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3,600 benefit from amnesty, 10,000 more have applied

MoI assures departing violators won't be blacklisted, warns holdouts

Top court looks into Assembly storming case after recusal

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The court of cassation will today start looking into the case of 70 opposition activists including sitting MPs accused of storming the National Assembly, after it delayed the start of procedures as the head of the judges' panel recused himself. The court was supposed to start hearing the case yesterday, but Judge Ahmad Al-Ajeel stepped down from presiding over the panel because one of the defense lawyers is his relative. The panel then

appointed a new judge to preside over the proceedings and decided to begin deliberations from today. The court may decide to free all the jailed defendants pending the result of the trial.

The activists are charged with storming the Assembly in Nov 2011. The criminal court had acquitted all of them, saying they had no criminal intent when they entered the house. But the appeals court handed 67 of them harsh jail terms - from one to nine years - including current and former MPs. They include MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, who have been held at the central prison for the past two months. Others include leading opposition figure and former MP Musallam Al-Barrak and well-known opposition figures.

The public prosecution in its arguments to the cassation court acknowledged that the appeals court ruling

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By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: During the first six days of the amnesty, 3,632 residency violators have left the country or legalized their status. Interior ministry statistics show that the total number of residency violators before the amnesty was over 125,500, and after the amnesty went into effect on Jan 29, the figure dropped to around 122,000 (till Saturday).

The interior ministry expects more violators will benefit from the amnesty. "We expect that the number will rise during the coming period as over 10,000 violators have already applied, but are awaiting procedures including fingerprinting, ticket reservations, etc." Col Hamad Rasheed Al-Twalah, General Director of the Central Department for Residency and Entry and Exit Procedures, told Kuwait Times.

The interior minister issued the amnesty decision seven years after the last full amnesty for humanitarian reasons. "Violators still have a chance to either legalize their status after paying the fines or leave the country before the 22nd of this month, with the possibility of returning to Kuwait in the future. This amnesty is a great relief for those who wanted to leave the country or legalize their status, but were

not able to do so due to the high amount of fines they would have had to pay. The amnesty includes those on all types of visas, including domestic and visit visas," Twalah added.

According to Twalah, some people may have the wrong information. "Some violators believe that after they leave during the amnesty, they won't be able to return as they will be blacklisted, but this is not true, as they are not being deported. But those who don't benefit from this decision will be arrested after the amnesty and will be deported and blacklisted. Some people are spreading rumors that after the amnesty, nothing will change and the situation may even get calmer. But I'm warning violators that these are rumors, and the ministry will be very strict in deporting any violator arrested after the amnesty expires," stressed Twalah.

Violators who were arrested before the amnesty and sent to the deportation prison are not forcibly deported to certain countries. Also, they cannot remain there for over two months. These violators can choose other countries to be deported to after negotiating with representatives of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) if they feel their home country is dangerous for them. Representatives of UNHCR and the Red Cross have an office at



Col Hamad Rasheed Al-Twalah

the deportation prison and visit the prison weekly to meet prisoners who need their help. They may arrange for them to leave to other countries, as the case was of some Syrian prisoners," he pointed out.

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Thurman details Weinstein attack

LOS ANGELES: Actress Uma Thurman, who is indelibly linked to Harvey Weinstein's Miramax studio thanks to her iconic roles in "Pulp Fiction" and "Kill Bill", has broken her silence about the disgraced Hollywood mogul, accusing him of attacking her and threatening her career. Dozens of Hollywood women - including Ashley Judd, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Beckinsale and Salma Hayek - have accused Weinstein of acts ranging from sexual harassment to rape.

The scandal touched off a deluge of allegations against powerful men in entertainment, politics and the media, forcing many industries to re-examine workplace policies. Thurman, 47, told The New York Times in an interview published Saturday of two incidents in London that took place after the release of 1994's Oscar-winning "Pulp Fiction". They followed an episode in Paris during which Thurman said Weinstein, dressed in a bathrobe, led her into a steam room during a meeting about a script. In the first "attack", in Weinstein's suite at London's Savoy Hotel, "he pushed me down. He tried to

shove himself on me. He tried to expose himself. He did all kinds of unpleasant things," she said.

Thurman said she took a friend with her to confront Weinstein not long after, but his assistants pressured her to meet him alone. Thurman said she told Weinstein: "If you do what you did to me to other people you will lose your career, your reputation and your family, I promise you." Weinstein told the paper "she very well could have said this." Thurman's friend Hona Herman, Robert De Niro's long-time makeup artist, recalled in the Times that the actress came out of that meeting "very disheveled and so upset". Herman said Thurman told her that Weinstein had threatened to end her career.

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Uma Thurman



Harvey Weinstein

Israel 'legalizes' rogue settlement

JERUSALEM: Israel's cabinet voted yesterday to formally authorize a rogue West Bank settlement in response to last month's murder of a rabbi who lived there, officials said, in a rare move likely to spark an international outcry. The vote came as European nations voiced growing concern over settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territory, but with US President Donald Trump largely refraining from such criticism, which many Israelis see as a green light.

Israeli authorities have advanced plans for thousands of new settlement homes in recent months, although cabinet votes to authorize a pre-existing outpost are relatively rare. Yesterday's vote to authorize the Havat Gilad outpost was unanimous, an official familiar with the proceedings said on condition of anonymity. Speaking at the start of the meeting, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "the government will today regularize the status of Havat Gilad to allow the continuance of normal life there".

The official cabinet agenda said the motion would designate the 15-year-old outpost as a "new community" which will have the necessary building permits and a state budget. The agenda said about 40 families live in the outpost, but envisages its enlargement. Israeli media, however, said it was unclear how the



GAZA CITY: Palestinian schoolchildren shout slogans and hold placards during a protest yesterday against the difficult economic situation and the US decision to withhold funds earmarked for the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees. — AFP

authorization would proceed, as parts of the outpost may have to be moved elsewhere if found to have been built on private Palestinian land.

Rabbi Razel Shevach was shot dead near Havat Gilad, where he lived, on Jan 9. The following week, Israeli troops searching for his attackers shot dead what they described as a Palestinian suspect in the city of Jenin in the northern West Bank, about 35 km north of Havat Gilad. However, they did not catch the man suspected of being responsible for

Shevach's killing, 22-year-old Ahmed Jarrar.

The manhunt continued on Saturday with a raid on the West Bank village of Burqin, near Nablus, sparking clashes during which soldiers shot dead a teenager identified by the Palestinian health ministry as Ahmad Abu Obeid, 19. "Yesterday our forces were again in action in an effort to apprehend the last of the assassins and their accomplices in the murder of Rabbi Shevach," Netanyahu told cabinet ministers and media.

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Cheers, protests greet joint Korea ice hockey team

INCHEON: South Korean fans chanting, "We are one" and wearing shirts with the unification flag emblazoned on the front packed into a freezing ice hockey arena yesterday to cheer on the joint Korean women's team in a tune-up for this month's Winter Olympics. But outside the arena, security was tight as protesters faced off with supporters of the joint team, highlighting sharp divisions over the initiative. Those in favor of the North Korean presence chanted "Peace Olympics", while protesters just across the street shouted "Pyongyang Olympics", suggesting the North had been allowed to hijack the Pyeongchang Games.

North and South Korea agreed last month to field a combined women's ice hockey team and march together under one flag in Pyeongchang after a new round of talks amid a thaw in cross-border relations. With some 3,000 fans packed into Seonhak International Ice Rink in Incheon, the Koreans, who have only practiced together for a week, lost 3-1 to Sweden. While the result was a disappointment, hopes are high that the unified

team could help improve ties. "I am excited," said Park Cheol-hyun, who came to watch the game with his wife and son. "Even though the nuclear issue may not be resolved immediately, it will be good for the longer term if the two Koreas get closer. Otherwise, there is no way to resolve it."

While the reaction to the North's decision to participate in the Winter Games was met warmly in the South, the decision to form a combined women's ice hockey team sparked a public backlash. Critics said adding North Korean players to the South's roster at the last minute would mean missed opportunities for home players and could hurt team chemistry. "As a coach, it is hard to tell some of your players that you have been with for a quite a long time that they are not going to be able to play, but the whole situation is out of our control. So we are trying to make the best out of it," Sarah Murray, the head coach of the team, told a news conference after the game.

"There are a lot of challenges with adding players so close to the Olympics," she said, adding that the language barrier was a real problem. "The meeting takes three times as long. It's really hard when you have three different languages on one team," the Canadian said. Both sets of players speak Korean, but the language has evolved differently in the North and South.

The International Olympic Committee said 12 North Korea players would join the South's 23-

player squad. The game day roster will continue to be 22 and the team has to include at least three North Koreans. The North will also send athletes to take part in figure skating, short track speed skating, cross-country and Alpine skiing at the Feb 9-25 Games. The controversy has hit the popularity of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who hoped that the upcoming Olympics would pave the way for a breakthrough in resolving North Korea's nuclear issue.

"I think young people have hostility about the North because they only heard bad things about North Korea for the past nine years," said 19-year-old Chae Hyun-min, who was waiting in line to enter the stadium in freezing cold weather. "This is the first step, and will bring the two Koreas one step closer to peace. The perceptions of young people will change gradually," he said.

Ahead of the game, conservative groups held protests and tore up a North Korean flag. They called for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to step down. "The unified team is politically contaminated," 58-year-old Cho Young-hwan said, calling Moon "the puppet" of the North Korean leader. "The Olympics offered an opportunity for the North to publicize its propaganda and create a conflict within South Korea. "In this situation, how can the two Koreas be unified?" asked Cho, who is from Gangwon Province where the Feb 9-25 Winter Games will be staged. —Agencies



INCHEON: Ryo Song-Hui (center) of the unified Korean team fights for the puck with Sweden's Fanny Rask (right) during a women's ice hockey practice match yesterday. — AFP

Amir, Crown Prince host top state officials

Amir to sponsor cultural center's opening



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly's Deputy Speaker Essa Al-Kandari.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, National Assembly's Deputy Speaker Essa Al-Kandari and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Kandari, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor as well as Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh.

In other news, His Highness the Amir is set today to sponsor and attend the inauguration of the Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center, located in Al-Shaab. Separately, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to President of Finland Sauli Niinisto congratulating him on his re-election as president of the republic. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to the Finnish president. Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolence to US

President Donald Trump over the victims of a train collision in North Carolina, which left a number of victims dead or injured. Two similar cables were also sent to the US president by His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. — KUNA

Amir congratulates Finnish President



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

Kuwaiti MPs refute claims by Israeli Knesset: Speaker Ghanem

GENEVA: The Kuwaiti delegation have refuted allegations by the Israeli Knesset, complaints by a former Kuwaiti MP and a current lawmaker, said Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday. "We have refuted those allegations and I assure everyone that Kuwait and its parliament's reputation is intact and no one could tarnish it," said Ghanem, who arrived in Geneva last Wednesday heading a delegation to respond to these claims, filed with Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The National Assembly chief had also met IPU President Gabriela Cuevas Barron and Secretary General Martin Chungong on the sidelines of his attendance of the union's executive committee session. "Both IPU President and Secretary General, as well as the union's human rights director appreciated our interaction and response to those allegations, as it is a matter of choice, some parliaments choose to respond, others prefer not to," Ghanem told reporters.

"Yet, out of keenness on Kuwait's reputation, we saw that it was our duty to refute such claims that aim to smear the country's parliament. "In a month's period, we will present an inclusive response to the IPU on the matter. In this vein, I wish to thank my fellow MPs for efforts exerted throughout meetings with IPU senior officials."

In addition to the Knesset, MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and former MP Abdullhameed Dashti have both filed complaints against the Kuwaiti parliament. Meanwhile, Ghanem said



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem (center) and his accompanying delegation are seen shortly after their arrival to Kuwait yesterday. — KUNA

that he represented the Arab geopolitical group at the IPU executive committee, which includes other geopolitical groups, in addition to the IPU chair and secretary general. Participants in the meeting discussed a number of topics, he said.

The Kuwaiti delegation, including Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Parliamentary Caucus Rakan Al-Nisf, presented elaborate presentation of a proposal to modify the IPU constituent law, where the union could address a warning, then suspend membership or dismiss parliaments that fail to abide by the IPU principles, which are strongly bonded with UN resolutions.

"Everyone knows that there have been multiple unimplemented UN resolutions regarding our just Arab and Islamic causes,

thus parliamentary and parliamentary diplomacy must focus on effective resolutions by the IPU so that this organization won't turn into an institution that issues resolutions with no respect by the parliaments," Ghanem said.

"I believe that everybody knows who we point at and know our strategy, for we are pursuing our national, Islamic project as a Kuwaiti parliament and we are not afraid to be the spearhead and we won't be harmed by any harassments or bids or complaints from here and there and we are capable by Allah's will to confront these matters and we attain our objective sooner or later," the speaker elaborated. The delegation accompanying Ghanem included lawmakers Rakan Al-Nesef, Ali Al-Deghbasi, Khalil Abul and Allam Al-Kanderi. —KUNA

Kuwaiti FM receives Somalia's outgoing ambassador

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday the outgoing Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Abdulqadir Amin Abu Baker. The minister during the meeting lauded the diplomat's efforts during his tenure, namely his contributions to boosting the bilateral ties bonding the State of Kuwait with Somalia.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Saleh Al-Loghani and ranking ministry officials. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Abdulqadir Amin Abu Baker. — KUNA

Local

Finance Minister urges parliament to endorse bond issuance bill

Government spending to stimulate real estate

KUWAIT: The parliament's failure to approve the bond issuance bill means that the state's general reserve would be consumed to address budget deficits, Kuwait's Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said. The state's general reserve is exposed to risk because it is constantly used to address financial deficits, Hajraf said in an interview with Al-Rai TV channel. He underlined the importance of safeguarding Kuwait's financial system, which was based on the general reserve.

"Approving the bonds' bill does not mean the government will issue bonds tomorrow," said Hajraf who noted that "entering international stock markets is studied carefully." Hajraf said there should be a good governance and a wise administration to manage the bond issuance.

The government tabled a draft law to finance committee at parliament to seek funding from local and international markets, he said, as well as increasing debt ceiling to KD 25 billion (\$83 billion) with 30 years lending period. The draft law was approved by the finance committee and is now awaiting the house vote.

"The objective behind the bond issuance bill is to maintain the state financial condition and economic sustainability," said Hajraf, who warned that Kuwait suffered from "real challenges and structural problems which should be addressed rapidly before they worsen." Hajraf, meanwhile, said the government would soon launch the national program for economic and financial sustainability, in parallel with financial reforms which aimed at directing the

subsidies to the people who deserve them. This program, he added, aimed at further activating private sector's role and the development of non-oil sectors.

Real estate

Following recent recession in domestic development, government spending on housing and construction is forecast to trigger hike in the realty demand in the first quarter of 2018. It is also predicted that hotels and furnished apartments will flourish, in tandem with execution of government mega projects, namely development of Kuwait International Airport, expanding the Amiri Hospital, constructing Jaber Causeway, Al-Jahra and Jamal Abdullnasser roads, in addition to a number of private projects. The local property market has been affected with unfavorable domestic and external factors, namely imbalance in supply and demand and maintaining a strict credit policy by the banks. Other factors have also left marks on the market; such as decline of proceeds from realty enterprise, capitals' shifting to stock markets, unsteady oil prices, geopolitical events and increase of construction materials' prices.

Moreover, the sector's recent recession was attributed to increase of power, water and fuel rates. Nevertheless, experts believe that investment in the sector remains safe due to high proceeds, reaching in general eight percent. Last year, there were bids to stimulate the market; with auctions confined to selling land plots, however up to 20 auctions had to be delayed due to investors and auctioneers' absence.

Realty experts interviewed by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) believe that some of the main factors affecting the market are shortage of promoted plots against high demand and rare investment alternatives. Rents in the investment and commercial sectors have recently dropped by 10-15 percent, they say.

Qais Al-Ghanim, Secretary of the Kuwaiti Real Estate Association, affirms that the market has remained largely in a lackluster status, with trades not exceeding seven percent of the displayed properties. Some entrepreneurs have been shifting to the stock market, lured by instant profits.

Suleiman Al-Dlajjan, manager of a property agency, says young citizens, who make up 60 percent of the 1.4 million Kuwaiti population,



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf speaks during a press conference last week to announce the 2018/2019 state budget. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

noticeable. Director General of Athra Real Estate Company Maitham Al-Shakhs forecasts revival of the property market this year, amid predicted economic growth.

Subsidies and expenses

In other news, the Cabinet has sent to the National Assembly a detailed list showing the amount of subsidies and salaries in the state's budget for the fiscal year 2018/2019, which needs to be voted on by March 31, 2018, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday.

Total subsidies in the new budget reached KD 3.44 billion, distributed in six main sectors: Energy and fuel with KD 623.446 million, Education (students aid and rewards) with KD 633.39 million, social support allowance with KD 398.230 million, residential support (rent allowance, etc.) with KD 371.455 million, treatment abroad with KD 305.510 million, and sports with KD 45.880 million. As for economic subsidies, it reached KD 30 million, while agricultural subsidies reached KD 25.190 million, and information subsidies KD 110,000 paid.

Meanwhile, salaries and expenses totaled nearly KD 11 billion, distributed as follows: KD 2.213 billion for the general budget's contribution in social securities, KD 510.4 million for national labor support allowances in the private sector, KD 293.9 million for social care, KD 6.9 billion as salaries of ministries and state departments' employees, KD 211.8 million for employees in the judicial sector, KD 909.8 million for affiliates and KD 129.9 million for independent bodies.

Road projects withdrawn for failure to meet schedule

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) has withdrawn the Wafra and Bidaa projects from the contractor because of failing to meet the set schedule, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi said. Responding to an inquiry filed by MP Majed Al-Mutairi in this regard, Roumi said both projects were being executed by the same company and that the withdrawal decision was made due to the contractor's sluggishness and delay in executing them.

Roumi explained that the contractor had been hired to execute the Bidaa fly-over project on Jan 20, 2016 to complete all construction by Feb 18, 2018 (within 730 days), but until March 31, 2017, the contractor had only executed 12.36 percent of project instead of the scheduled rate of 38.7 percent.

The minister added that the same company had been hired to build and maintain roads, bridges, rain and sewer drainage on the road between Mina Abdullah and Wafra on Nov 15, 2015 within 1,095 days to be concluded on Dec 3, 2018, but until March 31, 2017, the company had only finished 8.18 percent of the project. Roumi said that two different companies had been hired to complete the two projects according to plans.

Social services

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) is currently working on preparing an integrated social security network study for citizens through the national social security networks' committee. In addition to the MSAL, this committee includes other state departments including the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development, Kuwait Credit Bank, Kuwait Central Statistics Bureau, the

Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, the Finance Ministry and the Public Authority for Manpower. MSAL intends to scientifically design the network by listing enough data about state-provided social services, their prices as well as other subsidized and free services.

Senior citizens

Separately, MSAL Undersecretary Saad Al-Kharraz stressed that senior citizens' priority cards have been approved for use in various governmental bodies, and urged these bodies to honor them for the benefit of the elderly. Kharraz sent a letter in this regard to the acting Manpower Authority Director Ahmed Al-Moussa.

Diplomatic missions

Under the auspices of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Development Hind Al-Sabeeh, the Public Authority for Manpower is scheduled to hold an open meeting this morning with representatives of all diplomatic missions designated to Kuwait.

Democracy Index

According to the 2017 Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit of The Economist magazine, Kuwait advanced to be ranked 119th worldwide compared to 121st in 2016, which makes Kuwait the top GCC state in democracy, outranking China, Russia and many African countries. Tunisia came first in the Arab world and 69th worldwide, Morocco advanced from 105 to 101 worldwide, Lebanon retreated from the second to the third rank in the Arab world and came 104th worldwide, while Syria tailed the list of 167 countries to be ranked 166.

ABK participates in 'PPP' training program, workshop

KUWAIT: In line with the belief that a solid employee knowledge base ensures better client service, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) participated in a training workshop entitled 'Public Private Partnerships (PPPs): Infrastructure Project Finance' organized by the Investment Studies Center at the Union of Investment Companies, in collaboration with Euromoney. The program was designed to provide participants with the best international practices used to finance projects, develop the infrastructure including electricity, water, transport and housing, due to the expansion of these projects inside the State of Kuwait. In addition, the program introduced the government's initiative to involve the private sector in these projects to trigger a partnership.

Some of the key topics discussed at the workshop were the nature of partnerships between the public and private sectors, roles and tasks assigned to each sector, financing methods, and ways of identifying and assessing the project risks. The interest of both public and private sectors in building a firm partnership to finance mega projects is in line with the vision of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, to transform Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub. Therefore, ABK is keen to accomplish this vision through participation in the financing of mega projects, while gaining the necessary knowledge and expertise about financing methods in order to establish a robust partnership with the public sector.

Local

Amnesty provides a way out for victims of abuse

Illegals leave the door open for a return to Kuwait in the future

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Philippines and Indian embassies are flooded with people who want to avail of the amnesty given to residency violators (from Jan 29 to Feb 22, 2018). Based on the statistics provided to Kuwait Times by the interior ministry, around 130,000 expats can benefit from this amnesty. But behind the smiling or anxious faces of people queuing up to apply for their travel documents, both at the Philippines and Indian embassies, there are a lot of stories. Why did they end up as illegals, or in violation of the Kuwait residency law?

Belinda and Rosie, not their real names, came to know each other in Ishbiliya. According to the two women, this is a Kuwaiti area - very peaceful and quiet - and therefore sees little police checking. Their sponsor was an Arab man named "Baba Yousef" who exploited women looking for jobs. Belinda and Rosie were both sold to Baba Yousef, whose "business" is thriving with the help of a Filipino girlfriend.

That Pinay, named Noora, coordinates with maids through Facebook. They contact women and goad them to flee their sponsors' houses to get a job under an article 18 visa. But once they accept the offer, they are required to work 8-12 hours daily for KD 120 and no day off. "We were made to work eight hours daily at different houses of people of various nationalities. The salary was KD 120 only, though we should have got more than KD 400. They earned a lot from us," Belinda said. So when she got an opportunity, she ran away.

Sold to employer

Rosie was 'sold' to a Saudi employer by Baba Yousef. Rosie was adamant to work in only one house. So when a Saudi employer asked for maid, Rosie was the first choice. She was taken to Saudi Arabia and stayed there for over six months. "I was fortunate to come back. But during the time I was demanding a regular employer, Baba Yousef got irritated and punched me in my face and stomach. But when we got a chance to escape, we ran away with the rest of the girls. I don't know if they are running rackets in other areas, but at my

status and continue residing in Kuwait after paying all fines and obtaining a valid visa without being referred to the investigation department. Residency violators who are banned from travelling or have a court case should visit the residency affairs department to discuss the possibility of getting a valid visa during the amnesty period.

Take the chance

Binu (not his real name) from India has been living in Kuwait for the last two years without a visa. Now he wants to go back to India, and if there is an opportunity to come back, he will take the chance. Binu, 42, absconded from his first job because he failed to open the shop he was tending, which happened only once. "I had a tooth problem and my face was swollen. When my boss found out that I was not able to open the shop, he was furious. He demanded I open the shop immediately. He arrived a few minutes later, and before I could even speak, he hit me in the face. After that incident, I felt very bad, so I left a few months later," he said.

Binu is married with two children - the eldest is 19 and the youngest is nine years old, and both are studying. "My wife is in India. She has polio, so yes, I am struggling just to be able to provide for my family. After a year since I encountered that problem with my previous boss, I found work with the boss of my friend, who is a good man," he said.

Sujin (also not his real name) from India, is also without a residency visa since 2014. He was a family driver for a rich Kuwaiti family, but he says that they were not treating him well. "For the last four years, I do not have legal residency. I left my original sponsor because he was abusive. He used to shout and sometimes punch me in my face. I did not like the way he treated me. When I got a chance, I



KUWAIT: People lined up outside the Indian Embassy's building yesterday. —Photo by Ben Garcia

ran away. So he filed an absconding case against me," he said.

Sujin, 29, said his next job was also as a family driver. "They were kindhearted and wanted to give me a visa, but they could not do anything because I had an absconding case against me. When I drive my employers around, I am not afraid even if there are police, because police won't check my papers because I am with my bosses. So I am free of any stress while driving," he said.

Regular conditions

Those who leave the country during this amnesty period are allowed to reenter Kuwait if they meet the regular conditions of entry and if they were not banned for another reason. This decree does not apply to expats who will lose their legal residency status after the amnesty period. If an illegal resident is caught

during the amnesty period, they will be deported immediately.

Residency violators who do not leave the country during the amnesty period will face legal penalties, will not be given a valid visa, will be deported, and will not be allowed to enter Kuwait again. Those who want to legalize their status and stay in the country will pay a penalty of KD 2 for each day up to a total of KD 600, even if they were in violation for a longer period.

The last time an 'amnesty' was granted in January 2016, but it was partial, as violators who wanted to leave the country still had to pay fines. The last full amnesty (leaving without paying fines) was granted in 2011. The amnesty comes as a relief for thousands of workers forced to illegally extend their stay in Kuwait due to non-payment of salaries.

Thank you President Duterte... but!



By Talal Al-Ghannam

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Good morning, dear and honorable brothers and sisters. In this article I would like to talk about the recent decision by Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte to ban his fellow nationals from traveling and working in Kuwait due to what he said is bad treatment by many sponsors. First of all, allow me, Mr President, to thank you very much for your concern over your country's nationals - I call this a big sacrifice when a president of any country stands up for the rights of his citizens.

Your statement about mistreatment by many sponsors in Kuwait can take place in any country, and I agree with you that these bad sponsors must be brought to justice to be punished. A few cases that happened here and there necessitate that stiffer action be taken against these sponsors who defame the bright image of Kuwait in international arenas.

The government of Kuwait must act harshly with these inhumane cases of mistreatment and manslaughter against any person of any nationality who came here to seek a decent living in a country labeled by the United Nations as a center for humanitarian action and its leader His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a humanitarian leader. Every national who arrives in Kuwait for a decent living must be respected and provided with the fullest security and peace. We do not want to be labeled as unjust and unfair sponsors.

On the other hand, Mr President, if you interview the majority of your countrymen and women, they will say that they are receiving great treatment and enjoy being here as great friends of Kuwait. There are a few cases that suffer a lot from their inhumane sponsors, but this does not reach to banning a great segment of your country's population from seeking a better living condition elsewhere.

If the economic conditions in the Philippines were good, those workers would not have left the country in search for a better life. In this case, you would also be banning them from seeking work in the entire Gulf. There are many bad cases in the Middle East and Europe too, but not to the extent of what is happening in this region. Kuwait and the Philippines enjoy excellent bilateral relations and I hope that these few cases will not jeopardize such great ties. I would like to note what the Philippines ambassador to Kuwait said - that the majority of the Filipino community here is satisfied.

Thank you Mr President.

Woman killed, seven children injured in crash

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Ahmadi detectives are searching for the driver of a luxury car who collided with a car driven by a Syrian, killing his wife and injuring seven of their children, three of whom are in critical condition. The man said his car flipped over when a car hit him from behind, and gave details of the luxury car. The injured were medevacked to Adan Hospital.

Drugs statistics

The Drugs Control General Department and Criminal Detectives Department last year confiscated 11,730 kg of 'chemical' (synthetic marijuana with added chemicals), 21,070 kg of marijuana, 7,928 kg of shabu (methamphetamine), 321,929 kg of hashish, 4,949 kg of heroin, 400 grams cocaine and 2,042,208 psychoactive tablets. The large amounts of drugs confiscated in 2017 reflects the Interior Ministry's keenness on fighting drugs and protecting youth from its dangers, Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Affairs Maj Gen Khalid Al-Dayeen said in a statement yesterday.

Army chief, US military official eye closer ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khoder discussed yesterday with the visiting US Deputy Commanding General, Special Operations Command, Brigadier General James D Craig issues of mutual concern. The meeting also tackled bilateral ties and underscored mutual eagerness for further progress in relations, Kuwait's Army Moral and Guidance Administration said in a statement. The meeting was attended by the Chief of the Kuwaiti Army's Armament and Procurement Authority Major General Ahmad Al-Amiri, Commander of the Commando Brigade 25, Brigadier General Khaled Al-Obaidi and US Chief of the Office of Military

Deaths reported

A security source said a call was received about a dead man in his apartment, so police and paramedics went to the scene and found several injuries on the victim's face and body. The prosecutor decided to record it as a homicide. Forensics officers collected the body and sent it to the coroner. Meanwhile, police received a call from a Fahaheel hotel about a dead citizen in his room. Employees said they knocked the door several times but there was no response, so they opened the door and discovered the body. The death was also recorded as a homicide. Separately, the body of an Egyptian engineer who worked for the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) was recovered by the coroner after he was found dead in his room. The body had signs of beating and a broken nose, and the case was also registered as a homicide. A relative of the man told detectives that he attempted to call him but did not get an answer, so he went to his apartment, but there was no response. He opened the door with a copy of the key and discovered he was dead.

Fatal accident

An Egyptian man succumbed to his injuries at Mubarak Hospital after he was involved in an accident in Salmiya. A car hit the man while he was crossing the road. The driver, Kuwaiti, then swerved and hit another car. The victim was rushed to hospital and the driver was taken to the police station.

Thief caught

Farwaniya detectives arrested an Egyptian pickpocket who stole KD 500 from a Turkish man in a crowded store. A security source said cameras helped detectives identify the thief through his car's license plate number, as he was followed till his car. The suspect confessed to committing the crime, adding this was not the first time he had stolen.

Drunks fight

Ahmadi police arrested five Asians fighting while under the influence of alcohol in a Mahboula apartment. The Egyptian haris of the building called police about the fight, so they went there and arrested them. One of the men was taken to Adan Hospital for treatment for a deep wound in his arm. Legal action is being taken prior to their deportation.

Municipality crackdown

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said a campaign was carried out in West Abdullah Mubarak by the Farwaniya Municipality branch. Director of Cleanliness and Road Occupancy Department at Farwaniya Saad Al-Khraiyeen said the campaign resulted in issuing 11 citations to roaming vendors and removal of three makeshift cabins where construction material and foodstuff were sold without a license, two tents, three electric generators and a water pump.



KUWAIT: Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khoder meets with the visiting US Deputy Commanding General Brigadier General James D Craig. —KUNA

Cooperation Brigadier General David P San Clemente.

In other news, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday met with the visiting Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammad Al-Jaber. They discussed relations between both

sisterly countries, the current regional and international developments and the latest Yemeni situation, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by several senior officials of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry. —KUNA

Blogger sentenced to 5 years in jail for insulting UAE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced blogger Dr Abdullah Al-Saleh to five years in prison

with labor over charges of slandering the UAE. Notably, the defendant is at large and has filed an asylum request in Britain, declaring his wish to not return to Kuwait. He is also sentenced in other cases to a total of 31 years in prison.

Also yesterday, the court of misdemeanor sentenced the chairman of a co-operative society to three months in prison and ordered suspending the verdict on paying KD 1,000 in bail. Notably, the suspect is facing charges of forgery and embezzling the co-op's funds during his tenure. Commenting on the case, the co-op's lawyer Mohammed Jameel said he filed all pieces of evidence against the suspect.

Legalese

Amnesty for visa violators



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Many expats in Kuwait by now would have heard about the new amnesty decree. Amnesty by definition means "an official pardon for people who are convicted of an illegal offense, usually of a political nature." Visa violations are illegal offenses obviously, and therefore every country has the right to give these violators an amnesty or legal pardon. The Kuwaiti government has provided amnesties on multiple occasions in the last 10 years, providing people the chance to rectify their legal status. I have written this at every chance that I could, and I will continue to make it clear - we are very lucky in Kuwait to be in such a diverse country with people from all walks of life coming together to build a society.

No penalties

Question: How many days do I have to leave Kuwait and will I get punished for having an expired residency? Do I have to pay any fees, other than the daily fine? Will I be able to come back to Kuwait easily in the future?

Fajer: The amnesty period is between Jan 29 and Feb 22, so you have a few more weeks to leave Kuwait. I have understood there will be no criminal penalties or other punishments as it is opportunity for you to leave the country as a violator without paying a fine. Those who leave the country during the period mentioned above should be able to enter the country again on a new visa if they meet the visa regulations in Kuwait.

No passport

Question: My residency has expired and I do not have my passport, because my previous employer refuses to give it to me. I have a case against him, but I want to leave now that there is an amnesty. What can I do?

Fajer: If you do not have your passport, the best thing you can do is to contact your embassy in Kuwait, or if your country does not have an embassy in Kuwait, contact your embassy in the closest country to Kuwait. They can give you a temporary document to travel back to your country, where you should be able to obtain a new passport.

You can give a power of attorney to a lawyer to represent you in your case in Kuwait after you leave. It will be important though for you to discuss a few issues before leaving though. For example, if your lawyer will have the right to obtain money on your behalf or not.

Absconding case

Question: I have been working as a domestic worker, and a few years ago, I fled the house of my employer. I now have an absconding case against me. Do I have the right to travel?

Fajer: You should be allowed to travel even if there is an absconding case against you, as long as the case was filed after Jan 4, 2016. This is for all visa types regardless if you worked as a domestic worker or for a company in the private sector. I would say that it should be really safe for you to leave Kuwait at this time, and I highly suggest that you make sure that your status is legal as soon as possible if you want to continue living in Kuwait. Please make sure though that you check if you have any other fines or any criminal cases against you, so that you are aware of all your responsibilities and obligations.

I hope the above helped. If you have a concern, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Seagulls are seen in flight over the sea. — KUNA

IWG holds monthly meeting with national flavor

KUWAIT: The International Women's Group (IWG) - Kuwait held yesterday its monthly meeting on the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days. The meeting had a very special February national celebration program, and hosted a number of distinguished dignitaries on this occasion.

The meeting, which took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, was attended by Former Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Dr Abdullah Yaqoub Bishara, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Malek Al-Sabah, ambassadors and other dignitaries. Dr Bishara delivered a speech on the history and biography of the Al-Sabah family and Kuwait's contemporary history.

Sheikh Faisal said women have an important and active role in the building of the society. He was extremely pleased with IWG's program that was held under the auspices of the Russian Embassy, and praised the aim of the group to promote friendship and exchange of ideas in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere among women of different nationalities.





Russian pilot killed; warplane downed

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It’s when, not if: Singapore worries, prepares for attack



RIO DE JANEIRO: Military policemen take part in an operation at Cidade de Deus favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. —AFP

Crime-ridden Brazil gets off to a bloody start

688 shooting incidents reported in Rio de Janeiro

RIO DE JANEIRO: The year was just a few hours old when a prison riot near the capital Brasilia left nine inmates dead—two of them decapitated—and set the stage for what is proving to be a deadly 2018 in Brazil. Since then, the country has seen a wave of violence that prompted Defense Minister Raul Jungmann this week to declare that “the security system is broken.” There have been 688 shooting incidents reported in Rio de Janeiro state in January, many of them focused in the same few sprawling, poor neighborhoods known as favelas where police are barely in control.

Then came the massacre of 14 people at a nightclub in the north-eastern city of Fortaleza, followed by the deaths of 10 people in clashes at a prison nearby. While Brazil has long suffered high crime and Rio in particular is beset by drug gang wars, there was dismay this week in the “Marvelous City” at television footage of drivers on a main artery being forced to stop and hide behind their cars because of shooting between police and traffickers nearby.

Corruption in the ranks
Jungmann told Globo television that urgent change is

needed. “We have to take the necessary measures before it’s too late and we find ourselves on the trajectory of other countries,” he said, referring especially to Mexico. But the task of taming criminal gangs and adequately training the police continues to elude politicians, partly because the root of the chaos stretch far beyond security and into poverty, poor education, poor municipal services, racism and deep inequality.

Drug trafficking gangs, meanwhile, have ever better weapons and operate often with impunity in favelas, while their leaders issue orders from prisons that the authorities only partially control. On the other side are police forces—notably in Rio—crippled by corruption,

poor funding, and a military style training that does not necessarily work in modern policing. Jungmann said “penetration of crime throughout the police has to be combated.”



‘Security system is broken,’ Defense Minister declares

ship and no one wanted to talk about public security,” said Jose Mariano Beltrame, Rio’s former security secretary. “Why were health and education put under the fed-

Historic roots
Some trace Brazil’s seemingly insoluble crime problems to the 1988 constitution, written at the end of a two-decades long military dictatorship. This gave almost all budgetary and strategic responsibility for security to individual state governments. “Public security was like the stepchild. We were coming out of a dictator-

eral government? Because they were considered important, they won votes. Today we’re paying for that.”

Arthur Trindade, a former security chief for the capital and now at the University of Brasilia, told AFP “there is no doubt that Brazil needs a new federal agreement. Public security has to be a federal matter.” Trindade said the national security body is understaffed, and that the police do not even have their own system for collecting reliable statistical data. Organizations like the Brazilian Public Security Forum fill the gap when it comes to data. According to the non-governmental group’s latest report, there were 61,619 homicides nationwide in 2016, or seven an hour.

That means in terms of body counts that Brazil is already deadlier than Mexico, with 29.9 homicides per 100,000 people, compared to 21. Ignacio Cano, an expert at Rio’s state university, said the latest trend is for violence to grow in the far-flung regions of the north and north-east. He doesn’t have much faith in the authorities’ response. “The federal government is on the defensive and makes bombastic declarations instead of taking measures, as a way of avoiding their responsibility,” he said. —AFP

Maldives Supreme Court seeking to impeach president

MALE: The Supreme Court in the Maldives is trying to impeach President Abdulla Yameen for not obeying its order to release jailed opposition leaders, the attorney general said yesterday, warning of further instability in the Indian Ocean nation. The Maldives, best known for its luxury resorts, has been in a political crisis since the top court threw out terrorism convictions last week against former president Mohamed Nasheed and others who have been trying to oust the president for years.

Yameen has faced calls at home, and from the United States and India, among other nations, to heed the court decision on Nasheed, the island’s first democratically elected president, and the others, but so far has dug in his heels. Home to about 400,000 people, the Maldives has also been drawn into a regionwide tussle for influence between India - with which it has longstanding political and security ties - and China, which opened an embassy in 2011 and has offered technical and financial assistance to build infrastructure.

Attorney General Mohamed Anil said the government had received information the Supreme Court was preparing to fire Yameen, but such a move would be illegal and resisted by government law enforcement authorities. “We have received information that things might happen that will lead to a national security crisis,” Anil told reporters in the capital, Male. “The information says the Supreme Court might issue a ruling to impeach or remove the president from power,” he said, adding that government bodies had been given instructions not to carry out such an order.

Meanwhile, Parliament Secretary General Ahmed Mohamed, who is politically neutral, suddenly resigned yesterday, citing personal reasons a day before the opening session of the body. Mohamed had told Reuters he would abide by a separate Supreme Court ruling ordering the reinstatement of 12 legislators who defected from Yameen’s ruling party last year. Allowing them to return to the legislature would deprive him of a majority. More than 100 riot police stood guard outside government offices in Male, including Parliament, as well as at Republic Square, a site of protests by opposition activists, although the streets were quiet.

The combined opposition said it feared a military takeover of the islands to preserve Yameen’s grip on power. “The intimidation of the Supreme Court justices, with the highly irregular statement made by the attorney general defying the Supreme Court, supported by the two chiefs of the security forces, is tantamount to the effective sidelining of the judiciary and in direct contravention of the constitution,” it said in a statement. “Maldivians are fearful that President Yameen is about to order a full military takeover of the country, in an attempt to ensure he is not removed from office.” —Reuters

Greeks rally over ‘Macedonia row’

ATHENS: Tens of thousands of Greeks staged a mass rally in Athens yesterday, urging the government not to compromise in a festering name row with neighboring Macedonia. As a huge Greek flag flew over central Syntagma Square, Greeks from all over the country and abroad chanted “Hands off Macedonia”, “Macedonia is Greek” and “We won’t leave until we are vindicated”. Athens objects to Macedonia’s name, arguing it suggests that Skopje has claims to the territory and heritage of Greece’s historic northern region of the same name.

However, leftist Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has been considering a resolution to the 27-year-old dispute, angering many opposition members and his own nationalist coalition partners. Among those in the crowd was former premier Antonis Samaras—who was foreign minister when the name dispute began in 1991 — along with mayors, senior clerics and army officers. Organizers said they expected around a million participants on Syntagma Square.

“Macedonia is Greek and only Greek. They are trying to steal history. We all have to fight and let the world know,” said Allia Sarelis, a member of the Greek diaspora who flew in from the United States. Around 2,500 buses from northern Greece and two ships from Crete brought thousands of demonstrators, reports said. Police declined to give numbers.

Some protesters wore traditional garb, including the uniform of Greek guerrillas who fought Bulgarian bands and Ottoman forces in Macedonia in the early 20th century. “Thousands of Cretans have shed their blood for Macedonia,” a bearded Cretan protester told Skai TV. The protest—the second on the Macedonia issue in a fortnight—has been organized and funded by Greek diaspora groups, with the support of retired officer associations, cultural unions and church groups.



ATHENS: People demonstrate to urge the government not to compromise in the festering name row with neighboring Macedonia, in front of the parliament of Greece yesterday. —AFP

‘Don’t be intimidated’
Renowned Zorba the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis will be the keynote speaker despite battling health issues at 92. Theodorakis has trouble walking, but was galvanized after self-styled anarchists vandalized his home with red paint late Saturday. “I am calm and ready,” the resistance icon said after the incident, urging rally participants “not to be intimidated”.

Anarchists were planning a counter-protest nearby, with riot police deployed to keep the two crowds apart. Two weeks ago, tens of thousands had protested in Thessaloniki, the capital of Greece’s Macedonia region. Police had estimated the turnout at over 90,000, while organizers claimed at least 400,000 attended. The dispute has remained unresolved since the former Yugoslav republic’s independence in 1991.

Greece considers the name “Macedonia” to be part of its own cultural heritage, as the province was the core of Alexander the Great’s ancient empire. Athens seeks guarantees that the use of the name by its neighbor implies no claim to parts

of its own territory. The government has accused far-right hardliners and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party of trying to exploit the issue. Georgia Bitakou, a journalist and former fight promoter, insists the rally is non-political. “We are all patriots. There are no parties, no colours. Our only goal is to give a mandate to (state) representatives,” she said.

Boost Balkan stability
However, several opposition politicians have indicated they will attend to also protest the government’s tax-hiking policies. The government insists the rallies will not affect its determination to solve the issue and boost stability in the often tense Balkan region. Athens says it is ready to accept a composite name that will establish a clear distinction from Greek Macedonia. “The government is trying to give a patriotic solution to a problem that has troubled the country, its international relations and its diplomacy for over 25 years,” government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos said yesterday. —AFP

International

Russia pilot killed in Syria after warplane downed

Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham claims it shot down the plane

SARAQIB: A Russian pilot was killed Saturday in fighting with Islamists after his warplane was downed over north-west Syria, Russia's defense ministry and a monitor said. Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), a powerful jihadist-dominated alliance said, on an affiliated media channel it had shot down the plane but made no mention of the pilot. "We were able to bring down the Russian warplane with a shoulder-fired missile above Saraqib in Idlib this afternoon," said Mahmoud Al-Turkmani who, according to the statement, heads HTS's "air defense brigade." He said the attack was in retaliation for a ferocious bombing campaign by Russian warplanes over Idlib.

HTS, which is dominated by Al-Qaeda's former affiliate in Syria, controls Idlib and has sought to fight back a ferocious Russian-backed assault by Syrian government troops. An AFP correspondent who arrived at the crash site on Saturday saw what appeared to be the charred remains of the plane, including a wing with a red star still visible. Firefighters arrived to put out flames that had been spewing dark smoke into the wintry Syrian sky. The Russian defense ministry confirmed that the Su-25 aircraft was shot down over Idlib province and said the pilot was killed "in fighting against terrorists."



US 'deeply concerned'

Syria's uprising broke out in 2011 with protests against Assad's rule but has since morphed into a complex war drawing in global powers. Moscow began conducting air strikes in Syria in September 2015, and its intervention has swung the nearly seven-year conflict firmly in the favor of its ally in Damascus. Opposition factions have shot down Syrian regime planes in the past, but the downing of Russian aircraft is much rarer. Turkey shot down a Russian warplane in November 2015, leading to the worst crisis in ties between the two countries since the end of the Cold War. In August 2016, a Russian military helicopter was shot down over Syria, killing all five people on board.

Deadly fire on Turkish tank

Russia has been spearheading a more than year-long diplomatic push to try to freeze the fighting in coordination with fellow regime ally Iran and rebel backer Turkey. Ankara has supported an array of rebel groups to fight Syria's government, the Islamic State jihadist group, and Kurdish militia that it has blacklisted as "terrorists."

On January 20, Turkey and allied rebel fighters began an offensive on the Syrian enclave of Afrin, held by the



SARAQIB, Syria: A picture shows smoke billowing from the site of a downed Sukhoi-25 fighter jet in the Syrian city of Saraqib, southwest of Aleppo. — AFP

Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Seven Turkish soldiers were killed on Saturday as part of the assault, including five who died in a single attack on a tank, the Turkish army said. The losses mark the highest toll in a single day for the Turkish army in operation "Olive Branch." The Observatory has also counted 104 allied rebels and 102 YPG fighters killed since the offensive began, as well as 68 civilians.

Ankara has denied targeting civilians as part of its Afrin offensive. Mourners on Saturday gathered in Afrin to

commemorate victims of the operation, including female fighter Barin Kobani whose badly mutilated body appeared in a shocking video earlier this week. The footage sparked accusations by her family and Kurdish officials that she was "defiled" by Turkish-backed rebels. The opposition's government-in-exile said Saturday it had opened an investigation into the matter. Thousands of people protested on Saturday in France against Turkey's operation "Olive Branch," gathering in Strasbourg and Paris to condemn the assault. — AFP

Uncertainty rules one month before Italian elections

ROME: Italy heads to the polls next month to vote in a crowded general election against a backdrop of populist gains in Europe and the shadow of ex-leader Silvio Berlusconi still looms large. A hung parliament is widely expected, with no party looking likely to forge a majority, so a coalition in which the veteran former prime minister acts as "kingmaker" remains a distinct possibility.

Following Britain's Brexit vote in 2016 and the rise of the far-right in France, Germany and Austria last year, attention now turns to the populist surge in the euro-zone's third largest economy. Italy's ageing population, struggling economy, "brain drain" of skilled young graduates leaving in increasing numbers and the arrival of 630,000 migrants since 2014 have created fertile ground for the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and anti-immigration Northern League.

According to opinion polls, a coalition between Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia (Go Italy), the Northern League and the post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia (Italian Brothers) is in front with more than 35 percent ahead of the March 4 vote. It is followed by M5S, the leading single party, with 28 percent and the ruling centre-left Democratic Party (PD) with 25 percent in the polls, which show that millions of voters remain undecided. A new electoral law introduced last year bringing in a combination of proportional representation and first-past-the-post has made it difficult to predict the margin needed to take power, with experts saying it will fall somewhere between 40 and 45 percent.

The Comeback Kid

"The only one who can make it happen, from his hospital bed, is Silvio Berlusconi," said Roberto D'Alimonte, director of political science at Rome's LUISS University. The billionaire media mogul had to cancel a television



ROME: In this photo taken on Jan 18, 2018, Italian former prime minister and leader of center-right party Forza Italia (Go Italy) Silvio Berlusconi arrives to attend the TV show "Quinta Colonna". — AFP

appearance due to tiredness this week. The four-time prime minister, 81, is not able to run for office himself due to a tax fraud conviction and has suffered a series of scandals including his notorious "bunga bunga" sex parties as well as having open heart surgery in 2016. And yet the man they used to call the "Comeback Kid" is indeed back.

Ubiquitous on his television channels except for this week, Berlusconi is positioning himself as the right's kingmaker while presenting his party as a bulwark against the M5S. His party has allied itself with the Northern League, which was once openly secessionist but, under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, has shifted towards a nationalist, anti-euro and anti-immigration stance modeled on France's National Front. But despite seeming to embrace the League's proposal for a flat rate income tax of 23 percent earlier this month, Berlusconi has sometimes struggled to channel his fiery ally, who also wants to scrap a compulsory vaccination law.

Who will take the top job?

If the centre-right coalition wins the election, then manages the difficult task of forming a government, another question lingers—who would be prime minister? The ineligible Berlusconi has put forward the name of Antonio Tajani, the European Parliament's current president. League chief Salvini has not been shy about his ambition for the top job, and the head of Brothers of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, has suggested a woman might be appropriate.

But their coalition is likely to fall short of forming a government by itself, so the Italian media has evaluated the prospects for some other alliances. A mix of centrists and eurosceptics with a Go Italy and PD coalition? An anti-euro alliance of the M5S, the League and the Brothers of Italy? There are many possible combinations, but few seem close to grasping a majority. — AFP

Indonesian police quiz officers over transgender case

BANDA ACEH: Indonesian police said yesterday they would press ahead with an investigation into officers accused of publicly shaming transgender people in conservative Aceh province despite an angry protest against the probe. North Aceh police chief Ahmad Untung Surianata and several of his subordinates have been questioned by the police internal affairs unit following raids on beauticians' premises in which 12 transgender staff were detained. Officers were said to have forcibly cut the hair of some of them and made them wear male clothing and speak in a masculine voice.

Surianata said at the time that mothers had complained the transgender people were teasing their sons. "The investigation is still ongoing," Aceh police spokesman Misbahul Munawwar said. "If proven guilty of violating police conduct (rules), they may face disciplinary sanctions." Sanctions range from a written reprimand to suspension. The investigation into the raids sparked an angry protest last Friday amid

rising anti-LGBT sentiment in the province.

Prejudice against gay and transgender people has long been widespread in Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population. Parliament is set to pass a long-dormant bill to make sex outside marriage, including gay relations, illegal. The discrimination is particularly acute in Aceh on Sumatra island, the only province to be ruled by Islamic law since it was granted special autonomy in 2001. More than 100 people including Aceh governor Irwandi Yusuf and a lawmaker took to the streets in the provincial capital Banda Aceh last Friday in a show of support for Surianata.

Some beauty shops who employed transgenders have closed down while many beauticians were considering fleeing the province. "The current situation is very uncomfortable to us. We are now in fear," a 33-year-old long-haired transgender, who requested anonymity, told AFP Saturday at her beauty shop. "At the moment, I avoid leaving home at night, it's too scary." Nasir Djamil, the lawmaker who joined the protest on Friday, said: "LGBT is forbidden by Islam. We shall continue efforts to educate them (transgenders) because they are also our brothers."

Pictures showing a Hello Kitty doll being burnt by the protesters went viral but it was unclear why the character was tar-



NORTH ACEH: Police chief of North Aceh, Ahmad Untung Surianata (center) poses with Acehnese transgenders wearing male clothing following a raid in North Aceh. — AFP

geted. "I don't know why they used Hello Kitty. I was only invited to join the rally," Djamil of the Islamic PKS party said. Last month a Christian was publicly flogged for selling alcohol, making him only the third non-Muslim to suffer a public whipping under Aceh's Islamic law. Human rights

activists condemned the police raids on beauticians. "The authorities were arbitrarily targeting transgender people simply for who they are, despite them having committed no crime," Amnesty International Indonesia executive director Usman Hamid said in a statement. — AFP

News in brief

Iran minister blasts Trump

TEHRAN: Iran's oil minister lashed out at the United States yesterday, saying that hostile comments by President Donald Trump had torpedoed new oil and gas contracts for the Islamic republic. "Trump is trying to destabilize market conditions for those who want to work in Iran," Bijan Namdar Zanganeh told a press conference. "For the past year, every three or four months, he has destabilized the market. One cannot say that this is not without effect," he said. The agreement in July 2015 of a nuclear deal between Iran and world powers sparked keen interest among international investors keen to focus on the country's petroleum riches. But Trump's arrival in the White House a year ago, and his regular denunciations of the deal with Iran and the country in general, cooled their ardor. — AFP

Ship missing off W Africa

NEW DELHI: A tanker with 22 Indian crew members on board has gone missing off West Africa, officials said yesterday, in waters plagued by piracy. The Panama-registered MT Marine Express, loaded with 13,500 tons of petrol, had been anchored off the Benin city of Cotonou before authorities lost contact with the vessel on Thursday. "Our mission in Abuja (Nigeria) is in touch with the authorities in Benin and Nigeria for their help in locating the ship and is constantly monitoring the situation," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said. The Hong Kong-based Anglo-Eastern shipping company, which manages the tanker, said the last contact with the crew was made on Thursday. "Authorities have been alerted and are responding. Our top priority is the safety of the crew, whose families have been contacted," it said on Twitter. — AFP

Guinea holds elections

CONAKRY: Guinea began voting yesterday in the first local elections since the end of the era of military dictatorship following eight years of delays. The municipal council elections, originally scheduled for 2010, have been repeatedly delayed due to a lack of funds, political infighting and the 2013-2016 Ebola crisis. Failing schools, unemployment, electricity shortages and corruption allegations are all election issues in the West African country. "This is the first time I have voted for a mayor. I hope my candidate wins and puts in place his program to clean up our district, create employment and make our city safe," said taxi driver Simbaya Aboulaye Soumah in the capital Conakry. But some voters have vowed to stay at home. — AFP

Bangladeshi loses legs

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi farmer lost both legs when he stepped on a landmine reportedly planted by Myanmar security forces in a buffer zone between the two countries, officials said yesterday. The incident happened near the southern Bangladesh border town of Naikhongchhari on Saturday when Badiur Rahman crossed into the zone. "His cow strayed inside the Myanmar border in no-man's land. He accidentally stepped on a mine when he went there to fetch the cow," said Sarwar Kamal, a local government administrator. The 45-year-old was rushed to a local clinic and later moved to hospital in the southern port city of Chittagong. "His condition is very critical," said Marjia Khatun, a nurse. Bangladesh border officials accuse Myanmar security forces of planting mines along border areas. — AFP

International

US citizenship query could threaten the 2020 census

Underreporting - a longstanding problem

WASHINGTON: The United States is gearing up to conduct its next population census in 2020 but a thorny question on citizenship has ignited controversy even before it has begun. When the decennial national head-count gets under way, census takers may have to ask respondents if they are US citizens, which observers say would discourage some ethnic minorities from participating and undermine the accuracy of the data. Arturo Vargas, head of the NALEO Educational Fund, said surveys have shown as recently as September that test respondents are now experiencing “unprecedented fear of the US government.”

President Donald Trump took office on a nationalist anti-immigrant agenda, linking foreigners and migration to terrorism, crime and lost jobs. In his State of the Union address last month, he reiterated his pledge to cut legal immigration and beef up enforcement. In this heated environment, with frequent reports of immigrants tearfully torn from their families and deported, large segments of the population could refuse to participate in the census, out of fear authorities could use the information against them, critics say.

In December, the Justice Department kicked up a storm when it asked to have a question on nationality added to the survey conducted by the Census Bureau, which is a part of the Commerce Department. The Justice Department argued that citizenship information would help enforce the Voting Rights Act, however that law is aimed at prohibiting racial discrimination at the ballot box. Only US citizens are allowed to register to vote. But Trump has long claimed that millions of illegal immigrants voted in the 2016 presidential election, without providing proof.

“The Census Bureau is conducting a review of the DOJ request,” said Al Fontenot, associate director for Census programs. “We are focused on having the final list of questions submitted to the Congress by March 31st.” The debate over the questions and how they could affect response numbers is not just one of politics. Required by the Constitution, the census determines the number of seats allotted to each state in the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the US legislature. Stanford sociology Professor C. Matthew Snipp, the survey is “essential for American democracy.”

Many fear authorities could use info against them

Power balance in Congress

The population tally also impacts distribution of more than \$675 billion in annual federal funding for schools, hospitals, roads and public services, according to the Census Bureau. Underreporting in some communities is a long-standing problem. Analysts estimate that the 2010 Census undercounted Latinos by 775,000 people.

The problem could be worse this time. If minority populations, often concentrated in Democratic-leaning urban centers, do not fully participate, this could affect the balance of power in Congress. “States like Texas, California, Arizona that have large Hispanic populations could lose seats in Congress if there is a very large undercount,” Snipp said. And NALEO’s Vargas warned that making a major last-minute change to the questionnaire would sabotage the Census Bureau’s technical efforts to improve results and analysis. Vargas said an imprecise census also could have economic and financial impacts.

The change also could increase the cost, currently



CALIFORNIA: Right-wing ‘Patriot Picnic’ chant during a demonstration at Chicano Park on February 3, 2018 in San Diego. —AFP

estimated at \$15.6 billion, up from \$12.9 billion in 2010, due in part to the need for follow-up visits to convince members of the public to respond.

And businesses use the decennial survey to identify demographic trends and locate consumers and potential employees, allowing them to tailor planned investments,

plan for factories and retail outlets, and convince banks to provide financing.

In 2010, the Census counted 308.8 million Americans, an increase of 9.7 percent from 2000. According to the latest estimates, the US population has since risen 5.8 percent to 327 million.—AFP

News in brief

Train collision kills 2

WASHINGTON: At least two people were killed and 70 more were injured yesterday when a train carrying 147 people collided with a freight train in the eastern US state of South Carolina, local police said. The Amtrak train traveling between New York and Miami collided with the CSX freight train and derailed in Cayce, near Columbia, the state’s capital, at around 2:30 am yesterday. Amtrak said in a statement that the lead engine derailed along with some passenger cars. Eight crew members and 139 passengers were on board. The Lexington County Sheriff’s Department confirmed all passengers had been evacuated from the Amtrak train. Officials added that although 5,000 gallons of fuel spilled following the crash, there was no danger to the public. —AFP

Migrants bodies recovered

MADRID: Moroccan rescue services have recovered the bodies of around 20 migrants in the Mediterranean, a spokeswoman for the Spanish enclave of Melilla said yesterday. The bodies of the migrants, from sub-Saharan Africa, were spotted Saturday by a Spanish ship, which alerted the rescue services of both countries, the spokeswoman said. She added that “about 20” bodies were then recovered in Moroccan territorial waters. Moroccan authorities have yet to issue a figure. Late Saturday, a Spanish police patrol boat found one more body, which was taken to Melilla, a Spanish enclave bordering Morocco. Migrants are increasingly favoring the so-called western Mediterranean route to reach Europe, which involves making the sea crossing between north Africa and southern mainland Spain. —AFP

Snowfall hits Moscow

MOSCOW: At least one person died and several were injured after Moscow experienced its heaviest day of snowfall since records began, the city’s mayor and agencies said yesterday. Russia’s meteorological service said Moscow had seen more than half its average monthly snowfall in the space of 24 hours, with 43 centimeters blanketing the capital by Sunday morning, agencies reported. “One person died from a falling tree that hit an electric power line,” Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on his VKontakte social media page, adding that 360 trees had already been brought down by the extreme weather. “According to the latest information, five have been injured. Be careful. The forecast says the weather will get worse,” he later said via Twitter, warning of strong winds to come. Dozens of flights were delayed and several cancelled at the city’s airports. —AFP

Cyprus’s runoff poll

NICOSIA: Greek Cypriots headed back to the polls yesterday in a runoff presidential vote between an incumbent conservative pledging to re-energize talks at ending the island’s division, and a leftist opponent who accuses him of squandering chances of a deal. Yesterday’s ballot pits President Nicos Anastasiades, 71, against leftist-backed Stavros Malas, 50. Polling stations opened at 0500 GMT with exit polls giving a first snapshot of voting when they close at 1600 GMT. Results should be final a little over two hours after voting ends. Both candidates appealed for people to vote after a high abstention rate in the first round of 28 percent. “Don’t give up on the right to decide who the next president will be,” said Anastasiades. “Our country has problems and the input of all is needed, irrespective of who will win tonight,” he added. —AFP

Fishing in Croatia, Slovenia troubled water; row rages

SAVUDRIJA: For two decades Diego Makovac has made a trouble-free living fishing for sole in Piran Bay. But he now faces a flurry of Croatian and Slovenian patrol boats as the two countries fight over the water. Police vessels from the neighboring states escort Makovac’s boat as he lets out his nets under a grey winter’s sky speckled with seagulls. “I can no longer work peacefully... They are beside us non-stop. It’s stressful,” said the 48-year-old, one of dozens of Croatian fishermen from coastal settlements who work in the bay in the northern Adriatic Sea.

The dispute over Piran Bay—less than seven kilometers long and five kilometers wide—has poisoned ties between Croatia and Slovenia ever since they proclaimed independence from Yugoslavia nearly 27 years ago. In June last year, an international arbitration court allocated more than two-thirds of the disputed body of water to Slovenia. Croatia, whose coast stretches for 1,700 km, refused to accept the ruling. It wanted the maritime border to be drawn down the middle of the bay. But Slovenia, which has just 46 km of coastline, had argued its access to international waters was at stake.

‘Working here forever’

Relations between the two European Union members became further strained in December, when Slovenia began implementing the ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. This has not stopped Makovac and his colleagues fishing in “their” half of the bay. “This is our territorial sea. We’ve been working here forever,” said Daniele Kolec, head of a local fishing association. “Nobody can tell us that we cannot fish here any more. No chance!” Each time the fishermen sail out they inform the Croatian police, who accompany them for protection in patrol boats.

As Makovac sets off from his village of Savudrija and approaches the centre of the bay, a Slovenian police dinghy with flashing blue beacons rushes to warn him that he is entering “Slovenian territorial waters”. Makovac said that he



SAVUDRIJA, Croatia: Franka Makovac assists her husband as they prepare to lay out the nets while accompanied by a Croatian police patrol boat off Savudrija. —AFP

expected a Slovenian inspection boat to be there when he retrieved the net the next day, carrying officials who would take down his details for a fine. Both countries have begun issuing penalties for alleged “border violations” of up to 1,300 euros (\$1,600) for an individual and 41,000 euros for a company. On top of that is the risk of a collision on the water—“especially when it’s foggy,” Makovac’s wife, Franka, told AFP as she helped him cast out a net.

Awaiting acceptance

Slovenian fishermen with nets say they have so far remained cautious, sticking to one half of the bay to avoid problems and “work in peace.” “We allowed a third party to draw the border and what was done was done,” said fisherman Zlatko Novogradeec from the picturesque Slovenian port city of Piran, to the north of the bay. Novogradeec, a representative of small-scale Slovenian fishers, said that his colleagues would wait until Croatia accepted the ruling before extending their nets further. “It

will happen sooner or later, but it must happen eventually as a legal ruling has to be respected.” Croatia pulled out of the arbitration proceedings in 2014 following a phone-tapping scandal, in which a Slovenian judge from the tribunal and a Ljubljana official were recorded discussing tactics for a ruling favorable to Slovenia. The proceedings nevertheless continued. Both Croatian fishermen and the government in Zagreb say they have no intention of paying the fines now being imposed.

Whipped-up tensions

The Makovac family and their colleagues say their work in the bay—whose fish patterns they know well—is crucial to their earnings. Most of their catch is sole, which is exported to Italy. “This is our bread, our life,” said Franka, who would like to see a deal struck with the Slovenians so that they can fish together. “It’s all politics,” she said. Her view is echoed by many other Croatian and Slovenian citizens, who have long lived and worked side by side around the border area. —AFP

Singapore warns citizens, prepares for terror attack

SINGAPORE: Armed officers patrol a train station where television screens and giant posters warn of the threat from militants. Nearby, fake gunmen storm a shopping mall in one of many recent terror attack simulations. But this is not some war-ravaged country. It is one of the safest in the world, Singapore.

The wealthy island-state has a near-perfect record of keeping its shores free from terror, but as it prepares to host defense ministers from around Southeast Asia this week, it appears to have good reason to have prioritized stopping the spread of militancy in the region. The cosmopolitan financial hub, which was second only to Tokyo in The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Safe Cities Index in 2017, says it has been the target of militant plots for years, some stemming from its Muslim-majority neighbors, and that it’s a matter of ‘when’ and not ‘if’ militants will strike.

“Singapore continues to face a serious security threat from both homegrown radicalized individuals and foreign terrorists who continue to see Singapore as a prized target,” Singapore’s Ministry of Home

Affairs (MHA) said in response to e-mailed questions from Reuters. Singapore authorities say they have been a target of Islamic extremism since the 1990s, but efforts to deter terrorism have stepped up markedly in recent years with more frequent attacks on Western countries and after Islamic State (IS) militants briefly took over a town in the southern Philippines last year.

Raising further concerns about the threat to the island, a Singaporean soldier has featured on a number of Islamic State promotional videos, most recently in December where he was filmed executing men alongside other militants. In its inaugural Terrorism Threat Assessment Report released last year, the MHA said Islamic State has demonstrated that Singapore is “very much on its radar” and that the threat to the country remains “the highest in recent years” - claims that are backed up by security experts.

“Singapore, being known as safe and secure, makes it such a risk target,” said Dan Bould, Asia director of crisis management at professional services firm Aon and a former captain in the British army. “If there’s an attack in the Philippines, it may get half an hour in a 24-hour news cycle. An attack in Singapore with all the multi-cultural individuals operating here, will be within the narrative for a few days at least.” In early 2017, Aon lifted Singapore in the terrorism and political violence category of its annual risk map from negligible to low risk.

Mobile app

The reality is that Singapore has so far escaped the attacks seen in other major world cities like New York, London and Berlin in recent years. That’s why it is at the bottom of the 2017 Global Terror Index, with no reported terror-related attacks post 9/11. But three in four Singaporeans believe that it’s only a matter of time before the country experiences a terror attack, a poll by the local newspaper Sunday Times last year showed. Singapore authorities certainly do not want their citizens to be complacent. Everyone, including school children, is encouraged to download a mobile app that alerts them to emergency situations and allows them to send in videos and photos of suspicious events.

The MHA said that as of the end of last year, more than 1.3 million devices were equipped with the SGSecure app, a large chunk of the population of around 5.6 million. Simulations of terror attacks - including one just over a week ago where masked gunman stormed a children’s activity centre on the resort island of Sentosa - are regular. Last month, Singapore’s military undertook its biggest mobilization exercise in more than three decades, including an inter-agency response to the simulation of a gunman at its national stadium.

Authorities said last year there was reliable information that IS militants were considering carrying out an attack in Singapore in the first half of 2016, a threat which they said was countered. In August 2016, neigh-

boring Indonesia, which has the world’s largest Muslim population, arrested six suspects with links to IS who were accused of plotting rocket attacks on Singapore’s iconic Marina Bay Sands hotel. Malaysia, Singapore’s northern neighbor which also has a Muslim-majority, and Indonesia say thousands of their citizens sympathize with IS and hundreds are believed to have travelled to Syria to join the group. Regional security officials say many are returning home after reverses in the Middle East.

Hardline approach

Singapore takes a hardline approach to suspected radicals and Bilveer Singh, an adjunct senior fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, says it is one of the reasons behind its success so far. The most controversial measure at its disposal is its colonial-era Internal Security Act which allows for suspects to be held for lengthy periods without trial. The MHA said it currently has 20 people detained under the Act for “terrorism-related” activities, and since 2002 has held close to 90 for such activities. “ISA is a fantastic deterrent, and so far it has worked,” Singh said. Authorities have also deported scores of foreigners for suspected radicalism in recent years, and in October banned two popular Muslim preachers from Zimbabwe and Malaysia from entering the city-state, saying their views bred intolerance and were a risk to its social harmony.—Reuters

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In Russia, a long game for Navalny

It's puzzling that President Vladimir Putin of Russia is held in high regard by democratic leaders of every shade of politics. Alex Salmond, the nationalist former first minister of Scotland - who called for the impeachment of Britain's Tony Blair for crimes against humanity in Iraq - regards Putin as having restored Russian national pride. Gerhard Schroeder, former Social Democrat chancellor of Germany, celebrated his 70th birthday with the Russian president at a costly banquet in St Petersburg in April 2014.

In last year's French presidential elections, three of the candidates - Marine le Pen of the far-right, Francois Fillon of the center-right and Jean-Luc Melenchon of the far-left - also expressed admiration for Putin. Silvio Berlusconi, three times prime minister of Italy and now the favorite to win next month's parliamentary elections as leader of the right-wing coalition, is even closer to Putin than Schroeder, a relationship leaked U.S. dispatches say may have a mutually beneficial financial subtext.

Capping it all is the esteem in which President Donald Trump holds his Russian opposite number, one which has remained in spite of mounting evidence that Russia intervened in US and European elections. On Jan. 29, the Trump administration announced it was holding off on imposing additional sanctions on Moscow in spite of a new law passed by Congress. This affection seems to be a mixture of the US president's general approval of authoritarian leaders and a specific admiration of the Russian's determination to put Russia First - the posture Trump believes should be, and actually is (behind the cooperative rhetoric), universal for all national leaders.

Why should leaders who have led or aspired to lead democratic states have such pronounced admiration for Putin when evidence of dangerous, agreement-shattering and neo-imperialist behavior is so obvious? In part because they admire his concentration on national revival; in part because he offers access to Russian riches; in part because they see Russia as a potential ally.

Two senior US officials, both of whom had taken the lead in seeking to bring their country and Russia closer together in the post-Soviet age - Robert D Blackwill for George W Bush and Philip H Gordon for Barack Obama - wrote an essay last month in which they affirmed that a new Cold War had settled on the world. They did so because - as they described the charge sheet against Putin - "since Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, Moscow has invaded and annexed Crimea; occupied parts of eastern Ukraine; deployed substantial military forces and undertaken a ruthless bombing campaign in Syria to prop up President Bashar Al-Assad; significantly expanded its armed forces; run military exercises designed to intimidate eastern European governments; interfered in eastern European political systems; and threatened to cut off gas to the most energy-dependent European states."

Enemy

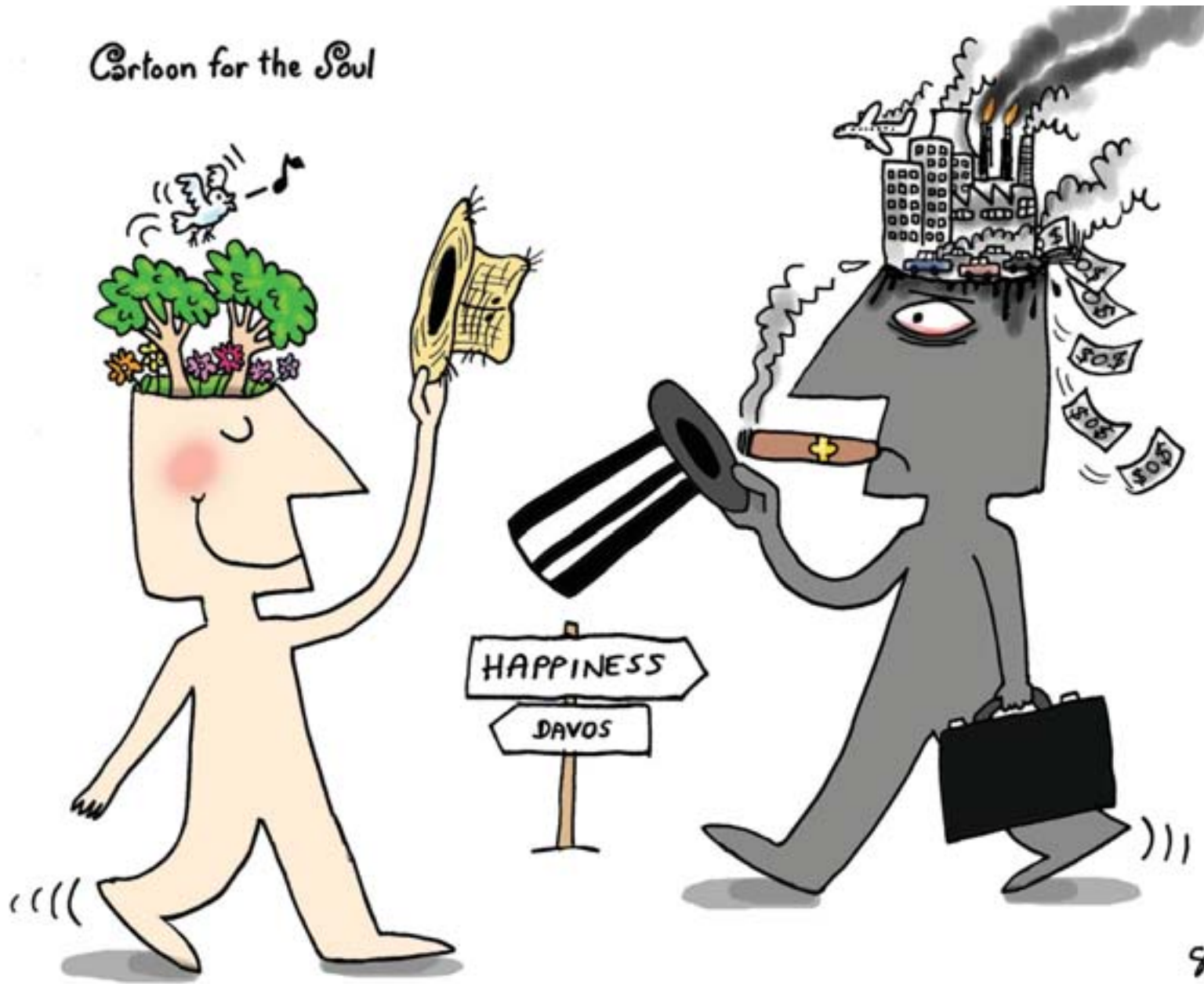
They note that Putin is "deeply hostile to democratic change anywhere near Russia, paranoid about what he believes to be US efforts to oust him, and resentful of American domination of the post-Cold War world." What they're saying is that if he talks like an enemy and acts like an enemy, he is an enemy.

And being an enemy, they argue, counter measures greater than the present sanctions must be taken. These include tougher controls over social media like Facebook, which has carried Russian political material; carrying out threats to release presently secret "embarrassing" information about Putin and his senior leaders; bolstering the US troops deployed under a NATO umbrella in Europe; imposing further sanctions on the country - no more investment, no more loans, no more visas for a longer list of public and private figures; arming Ukraine if Russia does not honor the 2015 Minsk II agreement on a ceasefire and blocking, as far as possible, the export of oil and gas from Russia to Europe and elsewhere.

Besides being hostile to democracy on his borders, Putin is deeply hostile to democratic change inside Russia, a posture that underscores the Russian power structure's fear of genuinely independent figures or institutions of civil society.

Nowhere, presently, is that more clear than in the determination with which the authorities now block the anti-Putin campaigner, Alexei Navalny, from taking part in Russia's March presidential election. Navalny would be very unlikely to beat Putin, but the influence on Russians of the 41-year-old lawyer spending weeks on the campaign trail to amplify his years-long struggle against high-level corruption is clearly not something Putin is willing to bear.

Navalny's the candidate, largely but not exclusively, of the young who are tech-friendly and willing to defy the restrictive laws on demonstrations. Although wholly barred from state-controlled TV channels except when shown under arrest, social media have provided him with a sturdy platform for his message. His anti-corruption video showing the extravagance of Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev's vast country estate has had more than 26 million views on YouTube since its publication in March 2017 and prompted thousands of his supporters to take to the streets in cities around the country last June. Navalny was initially more circumspect in meting out the same treatment to the popular Putin, but now attacks the president with equal vehemence. —Reuters



For Mideast peace, focus first on water

For the past 20 years, Israelis and Palestinians alike have approached peace negotiations with the flawed assumption that, in order to reach an agreement, all core issues must be solved simultaneously. As the conflict continues to claim victims on both sides, it's important to point out that when President Trump's Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, was looking for an early success in the new administration's peace efforts, he found it - in water.

For Palestinian communities that suffer water shortages and require Israeli approval to increase pumping of shared natural water resources, an agreement to increase water sales from Israel to the Palestinian Authority by 50 percent annually will dramatically improve lives and livelihoods without creating water shortages on the Israeli side.

This work to mediate peace through Israeli-Palestinian water sharing should be commended and continued. To ensure that the United States does not undercut its own efforts, the Trump administration must reevaluate some of its Middle East policies from a water security perspective. For example, the draft Taylor Force Act, which prohibits American aid to the West Bank and Gaza, does not exempt water programs. How might cuts to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) funding impact a water crisis in Gaza that is already severe? Any further reduction in Palestinian access to water could destabilize the region.

The United States clearly recognizes the importance of international water security, having recently released its Global Water Strategy, which coordinates the work of 16 US government agencies and private partners. The Israeli government recognizes water as a security issue as well, and that's a potential game-changer in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the Palestinian government, the priority is to increase water provision to meet basic needs, supporting economic growth as well as its aspirations for a state with the right to access and develop its own resources.

Israel is proud of its leading role in advancing technologies that can economically produce large quantities of drinking water from the salty Mediterranean. Today 70 percent of Israel's drinking water is produced through desalination and 85 percent of its wastewater is treated and reused to meet agricultural needs. Once-arid Israel no longer need suffer water shortages. A logical next step,

beyond water sales, would be to negotiate a fair allocation of the natural water resources that Israelis and Palestinians share, thus solving one of the core issues plaguing the peace process.

Shortsightedness

However, both sides have shortsightedly refused to negotiate over natural water reallocation, wanting any water deal to remain part of a negotiation on other final-status issues, like borders and refugees. Israeli politicians insist



Further cuts in Palestinian access to water could destabilize region

that a better water deal for the Palestinians must be matched by Palestinian compromises on refugees. Palestinian politicians argue that a fair water agreement would make the Israeli side look good, and say that they cannot afford to allow the need for a water deal to relieve pressure to resolve other issues. Both sides contend that, without also agreeing on borders and settlements, they will not know which natural water resources belong to whom.

These arguments ring hollow and, for both sides, the costs of continuing to hold water hostage are simply too high. Water, like money, is fungible. As long as all agree that negotiating over water rights involves cross-border waters (the Coastal Aquifer lies beneath parts of Israel and all of Gaza, the Mountain Aquifer underlies Israel and the West Bank, and the Jordan River shares borders) borders, settlements, refugees, and security arrangements are not issues that must be determined in advance of a water agreement.

The clock is ticking. Climate change, decreasing natural

waters, and increasing pollution are all taking their toll. In the West Bank, some 60 million cubic meters of untreated sewage pollute the Mountain and Coastal Aquifers, streams and the Mediterranean Sea annually. In Gaza, the flood of untreated sewage is so great that groundwater is no longer potable, and most beaches in Gaza and some in neighboring Israel have been forced to close. Twice, Gaza's sewage crisis has necessitated the shutdown of a nearby Israeli desalination plant, threatening the very technology that can ensure the region has enough water.

Lack of access to safe water and inadequate sanitation leads to the spread of preventable diseases, none of which recognize political borders, as untreated wastewater flows into cross-border streams and valleys, and the Jordan River. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed concern about the risk of an epidemic of cholera, or another infectious disease, in Gaza, and argued for the provision of more quality water in order to avoid public health, environmental and national security threats to Israel. The logic of leading peace through water diplomacy is further strengthened when one considers the broader instability of the region. Advancing regional water projects such as a master plan for the development of water and sanitation in the Jordan Valley, and an increased water trade that does not sacrifice water rights, present more opportunities to help stabilize the situation. Water scarcity was a causal element of the conflict in Syria and, now, with Syrian refugees flooding into neighboring Jordan, economic opportunities for both the refugees and the local population are paramount if we are to avoid further regional unrest. Water is required.

Clearly, the fair and efficient allocation of the region's fresh water could unlock an important path to greater stability. Conversely, the sustainability of any Middle East peace agreement will be compromised if water resources are not allocated fairly and managed efficiently. We urge the Trump administration to think outside the box and, in the interests of a more stable Middle East, to prioritize water projects. Israelis and Palestinians need a sustainable path to peace based on mutual respect and recognition. By advancing a policy that impacts every life, every day, we can restore hope in the possibility of peace, one glass at a time. —Reuters

Tiny Michigan town in water fight with Nestle

Global food conglomerate Nestle is in a battle with critics in tiny Osceola Township, Michigan where residents complain the Swiss company's water extraction techniques are ruining the environment. Maryann Borden, a retired teacher who has lived in the western Michigan town since 1953, has photos documenting changes in the Twin Creek River since Nestle began pumping water in the region in the early 2000s for its "Ice Mountain" brand of bottled water.

"It's not the same creek," Borden, 73, told AFP. "It's narrower and deeper and therefore warmer," compared with the "biting cold" water of her youth. "The trout can't survive in it because the water is warmer," she added. Located about four hours north of Detroit and with a population of just 900, Osceola Township is a sleepy rural community whose biggest employer is SpringHill Camp, a Christian-oriented program for kids.

The town opposes granting Nestle a permit to build a pumping booster station along a water pipeline that feeds a tanker load dock in Evart, another small town nearby. The booster station would help the company pump more water from a controversial Osceola County wellhead if the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality approves the project. Nestle wants to pump 400 gallons of water a

minute, up from the 250 a minute currently. Town officials voted in January to appeal a county court's ruling in Nestle's favor, portending a judicial saga. "If you look at the culverts, they provide an historic landmark," said Tim Ladd, manager of Osceola Township. "You don't have to be a geologist or a hydrologist to see those water levels," he added. "The water lake tables are lower today than what they were two years ago."

Nestle rejects this argument and also has some backing among supporters who praise the company for keeping water rates low. "There's been no measurable changes to the streams, the aquatic life there," said Arlene Anderson-Vincent, natural resource manager at Nestle Waters North America, who notes that dams in the area "can affect those streams". Nestle points to company-sponsored research that backs up its stance, but there has been no independent scientific review of the matter.

\$200 a year

Much of the anger in Osceola Township, that voted heavily for President Donald Trump in the 2016 US election, is due to a sense the town is being exploited by a powerful multinational blinded by profit. Nestle pays just \$200 a year to the state of Michigan to pump more than 130 million gallons (590 million liters) of water. Other US states have struck similar arrangements with big companies, authorizing them to pump as much water as they wish for a pittance as long as they build the infrastructure themselves. This includes the beverage giants Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, which sell water under the Dasani and Aquafina brands.



Evart city manager Zackary Szakacs walks along a drainage pipe as he tours one of the wells that Nestle Water uses to draw its water for bottling on Jan 11, 2018 in Evart, Michigan. —AFP

"Nestle has a reputation worldwide of going to poor rural communities, offering all kinds of economic benefits to the community that never really materialize, and taking as much water as they can get and when the stream runs dry they leave," said Peggy Case, president of the Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation. Nestle said it spends \$18 million a year in Michigan, including \$2.4 million in taxes in 2016. The company employs 280 people at its factory in Mecosta County, about 40 minutes away from Osceola Township where about 50 Nestle workers live.

Nestle is turning to Twin Creek River as

demand for bottled water rises. Wholesale bottled water sales hit a total of \$16.4 billion in 2016, surpassing soda sales of \$12.5 billion for the first time, according to the Beverage Marketing consultancy. Nestle's water brands in the US, which includes Poland Springs and Pure Life in addition to Ice Mountain, garnered 55.3 percent of the company's total worldwide water sales in 2016. Zackary Szakacs, city manager of Evart, credited Nestle with keeping water rates low in the region. The average income in Osceola Township is just \$20,000 per year, around the poverty level for a family of three. —AFP

No end in sight as Lebanon garbage mountains grow

BEIRUT: Arpi Kruzian has lived on the coastline east of Beirut for three decades. But now her balcony has a different view: a massive mound of trash rising on the Mediterranean. “This used to be the sea,” she said outside her home. “One day we looked out, we couldn’t see the sea.” Trucks and bulldozers have piled waste at a land reclamation site there since last year. “In the summer, we died from the stench,” she said. “You can’t control the smell...it seeps in from under the doors.” Landfills and dumpsites – many infamously known as “garbage mountains” – have mushroomed across Lebanon since the 1990s. The mess peaked in 2015 when the capital’s main landfill shut down, after running well beyond its expiry date.

Heaps of rubbish festered in the summer heat for months. Politicians wrangled over what to do, and the trash crisis of 2015 sparked a protest movement. It became a glaring symbol of a sectarian power system unable to meet basic needs like electricity and water. The government has since managed to get the waste off the streets and out of Beirut, partly through more landfills. But residents and environmentalists accuse it of failing to reach a permanent solution – warning of dire

consequences on the Mediterranean and public health.

Temporary fix

Last month, the cabinet agreed to expand two sea-side landfills at the outskirts of Beirut. Both had started as stop-gaps to resolve the 2015 crisis. “Lebanon seems to be addicted to these coastal landfills,” said Bassam Khawaja, Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch. “They cannot keep jumping from one emergency solution to the next ...It is remarkable that we don’t have a national law regulating waste.” Authorities have not conducted any studies on the environmental impact of the two dumps, near the Beirut airport and the Bourj Hammoud neighborhood, he said. The expansion will include a composting plant at the landfill by the airport – which Khawaja said would be “an important step if it actually happens”.

Lebanon has relied on a string of temporary fixes since an emergency waste plan in the late 1990s, after the end of its 15-year civil war, he said. The government has left local municipal councils to their own devices without the right resources or funding, especially outside the capital. For residents and activists, the mess stems from corrup-

tion and gridlock at the heart of government, where private firms allied to politicians routinely fight over lucrative contracts. A Human Rights Watch report in December said hundreds of unsanitary, makeshift dumps have spread across the country. The US-based group said 150 of them burn rubbish out in the open every week. Government officials have repeatedly banned open burning.

The environment ministry could not be reached for comment after repeated requests. The ministry has crafted an outline for a waste system that focuses on recycling and gradually closing dumpsites, which cabinet approved this month. Environment Minister Tarek Khatib says his office is fulfilling its duties. “We will launch a garbage plan in cooperation with the municipalities,” he said last week, when piles of refuse washed up on the shore north of Beirut. Photos circulated widely showed plastic bags and rot covering the beach after a storm. Officials have traded blame over such incidents in the run-up to parliamentary elections in May.

Landfill district

Over the past year, Joe Salem has watched the hill of

rubbish growing on the coast east of Beirut from his window. He gave the workers at his aluminum factory surgical masks and filled the place with air fresheners. “When a customer comes in, the smell of scum and dirt enters,” he said, pointing at the dumpsite behind the mall in the Dora suburbs. “We can’t open the windows. We spend our time with the rats,” Salem added. “It’s a catastrophe for the environment, for the people who live in the street.” But complaining to authorities is hopeless, he said. “People (object) and shut roads and do this and that. Nobody answers them.”

Another mound has also been rising at the edge of a runway at Lebanon’s only airport. In the summer, it sends a pungent smell along the highway, and sticks out in the view from the Costa Brava Beach Resort nearby. Residents say the facility, known as the Costa Brava landfill, has crippled economic activity and driven customers away from the beach. “The whole area has been affected,” said Khaled Hammoud, who owns a bakery a few hundred metres away. It makes no difference when the stench subsides in the winter. People have branded it “a landfill district, a district that stinks,” he said. “Nobody goes there.” — Reuters

Top court looks into Assembly...

Continued from Page 1

was not correct because it did not give the defendants the chance to present their defense. Defense lawyers are expected to request the court to free their clients pending the outcome of the trial. The court’s rulings are final.

In a related development, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem returned to Kuwait yesterday after talks with senior officials of the International Parliamentarians Union over complaints against the Assembly regarding the jailing of the two lawmakers. Ghanem said the Assembly will send an explanation of

Thurman details Weinstein attack...

Continued from Page 1

Weinstein “acknowledges making an awkward pass 25 years ago at Ms Thurman in England after misreading her signals, after a flirtatious exchange in Paris, for which he immediately apologized and deeply regrets,” his spokeswoman said in a statement received by AFP. “However, her claims about being physically assaulted are untrue... Mr Weinstein is saddened and puzzled as to ‘why’ Ms Thurman, someone he considers a colleague and a friend, waited 25 years to make these allegations public.”

Weinstein is reportedly in treatment for sexual addiction. Until now, he has insisted all his sexual encounters have been consensual. His lawyer Ben Brafman said Weinstein was “stunned and saddened”. Thurman’s comments to the Times “are being carefully examined and investigated before deciding whether any legal action against her would be appropriate,” Brafman said in a statement received by AFP. The actress had suggested mistreatment by Weinstein in an Instagram post last November when she said: “you don’t deserve a bullet – stay tuned.”

In the Times interview, Thurman also accused direc-

tor Quentin Tarantino – who has often referred to her as his “muse” – of forcing her to drive an unsafe car during filming of “Kill Bill,” leading to a serious crash. In footage posted by the Times, the actress is seen speeding down an unpaved road before crashing into a tree. Thurman is jolted and left dazed for several moments until crew members carry her away. “I felt this searing pain and thought, ‘Oh my God, I’m never going to walk again,’” she said. “Quentin and I had an enormous fight, and I accused him of trying to kill me.” Tarantino did not respond to requests by the Times for comment.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that the Assembly’s budgets committee recommended to refer the so-called interior ministry hospitality spending case to the public prosecution. The committee, which probed the issue, found that hospitality spending soared sharply from a few millions a year to well over KD 20 million last year.

The Salafist Alliance yesterday criticized the government’s bid to secure the approval of the Assembly for a new debt law allowing it to borrow up to KD 25 billion to meet the budget deficit. The alliance said such borrowing was in breach of Islamic sharia laws because it involves interest, and urged the Assembly to reject the law.

Miramax told her at the time that she could see the footage of the crash if she gave up her right to sue, Thurman said. She declined. “When they turned on me after the accident,” she said, “I went from being a creative contributor and performer to being like a broken tool.” Thurman said she has complex feelings about her experiences. “The complicated feeling I have about Harvey is how bad I feel about all the women that were attacked after I was,” she told the Times. “I am one of the reasons that a young girl would walk into his room alone, the way I did.”

But fellow actresses were quick to express support for Thurman on social media, with Reese Witherspoon describing her story as “deeply upsetting”. “Uma Thurman has seen the inside of our industry for 30yrs. I have great respect for her. She is a warrior,” added Jessica Chastain. — AFP

3,600 benefit from amnesty, 10,000...

Continued from Page 1

The ministry has contacted all related institutions to cooperate with it in simplifying the procedure for people who want to leave. “We have contacted the civil aviation directorate to request carriers to provide more seats for departing violators by giving them priority on their flights. But we have faced some obstacles, as many violators arrive with just a paper (temporary travel document) from their embassies with their photo but no data or civil number, which we need to enter in the system. So we have to take their fingerprints and get the results from the criminal evidence department. Taking these fingerprints is not for deportation, but to get their civil number or the unified number to be able to travel. This procedure should not take more than two days,” Twalah assured.

“Some violators come with children who were born

here without any documents, and we don’t know when or where the baby was born, as it wasn’t in a hospital. This is a great problem, as the mother has to prove it’s her child. Some of these children are already four or five years old. So we send them for blood tests, fingerprinting or other tests to prove the relationship. Some mothers were already in violation of the residency law during childbirth, so they didn’t get a birth certificate. But the hospital can issue a statement from the health ministry that she delivered without a certificate due to her situation,” explained Twalah.

The department receives statistics on violators weekly. “The top five countries whose nationals are in violation of residency laws are India, with over 32,000 violators (1,183 of whom have left); Egypt with 10,700 violators (647 have left); Philippines with 11,800 (366 have left); Bangladesh with 25,000 (280 have left); and Syria with 6,900 violators (235 have left or legalized their status),” he said. “Violators can visit any of the residency departments in Kuwait from 7:30 am to 2:00 pm. The department in Farwaniya is also working in the evenings from 2:00 pm to 7:30 pm, and during the amnesty, on Fridays and Saturdays too,” concluded Twalah.

Israel ‘legalizes’ rogue settlement...

Continued from Page 1

“We will not rest until we bring them to justice. And we shall bring them all to justice.”

Roger Kuby, Shevach’s father-in-law, told AFP the government move was “a small consolation, but an important gesture”. Mourners at Shevach’s funeral interrupted a speech by Education Minister Naftali Bennett of the far-right Jewish Home party with calls for “revenge”. Bennett responded by saying that the only revenge should be in building more settlements, and Netanyahu said yesterday that was one of the planks of his policy. “Anyone who thinks that through the abominable murder of a resident of Havat Gilad, a father of six, they would break our spirits and weaken us is making a bitter mistake,” he said.

Settlement watchdog Peace Now, however, said that retroactively granting legal status to Havat Gilad, built without development plans or construction permits, was “cynical exploitation” of Shevach’s death. Israeli settle-

ments are seen as illegal under international law and a major obstacle to peace as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

But Israel differentiates between settlements it has approved and those it has not. Those without approval are referred to as outposts and tend to be populated by hardline religious nationalists who see the entire West Bank as part of Israel. Past attempts by Israeli authorities to dismantle Havat Gilad have led to clashes with settlers there.

Israel has several times given retroactive approval to outposts, and last year work began on the first completely new government-sanctioned settlement built in the Palestinian territories in quarter of a century. Israel faced sharp criticism from the administration of former US president Barack Obama over settlement construction, but that has not been the case with Trump’s White House. Israeli officials have sought to take advantage of this.

Trump’s declaration of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital on Dec 6 was also hailed by Israelis, while deeply angering the Palestinians who also see the city as their capital. European officials and UN bodies have maintained their strong opposition to settlement building as well as the long-standing consensus that the status of Jerusalem must be negotiated. — AFP



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Aces high as Vonn keeps cards up her sleeve for Olympics next week

Lindsey says her rivalry with Goggia motivates her

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN: Lindsey Vonn is keeping a few cards up her sleeve for the Olympics, which start next week, despite bidding to chalk up her 81st World Cup win yesterday. She is the woman to beat in the women's downhill race in Garmisch-Partenkirchen yesterday-the final World Cup tune-up before the Winter Olympics open on Thursday.

On Saturday, the US ski queen completed her hat-trick of back-to-back downhill wins in Garmisch to leave her with 80 World Cup career wins. Having already won on the German piste in 2016 and 2017, Vonn, 33, clocked 1min 12.84sec, just 0.02 secs faster than World Cup downhill leader Sofia Goggia, who finished second.

Vonn will again go flat out, hoping for a fourth straight downhill win in the Bavarian Alps, but the Olympics remain her focus having missed the Sochi 2014 Games with a knee injury. "I think I skied a solid line, in some places I could have done more, but I am not looking to risk everything right now," said Vonn after Saturday's World Cup win.

"I skied aggressively-don't get me wrong-but I didn't leave all the cards on the table. "I'll hold those aces for the Olympics-

they are up my sleeve still." The women's Olympic alpine programme starts with the giant slalom on February 12 while the downhill-the blue-riband event-is on February 21.

Vonn wants more medals after taking downhill gold and Super-G bronze at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Her career stats — 80 World Cup wins, including 41 downhill victories-are impressive given her recent

“ I think I skied a solid line, in some places ”

injuries. She fractured her arm in November 2016 having broken her ankle the previous August.

NEW RIVALRY

The American says her rivalry with Goggia motivates her and she lies just 43

points behind the Italian in the downhill rankings before the race. Vonn battled Maria Hoefl-Riesch on the World Cup circuit before the German retired in 2014.

"I always had this with Maria, you push each other and respect each other, it's almost the same with Sofia, she has also had a lot of injuries," said Vonn. "When she is at the start, she always gives 110 percent-just like me. "It's all or nothing with her-I like that. She is a good person and works hard. We need a personality like that on the World Cup circuit.

"When she is at the finish with the fastest time, then I know I have to give my all to beat her." Vonn flies to Korea on Wednesday and is mentally racing the Olympic course every day to prepare. Goggia narrowly beat Vonn into second place in both the downhill and Super-G test events last March on the Jeongseon course where Olympic medals will be decided. "Sofia won the two test events in Korea and now it's time for a change," said Vonn.

"Everyday, before I go to bed, I run through the course once or twice in my mind. "It was the same before Vancouver-I was ready then and I am ready now for Korea." — AFP



GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN: Lindsey Vonn of the US celebrates after winning the Ladies' Downhill event at the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, southern Germany, yesterday. Lindsey Vonn chalked up her 81st World Cup win to complete the downhill double at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the final races before the Winter Olympics. — AFP

Ligety back against the odds to defend giant slalom crown

PYEONGCHANG: Against all the odds, reigning Olympic giant slalom ski champion Ted Ligety is grasping the chance to defend his crown after battling back from knee and back injury. "I want to be where I was at my peak," Ligety said ahead of the February 9-25 Pyeongchang Winter Games. "I feel good about my skiing. I'm just not sure where my speed is."

The 33-year-old American has won three world titles and five World Cup crowns in giant slalom after taking his first Olympic gold medal in 2006 in the combined event.

But Ligety hasn't won a World Cup race since October 2015 at the season opener in Sölden, Austria. In January 2016 he tore his right anterior cruciate knee ligament and missed the remainder of the season. He returned in late 2016 but struggled with back pain and last January underwent back surgery, having a microdiscectomy on two vertebrae in his lower back. "I was having shooting pain from my ass to my ankle," Ligety said. "The back surgery was even more frustrating. "I probably saw 10 different doctors and a lot of them were super anti-surgery. I was choosing something major to fix it but sometimes it's the right option."

ON THE PODIUM

Ligety was back training by last April and enjoyed World Cup finishes of fifth in Italy and seventh at Beaver Creek on home snow in December before finally standing on the podium

again with a third placed finish in Garmisch just one week ago.

Missing two seasons of wear on his body has enabled Ligety to ponder extending his career to the point where he might attempt a fifth Olympic berth in 2022 at Beijing. "I want to ski as long as I'm healthy and ski fast," he said. "I'd be 37. That's not impossible. I think there's the ability of skiing that much longer and I'm a dad now. He'd only be four years old. He's still packable." Son Jax was born last year and has lightened Ligety's load during his comeback fight.

"Playing around with him and trying to make him laugh is fun," he said. Ligety, the first American male ski racer with two Olympic gold medals, became the youngest US man to take alpine gold with his Turin combined title 12 years ago, an early career success that changed his outlook. "It gives you a different perspective for one thing," Ligety said. "Faith is a more important thing. Your perspective changes a little bit. You don't have to try and be a great ski racer but it gives you a greater sense of importance during training. You have something great to get back." He almost had to get back his Sochi gold medal before finding it in a search at his parents' home. "My parents have it hidden away somewhere," Ligety said. "My dad lost it for six months. We rummaged through the house and eventually we found it. Where? His secret hiding place." —AFP



Ted Ligety

Tournament of late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Tournament of the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah concluded on Saturday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex in the presence of representative of the tournament Sheikh Abdallah Khalid Fahad Al-Sabah, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Mohammad Mustafa Karam, and Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Misfer Al-Ghurba.

The tournament lasted for three days with the participation of club, National Guard and Sheikh Saad Academy shooters in the skeet, trap and double trap events.

Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba said in the club's speech that the tournament enjoyed a large participation of shooters who competed and achieved good results, in this tournament which the club is keen to organize every year.

He said that KSSC takes the opportunity to congratulate HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Kuwait people on the occasion of the national days.

Al-Ghurba concluded his speech by thanking the family of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for their continued support of this tournament.

Results of the tournament were as follows:

- Skeet Men:** Mohammad Al-Daihani, Saud Habib, Abdullah Al-Rashidi
- Skeet Women:** Eman Al-Shamma, Afrah Adel, Fatima Al-Zaabi
- Trap Men:** Abdelrahman Al-Faihan, Talal Al-Rashidi, Marzouq Al-Waalan
- Trap Women:** Asmaa Al-Qatami, Shahad Al-Hawal,



The men and women winners

- Skeet Juniors:** Ahmad Al-Awwad, Hamad Al-Ablani, Hamad Al-Azmi
- Trap Juniors:** Yousuf Al-Rashidi, Yousuf Al-Mutairi, Faris Al-Mutairi
- Double Trap Men:** Saad Lafi, Jarrah Al-Shuwaier, Mishal Al-Zafiri.

Japan ski jump queen grapples Olympic demons

PYEONGCHANG: Haunted by the memory of her Olympic heartbreak four years ago, Japan's ski jumping superstar Sara Takanashi has a point to prove in Pyeongchang. But despite being the most successful female ski jumper of all time, the 21-year-old must break a perplexing slump in form that stretches back almost a year in order to banish her demons.

Takanashi has been stuck on 53 World Cup wins-the most by any woman in the history of the sport-since last March, and on recent form Norway's Maren Lundby and Katharina Althaus of Germany are tipped to contest the gold medal. One more World Cup victory will see Takanashi overtake Austrian Gregor Schlierenzauer and claim an unprecedented win total-male or female. However, the pressure to break that record appears to have upset Takanashi's preparations as she attempts to avenge her flop at the 2014 Sochi Games, when the hot favourite slumped to fourth behind gold medallist Carina Vogt of Germany as women's ski jumping made its Olympic bow.

Once again Takanashi, Japan's flag bearer at the Pyeongchang opening ceremony on February 9, comes into the Olympics as World Cup holder, having last year captured a record fourth title that put her level with Matti Nykanen and Adam Malysz.

But it is hard to look past Lundby and Althaus in the women's field, while Takanashi once again finished outside the top three at the weekend in her final World Cup appearance in Slovenia. "I missed a podium but the gap in score wasn't that big," insisted Takanashi, who will need to produce something special in South Korea to avoid further pain.

"There were a lot of positive takeaways and I'll be aiming for gold in Pyeongchang," added the native of Japan's rugged northern island of Hokkaido. "I want to pay my debts for what happened in Sochi."



Sara Takanashi

CULT HERO KASAI

While Takanashi shoots for gold, fellow Japanese jumper Noriaki Kasai is set to become the first athlete to compete at eight Winter Olympics. The 45-year-old, who made his Olympic debut at Albertville in 1992, won team silver at Lillehammer in 1994, plus silver for the large hill and team bronze at Sochi in 2014 — making him the oldest Olympic ski jumping medallist.

"I never thought I'd be selected eight times," said Kasai, who has 17 individual World Cup victories to his name. "I'd like to aim for 10 Olympic Games eventually. I want to medal in Pyeongchang in possible, give everything I have and leave with no regrets."

The mild-mannered Kasai is something of a cult hero in countries which embrace a sport where hardy competitors launch themselves off the side of a mountain and fly the length of a football field at 60mph (96kph). —AFP

Patriots, Brady eye records vs underdog Eagles in Super Bowl

Brady will become the oldest non-kicker to play in the showpiece

MINNEAPOLIS: Tom Brady and the New England Patriots will have a slew of records in their sights yesterday as they aim to defend their Super Bowl crown against a Philadelphia Eagles team chasing a first ever win. Brady, 40, will become the oldest quarterback in history to win the Lombardi Trophy if he successfully leads the Patriots to a record-equalling sixth title.

A sixth title for Brady would also give him more Super Bowl rings than any other player in history. Win or lose, Brady will become the oldest non-kicker to play in the showpiece, 16 years after guiding the Patriots to his first Super Bowl crown in 2002.

More than 100 million households in the United States are expected to tune in for Brady's latest tilt with Father Time, ending a tumultuous NFL season rocked by player protests and a feud with President Donald Trump. Trump triggered a furious backlash across the NFL last September after disparaging mostly African-American players who refused to stand for the national anthem in a protest against social injustices. Advertisers are expected to steer clear of politically-charged TV ads, in contrast to last year, when issues such as immigration and women's rights were tackled.

Pop star Justin Timberlake, who headlines the halftime show, will also aim to avoid controversy, 14 years after the TV-watching nation were scandalized by Janet

Jackson in the "Nipplegate" furore.

A crowd of around 66,500 will huddle under the covered roof of the US Bank Stadium, while Minneapolis shivers in the forecasted sub-zero temperatures. Temperatures at kick-off, at 5.30pm local time (2330 GMT), are expected to be three degrees Fahrenheit (-16 Celsius) - the coldest Super Bowl in history.

BRADY LOOKS TO FUTURE

The finale comes one year after Brady inspired New England to the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, when the Patriots overturned a 28-3 third-quarter deficit to beat the Atlanta Falcons 34-28 in

overtime. Since then the veteran quarterback has shown no signs of being on the wane.

On Saturday, he became the oldest recipient of the NFL's Player of the Year award, the third time he has won the honour. It

follows a season in which Brady threw for 4,577 yards and 32 touchdowns with eight interceptions. Brady, who will be playing in his eighth Super Bowl, has shown no interest in savouring the accolades or reflecting on his place at the very top of the NFL's pantheon.

"I don't think much about legacy, I never have," he told reporters. "My motivation comes from just trying to be the best I can be for this team. What's happened in the past is great, but it's not going to win us anything this weekend."



MINNEAPOLIS: Fans make their way through Nicollet Mall during the Super Bowl Live event on Saturday in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Super Bowl LII will be played at US Bank Stadium between the New England Patriots and the Philadelphia Eagles. — AFP

UNDERDOGS TO BITE?

Lying in wait for Brady and head coach Bill Belichick are an Eagles team who powered into the Super Bowl with a 38-7 rout of the Minnesota Vikings. The Eagles sealed their place thanks to a dazzling display from quarterback Nick Foles, the back-up who was thrust into the starting position after an injury ended Carson Wentz's season in December.

Foles, 29, was only 16 when Brady was

winning his third Super Bowl ring, against the Eagles in 2005. If there is a gulf in experience between Brady and Foles, a chasm separates Belichick and Eagles counterpart Doug Pederson. Belichick 65, has won seven Super Bowl rings, two as an assistant with the New York Giants and five as head coach with the Patriots, in a career spanning five decades.

Pederson, 50 and only two years into his first head coaching job, was coaching a

high school team in Louisiana when Belichick won his fifth Super Bowl in 2005.

Pederson, however, says the Eagles are embracing the role of underdogs. Some of his players have even taken to wearing latex dog masks during their postseason. "I've been an underdog my whole career, my whole life," Pederson said. "I think that's the mentality of our football team. I think that's the mentality of our city, and I'm OK with that." — AFP

Brady wins MVP award on eve of Super Bowl

MINNEAPOLIS: New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady became the oldest winner of the National Football League's Player of the Year award on Saturday, winning the honour for the third time on the eve of his eighth Super Bowl appearance.

The 40-year-old superstar, who will attempt to win his sixth Lombardi Trophy against the Philadelphia Eagles, enjoyed another dazzling season as the Patriots talisman. Brady threw for 4,577 yards this season for 32 touchdowns and only eight interceptions.

Brady could become the oldest quarterback in history to win the Super Bowl if he is able to steer the Patriots past the Eagles at US Bank Stadium. In other awards Saturday, the Los Angeles Rams earned recognition for their stellar turnaround year, picking up three top honours. Rams head coach Sean McVay-the youngest head coach in NFL history at 31 was named coach of the year for transforming the California outfit into the league's most potent offense after a 4-12 season in 2016.

The Rams won the NFC West championship for the first time since 2003 before being eliminated in the playoffs. Rams running back Todd Gurley picked up the offensive player of the year award



Tom Brady

following a season which saw him rack up 2,093 running and receiving yards with 19 total touchdowns. Rams team-mate Aaron Donald was named defensive player of the year. New Orleans Saints running back Alvin Kamara was named rookie of the year following a dazzling debut season. Kamara finished the year with 14 touchdowns and 1,554 yards from scrimmage. He was only the second rookie in history to post five rushing touchdowns, five receiving touchdowns and a kick-off return touchdown in the same season. — AFP

Rockets rout Cavs, Nuggets rally past Warriors

LOS ANGELES: Chris Paul finished with 22 points and 11 assists as the Houston Rockets became the latest team to pummel LeBron James' struggling Cleveland Cavaliers with a 120-88 win on Saturday. The Rockets did it without a big night from James Harden who finished with 16 points, while on the other side James had just 11 points and didn't play at all in the fourth quarter with the game out of reach. Harden has been averaging 31 points a game this season for the Rockets, who won their fourth consecutive game and their 11th in their last 13. Ryan Anderson stepped in with 21 points.

Since losing at Golden State on Christmas Day, Cleveland have been humiliated in several matchups against top level NBA clubs. They lost by 28 at Minnesota, 34 in Toronto, 24 at home to Oklahoma City and now by 32 to the Rockets.

The Cavaliers looked nothing like the team that has made it to the last three NBA finals. "I'm lost for words," James said. The defending Eastern Conference champs played their second game without injured all-star forward Kevin Love, who suffered a broken left hand earlier this week and could be out for two months.

Isaiah Thomas scored 12 for Cleveland, who have lost 12 of 18 and don't seem to have any answers on the floor for what ails them. "They should take us off every nationally televised

game for the rest of the season," said James. "We haven't played good at all and we get our butts kicked every time we play on national television, so I'm at a loss for words." In Denver, Nikola Jokic scored 19 points and added nine rebounds as the Nuggets came from behind to beat the Golden State Warriors 115-108. Denver rallied from a 12-point deficit in the second half to hand the Warriors their second loss in three games.

"For us to come and get the defending world champs was huge," said Denver's Gary Harris, who tallied 16 points. Will Barton had 25 points and Harris 16 for the Nuggets, who split the four games with Golden State this season. Kevin Durant scored 31 points and Stephen Curry had 24 for Golden State. "They hit some shots tonight," Durant said. "We made plays but down the stretch we couldn't get it done."

PISTONS COME UP CLUTCH

In Detroit, Andre Drummond had 23 points and 20 rebounds and Ish Smith tallied a season-high 25, including a clutch triple in the final minute, as the Detroit Pistons beat the Miami Heat 111-107.

Blake Griffin helped offset a poor shooting night by making a key three pointer with 44 seconds remaining in the fourth. The 28-year-old Griffin, who spent all eight NBA seasons with the Los Angeles Clippers before being traded to the Pistons on Monday, missed his first five shots from beyond the arc before making one in the final minute. He finished six-of-19 from the field with 16 total points. The Pistons won their third straight game since the trade and are 2-0 with Griffin in uniform as they pulled within a game of .500 with a 25-26 record on the season. Goran Dragic scored 33 points for the Heat, who have lost three in a row. — AFP

Lakers, Tahreer win openers in wheelchair basketball tourney



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Lakers and Tahreer teams were the winners of the opening matches of the first local wheelchair basketball tournament organized by Kuwait Handicapped Club.

Lakers defeated Aboudka 62/42, as the Lakers had control from the onset and kept a large margin due to the outstanding performance of the national team star Yousuf Khalaf, despite of the captain of the national team Essa Al-Fadhly being on the other side.

The second match saw Tahreer defeating the Olympian due to 43/39, as the match was competitive and was only decided in the fourth quarter.

KHC treasurer, President of the Asian Handicapped Basketball Association Saad Al-Azmaa lauded the high technical level in the tournament as well as the performance of the national team players. He said the tournament is important as the national team is preparing for the West Asia tournament to be held in Jordan and the 2018 Asiad to be held in Jakarta.



NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 113, Chicago 103; Detroit 111, Miami 107; Indiana 100, Philadelphia 92; Washington 115, Orlando 98; Houston 120, Cleveland 88; Minnesota 118, New Orleans 107; Utah 120, San Antonio 111.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Boston	38	15	.717	-	Minnesota	34	22	.607	-
Toronto	35	16	.686	2	Oklahoma City	30	23	.566	2.5
Philadelphia	25	25	.500	11.5	Portland	29	23	.558	3
New York	23	30	.434	15	Denver	28	25	.528	4.5
Brooklyn	19	34	.358	19	Utah	24	28	.462	8
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	30	21	.588	-	Golden State	41	12	.774	-
Indiana	30	24	.556	1.5	LA Clippers	26	25	.510	14
Milwaukee	28	23	.549	2	LA Lakers	20	31	.392	20
Detroit	25	26	.490	5	Phoenix	18	35	.340	23
Chicago	18	34	.346	12.5	Sacramento	16	35	.314	24
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	30	22	.577	-	Houston	38	13	.745	-
Miami	29	24	.547	1.5	San Antonio	34	21	.618	6
Charlotte	22	29	.431	7.5	New Orleans	28	24	.538	10.5
Orlando	15	36	.294	14.5	Memphis	18	33	.353	20
Atlanta	15	37	.288	15	Dallas	16	36	.308	22.5



India cruise to victory as Chahal puts South Africa in a spin

India take 2-0 lead in six-game series

SCOREBOARD	
CENTURION, South Africa: Final scores in the second one-day international between South Africa and India at SuperSport Park yesterday.	
South Africa	
H.Amla c Dhoni b Kumar	23
Q.de Kock c Pandya b Chahal	20
A.Markram c Kumar b Kuldeep Yadav	8
J.Duminy lbw b Chahal	25
D.Miller c Rahane b Kuldeep Yadav	0
K.Zondo c Pandya b Chahal	25
C.Morris c Kumar b Chahal	14
K.Rabada lbw b Kuldeep Yadav	1
M.Morkel lbw b Chahal	1
Imran Tahir b Bumrah	0
T.Shamsi not out	0
Extras (w1)	1
Total (32.2 overs)	118
Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Amla), 2-51 (De Kock), 3-51 (Markram), 4-51 (Miller), 5-99 (Zondo), 6-107 (Duminy), 7-110 (Rabada), 8-117 (Morkel), 9-118 (Tahir)	
Bowling: Kumar 5-1-19-1, Bumrah 5-1-12-1, Pandya 5-0-34-0, Chahal 8.2-1-22-5, Kuldeep Yadav 6-0-20-3 (1w), Jadhav 3-0-11-0.	
India	
R.Sharma c Morkel b Rabada	15
S.Dhawan not out	51
V.Kohli not out	46
Extras (lb1, w6)	7
Total (1 wkt, 20.3 overs)	119
Fall of wicket: 1-26 (Sharma)	
Bowling: Morkel 4-0-30-0 (3w), Rabada 5-0-24-1 (1w), Morris 3-0-16-0 (1w), Imran Tahir 5.3-0-30-0 (1w), Shamsi 3-1-18-0	
Did not bat: A. Rahane, M. Dhoni, K. Jadhav, H. Pandya, B. Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, J. Bumrah, Y. Chahal.	
Result: India won by nine wickets	
Series: India lead the six-match series 2-0	

PRETORIA: Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal took career-best figures as India cruised to a thumping nine-wicket One-Day International victory over a woeful South Africa yesterday, though their moment of triumph was reduced to a farce by the umpires.

Aleem Dar and Adrian Holdstock stuck to the rules and called for a lunch break with the tourists needing just two runs for victory at Centurion. That ensured the final act was played out 40 minutes later in front of a sparse crowd, a decision that left both teams bemused.

Chahal finished with 5-22 in 8.2 overs, ripping through the middle-order as India won the toss and



Moment of triumph was reduced to a farce by the umpires

skittled their hosts for 118, South Africa's lowest total in home ODI matches. India then reached the victory target in 20 overs to humiliate their hosts.

After victory in the opening match of the six-game series in Durban, India always looked in control of the chase as opener Shikhar Dhawan (51 not out from 56 balls) and captain Virat Kohli (46 not out from 50 balls) made light work of the home attack.

The third match in the series will be played in Cape Town on Wednesday. The decision to call for lunch with the game all but over will be the major talking point to come out of the match, but it should not overshadow what was a dominant display from a highly impressive Indian unit.

Left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav also recorded his career-best figures of 3-20 in six overs as South Africa slipped from 51 for one to lose their last nine wickets



CENTURION: Indian batsman Shikhar Dhawan plays a shot during the second day of the One Day International (ODI) cricket match between South Africa and India at the Centurion cricket ground yesterday in Centurion, South Africa. — AFP

for 67 runs. "The spinners were outstanding, it was a hard surface so they were getting pace and bounce off the wicket as well," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

"We want to play positive cricket and take the opposition on. We know their middle order is inexperienced and we want to cash in on that."

SOFT OPTIONS

The home side were captained by 23-year-old Aiden Markram in just his third ODI game with both experi-

enced batsmen Faf du Plessis and AB de Villiers missing with finger injuries. They made a cautious start, losing their first wicket two balls shy of 10 overs with just 39 on the scoreboard as Hashim Amla (23) was dismissed.

The introduction of the spinners proved the catalyst for South Africa's collapse, with Chahal picking up the wickets of innings top-scorers JP Duminy and debutant Khaya Zondo, who both scored 25. "There were a couple of soft options (shots), starting with myself, so I am going to have to lead from the front and do better going forward," Markram said. — Reuters

Germany win Davis Cup tie against Australia

BRISBANE: German number one Alexander Zverev beat Nick Kyrgios in straight sets to give his country a 3-1 win over Australia in their Davis Cup World Group tie in Brisbane yesterday. Zverev produced some superb tennis to down Kyrgios 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 in one hour, 48 minutes and put Germany into a quarter-final against either Spain or Great Britain.

"(To win) against a very strong Australian team makes us very confident for the next round, for the upcoming years," German captain Michael Kohlmann said. "We showed we have a lot of good players, a lot of strong players.

"We showed that we are able to go further than this." Zverev served beautifully throughout, only facing two break points in the match, both at the end of the second set and both of which he saved.

He also returned well, getting many of Kyrgios's thunderbolts back in play and then winning the battle from the back of the court. "It's awesome, it's an amazing feeling and without my teammates it wouldn't have been possible," Zverev said.

"Obviously we're happy but hopefully this is just the beginning for us." Kyrgios went into the match full of expectation after an impressive win over Jan-Lennard Struff in Friday's opening singles. Zverev, on the other hand, had looked out of touch on Friday and was pushed for almost four hours before seeing off 18-year-old Alex de Minaur in five sets.

But following the Germans' win in the doubles on Saturday to give them a 2-1 lead, all the pressure was on Kyrgios, who had to win to keep the tie alive. The mercurial Australian opened brilliantly, holding his serve to leave much to the delight of the boisterous home crowd.

But that was almost as good as it got for the Australian team, as Kyrgios lost two of his next three service games to surrender the opening set in just 23 minutes. Kyrgios appeared troubled by an elbow problem in the first set and it became more noticeable in the second, the Australian often shaking his right arm between points.

He served better in the second set, firing down eight aces, but at 4-3 he had a medical timeout for treatment on his arm. The Australian continued to serve well and had two set points on Zverev's serve at 6-5, but the German saved both then played a superb tiebreak to take a stranglehold on the rubber.

Once Zverev broke to go ahead 3-1 the result was never really in doubt and at 2-5, Kyrgios was broken again to give Germany the tie. Kyrgios said he felt a problem with his elbow after Friday's match.

"It obviously affected me a lot," a downcast Kyrgios said. "My serve is my biggest strength-I mean I thought he played great today but my serve was not really there and that affects the rest of my game. "It's tough to go out there and not be able to put in your best performance." — AFP



CHITTAGONG: Bangladeshi cricketer Mosaddek Hossain (R) plays a shot as the Sri Lanka wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella (L) looks on during the fifth and final day of the first cricket Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. — AFP

Mominul, Liton help Bangladesh earn draw

CHITTAGONG: Mominul Haque became the first Bangladesh cricketer to hit a century in each innings of a test match as he and Liton Das helped the hosts secure a draw in the first Test against Sri Lanka yesterday. Beginning the final day 119 runs behind and with seven second winnings wickets in hand after Sri Lanka had declared their first innings on 713 for nine, Bangladesh needed to bat out three sessions to save the match.

They eventually succeeded in their mission as Mominul followed up his 176 in the first innings with 105 and Liton made 94 after Bangladesh had resumed on 81 for three. The duo batted through the morning session to frustrate Sri Lanka, their 180-run stand coming to an end when spinner Dhananjaya de Silva had Mominul caught in the slip. Stand-in skipper Mahmudullah faced 65 balls in his unbeaten 28 as Bangladesh reached 307-5 when players from both sides shook hands with 17 overs remaining in the batsman-dominated contest in which 1533 runs were scored for 24 wickets in five days. Dhaka hosts the second and final Test from Thursday. — Reuters

SCOREBOARD

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh: Final scoreboard of the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday:

Bangladesh first innings: 513 (Mominul Haque 176, Mushfiqur Rahim 92, Mahmudullah Riyad 83 not out; S. Lakmal 3-68, R. Herath 3-150)

Sri Lanka first innings: 713-9 dec (K. Mendis 196, D. De Silva 173, R. Silva 109, D. Chandimal 87, N. Dickwella 62, Taijul Islam 4-219, Mehedi Hasan 3-174)

Bangladesh second innings (overnight 81-3):
Tamim Iqbal c Dickwella b Sandakan 41
Imrul Kayes c Chandimal b Perera 19
Mominul Haque c Karunaratne b de Silva 105
Mushfiqur Rahim c Mendis b Herath 2
Liton Das c Perera b Herath 94
Mahmudullah not out 28
Mosaddek Hossain not out 8
Extras (b3, lb2, w1, nb 4) 10
Total (five wkts: 100 overs) 307
Fall of wickets: 1-52 (Kayes), 2-76 (Tamim), 3-81 (Mushfiqur), 4-261(Mominul), 5-279 (Liton)
Did not bat: Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Sunzamul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.
Bowling: Herath 28-6-80-2, Lakmal 9-1-25-0 (nb1), de Silva 12-0-41-1, Perera 26-5-74-1 (nb2), Sandakan 18-2-64-1 (nb1), Kumara 6-0-16-0 (w1), Mendis 1-0-2-0.
Result: Draw

Boxing could face expulsion from Games, IOC warns

PYEONGCHANG: Boxing could be knocked out of the next Olympic Games if the International Olympic Committee is not satisfied problems with the sport's finances and governance are sorted out, IOC President Thomas Bach warned yesterday.

Speaking in Pyeongchang ahead of next week's

Winter Olympics, Bach said the IOC was "extremely worried" about how the sport was run and said the body was prepared to make bold decisions.

"The IOC reserves the right to review the inclusion of boxing in the programs of the Youth Olympics 2018 and Tokyo 2020," he told reporters, adding that the IOC would be freezing all contacts with the sport's governing AIBA "excluding the ones on a working level necessary to implement the respective IOC decisions". AIBA was not immediately available for comment when contacted by Reuters. Following a two-day Executive Board meeting in Pyeongchang, Bach said the IOC had not been satisfied with a report prepared by AIBA, and that it would be open-

ing an investigation into the body.

AIBA has been riven with in-fighting for months, with former president CK Wu first provisionally suspended and then stepping down last November after a bitter dispute with his executive committee.

AIBA named Uzbek Gafur Rahimov as its new Interim President last Saturday, following the unexpected resignation of Interim President Franco Falcinelli. This is not the first time AIBA has had IOC funds blocked. The Olympic ruling body withheld payment of more than \$1 million of television rights from the Athens 2004 Olympics after a refereeing scandal at those Games. The Winter Olympics runs from Feb. 9-25. — Reuters

US sets 4x800m record, Miller-Uibo equals fastest 300m

NEW YORK: Bahamian Olympic champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo matched the fastest time ever recorded in the rarely run women's 300 metres and an American team broke the world record in the women's 4x800m relay at the NYRR Millrose Games on Saturday.

Miller-Uibo, the 2016 Rio Games 400 metres champion, sped to a runaway victory of 35.45 seconds around the indoor track in New York as she equalled the 25-year-old mark set by Russia's Irina Privalova.

"Coach wanted me to come out her and run a pretty good time and it was a world record," Miller-Uibo said of the event which is not recognised for world record purposes. "It's a great feeling."

A world record did fall in the women's 4x800m relay, however, thanks to an inspiring anchor leg by Ajee Wilson. Chrishuna Williams, Raeyvn Rogers, Charlene Lipsey and Wilson clocked 8:05.89 to better a 2011 Russian quartet's mark of 8:06.24.

"It was insane," Wilson, who ran her 800 metres in 1:58.37, told NBC Sports. "I could feel the crowd. They really pushed me, encouraged me to keep digging." Greek Olympic gold medallist Katerina Stefanidi won a highly anticipated women's pole vault that lost much of its lustre after American rival Sandi Morris pulled out due to back spasms.

Stefanidi, who is also the reigning world champion, claimed her 15th consecutive victory by clearing 4.71m on her second attempt. American Katie Nageotte matched the Greek woman's vault but lost out on comeback after registering more failures at an earlier height. Young Kenyan Emmanuel Korir sped to the year's fastest 800m, cruising to victory in 1:44.21, and Scotland's Chris O'Hare posted the leading mile time of 2018 with a 3:54.14. Americans Ronnie Baker and Devon Allen, and the Ivory Coast's Murielle Ahoure also defeated quality fields.

The up-and-coming Baker eased to victory in the men's 60m, running 6.48 seconds, more than a tenth of a second ahead of countryman Noah Lyles. Jamaican Olympic hurdles champion Omar McLeod was fifth and countryman Asafa Powell, the former world 100m record holder, finished sixth.Allen ran down outdoor world record holder Aries Merritt to claim the men's 60m hurdles in 7.50 seconds, 0.03 seconds faster than Merritt. Ahoure, already the year's fastest, put up another quality time to win the women's 60m in 7.11 seconds, marginally ahead of American world 100m champion Tori Bowie (7.14). —Reuters

Striker Pazzini late show sees Real Madrid held at Levante

Ramos scores his 50th La Liga goal for the club

MADRID: Former Italy striker Giampaolo Pazzini scored a dramatic late equaliser as Levante held Real Madrid to a 2-2 draw on Saturday, leaving Zinedine Zidane's men 18 points adrift of La Liga leaders Barcelona.

Sergio Ramos headed the visitors into an 11th-minute lead with his 50th La Liga goal for the club, but Levante equalised before half-time through Emmanuel Boateng. Isco came off the bench to put Real back in front late on, but Pazzini stunned the struggling defending champions with an 89th-minute strike on his debut. "We controlled the game, especially in the first half, and in the second we managed to do the hard part-get back into the game and score the second goal," said Zidane. "Then we should have been ready, we could have avoided the second goal, but we didn't and it's hard because it's two dropped points."

The Champions League is Real's only realistic chance of more silverware this season, but they'll need to find a significant upturn in form to challenge Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16, first-leg tie in Madrid on February 14. "We have to work even more, it's football and the opponent is there to try to put you in difficulty," Zidane added. Barcelona can move 21 points clear of their arch rivals with victory at Espanyol later, when second-placed Atletico Madrid welcome third-placed Valencia to the Wanda Metropolitano.

Real didn't take long to forge ahead at Levante, as centre-back Ramos met a Toni Kroos corner with a downward header which home goalkeeper Oier fumbled into his net under pressure from Karim Benzema.

They almost doubled their lead just after the half-hour mark as Oier managed to scramble the ball away

from Cristiano Ronaldo after spilling Kroos' tame strike. But Levante hit back in the 42nd minute as 21-year-old Ghanaian Boateng marked his fourth league start for the team with his first La Liga goal. Jose Luis Morales ran through on goal as Ramos found himself caught out of position, and although Keylor Navas saved his effort, Boateng met the loose ball with a cool finish into the far corner. The away side continued to look frail at the back and were lucky not to fall behind as Morales led another rapid counter-attack from a Real corner which ended with Navas making a sprawling save to deny Jefferson Lerma.

ISCO IMPROVES REAL

The reigning European champions improved after Isco replaced Gareth Bale midway through the second half, with the Spain midfielder shooting straight at Oier and Benzema having an effort deflected wide.

Isco's introduction did pay off with only nine minutes remaining, as Benzema capitalised on some sloppy defending and pulled the ball back for the 25-year-old to smash home his fifth league goal of the season.

Levante should have equalised in the 85th minute, but substitute Roger Contróved to head wide with the goal gaping from only a couple of yards out. The home side did snatch a point, though, as Pazzini scored less than 11 minutes after coming off the bench to make his debut.

The 33-year-old, who only joined on loan from Verona on Wednesday, easily got in behind the hapless Real defence and slotted into the far corner to pull Levante three points clear of the relegation zone.

Sevilla's push for a top-four finish and a Champions League place took a massive dent earlier on Saturday, as they were thrashed 5-1 at Eibar. Chilean internation-



al Fabian Orellana scored twice as Eibar moved up to seventh, just one point and one place behind Sevilla.

Fifth-placed Villarreal had Daniele Bonera sent off in the first half in a 2-1 defeat by Real Betis, as Betis forward Loren Moron scored twice on his debut after being promoted from the reserve team.

Alaves pulled five points clear of the bottom three as former Barcelona man Munir El Haddadi scored what proved to be the winner in a 2-1 victory over Celta Vigo. — AFP

Mahrez stand-off gives Leicester boss Puel headache

LONDON: Riyad Mahrez's career is at a crossroads. With his dream move to Manchester City potentially in ruins, Leicester City boss Claude Puel faces a major challenge to get his star player back and performing.

The Algerian winger was missing for the 1-1 draw against Swansea City at the King Power Stadium on Saturday, having not trained since the Premier League leaders walked away from the negotiating table due to Leicester's astronomical demands.

Despite a second transfer request from the player in eight months, Leicester reportedly held out for a deal worth £80 million (\$113 million, 91 million euros), with even City's cash-rich Abu Dhabi owners unwilling to go beyond £60 million. Mahrez, 26, is unhappy that Leicester were determined to secure such a huge profit on a player they bought for a reported £350,000 from French second-division side Le Havre in 2014 and who played a pivotal role in the club's rise from the Championship to Premier League champions. He was crowned players' player of the year during Leicester's remarkable title-winning campaign in 2015-16, scoring 17 Premier League goals, and then signed a four-year deal to help lead their Champions League charge.

Mahrez netted four times in the Champions League as Leicester again surpassed expectations as England's last side standing before narrowly losing out 2-1 on aggregate to Atletico Madrid in the quarter-finals, proving he was no one-season wonder.

KANTE DEPARTURE

Adding to Mahrez's ire is that other heroes of Leicester's title-winning triumph-N'Golo Kante and Danny Drinkwater-have been allowed to leave for Chelsea with far less resistance. And with City seemingly encouraged to make a move by injuries to Leroy Sane and Gabriel Jesus, there is no guarantee the run-away Premier League leaders will come calling again in the summer.

"I am fiercely ambitious and feel that now is the time to move on to a new experience," Mahrez said at the



end of last season as he tried to force his way out. Instead, he has again led a Leicester revival this season under Puel following Craig Shakespeare's sacking in October, scoring nine times in his past 20 outings.

Puel remains optimistic, saying Mahrez will return to the fold. "He is our friend and I think all the staff and all the players will help him to come back with a good mentality and a positive attitude and to enjoy his football with his teammates," he said.

"Riyad is a good player but he is a good man also. I respect him. It's important to manage this with calm inside the club." Should Mahrez back down, his next appearance could come at the Etihad Stadium against City when Leicester travel to Manchester next Saturday. A Mahrez performance reminiscent of the one he delivered when Leicester ran riot in a 3-1 win two years ago, propelling them towards the title, could go a long way towards convincing City he remains the man they want for next season.

"Everybody knows we were trying but we cannot afford, in this moment, this amount of what they are asking," said City boss Pep Guardiola after Wednesday's 3-0 win over West Bromwich Albion.

"We are going to see what happens in the summer." Guardiola named only six substitutes for Saturday's clash at Burnley due to City's mounting injury crisis, in a move some interpreted as a hint of his unhappiness about the club's unwillingness to sign Mahrez.

Come the end of the season, Leicester's hand may also finally be forced by the fact Mahrez will have two years left on his contract, the point at which many clubs choose to cash in before the value of their prized assets might depreciate. Time will tell whether he gets another chance. — AFP

Sanchez. While Aaron Ramsey scored his first career hat-trick against Everton, it was the promising partnership between Aubameyang and Mkhitaryan that stole the show.

"Overall, the two players integrated well into our game and they looked as if they had played for us forever," said Wenger. "They have similar qualities to what our game is about. Technically, they are good. They are quick and overall it was a first convincing performance." Aubameyang was a constant menace with his pace and energy and, while his goal was fortunate given he was offside when he ran onto Mkhitaryan's pass, there was enough quality on display to suggest he may keep the misfiring Alexandre Lacazette on the bench for the foreseeable future. "The quality of his movement and finishing was excellent. He gives problems to defenders with his movement, he is always looking to go into spaces that are difficult to cover," Wenger said.

"When he gets ahead it is hard to catch him. When we understand him better we can make more of that. He is not at his best physically and still has some work to do on that, but the price is reasonable I think, overall for that quality of striker in today's market."

Mkhitaryan struggled to make an impact at United, but he looked revitalised at the Emirates Stadium, link-

Conte committed to Chelsea despite Italy interest

LONDON: Antonio Conte insists speculation over his job will not derail his attempt to get his struggling Chelsea side back on track in the fight for a top-four finish in the Premier League. The English champions need to bounce back from a humiliating 3-0 home thrashing by Bournemouth on Wednesday, which put further strain on Conte's relationship with the Chelsea hierarchy, after the Italian described his preparations for the match a 'disaster' due to a busy few days of transfer business before the January window closed.

However, Conte, who led Chelsea to the title in a spectacular opening campaign in England last season, reiterated his intention to at least see out his contract until 2019 despite speculation he could return to fill the vacant position as coach of the Italian national team.

"I still have 18 months on my contract with Chelsea," said the Italian. "My intention, my will, my desire is to respect this contract." Bournemouth's victory at Stamford Bridge in midweek brought back memories of Chelsea's opening day collapse at home to Burnley in an early sign that a bigger challenge awaited Conte in his second season. "From the start of the season after our defeat against Burnley (there has been) a lot of speculation about my sacking," added Conte. "But I'm not interested in this and my only desire is to continue to work, to be focused on my team to try to do the best with this team. "I trust in my work and this is the only way that brought me to be one of the best managers. I don't trust in anything else, only in my work and my job." Chelsea's squad was bolstered by the arrival of Olivier Giroud and Emerson Palmieri on the final day of the transfer window, but Conte doesn't expect either player to be fit enough to make an immediate impact.

Palmieri has only recently returned from a long layoff due to a cruciate ligament injury, whilst Giroud suffered from a hamstring problem in his final weeks at Arsenal.

"We have to wait because don't forget that especially for Palmieri we are talking about a player he's coming from a bad injury," Conte added. "Olivier is coming (back) from a muscular injury, he was out for 50 days before he played 15 minutes in the game against Swansea (for Arsenal, on Tuesday). We are working with him and we have to check his physical condition. It won't be easy for him to start."—AFP

Friends reunited as Wenger salutes Arsenal new boys

LONDON: Arsene Wenger says the instinctive understanding between old friends Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Henrikh Mkhitaryan can transform Arsenal's turbulent season. Aubameyang marked his Arsenal debut with a goal in Saturday's 5-1 demolition of Everton, while Mkhitaryan provided three assists in his first start for the Gunners.

The swaggering show from the former Borussia Dortmund team-mates was a much-needed boost for Arsenal boss Wenger after a difficult January that saw Alexis Sanchez force through a move to Manchester United, while the north Londoners struggled on the pitch.

Gabon striker Aubameyang joined from Dortmund on deadline day for a club record £56 million, reuniting with Armenia midfielder Mkhitaryan, who arrived earlier in the window from United in a swap deal for

	Matches on TV (Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Watford v Chelsea	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Las Palmas v Malaga	0:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
Lazio v Genoa	22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 4	

13

Brady wins MVP award on eve of Super Bowl



14

India cruise to victory as Chahal puts South Africa in a spin



15

Striker Pazzini late show sees Real Madrid held at Levante





LIVERPOOL: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (L) goes close for a free kick during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield in Liverpool yesterday. — AFP

Kane saves Spurs in Liverpool thriller

Kane nets his 100th Premier League goal

LIVERPOOL: Harry Kane's 100th Premier League goal from the penalty spot deep into stoppage time snatched a controversial point for Tottenham Hotspur from a dramatic finale in a 2-2 draw at Liverpool yesterday.

Mohamed Salah's stunning 91st-minute solo run and finish for his second goal of the game looked to have handed Liverpool a vital victory in the battle for a place in the top four. But Kane, who had already seen a penalty saved by Loris Karius five minutes from time, converted second time round from the spot with virtually the last kick of the game after Liverpool's £75 million January recruit Virgil van Dijk was adjudged to have brought down Erik Lamela. Kane's 21st league goal of the season also edged him one back ahead of Salah in the race to be the Premier League's top scorer, but Liverpool were left furious at referee Jon Moss and his assistants. A point leaves third-placed Liverpool still two points ahead of Tottenham, who remain in fifth.

The majority of a 53,000 crowd had barely taken

their seats before being brought to their feet inside three minutes when Eric Dier's misplaced pass freed Salah in behind the Spurs defence to slot confidently past Hugo Lloris. Van Dijk had enjoyed a fine game until the final act as he produced an excellent block to deny Son Heung-min and it was Mousa Dembele who had Tottenham's first attempt on target that Karius trapped low to his right five minutes before half-time. Despite enjoying the bulk of possession, Tottenham struggled to penetrate Liverpool's three-man midfield and were often caught out on the counter-attack. However, even when the Liverpool defence was opened up, Karius came to

their rescue with a brave block to deny Son before Alli pulled his follow-up effort wide.

In Tottenham's desperation to get back in the game, Alli was then booked for diving as Dejan Lovren carefully pulled out of a challenge inside the area. Tottenham have now won just one of 19 visits to Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal in Mauricio Pochettino's four-year reign in charge. But they did salvage the point their second-half display at least deserved thanks in no small part to a stunning strike from substitute Victor Wanyama with his first touch.

The Kenyan had only been on the pitch a minute when he latched onto a punch from Karius to crash an unstoppable drive into the top corner. Spurs then thought they had the chance to win the game as Kane was brought down by Karius and Moss pointed to the spot. After a long discussion with one of his assistants, Moss stood by his original decision despite Kane arguably being in an offside position as he latched onto Alli's through ball.

However, justice was done for Liverpool when Karius repelled Kane's poorly hit penalty. Moments later Anfield was in raptures as Salah escaped from three Spurs challenges before dinking high beyond Lloris to send Jurgen Klopp racing down the touchline in celebration.

That joy was short-lived, though, as Spurs were awarded a second penalty, this time by Moss's assistant for Van Dijk's late swipe at Lamela. Kane kept his composure to send Karius the wrong way for his Premier League century and maintain Tottenham's Champions League hopes. — AFP



Liverpool furious at referee Jon Moss and his assistants

Palace fight back to save a point and keep Newcastle in trouble

LONDON: Newcastle remain mired in the battle for Premier League survival after Crystal Palace salvaged a 1-1 draw in yesterday's clash at Selhurst Park. Rafael Benitez's side took a first half lead through Mohamed Diame, but a Luka Milivojevic penalty soon after the interval forced Newcastle to settle for a point.

The Magpies are only one point above the relega-

tion zone in 16th place after failing to win for a fourth consecutive league match. Palace, without a win in their last three league games, are two points ahead of Newcastle.

The visitors had gone in front in the 22nd minute. Kennedy swung a low delivery into the penalty area that Milivojevic missed and when Martin Kelly failed to track Diame's run, the Senegal midfielder was free to finish from close-range.

But Newcastle defender Ciaran Clark conceded a 55th minute penalty when he bundled over Christian Benteke after the striker leaped to reach Wilfried Zaha's cross. Serbian midfielder Milivojevic sent his spot-kick towards the bottom corner and although Karl Darlow got a hand to the ball, he was unable to prevent it reaching the back of the net.

Newcastle's Jonjo Shelvey was fortunate not to concede another penalty for a blatant tug on James McArthur's shirt as the Magpies held on. — AFP



LONDON: Crystal Palace's Ivorian striker Wilfried Zaha (C) vies with Newcastle United's Welsh defender Paul Dummett (L) during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018

18 FOMC expecting 'further' gradual rate hikes, inflation to rise in 2018



19 Gridlock hurting business at Nigeria's busiest port



22 Creating a new generation of space enthusiasts in Kuwait



JOHANNESBURG: In this file photo taken on May 15, 2017 outside state entity Eskom Offices at Megawatt Park in Johannesburg, members of South African political party Congress of the People (COPE) demonstrate against the re-instatement of Brian Molefe as Eskom CEO. — AFP

Eskom: The core of S Africa's state rot

No economy for the country if Eskom went belly up

JOHANNESBURG: The name of Eskom, Africa's largest electricity company, has become synonymous with the worst corruption scandals in South Africa and the utility could well become the final nail in the political coffin of President Jacob Zuma. The sacking of yet another of its short-lived CEOs this week and the release of dire financial results confirmed the depth of the crisis plaguing the power utility. Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba admitted Eskom represents the single worst crisis facing the government.

"Eskom is the biggest risk," Gigaba said. "There would be no currency, and no economy for the country if Eskom went belly up." Parliament in South Africa has for months been probing Eskom over so-called "state capture"-alleged corruption at South African state institutions. A damning report published a year ago by the then-ombudswoman Thuli Madonsela first laid bare misconduct at Eskom, a state-owned monopoly founded in 1923.

Madonsela detailed how the Gupta business family, who are close friends of Zuma, allegedly arranged the 2015 appointment of Brian Molefe as Eskom chief to line up lucrative contracts to syphon off cash. Officials and former workers appearing before a parliament

hearing in recent weeks have made startling revelations of how Eskom executives helped the Gupta family benefit from favorable deals. Whistle-blower Mosilo Mothepu, who worked for a company advising on the deals, told the parliamentary committee that Eskom was identified as a "cash cow" by the Guptas.

Dodgy deals?

In one case, Eskom paid more than \$49-million to a Gupta-owned mining firm Tegeta to help it buy a coal mine from Glencore. The Guptas would then sell the coal to Eskom. Former Eskom chairman Zola Tsotsi told lawmakers how one of the Gupta's three brothers, Tony, summoned him to a meeting and threatened him with dismissal because he was not "helping" them.

"Tony told me 'Chairman, you are not helping us with anything. We are the ones who put you in the

position you are in. We are the ones who can take you out!'" he said. Respected former finance minister Pravin Gordhan, who was abruptly sacked by Zuma last March, sharply rebuked former Eskom executives appearing before the committee. "You brought Eskom to its knees, the biggest utility in Africa," Gordhan told the utility's former chief financial officer Anoj Singh. All implicated executives have pleaded innocence. "There are hundreds of decisions taken at Eskom that the CEO will not know about or know the details of," said Molefe.

Crisis plaguing the power utility

Risk to national economy

Opposition Democratic Alliance's MP Natasha Mazzone drew parallels between the denials and

"omerta"-the mafia's code of silence. But Lynn Brown, a close ally of Zuma and minister in charge of state enterprises, denies that she covered up governance and financial irregularities at Eskom. "We are not at that point yet that we can prove that people have done things wrong," Brown told MPs. Eskom's woes started in 2007 with the highly unpopular power shortages that plunged many neighborhoods into darkness on a nightly basis. Outages have been sharply reduced, but credit rating agencies have repeatedly downgraded the power utility over its financial and liquidity problems.

Now the new head of the ruling ANC party, Cyril Ramaphosa, has moved in to overhaul Eskom-as well as ease President Zuma out of office. In his first major move, Ramaphosa has already appointed a new board and ordered them to sack corrupt executives. "We are determined to address the damage that has been done to this institution," Ramaphosa said in a statement released on the presidential website. Rescuing Eskom will not be easy, even after Ramaphosa replaces Zuma as expected. Its annual financial results, released on January 30, showed profits plummeted 34 percent and the firm is heavily indebted to the tune of over 300 billion rand (\$250 million). —AFP

New leader to take the helm at US Federal Reserve

WASHINGTON: Jerome "Jay" Powell, the Republican former investment banker tapped by President Donald Trump to lead the US Federal Reserve, will take the reins of monetary policy starting today. Perhaps the wealthiest Fed chair ever, Powell—who turns 65 on Sunday—succeeds Janet Yellen, who ends the first and only term held by a woman.

He takes over at a remarkably quiet time following a decade of economic turmoil that forced the central bank into uncharted policy waters to try to recover from the global financial crisis. Nevertheless, Powell, one of the rare non-econo-

mists to fill the role, could soon face difficult policy decisions that will put him at the center of debate over how fast to raise interest rates.

Wages in January posted the biggest annual increase in nearly 10 years, with the growing US economy adding jobs at a solid pace, and while business and consumer confidence remains high just as a massive corporate tax reform is starting to take effect. This comes at a time when all major global economies are growing simultaneously, an unusual and happy coincidence, but one that begins to raise concerns about when the recovery will end. And how. "His biggest challenge will be leading the further calibration of interest rates when the US economy is late cycle amid a synchronized global economic upswing and fiscal stimulus is on its way," Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics told AFP.

Yellen legacy

As Yellen departs, the only Fed chair in nearly 40 years not to be reappointed for a second term, she leaves an economy with unemployment at a 17-year

low of 4.1 percent-half the rate when she became chair—quiet and nearly four years of uninterrupted growth. In addition, she steered the Fed out of its massive bond buying program and began the process of "normalization," or reducing the size of investment holdings, without upsetting the skittish financial markets.

Yellen prevailed in the debate to raise interest rates only gradually to ensure the economic recovery was on solid footing. The Fed has raised the key lending rate five times in her tenure, including three times last year. "Yellen hands the incoming Chair Jerome Powell a more 'normalized' economic and monetary policy environment," Bostjancic said.

The Fed in December raised the benchmark lending rate for the third time last year, and indicated that another three hikes were likely this year. But the minutes of the meeting show there was heated debate among the policymakers about how quickly they would need to move this year based on differing outlooks for inflation and the impact of the tax cuts.—AFP



Jerome "Jay" Powell

NBK Money Market Report

FOMC expecting ‘further’ gradual rate hikes, inflation to rise in 2018

KUWAIT: During its first meeting of the year, the US Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged on Wednesday, as expected. Nevertheless, the Fed still expects “further” gradual rate hikes as it reiterated its views that inflation will rise this year. As per tradition, markets are pondering over whether the introduction of the word “further” means that a rate hike is going to be announced during the FOMC’s next meeting, or if it’s a signal that the Fed wants to encourage market participants to continue pricing in more rate hikes for the coming years.

This comes as markets are confidently expecting a rate hike during the Fed’s next meeting in mid-March. Looking further into the future however, the US rate market still does not expect the Fed to raise rates beyond 2.5% in the current tightening cycle. This leaves some additional room for market rates to converge towards the Fed’s current plan to increase interest rates over 3% by 2020. Furthermore, the FOMC statement added that inflation will stabilize around the 2% target over the medium term. The central bank mentioned solid gains in employment, household spending and capital investment as catalysts that will spur growth at a moderate pace in the US economy.

Moving forward, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), the committee in charge of setting US interest rate policy, is due to undergo major changes. First, Jerome Powell will replace Janet Yellen, which has chaired her final meeting last week. Yellen’s departure will leave behind four empty seats on the Fed Board of Governors, which hold permanent seats on the FOMC. The man responsible for filling those seats is Donald Trump.

President Trump has the rare opportunity to put his personal mark on the makeup of the Fed. Be that as it may, forecasting the nature of the president’s future candidates might prove to be a tricky task. This is because Trump, as a presidential candidate, condemned the Fed’s promotion of low interest rates as feeding a risky economic bubble. After taking office and witnessing the stock market rally, however, it seems the president has had a change of heart. Trump now loves low interest rates. Nevertheless, one thing Trump has not changed his mind on is looser financial regulations.

Due to the sensitive nature of the FOMC’s responsibility and the enormous weight of its decisions, a proposal is being considered by a House of Representatives subcommittee to expand the number of voting members in the FOMC to include all twelve regional bank presidents, as opposed to the current five. Currently, the FOMC is made up of 12 seats. Seven are held by Fed Board of Governors while five are held by regional bank presidents which rotate every year (with the exception of the NY Fed.) Since presidentially appointed Fed governors would be outvoted by bank presidents who are selected by directors of their institutions, this change would essentially decrease the influence of politics on monetary policy. The subcommittee has reasoned that the proposal ensures that monetary policy decisions can accurately reflect the level, quality and distribution of economic activity throughout the Federal Reserve System. Considering the way Trump is handling his tenure as president, this bill would add welcomed stability in the US economy.

Towards the end of last week, US employment data managed to impress markets, providing some much

needed relief for the dollar. Average hourly earnings rose 0.3% m/m in January, above the level expected by economists. Additionally, December’s figure was revised upwards to indicate a 0.4% m/m gain. The year-on-year increase in average hourly earnings rose to 2.9%, the largest increase since June of 2009, while December’s y/y figure stood at 2.7%. At the same time, the number of jobs jumped by 200K, well above the level of 181K expected by markets. Last month’s figure was also revised upwards to 160K. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate stood unchanged at 4.1%, a 17-year low.

Meanwhile in Europe, as the EU pressures the UK in their ongoing Brexit negotiations, a confidential UK government analysis has been leaked. The document is an economic assessment of the different possible outcomes for the UK’s trade relation talks with the EU, which concludes that the British economy will be worse off in all of them. The “best” outcome, according to the document, is that the UK remains in the single market but not the customs union and presumes that the economy will be 2% smaller in 15 years than what it would have been had the UK avoided Brexit. Furthermore, the paper describes the “worse” outcome as one where the UK has no preferential market access beyond the World Trade Organization, which would cost the economy 8% over 15 years. The document also describes a third option (the “Canada model”), which would see the economy take a 5% hit over the same period of 15 years.

On the foreign exchange front, the dollar index failed to recover after it reached a 3-year low last week. A number of factors have contributed to the weakness of the greenback. These include recent comments from White House officials which have prompted fresh worries over trade protectionism. Also, another government shutdown may also be on the horizon, as the current continuing resolution expires on February 8th. Furthermore, political uncertainty amidst a dysfunctional white house has showed no signs of slowing down. Towards the end of the week however, solid numbers in the employment report managed to aid a wounded dollar.

On the other side of the coin, the Euro remained supported despite a hawkish FOMC statement, which indicated the need for “further” gradual rate hikes. Despite some volatility throughout the week, better than expected US employment data managed to minimize the pair’s weekly change. The EURUSD pair closed the week at 1.2460.

With regards to the sterling pound, the GBPUSD pair reached a 10-day low after a leaked government analysis concluded that the British economy would end up being worse off under all possible Brexit scenarios. The dip in the exchange rate was short lived however, as the GBP ended the week at 1.4120.

In China, the yuan has experienced its strongest monthly rally in almost 40 years in January. Since the beginning of the year, the yuan has gained more than 3% in value amid overall dollar softness. The yuan has reached levels last seen in early August 2015 when the People’s Bank of China shocked global markets with a 2.1% one-step devaluation. Recent surveys have indicated that a rising number of exporters are getting worried about a stronger Yuan. Meanwhile however, with the lingering threat of capital outflows, as well as the risk of exacerbating trade tensions with the Trump White House, markets do not expect the Chinese government to take action anytime soon.



US consumer confidence

Optimism of US consumers proved greater than expected after the Consumer Confidence Index came at 125.4, a comfortable increase over the forecasted 123.2 and the upwardly revised 123.1 in December. Climbing towards the 17 year high of 129.5 reached in November, the upsurge followed tax cuts signed by President Donald Trump and a record run of the stock market. The higher sentiment will probably underpin household spending, which accounts for about 70 percent of US economic activity.

Canada GDP

The Canadian economy expanded by 0.4% in November, rising after six months of lackluster figures. The growth in the gross domestic product was led by manufacturing, with temporary shutdowns for automobile and chemical plants coming to an end. In addition, the GDP was also complemented with smaller contributions by 16 out of 20 industries including the real estate, oil and gas, and wholesale sectors. On the foreign exchange side, coupled with a weak greenback, the Canadian dollar has appreciated to its highest level since September.

UK & EUROPE UK Manufacturing and Construction PMI

The United Kingdom’s manufacturing PMI failed to live up to analysts’ expectation as it came below last month’s level. The level of Britain’s manufacturing output rose at the slowest pace since August. Meanwhile, construction output barely recorded an increase as the construction PMI eased to a 4-month low of 50.2. The report, prepared by IHS Markit, stated that “survey respondents reported increased hesitance among clients to invest in new projects amid heightened concerns over the UK economic outlook. Encouragingly, however, firms generally expect things to improve later in the year.” The report also indicated that “a contraction in house building added to lackluster commercial building and civil engineering markets, and reduced inflows of new work suggest overall activity

Capital’s capabilities to manage the issuance process. It also reflects investors’ interest in Sukuk in general and GCC Sukuk in particular.

Al-Haddad emphasized that the initial trend of the sukuk market this year indicates that the issuance trend is expected to continue favorable in Q1 of this year due to increased interest and trust by companies and governments who have expressed their interest in the Sukuk product as a premier finance instrument. It is expected that there will be an increased momentum in the sukuk market considering many countries considering exploring this route in addition to corporate and financial institutions to cover their finance needs.

Al-Haddad reiterated that KFH Group plays a leading role in the Islamic Finance Sector by innovating new Islamic products and services which are introduced as an alternative for traditional banking products. Meanwhile, these instruments target to play a more significant role in financing development plans

could slip into decline in February. Furthermore, cost pressures remained intense, fuelled by shortages of input materials and high costs for imported products.”

Eurozone Inflation

In the Eurozone, inflation fell to 1.3% y/y in January, as expected by economists. The figure is tied for the lowest in one year. Meanwhile, core inflation, which excludes volatile items, was at 1.0% during the first month of the year. Nonetheless, the ECB has already indicated that it expects a slowdown in inflation over the coming several months, which gives officials more breathing room over when to end their quantitative easing program and start tightening monetary policy. In spite of inflation not meeting the ECB’s 2% target, the current situation is considerably better now compared to the same period last year, where the central bank was dealing with the threat of deflation.

ASIA Australia CPI

Core inflation in Australia continued to evade the RBA’s long-term target of 2-3% during the final quarter of 2017. The annual consumer price index ended the year at 1.9%, marking a period of eight straight quarters where inflation failed to live up to the central bank’s target. Wage growth, which has recently slowed to historic lows, has been identified as the main culprit. Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of Australia has continued to keep interest rates at an all-time low of 1.5% since 2016.

China PMI

Data out of China indicated that manufacturing activity came in below expectations at 51.3. Even though the figure is above 50, indicating an expansion in the sector, it is a slowdown from December’s level. After an unexpectedly strong year, analysts are predicting a cool down in the Chinese economy this year. On the other hand, the Chinese service industry saw accelerated growth in January, with the official non-manufacturing PMI rising to 55.3.

KFH Capital arranges US\$ 1bn Sukuk for Dubai Islamic Bank

KUWAIT: Chief Investment Banking Officer of KFH Capital, investment arm of KFH Group “KFH”, Abdullah Al-Haddad said that KFH Capital has succeeded in arranging the issuance of US\$ 1 Billion Sukuk for Dubai Islamic Bank. As one of the lead arranger, KFH arranged the sukuk issuance of Dubai Islamic Bank’s US\$ 5 Billion Sukuk program. This step has reiterates KFH Group’s pioneering role in the

Sukuk market, and establishes sukuk as a vital source of finance for governments and companies.

Al-Haddad indicated in a press release that KFH Capital has arranged the Sukuk transaction in cooperation with 7 Global Banks. This issuance is expected to be rated at A3 by Moody’s and A by Fitch. The Sukuk tenor will be 5 years with a return of 3.625%. The sukuk is based on the Wakala structure and shall be listed on the Irish Stock Exchange and NASDAQ Dubai. Issuance was priced at 115 bps above the five year benchmark rate.

Issuance marketing started at 130 bps levels and narrowed to 115bps as the order book started building up. Subscription to the issuance was approximately US\$ 1.75 Billion, i.e. an increase by 75% over the issuance amount with orders from more than 115 investors, mainly from the Middle East. The tremendous demand on this sukuk issuance reflects great trust investors place in Dubai Islamic Bank, and KFH

in the region and in global markets. Accordingly, KFH Group is recognized as the pioneer in Islamic Finance who has paved the way for an established industry that includes sukuk as the main product. He indicated that the vast experience of KFH Group in the Sukuk issuance has positioned it as a trustworthy and highly recognized organization by major corporates and governments globally. The various structures used by KFH Group in arranging sukuk, be it Ijara, Wakala or others, have made sukuk to be highly competitive against traditional finance instruments



Abdullah Al-Haddad

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.764
Indian Rupees	4.730
Pakistani Rupees	2.718
Srilankan Rupees	1.952
Nepali Rupees	2.957
Singapore Dollar	231.120
Hongkong Dollar	38.426
Bangladesh Taka	3.597
Philippine Peso	5.915
Thai Baht	9.624
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.173
Qatari Riyal	82.575
Omani Riyal	780.795
Bahraini Dinar	798.330
UAE Dirham	81.878
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.930
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.207
Tunisian Dinar	126.240
Jordanian Dinar	423.770
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.003
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.346
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	300.450

Euro	375.860
Sterling Pound	429.340
Canadian dollar	245.870
Turkish lira	80.660
Swiss Franc	324.810
Australian Dollar	245.770
US Dollar Buying	299.250
GOLD	
20 Gram	249.070
10 Gram	127.450
5 Gram	64.570
Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	300.100
Canadian Dollar	244.515
Sterling Pound	427.310
Euro	374.270
Swiss Franc	281.140
Bahrain Dinar	798.075
UAE Dirhams	82.110
Qatari Riyals	83.335
Saudi Riyals	80.920
Jordanian Dinar	424.545
Egyptian Pound	17.024
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.948
Indian Rupees	4.721
Pakistani Rupees	2.715
Bangladesh Taka	3.640
Philippines Peso	5.824
Cyprus pound	17.865

Japanese Yen	3.745	
Syrian Pound	1.585	
Nepalese Rupees	2.958	
Malaysian Ringgit	77.850	
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	48.150	
Thai Bhat	10.560	
Turkish Lira	80.210	
BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
	Europe	
British Pound	0.419296	0.426798
Czech Korune	0.006911	0.016211
Danish Krone	0.046418	0.051418
Euro	0.369328	0.376828
Georgian Lari	0.133817	0.133817
Hungarian 0.001131	0.001321	
Norwegian Krone	0.035257	0.040457
Romanian Leu	0.084184	0.081014
Russian ruble	0.005343	0.005343
Slovakia	0.008918	0.018916
Swedish Krona	0.034269	0.039269
Swiss Franc	0.316659	0.327659
	Australasia	
Australian Dollar	0.230301	0.242301
New Zealand Dollar	0.213567	0.223067
	America	
Canadian Dollar	0.236734	0.245734
US Dollars	0.296350	0.300770
US Dollars Mint	0.296850	0.300770

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003247	0.003831
Chinese Yuan	0.046117	0.049617
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036528	0.039278
Indian Rupee	0.004200	0.004841
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002663	0.002843
Korean Won	0.000266	0.000281
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073758	0.079756
Nepalese Rupee	0.002997	0.003167
Pakistan Rupee	0.002528	0.002818
Philippine Peso	0.005825	0.006125
Singapore Dollar	0.224289	0.234289
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001688	0.002268
Taiwan	0.010308	0.010488
Thai Baht	0.009199	0.009749
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.790382	0.798882
Egyptian Pound	0.014067	0.019785
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000197	0.000257
Jordanian Dinar	0.419146	0.428146
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154	0.000254
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021870	0.045870
Omani Riyal	0.774071	0.779751
Qatar Riyal	0.078236	0.083176
Saudi Riyal	0.079033	0.080333
Syrian Pound	0.001273	0.001493
Tunisian Dinar	0.121744	0.129744
Turkish Lira	0.074562	0.084862
UAE Dirhams	0.080376	0.082076
Yemeni Riyal	0.000976	0.001056

Gridlock hurting business at Nigeria's busiest port

A nightmare for pretty much everyone

LAGOS: Even okadas, the motorcycle-taxis that buzz fearlessly around Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, struggle to negotiate the road to Apapa—the country's busiest seaport. Riders pick their way gingerly around giant potholes that resemble blast craters, and among the lines of stationary trucks perched at precarious angles on the rutted surface.

Getting to and from Apapa—the catch-all name for Lagos' two seaports of Apapa and Tin Can Island—has increasingly become a nightmare for pretty much everyone. Now, with the chronic traffic jams hurting business and no sign of any swift resolution to the problem, labour unrest is looming large on the horizon. The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) has given the federal government an ultimatum: fix the roads or face an indefinite walk-out. MWUN leader Adewale Adeyanju said an open-ended strike by its members would paralyse port activities but they had no alternative.

"The road is now a safe haven for criminals, who use every opportunity to attack, assault and rob innocent Nigerians, including our members, who trek to and from work daily on the road, because it is no longer motorable," he told AFP. As well as security, he said shipping companies and businesses were increasingly using alternative berths such as those in Cotonou, in neighboring Benin. "While our neighboring ports are booming, our ports have been deserted because of the failed access roads to the ports, the gateway to the nation's economy," said Adevyanju.

Businesses hurt

Union leaders are due to meet the labour minister in Abuja on Tuesday. But it's possible that even then, oil tanker drivers like John Chinedu will still be waiting on the dilapidated highway. "We have been at this same

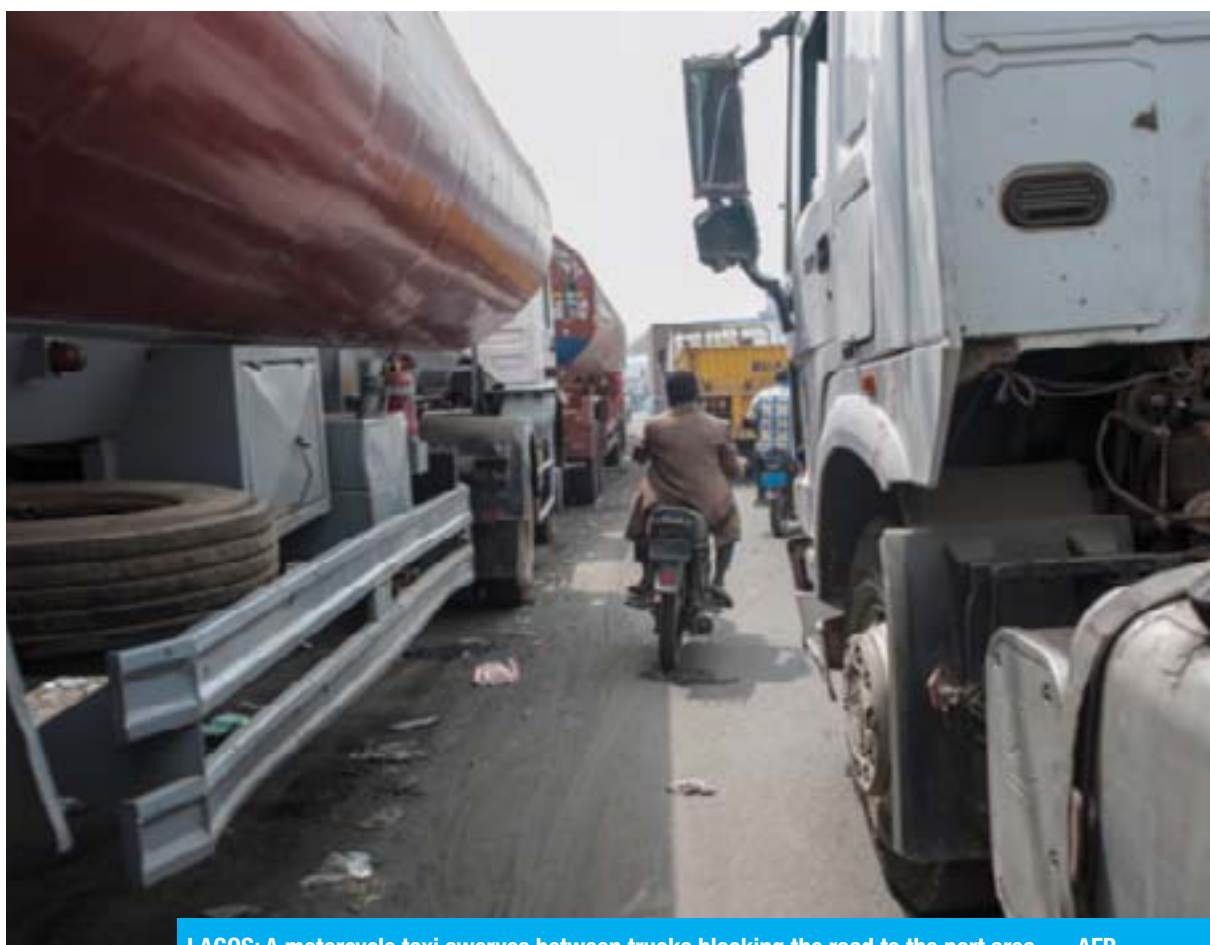
spot for the last four days and we've not been able to enter the port," he said. Chinedu, though, is a recent arrival compared to Lekan Yunusa. "It's been two weeks since we arrived in Lagos to help an importer carry his container that has been lying in the port for several weeks," he said. "But we have not been able to because of the bad condition of the road. I go to the toilet, wash and even eat over there," he added, pointing to the side of the road. The dismal state of the roads is all the more astonishing for a port that handles more than 60 percent of Nigeria's cargo and generates some 70 percent of customs revenue. In 2017, duties totalled more than one trillion naira (\$2.8 billion, 2.2 billion euros) — up from just under 900 billion naira the previous year. Jonathan Nicol, a Lagos-based importer, said the condition of the roads has had a knock-on effect on business, and spiraling costs had forced some to shut down.

“We are forced to pay extra charges and demurrage (when a ship’s owner pays a penalty for not loading or discharging in time), which is not the fault of importers,” he added. “Manufacturers cannot get their raw materials on time. The delay leads to extra port charges which will be passed on to the final consumers in terms of high prices.”

Fuel depot congestion

Shipping executive Lukman Busari said Apapa's chronic traffic jams were not helped by the location of fuel depots around the ports. "There are over 200 farm tanks with thousands of trucks waiting to load petroleum products at the ports, thereby creating gridlock on the roads," he said. "To decongest the roads, the railway should be developed while pipeline distribution of petroleum product should be considered."

The managing director of the Nigeria Ports



LAGOS: A motorcycle taxi swerves between trucks blocking the road to the port area. — AFP

Authority, Hadiza Bala Usman, acknowledged the grievances, which come as Nigeria looks to boost growth after months of recession. "There is no doubt that the deplorable state of the roads at Apapa is hurting businesses. We are not happy about the situation," she said. The NPA last year contributed 1.8 billion naira for road repairs and was pushing the government to do further work, despite it not being in the authority's remit.

"We are ready to do it because of its importance to our operations," she said, appealing to port users to bear with the authorities while the facilities are improved. "We have to adopt a multi-transportational approach to move cargo to and from the ports. "Right now, over 90 percent of cargo is moved through the roads, which is not too ideal. There is need to develop the railway and inland waterways as well." —AFP

New Look. New Website. New Mobile App.

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GCC markets start the year with recovery amid minimal volatility

KUWAIT: The performance of GCC markets was largely positive in January-18 with Muscat being the only market witnessing a monthly decline. The positive performance was also reflected in the MSCI GCC Index which surged 5.8% during the month. Markets also got passive support from oil prices that reached the highest level in three years and remained elevated on the back of tightening market conditions, further supported by improving global economic growth.

Trading activity during the month remained almost flat with monthly value traded at USD 28 Bn, while volume increased by 15.5% to 14.6 Bn shares. Qatar was the best performing market in the GCC continuing the trend seen at the end of last year, followed by Saudi Arabia. UAE markets also had a positive trend with Abu Dhabi recording a surge of 4.6% while Dubai, which surged 5.1% by mid-month, witnessed a sell off during the second half of the month, resulting in a marginal monthly gain of 0.7%. The performance of Boursa Kuwait was steady with a 4.4% return for the Price index. On the decliners side, weakness in the MSM 30 Index continued from last month, as the index declined by 1.9% in January-18.

The growth during the month was led by large-cap sectors, including Banking and Oil & Gas, primarily on the back of positive earnings announcements for full year 2017. Net income reported by 29 GCC banks by the end of the month showed an increase of around 15%. Meanwhile, telecom stocks also had a largely positive trend with Kuwait-listed telcos- Zain and Ooredoo posted positive returns during the month. In Saudi Arabia, the Banking sector recorded the strongest monthly gain of 11.2% as shares of all the banks witnessed positive returns. Qatari banks also had a positive run with the Qatari Banking & Financial Services Index recording a gain of 5.7%, as investors continued buying large-cap fundamentally strong stocks.

Boursa Kuwait

The gradual surge in Kuwaiti market continued during January-18 with the Price index up by 4.4% while the weighted index growth was much milder at 2.6%. The large-cap Kuwait 15 index gained 2.8% during the month following gains recorded by almost all the constituents of the index. The monthly sector performance chart was led by the Telecom index that recorded a gain of 6.8% after shares of Zain went up by 8.8% following first profit reported by the telcos Saudi Arabian operation. In addition, a 6% gain in shares of Ooredoo Kuwait also supported the gain in the telecom index. The Real Estate index had the second biggest monthly gain of 4.9% despite a majority of the larger stocks in the sector recording monthly decline that were more than offset by 4.3% gain in shares of Mabaneec.

The Banking index also had a positive show during the month with a gain of 2.3% after declines recorded by KIB (-1.3%) and Warba Bank (-2.6%) were offset by positive performance recorded by the rest of the banks. In terms of trading activity, the exchange recorded a strong recovery with both volume and value traded recording solid month-on-month growth. Monthly volume traded more than doubled to 2.6 Bn shares as compared to 1.2 Bn shares during the previous month, while monthly value traded improved by more than two-thirds to KWD 322.9 Mn as compared to KWD 192.5 Mn during December-17. Shares of KFH (+1.6%) garnered the most interest in terms of value traded recording total trades worth KWD 44.2 Mn followed by NBK (+1.6%) and Zain (+8.8%) at KWD 36.3 Mn and KWD 27.9 Mn, respectively. The monthly gainers chart was topped by Amwal Intl. Investments recording a gain of 77.7% followed by REAM and Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport with gains of 68.8% and 66.7%, respectively.

On the decliners chart, Hilal Cement topped with a fall of 35.9%, while the rest of the decliners were relatively small at 16.7% for ABAR and 15% for GIG. Meanwhile, in a significant development on the regulatory front and with an eye on improving liquidity, Boursa Kuwait announced the guidelines for the bifurcation of listed companies in three groups i.e. Premier, Main and the Auction market. The first category is set to include large to mid-cap companies with relatively higher liquidity. The requirements for this group is expected



to be high while on the other hand, for the companies in the Main market, a specified minimum liquidity has to be maintained failing which the company would be moved to the auction market. A total of 16 companies have been qualified for the premier market while a majority of the companies would be in the auction market. In economic news, Kuwait's Ministry of Finance announced budget for 2018/19 with a deficit of KWD 5 Bn (pre-FGF). Revenue is expected to increase by 13.1% to KWD 15 Bn on an oil price of USD 50/b, while expenditure is expected to remain flat at KWD 20 Bn. Oil revenue is budgeted to grow by 13.7% to KWD 13.3 Bn (89% of revenue) while non-oil revenue is expected to grow by 8.5% to KWD 1.8 Bn.

Saudi Arabia (Tadawul)

Saudi Arabia's benchmark TASI recorded the second biggest monthly gain during January-18 after investors focused on large-cap stocks. The banking sector was the top performer with a return of 11.2% followed by Health Care Equipment & Svc index with a return of 10.6%. Banking sector gains were led by positive returns recorded by all the listed banks with most of them seeing double digit growth. Earnings for the banking sector saw healthy growth during 9M-17 and full year profits are estimated to continue the trend. Moreover, with the increase in project activity and the government focused on meeting its targets, the participation of banks in the economy is set to increase. Recently, the government asked local banks for an RFP to refinance its USD 10 Bn international debt and to help the government raise debt by other means.

In addition, according to a SAMA report, domestic liquid assets of Saudi banks reached a record high in 2017 at SAR 457 Bn despite modest deposit growth. Commenting on the numbers, Moody's forecasted a positive view of the sector on the back of a recovery in economic activity in the Kingdom in the next 12-18 months, based on governments budget spending plans. The agency said that Saudi banks would benefit from the USD 19 Bn injection by the Saudi government announced in December-17 that are aimed at boosting the non-oil sector. The higher liquidity would help the banks take on much of the lending growth in 2018, according to Moody's.

Trading activity during the month took a slight hit with volumes down by 11.2% and value traded contracting by 6.1%. Almost 4.41 Bn shares were traded during the month valued at SAR 82.1 Bn. Dar Al Arkan Real Estate Dev Co. topped the monthly value and volume charts with a total of 1.6 Bn shares traded during the month valued at SAR 16.9 Bn. The stock was also the top decliner during the month recording a fall of 30.4% after investors booked profits on last years rally on the stock. SABIC was second on the monthly value chart recording SAR 10.6 Bn in trades with a volume of 101 Mn shares. Alinma Bank stood third on the monthly value chart and second on the volume chart with 426 Mn shares traded worth SAR 8.5 Bn.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

After ending 2017 in the red, ADX opened 2018 strong, as the index gained by 4.6% in Jan-18. The index closed at



4602.23 points, as larger sectors performed well in the first month of 2018. The Financials pack had a strong month, led by the Investment & Financial Services index which gained by 9.2% m-o-m, driven by a 10.2% increase in Waha Capital's share price. Banks also closed strong for the month of Jan -18, as the index moved up by 7.0% m-o-m driven by a 9.3% increase in the share price of First Abu Dhabi Bank and a 6.6% move up in ADCB's share price. The Insurance index was also up by 6.1% m-o-m in Jan-18. The Real Estate sector improved by 4.6% m-o-m, as Aldar Properties improved by 4.1% m-o-m, while Eshraq Properties and Ras Al Khaimah Properties went up by 5.6% and 8.5% m-o-m. Sectors that declined was led by Consumer Staples as the sector fell by 5.4% m-o-m, driven by a 8.9% drop in the stock price of Aghthia Group.

The Energy sector and Services sector also receded as they went down by 3.7% and 1.8% respectively m-o-m. In terms of full year earnings release for 2017, First Abu Dhabi Bank reported group net profit that amounted to AED 10.92 Bn, while adjusted group net profit for 2017 came in at AED 11.52 Bn, broadly in line with 2016. Group revenues came in at AED 19.53 Bn, down 4% y-o-y, as the decrease mainly ascribed to relatively softer market conditions compared to 2016, and portfolio optimization initiatives implemented throughout the year in order to enhance risk-adjusted returns. Net Interest Income including Islamic Financing Income for

2017 was down 3% to AED 13.11 Bn, driven by margin compression, as a result of portfolio optimization and lower interest in suspense (IIS). ADCB reported a net profit of AED 4.3 Bn, an increase of 3% y-o-y, while the bank reported strong topline growth with net interest and Islamic financing income growing by 8% y-o-y to reach to AED 6.7 Bn. In funding action, banks took the Formosa bond route where bonds are sold in Taiwan by foreign borrowers and are denominated in currencies other than the Taiwanese dollar. First Abu Dhabi Bank issued a USD 610 Mn Formosa Bond with a 30-year tenor and was callable or redeemable by the issuer every five years. Similarly, ADCB raised USD 540 Mn through the sale of a Formosa bond during Jan-18 as well.

Qatar Exchange

After closing 2017 as the worst performing GCC market, the QE 20 ended Jan-18 as the best performing index in the region. The QE 20 rose by 8.0% and closed at 9204.62 points. The Qatar All Share index which maps the broader market also rose by 5.6% m-o-m, as most major sectors closed the first month of the year in the green. Market breadth was also strong as 27 companies advanced during the month while 17 companies lost ground.

The Transportation index was the top performing sectoral as it went gained by double digits (+13.7%) during Jan-18, followed by the Consumer Goods & Services index which went up by 9.3% m-o-m. Larger indices such as Banks and Financial services also moved up by 5.7% m-o-m as QNB rose by 7.3% m-o-m. QNB gained by 7.3% m-o-m and was the main driver for the Banks and Financial Services sector, while Masraf Al Rayan also moved up by 7.0% m-o-m. The Real Estate index was up 3.6% m-o-m as Barwa Real Estate

and Union Real Estate both posted 18% gains each for the month, which was offset by a 4% drop in the share price of Ezzdan Real Estate. Indices which receded in Jan-18 included Insurance (-2.5%) and Telecoms (-0.3%).

In full year earnings releases, QNB 2017 net profit reached QAR 13.1 Bn, up 6% y-o-y, as key drivers were a growth in net fee and commission income, reduction in total expenses and lower impairment charges on loan book. Net interest income after EGP devaluation impact increased by 7% y-o-y to reach QAR 17.8 Bn in 2017 as compared to QAR 16.7 Bn in 2016. For Qatar Islamic Bank, net profits improved by 6% y-o-y to reach QAR 832 Mn, while total revenues improved by 8.8% y-o-y from QAR 1.7 Bn in 2016 to QAR 1.9 Bn in 2017. Real estate player Ezzdan Holding Group reported a net profit decline from QAR 1.8 Bn in 2016 to QAR 1.7 Bn in 2017, which translated into EPS of QAR 0.64 per share in 2017 as compared to QAR 0.68 per share in 2016. In funding related action, QNB Group completed their inaugural Kangaroo bond issuance under its Kangaroo program, which was a AUD 700 Mn transaction, and was executed with 5Yr and 10Yr maturities. The issuance was part of QNB Group's strategy to tap new stable funding sources from new markets.

Bahrain Bourse

After ending 2017 as one of the top performing markets in the GCC, Bahrain started off 2018 in the green as well, but gains for the month of Jan-18 was lower than some of the other GCC markets. The Bahrain Bourse gained by 1.4% for the month of Jan-18, as the largest sectoral index Commercial Banks gained by 3.0%. Market breadth for the month favored gainers, as 15 stocks advanced while 7 stock saw lower levels. The index closed at 1350.67 points at the end of the month. Commercial Banks were primarily driven by Al Salam Bank, which went up by 6.1% m-o-m, followed by AlKhaleeji Commercial Bank (1.7%) and Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (+1.5%). The Industrials index was the best performing index for Jan-18, as it went up by 3.2% m-o-m driven solely by Aluminium Bahrain, which went up by 3.2% m-o-m.

The Investment sector was the worst performing index and the only index that dropped in Jan-18, as it declined by 1.7% m-o-m, as Arab Banking Corp and GFH declined by 6.8% m-o-m and 3.4% m-o-m. The sector dropped despite a strong performance from Itmar Bank, which finished the month as the top performer in the over Bahrain Bourse. In terms of prominent full year earnings released for 2017, National Bank of Bahrain reported Net Profit of BHD 61.01 Mn, an increase of 4.8% compared to BHD 58.24 Mn. Net Interest Income came in at BHD 73.07 Mn for 2017 as compared to BHD 65.99 Mn for 2016 as the increase of 10.7 % was ascribed to growth in earning assets and effective asset liability management. Total operating costs decreased to

BHD 32.99 Mn in 2017 from BHD 34.09 Mn in 2016, resulting in a significant improvement in Cost to Income ratio to 31.6 % in 2017 from 35.2% in 2016.

Investment company Esterad reported a net profit of BHD 1.41 Mn in 2017 as compared to a loss of BHD 1.38 Mn in 2016. Investment Income for 2017 came in at BHD 2.5 Mn as compared to BHD 1.9 Mn in 2016.

CBK announces the winners of ‘Al Najma Account’ draw

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the daily draw on ‘Al Najma Account’ yesterday at the Bank’s Head Office to select 5 winners to win a cash prize of KD 7000 for each.

The draw was held in the presence of Jassim Al Otaibi, representative of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The following names were announced as winners of the prizes:

1. Ali Mohammad Mohammad
2. Hamza Emad Al Darawi
3. Salah Abdullah Al Khurainej
4. Abdulrahim Mohamed Sadik
5. Amir Jeed Abd Al Malak Tayeh

Al-Najma Account allows its customers to win a daily prize of KD 7000 which is the highest daily prize in Kuwait. In addition, the Account offers quarterly draws that provide customers with opportunity to get their dreams turned to reality by winning great prizes starting from KD 100,000 for the first quarter escalating thereafter by KD 50 thousand for each quarter to reach KD 250,000 in the last quarter.

Customers can enjoy additional benefits including obtaining ATM card and a credit card against the customer's account along with enjoying all other banking services. The Bank congratulates all the lucky winners and draws their attention that the cash prizes will be credited into their accounts with the Bank. Further, the Bank appreciates the Ministry of Commerce & Industry's significant role & its continuous cooperation and effective supervision on the draw that was smoothly & transparently organized.

NBK offers the best loyalty rewards program in Kuwait

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait offers the best loyalty rewards program in the country for its credit card holders. NBK's Rewards program offers instant cash back, allowing customers to earn points (and cash back rewards) for every IKD spent at participating outlets. NBK takes the reward program idea to a whole new level, almost expanding it to every major local and international brand in Kuwait and giving our customers the best possible service.

NBK has expanded the popular Rewards loyalty program to include more than 700 local and international brands in clothing, dining, entertainment and lifestyle. Customers can shop at

their favorite local or international brands, dine out at their favorite restaurants and spend time with family and friends enjoying their favorite activities while earning reward points for future purchases. The Rewards loyalty program is available to all NBK credit card holders. NBK Rewards is tailored to today's consumer, who places value on leveraging their spending power.

NBK consistently offers the best-in-class services and products and rewards loyal customers with one of its kind benefits and promotions."

NBK Rewards offers a simple and easy way for customers to benefit from their spending habits. NBK customers



can use their NBK Visa, Mastercard or Diners Club at participating outlets to earn NBK Reward points. Customers will receive up to 20% of their payments as reward points. Customers can earn 10 reward points for

every KD 1 spent at a participating partner. Now fully digital, NBK Reward Program allows customers to always have the most updated information on the number of points earned through NBK Mobile Banking app.

only carry our guests to the most countries worldwide, but we also aim to bring them the experience of a lifetime by delivering them not only superb quality of service but also excellent in-flight entertainment. We are once again excited to offer the experience of watching the Super Bowl, the most watched show in USTV history, live on Turkish Airlines flights.

I am also delighted to announce that our new commercial video starring famous heart surgeon and TV personality Dr Oz will also be broadcast for the first time during the Super Bowl commercial break, marking the launch of our Five Senses campaign." Ahmet Olmstur, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Turkish Airlines announced.

Turkish Airlines has been recognized as the winner

of Skytrax's 'Best Airline in Europe' award six consecutive years and awarded for 'Best Business Class Airline Catering', 'World's Best Business Class Lounge', and also 'Best Business Class Dining Lounge' several times by Skytrax, one of the most prestigious passenger survey organizations in global aviation industry.

The global carrier offers a seamless in-flight entertainment service with Planet which features content in 23 different languages including more than 800 TV shows, over 700 music albums, 7 in-flight live TV broadcasts, 11 "barrier-free" films with "descriptive subtitles" and "descriptive audio" techniques; as well as noise-cancelling headphones on all long-haul flights.

Turkish Airlines brings Super Bowl excitement to the skies

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines passengers will be able to watch the Super Bowl LII, the final game of the National Football League, live on all flights with Internet connection on February 04, 2018. "We not

Business

Zain launches 'Unlimited Hellos!' for prepaid and postpaid customers

On the occasion of Kuwait's national celebrations

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, launched its latest promotional campaign entitled "Unlimited Hellos!" through which postpaid and prepaid customers can enjoy unlimited calls on Zain's network and many other great benefits on the occasion of Kuwait's national celebrations. Zain launched the new campaign to share the joys of Kuwait's national festivities with all its customers. At this time of the year, the company is always keen on launching unique promotional campaigns with exclusive offerings to celebrate this much cherished occasion.

As part of the latest campaign, new and existing postpaid customers subscribing to the KD 10, KD 15, KD 25, or the KD 35 plans can enjoy unlimited local calls on Zain's network during the entire subscription period (24 months with the latest smartphone devices). The new campaign also includes an exclusive offer for postpaid customers subscribed to voice/data plans, which includes unlimited local calls on Zain's network and unlimited 4G LTE Internet for KD 5 only.



Customers wishing to enjoy this offer can simply send 5 to 99107 (offer valid until 28th of February). Through its campaign, Zain also introduces an offer for new and existing prepaid (eeZee) customers, which includes unlimited local calls on Zain's network, 150 local minutes for other networks, 35 GBs of 4G LTE Internet, and FREE video streaming, all for KD 10 only. Customers wishing to enjoy this offer can simply send 10 to 999 (offer valid for 30 days). Zain has long considered itself a key partner of the Kuwaiti society, especially in such national celebrations.

The company launched this exciting campaign to show its commitment in sharing the joys of Kuwait as a leading national company, and will spare no efforts in being an integral part of the many occasions that are of interest to the society. By launching this exciting limited time promotional campaign, Zain continues to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best services and offers to meet customers' professional and personal telecommunications needs.

Ooredoo launches Huawei Mate 10 Porsche Design offer with 'Nukhba'



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait invited Porsche Club Kuwait members to the Nukhba branch for the exclusive launch event of the Huawei Mate 10 Porsche Design device.

All the members were offered a tailor made package with the Porsche Device exclusively created for this one day event, the packages came with unique and exclusive platinum lines.

The event took place last week when Porsche club members and the president of Porsche Club Kuwait Eng. Zakaria Dashti visited Ooredoo's head office with their Porsche cars for a friendly gathering with Ooredoo management, as well as a car photography session and afterwards they were taken on an official tour in the Nukhba VIP Lounge. During the gathering the members were introduced to the Huawei Mate 10 Porsche Design device with an un-boxing demonstration from a Huawei representative, afterwards the Nukhba Sales team explained all the details for this exclusive offer to the club members and answered all their questions.

The Porsche Club organization is now one of the best established of its kind in the world. Porsche Clubs are independent and guided by Porsche owners. Therefore, each Club has its own particular and highly individual program and range of services.

Yet all the Porsche Clubs on every continent have one thing in common, their strong bond to the Porsche brand. Porsche Club Kuwait was founded in 2003, and celebrates the values and the legend of the Porsche brand. The club offers the opportunity to experience together the real, living fascination with the marque.

Commenting on this event, Jasem Abdulrahim, Director of VIP and Direct Sales at Ooredoo, said: "This kind of event demonstrates the company's commitment to enrich-

ing our customers' experience and offering them tailored offers to what they desire, driven by the company's core values which are aligned with our core values of caring, connecting and challenging.

PORSCHE DESIGN and HUAWEI have joined forces to build a breathtaking high-performance luxury smartphone. Designed for strength and style with a glass uni-body construction and sleek handcrafted exterior, which is available exclusively in Diamond Black.

The PORSCHE DESIGN HUAWEI Mate 10 User Interface has been precision engineered to deliver a new level of performance-driven smartphone experience and has been specifically designed with an impressive memory cortex. With a combination of 6 GB RAM and 256 GB ROM* it is the highest spec of the HUAWEI Mate 10 series. The PORSCHE DESIGN HUAWEI Mate 10 comes with a USB-C to 3.5 mm Headphone Jack Adapter and custom-made leather case, designed exclusively for this premium package.

Abdulrahim added, "The Nukhba Program strives to provide a VIP experience tailored to a particular kind customer that are looking for quality services that match their extravagant lifestyle. In which we found Porsche owners and club members to be the most fitting customers to in which building a truly luxurious and exclusive customer experience with."

It is worth mentioning that all Nukhba clients get Nojoom rewards worth up to KD 500, which can be redeemed from ooredoo's selection of exclusive partners who offer the best in class services in a variety of industries, ranging from retail to hospitality and travel. The company is continuously working on enriching its portfolio of partners to ensure delivering customers with an unrivalled experience.

AUB signs a cooperation agreement with eNet

KUWAIT: In line with Ahli United Bank's (AUB) strategy of developing its digital capabilities, the Bank announced that it has signed a cooperation agreement with Automated Services Network Company (eNet) which will allow the Bank to expand its scope of electronic banking services with quick payment solutions to all telecommunications companies in Kuwait, as well as a selective number of carriers abroad.

The agreement will also allow customers to pay their financing installments with companies, school tuition fees as well as purchase online shopping cards while receiving a host of entertainment services through subscribing to various television channels, entertainment packages, and electronic payment channels along with purchasing an extensive range of online games. The agreement enables customers to access electronic payment Solutions available on the Bank's website or through the Bank's mobile



Sabah Khaled Al Ghunaim and Tareq Muhmood signing the agreement.

banking application.

Commenting on the new agreement, Tareq Muhmood, AUB's Senior Deputy Chief Executive Officer said, "This is all about providing our customers with more choice on how they handle their financial affairs. We are committed to deliver better and enhanced services to our customers, as we always strive to facilitate their banking transactions with comfort and ease. Therefore, we have signed this agreement with eNet, which is the first company of its kind in Kuwait to provide automated payment services that include the payment of invoices to all major telecommunications companies operating in Kuwait.

Moreover, Huda Al-Madani, AUB's Alternative Distribution Channels said,

"We believe customers will be delighted with the ease of use and the convenience of this new service. The new service with eNet offers a wide range of special services that represent added value and a qualitative leap in the level of our services which aim to provide the best means of secure and easy payment methods anywhere and anytime. This is in line with AUB's strategy to stay abreast with the continuous technological development across the financial sector, and provide the latest innovations that meet our customers' needs." "We are keen to leverage fruitful opportunities that allows us to expand our online banking services to provide more convenience to our customers," added Al-Madani.

Burgan Bank announces names of Yawmi account draw winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday 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. Humoud Ayed Reshedan Al-Sulaimani
2. Smeerah Mohammad Gaith Almutawaa
3. Abdullateef Mohammad Naser Alhamad
4. One third of late Mohd Jawad Marafi
5. Kamal Saleem Habib Kulkawi

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 bal-



ance 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.

Air Arabia launches flights to Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport

SHARJAH: Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC), yesterday announced the launch of its inaugural flight to Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport, adding a second route for travel to the Russian capital. The inaugural flight landed in Sheremetyevo International Airport on Thursday, February 1st, at 13:35 local time led by an Air Arabia delegation headed by the airline Group Chief Executive Officer. The delegation was received by Sheremetyevo Airport officials who were present for the arrival of the flight.

Air Arabia announced that the flight will initially operate four times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, before being upgraded to a daily service from 1 March 2018. The outbound flight G9 951 departs Sharjah International Airport (SHJ) at 09:10 hours, arriving at Sheremetyevo International Airport (SVO) at 13:35 hours local time. The inbound flight G9 952 leaves Sheremetyevo at 14:35 hours, landing in Sharjah at 20:45 hours local time.

"We thank the Russian authorities



and Sheremetyevo International Airport for their warm welcome. Moscow is a metropolis that brims with culture, and Sheremetyevo adds a convenient gateway to enter and discover this historic city," said Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia. "Through flexible and affordable travel options, and our award-winning services, we remain

committed to providing our passengers with the best, and are confident that this new route will complement our existing flights to Domodedovo in making Moscow a unique and unforgettable destination," he further added. Air Arabia currently operates flights to over 140 routes across the globe from five hubs located in the Middle East and North Africa.

Exclusive automotive offers in cooperation with Gulf Bank



KUWAIT: Building on the success the campaign has achieved in 2017, and aiming at providing convenient and added value services to its customer, Gulf Bank announced the extension of its exclusive automotive offers, in cooperation with top car dealers in Kuwait. Gulf Bank customers can benefit from these offers when visiting the cars showrooms and meeting the bank's representatives to finance their new car through Gulf Bank. Gulf Bank will continue to embark on collaborations with car dealers to present

the best offers to its customers throughout the year, in its effort to cater to its customers various needs while offering the best services. The offer is valid in top car dealers in Kuwait including: Lexus, Toyota, Ford, KIA, Nissan, Honda, in addition to Chevrolet and Cadillac and is valid until 31 March 2018. Gulf Bank representatives are available at all car dealers across Kuwait, to present the best services and facilities to the bank's customers and non-customers when purchasing their dream car.

Technology

Creating a new generation of space enthusiasts in Kuwait

Kuwait Times speaks to the founder of Space Generation

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Space lovers will now have their chance to see their dreams of being involved in space activities come true and be a part of the future of space science in Kuwait. Ghanim Khalid Al-Otaibi is a 32 years old mechanical engineer and graduate from Kuwait University, a former employee at Kuwait Oil Company and a master degree holder in astronomy, founded the Space Generation (SG) with the support of the Space Generation Advisory Council, The Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and the Arab Planning Institute.

Kuwait Times spoke with Otaibi to know more about the initiative. Otaibi is a member of Space Generation Advisory Council which is a global non-profit organization by United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and aims to represent university students and young space professionals at the United Nations. Along with this, they also work to promote international cooperation in the peaceful exploration of space.

"I'm trying to be a link between the youth and the decision makers to establish a space program in Kuwait," he said, adding that the Space Generation aims to gather the youth of Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike to express their thoughts and ideas on the subject. The local team of SG will help students and young professionals who are between the age of 18 and 35 years old to write a proposal to establish a space program in Kuwait.

Otaibi noted that 10 groups will be selected and each group will consist of 2-4 members. "I will support the participants with periodic meetings, educational

resources and a proposal template about space science, space engineering, space business, and space policy," Otaibi said. "International colleagues from the Space Generation Advisory Council also expressed their willingness to support with technical issues and discussions held online."

He explained that the participants will have great tools to work while some participants can do CubeSat which is a type of miniaturized satellite for space research. After finalizing the proposal, teams will be required to present their proposals on March 3rd to an audience for discussion. After the discussion, we will have mentors from the Arab institute for Planning and they will coach them how to present their ideas and their suitability in Kuwait. "I aim to establish nonprofit organizations, for students who like to perform research in the international space station or someone who wants to translate novels in space field to Arabic. The goal is to deliver the idea to decision makers in University of Kuwait and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)."

Space Generation was not the first attempt to establish a space program in Kuwait. In 2009, Otaibi joined a committee who are reviewing international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, studying space-related activities that could be undertaken by the United Nations and encouraging space research programs in Vienna. "I talked about the benefits of having space program in Kuwait to the committee. After that I was doing lectures in science club about different space subjects and astronomy biology."



AI and the future of mobile intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way both businesses and individuals function. The ability to process, leverage, and learn from big data means machines are becoming more powerful in the one area they could not compete with humans: they can now think, and faster. Huawei views this as an important turning point and a shift from the smart to the intelligence revolution.

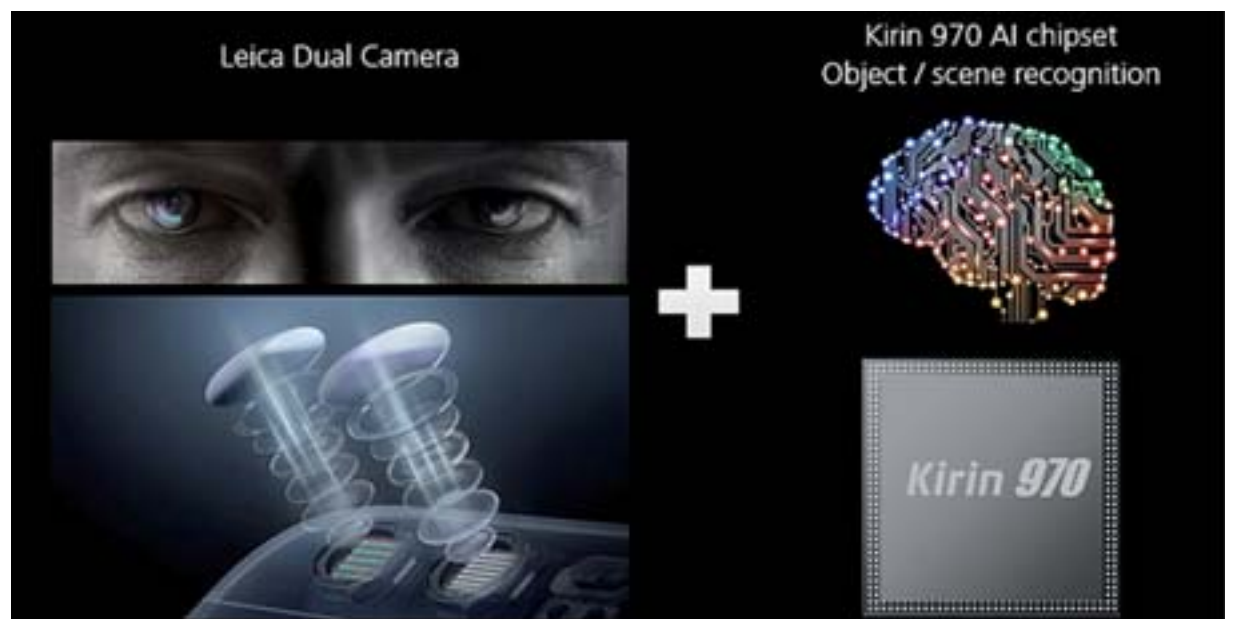
The spirit of Huawei Mate 10 series is built on that very concept - to create innovative devices that help make the lives of our consumers easier. As Huawei continues to drive the new era of 'intelligent technology', all eyes are on Huawei for the upcoming Mobile World Congress where Huawei Mate 10 Pro is short-listed for the Best Smartphone category at the Global Mobile Awards 2018.

Today's users need technology to be more humane, transparent and rapid, which is why the core of Huawei devices revolve around intelligent power, intelligent speed and intelligent camera. A phone that adapts to a user's behavior and needs, from auto-adjusting camera settings to optimizing battery usage, for example, is just the start.

AI-powered phones like Huawei Mate 10 series means that app developers can now capitalize on the power of Huawei's Kirin 970 chipset - a mobile artificial intelligence computing platform that runs on a Neural Processing Unit (NPU), which performs 25 times more with 50 times more efficiency. New game-changing AI apps could potentially replace the entire generation of apps we currently use with intelligent apps. Huawei the Kirin processor will play an instrumental role in the intelligence revolution.

The Mate 10 Series is also a giant technological leap with the introduction of artificial intelligence into the camera. This milestone is helping shift traditional photography to smart photography with an intelligent camera that can recognize scenes and objects and adjust parameters to produce gallery-like pictures.

Meanwhile, Huawei has also developed battery management feature with the AI just to extend the battery life even further, although Mate 10 and Mate 10 Pro already have a gigantic 4000mah battery and 22.5W SuperCharge. AI helps extend battery life by learning user habits, which are categorized



into four groups - gaming, business, travelling and taking photos, and under each group, there are 14 labels for different scenarios. After mapping the user habits according to these labels and groups, the phone will generate a customized plan to save power. Huawei Mate 10 Series is certainly setting new benchmarks in the era of AI and transforming the future of smartphones.



Waymo vs Uber trade secrets trial at starting line

SAN FRANCISCO: A billion-dollar trial pitting Alphabet-owned autonomous driving unit Waymo against Uber starts Monday, in what could be a blockbuster case between two technology giants over alleged theft of trade secrets. The San Francisco courtroom battle will take place as Waymo and Uber race to perfect self-driving cars that people could summon for rides as desired in a turn away from car ownership.

The list of witnesses who might be called to testify includes ousted Uber chief Travis Kalanick as well as Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page. The trial stems from a lawsuit filed last year by Waymo-previously known as the Google car unit-which claimed former manager Anthony Levandowski took a trove of technical data with him when he left to launch a competing venture that went on to become Otto and was later acquired by Uber. Levandowski is expected to be called to the stand at trial before federal judge William Alsup. Uber last year confirmed that it fired Levandowski just ahead of a date set by a judge for the San Francisco-based ridesharing titan to return files taken from Waymo.

'Unjust enrichment'

Waymo's lawsuit contends that Levandowski in December 2015 downloaded thousands of files from a highly confidential design server to a laptop and took the data with him to the startup. During hearings last year, the judge said that Waymo "supplied a compelling record that Levandowski pilfered over 14,000 files from Waymo," and that Uber knew or should have known about the theft. A key, however, will be for Waymo to prove to jurors that any swiped secrets actually made it to Uber.

Alsup begrudgingly delayed the start of trial twice, most recently to look into whether Uber connived to hide evidence. Waymo argues in the lawsuit that a "calculated theft" of its technology netted Otto a buyout of more than \$500 million and enabled Uber to revive a stalled self-driving car program. The Alphabet unit is seeking damages of at least \$1 billion. Levandowski, a co-founder of Otto, headed Uber's efforts to develop self-driving technology for personal driving, delivery and trucking.

Waymo will need to convince jurors that data taken was actually trade secrets; that Uber used or disclosed what it learned, and that the ride-sharing company was "unjustly enriched" as a result. The eight supposed trade secrets at issue in the trial have not been revealed in court. Waymo is set to begin calling witnesses on Monday after both sides present opening remarks to the four-woman, six-man jury. The trial is expected to take about three weeks.

Shifting gears

The courtroom drama is playing out as Uber's new chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi strives to get the company on course and prepare for a stock market debut in 2019. Khosrowshahi's stated goal is to shift Uber to a responsible course after a period of market traction at any price. Even as Uber has seen unprecedented growth by expanding to dozens of countries, it has been hurt by missteps including allegations of executive misconduct, a toxic work atmosphere and potentially unethical competitive practices.

Japanese telecommunications giant SoftBank in January finished buying a 15 percent stake in Uber. The investment is part of an effort by Uber to move past a series of scandals, reform its board structure and diminish the role of Uber co-founder Kalanick. Meanwhile, Waymo is striving for a lead in autonomous ridesharing, which involves major automakers, technology developers and services such as Uber and Lyft. Waymo recently announced it was ordering "thousands" of vehicles from Fiat Chrysler for the expansion of its autonomous ride-hailing service across several US cities. —AFP

Afghan deliverymen feel pressure as online sales rise

KABUL: Afghan courier Sarajuddin stops his motorbike on a dirt road in the heart of war-torn Kabul and calls his customer for directions: "I am in the second street. Which way should I go now?" As Afghans embrace online shopping, harried delivery men in the capital are increasingly running the gauntlet of security checkpoints, gridlocked traffic, and potholed roads-as well as the near-constant threat of blasts and attacks.

Lost in Kabul's labyrinthine streets, Sarajuddin often arrives at his destination late, sometimes by several hours. He then has to endure the abuse of angry customers who have been waiting for their package. "You never know how long it takes to reach an address in Kabul," the 24-year-old tells AFP as he prepares to set off on what he hopes will be a quick delivery. "An estimate of time and distance in Kabul can end up being totally wrong." It is a problem that is likely to worsen as more and more delivery men fight their way through Kabul to satisfy the country's nascent e-commerce market.

Growing market

In recent years a new generation of tech-savvy entre-

preneurs has tapped into a small but growing online market-currently around eight million people, less than one-third of the population, can access the internet. Countless online stores offering everything from prayer beads to penis enlargement creams have appeared, many using popular social media networks such as Facebook to promote their products.

"We promise to deliver the product to a customer in an hour but then it takes two or more hours to find the address," says Ahmad Asmar Faqiri, who recently launched Foodbooking, an online delivery service for eateries in Kabul. "It is a huge headache in Kabul. In most cases, even when you get to the areas it takes our men an average of three phone calls to physically reach the customer."

Adding to the woes of Kabul's stressed-out delivery men is the absence of mobile payment, which means customers must pay cash on delivery. The government says it is working on developing a transaction-processing system but entrepreneur Lais Shujia tells AFP it "has all been mainly talk so far". In the meantime couriers must carry wads of cash with them, making them prime targets for robbers in a city beset by violence. A Foodbooking courier was recently attacked on his way to a customer. The assailants beat him up before stealing his money, mobile phone and motorbike, Faqiri said.

'Nothing starts perfectly'

The Afghan government hopes the embryonic e-commerce sector-which officials vaguely estimate to be worth "millions of dollars"-could help generate jobs in a country where unemployment hovers around 40 percent. Shah Faisal

took a huge gamble three years ago, sinking his entire savings of \$3,000 into an online clothing business. Since then his sales have soared from one or two a week to more than 100 a day and he now employs 20 people.

"My family was concerned that I may lose that hard-earned money, my friends said I was being naive and some even mocked me for the idea," says the 27-year-old, whose e-commerce venture was among the first in the country. Despite the many problems facing the sector-including the lack of regulation over the quality of the products sold online-officials remain optimistic.

"Nothing starts perfectly but the success of these first few online businesses is encouraging news for others to get in," Naqibullah Laraway, finance director for the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, tells AFP on the sidelines of a recent e-commerce and digital marketing seminar in Kabul. "We have seen that despite the skepticism many Afghans find it tempting, even fascinating, to order online and receive their goods at their doorsteps."

The convenience of having online purchases delivered to their homes or offices has resonated with some Afghans afraid of being caught up in the violence plaguing the city. "I always preferred to see and touch a product before buying it but I was forced to explore it (online shopping) after some scary suicide attacks that killed a lot of people including a friend of mine," Madina Sadat wrote on Facebook. But delivery delays are a source of irritation. "Online shopping services are good especially when it comes on time," says Zabihullah Danish after receiving his package from Sarajuddin. "But sometimes we do not get it on time-I hope it gets better in the future." —AFP

Health

As cancer survival rate grows, so does number of new cases

PARIS: Even as cancer treatment improves and survival rates go up, so too does the number of people afflicted with the deadly disease, experts said ahead of World Cancer Day. The 14 million new cancer cases worldwide recorded in 2012 will balloon to 24 million within two decades, outstripping the increase in global population, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). All forms of cancer combined claimed 8.8 million lives in 2015, making it the second leading cause of death after heart disease. "We know how to help avoid it, and to detect it. We're getting better at treating it. But overall, we're not making real headway in the fight against cancer," said Christophe Leroux, head of communications for France's League Against Cancer.

Several factors account for the disease's growing prevalence. One is ageing populations, especially in developed nations and China, where a one-child-per-family policy in force for more than 30 years created a top-heavy age pyramid. Cancer risk increases with age. There is also a long list of lifestyle habits linked to cancer, with tobacco consumption at the top. Other risk factors—all of them increasing—include eating poorly, lack of exercise, drinking alcohol, and

obesity. Cancer-causing infections such as hepatitis and the human papilloma virus (HPV) account for a quarter of cancer cases, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Another risk is exposure to carcinogenic industrial pollutants, including asbestos, organic pollutants such as dioxins, heavy metals and small air particles that lodge in the lungs.

Unequal access

Despite the growing challenges, five-year survival rates for most cancers have improved—sometimes significantly—since 2000, according to a study published last week in medical journal *The Lancet* that reviewed 37.5 million cancer cases between 2000 and 2014. But large disparities between societies remain, depending on level of development and differences in health care systems. For children with brain tumors, for example, five-year survival has

improved across the board from 54 percent for the period 2000-2004, to more than 60 percent for 2010-2014. In the United States, Denmark, Sweden and Slovakia, the survival rate progressed to 80 percent or better.

In Mexico and Brazil, however, less than 40 percent of children diagnosed with brain tumors survived in the 2010-2014 period. Breast cancer rates also improved across the board, even as disparities remained. Five-year survival rates for 2010-2014 in the US and Australia were 90 percent. In western and eastern Europe, the rate improved to 85 and 71 percent, respectively.

"If we want fewer deaths from cancer, there are two ways: first, better prevention, and second, improving outcomes," co-author Michel Coleman, an epidemiologist and researcher at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told AFP.

Treatment costs \$300 bn

Cancer is also a costly disease, both for health care systems and for society at large. Globally, the total annual economic cost of cancer exceeds a trillion dollars, according to the WHO. Much of that burden falls on developing nations. Lost productivity due to premature cancer deaths in five emerging economies India, China, Brazil, South Africa and Russia—was more than \$46 billion (37 billion euros) in 2012, according to a study released this week by the UN's International Agency for Research on Cancer. Caring for cancer patients is also expensive. "It seems plausible that the global cost of cancer treatment and care in 2017 must already be substantially higher than \$300 billion," the authors of the *Lancet* study concluded.

Inevitably, less money also means higher death rates. "A lack of access to treatment is leading to premature deaths which could have otherwise been prevented," said Sanchia Aranda, head of Cancer Council Australia. "Low- and middle-income countries face the brunt as millions of people die prematurely from cancer every year as a result of inequities in access to diagnosis." World Cancer Day is on February 4. — AFP



LONDON : A placard portraying Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (center) is held by protesters during a march calling for an end to the 'crisis' in the state-run National Health Service (NHS), in central London on February 3, 2018. — AFP

Second baby hit by salmonella from Lactalis milk in Spain

MADRID: A baby who drank milk produced by the French dairy giant Lactalis has been diagnosed with salmonella in the Spanish Basque country, taking the number of cases in the country this year to two, authorities said Saturday. "A second case of an infant affected by an infection with salmonella Agona" was detected at the Basurto University Hospital in Bilbao, the Department of Health of the Basque regional government said in a statement. Lactalis has been engulfed in scandal since December when authorities ordered a massive international recall of the baby milk which made at least 38 babies ill in France and Spain.

The statement said the child consumed "formula milk developed by the French group Lactalis", adding the baby was in "good" state of health, was under medical surveillance but not in hospital. Another baby who had consumed contaminated Lactalis infant milk had already been identified in the Basque region. His infection with salmonella was confirmed on January 12 by scientists at the Pasteur Institut and Public Health France. Lactalis announced a few days later the withdrawal in Spain of 37 additional batches of infant food products potentially contaminated with salmonella.

In December it withdrew all products manufactured from February 15, 2017 at the Craon plant in western France, where salmonella contamination had been detected. The products concerned in Spain are mainly powdered milk and cereals of the Damira, Sanutri and Puleva brands, sold exclusively in pharmacies. Lactalis has been the target of heavy criticism after it emerged that the company's own tests found salmonella at the factory in Craon, but it did not sound the alarm because it had not detected the bacteria in the milk itself.

The company is facing several lawsuits over the outbreak, and police raided the group's headquarters in Laval, western France, earlier this year. It recalled 12 million packages of the affected baby milk, under brands including Picot, Milumel and Celia, across 83 countries. Salmonella causes fever and diarrhea in infants, along with vomiting in some cases, which can lead to babies being hospitalized for dehydration. — AFP

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Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader Consultant vascular and general surgery

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What's On

Grand Hyper launches its 12th branch in Kuwait at Al-Rai

Amazing inaugural offers coinciding with Hala February celebrations



Grand Hyper launched its newest branch in Al Rai as a New Year gift to Kuwait. The managing director of the Regency Group, Dr Anwar Ameen, and Sheikh Dawood Salman Al Sabah, jointly inaugurated the new branch on Wednesday, January 31st, at 4 pm.

Abu Baker Mohammed, N.V Mohammad (Director Regency Group), Abdussubhan Shamsudheen, AP Nabeel Salam, Jassim Mohammad Khamis Al Sharrah, Ayyoob Kachery (Regional Director), Dr Abdul Fathah (Director Grand Hyper, Kuwait), Mohammad Suneer (CEO), Thahseer Ali (General Manager), were the other dignitaries present at the ceremony.

This is Grand Hyper's 12th branch in Kuwait and the 49th in the region. The inauguration of the showroom coincides with the start of the festive month of February in Kuwait, and in a manner of adding to the celebratory mood, the showroom provides several inaugural offers rewarding customers handsomely.

Speaking to the media, Dr Anwar Ameen stated that the new opening is a tribute to the loyal customers in Kuwait, "who have always supported all our initiatives, fully appreciating the value that we offer them both in terms of quality and quantity. We stay focused on providing satisfaction to our customers in order to build their trust, which is our biggest investment."

Further he noted that the journey of Grand Hyper in Kuwait is a testimony to our dedication and sincerity to our customers, who have patronized us loyally in the face of stiff competition. "The inaugural offers we are extending to our customers is our way of expressing our gratitude for their support. We promise that we will keep raising the bar higher in providing greater

value to them, fulfilling their growing needs."

The new showroom is located in the heart of Kuwait's busiest commercial district of Al-Rai, at the intersection of the 4th Ring Road and the Airport Road 55. The showroom boasts an expansive parking area and spans an enormous 45,000 sq feet on a single floor, providing all the needs of consumers under one roof, including a special food section that serves Indian, continental, Chinese and Arabic cuisines. The food section is set to satisfy the cravings of the large number of workers and the floating population in the area.

Competitive pricing, which has been one of the strengths of Grand Hyper, will continue to benefit customers in its newest showroom, providing value without compromising quality or quantity. The new branch will provide all the needs of the customers under one roof across a vast range of product categories including foodstuffs, electronic equipment and appliances, garments from the collections of European designers, footwear, health and beauty items among others. Vegetable and fruit produces are sold fresh and are purchased from select farms from around the world to ensure the highest quality.

Meat and fish products are imported from India and other countries on flights on a daily basis to ensure customers a steady supply of fresh products. Grand Hyper is able to provide such competitive prices by sourcing products directly from international suppliers, bypassing middlemen, who otherwise charge a commission adding to the overall cost. All these factors combine to give shoppers a unique shopping experience that is exciting and truly satisfying.



Writers Forum holds poetry recitation



The Writers Forum, Kuwait organized a multilingual kavi sammelan/mushaira in Salmiya on the occasion of India's Republic Day on Jan 26, under the leadership of Maimona Ali Chougale, President of the Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira Arvind

Rayina, Secretary Rajesh Velverlekar, the two announcers Saeed Nazar and Madhulika and Amir Dewan, a translator of Indian languages like Tamil, Oriya, Bengali, Punjabi etc into Hindi, and Nazeer Ahmad Shaik. Various patriotic songs and poems were sung.

CBSE appoints ICSK Principal Dr V Binumon as pre-exam counselor for students, parents

Dr V Binumon, the Principal of the Indian Community School Kuwait, has once again been selected as a Counselor for Kuwait region as part of the CBSE annual pre-examination counseling. The CBSE annual counseling is an outreach program which caters to the heterogeneous students' population and vast geographical network of schools. The Pre-Examination Psychological counseling for students and parents will begin from the 1st of February 2018, and will continue up to 13th April, 2018.

The counseling session will be carried out telephonically and Dr V Binumon can be reached at the mobile number 00965 94784839 between 8:00 pm and 10 pm on all these days. Dr V Binumon is a trained personnel who has a brilliant record as an Education Counselor and is empathetic to the needs of students. He has undergone courses and training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Hypnotherapy as well. Simultaneous to the counseling session, students and parents shall be instructed on techniques of harnessing stress and stress-related problems.

CBSE Tele-Counseling is offered by Principals and trained counselors from within CBSE affiliated schools located in and outside India. It is a voluntary, free of cost service provided by the participants. This year 91 Principals, trained Counselors from CBSE

affiliated government and private schools, few Psychologists and Special Educators will participate in Tele-Counseling and address exam related psychological problems of the students.

71 of them are available in India while 20 are located in Nepal, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al-Khobar), Sultanate of Oman, UAE (Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah), Kuwait, Singapore, Qatar and Japan. For the ninth year CBSE has arranged to provide counseling to differently abled children to take care of the needs and anxiety of special children. CBSE experts will answer queries of students through weekly Question Answer columns to be published in major national dailies during the month of February.

Online Queries will also be replied at counselling.cebse@gmail.com. Information related to examinations and techniques to cope with exam related anxiety is also provided at the CBSE website www.cbse.nic.in through micro link Helpline.







Dr V Binumon

TV

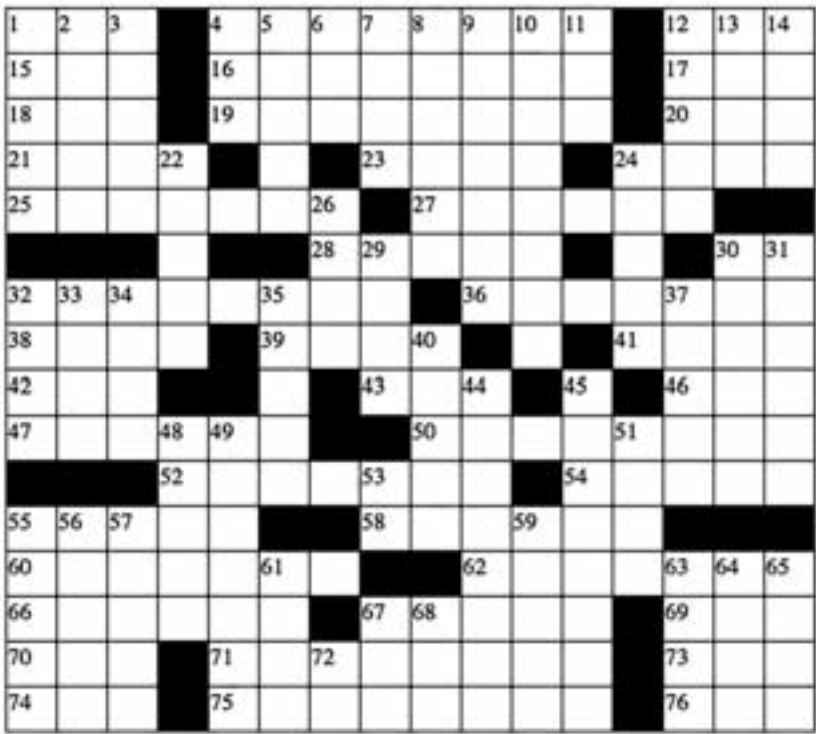
	
00:05	REC 2
01:40	Resident Evil: Vendetta
03:25	Knight And Day
05:30	American Ninja II: The Confrontation
07:05	Resident Evil: Vendetta
08:50	Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders
10:20	Knight And Day
12:25	Armageddon America
14:05	American Ninja II: The Confrontation
15:40	Blown Away
17:45	Iron Man
19:55	The Viral Factor
22:00	Revenge Of The Green Dragons
23:40	REC 3 Genesis
	
00:50	Lone Star Law
01:45	Treeshouse Masters
02:40	Treeshouse Masters
03:35	Treeshouse Masters
04:25	Treeshouse Masters
05:15	Treeshouse Masters
06:42	Preposterous Pets
06:49	Preposterous Pets
07:36	Night
08:00	Meet The Orangutans
08:25	Escape To Chimp Eden
08:50	Escape To Chimp Eden
09:15	Treeshouse Masters
10:10	Bad Dog
11:05	North America
12:00	Escape To Chimp Eden
12:28	Escape To Chimp Eden
12:55	Keeping Up With The Kruger
13:50	The Lion Queen
14:45	Bad Dog
15:40	North America
16:35	Lone Star Law
17:30	Treeshouse Masters
18:25	Into The Dragon's Lair
19:20	Intruders
20:15	Bad Dog
21:10	Escape To Chimp Eden
21:38	Escape To Chimp Eden
22:05	Into The Dragon's Lair
23:00	Intruders
23:55	North America
	
00:00	Call The Midwife
01:00	Liar
01:50	Line Of Duty
02:55	New Tricks
03:55	Doctors
04:25	Eastenders
05:00	Call The Midwife
06:00	Doctors
06:30	The Musketeers
07:30	Call The Midwife
08:30	Father Brown
09:20	Doctors
09:50	Eastenders
10:20	New Tricks
11:20	The Musketeers
12:15	Call The Midwife
13:20	Father Brown
14:10	Doctors
14:40	Eastenders
15:10	New Tricks
16:05	The Musketeers
17:00	Casualty
17:55	Casualty
18:45	New Tricks
19:45	Call The Midwife
20:45	The Level
21:35	New Tricks
22:35	Casualty
23:25	Call The Midwife
	
00:00	Britain's Darkest Taboos
01:00	The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
02:00	Crimes That Shook Britain
03:00	Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
04:00	Britain's Darkest Taboos
05:00	The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
06:00	Crimes That Shook Britain
07:00	It Takes A Killer
08:00	The First 48
09:00	Escaping Polygamy
10:00	Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
11:00	Crimes That Shook Australia
12:00	Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00	The First 48
14:00	Crimes That Shook Britain
15:00	Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00	Nightmare In Suburbia
17:00	Homicide Hunter
18:00	Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00	The Murder Of Laci Peterson
23:00	Britain's Darkest Taboos
	
00:10	Jo Brand: Barely Live
01:05	Another Period
01:28	Another Period
01:50	Tosh.O
02:13	Chappelle's Show
02:35	Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00	The Daily Show - Global Edition
03:25	Tosh.O
03:50	Chappelle's Show
04:15	Kroll Show
04:40	Key And Peele
05:05	I Live With Models
05:30	Impractical Jokers
05:55	Disaster Date
06:20	Ridiculousness Arabia
06:50	Catch A Contractor
07:40	The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05	Impractical Jokers
08:30	Disaster Date
08:55	Workaholics
09:20	Kroll Show
09:45	Key And Peele
10:10	I Live With Models
10:35	The Jim Gaffigan Show
11:00	Impractical Jokers
11:25	Disaster Date
11:50	Ridiculousness Arabia
12:15	Impractical Jokers
12:40	Framework
13:30	I Live With Models
13:55	Friends
14:20	Friends
14:45	Workaholics
15:10	Key And Peele
15:35	Kroll Show
16:00	Comedy Central Presents Comedy Salwagef
16:30	Ridiculousness Arabia
16:55	Friends
17:20	Friends
17:45	Disaster Date
18:10	Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35	Punk'd (Bet)
19:00	Punk'd (Bet)
19:25	Impractical Jokers
19:50	Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12	Friends
20:35	Friends
21:00	The Daily Show - Global Edition

21:30	Teachers
22:00	Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
22:25	Comedy Central Presents Comedy Salwagef
22:50	Detroiters
23:15	Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40	The Daily Show - Global Edition
	
00:30	Ultimate Survival
01:20	How The Earth Works
02:10	Prehistoric
03:00	How The Earth Works
03:50	Kids Do The Craziest Things
04:15	Kids Do The Craziest Things
04:40	Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:05	Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:30	Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:55	Kids Do The Craziest Things
06:20	How It's Made
06:40	How It's Made
07:00	Ultimate Survival
07:50	How It's Made
08:15	How It's Made
08:40	Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:05	Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:30	Tanked
10:20	Prehistoric
11:10	Finding Bigfoot
12:00	Someone's Gotta Do It
12:50	How It's Made
13:15	How It's Made
13:40	Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:05	Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:30	Tanked
15:20	Ultimate Survival
16:10	Prehistoric
17:00	Finding Bigfoot
17:50	Atlas 4D
18:40	Destroyed In Seconds
19:05	Destroyed In Seconds
19:30	How It's Made: Sports Equipment
19:55	How It's Made: Sports Equipment
20:20	Tanked
21:10	Finding Bigfoot
22:00	Atlas 4D
22:50	Prehistoric
23:40	Ultimate Survival
	
00:50	Murder Online
01:45	Kindred Spirits
02:40	A Haunting
03:35	I Speak For The Dead
04:30	Murder Online
05:25	Killer Confessions
06:20	Murder Book
07:10	Disappeared
08:00	California Investigator
08:25	True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:15	California Investigator
09:40	California Investigator
10:10	Swamp Murders
11:05	Id Kill For You
12:00	Reasonable Doubt
12:55	True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50	I Almost Got Away With It
14:45	Swamp Murders
15:40	Id Kill For You
16:35	Grave Secrets
17:30	True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
18:25	Who On Earth Did I Marry?
18:50	Who On Earth Did I Marry?
19:20	I Almost Got Away With It
20:15	Evil Stepmothers
21:10	Id Kill For You
22:05	Fatal Encounters
23:00	Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
23:55	I Speak For The Dead
	
00:10	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35	Binny And The Ghost
01:00	Hank Zipzer
01:25	Alex & Co.
01:45	Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50	Evermoor Chronicles
02:15	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05	Binny And The Ghost
03:30	Binny And The Ghost
03:55	Hank Zipzer
04:15	Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20	Hank Zipzer
04:45	Alex & Co.
05:10	Alex & Co.
05:35	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25	Binny And The Ghost
06:45	Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50	Rolling With The Ronks
07:00	Jessie
07:25	Tangled: The Series
07:50	Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55	Hotel Transylvania: The Series
08:20	Elena Of Avalor
08:45	Bunk'd
09:10	Stuck In The Middle
09:35	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:00	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25	Lolirock
10:50	Lolirock
11:15	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
11:40	Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
12:05	Hank Zipzer
12:30	Alex & Co.
12:55	Alex & Co.
13:20	Lolirock
13:45	Lolirock
14:10	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
14:35	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:00	The Zhuzhus
15:15	K.C. Undercover
15:40	Bunk'd
16:05	Disney Mickey Mouse
16:30	Elena Of Avalor
16:55	Bizaardvark
17:00	Tangled: The Series
17:25	Descendants Wicked World
17:50	Stuck In The Middle
17:55	K.C. Undercover
18:20	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:45	Hotel Transylvania: The Series
19:10	Star Wars Forces Of Destiny
19:15	Bunk'd
19:40	Girl Meets World
20:05	Disney Mickey Mouse
20:10	Liv And Maddie
20:35	Jessie
21:00	Tangled: The Series
21:25	K.C. Undercover
21:50	Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:15	Bizaardvark
22:40	Stuck In The Middle
23:05	Rolling With The Ronks
23:20	Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:45	Lolirock

	
00:15	PJ Masks
00:40	Vampirina
01:05	Vampirina
01:30	Art Attack
01:55	Henry Hugglemonster
02:05	Loopdidoo
02:20	Henry Hugglemonster
02:35	Calimero
02:50	Henry Hugglemonster
03:05	Art Attack
03:30	The Hive
03:40	Loopdidoo
03:55	Henry Hugglemonster
04:10	Art Attack
04:35	Loopdidoo
04:50	Calimero
05:05	Art Attack
05:30	Henry Hugglemonster
05:45	Henry Hugglemonster
06:00	Art Attack
06:30	Henry Hugglemonster
06:45	Loopdidoo
07:00	Henry Hugglemonster
07:15	Calimero
07:30	PJ Masks
08:00	P-King Duckling
08:25	Jungle Junction
08:40	Special Agent Oso
09:00	Handy Manny
09:15	PJ Masks
09:30	Puppy Dog Pals
10:00	Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:25	Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:55	Sherrif Callie's Wild West
11:20	Sherrif Callie's Wild West
11:50	The Lion Guard
12:45	Sofia The First
13:35	PJ Masks
14:00	PJ Masks
14:30	Doc McStuffins
14:55	P-King Duckling
15:20	Vampirina
15:45	Sofia The First
16:10	Puppy Dog Pals
16:35	Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:00	PJ Masks
17:25	Mission Force One: Connect And Protect
17:35	Miles From Tomorrow
18:00	Goldie & Bear
18:30	Puppy Dog Pals
18:55	Sofia The First
19:25	Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:55	Doc McStuffins
20:10	The Lion Guard
20:35	P-King Duckling
21:00	Vampirina
21:30	PJ Masks
22:25	Sofia The First
22:50	P-King Duckling
23:20	Puppy Dog Pals
23:45	Mickey And The Roadster Racers
	
00:15	Yukon Men
01:05	Dangerman
01:50	Railroad Australia
02:35	Abandoned Engineering
03:20	Street Outlaws
04:05	Alaska Monsters
04:50	Deadliest Catch
05:35	How Do They Do It?
06:00	Backroad Bounty
06:45	How Do They Do It?
07:40	How Do They Do It?
07:35	Alaska Monsters
08:20	Backroad Bounty
09:10	Deadliest Catch
09:55	Dangerman
10:45	Railroad Australia
11:30	Abandoned Engineering
12:20	Backroad Bounty
13:05	How Do They Do It?
13:30	How Do They Do It?
13:55	Deadliest Catch
14:40	Yukon Men
15:30	Dangerman
16:15	Railroad Australia
17:05	Abandoned Engineering
17:50	Alaska Monsters
18:40	Deadliest Catch
19:25	Yukon Men
20:15	Street Outlaws
21:00	Gold Rush
21:50	Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:40	Junkyard Empire
23:30	Alaska Monsters
	
06:00	Supa Strikas
06:25	Milo Murphy's Law
06:50	Right Now Kapow
07:15	Mech-X4
07:40	Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45	Walk The Prank
08:10	Walk The Prank
08:35	Right Now Kapow
09:00	Right Now Kapow
09:25	Mighty Med
09:50	Mighty Med
10:20	Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
10:45	Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10	Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35	Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00	Kid vs. Kat
12:25	Two More Eggs
12:30	Kid vs. Kat
12:55	Kirby Buckets
13:20	Kirby Buckets
13:45	Supa Strikas
14:10	Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15	Supa Strikas
14:40	Right Now Kapow
15:05	Right Now Kapow
15:30	Milo Murphy's Law
15:55	Two More Eggs
16:00	The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
16:25	Lab Rats
16:50	Lab Rats
17:15	Mech-X4
17:40	Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05	Supa Strikas
18:30	Marvel's Ant-Man
18:35	Walk The Prank
19:00	Gravity Falls
19:25	Milo Murphy's Law
19:50	Marvel's Rocket And Groot
20:25	Mech-X4
20:40	Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45	Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10	Kid vs. Kat
21:35	Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40	Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45	Lab Rats
22:10	Lab Rats
22:35	Phineas And Ferb
23:00	Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
	
00:00	WAGs Atlanta
00:55	Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:50	El News
02:50	Botched

03:40	Botched
04:35	Botched
05:30	Celebrity Style Story
06:00	Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
06:55	El News Middle East
07:25	Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
08:20	Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
09:15	Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:10	El News Middle East
10:40	Red Carpet Icons
11:10	Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
12:10	Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
13:05	Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
14:00	Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
15:00	El News Middle East
15:30	Red Carpet Icons
16:00	Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:00	Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:00	Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00	WAGs Atlanta
20:00	WAGs Atlanta
21:00	WAGs Atlanta
22:00	The Platinum Life
23:00	El News Middle East
23:15	Citizen Rose
	
00:00	Chopped
01:00	Iron Chef Gauntlet
02:00	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00	Man Fire Food
04:00	Chopped
05:00	Guy's Grocery Games
06:00	Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:50	Anna Olson: Bake
07:15	The Kitchen
08:05	The Pioneer Woman
08:30	The Pioneer Woman
08:55	Siba's Table
09:25	Siba's Table
09:55	Cooking For Real
10:25	Cooking For Real
10:55	The Kitchen
11:45	Cooking For Real
12:10	The Pioneer Woman
12:35	The Pioneer Woman
13:00	Siba's Table
13:30	Siba's Table
14:00	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00	Chopped
16:00	The Kitchen
17:00	Cooking For Real
17:30	Cooking For Real
18:00	Chopped
19:00	Guy's Grocery Games
20:00	Tia Mowry At Home
20:30	Tia Mowry At Home
21:00	The Big Eat - Middle East
21:30	The Big Eat - Middle East
22:00	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30	Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00	Chopped
	
00:10	Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00	Emmerdale
01:30	Emmerdale
02:00	Coronation Street
02:30	Cash Trapped
03:25	The Chase: Celebrity Specials
04:20	The Chase: Celebrity Specials
05:15	Don't Tell The Bride
06:15	Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:10	Cash Trapped
08:05	The Chase: Celebrity Specials
09:00	The Chase: Celebrity Specials
09:55	Don't Tell The Bride
11:00	Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50	Cash Trapped
12:45	Emmerdale
13:15	Coronation Street
13:45	Coronation Street
14:15	Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10	Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00	The Voice UK 2018
17:25	Royal Stories
17:50	Don't Tell The Bride
18:50	Emmerdale
19:15	Coronation Street
19:45	Coronation Street
20:10	Couples Come Dine With Me
21:00	The Voice UK 2018
22:25	Royal Stories
22:50	Emmerdale
23:15	Coronation Street
23:40	Coronation Street
	
01:00	How 2 Win
02:00	Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
03:00	The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
04:40	WW2 From Space
06:20	Modern Marvels
07:10	How 2 Win
08:00	The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
09:00	The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
10:00	Modern Marvels
11:00	Engineering Disasters
12:00	United Stuff Of America
13:00	Cowboys & Outlaws
14:00	The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
15:00	The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
16:00	Engineering Disasters
17:00	Modern Marvels
18:00	United Stuff Of America
19:00	Cowboys & Outlaws
20:00	UFO Files
21:00	America's Book Of Secrets
22:00	Ancient Aliens
23:00	10 Things You Don't Know About...
	
00:20	Swamp People
01:10	Swamp People
02:00	American Pickers Best Of
02:50	Pawn Stars
03:15	Storage Wars
03:40	American Pickers
04:30	Swamp People
05:15	Swamp People
06:00	Mountain Men
06:50	Forged In Fire
07:40	Pawn Stars
08:05	Storage Wars
08:30	American Pickers
09:20	American Pickers
10:10	Ax Men
11:00	Forged In Fire
11:50	Pawn Stars

CROSSWORD 1827



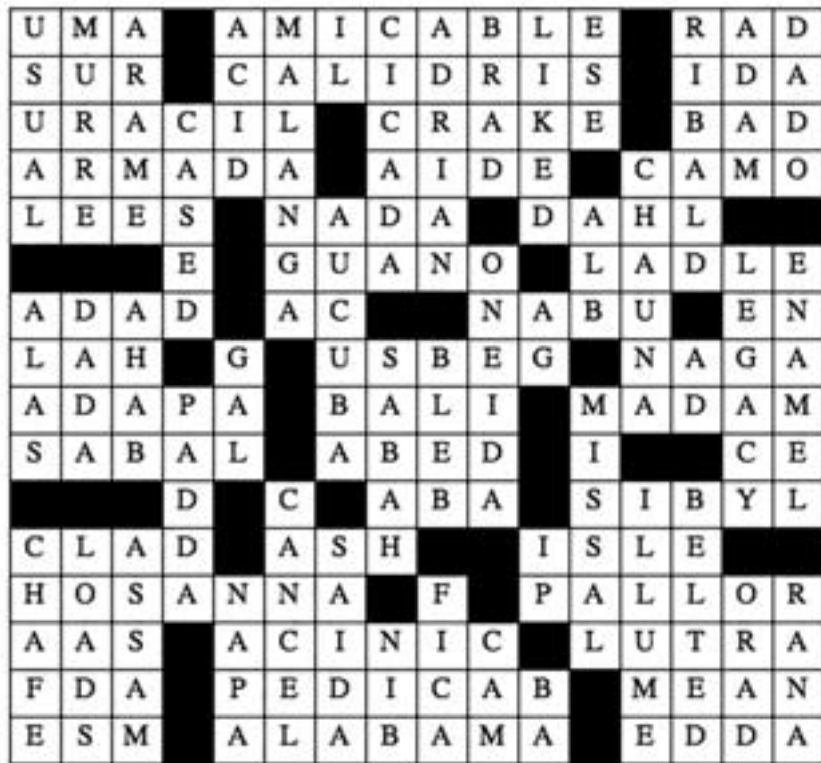
ACROSS

- 1. Hairpiece covering the head and made of human or synthetic hair.
- 4. Based on the meter as a standard of measurement.
- 12. Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
- 15. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 16. Arouse hostility or indifference in where there had formerly been love, affection, or friendliness.
- 17. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- 18. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
- 19. A rate that is rapid.
- 20. (Judaism) Sacred chest where the ancient Hebrews kept the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments.
- 21. A device in which something (usually an animal) can be caught and penned.
- 23. Fraught with extreme danger.
- 25. A cephalosporin that can be given parenterally (trade name Zinacef) or orally by tablets (trade name Ceflin).
- 27. Type genus of the Annonaceae.
- 28. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
- 32. Small genus of Old World ferns.
- 36. Burst or split open, as of flowers and seeds when releasing pollen or seeds.
- 38. United States tennis player who was the first Black to win United States and English singles championships (1943-1993).
- 39. Male red deer.
- 41. Queen of England as the 6th wife of Henry VIII (1512-1548).
- 42. The cry made by sheep.
- 43. Pan with a convex bottom.
- 46. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
- 47. A piece of starched cloth covering the shoulders of a nun's habit.
- 50. Small Atlantic wrasse the male of which has a brilliant blue head.
- 52. Rod-shaped motile bacteria that attack plants.
- 54. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
- 55. Lower in esteem.
- 58. Of or relating to coitus or copulation.
- 60. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- 62. Overly concerned with masculinity and male sexuality.
- 66. Situated in a particular spot or position.
- 69. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- 70. Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
- 71. Small family of usually tropical butterflies.
- 73. According to need (physicians use PRN in writing prescriptions).
- 74. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- 75. Order of mammals having few or no teeth including.
- 76. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.

DOWN

- 1. Music composed in triple time for waltzing.
- 2. Large short-tailed lemur of Madagascar having thick silky fur in black and white and fawn.
- 3. A mountain peak in the Andes in Argentina (21,654 feet high).
- 4. The month following February and preceding April.
- 5. Fill with high spirits.
- 6. The extreme end of something.
- 7. Scottish philosopher of common sense who opposed the ideas of David Hume (1710-1796).
- 8. Of or relating to or characteristic of India or the East Indies or their peoples or languages or cultures.
- 9. Marked by caims.
- 10. A person who participates in a meeting.
- 11. A field covered with grass or herbage and suitable for grazing by livestock.
- 12. God of wealth and love.
- 13. A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
- 14. (Sumerian) Water god and god of wisdom.
- 22. A person to whom money is paid.
- 24. Open the zipper of.
- 26. A piece of information about circumstances that exist or events that have occurred.
- 29. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
- 30. Sharp piercing cry.
- 31. The capital of the Mexican state of Yucatan.
- 33. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- 34. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- 35. Turned or twisted toward one side.
- 37. Capital of the state of Oregon in the northwestern part of the state on the Willamette River.
- 40. True gudgeons.
- 44. A city in western Lithuania on the Baltic Sea.
- 45. 1 species.
- 48. (physics) Of or pertaining to a meson.
- 49. Be earlier in time.
- 51. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
- 53. A state in southeastern United States.
- 56. Be in contradiction with.
- 57. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- 59. Something considered choice to eat.
- 61. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- 63. An informal term for a father.
- 64. A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
- 65. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
- 67. Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc..
- 68. A successful stroke in an athletic contest (especially in baseball).
- 72. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, a great rest helps you awaken with zest and vitality; you are set on go for taking care of business and making things happen with ease. The energies are such that your choices are made with confidence and assurance of being correct. If you find yourself responsible for paperwork, this is the perfect time for this type of task; your mind easily focuses on what you need to do. You may not jive well with those around you today; look for ways to make progress without calling on anyone for help. You find a place where you buy a certain product has been closed or moved somewhere far away. Tonight, you could hear from a friend you haven't seen in a very long time; this evening brings a chance to try exotic new recipes for several friends or loved ones, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, the stars are aligned for creating an energy of change; if you're unhappy with a certain environment you have the ability to transform this. Check your attitude and realize what you create with it. The desire to make things better is strong; improving your world serves to provide health and vitality. A sticky situation at home shifts you into high gear; you save the day when you discover a different way to make something happen. Someone stops by to see you that understands your feelings. You don't feel grateful for a certain person that loves you, but is honest. Hold off on choosing styles or colors until your thoughts are clearer. Trouble with a younger person blows up in your face; remember that children only know what we teach, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you could find yourself interrupted when you try to communicate your thoughts. You look into a certain situation as though dissecting each aspect of it. A disagreement stays on your mind more than it should; sometimes when we step back we allow others to learn their own lessons. Someone treasures your input regarding a personal issue that has grown volatile. An opportunity to volunteer in an important capacity is possible; this could indicate a gardening project or perhaps pet or house sitting is on the horizon. Creating fresh energy in the home could be accomplished by adding new furnishings, paint or plants. The purchase of a new diffuser for essential oils could happen. This evening is spent enjoying new animals or children, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you've entered a new cycle indicating a desire to learn more about the unknown. Remember not to collapse yourself into new information and beliefs until you have taken some time to absorb their full meaning. You wonder if it's worth looking deeply into your soul; you may dislike some things you find. You enjoy and desire to live the good life, but it's not worth envy or unhappiness. Now is great timing for taking pleasure in what you have already created in your life. Your estimate of what items are worth is right on; your eye for value is as strong as it's ever been, when called upon it's dependable. Someone surprising could reach out to invite you to take part in a quickly organized gathering of old friends; reunion of some kind is indicated, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, a close look at your personal life and private attitudes and behaviors is called for. A person with totally different beliefs and methods causes conflict. The energy of those around you is crystal clear; you comfort someone with an emotional hurt. Positive feelings are rampant today as you visit with one person after the next. The stars are aligned for peace and contentment overall; enjoy this wonderful time you'll long remember! A challenge brings new options and ideas about how to deal with a recurring situation you dislike. A needed new purchase could become the best thing you have done for your home in a long while; spending time with someone who knows about what needs to be included in this purchase is a wise choice this evening, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you're not happy with your current living arrangements or the circumstances you're living with. An opportunity for making changes is available if you choose to accept it; you could have to make special efforts to succeed but success is very possible. Being frustrated could cause your emotions to flare; maintaining control is possible if you commit to it. You want to broaden your mind and enrich your thinking, but someone could disagree with your methods or the information you get. Stand your ground while conceding that everyone has their individual opinions. Your political or religious values could be points of contention if discussed with the wrong people. Spend time with loved ones playing board games or putting together jigsaw puzzles, Virgo.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Movie Actors 1

Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Jeremy Irons won an Oscar.



- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BACON, Kevin
BARDEN, Javier
BLACK, Jack
BRIDGES, Jeff
CAINE, Michael
CARREY, Jim
CHIAN, Jackie
CLOONEY, George
COSTNER, Kevin
CUSACK, John
DAMON, Matt
DANIELS, Jeff
DEPP, Johnny
DICAPRIO, Leonardo
DOUGLAS, Michael | DUNCAN, Michael Clarke
FORD, Harrison
FOX, Jamie
GIBSON, Mel
GOLDBLUM, Jeff
GRANT, Hugh
GRIENHALL, Jake
HACKMAN, Gene
HARTNETT, Josh
IRON, Jeremy
JACKMAN, Hugh
JONES, James Earl
LAW, Jude
MC DONAUGHEY, Matthew | MC KELLLEN, Ian
NEESON, Liam
PESCI, Joe
PHOENIX, Joaquin
REEVES, Keanu
RUSH, Geoffrey
RUSSELL, Kurt
SPACEY, Kevin
STATHAM, Jason
TRAVOLTA, John
VOIGHT, Jon
WAHLBERG, Mark
WEAVING, Hugo
WOOD, Elijah |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, someone needs your steady hand with a delicate project. A new fad gets your attention having to do with fashion or a new type of toy. Your concern is fixed on someone younger that warms your heart; this could indicate a period of time for nurturing and revisiting the way you were raised. Take some time to refresh yourself with a haircut or massage; your health is better with the new diet and lifestyle. A sticky situation could land in your lap simply because no one else knows what to do with it! The ending of an old, worrisome condition has arrived, and none too soon; you shouldn't feel guilty for being relieved, everyone has their limits. A delicious meal with desert, shared with someone you love, creates an atmosphere of plenty and peace, Libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, look back over your life, you have had a charmed one overall! But now, you're blessed with hard work and good fortune coming together in perfect harmony; you can task for better life conditions. Think about the bullets you have dodged, so far so good, but the consequences of risky behavior can't be escaped forever. Your quirks could cause you to be labeled as odd. You verge on brilliant when you discover a different way to do something routine. Later today someone may be rude and interrupt at an inopportune time. You enjoy your home and intimate surroundings, grateful for the privilege. Any problems or obstacles are easily dealt with, life is good. Those you spend time with today notice your relaxed mood and positive attitude, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, your interests expand to include unusual topics; you find a large number of books appealing. Some subjects that grab your attention could be controversial and sensitive to some, best keep what you're learning to yourself at this time. You long to do something that could get you in trouble; is this worth what it would cost is what you should consider. When you compare your life to someone else's you feel humble and blessed; you have worked hard and made good choices. Looking deeply into your motivations helps you know yourself better. You could feel frustrated or blocked when you offer advice; let this go and keep moving forward. On the other hand, someone seeks your wise advice and counsel on a very personal matter, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, a quiet day at home is what you planned but something crops up you have to tend to. New information has you wondering what's wrong with the world! The people around you could rub you entirely the wrong way, but you manage to avoid any quarrels with them. Even so, you're able to find moments of joy throughout the day. Your focus is on continuing down a peace-seeking path and away from toxic energy. If emotional differences remain a problem, stay quiet and let this unfold; watch as karma takes care of everything, and this includes you. You like people and this is obvious later when you lend a stranger a helping hand. You invite someone over for a nice visit that strengthens bonds; plans are made for an important project, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you have entered a cycle that brings much learning and hands-on practice of new theories. The energies indicated here are tuned to your creative process; let your mind think as though there are no boundaries. You long to create products or images or words that move the emotions of many. If you work in the service industry, understand that your smile goes a long way to brighten someone's day. You feel a strong desire to be whimsical, as though skipping through a fairytale; fun, games taking risks are all part of this phase. If you feel blocked or frustrated, this could be due to the position of the planets just now; this will change soon. You could feel a sense of relief this evening as you share dinner with some special people, Aquarius!

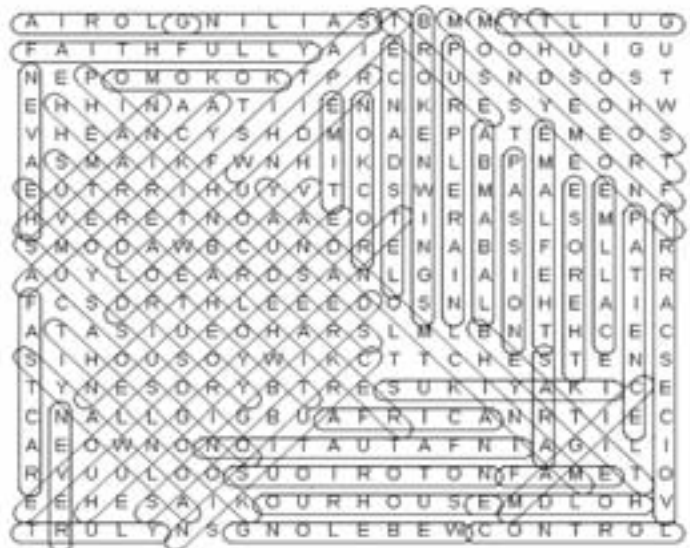


Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you love new concepts and theories. You may be pulled into an interesting conversation that relates to the universe. Your expectations could be so high that you find you are left out of some plans. You could feel separated and lonely just now; know that this is very temporary! Deep, reflective moods could dominate your waking hours. Your newly discovered ways of doing things could clash with others in your circle of people; be careful not to collapse yourself into being right when perhaps you're not. You may feel it's necessary to make a long overdue phone call to someone who loves you. A need to be approved of and as though you belong is prominent; avoid being clingy in your marriage or other close relationships in your life, Pisces.

Yesterday's Solution

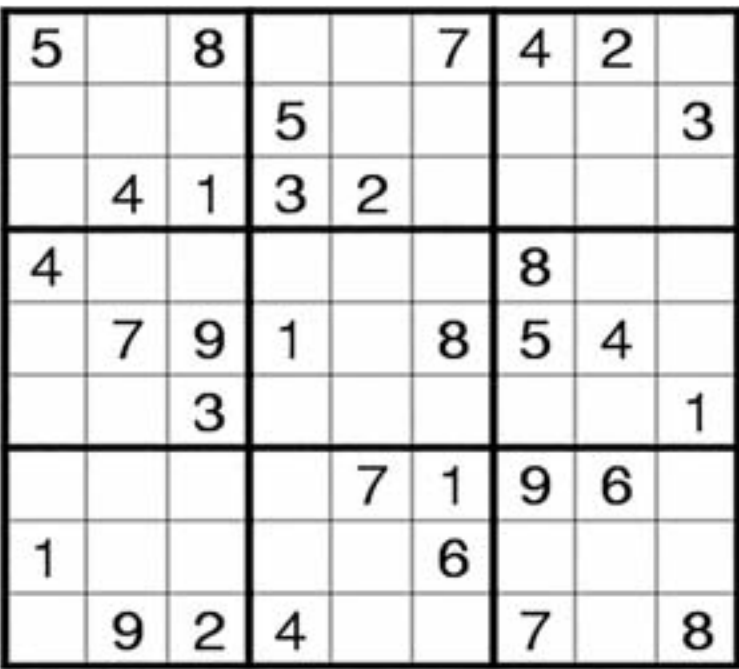
More 80's Songs



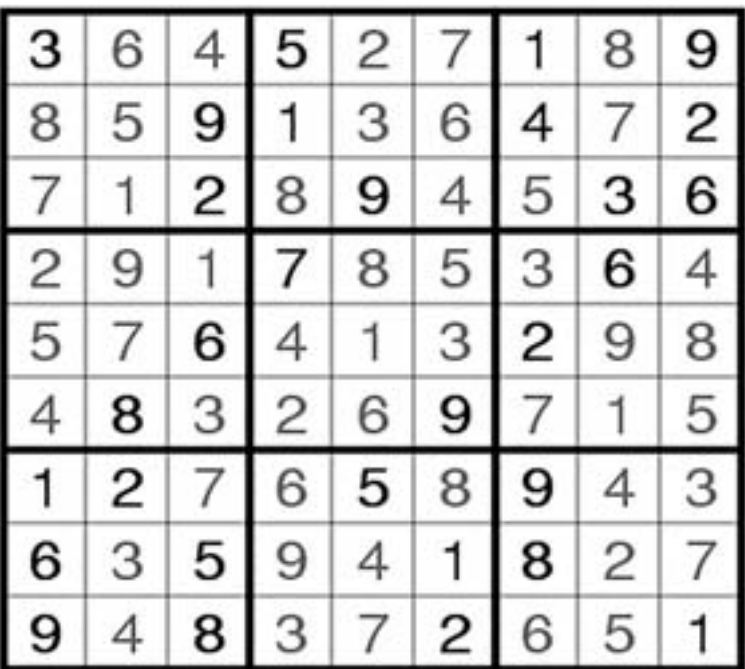
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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AFRICA
ALWAYS
AMERICA
BEAT IT
BROKEN WINGS
CALL ME
CONTROL
CRUISIN'
DOWN UNDER
ENDLESS LOVE
FAITHFULLY
FAME
FAST CAR
FREEDOM | GLORIA
GUILTY
HEARTBREAKER
HEAVEN
HOLD ME
HUMAN
HUNGRY HEART
IN SITUATION
KOKOMO
LA BAMB
LET'S DANCE
MAGIC
MANIC MONDAY
MONEY MONY | NEVER
NOTORIOUS
OUR HOUSE
PASSION
PATIENCE
PINK HOUSES
PURPLE RAIN
ROCK ON
SAILING
SARA
SATISFIED
SHOUT
SONGBIRD
SUKEYAKI | SUSJUDO
THE FLAME
THE LOOK
THE ROSE
TIME
TOD SHY
TRUE
TRULY
TWO HEARTS
VACATION
VOICES CARRY
WE BELONG
WHIP IT
YOUR LOVE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The hidden song is: I GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE BLUES

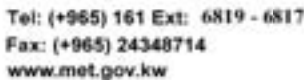
Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Monday, February 5, 2018



BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 32 km/h .

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

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	02/05	Partly cloudy	23 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	02/06	Partly cloudy to cloudy	24 °C	09 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Wednesday	02/07	Warm and some high clouds will appear	25 °C	09 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Thursday	02/08	Warm and some high clouds will appear later on	24 °C	10 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	56 %
MIN. RH	16 %
MAX. Wind	NW 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm



Arrival Flights on Monday 5/2/2018				Departure Flights on Monday 5/2/2018											
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	692	Muscat	14:15	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:15	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:01	KAC	618	Doha	14:15	MSC	405	Sohag	23:30	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	FDB	206	Islamabad	14:20	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	QTR	1075	Doha	12:30
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	QTR	059	Dubai	14:20	MSC	411	Asyut	23:55	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	KAC	1078	Doha	14:20					IAW	158B	Al Najaf	13:00
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25					RBG	554	Alexandria	13:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:35	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	352	Kochi	14:35	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	412	Bangkok	14:35	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	364	Colombo	14:40	PIA	206	Lahore	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:05
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	MSC	502	Alexandria	01:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:50	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:55	BBC	044	Dhaka	01:30	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:25
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:15	IAW	157C	Al Najaf	14:55	JZR	502	Luxor	01:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55	JZR	142	Doha	01:45	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	JZR	787	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	502	Beirut	15:30	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	IAW	158C	Al Najaf	15:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	KAC	562	Amman	15:30	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	QTR	1072	Doha	15:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1090	Doha	04:05	JZR	535	Cairo	16:00	KAC	351	Kochi	03:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:00	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	KAC	118	New York	16:00	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	JZR	779	Jeddah	16:25	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55	QTR	1073	Doha	17:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	RJA	640	Amman	16:55	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	542	Cairo	17:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi					

Lifestyle | Gossip

James Corden’s son excited for new movie

James Corden’s son is “bursting with excitement” to see his new movie. The 39-year-old star - who has Max, six, Carey, three, and seven-week-old Charlotte with wife Julia - voices beloved Beatrix Potter character Peter Rabbit in the upcoming film of the same name and he’s particularly pleased with the project because it’s the first time his oldest child has shown an interest in his work. He said: “My son is bursting with excitement to see the film. He asks about it far more than anything else I’ve ever done in my life. It’s the only time he’s ever shown any real interest in what I do.” The ‘Late Late Show’ host himself was a big fan of the book series as a child and has vivid

memories of reading the tales of the animals. He said: “I remember reading the books in Sunday school at the Salvation Army. I loved that Peter was mischievous and naughty. That’s how you feel when you’re seven or eight. “When someone tells you not to touch something, all that goes through your brain is, ‘What will happen if I touch it? I should touch it...’ “ And James admitted his own love of the book series made him hesitant to take the role at first. He told Event magazine: “I felt quite reticent about it at first, because it’s just such a beloved piece of British heritage. Will came back saying, ‘No, we’ve sent the script to the Beatrix Potter estate, they really love it, and this is the first time they’ve ever given permission to any-

body to make a film of it.’ “ The first trailer for ‘Peter Rabbit’ sparked a backlash because of an American voiceover and footage of Peter twerking, with even Beatrix’s granddaughter expressing her reservations. However, James is confident the movie will bring a new generation of fans to the book series. He said: “You can’t keep everybody happy. I’m almost certain that because of this film more children will read Beatrix Potter stories in the next 18 months than will have done in the previous 18 months - whatever the critics think about it.”



Dinah Jane reveals her insecurities

Dinah Jane used to feel like the most insecure person in the world. The 20-year-old singer has admitted to suffering from serious self-doubt during her younger years, but Dinah’s confidence has increased enormously since she joined Fifth Harmony, which also features Ally Brooke, Normani Kordei and Lauren Jauregui. She explained: “They girls have definitely motivated me to love myself more. “I think part of my confidence also comes from the fact that I’m surrounded by different cultured women through this experience. I’m exposed to the African American culture and the Latin culture, and that makes me want to embrace my own individuality, to express it, and to live in it because I realise I’m a representation of someone else out there.” The group was formed on the US version of ‘The X Factor’ in 2012. And Dinah has credited

the other girls in the band for helping to make her so fearless. She told Flaunt magazine: “I draw my confidence from the other girls in the group. “We got into this industry when we were barely 15-years-old. And with being 15, you kind of come into this business being super insecure only because you’re now in the public eye and you’re growing up in front of everybody.” Dinah’s ultimate idol is Beyonce, who she has likened to her own mother. Of the award-winning singer, she said: “She’s sort of like my mom. “She embodies empowerment. No matter the age, no matter the gender of her fan base, she has the ability to be authentic with her flaws and her journey and is able to touch so many people’s hearts.”



VICTORIA BECKHAM WILL SING WITH SPICE GIRLS

Victoria Beckham will sing with the Spice Girls again. The 43-year-old fashion designer had previously had no interest in returning to the stage with Geri Horner, Mel B, Mel C and Emma Bunton, but after a meeting with her former bandmates on Friday, she has now agreed to join them for a lucrative world tour, which will reportedly make the quintet £50 million. A source told the Mail on Sunday newspaper: “Victoria was so cold on singing and performing with the Spice Girls again but Friday’s meeting made her remember the good times. “The girls sat together laughing and remembering the fun and special times and she is now very much in.” The ‘Stop’ hitmakers reportedly have another meeting planned in Los Angeles around Easter time, where they will thrash out the details for their comeback shows. Though the group haven’t yet confirmed the details of their reunion plans - which are rumored to include an album and a possible TV show - Mel C has revealed they are keen to inspire a new generation of young girls. She told BBC Radio 2 host Dermot O’Leary: “There are so many negative things going on in the world all the time and we feel like the Spice Girls was always a little bit of fun-some-

thing to enjoy when it’s tough times. “We now realize some of the impact that we did have on young people at the time, and now we all have kids, there’s another generation that enjoy our music. We just want to empower people, we want to empower girls. “We were talking about opportunities, ideas we have for the future. It’s just great to be back in Spiceworld and to see the reaction and it’s so lovely to know that people out there still care. “I think we always shared the same vision so it’s really nice to be back and thinking about the future. “We are really excited to see what the future holds.” The Spice Girls were expected to reunite in the past but Victoria pulled out, followed by Mel C. Revealing how she decided not to join a reunion in 2016 after her bandmate Victoria decided against it, Mel said: “I know there are people that want to see it. But there were various reasons ... but the one thing that I couldn’t get away from was that, we did reunite as a five piece [for the Olympics] and it was so incredible, and for me we are like a jigsaw puzzle and if there’s a piece missing it’s not complete. We’re not a band of interchangeable parts. For me, it didn’t feel right.”



MC Hammer pays tribute to Temptations’ Dennis Edwards

MC Hammer has paid tribute to the Temptations’ Dennis Edwards following his tragic death. The 55-year-old hip-hop artist took to his Twitter account last night to pay his respects to the “great artist” - who was the lead singer of the successful vocal group - after he heard that he’d passed away in a hospital in Chicago - just one day before his 75th birthday. Alongside a video of Dennis performing, MC - whose real name is Stanley Burrell - wrote: R.I.P Dennis Edwards one of my favorites in the industry. Good Soul Great Artist !!!! (sic) And Motown great Martha Reeves has admitted she feels like she’s been hit by a “sledgehammer” since she found out the news because her heart feels so “heavy.” She told Detroit Free Press: “My heart is very heavy. I feel like I’ve been hit by a sledgehammer.” Dennis’ management confirmed the heartbreaking news yesterday - referring to him as “an amazing performer and singer” - but refused to disclose his cause of death. The band’s agent said in a statement: “He was an amazing performer and singer and the whole Temptations family are grieving at his sad passing.” However, it’s been claimed by US publications that his death may have been linked to complications related to meningitis after he fell ill with the infection last spring. Dennis - who was born in Alabama and raised in Detroit - joined the Temptations back in 1968 as the lead singer after the Motown group fired frontman David Ruffin. His incredible vocals helped the group storm to success with hits such as ‘Papa Was a Rollin’ Stone’ and ‘Ball of Confusion’, but he left in 1976 after they split with Motown Records. He then returned for numerous stints in the 1980s.— Bang Showbiz



‘Oscar Fever’ comes to OSN in February with a nightly double-bill of Award-winning movies

Movie and series lovers are in for a treat this February with OSN. Bringing new and exclusive movies and series, Academy Award-winning films straight out of Hollywood, sports and family entertainment OSN has the stories you need to stay entertained all month long.

The Oscars

Every night from 16 February until 4 March at 8pm KSA, enjoy a double-bill selection of Oscar-winning and nominated films on OSN Movies First HD, to get you ready for the glitziest night in Hollywood.

The 90th Academy Awards hosted by Jimmy Kimmel, airs exclusively on OSN Movies HD on 5 March at 4am (KSA), and is simulcast on OSN Yahala Cinema HD with Arabic commentaries. You can also catch the event again with a prime time repeat at 8pm (KSA).

NEW CHANNEL: OSN Living HD

Whether you’re a travel-junkie or food fiend, design obsessed or hooked on home-improvement, OSN Living HD offers a great range of shows that will help you get your lifestyle fix. All shows are subtitled in Arabic. The channel offers new shows from celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver’s Jamie’s Comfort Food, Bake with Anna Olsen, Grand Designs and much more to come.

OSN Store

Just months after their cinematic release, buy and keep three of 2017’s biggest movies on OSN Store and watch them whenever you like, and as many times as you want!

Daddy’s Home 2

Families will love this laugh-out-loud comedy, where Brad (Will Ferrell) and Dusty (Mark Wahlberg) attempt to manage their intrusive fathers during the holidays.

Murder on the Orient Express

A celebrated detective is recruited to solve the case of a mysterious death.

Thor: Ragnarok

Two years after the events in ‘Avengers: Age of Ultron’, can Thor save his home and the Asgardian civilization from the all-powerful Hela?

OSN First Home of HBO

Homeland S7

Premiering February 12 (10pm KSA)

This gripping crime-drama series returns, and after former CIA Agent Carrie leaves her job in White House, she moves back to D.C. and takes on the Keane administration who has arrested 200 members of the intelligence community.

OSN Series Comedy HD

Hit the Road S1

Double bill premiere on February 5 (10pm KSA)

This new series follows a chaotically dysfunctional family of would-be rock/pop stars on the search for fame and fortune in a cross-country bus tour - starring Seinfeld’s Jason Alexander.



OSN Series First HD

The Voice S14

Tuesdays from February 27 (7pm KSA)

The four-time Emmy Award-winning programme, returns, for another season showcasing unbelievable vocal talents in the enthralling reality-competition series.

OSN Yahala Al Oula HD

Ka’anouh Embarah

Sundays-Thursdays from February 4 (11pm KSA)

New and exclusive to OSN, this Egyptian social-drama series follows the lives, conflicts and challenges of family life.

Saif Bared

Sundays-Thursdays from February 7 (8pm KSA)

As the summer vacation approaches, every family starts looking for a resort away from the gulf heat. The

story revolves around young ladies that travels abroad to live and experience a new taste of stories.

OSN Yahala Cinema HD

El Kanz (1)

February 16 (11pm KSA)

The Treasure revolves around three eras: The Pharaonic era, the Mamluk era and the first half of the 20th century. It discusses corruption and how some clerics have involved religion in politics in order to obtain high positions and gain power which they have abused over the ages.

OSN Sports Cricket HD

Pakistan Super League 2018

22 February

Cricket fans can watch six teams, play 34 matches in this exciting short form tournament.

OSN WWE Network HD

WWE Elimination Chamber

19 February

Find out who will enter ‘Satan’s Prison’, and who will walk out with a WrestleMania main event in their future? Third Party Channels

TLC: Cake Boss S9

From Sunday 4 February (9pm KSA)

Buddy Valastro and the bakery crew are back in the mix! This season’s colorful confections include an old-school style robot for a gala event honoring the world’s most advanced robot.

Disney Channel: Raven’s Home S1 (New Series)

From Saturday 17 February (10.35am KSA)

School friends Raven and Chelsea are now grown-up, divorced and living happily together with Raven’s twins Booker and Nia, and Chelsea’s son Levi. Raven still catches glimpses of the future and Booker has inherited her ability, which makes for some hilarious situations.

Catch the first episode of Raven’s Home before anyone else on OSN Play and OSN On Demand on Wednesday 14 February, before the launch of the show on Disney Channel. Catch up on your favourite shows and watch live TV anytime, anywhere with OSN Play and OSN On Demand.



Lifestyle | Feature



Moroccan Hamza Labyad (second left) reacts to being named the winner of season two of the 'The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt' on February 3, 2018, at the Pan Arab Satellite MBC TV Station studios in Zouk Mosbeh, north of the capital Beirut. — AFP



Moroccan Hamza Labyad (second right) is presented with the trophy after being named the winner of season two of the "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt" .

MOROCCO'S **HAMZA LABYAD** WINS THE LATEST EDITION OF 'THE VOICE KIDS' ON **MBCI** AND 'MBC MASR'



Lebanese singer and judge Nancy Ajram (center) sings with Lebanese George Assi (left) and Saudi Loujay Al-Masrahy (right) during season two of the "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt".



Egyptian singer and judge Tamer Hosny (center) sings with Iraqi Nour Wissam (left) and Egyptian Achrakat Ahmad (right) during season two of the "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt".



Moroccan Hamza Labyad (left) is presented with the trophy after being named the winner of season two of the 'The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt'.



(From left) Iraqi singer and judge Kazem Al-Saher sings with Moroccan Hamza Labyad and Yemeni Maria Kahtan.



Moroccan Hamza Labyad (left), the winner of season two of the "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt", poses for a picture with his trophy and a member of staff.



Moroccan Hamza Labyad, the winner of season two of the 'The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt', poses for a picture with his trophy.



Yemeni Maria Kahtan (right) is comforted by Iraqi singer and judge Kazem Al-Saher after not winning season two of the "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt".

Hamza Labyad from Morocco has been named the winner of 2018's 'the Voice Kids', in an edition of the entertainment programme on MBCI and "MBC Masr" that has garnered high television ratings and generated a large following via social media. Aged just 10, Labyad - who was coached by singing superstar and one of show's judges, Kadim Al-Sahir - captivated the hearts of audiences all over the region since his first appearance on stage. Iraqi singer, composer and songwriter Al-Sahir has now enjoyed mentoring two winning contestants, two seasons in a row after also emerging victorious in the series debut in 2016.

Six talented contestants made up Season Two's grand finale: Nour Wissam and Achrakat Ahmad - part of Egyptian singer and judge Tamer Hosny's team; Loujay Almasrahy and Georges Assi - part of Lebanese singer and judge Nancy Ajram's team; and of course, Labyad, along with Mariah Qahtan on 'Team Kadim'. The three coaches praised all the contestants who took part in this series, with a special acknowledgment to those who made to the semi-finals and finals.

Following his win, Labyad has walked away with several prizes, including a VIP family trip to Disneyland(r) Paris, where he will be shooting his very own music video for the new Disney Princess song, "Eish Al-Hekaya", given the English title: "Live Your Life". This is part of an exclusive partnership between 'The Voice Kids' and Disney.

He's also received a SR 200,000 scholarship; a family trip to London courtesy of WEGO and a contract with Platinum Records.

Live finale

Televised live from MBC Group's studios in Beirut, Lebanon, the six finalists performed a number of songs, including "Eish Al-Hekaya", as part of a special partnership with Disney.

There was also a special appearance by 'the Voice Kids' Season One winner, Lynn el-Hayek, who performed her brand-new song "Aam Bekbar" [I'm Getting Older].

All three coaches praised the finalists for their efforts throughout the competition and that they were all walking away winners. As per the public votes, Egypt's Ahmad and Saudi Arabia's Almasrahy were named the runners-up before Labyad was crowned the winner.

Press conference

Following the live finale and crowning of the winner, "MBC Group" held a post-event press conference at its Beirut studios. Joining the three coaches - Al-Sahir, Ajram and Hosny - was Mazen Hayek, MBC Group's Official Spokesman, along with Labyad and his parents, who thanked the programme for the "wonderful experience" their son has taken part in.

On his part, Al-Sahir - who oversaw the coaching of Labyad from the beginning of the season - expressed his joy at one of his team members winning for the second consecutive season, stressing that all the contestants are winners.

"Our children [in the Arab world] are immensely creative," he said. "We need to continue discovering their talents and culture - despite our current turbulent times in the region. "I started my career as a school teacher and therefore consider working with children both fun and an important responsibility. It reminds me of my early days in the art and entertainment world."

“Superstar Coach Kadim Al-Sahir scores his second victory in a row”

Meanwhile, winner Labyad told the attending media that he was hoping for a win since the beginning of the programme, even though the remaining finalists had "very strong and distinctive voices". He went on to thank Al-Sahir for his commitment on the show, especially for responding for his desire to meet the iconic Syrian tenor singer Sabah Fakhri. Additionally, the 10-year-old winner thanked fans of the programme and those who voted.

"Children should be able to be taught and study [the

Arts]," noted Labyad. "Programmes like this offers the opportunity for them to choose."

A message of hope

During the conference, Mazen Hayek stated that the second season of 'the Voice Kids' has garnered more success than the previous season, stating: "The exceptional talent made it impossible to predict who would emerge the winner, in addition to the fact that the first season was somewhat of an introduction to the programme in the region.

"For Season Two, viewers have been following it from the very beginning."

He also went on to state that the programme goes beyond just a singing completion for children in a region that's affected by wars, displacement and insecurity.

"These kids are doves of peace amidst a storm of war, extremism and human suffering," he continued. "I urge that we use platforms like that of 'the Voice Kids' to spread love, tolerance and peace - and not racism or divisiveness. We need to bring hope to our children."

Star coaches congratulate contestants

Lebanese singer Ajram praised all the young contestants for their participation, commenting: "I wish that life in the Arab world was like that of the experiences on 'the Voice Kids' because it is innocent and pure. The goal of the show is to bring happiness to the participants and viewers."

Meanwhile, third coach Hosny confessed he knew Labyad was a hot favourite to win, stating: "He has a fantastic voice. And I have been saying this from the very beginning. "The programme teaches kids the meaning of will and ambition, and strengthens their sense of challenge, which we need more of in the region. But most importantly, we train them without losing a sense of fun, despite it being a competition."



(From left) Moroccan Hamza Labyad, Iraqi Nour Wissam, Lebanese George Assi, Yemeni Maria Kahtan, Saudi Loujay Al-Masrahy, and Egyptian Achrakat Ahmad, the six finalists of season two of the 'The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt' perform on stage.



(From right) Iraqi singer and judge Kazem Al-Saher, Lebanese singer and judge Nancy Ajram (center) and Egyptian singer and judge Tamer Hosny. — AFP photos



(From left) Producer J Miles Dale, director Guillermo del Toro, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 'The Shape of Water', actors Sally Hawkins and Richard Jenkins and composer Alexandre Desplat pose in the press room during the 70th Annual Directors Guild Of America Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.



(From left) Actors Marcus Henderson, Betty Gabriel, Bradley Whitford and Catherine Keener pose with director Jordan Peele (center) winner of the Nomination Medallion for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 'Get Out'. — AFP photos

Del Toro wins top DGA prize for 'The Shape of Water'



Director Guillermo Del Toro, winner of the outstanding directorial achievement in feature films.



Director Jordan Peele, winner of the First-Time Feature Award for 'Get Out'.



Director Reed Morano, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Dramatic Series for 'The Handmaid's Tale' episode 'Offred', and actor Allison Janney.



Director Jean-Marc Vallee, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Movies for Television and Mini-Series for 'Big Little Lies'.



Director Jean-Marc Vallee (center), winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Made for Television and Mini-Series for 'Big Little Lies,' poses with members of his directing team.



Director Matthew Heineman, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary for 'City of Ghosts' (left), and actress Christine Lahti.



Director Martin McDonagh (left), recipient of the Nomination Medallion for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri,' and actor Sam Rockwell.



Actress Frankie Shaw (left) and director Niki Caro, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Children's Programs for the 'Anne with an E' episode.



Actress Sally Hawkins (left) and Actor Richard Jenkins.

Guillermo del Toro's bid for Oscars glory was boosted Saturday as he took top prize at the Directors Guild of America honors—a key predictor for the Academy Awards. The Mexican filmmaker was crowned best director for his Cold War-era fantasy romance “The Shape of Water,” a month ahead of the glittering culmination of Hollywood’s annual awards season. The 53-year-old has already scooped a Golden Globe for directing the movie, starring Sally Hawkins as a janitor in a top secret government laboratory who falls in love with a mysterious merman-like sea creature.

“This movie particularly took me to do things I was very afraid of,” Del Toro told fellow filmmakers at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. “It was a movie that was full of many reasons why it shouldn’t work, and those are the reasons why it works.” A feature of speeches during the awards season has been defiant rejection of the culture of sexual harassment and gender inequality, and the DGAs were no different. “What Harvey Weinstein ruined was robes. If I wear one now, my wife says ‘ewww,’” quipped host Judd Apatow—a reference to the mogul’s habit of appearing before young actresses in his hotel room wearing only a bathrobe. Dozens of Hollywood women—including Ashley Judd, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Beckinsale and Salma Hayek—have accused Weinstein and numerous other powerful men of acts ranging from sexual harassment to rape.

‘Grateful and proud’

Comedian Amy Schumer said she was “so grateful and proud” of victims of sexual abuse who had spoken out, singling out “Kill Bill” actress Uma Thurman, who accused Weinstein in an interview published Saturday of attacking her and threatening her career. Del Toro, who lives in Los Angeles, has alternated between big-budget Hollywood popcorn fare such as “Blade II” and more personal Spanish-language projects such as “Love Lies” (1989) and “Cronos” (1993). Monsters and the supernatural have been a recurring theme of his movies, which include “Mimic” (1997), both “Hellboy” films and his 2006 masterpiece “Pan’s Labyrinth.” “The Shape of Water” was nominated for seven Golden Globes in January, eventually taking home two, and was awarded best picture by the Producers Guild. It is up for 13 Oscars. Alexandre Desplat, the movie’s Oscar-winning composer, told AFP on the red carpet of his “amazing relationship” with Del Toro, describing the director as “so generous, passionate, and inspiring.”

Del Toro edged out Christopher Nolan, nominated for World War II thriller “Dunkirk”—another film seen as a top contender for Oscar glory on March 4. The DGA Awards are seen as a reliable bellwether of Academy Awards success particularly the best director prize, as 13 of the last 14 winners went on to win the Oscar for best director.

‘When everything aligns’

Presenters at Saturday’s star-studded event for 1,600 guests included Sam Rockwell, Saoirse Ronan, Kevin Bacon, Allison Janney and Damien Chazelle, who won the top prize at the last ceremony. The other nominees for best director were Greta Gerwig for coming-of-age story “Lady Bird,” Martin McDonagh for dark crime comedy “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri,” and Jordan Peele for racial satire “Get Out.” Peele walked away with a medallion for best first-time feature, and said the reaction to the movie had made for “the best year of my life, hands down.”

“The fact that I had never seen a film that addresses the fears of the modern African-American experience was a signal to me that the conversation about race was broken,” he said. On a night of expressions of solidarity for women, Reed Morano was a popular winner in the dramatic series category for directing “Offred,” an episode of Hulu’s dystopian sci-fi series “The Handmaid’s Tale,” about the subjugation of women in a totalitarian near future. “They were trying to get



Director Greta Gerwig (left), recipient of the Nomination Medallion for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 'Lady Bird', and actress Saoirse Ronan pose in the press room.



Actors Travis Schuldt (left) and Actress Natalie Zea

this show made for a long time, like way before we knew what the political climate was going to be,” she told AFP. “It is just a very odd moment. In this business things don’t get going right when you want them to, they get going when everything aligns.” — AFP

Lifestyle Awards



Director Michael Apted, recipient of the DGA Honorary Life Member Award, poses in the press room during the 70th Annual Directors Guild Of America Awards.



Actress Saffron Burrows



Actress Amy Schumer



Actor Milana Vayntrub



Director Glenn Weiss, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Variety/Talk/News/Sports.



Composer Alexandre Desplat



Actors Kyra Sedgwick and Kevin Bacon



Actress Angela Lansbury



Actress Aisha Tyler (left) and director Brian Smith, winner of the award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Reality Programs.



Directors Ross Duffer and Matt Duffer



Actor David Hasselhof



Honoree Dwight Williams, recipient of the Frank Capra Achievement Award.



Spanish actress Marisa Paredes acknowledges the public before receiving an honorary award for her career at the 32nd Goya awards ceremony in Madrid on February 3, 2018. — AFP photos



Spanish director Jon Garano receives the best original script award for 'Handia' (Giant).



Spanish actress Bruna Cusi receives the best new actress award for 'Estiu 1993' (Summer 1993).



Spanish singer Leiva receives the best original song award for 'La Llamada' (Holy Camp!).



Mikel Serrano receives the best art direction award for 'Handia' (Giant).



Spanish actor Javier Gutierrez receives the best actor award for his role in 'El Autor' (The Motive).



Spanish actor David Verdaguer receives the best supporting actor award for his role in 'Estiu 1993' (Summer 1993).



Spanish actress Adelfa Calvo receives the best supporting actress award for her role in 'El Autor' (The Motive).



Spanish actors Javier Bardem (left) and Penelope Cruz pose on the red carpet.

SPANISH CINEMA STARS DEMAND MORE WOMEN IN FILM AT GOYAS

Stars of Spanish cinema have lashed out at the lack of women in the film industry at the country's equivalent of the Oscars. 'We need directors, screenwriters, directors of photography, scripts, technicians, composers—equal in number to men,' said actress Nora Navas, a vice president of the Spanish Film Academy, during the Goyas in Madrid on Saturday. Carla Simon, one of Spain's top directors whose film 'Summer 1993' bagged three awards at the ceremony, said the country 'needs more women to make films'.

'We need time to change that, I think the initiative has to come from politics,' said Simon, 31. Only 27 per cent of the nominees for the Goyas were women and female attendees at the ceremony carried bright red fans sporting #MÁS MUJERES (more women) slogans. The comments come a week after the music industry's hottest stars wore white roses to the Grammys last weekend in support of gender equality. Meanwhile director Isabel Coixet, 57, also scored three prizes for 'The Bookshop'—best picture, director and adapted screenplay—dedicating the awards to 'all those who still buy books, open bookshops and love the cinema'.

The film, which is in English, is set in an English village and tells the story of a widow who decides to rebuild her life by opening a bookstore despite opposition in the local community. The night's other big winner was the film 'Handia'—an historic drama set in the Basque Country which took home ten awards. — AFP



Spanish actor Eneko Sagardoy receives the best new actor award for 'Handia' (Giant).



Spanish actress Marisa Paredes receives an honorary award for her career.



Spanish director Carla Simon receives the best new direction award for 'Estiu 1993' (Summer 1993).

THE FULL LIST OF WINNERS

Feature Film Director
Guillermo del Toro, "The Shape of Water" (Fox Searchlight Pictures)

First-Time Feature Film Director
Jordan Peele, "Get Out" (Universal Pictures)

Dramatic Series
Reed Morano, "The Handmaid's Tale," "Offred" (Hulu)

Comedy Series
Beth McCarthy-Miller, "Veep," "Chicklet" (HBO)

Movies for Television and Miniseries
Jean-Marc Vallée, "Big Little Lies," (HBO)
Variety/Talk/News/Sports - Regularly Scheduled Programming
Don Roy King, "Saturday Night Live," "Host: Jimmy Fallon" (NBC)
Variety/Talk/News/Sports - Specials
Glenn Weiss, "The 89th Annual Academy Awards," (ABC)

Reality Programs
Brian Smith, "MasterChef," "Vegas Deluxe & Oyster Shucks" (FOX)

Children's Programs
Niki Caro, "Anne with an E," "Your Will Shall Decide Your Destiny" (Netflix)

Commercials
Martin de Thurah (Epoch Films), "Festival, StubHub - Goodbye Silverstein," "Machines, StubHub - Goodbye Silverstein," "Mad World, WealthSimple - WealthSimple In House"

Documentary
Matthew Heineman, "City of Ghosts," (Amazon Studios)
Frank Capra Achievement Award
Dwight Williams
Franklin J. Schaffner Achievement Award
Jim Tanker
Honorary Lifetime Member Award
Michael Apted

Lifestyle

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018



Revelers wearing traditional carnival costume pose in St Mark Square during Venice's Carnival on February 3, 2018. — AFP

IN QUEST FOR GROWTH, GERMAN TOYMAKERS KEEP IT REAL



Big monchhichi figures pose during the press preview of the international toys fair Spielwarenmesse in Nuremberg, southern Germany. — AFP photos



A young girl styles a doll's hair at a booth during the press preview of the international toys fair Spielwarenmesse.

In an industry upended by the changing play habits of tech-savvy kids, German toymakers are pinning their hopes for growth on traditional, real-world toys—with a little help from the big screen. At the world's biggest toy fair in Nuremberg this week, it was a large panel showing a bearded Playmobil figure peeking from behind a curtain that perhaps best exemplified an industry in flux. “We see us 2019” read the tagline, a tongue-in-cheek nod to how a German person with clumsy English might say it. The teaser for the first-ever Playmobil movie may seem unremarkable—rival Lego has been doing movie tie-ins for years.

But for a company that has hardly tweaked its recipe for success since 1974, it marks a sea-change—evidence of the upheaval sweeping the sector as toymakers compete not just with each other, but also for the attention of children glued to tablets and smartphones. Toy companies have in part responded by joining kids in the digital world, with apps, online games and YouTube videos. They have also chased licensing deals with Hollywood studios, hoping that links with popular movie or television characters will win fans in new markets. But some of Germany's favorite toy brands are bucking these trends, keeping the focus on the physical products that they themselves created.

‘Can’t cuddle an iPad’

“Parents are getting bored of all these tablets,” said Schleich chief executive Dirk Engehausen, whose company is best known for its hand-painted, plastic animal figures. “It’s much easier for a child to really understand the fascination of an elephant, giraffe or cheetah by having it in your hand instead of just swiping over the surface of an iPad,” he told AFP at the fair. Daniel Barth, CEO of Steiff, the 138-year-old company behind the iconic teddy bears with a button in their ear, agreed. “We see ourselves as an analog brand,” he said.

“You can’t cuddle an iPad.” So far, the strategy has paid off. In a near-stagnant toy market, Schleich’s global revenues climbed nine percent in 2017 to a record 156 million euros (\$194 million), driven by robust demand for its Horse Club range. Steiff’s revenues were up some eight percent to around 45 million euros, as customers snapped up a new line of colorful, ultra-soft stuffed animals—a departure from the brand’s usual true-to-nature creatures and one that was originally aimed at the Asian market, but proved a hit at home too.

Going to the movies

Looking ahead, both companies plan to join Playmobil in moving to the silver screen to reach new audiences. Schleich is bringing its popular Bayala fantasy world populated by elves, unicorns and mermaids to life with an eponymous movie set for release next year. Steiff was more tight-lipped about its film plans, with Barth saying only it would be a “surprise”. While both firms have dipped their toes into the licensing pool—Steiff was one of the first toymakers to partner with Disney in the 1930s—Engehausen and Barth said they were relying on the strength of their own brands to drive future growth. “We believe that the potential in our own franchise is so big that we are focusing more on our stuff,” said Engehausen.

Licensing’s risky bet

Germany is somewhat of an exception in this area, said Joachim Stempfle of the NPD research group. While licensed toys account for over 25 percent of global toy sales, in Germany that share is only 19-20 percent. “In Germany, traditional toy manufacturers have a higher status than in other markets,” Stempfle said. Playmobil only entered the licensing game last year, creating “Ghostbuster” toys and a line based on the animated film “How to Tame Your Dragon”. Playmobil sales shot up 11 percent to 679 million euros, and although the Bavarian giant does not release a breakdown of revenues, spokesman Bjoern Seeger said licensed toys brought “new momentum” to the brand.

But licensing remains fraught with risk. After years of growth, Lego revealed at the fair that consumer sales in Germany slumped by 2.6 percent in 2017 — in part because of “disappointing” sales in the “Star Wars” range. Seeger said licensed toys and the upcoming Playmobil Movie allowed for “new ways of storytelling” that would bring greater attention to the brand as it seeks to expand in the United States and China. But ultimately, there’s no substitute for children “playing with Playmobil figures in their rooms and dreaming up their own adventures,” he said. — AFP



Girls look at dolls to style at a booth during the press preview of the international toys fair Spielwarenmesse.



Big monchhichi figures present small plastic monchhichi figures at a booth during the press preview of the international toys fair.



A young boy plays with cars at a booth during the press preview of the international toys fair Spielwarenmesse.



Football player figures from the ‘2018 FIFA World Cup Russia - Take Away Arena’ game set by Playmobil, can be seen at the 69th International Toy Fair Spielwarenmesse.



Representatives of Carrera racing cars pose at a booth during the press preview of the international toys fair Spielwarenmesse.