



3 UN-Habitat celebrates sustainable urban development at Boulevard



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16 Eagles stun Patriots to claim maiden Super Bowl triumph



Cassation court refuses to free jailed activists

Assembly office discusses bedoons with Fadhalah

By B Izzak

Amir opens Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center) attends a ceremony to inaugurate the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center in Shaab yesterday. The Amir is flanked by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA (See Page 4)

KUWAIT: The court of cassation yesterday rejected requests by defense lawyers to free jailed opposition activists charged with storming the National Assembly building and set Feb 18 for the next hearing. The court was highly expected to release the activists, who include two sitting MPs, pending completion of the trial. The activists have been in jail for over two months.

The criminal court had acquitted all of the 70 activists who were charged of storming the Assembly building during a protest in Nov 2011, saying they had no criminal intent. But the appeals court handed 67 of them harsh jail terms ranging from one to nine years. They include MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, both in jail, and Mohammad Al-Mutair, who is outside the country.

Opposition MPs Mohammad Al-Dallal and Osama Al-Shaheen, both lawyers, regretted what happened yesterday, saying that the activists should have been freed, especially since they were acquitted by the criminal court and that the public prosecution clearly acknowledged that the appeals court's ruling was incorrect because the defendants were not allowed

to defend themselves in a proper way.

In another development, the National Assembly office yesterday discussed with the head of the stateless people or bedoons' agency Saleh Al-Fadhalah the problem of bedoons in Kuwait. Fadhalah told members of the office, who include the speaker, his deputy and heads of several panels, that the 1965 census is a precondition for naturalizing bedoons, but is not the only requirement. Assembly Secretary Awdah Al-Awdah said.

To be considered for obtaining Kuwaiti citizenship, authorities have said that a bedoon applicant or his forefathers must have been counted in the 1965 population census. Awdah said Fadhalah provided the office with statistics showing that Kuwait has an excellent performance on this issue. He added that the meeting did not discuss setting a specific deadline to resolve the issue of around 110,000 bedoons in Kuwait.

MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli commended the work of Fadhalah and said his decisions have been correct and supported by the courts. Fadhli charged that some of the bedoons refuse to reveal their true identities because they don't want their original nationalities.

News in brief

Saudis down Houthi missile

RIYADH: Saudi air defenses intercepted a ballistic missile fired at the kingdom by Yemen's Shiite Houthi rebels yesterday, state media reported. The attack was launched from Yemen's northern governorate of Saada, a Houthi stronghold, and "intercepted" at 7:23 local time (0423 GMT), Colonel Turki Al-Maliki told state news agency SPA. Maliki, spokesman for the Saudi-led military coalition supporting the government in Yemen, said the missile was headed toward the city of Khamis Mushait - about 160 km north of the border. — AFP

Dubai airport retains top spot

DUBAI: Dubai airport was the world's busiest for international passengers in 2017 for the fourth year running, with 88.2 million travellers, a statement said yesterday. International traffic at the UAE airport increased by 4.6 million passengers or 5.5 percent compared to the previous year, operator Dubai Airports announced. Indians continued to dominate the top position with 12.1 million passengers arriving at Dubai airport last year, up 5.4 percent on 2016. The airport recorded 10,000 less flights than the previous year, but planes were filled closer to capacity, with an average of 223 per flight - an increase of nearly seven percent. Cargo rose by 2.4 percent to a record 2.65 million tonnes. — AFP

Modi to meet Abbas during tour

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet the Palestinian leader during a brief tour of the Middle East, the foreign ministry said yesterday, just weeks after hosting Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu. The Indian premier will visit Ramallah first on his three-day tour of the region between Feb 9 and 12, which will also take in Oman and the UAE. Modi will hold talks with Mahmoud Abbas in an overture seen as India's effort to balance its decades-old support for the occupied territories against its growing closeness to Israel. The leaders are expected to discuss information technology, health and tourism during the brief visit. Modi will also address a joint press conference and attend a banquet. — AFP

Man tries to enter Iran presidency

TEHRAN: Iranian security forces shot and wounded a man wielding a bladed weapon who tried to force his way into the presidential compound in central Tehran yesterday. "An individual wearing a shroud tried to push through the doors of the presidential complex and was warned by security guards," Tehran's deputy governor for security Mohsen Nasj-Hamedani told the Fars and Tasnim news agencies. — AFP

Govt OKs plan to fight human trafficking, vows to protect rights

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has given the thumbs up to a national strategy designed to prevent human trafficking and immigrant smuggling. In its weekly meeting presided over by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the executive body assigned the foreign and justice ministries with the task of making sure that the plan comes to fruition. Meanwhile, a government official stressed

Kuwait's keenness "out of its respect for human rights" on protecting the labor force working on its soil. Since its establishment in 2013, the Public Authority for Manpower has worked on regulating the labor market according to laws in the civil and private sectors and in light of Kuwait's commitment to international human rights agreements, as well as the ones of the International Labor Organization (ILO), Abdullah Al-Mutautah, the authority's Deputy Director General, told a host of diplomatic mission representatives in the country.

Moreover, Kuwait had signed a series of agreements in this regard, including 19 of the ILO, he noted, pointing out that Kuwait has gone a long way as far as labor-related legislations are concerned. Despite the fact that the old 1964 law on labor regulations was 'distinguished' on the Arab level, yet Kuwait

saw that an updated version of the law was necessary in order for the country to keep up with developments and match its current international status, he said.

The original enactment of the labor law was in 1964 to regulate the workforce in the private sector. The amended 2011 version came mainly to ensure a fair treatment for all blue-collar workers. The law contains all essential rules and regulations that an employee needs to know before accepting a contract. It also contains significant guidelines and procedures that the employer should follow to make sure that an individual is a competent worker and is authorized to work in Kuwait. The meeting was attended by diplomatic representatives of France, the Netherlands, Egypt, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and the Philippines, as well as the ILO. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Director General of the Manpower Public Authority Abdullah Al-Mutautah. — KUNA

US worries Iran benefitting from Gulf tensions

DUBAI: A rise in tension between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in a row over military flights threatens US strategic interests in the Gulf and could benefit regional rival Iran. Abu Dhabi says Qatari air force jets intercepted two UAE civilian aircraft on commercial flights to Bahrain last month, and Doha says UAE military aircraft violated its airspace on Dec 21 and Jan 3. Each denies the other's accusations and the two energy-producing states have sought to ease the dispute. The risk of a confrontation between them has increased but a war between them is unlikely, regional experts say. The increase in tension, seven months after the UAE,

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt imposed travel and trade sanctions on Qatar over accusations - denied by Doha - that it supports terrorism and regional rival Iran, has alarmed Washington. "When you have Qatari (military) planes being scrambled near a civilian airliner, it runs the risk of an incident that, even unplanned, could result in the loss of lives and escalate this into an incident that Gulf countries have never had among each other," said a Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gabriel Collins, an expert on financial sanctions at Rice University in Texas, said "military posturing" against a background of underlying tension because of the diplomatic and trade sanctions "left space for a miscalculation." "A very small spark can, in a worst-case scenario, light a huge fire," he said. US Defense Secretary James Mattis has said the fracturing of ties among its Gulf Arab allies hinders Washington's fight against Islamic State and "countering the spread of Iran's malign influence".

Iran has criticized the restrictions on Qatar and called for the rift to be resolved through dialogue. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has lamented what he called a "dialogue deficit" in the region. The Gulf is a strategically important area for the United States. The US Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain and the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar is a center of its air operations against Islamic State. "The United States considers both Qatar and the UAE to be critical regional partners," a US Air Forces Central Command spokesman in Qatar said in response to a Reuters request for comment on the incidents. He called for "meaningful solutions to reduce tensions."

The base would be crucial if the United States were to go to war with Iran, which Washington says sponsors terrorism and is a threat to stability and US interests in the Middle East. Tehran denies the accusations. Saudi Arabia also sees Iran as a threat to regional stability and regards the Islamist Republic as its main rival in the region.

Continued on Page 11

Erdogan and Pope discuss Jerusalem

VATICAN CITY: Recep Tayyip Erdogan made the first visit by a Turkish president to the Vatican in 59 years yesterday, discussing the status of Jerusalem with Pope Francis, as scuffles broke out between police and demonstrators nearby. Police, who put much of the center of the city under lockdown for the visit, said two people were detained after demonstrators tried to break through cordons to get closer to the Vatican from an authorized protest several blocks away.

Returning a visit made by the pope to Turkey in 2014, Erdogan spoke privately with Francis for about 50 minutes in the

pontiff's frescoed study in the Vatican's Apostolic Palace, which he uses mostly for ceremonial purposes. A Vatican statement said the talks included "the status of Jerusalem, highlighting the need to promote peace and stability in the region (Middle East) through dialogue and negotiation, with respect for human rights and international law."

Both Erdogan and Pope Francis are opposed to US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which many US allies say could doom Middle East peace efforts. At the end of the private part of the meeting, the pope gave Erdogan a bronze medallion showing an angel embracing the northern and southern hemispheres while overcoming the opposition of a dragon. "This is the angel of peace who strangles the demon of war," the pope told Erdogan as he gave him the medallion, made by the

Continued on Page 11



VATICAN CITY: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) meets Pope Francis during a private audience yesterday at the Vatican. — AFP

Amir receives members of Arab, International Relations Council

His Highness meets MPs back from Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Arab and International Relation Council Mohammad Jassim Al-Saqer and the council's members. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Chairman of the Arab and International Relation Council Mohammad Jassim Al-Saqer and Council members, on the sidelines of the seventh meeting of the council board of trustees. The delegation later met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and transfer of US embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied city, topped council's meeting agenda on Sunday, Saqer said. The meeting also touched upon humanitarian conditions in Syria, Yemen and Libya, as well as crises in regional countries, Saqer told reporters following the meeting.

Kuwait's former Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said the meeting was held amidst critical development at the Arab and international scenes. He said the meeting's prime issue was the Palestinian cause. The council members, he added, condemned Trump's decision and rushed to help address financial resources of the UN Palestinian workers' agency (UNRWA) in the wake of the US cessation of funding. "Kuwait was the only Arab country that, along with a number of western countries, acted to address the (financial) deficit," he said.

Sheikh Mohammad said he believed there was a need to evaluate the Arab order to address strategic problems facing national security. "This can happen through good governance and openness among regimes and their people," he added. Sheikh Mohammad, meanwhile, said the

agenda of the State of Kuwait reflected same issues at the Gulf and Arab levels.

Hanan Ashrawi, spokesperson of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), said "we need to unite the visions and



Jerusalem tops Council meeting's agenda

adopt strategic positions that help resolve our causes."

The US "is undoubtedly offering Jerusalem as an easy bite for the Israeli occupation, and to make Jerusalem a Jewish city, not an Arab Islamic and Christian city which has a tradition, a history, rights and people live in," she said. "What is happening now is an actual change on the ground, a unilateral imposition with false facts," said Ashrawi.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and MPs who took part in recent meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Executive Commission in Geneva. The parliamentary delegation later met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as well.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir

received Chairman of Ooredoo telecom company Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al Thani and the company's CEO Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Thani and board members. The meetings were attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince hosted Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and General Supervisor of the Public Authority for Communications and Information Technology Anas Al-Saleh, as well as the CEO of the authority Salem Al-Uthaina and the board members. They presented His Highness with elaborate explanation about the "regional telecommunications transit," which would place Kuwait on the global technology and data transfer map, in line with His Highness the Amir 2035



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.

development vision. He also hosted Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also

received Chief of the National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Ooredoo telecom company Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al Thani, the company's CEO Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Thani and board members.

US reiterates support to Iraq reconstruction conference

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The US Embassy held a press roundtable yesterday at Radisson Blu Hotel to discuss the donor conference hosted by Kuwait for the reconstruction of Iraq and the ministerial meeting of the global coalition to defeat the Islamic State (IS), scheduled to take place on Feb 12-14. US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman expressed the US' support for the reconstruction of Iraq, saying US support for Iraq will continue, particularly to rebuild the country, boost the economy and attract investment. He commended the Iraqi forces for defeating IS.

Silverman praised His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's efforts in hosting the donor meet. "I knew about the generosity of Kuwait before I became ambassador to Kuwait. I visited Kuwait three times during the Syria aid conferences, where Kuwait's role was bigger than its geographical size," Silverman said. The ambassador took note of Iraq's recent defeat of IS and highlighted further coordination on this effort at the ministerial level of the global coalition to defeat IS. "The most important thing is to remain united with all countries to stop IS from coming back. We have to restore the Iraqis' normal life," he stressed.

Investment opportunities

Silverman said Washington has spoken with Iraqi officials regarding the investment opportunities that will be presented at the Kuwait conference. "Over 100 American companies and firms will participate in the conference," he said. He added that the donor meet will provide an important opportunity for the government of Iraq to showcase a number of attractive investment opportunities for foreign investors, including many American companies, and to demonstrate that Iraq is open for business. "Iraq's role now is to seize this opportunity. Iraq's needs are huge, and that is why we are focusing on the private sector for reconstruction," he added.



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman speaks to the press yesterday. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

"Over the last few years, we have given the Iraqi government \$1.7 billion in humanitarian assistance, and \$115 million to support stability in liberated areas. In addition to that, we gave Iraq \$1 billion without guarantees, and they were able to turn it to \$2 billion in 2017. We also gave Iraq over \$100 million to clear mines and explosives, and 2.8 million Iraqis have been able to return to their homes," Silverman said. The envoy revealed that US is planning to give Iraq \$150 million for stabilization through the UN this year, while the US is the biggest entity in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and will provide part of its \$5.4 billion program.

Gulf crisis

On the Gulf crisis, Silverman said it is important for the US to solve the crisis and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has to be united again to solve the region's issues, terrorism and the Iran issue. On the Syria situation, he said that there is a new future for Syria, but Russia must do more to ensure the attendance of Syria on the discussion table and to stop the use of chemical weapons. "We are focusing now on defeating Daesh (IS) in Syria. We understand Turkey's fears of IS in their area, but we ask them to limit their military. We want all of Syria's neighbors to be secure."

KT Editor-in-Chief meets ambassadors

KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh along with First Secretary HA Manhle visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba Fernando Perez Maza visited Kuwait Times where he met with Alyan and discussed with him matters of mutual concern.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan meets with the Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh along with First Secretary HA Manhle. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan meets with the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba Fernando Perez Maza.

Local

UN-Habitat celebrates 10 years of cooperation for sustainable urban development in Kuwait

At Boulevard open public space park

KUWAIT: The United Nations Human Settlements Programme UN-Habitat and Boulevard under Al-Salmiya Group for Enterprise Development Company has announced the successful signing between the two organizations to launch an engaging celebratory event on Public Space during March 15th and 16th at Boulevard Park.

This year's celebrations marks the theme 'Public Space for Peace,' a celebratory event bringing communities together to celebrate our appreciation for Kuwait's coalition countries by having an 'International Tasting Bazaar' and celebrating the importance of having an open public space around Kuwait districts that is socially engaging and impactful.

Boulevard Park is considered Sustainable due to its multipurpose setting for park goers having a library, shopping, and restaurants with beautiful open out-door space creates a sense of holistic well-being for guests to finish and enjoy their daily activities.

Boulevard Park has been selected due to its commitment in promoting and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals specifically SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities advocating that a well-planned city-wide public space systems with natural green areas that are well connected can create networks to regenerate ecological systems and tackle challenges posed by climate change.

The UN-Habitat and Boulevard cooperation aims to bring together people. It represents the culmination of the cooperation between private sector and UN organizations along with participation of all sectors of the society. Bringing in cultural diversity by enriching residents experience in a variety of international food dishes, representing different regions of the world, and achieving creating cross-cultural friendships.

The signing ceremony held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah building and attended by Dr Tarek El-Sheikh, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Acting Head of Office UN-Habitat Dr

Ameera Al-Hassan and Adwan Al-Adwani, Chairman of Al-Salmiya Group.

"Bringing forward this initiative to Boulevard aims to raise awareness of the importance of having an open public space around Kuwait districts that helps to achieve a compact, connected and integral inclusive in Kuwait future cities," Adwani said.

"This is part of our mandate to update and inform all residents of Kuwait on the international pillars of what makes a community sustainable by promoting both the

Hassan stated that as a shopping mall with an open space, Boulevard provides its shoppers with a multipurpose park, where each family member enjoys a safe and environmental friendly open space, the youth can also practice sports and intellectual activities which leads them to become a more creative and productive generation, and that in its essence achieves the UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda objectives and at the same time it achieves the economic growth of the city.

Hassan further added that the interesting part is that Boulevard design places in consideration of all kinds of shopper's access requirements including infants, people with special needs and elderly making it easier for nearby commuters.

Sheikh emphasized, that UN role we are tasked to help raise awareness and create a place that empower residents to be involved in decision making process's in order to meet their general demand as set by Agenda 2030.

Messages from 'Public Space for Peace' celebration will promote the five pillars of what makes a Sustainable Public Space: 1) Creating adequate public space that serve an inter-generational mix of diverse people and cultures since communities are key to sustainable development; 2) Public space should be people-centered empowering residents to participate in the urban planning process; 3) Public Spaces should be sustainable spaces that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable; 4) Partnerships with private sector is critical and essential in advancing sustainable practices and ensuring the global messages are reached effectively through demonstration projects and lastly; 5) Effective Local level leaderships (at the Mokhtar level) together with empowered Governorates makes our future better and our needs met effectively.

It is worth noting; that public art performances in public spaces can celebrate and validate a sense of community, identity, belonging and well-being. The more that our cities architecture and urban design is admired and loved by the public, the longer it will be cared, adopted and sustained.

Partnership leads to sustainable development goals



New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)," Sheikh further added

In order to generate more awareness of what is 'open public space,' a youth competition will run simultaneously during the second day of the bazaar geared to students in private schools who offer the UN curricula to showcase their creative talents in either drawing or design a model of what they need and want in the sustainable 'My Future City Model' competition.

Adwan added that Boulevard Park was designed in a way to promote a unique offering of a mix of in-door and out-door services, activities, and facilities to empower families by contributing to the local community and making it accessibly convenient for both families and kids.

Strategically located at the heart of Salmiya, Kuwait's most vibrant district, Boulevard stands as an urban hub for recreational, social, commercial, natural, and touristic attractions in which visitors can enjoy an array of activities.



KUWAIT: (From left) Dr Ameera Al-Hassan, Adwan Al-Adwani and Dr Tarek El-Sheikh are seen during the signing ceremony.

Boulevard Shopping is the one-stop shopping destination that embodies a diverse array of retailers, cafes and restaurants. The entire mall is equipped with a full range of facilities that guarantees convenience of both its visitors and tenants.

- 2000+ parking spaces
- Free Wi-Fi
- Special needs facilities
- 24/7 security services
- Banking and ATM services
- Sultan Center Hyper Market
- A huge shopping mall
- Jarir Bookstore
- Best Electronics (opening soon)
- Kids Entertainment
- Seven gates overlooking four main streets
- Prayer rooms

Public Space is the banner of urban community where people perform a number of functions that are shared with all and when planned efficiently public spaces can:

- 1) Generate income of investment and wealth creation
- 2) Producers of environmental sustainability
- 3) Increases transportation efficiency and enhances Safety
- 4) Improves Public Health
- 5) Act as promoters of equity and social inclusion

6) Opportunities for generation citizen involvement

7) Generators of great cities.

UN-Habitat is the UN agency for Housing and Cities that supports sustainability in urban areas for more than 40 years UN-Habitat has been working in human settlement programs throughout the world with a focus of building brighter future for developing villages, towns, cities of all sizes, which are in need of support in guiding the process of urbanizations.

The collaboration between UN-Habitat and Boulevard will educate and inform 'youths' about the benefits of public space for sustainability and how this plays a strong impact for societies to thrive in Kuwait. Teaching residents and youths the added benefits of having an open public space and investing more into attractive outdoor communities are 50 percent more likely to achieve high levels of walking which help slow global warming and its role to shape urban development communities.

Dalal Al-Radhi, Partnership and Advocacy Associate at UN-Habitat ended by saying, Green public space must be a key consideration in urban planning for the health of the city and its people, considering world's most famous cities are known for their open space as for their culture such as, Barcelona La Rambla tree lined pedestrian or the Bukit Timah Nature Preserve in Singapore.

Palestinian street named after Ghanem

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Municipality of the Palestinian city of Salbit recently named a street running in parallel to a settlement after Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. A statement issued by the municipality yesterday said that the decision was made in appreciation for Ghanem's courageous stances towards the Palestinian cause. Notably, Ghanem had criticized the head of Israel's delegation at the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Russia in October.

Leading positions

The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) Secretary General Fauzi Al-Majdali stressed that the program follows all possible procedures to meet the call made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to focus on human resources' development as a tool of comprehensive economic development. Speaking at a meeting held at the MGRP headquarters to set a strategy to develop manpower in over 40 private sector establishments with the aim of appointing Kuwaiti youth in leading positions, Majdali stressed that following up the implementation of the strategy was at the top of MGRP's priorities.

Majdali added that MGRP also seeks to empower women through creating proper working environments and providing special training programs to qualify women for leading positions in various private sector establishments. Meanwhile, manager of MGRP's manpower development department Iman Al-Ansari said the program aims at building a medium term strategy that will create a comprehensive social revival based on three basic elements - restructuring the private sector labor market, setting a comprehensive plan to develop the private sector's national manpower and setting a plan to empower nationals.

Investigations

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi

referred three officials for investigations for failing to do their job duties properly. Manfouhi explained that the three officials included Ahmadi and Jahra cleaning department officials and the Ahmadi constructions manager. He added that penalties may go as far as termination if the violations were repeated, and stressed that lenience will not be tolerated.

Public funds

Ministry of Health's assistant undersecretary for financial affairs Mohammed Al-Azmi stressed that despite the circumstances the ministry had gone through during the fiscal years of 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the ministry is keen on cooperating with all supervisory and monitoring bodies to protect public funds. Azmi added these circumstances helped reveal various financial and contracting violations involving public funds that were later referred to the public prosecution and the anti-corruption authority, where they are still being investigated. Azmi explained that violations included signing contracts without his department's approval. He also expressed amazement at listing his and others' names in the ministry's investigation committee recommendations to refer some officials to the anti-corruption authority despite his and his department's reputation for protecting public funds.

Hajj season

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has started early preparations for this year's hajj season, said Undersecretary Fared Emadi, noting that he is heading the ministry's hajj mission that left for Saudi Arabia yesterday to discuss preparations with the Saudi side. Emadi added discussions will include timings, the registration deadline and Kuwaiti convoys' locations in Mina and Mt Arafat. He added that the mission will look for a new headquarters for the mission after the previous one's 11-year lease expired. Emadi added that the mission will discuss the possibility of increasing the number of Kuwaiti pilgrims. Commenting on measures to be taken against violating hajj convoys, Emadi stressed that prices will be closely monitored to make sure they actually match the services provided, noting that violators who operate unlicensed convoys will be subject to severe penalties of up to one year of imprisonment or a fine of KD 50,000.

Interior Ministry looks to 'Kuwaitize' 1,000 jobs: Report

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passport Affairs Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah asked the administrative affairs to make a request to the Civil Service Commission to provide 1,000

Kuwaiti job hopefuls to replace expatriate workers in the nationality and passports sector in various areas in Kuwait, in addition to issuing electronic passports and residences. Security sources said this is the largest number of workers the interior ministry requires for one of its sectors, and this is within the policy to terminate 150 expats.

The sources said the 1,000 required workers will be distributed as 300 for e-passport issuance (50 in each center), 300 for residency affairs and 300 for service centers, in addition to 50 at the main office, and 50 others for the residency affairs' main office.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai.

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Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other state officials attend the inauguration ceremony of the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center yesterday. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed upon his arrival to the venue.

Amir inaugurates the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center

Project implemented by Amiri Diwan, subjected to legal, auditing scrutiny

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah inaugurated the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center in Shaab yesterday evening. His Highness the Amir was received upon his arrival by Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Director of Financial and Administrative Affairs at Amiri Diwan Abdulaziz Ishaq.

Sheikh Ali, addressing the ceremony, said Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center is a scientific, cultural and historic monument, which displayed the past and present as well as illustrated a future vision. The center was named after late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah "the founder of modern development of our beloved nation," he said. The center, said Sheikh Ali, was implemented by the Amiri Diwan and subjected to legal and auditing scrutiny.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, to be run by trained Kuwaitis, is an addition to development and civi-

lized projects implemented under the rule of His Highness the Amir, added Sheikh Ali. The minister thanked the Ministries of Education and Information for their "important contributions" to the center.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim, Sheikh Jaber Abdullah Al-Sabah, Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-

Hamad Al-Sabah, GCC Secretary General Abdullahif Al-Zayani, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Minister State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, senior government, GCC and military officials. —KUNA



Center to be run by trained Kuwaitis



Local

Zain receives 3 public relations and customer service awards

Kuwait's Public Relations and Customer Service Award



KUWAIT: Shaikha Modhey Ali Al-Jarah Al-Sabah receives one of Zain's awards.



Raed Al-Thaqeb receives one of Zain's awards.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, was awarded with three awards in the fields of public relations and customer service as part of Kuwait's Public Relations and Customer Service Award for the year 2017. The event, hosted by Kuwait's Public Relations Association, came under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The awarding ceremony witnessed the attendance of His Highness the Amir's representative the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh, Head of Amiri Protocols Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, and Head of Kuwait's Public Relations Association Jamal Al-Nasrullah, who awarded Zain's Regulatory and Government Affairs Director Shaikha Modhey Ali Al-Jarah Al-Sabah and Zain's Customer Care Director Raed Al-Thaqeb with the Excellence in Call Center

Award, Excellence in VIP Customer Service, and Excellence in Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility.

Kuwait's Public Relations Association dedicates this prize to shed light on the distinguished efforts and achievements of companies and organizations in the fields of public relations and customer service across all industries from both the public and private sectors. The event also featured a number of workshops about the strategies of public relations and customer service targeted at employees of ministries and organizations.



Held under Amir's patronage

The judging committee - responsible for selecting the winners - consisted of local and international PR and Customer Service experts who evaluated the participating entities as per the highest international standards. The standards included serving customers while meeting their needs, distinguished social contributions, excellent media presence, and more.

During December 2017, Zain proudly received four titles as part of the fifth Advertising Creativity Award. The award, organized by the Arab Media Forum, recognized Zain's achievements in the Influence Category Award for Zain's

Ramadan 2017 TVC, the National Campaigns Category Award for Zain's Kuwait National Day 2017 TVC, the Direction Category Award for Zain's Eid 2017 TVC, as well as the Public Relations and Corporate Sustainability Creativity Award for the company's long-list of initiatives and programs launched during 2017.

Zain's sponsorship of Kuwait's Public Relations and Customer Service Award for the third consecutive year showcases its distinguished public relations and media involvement, and further strengthens the company's role as a leading private sector company launching several public relations and marketing campaigns all year round. Zain will continue supporting this very important field which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole, whether through traditional or modern media tools.

Award contributes to state development plan: Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh said that state sponsorship of the Public Relations and Customer Service Award stems from its importance to human development, one of the 'Kuwait 2035' vision's two main pillars. The prize, organized by the non-profit Kuwait Public Relations Association, aims to usher forward the national economy as it focuses on competitive and quality assurance indices, she said in remarks at the closing ceremony. The annual

event hosts workshops and specialized courses in the field for private and public sector employees throughout the year, and does much to instill the principles of leadership and excellence in the services sector, Sabeeh, also Minister of State for Economic Affairs, explained.

Due to its importance, it has received the backing of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for a third year in a row. Businesses are fundamental partners in sustainable development as the nation look to implement its strategy aimed at transforming its economy into a leading regional financial hub, she added. The event's chief organizer and Kuwait Public Relations Association chairman Jamal Al-Nasrullah said meanwhile that the event awarded 46 individuals and entities for their accomplishments. —KUNA

KIB renews strategic partnership with Al-Sidra Association

KUWAIT: In conjunction with Gulf Cancer Awareness Week, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently renewed its support and sponsorship of Al-Sidra Association for the Psychological Care of Cancer Patients, with an official partnership signing that took place at Kuwait Towers. This marks the third consecutive year that the Bank has served as a strategic partner and sponsor of the Association.

Considered a safe haven for those struggling with the disease, Al-Sidra provides comprehensive health-care services for cancer patients, across all stages of the disease. Additionally, Al Sidra plays an active role in improving the psychological well-being of patients.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najja, said: "Our sponsorship of Al-Sidra's activities falls under the scope of our comprehensive social responsibility strategy, which reflects KIB's ongoing efforts to sponsor

health-related programs and initiatives, as well as support a number of different community-based organizations. Through these various activities, we hope to promote a more health-conscious society, in addition to playing an active role in developing the local healthcare sector."

Furthermore, Najja lauded the remarkable efforts made by the team at Al-Sidra, headed by Sheikhha Azza Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. He noted that KIB is always keen on supporting Al-Sidra's goals and helping it carry out its mission, as the Association continues to create a positive environment for cancer patients to help them better adapt to their conditions and better deal with any related side effects. Ultimately, Al-Sidra strives to enhance patients' responses to treatment through a program of educational initiatives and therapy sessions, both individual and group, provided by its network of mental health professionals.

As a key part of its social responsibility philosophy, KIB has always strongly believed in the importance of health awareness as the driving force for the development and advancement of modern society. Accordingly, the Bank is keen on sponsoring health awareness campaigns, particularly those which target cancer patients, as these campaigns act as key factors in combating the disease, and play an integral role in early detection of disease.



مستشفى طيبة TAIBA HOSPITAL

يوم التوظيف المفتوح Recruitment Open Day

1. Patient Access Representative (Call Center Officer – Front Desk Officer)	١. موظف إدارة علاقات المرضى (مركز خدمة العملاء – موظف استقبال)
2. Patient Relations Officer	٢. موظف خدمات المرضى
3. Insurance Officer	٣. موظف تأمين صحي
4. Billing and Claims Officer	٤. موظف مطالبات مالية
5. Medical Coder	٥. مبرمج صحي
6. Transcriptionist	٦. ناسخ طبي
7. Medical Documentation Officer/Supervisor	٧. موظف توثيق بيانات صحية وطبية
8. EMR Enhancement & Implementation Officer	٨. موظف سجلات صحية إلكترونية
9. System Administrator - IT	٩. مبرمج نظم معلومات
10. RCM/CDM Supervisor	١٠. مشرف إدارة الإيرادات
11. Patient Accounting Officer	١١. موظف حسابات المرضى
12. Denial Management Officer	١٢. موظف تدقيق طلبات التأمين الصحي
13. Physiotherapist	١٣. فني علاج طبيعي
14. Nurses & Assistant Nurses	١٤. طاقم تمريض وطاقم تمريض مساعد
15. CSSD Technician	١٥. فني تعقيم أدوات صحية

All other Medical and Administrative applicants are encouraged to apply. كما يدعو المستشفى كافة موظفي المجالات الطبية والإدارية بالتقديم.

Requirements

- Transferrable visa
- Minimum one year experience
- Priority for candidates with medical experience
- Knowledgeable in Microsoft Office
- Medical staff must be holding appropriate Medical Degree

المتطلبات

- إقامة قابلة للتحويل
- خبرة لا تقل عن عام واحد
- الأولوية لمن لديهم خبرة في المجال الطبي
- خبرة في استخدام برامج المايكروسوفت
- للتخصصات الطبية، يجب توفر شهادة تتناسب مع التخصص المعين

Documents Needed: Updated CV, Civil ID, Passport, Educational Qualifications, One recent photo. Formal dress code. **المرفقات:** السيرة الذاتية، صورة عن البطاقة المدنية، جواز السفر، الشهادات الدراسية، صورة شخصية حديثة. يرجى الالتزام بالزى الرسمي.

Thursday 8th February 2018
From 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

Location: Taiba Hospital (9th Floor), Sabah Al Salem, Block 3, Street 3

الخميس ٨ فبراير ٢٠١٨
من الساعة ٩ صباحاً وحتى الساعة ٩ مساءً

العنوان: مستشفى طيبة (الدور التاسع)
صباح السالم، قطعة ٣، شارع ٣



Autistic man accused of hacking wins appeal

Islamic State threatens Iran from 'Tora Bora' borderlands

Page 7

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BRUSSELS: Prime suspect in the November 2015 Paris attacks Salah Abdeslam sits as he is surrounded by Belgian special police officers in the courtroom at the 'Palais de Justice' courthouse in Brussels for the opening of his trial yesterday. — AFP

'I put my trust in Allah': Terror suspect

Salah Abdeslam defies Belgian judges

BRUSSELS: The only surviving suspect in the 2015 Paris attacks, Salah Abdeslam, defied Belgian judges yesterday and said he put his "trust in Allah" on the opening day of his trial for a shootout that led to his capture. The 28-year-old, who was transferred under heavy security from a jail near the French capital overnight for the trial, refused to answer questions about the gunbattle in Brussels or stand for the court.

"I am not afraid of you, I am not afraid of your allies," said a defiant Abdeslam, who has grown long hair and a beard during his nearly two years behind bars. "I put my trust in Allah and that's all." The Belgian-born French national of Moroccan descent alleged that the court in Brussels was biased against Muslims as he explained why he would not cooperate despite having asked to attend the trial. "My silence does not make me a criminal, it's my defense," Abdeslam said. "Muslims are judged and treated in the worst of ways, mercilessly. There is no presumption of innocence."

He also refused to allow photographs or video images to be taken of him. He has point-blank refused to speak to investiga-

tors since his arrest in Brussels March 2016, three days after the gunbattle in the Forest district of the city for which he is on trial. Abdeslam and Sofiane Ayari, a 24-year-old Tunisian arrested with him, face charges of attempted terrorist murder of police officers and carrying banned weapons. Three police officers were wounded and an Algerian fellow jihadist was killed. The pair face up to 40 years in prison if convicted.

Heavy security

Abdeslam's arrest ended four months on the run as Europe's most wanted man following the November 2015 Paris attacks that killed 130 people, and in which his brother Brahim carried out a suicide bombing. Police officers wearing body armour and black balaclavas with eye- and mouth-holes stood guard next to them as the trial started. Abdeslam, wearing a long-sleeved light shirt and dark trousers, launched into his diatribe after presiding judge Marie-France Keutgen asked why he insisted on attending the trial

where he refused to answer questions about the charges against him.

The judge rejected his accusations of bias, insisting he was presumed innocent. Hundreds of members of Belgian security forces turned the Palais de Justice court building into a virtual fortress while a heli-

copter with searchlights circled overhead as he arrived. The non-jury trial is the prelude to a later one in France and prosecutors hope the Brussels case will yield clues not only about the Paris attacks but also the

Brussels bombings on March 22, 2016. Investigators believe Abdeslam's capture three days after the shootout caused members of his jihadist cell to bring forward plans for the attacks on Brussels airport and a metro station in which 32 people were killed. Ayari, who is cooperating with authorities, told the judge he knew Ibrahim Bakroui, one of the suicide bombers at Brussels airport, adding he visited the apartment where the shootout occurred. The same cell is believed to have been behind both the Paris and Brussels attacks, which were claimed by the Islamic State group. But Ayari—who entered Europe via the Greek islands during the European migration crisis in 2015 — insisted: "I don't think I am a radical."

Manhunt

The plans for transferring Abdeslam from Fleury-Merogis prison in the Parisian suburbs, and then back to a prison just across the border in northern France every night, were shrouded in secrecy. Two separate convoys left Fleury-

Merogis in the middle of the night with an escort of elite French officers with blue lights flashing, while a third group of unmarked vehicles left shortly afterwards. The boyish former bar owner has spent nearly 20 months in isolation under 24-hour video surveillance at Fleury-Merogis, after being transferred to France after his arrest. Police say Abdeslam and Ayari escaped through the back door of the flat in Forest while a third suspect, Algerian Mohamed Belkaid, died while providing covering fire for their escape through a back door.

Police say they found Abdeslam's fingerprints in the flat, confirming they were on the trail of the last suspect in the rifle and bomb attacks on the Bataclan concert hall, bars, restaurants and the national stadium in the French capital on November 13, 2015. Abdeslam is reported to have disposed of a suicide belt before fleeing. He is also suspected of being the driver in the attacks. Three days after the raid, armed officers shot Abdeslam in the leg and captured him and Ayari just yards from Abdeslam's home in Molenbeek, a gritty Brussels immigrant neighborhood. — AFP



Only surviving suspect in 2015 Paris attacks

Netherlands withdraws its ambassador from Turkey

THE HAGUE: The Netherlands announced yesterday it was withdrawing its ambassador from Turkey, and will refuse to allow Ankara to post one in the country as diplomatic ties plunge to new lows. Relations have deteriorated in the past months, after Dutch officials barred a Turkish minister from attending a rally in Rotterdam on the eve of the March general elections here.

Despite recent high-level talks between the two countries, "we have not been able to agree on the way normalization should take place," Foreign Minister Halbe Zijlstra said in a statement. The Dutch government has therefore "decided to officially withdraw the Netherlands' ambassador in Ankara, who has not had access to Turkey since March 2017," the foreign ministry added. "As long as the Netherlands has no ambassador to Turkey, the Netherlands will also not issue permission for a new Turkish ambassador to take up duties in the Netherlands."

Relations between the two NATO allies have spiraled to an all-time low after the Netherlands expelled Turkey's Family Minister Fatma Betul Sayan Kayar in March. The country had also barred another minister's plane from landing as both Turkish politicians sought to attend a Rotterdam rally of Dutch-Turkish citizens in favor of last April's Turkish referendum. But Betul Sayan Kayar defied the Dutch government ban, arriving by car from Germany to press for the powers of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to be extended in the referendum.

No 'magic formula'

Protests erupted in the port city as Dutch police stopped her addressing the rally, and escorted her out of the country. Riot police had to move in to break up an angry demonstration using dogs, horses and water cannon, which added to political tensions just days



BRUSSELS: Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Halbe Zijlstra arrives seen at the European Council in Brussels. The Netherlands announced yesterday it was withdrawing its ambassador from Turkey. — AFP

before the Dutch general elections. Furious Turkish officials in vain demanded an apology for the minister's treatment from Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

And the Dutch ambassador, who had been abroad at the time, was blocked from returning to Turkey. Erdogan even accused the Dutch of behaving like "fascists" in their treatment of the Turkish ministers-comments which triggered anger in the Netherlands occupied by Nazi Germany in World War II. The Netherlands is home to some 400,000 people of Turkish origin, and the two countries have had diplomatic relations for some four centuries. But ties first began to strain in 2012 over a row about a Turkish boy adopted by Dutch lesbian parents. And in 2016 Turkish-Dutch journalist Ebru Umar was arrested and briefly detained after she tweeted comments critical of Erdogan. She was only released after an intervention from the Dutch foreign ministry. — AFP

83 die in 'war on children' in Middle East

AMMAN: At least 83 children were killed in Middle East war zones in January, most of them in Syria, the UN children's agency UNICEF said yesterday, vowing their voices "will never be silenced". "They were killed in ongoing conflicts, suicide attacks or frozen to death as they fled active war zones," said UNICEF's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Geert Cappelaere. "In the month of January alone, escalating violence in Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, Syria and Yemen has claimed the lives of at least 83 children," Cappelaere added in a statement. Calling January a "dark (and) bloody month", Cappelaere said it was "unacceptable that children continue being killed and injured every single day". "Children may have been silenced but their voices will continue to be

heard... their voices will never be silenced," he said. "We collectively continue failing to stop the war on children! We have no justification. We have no reason to accept a new normal." The highest death toll was in Syria where 59 children were killed in violence as the war there enters its eighth year, said UNICEF. In Yemen, wracked by conflict since March 2015 between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and a government supported by a Saudi-led military coalition, 16 children were killed, it said.

"UNICEF is receiving reports of killed and injured children on a daily basis as fighting escalates across the country (Yemen)," it added. In Libya's second city Benghazi, a suicide attack killed three children while three others died while "playing near unexploded ordnance" and a fourth child was critically wounded. A child was killed in a "booby-trapped" house in Iraq's second city Mosul, ruled for three years by Islamic State group jihadists before being driven out by government forces in July after fierce battles. And north of the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, Israeli soldiers shot dead a 16-year-old Palestinian boy. — AFP

International

Airstrikes kill 28 civilians in rebel area near Damascus

Syrians suffer breathing difficulties after strikes

ARBIN: Regime air strikes killed 28 civilians in a rebel enclave near Damascus yesterday as Syria's seven-year-old conflict raged on several fronts with non-combatants paying a heavy price. The region of Eastern Ghouta is home to an estimated 400,000 people living under a crippling government siege that has made food and medicine almost impossible to acquire. The area has been designated as one of four de-escalation zones in Syria, but residents there have been facing escalating bombardment in recent weeks. "Dozens of air strikes hit several areas in Eastern Ghouta," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

The deadliest raids yesterday hit a market in the town of Beit Sawa, killing 10 civilians including two children. Another nine civilians, two of them children and one a local rescue worker, were killed in Arbin. Nine more civilians died in strikes across the rest of the besieged region, and dozens more people were wounded, the Observatory said.

The barrage of bombardment came as the United Nations children's agency warned of the dire risks to children in the Middle East's war zones. At least 83 children were killed in conflicts across the region in January including 59 in Syria alone. And four Syrian children were among at least 16 refugees who froze to death in a snowstorm as they tried to flee to neighboring Lebanon.



Syria's war has killed more than 340,000 people

sobbing silently atop a pile of rubble after having lost two of his family members in the raids. AFP correspondents reported that air strikes began at around 10:00 am yesterday, and airplanes could still be heard circling above in the afternoon.

In apparent retaliation, rockets and mortars rained down on government-controlled districts of Damascus, Syria's state news agency SANA reported. One woman was killed and four people were wounded in mortar fire on the Bab Touma neighborhood and the capital's Mariamite Cathedral, a Greek Orthodox church, a police source told the agency. Another person was killed and nine people wounded in rocket fire on the regime-held part of Harasta district.

Syria's war has killed more than 340,000 people and displaced millions since it began in March 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

Chlorine accusations

Eastern Ghouta is supposed to be one of four de-escalation zones agreed last year by rebel ally Turkey and government supporters Iran and Russia. But violence has ramped up there in recent weeks, with at least 11 civilians killed in raids on the district on Friday. This month alone, chlorine is suspected of having been used on two occasions in munitions launched by the regime on Eastern Ghouta, causing respiratory problems among civilians. Accusations of toxic gas use have also come from Idlib, an opposition-controlled province in the country's northwest that also falls in a de-escalation zone.

Syrian troops have pressed a fierce offensive on Idlib for more than a month with air cover from Russian warplanes. Nearly a dozen people were treated for breathing



IDLIB, Syria: Syrian emergency services search for members of four families reportedly stuck under the rubble of a six-storey building that collapsed following Syrian government air strikes in Idlib. —AFP

difficulties on Sunday after Syrian government raids on the town of Saraqeb, the Observatory said. Mohammad Ghaleb Tannari, a doctor in a nearby town, said his hospital had treated 11 people.

"All the cases we received had symptoms consistent with inhaling the toxic gas chlorine, including exhaustion, difficulty breathing, and coughing," he said. The

United Nations has found that Syria's government carried out chlorine gas attacks in 2014 and 2015 and also used sarin against a town in Idlib last year. Syria's government has vehemently denied ever using chemical weapons. Another 16 civilians were killed across southern parts of Idlib on Sunday, the Observatory said in an updated toll. —AFP

IS threatens Iran from 'Tora Bora' borderlands

HALABJA: Islamic State may be on the wane in Iraq and Syria but for Iran, the threat is still strong, centred on Kurdish communities along the Iraq-Iran border where militants have operated in recent years. The locals even have a nickname for the area, "Tora Bora", after the mountain hideout Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden fled to after the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, a senior Iraqi security official in the border region said.

In late January, three Revolutionary Guards were killed in the Bamro region fighting 21 Islamic State militants who had sneaked in from Iraq. Three militants detonated suicide vests and two others were killed in the clash, the Guards said. Days earlier, Iran's intelligence ministry found a weapons cache in the town of Marivan on the Iranian side of the border that included TNT, C4, electronic detonators, grenades, ammunition clips for AK-47 machine guns and rocket propelled grenades.

The clash and discovery indicate that Islamic State still has the ability to penetrate the tightly controlled security net of the Islamic Republic, which has largely managed to avoid the devastation wrought by the group in neighboring countries. "Today (Islamic State) does not control a country ... in order to assert that they exist, they may carry out an attack any day," Hossein Dehghan, a former defense minister and now an adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in a recent interview with the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Halabja, the largest town on the Iraqi side, is most often remembered for a chemical attack ordered by then-President Saddam Hussein in 1988 which left thousands dead. The presence of religious militants in the area around the town is not new: at the city's entrance hang portraits of Iraqi Kurdish security forces, known as Peshmerga, killed in the battle against Islamic State. Prior to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the jihadist largely blamed for stoking a civil war between Iraq's Sunnis and Shi'ites, led a group in the area called Ansar al-Islam, which merged with Islamic State in 2014.

Many of the Iranian and Iraqi Kurds now fighting with Islamic State are part of a second generation of militants largely influenced by Zarqawi's deadly legacy. Iraqi security officials and Peshmerga commanders familiar with the matter say, Sunni IS militants see Shi'ites, who make up the majority of Iran's population, as apostates and have repeatedly threatened to carry out attacks in the Islamic Republic. Kurds make up about ten percent of Iranians and are predominantly Sunni. Hamai Hama Seid, a senior Peshmerga commander and member of the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party, said Kurdish IS militants take advantage of their knowledge of the language and region as well as strong cross-border ties.

"There are definitely ties between the Iranian and Iraqi extremists on the two sides of the border," Seid told Reuters in the Iraqi border village of Tavila, only a few hundred meters from the Iranian border. He added: "The militants exploited this area because it's mountainous, difficult and wooded." Many of the young men are poorly educated and have few economic opportunities, allowing extremist recruiters to flourish, Iraqi security officials and Peshmerga commanders say. Iranian authorities say the arms cache found on the border was going to be used to attack civilians in public areas, a follow-up to the shocking assault on the parliament in Tehran and the mausoleum of the founder of Iran's revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, last June that left at least 18 people dead and dozens wounded. — Reuters

Yemen's army makes a push for Sanaa on mountain frontline

NIHM: Ignoring the rumble of heavy artillery, Yemeni commander Nasr Al-Dibani points at Houthi bases from a jagged clifftop, outlining his push to break a grinding stalemate on the frontline outside Sanaa. "Whoever controls Nihm controls Sanaa," Dibani, flanked by armed loyalists, said from atop a newly captured hill, Al-Humra, on the outskirts of the Yemeni capital. Backed by air support from the Saudi-led coalition, the Yemeni army in recent months has toppled multiple Houthi rebel bases on Nihm, a rugged chain of cloud-cutting mountains on the eastern edge of Sanaa, which has been held by the insurgents since September 2014.

A bloody battleground, Nihm is a key gateway to the capital, which still remains elusive with the Yemeni military advance impeded by the treacherous mountain terrain and thousands of land mines planted by the Iran-backed rebels. "What is a big-

ger enemy—the Houthis or the terrain? I say both," said Dibani, clutching a walkie-talkie as he pointed at surrounding Houthi territory below during a press tour organized by the coalition. Dibani said his army stormed many Houthi hideouts on foot, using donkeys to carry supplies before a months-long engineering effort to pave a moonscape of rutted mountain tracks. Now pick-up trucks carry equipment, fuel and supplies to captured outposts, in a bone-jarring ascent.

Sanaa, less than 30 miles away, remains stubbornly out of reach despite the recent gains, highlighting the complexities of Yemen's tangled conflict. "Nihm's rugged mountains make it quite difficult for even the most technologically proficient armies to make progress," Adam Baron, a Yemen expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations said. "This makes it unlikely—though not impossible—that there will be any dramatic shifts for the time being, even if both sides of this conflict see Nihm as one of the most strategically important battlefields in Yemen."

A fight to the death

Further complicating the war, the Yemen army led by President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi is now distracted by the emergence of a new battlefield against southern secessionists who last week

seized the port city of Aden. Yemen's civil war took a dramatic turn in December when Houthi rebels killed Ali Abdullah Saleh, the country's toppled ex-president, punishing him for switching sides and seeking peace with the Saudi-led coalition. But the soldiers at Al-Humra seem unfazed. Dibani used a knife to rip open a rock-shaped anti-tank mine that blended in with the dun-colored landscape. Hundreds of such mines were defused on Al-Humra alone, he said.

In a small hole punched in the mountainside, used as a Houthi sniper nest, he pulled out discarded Islamic literature, cigaretttes, fruit juice and cans of cream cheese and a condiment made from sesame seeds. "They eat like us. They are human," Dibani joked. A foul stench came from another sniper nest, raising fears there was a dead Houthi inside. "These men fought till their death, unwilling to surrender," Dibani said. A discarded pamphlet-embossed with images of university graduates and smiling youths—which was apparently airdropped by coalition jets during the fight, read: "Oh happy people of Yemen, Iran only wants the destruction of this Arab nation. Put your hands in the hands of the legitimate government of Yemen."

'Honour and revenge'

Dibani's men—including teachers,

lawyers and PhD holders who took up arms—insist they are capable of a swift advance to dislodge the rebels from Sanaa, but they are restrained by the need to prevent civilian casualties. "We don't want to capture Sanaa at the cost of burning the city," Dibani said. "Our families, our relatives, our brothers are inside."

The United Nations accuses both sides of doing little to prevent civilian casualties, and plunging the country into chaos, famine and disease. Dibani said ordinary Yemenis are so inured to tragedies that death no longer gives pause. He insisted on pushing ever closer to the city, in the hope of pressuring the Houthis to surrender and commit to negotiations. But that may be wishful thinking, analysts warn. "This is because the tribes surrounding Sanaa have fluid allegiances," Elisabeth Kendall, a Yemen scholar at Oxford University said. "It's also because the Houthis will not simply surrender, irrespective of superior Saudi fire power."

This is about honor and revenge, and not necessarily about military logic," Dibani insists they have no choice in the face of an intractable enemy unwilling to engage. He cited a recent encounter between one of his men who seized a walkie talkie abandoned by the Houthis on a captured mountain and a rebel on the other side. —AFP



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International

Autistic man accused of hacking wins appeal against extradition

Lauri Love accused of hacking FBI, Fed, others

LONDON: An autistic British man accused of hacking into US government agencies won his appeal against extradition to the United States yesterday but was told he should be prosecuted in Britain instead. Lauri Love, who has Asperger's syndrome, is accused of involvement in a series of hacks in 2012 and 2013 into computers at agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the US army, the Missile Defense Agency and the Federal Reserve.

Charged with multiple offences in three US indictments, he had been facing a life prison sentence in the United States if found guilty, a fate which he has said could lead him to taking his own life. "Very happy, relieved, very thankful for the High Court, for the judges," a beaming Love, surrounded by cheering supporters, told waiting reporters outside the courthouse after his appeal was upheld. A lower court in London had approved his extradition in 2016.

Love has been diagnosed with clinical depression and suffers from stress-aggravated eczema, conditions which he manages with a complex medication regime and support from his parents. "We come to the conclusion that Mr Love's extradition would be oppressive by reason of his physical and mental condition," two High Court judges wrote in their ruling on his appeal.

Love's lawyers had argued that he was not seeking to avoid justice, and was prepared to stand trial in Britain. The judges indicated that what should now happen. "The CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) must now bend its endeavors to his prosecution, with the assistance to be expected from the authorities in the United States, recognizing the gravity of the allegations

in this case," they wrote. US authorities say Love was connected to Anonymous, an international group of hackers, and that his actions had caused millions of dollars' worth of damage.

Precedent

His legal case sets a precedent that could be relevant to future extradition cases, because it is the first successful use of a legal provision called the "forum bar" which allows British judges to block extradition if it is not in the interests of justice. "The reason I've gone through this ordeal is not just to save myself from being kidnapped and locked up for 99 years in a country I've never visited, but it's to set a precedent whereby this will not happen to other people in the future," Love said outside court.

"We're hopeful that other people may be able to rely on this verdict to ensure that they're treated more humanely by the justice system." The lower court had ruled that the forum bar did not apply in Love's case, but the High Court judges said that it did. "We emphasize however that it would not be oppressive to prosecute Mr Love in England for the offences alleged against him," they wrote. "If the forum bar is to operate as intended, where it prevents extradition, the other side of the coin is that prosecution in this country rather than impunity should then follow."

The forum bar was introduced in 2013 after the extradition to the United States of Scottish hacker Gary McKinnon was blocked by Theresa May, in her former role as home secretary, or interior minister. She is now prime minister.

Judges cancel extradition, call for UK trial



LONDON: British student Lauri Love, (right) who is accused of hacking into US government websites, poses with his girlfriend Sylvia Mann outside the Royal Courts of Justice in central London yesterday. —AFP

McKinnon, who also had Asperger's, said he broke into US state computers while on a "moral crusade" to find classified documents about UFOs. May said he was seriously ill and extradition would violate his human rights. Love's law firm, Kaim

Todner, said in a statement his case was a legal landmark not only because of the successful use of the forum bar but also because the ruling recognized that mental health provisions in US prisons were not adequate to keep Love safe. —Reuters

News in brief

Deadly ethnic violence

KINSHASA: At least 23 members of the Hema ethnic group have been killed since Friday in renewed violence in Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri province, a leader of the group said in a statement yesterday. A high-ranking provincial official, who did not wish to be named confirmed the toll since Friday and added that 10 fighters from a rival ethnic group, the Lendu had died. Hema herders and Lendu farmers have been locked in violence in Ituri province for decades, with tens of thousands killed from 1999 to 2003. The conflict in the area, part of DRC's deeply troubled eastern region that includes the restive North and South Kivu provinces, triggered a European Union-led military operation in 2003. The intervention saw a major drop in the intensity of the violence, but the conflict never came to a total halt, with occasional flare-ups still wracking the area. —AFP

Terror survivor meeting

JAKARTA: A landmark reconciliation meeting between survivors of terror attacks and the perpetrators will be held in Indonesia this month, Jakarta said yesterday. The meeting, announced by chief security minister Wiranto, is being touted as a first for Muslim-majority Indonesia, which has long struggled with Islamist militancy and attacks. "This meeting is quite unique-it has not ever happened before," Wiranto, who like many Indonesians goes only by one name, told reporters in the capital Jakarta. People currently incarcerated for terror-related offences and ex-convicts will get the chance to apologize to survivors at the meeting, he said. The government did not release the names of the militants or the survivors, and it was not clear for how long or where the two groups would meet. It also did not say if any family members of those killed in such attacks would participate. —AFP

Soldier, militant killed

BEIRUT: Militants resisting arrest by the Lebanese army in the restive Tripoli neighborhood of Bab al-Tabbaneh sparked clashes that killed one on each side, a statement said yesterday. The violence broke out late on Sunday when the army entered the Sunni stronghold with the aim of arresting wanted militants. "One soldier was killed and several others wounded" when the unit was targeted by militants, the army said, adding that hand grenades were used against its men. The army said "one terrorist" was killed and his brother arrested. Weapons and ammunition were also seized. Lebanon's second city has been directly affected by the violence raging in neighboring Syria, where the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad, who is from the Alawite minority, has been battling mostly Sunni groups since 2011. —AFP

Nepal's ban on women

KATHMANDU: Nepal's restrictions on woman migrating for work are discriminatory and inconsistent with international law, a United Nations rights official said yesterday during a visit to the country. Nepal last year introduced a ban on women working as domestic helpers in the Gulf, one of various laws passed over the last decade to protect female migrant workers from sexual exploitation. "These bans are ineffective and create the consequence that women migrate through irregular channels and become victims of trafficking," said the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzalez Morales. "They (the government) don't realize it's discrimination, but these policies are inconsistent with international law and should be lifted." Nearly half a million Nepalis migrated for work in 2015/16, according to the latest available government data, and migrant remittances account for over a third of the country's GDP. —AFP

Germany parties make final push for coalition deal

BERLIN: Negotiators for German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) reconvened yesterday to hammer out compromises on healthcare and labor policy, the stumbling blocks in the way of another "grand coalition". The parties missed a self-imposed Sunday deadline to clinch a deal on renewing the coalition that has governed Europe's largest economy since 2013. But both sides cited progress and said the remaining differences did not appear insurmountable. "It's going to work out," the SPD's Andrea Nahles said on arrival for yesterday's negotiations at her party headquarters. Another SPD negotiator, Karl Lauterbach, put the chances of the parties striking a deal yesterday at 50-50.

The Rheinische Post newspaper, citing an internal SPD schedule, reported that Merkel, the leader of her Bavarian allies Horst Seehofer and SPD chief Martin Schulz wanted to present a final coalition agreement today. But Alexander Dobrindt of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) said: "The hurdles are still big." In a sign of progress, the parties concluded their talks on Europe with an agreement to invest more in the euro zone and end austerity, Schulz said.

"Today we have completed the consultations in the field of Europe," he said on social media, adding that the agreement included "more investment, an investment budget for the euro zone and an end of forced austerity!" The parties further agreed to seek fairer corporate taxation in Europe, including for Internet giants like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon. Schulz made no specific mention in his message, however, of any plans for the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to become a European Monetary Fund, as was envisaged in a coalition blueprint agreed on Jan. 12 after exploratory talks.

Some conservatives fear that rushing ahead with European integration would create too much of a burden

Join us at EU table, Balkan aspirants told

BRUSSELS: A dozen EU countries want to bring the six western Balkan nations into European Union policy meetings even before they join the bloc, according to a policy paper seen by Reuters, in an effort to improve the bloc's image in the region. After years of neglecting the six western Balkan countries and looking to counter growing Russian and Chinese influence in the region, the European Commission is set to unveil a plan today that lays out how Serbia and Montenegro could become the first of the group to join the EU by 2025.

Now 12 EU nations - Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia - want to go further and propose an annual EU summit with the Western Balkan leaders of Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, the paper said. In their 12-point proposal handed to the European Commission in late January, the EU countries also want to allow ministers of Balkan governments to participate in top EU meetings in areas including the environment, health, transport and foreign policy.

That would go beyond the ad-hoc meetings and ministerial breakfasts that the EU offers its closest non-member partners. "These are cost-free measures that would have a tremendous political impact and would be instrumental in improving the EU's image in the region," the proposal said, also urging EU government officials to visit the Balkans



BERLIN: Julia Klöckner (2nd right), politician of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, arrives at the SPD headquarters as talks between the top German parties on forming a new government spilled into overtime yesterday. —AFP

for German taxpayers. The SPD made reform of the European Union a priority in campaigning for last September's federal election, pledging in its manifesto to work for "a better and fairer Europe". The message failed to resonate with voters, however, and the SPD slumped to its worst post-war election result. Now, the party is trying to extract concessions on domestic policy that could win over sceptics among its 443,000 members, who get the final say on whether to move ahead with another tie-up with the conservatives.

Investor concerns

Merkel's failure to cobble together a new government more than four months after the election has raised concerns among investors and partner countries at a time when Europe is facing multiple challenges - including the need for euro zone reform and Britain's looming departure from the EU. Germany could face a new election or an unprecedented minority government if SPD

members reject a coalition deal. EU Budget Commissioner Guenther Oettinger told the Rheinische Post the parties should finalize a coalition deal as soon as possible for the sake of pending EU decisions on asylum, banking and budget matters.

The parties agreed on Sunday to invest more than 2 billion euros in social housing by 2021, to spend up to 12 billion euros on expanding broadband and to channel 33 billion euros to municipalities for investments, including in childcare. Agreements were also reached on migration, energy and agriculture in recent days. The SPD regards advances on labor rules and healthcare as crucial to winning over left-wing members and other sceptics.

Conservatives have thus far rejected a push by the SPD to ban short-term employment contracts imposed by employers without justification. But they have offered to prevent the repeated renewal of such short-term employment contracts as a compromise. —Reuters

more regularly. Ending mobile telephone roaming charges for the 18-million strong Balkan population should also be considered, they said.

Challenges

The six countries - all bar Albania emerging from the breakup of Yugoslavia - have long been considered future members. But amid concerns in Western capitals over the costs of another wave of eastern enlargement and over the slow progress of the region's political, judicial and economic reforms, many citizens in the Balkans are wondering if they will ever join. Only a slim majority of Serbs would vote for EU membership in a referendum, a January poll by Serbia's ministry of European integration showed, down from 73 percent in 2009.

Reforming the region throws up formidable challenges. For example, Serbia does not recognize the independence of Kosovo, its former province. Some EU states have also refused to recognize Kosovo, including Spain, which is trying to contain its own separatists in Catalonia. Germany, the biggest provider of EU funds to candidate countries, is cautious about throwing open the door to the six countries, saying organized crime and corruption are entrenched and the rule of law needs to be assured first.

German diplomats say they are wary of repeating mistakes made in 2007 with Romania and Bulgaria, which many EU officials believe were allowed to join the bloc before they were ready and are still dogged by corruption and a weak judiciary. However Bulgaria now holds the EU's rotating six-month presidency until June 30 and is keen to champion the membership drive of its Western Balkan neighbors by holding a special Balkan summit in Sofia in May. And despite its own decision to leave the EU, Britain also backs the group's aspirations to join the bloc and will host another top-level Balkan gathering in July. —Reuters



BRUSSELS: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (right) welcomes Croat member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency Dragan Covic upon his arrival at the European Commission in Brussels. —AFP

International

The perfect storm: China blizzard exposes flaws in rail, coal policies

Heavy storm in central, south China snarls coal trains

BEIJING: China's worst blizzard this winter exposed a flaw in Beijing's drive to create remote coal mining hubs as it tries to streamline heavy industries and clear the air in populated regions: a lack of railroads to get the fuel to market. Heavy snow storms snarled the world's largest rail network this week, closing highways, freezing ports and cutting off critical supplies of thermal coal. The bottlenecks added to a month-long coal price rally and prompted four top utilities to warn of potential heating and electricity shortages ahead of the upcoming Lunar New Year.

By Friday, rare heavy snow in south and central regions had eased, but railways were still clogged. State railway operator China Railway Corp has imposed more emergency measures to increase coal deliveries to southern power producers running low on stock. Rail experts and executives at utilities warn chaotic episodes like this may become more frequent over coming years until new freight lines are built. "China's railway capacity is seriously inadequate, even though it has invested lots of money each year to build new lines," said Zhao Jian, professor at Beijing Jiaotong University. Adding further strain to the system, the government last year required thousands of factories to use rail to ship cargo rather than roads, the nation's favorite mode of transportation.

Aside from rail capacity, the issue can also be traced back to central government policy that has closed small mines and reduced output in the south, limiting availability of regional spot supplies that could normally pick up the slack. By creating mining hubs in more remote northern and western regions, the fuel has further to travel to get to the coal-fired power plants that produce most of the nation's electricity. A source at one of the country's top utilities Huaneng reckons imports will play an even bigger role in supplementing his supplies. "The shifting of

the coal hub from east to the west will add potential risks to transportation since we will see coal travelling a longer distance," he said.

Breakneck expansion

Over the past decade, China has ploughed trillions of dollars into expanding its high-speed passenger rail network, but spending growth is starting to slow. China Rail's investment target this year is the lowest since 2013, and mostly on high-speed passenger tracks. The somewhat neglected freight network cannot handle the extra capacity. The nation's first north-south special coal line - the Inner Mongolia to Jiangxi Railway designed to carry 200 million tons of cargo and stretching 2,000 km - won't be ready until at least 2019. Existing freight tracks also don't service the regions in dire need of fuel. The nation's four major tracks with capacity to carry 1.2 billion tons each year of freight run west from the coal hinterlands to east coast ports, where fuel is shipped south for delivery inland by truck or barge along the Yangtze River.

Shoring up

With coal stranded at mines, the authorities have rushed to shore up supplies of fuel. In the second round of emergency measures, China Railway last week ordered almost 20 regional hubs from Hohhot in Inner Mongolia to Kunming in Yunnan in the south to ramp up loadings. Until Feb 10, some 46,000 cars of coal a day must be delivered to ensure supplies reach Hunan, Hubei, Shandong and Jiangxi and power plants in other regions that are running low of fuel, it said in a fax reviewed by Reuters. That equates to about 3 million tons of coal, almost 60 percent of China's average daily needs for its coal-fired power sector, according to Reuters calculations. China Rail had already made



Beijing has been moving mining to more remote hubs



BEIJING: A man and a woman dance at Ditan Park in Beijing. The Lunar New Year falls on February 16 this year, with celebrations in China scheduled to last for a week. —AFP

coal a priority and restricted shipments of grain and fertilizer south. China Railway and the National Railway Bureau did not respond to requests for comment.

Well-intentioned but flawed

Restrictions on mining are part of efforts to clear the pollution that blankets the north during winters and move heavy industry away from populated urban areas. The provinces

pleading for help after a rare dump of snow were in the south and central regions of Jiangsu, Hunan, and Sichuan. Those provinces have cut coal output the most in percentage terms in recent years, while Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Xinjiang have ramped up supplies. Those four-top producing regions accounted for 72 percent of the total coal output in 2017, compared with just over half in 2008, according to data from China's coal transportation association. —Reuters

South Africa's ANC to discuss Zuma's future

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) met yesterday to discuss President Jacob Zuma's future amid growing pressure on the 75-year-old leader to step down as head of state over corruption allegations and a weakened economy. Zuma, in power since 2009, has been deserted by prominent allies since being replaced in December as ANC leader by Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's deputy president, who is now lobbying behind the scenes for him to step down as president too.

But overnight talks with top ANC officials failed to persuade him to quit, and a group of Zuma loyalists said they would march yesterday on the party's headquarters in downtown Johannesburg, Luthuli House, in support of the president. ANC officials said the party had summoned its National Working Committee (NWC) to meet at 1200 GMT at Luthuli House.

The NWC handles the day-to-day running of the ANC, which has run South Africa since the end of white minority rule in 1994. It would need to call a meeting of the National Executive Committee to force Zuma to quit. Asked about the ongoing talks surrounding Zuma, ANC spokeswoman Khusele Diko said: "There is no crisis within the ANC, we are used to robust discussions." The ANC's top six most powerful officials met Zuma late on Sunday at his official residence in Pretoria but there was no announcement of the outcome. After the pro-Zuma group Black First Land First announced its march yesterday, a pro-Ramaphosa faction of the ANC said it would "defend" Luthuli House, raising the prospect of clashes between different camps within the party. The ANC said it respected the right of citizens to protest in a disciplined and peaceful manner. "We trust those who protest today will do so in a manner that does not undermine the genuineness ... of their cause," it said in a statement.

State of nation address

The rand, which has tended to strengthen on signs that



JOHANNESBURG: ANC supporters are held back by the South African Police Service outside Luthuli House, after supporters of the Black First Land First (BLF) movement handed a memorandum to the ANC secretary general in support of the South African president yesterday. — AFP

Zuma could step down before his second term as president ends next year, was slightly firmer yesterday. Opposition parties and some in the ANC want Zuma to go before his state of the nation address to parliament, scheduled for Thursday.

Zuma has not said in public whether he will step down voluntarily. But he faces a new confidence-vote in parliament against his leadership on Feb. 22 filed by the opposition far-left Economic Freedom Fighters party (EFF). The EFF has asked the speaker of parliament,

Baleka Mbete, to allow a secret ballot for the no-confidence vote, a decision which would increase the chances of Zuma losing the vote.

Unlike in August when Zuma survived a no-confidence vote, a significant portion of the ANC now wants him gone. If he lost the vote, his entire cabinet would have to step down. Zuma will meet Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini at 1200 GMT yesterday at the king's residence in Ulundi in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province, said Prince Thulani Zulu, a spokesman for the Zulu royal household. —Reuters

Nightfall in Philippine slum revives specter of deaths in drugs war

MANILA: As night falls in Manila, the Philippine capital, few of the 700 families living in the sprawling portside shanty town known as Market 3 dare to venture out of their homes. The crime-ridden maze of sheet metal, crumbling cement and wooden boards has become a frontline of the bloody war on illegal drugs that has defined Rodrigo Duterte's presidency since it was unleashed in June 2016. Dozens of Filipinos who live along the slum's narrow dirt-floor alleys have wound up dead. The community lives in fear of masked or mystery men dragging away slum dwellers, or police and their notorious "Tokhang" operations, where officers are required to knock on doors of suspected dealers to urge them to surrender. But those visits have been fatal.

"Many people have left. They leave because of Tokhang," said Nenita Bravo, a 56-year-old Market 3 resident. "We can't really count them anymore," she said, referring to those killed, adding that she had witnessed many killings in the area. "We can't really count them because there's been so many." Bullet-ridden corpses are found hours or even days later,

often just a few minutes away, although police say there have been no illegal killings in their anti-drug campaign.

Yet the frequent police operations and shadowy murders have hit the slum hard and those who live there say more blood has been spilled since he was elected president on the promise to wipe out drugs and crime in six months. "Since Duterte came, that's when there was a rise in killings. It was pitiful, especially so for the many women killed," said Visitacion Castellano, 73, a long-time resident of Market 3. "They should have given them years. Put them in jail. But not kill." In Spanish colonial times, Navotas, as the area was known before the patchwork of shanty communities emerged, was the home of a middle class that lived off the sea, either as owners of fishing boats or shipbuilders.

Now employment is in short supply, with men jumping from one informal job to the next, such as scavenging or unloading fish from returning trawlers. Although life is hard, people get by, but there is never enough. Scarcity fuels desperation and the desperate turn to petty crime, or dealing and using drugs, mostly "shabu", the methamphetamine Duterte says could destroy a generation of Filipinos. One 28-year-old man who spoke to Reuters was among those who sold and used shabu. During one of the deadliest chapters of the drugs war in August 2016, he said his partner and mother of his five children was murdered, her body found riddled with bullet wounds in the head and chest.



MANILA: Nanette Castillo grieves next to the body of her son Aldrin, an alleged drug user killed by unidentified assailants in Manila. —AFP

Desperate times

The former drug user, who refused to give his name for fear of reprisals, then fled Market 3 and says many of his friends did the same, or are now dead. He even tried, unsuccessfully, to take his own life, he said, by hanging himself with his belt.

The man is in poor health, skinny and coughing frequently due to tuberculosis. Nuns now take care of his youngest children. Too weak to work, he spends his days at the port waiting to beg for

scraps of fish from returning boats. His dream, he says, is to regain strength so he can work, and build a home for himself and his children in the Market 3 shanty town where they can live, free of drugs and the fear of police raids. "My only concern now is for my four kids to have a different life," he said. One woman in the community told Reuters that four of her seven children are in prison, three on drugs charges and one accused of murder. —Reuters

News in brief

Army helicopter crashes

TOKYO: A Japanese army Apache attack helicopter crashed in western Japan yesterday, killing one of two people on board and sparking a fire in a residential area near a school and a nursery, according to media reports. The crash comes amid heightened scrutiny of military flights following a series of emergency landings and parts falling from aircraft operated by the US Marines on the southern island of Okinawa. The Ground Self Defense Force helicopter, built by Boeing Co, came down in Saga prefecture during training. Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera said in comments aired by public broadcaster NHK. The second person on the helicopter was found in "cardio-pulmonary arrest," according to NHK. Live images aired by NHK showed firefighters dousing a house as smoke billowed from its roof and windows. —AFP

'Showbiz pastor' case

SINGAPORE: Singapore will amend a law that allowed a megachurch pastor to escape a harsher prison term for fraud despite funneling millions in church funds into his wife's music career, a senior official said Monday, following a public backlash. In a case that fascinated Singapore with a heady mix of religion, showbiz and fraud, Kong Hee and five other church leaders were convicted in 2015 of spending Sg\$24 million (\$19.8 million) from a church building fund to promote his wife Ho's pop career. But, in a country which prides itself on its tough stance on corruption, a High Court ruling that cut their sentences last year on a technicality-upheld by an appeals court last week-triggered widespread anger including personal insults against the judges. —AFP

Boko Haram kills 2

MAIDUGURI: Boko Haram fighters stormed a village in northeast Nigeria and murdered two civilians, a local resident and a security source said yesterday, as the military again maintained the jihadists had been defeated. The attack happened on Sunday evening at Alau-Kofa village, some 12 km from Maiduguri, the capital of unrest-hit Borno state. "Boko Haram came to our village last night at about 8:00 pm (1900 GMT) firing guns and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades)," Bulama Bukar, who lives in Alau-Kofa, told AFP. "Two people were burnt alive and the whole village was burnt, along with our food." Bukar, whose father was shot in the leg during the attack, said the jihadists "specifically came to steal our cattle" but were forced to abandon the herds when soldiers arrived. "Last Wednesday they attacked the village, killed three people and took away 50 cattle. And now they came back," he added. A security source in Maiduguri, who asked not to be identified as he was not authorized to speak to the media, confirmed Bukar's account. —AFP

Chinese man shot

KARACHI: Unidentified gunmen yesterday fired multiple shots at two Chinese nationals and injured one of them critically in a targeted attack in an upmarket area of Pakistan's southern city of Karachi, police said. The two Chinese were in their car in the Zamzama district when the attackers in another car opened fire on their vehicle. One of the Chinese suffered two bullet wounds to his head and the other was shot in the leg, senior police officer Azad Khan said. "Apparently it seems to be a targeted attack," Khan added. Police collected nine bullet casings. A Pakistani passer-by suffered minor injuries. A hospital official said the Chinese who was hit in the head was very seriously hurt. "We are trying our best to save his life but his condition is highly critical," doctor Seemi Jamali, the head of the government hospital where he was brought said. —AFP

Analysis

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Battle over bodies rages in Mosul long after IS rout

The Iraqis who have come home to Mosul's Old City knew it would be hard living in the rubble left by the battle against Islamic State, but there is one aspect of their surroundings they are finding unbearable seven months on. "I don't want my children to have to walk past dead bodies in the street every day," said Abdelrazaq Abdullah, back with his wife and three children in the quarter where the militants made their last stand in July against Iraqi and US-led coalition forces. "We can live without electricity, but we need the government to clear the corpses - they're spreading disease and reminding us of the horrors we've just lived through."

The stench of death wafts from rubble-filled corners in the dystopian wasteland of what was once West Mosul, from rusting cars still rigged with explosives and from homes abandoned as those who could, fled the bloody end of the militants three-year rule. The corpses lying in the open on many streets are mainly militants from the extremist group who retreated to the densely-packed buildings of the Old City, where only the most desperate 5,000 of a pre-war population of 200,000 have so far returned.

Local residents and officials in predominantly Sunni Mosul say there are also thousands of civilian bodies yet to be retrieved from the ruins, a view which has put them at odds with the Shiite-led government in Baghdad. "There are no more civilian bodies to be picked up in Mosul," said Brig Gen Mohammad Mahmoud, the head of Mosul's Civil Defence, first responders who report to the Interior Ministry and are tasked with collecting them and issuing death certificates. The Civil Defence says it had collected 2,585 civilian bodies by mid-January - many of them still unidentified - and has completed operations. It does not want to waste resources on the militants. "Why should we have to give terrorists a proper burial?" Mahmoud said.

The standoff over the dead threatens to stoke the anger of a population already beaten down by a grueling war and the militants' draconian rule in a place where Islamic State initially found some sympathy. The final civilian death toll is also a highly sensitive political issue in Iraq and beyond.

Common graves

The municipal government has had to set up its own specialized team to field requests filed by city residents to find more than 9,000 missing people, most of them last seen in the Old City and assumed to be buried under the rubble. The team is working through a backlog of 300 bodies, dispatching groups to collect them when it can. But these are just the ones where exact coordinates have been given by neighbors, family members or passers-by who saw the bodies.

"We don't know how many more are under the rubble," said Duraid Hazim Mohammed, the head of the municipal team. "If the family or a witness who saw the people die doesn't call us to tell us exactly how many bodies are at a site, we have no way of knowing if one, five or 100 bodies are buried there." Locals say common graves were dug as the battle raged. In the courtyard of Um al-Tisaa mosque in the Old City, they say 100 of their neighbors were buried in groups of shallow graves. "I buried between 50 and 60 people myself, by hand, as planes flew overhead and bombed the city," resident Mahmoud Karim said.

Several families have since come to excavate the bodies of their relatives, to bury them in proper cemeteries. "But others, we don't know where their families are," Karim said. Some are dead, while others are among the thousands lingering uneasily in refugee camps or paying high rents elsewhere in the city. The municipal government in Mosul has not given an exact figure for civilian casualties, but its head, Abdelsattar Al-Hibbu, told Reuters it coincided with estimates of 10,000 civilians killed during the battle, based on reports of missing people and information from officials about the dead. The toll includes victims of ground fighting and coalition bombing.

Asked for comment, a US coalition spokesman directed Reuters to publicly available reports of incidents. A tally based on those reports showed that the US military acknowledges 321 deaths based on "credible allegations" in dozens of reports of civilian casualties from coalition air strikes conducted near Mosul. A further 100 reports of casualties from coalition air strikes near Mosul, each referring either to one or to multiple deaths, were still under investigation, the data showed.

Fighters

While the most visible problem in Mosul is the corpses of fighters left in the streets, residents say they have also found bodies of suspected Islamic State family members in their homes. The owner of a house in the Old City, who asked Reuters to withhold his name for fear of retaliation from officials, said he had asked the Civil Defence for weeks to come and remove two bodies from the main bedroom of his basement home. They were badly decomposed but the clothing was clearly that of a woman and child.

"Civil Defense refused, because they say the woman and child are Daesh," he said using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State. "They said they're punishing me because they think I supported Daesh." —Reuters

WITCH - HUNT



Inefficiency, waste in Lebanon public sector

The corridors are dark in Lebanon's Public Transport and Railway Administration. A few employees scroll through mobile phones in mostly empty offices lined with filing cabinets covered in dust. In a country with almost no public transport, these civil servants have little to do. Yet the administration still has a budget of 13 billion Lebanese pounds (\$8.64 million). Public sector waste is a huge problem for Lebanon, which suffers from one of the highest levels of public debt in the world.

With Lebanon suffering weak economic growth, some leaders are raising the alarm about the unsustainable state deficit, financed mostly by local banks. International donors aiming to meet later this year are expected to demand reform. But with parliamentary elections approaching in May, Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system will make it hard to deliver cuts. The World Bank said in a 2016 report that the system - long used by politicians to bestow patronage and shore up their support - was partly to blame for waste.

Public spending in total climbed from \$6.5 billion in 2005 to \$16 billion in 2016, said Nassib Ghobril, chief economist at Byblos Bank. "There is a huge waste, there is overstaffing," he said. Lebanon's debt-to-GDP ratio was 155 percent at the end of 2017, one of the highest in the world, the World Bank projected. Servicing that debt took over the public sector wage bill as the biggest part of state spending late last year, Ghobril said.

Lebanon's transport administration is located in a sprawling complex near central Beirut, dotted with rusting trains from the days when the country had a railway, and roamed by a pack of wild dogs. "We have massive plans to revive reform and activate the public transport sector," its director, Ziad Nasr, told Reuters, including restoring the railway and setting up a proper bus service. The plans are on hold due to lack of funds, he said.

The current public bus service for the country of 4 million people is a fleet of 40 buses. The bus drivers are employed by the transport administration but few get behind the wheel, some because they are afraid they will be attacked by the drivers of private minibuses, who domi-

nate the sector. "I haven't driven a bus for more than a year and a half and there are others who haven't driven for 10 years," said one of them, asking not to be named.

No meaningful role

The transport agency is just one of more than a dozen government departments that are funded but have no meaningful role, said Mohammed Shamseddine, senior researcher at Information International, a Beirut-based consultancy working on market research and public policy.



Civil service staff ratios also balanced along sectarian lines

The Elissar agency was set up to develop Beirut's southwestern suburbs but all work stopped in 1997 due to political disputes and difficulties securing financing.

Although the development project was shelved, the agency has retained an annual budget of 3.4 billion pounds (\$2.25 million) and roughly 40 employees, said Shamseddine. The agency declined to talk to Reuters. But its former director Fadi Fawaz, now an economic adviser to Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri, said the government plans to relaunch the project this year. "For 20 years, (it) has seen no progress," he admitted.

The power-sharing system, part of an agreement that ended Lebanon's civil war in 1990, can extend informally to balancing civil service staff ratios along sectarian lines, the World Bank's 2016 report said, making it difficult to lay

off staff. "Each of these administrations has a general director and employees and abolishing it means infringing the rights of the sects to which these civil servants belong," said Shamseddine, who has been gathering data on the issue.

Some agencies close down only after the last employees have retired, he said. He gave the example of an agency set up to promote Lebanon's once famous silk industry that halted all activities in 1975 when the civil war erupted but was only officially closed in 2000. The postal administration has 60 employees and a 6.8-billion-pound (\$4.50 million) annual budget, despite the fact that almost all its functions ceased in 1998 when the postal service was privatized. It still designs the postage stamps, however. "There was no strategic vision about what to do with the employees after privatization," its director, Mohammed Zuheir Youssef, told Reuters. But he added: "The state can't cause indignation in society and fire them all."

Sclerosis

A deep split between Lebanon's most important political blocs has caused more sclerosis: Elections have been postponed twice, there was no formal government from 2014-2016 and no budget from 2005 until last year. A deal between rival parties allowed parliament to appoint the current government in 2016. Whether the May elections will help solve problems or simply paper them over is not yet clear. For now it may have made things worse, however.

Politicians with their minds on votes rammed through a popular public sector pay rise in its first state budget in 12 years last year. They also passed new taxes to cover the extra spending, budgeted at \$917 million. But the truth is nobody really knows how much it will cost because there are no accurate data on how many people are on the state payroll. A ministry set up at the end of last year to fight corruption and waste lacks a budget, a building, employees, powers or an organizational structure. "We didn't ask for money. The budget is already heavily burdened," said the minister, Nicholas Tueni. —Reuters

Locals mobilize to defend Afrin against Turkey

Ammunition belts slung over their shoulders, voices cracking from the chanting, dozens of young Syrian Kurds amassed in Afrin's town square to enlist in the "resistance" movement against a Turkish-backed assault. They wore mismatched military gear, some in jeans and others with scarves wrapped around their faces. A few admitted it was the first time they had ever touched a weapon, but said they felt compelled to defend their hometown. "Afrin is where I grew up, just like my parents and my grandparents before me. This is why it's a duty for me to fight for it," says Asmaa, 19.

The first-year journalism student at Afrin University decided last month to leave her studies behind and respond to a call to arms by local Kurdish authorities. Town officials called for a "mass mobilization" of civilians to fight an assault by Turkish troops and allied rebels on the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Afrin. They estimate hundreds have joined so far - some deployed to the front lines while others have volunteered for hospital shifts or rescue teams that search for survivors after bombardment.

Asmaa, a black-and-white scarf wrapped around her neck, says she enlisted to take part in the fighting. "Today, I don't see myself as a student. I see myself as a fighter," she says assertively. The crowd around her splits into two lines - one for young men and one for women - and begin marching through Afrin for an

impromptu military parade. As shopkeepers look on, the youth wave YPG flags and chant, "No to occupation!" and "Long live the heroic resisters!"

Fighting, food distribution

"There has been an increasing number of volunteers, and each young man or woman can choose which institution they want to volunteer for depending on their experience and capacities," says Rezan Haddu, a media adviser to YPG in Afrin. "Some volunteered as YPG fighters, others provide logistical support like food, transportation, and clothes," he tells AFP. Turkey and allied Syrian rebels began their cross-border assault on the Afrin region on Jan 20, and most of the fighting has been concentrated along the mountainous frontier.

Ankara has blacklisted the YPG as a "terror" group for its ties to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a deadly and decades-long insurgency against the Turkish government. Local authorities had to act quickly to hold off the offensive, says Jinda Tulhaldan, a leader in the Kurdish Youth Movement's Afrin branch. "We give them a week of military training and teach them how to use weapons," says Tulhaldan. "We know a week isn't enough, but we were attacked and had to defend our city with whatever we had in front of us."

The Afrin region juts out from Syria's northern Aleppo province, but it is governed under a semi-autonomous system established by Kurdish factions in 2013. Under that system, people between the ages of 18 and 32 must spend one year in military conscription, says the YPG's spokesman in Afrin, Birusk Hasakeh. Hasakeh says "hundreds" of recruits had now fully enlisted in the YPG and allied groups, including members of local government who had closed public office and



Syrian Kurds attend an impromptu parade in Afrin as civilians enlist to fight an assault by Turkish troops and allied rebels on the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria's border region on Jan 28, 2018. —AFP

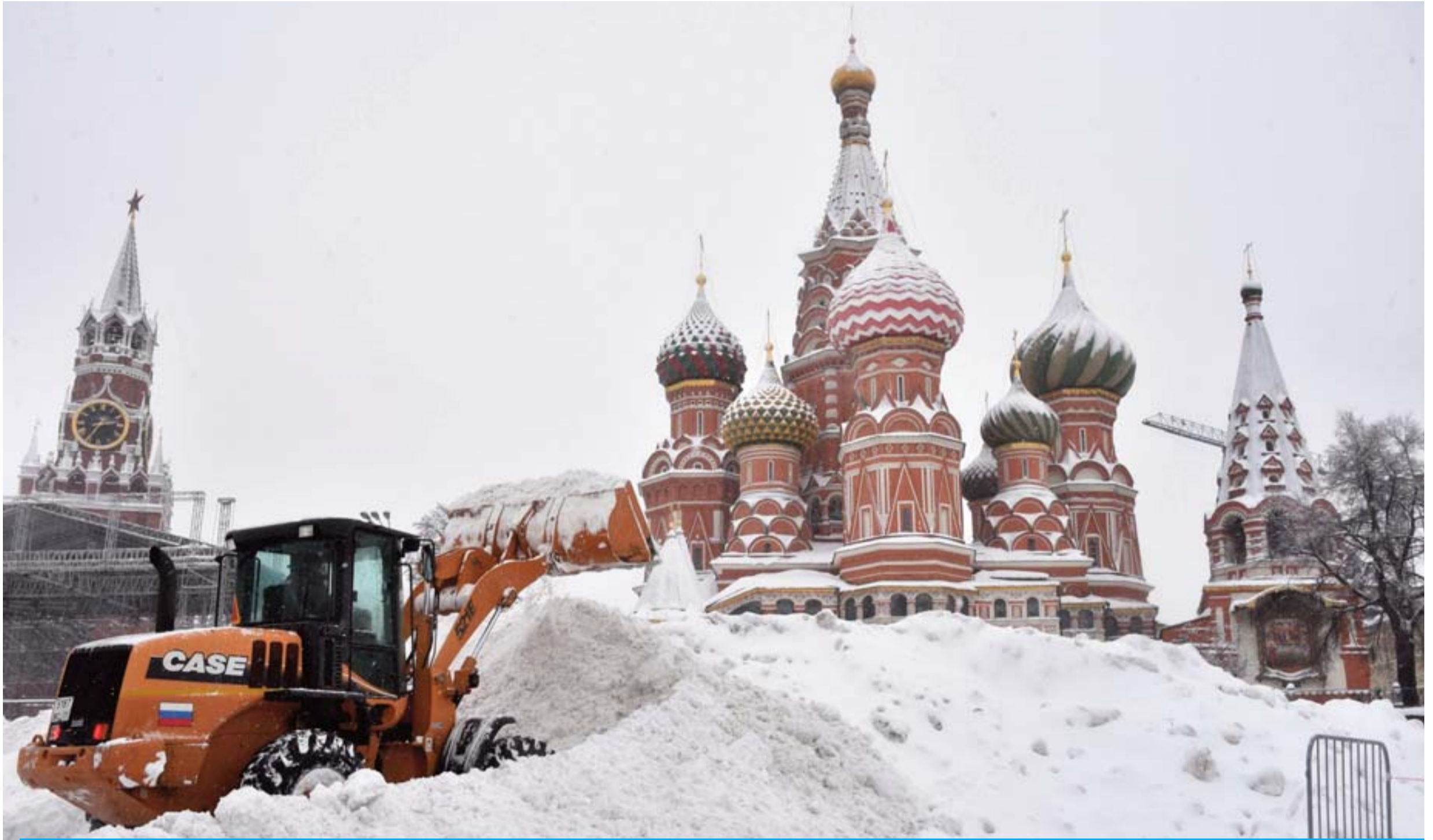
taken up arms. "Others decided to prepare tea and food to distribute to the fronts, and others are volunteering in the hospitals," he says.

'First time I carry weapons'

"We were trained in light weapons from the youth center in Afrin," says Tirij Hassan, a 22-year-old attending the recruitment rally. "It's the first time I carry weapons, but I'm happy about it because I'll be defending Afrin, its people, and its children." Turkey says it does everything it can to avoid hitting civilians. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 68 civilians have been killed including 21

children since Turkey launched operation "Olive Branch" last month. At least three civilians have also been killed by rocket fire from Syria onto Turkish territory.

More than 100 YPG fighters and about the same number of pro-Turkey rebels have also died in the fight, the Britain-based monitor said. "Turkish warplanes are bombing Afrin. They are bombing civilians and attacking us and our forces," says Farhad Akid, a 21-year-old agricultural engineering student in the Afrin city center. "As young men, we've pledged ourselves to resist, to protect Afrin and our people. We won't allow a single Turkish occupier to enter our blessed land." —AFP



A bulldozer shovels snow off Red Square as snow falls in Moscow on Sunday. — AFP

Air pollution closes all Tehran schools

TEHRAN: All schools in Tehran will remain closed today because of dangerously high levels of air pollution blanketing the Iranian capital, authorities said. State television said the closure of primary schools yesterday was being extended to also cover high schools and colleges in the

whole of Tehran province apart from four areas where lower levels were recorded. Average concentrations of the finest and most hazardous airborne particles hit 173 microgrammes per cubic meter in Tehran on Monday and peaked at 231 in an eastern sector, municipal authorities said.

That is far above the World Health Organization's recommended maximum of 25 microgrammes per cubic meter on average over a 24-hour period. The microscopic particles lodge deep in the lungs and are harmful to

human health. A grey cloud hung over Tehran yesterday, obstructing the view of the mountains which overlook the city to the north. Authorities have imposed traffic restrictions in Tehran, which is home to 8.5 million inhabitants, and ordered a suspension of polluting industrial activities and work on construction sites. Iranian media reports say 80 percent of the pollution in Tehran is caused by fumes from vehicle exhaust pipes.

Similar measures were taken in December when primary schools in Tehran and most of its province were

forced to close for several days because of pollution. Working mothers are being given a day off on Tuesday to look after their children, said Qumars Kalantari, head of the environmental protection service for Tehran province. With pollution causing 20,000 deaths a year in Iran, President Hassan Rouhani said Tuesday that "the Iranian government attaches great importance to the question of the environment". But ordinary Iranians voiced skepticism. "If there was a strong will, things would be changing," said Mohammed Soultani, a private sector employee. — AFP

US worries Iran benefitting from...

Continued from Page 1

But more than any of the countries boycotting Qatar, the UAE bristles at alleged Qatari support for Islamists throughout the region and maintains a hard line against the Muslim Brotherhood, branches of which are supported by Doha in some countries. There are trade risks for the West as well as security concerns. "The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies with Iran is raging. These are key trade and security partners to the West for decades and if they are divided and very nearly coming to military blows, in this zero-sum atmosphere, Iran stands to gain and the US to lose," another Western diplomat said.

An Arab official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the UAE, because of its competing regional vision with Qatar, wanted to pile pressure on Doha to signal a

reconciliation is not close and the boycott will not soon end. "Saudi Arabia and the other quartet countries have little to fear for their economies from this crisis, though Qatar does," the official said. "Also, because the UAE is so interested in enforcing its demands on Qatar and curtailing its activities in the region, that makes the two countries eager to prove in this phase that they won't be giving up soon and can escalate if necessary."

US President Donald Trump appears to have softened his view of Doha. He initially blessed the boycott, accusing Doha of funding terrorism "at a very high level." But he offered in September to mediate and this month telephoned Qatar's ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to thank him for his counter-terrorism efforts. The change follows a charm offensive by Doha, which in recent months has hosted several rightwing commentators close to the president and matched the UAE's lobbying efforts in Washington. The change appears to reflect a political calculation among the Gulf states' Western partners that Qatar would not risk allowing the rift with the UAE to deteriorate further, one of the Western diplomats said. — Reuters

Erdogan and Pope discuss Jerusalem...

Continued from Page 1

Italian artist Guido Verol. "It is a symbol of a world based on peace and justice."

The public part of the meeting, with reporters and Erdogan's entourage, was cordial, although both men seemed stiff at the start while seated at the pope's desk before journalists were ushered out. Erdogan's motorcade entered a virtually deserted St Peter's Square after the streets that are usually bustling with tourists were closed due to security fears. An authorized demonstration of about 150 people including Kurds and their supporters outside nearby Castel Sant'Angelo, a fortress on the banks of the River Tiber, turned violent when police in riot gear pushed back shouting and shoving protesters who tried to break through their lines. At least one demonstrator was injured, a witness said.

Some 3,500 police and security forces were on duty in

Rome and authorities declared a no-go area for unauthorized demonstrations that included the Vatican, Erdogan's hotel and Italian palaces where he is meeting the president and prime minister. Matteo Salvini, head of Italy's anti-immigrant Northern League, said in a tweet that it was "shameful" that the government was receiving Erdogan.

Erdogan and the pope spoke by phone in December after Trump made his announcement on Jerusalem and agreed that any change to the city's status quo should be avoided. The Vatican backs a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with both sides agreeing on the status of Jerusalem - home to sites holy to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions - as part of the peace process. Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future independent state, whereas Israel has declared the whole city to be its "united and eternal" capital.

Among Erdogan's delegation was the Mehmet Pacaci, Turkey's ambassador to the Vatican. Erdogan recalled Pacaci to Turkey in 2015 when Francis became the first pope to publicly call the 1915 killing of as many as 1.5 million Armenians "genocide" - something Turkey has always denied. — Reuters

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Sports

No Olympics for Russians who had life bans lifted

Olympics open on Friday with a widespread doping conspiracy

PYEONGCHANG: Fifteen Russians whose life bans for doping were lifted last week have been barred from the Pyeongchang Winter Games, the International Olympic Committee said yesterday, as Russia's drugs conspiracy continued to reverberate just days from the opening ceremony.

The decision was taken after a special panel "unanimously recommended that the IOC not extend an invitation to the Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018 to the 15 individuals", a statement said. "The OAR IG (Olympic Athlete from Russia Implementation Group) confirmed that no additional invitations will be extended to these 15 individuals," the IOC said.

The 15 were among a group of 28 Russians who had been banned for life from the Olympics for doping, but whose suspensions were overturned at the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Thursday. They included 13 athletes and two ex-athletes now working as support staff. The other members of the 28 have either retired or are unavailable for undisclosed reasons.

The IOC has barred Russia from the Pyeongchang Olympics, which open on Friday, over a widespread doping conspiracy. But 169 Russians who have passed strict anti-doping protocols will compete under a neutral flag.

The announcement comes after the body's president, Thomas Bach, slammed the CAS decision and called for reforms to the independent sports tribunal. Bach kept

up his attack yesterday, when he told reporters: "This CAS decision is extremely disappointing and needs a very careful review. We will clearly review it. If we can appeal it we will appeal it."

The World Anti-Doping Agency has also expressed "serious concern" over the decision by CAS, which said it had insufficient evidence to leave the bans in place. And Canadian luge athlete Sam Edney, who was robbed of a 2014 Olympic medal when the bans were overturned, called the uncertainty "a nightmare for clean athletes".

'TRACES OF PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES'

Australia's John Coates, president of the court's governing body, said the tribunal would "thoroughly examine" the concerns raised by Bach and would issue details of the decisions as soon as possible. "Athletes are entitled to have confidence in judicial processes at all levels, more particularly before the CAS," Coates said in a statement.

The IOC's Invitation Review Panel, which looked into the cases of the Russians, said it had "additional information" including data from a leaked database which showed "traces of prohibited substances (and) evidence of steroid profile manipulation".

"The panel agreed that the decision of the CAS had not lifted the suspicion of doping or given the panel sufficient confidence to recommend to the OAR IG that



GANGNEUNG: International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach speaks during the opening ceremony of the 132nd IOC Session prior to the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games yesterday in Gangneung. — AFP

those 13 athletes could be considered as clean," the IOC said. It is the second successive Olympics where the IOC has been embroiled in problems involving Russian doping, after accusations of systemic drug cheating blew up just before Rio 2016. Russia topped the medals table when it hosted the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. But it later emerged that dirty samples involving its athletes were switched using a "mouse-

hole" in the anti-doping laboratory's wall.

At Rio, the IOC stopped short of banning Russia and instead left the decision on their participation up to individual sports federations, creating some confusion in the build-up to the Games. Bach also heavily criticised WADA at the time and called for its reform, complaining about the timing of the anti-doping body's report into Russia's drugs conspiracy. — AFP

Sex abuse trauma centres set up for Olympic athletes

PYEONGCHANG: As American sport reels from a horrifying sexual abuse scandal, athletes competing in this month's Pyeongchang Olympics will have access to trauma units for the first time in Games history.

The Winter Olympics open in South Korea on Friday after long-time USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar was sentenced to up to 175 years in prison for molesting young athletes in a case that sparked universal shock and anger.

Four counselling centres have been set up by local organisers to offer medical and psychological care to athletes subjected to harassment or abuse. Legal advice will also be on hand to help victims file a police report, according to Games officials.

"We have to protect our athletes and help them avoid and manage any situation," said International Olympic Committee (IOC) safeguarding officer Susan Greinig. "It's important to raise awareness. If you learn about something you feel more in control," said the IOC medical officer, who said national sports federations also recognise more work needs to be done to tackle sexual abuse.

"Our focus is to help the athletes," added Greinig. "We lose talented athletes and it's completely a disaster if people don't come forward. "When we started this work it was very much a taboo subject, but the NOCs (National Olympic committees) have recognised the destruction it brings to sport."

Greinig took up her role as safeguarding officer at the 2016 Rio Olympics, when the IOC first created

the post, and recommended future local organisers establish their own framework for dealing with sexual harassment.

'SILVER LINING'

American luge slider Summer Britcher applauded the decision to set up support units at the Games, crediting the more than 150 victims who gave testimony against the disgraced Nassar. "Everything that happened with the gymnastics team is really horrible," she told AFP.

"But I think maybe it's a bit of a silver lining that those women having the strength and bravery to come forward has resulted in having these avenues available for women in the future." IOC President Thomas Bach said he was "saddened" by the Nassar case and called for answers on why the system had failed athletes. But when asked how Nassar could have been allowed to attend multiple Olympics, he denied the IOC was to blame.

"I think this is first of all a question you have to ask to the USOC (United States Olympic Committee)," insisted Bach. "The IOC is not nominating the members of the US Olympic team. This is the prerogative of the national Olympic committee."

Olympic host South Korea, a socially conservative country where victims fear public shame, has made significant strides in dealing with sexual abuse as the global "MeToo" movement continues to expose sexual abuse following the bombshell allegations against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. — AFP

Flags welcome await North Korea's Olympic cheer squad

INJE: Tight security awaits North Korea's 230 cheerleaders who will make this exclusive South Korean mountain resort their home-from-home from tomorrow during the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

Flags of welcome are already flying here for the North Korean cheerleaders — mostly elite, attractive females in their 20s—who will arrive in a convoy of buses after crossing the world's most heavily fortified border earlier in the day.

The cheer squads are leading a North Korean charm offensive in the South following a diplomatic thaw between the two bitter rivals triggered by the nuclear-armed North's agreement to take part in the Games. North Korea's ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-Nam will attend the opening ceremony on Friday.

Surrounded by mountains in the sparsely populated town of Inje, the Inje Speedium hotel, near to a 3.9 kilometre auto racing track, is seen as an ideal spot for enforcing tight security while at the same time maintaining close surveillance on the large group of Northerners.

Aging low-rise apartments and army bases dot the rural town where a dozen South Korean flags wave in the breeze against the chilly winter weather in the remote spot around 120 kilometers from the Olympic stadium in Pyeongchang. Only a short drive out of the town, the hotel and luxury resort opened only five years ago, with a bright orange mock-up racing car showcased in the modern lobby.

Banners saying "We welcome the North's cheerleaders" flutter on the roads near the resort town. But the hotel stands empty—all guests had checked out as of Monday and the hotel is accepting no other reservations for its



INJE: South Korean flags are displayed before apartment buildings in the village of Girin-myeon, where a delegation of North Korean cheerleaders attending the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games are due to commute past during their stay at the nearby Inje Speedium resort. — AFP

252 rooms until the end of the Olympics, a staff member at the front desk told AFP.

In one of the rooms where the North Koreans will be staying, a flat-screen television offered a list of cable channels including US news network CNN. Foreign news outlets are strictly banned in the North and the hotel said it is still making adjustments ahead of the arrival of its special guests. "There have been some requests (from the North) for security but everything is being handled by the government," Kim Tae-Eun told AFP. Everything outside the rooms, Kim said, including its arcade station in the basement blaring "Surfin' USA" and where games can be used for roughly \$1 per go, will be left unchanged for the guests to enjoy.

MUSICAL TUNNEL

The near two-hour commute from the hotel to the Olympic venues will offer the North Koreans a glimpse of the landscape of one of the world's most technologically advanced countries. A tunnel that stretches 11 kilometres through the mountains fea-

tures a high-tech sound and light show to entertain travelers. The tunnel, which connects Inje with neighbouring Yangyang country, is a hallmark of southern technology, serenading drivers and providing a multi-color light show.

On the ceiling of the tunnel are LED projections of daisies, the sky, or the sandy beach—depending on the time of the day—with "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" playing in the background.

Residents of Inje say they are worried the heavy police presence will disrupt their business but are welcoming the northern visitors. "It's great that Inje is contributing to the peacemaking between the North and South," said Hwang In-Soo, who owns a cafe about five minutes away from the resort.

The roads will be closed down for security purposes, which will hamper business, added his wife Kim Ge-Suk. But she smiled at the unlikely possibility of serving lattes and cappuccinos to the visitors and said: "It would be nice if North Korean ladies came to our cafe," Kim said. — AFP

Pyeongchang Olympics brings 'real hope' to divided Koreas: Bach

GANGNEUNG: Olympics chief Thomas Bach yesterday said the Pyeongchang Winter Games brought "real hope" to the divided Korean peninsula and conceded there was no "Plan B" even when nuclear tensions put them under threat.

Bach was speaking four days ahead of the opening of the Games, which received a major boost when isolated North Korea ended months of bellicose posturing by agreeing to send a contingent of

athletes. "The Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018 have allowed another new beginning on the Korean peninsula," Bach told delegates at the opening ceremony for this week's International Olympic Committee (IOC) session. "They have opened the door for a peaceful dialogue between the Republic of Korea (South) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North). "The Olympic spirit has brought two sides together that for too long were divided by mistrust and animosity.

"The Olympic spirit has brought real hope for a brighter future for everyone on the Korean peninsula," Bach said it had been a "long and difficult journey" to organise an Olympics in Korea, whose two sides are divided by a heavily fortified border—just 30 miles (50 kilometres) from the Games site—and remain technically at war.

Officials from France, Germany and Austria all expressed concerns about sending athletes as tensions spiralled last year, when North Korea fired a series of missile tests and exchanged threats of war

with the United States. But Bach said: "In all the conversations we had, the Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018 were never put in doubt. On the contrary, we could always feel support."

"Despite the sometimes worrying political circumstances, we were always standing at the side of our Korean hosts and never talked of a Plan B," he added.

'IMPOSSIBLE DREAM'

South Korean President Moon Jae-In has long argued for engagement to bring the North to the negotiating table over its nuclear ambitions. But not all of his countrymen agree and there is a public perception that Moon's administration made too many concessions to the North to secure its participation at the Olympics.

Chiming with Bach, Moon said: "Something truly wonderful is taking place in the divided and war-torn nation... throughout the world the message of peace is echoing."

"One or two months ago, many countries were concerned with the safety of the Pyeongchang Olympic Games. North Korea's participating in the Games and a unified team under the banner of peace seemed like an impossible dream then," he added.

North Korea is sending 22 athletes to Pyeongchang, along with a large number of officials and an all-female cheer squad. A unified Korean women's ice hockey team, whose squad includes 12 players from the North, on Sunday made its debut ahead of the Games, losing 3-1 to Sweden in a practice match.

The team has proved polarising in South Korea, where it has been blamed for a sudden drop in Moon's approval ratings.

While enthusiastic supporters cheered on the joint team, protesters chanting "Pyongyang Olympics!" also gathered outside, stamping on a picture of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and ripping up the blue-and-white Korean unification flag. — AFP

Sports

Ex-USA Gymnastics doctor gets up to 125 more years in prison for abuse

Parade of victims lined up to hug and thank Denhollander

CHARLOTTE: Former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar was sentenced to an additional 40 to 125 years in prison in a Michigan courtroom yesterday for sexually abusing young female gymnasts, following an earlier sentence of up to 175 years last month.

The case against Nassar has sparked various investigations into why the US Olympic Committee, the sport's governing body USA Gymnastics, and Michigan State University, where he also worked, failed to investigate complaints about him going back years. High-level officials at USA Gymnastics and Michigan State have resigned in recent weeks as outrage over the scandal intensified.

Nassar, who is also serving a 60-year federal sentence for child pornography convictions, pleaded guilty to two sets of molestation charges in Michigan's Ingham and Eaton counties and had to be sentenced in each case.

As Eaton County Circuit Judge Janice Cunningham delivered Nassar's sentence yesterday, several victims in the courtroom cried. Rachael Denhollander, the first

woman to make her allegations of abuse public, smiled broadly and squeezed her husband's hand.

After Nassar was led out in handcuffs, a parade of victims lined up to hug and thank Denhollander, who in her own victim statement had repeatedly asked, "How much is a little girl worth?" "I got my answer," she told Reuters immediately after the sentencing. "It's worth the fullest extent of punishment justice can provide. That's what just happened here."

As with last month's proceeding in Ingham County, yesterday's sentencing followed days of testimony from scores of Nassar's victims, who offered emotionally wrenching accounts of his abuse masquerading as medical treatment, sometimes

with their own parents present in the exam room.

All told, the two sentencing hearings saw more than 200 victim impact statements, and prosecutors

have said there are approximately 265 known victims in total. Nassar offered a brief apology to his victims yesterday, saying, "The visions of your testimonies will forever be present in my thoughts."



Case against Nassar sparked various investigations



WASHINGTON: File photo shows former champion gymnasts Dominique Moceanu, Jeanette Antolin, Jamie Dantzscher and Mattie Larson pose for photographs with supporters following a news conference about new legislation to protect athletes in the Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill January 30, 2018 in Washington. —AFP

But the judge, Janice Cunningham, said Nassar had again suggested in a pre-sentencing interview with authorities that he had not done anything wrong, even after he

was sentenced in Ingham County.

"I am not convinced that you truly understand that what you did was wrong, and the devastating impact that you have

had on the victims, their families and friends," Cunningham told an expressionless Nassar. "Clearly you are in denial. You don't get it." — Reuters

Russian teens in Olympic figure skating showdown

PYEONGCHANG: A Russian teenage girl who remained nameless for the first year of her life could become a household name at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. Alina Zagitova has luted and axeled her way into contention for Olympic women's figure skating gold after a breathtaking debut season on the senior circuit.

Born on May 18, 2002 in the Western Urals she went the first year of her life unnamed, until her parents settled on Alina, after celebrated Russian gymnast Alina Kabaeva. The 15-year-old Russian travels to South Korea as European champion, a title she earned at the expense of two-time world and European champion Evgenia Medvedeva.

"I could hear kids shouting and people shouting 'Go on Alina'", she said after claiming the continental crown at the Megasport Palace rink in Moscow last month.

Returning after time off to recover from a broken foot, Medvedeva was narrowly eclipsed by her training partner, close friend, and now deadly Olympic rival. The injury had sidelined her for the Grand Prix Finals in Japan, and the Russian national championships, opening the way for Zagitova to step in and claim both titles.

Pyeongchang promises to serve up an electric rematch between the two pals. Zagitova burst onto the scene in 2016-2017, being crowned world junior champion and becoming the first junior to break the 200 point barrier. Turning senior she remains unbeaten this season with wins in China and France, the Grand Prix finals, the Russian national championships, and the Europeans, where she produced a personal best of 238.24 points to shade Medvedeva by less



Alina Zagitova

than seven points.

Dancing to Black Swan in her short program and Don Quixote in her free dance, she is unusual in that she backloads her routine with all her jumps executed in the second half, to earn extra points.

Both Zagitova and Medvedeva are among a group of Russians competing as neutrals at the 2018 Games with Russia serving a country ban for state-sponsored doping.

PLOTTING REVENGE

"At the Olympics we will be competing under the white flag, but we are still 'Athletes from Russia'. In our souls, we know," she said after succeeding Medvedeva as European champion.

Ominously for her rivals she added: "I think there is still room for improvement for me." For Medvedeva, any disappointment at taking silver was dissipated by proving her fitness ahead of her Games' debut. The Muscovite said: "My main victory is that I am standing here (after the injury)." "For all athletes, but for me too, their performances improve from competition to competition. The bigger the break in competing, the worse it is.

"There are a lot of people that made it possible for me to get back on to the ice and I think I realised that it is the treasure of my life to be able to go out and skate. It was not ideal, but first of all, I want to say thank you for the support. The support of the fans gives me strength."

She left Moscow's Megasport Palace rink plotting her revenge on Zagitova. "Of course, I am not completely satisfied. There were many moments where I need to do better. I understand that very well so now I need to work." Like her three-year younger compatriot, Medvedeva's shot at Olympic glory comes against the backdrop of systematic Russian doping at the Sochi Games in 2014.

And Medvedeva deployed the agility and dexterity she is famed for on ice when delivering an emotional and eloquent plea before the IOC asking that Russia escape an Olympic ban. With a ban subsequently imposed but with 169 'clean' Russian athletes cleared to compete, she commented: "Like everybody else I don't know much about what is happening, but I am really glad we have the chance to represent our country at the Olympic Games." —AFP

ly, Froome was not suspended by cycling's governing body the UCI but merely asked to explain the elevated reading.

Team Sky said in December they were providing information to the UCI over the matter and confirmed in a statement on Monday that the process was ongoing. "I'm confident that we will be able to get to the bottom of what has happened and I'm working hard with the team to do that," Froome said in the statement on the team's website. "Obviously I understand that this situation has created a lot of uncertainty, I completely get why there has been so much interest and speculation. I hope that people will appreciate there are limits to what I can say whilst the process is still ongoing but no one is keener than me to move things forward as quickly as possible."

Team principal Dave Brailsford said: "We all recognise that these are difficult circumstances but it's important for all sides that this process is conducted fairly before a final conclusion is reached. "It is a complex situation but we're working as hard as we can with Chris to resolve things as soon as possible."

RUTA WIN

Froome, who will line up in Spain after spending the early part of the year training in

South Africa, last raced the Ruta del Sol in 2015, when he took overall victory and picked up a stage win along the way. "I have put in a hard training block in January," said Froome. "It's been good to be out on my bike and to get the miles under my belt."

"It's been a couple of years now since I was last at Ruta del Sol. It's a race I've enjoyed in the past and so I'm looking forward to going back there." Last week the British rider strongly denied a newspaper report that he is seeking to negotiate a short ban rather than fight to prove his innocence over the adverse test.

UCI chief David Lappartient said earlier this month that Froome should be suspended over the adverse test and some of the rider's main rivals have hit out at cycling authorities for failing to ban him. In 2016 the Russian hacking group Fancy Bears revealed that British rider and former Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins had received three therapeutic use exemptions (TUEs) during his career at crucial moments before the Tour in 2011 and 2012 and the Giro d'Italia in 2013.

Wiggins said he needed to take the corticosteroid triamcinolone to treat allergies but some ex-cyclists have spoken out against that, saying it would have given him a significant performance boost. —AFP

ABK to send 2 lucky Visa cardholders to 2018 FIFA WCup

KUWAIT: As the most awaited sporting event in the world, 2018 FIFA World Cup, approaches, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is collaborating with Visa, the world's leader in digital payments, to reward two lucky ABK Visa cardholders with all-inclusive packages to attend the semi-final match in Russia through its newest spend-and-win campaign.

The campaign will start from 1st of February 2018 and will last till 31st March 2018. In order to be eligible to win, participants must hold one of ABK's Visa cards: ABK Visa credit card, ABK Visa prepaid card and ABK

Visa debit card, which has been issued before 1st of February 2018. In addition, ABK Visa cardholders are required to spend a minimum of KD 100 to qualify for the draw. For every KD 10 spent locally, participants will get 1 draw point while every KD 10 spent overseas will grant them 3 draw points. The more points the customer accumulates, the higher the chances of winning.

Commenting on the campaign, ABK said they were delighted to offer loyal customers an exclusive opportunity to attend the most popular sporting event in the world that only happens every four years. With four Arab countries participating in the 2018 FIFA World Cup, the event is all the more special.

Winners of the campaign will be announced on 11th April 2018, and will be entitled to one package respectively. Each package will include two Emirates flight tickets, accommodation for two for the duration of 4 nights/5 days, in addition to 2 FIFA World Cup semi-final game tickets and one ABK Visa Prepaid card loaded with \$450.



Froome to start season in Spain under doping cloud

LONDON: Chris Froome said yesterday he is "confident" of progress in a probe into his adverse doping test as the British rider prepares for his first race of the season at this month's Ruta del Sol.

Froome will be part of Team Sky's line-up for the five-day stage race in Andalusia, southern Spain, which runs from February 14 to 18. Froome and his Team Sky revealed in December that the 32-year-old had tested for elevated levels of the asthma medication salbutamol during the Vuelta a Espana, which he won for the first time in September.

Although salbutamol is permitted in certain doses, the four-time Tour de France winner gave a urine reading of twice the allowed limit. However, as the medication can be taken legal-

London to host new WCup event

LONDON: London will host a new World Cup event this summer featuring eight top nations including the United States and Jamaica, British Athletics announced yesterday. Britain, the United States, Poland, China, Germany, France, Jamaica and South Africa will compete at the London Stadium on July 14-15. The tournament follows last year's world athletics championships in the British capital, which also hosted the Olympics in 2012. The competition format will feature all field events and track events up to and including the 1500m, with just one man and one woman from each nation in each event.

Each nation will be competing for a \$2 million prize pot over two evening

sessions of athletics under the lights. "It's great to see such an exciting head-to-head event confirmed to be taking place in London this summer—the concept is one that will excite everyone in athletics and is sure to attract new fans to the sport," said Olympic and world 400m champion Wayne van Niekerk. Sebastian Coe, president of athletics' world governing body the IAAF, hailed the "innovative" event.

"We have eight lanes, eight top nations, eight teams and a host of world-class athletes lining up in each event to win the trophy and prize pot. This will be a fast-paced and exhilarating experience for athletes and fans." UK Athletics chief executive Niels de Vos told AFP he was confident the event would capture the attention of the sporting world, even though it clashes with the World Cup final in Russia and the Wimbledon finals. "When you have a new concept in sport, actually what better time to do it than when everyone's talking about the football World Cup," he asked. — AFP

Sports

Al Horford's buzzer beater carries Celtics past Blazers

Toronto Raptors beat Memphis Grizzlies 101-86

LOS ANGELES: Al Horford rattled in a fadeaway jumper as the buzzer sounded to lift the Boston Celtics to a 97-96 NBA win over the Portland Trail Blazers on Sunday. "It's a shot I work on a lot and it felt good when it left my hands," Horford said.

Horford, Semi Ojeleye and Jayson Tatum scored consecutive three-pointers late in the fourth quarter as the Celtics took the lead with an 11-0 scoring run after trailing 85-79. Horford said teammate Jaylen Brown was supposed to take the last shot but he was covered.

"That shot epitomizes the work he puts in," Brown said. "He embraces those opportunities and steps up to the challenge." Horford finished with 22 points and 10 rebounds for Boston, who won their fourth game in a row. Tatum had 17 points and Brown scored 16 for the Celtics in front of a crowd of 18,600 at the Boston Garden arena. Terry Rozier, starting in place of injured guard Kyrie Irving, had 11 points on five-of-18 shooting.

Damian Lillard scored the final eight points for the Blazers, including a three-point play with seven seconds left to give them the lead 96-95. Lillard finished with 21 points shooting six-of-19 from the field. C.J. McCollum led the Blazers with 22 points. "They executed well down the stretch, made some tough shots," McCollum said. "Credit them for battling back and then down the stretch they seemed to match every basket."

Celtics coach Brad Stevens said they were going to celebrate the win by watching the New England Patriots battle the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl 52.

"Wanted to end the game so we could go watch the Super Bowl," Stevens said. Elsewhere, the Milwaukee Bucks breezed past the Brooklyn Nets 109-94 despite missing star Giannis Antetokounmpo who left the game in the final quarter with a sore right ankle.

Eric Bledsoe scored 28 points, John Henson had 19 points and 18 rebounds for the Bucks who stretched their winning streak over the Nets to 10 games.

ANTETOKOUNMPO SCARE

Milwaukee led by as many as 28 points at one stage and were in control when Antetokounmpo twisted his ankle and headed to the bench. He finished with 16 points. Antetokounmpo said the injury was not a serious one and he wanted to come back in the game but the coaching staff wouldn't allow it. "I knew that if the game was close I would definitely be back in," the All-Star forward said.

Khris Middleton also had 16 points for the Bucks, who improved to 6-1 since firing coach Jason Kidd. DeMarre Carroll and Caris LeVert each scored 15 for the Nets, who lost for the sixth time in seven games.

In Toronto, Delon Wright had 15 points off the bench as the Toronto Raptors beat the Memphis Grizzlies 101-86. The Raptors have won five straight at home against the Grizzlies. Toronto improved to a league-best 21-4 on home court this season and 7-3 in its past 10 games.

Grizzlies started their NBA life out as the expansion Vancouver Grizzlies where they played for six seasons.

“That shot epitomizes the work he puts in”



BOSTON: Damian Lillard #0 of the Portland Trail Blazers passes the ball against the Boston Celtics on Sunday at the TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

In 2001 they moved to Memphis, leaving the Raptors as the lone Canadian team in the league. Marc Gasol scored 20 points and Andrew Harrison had 16 for the Grizzlies, who have lost six straight on the road.

In Oklahoma City, Russell Westbrook scored 36

points but the mistake-prone Oklahoma City Thunder couldn't overcome some timely turnovers in a 108-104 loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Thunder have now lost four straight after going on an eight-game win streak in January. — AFP

El Kaabi hits ninth goal as Morocco whip Nigeria

CASABLANCA: Ayoub el Kaabi scored his ninth goal of the 2018 African Nations Championship (CHAN) as Morocco became the first hosts to triumph by thrashing 10-man Nigeria 4-0 Sunday in a Casablanca downpour. With Nigeria in disarray and the final long over as a contest, the previously little known striker completed his record-extending goal haul by firing into the net from close range.

Zakaria Hadraf put the home team ahead at Stade Mohammed V on the stroke of half-time and added the match-clinching third goal midway through the second half. In between the first goals of the tournament for Hadraf, fellow midfielder Mohamed el Karti netted soon after Nigerian attacker Eneji Moses was red-carded following a second caution.

Before the biennial tournament kicked off last month, Achraf Bencharki from 2017 CAF Champions League winners Wydad Casablanca was the centre of attention. His five goals were instrumental in the success of Wydad and he was expected to spearhead the Moroccan CHAN challenge. But Bencharki was a shock absentee from the line-up for the tournament opener while lone striker El Kaabi bagged a brace in a 4-0 mauling of Mauritania.

He followed up with a hat-trick-only the third in the history of the tournament-against Guinea, put one past Namibia and scored twice in the semi-final victory over Libya. His nine goals comfortably surpassed the previous record of five from Zambian Given Singuluma in the first CHAN finals nine years ago. El Kaabi helped Racing Casablanca win promotion to the Moroccan top flight last season, then joined Renaissance Berkane, a relatively successful but low-profile elite division outfit.

After his CHAN exploits, national coach Herve Renard is likely to give the 24-year-old a chance as Morocco prepare to face Iran, Portugal and Spain at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. The destruction of Nigeria created a record winning margin for a CHAN final, bettering the three-goal victories of Tunisia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.—AFP

KFH applauded for supporting national events

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 7th Kuwait International Arabian Horse Festival 2018 held at Bait al-Arab Arabian Horse Center in Kuwait under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This comes as part of the bank's continuing efforts to support the major events and international forums held in Kuwait. Representing His Highness the Amir at the closing ceremony was the Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

The festival started with the national anthem and presentation of the participating horses. Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah distributed prizes to the winners of the championship. The festival attracts huge number of visitors locally and globally.

KFH was praised in recognition of its main sponsorship and keenness to participate in the national events as part of its social responsibility.



KFH representatives participating in honouring one of the winners.

'Wonderful' Six Nations excites England boss Jones

ROME: England coach Eddie Jones forecast fans were in for a treat following the "wonderful rugby" played on the opening weekend of this season's Six Nations. Jones's men launched their bid for an unprecedented third successive outright title by rounding off the first round of fixtures with a 46-15 win away to Italy in Rome on Sunday.

A crowd of more than 61,000 spectators at the Stadio Olimpico saw England run in seven tries, with an emboldened Italy scoring two of their own before fading away late on. The fixture capped a weekend where Wales hammered Scotland 34-7 in Cardiff, while Ireland needed a last-ditch drop goal from Johnny Sexton to see off France 15-13 in Paris. It all promised a truly competitive tournament, in marked contrast to last year's Rugby Championship where world champions New Zealand were yet again the overwhelmingly dominant side in the southern hemisphere equivalent of the Six Nations.

"I thought if you look at the three games in the

championship so far, what wonderful rugby," said Jones. "You had Wales and Scotland throwing the ball from side-to-side, you had Ireland and France in an old-fashioned arm wrestle. "You saw today (Sunday) that there was a bit of an arm wrestle and then it opened up at the end.

"We feel honoured to be part of the tournament and the tournament is only going to get better," added the Australian after overseeing his 23rd victory in 24 Tests in charge of England.

"We go next week (against Wales) at Twickenham, there will be 82,000 people, they'll be absolutely pumped and we'll be pumped to play in front of them." The speedy Watson gave England an early 10-0 lead with two unconverted tries and Jones, perhaps mindful he was in Italy, said: "He got the Maserati out of the car park today."

'TWENTY20 SIMMONDS'

Simmonds might not have even been on the bench had both Billy Vunipola and Nathan Hughes been fit, but the Exeter back-row did not look out of place in what was just his fourth Test. "Sam's a good young lad with a great set of skills," said Jones. "If he was a cricketer he'd be playing Twenty20," the avid cricket fan added.

"He's a bit different-he's fast and runs good lines." Reflecting on England's overall performance, Jones said: "Our scrum and line-out was absolutely first-

class. I don't think we've scrummed as well as that in the time I've been in charge of England.

"We were completely dominant and that's English rugby. When the game broke up at the end we were able to score tries... It wasn't the perfect game but very, very positive." The one downside for England was the sight of Ben Youngs being taken off on a medical cart just 10 minutes into the game after crying out in pain when his knee buckled during a tackle.

"Ben will have an examination tomorrow (Monday) so we'll know more after that," said Jones. "He's unlikely to be available for the Wales game." As for who would join Danny Care, who came off the bench in Rome, as a scrum-half in England's squad for Wales, a playful Jones, indicating a preference for a 'kicking' No 9, said: "They're on the Batphone mate." Sunday's result meant Italy, who've now lost all 24 of their Tests against England, had gone 1,072 days since they last enjoyed a win over any opponent in the Six Nations.

"I'm proud and angry," said Italy coach Conor O'Shea, the former Ireland fullback, after a match where Azzurri skipper Sergio Parisse suffered a rib injury. "Proud because we saw a team with a lot of potential for the future. But I'm annoyed because we caused them a lot of problems with the ball but the defeat is another statistic." Italy next face O'Shea's compatriots in Dublin and he admitted: "It's a long, hard road ahead for us and we will have to be more disciplined against Ireland." — AFP

Lakers beat Olympic to top the table

KUWAIT: Kuwait local wheelchair handicapped basketball tournament will come to a conclusion today with two matches, one to decide third and fourth place, then the final match.

Kuwait Handicapped Sports Club Secretary General Abdallah Al-Azmi said, the tournament achieved the goal behind holding it within Kuwait's celebrations of the National and Liberation days and the 12th anniversary of HH the Amir's ascension of power.

The second day matches saw the Lakers beat the Olympic 63-48, Aboudka beat Tahreer 49-47, so the Lakers topped the table, heading for the final match.



Sports

Pique keeps Barca unbeaten, Atletico edge Valencia to cut gap

Barcelona set new club record of 22 matches unbeaten

MADRID: Gerard Pique salvaged a 1-1 draw for La Liga leaders Barcelona at city rivals Espanyol on Sunday, keeping their bid for an unbeaten campaign on track, while Atletico Madrid edged out Valencia to cut the gap at the top to nine points.

Ernesto Valverde's men were in danger of falling to their first league defeat of the season when Gerard Moreno nodded the hosts ahead midway through the second half, but centre-back Pique met a Lionel Messi corner in the 82nd minute to snatch a point.

Barcelona are now nine points clear at the top of the table from Atletico Madrid, who beat third-placed Valencia 1-0 at the Wanda Metropolitano. The Catalan derby was played in pouring rain and Valverde slammed the "dangerous" pitch.

"Even though it was raining, we thought that the pitch would hold, but then we saw that the grass was not going to hold up and that the pitch was becoming dangerous," the Barcelona coach said. "On our passes from defence the ball could get stuck in a puddle and that's why things got difficult."

"We give a lot of value to this draw, because it was hard to get because of this scenario and because it's a derby and we didn't want to lose." The five-time European champions also set a new club record of 22 matches unbeaten to start a league season on Sunday, and are still in the hunt for a La Liga, Copa del Rey and Champions League treble.

"We are still up there (top of the table). The conditions for them and for us were not the best, but it was an entertaining game," Barca captain Andres Iniesta told Bein Sports. They were far from at their fluent best against a stubborn Espanyol whose point drags them

eight clear of the relegation zone, although Philippe Coutinho came close to scoring his first goal since joining from Liverpool last month when he struck the crossbar in the first half. Faltering champions Real Madrid are 19 points adrift of arch rivals Barca in fourth, after throwing away two points in a 2-2 draw at Levante on Saturday.

CORREA STUNNER CUTS THE GAP

Atletico took advantage of Barcelona's draw to revive their slim title hopes, as Angel Correa produced a moment of magic to win the game. Neither side managed to create many chances in a sloppy first half, with Saul Niguez seeing a long-range effort palmed away by Valencia goalkeeper Neto, while Simone Zaza dragged a shot wide for the visitors.

But Correa stunned Neto with a magnificent long-range strike when nothing appeared on in the 59th minute, with the ball flying into the top corner from 25 yards out to give the 22-year-old Argentinian his sixth league goal of the season.

Valencia plugged away but never truly threatened an equaliser, with Diego Simeone's hosts doing enough to keep Barca looking over their shoulders. But star forward Antoine Griezmann was whistled by the home fans late on, when he opted to run down the clock instead of pushing for a second goal.

The Frenchman has had an up-and-down relationship with the Atletico supporters since saying last year he wanted to leave the club in the future. "Griezmann did what he had to do... That's normal, people want to win," coach Simeone said.

"The players are the ones who best interpret what



CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT: Barcelona's Spanish defender Gerard Pique (C) vies with Espanyol's Spanish forward Gerard Moreno (L) during the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and FC Barcelona at the RCDE Stadium in Cornella de Llobregat on Sunday. — AFP

they have to do on the pitch. Griezmann made only good choices tonight, even though he didn't score and couldn't finish. "Everyone is happy, all the fans are celebrating at home and everyone is happy."

Earlier on Sunday, Girona moved into the top half of the table as Uruguayan international Cristhian Stuani scored a double in a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao, while Getafe and Leganes played out a goalless draw. — AFP

“ We give a lot of value to this draw ”

Salah the star African performer in Europe

PARIS: Mohamed Salah was the star African performer in Europe at the weekend, netting twice to close within one goal of Harry Kane in the English Premier League leading scorer race. The Egypt sharpshooter and 2017 African Footballer of the Year twice gave Liverpool the lead in a dramatic 2-2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur, whose second equaliser came from Kane.

Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang-third behind Salah and Senegalese Sadio Mane in the Footballer of the Year poll-scored on his debut as Arsenal triumphed 5-1 against Everton.

ENGLAND

MOHAMED SALAH (Liverpool)

The Egypt winger struck twice, including a stoppage-time goal, but Liverpool were denied as Tottenham rescued a 2-2 draw at Anfield. Salah punished a mistake from defender Eric Dier to put Liverpool ahead with a cool finish in the third minute. He restored Liverpool's lead with a superb solo effort-his 21st league goal this term.

PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG (Arsenal)

He marked his Arsenal debut with a goal in the Gunners' 5-1 demolition of Everton at the Emirates Stadium. Aubameyang joined Arsenal from Borussia Dortmund for a club record \$56 million (about \$79.1 million/63.5 million euros) last week and didn't waste time making a good impression on his new fans. He capped a lively performance by scoring Arsenal's fourth goal with a cool finish late in the first half,

although replays showed he was fortunate not to be flagged offside.

WILFRIED BONY (Swansea City)

The Ivory Coast striker has been ruled out for the rest of the season after suffering a serious injury in a 1-1 draw at Leicester. Former Manchester City star Bony tore a cruciate ligament in his knee after coming on as a second-half substitute.

AHMED HEGAZI (West Bromwich Albion)

The Egypt defender scored his first goal since August, but it wasn't enough to boost his side's hopes of avoiding relegation as they lost 3-2 at home to Southampton. Hegazi put Albion in front with a fourth-minute header from Chris Brunt's cross.

VICTOR WANYAMA (Tottenham Hotspur)

Wanyama set up a dramatic finish at Anfield with an incredible 25-yard piledriver into the top corner for Tottenham's first equaliser 10 minutes from time. The Kenyan had been on the pitch only a minute before smashing home his first goal of an injury-plagued season.

RIYAD MAHREZ (Leicester City)

Algerian Mahrez was again absent from the Leicester squad in a 1-1 draw against Swansea after his displeasure at the Foxes' refusal to let him move to runaway league leaders Manchester City last week.

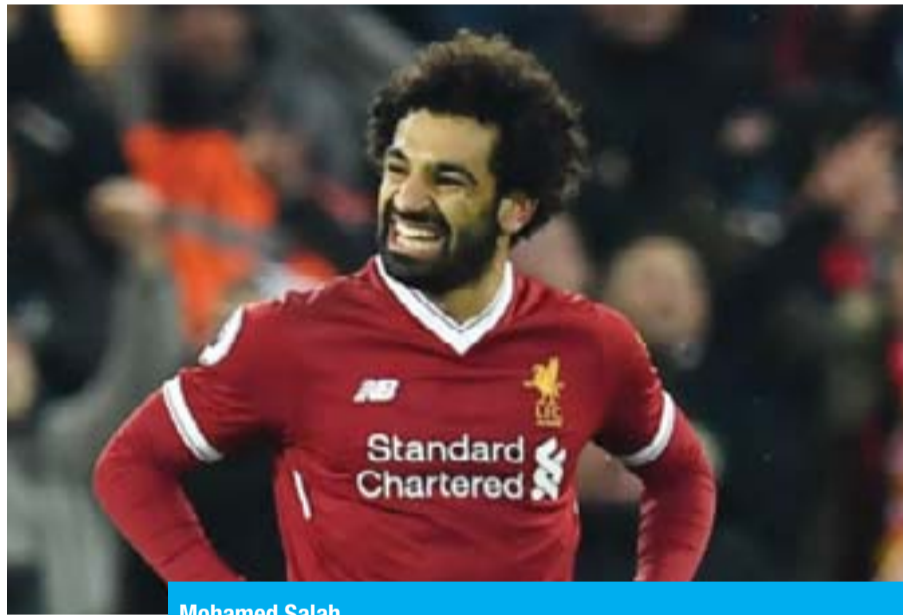
MOHAMED DIAME (Newcastle United)

Senegalese midfielder Diame headed home his second goal of the season to earn Newcastle a 1-1 draw at Crystal Palace to lie just a point above the relegation zone.

SPAIN

EMMANUEL BOATENG (Levante)

The 21-year-old Ghanaian marked only his fourth La Liga start with his first goal in the Spanish top flight against floundering champions Real Madrid. Boateng latched onto a loose ball to coolly slot in Levante's



Mohamed Salah

first equaliser of a 2-2 draw and cap an enterprising individual display.

GERMANY

SALOMON KALOU (Hertha Berlin)

Once again, the Ivory Coast veteran rescued a point for Hertha when he headed home a second-half equaliser for his eighth Bundesliga goal of the season in a 1-1 draw against Hoffenheim. It was the fourth time this season that Kalou, 32, pulled Berlin level after also netting in draws against Bayern Munich, Freiburg and Augsburg.

FRANCE

KEITA BALDE (Monaco)

The Senegal international endured a night of contrasting emotions as Monaco came from two goals down to beat Lyon 3-2. Balde used his strength to hold off a series of defenders and drill in a low strike to cut the deficit on 31 minutes that helped spark his side's recovery. But his role in the fight back ended prematurely as he was sent off for a second yellow card shortly before half-time for a wild challenge on Ferland Mendy, having been booked minutes earlier for kicking the ball away in frustration. — AFP

American Tourister announces Ronaldo as its new brand ambassador

KUWAIT: American Tourister, world's leading fashionable, youthful, international luggage brand, is proud to announce the signing of international football superstar and fashion icon, Cristiano Ronaldo, as its new brand ambassador for 2018. Five-time winner- a world record, and the current holder of the FIFA Ballon d'Or Award (2008, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017), the former Manchester United (2003-2009) and Real Madrid (2009-present) goal-scoring record-breaker has won 24 trophies over the course of his illustrious career, including four UEFA Champions League titles, and has captained Portugal to victory in the 2016 UEFA European Championship. Cristiano is a true legend of the game and one of today's most popular and recognizable sporting icons.

Dynamic, stylish and confident, with most followers across Facebook and Instagram globally, Cristiano

embodies the soul of the American Tourister brand. His appointment also comes as football fever begins to grip global audiences ahead of the FIFA World Cup, which kicks off in Moscow, Russia on June 14th, 2018.

Expressing his excitement on the signing of Cristiano, Subrata Dutta, President of Asia Pacific at Samsonite, said, "There couldn't be a better time to bring Cristiano on-board. His lively and vivacious personality, on and off the field, resonates perfectly with our fun-loving, vibrant brand personality. His presence will help bring American Tourister to a whole new audience, allowing us to stand out from the competition, and enabling us to take the Brand to the next level."

Equally delighted to join the American Tourister family, Cristiano said, "American Tourister is a functional yet cool brand that appeals to everyone. I'm delighted to be the face of the brand for 2018. As a frequent traveler myself, I appreciate the need for high quality luggage that still allows you to express your personality."

Speaking on the association, Syed Shaheen Jamil, Business Head for Middle East, Africa, CIS and SAARC countries, said "Cristiano Ronaldo is arguably the most popular football star in our region. We hope to leverage his popularity, in a football-crazy region, especially when the FIFA World Cup is just around the corner, to strengthen our brand's connection with all his fans."



Conte faces uncertainty over Chelsea future

LONDON: Chelsea manager Antonio Conte goes into Premier League game at Watford with mounting uncertainty over his future amid concern the champions may miss out on a Champions League spot next season.

Fourth-placed Chelsea are one point ahead of Tottenham Hotspur after an unimpressive start to the year in which they were knocked out of the League Cup by Arsenal and beaten at home in the Premier League by Bournemouth.

Conte has been the subject of persistent British media reports that he will leave the club at the end of the season after publicly criticising their transfer policy. Although the 48-year-old has been linked with a return to his former job as Italy manager, Italian football federation (FIGC) assistant commissioner Alessandro Costacurta said on Sunday that he has ruled himself out.

"As Conte reiterated the other day, he wants to continue working as a coach on a day-by-day basis at club level for at least the next 18 months, the length of his Chelsea contract, so he has pulled out of the running," Costacurta said. Conte has called on the Chelsea board to end the uncertainty over his future by publicly confirming their trust in his work.

One way or another he may well be disappointed. The only time Chelsea have done anything similar was in Oct 2015 when they released a statement backing Jose Mourinho following Chelsea's worst start to a season since 1979. Two months later the Portuguese was sacked.

Conte's methods underwent further scrutiny over the weekend when it was revealed that new signing Ross Barkley will miss Monday's game at Vicarage Road after becoming the eighth Chelsea player to suffer a hamstring injury this season.

Conte has consistently said his squad is not strong enough, although striker Olivier Giroud and defender Emerson Palmieri were recruited last week in an attempt to provide more options.

Publicly at least, Conte is putting a brave face on the situation, refusing to confirm media reports he has been at odds with director Marina Granovskaia, one of owner Roman Abramovich's most trusted employees, following November's surprise departure of transfer chief Michael Emenalo.

Conte maintains that he intends to stay until at least until next summer when his contract runs out. "We are doing the maximum for this club. If the club understands this and the club wants to extend a new contract, we can talk," he said. "We can talk. Why not? My contract expires in 2019. My desire and my will are to continue to work with this club."

Although Conte's position would be bolstered by a strong showing against Barcelona in the Champions League round of 16, he knows that, after 18 months in the job, he has survived longer than most at a club which has employed 10 managers in as many years. — Reuters

12 No Olympics for Russians who had life bans lifted



14 Al Horford's buzzer beater carries Celtics past Blazers



15 Pique keeps Barca unbeaten, Atletico edge Valencia to cut gap



MINNEAPOLIS: Zach Ertz #86 of the Philadelphia Eagles dives into the endzone for a 11-yard touchdown against the New England Patriots during the fourth quarter in Super Bowl LII at US Bank Stadium on Sunday in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

Eagles fly high for first Super Bowl title

Brady throws Super Bowl record 505 passing yards

MINNEAPOLIS: For a city that produced one of Hollywood's ultimate underdog stories, the Philadelphia Eagles delivered an equally inspiring script by upsetting the New England Patriots on Sunday for their first Super Bowl title.

The Eagles were underdogs throughout the NFL playoffs, and just as most expected little from fictional Philadelphia boxer Rocky Balboa, few onlookers outside the City of Brotherly Love expected them to beat the defending Super Bowl champions.

But Philadelphia, who embraced their lowly status with some players wearing dog masks throughout the playoffs, stunned New England with a 41-33 victory to cap a remarkable turnaround after finishing last in their division a year ago.

"We've been doubted since Day One," said Eagles tight end Zach Ertz, who caught what proved to be the game-winning touchdown. "This team, no one picked us. We come out here and we're World Champions."

The victory set off a wild celebration among the team's many green-clad supporters who made the trek to chilly Minneapolis, while uplifting music from "Rocky" blared through the speakers above a field covered in silver and green confetti.

The Eagles limped into the post-season with an offense handicapped by a seemingly hopeless backup quarterback following an injury to Carson Wentz in December, but Nick Foles proved more than ready to shine on the game's biggest stage.

Foles, who nearly retired after an underwhelming 2015 season with the St Louis Rams, showed no nerves playing in his first Super Bowl and went toe-to-toe with Patriots counterpart Tom Brady, a five-time Super Bowl champion.

BRADY FUMBLE

"I felt calm," said Foles, who was named the game's Most Valuable Player after throwing three touchdowns. "We felt confident coming in and we just went out there and played football."

The Eagles, who won three championships in the pre-Super Bowl era, had long been a tormented franchise and lost in their only two previous Super Bowl appearances, including to the Patriots in 2005, but dug deep to bring home a championship.

Trailing by a point late in the fourth quarter, the Eagles moved ahead for good when Foles connected with Ertz on a 11-yard touchdown to put his team ahead 38-33.

Philadelphia missed a subsequent two-point conversion attempt to leave the door open for the Patriots with a little less than two-and-a-half minutes to play.

But in a game when both offenses moved up and down the field effortlessly and combined for a Super Bowl record 1,151 yards, Brady had the ball swatted from his grasp and it was recovered by Philadelphia to all but seal New England's fate.

The Eagles went on to kick a field goal to extend their lead to eight points and prevented the Patriots from engineering a last-minute, game-tying drive. Up 15-6, the Eagles had a chance to build a comfortable lead towards the end of the first half but intended receiver Alshon Jeffrey deflected a Foles pass that was intercepted by Patriots defensive back Duron Harmon steps from the end zone.

The turnover proved costly as the Patriots marched 90 yards back down the field in less than three minutes, in a drive that was capped by a James White touchdown to pull within 15-12.

However, the Eagles replied with an impressive drive of their own that resulted in a touchdown on a gutsy trick play on fourth down from the Patriots one-yard line. The Eagles, opting not to kick a field goal, snapped the ball to rookie running back Corey Clement, who flipped the ball to tight end Trey Burton, who then threw to a wide-open Foles for a walk-in touchdown and a 22-12 halftime lead.

It marked the end of a wild opening half that included missed extra points, a missed field goal and a botched Patriots attempt at a trick play of their own when a wide-open Brady failed to haul in an intended pass.

But in a game when both offenses moved up and down the field effortlessly and combined for a Super Bowl record 1,151 yards, Brady had the ball swatted from his grasp and it was recovered by Philadelphia to all but seal New England's fate.

The Eagles went on to kick a field goal to extend their lead to eight points and prevented the Patriots from engineering a last-minute, game-tying drive. Up 15-6, the Eagles had a chance to build a comfortable lead towards the end of the first half but intended receiver Alshon Jeffrey deflected a Foles pass that was intercepted by Patriots defensive back Duron Harmon steps from the end zone.



MINNESOTA: Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Nick Foles celebrates after winning Super Bowl LII against the New England Patriots. — AFP

'LOSING SUCKS'

The Patriots looked poised to collect a record-tying sixth Super Bowl in 17 seasons when Brady threw his third touchdown- this one a short pass to Rob Gronkowski with about nine minutes to play- to give his team their first lead of the game, 33-32. But the Patriots had no answer for the Foles-led Eagles.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick took the blame for the loss while Gronkowski, who was playing in his first game since suffering a concussion two weeks ago, said he knew his team were going to be in for a battle.

"You just knew that it was going to be a shootout the whole game and it was going to take all 60 minutes," said Gronkowski. "Unfortunately, we just didn't come up with the most opportunities to make to win the game."

Brady finished with a Super Bowl record 505 passing yards and three touchdowns but could not deliver when it mattered most, his desperate pass falling to the ground in the end zone as time expired.

"Losing sucks. That's part of it," said Brady. "You try to win and sometimes you lose. That's the way it goes." The Patriots now enter an off-season some feel could mark the beginning of the end for their dynasty after ESPN reported in January about a rift between Brady, Belichick and owner Robert Kraft.

The trio have denied reports of any off-field tension but there will be no shortage of attention paid to their every move between now and next season. The game, played under a translucent US Bank Stadium roof while temperatures outside plummeted, capped a season during which NFL ratings dropped after many players kneeled during the national anthem to protest racial inequality and as the league's concussion protocol entered the spotlight.

But no players protested while Grammy Award-winning pop singer Pink performed "The Star-Spangled Banner" ahead of the year's most-watched US television broadcast, attracting an audience of more than 100 million viewers. — Reuters

Business

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2018

18 Ryanair profits rise despite cancellations**19** Ooredoo reports revenue of KD 698 million for FY 2017**21** EQUATE Group reports a net profit of \$1.13 billion for 2017

SHANGHAI: People walk to an office building during the morning rush hour in downtown Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

UK economy suffers slowdown in 2018

Companies blame slowdown on non-renewal of old contracts

LONDON: Britain's economy slowed sharply in January, according to a survey that cast doubt on growing expectations among investors that the Bank of England might be gearing up to raise interest rates again in the coming months. Sterling fell and British government bonds briefly rose after financial data firm IHS Markit said growth in the world's sixth-biggest economy looked set to slow to 0.3 percent in the first quarter, down from 0.5 percent in the last three months of 2017.

The slowdown was driven mostly by Britain's dominant services sector, where activity growth fell to a 16-month low of 53.0 last month from 54.2 in December, as measured by IHS Markit's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). By contrast, eurozone businesses began 2018 with their strongest growth in well over a decade, IHS Markit said - figures that highlighted the gap between Britain, as it heads for Brexit, and its European neighbors.

Combined with weaker-than-expected surveys last week for Britain's manufacturing and construction sectors, yesterday's report suggested the country grew last month at its slowest pace since just after the 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU. "With the survey also indicating weaker upward price pressures, the data therefore cast doubts on any imminent rise in interest rates," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit. But

George Buckley, an economist with Nomura, said the survey suggested growth might slow only to 0.4 percent - enough to keep the BoE on track to raise rates four times between now and the end of 2019, more than investors currently expect. The BoE is due to announce new economic forecasts on Thursday and investors are watching for any signs that it is moving towards a rate hike in the coming months, after it raised rates in November for the first time in a decade.

Britain's economy grew faster than anticipated at the end of 2017, and financial markets have put a 50-50 chance on a BoE rate hike in May. Yesterday's survey showed companies blamed the slowdown on the non-renewal of old contracts, bad weather and a loss of clients, as well as uncertainty about the outcome of the Brexit negotiations facing British Prime Minister Theresa May.

Although new work came in faster than in December, it

was below the average for 2017. But there were some positives. Job creation picked up as services firms remain positive about the outlook and business confidence was the highest since March 2017. Inflation in the prices charged by firms eased to a four-month low but remained high. Input prices rose at their slowest pace since September 2016.

Meanwhile, sterling extended losses yesterday to hit fresh one-week lows as new surveys indicating a slowing British economy and negative news around Brexit negotiations sapped investor confidence in a busy week for the central bank. Financial data firm IHS Markit said yesterday growth in the world's sixth-biggest economy looked set to slow to 0.3 percent in the first quarter, down from 0.5 percent in the last three months of 2017.

Sterling's losses were also exacerbated by the general undertone of risk aversion in the markets with most

European stocks down by more than a percent as investors unwound risky bets.

"We are starting to see some pressure on carry trades: US high yield bonds, interest rates flattener strategies, long emerging market trades and generally leveraged long carry bets," said Alberto Gallo, head of macro strategies at London-based fund Algebris. Sterling deepened losses on the day and was down 0.7 percent at \$1.4014, its lowest since Jan. 30. On a two-day rolling basis, it has fallen 1.7 percent, its biggest drop since early June, 2017.

Britain has ruled out any form of customs union with the European Union after Brexit, according to a source in Prime Minister Theresa May's Downing Street office. With those brewing tensions in the background, British and European Union negotiators this week hold their first formal Brexit talks since the interim deal in December unlocked discussions on their future relationship.

Ratings agency S&P Global said that disorderly Brexit would bring renewed downward pressure to the country's sovereign rating. Still, investors were wary of chasing the currency lower before a policy decision later this week where a repricing of Bank of England interest rate hike expectations - several banks are now calling for a rise to come in May, and for another to come later in the year - may be on the cards. — Agencies



Sterling deepens losses as risky bets unwind

Amazon makes French tax deal as tide turns against web giants

PARIS: US online retailer Amazon said yesterday that it has settled a major tax claim in France and will start declaring all its earnings in the country in a response to building European pressure on the digital economy giants. Amazon did not reveal how much it had paid over a French claim for nearly 200 million euros (\$249 million) covering the period from 2006 to 2010.

It is one of several American technology giants in the line of fire in Europe over their tax-avoidance strategies, which often sees them route their income through low-tax nations - in Amazon's case, Luxembourg. French President Emmanuel Macron has proposed a new mecha-

nism for taxing US tech companies that would take into account the volume of sales generated in each European country, rather than on the profits that are booked through low-tax jurisdictions.

Amazon announced a similar tax settlement deal with Italy in December, paying 100 million euros to settle an investigation into suspected tax evasion from 2011 to 2015, while also agreeing to declare its income locally.

In 2012, Amazon revealed that it had been hit with a 198-million-euro tax bill in France for back taxes, interest and penalties relating to income spread between different jurisdictions.

At the time, the company had said it disagreed with the French assessment and vowed to "vigorously" fight it. In its statement yesterday, Amazon said it had created a French subsidiary for its European operations in August 2015, "with all retail revenues, expenses, profits and taxes due now accounted for in France." The retailer also said it had invested over 2 billion euros in France since 2010, creating more than 5,500 jobs.

'Electroshock' plan

European officials have vowed to make the digital

economy giants known as GAFAM - Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple - pay a greater share of their taxes in the countries where they earn their profits. Under current EU law, companies based outside the bloc can declare their earnings from across the 28-nation market in a single country.

That has led them to pick low-tax nations like Ireland, the Netherlands or Luxembourg - depriving other member states of revenues, even though they may account for a bigger share of the earnings.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says such rules cost governments around the world as much as \$240 billion (193 billion euros) a year in lost revenue, according to a 2015 estimate.

On Sunday, EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici said he would unveil by the end of March a plan to "create a consensus and an electroshock" on taxing digital economy revenues.

"The idea is to be able to identify the activities of digital companies, so we need a range of indicators - the number of clicks, the number of IP addresses, advertising, and eventually revenues... and then we'll find ways to tax them," Moscovici said. — AFP



This file photo shows the logo of US electronic commerce and cloud computing company Amazon in Vertou, France. — AFP

Business

NBK chosen for CIO 100 Awards by CNME magazine

Award confirms NBK's leadership role in digital innovation

KUWAIT: Digital innovation has become a critical component of modern banking and at the forefront, leading this development in the Middle East, stands National Bank of Kuwait. NBK's innovative digital solutions are reshaping banking at a time when more and more customers are seeking digital options for their daily personal and business banking needs.



NBK innovates products and serves tailored to today's lifestyle

In the latest affirmation of the bank's leadership position, NBK Group Information Technology has been chosen as a winner of the 2018 CIO 100 Awards, organized by Computer News Middle East (CNME) magazine. The prestigious industry award celebrates Information Technology leadership groups who are leading the development and implementation of innovative best practices in banking and finance.

NBK was honored during the annual CIO 100 Symposium & Awards Ceremony held in Dubai on 29 January 2018 and will be featured in the February 2018 issue of CNME magazine.

The award was presented to Yousef Al-Kateefi, Executive Manager who received the award on behalf of the NBK Group Information Technology. "Winning the CIO 100 Award cements NBK's leadership role in digital innovation," said Nikolas Sfikas, NBK's Group CIO. "It confirms that we are not only on the right path, building stronger, safer and more efficient digital financial solutions but also that our industry peers value what we are doing." "NBK leads the way in developing innovative Fintech solutions with a customer-centric approach," added "We are delighted to recognize and honor NBK's contribution to these important developments in the Fintech sector and in technology in the Middle East."

CNME was established more than two decades ago and enjoys a readership of 75,000 readers per month with a focus on IT issues and news of local relevance, business benefit and technology for decision makers. National Bank of Kuwait continues to develop award-winning digital and financial products and services. Its newly redesigned and rebuilt website, NBK.com won the notable Web Marketing Association (WMA) 2017 WebAward for 'Bank Standard of Excellence'. NBK was honored specifically for the website's mobile-responsive and innovative design.

NBK's Tap & Pay card and wearables are another strong example of the bank's push for innovative digital solutions that meet the lifestyle needs of today's customers. Customers can learn more about NBK Tap & Pay and other products and services by visiting NBK.com.



Nikolas Sfikas



Yousef Al-Kateefi

Ryanair profits rise despite cancellations

LONDON: Ireland's troubled Ryanair said yesterday that quarterly net profits rose 12 percent despite a cancellations crisis, but warned Britain was under-estimating the risk of "serious disruption" to flights following Brexit. Profit after tax increased to 106 million euros (\$132 million) in the group's third quarter, or three months to December, from a year earlier, the Dublin-based carrier said in a statement. Passenger numbers grew six percent to 30.4 million people. In another boost, the group forecast passenger traffic would climb eight percent to 130 million for the full year which ends in March 2018. That was upgraded from previous guidance of 129 million. And Ryanair also announced a 750-million-euro share buyback which will begin this month. "We are pleased to report this... increase in profits during a very challenging third quarter," said chief executive Michael O'Leary. Investors seemed unmoved, with Ryanair shares down more than 3 percent in morning trading in Dublin.

Roosting failure

The outspoken boss once more acknowledged Ryanair's "pilot roosting failure in September". Ryanair suffered a troubled end to 2017, being forced to cancel 20,000 flights through to March this year, mainly because of botched holiday scheduling for pilots. The results yesterday came one week after Ryanair signed an agreement to recognize the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA), reversing its historic hostility towards trade unions. This after the carrier said that its UK-based pilots had accepted pay increases of up to 20 percent. "It became clear in December that a majority of pilots wanted to be represented by unions," O'Leary said. "In keeping with our policy to recognize unions when the majority of our people wanted it, we have met pilot unions in Ireland, UK, Spain, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Belgium and France to discuss how we can work with them on behalf of our people. "We have successfully concluded our

first recognition agreement with BALPA in the UK." He added: "As we finalize union discussions along similar lines to that agreed in the UK, we expect some localized disruptions and adverse PR so investors should be prepared for same." Similar talks will be held with cabin crew unions. The cancellations fiasco triggered pilots' demands for better working conditions and representation, with some departing for other carriers. As a result of pay hikes, staffing costs are set to jump by 45 million euros in the current 2017-2018 year. And looking ahead to next year, total costs will rise as the fuel bill jumps by more than 300 million euros and the wage bill soars by another 100 million euros. Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Laith Khalaf said Ryanair was bracing for even more turbulence. "The dials are moving in the right direction at Ryanair, but Michael O'Leary has switched the fasten seat belt sign on," said Khalaf. "The low-cost airline is bracing for a significant increase in staff pay, continued low air fares, and the potential for industrial action as it negotiates with pilot unions across Europe." Ryanair shareholders appeared to trade more on the outlook than the results, with the company's shares falling 3.3 percent. "Traders place a lot more value in which the company is going over where the company was, and the less the optimistic outlook has prompted selling of the stock," said market analyst David Madden from CMC Markets UK.

Brexit warning

Ryanair meanwhile warned that the British government was "under-estimating" the risk of flight disruptions following Britain's departure from the EU next year unless the uncertainty of its future relations are cleared up quickly. "There remains a worrying risk of serious disruption to UK-EU flights from April 2019 unless a UK-EU bilateral or transitional arrangement is agreed in advance of September 2018. "We, like other airlines, need clarity on this issue... and time is running out for the UK to develop and agree these solutions." Ryanair itself decided last month to apply for a British operating license as part of its Brexit contingency plans, in case Britain leaves the European Union next year without an aviation deal. Britain accounts for about one-quarter of revenues earned by the Irish no-frills airline. — AFP

Al Mulla Exchange's new digital platform looks very promising

KUWAIT: Al Mulla Exchange unveiled their latest look on the digital platform. The Al Mulla Exchange website and their online portal underwent a major upheaval in design. The newly-unveiled website and online portal aptly shows the out of the box thinking as well as the cutting edge technology promised by Al Mulla Exchange. Also showcased was the Al Mulla Exchange remittance App which is the first ever remittance App that is introduced in Kuwait. Speaking during the launch Praveen Singh, Divisional General Manager, Al Mulla Exchange said "Digital platforms form a critical portion of our everyday life. Be it on social media, professional networking or search, we are all online. With the customer in mind we have gone ahead and revamped our website and online portal to offer a better customer experience in every way possible. So now be it browsing our website to know more

about us and our product or services, you will find the overall look and feel very enriching. Adding to that our online portal now showcases one of the best transactional experiences when it comes to sending money. Seeing is believing and I would request everyone to please try for themselves." "Our bouquet of services have now expanded with the introduction of the Al Mulla Exchange remittance. This will be the smarter way to send money with capability of remittances being sent on the Go. With this facility Al Mulla Exchange has fulfilled the long cherished wish of customers to have an app to send their transfers. We are continuously modifying and recalibrating our services and we look forward to customer's feedback to improve even better." In addition to the above list of services, Al Mulla Exchange has one of the largest retail networks in Kuwait with 76 branches. With their aim of reaching out and being closer to customers, Al Mulla Exchange will be opening more branches in the future as well. They also have a robust loyalty points system, free insurance coverage as well as free events that are conducted for all communities. With their wide reach and differentiated product & service offerings Al Mulla Exchange continues to grow exponentially in the remittance space.

VIVA launches 'February Offers'

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched a variety of offers this month, celebrating the kick-off of the "Hala February" festival and the National and Liberation Days. The "February Offers" include valuable instant prizes and more benefits on plans for both VIVA postpaid and prepaid customers. Prizes will be on a 'first come first serve' basis every "Friday" of February 2018. Customers will enjoy amazing 'Scratch & Win' vouchers at VIVA's Avenues Mall branch once they subscribe to any of VIVA's voice or data postpaid plans. The vouchers allow them to instantly win one of plenty valuable instant prizes including ATVs, LED screens and smart devices. VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things 'More' for its customers by transforming communication, information and entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established a pioneer position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in

Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions: a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service.



ROME: This file photo shows a plane of Irish low-cost airline company Ryanair on the tarmac of Rome's Ciampino airport. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.			
ASIAN COUNTRIES			
Japanese Yen	2.764		
Indian Rupees	4.730		
Pakistani Rupees	2.718		
Sri Lankan 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		
Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		GOLD	
		20 Gram	249.070
		10 Gram	127.450
		5 Gram	64.570
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate		
US Dollar	300.100		
Canadian Dollar	244.515		
Sterling Pound	427.310		
Qatari Riyals	374.270		
Swiss Frank	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		
BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL			
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL	
Europe			
British Pound	0.418112	0.425612	
Czech Korune	0.006797	0.016097	
Danish Krone	0.046159	0.051159	
Euro	0.368339	0.375839	
Georgian Lari	0.133817	0.133817	
Hungarian 0.001116	0.001306		
Norwegian Krone	0.034695	0.039895	
Romanian Leu	0.083497	0.080347	
Russian ruble	0.005302	0.005302	
Slovakia	0.008918	0.018916	
Swedish Krona	0.033913	0.038913	
Swiss Franc	0.316139	0.327139	
Australasia			
Australian Dollar	0.229582	0.241582	
New Zealand Dollar	0.213847	0.222347	
America			
Canadian Dollar	0.236734	0.245374	
US Dollars	0.296350	0.300770	
US Dollars Mint	0.296850	0.300770	
Asia			
Bangladesh Taka	0.003247	0.003831	
Chinese Yuan	0.046193	0.049693	
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036319	0.039069	
Indian Rupee	0.004200	0.004841	
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024	
Japanese Yen	0.002644	0.002824	
Korean Won	0.000265	0.000280	
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073655	0.079665	
Nepalese Rupee	0.002997	0.003167	
Pakistan Rupee	0.002528	0.002818	
Philippine Peso	0.005840	0.006140	
Singapore Dollar	0.222506	0.232506	
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001688	0.002268	
Taiwan	0.010119	0.010299	
Thai Baht	0.009192	0.009742	
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	0.000148	0.000248	
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	0.122013	0.130013	
Turkish Lira	0.074508	0.084808	
UAE Dirhams	0.080376	0.082076	
Yemeni Riyal	0.000976	0.001056	

Business

Ooredoo reports revenue of KD 698 million for FY 2017

Customer base up by 4% to exceed 26 million

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo" announced yesterday its financial results for the year 2017:

Financial highlights

* Consolidated customer base increased by 4% to reach 26.3 million in 2017, compared to 25.2 million in 2016.

* Revenues for 2017 stood at KD 697.6 million, compared with KD 706.8 million for the same period in 2016, representing a decrease of 1 percent. Revenues in KD were impacted due to 11 percent depreciation of the Tunisian Dinar and 1 percent depreciation in the Algerian Dinar. In local currency terms Kuwait, Tunisia, Maldives and Palestine recorded growth. Excluding Foreign Exchange (FX) translation impact, revenues would have increased by +1 percent year on year.

* EBITDA increased by 6 percent for 2017 to KD 255.6 million, compared to EBITDA of KWD 240.2 million for the same period in 2016, due to cost efficiencies offsetting FX depreciation.

* The Net Profit Attributable to NMTC for 2017 was KD 39.5 million compared with KD 46.7 million for the same period last year. Net profit was negatively impacted by FX developments.

* The consolidated earnings per share was 79 fils compared to 93 fils per share

earned for the same period last year. The Board of Directors recommended a dividend of 70 fils per share. Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented:

"In all, 2017 was a transformative year for Ooredoo, as we made great progress in our mission to enrich the digital lives of customers across our footprint. Working together, we have grown our customer base and increased EBITDA by delivering strong performances in some highly competitive markets and focusing on efficiency and cost optimization.

We served 26.3 million customers in 2017, compared to 25.2 million in 2016, and revenues stood at KD 697.6 million, compared with KD 706.8 million for the same period last year. EBITDA increased by 6 percent for 2017 to KD 255.6 million, compared to EBITDA of KD 240.2 million for the same period in 2016.

We have grown our customer base in Tunisia, Algeria, Palestine and the Maldives, boosted revenue in Kuwait, completed the most successful IPO in the history of the Maldives, sponsored the national football team in Tunisia as they qualified for the FIFA World Cup and continued to enhance our networks and increase access to digital services for all. We have enhanced 4G services in Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia and the Maldives, and officially launched operations in Gaza - remarkable

achievements made possible by our investment in a state-of-the-art network. Most importantly, we have listened to the voices of our customers, and developed services and solutions that enrich their digital lives."

Review of Operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:



Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait stood at 2.2 million for 2017, representing a 6 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2016 due to intense competition and the overall market condition. Revenues for 2017 were KD 222.7 million, an increase of 13 percent compared to KD 197.8 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA was KD 54.3 million, up from KD 51.0 million for the same period in 2016.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia reached 8.4 million for 2017, an increase of 5 percent compared to the same period in 2016. Revenues stood at KD 127.5 million, compared to KD 142.3 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA was KD 50.5 million compared to KD 57.0 million for the same period in 2016. Tunisian Dinar depreciated by 11 percent year on year. In local currency terms, revenue increased by 1 percent in 2017.



Ooredoo - Algeria

Ooredoo's customer base in Algeria increased to 14.3 million customers for 2017, up by 4 percent compared with the same period in 2016. Revenues for 2017 decreased to KD 285.1 million compared to revenues of KD 309.8 million for the same period in 2016, negatively impacted by the increase in VAT and a weak economic environment. Despite revenue decrease, EBITDA increased, due to cost efficiencies, to KD 125.5 million in 2017, representing a 16 percent growth compared to KD 108.5 million for the same period in 2016.

reach 1.0 million customers. 2017 Revenues stood at KD 26.0 million compared to revenues of KD 25.4 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA for 2017 was KD 5.7 million compared to an EBITDA of KD 6.6 million for the same period in 2016.

Ooredoo - Maldives

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 15 percent increase in Revenues for 2017 to reach KD 36.3 million, compared to KD 31.6 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA for 2017 was KD 19.7 million, an increase of 15 percent compared to an EBITDA of KD 17.1 million for the same period in 2016.

Wataniya - Palestine

Wataniya Mobile Palestine increased its customer base by 31 percent for 2017, to

	Quarterly Analysis			Full Year Analysis		
	Q4 2017	Q4 2016	% change	2017	2016	% change
Consolidated Revenue (KWD m)	175.0	173.9	1%	697.6	706.8	-1%
EBITDA (KWD m)	57.9	59.1	-2%	255.6	240.2	6%
EBITDA margin (%)	33%	34%	-	37%	34%	-
Net Profit attributable to NMTC (KWD m)	4.8	14.5	-67%	39.5	46.7	-15%
Consolidated Customers (m)	26.3	25.2	4%	26.3	25.2	4%

Malabar Gold & Diamonds 211th showroom



HYDERABAD: Indian film actress Tamannaah Bhatia inaugurated Malabar Gold & Diamonds 211th showroom globally at Kondapur, Hyderabad, Telangana, India on 28th January, 2018 in the presence of B Navara Reddy - Corporator, M.P. Ahmed, Chairman - Malabar Group, Asher O, Managing Director -

India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Nishad A.K, Abdul Majeed - Group Executive Directors, Malabar Group, Siraj P K, Regional Head, other management team members, media and guests.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on 4 February 2018 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 21 January - 25 January 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

The winners are:

- (Sunday 28/01): Bashair Nawaf Ghanim Ali, Saad Sadeq Alhaj Hasan Saed
- (Monday 29/01): Waleed Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Shiha, Faisal Faleh Aayed Al-Subaiei
- (Tuesday 30/01): Teibah Ahmed Mohammed Habib, Ali Abdullah Mohammed Al-Saffar
- (Wednesday 31/01): Omar Yousef Eid Ismaeil, Ali Ahmad Ali Khameis
- (Thursday 1/2): Shabana Bagwala Shabbir Hussain,

Habib Salah Habib Al-Qattan. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2018 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day each receive KD 1000). Al-Danah's 1st quarterly draw for the prize of KD 200,000 will be held on 28 March, the 2nd quarterly draw for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 27 June and the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January, 2019 whereby the Al Danah Millionaire will be announced.

Gulf Bank encourages you to increase your chances by depositing more into your Al-Danah account, immediately from any local bank, using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking.

Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the best:

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million and the largest international bank prize according to Guinness World Records
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD 500,000
- 3) Two winners of KD 1,000 every working day
- 4) The most chances to win
- 5) Only Bank that transfers your chances to win from the previous year to the current year.

Changi Airport in Singapore as prime examples of vastly expensive projects. "The cost of infrastructure is skyrocketing," he told reporters ahead of the Singapore Airshow this week. "When we look at the numbers of Heathrow for the third runway, we are very, very, very worried. Even the numbers for T5 in Singapore are very high," he added, without disclosing a figure for Changi Airport's expansion.

The city-state's plans for its hub airport include a new development due to open next year featuring a 131 foot (40 meter) high indoor waterfall, and a fifth terminal slated for 2030. "We would like for instance to avoid big projects in which we see overruns because the architecture is fantastic, wonderful but it's very costly... we have to be more modest," De Juniac said without naming any airport. Airport construction costs are rising to levels which are too much for airlines to bear, he added. — AFP

IATA chief warns about rising cost of airport expansion

SINGAPORE: The "skyrocketing" costs of expanding airport infrastructure must be controlled to keep flight tickets affordable, the boss of airline industry group IATA warned yesterday. Alexandre de Juniac called for more modest developments to keep construction costs down and avoid landing customers with higher prices which would hit demand.

De Juniac cited the proposed 14 billion pound (\$19.8 billion) cost of a third runway at London's Heathrow Airport and the construction of a fifth terminal at

2017 Year End Results

Customer Base

2016
25.2
Million Customers

+4%

2017
26.3
Million Customers

Revenue

2016
706.8
KD Million

-1%

2017
697.6
KD Million

Net Profit to NMTC

2016
46.7
KD Million

-15%

2017
39.5
KD Million

The Board of Directors of National Mobile Telecommunication Company K.S.C.P (Ooredoo) is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company achieved a consolidated Net Profit attributable to shareholders of **KD 39.5 million**, translating to an earnings per share of **79 fils** for the year 2017. The revenue for the year 2017 reached to **KD 697.6 million**, compared with **KD 706.8 million** in the same period of 2016.

The Board of Directors takes this opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation to NMTC (Ooredoo) shareholders, customers and to all our employees for their continuous efforts.

ooredoo.com.kw

Euro-zone businesses began year in best shape for over a decade

Inflation still nowhere near target ceiling of 2%

LONDON: Eurozone businesses began 2018 by increasing activity faster than at any time in well over a decade as new orders surged despite firms raising prices at the steepest rate in almost seven years, a survey showed. The eurozone emerged as one of the best-performing major economies last year. Forward-looking indicators in the survey suggest that momentum will continue for at least another few months - welcome news for the European Central Bank as it moves to unwind policy.

IHS Markit's Final Composite Purchasing Managers' Index, seen as a good overall growth indicator for the eurozone, rose to 58.8 in January from December's 58.1 and up from the flash estimate of 58.6.

It is now at its highest since June 2006 and well above the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction. "The optimism reflects the strong economic upturn that the

euro zone is experiencing, which continues to be broad-based and is set to continue in the months ahead," said Bert Colijn at ING.

"Backlogs of work are increasing, job creation is historically very strong and new orders continue to pour in. This makes for a rosy growth outlook."

Earlier figures from Germany, Europe's biggest economy, showed private sector growth was at a near seven-year high while in France the business boom showed no sign of abating in January.

However, investor morale in the bloc deteriorated this month over discontent with coalition negotiations between German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD). Still, Italian business growth was at a 10-1/2 year high

while in Spain the service industry, worth around half of total economic output, expanded at its fastest pace in six months.



New orders surge despite price rises

Those upbeat surveys stand in stark contrast to a British PMI, which was at the bottom end of a range of forecasts in a Reuters poll

and showed the UK economy slowed sharply in January. "Following falls in the manufacturing and construction PMI surveys released last week, the weak January services sector survey will do little to assuage fears that the economy lost the momentum it gained in Q4 at the start of 2018," said Paul Hollingsworth at Capital Economics.

Price rises

Although inflation is still nowhere near their target ceiling of 2 percent, ECB policymakers halved their monthly asset purchases from January and are expected to end the quantitative easing program completely by the end of the year. So they will be heartened to see an index measuring prices charged leapt to 54.8 from December's 53.2, its highest since April 2011.

Higher energy prices proved a drag on retail sales across the bloc in December, which slipped 1.1 percent month-on-month. IHS Markit said the PMI data, if maintained, pointed to first quarter GDP growth of 1.0 percent, which would be the best since the second quarter of 2010 and much faster than the 0.6 percent predicted by a Reuters poll last month.

Britain's PMI points to an economic expansion of just 0.3 percent, IHS Markit said. Growth in the bloc is being supported by a booming service industry. Its PMI bounced to 58.0 from 56.6, surpassing the flash estimate of 57.6 and chalking up its highest reading since August 2007. That growth was boosted by new business flooding in at the fastest rate in over a decade. The sub-index was 57.3, up from 56.7 the month before to a level also not seen since August 2007. — Reuters

UK rules out being in a customs union with the EU after Brexit

LONDON: Britain has ruled out staying in any customs union with the European Union after Brexit, Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said yesterday as the government prepares for a crunch week of Brexit talks. The extent of any British post-Brexit involvement in the EU's customs union - which binds members into a trade bloc with common external tariffs - has become a major issue of contention inside May's divided government and Conservative Party.

Membership of the, or a, customs union after Brexit, would prevent London from striking trade deals with countries outside the EU in future. "The key point, as the prime minister has said on many many occasions, is that we need to have our own independent trade policy and be able to strike trade deals with the rest of the world," May's spokesman told reporters. "We will be leaving the EU and the customs union and it is not government policy to be members of 'the' customs union or 'a' customs union."

He said the official negotiating stance had been set out in a document published in August giving: "two possible options and they are: a highly streamlined customs arrangement, and a new customs partnership with the EU." The spokesman said Britain was still looking at both options, and no deadline for a decision on which one to pursue had been set.

With just a year left before Britain's March 2019 exit from the European Union, May's party remains deeply divided over what sort of relationship should be built between the world's biggest trading bloc and the world's sixth-largest economy.

Such are the divisions within May's government, that the debate over the extent of Britain's post-Brexit participation in a EU customs union has taken place in public with key ministers offering a range of views.

Brexit tariffs?

While May has repeatedly said that Britain will leave the customs union, some ministers had hoped that Britain could remain in some sort of bespoke customs arrangement with the EU after Brexit. But supporters of Brexit say one of the main

benefits of leaving the bloc will be the ability to strike trade deals with other, faster-growing countries around the world. The Confederation of British Industry has called for Britain to stay in a customs union and finance minister Philip Hammond last month also left open the possibility of Britain joining a new customs union.

A customs union means that its members apply the same tariff to goods imported into their territory from elsewhere and apply no tariffs to goods from other members. It also limits checks and other bureaucracies at borders between members.

Unless Britain negotiates a new trade deal with the EU, its exports would run into the union's external tariffs, which average about 5 percent across all goods, including 10 percent for cars and over 200 percent on certain types of poultry. But May is under pressure from eurosceptic members in her party to quit the trading arrangement because for them the key prize is chance to sign new trade deals with other nations such as the US, China and India. Britain and the EU are due to hold their first formal discussions about what their future relationship will look like after Britain leaves the EU this week.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier will meet his opposite number, Brexit Secretary David Davis, in London on Monday for the first time since EU leaders told Barnier to negotiate a post-Brexit transition period to ease Britain's departure. May will hold two cabinet meetings tomorrow and Thursday at which she will try to heal the deep divisions among her ministers over the best way to leave the EU.

If no deal is reached by October of this year, many businesses fear Britain could face a disorderly exit that would weaken the West, disrupt the peace in Northern Ireland, imperil Britain's \$2.7 trillion economy and undermine London's position as the only financial center to rival New York. A disorderly Brexit as a result of Britain misjudging the "self-preservation" instincts of the European Union could lead to a further downgrade of the UK's sovereign credit rating. S&P Global also said yesterday. — Reuters

markets, including in Britain, had limited the extent of the increase.

"China and overseas markets were up while the UK, US and European markets were lower, reflecting more challenging conditions with cyclical weakness in the UK and US, increasing diesel uncertainty in the UK and Europe, and Brexit uncertainty in the UK," Tata Motors said in a statement.

It said Jaguar Land Rover deliveries to North America had declined by 2.4 percent and by 3.4 percent to Europe. But JLR chief executive officer Ralf Speth gave an optimistic forecast for the future.

"This is a milestone year for Jaguar Land Rover as we prepare to launch our first ever electric car, the Jaguar I-Pace, and Range Rover plug-in hybrids," Speth said in the statement. "We expect a stronger all-around performance in the fourth quarter driven by new models, seasonality, and improved profitability."

Shares in Tata Motors, part of the sprawling tea-to-steel conglomerate, rose 3.12 percent on the Bombay Stock Exchange yesterday. A year ago the company reported a 96 percent fall in quarterly profits after the Indian government's decision to scrap more than 80 percent of the country's banknotes sent consumer sentiment into a tailspin. — AFP

Brexit 'crisis' drags Tata Motors profits

MUMBAI: Indian carmaker Tata Motors, the owner of Jaguar Land Rover, said yesterday "Brexit uncertainty" in Britain had affected overall quarterly profits as its earnings came in well below analysts' expectations.

The Mumbai-based manufacturer reported an almost 13-fold increase in quarterly profits year-on-year owing to strong JLR sales in China and a particularly low earnings report 12 months ago due to the effect of a shock Indian banknote ban. Tata Motors said consolidated net profit for the three months ending December was 11.99 billion rupees (\$187.15 million), up from 937.7 million rupees a year earlier when Indians were dealing with the fallout of demonetization. A survey of 15 analysts by Bloomberg News had predicted profits of 23.5 billion rupees this time around.

The car giant said concerns over soaring oil prices and a weaker showing in Western

Global stock markets selloff accelerates

LONDON: Most Asian and European stock markets slumped yesterday on intensifying worries over the prospect of rising interest rates in the United States, dealers said.

Wall Street kicked off the global selloff on Friday as a bright non-farm payrolls report sent Treasury bond yields soaring on fears of a quicker-than-anticipated increase in borrowing costs. New York's Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged more than two percent after the release of a healthy January jobs report that showed the biggest increase in wages in nine years. That catapulted 10-year Treasury yields—a key global interest rate indicator—to fresh four-year highs. The turmoil claimed fresh losses in Asia and Europe yesterday, with traders fretting that a resurgent US economy will lead to rapid interest rate rises by the Federal Reserve. The selling was fuelled also by profit-taking after a blistering January that saw several indexes strike record or multi-year highs, while energy firms were hit by a drop in oil prices.

Bull run at end?

"Stocks look like they are set for a correction of some sorts after huge losses over the last few sessions that has left many bulls worried that the bull run may have come to an end," said AxiTrader analyst James Hughes. On Friday, New York's Dow closed down 666 points, with the S&P and Nasdaq also down sharply. Europe's benchmark Stoxx 600 fell 1.5 percent, its sixth consecutive day of losses totalling 4.6 percent - the biggest decline since the United Kingdom voted in June 2016 to leave the European Union.

All major indexes in Europe fell: the UK's FTSE 100 dropped 1.4 percent, France's CAC 40 1.4 percent and Germany's DAX 1 percent. Friday's US payrolls report showed wages growing at their fastest pace in more than eight years, fuelling expectations that both

Powell sworn in as 16th US Fed Reserve chair

WASHINGTON: Former investment banker Jerome "Jay" Powell was sworn in yesterday as the 16th leader of the US Federal Reserve, taking a key role in overseeing the world's largest economy.

Perhaps the wealthiest Fed chair ever, Powell, 65, takes the reins of monetary policy just as a decade of economic recovery has begun to crest, and as analysts are pointing to challenges on the horizon.

Powell said he was committed to explaining the Fed's policy moves, a signal likely to be welcomed by conservative lawmakers who have called for the central bank to follow strict formulas in setting interest rates — a requirement Fed officials have opposed. Powell also said the banking reforms enacted since the 2008 crisis made the financial sector stronger. "We intend to keep it that way," he

German metalworkers return to talks after week of strikes

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Germany's powerful metalworking union IG Metall returned to the negotiating table with employers yesterday, with the threat of strikes hanging over talks after a week of walkouts.

The latest round of haggling will begin at 11 am (1000 GMT) in Stuttgart, capital of southwestern Baden-Wuerttemberg state. IG Metall said in a statement. Around half a million workers drawn from sectors as varied as carmaking, electrical and electronic goods or metal production downed tools last week in 24-hour

inflation and interest rates would rise more than previously forecast.

"This morning Europe is catching the virus and is aggressively lower," said Hughes. "The issue with this kind of fall is that it becomes a snowball effect, and after such astronomical gains since election day 2016 the falls can be equally as aggressive, but nobody could say that a correction has not been due." A market correction is drop of more than 10 percent from recent highs. The Dow is now down 4.1 percent from a record high struck on January 26. There was fresh turmoil in Washington on Friday after Donald Trump approved the declassification of a controversial memo linked to the FBI's Russia probe. Wall Street has enjoyed a record-breaking run ever since Trump's 2016 election on hopes of a beneficial impact from the US president's pro-business tax-cutting policies. Many equity markets were already in negative territory last week owing to rising bond yields and profit-taking. In Asia yesterday, Tokyo dived 2.6 percent, while Hong Kong sank more than one percent and Sydney closed down 1.6 percent. However, Shanghai recovered to end 0.7 percent higher.

said in comments after taking the oath of office.

But he struck a note of balance, perhaps a nod to the Trump administration priority to reduce regulatory burdens in the economy.

"We will also work hard to make sure that our regulation and supervision are efficient as well as effective," Powell said. "At the Federal Reserve, we know that our decisions matter for American households and businesses." Powell joined the Fed as a governor appointed by then-President Barack Obama in 2012, the year the Fed adopted a two percent target for annual inflation.

Inflation has run below target since then, allowing former Chair Janet Yellen to leave the post amid low price pressures, steady growth and rising employment.

Despite her solid record, Yellen, the first woman to lead the Fed, became the first Fed chief in four decades not to be reappointed to a second term. Powell, who is not an economist, takes over just as fears arise about fiscal pressures following December's massive tax cut and concerns inflation may finally be poised to heat up.

The new Fed chief is likely to make the first of regular public appearances in the usual



HONG KONG: Pedestrians walk past a stocks display board showing the Hang Seng Index at 32022.79, down 1.78 percent, after closing for lunch in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

'Equity storm'

The rise in bond yields, fuelled by a surging US economy and corporate earnings, has spooked traders worried that the Fed will raise borrowing costs more than the three times initially expected this year. "It's an equity storm, created by the pressure from bonds," noted ETX Capital analyst Neil Wilson.

FX fallout

Faster rate rises by the Fed would hurt emerging markets and commodity currencies, said Deutsche Bank macro strategist Alan Ruskin. Emerging-market currency the South African rand fell 0.4 percent, with the Chinese yuan and Polish zloty down around 0.2 percent. Rising US yields gave the dollar some support. Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was up fractionally at 89.267, after climbing 0.6 percent on Friday for its biggest single-day gain in three months.

nally by the dollar weakens commodities priced in the currency, with the Thomson Reuters CRB index down 0.5 percent. Gold was off at \$1,335.78 an ounce after losing 1 percent on Friday. — Agencies



WASHINGTON: Jerome Powell takes the oath of office as he is sworn-in as the new Chairman of the Federal Reserve (FED) by Randal Quarles Vice Chair for Supervision, at the Federal Reserve Building in Washington, DC, yesterday. — AFP

semi-annual testimony before Congress later this month, followed by his first press conference after the March policy meeting.

The Fed indicated in December it expects to raise the benchmark interest rate three times this year, and the first move is widely expected to come in March. — AFP

cal sector for Europe's largest economy. Up to now, business chiefs have offered a two-percent pay rise in response to the union's demand for six percent. But the biggest sticking point has been workers' insistence on the right to cut their hours to 28 per week for up to two years, with employers topping up salaries for some of those taking the option, for example to care for children or relatives.

If the two sides reach an accord in prosperous Baden-Wuerttemberg, home to industrial giants such as Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler or the world's biggest car parts supplier Bosch, the results could be extended to all of Germany. The talks are under close scrutiny from other labor groups including civil servants whose contracts are up for renegotiation in the coming months. — AFP

Business

EQUATE Group reports a net profit of \$1.13 billion for 2017

Rebounding in EG price, recovery in PET business in Europe

KUWAIT: EQUATE Group, a global petrochemical producer, yesterday reported its 2017 financial results. The Group reported an EBITDA of \$1.73 billion, up 47 percent from last year, and a net profit of \$1.13 billion for 2017, up by 66 percent from the previous year. The EQUATE Group combines the Kuwait-based EQUATE Petrochemical Company and its subsidiaries, and The Kuwait Olefins Company (TKOC). The earnings mark the second year since EQUATE's acquisition of MEGlobal, a manufacturer of Ethylene Glycol (EG). EQUATE Group's President & CEO Dr Ramesh Ramachandran said,

“2017 was one of our best years where our people delivered on all fronts. The results were primarily driven by a rebounding EG price, new customer optimization in our Polyethylene (PE) portfolio, and a strong recovery in our Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) business in Europe.”

“2017 one of our best years”

The year 2017 was indeed a milestone year. We maintained our leadership position as the second largest producer of EG globally, with an EG production of over 2.5 million metric tons. This market leadership will be further strengthened next year with an additional 750,000 MT in EG capacity as our new US Gulf Coast (USGC) facility comes on line. From safe and reliable operations to record-breaking conversion efficiencies, relentless focus on our fixed



Dr Ramesh Ramachandran

costs and a solid marketing platform across the globe, in 2017 EQUATE made great advancements and set stronger foundations for the Group's continued growth.”

The EQUATE Group is a global producer of petrochemicals and the world's second largest producer of Ethylene Glycol (EG). The Group has industrial complexes in Kuwait, North America and Europe that annually produce over 5 million tons of Ethylene, EG, Polyethylene (PE) and Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET).

The products are marketed throughout Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The EQUATE Group's shareholders include Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), The Dow Chemical Company (Dow), Boubyan Petrochemical Company (BPC) and Quraan Petrochemical Industries Company (QPIC). The Group is a leading enterprise that pursues sustainability wherever it operates through partnerships in fields that include the environment, economy and society.

Why the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series were among the best flagships in 2017?

The year 2017 saw many smartphones hitting the market, and the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series smartphones have also made their way into consumers' hands. Wrapped in an understated design with curved corners and reduced bezels, the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series hit the world by storm as they were the only devices built with artificial intelligence at their core. Discover some facts that made the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series among the best flagships in 2017.

1. The advanced expertise of Huawei in smartphone engineering

Founded 30 years ago, Huawei is today the world's third smartphone manufacturer. The success of the company stems from a philosophy of collective wisdom and strong partnerships, as well as its commitment to provide technology solutions that enrich consumers' lives and help them live smarter. Driven by constant innovations and ongoing investment in research development, Huawei grew to become one of the world's top three smartphone manufacturers with its products sold in more than 170 countries and regions, and the fastest growing technology company in the Middle East and Africa, with a foothold in 22 countries. Year after year, the company's products were increasingly acclaimed and endorsed in the region thanks to Huawei's meticulous craftsmanship. And the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series smartphones were no exception, as they were celebrated for their impressive technology and innovation. Huawei Consumer BG is expected to generate revenue of CNY 236 billion in 2017, a year-on-year increase of around 30%. The annual global shipments of Huawei and Honor smartphones are expected to reach 153 million units. HUAWEI smartphone global market share exceeded 10%.

2. The introduction of artificial intelligence to empower consumers in their daily lives

The processing chips are still the core smartphone technology. HUAWEI had a solid foundation to develop its own chips. As early as 1991, the company established the ASIC design center mainly to design chips for HUAWEI's telecommunication equipment. By 2004, HUAWEI founded HiSilicon, a semiconductor company to start developing 3G chips. The latest generation of the Kirin chipsets are

now the highlights of HUAWEI's flagship products: the Mate7, equipped with the Kirin 925 chipset, is HUAWEI's star products and the first Android phone with fingerprint unlock. The Mate 9 that comes with the Kirin 960 chipsets, on the other hand, went to a new level in terms of performance. The HUAWEI Mate 10 Series smartphones were an amazing technology breakthrough as they're the only phones with an artificial intelligence heart. They come with Huawei's Kirin 970 processor and they are the world's first smartphones with dedicated neural network processor unit (NPU). The Kirin 970 has a dedicated artificial intelligence chip, the Neural Processing Unit (NPU) that is able to interact and recognize its surroundings. NPU has 25 percent improvement on performance and 50 percent on efficiency compared to the normal CPU chip.

3. An intelligent dual camera co-engineered with Leica to help capture amazing shots

Huawei strongly believe in collective wisdom. This is why the company constantly seeks to establish long-term collaborations with premium brands to push the boundaries of smartphone technology. To offer consumers an unparalleled smartphone photography experience, Huawei established a long-term partnership with Leica, the leader in the world of imaging for more than 10 years. By partnering with Leica, Huawei made a real-breakthrough in smartphone photography and helped transform smartphone photography into a creative art form infusing emotion into pictures. The Huawei P9 series was Huawei's first collaboration with Leica and achieved a dual-camera milestone with Leica color and monochrome modes, as well as wide aperture bokeh effects to bring an artistic feel to the pictures. The Mate 9 Series are Huawei's second-generation Leica cameras with dual-camera zoom. The monochrome lens was upgraded to 20MP, bringing a smooth high-definition to the shots. The P10 Series was a breakthrough in portrait photography as it focused on portrait modes using 3D facial detection, dynamic illumination and natural portrait enhancements. The Mate 10 Series smartphones were a giant technological leap with the introduction of artificial intelligence into the camera. This milestone helped shift traditional photography to smart photography

with an intelligent camera that can recognize scenes and objects and adjust parameters to produce gallery-like pictures. It's worth to mention that Huawei and Leica have expanded their partnership with the establishment of Max Berek Innovation Lab, a jointly operated research and innovation center that will drive further developments in smartphone image and video quality.

4. An intelligent battery that can support intensive loads

The HUAWEI Mate 10 Series smartphones



sport a powerful 4,000 mAh battery - the largest among in size in the market. The battery uses artificial intelligence to support power-intensive applications. It's also combined with Huawei's Fast Charge, a technology created by the company to make charging faster and more secure; in just 30 minutes, the smartphones can power up to 58 percent, thus supporting heavy, intensive usage over 2 days. The HUAWEI SuperCharge is the world's first TÜV Safety Certified charging technology, the strictest certification of its kind in the world.

5. Ongoing investment in R&D to master smartphone technology

Excellence is not acquired, but earned. To achieve excellence, Huawei perseveres and does not sleep on its laurels. The company is constantly researching and developing solutions to embed the latest technology into its smartphones.

Every year, the company invests more than 10 percent of its annual sales revenue in R&D - the total R&D spending over the past 10 years has exceeded \$45.1 billion. Huawei pays special attention to meaningful innovation, focusing on the core concerns of consumers to solve their biggest pain points: camera technology, battery life and faster mobile data experience. This is why the company has also set up 15 independent R&D centers around the globe, spanning North America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific to expand cooperation with global industry players at multiple inter-



sections of technology. In France, Huawei established the Paris Aesthetics Research Center, where French luxury brand designers are invited to forecast future trends in fashion. In Russia, Huawei set up an R&D center focused on algorithm research, and in Japan, it established a small design and quality control research center. Huawei's U.S. R&D center is engaged mainly in research on RF, operating system, and chips, while Huawei's research centers in Europe are mainly engaged in research on 5G technologies.

In 2017, Huawei has established Noah's Ark Lab, a dedicated lab for research on big data, machine learning and artificial intelligence. The company has also partnered with universities such as Berkeley to run strategic cooperation on the infrastructure of artificial intelligence. Huawei ranked number 9 in 2016 Top 10 Global R&D investment; over 90 percent of Huawei's intellectual property are invention patents. Today, Huawei holds around 30,000 patents around the world.

6. Recognition from the world's most renowned institutions

Celebrating Huawei Mate 10 Series smartphones' excellent performance, Huawei is an early winner at CES(r) 2018, earning awards from global technology media titles following

the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro's introduction to the U.S. market and the unveiling of the HUAWEI WiFi Q2 Series. Highlighting the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro's mobile AI processor, New Leica Dual Camera and long-lasting battery, among other features, media presented Huawei four awards: Android Authority awarded the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro the '2017 Smartphone of the Year' award for having consistent quality across the board. TechRadar named the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro the 'Best Smartphone' at the show, acknowledging the device's Kirin 970 AI chip, HUAWEI FullView Display, the world's largest dual f/1.6 aperture, and the world's first end-to-end safety certified charging technology. T3 gave the HUAWEI WiFi Q2 Series one of its 'Loves' award for being a true plug-and-play Wi-Fi system designed for the entire house. Android Police recognized the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro as a 'Best of CES 2018' for its Kirin 970 processor, intelligent New Leica Dual Camera, and long-lasting battery power. Android Central named the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro a '2018 CES Top Pick' because of its improved dual camera setup, SuperCharge certification and 6-inch HUAWEI FullView HDR display.

7. One of the fastest growing brands in the world

Over the years, Huawei cemented a positioning as a premium brand loved and celebrated by consumers around the globe. It is also one of the fastest growing tech companies in the world. Huawei's brand awareness increased from 81 percent in 2016 to 85 percent in 2017. Its brand value has been recognized by multiple sources across the globe - having ranked 49th in the 2017 BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands list, made 88th place in the World's Most Valuable Brands list released by Forbes in 2017, and climbed to 70th place on Interbrand's 2017

Honda Alghanim sponsors the 8th Kuwait Motor Show

KUWAIT: Honda Alghanim, the exclusive distributor of Honda cars, motorcycles and marine equipment in Kuwait, sponsored the 8th Annual Kuwait Motor Show, held at the 360 Mall. The event gathered amateur enthusiasts from all over the Gulf, where owners of more than 300 Honda motorcycles were involved.

On the occasion of this exhibition, the owners of these motorcycles rode from Kuwait Towers to the 360 Mall to celebrate the event, which was organized by Kuwait Riders. During the event, the panel of experts from Europe evaluated the motorbikes participating in the Best Looking Bike competition, in which 5 Honda Gold Wings participated and 3 of which won!

Honda Alghanim introduced all categories of motorcycles in a special show to highlight the strong performance, advanced technology and exceptional design, recognized by these grades and make them the most sought after in the world. For more than four decades, the Honda Gold Wing has set the ideal motorcycle standards for roaming. From its superior geometry, smooth driving and strong performance, Honda bikes have a powerful engine to move to ultimate speed and a chassis designed to provide all-day driving comfort as well as a full chassis and built-in luggage to enhance the sense of comfort



and elegance while riding a bike. The Honda Gold Wing bike provides power, performance, ease of handling and driving comfort in three packages of this bike, each offering a special ride experience with exclusive features.

As for the CBR1000RR bike, it is lighter, more powerful and faster than any CBR1000RR bike produced by Honda. For racing enthusiasts, the bike is equipped with a rack that responds to the needs of driving on the racetrack, and ensures that the CBR1000RR SP bike is on the challenge. The SP CBR1000RR is available in a limited number, with all the new features of the CBR1000RR, the eHollins suspension, the Brembo brakes, the titanium muffler and many exclusive features.

Honda also offers the CBR1000RR SP2 to a very limited number of racing enthusiasts and professional racers. The CBR1000RR SP2

includes all the features of the CBR1000RR SP, and adds larger exhaust and exhaust valves and a lighter design for the Marcini wheels. Honda Alghanim also offers a wide range of cars catering to the different needs of audiences that can be viewed at all Honda Alghanim showrooms. Al Rai showroom opens from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm from Saturday to Thursday, while working hours on Friday are from 9:30 am to 10:00 pm. The Honda showroom in Shuwaikh is open from Saturday to Thursday, 9:00 am to 10:00 pm.

The service center waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers, with digital satellite TV, free wireless internet, relaxing massage chairs, a PlayStation 4 corner and more. The service center operates 7 days a week, from Saturday to Wednesday from 7:30am to 8:30pm, from 7:30am to 6:30pm on Thursdays, and from 2:00pm to 7:00pm on Fridays.

Gulf Bank's salary account draw to take place on Feb 8 for KD 250,000 prize

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is pleased to announce it will be holding its Kuwaiti Salary Account draw on Thursday, 8 February 2018, where the lucky winner of its big KD 250,000 cash prize will be announced. The Bank is happy to be holding this event at The Scientific Center located in Salmiya, Kuwait's premier science and educational organization.



The event kicks off at 5 pm with fun activities and programs, with a great lineup of children's activities. There will be a performance by Fahed Al-Salem, who will be singing a medley of Kuwait songs new and old, accompanied by Mohamad Al-Sarraf of The Concert. Gulf Bank will be represented by MCs - Mijren Al Mijren and Nawaf Al Jazzaf from Corporate Communications; In addition to Ahmad Al-Matari, from Human Resources. The Bank

will also be holding its always popular 'Catch the Cash' money box game, which offer the audience a chance to win cash prizes on the spot. The actual draw will take place at 7pm, and the lucky winner's name will be unveiled on the spot and live on 88.8 FM Kuwait Pulse radio station.

Gulf Bank's salary account is tailored for Kuwaiti customers, and allows them to benefit from many unique offers by transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, including the opportunity to either receive a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest free loan. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are fully eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Additionally, customers can also enjoy a one year free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card, as well as a chance to apply for loan up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan up to KD 15,000.

The Scientific Center is a premier institution in Kuwait, aim to simplify science and promote environmental awareness in a fun-filled learning experience.

Technology

As the world goes digital, is there a hack for inequality?

‘Poor people are the ones most likely to be left outside of the digital sphere’

BARCELONA: In the fashionable Poble Nou district of Barcelona, hipsters and entrepreneurs rub shoulders with homeless people and immigrants, as the city authorities try to reduce digital inequality. The futuristic Media-TIC building is one of several venues around the city where disadvantaged people can sign up for free courses to improve their online literacy skills under a “Barcelona, Digital City” plan launched last year.

The program, which runs until 2020, is needed because access to technology has become a “new source of social fracture” for cities in an increasingly computerized world, the council of Spain’s second-largest city said on its website. Initiatives are springing up around the globe to teach online skills, in an effort to smooth access to jobs and education, and integrate people better into society. But questions are being raised about how well such schemes can reach those most in need.

Berlin-based non-profit Kiron Open Higher Education provides free web-based courses for refugees with internet access anywhere in the world. In New York, thousands of kiosks offering free Wi-Fi are being rolled out across the city under the LinkNYC scheme to help people of all income levels go online. Meanwhile, Miami-based organization One Laptop per Child (OLPC) continues to hand out free laptops to children in developing countries, while Google promised in 2017 to teach online skills to 10 million Africans over the next five years.

The catch with some of these initiatives, however, is that they only work if people are already connected to the internet or own the necessary technology, experts say. “Poor people are the ones most likely to be left outside of the digital sphere,” said Darrell West, director of governance studies at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think-tank. New Yorkers wanting to use LinkNYC’s private internet connection, for example, need one of Apple’s latest iPhones. Critics say this excludes low-income users who are most likely to need free Wi-Fi because they cannot afford a home broadband connection.

Digital divide 2.0
The so-called “digital divide” has traditionally referred to the gap between those who have access to computers and the internet, and those with limited or no access. Globally, around 3.2 billion people are using the internet, according to the International Telecommunication Union, a UN agency. Of the roughly 4.3 billion people who are not connected, about half live in India and China, according to the Brookings Institution. But digital inequality can no longer be viewed simply as the gap between those with physical access to devices and those without, experts say.

In today’s world, there are many different digital divides, they argue - and various ways of trying to overcome them. Prohibitive connection charges are a major cause of digital inequality, especially in emerging economies, said West of the Brookings Institution. “The problem is that if you provide a free computer but don’t address high telecommunications charges, people are not going to be able to use the devices,” he added.

New source of social fracture

Not just a laptop
OLPC, a US non-profit founded in 2005, provides children in developing countries with a low-cost, low-power computer that is connected to the internet. More than 3 million laptops have been distributed to children, said Leah Shadle, legal associate with OLPC. “(It) has always been an educational program, not just a laptop program,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Schools are offered teacher training and technical training, among other services, she said. In Uruguay, OLPC’s education program has been adopted on a national scale. According to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, around 60 percent of households in Uruguay are connected to the internet, the highest of any country in the region. In other, richer parts of the world, the issue of digital inequality is more nuanced than it was a few decades ago, said Mark Warschauer, professor of education and informatics at the University of California, Irvine.

Amplifying difference

In the United States, for instance, most people have a



HEDEBAZOUGES, FRANCE: In this file photo taken on September 28, 2017 shows a smartphone being operated in front of GAFA logos (acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon web giants) as background. —AFP

smartphone and a data plan, “and are pretty adept at using that”, even among urban populations with high levels of poorer non-white communities, as in Los Angeles, he said. The issue is what digital devices people are using - and how. Lower-income families tend to use smartphones more than laptops, and if they do have a computer at home it may be shared by several family members, Warschauer noted.

Children from wealthier backgrounds are using technology to gain knowledge, whereas children from poorer families focus more on chatting and playing, he added. Digital media “tends to amplify existing discrepancies” in society, he said. A physical access divide persists, however, between rural and urban areas in the United States, Warschauer noted. Many remote areas

are still not connected to the internet, an inequality that needs to be dealt with at a policy level, he suggested. West, of the Brookings Institution, urged governments to promote competition in the telecoms sector to bring down connection charges and make data services more affordable. Being excluded from the digital sphere hurts individuals’ job prospects as many companies now favour online applications, he added. Small business owners, meanwhile, often need a website to promote their goods and services, he said. Improving people’s ability to earn by getting them connected is a virtuous circle, as greater wealth increases the likelihood of narrowing the digital divide. “Anything a country can do to raise people out of poverty is going to bring more people into the digital world,” said West. —Reuters

Tesla, Australia to turn 50,000 homes into power generators

SYDNEY: Some 50,000 homes in South Australia will receive solar panels and Tesla batteries, the state government announced Sunday, in a landmark plan to turn houses into a giant, interconnected power plant. South Australia is already home to world’s biggest battery in an Elon Musk-driven project to provide electricity for more than 30,000 homes. The state government has since been looking for more ways—particularly through renewables—to address its energy woes after an “unprecedented” storm caused a state-wide blackout in 2016.

Under a new plan unveiled on Sunday, a network of solar panels linked to rechargeable batteries will be provided free to households and financed by the sale of excess electricity generated by the network, the government said. “My government has already delivered the world’s biggest battery, now we will deliver the world’s largest virtual power plant,” state Premier Jay Weatherill said in a statement. “We will use people’s homes as a way to generate energy for the South Australian grid, with participating households benefitting with significant savings in their energy bills.”

A trial phase will begin with 1,100 public housing properties, each supplied with a 5kW solar panel system Tesla battery. Following the trial, the systems will be installed at a further 24,000 public housing properties before the scheme is opened up to other South Australians over the next four years. The government is also set to look for an energy retailer to deliver the program to add more competition to the market.

The rollout will be supported by the state government through a Aus\$2 million (US\$1.6 million) grant and a Aus\$30 million loan from a taxpayer renewable technology fund. Tesla said in a statement to AFP that the virtual power plant would have 250 megawatts of solar energy and 650 megawatt hours of battery storage. “At key moments, the virtual power plant could provide as much capacity as a large gas turbine or coal power plant,” the company added. Australia is one of the world’s largest producers of coal and gas but the South Australian blackout raised questions about its energy security.

Several ageing coal-fired power plants have closed, while strong demand for gas exports and a rise in onshore gas drilling bans have fuelled concerns of a looming domestic energy shortage in the next few years. More than 60 percent of electricity generation in Australia is from coal, with 14 percent from renewables, according to government data published in 2016. —AFP

S Korea appeals court frees Samsung heir

SEOUL: A South Korean appeals court yesterday dismissed most of Samsung heir Lee Jae-Yong’s bribery convictions and cut his prison sentence to a suspended term, ordering his immediate release. Judges said Lee, vice chairman of the world’s biggest smartphone and memory chip maker Samsung Electronics, had been forced to offer bribes to then-president Park Geun-Hye and her close confidante.

Samsung Electronics, which last week reported record profits, is the flagship subsidiary of the giant Samsung group, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates known as chaebols that dominate Asia’s fourth-largest economy. The chaebols played key roles in the South’s dramatic economic growth but have long had close and sometimes murky ties with political authorities. Commentators said yesterday’s decision was in keeping with past lenient legal treatment of their leaders.

Government favors

At his original trial Lee, 49, was convicted of a range of offences, including bribery, embezzlement, money laundering and perjury in parliament, in connection with the sprawling corruption scandal that brought down Park Geun-Hye. The case centered on payments Samsung made to Park’s secret confidante Choi Soon-Sil, with prosecutors arguing they were intended to secure government favors.

He had been sentenced to five years in jail, making him the first Samsung chief to serve prison time, even though his father was twice convicted of criminal offences and his grandfather was earlier embroiled in scandal. But the Seoul high court yesterday struck out most of the convictions and

reduced the penalty on the remainder to a suspended prison sentence of two and a half years.

The court said Lee had been “forced” to offer Park bribes and there was “no evidence” that Lee explicitly demanded policy favors in return. “Park Geun-Hye and Choi Soon-Sil should be seen as the main players in this scandal,” said the ruling, read out in court by one of the judges. Lee walked out of the courthouse swinging the hands that had been cuffed every time he arrived and left the building since he was first detained in February last year, television pictures showed.

The badge bearing his prisoner number that had been pinned to his jacket earlier was gone, and he smiled although he had appeared to have lost weight during his time in custody. He was driven back to his detention centre for formalities before being released.

The Samsung group, whose revenues are equivalent to around a fifth of the country’s GDP, has lobbied hard against the convictions of Lee and four other senior executives. Shim Jung-Taik, an author of several books on Samsung and its corporate culture, said: “It shows that, in South Korea, politicians come and go but Samsung’s power never fades away.” “We still have this widespread mindset that “our economy will collapse without chaebols, and the chaebols will collapse unless they are controlled by the members of their founding families,” Shim told AFP.

‘Courage and wisdom’

The corruption scandal set off massive months-long protests across the nation last year that urged Park’s removal as well as punishment of the top tycoons who helped enrich Choi. Samsung was the single biggest contributor to the two non-profit foundations controlled by Choi, which she allegedly used for personal gain. But his lawyers argued that Samsung had been coerced to pay. One of them, Lee In-Jae, told reporters: “We express our sincere respect for the courage and wisdom of the court that exonerated Lee of some major accusations.”

They will launch a further appeal to the supreme court against the remaining convictions. Lee has been the de facto

In Australia, Amazon still finding its way

SYDNEY: When Kiri Pomery ordered a red Santa Claus hat from Amazon.com Inc’s new Australian operation, the estimated delivery time to her address in outback Western Australia seemed too good to be true. It was. Several weeks after the end of Amazon’s Jan. 10 delivery window and a month after Christmas, the manager of the Ora Banda Historical Inn had still had not received her package. “Generally it is pretty reliable,” said Pomery, referring to the nearest post office, a 45-minute drive away in the gold mining town of Kalgoorlie, where she collects her mail. “I think we have had one thing in the last four years that we have had to go looking for.”

On the other side of the country, at a pub she manages with her husband, Lester, in the spinifex plains of far western Queensland state, Valerie Cain got her Santa hat in time to wrap it as a Christmas gift for her six-month-old grandson Oscar. The hat arrived just two days into Amazon’s 20-day estimated delivery window. A third parcel bound for the tiny township of Yuendumu, in Central Australia’s Western Desert, arrived nine days

after Amazon’s delivery window. Reuters ordered the hats in December to check Amazon Australia’s shipping estimates. And the experiences of three of the company’s first customers reflect what analysts see as the main challenge to capitalising on a lack of serious online competition and winning over the world’s 12th-largest economy: its geography.

Australia has the developed world’s most spread-out population, with 24 million people on an island roughly the size of the mainland United States. Yet there is little inland transport infrastructure, making it hard for Amazon to live up to its promise of reliable shipping times. Amazon can generally reach customers in far-flung parts of North America and Asia quickly by using income from its subscription service, Prime, to bankroll its own delivery vehicles. The company has said it plans to offer Prime in Australia sometime in 2018.

“Retailers that have been here and have had an online offer for the last 10 years are all struggling,” said Shanaka Jayasinghe, a manager at logistics consultant GRA Supply Chain Pty Ltd. If a company is trying to ship to all of Australia, “offering same day or next day, it’s a challenge in our market,” Jayasinghe added, referring to shipping times.

Kogan.com Ltd, a local e-tailer which has styled itself after Amazon, says it delivers nationwide in 14 days or less. Amazon Australia’s longest estimated shipping time is



TRACY, California: In this file photo taken on January 19, 2015 shows an Amazon.com worker sorting packages onto a conveyor belt at an Amazon fulfillment center. —AFP

10 days. Both offer disclaimers that delivery may take longer in remote areas. Third-party vendors sell about 90 percent of the goods advertised on Amazon’s Australian website while Amazon itself sells the rest, said Daniel Mueller, an analyst at Vertium Asset Management, which holds Australian retail shares.

That ratio is reversed in Amazon’s other

markets, Mueller added, providing speedier service. Amazon’s biggest challenges in Asia so far have involved competition from entrenched local players like China’s Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, Singapore’s Carousell Pte Ltd and India’s Flipkart Online Services Pvt Ltd. By contrast, Australia has low online shopping penetration and lack of well-resourced rivals. —Reuters

Health

Opioid high: Painkiller abuse sparks fears for Gabon's young

The drugs have abetted a crisis of addiction and misery

LIBREVILLE: Misuse of a powerful painkiller has spread like wildfire among schools in the West African state of Gabon, where teachers blame it for violent changes in mood among normally placid and motivated teenagers. Known as "kobolo" by local youths, the drug comprises high doses of anti-inflammatory medicine, usually washed down with soda or alcohol. In the United States, abuse of such opioid drugs, say experts, has abetted a crisis of addiction and misery.

"It's easier to ask who in our state schools is not taking kobolo," said a young music teacher in a Libreville high school, who gave her name as Chantal. "It starts at secondary level, from the age of 12 or 13. The children go through changes almost overnight—they become aggressive and violent under the effects of kobolo, which we regularly find when we go through their schoolbags," she adds. "The worst thing is that the kids not only use it, they sell it, too."

Knife fights and arrests

Almost every week, the press report knife fights between pupils, largely blamed on their use of kobolo, and on arrests of drug dealers, often deemed to be connected to the pharmaceutical business or from Cameroon. "Kobolo is a combination based on painkillers that act directly on the brain. It induces feelings of well-being due to the secretion of dopamine, the pleasure hormone," said Marie-Louise Rondi, who chairs the National Order of Pharmacists in Gabon.

"This explains addiction and the tendency to increase daily doses, until all the safety fuses in the brain have been blown." When used by young Gabonese as a recreational drug, the painkiller Tramadol or a generic equivalent is taken in large doses, sometimes mixed with alcohol and a range of juices. In 2017, its popularity began to spread fast in a country where consumption of cannabis and other substances is very limited. By July, concern had become so great that prescriptions for the drug became compulsory, and social support was beefed up. "We had meetings with the parents of students to

warn them of the scale of the problem," Rondi said.

'You're a super-hero'

Under the pseudonym Ted, a self-described "ex-user" of kobolo in his 20s, who comes from a poor neighborhood, described what it was like to take the drug. "With a soft drink, it's like you're asleep, having a waking dream. But if you drink it down with a little alcohol, well then...!" he guffawed. "It awakens your sleeping senses, when you take it you become hot. You can't control yourself, you imagine you're a super-hero, you lose your feelings," laughs the young man. "It gives you too much courage... You don't even feel pain." Proof of this risk, he displayed a large scar on a forearm—the legacy of an accident when he "went through a car windscreen without feeling hurt." Other collateral damage includes loss of appetite and sleep, itching, "epilepsy attacks, liver problems and memory lapses," he said. Others say unsafe sex is another risk.

'Pink baby'

Despite regulatory efforts, the painkiller is easy to obtain on the streets of Libreville. Known as the "little red", "pink baby" or "kemeka," pills are sold for between 250 and 500 CFA francs (0.40 to 0.80 euros / \$0.50 to \$1.00) apiece. Around the bus station, regular traders and ambulant salesmen help make acquiring kobolo a simple formality. In the maze of narrow streets, the drug is sold not only by the usual dealers but also at little stalls that sell medication along with rat poison.

For lack of official statistics, the kobolo business is difficult to put into figures. Since getting high requires no more than swallowing some cheap pills, the phenomenon is more discreet than smoking pot. The wholesale dealers are above all Nigerians and Lebanese, Chadians and Guineans, people say in the working-class districts. "Everybody sells it under the counter," said Ted, who described kobolo as "the high-school favorite". The media gives ample coverage to anti-kobolo operations and the police say they are on the job, reporting the



LIBREVILLE: A man looks at the products displayed on a market stall selling rat poison at a street market. — AFP

seizure of 5,952 illicit pills in 2017. "But the silence of health authorities is deafening," protests the director of a state-run hospital. "Not even a simple video clip on the TV to raise awareness among young people."

'Right kind of laughter'

By contrast, "Goudronier," a video about kobolo by rapper Don'zer, has given the drug nationwide prominence. It has been even broadcast at meetings of political parties. "What this song is about, with its words and the video full of violence, is what's happening now in our society and our schools," said the teacher Chantal, distraught. "The drug has become fashionable-kobolo

users are no longer hiding." Kobolo users are typically aged from 12 to 16 or 17, but there are many who come outside this age range, said a psychologist who has seen many users in her private practice. "All social classes are affected, including the French and the Lebanese," she said, referring to two large expatriate communities. The drug has increased the risk of unsafe sex and unwanted pregnancies for girls, the psychologist added. "Me, I gave it up because of the violence, trouble with my parents," Ted said. "You laugh a lot, but it's not the right kind of laughter. And you lose friends who die in fights, getting stabbed or having their throats cut." — AFP

CLINIC

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What's On

Landmark Group announces winners of 'Art Olympiad X'



Landmark Group awarded the artistic talents of eight students at the tenth Art Olympiad held this year. The event saw the participation of 160 students from 16 schools of repute across Kuwait. The atmosphere was abuzz with excitement as the names of winners were announced. The Art Olympiad which recognizes the outstanding creative talents of students got an overwhelming response.

The paintings were judged by Walid Kanafani, President - IAA Kuwait Chapter and General Manager, Wavemaker Kuwait and Zeina Mokaddam, Managing Director at PH7 Group. A total of eight winners were selected at the end of the Olympiad on the basis of creativity, workmanship, overall impression and relevance to the Theme. The paintings of the young talented artists offered the judges to choose the best of the best. There were also two special prizes, one for the most colorful painting which was won by Liya Ance George (9-11 years) - Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School and the most creative painting won by Sarah Hussien Al Mutairy (12-14 years) - Canadian Bilingual School.

This year's competition themes which the students could select from were: Dream City, Cartoon Character, Children at play etc. for the 9-11 years category. For the 12-14 years category it was Future Kuwait, draw your dream Home, A place you want to go etc. All themes brought out the unique talents and skills of the participants.

The winners of the 9-11 years category were:

- First Prize: Aileen Seo - International British School
- Second Prize: Mridula Pallissery Ravindran - Indian Educational School
- Third Prize: Leon Marian Prasad - Carmel School

The winners of the 12-14 years category were:

- First Prize: Minjae Son - Kuwait English School
- Second Prize: Hala Hassanein - Kuwait English School
- Third Prize: Reeda Shimaz Huda - Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School

Landmark Group organized the event for the tenth consecutive year, as it falls in line with the company's corporate social responsibility strategy to uplift the capabilities and skills of youth in Kuwait. The

event is seen as a grooming platform for these students by helping them improvise their flair and encourage their innovative ability through art.

Saibal Basu, Chief Operating Officer of Landmark Group Kuwait said, "My heartiest congratulations to the winners, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the rest of the talented students who participated in this competition. Their talent is a reflection of their hard work and artist vision which impress us with their outlook towards things around them. Once again, we are proud and excited to hold the competition year after year and are continually amazed by the ability our young students have. Every year the Olympiad proves to be a great accomplishment; it only gets bigger and better."

"We are really pleased with the winning artworks and we think that they look absolutely brilliant. I would like to thank our esteemed judges Walid Kanafani, President - IAA Kuwait Chapter and General Manager, Wavemaker Kuwait and Zeina Mokaddam, Managing Director at PH7 Group who has helped make this event bigger and better. Last but not the least I thank the teachers for their efforts and for encouraging such talents. With such an overwhelming response we are definitely looking forward to preparing for the Eleventh Art Olympiad next year."

The participating schools for this year's Olympiad were: The English School Salmiya, Fahaheel Al Watanieh Indian Private School, Indian Educational School, Indian Learners Own Academy, Canadian Bilingual School, Indian English Academy School, Indian Central School, Al-Nibras International Bilingual School, The English School Fahaheel, Kuwait English School, Carmel School, British School of Kuwait, Dasman Bilingual School, Kuwait National English School, International British School, American Creativity Academy - Salmiya Girls Campus. Landmark Group is always keen on maintaining an excellent rapport and creating awareness about relevant issues among the youth with constant activities and events. Children were provided with a craft pack that included a drawing sheet and a variety of art materials such as paints, pencils and crayons. The winners received a prize, certificates and trophies. The schools were given a plaque of appreciation. All students who participated in the Olympiad were provided with gifts and participating certificates.



AUK's newly appointed General Editor of Music Society

Dr Lisa Urkevich, Chair of the Department of Music and Drama at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), has been appointed General Editor of the College Music Society Symposium, the scholarly unit of the College Music Society which is the largest worldwide university music organization. She succeeds David Woods, Dean of the University of Connecticut School of Fine Arts, who held the post for over two decades. As General Editor, Urkevich oversees ten components, each with its own editor and editorial board. These include Scholarship and Research, Music Business-Industry, Instructional Technologies and Methodologies,



Audio Performance Archive, Reviews, CMS Forums, Events in Music, CMS Reports, CMS Conference Archive, Video Lectures, Performances, and Lecture-Recitals.

Dr Lisa Urkevich is a Professor of Musicology/Ethnomusicology whose research concentrates on the cultures of the Arabian Peninsula. For seven years she was the film/video review editor of the Yearbook for Traditional Music (UNESCO). In 2015-16 she was a visiting scholar at Harvard University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and she is the recipient of the Alumna of the Year Award at the University of Maryland. Urkevich is looking forward to working with CMS editors and board members in order to effectively advance the Symposium into the future. The American University of Kuwait (AUK) is an independent, private, equal opportunity, and co-educational liberal arts institution of higher education. The educational, cultural and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English

educational, cultural and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English

Forum hosts media delegation

The Najla Al-Naqi Forum is set to host a press conference on Thursday, February 8, 2018 in honor of an Egyptian media delegation led by veteran media personality Tahani Al-Bartaqali. The event takes place at the Radisson Blu Hotel.



Najla Al-Naqi

TIES Cultural Q & A

Experiencing a foreign culture is always exciting and often mind-boggling. Questions abound, whether related to customs, character or creed. Drop by TIES, where every question is regarded as the first step to wisdom. The talk takes place on Wednesday, February 14 at 7pm and will be held at Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada Area, Kuwait.

Burgan Bank concludes sponsorship of KES's annual 'Green Unit Bazaar'

Striving to enrich society by supporting activities that provide added-value to all segments, Burgan Bank recently concluded its sponsorship of the "Green Unit Bazaar", which took place at the Kuwait English School (KES) for the second consecutive year. An annual non-profit event ran by the "Green Unit department" at KES, which aims to advance the skills and talents of students with disabilities.

The "Green Unit department" caters to 125 students with special educational needs, aged 6 to 21, offering them a healthy, safe and holistic educational environment in line with the school's objective to inspire, challenge and encourage newer and fulfilling experiences. Every year, it hosts the coveted Green Unit Bazaar to help raise awareness and funds for students with special needs.

The Bazaar was an open day for all family members with plentiful children's interactive activities ranging from games, face painting, photo booths, henna painting, story reading surrounded by a variety of food, clothes and gadgets stalls. Children also had the opportunity to purchase educational toys, books, pieces of art, and jewelry. The money raised during the event will all be invested to provide an effective learning environment for students with special educational needs.

Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.



TV

AM MOVIES ACTION
01:05 Cold Zone
02:30 Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders

ANIMAL PLANET HD
00:50 Lone Star Law
01:45 Treehouse Masters

BBC FIRST
00:25 New Tricks
01:25 The Level
02:10 Casualty

crime investigation network
00:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos

COMEDY CENTRAL
00:05 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
00:30 Comedy Central Presents

Discovery Family
00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds

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00:55 Destroyed In Seconds

Discovery Family
00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds

ID
00:50 Killer Confessions
01:45 The Accused, Jeffrey Macdonald: People Magazine...

Disney HD
00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binnie And The Ghost

Discovery Family
00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds

Disney Junior
00:15 PJ Masks
00:40 PJ Masks

Discovery Channel HD
00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Blowing Up History

Discovery Channel HD
00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Blowing Up History

FX HD
06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law

EHD
01:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:55 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

03:40 Botched
04:35 Botched

NAT GEO people HD
00:15 One Man & His Campervan
00:45 John Torode's Asia

food
00:00 Chopped
01:00 Iron Chef Gauntlet

itv CHOICE
00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale

FX HD
00:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
01:00 Cowboys & Outlaws

HISTORY HD
00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People

02:40 Road Hawks
02:40 Forged In Fire

NAT GEO people HD
00:15 One Man & His Campervan
00:45 John Torode's Asia

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 The Story Of Us With Morgan Freeman

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 When Crows Ate Dinosaurs
01:10 World's Deadliest

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NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 When Crows Ate Dinosaurs
01:10 World's Deadliest

01:45 Rabbids Invasion
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers

nick jr
00:16 Kid-E-Cats
00:21 Shimmer And Shine

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 The Story Of Us With Morgan Freeman

AM MOVIES FAMILY
00:25 The Adventures Of Pepper And Paula

AM MOVIES COMEDY
01:45 Cooties
03:15 Highland Park

AM MOVIES FESTIVAL
01:20 Sleepers
03:50 Not Without My Daughter

Time Machine
07:35 The Secret Of Kells
09:05 Elias And The Royal Yacht

AM MOVIES HD
02:00 In The Heart Of The Sea
04:05 LA Bamba

DISCOVERY SCIENCE
00:40 Mythbusters: The Search
01:30 How Do They Do It?

DISCOVERY SCIENCE
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STAR MOVIES HD
01:30 Frailty
03:15 Babel

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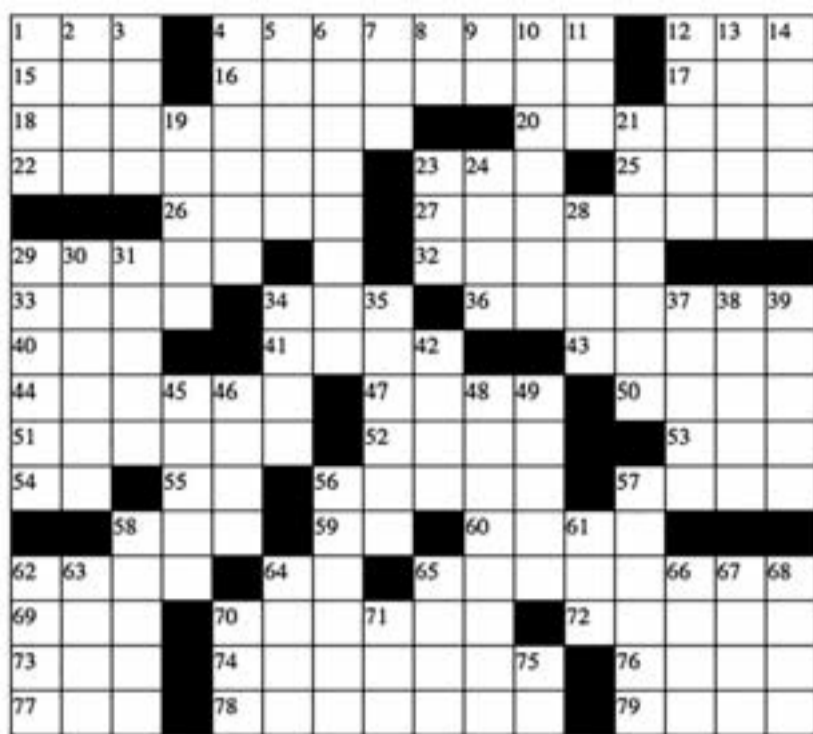
STAR MOVIES HD
01:30 Frailty
03:15 Babel

TLC HD
00:20 Hodges Half Dozen
01:05 Married By Mum And Dad

TLC HD
00:20 Hodges Half Dozen
01:05 Married By Mum And Dad

TLC HD
00:20 Hodges Half Dozen
01:05 Married By Mum And Dad

CROSSWORD 1828



ACROSS

- 1. A solution containing a phosphate buffer.
4. Ability to perform or produce.
12. Not reflecting light.
15. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
16. A sandal with flat heels and an upper of woven leather straps.
17. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
18. A throne that is the official chair of a bishop.
20. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
22. The capital and largest city of Iran.
25. Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
26. Ctenophores lacking tentacles.
27. Having a lean and bony physique.
29. Sour or bitter in taste.
32. Slandering or defaming.
33. A polite name for any woman.
36. Kauri pine.
40. General term for any insect or similar creeping or crawling invertebrate.
41. A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
43. An extensive grassy and nearly treeless plain (especially in Latin America).
44. Deciduous round-headed Asiatic tree widely grown in mild climates as an ornamental for its heart-shaped leaves and fragrant yellow-green flowers followed by hanging clusters of fleshy orange-red berries.
47. Acute lung injury characterized by coughing and rales.
50. (used as a sentenced connector) Therefore or consequently.
51. A salt used especially in baking powder.
52. The dynasty that ruled much of Manchuria and northeastern China from 947 to 1125.
53. Vietnamese New Year.
54. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
55. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
59. Unknown god.
60. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
62. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
69. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
72. British composer (1857-1934).
73. (Judaism) Sacred chest where the ancient Hebrews kept the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments.
74. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
76. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
77. Seed of a pea plant.
78. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
79. A principle or condition that customarily governs behavior.

DOWN

- 1. A written agreement between two states or sovereigns.
2. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
3. (Old Testament) Third son of Adam.
4. A sweet innocent baby.
5. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
6. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
7. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
8. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
9. Being nine more than ninety.
10. The middle of the chief navigable channel of a waterway that forms the boundary line between states.
11. An affirmative.
12. United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
13. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
14. Having or characterized or distinguished by tone or a specific tone.
19. A unit of inductance in which an induced electromotive force of one volt is produced when the current is varied at the rate of one ampere per second.
21. A soft partly suppressed laugh.
23. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
24. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
28. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
30. Constituting or relating to a tail.
31. A person who puts finishing edges on a garment.
34. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
35. Paralysis of the vocal cords resulting in an inability to speak.
37. United States writer noted for his stories about life during the California gold rush (1836-1902).
38. A member of western Finnish people formerly living in the Baltic province where Saint Petersburg was built.
39. Of the blackest black.
42. Baby bed with high sides.
45. The function or position properly or customarily occupied or served by another.
46. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
48. Absent-minded dreaming while awake.
49. Type genus of the Soleidae.
56. God of war.
57. Deciduous horn of a member of the deer family.
58. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
61. (informal) Of the highest quality.
63. The work of caring for or attending to someone or something.
64. A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
65. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
66. An Eskimo hut.
67. A telephone connection.
68. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
70. An accountant certified by the state.
71. Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
75. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, vibrations of health and fitness surround and encourage you to seek the best way for you to guard your physical health. This is a time to overcome temptations by substituting other foods or beverages. You make a strong effort to do well at work; your pride in your job kicks in and others notice. Bursts of energy embolden you as you move closer to reaching impressive goals. You may find yourself in a position of leadership regarding a group effort; your logical way of looking at things is well known and desired. You could be misled about something you have to make a decision on; next week could be a better time for this. An invitation to go out could present a serious problem if you accept! A good book or movie fits the bill this evening, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you're drawn to gaining control in all areas of your life; be careful that you don't come across as a control freak or busybody. Intimate secrets draw your attention and you long to have your own private reality apart from family and friends. Privately, you will go to ominous places in your mind; beware that keeping these thoughts and urges to yourself will not help them go away. An opportunity to make money comes from an unexpected place today. Vibrations of a stubborn nature plague you regarding a certain situation. This is a good day for you physically as you feel healthier than you have in a while. Tempers could flare around you and you may want to join in; use your desire for control to keep yourself calm and going in the right direction, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, things that could be considered occult hold your interest now. You could be interested in learning more about spells or potions; perhaps you're eager to learn more about historic writings and events or art. Your energy is cleansed by clearing old judgments or using new thinking regarding disagreements. Plans go smoothly today with productive results. Ideas fill your head to the point of making it spin; write these down so you can use them later when you need them. A new neighbor annoys you; you're not sure how to handle this as you're not the only one who finds this disturbing. You let your efforts flow from one to the next with ease. New surroundings could require your time this evening as you finish a project you have been at for a while, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, if there are unfinished details, focus on getting these taken care of now. Ticking things off your to-do list should come easily now; use this wisely! You could feel a lack of support from those on your team; keep your ideas to yourself just now until there's a change in energy here. You could feel stunted or slowed by circumstances or an event you attend. You figure out where a certain problem started and understand that you have the ability to repair it; you could realize that you or something you did is at the root of the problem. Your heart is usually in the right place but you somehow put your foot in your mouth at just the wrong time; working on yourself could come easier this evening as you spend time with someone who loves you, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you long to have complete control over a certain person or situation; remember that everyone has their own free will and may want to use it! Look closely at your behavior so that no one is offended by your good intentions. It's sometimes difficult to sit back and watch someone run off a cliff. Your interest in the unknown and unusual facts regarding many different areas is heightened at this time; new books and documentaries play an important part in your free time. You make progress as a member of a group your heart is close to. A new pet could make an appearance at your house or the home of a friend. You have lots of love to share and many opportunities to do so during this new cycle. You should pamper yourself this evening, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, mysteries, taboo subjects and practices captivate your interest; the discovery of a new literary series could be indicated here as books are your best friends. Your passions rise and you could feel a need to demand sexual attention and affection. You want to run the show, Your advice is considered valuable; your opinions are respected and followed more than you know. Someone watches you and follows your examples and style; you help people with kindness and attention which creates great karma for your present and future. An interesting invitation arrives that stirs your curiosity and you want to know more about the person who sent it. Enjoy something new! Merely considering changes isn't enough, you must actually make them, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you've entered a new, interesting phase highlighting major shifts in your personal life. There could be tense feelings regarding political or religious views; you know how to handle this particular person. You could make a discovery about someone in your tribe; the close circle of friends you turn to for the most intimate advice. There could be an alert to a possible health scare; it can be easier to get healthy as a group! Relationships are at the top of your most important things list; your friends are as treasured as family. You join with others to get something accomplished that helps everyone. You can rest this evening having contributed your share today; you feel loved and cherished later when you spend time with someone special, Libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, the group looks to you for leadership. Your thoughts are clear regarding how to finish a difficult project that hasn't gone well. Sexual desire is strong and you could find yourself being demanding when perhaps you shouldn't; wait for a more appropriate time and enjoy! Creative energy pushes you toward your art; this could mean painting, writing or sewing, anything originating from you. You enjoy watching others and what motivates their actions; you're more observant than expressive now. Getting to the bottom of something that disturbs you is an important priority; you may not like what you find but at least you know. You desire to start over from ground zero and approach life in a different, more sensible, conservative manner, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, your circumstances don't support the spiritual evolution you seek for your life. An elderly person is indicated as causing blockage and turmoil; you're more than able to ignore or overcome this unwanted interference. Being willful or stubborn only adds to your frustration; step back, let troubles play out without your input. You suspect someone is pulling strings and calling shots behind your back; listen to your intuitive knowing on this one. Mental stress is prominent. If you insist on having your way at this time, you could cause permanent damage; again, sit back and watch! Outside pressure helps you see that you're worthy of happiness and success; those who love you offer support and encouragement right when you need it, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, your desire is to be in control of yourself and as many situations as possible; remember, you live on a planet where this is difficult. There are enough challenges without you creating more for yourself! Your secret interests hold strong attraction for you now. Reading and otherwise learning about far reaching subjects such as space, history or geology satisfy your constant need to learn. You have to hold your tongue when an elder insists on being negative. You're curious about someone's motivation and you wonder what they're really up to. Your tendency is to get to the bottom of a problematic situation and make it come to an end. The universe smiles upon your sincere efforts. Everyone loves a winner, including you, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you're ready to put things in order in your work and home life. Regrouping and rearranging files, furniture and pictures creates a more manageable energy in your life and helps get you through the tough times. You feel the fog lifting, relax and allow this; someone could seek you out for your advice on an upsetting situation. Your input helps bring this negative situation to a positive place. The heavens say that your ability to get straight to the heart of the matter is almost invincible at this time. Food, exercise and meditation could become a strong focus for you this year. Make an effort to relax this evening and let the day's work go. Someone invites you out for dinner or coffee. It's time for a break later and you should take it, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, your surroundings don't make you feel good about yourself as though you don't fit or belong in this situation. There are some that insist on trying their best to anger you regarding something you said or did. Your sensitive nature causes you to make too much out of what other people think; remember that being approved of by every person you know isn't that important. You're overcome with anger or sadness when you realize you have treated someone incorrectly. Perhaps checking your hormone levels will lessen the out of control emotions or there could be good results from changing your diet. When you relax this evening try to forget about negative energy or anything upsetting; remember that rain falls in every life to nourish and heal, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Movie Actors 2

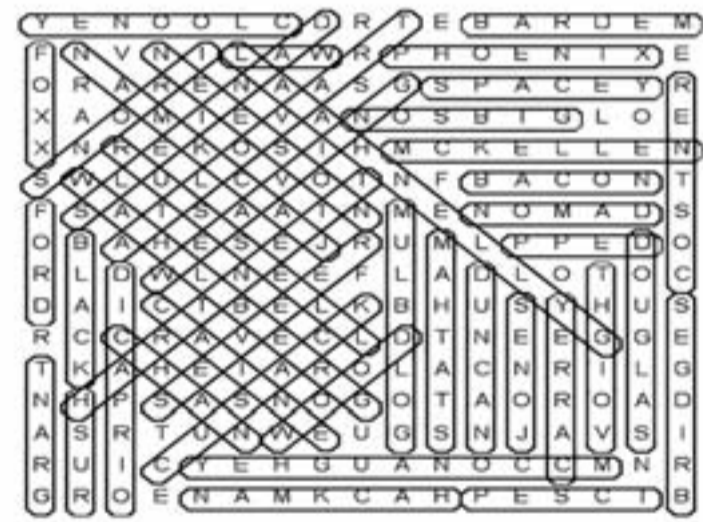
Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which William Hurt won an Oscar.



- ASTIN, Sean
BLOOM, Orlando
BROSIMAN, Pierce
BUSCEMI, Steve
CAGE, Nicolas
CONNERY, Sean
CROWE, Russell
CRUISE, Tom
GARFO, William
DE NIRO, Robert
DESEL, Vin
DOWNEY JR, Robert
DREYFUS, Richard
DVALL, Robert
EVERETT, Robert
FERRELL, Will
FENNES, Ralph
FREEMAN, Morgan
GERE, Richard
GOSLING, Ryan
HANKS, Tom
HARRISON, Woody
HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour
HOWARD, Terrence
HEAT, William
JACKSON, Samuel L.
JONES, Tommy Lee
KEATON, Michael
KILMER, Val
LABOUE, Shia
MAGUIRE, Tobey
MARTIN, Steve
MORTENSEN, Viggo
MYERS, Mike
PATTINSON, Robert
PENN, Sean
REYNOLDS, Ryan
RODEN, Seth
RIDGE, Paul
SMITH, Will
STALLONE, Sylvester
STEWART, Patrick
VAUGHN, Vince
WILKINSON, Tom
WILLIAMS, Robin
WILSON, Owen

Yesterday's Solution

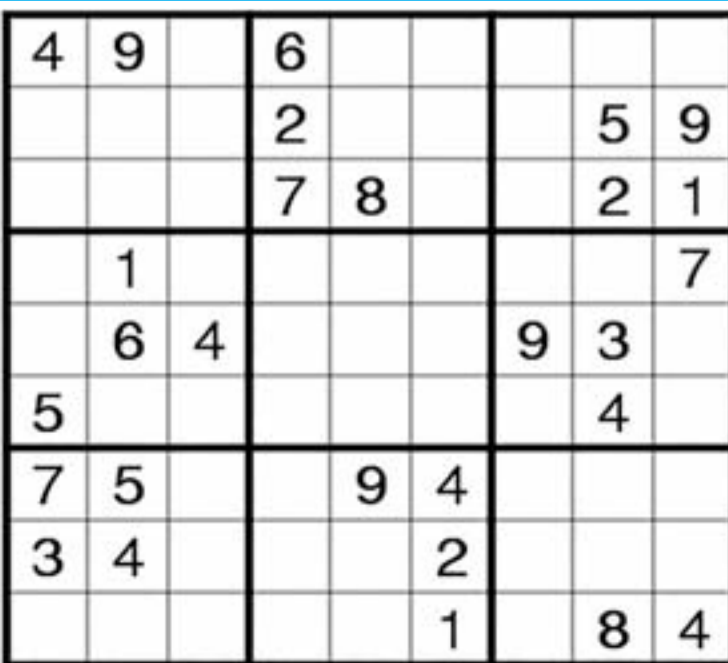
Movie Actors 1



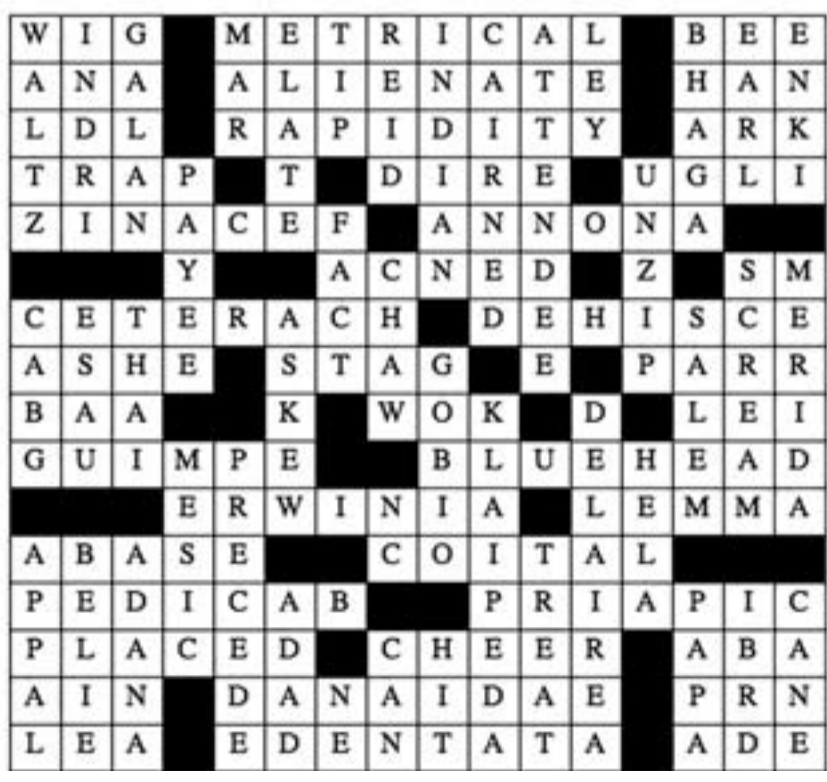
- BACON, Kevin
BARDEM, Javier
BLACK, Jack
BRIDGES, Jeff
CAINE, Michael
CARREY, Jim
CHAN, Jackie
CLOONEY, George
COSTNER, Kevin
CUSACK, John
DAMON, Matt
DANIELS, Jeff
DEPP, Johnny
DICAPRIO, Leonardo
DOUGLAS, Michael
DUNCAN, Michael Clarke
FORD, Harrison
FOX, Jamie
GIBSON, Mel
GOLDBLUM, Jeff
GRANT, Hugh
GYLENHAAL, Jake
HACKMAN, Gene
HARTNETT, Josh
IRON, Jeremy
JACKMAN, Hugh
JONES, James Earl
LAW, Jude
MCCONAUGHEY, Matthew
MCKELLEN, 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

The hidden movie title is: REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle | Gossip



Rita Ora always 'wanted to record a soundtrack'

Rita Ora has always had an ambition to record a movie soundtrack. The 27-year-old beauty stars as Mia - Christian Grey's sister - in the 'Fifty Shades' trilogy, and she also has a single, 'For You', appear on the movie's soundtrack. Reflecting on her sense of achievement, Rita shared: "I always wanted to do a soundtrack for a movie. To be able to finish this amazing trilogy with a song and always these songs have been so successful with the soundtracks that have been coming out previously ... it's nice to have saved the best till last. "It was a real achievement for me. Because being in it and having the lead single on the soundtrack was kind of like, 'Yeah, double thrill!'" The blonde beauty is preparing to release her long-awaited second album later this year, following a much-discussed dispute with her old record label. And Rita believes that her return to

the music industry has really gathered pace over recent months, with the launch of her singles 'Your Song' and 'Anywhere'. She told ITV's 'This Morning': "It's so awesome because in 2017, I actually released two songs before the year was over. I did 'Your Song' and and I did 'Anywhere', which both charted number one on iTunes. "They both were in the top five at the same time in the UK, and I think it was a great, great comeback, because it set me up to put my album out. I'll be performing at the BRITs, I think, next week. That's going to be amazing. I'll be back in the UK in May for my sold out tour. "It's really, really kind of coming together. It's nice to see that my music - which is my passion - is really there and kind of ... I wouldn't be able to be here today if it wasn't for that. I can't wait to go on the road and see everybody again."

ROD STEWART'S SONG FOR JOANNA LUMLEY



Sir Rod Stewart dedicated a song to former girlfriend Joanna Lumley on his 1974 album 'Smiler'. The two stars had a brief relationship in 1973 at the same time as Rod was recording his fifth solo album and their romance had a profound and lasting effect on the singer's music. Rod recorded a cover version of Bob Dylan's 'Girl from the North Country' for his LP, which was one of Joanna's favorite songs and she was one of the first people he ever played it to. Former model Joanna, now 71, told the Daily Express newspaper: "When I was in my late twenties I went out with Rod Stewart for about 20 minutes ... I remember him pitching up early one morning about four o'clock. He had this track and said, 'This is for you.' It was 'Girl from the North Country' and I adore Bob Dylan. To hear Rod singing this fabulous song in his gravelly voice touched me so much. "I've studied the album and it doesn't say dedicated to Joanna Lumley so you've only got my word for it. I could be lying!" Joanna - who has been married to conductor Stephen Barlow

for 30 years - admits dating Rod, 73, was very exciting because he was an extravagant rock 'n' roll star. But as well as being a larger than life character, the 'Absolutely Fabulous' actress insists Rod - who is now happily married to Lady Penny Lancaster - was also a very kind man. Joanna revealed: "He was so fabulous. He had done 'Maggie May' and it was the time that he still wore pink satin suits and drove a Lamborghini and was glamorous ... He would say things like, 'Come to Marbella I want to buy a yacht,' but he did sweet things too. My son was at school and he'd stand by the gates to pick him up. Other mums would be fainting flat on the ground."

Iggy Azalea felt helpless

Iggy Azalea felt helpless when she wrote 'Savior'. The 27-year-old rapper admits she was in a tough time in her life when she penned her most recent single, having gone through a tough break up and feeling her career wasn't going as well as she had hoped. She said: "It was a really heavy period in my life where I'd had a lot of changes that had happened overnight. I'd had a big breakup, and my career wasn't going well. And I sort of found myself in this space where everything that I was used to, just my day-to-day routine, had abruptly stopped. "And I just didn't know how to get my life back together, or what my life looked like with all of these changes, and how to get a routine going again, and just how to get my happiness back and feeling normal. So that was the space that I was in when I wrote this song." And Iggy admits it was "hard" to even put the song out

as it reminds her of how she felt during those tough times. Speaking to iHeartRadio, she added: "It was a hard one to put out there. Sometimes it takes me back to that place, which was so heavy. But it also makes me really happy when I hear it because I figured it out for myself." Meanwhile, Iggy previously revealed she won't be singing about her exes on her new album despite her split from ex-fiancé Nick Young. Replying to fans on Twitter, she shared: "i dont want any songs about exes etc on my album. thats best left in the past. its not my vibe ... lol, no, theres no mention of any relationship drama type stuff. (sic)"



Queen and Adam Lambert to rock around the block once more

Queen and Adam Lambert have announced new European and UK shows this summer due to demand. The 'We Will Rock You' hitmakers and the former 'American Idol' star performed 25 shows across Europe and the UK at the end of last year, but yesterday they surprised fans with the news that the band are set to return to London's The O2 on July 2, and Italy and Germany, with other concerts due to be announced for Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium. The rock legends - who were fronted by the late Freddie Mercury until his death from HIV/AIDS in 1991 - already sold out two shows at the 20,000-capacity venue in the British capital in December. Describing the new dates as "one more around the block", Queen's guitar maestro Brian May said: "The almost unanimous reaction to our last round of dates in Europe was this is absolutely the best production we've ever mounted. There has been a great demand for us to go back and cover the cities we missed! So, while we're still physically able to perform at those high energy levels on this massive scale, we thought ... YES!! One more



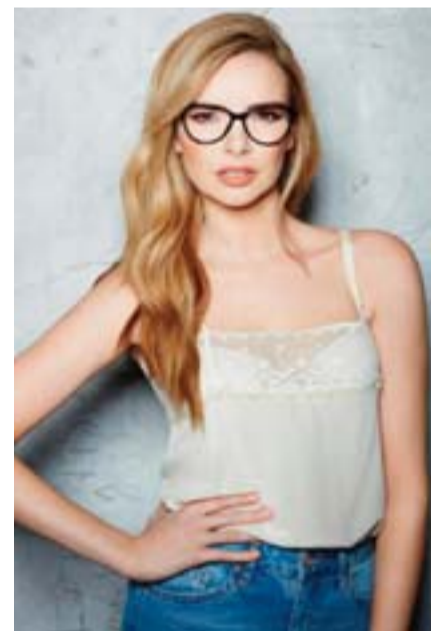
around the block! It's live, it's dangerous, and it takes every ounce of fitness we can muster. But it's still fun!" And Lambert added: "I enjoyed every second of the recent European tour and really felt the love in every city. I can't wait for us to get back there again in the spring!" Fans will be able to experience 300 moving lights during the show choreographed by acclaimed lighting designer Rob Sinclair, who has illuminated tours for major artists including Adele, Peter Dinklage and Kylie Minogue. The spectacular laser elements are the work of ER Productions, behind both the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympics and seen by over 900 million people worldwide. Tickets for their new summer shows go on sale on Friday from 9am.

The new tour dates [with more to follow] are:

June 13, Cologne, Germany, Lanxess Arena
June 19, Berlin, Germany, Mercedes Benz Arena
June 20, Hamburg, Germany, Barclaycard Arena
June 25, Milan, Italy, Forum
July 2, London, The O2

Nadine Coyle plots Girls Aloud greatest hits tour on her own

Nadine Coyle is planning a solo Girls Aloud greatest hits tour. The 32-year-old singer - who made a solo comeback with the song 'Go To Work' last year - has decided to perform the girl group's songs on her own after a reunion with her bandmates - Nicola Roberts, Sarah Harding, Kimberley Walsh and Cheryl Tweedy - proved too difficult, and due to the demand from fans on social media. Speaking to The Sun newspaper, Nadine revealed: "I love the Girls Aloud songs and get messages from fans asking to hear them performed live again. So this is giving them what they want. "This tour is gonna be one big party night out. All the hits the fans love plus the new songs I've been working on over the last few years. I literally can't wait to get out back on the road again." The run of shows will be the first time their biggest tracks - which included 'Sound of the Underground', 'Love Machine' and 'Call The Shots' - have been performed since the band split five years ago. It comes after Nadine admitted the girls became "very bitter" when she landed more lead vocals than any other member. The Irish beauty hinted the reason the 'Can't Speak French' stars - who formed on 'Popstars: The Rivals' in 2002 - parted ways was because there was "always politics" amongst them and a "divide" over who wanted their voice to be heard. The brunette beauty previously admitted: "It was fine at the start but there's always politics in any band. "It just happened that I always got more vocals than everybody else, so in terms of people wanting their voice heard, that wasn't happening. "And it made people, very bitter. They didn't like that. "It's so sad for me to have to admit this stuff now because for so long, there's the band, and you



want everybody to think we're best friends and we have pillow fights and, you know, drink milkshakes. "That's what I wanted it to be. I really, really wanted that to be, but it just wasn't how it was. "So yeah there was [a divide]. We're all very, very different characters." But Nadine thinks the five of them will "absolutely" reunite in the future, although she thinks it would be "different" to the old days. She said: "Could we work together? Absolutely. We could do that next week and it would be fine. "It might be different to how everything would work and how it would all go. Yeah, you'd just go. 'We'd do it.'"



Yungen to collaborate with Bradley Walsh?

Yungen wants to collaborate with Bradley Walsh after he messaged him to say he's a fan of his song 'Bestie'. The grime star has revealed the TV presenter and singer - whose debut album 'Chasing Dreams' beat the likes of Zayn Malik to become the UK's biggest selling album of 2016 - would like to work with him after sharing his love of the chart-topping track, which Yungen features on with pal Yxng Bane. He said: "It's so funny. I got a message from Bradley Walsh. I was like: 'What?' He just posted a video of himself singing along to my song 'Bestie' on Instagram! "That's so weird to me, seeing stuff like that. Hopefully we can do something. We'll see what he can do, eh!" Bradley previously revealed he was planning a duet with another grime star, Stormzy, after the pair met at the BRIT Awards in 2017. Meanwhile, Yungen, 26, has been in the studio with garage king Craig David. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "He is literally my idol. He is the nicest guy ever, we've been in the studio. We're making something that I love of Craig David, old school R&B. "That's my vibe, that's what I grew up listening to, so we're working in that lane." And asked previously if he's going to do anymore tracks with Yxng Bane, Yungen told BANG Showbiz: "Definitely. As soon as we did 'Bestie' that was the first song we did together - we had instant chemistry." And on whether they expected the hit song to blow up like it has, he said: "No. I had no idea it would be a hit. "Despite performing at Wireless festival last year, Yungen is going to focus on his album instead, which he hopes will be released before the end of 2018. On whether he plans on returning to the Finsbury Park weekend in summer, he teased: "Who knows? I might be on holiday taking a break. I would like to go, but right now I am working on the album. "I've been doing festivals for two years straight. The most important thing this year is making new music." Yungen was speaking after a secret gig to launch the Huawei P smart, which is now exclusively available in Vodafone stores across the UK and via the Vodafone website.

Naomi Campbell not body confident



Naomi Campbell is not body confident. The 47-year-old supermodel admitted she would never strip for a selfie because she feels uncomfortable flashing her flesh and feels awkward when she wears "tight" clothes. Discussing the likes of Kim Kardashian West posting nude selfies on their social media accounts, she said: "That's them. That's what they want to do. Personally, I couldn't do that, I can do it in a picture [for my work]. "As a personal picture, I have always been self-conscious of my body. "When I first got to New York and I was, you know, I could never wear hot pants on the street. If I wore something tight, I would have to have a cardigan around my waist just to cover my back, that's just how I always felt." And Naomi admitted she even used to feel "uncomfortable" if she wore skimpy underwear in photoshoots when she first began her career. Speaking on UK TV show 'Good Morning Britain', she said: "It took me for years to get comfortable doing lingerie I felt so uncomfortable." Meanwhile, Naomi recently spoke out about the racist abuse she received at the age of just five. She said: "I remember when I was five a little boy with red hair called me the 'N-word.' Even at that young an age Naomi knew the word was "wrong" and she wasn't willing to simply "accept" the insult and she defended herself. She said: "And at five I know this was wrong, I am not going to accept this and I fought back. It's not acceptable. It's not acceptable anywhere in the world." - Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Gossip

Cardi B wants fashion line



Cardi B wants to release a fashion line. The 'Bodak Yellow' hitmaker - who is engaged to Migos rapper Offset - has a lot of career goals she'd like to accomplish, but she's most looking forward to having a family who she can pass her business empire onto in the future. Asked by Zendaya in an interview for CR Fashion Book what else she'd like to achieve, she said: "I really want to accomplish more records, more Billboard hits. I might want to get into acting or designing clothes, but my real goal is to have beautiful kids, a beautiful mansion, and do business that makes me money until the day I die. Then be able pass it on to my children." The 25-year-old singer also admitted her dream day off would involve wearing her most comfortable clothing and not having to worry about her appearance. She said: "I like to do absolutely nothing. I don't want nobody to invite me nowhere. "I don't want to do my make-up. I don't want to put tight clothes on. I don't want to wear heels. I don't want to do s**t. "But if I can be with my dude and have a little nasty time, I love that too." Cardi - who is of Afro-Trinidadian and Dominican descent - also admitted she feels frustrated that people don't truly understand her heritage. She said: "One thing that always bothers me is that people know so little about my culture. We are Caribbean people. "And a lot of people be attacking me because they feel like I don't be saying that I'm black. Some people want to decide if you're black or not, depending on your skin complexion, because they don't understand Caribbean people or our culture. "I feel like people need to understand or get a passport and travel. "I don't got to tell you that I'm black. I expect you to know it. When my father taught me about Caribbean countries, he told me that these Europeans took over our lands. That's why we all speak different languages. "I expect people to understand that just because we're not African American, we are still black. It's still in our culture. "Just like everybody else, we came over here the same way. I hate when people try to take my roots from me. Because we know that there's African roots inside of us. "I really just want people to understand that the color that I have and features that I have are not from two white people."

Lady Gaga needed treatment at gig

Lady Gaga needed medical treatment at one of her concerts last week. The 31-year-old singer - who has fibromyalgia, a long-term condition which can cause pain all over the body - has been forced to axe the last 10 dates of the European leg of her world tour because she's suffering with "severe pain" and it has been revealed she was struggling during her performances, and had to be seen by medics backstage at Birmingham Arena, where she performed on Wednesday because of concerns for her health. A source told the Sun on Sunday newspaper: "Obviously Lady Gaga's health was the most important priority for everybody on her team. "While



Gaga wowed her fans onstage, no one was aware of the health struggles she was going through behind the scenes. But she was determined to battle through and not let anybody down. "There was only so long she could carry on without risking longer term consequences." The 'Just Dance' hitmaker and her team had considered scrapping the remaining concert dates earlier in the week but she was determined to press on for as long as she could. However, as a precautionary measure against lost revenue, it was reportedly decided to move the

recording of her tour DVD from London's O2 Arena on Sunday - one of the axed dates - to the Birmingham show. The insider said: "After it became apparent that Gaga's health was failing, her team organized crisis talks. "Tour DVDs are very lucrative and everyone knew that if Gaga had to cancel her dates then they'd lose out on millions of pounds. They couldn't face missing out on more. "So they felt it was best to bring forward the recording." The 'Poker Face' singer previously admitted she was "devastated" at having to cancel the shows. Taking to her Twitter account, she said: "I am so devastated I don't know how to describe it. All I know is that if I don't do this I am not standing by the words or meaning of my music. My medical team is supporting the decision for me to recover at home. We're cancelling the last 10 shows of my Joanne World Tour. I love the show more than anything and I love you but this is beyond my control. "London, Manchester, Zurich, Koln, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin. And Rio.

Jamie Dornan too old to carry on Fifty Shades franchise

Jamie Dornan believes he is "too old" to carry on with the 'Fifty Shades of Grey' franchise. The 35-year-old actor has portrayed S&M enthusiast Christian Grey in the erotic films and makes his final appearance in 'Fifty Shades Freed' and he insists the time is right to bow out from the franchise. Speaking on UK TV show 'Lorraine' yesterday Dornan said: "Yeah I think so, I don't think there's a story. Erica [James - author] wrote the two books from Christian's perspective but that has been done in the films. But Dakota [Johnson] and I, particularly me, are too old for doing this." The movies - which are based on the popular novels by E.L. James - follows the racy relationship between Christian and Anastasia, with the final movie following the newlyweds who believe they have left behind the figures from their past. However, as she steps into her role as Mrs Grey, Christian relaxes into an unfamiliar stability, which could threaten their relationship. Although his character is both liked and disliked by fans of the novels and films, Dornan

revealed he has grown to like his on-screen alter-ego. He said: "I think I like him more than I did in the first movie. "I think he has gone through a big change in his way and how he is with people and he has opened a lot by Anna and is a better version of himself that was always within him but the awful stuff that happened to him shaped the way he was. I find him more palpable than I did in the first one." The film also stars Rita Ora as Dornan's on-screen adopted sister Mia and the singer-turned-actress recently teased the third film is more of a thriller. She explained: "I was really excited because I definitely had a bigger part in the movie, and I ended up loving each and every one of the cast and crew, including Dakota and Jamie, and everyone was super supportive of one another. "It was actually kind of sad wrapping up, because I guess that was the last movie, but it's so exciting. It's definitely way more thriller-y than anything. It's got moments of my getting kidnapped. There's fighting scenes. It's really great."



Rian Johnson admits woes with Poe storyline



Rian Johnson found Poe Dameron's storyline the "trickiest" to write in 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The 44-year-old filmmaker helmed the eighth installment of the hit sci-fi franchise and took over the directing seat from JJ. Abrams, who started the brand new trilogy with 'The Force Awakens', but Johnson admitted he had problems writing Oscar Isaac's on-screen alter ego. In a recent interview with Collider, Johnson said: "[Poe was the] hardest to write for, honestly, just in terms of figuring out what their story was going to be was Poe. Luke [Skywalker - played by Mark Hamill] was obviously the hardest overall, but besides Luke, Poe was the trickiest. Poe is a such a clear-cut, simple character in [Episode VII] because he's Oscar Isaac and he's the most charismatic man in the universe and he's just rad. "Honestly, I actually wrote, in the very first draft I wrote of it, Poe went with Finn [John Boyega] on the mission to Canto Bight, and the two of them were going to be together on the mission. And it didn't work at all because those two get along so well and it'd be really boring." 'Episode IX' is set to be helmed once again by Abrams who looks to be finally concluding the Skywalker storyline. 'The Last Jedi' has been slapped with backlash since it hit the big screen last year because fans were expecting it to have a memorial service for the beloved character Han Solo (played by Harrison Ford) after he died in 'The Force Awakens'. But Johnson has defended his decision not to have a special scene for the beloved space smuggler character because he thought it would mess up the pace of the film. He said: "[There was no debate of showing Han Solo's funeral], just because pacing-wise it didn't have a place. It's tough in 'Star Wars' because I always think about the mourning that Luke gives to Ben's death, which is all of four-and-a-half seconds before. 'Come on kid we're not out of this yet,' and then boom, you're into, 'Yay, woo-hoo! Don't get cocky!' "There's the moment for it, but it's not long. We don't have time for our sorrows, commanders. That's kind of the thing of 'Star Wars'; you don't really linger on grief because you're moving forward."

Lupita Nyong'o: Black Panther is not a typical sweetheart story

Lupita Nyong'o says her 'Black Panther' alter ego isn't your "average damsel in distress". The 34-year-old actress plays Special Forces warrior Nakia in the new Marvel Cinematic Universe movie, and has described the heroine as a "war dog" who proves useful to the titular hero [Chadwick Boseman]. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Lupita said: "[She] is a war dog, which means that she is an undercover spy for Wakanda. She goes out into the world to places like Korea. "She has a special relationship with T'Challa and what I love about that relationship is that it's not your average, you know, sweetheart story [with a] damsel in distress. They have a history but she is a reliable ear for him." The movie's helmer, Ryan Coogler, and Nyong'o previously revealed the filmmaker avoided the "expected female-rival narrative" in the latest film. Nyong'o said: "Ryan made a point of avoiding the expected female-rival narrative. In this genre, where spandex is involved, oftentimes the women are pitted against each other. In our story, there are so many different women holding their own space. Women may be in competition with each other, sure, but that doesn't necessarily mean there's an absence of love or respect. Shuri [Letitia Wright] is the sister to the Black Panther [Chadwick Boseman] and the leader of technological pursuits and Nakia is someone who has a complicated history with the Black Panther and is a warrior in her own right. You see them work together, and you see a dynamic that is really encouraging. Making this film awakened me. I walked away from this experience feeling extremely supported and I felt challenged." The motion picture is expected to expand on the storyline that was first introduced in 'Captain America: Civil War' of how T'Challa becomes the Black Panther. T'Challa's father T'Chaka is king of the African nation Wakanda and has the ceremonial title Black Panther as the chief of the Panther Tribe, but is killed when a bomb goes off at the UN making his son the Black Panther.



Lorde asks fans for clothes

Lorde has asked her fans to send her clothes to wear on tour. The 'Royals' hitmaker is keen to pay tribute to her idols at her upcoming concerts, so has sent out an appeal for "genuine" merchandise that she can use on stage. In exchange, Lorde has promised to send her fans a personalized gift. She wrote on Twitter: "ok time to quit playing. need to rep my heroes on this tour. if anyone has any GENUINE/AUTHENTIC crosby, stills, nash/& young paul simon/simon & garfunkel phil collins merch they would part with... i'll swap it for a homedrawn tshirt by me! (sic)" Meanwhile, the 21-year-old singer previously revealed she and producer Jack Antonoff tried over 20 different types of cereal while working on her latest album 'Melodrama' because the New Zealand-born star hadn't sampled many American breakfast favorites. She said: "When I came to New York, we had only written together maybe a couple of times, and we were very obsessed with each other on a creative level as buds. "I was sort of doing nothing in New York, and we did this thing where for five days in a row we just kept having dinner every night, just getting to know each other. One night, somehow, it came up that I hadn't had Cap'n Crunch or Cinnamon Toast Crunch or Lucky Charms. He was like, "We have to do this." "So we went to a bodega, got all of these cereals and went back to his house in Brooklyn and did a little lineup of bowls. We tried, like, 20 different kinds of cereal. [I still think] about Cinnamon Toast Crunch all the time." Out of all the cereals she sampled, the 'Green Light' singer liked "delicious" Reese's Puffs the most.



Jordan Peele gave up acting due to The Emoji Movie



Jordan Peele gave up acting because of 'The Emoji Movie'. The 38-year-old actor and filmmaker is currently being praised for his directorial debut 'Get Out' and now, Peele has admitted he will no longer act after he was offered the voice role of Poop in the animated movie based around the mobile text images. While accepting his Director's Guild Award for Best First-Time Director on Saturday Peele said: "Daniel Day-Lewis and I are both out. Acting is just nowhere near as fun for me as directing. "The 'Emoji Movie' actually helped me quit acting. I was offered the role of Poop. This is true. I would not make this up. "When you have women directors you get 'Lady Bird', 'Mudbound', and 'Wonder Woman'. When you have male directors you get 'The Emoji Movie' ... with a character who is a literal piece of s**t." The role of Poop was ultimately given to Sir Patrick Stewart in the animation directed by Tony Leondis. Despite turning down the role of Poop, Peele is receiving continuous nominations - including Best Picture at the Academy Awards and Best Actor for the leading man Daniel

Kaluuya - for his psychological thriller 'Get Out'. The film follows interracial couple Chris (Kaluuya) and his girlfriend, Rose (Allison Williams), who have reached the meet-the-parents stage of dating. She invites him for a weekend getaway with her parents and, at first, Chris reads the family's overly accommodating behavior as nervous attempts to deal with their daughter's interracial relationship. But during the weekend, a series of increasingly disturbing discoveries and bizarre encounters with the family's white neighbors and friends lead him to a truth that he never could have imagined. And Peele admitted he hopes viewers "crap their pants" when they see it. He said: "I hope they s**t their pants! It's the least I could hope for. Despite the nature of the film, I want people to come away from this movie feeling good. I want people to come away from this movie feeling good. I want it to strike a cathartic cord with people, and provide an emotional release. I have no doubt white and black audiences will experience the film very differently, but this movie is actually bringing people together."

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Singer Justin Timberlake performs during the halftime show of Super Bowl LII at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Sunday. — AFP photos

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE SALUTES PRINCE IN SUPER BOWL HALFTIME DANCE PARTY

Justin Timberlake danced his way through a club-inspired Super Bowl halftime show Sunday as he paid tribute to Prince in the late singer's hometown with a towering yet tasteful projection. After fevered speculation on whether or how Timberlake would salute the icon as the Super Bowl came to Minneapolis, the pop star obliged midway through his performance. "Minneapolis, this is for you," Timberlake told the crowd as he sat down to a piano, the field bathed in purple light. As Timberlake slowed down the tempo for a soulful cover of "I Would Die 4 U," footage of "Purple Rain"-era Prince shot up toward the roof of the new US Bank Stadium in a smoky haze, closing with a silhouette of The Purple One with his guitar.

“Minneapolis,
this is
for you”

But Prince, who died in April 2016 of an accidental overdose, did not "perform" in a hologram—as some fans had feared—and the segment, while memorable, amounted to a fleeting moment of the up-tempo show. There was also no naked "wardrobe malfunction" of the type that marred Timberlake's last appearance 14 years ago, when he joined Janet Jackson at the Super Bowl—by far the most watched US television event of the year. While many Super Bowl performers go heavy on pyrotechnics, Timberlake instead showed off his dancing skills, opening the show in a nightclub-like maze of lasers as he sang his recent single "Filthy." Timberlake then strutted into the stadium with his mic in hand, leading a squad of dancers—and matching them step for step—as he sang a medley of his best-known songs including "SexyBack." He rose to center stage and sang "Suit and Tie" with back-up from the appropriately attired University of Minnesota march-

ing band, who moved to the music with their instruments doubling as props.

How to honor Prince?

Timberlake has described Prince as a "huge influence" on him, but his Super Bowl tribute had generated controversy even before it happened. The celebrity gossip site TMZ earlier said that Timberlake was considering a Prince hologram, horrifying many fans. Sheila E., one of Prince's closest collaborators, said late Saturday that she had spoken to Timberlake who voiced "heartfelt words of respect" for The Purple One—and assured no hologram. Prince had a famously complicated relationship with technology, with the artist among the first stars to embrace the possibilities of online music but eventually

becoming disgruntled over the internet's cultural effects.

In a 1998 interview with Guitar World, Prince said he would never want to "perform" with a dead artist such as Duke Ellington through digital effects, calling such lack of artistic control for a late musician "the most demonic thing imaginable." In Timberlake's last Super Bowl appearance in 2004, he entered as the surprise guest of headliner Jackson and swiped his hand across her chest—exposing one of her breasts. A scandalized TV-watching nation saw Jackson's nipple-well, covered with a metal nipple shield—and broadcaster CBS was fined \$550,000 for indecency. Jackson took to social media ahead of the latest Super Bowl to make clear she was not coming back for a do-over. — AFP



Kylie Jenner breaks silence and the internet with birth announcement

It wasn't exactly the best kept secret but Kylie Jenner still managed to break the internet on Sunday when she finally confirmed she had given birth to a baby girl with her beau, rapper Travis Scott. The announcement had been predicted for weeks in the celebrity pages partly because the 20-year-old reality TV star had embarked on such a prolonged and uncharacteristic media blackout for a member of the wildly popular Kardashian clan. "My pregnancy was one I chose not to do in front of the world," she wrote in a post on Instagram announcing her daughter's birth, which quickly racked up 8.3 million likes. "I knew my baby would feel every stress and every emotion. So I chose to do it this way for my little life, and our happiness," she added.



Kylie Jenner

The announcement was followed up with a carefully choreographed social media blitz typical of a family who have turned the broadcasting of their lives and the endorsing of products—into a hugely lucrative industry. Jenner published an 11-minute video on YouTube documenting her pregnancy, complete with tearful ultrasounds, plenty of pregnant selfies and cameos from her Kardashian sisters, that notched up more than 17 million views within the first 12 hours.

The Instagram post announcing the pregnancy quickly became the tenth most liked post of all time on the social media platform. Celebrity babies feature prominently in Instagram's most popular posts. The current leader is a post from November by footballer Cristiano Ronaldo announcing the birth of his fourth child which has 11.3 million likes. Entries by pop superstar Beyonce and Jenner's half-sister Khloe Kardashian announcing births or pregnancies are also all in the top ten list of the website's most liked posts. In her post Jenner said she and Scott had yet to name the baby girl who was born in Los Angeles on February 1. — AFP

'SEX AND THE CITY' ACTRESS CATTRALL SAYS BROTHER IS DEAD

Appeals by "Sex and the City" actress Kim Cattrall for help in finding her missing brother ended in sadness on Sunday when she announced his death. "It is with great sadness that myself and my family announce the unexpected passing of our son and brother, Chris Cattrall," she said in a tweet, less than 24 hours after publicly appealing for help in finding him. "At this time we ask for privacy. We want to thank you all on social media for your outpouring of love and support in this trying time," she said without specifying the cause of death.



In this file photo British-Canadian actress Kim Cattrall poses on the red carpet as she attends the 60th London Evening Standard Theatre Awards. — AFP

Her younger sibling disappeared from his home in Canada's Alberta province for five days. "MISSING! This is my brother Christopher Cattrall or Chris as we call him," she wrote in an Instagram post that accompanied a picture of the 55-year-old, sporting a short haircut, a slight smile, and a black sports-style jersey. She added that he had not been seen since January 30, and that he left his keys, cell phone, and wallet on the table of his home in the town of Lacombe, while the front door was unlocked. "This is not like Chris. He... would never leave his unlocked home without those items nor his seven beloved dogs," she wrote.

"Chris is 55 years old, six feet tall (1.83 meters), 200 pounds (90 kilograms), blue eyes, short brown hair, goatee, average build and usually wearing a waist length hooded winter coat with black gloves, blue jeans and calf high black winter boots," she added. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police had also issued an alert on Sunday. CBC television cited the police as saying Chris Cattrall's death was not considered suspicious. — AFP

Director Dolan cuts Chastain from upcoming film

Canadian director Xavier Dolan announced he had cut American actress Jessica Chastain's character from upcoming drama "The Death and Life of John F. Donovan." In Instagram posts shared on Sunday evening, Dolan said he had to rework the first cut of the film, which lasted over four hours. "What you need to hear from me is that Jessica Chastain's character, after what was a long period of reflection, had to be cut from the film," he said, adding that the decision was "editorial" and not reflective of Chastain's performance in the drama.

Instead, Dolan explained, Chastain's "villain" character "did not feel like it belonged to the rest

of the story." "I am disappointed that we didn't get to reveal the exciting things we crafted together on this one adventure," he said, adding he wanted fans to hear the news from him. However, Montreal native Dolan added he is "beyond happy" with the film and "eager" to share it with fans—but did not give a release date. "The Death and Life of John F. Donovan," which documents a young actor's reflections on correspondence he shared with an American TV star as a child, is Dolan's most ambitious work yet—and his first English-language film, with stars including Kit Harington and Susan Sarandon. — AFP



Xavier Dolan

Ice instruments ring out coolest music in Norway



Organizer sprays water towards a structure of ice ahead of the Ice Music Festival in the small mountain village of Finse in the municipality of Ulvik in southern Norway.— AFP photos



Terje Lsungset, the founder and artistic director of the Ice Music Festival, tests a musical instrument made of ice outside his workshop ahead of the festival.



An organizer builds a structure of ice ahead of the Ice Music Festival.

Inside a giant igloo in a snowy Norwegian village, the sound of a horn rings out, warming the mood of a freezing audience, huddled together in -24 Celsius. But the four musicians performing are even colder: the instruments they are playing are all made of ice. The xylophone, claves and wind instruments have been painstakingly carved from ice blocks extracted from a frozen lake, and are now part of a finger-numbing performance at the 13th Ice Music Festival in the mountain village of Finse.



Organizers build a structure of ice ahead of the Ice Music Festival.

The problem is, the longer the musicians play, the more the instruments start to disintegrate. It is not an easy task "to perform on instruments that are melting while you play them," says percussionist Terje Lsungset, also the founder of the festival. Wearing thick wool gloves, he blows warm air into his ice-sculpted horn, illuminated under blue and turquoise lights. Next to him, a singer with an angelic voice covers her mouth with a scarf to stay warm, while a bass player removes his gloves so he can pull the strings on his ice-made instrument.



Terje Lsungset, the founder and artistic director of the Ice Music Festival, shapes a musical instrument made of ice outside his workshop ahead of the festival.

'Art and madness'
The setting of the festival, 195 kilometers (121 miles) west of Oslo, is not for anyone sensitive to a shivering climate. Held between February 2 and 3 inside an igloo built solely of ice, dozens of people wearing clothing fit to survive freezing mountain weather sit on snow benches while cheering and wrapping their arms around each other. As the night grows older, a band member blows into a long ice wind instrument shaped like an Australian didgeridoo, vibrating across the venue. "It's a fine line between art and madness," Emile Holba, a UK-based photographer and crew member, tells AFP as he bursts into laughter.

“It's a fine line between art and madness”

"Things can go wrong, instruments can break... the audience likes the purity of it," he adds. The festival has previously been held in Geilo, a ski resort in the central mountain region of Norway. But organizers say the weather there has become milder, making it difficult to build ice venues and harder to prevent the instruments from melting. "This winter... the ice was really slushy and difficult to deal with," Lsungset said. "It's the first time I have seen ice like this."

Something out of 'nearly nothing'
In search of guaranteed freezing temperatures, the festival moved further west to Finse, a 30-minute train ride from Geilo. Surrounded by mountains framing a glacier,

the area was used to create the snow planet "Hoth" in the opening scene of Star Wars movie "The Empire Strikes Back". The village was also the base for Antarctic expedition training by British explorer Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922) and his Norwegian counterpart Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930). "It's kind of otherworldly... there is magic there," says Holba. Preparing the festival is no simple task. It took organizers a week to build the igloo and the ice needed to be sourced and collected by a crew of more than 20 people.

Large chunks were removed from a nearby lake and the musicians used chainsaws, hammers and chisels to carefully sculpt the instruments. "It's just music... and trying to create something out of nearly nothing," Lsungset said. After the festival, some of the instruments do become nearly nothing again, the ice dripping away back into the earth. But a few of the ice-creations do survive. If deemed to be in good enough shape, the instruments are stored inside a freezer, waiting in frozen isolation, to be used again the following year. — AFP



Terje Lsungset (center), the founder and artistic director of the Ice Music Festival, performs with a musical instrument made purely of ice during the festival.



Terje Lsungset, the founder and artistic director of the Ice Music Festival, tests a musical instrument made of ice outside his workshop ahead of the festival.



An organizer places a musical instrument made of ice ahead of the Ice Music Festival.

French chef Veyrat seals comeback with third Michelin star

Marc Veyrat, the comeback king of French cuisine, was back on the top of the culinary tree yesterday after the Michelin guide awarded him the maximum three stars. The flamboyant chef, who is rarely seen without his black Savoyard hat and cape, has now won the top rating for three different restaurants over the course of his career. Nine years after Veyrat was forced to give up cooking after a serious skiing accident and three after his alpine restaurant La Maison des Bois burned down, the 67-year-old was back at the summit of French cooking. Known for his highly inventive creations that mix delicate infusions of wild herbs with hearty traditional Savoyard cooking, Veyrat is one of only two "new" chefs promoted this year to the elite club who hold three stars, a source told AFP.

The self-taught master, who has spent most of his life cooking in his home village of Manigod 1,600 meters (5,200 feet) up the Alps near Annecy, has twice been given the maximum 20 out of 20 score by the rival Gault-Millau guide. Christophe Bacquie, 45, of the Castellet Hotel in the Var region of southeast France was also awarded a third star for the first time. Only a tiny club of 28 chefs hold three stars from the Michelin guide, the bible of French gastronomy. Last week for the first time the Michelin allowed a top French restaurant to bow out

of its listings after its chef told AFP he no longer wanted to work under the "huge pressure" of being judged by its inspectors. Sebastien Bras, whose Le Suquet restaurant in the rural Aveyron region, had held the maximum three-star rating for 18 years. — AFP



File photo shows French chef Sebastien Bras posing in the kitchen of his three-star restaurant Le Suquet, in Laguiole, southern France, after announcing that he asked not to be included in the Michelin Guide starting in 2018. — AFP

Environmental percussion piece to mark New York festival

"Inuksuit" composer John Luther Adams' innovative percussion piece, played outdoors by dozens of players, will return for a free performance at New York's Caramoor summer festival. Adams, one of the leading living US composers whose work is heavily influenced by Alaska, won acclaim after premiering the environmental-minded work in 2009. Named for and meant to rhythmically model the stone markers set up by Arctic indigenous people, "Inuksuit" brings together 9 to 99 percussionists dispersed over a wide area and influenced by local factors such as birds. The Caramoor festival, announcing its 73rd season on Wednesday, said that more than 60 players would perform "Inuksuit" on July 1 as part of a day of free programming that will include children's activities.

Kathy Schuman, Caramoor's vice president for artistic programming, said in a statement that she hoped the performance "will attract some curious audiences who may never have ventured onto our

grounds." The Caramoor festival, launched in 1945 as World War II was ending, takes place each summer over a sprawling Mediterranean-inspired estate some 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Manhattan. The festival made its name as a leading US hub for bel canto singing but has increasingly branched out.

The latest season, which runs from June 16 to July 29, will put a special focus on women's contributions with performances by Benin's Angelique Kidjo, who is one of Africa's best-known singers, folk-rocker Aimee Mann, jazz singer Dianne Reeves, Broadway star Audra McDonald and, from the opera world, mezzo-soprano Susan Graham. The season will also feature two world premieres—a piece for string quartet by rising New York composer Julia Adolphe and a work by the modernist jazz pianist Vijay Iyer. — AFP

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A woman walks past an art work installation of a large wooden skull at Gyeongpo beach in Gangneung. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games in South Korea will take place from February 9 to 25. — AFP



A picture shows a Phoenician sculpture of a young boy wearing a long shirt dating back to the 5th century BC, part of a collection of repatriated artefacts on display during a ceremony at Beirut National Museum in the Lebanese capital. — AFP photos

LEBANON MUSEUM UNVEILS ARTEFACTS LOOTED DURING CIVIL WAR

Lebanon's national museum on Friday unveiled five ancient sculptures, including a Phoenician bull's head returned by the United States, that were looted during the civil war. The life-size 4th century BC white marble bull's head, the star artefact among the works that were all looted in 1981, had been loaned to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met). The five pieces were discovered on the Phoenician site of Eshmun, near the southern port city of Sidon, during excavations carried out in the 1960s and 1970s. "We are committed, as much as we can, to repatriating pieces stolen during the war," Lebanese Culture Minister Ghattas Khoury said during a ceremony at the National Museum of Beirut.

Lebanon's civil war lasted 15 years from 1975 to 1990. The five statues were stolen from a storeroom in Byblos and later surfaced "on the international antiquity market", the culture ministry said in a statement. They were repatriated over the past two months. The bull's head had been

exhibited at the Met and was spotted as part of a drive by Manhattan district attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. The official has made it a priority to track stolen artwork and the repatriation of the Lebanese sculptures capped months of cooperation between Beirut and the US authorities. The repatriated works unveiled on Friday also included a 6th century BC marble statue that had ended up in the same private collection as the bull's head. The other pieces were a 4th century BC statue that had been in the possession of a private New York collector, a 5th century BC marble torso that turned up in Germany and a statue of a young boy which customs seized at the northern port of Tripoli. — AFP



A picture shows a sculpture of a bull's head dating back to the 4th century BC, part of a collection of repatriated artefacts on display during a ceremony at Beirut National Museum in the Lebanese capital.



US Ambassador to Lebanon Elizabeth Richards (center) inspects repatriated marble sculptures dating back to 4th to 6th centuries on display during a ceremony at Beirut National Museum.



Pictures show repatriated marble sculptures dating back to 4th to 6th centuries on display during a ceremony at Beirut National Museum in the Lebanese capital.

Leonardo boosts Christie's sales to record high

Sales at Christie's hit a record high last year of £5.1 billion (5.8 billion euros, \$7.3 billion) boosted by blockbuster sales including Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi", the auction house said on Friday. The Britain-based auction powerhouse was responsible for sales of seven of 10 top works of art sold globally in 2017 including the Leonardo, which was bought for \$450.3 million. "2017 has been a year to remember for Christie's both for its record growth and some unforgettable moments," said Guillaume Cerutti, Christie's chief executive officer. At New York's November Impressionist and

Modern evening sale, six auction world records were made, with Vincent Van Gogh's "Laboureur dans un champ" fetching \$81.3 million and Fernand Leger's "Contraste de formes" making \$70 million.

Auction sales led the growth in 2017 with a 38 percent increase totalling £4.6 billion while sales of art online, via Christie's live platform and online absentee bidding, reached £165.6 million. New clients at Christie's provided a significant boost to the auction house, accounting for 31 percent of all buyers with online sales remaining their preferred point of entry. "In 2018 we will focus on contin-

uing to expand our global client base and improving services to our customers, especially online," said Cerutti.

Globally, European and Middle Eastern buyers led client spending, accounting for 37 percent while buying in the Asia region increased 39 percent to represent 31 percent of global spend. Christies.com received 12 million unique visitors, with those visiting the website and app coming from over 190 countries. — AFP