

Jan. 7: National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee approved a bill allowing the government to raise the borrowing ceiling to KD 25 billion (about \$83 billion), within a 30-year period, and to sign public loans as well as carry out financing operations from local and international financial markets.

Feb. 7: National Assembly approved referring a report by the parliamentary budgets and final accounts committee on some expenditures of the Ministry of Interior to the Public Prosecution.

Feb. 11: National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee agreed to add 14 new items to civil service law on appointing senior officials.

Feb. 13: National Assembly approved a draft proposal regarding the family court.

Feb. 13: The parliament approved a draft law allowing non-Kuwaitis to join the Kuwait Army.

March 4: The parliament's defense and interior affairs committee agreed to amend the army's law and rejected a proposal to equate Gulf and stateless military personnel with their Kuwaiti counterparts.

March 6: National Assembly approved unanimously the conflict of interest law during the first and second sessions.

March 6: National Assembly okayed amendments of the law of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises.

March 19: Parliament's legal and legislative affairs committee agreed on the public prosecution's requests to lift immunity of MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaie and Safaa Al-Hashem.

March 23: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem took part in 138th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Geneva.

April 3: The parliament agrees, in its first reading, a law amending the Labour Law in regards to privately-employed individuals allowing full benefits for oil sector retirees between 2010 and 2017.

April 4: The parliament adopts a commercial law that incriminates data meddling and allows Ministry of Commerce and Industry employees to assume a judicial policing role.

May 15: The parliament passes a law allowing early retirement for men after 30 years of employment and 25 years for women.

May 17: The parliamentary women's and family committee passes amendments on the women's housing law.

June 25: The parliament adopts a law for Kuwait's contribution in the China-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

June 25: The parliament adopts a law forming a Kuwaiti anti-doping commission.

June 25: The parliament adopts amendments to a law for the establishing of private enterprises in a move aimed at easing the business environment.

July 8: The Court of Cassation amended an appeal ruling in the National Assembly case by handing three-and-a-half year sentences to 13 suspects and two years to another three. It also rejected handing verdicts to 30 and acquits others.

July 17: National Assembly chief Marzouq Al-Ghanem chairs a legislative meeting to discuss recent developments in Iraq.

July 21: At Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union talks, speaker Al-Ghanem states that an overwhelming majority of nations believe in the legitimacy of Arab-Palestinian rights.

Oct. 10: Al-Ghanem conveyed a message from His Highness the Amir to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over resolution of conflicts in the region.

Oct. 17: MP Safa Al-Hashem was elected vice-chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Standing Committee on UN Affairs.

Oct. 29: Al-Ghanem received a request to withdraw an interpellation by MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Mohammad Al-Mutair against His Highness the Prime Minister.

Oct. 30: The National Assembly voted against revok-

ing memberships of Waleed Al-Tabtabaie and Jamaan Al-Harbash, and ended a grilling against Minister of State for parliament Adel Al-Kharafi without filing a no-confidence motion.

Oct. 30: The house approved, in two readings, a bill to change the quorum over general assemblies of sport clubs.

Nov. 11: Speaker Al-Ghanem announced Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf would prepare a mechanism to compensate people affected by heavy rain.

• **His Highness the Prime Minister and Government:**

Jan. 5: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah represented His Highness the Amir at the conclusion of the 23rd Gulf football Cup, held at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Jan. 15: The government assigned the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) to implement the regional passage project.

March 12: The council of ministers formed a committee tasked with examining Kuwait's retreat in the 2017 international corruption list.

March 20: His Highness the Prime Minister attended an event to review state-of-play of Kuwait national development plan.

April 1: The Cabinet approves appointment of Faisal Al-Madraj as head of the body tasked with the development of the Silk City and Boubyan Island.

July 23: The Cabinet adopted proposals for Offset, an obligation required from foreign entities that sign supply contracts with the government.

Sept. 17: The Cabinet assigned the Municipality with transferring the ownership of the Shuwaikh Free Trade Zone to the Finance Ministry.

Sept. 26: Representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister delivers Kuwait's speech at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly.

Oct. 8: The government assigned the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) to prepare executive plan for construction and operation of Kuwait Airport's Terminal Two (T2).

Oct. 8: The government, acting upon instructions of His Highness the Amir, provided \$2 million for victims of an earthquake in Indonesia.

Oct. 15: The government assigned the foreign ministry to follow up implementation of agreements signed during His Highness the Amir's visit to China.

Oct. 15: The government rejected a campaign against Saudi Arabia following the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

Oct. 29: The government assigned state bodies to speed up development of Failaka Island.

Nov. 6: The government announced a day off in all government departments due to severe weather conditions, and His Highness the Prime Minister said the state was ready to address any emergency.

Nov. 6: The government sacked Ahmad Al-Hassan, Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation.

Dec. 20: His Highness the Prime Minister patronizes and attends inauguration of the new Amiri Hospital expansion project.

Dec. 24: The cabinet accepted the resignations of four ministers, conducting a reshuffle and assigning new ministers. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a cabinet meeting to follow up on the aftermath of severe weather conditions which swept Kuwait on November 6, 2018.



# Kuwait 2018 in Pictures



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during the inauguration of the 3rd session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly on October 30, 2018.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah inaugurates the 3rd session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly on October 30, 2018.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the official inauguration of the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) hosted by Kuwait from February 12 - 14, 2018.



A commercial jet is pictured with fighter jets participating in the Kuwait Aviation Show on January 17, 2018.



A man takes a picture during a performance organized by the 'Freccia Tricolor' acrobatics team of the Italian Air Force, together with the Italian military aircraft T346A and Eurofighter F2000-A on November 18, 2018.



Vehicles submerged in rainwater that flooded the Mangaf bridge after heavy rains hit Kuwait on November 6, 2018.



Vehicles drive through a heavy dust storm that hit Kuwait on February 18, 2018.



A man carries a sheep at the livestock market in Rai ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Adha on August 21, 2018.



Children play with water guns during National and Liberation Days celebrations on February 25 - 26, 2018.



(From top left, clockwise) All Al-Kharafi, All Al-Shatti, Issa Al-Zankawi and Mansour Al-Rashidi pose with their gold medals that they won during the 18th Asian Games held in Jakarta on August 18, 2018. Kuwait was allowed to participate in the event after its suspension, enforced by the IOC since October 27, 2015, was lifted two days prior to the tournament.



## Local

# Remittances sent by Filipinos in Kuwait dropped by 18.2 percent

## Electric vehicles infrastructure to be ready by 2021

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Recent statistics issued by the Philippines Central Bank showed a considerable \$1.03 billion drop in remittances made home by Philippines laborers working in the Middle East during the first ten months of 2018, said a report posted on Arabnews.com. Remittances sent by the Philippines laborers in Kuwait dropped by 18.2 percent, the report added without giving any further details. It also noted that remittances sent from Saudi Arabia also dropped by 11.1 percent, those sent from Bahrain dropped by 9.6 percent and those sent from UAE dropped by more than 11 percent. However and despite the drop, Filipino officials expect the total remittances sent home from various countries around the world to exceed a record number of \$31 billion. The report added that in contrast to remittances made from the Middle East, those made from Africa, Europe, the Pacific Islands, United States, Canada and parts of Asia increased.

### Electric vehicles

Widespread use of electric vehicles in Kuwait is expected to start in 2021 once relevant government bodies finished the final draft of the bill for the electric vehicles project, and logistics, such as infrastructure and charging

outputs, are discussed. The project is currently being discussed at the Public Authority for Industry, said sources familiar with the project. The sources added that the study was still in preliminary stages, noting that charging outputs should be built according to GCC standards. Further, the



### Social care center for the elderly

sources highlighted that both the Ministry of Electricity and Water and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation have shown full support in terms of building the infrastructure needed for recharging. The sources also explained that once the final draft was ready, it would be further studied in all GCC states before sending it to the GCC specifications commit-

tee, then the technical council, then to be approved by various GCC states before submitting it to GCC ministers of commerce for approval and notifying the concerned manufacturers.

### Solar power

The Fatwa and Legislation Department recently urged the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to study the establishment of a Kuwaiti shareholding company under the name of 'Kuwait Solar Power Company' with a capital of KD 300 million, with the aim of supervising all solar power industries in Kuwait. In this regard, sources familiar with the project said that the company would be responsible for boosting high quality solar powers in Kuwait through producing and importing the material and equipment needed to build, operate and maintain solar cells and photoelectric plants as well as issuing quality certificates for all related products. The sources added that a parliamentary proposal had been made pertaining with establishing the company on grounds that 24 percent of the shares would be owned by the government and its subsidiary bodies, 26 percent would be offered for public tendering amongst stock exchange shareholding companies and specialized foreign companies approved by the cabinet, while

50 percent of the shares would be offered in an initial public offering.

### Special resort

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's assistant undersecretary for social care affairs Sheikha Al-Adwani stressed that medical teams serving various social care tenants had been increased to 23. She also noted that a new geriatric house would be opened soon in the capital governorate in addition to building a special resort for the elderly at Sabah Al-Ahmad City. "We have recently laid the corner stone for a new social care center matching international specifications," she added, noting that the center, dubbed 'Al-Barakah club,' would be opened soon. Further, Adwani said that special parking spaces have been allocated for the elderly in 28 shopping malls and 14 other public facilities, in addition to launching a special application to register new cases of senior citizen wishing to receive special services at home or obtaining priority cards. Speaking about family custody houses, Adwani said that eight new cases were added in 2018 to add up the total number to 620. She added that the surrogate mother project had shown remarkable success and that it currently includes eight surrogate mothers and two surrogate fathers.

## Camp booking online starts from today

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality announced opening for booking camp sites for the 2018-2019 camping season. The booking can be done at the municipality's website: www.baladia.gov.kw starting from 8:00 am today, the municipality's committee entrusted with studying and updating the temporary camping sites announced yesterday. The committee stressed that licensing a camp requires signing an affidavit to keep off military restricted areas by at least 2 kilometers, avoid any strange objects and immediately report sighting of any such objects found in the desert.

### Municipal Council building

Chairman and members of the Municipal Council yes-

terday visited the council's new headquarters in Safat to see how far construction operations had gone. Speaking on the occasion, Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi expressed satisfaction with the work accomplished and called for honoring the project's schedule, pointing out that the contract stipulates finishing the project on January 7, 2019 and handing over the building in April. "Any delay would be subject to penal clauses and measures," he warned. Meanwhile, council member Hassan Kamal stressed that the new building is highly equipped with state-of-the-art technologies, adding that the furnishing contract had already been signed with hopes that the building would be launched in 2019.

### New road

Director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transport (PART) Soha Ashkenani announced that, in collaboration with the Interior Ministry's traffic department, PART would open the land segment of the Jaber Al-Ahmad City entrances project near the Entertainment City at 9:00 am today. Ashkenani added that motorists coming from Doha Spur and Jaber Al-Ahmad City would be able to use the new road to reach Doha Port, the Entertainment City, Doha Chalets and Camp Doha.

## Shops selling banned containers to be sanctioned

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) banned the importation of cancerogenic thermosetting containers for containing asbestos after confirming that those containers are harmful to human health.

The ministry has started an inspection campaign on different stores around Kuwait for over a month without sanctions, while sanctions will be applied on violators starting from tomorrow. "After we received the results of tests made on the thermosetting containers, which showed it contains harmful substances, the ban is being applied," inspector Jaleel Jawhar from the Customer Protection Center of MoCI told the Kuwait Times yesterday.

"The beginning of our campaign was to spread awareness among store owners. Our inspectors were only confiscating the containers without issuing fines for the stores as the owners did not know (about the ban). Thus, from the first day of 2019, they will be sanctioned

in addition to confiscating the products, and the sanction may reach to shutting the store down," he added.

### Banned containers

How to know which thermosetting containers are banned? "The consumer may easily find out the harmful container from a 'black dot' inside the container on the bottom of the glass material. There are different kinds of thermosetting containers in the market, which are mostly made in the same factory located in an Asian country. It is a cheap quality container and is also sold for a cheap price," Jawhar explained.

The inspectors go on inspection tours in different areas. "We basically check the products sold in the local market, but sometimes we may miss a store. So we also depend on the cooperation of consumers to report any case of selling the banned thermosetting containers," he pointed out.

Other harmful materials were found in the market. "The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, which is in charge of ensuring the safety of food, had discovered harmful materials used widely in Kuwait. Those materials are the plastic bowls and boxes in which the chick-pea and Bajela (broad bean) are served. Now, shops are selling those in high quality plastic boxes, which is why they increased their price. The old plastic bowls contained harmful substances affecting people's health," concluded Jawhar.

## KFSD closes 15 facilities

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Director Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad recently ordered the closure of 15 establishments in the Capital, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorates for violating licensing, safety and prevention conditions. Notably, the shutdown facilities, which practice various activities, had earlier been warned and given a 72-hour notice, but they failed to respond.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Service Directorate officers close a facility during the campaign.

## Defendant acquitted in drug case

**KUWAIT:** Lawyers Khalil Al-Qattan and Mohammad Al-Qattan recently won a case before the court of appeal which acquitted their client Ali Sadeq, who had been sentenced by the court of first instance to ten years in prison in a drug trafficking case in which defendant Adel Al-Musallam is the prime suspect. The lawyer argued that the search warrant did not include their client's name, that he had not been arrested red-handed and that his arrest procedures were void.



Lawyer Khalil Al-Qattan

## Kuwait's 3rd quarter GDP grows 1.8%

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 1.8 percent in constant prices during the third quarter of the year, as compared to last year's figure of 26.9 percent in current prices, its Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) said yesterday.

The price of oil hit its highest level since 2014, pushing GDP growth in current prices to an estimated value of KD 11 billion (\$363.3 billion), an increase worth 26.9 percent when compared to the same period last year, CSB said in a statement.

GDP growth in constant prices hit KD 9.8 billion (\$32.3 billion), equivalent to a growth rate of 1.8 percent, the data showed. The oil sector's contributions to GDP growth in current prices during the third quarter of the year had risen 54.3 percent, up from last year's figure of 44.4 percent, while it remained stable at 59.4 percent in constant prices.

Meanwhile, an increase in Kuwait's crude oil and natural gas outputs was among the most notable economic happenings of the year, with an increase in current prices worth 56.3 percent. According to the data, the healthcare and education sectors, in addition to the real estate industry, were also major contributors to Kuwait's GDP growth in constant prices. — KUNA

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# Amir, Crown Prince meet senior state officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness Sheikh Sabah also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Moreover, His Highness received Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Kuwaiti Ambassador to Morocco Abdulatif Al-Yahya. — KUNA

## Zain recognizes graduates of LOYAC training program

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, recognized 32 students of the LOYAC part-time training program who worked at the company's various divisions during October - December 2018, giving them an opportunity to gain experience in the private sector work environment. Zain's support to the program came as part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims at developing the youth's talents and skills.

Zain's support to this program came as part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, which continued this year for over 14 consecutive years. The partnership came in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, which centers around the development of the Education and Youth sectors, especially in regards to nurturing and developing business skills within the youth.

The 32 students, enrolled in the LOYAC part-time program, took part in completing tasks, learning new skills, and going through professional training in the real business world at various departments and divisions within Zain during the period from October - December 2018, where they gained valuable experiences of working in the private sector environment. Zain also offered the students financial rewards in recognition of their efforts and as an encouragement to their



KUWAIT: Zain's HR team with some of the recognized students.

dedication.

This year, Zain's support to LOYAC extended to a great number of educational initiatives and programs that catered to developing the youth's skills and talents, including the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. The company also offered its exclusive support to LOYAC's Internship Program at the United Nation's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as the LOYAC AC Milan Soccer School, and more.

Zain is proud to be one of the Strategic Partners of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that cater to

the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

Zain believes in the development of the communities in which it operates, and it is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the country's youth.

Since its inception in 2002, LOYAC has grown to be the first choice of the youth in Kuwait when it comes to innovative and high quality educational programs. LOYAC runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and to help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.

## GCC young leaders look up to Amir as father figure: Sheikh Nasser

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed that young GCC leaders look up to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a father figure who helps them make difficult decisions and mediates amongst them. Speaking in an interview with the Chinese TV made during his recent visit to China, Sheikh Nasser expressed optimism that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis would end positively. "We hope to hear good news soon," he stressed.

Sheikh Nasser also highlighted the ongoing efforts in Kuwait to diversify national economy resources and achieve more openness for investors. "There are more accelerated steps now towards diversifying sources national income," he underlined, describing the continuation of relying on oil as the sole source of income as 'dangerous'. "Kuwait is a beautiful and rich country, but we are not happy with bureaucracy and the state of relaxation in our economy," he added, noting that many laws and legislations had been changed and that there is



Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

more government-parliament understanding now.

Further, Sheikh Nasser noted that the results of parliamentary elections in Kuwait were often influenced by tribal affiliations. "However, this is destined to stop one day as the recent elections resulted in electing a somehow diversified parliament, and voters are now more able to differentiate amongst various candidates and choose the best," he pointed out. — Al-Qabas

## Author honors martyrs' families



KUWAIT: Author Abdullah Buwair in a group photo with the families of martyrs.



(From left) Dr Mustafa Behbehani, Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait, Dr Shamir Ally, and Author Abdullah Buwair.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Author Abdullah Buwair held an awards ceremony for the families of martyrs and distributed a book of photos and documents of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya. Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamad Al-Malik Al-Sabah praised the efforts by Buwair every year to honor the families and the memory of the martyrs of Kuwait. "I pray to God to rest the souls of our martyrs in peace and sustain the wellbeing of our beloved homeland under the leadership of HH the Amir," he said in a phoned speech during the ceremony.

"We have the honor to meet with our families - the families of the honored martyrs. Without the sacrifices of your relatives, we would not have been in this place enjoying the freedom of security and safety of Kuwait," Buwair said. He noted that the invasion of Kuwait by the Saddam Hussein regime is an unforgivable crime. "While people were sleeping, they were killing and stealing. Saddam's

regime did not consider the rights of neighbors. In the past he always said he is the sword of the Arabs and the protector of Arab countries, but what we saw was quite far from it," he said. "History tells us that this event was a page among the brightest pages of the Kuwaiti people. Our history is full of wonderful examples that reveal the depth of values in the conscience and thinking of the Kuwaiti citizen. There is evidence of their courage to always defend their homeland."

Buwair hailed the heroic acts of the martyrs and the perpetuation of their heroism and sacrifices in the defense of the homeland and its dignity, as well as the honorable care of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for their families. This honor is not for Kuwaitis only, but includes all those who sacrificed their lives and blood for the independence of the soil of this country. The Office of Martyrs under the auspices of HH the Amir has sponsored families from 15 different nationalities among the expatriates and residents of Kuwait.

After the ceremony, a short documentary about the Iraqi invasion and the liberation of



Author Abdullah Buwair honors a martyr's family member.

Kuwait was presented. Also, poems were read and presented by poet MUSAAD AL-SAWARJ and student Orad Abdullah Buwair. This was followed by honoring the martyrs and awarding certificates and valuable gifts to their families.



A work of art featuring portraits and names of Kuwait's martyrs throughout its history is displayed at the event.





DR Congo goes to the polls after troubled odyssey

## Worse every day: Afghans expect 2019 to be deadlier



DHAKA: Bangladeshi voters wait in line outside a polling station while security police officials watch over yesterday. — AFP (See Page 9)

# Hasina heading for landslide win

## Bangladesh election marred by rigging allegations • 14 killed in violence

DHAKA: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appeared headed for a landslide win in a general election yesterday marred by opposition claims of rigged voting as 14 people were killed in clashes between rival supporters. Early results showed Hasina racing into a clear lead, winning each of the first 29 seats declared - some by tens of thousands of votes - according to Channel 24, which is compiling results from around the country.

The deadly violence and bitter rivalry that marred the election campaign spilled over into voting day, even as authorities imposed tight security with 600,000 troops, police and other security forces deployed across the country. Ten people were killed in clashes between Hasina's ruling Awami League party and supporters of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, police said, while three men were shot by police who said they were protecting polling booths. An auxiliary police member was also killed by armed opposition activists, according to officials.

Hasina, 71, has been lauded for boosting economic growth in the poor South Asian nation during her decade in power and for welcoming Rohingya refugees fleeing a military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar. But critics accuse her of authoritarianism and crippling the opposition - including archival Khaleda Zia who is serving 17 years in prison on graft charges - to cling on to power.

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday accused Hasina's party of using stuffed ballot boxes and other illegal means to fix the result, which was to be

announced today. BNP spokesman Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal told reporters there were "irregularities" in 221 of the 300 seats contested. Its Islamist ally Jamaat-e-Islami said it would reject the results. "Voters are not allowed to enter booths. Especially women voters are being forced to vote for the boat," Alal said, referring to the Awami League symbol.

### 'We'll cast your vote'

Bangladesh election commission spokesman S M Asaduzzaman told AFP the body had "received a few allegations of irregularities" and was investigating. Authorities ordered mobile operators to shut down high speed Internet services until midnight Sunday "to prevent the spread of rumors" that could trigger unrest. One independent television news channel complained that its broadcasts were blocked.

Voting in the capital Dhaka was largely peaceful as convoys of soldiers and paramilitary forces were on the streets where most traffic was banned. "I have never missed voting in my life. This is probably the last election for me and I want a suitable candidate for my country," 98-year-old Abdus Salam said at a Dhaka polling station. However voters in provincial areas reported intimidation. Atiar Rahman said he was beaten by ruling party activists in the central district of Narayanganj. "They told me not to bother, 'We'll cast your vote on your behalf,'" he told AFP.

The opposition said the unrest was stirred up to deter

voters, and presiding officers reported a low turnout across the country. Yesterday's deaths brought to 18 the official police toll for election violence since the ballot was announced on Nov 8. Police said they acted "in self-defence" in the southern town of Bashkhal, when they fired on opposition supporters who stormed a polling booth, killing one. In a separate incident a man was shot by police after he tried to steal a ballot box.

### Free and fair?

Hasina needs 151 seats to control parliament but experts say a victory would be sullied by accusations that she hamstrung opponents. The opposition says more than 15,000 of its activists were detained during the campaign, crushing its ability to mobilize support. Human Rights Watch and other international groups said the crackdown created a climate of fear which could prevent opposition supporters from casting ballots.

The United States raised concerns about the credibility of the election while the United Nations called for greater efforts to make the vote fair. Seventeen opposition candidates have been arrested over what they claim are trumped-up charges while another 17 were disqualified from running by courts, which Hasina's opponents say are government controlled. The Bangladesh leadership has alternated between Hasina and Zia, allies-turned-foes, over the last three decades.

Hasina rejects accusations of authoritarianism but ana-



DHAKA: Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina flashes the victory symbol after casting her vote, as her daughter Saima Wazed Hossain (left) and her sister Sheikh Rehana look on at a polling station. — AFP

lysts say she feared young voters would support the BNP. Her government was criticized this year for its heavy handling of weeks of major student protests that brought Dhaka to a standstill. Hasina, daughter of Bangladesh's first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was gifted victory in the 2014 election when the BNP boycotted the vote claiming it was not free and fair. Rights groups have since accused her administration of stifling freedom of speech by toughening a draconian anti-press law and the enforced disappearance of dissenters. — AFP

## Syria regime on path to come in from the cold

BEIRUT: Almost eight years into Syria's civil war, President Bashar Al-Assad seems closer than ever to securing a comeback at home and in the Arab region, analysts say. As 2018 ends, the Moscow-backed government in Damascus is in control of nearly two-thirds of Syria, after notching up a string of victories against rebels and militants. And after a shock announcement by the US this month that it is to pull all 2,000 of its troops out of Syria, the regime also seems on track to regain influence in parts of the country under Kurdish-led control.

On Friday, Damascus sent troops to a northern area near the border with Turkey to stave off a long-threatened Turkish assault on the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces there. It did so at the invitation of the Kurds, who feel exposed by the shock withdrawal announcement by the US, their principal backer. The Kurds reaching out to the regime represented the latest in a string of achievements for Assad, said Mutlu Civioglu, an expert in Kurdish affairs. "He is consolidating his power day by day diplomatically and militarily," he said.

Assad had previously threatened to retake SDF-held oil-rich territory, whether through ongoing talks or by force. "Rather than fighting with the Kurds, the government is now invited by the Kurds to enter these regions," Civioglu said. "There can be nothing better than this for Assad," the analyst added. Aside from SDF-



DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad (right) meets Iraqi national security advisor Faleh Al-Fayad in the capital on Saturday. — AFP

held northeastern Syria, the rebel-held region of Idlib remains beyond Assad's control, but is subject to a ceasefire deal. The SDF are battling to expel the last Islamic State group fighters from their eastern holdout near the Iraqi border. But the militants also retain a presence in the country's vast Badia desert.

### 'Signal to the Arab states'

Kurdish fighters have spearheaded the fight against IS in Syria, and the presence of US-led coalition members alongside the SDF in northern Syria had previously deterred Turkey from attacking. The US announcement last week sparked renewed fears of an assault, after two previous Turkish incursions inside the war-torn country. But President Donald Trump's pullout order has also sent a message to fellow Arab countries in the region, says Nicholas Heras, an analyst at the Center for a New American Security. "Trump's decision to withdraw US forces from Syria sent the signal to the Arab states that they need to engage with Assad on

their own terms and not wait for US policy to come into focus," he said.

Even before any US troops pull out, a drive to bring Assad back into the Arab fold seems to have picked up momentum in recent weeks. The United Arab Emirates embassy in Damascus reopened on Thursday, ten days after Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir made the first visit of any Arab leader to the Syrian capital since the start of the war. Bahrain has announced it will re-open its diplomatic mission. Syria's war has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since it began with the brutal repression of anti-Assad protests in 2011.

The United Nations estimates the conflict has cost the country close to \$400 billion. Heras said the president would be seeking deals with wealthy Gulf states to help rebuild. "Assad will look to build on his success in 2018 by scoring deals with the Arab states, especially the Gulf, to kick start the reconstruction of Syria," he said. — AFP

## Cyberattack hits US newspaper deliveries

LOS ANGELES: A cyberattack caused major printing and delivery disruptions on Saturday at the Los Angeles Times and other major US newspapers, including ones owned by Tribune Publishing Co such as the Chicago Tribune and Baltimore Sun. The cyberattack appeared to originate outside the United States, the Los Angeles Times reported, citing a source with knowledge of the situation. The attack led to distribution delays in the Saturday edition of The Times, Tribune, Sun and other newspapers that share a production platform in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Tribune Publishing, whose newspapers also include the New York Daily News and Orlando Sentinel, said it first detected the malware on Friday. The West Coast editions of the Wall Street Journal and New York

Times were hit as they are also printed on the shared production platform, the Los Angeles Times said. Tribune Publishing spokeswoman Marisa Kollias said the virus hurt back-office systems used to publish and produce "newspapers across our properties."

"There is no evidence that customer credit card information or personally identifiable information has been compromised," Kollias said in a statement. The Wall Street Journal and New York Times did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Most San Diego Union-Tribune subscribers were without a newspaper on Saturday as the virus infected the company's business systems and hobbled its ability to publish, the paper's editor and publisher Jeff Light wrote on its website.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Homeland Security said it was studying the situation. "We are aware of reports of a potential cyber incident affecting several news outlets, and are working with our government and industry partners to better understand the situation," said DHS spokeswoman Katie Waldman in a statement. Representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation were not immediately available for comment. — Reuters



International

# Trump blames Democrats for migrant children's death, amid budget impasse

## No evident signs of any imminent breakthrough

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Saturday blamed opposition Democrats for the death of two immigrant children in US custody, comments set to heighten tensions as the second week of a government shutdown began over his demands for a wall on the US-Mexico border. "Any deaths of children or others at the Border are strictly the fault of the Democrats and their pathetic immigration policies that allow people to make the long trek thinking they can enter our country illegally. They can't. If we had a Wall, they wouldn't even try!" Trump said on Twitter.

His comments came after the separate deaths of two Guatemalan children, aged seven and eight, who crossed the border illegally with relatives who were taken into custody by US Border Patrol. The tweet hardened Trump's tone after an earlier message on Twitter that said the next move in the eight-day budget standoff over border wall funding belonged to the Democrats. "I am in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come on over and make a deal on Border Security," Trump tweeted.

But members of Congress, most of them home for the holidays, kept low profiles, and there were no evident signs of any imminent breakthrough. One Democratic representative, Dwight Evans of Pennsylvania, said in a tweet posted by his staff that Trump was "reaching new lows with these ridiculous tweets. His administration is the cause of pain and suffering that is taking place at the border. Nothing that he says will alter this truth." Others called the Trump tweets "disturbing" and pointed out that US immigration policies have been in place for years without children dying in government custody.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was in Yuma, Arizona, on a trip to witness border operations first hand after saying last week that the US will take "extraordinary" protective measures to deal with a surge of immigrant children in custody. Eight-year-old Felipe Gomez, who collapsed after running a fever, died

in US custody after traveling with his father Agustin Gomez from an indigenous community in Guatemala. He died on the same day that Jakelin Caal, a Guatemalan girl who died in US custody under similar circumstances earlier this month, was buried back in her home village.

In the last two months, US Border Patrol agents have apprehended 139,817 people on the southwest border, compared with 74,946 during the same period a year earlier, Nielsen said. More than 68,500 were "family units" while almost 14,000 others were unaccompanied children, she said, and the system has been pushed to the "breaking point". When the shutdown began on Dec 22, affecting a quarter of the federal government, Trump canceled his plans to spend the year-end holidays in Florida and vowed to remain at the White House - though he made a quick, unannounced trip to visit US troops in Iraq.

But as he tries to build pressure on Democrats to help fund the border wall he sees as an urgent priority - threatening even to close the border if no deal is reached - Democrats appear adamant in their refusal to pay for a project they view as a waste of money. Some conservative Republicans, meanwhile, appear equally determined to press for the wall. Trump has demanded \$5 billion for wall construction - though the White House reportedly has shown flexibility on that number - while Democrats have offered to spend no more than \$1.3 billion for security measures not including a wall.

### A vow to reopen government

Nancy Pelosi, who is expected to be House speaker in the new Congress, has vowed to "swiftly" reopen the government once her Democrats take control of that chamber from the Republicans on Thursday. She said Democrats "will govern responsibly in stark contrast to this chaotic White House". Trump had previously blamed Democrats for policies he said had forced his administration to separate some children from their parents at the border, a claim widely seen as specious.



PLAYAS DE TIJUANA, Mexico: Children travelling with the Central American migrants that hope to reach the United States play at the beach next to the US-Mexico border fence on Saturday. —AFP

The effects of the shutdown have been slow to appear - many of the 800,000 government employees sent home or working without pay would have been off for the holidays anyway - but once the New Year arrives, pressure will grow. The popular Smithsonian museums and National Zoo in Washington, for example, said they found money to stay open through New Year's Day but will close on January 2 if the standoff continues. While most of the US military is unaffected, about

42,000 Coast Guard members are working without pay. That branch falls under the Department of Homeland Security, not the Pentagon. This is the third government shutdown of the year, following shorter closures in January and February. Shutdowns have rarely been popular with the public. A recent NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found that Americans - by 57 to 36 percent - favored Trump seeking compromise rather than insisting on his wall demand. —AFP

## Iran sees 'revival' of imperiled lake

MIANDOAB, Iran: It is one of the worst ecological disasters of recent decades, but the shrinking of Iran's great Lake Urmia finally appears to be stabilizing and officials see the start of a revival. A rusty cargo ship and a row of colorful pedal boats lying untouched on the bone-dry basin are a sign of the devastating loss of water in what was once the largest lake in the Middle East. Situated in the mountains of northwest Iran, Lake Urmia is fed by 13 rivers and designated as a site of international importance under the UN Convention on Wetlands that was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971.

The lake has been shrinking since 1995, according to the UN Environment Program, due to a combination of prolonged drought, over-farming and dams. By August 2011 the lake's surface was 2,366 sq km and shrank drastically to just 700 km<sup>2</sup> in 2013, according to the United Nations. The catastrophe has threatened the habitat of shrimp, flamingos, deers and wild sheep and caused salt storms that pollute nearby cities and farms.

That finally triggered a coordinated effort to save the lake in 2013 - with a joint program between Iran and the UN Development Program funded by the Japanese government. The project became a priority for the incoming

administration of President Hassan Rouhani. "One of my promises was to revive Urmia lake, and I am still committed to that promise," Rouhani said during a recent visit to the region.

Some positive results are finally emerging and the lake's surface area reached 2,300 km<sup>2</sup> last year, according to UN Development Programme figures. "This is the beginning of the lake's revival," said Abolfazl Abesht, who heads the wetlands unit of Iran's environment department. He warned it would take "decades" to return to the 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> it once covered, but at least "now the trend has stopped".

### Sustainable farming

Rising temperatures and reduced rainfall have been a major factor in the lake's decline, experts say. So, too, was the construction of a causeway in 2008 to shorten driving times between Urmia and the nearby city of Tabriz that cut the lake in two. But people were also a major part of the problem due to a rapid rise in the population and farming around the lake, which provides a livelihood to some six million people.

The rejuvenation effort therefore focused on redirecting rivers to irrigate farmland, thus avoiding use of water from the lake, and the promotion of more sustainable farming methods. "Almost 85 percent of the water is used for agriculture, and we are trying to help farmers reduce usage through cheap and effective techniques," said Abesht. Measures



URMIA, Iran: This picture taken on Dec 8, 2018 shows a general view of recreational boats along the shore of the salt lake of Urmia and the Shahid Kalantari causeway. —AFP

such as using natural instead of chemical fertilizers, or levelling the land to avoid run-off, have shown major improvements for local farmer Afshin Medadi. The 47-year-old had to invest in new equipment, but says "things are more cost-effective now", with his farm using a tenth of the water.

There has also been a noticeable reduction in the salt and dust pollution whipped up from the desiccated lake floor during storms, he added. Others have launched their own green initiatives. One group of 20 women set up a collective to raise awareness among

lakeside communities about water waste, and encourage the production of handicrafts to boost sustainable employment.

One of the organizers, 39-year-old Kobra Asghari from the village of Gharehgozlu, hopes industries such as carpet and doll-making can gradually overtake traditional farming. They are also encouraging women to plant less thirsty crops such as saffron and olives. "We gradually managed to encourage the men to do the same," she said. "People are paying more attention to their environment and the dying ecosystem." —AFP

## Tourists throng pyramids after bombing, but future clouded



GIZA: A tourist jumps as she has her picture taken at the Giza pyramids necropolis on the southwestern outskirts of the Egyptian capital Cairo on Saturday, with the pyramids of Khafre and Khufu seen in the background. —AFP

GIZA: Crowds of tourists stared in awe at the towering pyramids of Giza near Cairo Saturday undaunted by a nearby bomb attack a day earlier that killed holiday-makers from Vietnam. A roadside bombing claimed the lives of three tourists and their Egyptian guide Friday when it ripped through the bus they were on as it travelled near the world-famous attraction. The attack comes as Egypt's vital tourism sector has begun to recover after years of instability and violence that scared visitors away. "I think terrorism can strike anywhere in the world," Somand Yang from South Korea told AFP. "You have to be careful but it is also like luck." Security forces guarded the entrance to the sprawling site and Yang, 32, said she had no qualms about visiting. "Lightning never strikes twice in the same place. So I figured it will be even safer today," she said. —AFP

## With US pullout, Manbij braces for upheaval

MANBIJ, Syria: The city of Manbij has switched control more than most places in Syria's civil war. With US troops set to leave after President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw them, residents fear others will rush to fill the vacuum, causing more upheaval: Syrian government forces have deployed nearby while Turkey is threatening its own assault on the city. US forces have underpinned stability in Manbij since Islamic State's defeat here in 2016.

Some 30 km from the Turkish border, it occupies a critical spot in the map of the Syrian conflict, near the junction of three separate blocks of territory that form spheres of Russian, Turkish and - for now - US influence. While US forces have yet to leave, the consequences of Trump's decision are already playing out in Manbij. Russian-backed Syrian government forces entered the outskirts on Friday for the first time in years at the invitation of Kurdish YPG militia who fear the US departure could open the way for a Turkish attack.

"We have been living in fear for the past few days and we don't know what is happening and who will enter the city," said Ismail Shaalan, 41, who has lived in Manbij since fleeing fighting in the Aleppo area two years ago. "Is it the Turks or the Syrians?" Trump has said the withdrawal will be slow. US-led coalition jets and attack helicopters could still

be seen in the skies over Manbij on Saturday.

Local fighters with the US-backed militia that has held the city since 2016, the Manbij Military Council, were conducting their normal patrols on Saturday wearing red berets and armed with AK-47 assault rifles. "We survived the war. We will never see worse than Daesh," he said, referring to Islamic State, said Abu Hamze, 43, a father of five. But he too is worried: "We are scared. The situation is confusing."

Manbij has changed hands three times since the Syrian conflict began in 2011. Free Syrian Army rebels seized it from President Bashar al-Assad's government early in the conflict. Then it fell to Islamic State which declared it part of its "caliphate". Islamic State was dislodged from Manbij in 2016 by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a militia force spearheaded by the Kurdish YPG and backed by the US-led coalition. Manbij has been held by SDF-allied forces since then, angering neighboring Turkey which views the influence wielded by the YPG in northern Syria as a national security threat. Turkish and US forces have been conducting joint patrols near Manbij since November, agreed as part of US efforts to satisfy Turkish concerns.

### 'Partial' Syrian army deployment

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday Turkey would have nothing left to do in Manbij once the "terrorists" leave, a reference to the YPG, which says its forces have already withdrawn from the city. Turkey says the YPG is indistinguishable from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a 34-year insurgency in Turkey. It has vowed to crush the YPG with help from Syrian rebel allies, some of whom come from



MANBIJ, Syria: Syrians walk in this northern town on the Turkish border yesterday. —AFP

places now held by the SDF and are fiercely hostile to the Kurdish fighters.

Turkey-backed rebels have been mobilizing for an attack on Manbij in nearby areas that have been under Turkey's control since it swept into northern Syria in 2016, part of its effort to roll back the YPG. Erdogan signalled on Friday that Turkey was not in a hurry to carry out the operation. The YPG, taken aback by Trump's withdrawal decision, called on Damascus on Friday to protect Manbij.

Shortly afterwards, the Syrian army said it had deployed to Manbij where it would guarantee security "for all Syrian citizens and others present". The Syrian troops did not enter the city but nearby frontlines with the hostile Turkey-backed rebels. A military source in Manbij Military Council said dis-

cussions with the Syrian government had yielded agreement on the need to halt "the Turkish occupation of Manbij".

The Syrian army's deployment in the Manbij area was so far "partial", the source said, adding that further Syrian army deployment into the area would take into account the US presence. As to whether the Syrian state was poised to restore its authority over Manbij, the source said: "Committees will be formed later on about how to administer the city." The question of whether the Syrian government will return to rule Manbij is of critical importance to many in the city. One primary concern is fear of being enlisted to the army. Yet the return of Assad's rule is seen by some as preferable to the prospect of a Turkish offensive. —Reuters

## New Iraq minister quits over videos linking bro to IS

BAGHDAD: Iraq's newly appointed education minister has said she tendered her resignation over online accusations her brother was a member of the Islamic State group. Shaima Al-Hayali announced her decision in a tweet on Saturday, two weeks after parliament approved her nomination, saying she had handed her resignation to Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi. "I announce that I have submitted my resignation to the prime minister... and it is up to him to decide whether he will accept it once he has ascertained any link between me and terrorists," she said in the tweet.

Her decision comes days after MPs and local officials from Mosul made accusations online that her brother, Layth Al-Hayali, was an IS member. The accusations were accompanied by two videos dating back to 2016 showing Layth in IS propaganda videos, at a time when he worked for a local administration in IS-held Nineveh province, where Mosul is located. In these videos, the man, whose whereabouts are currently unknown, can be heard denouncing US-led air strikes against the group. —AFP



## International

# Latest Indonesia tsunami raises global questions over disaster preparedness

## Early detection near impossible given the equipment in place

**CIGONDONG/JAKARTA:** As Indonesia reels from the carnage of yet another natural disaster, authorities around the globe are working on how they can prepare for the kind of freak tsunami that battered coasts west of Jakarta this month. The Dec 23 tsunami killed around 430 people along the coastlines of the Sunda Strait, capping a year of earthquakes and tsunamis in the vast archipelago, which straddles the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire. No sirens were heard in those towns and beaches to alert people before the deadly series of waves hit shore.

Seismologists and authorities say a perfect storm of factors caused the tsunami and made early detection near impossible given the equipment in place. But the disaster should be a wake-up call to step up research on tsunami triggers and preparedness, said several of the experts, some of whom have traveled to the Southeast Asian nation to investigate what happened. "Indonesia has demonstrated to the rest of the world the huge variety of sources that have the potential to cause tsunamis. More research is needed to understand those less-expected events," said Stephen Hicks, a seismologist at the University of Southampton.

Most tsunamis on record have been triggered by earthquakes. But this time it was an eruption of Anak Krakatau volcano that caused its crater to partially collapse into the sea at high tide, sending waves up to 5 m high smashing into densely populated coastal areas on Java and Sumatra islands. During the eruption, an esti-

mated 180 million cu m, or around two-thirds of the less-than-100-year-old volcanic island, collapsed into the sea. But the eruption didn't rattle seismic monitors significantly, and the absence of seismic signals normally associated with tsunamis led Indonesia's geophysics agency (BMKG) initially to tweet there was no tsunami.

Muhammad Sady, head of geophysics at BMKG, later told Reuters its tidal monitors were not set up to trigger tsunami warnings from non-seismic events. The head of Japan's International Research Institute of Disaster, Fumihiko Imamura, told Reuters he did not believe Japan's current warning system would have detected a tsunami like the one in the Sunda Strait. "We still have some risks of this in Japan...because there's 111 active volcanoes and low capacity to monitor eruptions generating a tsunami," he said in Jakarta.

Scientists have long flagged the collapse of Anak Krakatau, around 155 km west of the capital, as a concern. A 2012 study published by the Geological Society of London deemed it a "tsunami hazard". Anak Krakatau has emerged from the Krakatau volcano, which in 1883 erupted in one of the biggest explosions in recorded history, killing more than 36,000 people in a series of tsunamis and lowering the global surface temperature by one degree Celsius with its ash.

### Broken warning system

Some experts believe there was enough time for at least a partial detection of last week's tsunami in the 24

minutes it took waves to hit land after the landslide on Anak Krakatau. But a country-wide tsunami warning system of buoys connected to seabed sensors has been out of order since 2012 due to vandalism, neglect and a lack of public funds, authorities say. "The lack of an early warning system is why Saturday's tsunami was not detected," said disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Nugroho, adding that of 1,000 tsunami sirens needed across Indonesia, only 56 are in place. "Signs that a tsunami was coming weren't detected and so people did not have time to evacuate."

President Joko Widodo this week ordered BMKG to purchase new early warning systems, and the agency later said it planned to install three tsunami buoys on the islands surrounding Anak Krakatau. The cost of covering the country is estimated at 7 trillion rupiah (\$481.10 million). That is roughly equivalent to Indonesia's total disaster response budget of 7.19 trillion rupiah for 2018, according to Nugroho.

But other experts say even if this network had been working, averting disaster would have been difficult. "The tsunami was very much a worst-case scenario for any hope of a clear tsunami warning: a lack of an obvious earthquake to trigger a warning, shallow water, rough seabed, and the close proximity to nearby coastlines," said seismologist Hicks.

In the Philippines, Renato Solidum, undersecretary for disaster risk reduction, said eruptions from the country's Taal volcano had caused tsunami waves

before in the surrounding Taal Lake. He told Reuters that what happened in Indonesia showed the need to "re-emphasize awareness and preparedness" regarding volcanic activity and its potential to trigger tsunamis in the Philippines. The United States has also suffered several tsunamis caused by volcanic activity, including in Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington, according to the national weather service.

### More education

In Indonesia earlier this year, a double quake-and-tsunami disaster killed over 2,000 people on Sulawesi island, while at least 500 died when an earthquake flattened much of the northern coastline of the holiday island of Lombok. In a country where, according to government data, 62.4 percent of the population is at risk of being struck by earthquakes and 1.6 percent by tsunamis, attention is now focused on a continued lack of preparedness. "Given the potential for disasters in the country, it's time to have disaster education be part of the national curriculum," Widodo told reporters after the latest tsunami.

For Ramdi Tualfredi, a high school teacher who survived last week's waves, these improvements cannot come soon enough. He told Reuters that people in his village of Cigondong on the west coast of Java and close to Krakatau had never received any safety drills or evacuation training. "I've never received education on safety steps," he said. "The system...totally failed." —Reuters

### News in brief

#### Philippine cyclone kills 22

**MANILA:** At least 22 people have died due to landslides and flooding triggered by a tropical cyclone that brought heavy rains to central Philippines, a disaster agency official said yesterday. The people, including a three-year-old boy, were reported dead as of yesterday morning, said disaster agency spokesman Edgar Posadas, after a tropical cyclone barreled through the eastern Visayas and Bicol regions on Saturday. A regional office of the disaster agency said it was working to confirm the deaths of 38 people in the Bicol region, located south of the main island of Luzon. —Reuters

#### Colombia slams plot to kill prez

**BOGOTA:** Colombia's foreign minister on Saturday condemned an alleged plot to kill President Ivan Duque and said three Venezuelan citizens had been detained in possession of "weapons of war". "For several months there have been intelligence probes into possible attacks against the life of the president," Carlos Holmes Trujillo said in a video on the ministry's social media accounts. He added that three Venezuelans in possession of "weapons of war" had been captured in connection with such plots, without going into further details. In a separate statement, Trujillo said that the threats came from "internal and external actors". —AFP

#### Taliban dismiss govt talks offer

**KABUL/PESHAWAR:** The Taliban have rejected Kabul's offer of talks next month in Saudi Arabia where the militants, fighting to restore strict Islamic law in Afghanistan, will meet US officials to further peace efforts, a Taliban leader said yesterday. "We will meet the US officials in Saudi Arabia in January next year and we will start our talks that remained incomplete in Abu Dhabi," a member of the Taliban's decision-making Leadership Council told Reuters. "However, we have made it clear to all the stakeholders that we will not talk to the Afghan government." A close aide to President Ashraf Ghani said the government would keep trying to establish a direct line of diplomatic communication with the Taliban. —Reuters

#### 15 killed in joint French-Niger op

**PARIS:** Some 15 suspected militants have been killed near the Niger-Mali border by a joint Franco-Nigerien task force, the French military high command said. "On the night of December 27 (...), an air raid mounted by fighters and Tiger attack helicopters struck" militants gathered near Tongo Tongo, in southwestern Niger, the high command said in a tweet overnight. Overall, about 15 militants were "put out of action", a term generally used by the military to say they were killed. During the sweep, "some 20 motorbikes were recovered, along with 26 weapons, including machine guns, and ammunition, the high command said. —AFP

#### Agung volcano spews ash

**JAKARTA:** A volcano on the Indonesian holiday island of Bali erupted yesterday, belching ash high into the air and over nearby villages as officials warned tourists to keep clear of the area. Mount Agung has been erupting periodically since it rumbled back to life in 2017, when it grounded hundreds of flights and left 120,000 visitors stranded. Yesterday morning, the volcano - which is about 70 km from the tourist hub of Kuta - sent ash skywards as it erupted for about three minutes, according to the country's volcanology center. In the latest eruption, several villages on Bali were covered in a thin layer of ash but no smoke or lava was detected coming from the crater and no evacuation has been ordered. —AFP

## DR Congo goes to the polls after troubled odyssey

**KINSHASA:** Voters in the Democratic Republic of Congo went to the polls yesterday in elections that will shape the future of their vast, troubled country, amid fears that violence could overshadow the ballot. Millions of electors are choosing a successor to President Joseph Kabila, who is stepping down two years after his term limit expired - a delay that sparked bloody clashes and revived traumatic memories of past turmoil. The vote gives DR Congo the chance of its first peaceful transfer of power since it gained independence from Belgium in 1960.

But analysts say the threat of violence is great, given the many organisational problems and wide-ranging suspicion of Kabila. The election's credibility has already been strained by repeated delays, the risk of hitches on polling day and accusations that electronic voting machines will produce a rigged result. On the eve of the vote, talks between key candidates to avert post-election violence broke down.

Opposition frontrunners Martin Fayulu and Felix Tshisekedi refused Saturday to sign a proposed peace pledge, saying election officials had failed to make suggested changes to the text. The announcement came after the pair had met with the Independent National Election Commission (CENI) as well as

## Kim vows more summits with South next year: Seoul

**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to meet the South's President Moon Jae-in "frequently" next year to discuss denuclearization of the peninsula in a rare letter sent to Seoul, Moon's office said yesterday. The leader of the isolated North met with Moon three times this year - twice at the border truce village of Panmunjom and once in the North's capital Pyongyang - as a reconciliatory push gathered pace. During Moon's visit to Pyongyang in September, Kim promised to pay a return visit to the South's capital Seoul "at an earliest date", sparking speculation he may visit by the end of this year.

But the much-anticipated trip has not yet materialized, which left the young ruler feeling "much regret," according to Kim's letter sent to mark the end of the year. Moon's spokesman said. The North's leader

Kabila's preferred successor, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. The UN, the United States and Europe have loudly appealed for the elections to be free, fair and peaceful - a call echoed on Wednesday by the presidents of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and the neighboring Republic of Congo.

### Opposition chance?

Polling stations opened in the east of the country a little after their scheduled time of 0400 GMT and an hour later in Kinshasa and the west. Kabila voted in the capital along with his family, just minutes before Shadary also cast his ballot in the same polling station. "I feel liberated, freed," said Victor Balibwa, a 53-year-old civil servant and one of the first voters to cast his ballot in Lubumbashi, the country's mining capital in the southeast. "I'm excited to vote, to be able to choose at last. It's my first election," an 18-year-old student named Rachel told AFP in the eastern city of Goma, an opposition stronghold.

Some polling stations opened late in Goma and elsewhere. In one, electoral officials were still adjusting voting machines and in another a technician needed to restart a machine that had broken down, an AFP reporter saw. The last polls are due to close at 1600 GMT. Provisional results are due on Jan 6. Twenty-one candidates are contending the presidential election, which is taking place simultaneously with ballots for the national legislature and municipal bodies.

The frontrunners include Kabila's champion Shadary, a hardline former

"expressed a strong determination to visit Seoul while watching future situation," Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters. Kim Jong Un also "expressed an intention to meet with Moon frequently in 2019" to pursue peace and "solve the issue of denuclearizing the peninsula together," the spokesman said. The official did not elaborate on how the letter was delivered.

The two neighbors technically remain at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with a ceasefire instead of a peace treaty. Moon - a dovish former human rights lawyer - has advocated dialogue to push the impoverished but nuclear-armed North toward denuclearization. Cross-border ties improved markedly in 2018 as Kim made a series of reconciliatory gestures - including a historic summit with US President Donald Trump in June in Singapore.

But progress in pushing the North to give up its atomic arsenal has stalled as Washington and Pyongyang accused each other of dragging their feet and acting in bad faith. Critics say North Korea has made no concrete commitments and is unlikely to surrender its nuclear weapons, while

Washington's policy of maintaining pressure through isolation and sanctions has left Pyongyang seething, Trump said last week

for stable government. Masisi last month used his first state-of-the-nation address to openly attack his predecessor, saying the "transition from the previous administration has not been as smooth as expected". Then, addressing villagers last week during a meeting in his capacity as a traditional chief in his rural home of Serowe, Khama described Trump as "arrogant and racist". The foreign ministry issued a statement on Saturday dissociating itself from the remarks. "These disparaging remarks... do not in any way represent the position of the government of Botswana," said the ministry.

It said Khama is entitled to his personal views, "but the ministry is concerned that the usage of the kgotla (traditional) meeting by the former president to castigate a president of another country may be misconstrued as espousing an official position of the govern-

ment". Yesterday, Khama said he would not give up criticizing poor governance and violation of democratic principles and human rights by other countries. "The ministry is free to abandon those principles and ignore Donald Trump's present and past disrespectful tendencies which he clearly displayed... sometime ago, in the way he referred to countries in Africa," he said in a statement.

Earlier this year Trump reportedly referred to African nations as "sh\*\*hole countries". "I am proud that when I was president, Botswana was one of those that criticized him over those insulting and racist remarks," said Khama. "Trump's attitude is motivated by what I have said before and I repeat again, his arrogance, intolerance, extravagance, and his allergy to telling the truth". The latest spat has again laid bare the frosty relations between Khama, 65 and Masisi, 57. —AFP



**KINSHASA:** President of the Democratic Republic of Congo Joseph Kabila greets some electoral observers after casting his vote at the Institut de la Gombe polling station yesterday. —AFP

interior minister facing EU sanctions for a crackdown on protesters. His biggest rivals are Fayulu, until recently a little-known legislator and former oil executive, and Tshisekedi, head of a veteran opposition party, the UDPS. If the elections are "free and fair," an opposition candidate will almost certainly win, according to Jason Stearns of the Congo Research Group, based at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University.

Opinion polls indicate Fayulu is clear favorite, garnering around 44 percent of voting intentions, followed by 24 percent for Tshisekedi and 18 percent for Shadary,

he said. However, "the potential for violence is extremely high," Stearns warned. Between 43 and 63 percent of respondents said they would not accept the results if Shadary is declared winner, he said. And between 43 percent and 53 percent said they did not trust DRC's courts to settle any election dispute fairly.

However, Kabila said he was confident "everything will go well on Sunday". "I want to reassure our people that measures have been taken with the government to guarantee the safety of all sides, candidates, voters and observers alike," he said in his end-of-year address broadcast Saturday. —AFP



**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un waves during a photo session with participants of the 4th National Meeting of Activists in the Agricultural Field, which was held at an undisclosed location on Dec 25-26, 2018. —AFP

Washington's policy of maintaining pressure through isolation and sanctions has left Pyongyang seething, Trump said last week

that he was "looking forward" to his second summit with Kim, which the US says may take place early next year. —AFP



International

# Worse every day: Afghans expect 2019 to be deadlier

## Security forces locked in a downward spiral

**KABUL:** After a year of record bloodshed, Afghans are bracing for an even deadlier 2019 with the threat of a US draw-down and a looming presidential vote likely to fuel violence. President Donald Trump's plan to slash the number of US soldiers in Afghanistan before negotiators have struck a peace deal with the Taliban has crushed hopes among many Afghans for an end to the 17-year conflict. The news, which the White House has not confirmed, capped an annus horribilis for the war-weary country which by some estimates has overtaken Syria as the world's deadliest conflict zone this year.

Ordinary Afghans, who have long borne the brunt of the relentless fighting, told AFP they felt increasingly despondent about the future as the Taliban and the Islamic State group adapt to ramped up security to carry out almost daily attacks on civilians and security forces. "It is getting worse every day," said electrical engineering student Mohammad Hussain in Kabul, one of the deadliest places in the country for civilians. "The security we had four or five years back was better than now. Even when we don't have attacks in Kabul, we are waiting for something to happen."

### 'Very bad year'

Zabihullah Shirzad, who owns a garbage collecting company in the Afghan capital, said he could not remember a bloodier year than 2018 and predicted 2019 would be even deadlier. "We will see more killing and bloodshed," the 42 year old said. "I am not optimistic about the peace talks." Their gloomy comments reflect the findings of a Gallup poll published in October, which showed an unprecedented level of pessimism among Afghans. And an Asia Foundation study in December suggested more than 60 percent of Afghans thought the country was moving in the wrong direction - unchanged from a year earlier.

Several key indicators show Afghan security locked in a downward spiral, underscoring their negativity. Civilian deaths hit a record high in the first half of the year, while the Taliban

are slaughtering Afghan forces in greater numbers than ever before. This year was also marked by some of the deadliest suicide attacks since the start of the war in 2001, including an ambulance bomb blast that targeted a crowded street in Kabul in January, killing more than 100 people and wounding hundreds more.

The bloodshed was exacerbated by Trump's more aggressive strategy for Afghanistan, which he reluctantly announced in August 2017, putting thousands more US boots on the ground and giving its air units greater leeway to go after the Taliban and IS. One estimate puts the number of conflict-related deaths at more than 40,000 this year - almost equal to the combined total for Syria and Yemen - according to data compiled by the US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

Afghanistan also took the unenviable title of deadliest country in the world for journalists, with 15 media workers killed, including AFP chief photographer Shah Marai and AFP driver Mohammad Akhtar. Adding to the misery was the worst drought in recent history, which forced more than 250,000 people to abandon their homes, overwhelming humanitarian agencies as they struggled to provide enough food and shelter. Thousands of displaced families have set up makeshift tents on the edge of cities, and some are even selling their young daughters into marriage to repay debt or buy food. "It was a very bad year - the situation has not improved at all," said Thomas Ruttig, co-director of Afghanistan Analysts Network.

### Pain of war

Some observers saw positive signs that, if the circumstances are right, could translate into good news in 2019. An unprecedented three-day ceasefire in June was widely celebrated by Afghans taking selfies and sharing ice cream with Taliban fighters, seemingly underscoring the desire for peace on both sides. And the insurgents' apparent willingness to meet



**KABUL:** In this file photo taken on April 22, 2018, Afghan residents inspect the site of a suicide bombing outside a voter registration center. —AFP

with US officials as part of a push for peace talks in recent months could bode well for a deal, said Lotfullah Najafizada, director of Afghanistan's largest private broadcaster Tolo News. "I think Afghanistan will pass 2019 with some success. I hope it will be a historic year," Najafizada said.

But slashing US troop numbers - which many fear would be a harbinger for a full withdrawal - before any deal is struck

could trigger a civil war "with a regional dimension", warned Davood Moradian, director general of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies. Ruttig said Washington should put Afghanistan's need for peace ahead of its own desire to pull out troops and save money. "They are as much a part of the problem as they could be the solution," he said, describing US policy in Afghanistan as "dysfunctional". —AFP

## Some Bangladesh voters barred from polling booths

**DHAKA:** At least three voters in southeast Bangladesh, including a journalist, told Reuters yesterday that they were barred from entering polling booths or were told their ballot papers had already been filled in, hours after voting began in the nation's general election. The journalist, who declined to be identified for fear of reprisals, said activists of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League party in Chittagong, Bangladesh's second-largest city, warned him and other voters at the polling center not to go inside.

"They said we didn't need to go inside as our votes had already been cast," the journalist told Reuters by phone, adding that there were five other voters around him at the time at the polling center set up at the national primary school in Chittagong's Kotwali area. "I am hearing the same thing happening at several other polling booths in Chittagong," the journalist said.

His comments add to accusations by several leaders of the

country's main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) who have alleged rigging and vote manipulation by the Awami League. The Awami League said opposition supporters were wrongly accusing the party. The Election Commission said it had received complaints of rigging that it was investigating. "Allegations are coming from across the country and those are under investigation," the agency's spokesman S M Asaduzzaman said. "If we get any confirmation from our own channels then measures will be taken as per rules."

At least 10 people were killed and more than a dozen injured in political clashes yesterday by the time voting ended at 1000 hours GMT. At least six candidates of the opposition National Unity Front alliance said they had pulled out alleging rigging. When Rasel, a 34-year-old voter in Chittagong, went down to the polling center set up at a local polytechnic college in his area, he said about 30 people stopped him from entering the booth. He knew at least one of them was an Awami League activist, he said.

"They told me that 'voting is going on nicely, you don't need to go inside'. If you try to enter, you will be in trouble," Rasel, who declined to give his second name fearing reprisals, told Reuters by phone. He turned back without voting. Hasina has promised to conduct a "free and fair" election and earlier this month said in a public speech that she would not try to win the election using "unfair means."

facing charges in Turkey of joining the organization. The government in 2016 asked Ankara to extradite Prakash, who Canberra previously reported as having been killed in a US airstrike in northern Iraq.

"I can confirm that the Australian government has notified Neil Prakash that his Australian citizenship has ceased due to being in the service of Islamic State," Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton said in a statement Saturday. "Cessation of Australian citizenship of dual nationals engaged in terrorist conduct offshore is a key part of Australia's response to international violent extremism and terrorism." Reported to be of Indian, Fijian and Cambodian background, Prakash used the Internet "to promote the evil ideol-



**DHAKA:** Kamal Hossain, Bangladeshi lawyer and leader of the National Unity Front Alliance, speaks to the media yesterday. —AFP

ogy" of the militant group "and recruit Australian men, women and children", Canberra has said. Known as Abu Khaled Al-Cambodi, Prakash left Australia in 2013 and was linked to an alleged terror plot on Anzac Day in 2015, when Australia honors its war dead. Prakash said during his trial in Turkey last year that he regretted his involvement with IS after seeing its "true face". Canberra has become increasingly concerned about Australian nationals returning home after fighting alongside IS abroad and has passed a series of tougher national security laws in recent years. That includes legislation where people can forfeit their citizenship if they also hold a passport from another country, and therefore are not left stateless. —AFP

## Navy divers hunt flooded Indian mine for 15 men

**NEW DELHI:** Indian navy divers yesterday launched an operation to find 15 men trapped for more than two weeks in a flooded "rat-hole" coal mine in remote northeast India, police said. The workers have been cut off since December 13 when water from a nearby river poured into the 106-m deep illegal mine in Meghalaya state. There has been no sign of life, with the delayed rescue effort drawing public outrage, but the men's families are clinging to hopes that they may have found an air pocket.

"Fourteen navy divers arrived yesterday (Saturday) and surveyed the mine. They are trying to go inside now," police superintendent Sylvester Nongtinger told AFP. "Rat hole" mining involves digging into the side of hills and then burrowing tunnels up to 1.5 m high to reach a coal seam. A federal environment court banned wildcat mining in the mineral-rich state in 2014 after local communities complained it was polluting water sources and putting the lives of miners at risk.

With mine owners and the state government challenging the ban at India's Supreme Court, the practice remains rampant. Most of the miners are poor migrant laborers from neighboring states. In 2012, 15 miners were killed after they were trapped in another flooded rat-hole mine in Meghalaya. Their bodies were never recovered. The latest incident has sparked a public outcry over the practice as well as poor rescue efforts. The rescue had been hampered by a lack of power pumps and other equipment. —AFP

## Australia strips citizenship of terror suspect

**SYDNEY:** Australia has stripped the citizenship of its most-wanted Islamic State suspect Neil Prakash for being a member of the militant group, the 12th dual-national to lose their passport over terrorism links. Prakash - a senior recruiter for IS who has been linked to terror plots to kill Australians - is currently

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## Analysis

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## Nutrition crisis prompts SOS call for new approach

By Thin Lei Win

With billions of people either starving or obese, poor diets have become a leading cause of disease and death, prompting calls for a new approach in 2019 to how food is produced to stem rising rates of malnutrition. Eating unhealthy food, or not having enough food, has led to rising rates of malnutrition, with one in eight adults globally now obese - while one in nine go hungry and almost 2 billion lack essential vitamins and minerals.

Per Pinstrup-Andersen, professor emeritus at New York's Cornell University, said these figures were a wake-up call to change the focus on food production which for decades had aimed to boost crop yields and calories to save people from starving.

But he said it was now time to focus on nutrients.

"You can go blind from not getting enough vitamin A," said Pinstrup-Andersen, who used to head the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Yet agricultural researchers have been reluctant to shift the focus from calories to nutrients, he said, arguing they are still struggling to supply enough calories to a growing population to worry about the quality of the diet.

But the argument for change is growing.

In January, a report by Oslo-based EAT Foundation, which aims to transform the global food system, launched by The Lancet, plans to propose, for the first time, scientific targets for what constitutes a healthy diet and sustainable food system.

### Global crisis

CGIAR, the global agricultural research network whose annual funding of more than \$900 million goes mainly towards staple crops, also plans to intensify efforts to address the nutrition challenge, said chair of its management board Marco Ferroni. Economists and scientists said another sign of change was the fact the 2018 World Food Prize, dubbed the Nobel for agriculture, went to champions of nutrition - only the third time since 1986 that nutrition-related efforts were recognised. The prize credited Lawrence Haddad and David Nabarro with cutting the number of stunted children in the world by 10 million by lobbying governments and donors to improve nutrition.

Haddad, executive director of Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), said poor nutrition was now a global crisis. "In 2018, we have hunger numbers rising for the first time in 10 years and obesity figures going through the roof in every country. We have a crisis but we don't really have political leadership," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Still, governments and international bodies were increasingly aware of agriculture's role in nutrition, said Anna Lartey, who leads the nutrition division at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The FAO started looking closely at nutrition a few years ago, but the organization's next annual flagship report on hunger and nutrition would look at obesity, she said. "This is a big change because five years ago, people were telling me: 'FAO doesn't do obesity. We only do under-nutrition'," said Lartey, former president of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences.

### SOS

Addressing malnutrition requires producing the right kind of food and ensuring there is consumer demand for such food, said Jessica Fanzo, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and a lead author of the 2018 Global Nutrition report. This means more funding to research and develop nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables which are currently unaffordable for many families, she said.

Cost was critical, said Nabarro, co-winner of the World Food Prize, adding that government policies focused on grain subsidies needed to change to reduce the cost of producing fruits and vegetables.

"The challenge is to ensure what is nutritious, healthy and sustainable is available for everybody," said Nabarro, who now leads 4SD, a Swiss-based social enterprise supporting sustainable development.

To change people's eating habits, it was key to talk about widespread problems such as diabetes and blood pressure, and not only issues caused by long-term malnutrition, said Haddad.

"(Malnutrition) no longer really respects geography. It doesn't respect age groups or income groups. It's affecting everybody. If you can harness that agency, there could be powerful alliances," he said.

The call for more funding was echoed by a global study published this month which found by 2050, people would still lack nutrients essential for a healthy life, such as iron, calcium and Vitamin A.

The world would be awash in carbohydrate rich foods, even after taking into climate change into account, but nutrient-dense foods would be in short supply, said the authors which included researchers from IFPRI and University of Illinois.

The private sector needed to be involved to produce more affordable healthy food too, said Pinstrup-Andersen. This included the processing industry which turns "perfectly good raw materials from farmers into unhealthy stuff", he said, citing the use of maize to make into high fructose corn syrup. — Reuters



## US shutdown threatens to unsettle economy

By Virginie Montet

The paralysis triggered by the US government shutdown could have unexpected consequences, such as muddying economic statistics just as the markets are extremely reactive to any whiff of uncertainty. More than a week into the game of chicken between President Donald Trump and Democrats in Congress, the publication and recording of statistical indicators are being delayed.

With the lack of an agreement on Trump's much-promised wall on the border with Mexico, thousands of government workers are forced to stay home or work without pay due to budget shortages that are also hampering the publication of certain government indicators.

"There will be no lockups for Census or BEA (Bureau of Economic Analysis) and no posting of lockup data from either of those organizations because of the government shutdown affecting those agencies," said Labor Department spokeswoman Suzanne Bohnert, whose agency oversees the release of those indicators under embargo. The release of data on new home sales is so far the only indicator to have been delayed. But if the shutdown is still in effect after January 1, it could impact the release of figures on construction expenses, such as industrial orders, and on trade-due January 8 — which is critical for markets just as the Trump administration is involved in a full-fledged trade war with some US allies. The closely watched employment figures for November, usually published the first Friday of the month, are set to be released on January 4 on schedule because the Labor Department still has funds to keep running its operations. In addition to the publication of data, the very process of collecting this information is also beginning to be compromised.

### Impact on financial markets

"Odds are that it'll continue into January," Grant Thornton chief economist Diane Swonk said in a tweet. "The impasse is already cutting into the supply of something that is essential to just about every market out there: federal economic data. That could have an impact on markets going forward and also what the Federal Reserve decides to do with interest rates in 2019."

With financial markets already extremely volatile and amid worries over tariffs with China and the Fed's monetary policy, the shutdown could add yet another layer of



SAN YSIDRO, California: Shoppers walk towards the San Ysidro Port of Entry after making purchases at outlet malls along the US/Mexico border on Saturday in San Ysidro, California. President Donald Trump has threatened to shut down the border if he doesn't get over 5 Billion in funds for a border wall. — AFP

uncertainty. The partial paralysis of administrative services will likely only have a mildly negative impact on economic growth, even though it's more tangible in the US capital, where affected government workers won't get paid.

"Thousands of federal workers would either be furloughed or work without pay for the duration of the shutdown," Oxford Economics said.

"While the economic impact of two-week partial shutdown would be minimal-less than 0.1 percent of GDP growth-it would add political uncertainty at an inopportune time. "Among other things, a shutdown would affect the release of economic indicators and disrupt the start of the 2019 tax filing season." Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser urged Trump to find a solution to end the stale-

mate, noting the capital's 170,000 federal workers "pay the highest price." These furloughs also have unexpected consequences for the private sector.

On Friday, the National Association of Realtors expressed concern about the shutdown's impact on home sales. "Very disappointingly, flood insurance has not been available during the government shutdown... which means that roughly 40,000 homes may not get transacted because it requires flood insurance in order to get a mortgage," NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun said. "Any time there is a government shutdown, consumer confidence may be dampened, so even if they have the cash, they may not spend the money, and that will hold back economic growth, so it's bad news all around." — AFP

## Modi's clampdown on e-commerce may not win votes of small retailers

By Manoj Kumar

India's new curbs on e-commerce companies may not be enough to win over small store owners and traders in next year's general election, with the key voting bloc still seething over what it sees as broken promises by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

From Feb 1, e-commerce firms such as Amazon.com and Walmart-owned Flipkart Group will not be able to sell products from companies in which they have an equity interest or form exclusive agreements with sellers. Intended to prevent predatory pricing and deep discounting, the curbs follow intense lobbying by India's many millions of small shopkeepers and the middlemen who serve them, particularly after Walmart this year spent \$16 billion to acquire Flipkart.

The sector, which includes an estimated 25 million small store owners, largely supported Modi in the 2014 general election. While seeing the new rules as a step in the right direction, many small businesses feel too much damage has been done after Modi went back on promises that he would not allow the entry of foreign companies into the domestic retail sector. "We clapped and voted for Modi believing in his promises. But what have we got is just a slap on our face," said Pankaj Revri, president of a furniture market association in central Delhi.

The curbs, announced on Wednesday, surprised foreign e-commerce firms as little had been done by the government despite over three years of lobbying by domestic

retailers. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is widely viewed as panicking after losing five state elections this month. The government, which must hold a general election by May, is also expected to come up with new support programs for farmers as their opposition grows due to low crop prices. An opinion poll by TV channel ABP News this week predicted Modi's party could fall short of a majority if the opposition forms an effective alliance in the national election.

### Earnings halved

B C Bhartia, president of the Confederation of All India Traders, said some small businesses had seen earnings more than halve in the last few years as they struggle to compete with low prices offered by the American-controlled behemoths. "The last minute policy change is too little and too late," he said.

In particular, retailers and traders believe Modi turned a blind eye to what they say was the use of policy loopholes by major e-commerce companies to offer heavy discounts that allowed them to seize market share for goods such as electronic items. Asked about those accusations, Amazon India said in a statement that it had always operated "in compliance with the laws of the land" and that had more than 400,000 small and medium businesses on its marketplace. Flipkart declined to comment on the specific allegations. Small Indian businesses have also been bruised by other Modi policies, including a sudden ban on the use of high-value currency notes in late 2016 and the launch of a national sales tax in 2017, both of which raised compliance costs. Bhartia said if the government was serious about the concerns of small traders, it should prosecute violators of trade rules and appoint an independent regulator to curb malpractice. A government official told reporters on Thursday the administration could consider demands for a regulator in its new e-commerce policy, expected to be released in the coming months.

A September report by PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated online commerce in India would grow 25 percent a year for next five years, hitting \$100 billion a year by 2022.



NEW DELHI: In this file photo taken on May 10, 2018 an Indian protester holds a placard slogans against Walmart, around the time of its deal with Indian online sales giant Flipkart, in New Delhi. — AFP

The new curbs could harm those growth prospects and discourage some foreign investors, said investment consultants. "Sentiment is definitely hurt," said Harminder Sahni of retail consultant Wazir Advisors, adding that the policy suggested online retail business should only be done by Indians.

Amazon said in its statement it was evaluating the new guidelines to engage as necessary with the government so it could remain true to its vision of "transforming how India buys and sells and generating significant direct and indirect employment." Flipkart said the advent of e-commerce had created hundreds of thousands of jobs and "the industry was set to be a major growth driver for the Indian economy and create millions of jobs in the future."

"It is important that a broad market-driven framework through the right consultative process be put in place in order to drive the industry forward," it added. The government boasts of attracting nearly \$223 billion foreign investment in the last four years, compared with about \$152 billion in the previous four years. — Reuters



## Business

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LAHORE: Pakistani vendors prepare fish to be sold at a fish market. — AFP

# Trump: Big progress on China trade deal

**'It will be very comprehensive, covering all subjects, areas and points of dispute'**

WASHINGTON/BEIJING: US President Donald Trump said on Twitter that he had a "long and very good call" with Chinese President Xi Jinping and that a possible trade deal between the United States and China was progressing well. As a partial shutdown of the US government entered its eighth day, with no quick end in sight, the Republican president was in Washington, sending out tweets attacking Democrats and talking up possibly improved relations with China.

The two nations have been in a trade war for much of 2018, shaking world financial markets as the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods between the world's two largest economies has been disrupted by tariffs. Trump and Xi agreed to a ceasefire in the trade war, deciding to hold off on imposing more tariffs for 90 days starting Dec 1 while they negotiate a deal to end the dispute following months of escalating tensions.

"Just had a long and very good call with President Xi of China," Trump wrote on Saturday. "Deal is moving along very well. If made, it will be very comprehensive, covering all subjects, areas and points of dispute. Big progress being made!" Chinese state media also said Xi and Trump spoke on Saturday, and quoted Xi as saying that teams from both countries have been working to implement a consensus reached with Trump. "I hope that the two teams will meet each other half way, work hard, and strive to reach an agreement that is mutually beneficial and beneficial to the world as soon as

possible," Xi said, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.

China's foreign ministry said on Sunday the two countries' relationship had endured storms before, but that strong ties were important for the economies of both nations and for ensuring global stability and peace. Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that Sino-US ties now "stand at a historic new starting point" and that the two sides should respect each other's sovereignty, security and development interest and appropriately manage differences. "Both sides should stick to rationally and objectively viewing the other side's strategic intentions, strengthen strategic communication and promote strategic mutual trust to prevent strategic misjudgments," he said in a statement.

#### Government shutdown

Having canceled his plans to travel to his estate in Florida for the holidays because of the government shutdown that started on Dec 22, Trump tweeted, "I am in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come on over and make a deal." The Republican-controlled Congress was closed for the weekend and few lawmakers were in the capital.

The shutdown, affecting about one-quarter of the federal government including 800,000 or so workers, began when funding for several agencies expired. Congress must pass legislation to restore that funding, but has not done so due to a dispute over Trump's demand that the bill include \$5 billion in taxpayer money to help pay for

a wall he wants to build along the US-Mexico border.

The wall was a major 2016 campaign promise of Trump's, who promised then that it would be paid for by Mexico, which has steadfastly refused to do so. Trump has since demanded that U.S. taxpayers pay for it at an estimated total cost of \$23 billion. He sees the wall as vital to stemming illegal immigration, while Democrats and some Republicans see it as an impractical and costly project. The standoff over Trump's demand for funding will be a test for Congress when it returns next week.

Trump tweeted on Saturday that the deaths of two migrant children this month who had been taken into US custody after trying to cross the southern border were "strictly the fault of the Democrats and their pathetic immigration policies." It was unclear exactly which policies Trump was referring to, but his aides have referred to US laws and court rulings - including laws passed with bipartisan support - that govern the conditions under which children and families can be detained as "loopholes" that encourage illegal immigration.

On Friday, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen visited Border Patrol stations in Texas after her agency instituted expanded medical checks of migrant children following the two deaths. She is also due to visit Yuma, Arizona, the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement on Saturday. In the interim, thousands of employees of federal agencies such as the Homeland Security, Justice,



BEIJING: In this file photo taken on November 9, 2017, China's President Xi Jinping (L) and US President Donald Trump attend a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People. — AFP

Commerce, Interior, Transportation, Agriculture and other departments were staying at home on furlough or soon to be working without pay.

For instance, members of the US Coast Guard will receive their final paychecks of the year on Monday, the service said in a statement on its website on Friday after previously warning that payments would be delayed due to the shutdown. "The adminis-

tration, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Coast Guard have identified a way to pay our military workforce on Dec 31, 2018," the service website read. That paycheck will be their last until the government reopens. The Federal Emergency Management Agency also said on Friday that it would resume issuing new flood insurance policies during the shutdown, reversing an earlier decision. — Reuters



## Business

## NBK Money Markets Report

# US government shutdown likely to go well into 2019

## Trump had labeled the Federal Reserve as the 'only problem'

**KUWAIT:** The US government partial shutdown seems to be heading into 2019 after funding ran out on December 21st. US President Donald Trump is still blaming the Democrats for the partial shutdown and the loss of income for federal employees. There is no sign of progress towards a budget to fund the currently closed nine government departments. The issue remains that Trump is demanding \$5 billion to build the wall at the southern borders while the democrats call such spending wasteful and ineffective.

White house Press Secretary Sarah Sanders issued a statement to clarify Trump's view on the matter "The president has made clear that any bill to fund the government must adequately fund border security to stop the flow of illegal drugs, criminals, MS-13 gang members, child smugglers and human traffickers into our communities - and protect the American people," she said. "The president does not want the government to remain shut down, but he will not sign a proposal that does not first prioritize our country's safety and security."

Wall Street saw one of its best days since the great recession last Wednesday. Although more than one factor played a part in the rebound in equities after a severe meltdown, a MasterCard report indicated that sales during the Christmas season rose the most in six years and managed to alleviate concerns over the health of the US economy.

Moreover, White House officials attempted to calm any fears over the job status of Fed Chairman Powell, who came under fire from Trump after the central bank continued with raising rates. Initially, Trump had labeled the Federal Reserve as the "only problem" in the US economy after a Fed meeting

where policymakers raised interest rates for the fourth time this year and planned for more in 2019. At the same time, a partial shutdown in the US Government did not help the rattled investors, which in turn, forwent their equity positions and found shelter in safe government bonds. Nevertheless, US equities year to date remain in negative territory with one more trading day left in 2018.

The Fed Funds futures in Bloomberg showed a cut probability of 30.3% higher than a hike probability of 6.5% for January 2020, which could be a signal from the market pricing in an easing cycle or a recession to start in just one year from now. Additionally, the 1-year LIBOR was down by 10 basis points from the beginning of December to reach 3.03%. On the commodities side, we have seen a volatile oil market as the US benchmark rebounded from steep losses, despite concerns over the health of the global economy.

Financial markets have been suffering from worries over a global economic slowdown amid trade wars and higher US interest rates. The Russian energy minister said on Tuesday that oil prices are to stabilize in the first half of 2019 given the joint efforts by OPEC and non-OPEC countries. On the FX side, thin trading was the theme of the market. The dollar index opened the week at 96.935 and reached a high of 97.116 on Wednesday yet quickly lost all the gains and closed the week lower at 96.402.

### Inflation in Germany below 2% target

German CPI figure came at the end of the week at 1.7%, 0.3% short of the 2% inflation target of all major economies. However the volatility in the single currency dictated the movement as the euro reached a high



of 1.1473 on Friday night. We witnessed a safe haven move towards the Swiss franc as it gained as much as 1.50% on the dollar and closed the week at 0.9844.

Core CPI in Japan took a dip to 0.5% year on year from an expected 0.6% leaving the BOJ with increased difficulty to reach its 2% inflation target.

Unemployment rate also increased from 2.4% to 2.5% on monthly basis. Retail sales in Japan took a massive dip from 3.6% to 1.4% year on year; however the currency remained supported around the 110.40 level by the risk aversion sentiment amid partial US government shutdown.

### WALL ST WEEK AHEAD

## Defensive stocks top the 2019 playbooks

**NEW YORK:** Perceived safe havens like utilities and consumer staples, often an afterthought in Wall Street's cascade of year-ahead investment recommendations each December, are emerging as top picks as stocks limp into 2019. Growth-oriented sectors like tech or communications services have typically dominated year-end roundups of investment ideas. But an uncertain economic outlook and concerns the bull market's roar is morphing into a bear's growl have more Wall Street banks telling investors to play it safe.

A Reuters analysis of 2019 outlooks from 10 major financial institutions found eight, including Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Barclays, with "overweight" ratings on at least one defensive sector for 2019. That marks a big change from last year, when just two of those banks favored any defensive sectors. Bank of America Merrill Lynch, for instance, has moved its rating on utilities to "overweight" from "underweight."

"Utilities offering 6 to 8 percent total return with a lower level of risk might actually be a good place to be in an environment where volatility is rearing its head," Savita Subramanian, the bank's head of U.S. equity and quantitative strategy, said during a recent outlook call. The lack of analyst love for defensive sectors over the years is understandable. Appreciated more for their rich dividend yields than share price gains, the utilities

and consumer staples sectors have turned in relatively yawn-worthy performances during the long bull run since the March 2009 market bottom.

Utilities and staples are up 135 percent and 160 percent, respectively, versus the S&P 500's 268 percent gain. The tech sector has jumped 441 percent and consumer discretionary has soared 513 percent. But defensive sectors have held up reasonably well for the past three months while the market has crashed around them. Nasdaq is now in a bear market, having recently slid more than 20 percent from its record high in late August, and the S&P 500 earlier this week was just a stone's throw from bear territory.

### Higher market volatility

In recommending defensive sectors, including the health sector in some instances, many strategists cited decelerating US and global economic growth and the potential for higher market volatility. And geopolitical issues such as US-China trade tensions and Britain's exit from the European Union could continue to weigh on US equities in 2019, investors said.

However, US President Donald Trump offered investors a ray of hope 2019 may offer less volatility when it comes to China, tweeting on Saturday that "big progress" was being made toward a possible trade deal between the two countries. Defensive sectors may also benefit from an expected slowdown in the pace of Federal Reserve interest rate increases in 2019. Because of their higher dividend yields, defensive stocks are seen as bond proxies and do poorly when interest rates and bond yields are on the rise, as they were through much of this year.

But the Fed is now seen throttling

## Juncker to Britain on Brexit: 'Get your act together'

**BERLIN:** European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker yesterday urged Britain to "get your act together" on Brexit, as he rejected accusations that the EU had a hidden agenda of keeping Britain in the bloc. "I find it unreasonable that part of the British public seems to think that it's entirely up to the EU to present a solution for all future British problems," Juncker told German newspaper Welt am Sonntag. "My call is: get your act together. And tell us what you want. Our proposals have been on the table for months."

Earlier this month, British Prime Minister Theresa May postponed a vote in the House of Commons on the withdrawal deal she struck with the EU in November, fearing a huge defeat as many of her own MPs oppose it. She is seeking further clarifications from Brussels on arrangements relating to the Irish border, and has said the vote would take place the week of January 14. It also means the parliamentary decision would come just weeks before Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29.

The main opposition Labour party has accused May of "running down the clock" to try to force MPs to back her deal rather than risk Britain leaving the EU with no arrangements in place. "I get the impression that the majority of the British lawmakers deeply distrust the EU and Madame May," said Juncker. The European Commission president also rejected claims that Brussels was stalling to stop Britain from leaving. "One insinuates that our aim is to keep Britain in the EU with all means possible. But that's not our intention," said Juncker. "We only want clarity about the future relationships. And we respect the result of the referendum."

### 50-50

Britain's chances of leaving the European Union are only "50-50" if MPs reject Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, a senior minister warned yesterday. Liam Fox, the international trade secretary and a vocal Brexit campaigner during the 2016 referendum, warned colleagues planning on voting against May that her plan was the only way to be "100 percent certain" that Britain would leave. "If we were not to vote for that, I'm not sure I would give it much more than 50-50," he told The Sunday Times.

May's government is trying to persuade a skeptical British parliament to endorse a broad withdrawal deal she struck with



**NEW YORK:** People congregate outside of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in lower Manhattan during the holiday week between Christmas and the New Year. —AFP

back on rate hikes, and benchmark 10-year Treasury yields have retreated to around 2.75 percent, down by roughly half a percentage point from an early November high. Robert Phipps, director at Per Stirling Capital Management in Austin, Texas, recently added a utilities position to his stock holdings, the majority of which are in growth sectors. "There's the income component, and it is actually among the few sectors that still has upside momentum," he said. Cyclical and growth sectors are not entirely out of the mix. For instance, RBC Capital Markets has "overweight" ratings on consumer staples and healthcare but also on financials and energy.

Some investors argue it is too early to jump into defensive sectors with economic and earnings growth expected to

continue, albeit at a slower pace. Safe havens are also looking pricey relative to growth stocks.

Forward price-to-earnings ratios for the S&P 500 consumer staples and utilities sectors are now higher than for the technology sector, according to Refinitiv data. Utilities are the priciest they have been relative to tech stocks in 2-1/2 years.

Still, even some of the more optimistic strategists say a sector allocation shift is warranted. Jonathan Golub, chief US investment strategist at Credit Suisse Securities in New York, recently upgraded his rating on healthcare to "overweight." "The economy is going to move forward, and I think the market is going to be led by things that are as cyclical," Golub said. —Reuters



**LONDON:** Anti-Brexit demonstrators lay out a sign demanding a second referendum outside Parliament as Theresa May announced a postponement of a crucial parliamentary vote on the Brexit agreement struck with EU leaders last month. —AFP

European leaders last month. But the bill's passage is far from certain, with May having to pull an initial vote with a crushing defeat looking, rescheduling it for the week beginning January 14.

Pro-Brexit supporters are particularly concerned about the deal's so-called "backstop" provision, which could keep Britain

locked in a customs union with the EU in order to avoid a "hard" border between British province Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. But Fox urged his colleagues to "put their own pride behind them" and take what was on offer. "The worst possible outcome of this process would be no Brexit," he told the paper. —AFP

### EXCHANGE RATES

#### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.380095	0.393995
Czech Koruna	0.005517	0.014817
Danish Krone	0.042632	0.047632
Euro	0.341057	0.345757
Georgian Lari	0.134867	0.134867
Hungarian 0.001146	0.001336	
Norwegian Krone	0.030967	0.036167
Romanian Leu	0.065164	0.082014
Russian ruble	0.004430	0.004430
Slovakia	0.009088	0.019088
Swedish Krona	0.029965	0.034965
Swiss Franc	0.303012	0.0314012

<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.206387	0.218387
New Zealand Dollar	0.198374	0.207874

<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.217961	0.220961
US Dollars	0.300050	0.306350
US Dollars Mint	0.300550	0.305350

<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003027	0.003828
Chinese Yuan	0.042767	0.046267
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037004	0.039754
Indian Rupee	0.003740	0.004512
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000016	0.000022
Japanese Yen	0.002673	0.002853
Korean Won	0.000262	0.000277
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069653	0.075653
Nepalese Rupee	0.002607	0.002947
Pakistan Rupee	0.001611	0.002381
Philippine Peso	0.005808	0.006108
Singapore Dollar	0.217357	0.227357
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001373	0.001953
Taiwan	0.010152	0.010332
Thai Baht	0.009007	0.009557
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792194	0.808694
Egyptian Pound	0.014596	0.020314
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000268
Jordanian Dinar	0.424685	0.433685
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000156	0.000256
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021717	0.045717
Omani Riyal	0.783682	0.789362
Qatar Riyal	0.079252	0.084192
Saudi Riyal	0.080020	0.081320
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.097258	0.106258
Turkish Lira	0.051581	0.063081
UAE Dirhams	0.081384	0.083084
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069



## Business

# Italian MPs approve revised budget after EU standoff

## Promised a universal basic income, scrapes pension reform

**ROME:** Italian lawmakers passed Saturday the populist government's revised 2019 budget before a year-end deadline, despite complaints from the opposition that it was dictated by Brussels and had been rammed through without debate. The coalition of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the far-right League party expressed their approval with a vote of confidence that saw 327 deputies for and 228 against, with one abstention.

Key measures in the big-spending budget were watered down as the government tried to avoid being punished by the European Commission and financial markets. Senators passed the draft last week with a vote of confidence that avoided discussing around 700 amendments put forward by the government 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 in the chamber on Saturday. If next year's budget had not passed before December 31, the government would have been forced to 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.

### 'End poverty'

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



**ROME:** Deputies from the centre-right party "Forza Italia", wearing blue vests reading "Enough taxes" disrupt a session for a Parliament vote of confidence on Italy's revised 2019 budget. — AFP

## Key measures in revised Italian government budget

**ROME:** Italian lawmakers on Saturday approved a revised 2019 budget after the populist government's initial plan faced stiff opposition from EU officials and a cool reception in financial markets. The draft budget includes 32 billion euros (\$28 billion) in extra spending, but estimates it will limit the public deficit to 2.04 percent of national output, a level watched closely by European Union authorities. Italy's huge public debt of 2.3 trillion euros, or 131 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), has forced the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the anti-immigration League coalition to curb several campaign pledges that brought it to power. Following are key items from the proposed budget:

### Pension reform

Retirement conditions have been relaxed, a leading League promise that would cost 3.9 billion euros next year and 8.6 billion in 2020, according to government estimates. The current retirement age is 67 but that would be cut to 62 if the worker has paid into the system for 38 years. The government believes 340,000 people would take advantage of the new conditions next year, freeing up jobs for younger workers. Higher-income pensions are to be reduced and the new text progressively curbs inflation-indexed increases on pensions of more than 1,500 euros net per month.

### Citizen's revenue

A major M5S campaign promise, this would pay a monthly stipend of 780 euros to 1.7 million of Italy's poorest families, and hopefully support their social integration. Nine billion euros was initially earmarked for this measure next year, but the number has been cut to 7.1 billion. M5S vows that the first cheques will be sent in April, but conditions are strict and the process is fairly complicated.

### Fiscal amnesty

Another League measure, the amnesty would concern those who did not pay taxes that they either correctly declared or underestimated between 2000 and 2017. In addition, the government has proposed a flat tax rate of seven percent for pensioners who settle in small southern towns as long as they are Italians returning to the country, or foreigners.

### Fiscal reform

Taxes are to be cut to 15 percent for more than a million self-employed workers and artisans with annual revenues of less than 65,000 euros. A 3 percent "web tax" is to be introduced on companies who sell goods, services or advertising on the internet, a measure estimated to bring in 150 million euros next year and 600 million once the system is fully operational. Corporate taxes in general are to rise, with banks and insurance companies hit hardest. Non-profit organizations would also see their tax rate double, though the government has pledged to revisit this measure in January.

### Limited investment increase

The government pledged in May to invest 38 billion euros over 15 years in infrastructure, including nine billion in the next three years, a figure that has been cut to 3.6 billion euros.

### No automatic VAT hike

An previously planned automatic increase in VAT has been scrapped, depriving the government of 12.5 billion euros in revenue next year. The increase has been maintained for the following years however unless the government comes up with an additional 23 billion euros in revenue in 2020 and 28 billion in 2021. — AFP

## Spanish 'ghost towns' slowly come to life

**GUADALAJARA:** Concrete skeletons still haunt Spain, 10 years after the 2008 global economic crisis caused a housing boom to crumble, bankrupting developers and dotting the landscape with unfinished projects. But buoyed by an economic recovery, some "ciudades fantasma", or "ghost towns", are gradually reviving, such as Valdeluz near Guadalajara, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) northeast of Madrid.

Valdeluz was designed as a dormitory town for 30,000 residents near a new station where high-speed trains linking the Spanish capital to the northeastern region of Catalonia stop, but the lead developer went bankrupt shortly after the crisis hit. When Almudena Castillo moved in to a flat there 11 years ago, she said she had "a maximum of eight neighbors". "There were days when I did not come across anyone," she recalled. Valdeluz is now home to 4,000 people as banks have gradually sold apartments they reclaimed from bankrupt developers. Spain's economic rebound, which began in 2014, and the fact that Valdeluz is located near an economic axis between Madrid and Guadalajara has helped breathe new life into the town, Jose Luis Ruiz Bartolome, the author of a book on the rise and fall of Spain's property market, told AFP.

### 'Not as isolated'

Jose Miguel Cocera, the mayor of Yebe, which is administratively responsible for Valdeluz, said that investment in services such as a new sports complex which opened last year had been the key to success. A primary school which closed in 2013 reopened four years later and now has 300 students. "It's not as isolated as before," said Luis Miguel Cobo, who in 2015 founded a football club in Valdeluz, a project he says would have been impossible before due to a lack of players and



infrastructure. "Before we had to leave Valdeluz by car to buy anything. Today there is a supermarket, two grocery stores, a pharmacy, a veterinary and three bars," he added. Valdeluz's mayor wants to establish a technological industrial zone next year to attract a major company that would bring in even more residents.

### Safety concerns

The situation is not as encouraging in nearby Yebe however, where about 50 empty flats in a neighborhood dubbed "sector 10" is a cause of concern for local residents. Anca Bejan bought her first home there a year ago, a 170-square-metre (1,830-square-foot) flat for which she paid just 60,000 euros (\$68,000). But every morning she wakes up to a view of empty buildings with closed shutters.

Two blocks away, 20 buildings are decaying, their floors littered with blueprints. "When I arrived, these houses were in better shape. But with time people came and began to steal everything. As long as we cannot find their owner, as long as we don't decide whether or not to demolish them, we have to live with them," Bejan said. Meanwhile, she worries for her 10-year-old son. "You can find all kinds of people living inside empty homes," Bejan remarked. Mayor Cocera said

absent homeowners refused to look after their properties. All the municipal government can do is "try to keep the area clean", he added.

### 'Exaggerated production'

Several parts of the country are blighted by abandoned housing developments such as the "Ciudad Jardin Soto Real" in Buniel near the northern city of Burgos, where sacks of cement still lie beside unfinished red brick buildings. "There was an exaggerated, enormous production" of homes before the crisis, said Bartolome, the property sector specialist. Housing prices rose sharply as growing numbers of Spaniards invested in real estate because mortgages were easy to get, he added.

Corruption fuelled the construction frenzy as elected officials approved projects on land where building was banned in exchange for kickbacks. In 2006 alone, 900,000 new homes were built in Spain, ten times as many as in 2017, according to Idealista.com, Spain's biggest online property advertising site. "We must accept that we will continue to have ghost towns," because homes were built "in areas where no one wants to live," concluded Fernando Encinar, head of research at Idealista.com. — AFP

## French start-up offers 'dark web' compass, but not for everyone

**LYON:** For years criminal websites shrouded in secrecy have thrived beyond the reach of traditional search engines, but a group of French engineers has found a way to navigate this dark web — a tool they don't want to fall into the wrong hands. "We insist on this ability to say 'no'," Nicolas Hernandez, co-founder and CEO of Aleph Networks, says at the company's offices near Lyon, in the heart of France's Beaujolais wine country.

He said Aleph refused 30 to 40 percent of licensing requests for its "Google of the dark web," based on reviews by its ethics committee and input from its government clients. Most web users never venture beyond the bounds of sites easily found and accessed with casual web surfing. But people and sites seeking anonymity can hide behind layers of secrecy using easily available software like Tor or I2P.

These sites can't be found by searching; instead, users have to type in the exact URL, string of often random characters. In an authoritarian regime, a protest movement could use the secrecy to organise itself or con-

nect with the outside world without fear of discovery. But the dark web is also ideal for drug and weapon sales, people-smuggling and encrypted chat-room communications by terrorists.

When Aleph's co-founder Celine Haeri uses her software to search for "Glock", the Austrian pistol maker, several sites offering covert gun sales instantly pop up. A search for Caesium 137, a radioactive element that could be used to create a "dirty" nuclear bomb, reveals 87 dark web sites, while another page explains how to make explosives or a homemade bazooka. "Some even advertise the stars they've gotten for customer satisfaction," Hernandez said.

### Uncharted territory

Over the past five years Aleph has indexed 1.4 billion links and 450 million documents across some 140,000 dark web sites. As of December its software had also found 3.9 million stolen credit card numbers. "Without a search engine, you can't have a comprehensive view" of all the hidden sites, Hernandez said. He and a childhood friend began their adventure by putting their hacking skills to work for free-speech advocates or anti-child abuse campaigners, while holding down day jobs as IT engineers.

Haeri, at the time a teacher, asked for their help in merging blogs by her colleagues opposed to a government reform of the education system. The result became the basis of their mass data collection and indexing software, and the three created Aleph in 2012. They initially raised 200,000 euros (\$228,000) but had several close calls



**VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-SAONE:** Celine Haeri, co-founder of Aleph Networks, a cyber security company poses, on December 4, 2018 at the company's headquarters near Villefranche-sur-Saone. — AFP

with bankruptcy before finding a keen client in the French military's weapon and technology procurement agency.

"They asked us for a demonstration two days after the Charlie Hebdo attack," Hernandez said, referring to the 2015 massacre of 12 people at the satirical magazine's Paris offices, later claimed by a branch of Al-Qaeda. "They were particularly receptive to our pitch which basically said, if you don't know the territory — which is the case with the dark web — you can't gain mastery of it," Haeri added.

### Ethical risks

The ability to covertly navigate the dark web is a holy grail for security services trying to crack down on illicit trafficking and prevent terror attacks. The US government's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has been working on a similar project, called Memex, for years.

Aleph plans to soon add artificial intelligence capabilities to its software, which would recognize images such as Kalashnikov rifles or child abuse victims, or alert businesses to potential copyright infringement.

Its revenues are expected to reach around 660,000 euros this year, a figure it hopes to double in 2019. That has attracted the attention of investors as Aleph steps up efforts to add more private-sector buyers to its roster of government clients. But as more people and businesses start using Aleph's search engine, the risk increases that criminal organizations or hostile governments will eventually gain access. The challenge will be to grow while setting out clear guidelines for handling the thorny ethical questions. But Hernandez insisted he would remain vigilant, comparing his role to that of the "Protectors of the City" in ancient Greek democracies. — AFP



**ROME:** Members and supporters of the Italian opposition Democratic Party (PD) gather for a protest outside Palazzo Montecitorio, the seat of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. — AFP



## Business

# Innovation the hallmark to Huawei's fame in the Middle East and Africa

## 95 million units shipped globally in the first half of 2018 alone

**KUWAIT:** According to initial data from the International Data Corporation (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker, smartphone vendors globally shipped a total of 355.2 million units during Q3 2018, resulting in a year-on-year decline of 6 per cent. But while the industry trends are appearing to lose juice, Huawei shipped 95 million units of smartphones globally in the first half of 2018 alone, growing its shipment despite the downward trend and ascending to second place for two consecutive quarters (Q2 and Q3), with 14.6 per cent global market share in Q3 2018 as recorded by IDC.

Correspondingly, Huawei earned its rank as second smartphone vendor in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region with a 21.5 per cent of market share, according to the Growth from Knowledge (GfK) August 2018 report, which is an indication of the company's strong performance this year as Huawei focused its efforts on the development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in its devices to improve users' experience and further pushed its AI on device strategy where Artificial Intelligence is embedded on the chipset of the phones, turning smartphone phones into intelligent machines. These breakthrough innovations are a testimony of Huawei's heavy investment in Research and Development, the giant tech invested \$45 billion over the last 10 years and a whopping \$13.23 billion last year only, making it one of the leading companies worldwide in terms of investment in R&D.

This innovative approach to products has enabled Huawei to conquer consumers worldwide, and especially in

the region where users tend to long for innovative features and products. Looking to strengthen its presence in the Kuwait market, Huawei is planning to expand its presence in the retail space by opening the first "experience stores" at The Avenues Mall - Phase Four, by early 2019, aiming to offer consumers access to its latest products and technology with an excellent opportunity for customers to experience firsthand the latest tech innovation, in an exciting and futuristic setting.

Conscious of the fact that confidentiality protection is the only way to earn and maintain user's trust, Huawei's privacy protection measures extend from the product's design throughout the entire development process and complies with GAPP principles- the most stringent privacy technology framework in the world - and all requirements set forth in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) planned to invest more than \$50m in research and innovation of security technology by the end of 2018 to ensure the continued cyber security of its users. To that end, the company has appointed more than 200 cyber security experts and engineers to work in research centers in China, Germany, Finland, Canada, and Singapore, and created over 10 partnerships around the world, including security manufacturers, consulting firms, industry alliances, and industry organizations. In 2018, what differentiated the good from the truly amazing was innovation, which has always been the hallmark of Huawei's rise to fame.



## FarEye in the Hype Cycle for Multi-enterprise solutions

**DUBAI:** FarEye, a technology solution to run eCommerce and supply chain logistics operations has been mentioned as a sample vendor in Gartner's recent Hype Cycle report for Multi-enterprise Solutions under the Global Logistics Visibility technology which was published on 13 December 2018. Gartner has mentioned FarEye in four other researches for its real-time visibility platform. Therefore, this mention is the fifth one.

As per Gartner's report, the multi-enterprise solutions market is undergoing a new wave of hype mostly driven by new options such as blockchain-enabled platforms. The rise of digital business and interest in blockchain-enabled platforms fuel renewed interest in multi-enterprise solutions. Digitalizing multi-enterprise processes delivers improvements in agility, visibility, scalability and profitability across a wide array of application and supply chain domains.

The Hype Cycle lists FarEye, among sample vendors for Global Logistics Visibility technology. FarEye enables companies to monitor international logistics events across an entire multiple shipment itinerary to detect event-driven problems early enough to notify recipients and address possible threats. It also offers mobile device integration that allows the capture of geographical and/or conditional information in real time for increased end-to-end visibility. "As these platforms and applications mature, they're being used in conjunction with other visibility systems covering other modes of transportation or geographies to form what is called the Network of Networks", Gartner cited.

"We feel honored to receive the recognition in the Hype Cycle for Multi-enterprise Solutions. We view Gartner mentions as testaments to the value we bring in our solutions. We built FarEye with a vision to provide technology for predictable logistics and we are zealous towards enabling efficient and reliable logistics using data, intelligence & automation. We will continue to empower our customers with the insights and efficiencies they need to compete in the global market," says Kushal Nahata, CEO & Co-founder, FarEye.



Kushal Nahata, CEO & Co-founder, FarEye

## EU operators still see Huawei as a strategic partner

**DUBAI:** During a year-end press briefing held yesterday in central Seoul, LG U+ CEO and Vice Chairman Ha Hyun-woi has made it clear that the carrier does not think there are any security threats related to its use of Huawei equipment in its 5G infrastructure, rebuffing claims by some lawmakers that there is a risk of security leaks through the use of the Huawei equipment in the network.

LG U+ currently partners with Huawei for its 5G infrastructure. According to Ha, Huawei has already applied for security certification of its 5G network equipment from an international certifying body in Spain, and the public will be able to see how secure the equipment is once the evaluations are complete next year.

"Security concerns apply to every equipment vendor we partner with, not only Huawei, and we need to thoroughly verify all the equipment [we use] is secure," Ha said. "There are roughly 170 countries that are already using Huawei's network equipment, and there hasn't been any security problems reported so far." He added. Locally, Huawei has set up equipment that abides by over 70 security guidelines set by the Korea Internet & Security Agency, according to LG U+.

LG U+ has built 5,500 base stations to service the next-generation 5G network as of Wednesday, while its local competitors have reportedly established less than 1,000 5G base stations. The company invested roughly 4 trillion won (\$3.6 billion) to set up its 5G infrastructure, including at 5G spectrum auctions.

## Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma prize program

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw prize of KD 5,000 to be Hilda Mathias and Jenima Bor. The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ms Latifa Al Jean.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000 & monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held in January 2019.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD

### Crucial roles

On a related note, at year-end news conference in Ottawa, Canada prime minister's Justin Trudeau said: Canada's decision on whether to allow Huawei access to its next-generation wireless network won't be a political one. There are millions of dollars, billions of dollars at stake in technology and in communications infrastructure, there is also the extraordinary imperative that Canadians and people around the world expect to be kept safe and free from interference and cyber attacks," Trudeau said.

"It shouldn't at all be a political decision made on how we engage, but a decision made by experts and a decision based on recommendations by our intelligence and security agencies," he added. Also in a reversal of its earlier stance, India said is unlikely to ban China's Huawei from selling 5G equipment in the country, despite the US calling for a boycott over espionage concerns. Indian officials now say the telecom gear maker can't be singled out in matters of security, especially since its rivals also source key components from China.

Many European operators see Huawei as their strategic partner that will play crucial roles in advancing the next generation of wireless technology. Huawei is still gaining foreign carriers' support on 5G. Many European telcos are proceeding with 5G implementation with Huawei. The UK mobile operator O2 confirmed that it will continue to deploy Huawei 5G gear in the UK. Huawei has also recently partnered with market-leading Telecommunications Operator Alice Portugal committing to the development and implementation of 5G services in Portugal.

Vodafone Italia and Huawei also recently announced the completion of a technique to improve the range of high frequency spectrum as part of their pre-standard 5G trials in Milan. Orange CEO Stephane Richard was very clear in his feedback about Huawei in face of the current situation. He said: "Huawei has the best technology in the world. They have the strongest capability and methods for R&D in the industry. So the quality of their products is undoubt-



ed". Some analysts have already suggested that banning Huawei will create a vacuum that no one can fill in a timely fashion, and may seriously impair 5G deployments worldwide as Huawei has recently announced through its rotating chairman Ken Hu that it has secured 25 commercial contracts, ranking number one among all ICT equipment providers, having already shipped more than 10,000 base stations to markets around the world.

Ken rejected allegations about the company network security saying: No evidence has been presented to back the allegations up, and no one can improve by locking out competition. "Some security concerns based on the technology for 5G were very legitimate, but able to be clarified or mitigated through collaboration with operators and governments", Ken added. "Almost all network customers have indicated they want Huawei, which is currently the market leader with the best equipment and will remain so for at least the next 12 to 18 months, for faster and more cost-effective upgrades to 5G".

## Burgan Bank names winners of Yawmi account draw

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank yesterday announced the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

### The lucky winners are:

1. Abbas Ahmed Ali Bohamad
2. Humoud Abdulhadi Mohammad Almousawi
3. Fatemah Joudah Mubarak Alfidhli
4. Ali Abdulrahman Mohammad Alsalem
5. Safeya Fuad Yusef Alsayegh

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance



of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win. For more information on opening a Yawmi account, the new quarterly draw or on any of the bank's products and services, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or simply call the bank's Call Center. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

## Police teargas 'yellow vest' protesters in Paris

**PARIS:** Police fired tear gas at "yellow vest" demonstrators in Paris on Saturday but the turnout for round seven of the popular protests that have rocked France appeared low. Several hundred people wearing the symbolic hi-visibility vests had gathered near the offices of several state-run television stations and the BFM TV channel in the centre of the capital shouting "Fake news" and calling for the resignation of President Emmanuel Macron.

Protesters spilled onto tram lines and lobbed projectiles at police who replied with tear gas grenades and detained several people. Several cars were also set alight outside the offices of the Le Parisien newspaper, although a fire service spokesman said it was not clear if the blaze was linked to the protests. Tear gas was also fired in Nantes, western France, and protests were expected in Lyon, Bordeaux and Toulouse.

In the southern city of Marseille, police said around 1,000 protesters turned out, amid cries of "Macron out". The official turnout numbers have plunged with the passing weeks, with police saying some 12,000 had joined Saturday's rally by midday. The government recorded

38,600 demonstrators on December 22 compared to 282,000 for the first major demonstrations on November 17. But leading figures within the movement that has flourished outside of trade union and political groups, say the low numbers are due to the holiday season and January will bring a resurgence of the street protests.

The focus of the protests has morphed from anger over fuel taxes to a broad rebuke of Macron, accused by critics of neglecting the rising costs of living for many in rural and small-town France. "We want to get our purchasing power back and have a say in the decisions," said Priscillia Ludosky, who launched the yellow vest petition against fuel price hikes. Government tax concessions to boost disposable income among the low paid "are not enough", Ludosky said in Marseille.

The movement has increasingly targeted Macron and 40 "yellow vests" on Thursday tried to storm the medieval fort of Bregancon that serves as his official summer retreat on the Mediterranean before being turned back by police. Die-hard yellow vest supporters believe the movement will live on in 2019 and plans are underway for New Year's Eve protests. Nearly 8,000 people are listed on Facebook as intending to attend, insisting it will be "festive and non-violent". Paris officials said preparations would continue for a fireworks display and sound and light show on the Champs-Elysee, the epicenter of repeated violent action against the government, with the Arc de Triomphe ransacked on December 1. Tens of thousands of tourists and locals traditionally ring in the new year on the wide shopping boulevard, which rises to the Arc monument.— AFP





Health & Technology

# Runaway lion, wounded elk find home in Russian shelter

‘Sometimes their stories are like the plot of a film’

**RAPPOLOVO:** A lion that escaped from an airport, a crocodile found at a rubbish dump and an elk attacked by stray dogs — all these animals have found refuge in an unusual private shelter in Russia. Dozens of bears have also passed through the Veles centre, just outside Saint Petersburg, since it was opened in 2009 by businessman Alexander Fyodorov, who says he spent more than \$1 million on the project.

“Our aim is to treat wild animals and get them back on their legs again in order to release them if that’s possible,” he said of the centre in Rappolovo, 20 kilometers out of Russia’s second city. “Some of the animals were found after accidents, others were abandoned. Sometimes their stories are like the plot of a film,” said Fyodorov. One particularly dramatic story is that of a lioness called Elza, who escaped in Saint Petersburg’s Pulkovo airport in December last year. “Elza was sent from Grozny (the capital of Chechnya) by a Chechen businessman to his friend in Saint Petersburg as a New Year’s gift,” Fyodorov said.

“But the sleeping pills given to the lioness before the trip stopped acting too early. In the airport, the lion broke her cage open and made a run for it.” The lion

was soon captured and later taken to her new owner, but he quickly realized that “it was impossible for him to keep a lion” and brought her to the shelter. At the time, keeping wild animals at home was not illegal, but a law was recently enacted that bans the practice from next year. Less is known about the background of the crocodile named Gena who was found at a rubbish dump north of the city. Keeping exotic wild animals as pets has long been fashionable among certain rich or novelty-seeking Russians but often ends unhappily with animals mistreated or escaping.

**Little help from state**

Other animals come to the shelter after incidents in the wild. Two years ago, while still a foal, an elk called Alyuminka was badly hurt by stray dogs attacking her. Elks are still common in European Russia, living in forests. She now paces the enclosure in Rappolovo. “Those animals that could not survive in the wild stay here,” said Alexander Teplyakov, a 45-year-old volunteer at the centre. Four staff and around 10 volunteers work in Rappolovo, where the animals are kept in huge cages or enclosures around a large stone building housing a medical facility.

Despite Russia’s huge size, human activity is increasingly encroaching on the animals’ natural habitat and making it harder for them to survive in the wild. The state does little to support them, even as President Vladimir Putin gives speeches praising Russia’s natural heritage and enjoys occasional photo opportunities with wild animals.

“In Russia, you can count centres like this, where there is real help given to wild animals, on the fingers of one hand,” said Svetlana Ilyinskaya, co-director of the Centre for Legal Protection of Animals, a Moscow NGO. There are around 50 million abandoned pets in the country, particularly cats and dogs, that breed in the wild as owners often do not sterilise them, she said. For wild animals, road collisions are a frequent cause of death, with 161 vehicle accidents recorded in Russia last year involving large animals — often elks. Ilyinskaya said that “there is no effective plan to help wild animals in need.”

“There are no shelters, nor (public) awareness of what you should do if you find a wounded animal in the wild. There’s also no law that could protect them against industrial development,” she said.

And for private shelter owners like



**RAPPOLOVO:** A lion gestures in his cage at Veles, a shelter for wild animals in Rappolovo village, outside Saint Petersburg. — AFP

Fyodorov, the costs are prohibitive. “I’m not sure how long we can go on,” he said, explaining that profits at his construction business had been hurt by the economic

crisis that hit Russia in 2014. “You can’t predict the future,” he said, admitting that his friends think he is “crazy” for maintaining the shelter. — AFP

## WHO chief warns DRC unrest threatening gains in Ebola fight

**GENEVA:** The World Health Organization chief warned Friday that growing unrest in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo was disrupting efforts to rein in an Ebola outbreak, threatening gains made in fighting the deadly virus. The security situation in the Ebola-hit Beni and Butembo areas has deteriorated since Thursday morning as protests erupted against further delays to DRC’s election. This has complicated efforts to provide vaccinations and track down people who may have been infected, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

Some 20 people suspected of having contracted Ebola fled a transit centre where they were being monitored in the Beni region, the

epicentre of this latest outbreak of the highly infectious and potentially fatal disease, according to the country’s health ministry. The incident followed the announcement that elections planned for Sunday in the region had once again been postponed because of local unrest, as well as the Ebola outbreak.

Tedros said that the UN agency and its partners were continuing to respond to the Ebola outbreak in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces. But “yesterday our teams in Beni were unable to carry out critical field work, including vaccinations, contact tracing, and following up on alerts of potential new cases,” he said. And in Butembo, “some alerts of potential cases were investigated and confirmed cases were referred to treatment centres but teams were unable to trace contacts or to conduct vaccinations.”

**‘Tragedy’**

Tedros stressed that response activities had not been interrupted in other affected areas. He pointed out that after an intensification of field activities, “we were seeing hopeful signs in many areas, including a recent decrease in cases in Beni.” But he warned that “these gains could be lost if we suffer a period of prolonged

insecurity, resulting in increased transmission.”

“That would be a tragedy for the local population, who have already suffered too much,” Tedros said. He said the WHO teams in Beni and Butembo were doing “everything possible” to continue responding to the outbreak, and that WHO hoped to “return to full operations as soon as possible while remaining committed to ensuring the safety of all staff deployed.”

He asked everyone to “protect health facilities and provide access for responders to the affected populations so that we can stop this outbreak.” “We cannot afford to take a step back at this critical point in the response,” he said. Kigali declared the Ebola epidemic last August, and it has already claimed 357 lives.

There is great concern that the disease could spread to other major towns in the region, such as Goma and Kisangani and even neighboring Uganda. On Wednesday, the country’s electoral commission cited the unrest in the region and the Ebola outbreak as the reasons it was further postponing national elections there. However, the vote will continue to take place in the rest of the country as scheduled on December 30, and the next president will be sworn in on January 18, the commission said. — AFP

## Galapagos bans fireworks to protect unique wildlife

**QUITO:** Fireworks have been banned on the Galapagos Islands to protect the archipelago’s unique fauna, the local government said. The local council said in a statement that it had agreed “unanimously a resolution that prohibits the importation, sale, distribution and use of fireworks or pyrotechnics in the Galapagos province.”

Those fireworks that produce light but no noise have been excluded from the ban. The islands are home to thousands of residents as well as being a tourist destination, and the measure comes just days before New Year celebrations in which many people traditionally set off fireworks. “Ecosystems as sensitive as the Galapagos Islands are affected (by fireworks), principally its fauna that is unique,” said the council.

It also wants to avoid any potential deterioration in air quality or pollution of water sources. Animals have suffered from elevated heart rates, nervous stress and anxiety, which have “notably” changed their behavior and affected the survival of species inhabiting this World Heritage Site that belongs to Ecuador.

“This is a gift to conservation for Ecuador and the world,” Lorena Tapia, president of the local council, said on her Twitter account. A campaign to limit the use of fireworks on the Galapagos Islands was launched in 2017. Single-use plastics have also been banned on the archipelago, about 1,000 kilometers off the coast of Ecuador. Known for its endemic species, the volcanic Galapagos Islands played a crucial role in British naturalist Charles Darwin’s studies before he came up with his theory of evolution. — AFP

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- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
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**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
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- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
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Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

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

**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
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Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates - Training**

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

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

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What's On



# KIB continues its journey of giving and duty towards the community in 2018

Since its beginnings, KIB has always embraced a comprehensive, integrated approach to corporate social responsibility - this is nothing new. Social responsibility remains at the core of KIB, evolving and growing further as the Bank embarked on a new chapter in 2018 under the slogan "Bank for Life". As part of this new strategic direction, KIB has adopted a modern philosophy that focuses on its social mission, becoming more customer-centric by offering an integrated customer banking experience that delivers much more than just "banking" in the traditional sense - but rather establishes the Bank as a partner in every aspect of its customers' daily lives.

Within this context, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, lauded the various activities and initiatives within the Bank's social responsibility program for the year 2018, which it considers an integral component of its business strategy

exciting competition entitled 'Find the Lost Treasure' in the outdoor park area at the Boulevard Mall, in collaboration with the British Academy of Sports (BAS).

KIB's social responsibility program also dedicates a great deal of attention to mothers and women. For this reason, the Bank celebrated International Women's Day, as well as Mother's Day, as it fully recognizes the importance of women, who represent half of the population, and their boundless capability to give. In line with its active role in the community and its ongoing commitment to increasing its social efforts, KIB signed an agreement for a strategic partnership with Safira CSR Company.

As a continuation of its commitment to supporting local development initiatives, KIB sponsored a number of social and sports activities for the Public Authority for Industry in 2018. KIB also sponsored the 2018 GCC Forum for Volunteer Groups, which was organized by the Environment Public Authority (EPA) under the title "Our

awareness initiative organized by the Association at Al-Hamra Tower, which aimed at spreading awareness about breast cancer and the importance of using different methods of psychotherapy. KIB also sponsored the 4th national cervical cancer awareness campaign, which was organized by Safira in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

### Youth Empowerment

As part of its ongoing commitment, KIB sponsored the 7th Tmkeen Youth Empowerment Symposium (YES, which focuses on developing the skills of today's youth and promoting entrepreneurship amongst the country's youth population. For the second consecutive year, KIB sponsored a lecture by renowned Emirati counselor and author, Hala Kazim. The lecture took place as part of the YouLeadQ8 Leadership Forum in order to empower and support youth. The Bank also sponsored the B2B4SME symposium, which was organized by the Association of

attention to its employees, devoting its utmost to fulfilling its commitment towards them. The Bank believes in the importance of human capital and its key role in elevating its standing. Accordingly, KIB has implemented an approach to recruitment that focuses on attracting young, local talent by providing essential training and development opportunities, as well as specialized courses. The Bank also regularly recognizes outstanding employees, encouraging them to work efficiently within various banking sectors.

KIB always strives to engage directly with its employees by organizing a number of social events throughout the year, focusing on social aspects in order to reduce work stress and spend a more enjoyable time with each other; thereby increasing their productivity. First in line in 2018 was a special event in celebration of the New Year. Next, in February, we celebrated the National and Liberation Days of Kuwait in the outside court area of the Joint Banking Company (JBC) complex under the theme "Together".

KIB also organized its annual blood donation campaign for its staff, hosting the Kuwait Central Blood Bank's mobile unit for a blood drive. The initiative came as part of our belief in the importance of encouraging its employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle through their participation in the blood drive - and save lives. On the occasion of World Diabetes Day, the Bank hosted a team from Salmiya German Medical Laboratory, where the team conducted a number of medical examinations for all our employees, and additionally offered medical advice to reduce the risk of diabetes.

KIB is committed to encouraging its employees to participate in local sports events and tournaments, particularly football. This year, we organized the 8th annual football tournament for our employees, and also encouraged the KIB football team to participate in this year's Kuwait Banking Association football championship.

As for its Ramadan campaign, KIB also included an Iftar for security staff at the Joint Banking Complex under the 'One Table' campaign, which aimed at appreciating their hard work and effort in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Additionally, the Bank organized the annual Ramadan Quran competition for children of the Bank's customers, as well as employees and their children.

### Taking Pride in Our Achievements

Najia also noted that KIB has amassed a number of local, regional and international awards in 2018, serving as a strong motivator for more achievements in the future. Some of the most prominent awards received by KIB in 2018 were the 'Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait' award and the 'Best Customer Acquisition in GCC' award from World Finance. Additionally, the Bank also received 'Best Customer Acquisition in Kuwait' and 'Best Branding in Kuwait' from CPI Financial.

The Bank was also awarded 'Best Sharia-compliant Bank in MENA' and 'Fastest Growing Islamic Bank MENA' from Capital Finance International (CFI.co). KIB was also honored with the "Excellence in Islamic Banking Products and Services Award" for the year 2018 from the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB). At the end of his statement, Najia thanked all those who contributed to representing KIB in the local community, including members of the board of directors, executive management, and employees from all levels across the organization, as well as shareholders and customers.



### One-of-a-kind program

As part of its program, KIB hosted a group of children who participated in the 'Business Kid' program, which was organized by Safira CSR Company. Additionally, the Bank was an ambassador sponsor of the 'Educate Your Money' forum, which aimed at discussing banking and legal awareness, as well as financial education. KIB also utilized its expertise in the banking sector to promote financial awareness amongst all segments in the local community by means of its comprehensive awareness campaign entitled "With KIB, I Learned How to Spend and Save".

### Positive impact

Najia added that KIB also launched a comprehensive annual Ramadan campaign featuring a host of various activities and social events, reflecting its active role in promoting social unity and upholding deeply-cherished societal values held during this Holy Month. In a continuation of its commitment to upholding social values, Najia noted that KIB organized visits to the elderly care center and the Kuwait Orphanage, both community care centers under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, to share the joy of special occasions and spread happiness amongst them.

For World Teachers' Day, KIB sponsored the 'Hello, My Teacher' forum, which was organized by the Public Relations Department at the Kuwait Teachers Society. On the occasion of World Children's Day, KIB organized an

Volunteering Leads to our Development". Additionally, the Bank sponsored the GCC Traffic Week, which was held under the theme "Your Life is a Trust". The Bank also sponsored the 5th Kuwaiti Industries Union (KIU) Expo 2018 Exhibition (KIU EXPO 2018) entitled "Bridges" in order to support and develop the local industrial sector.

### Better Community, Better Life

Sports activities remain to be a cornerstone of KIB's social responsibility program. Accordingly, the Bank strives to promote the local sports culture, as well as spreading health awareness to improve overall well-being and boost productivity. In addition to sponsoring the 56th Kuwait Amir Cup final for the 2018 season, KIB also sponsored the Night Run event - the first of its kind. The Bank also sponsored Al-Mudahaka Annual Showjumping Championship in its third edition and the British Academy for Sports (BAS) for the 2018/2019 academic year.

As per its ongoing commitment to supporting sports and youth activities taking place during Ramadan, KIB participated in the late Jassim Al-Sharhan Ramadan annual football tournament and Al-Qattan football tournament. Additionally, KIB sponsored and participated with a team of notable international athletes in the last Abdallah Meshari Al-Roudan Ramadan Indoor Football Tournament, who competed for first place.

KIB signed a strategic partnership with Al-Sidra Association for the Psychological Care of Cancer Patients for the third consecutive year. KIB participated in an

Small and Medium Enterprises of Kuwait (ASMEK).

Moreover, KIB sponsored the Students Club at the University of Arizona, covering the Club's entire program of activities for the academic year 2018/2019. This year, the Bank also sponsored the 35th annual National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) conference, which was held under the theme "The Youth of Kuwait" and took place in Dallas, United States.

KIB always strives to participate in various career fairs, which support students as they explore their career aspirations and opportunities, including the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) Career Fair, the Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST) Career Fair, and the 2nd annual career fair which was organized by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

As part of its unwavering commitment to supporting youth initiatives, KIB offered its support and sponsorship to the 'Made in Kuwait 2' Exhibition, which aimed at supporting talented Kuwaiti youth who spearheaded various small and medium sized businesses. KIB also sponsored the Food Buzz market for a second consecutive time. KIB offered its sponsorship to the 'BridgeWorks' youth development program, in cooperation with a group of experts specializing in personal development who delivered workshops about knowledge and skills that are necessary in the workplace.

### Our People, a Pillar of Success

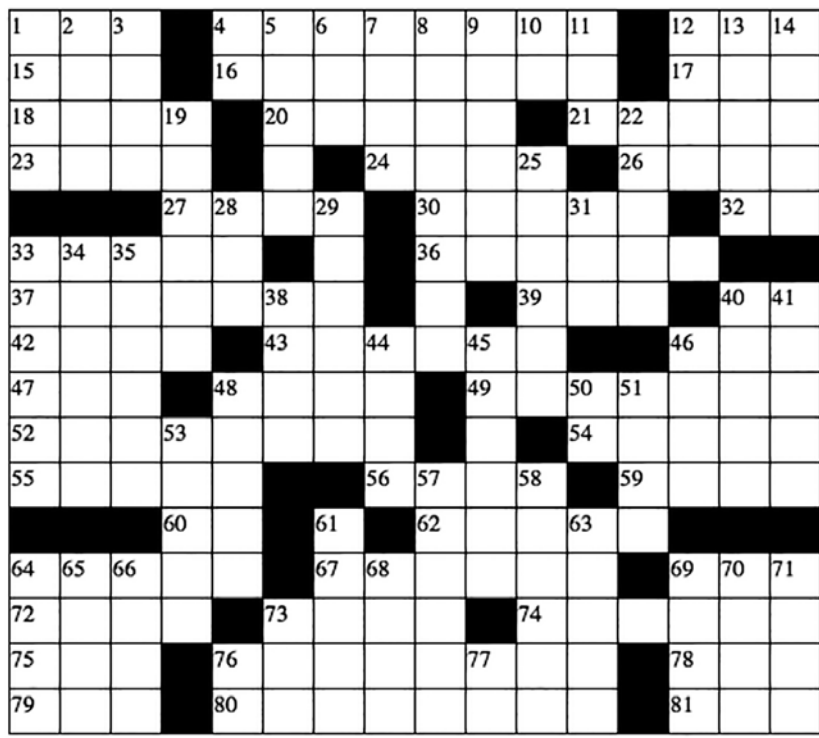
Furthermore, Najia noted that KIB pays special





Stars

CROSSWORD 2098



ACROSS

1. A unit of electrical resistance equal to the resistance between two points on a conductor when a potential difference of one volt between them produces a current of one ampere.
4. A pipe with a long flexible tube connected to a container where the smoke is cooled by passing through water.
12. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
15. The corporate executive responsible for the operations of the firm.
16. Not suitable or right or appropriate.
17. A doctor's degree in preventive medicine.
18. The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
20. Of or relating to Oman or its people.
21. A genus of Indriidae.
23. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
24. English monk and scholar (672-735).
26. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
27. Of or being the lowest female voice.
30. A language group of the Hokan family.
32. A very light colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
33. A tall tower that forms the superstructure of a building (usually a church or temple) and that tapers to a point at the top.
36. Make a subtraction.
37. A crystalline amino acid found in proteins (especially keratin).
39. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
42. A principle or condition that customarily governs behavior.
43. A statement (either spoken or written) that is made in reply to a question or request or criticism or accusation.
47. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
49. Tropical American feather palm having a swollen spiny trunk and edible nuts.
52. Pearl oysters.
54. An assertion of a right (as to money or property).
55. Egyptian statesman who (as President of Egypt) negotiated a peace treaty with Menachem Begin of Israel (1918-1981).
56. Agency of the United States government charged with mediating disputes between management and labor.
59. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
60. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
62. A large number or amount.
64. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
67. A colorless crystalline solid used in perfume or preserving biological specimens or in embalming or medically as a fungicide or antiseptic.
72. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
74. Having two horns or horn-shaped parts.
75. (folklore) Fairies that are somewhat mischievous.
78. The cry made by sheep.
79. An audiotape recording of sound.
80. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
81. A caustic detergent useful for removing grease.

DOWN

1. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
2. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
3. British informal.
4. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
5. (archaic) Utterly cast down.
6. Rate of revolution of a motor.
7. Taken or to be taken at random.
8. The fruit of a variety of winter melon vine.
9. Large family of bark-boring or wood-boring short-beaked beetles.
10. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
11. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
12. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
13. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
14. A percussion instrument consisting of vertical metal tubes of different lengths that are struck with a hammer.
19. A card game for 2 players.
25. Small genus of evergreen trees of tropical America and western Africa.
28. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
29. Used of mouth or eyes.
31. The month following July and preceding September.
34. Presence of white blood cells in the urine.
35. A land mass (smaller than a continent) that is surrounded by water.
38. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
40. A unit of acoustic absorption equivalent to the absorption by a square foot of a surface that absorbs all incident sound.
41. Type genus of the Bramidae.
44. The act of scanning.
45. Special design or visual object representing a quality, type, group, etc.
46. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
48. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
50. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
51. By bad luck.
53. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
57. Type genus of the Rhyiaceae.
58. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
61. Rock star and drummer for the Beatles (born in 1940).
63. A folded part (as a fold of skin or muscle).
65. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
66. The handle of a weapon or tool.
68. A noisemaker (as at parties or games) that makes a loud noise when you blow through it.
69. A large number or amount.
70. Using speech rather than writing.
71. Type genus of the Anatidae.
73. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
76. A member of the military police who polices soldiers and guards prisoners.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The easy way is not always the right way. Today your morals may be tested. Doing the right thing could bring great reward into your world. Even with no reward in sight, the right way is the only way. You always want to be able to look back and be proud of the decisions you make. You are strong and determined and you will succeed. Problems and decisions, you face today could leave you feeling tense and uptight. Spend some time this evening relaxing with a good book or funny movie. We all need to escape our realities now and then.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you make a mistake today, you will learn from it and be a better person as a result. You take your work seriously. It's a trait that will help you advance in your career but may be a stumbling block in personal relationships. People are not as disciplined may be envious. Be patient with them. Your good manners and self-control will overcome.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may experience a tense beginning to this day. Your thoughts are deep but scattered. Leave the big decisions for later unless you are in the mood to do things twice. You may have your eye on a prize and seem to be focused on the material things this world has to offer. Today could be a very rewarding day for you in this area. Your focus is far from the workplace today and you may find yourself going through the motions. A special task assigned to you may be just what you need to regain focus and bring you back down to Earth.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The friends you keep say a lot about you. Who are your friends? Ideally they are a mixture of all ages. They may come from different cultures and different religions. Their opinions may be different from yours. You have a wide range of talents, and different friends can help you cultivate them. They can also provide a network for business purposes as well as emotional support.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

It doesn't seem things can get much better in the workplace. Your superiors seem to be really taking notice of who you are and what you bring to the table. You may find new responsibility is being placed on you. You eagerly take on whatever is assigned to you. You find a sense of pride in knowing you are trusted and admired. You are in the limelight today. You will find this day to be very productive. A great day to share your happiness and high energy with others. Enjoy an evening with friends.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

What do you want from a significant person in your life? Is the person aware that you want this? Don't try to communicate by osmosis. Express your needs clearly. You don't have to be aggressive. Just be assertive. You may find the person more than willing to meet you half way if they have the right information. Virgo. Open your heart and you may find just what you have been seeking.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today you are motivated and driven. Don't let anything stand in your way. You may feel as if an obstacle is blocking your forward motion. Take a leap and keep on going. Sometimes your work is at its best when you feel as if your back is against the wall and you are under pressure. Your family may be something you feel as if you have to put on the back burner as the pressure at the workplace builds. This is temporary, and you will find your loved ones show great compassion and understanding for your situation. Libra, even though this may feel like a difficult time you will feel great pride when you are able to conquer these problems and come out of this on top.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

The easy way is not always the right way. Today your morals may be tested. Doing the right thing could bring great reward into your world. Even with no reward in sight, the right way is the only way. You always want to be able to look back and be proud of the decisions you make. You are strong and determined and you will succeed. Problems and decisions, you face today could leave you feeling tense and uptight. Spend some time this evening relaxing with a good book or funny movie. We all need to escape our realities now and then.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today is a day that things would be much easier if you could just see the future. You yearn to know what tomorrow will bring and the uncertainty has you on edge. You may feel you are facing opposition from one of your elders. It may be time to regroup and reorganize not only your emotions but also your surroundings. The answers you seek may be found from merely taking a step back and taking a different approach. Surround yourself with friends and let your hair down. This may be just the distraction you need to wake up to a new day and see things in a much clearer light. Sagittarius, take some time for yourself and go have some fun.



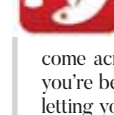
Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You have the ability to get outside yourself and see what is going on with others. This may mean you see things others don't see. It's a gift that could serve you well in journalism or in crime detection. Or, you may just find it useful in personal relationships. You can see beyond the "what" and identify the "why" of behavior. It helps. You may be able to lose yourself in your imaginings today. You make take an idea and totally run with it.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You have a natural sense of communicating with others. You know what others want and you able to quickly read others emotions. You may find that your sexual needs or one of the issues emphasized in your life now. You want power and control. It is if you wish to be the puppet master of all around you. You may wish to help others and think that taking control of them is the way to accomplish this. Just as you have lived and learned, you may need to take a step back. Others need to learn from their own mistakes and you need to step back and let them.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your mood is one of sensuality and pleasure. Be careful as you may come across as being overbearing or controlling; this doesn't work with someone you're beginning to care for. The outdoors is where you spend time recharging and letting your mind wander. You understand that life can be everything you want but you may have to do things differently. A new project looks like it can provide some income. Shopping for someone else is a priority right now, and you rise to the occasion: the items you seek seem to simply manifest! An assertive energy is strongly felt, almost as though you're flying! Dinner and dancing - even if you don't, you'll be around it - brings fun times you'll remember. You could more emotionally involved.

Wordsearch Puzzle

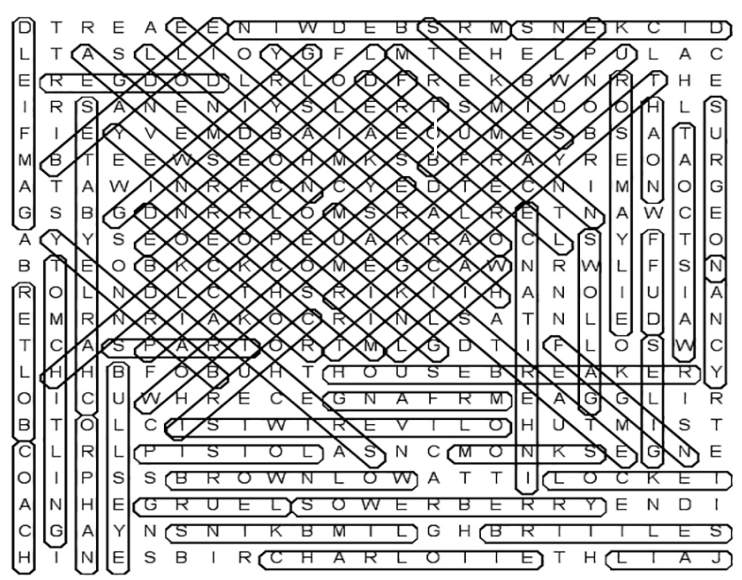
Parkinson's Disease

Find and circle all of the Parkinson's Disease related words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Helen Keller quote.



- |              |             |                 |                 |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| AEROBIC      | DOIDGE      | LATERAL SHUFFLE | QUALITY OF LIFE |
| AGONIST      | DOPAMINE    | LEVODOPA        | RED TULIP       |
| AMYGDALA     | DYSKINESIA  | LEWY BODIES     | RESEARCH        |
| BETA BLOCKER | DYSPHAGIA   | LONG TERM       | RIGIDITY        |
| BOXING       | EXERCISE    | MICHAEL J FOX   | SENSORY         |
| BRADYKINESIA | FESTINATION | MOTOR SYSTEM    | SIALORRHEA      |
| CHALLENGE    | FLEXIBILITY | MUHAMMAD ALI    | STAGES          |
| CHARCOT      | FREEZING    | NEUROLOGIST     | SYMPTOMS        |
| COGNITION    | GAIT        | NEURON          | TREMORS         |
| DEGENERATIVE | HYPOKINESIA | PLACEBO         | WALKING POLES   |
| DEMENTIA     | IDIOPATHIC  | POSTURE         |                 |
| DEPRESSION   |             |                 |                 |

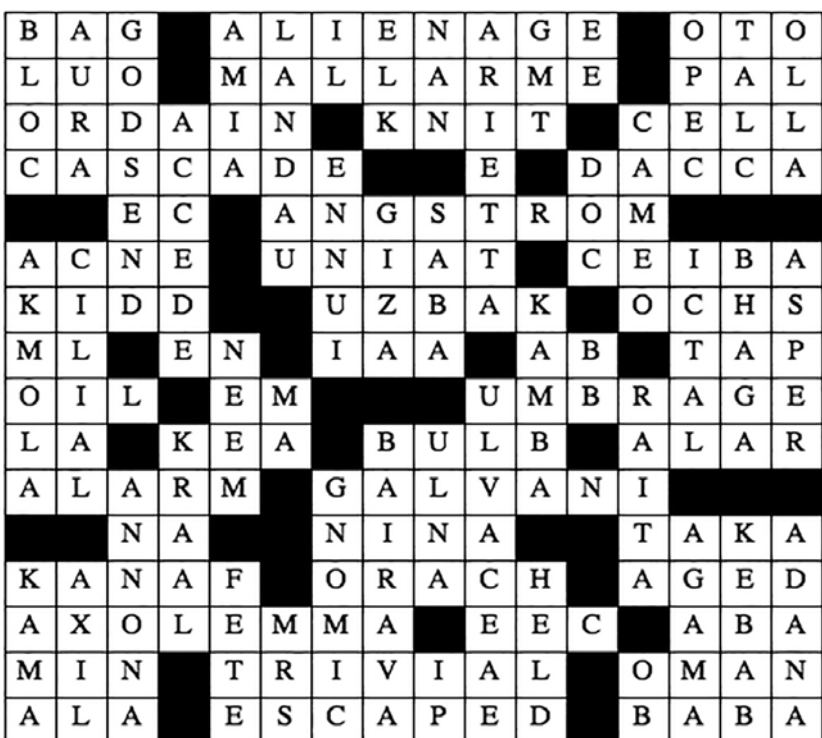
Oliver Twist



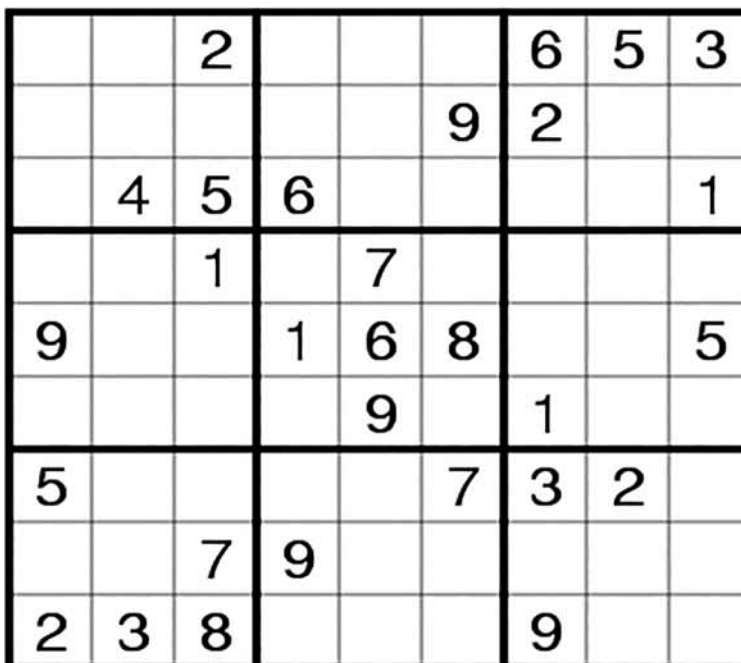
- |               |              |              |              |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| AGNES FLEMING | DODGER       | LIMBKINS     | ORPHAN       |
| BARNEY        | DUFF         | LOCKET       | PICKPOCKET   |
| BEADLE        | FAGIN        | LONDON       | PISTOL       |
| BLATHERS      | GALLOWES     | LOSBERNE     | ROSE MAYLIE  |
| BOLTER        | GAMFIELD     | MAGISTRATE   | SIKES        |
| BRITTLERS     | GILES        | MONKS        | 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         | WALSTCOAT    |
| COURT         | JAIL         | OLD SALLY    | WILL         |
| DICKENS       | LEEFORD      | OLIVER TWIST | WORKHOUSE    |
| DOCTOR        |              |              |              |

The hidden sentence is: TREATS OF THE PLACE WHERE OLIVER TWIST WAS BORN AND OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING HIS BIRTH

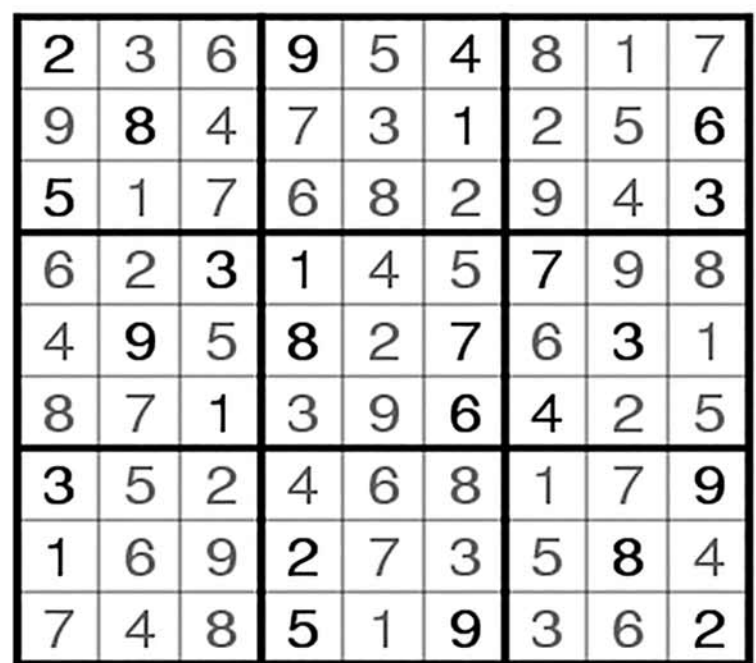
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





# Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2018



This picture shows Chinese riders and their horses taking part in a performance in the show hall of an equestrian-themed town in Jiangyin, Jiangsu province, some 200 kilometers northwest of Shanghai. — AFP

## China to mark Year of the Pig with 'Peppa Pig' movie

China is set to mark the Year of the Pig with a film starring "Peppa Pig," despite a backlash against the popular British cartoon character earlier this year. A government document listing upcoming movie projects shows a new film in the works titled "Peppa Pig



celebrates Chinese New Year" to be released in February 2019 during the Lunar New Year holiday. The film includes Chinese New Year customs such as a dragon parade and fireworks, state-run China Daily reported.

It is co-developed by Alibaba Pictures-part of the vast Alibaba technology group-and Canadian media company Entertainment One, which currently produces the series for the BBC. The film includes the entire "Peppa Pig" cast and two new characters named "Jiaozi" or dumpling and "Tang yuan" or glutinous rice ball-two popular Chinese New Year items. The series, introduced in the mid-2000s in China, has become extremely popular through episodes dubbed into Mandarin.

The fervor intensified at the end of 2017 among a young adult audience. Many internet users including stars sported temporary "Peppa Pig" tattoos in selfies, and cups, watches and clothes appeared bearing the image of the heroine. But several media outlets affiliated to the Communist Party lampooned the series earlier this year, saying the playful pink pig had become a "subversive" icon for slackers and anti-social youth in China.

People who upload videos of Peppa Pig tattoos and merchandise and make Peppa-related jokes "run counter to the mainstream value and are usually poorly educated with no stable job," state-run Global Times said in May. "They are unruly slackers roaming around and the antithesis of the young generation the (Communist) party tries to cultivate." Some online memes featuring the beloved children's character also took on dark undertones, occasionally veering into violent or pornographic territory. Pornography is illegal in China and laws banning it are strictly enforced.

The state media backlash led to a Chinese internet platform giving "Peppa Pig" the chop in May although there was no official ban enforced by censors. At least 30,000 clips of the British cartoon were removed from the popular Douyin video-sharing platform, while the #PeppaPig hashtag was banned from the site.—AFP



Revelers battle with flour and eggs during the traditional 'Els Enfarinats' (The Floured) festival in Ibi, Alicante Province, Spain. — Reuters photos

## Spanish town battles it out with flour and eggs

The residents of the southern Spanish town of Ibi splattered each other with flour and eggs on Friday as they celebrated the Els Enfarinats festival, a tradition dating back more than 200 years. The festival sees a group don military clothing and stage a coup, declaring new rules on the small town and collecting fines from residents who fall foul of them. The collected money is donated to charity with the residents restoring order by

overthrowing them in a messy battle involving hundreds of eggs, kilos of flour and firecrackers. The festival is held every December 28 as part of the festivities to mark the Day of Innocents, a Christian feast day remembering the Biblical story of King Herod killing children.—Reuters





Commuters walk at Fonvizinskaya metro station in Moscow. — AFP photos



Commuters walk at Rasskazovka metro station in Moscow.



Commuters walk at CSKA /TsSKA/ metro station in Moscow.

## Goodbye Stalin: Moscow metro sheds Soviet look in bold new stations

Moscow's metro system is famed for its Stalin-era stations with glittering chandeliers and mosaics, but architects are taking a radical new approach as the network undergoes a massive expansion. While the original stations were conceived as "palaces for the people", the new designs are less formal with light boxes for seats and laser-printed glass patterns. In a major break with tradition, the Moscow city government has allowed outside architects to submit designs for several new stations in competitions that included a public vote on a phone app.

It has paved the way for "truly interesting and original stations that are outside any tradition," says architecture journalist Nina Frolova. The first of these to open is in the high-rise suburb of Solntsevo, once notorious for its local mafia. Moscow's Nefa Architects won with a design inspired by the sun, the Russian word for which forms the root of the suburb's name.

"We wanted to let the sun inside," said Nefa's lead architect Dmitry Ovcharov, surveying the newly opened station on a recent afternoon. They punched holes in the walls of the station entrances to "create light and shadow", he said. Down on the platform, cylindrical white light boxes serve as seats that Ovcharov promises are sturdy enough to withstand passengers' weight. This year the transport system, which dates back to 1935, opened 16 new stations and carried around two billion passengers.

### 'A battle for quality'

Frolova, editorial director at the Arch.ru architecture website, said Solntsevo is a bright example of new metro trends. "There's a concept that any passenger can see. It feels pleasant being in the station." But she said another design competition for the Novoperedelkino station ended less happily, with "significant changes" to the design. It featured dramatic patterned glass ceilings that ended broken up with ugly seams and "turned out much less interesting than was planned", she said.

Architect Ovcharov has grumbled about Solntsevo too, pointing out incorrectly printed panels and overhead lights that do not work. "It was a really unrelenting battle for

quality, to get the design decisions complied with," he said. Yet he adds that he's now considering taking part in another metro design competition. Another architect with a winning station design, Tatiana Leontyeva of Moscow's Blank Architects, said the prestige of the commission was a draw.

### "We wanted to let the sun inside"

She was part of a team who designed a station called Rzhevskaya, which will have an "archway" theme in a nod to its location near a mainline railway station. The brief was to create a station for "the new times", she said, using Russian materials and "without excessive decoration."

"There was a large number of applications and (the competition) had a big impact, not just on the Russian architectural scene but abroad too because, of course, a lot of people wanted to get their hands on a site like the Moscow metro." The historic Moscow metro was a monumental construction in the 1930s, built as an example of quality and solidity, symbolizing the grandeur of Stalin and the young Soviet Union. The country's history was told in the mosaics that adorned the stations' walls and the metro could serve as a bunker if needed.

### Metro expertise

Previously the state company Metrogiprottrans had a monopoly on the transport system's architecture, and it still designs the majority of new stations. One of its architects recently argued that the company was the only one

with the expertise to design the facilities. "There's a popular opinion that you can just come along to the metro and draw a picture of a station," Alexander Orlov said at a recent presentation.

"Even if a drawing of something seems beautiful, it can be incompatible with all the metro technology." But Metrogiprottrans is also modernizing. The company's latest station interiors feature laser-printed designs on glass or glossy aluminum panels, a simple approach that critic Frolova says also works. "I think they kept a good balance with not many details and some simple, modern forms."

### Deprived of art

The company is also behind more elaborate stations such as Fonvizinskaya, which depicts characters from the work of a playwright by the same name in ceiling-high 3-D panels. "I'd never dreamed I'd do the metro," digital artist Konstantin Khudyakov said. "That's monumental art," said the designer, who explained his work is usually much smaller in scale. Khudyakov's stereoscopic panels use the same technology as novelty rulers or pens where figures appear to move-but using many more high-resolution images.

"It's the first time in the world that this has been done" in the metro, Khudyakov said. Public reaction to the decor at the station has been mixed. School teacher Lyudmila told AFP she didn't much care for the "gloomy" pictures, but was glad the metro system had been linked up to her neighborhood. But designer Alexandra, travelling on a weekday afternoon, said she liked the images "purely visually—they're cool".

Either way, Khudyakov believes the metro should still be a showcase for decorative art in a city with relatively few galleries. "There's not enough art. People are deprived of art... Let there be art at least in the metro." —AFP



Commuters walk at Dostoyevskaya metro station in Moscow.



Commuters walk at Khoroshevskaya metro station in Moscow.

## New Year's Eve party in Times Square to cheer for press freedom

Reporters will be the guests of honor at the New Year's Eve party in New York's Times Square on Monday, in what organizers said was a celebration of press freedom after an unusually deadly year for journalists at US news outlets.

Two attacks in particular weighed on organizers as they discussed in autumn whom to give the honor of initiating the ceremonial ball drop just before midnight, according to Tim Tompkins, president of the Times Square Alliance. One was the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi columnist for the Washington Post and US resident, inside a Saudi Arabian consulate in Turkey. The other was the mass shooting in June in the newsroom of The Capital, a newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland, in which five employees were killed.

"Throughout the year it's been a big issue," Tompkins said in an interview. "Times Square itself is the ultimate agora and public space," noting that the area was named after the New York Times, and that it was a Times publisher, Adolf Ochs, who began the tradition of the ball drop in 1907. Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said the Times Square Alliance approached his group because of "the percep-



Capital Gazette staff take part in a candlelight vigil held near the Capital Gazette, the day after a gunman killed five people inside the newspaper's building in Annapolis, Maryland. — Reuters photos



tion that the journalism and journalists in particular are under threat and their role is being questioned."

Simon, who said he usually spends New Year's Eve playing Scrabble with his wife in New Hampshire's White Mountains, will be in the spotlight at the Times

Square festivities, joining Mayor Bill de Blasio to launch the ball drop a minute before midnight. Simon will be joined onstage by an array of journalists from US and international news outlets. The names were still being finalized on Friday, the Times Square Alliance said. The

button-pressing honor has in previous years gone to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, an Iraq War veteran, US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and the singer Lady Gaga.

The Times Square Alliance contacted Simon in November, Simon said, several weeks before Time magazine would devote their annual "Person of the Year" issue to several prominent journalists who have faced attacks and hostility. Among those journalists were Khashoggi, and Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, two Reuters reporters imprisoned by Myanmar for investigating how the country's security forces killed members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority.

US President Donald Trump has become a vociferous critic of parts of the press, routinely chiding reporters and outlets he views as publishing "fake news," calling them "the enemy of the people." Simon said this was in the background of his discussions with the Times Square Alliance "Unavoidably, Trump was the subtext, but not front and center," he said. "We wanted to have a unifying message." —Reuters





These pictures show Chinese riders and their horses taking part in a performance in the show hall of an equestrian-themed town in Jiangyin, Jiangsu province, some 200 kilometers northwest of Shanghai. — AFP photos



These pictures show visitors taking pictures and looking on at the Horse Culture Museum.

# China saddles up with exclusive riding clubs, horse towns

Leather riding boots are neatly lined up on a carpet, a picture shows blood-thirsty hounds on a fox hunt and a fountain spews water from the mouths of stone horses. It may have the trappings of upper-class Britain, but this is in fact suburban Shanghai and the County Down Club, the self-styled first exclusive membership club in China for horsemanship and fox-hunting.

The club, which takes its name from a county in Northern Ireland, was founded three years ago and owner Steven Sun says equestrian sport "has developed rapidly in China during the past five to 10 years". "I think it's a change in awareness," said the 32-year-old, whose interest in horses was triggered while studying in Britain.

Rising numbers of Chinese are taking up sports such as horse riding as the country's growing economy—now the second biggest after the United States—gives people more disposable income to pursue leisure activities. County Down has a dozen horses and Sun wants it to be at the forefront of promoting equestrian sports in China.

The club, which also features an indoor swimming pool, gym and sparkling white piano, is just as much about networking as it is horse riding, Sun says. County Down has about 80 members and annual membership is 58,000 yuan (\$8,400), but prospective newcomers will need more than just deep pockets. "We hope our members have good qualities and manners or are highly educated elites," said Sun, in polo shirt and riding trousers.

"That can ensure communication between our members will be at the same level. "One of the benefits is that our members can meet using this platform and push each other forward," Sun says he has forged links outside China, too, taking members on fox hunts with European

nobility. He also has four racing horses in France.

### New experience

Zoe Quin recently founded WonderHorse, which provides products and services relating to horses. The industry is "booming" for two main reasons, said Shanghai-based Quin. "Chinese parents consider horse riding an elite education to make their kids more outstanding in this highly competitive Chinese society," said Quin, formerly chief representative in China for LeCheval, which promotes the French horse industry.

"As for adults, they can extend their participation in equestrian sports beyond riding into broader aspects such as ownership, investment, travel, leisure and social activities. "More than a sport, it is a new experience for Chinese." The governmental Chinese Equestrian Association declined to give numbers, but according to the respected Horsemanship magazine's annual report, there were 1,802 equestrian clubs in China to July 2018.

That is double the number in 2016, with the majority in northern and eastern China, notably Beijing and Shanghai, according to the magazine's findings. With the Chinese government stating in 2014 that equestrian sports were to be "strongly supported", the trend looks set to continue.

Underlining the point, in January 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in China bearing the gift of a French Republican Guard horse for his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. However, Horsemanship identified areas of concern, primarily the lack of media coverage and a shortage of experts such as trainers and veterinarians.

### Napoleon on horseback

A two-hour drive from Shanghai is the horse-themed "Pegasus Water Town" complete with hotels, art gallery, a mall with Venice-style gondolas, an equestrian club and "Horse Culture Museum". There are more than 400 horses of dozens of breeds imported from around the world and visitors form long queues for horse-drawn carriage tours of the resort in Jiangsu, the province west of Shanghai.

Once a week, pristine horses are paraded and perform crowd-pleasing tricks in an opulent arena designed in what the official website calls "Austro-Hungarian Empire style". A giant portrait of Napoleon on horseback overlooks the performance. At one point in the show, women horse riders in white gowns and sparkling tiaras convey white carriages that would not look out of place at a British royal wedding.

It is all a far cry from 40 years ago, when China's ruling Communist Party launched wide-ranging reforms that lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. "Forty years ago China was very poor, there was no possibility to do such a high-end sport," said Shen Houfeng, general manager of Heilan International Equestrian Club, one of the jewels of the resort. "But you see 40 years after reform and opening, China has seen big changes. It's gone from a country people didn't pay attention to, to one that everyone cares about." —AFP

## In Caracas, macaws' bold color show can't be missed

Colorful wild macaws flying through Caracas skies are a bright sight to behold. Striking and mostly docile, they settle on balconies in search of food. But that very closeness is not always what's best for them. The birds' plumage is a palette that runs from reds, blues and greens to yellows or oranges. With every sunrise and sunset they start their zigzagging flight between

palm trees and residential towers. If the scene sounds like a dream for nature lovers, behind the proliferation of these birds in a city with high noise, pollution and human hustle, is wildlife trafficking and the introduction of exotic species, biologist Diego Diaz tells AFP.

It's unknown how they arrived in this city of six million people. But many experts think they were introduced by animal traffickers or that they could escape from captivity in homes or zoos. Regardless, Caracas is not their natural habitat: macaws are at home in the wild in secluded jungle areas of southern Venezuela, some on the border with Brazil. In the capital, these large- and sharp-beaked species live incongruously from terrace to TV antenna, from roof to ledge to palm tree, from which they set out on noisy individual and flock flights.

The Ara araurana, with blue and yellow plumage, is the most common parrot in the city. You can also spot Ara chloropterus (red and green), Ara macao (yellow, blue

and red) and Ara severus, with reddish and blue brush-strokes. "It all gives you mixed feelings. On the one hand, it is nice to see them approach houses and welcome them nicely with food; but on the other hand, it is worrying that they do not find the food they need in nature," Diaz explains.

He says that it's actually best to avoid direct contact with these animals "because they end up being a kind of pets, dependent on human beings." But faced with inevitable proximity, veterinarians say they could be fed fruit, vegetables or sunflower seeds, but never processed foods such as cookies, which is what they get in many houses. In Caracas, macaws live with other parrots that give their own shows—and hundreds of birds from El Avila, an imposing mountain that separates the city from the Caribbean Sea.—AFP



A blue and yellow macaw sits at the balcony of an apartment building.

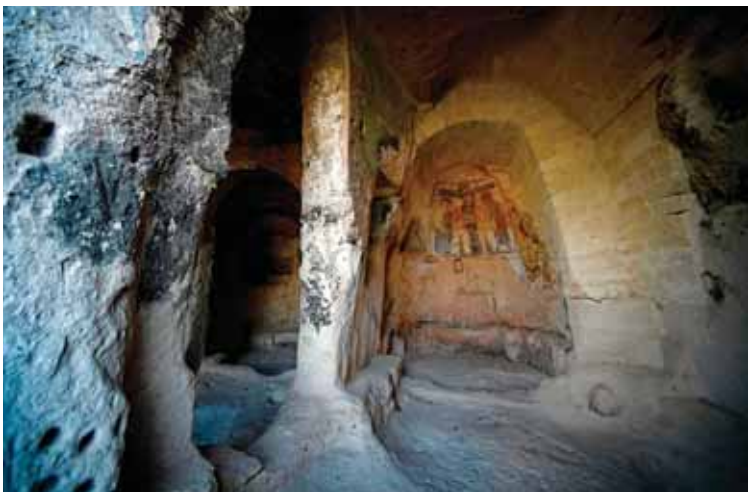


A blue and yellow macaw observes a camera curiously.



A flock of blue and yellow macaws (Ara araurana) fly over apartment buildings in Caracas. — AFP photos





## Italy's city of shame Matera becomes Europe's pride

**F**ifty years after Italy's Matera was a national embarrassment because of its extreme poverty, the city is rescuing its dignity, baroque palaces and cave churches to become a European Capital of Culture. "Yes, it's true, we went from shame to glory," Matera mayor Raffaello De Ruggieri told journalists ahead of the southern city's year-long stint as a European Union-designated cultural crossroads in 2019.

In the 1950s, prime minister Alcide De Gasperi, one of the EU's founding fathers, was outraged by Matera's underdevelopment, where many lived in ancient limestone caves without electricity or running water, lives ravaged by malaria. Now, the city in the Basilicata region on the instep of Italy's boot, is hoping to draw thousands of visitors for cultural and heritage events, many inside the same caves, now renovated.

"We want people who decide to come to Matera to live an experience," said Paolo Verri, director of the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation. The city, one of the world's oldest, is known as the "Jerusalem of the West" thanks to its position perched on limestone rocks and ravines and its famous "sassi" cave homes. "Archaeological remains show that people have been here for 8,000 years," said mayor De Ruggieri.

"That's why we want 'slow' tourism," said Verri, rejecting the mass tourism of a one-day camera snapping visit in favour of getting art and culture lovers to come for longer spells. To achieve that, around 300 cultural performances, workshops, exhibitions and conferences are being organised, from music to food to readings. "Everyone can bring something, such as a book, and explain why they want to improve European culture," said Verri, who hopes the result will be a vast library of European heritage.

Visitors pay 19 euros to become "temporary citizens" of Matera, around 400 kilometers south of Rome, for a year. The relatively isolated city, with no airport, high-speed train station or even a motorway, hopes visitors will be inspired by the mystical atmosphere to write, sculpt and create music or installations which will in turn become an exhibit.

Many films set in the early days of Christianity have been filmed in these narrow, historic streets, including Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Christ" and Pier-Paolo Pasolini's "The Gospel According to St Matthew".

### Another Venice?

Ariane Bieou, a Frenchwoman who helped Marseille put some of its more gangsterish stereotypes behind it when it was cultural capital in 2013, admits her job in Matera will be "a challenge".

"The task of a European cultural capital is to encourage growth," she told AFP. The city, reached by winding roads, has become better known, and for better reasons, since 1993 when it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



"Matera is calling Europe and Europe is calling Matera," said Bieou, although not everyone here agrees with the slogan. Patrizia Capriotti, whose shop sells craft objects and clothes, many made from recycled waste, says the cultural capital is "a project that is too far from reality." "I'm worried that we'll become another Venice," invaded by mass tourism, she said. "The problem is the tourism model, people will move into the poor neighborhoods and turn their stone houses or family caves into tourist properties," said Capriotti, an architect by training.

Lower Matera, where you can visit an incredible 150 rock churches, is a hive of activity, with workers climbing up and down the steps, busy turning ancient buildings and caves into boutique hotels. Not far from the 12th century Church of the Madonna delle Virtù, as featured in "The Passion of Christ", Vito Cuscianna, a 27-year-old business and marketing graduate, is hiring out his Vespa three-wheeler to visitors. "My grandfather Donato is 90, he was a farmer and lived in a sassi," he smiled. "But he would never have imagined seeing Wifi or jacuzzis inside these prehistoric caves!"—AFP



## Vienna's male cheerleaders seek to redefine masculinity

**V**ienna's female roller derby team have a halftime show most spectators won't forget: a cheerleading squad of a different kind. Armed with blue sweatbands, comically tight shorts and a soundtrack heavy on 80s kitsch, the all-male Fearleaders deliver performances that are camp, acrobatic and crowd-pleasingly funny during the roller-skating competition, but their message is serious.

"We really would like to make people think - how is a man supposed to behave? How is a man supposed to dance?" one of the Fearleaders, Romed Felderer, a

33-year-old social worker, said in an interview. The group's website adds: "Fearleading for us means taking fear away. Especially from men. Fear of not being strong enough, not behaving manly enough, not performing masculine enough. We want to get rid of sexual repression, gender inequality, toxic masculinity, homophobia, transphobia ... and many other fears."

The amateur group was created in 2013 by friends who were mainly students at the time. It has grown to around 29 members, roughly half of whom currently perform. The Fearleaders also publish a calendar that

funds their operations, which include travelling to away matches against other European sides.

Despite their modest means and being tied to a sport with a limited audience, the group are ambitious about broadening their appeal. "It would be lovely to be invited to the Ellen Show," said Andreas Mayer, a 39-year-old academic, referring to the U.S. talk show hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. — Reuters





# Classifieds

Monday, December 31, 2018

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
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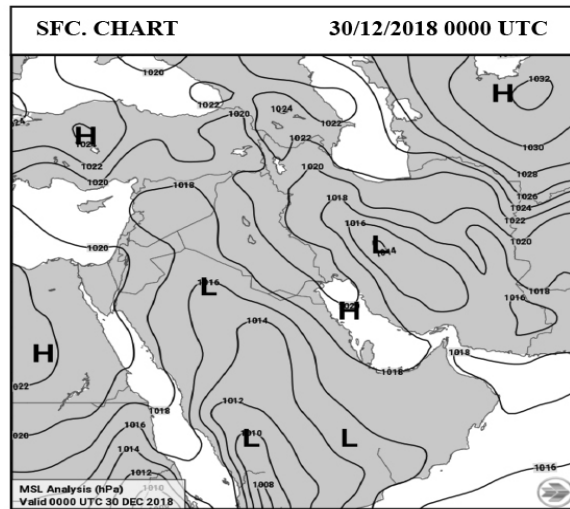
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times north easterly wind, with speed of 10 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

**BY NIGHT:** Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north easterly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	17 °C	07 °C
ABDALY	18 °C	05 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	18 °C	09 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	17 °C	13 °C
SALMIYAH	17 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	17 °C	15 °C
NUWASIB	19 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	19 °C	09 °C
SALMY	17 °C	06 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	12/31	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	18 °C	11 °C	NW-N	12 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	01/01	Partly cloudy to cloudy	19 °C	09 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Wednesday	01/02	Cloudy with a chance for scattered rain at times	21 °C	12 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Thursday	01/03	Partly cloudy	24 °C	14 °C	SE-NW	20 - 45 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.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	86 %
MIN. RH	34 %
MAX. Wind	NW 32 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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 25611588-25620566  
 iefs@yahoo.com

## 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 Monday 31/12/2018				Departure Flights on Monday 31/12/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	406	Kochi	00:10	JZR	111	Doha	01:45
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
JZR	254	Amman	00:40	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25
KAC	102	London	00:50	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	701	Asyut	04:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	203	Lahore	05:10
JZR	1736	Cairo	03:00	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	FDB	070	Dubai	05:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	713	Sohag	06:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:40
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	167	Paris	07:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	RJA	643	Amman	07:15
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:20
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	115	Doha	07:30
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	173	Munich	08:20
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	163	MXP	08:40
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	BAW	156	London	08:50
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	FDB	054	Dubai	08:50
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	161	Geneva	09:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	117	Shannon/New York	09:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	541	Cairo	09:30
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	101	London	09:45
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	856	Dubai	10:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	157	Istanbul	10:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:45
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	SAW	704	Damascus	11:30
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	JZR	405	Kochi	12:45
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00				
RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05				
KAC	204	Lahore	14:05				
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10				
IRA	667	Esfahan	14:10				





KUWAIT: A general view of the Jaber-Al-Ahmad Cultural Center in downtown Kuwait. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

# Top Republican to urge Trump to reconsider Syria pullout

‘If we leave now, the Kurds will get slaughtered’

WASHINGTON: A senior Republican senator said yesterday that he would be meeting with US President Donald Trump to urge him to reconsider his plan to withdraw all US troops from Syria and many from Afghanistan.

“If we leave (Syria) now, the Kurds will get slaughtered,” Lindsey Graham said on ABC’s “This Week,” referring to the Kurdish troops allied with US forces in Syria. “I’m going to ask the president to do something that President Obama would never do: reconsider.” He did not say when the two would be meeting.

Graham, who sits on the Armed Services committee and has frequently visited US troops in conflict regions, said Trump was “frustrated” by the limited options available in Syria.

“I’m going to talk to him,” Graham said. “The president is reconsidering how we would do this. He’s frustrated. I get it. We’re not the policemen of the world here. We’re fighting a war against ISIS,” he said, using an alternative name for the Islamic State group. “They’re not defeated in Syria. I’m asking the president to make sure we have troops there to protect us.”

Graham added: “I’m going to ask him to sit down with his generals and reconsider how to do this. Slow it down. Make sure we get it right and ISIS never comes back. Don’t turn Syria over to the Iranians.”

Kellyanne Conway, a close Trump advisor, seemed to hint yesterday that the president might be tweaking his withdrawal plans. “In Iraq he had a closed-door meeting and he said watch what happens... Watch what happens because he’s got plans and I won’t get ahead of his announcement, but he did want me to convey that,” she said on “Fox



WASHINGTON, DC: In this file photo, Senator Lindsey Graham listens during a press conference at the US Capitol in Washington, DC on US President Donald Trump's decision to remove US military forces from Syria. — AFP

News Sunday.”

“This president is cleaning up the mess left by the last administration, which never took the threat of ISIS seriously.” Trump’s abrupt decision on Syria stunned regional players, US politicians of both parties and military leaders, who expressed surprise that such a major decision would be announced after apparently so little advance consultation, against the advice of his national security advisors—and on Twitter.

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned following the announcement, which came on the same day that US officials said Trump was also planning a significant drawdown in Afghanistan, with some reports suggesting as many as half of the 14,000 troops could leave.

Graham warned at the time that a reduction now of US forces in war-torn Afghanistan risked “paving the way toward a second 9/11.”

A prominent critic of the move was retired US army general Stanley McChrystal, the former commander

of US and international forces in Afghanistan.

Yesterday, he told ABC the dual drawdowns could seriously weaken US influence in the region. “We have a tumultuous regime or region (in Syria) that now has a Russian presence which had been out for about 30 years... and now Russia is back. They’re back in an influential way,” he said.

“Iran has increased influence across the region now. If you pull American influence out, you’re likely to have greater instability, and of course it will be much more difficult for the United States to try to push events in any direction.” Similarly, he said, Trump’s planned drawdown in Afghanistan could seriously undercut American leverage there.

“Just when we were starting to sit down with the Taleban, just as we were starting to begin negotiations, he basically traded away the biggest leverage point we have... Their incentives to try to cut a deal dropped dramatically,” McChrystal added. — AFP

## Belgium to appeal against order to repatriate IS families

BRUSSELS: Belgium will appeal against a judge’s order forcing it to repatriate two Belgian women convicted of being Islamic State militants and their six children from Syria, the migration minister said yesterday. A judge said on Wednesday that Belgium had to bring back Tatiana Wielandt, 26, Bouchra Abouallal, 25, and the children they had with militants, from the Al-Hol camp where they were being held in a Kurdish-dominated part of Syria.

Maggie De Block, the minister in charge of migration policy, told broadcaster VTM that a distinction had to be made between the mothers and the children. “The children have not chosen to be born in such circumstances ... Four of the six are Belgian children, they have grandparents here, one child is reportedly very ill,” she told VTM.

She did not specify what the country might do about the other two children. “The mothers, that’s a

different story. They have been convicted here. They have contributed to the planning of terrorist attacks here. I think we have to assess the risks and not just willingly accept them.”

Both women were convicted in absentia of being members of Islamic State, and each sentenced to five years in jail by an Antwerp court in March. Hundreds of European citizens, many of them babies, are being held by US-backed Kurdish militias in three camps since Islamic State was ousted from almost all its territory last year, according to Kurdish sources.

European nations have been wrestling with how to handle suspected militants and their families seeking to return from combat zones in Iraq and Syria. France is working to bring back children held by Syrian Kurdish forces, but will leave their mothers to be prosecuted by local authorities, French officials have said. Paris is concerned that if these minors are left in Syria, they could eventually also become militants.

The Kurds say it is not their job to prosecute or hold them indefinitely, leaving the women and children in legal limbo. The judge said on Wednesday that Belgium must organize the travel within 40 days after being notified of the decision or pay a daily penalty of 5,000 euros (\$5,718) for each child, up to a maximum 1 million euros. — Reuters

## Duterte under fire for saying...

Continued from Page 1

Duterte provoked fury in 2016 when during an election campaign speech he said he had wanted to rape a

“beautiful” Australian missionary who had been murdered in a Philippine prison riot.

Women’s advocates said Duterte’s latest comments endangered domestic workers. More than a million Filipinos work abroad as domestic workers, according to the labor ministry. “Flaunting abusive practices encourages the rape culture and in this case, sexual abuse of domestic workers,” said Jean Enriquez, executive director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific. — AFP

## Despite pullout notice, US flag...

Continued from Page 1

The jihadists have lost nearly all their territory, although thousands of its fighters are thought to remain in Syria. The SDF has been a key player in the US-led coalition against IS, but Ankara considers its leading faction—the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) — to be “terrorists”.

A YPG spokesman yesterday said US troops remained in their bases. “The pullout has not started,” Nuri Mahmud told AFP. Since Friday, Syrian troops have deployed in a crescent in a bid to prevent Kurdish territory around Manbij from falling to Turkish troops and pro-Ankara rebels massing to the northwest.

Yesterday, these troops stood guard in the countryside near the Arab-majority city, supervised by regime ally Russia, a source on the ground said. At the closest point, regime forces were stationed less than

500 metres from pro-Turkey opposition fighters, the source said.

Ankara says the YPG is a “terrorist offshoot” of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. Alongside backing rebels that oppose Damascus, Turkey has led two previous incursions into Syria, with the latest ousting Kurdish fighters from the northwestern enclave of Afrin in March. On Saturday, another AFP correspondent saw pro-Turkish rebels parade in camouflaged rain ponchos some 70 kilometers (45 miles) west of Manbij.

Rebel commander Yussef Abu Marduh told AFP his forces were ready to attack Manbij. “We finished the preparations to begin operations to free the city of Manbij from the control of the PKK,” he said, alluding to the Kurdish-led SDF. “The fighters that will carry out this operation are ready to enter the city of Manbij and the whole area east of the Euphrates” River, he said, referring to SDF-held areas.

“We will pool all our forces, weapons and ammunition in order to achieve victory and freedom for the people in those areas,” he added. — AFP

## Nine lawmakers urge quick...

Continued from Page 1

country based on information that Australia, the main live cattle exporter to Kuwait, plans to suspend its supplies for a few months every year.

The lawmaker said that consumers were recently surprised by a sharp rise in the price of lamb meat, double the previous price in some cases, based on reports of the expected Australian export ban.

He asked the Commerce and Industry Minister

Khaled Al-Roudhan if the reports that Australia will stop exporting sheep to Kuwait for two to four months every year starting 2019, were correct. He asked the minister about what measures the ministry has taken if the news were correct. Shaheed also asked the minister about the role of the consumers protection department in safeguarding the interests of the people. The lawmaker also asked if the export stoppage was only for Kuwait or it includes other countries.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie said yesterday he will not vote in favor of the second and final reading of the early retirement law if it was not amended. The law was passed in the first reading after a number of key government amendments were accepted but several MPs want to see changes to the law before approving it.



Sports

# Capitals edge Ottawa Senators 3-2 for fourth straight win

## Edler's OT goal drives Canucks past Flames

OTTAWA: Madison Bowey and Tyler Lewington each scored their first NHL goals and the visiting Washington Capitals defeated the Ottawa Senators 3-2 on Saturday night for their fourth straight win. Tom Wilson had a goal and an assist for Washington, which is 9-1 in its past 10 games and 16-3 since mid-November. Phoenix Copley made 31 saves. Lewington added an assist. Mark Stone pulled Ottawa within 3-2 with 3:30 left in the game when he scored from the right circle off a pass from Brady Tkachuk for his 18th goal. Colin White had a goal and an assist for Ottawa, which has lost four straight and dropped a home game to Washington for the second time in eight days. Tkachuk had two assists and Marcus Hogberg made 21 saves in his NHL debut.

### DEVILS 2, HURRICANES 0

MacKenzie Blackwood authored his first NHL shutout by stopping all 37 shots he faced as host New Jersey beat Carolina. Blackwood's shutout came in just his third career start and in the game immediately after he notched his first NHL win Thursday, when the Devils beat the Boston Bruins 5-2. Pavel Zacha scored a short-handed goal in the final minute of the second period and Andy Greene added an empty-netter with 32.9 seconds left as the Devils won their second straight. It is New Jersey's first winning streak since it won two straight from Nov. 13-15.

### LIGHTNING 6, CANADIENS 5

Adam Erne scored the tying goal almost midway through the third period and collected the game-winner with 62 seconds remaining as host Tampa Bay earned a wild win over Montreal. The Lightning trailed 2-0, 3-2 and 5-4 before extending their winning streak to five games and point streak to 14 games (13-0-1). Tampa Bay has six winning streaks of at least three games this season. Erne tied the score by backhanding home a rebound of a shot by Anton Stralman with 10:24 left in the third. He then gave the Lightning just their second lead of the game by firing a shot from the right faceoff circle past goalie Antti Niemi.

### ISLANDERS 4, MAPLE LEAFS 0

Mathew Barzal scored three straight goals in less than eight minutes in the second period, Robin Lehner earned his second shutout this season and visiting New York defeated Toronto. The natural hat trick gave Barzal five goals over the past two games. He scored twice Friday night in a 6-3 win over the Ottawa Senators. Lehner stopped 36 shots for his 10th career shutout.

### PANTHERS 2, FLYERS 1

Jonathan Huberdeau had the game-tying assist with

6:44 remaining and the go-ahead goal with 66 seconds left as host Florida rallied to defeat Philadelphia in Sunrise, Fla. With the Panthers trailing 1-0, Mike Hoffman scored the tying goal on a brilliant pass from Huberdeau, who showed great vision to find his open teammate. Huberdeau then added the winning goal on Aleksander Barkov's second assist of the night. It was the 18th goal of the season for Hoffman and No. 10 for Huberdeau.

### WILD 3, JETS 1

Minnesota snapped a five-game winless streak with a road win over Winnipeg. While three goals aren't exactly an offensive breakout, it was a welcome improvement for the Wild, who had scored five total goals over that 0-4-1 stretch. The Wild received their opening goal from an unlikely source, as defenseman Matt Bartkowski scored 9:28 into the first period. After playing 28 games with the Wild's American Hockey League affiliate this season, Bartkowski was making his debut in a Minnesota jersey.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, KINGS 1

Malcolm Subban made 30 saves in his first win of the season and visiting Vegas defeated Los Angeles. Subban came in 0-5-0 in five starts this season. Vegas had supported him with six goals in those outings. Paul Stastny and Alex Tuch each had a goal and an assist and Nate Schmidt had two assists for the Golden Knights.

### RANGERS 4, PREDATORS 3

Jesper Fast scored his second goal of the game with 12:25 remaining, Mika Zibanejad collected a career-best four assists and visiting New York held on for a victory over Nashville. Fast scored the tiebreaking goal to cap a terrific sequence where all five Rangers on the ice touched the puck. Defenseman Adam McQuaid sent the puck from the defensive zone hard off the end boards and out of goaltender Pekka Rinne's reach. Brady Skjei retrieved the loose puck and quickly fed Chris Kreider, who whipped the puck to Zibanejad. Zibanejad emerged from behind the net on the right wing and centered the pass for Fast, who finished the sequence by lifting a one-timer from the high slot past Rinne.

### STARS 5, RED WINGS 1

Alexander Radulov scored two goals and host Dallas rolled to a victory over slumping Detroit. Blake Comeau and Jason Spezza each had a goal and an assist for the Stars. Tyler Pitlick also scored, while Ben Bishop made 33 saves. Dylan Larkin scored a third-period goal for Detroit to extend his point streak to 13 games. Jonathan



NEWARK: Brett Seney #43 of the New Jersey Devils skates past Jordan Martinook #48 of the Carolina Hurricanes in the first period of an NHL hockey game at the Prudential Center on Saturday in Newark, New Jersey. —AFP

Bernier made 37 saves for the Wings, who have lost eight of their last nine games.

### BLACKHAWKS 3, AVALANCHE 2 (OT)

Patrick Kane scored his second goal of the game 41 seconds into overtime, and visiting Chicago beat Colorado in Denver. Kane also had an assist, Alex DeBrincat scored a goal and Dylan Strome had two assists for Chicago. Collin Delia stopped 30 shots to beat Colorado for the second time in December. Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen scored for the Avalanche, who have lost four straight.

### CANUCKS 3, FLAMES 2 (OT)

Alexander Edler's goal at 3:06 of overtime gave visiting Vancouver a victory over Calgary. Edler, a defenseman, put in a shot from a back-door pass from Brock

Boeser after moving forward. The Canucks posted their eighth win in 11 games, while the Flames lost for the fourth time in five outings.

### COYOTES 5, DUCKS 4 (OT)

Nick Schmaltz scored 33 seconds into overtime to give visiting Arizona a victory while sending Anaheim to its fifth consecutive defeat. After never holding the lead in regulation, the Coyotes won for the third time in their last four games after a three-game losing streak. The Coyotes broke free for a two-on-one early in overtime with Clayton Keller feeding Schmaltz for the one-timer past Ducks goalie John Gibson. Ondrej Kase scored a goal in each of the first two periods but the Ducks lost despite taking a season-high 41 shots on goal. The Ducks managed just one other goal after Adam Henrique scored 12 seconds into the second period. — Reuters

## AUB holds late Ali Mansour Al Sarraf football tournament

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced organization of the late "Ali Mansour Al Sarraf (May Allah bless his soul) football tournament amongst its employees from various departments and branches. The competition, which ran from the 16th -27th December 2018, took place at the football pitch located at the Kuwaiti Lawyers Association.

The tournament reflects the Bank's overall commitment to a diversified range of sports activities, catering for its employees, developing their health as well as nurturing a healthy competitive environment. The tournament succeeded in attracting more than 100 employees in the Bank whom practiced with a great team spirit.

Commenting on the tournament, Naqeeb Amin, AUB's General Manager of Human Resources, said: "The late Ali Mansour Al Sarraf" (May Allah bless his soul) was named for this tournament when we thought about organizing it two years ago in recognition of his 64 yearlong service. After his death this year, we decided to continue this tournament in his name as a tribute to his memory and to his continuous dedication over many years.

Amin added that this initiative is a message to the



youth of on the importance of recognizing the legacy of the previous generations who established banking in Kuwait and served as a good role model in their work and morals. It's also a clear indication of the Bank's pride of its human wealth from outstanding employees who have spent years with dedication to their work. Affirming that the Bank will continue to appreciate the contribution of the late Ali Mansour Al Sarraf " (May Allah bless his soul) and the first generation of Ahli United Bank's old staff who set up the first building blocks for banking in Kuwait when the Bank started its operation in 1942.

Mrs Mariam Al-Mudhaf, AUB's Head of Employee Relations & Services added, "The organization of sports competition comes as part of our core belief

against Muguruza comfortably in the battle of the two former world number ones.

However the Spaniard wasn't going to let her own five-match winning run against the German go easily, and took the second set.

A break of serve in the fourth game of the third set was enough to ensure Kerber maintained her perfect record in Perth, winning 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Kerber conceded Muguruza had proven a historically difficult opponent and she was pleased to begin her Australian Open preparation with a win.

"The first match you never know how you will feel on court," she said.

"I was trying to find the rhythm and I am very happy about how I played.

"I was trying not to think about the head to head."

Zverev started well against Ferrer and cruised through the first set, but then grew increasingly frustrated with his own game as the determined Spaniard fought back, breaking the German's serve with a sublime forehand passing shot in the 10th game to claim the second set.

There was little between the pair in the third set until Zverev surged in the tiebreak to take the match 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (7/0).

Although Zverev is ranked fourth in the world and Ferrer 126th, the German said he expected nothing less from the Spaniard, who has retired from Grand Slam tennis.

that our employees' own health and safety is of paramount importance to the Bank, and are at the same time our most important asset that we continue to invest in. To that extent, we have launched this initiative which is in line with the Bank's overall social responsibility drive, and its approach towards sponsoring a diversified range of sports activities, internally and externally. Furthermore, it serves to nurture a healthy competitive environment amongst working teams."

Mrs Al-Mudhaf pointed out, "The competition aims at communicating a clear message about the importance of practicing different sports, while also encouraging employees to manage their own health to benefit their personal as well as professional lives, and the wider society".

## Murray, Nadal look for Brisbane bounce-back after injury-hit 2018

BRISBANE: Andy Murray aims to kick-start his stalled career in Brisbane this week after an injury-plagued 2018, with Spanish great Rafael Nadal also playing as he tests his troubled knee ahead of the Australian Open.

The season-opening tournament boasts a stellar field with Kei Nishikori and Grigor Dimitrov also in contention as they prepare for the first Grand Slam of the year at Melbourne Park. It also marks the return of temperamental Nick Kyrgios, the defending champion who has been talking to psychologists and "trying to get on top" of his mental health after another roller-coaster year.

His preparations took a blow when he was bitten by spider over Christmas, which needed medical attention, but he is expected to be ready. The women's field includes seven of the world's top 10 — defending champion Elna Svitolina, US Open winner Naomi Osaka, Sloane Stephens, Petra Kvitova, Karolina Pliskova, Kiki Bertens, and Daria Kasatkina.

Three-time Grand Slam winner Murray only played six tournaments last season and arrived in Australia early to acclimatise and prepare as he continues his recovery from hip surgery.

### 'A BETTER PLACE'

The Scot, who won the Brisbane title in 2012 and 2013, said he had been training hard to work himself back to the sort of fitness levels that saw him capture nine titles in a stellar 2016 campaign and reach the number one ranking.

"There are still things that I want to achieve," he said. "Whether I am capable of that I don't really know." The 31-year-old had intended to play Brisbane at the beginning of 2018, but was forced to withdraw on the eve of the tournament and pull out of the Australian Open with the hip problem.

He said he still had some pain, but "I'm in a better place than I was a few months ago". The former world number one spent the off-season training in the heat of Miami to prepare for what can be gruelling conditions in Brisbane and then Melbourne.

He hasn't played since pulling out of the China Open in September, with his ranking plunging to 256. World number two Nadal also battled injury worries throughout 2018 but enjoyed success as well. He won a record-extending 11th French Open in June and reached the semi-finals both at Wimbledon and the US Open. — AFP

## German stars shine at Hopman

PERTH: Star duo Angelique Kerber and Alexander Zverev made encouraging starts to their Australian Open preparation as Germany cruised to a 3-0 win over Spain at the mixed teams Hopman Cup in Perth yesterday.

The top 10 pair, beaten finalists in the previous edition of the tournament, were too good in their singles matches against Garbine Muguruza and David Ferrer.

Just over two weeks out from the year's first Grand Slam, Kerber edged past Muguruza in three sets to open the tie, while a misfiring Zverev was given a scare by the veteran Ferrer before also winning in three.

In the dead mixed doubles rubber, the Germans made it a clean sweep with a straight sets win.

Kerber won all four of her singles matches without dropping a set at the last Hopman Cup, as part of a 14-match winning streak that was only snapped in the Australian Open semi-final by Simona Halep.

That proved to be the start of a productive year for a resurgent Kerber, who won at Wimbledon and climbed back to number two in the world.

Hoping for a similar start to the new season under new coach Rainer Schuttler, Kerber took the first set



PERTH: Belinda Bencic of Switzerland hits a return against Katie Boulter of Britain during their fourth session women's singles match on day two of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. —AFP

"He is the greatest fighter, maybe we have ever seen in tennis," Zverev said. Zverev received attention for a right leg problem during the mixed doubles, but played out the match without apparent discomfort. — AFP



## Sports

# Buoyant India thrash Australia by 137 runs in Melbourne Test

## Virat Kohli's side retains Border-Gavaskar Trophy

MELBOURNE: India captured Australia's last two wickets after a rain-delayed start today five of the third Test yesterday to complete an emphatic 137-run win and take a 2-1 series lead into the Sydney finale.

India, denied victory on day four by the tail-end resistance of Pat Cummins, were forced to wait nearly two-and-a-half hours for play to begin due to rain at the Melbourne Cricket Ground but when the weather cleared their bowlers wrapped up Australia's innings for 261 in 22 minutes.

In his second over, seamer Jasprit Bumrah had Cummins edge to Cheteshwar Pujara, who took a sharp, low catch in the slips to remove the bowler for a personal high score of 63. Paceman Ishant Sharma then sealed the result when he had Nathan Lyon edge behind to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant for seven when attempting to slog the ball.

The wicket triggered bear hugs and backslaps among the Indian players as travelling fans in the sparse crowd roared with joy.

Having dominated with bat and ball throughout the one-sided Boxing Day clash, Virat Kohli's men will head to the Sydney Cricket Ground with a genuine belief they can become the first Indian team to win a series Down Under.

The win also saw them retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy contested between the nations after claiming last year's series 2-1 at home.

"We're not going to stop here, this has only given us more confidence to go out in Sydney and play even more positive cricket," Kohli said at the trophy presentation. "The job is not done yet ... We want to win the last test as well."

"It's all about taking pride in the roles we were given and executing them." Resuming on 258 for eight, 141 runs short of victory, Australia's best hope was for rain to wash

out the final day but the morning showers merely delayed the inevitable.

They had been set a daunting victory target of 399 shortly before lunch on day four, and crumbled after India's pacemen attacked the stumps with cold-blooded assurance. The pride of Cummins and Lyon allowed Australia to limp into day five but the match had slipped away from the hosts on the morning of day three, the rampaging Bumrah taking 6-33 to rout Paine's side for 151 and carve out a first-innings lead of 292.

Bumrah claimed 3-53 in the second innings for a match haul of 9-86, and was deservedly named man of the match. The recalled Ravindra Jadeja enjoyed a successful return, claiming five wickets for the match with his wily left-arm spin.

Barring Cummins' heroics—the fast bowler claiming nine wickets for the match and career-best figures of 6-27 in India's second innings—there were few positives for Tim Paine's Australia.

The hosts will head into the final match pondering a litany of problems and whether their victory in the second test in Perth was a false dawn rather than a turning point for a depleted team playing without their two top batsmen in former skipper Steve Smith and his vice captain David Warner.

The pair have three months left on their bans for their part in the Cape Town ball-tampering scandal but Australia will be eager to reinstate them as soon as possible. "It's a bit disappointing, no doubt," Paine said.

"We felt we made some strides in Perth but with an inexperienced batting lineup at times you're going to have performances like we did in the first innings. "So we've got to learn from that, and get better really quickly before we go to Sydney." — Reuters



MELBOURNE: India's Ishant Sharma (R) celebrates with captain Virat Kohli (L) after taking the final Australian wicket on the final day of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

## Bancroft flops on return from ball-tampering ban

PERTH: Australian batsman Cameron Bancroft's return from a ball-tampering ban proved to be short lived after he was dismissed for two runs for the Perth Scorchers in

the domestic 'Big Bash' Twenty20 competition at Launceston yesterday.

Bancroft was banned from international, state and Big Bash cricket for nine months for his part in the Cape Town scandal in March, which also led to 12-month bans for former Australia captain Steve Smith and vice-captain David Warner.

The 26-year-old found himself called into action earlier than expected, with the Scorchers struggling on 16 for three in the fourth over against the Hobart Hurricanes.

Australian media reported that parts of the

Tasmanian crowd erupted in a chorus of boos when Bancroft was announced as the incoming batsman.

Facing fast bowler Riley Meredith, Bancroft clipped the first ball off his pads for two runs. He blocked the second delivery, before edging the third to wicket-keeper Matthew Wade as the Scorchers fell to 19-4.

Bancroft will have a chance to earn an Australian test recall when he resumes as a top-order batsman for Western Australia in the Sheffield Shield in February. — Reuters

## How cool is that? Williamson reflects on NZ's record win

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand celebrate a historic victory yesterday when they needed just 14 balls on day five to demolish Sri Lanka by a colossal 423 runs in the second Test in Christchurch. "That's quite a cool thing to achieve," skipper Kane Williamson said, reflecting on New Zealand winning a fourth consecutive series for the first time in their 88-year Test history.

"That wasn't the focus, and if we do reflect on that a little bit, the positives of the different conditions we've experienced, the different opposition all come into the fact we've been able to get across the line and that makes it quite special."

The victory over Sri Lanka, by the biggest ever margin for New Zealand and eighth largest of all time in terms of runs, followed back-to-back series wins against the West Indies, England and Pakistan this year. Sri Lanka, having been set an improbable 660-run target, resumed the final day at 231 for six and lost their first wicket with the third ball of the morning when Trent Boult bowled Suranga Lakmal for 18.

Neil Wagner removed Dilruwan Perera for 22 before Boult ended the innings with the wicket of Dushmantha Chameera in the third over of the morning. Angelo Mathews, who retired hurt when on 22 on Saturday, did not resume his innings.

After a placid pitch and rain saved Sri Lanka in the first Test in Wellington, the weather and wicket in Christchurch were ideal for the decider. Sri Lanka won the toss and had New Zealand six for 64 before a whirlwind 68 from

man-of-the-match Tim Southee lifted New Zealand to 178. Sri Lanka were cruising towards that target until a purple patch from Trent Boult whose six wickets for four runs wiped out the lower order and the tourists were all out for 104.

### KEY MOMENT

Tom Latham's 176 and an unbeaten 162 by Henry Nicholls saw New Zealand declare at 585 for four in their second innings, leaving Sri Lanka more than two days to survive. When Kusal Mendis and Dinesh Chandimal were at the crease they had a faint hope, but a stunning catch by Matt Henry broke the stubborn partnership. "That was the key moment," Williamson said of Henry's diving catch at extra cover to remove Mendis for 67 off the bowling of Neil Wagner to end a 53-over stand. The

remaining seven batsmen only lasted 50 overs in total and contributed 110 runs.

"He came on and perhaps being a sub fielder you're not quite feeling the rhythm of the game and it can be disruptive," Williamson said. "Perhaps he was in the right position or the wrong position, we don't know, but it went to him and he was fresh as and it was kinda cool."

Wagner, who had struggled for wickets earlier in the series, found the Christchurch conditions to his liking and took four for 48. Boult finished with three for 77.

Sri Lanka captain Chandimal blamed his side's "disappointing" efforts from his batsmen in the first innings of both Tests. "We just have to improve," he said as Sri Lanka prepare for three one-dayers and a Twenty20 against New Zealand before moving to series in Australia and then South Africa. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

<b>New Zealand first innings 178</b> (Southee 68, Watling 46; Lakmal 5-54)	D. Perera c Williamson b Wagner 22
<b>Sri Lanka first innings 104</b> (Mathews 33 not out; Boult 6-30, Southee 3-35)	S. Lakmal b Boult 18
<b>New Zealand second innings 585-4 dec.</b> (Latham 176, Nicholls 162 not out, de Grandhomme 71 not out, Raval 74; Kumara 2-134)	D. Chameera lbw Boult 3
Sri Lanka second innings (overnight 231-6)	L. Kumara not out 0
D. Gunathilaka c Watling b Southee 4	Extras: (b 4, lb 2, wd 1) 7
D. Karunaratne c Watling b Boult 0	<b>Total:</b> (for 9 wickets; 106.2 overs) 236
D. Chandimal c Nicholls b Wagner 56	<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-1 (Karunaratne), 2-9 (Gunathilaka), 3-126 (Mendis), 4-158 (Chandimal), 5-181 (Dickwella), 6-208 (Silva), 7-233 (Lakmal), 8-233 (Perera), 9-236 (Chameera)
K. Mendis c sub (Henry) b Wagner 67	<b>Bowling:</b> Boult 28.2-11-77-3, Southee 27-13-61-2, de Grandhomme 10-1-23-0 (1w), Wagner 29-10-48-4, Patel 12-9-21-0.
A. Mathews retired hurt 22	<b>Result:</b> New Zealand won by 423 runs
R. Silva c Watling b Wagner 18	Series: New Zealand 1-0
N. Dickwella b Southee 19	



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand celebrate winning the Test match series against Sri Lanka during day five of the second cricket Test match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Hagley Park Oval in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Final scorecard on day five of the third Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday after India won by 137 runs.

<b>India 1st innings 443-7 dec</b> (Pujara 106, Kohli 82, Agarwal 76, Sharma 63 no; Cummins 3-72)	M. Starc b Shami 18
<b>Australia first innings 151</b> (Bumrah 6-33)	N. Lyon c Pant b Sharma 7
<b>India 2nd innings 106-8 dec</b> (Agarwal 42; P Cummins 6-27)	J. Hazlewood not out 0
	Extras (lb6, b2, w2) 10
	<b>Total:</b> (all out, 89.3 overs) 261
	<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-6 (Finch), 2-33 (Harris), 3-63 (Khawaja), 4-114 (S. Marsh), 5-135 (M. Marsh), 6-157 (Head), 7-176 (Paine), 8-215 (Starc), 9-261 (Cummins), 10-261 (Lyon)
	<b>Bowling:</b> Bumrah 19-3-53-3, Sharma 14.3-1-40-2, Jadeja 32-6-82-3, Shami 21-2-71-2, Vihari 3-1-7-0.
	<b>Result:</b> India won by 137 runs
	Series: India lead 2-1

<b>Australia 2nd innings</b> (overnight 258-8)	
M. Harris c Agarwal 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 c Pujara b Bumrah 63	

## Paine admits Smith, Warner needed after more batting woes

MELBOURNE: Captain Tim Paine admitted yesterday Australia badly needed the banned Steve Smith and David Warner back in the side after more woeful batting in the third Test against India. Other than tailender Pat Cummins, no Australian passed 50 in the 137-run defeat in Melbourne, exposing their lack of depth, poor discipline and questionable technique.

Paine acknowledged that not having world-class batsmen was hindering their chances of competing with teams like India, ranked number one in the world. "I think it's inexperience, it's pressure, India's bowling attack is probably as good as most of us have ever played," he said.

"I think it's pretty clear that if you take two or three of the best players out of anyone's line-up around the world, you're going to struggle a little bit at times and you are going to have inconsistent performances."

"The silver lining is that we do have world-class players that are available soon to come back into this side, and clearly when they do they will make a huge difference." Smith and Warner's year-long suspensions for ball-tampering run out in late March.

Australia were skittled for 151 in their first innings reply to India's 443 for seven declared. That total was built on the back of Cheteshwar Pujara's patient 106 and Virat Kohli's restrained 82. Australian batting coach Graeme Hick

said his team needed to look and learn from Pujara and Kohli.

"We spoke about how Kohli went about it (his 82). We knew Pujara, and even Kohli, one of the most explosive batters, got to 20 off 25, 26 balls, then the rest of his innings took whatever it was," he said.

"For the best player in the world to change his innings and play like that, if you can't be on the same field as him and watch him and learn from what he is doing, then you are in the wrong space. "There are certainly things our players can take out of that. It takes a lot of discipline, a lot of patience and, on top of that, you have got to bat with intent."

Aaron Finch again struggled at the top of the order, with his role as a Test opener under intense scrutiny with growing speculation that he will be axed for the next Test in Sydney this week.

Mitch Marsh also failed again with the bat, and fellow all-rounder Marnus Labuschagne has been added to the squad. Paine wouldn't be drawn on what changes might be made. "I think they'll be a lot of things on the table in the next day or two and of course I have some thoughts on what I think but I will share them with JL (coach Justin Langer) before I share them here," he said.

"But I think we have the best group of players available to us at the moment and we'll pick the best combination of that group that we think will win this last Test." — AFP



MELBOURNE: India's captain Virat Kohli (L) shakes hands with Australian captain Tim Paine (R) on the final day of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP



Sports

# Harden scores 41, Rockets stop New Orleans Pelicans 108-104

## Spurs' Aldridge scores season-high 38 in win over Clippers

**NEW ORLEANS:** James Harden scored 41 points as the red-hot Houston Rockets held off the host New Orleans Pelicans 108-104 on Saturday night.

Harden had his third straight game with at least 40 points and his seventh straight with at least 35 as the Rockets won for the ninth time in 10 games. Eric Gordon added 21 points, Danuel House Jr. scored 15 and recently signed Austin Rivers came off the bench to score 10. Julius Randle had 23 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Pelicans, who lost for the sixth time in seven games. Anthony Davis, who scored a season-high 48 points and grabbed 17 rebounds while playing nearly 43 minutes a night earlier, had 22 points and 11 rebounds. E'Twaun Moore scored 21 and Jrue Holiday had 20.

### WARRIORS 115, TRAIL BLAZERS 105

Klay Thompson scored 32 points and Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant added 25 apiece as visiting Golden State downed Portland. Damian Lillard put in 40 points for the Trail Blazers, who beat the Warriors 110-109 in overtime two nights earlier. Jusuf Nurkic added 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for Portland. Golden State's Andre Iguodala was assessed a technical foul and ejected for throwing the ball into the stands after time expired in the first half.

### SPURS 122, CLIPPERS 111

LaMarcus Aldridge scored a season-high 38 points and keyed a mid-third quarter run that cemented the game and helped propel visiting San Antonio to a win over Los Angeles. Both teams were

playing the second games of a back-to-back and it showed, especially from the Clippers, who beat the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday but had no energy in the second half when San Antonio ran away with the game. San Antonio busted open a game that was tied at the half by outscoring the Clippers by 20 points in the third period.

### WIZARDS 130, HORNETS 126

Trevor Ariza scored 24 points and converted a crucial three-point play with 1.8 seconds remaining, and injury-riddled Washington snapped a three-game losing streak with a home victory over Charlotte.

Ariza came to the rescue after the Wizards nearly blew a nine-point lead in the final 24 seconds. He was fouled on a layup and hit the ensuing free throw to give the Wizards their final four-point victory margin.

The Wizards were playing their first game since learning that All-Star guard John Wall would miss the remainder of the season because of upcoming heel surgery. The Wizards also were without Otto Porter (knee), Markieff Morris (back/neck) and Dwight Howard (spinal surgery).

### BUCKS 129, NETS 115

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 14 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter and added 10 rebounds and 10 assists to record his third triple-double as Milwaukee built a big lead and warded off a late comeback attempt by visiting Brooklyn. Antetokounmpo helped the Bucks finish off their



**NEW ORLEANS:** Jrue Holiday #11 of the New Orleans Pelicans goes up for a dunk against the Houston Rockets on Saturday at the Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. —AFP

seventh win in eight games by scoring eight straight points down the stretch after the Nets were within 116-109 on a short jumper by Shabazz Napier with 4:51 remaining.

The Bucks finished the game with a 13-6 run highlighted by Antetokounmpo. He hit two mid-range jumpers, two layups, including one when he made a crafty move around Napier, and hit the right-handed layup around Jared Dudley with 1:58 left for a 126-113 lead.

### CELTICS 112, GRIZZLIES 103

Marcus Morris put Boston ahead for good with a jumper with 2:41 remaining and Al Horford buried a crucial 3-pointer a little more than a minute later, rallying the visitors to a victory at Memphis. In the first head-to-head meeting of star point guards Kyrie Irving of Boston and Mike Conley of Memphis since March 2015, they matched game-high, 26-point efforts in a game that featured five late lead changes. Horford finished with 18 points and five 3-pointers as the Celtics outscored the Grizzlies 48-21 from beyond the arc.

### NUGGETS 122, SUNS 118

Jamal Murray ignited a 46-point performance with a pair of early 3-pointers as Denver scored the game's first eight points and never trailed en route to a victory over host Phoenix. Murray's total was his second-highest of the season. He went for 48 points last month against Boston.

The Nuggets bolted out to a 36-16 advantage after one quarter and went up by as many as 25 in the second period.

### JAZZ 129, KNICKS 97

Rudy Gobert scored 24 points and had 13 rebounds in the first half alone as Utah scored 71 points in the first 24 minutes and waltzed to a win over visiting New York. As the score indicates, it was all Jazz all night, except for a six-minute stretch in the third. But Utah closed the quarter on a 15-6 run to take a 97-66 lead heading into the fourth quarter. Utah opened up the fourth period on a 16-2 run and went up 113-68 on Georges Niang's 24-foot, 3-point jumper. Utah's largest lead of the game was 46 points.

### HAWKS 111, CAVALIERS 108

Veteran Vince Carter came off the bench to score 21 points and Atlanta won for the fifth time in six games, beating visiting Cleveland.

Carter, at 41 years, 337 days, became the oldest player in NBA history to lead (or tie for the lead) his team in scoring. Carter had been tied with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar at 41 years, 331 days, after he had a season-high 18 points on Dec. 23 at Detroit. Cleveland tied the score at 106 when Collin Sexton made a pair of free throws with 57.9 seconds remaining. John Collins reclaimed the lead for Atlanta when he scored on a putback with 47.9 seconds left. —Reuters

## NBA results/standings

**NEW ORLEANS:** LA Clippers 111, San Antonio 122; Atlanta 111, Cleveland 108; Portland 105, Golden State 115; Phoenix 118, Denver 122; Memphis 103, Boston 112; Washington 130, Charlotte 126; Utah 129, New York 97; New Orleans 104, Houston 108; Milwaukee 129, Brooklyn 115.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	25	10	0.714	-	Denver	23	11	0.676	-
Toronto	26	11	0.703	1	Golden State	24	13	0.649	1.5
Indiana	24	12	0.667	1.5	Oklahoma City	22	12	0.647	1
Philadelphia	23	13	0.639	2.5	LA Clippers	21	15	0.583	3
Boston	21	14	0.600	4	Houston	20	15	0.571	3.5
Miami	17	17	0.500	7.5	LA Lakers	20	16	0.556	4
Charlotte	17	18	0.486	8	Portland	20	16	0.556	4
Detroit	16	17	0.485	8	Sacramento	19	16	0.543	4.5
Brooklyn	17	21	0.447	9.5	San Antonio	20	17	0.541	4.5
Orlando	15	19	0.441	9.5	Memphis	18	17	0.514	5.5
Washington	14	23	0.378	12	Utah	18	19	0.486	6.5
Atlanta	11	24	0.314	14	Dallas	16	18	0.471	7
Chicago	10	26	0.278	15.5	Minnesota	16	19	0.457	7.5
New York	9	28	0.243	17	New Orleans	16	21	0.432	8.5
Cleveland	8	29	0.216	18	Phoenix	9	28	0.243	15.5

## Jones, Nunes power to UFC title triumphs

**LOS ANGELES:** Jon Jones returned from a 15-month doping ban to reclaim the Ultimate Fighting Championship light-heavyweight title with a third-round technical knockout win over Alexander Gustafsson, capping off a dominant display with a series of ground strikes.

In Saturday's co-main event, Amanda Nunes scored a devastating first-round knockout win over fellow Brazilian Cris Cyborg to add the featherweight title to her bantamweight crown, becoming the first woman to hold two UFC belts simultaneously.

The high-profile victories came at the end of a turbulent week for the UFC, who were forced to switch the event from Las Vegas to Los Angeles after the American was denied a license to compete in Nevada due to concerns over recent drug tests.

California stepped in at the last minute to grant a license to the former champion, who was stripped of his belt following a positive test, and the stage was set for a re-run of the epic bout between the pair that took

place five years ago.

However, Saturday's contest at the Los Angeles Forum was a more sedate affair, with Jones managing the range much better, out-manoeuvring and out-thinking his Swedish opponent on the way to a superb, yet easy win to capture the vacant crown.

Jones, 31, used his long reach and superior array of strikes to win the first two rounds, circling away from the Swede and landing some painful kicks on Gustafsson's torso and lead leg. The American took the fight to the ground early in the third, flattening out a fatigued Gustafsson and working methodically to turn him over before unleashing a series of strikes to the Swede's unprotected head to end the fight.

"This is great, this is a great feeling," Jones said in a post-fight interview before calling out rival and former two-weight champion Daniel Cormier, who lost the light-heavyweight title to Jones but was reinstated after the latter's positive test.

"Daddy's home DC, prove to the fans that you're the 'champ champ'. I'm here, I'll be waiting," Jones said, goading Cormier, who was relieved of the title after turning his focus towards defending the UFC heavyweight crown.

Nunes, who stepped up a weight class, wasted no time in landing a pun-



Jon Jones with the belt.

ishing series of left hooks and overhand rights to dethrone Cyborg in a slugfest, rocking her opponent back on her heels early as both women traded blows.

The 30-year-old sent her dazed

compatriot crashing to the mat as she scored a superb knockout victory in just 51 seconds, before crying tears of joy after becoming just the third UFC fighter to hold titles in two weight divisions simultaneously. —Reuters

## Burnley end run of defeats with win over West Ham

**LONDON:** Goals from Chris Wood and Dwight McNeil gave struggling Burnley a much-needed 2-0 Premier League win over West Ham United at Turf Moor yesterday, ending a run of three straight defeats for Sean Dyche's team.

After his side's 5-1 mauling by Everton on Boxing Day, Dyche dropped former England goalkeeper Joe Hart and brought back Tom Heaton for his first league start since September 2017. He also gave 19-year-old McNeil only his second Premier League start.

The Clarets took the lead in the 15th minute when Wood fired home after Ashley Barnes headed into his path. New Zealander Wood has now scored five goals in four appearances against West Ham in the Premier League. Left-winger McNeil made it 2-0 with a volley at the back post after Ashley Westwood had whipped in a deep cross from the right and the youngster should have added another goal moments later when he shot wide after a fine pull-back from Barnes.

Heaton justified his recall with a good save from an Andy Carroll header late in the game to give Burnley a rare clean sheet and three valuable points, stopping West Ham's run of three straight away victories. —Reuters

## EPLTable

**LONDON:** English Premier League table after Sunday's early match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Liverpool	20	17	3	0	48	8	54
Tottenham	20	15	0	5	43	21	45
Man City	19	14	2	3	51	15	44
Chelsea	20	13	4	3	38	16	43
Arsenal	20	11	5	4	42	30	38
Man Utd	19	9	5	5	37	31	32
Wolves	20	8	5	7	23	23	29
Leicester	20	8	4	8	24	23	28
Watford	20	8	4	8	27	28	28
Everton	20	7	6	7	31	30	27
West Ham	19	8	3	8	27	28	27
Bournemouth	19	8	2	9	27	33	26
Brighton	20	7	4	9	22	27	25
Crystal Palace	20	5	4	11	17	26	19
Newcastle	20	4	6	10	15	27	18
Cardiff	20	5	3	12	19	38	18
Southampton	19	3	6	10	20	35	15
Fulham	20	3	5	12	18	43	14
Burnley	19	3	3	13	17	41	12
Huddersfield	20	2	4	14	12	35	10

## Barcelona confirm interest in Rabiot but deny breaking transfer rules

**BARCELONA:** Spanish champions Barcelona confirmed their interest in signing Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Adrien Rabiot in a statement yesterday but have denied any transfer irregularities.

"FC Barcelona wish to address stories pub-

lished in France regarding the signing of players from Paris Saint-Germain, and make clear that they have not breached any rule in this regard," said the statement.

"The only contact made was during the month of August and one week ago. In both cases, this contact was made with PSG's sporting management to show FC Barcelona's interest in player Adrien Rabiot."

PSG said earlier in December that they will allow the 23-year-old, whose contract expires in the summer, to join another club at the end of the season due to his reluctance to sign a new deal.

His agent Veronique Rabiot, who is also his mother, said the following day that the situation between the French champions and her son had

completely deteriorated. Barcelona, who were banned from signing players for a year in 2014 for breaking rules over the international transfer of players aged under 18, have been at pains to point out that they have not signed any deal prior to the transfer window opening on January 1.

"FC Barcelona have always wanted to work with the utmost transparency in their dealings with PSG and with any other club," said the statement. FC Barcelona refute the existence of any type of agreement with PSG player Adrien Rabiot."

Rabiot, who has made more than 150 top-flight appearances, has been agitating for a transfer for some time. He also rejected a chance to be on standby for France's World Cup-winning squad. —AFP



**25** Capitals edge Ottawa Senators  
3-2 for fourth straight win



**26** Buoyant India thrash Australia  
by 137 runs in Melbourne Test



**27** Harden scores 41, Rockets stop  
New Orleans Pelicans 108-104



## City stops the rot against Southampton

Reigning champions cut gap between themselves and Liverpool to seven points



LONDON: Southampton's English striker Charlie Austin (2nd L) vies with Manchester City's Ukrainian midfielder Oleksandr Zinchenko during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Manchester City at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England yesterday. — AFP

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Manchester City showed they are willing to accept the challenge of Liverpool in the race for the Premier League title with a 3-1 win away to Southampton yesterday. Following shock defeats by Crystal Palace and Leicester, reigning champions City cut the gap between themselves and Premier League leaders Liverpool to seven points ahead of their meeting with the Merseysiders at the Etihad Stadium on Thursday.

But they allowed a limited Southampton side back into the game after a dominating start, which suggests there are still frailties for Liverpool to exploit. David Silva put City ahead after 10 minutes but they passed up a number of chances to add to the lead and gifted Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg an equaliser in the 37th minute.

For a period, Pep Guardiola's side looked fragile, but a James Ward-Prowse own-goal and a header by Sergio Aguero just before half-time restored their confidence. Saints' frustrations boiled over with a red card for Hojbjerg after a wild challenge on Fernandinho late in the game.

Southampton manager Ralph Hasenhuttl sprang a surprise in his team selection by giving a debut to 18-year-old former Chelsea starlet Kayne Ramsay at right-back. City should have gone ahead in the fifth minute when Jack Stephens allowed Raheem Sterling to steal possession and set up David Silva.

But the City man tried to be too deliberate, with his shot blocked by goalkeeper Alex McCarthy. But Saints could also have taken a more surprising lead after eight minutes when Mohamed Elyounoussi's clever flick over the City defence sent Charlie Austin clear.

Austin's first touch, however, was dreadful and sent the ball into Ederson's grateful arms.

Instead of being a goal up, the home side were behind within a minute.

The left side of their defence was opened up with ease by a simple one-two, leaving Bernardo Silva clear of full-back Matt Targett and free to advance down the right. He had all the time he wanted to pick out the unmarked David Silva, who hit the ball first-time past

McCarthy. Riyad Mahrez then shot wide after a move that began with City playing a series of passes inside their own penalty area.

And Aguero squandered an excellent chance in the 25th minute, hitting his shot against McCarthy after Sterling had accelerated past the hapless Targett.

But overplaying at the other end almost proved City's undoing. Ederson was nearly caught by Austin before dribbling round the striker. But he showed a mastery of the more conventional goalkeeping arts on the half-hour with a diving save to keep out Austin's glancing header from a corner by Ward-Prowse.

City did not heed the warning and Saints were level after 36 minutes. Oleksandr Zinchenko was slow to see Hojbjerg closing in on him and the Southampton captain robbed the Ukraine defender and strode forward before lashing the ball in from 15 yards.

Zinchenko could count himself lucky that referee Paul Tierney did not see his barge on Ward-Prowse after 44 minutes as a penalty.

And the home crowd were still complaining about that decision when City retook the lead on the stroke of half-time. Sterling forced his way down the left and fired in a low cross that hit the foot of Ward-Prowse and zipped between the surprised McCarthy and his near post. And the crowd's disbelief was complete three minutes into first-half stoppage time when Aguero rose unchallenged by Jan Bednarek to nod Zinchenko's cross under McCarthy.

In the second half both sides went through the motions. City had the points they needed and Southampton were happy to avoid further damage to their confidence and goal difference. But even then City could have had three or four more goals.

Sterling shot straight at McCarthy, Aguero hit the angle of the post and crossbar, and Mahrez blasted straight at the goalkeeper.

Frustration got the better of Hojbjerg, who launched into a scissors-style challenge on Fernandinho and was rightly sent off. — AFP

## Kante's goal secures Palace coup for Chelsea

**LONDON:** N'Golo Kante showed signs he is growing into his more advanced midfield role with a composed finish that gave Chelsea a 1-0 victory over Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park yesterday. Chelsea head coach Maurizio Sarri has been criticised for moving Kante out of his more familiar position in front of the back four, with Jorginho filling the holding role. As a result, Kante's effectiveness this season has been questioned, but the former Leicester City man impressed as he struck the 51st minute match-winner that helped the Blues tighten their grip on fourth by opening up a five-point gap to Arsenal.

Kante followed a perfectly timed run to meet David Luiz's chipped pass with a clinical finish to cap a dominant display by Sarri's side against London rivals Palace. Chelsea's failure to add to Kante's third league goal of the season will have given Sarri some concern, though, and would

have proved costly had Palace substitute Connor Wickham not skied a late chance over the bar.

The Italian manager reshaped his forward line by including Olivier Giroud as the central striker—a decision that handed Alvaro Morata another reminder of his place in the strikers' pecking order at Stamford Bridge.

The Spaniard was among the substitutes, while Giroud's inclusion freed Eden Hazard from his recent duties as a false nine, allowing the Belgian international to return to his more familiar position on the left of the front three. But despite dominating, particularly in the second half, Chelsea's chances remained limited.

Hazard quickly made the most of his freedom to drift in from the flank, testing the Palace defence with a number of runs from deep. The Belgian's 34th-minute run towards the home penalty area drew a foul from Cheikhou Kouyate and led to the game's first real opportunity.

Willian's curling free-kick from 25 yards took a deflection off the defensive wall before clipping the outside of Vicente Guaita's right-hand post. The Palace goalkeeper did well to punch the resulting corner clear, but Willian almost caught the Spaniard out with a fierce low shot from distance.

This passage of play suggested Chelsea

were beginning to assert themselves but Palace's belief had clearly been strengthened by their victory at champions Manchester City eight days previously.

The home side appeared happy to concede territory in the hope of hitting Chelsea on the break and it was little surprise the game remained locked in stalemate at half-time. It did not take long, however, for Sarri's side to breach the Palace defence at the start of the second half with Luiz injecting the moment of creativity needed to find a way through.

The centre-back was allowed time to pick his pass and his perfectly weighted chip fell into the path of Kante who had made a positive run towards the penalty spot. The France international controlled the ball on his chest before hitting a left-foot shot that flew wide of Guaita's dive.

Having dominated long periods of the game before the goal, Chelsea assumed total control after Kante's opening goal. Guaita was called to save yet again from Willian after the Brazilian was set up by a clever Hazard back-heel before Giroud saw his second effort of the game ruled out for offside. Wickham's 89th-minute chance gave Sarri's side a late scare but this was a comfortable Chelsea win. — AFP



LONDON: Chelsea's English midfielder Ross Barkley (L) vies with Crystal Palace's English midfielder Aaron Wan-Bissaka (R) during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Chelsea at Selhurst Park in south London yesterday. — AFP