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# Minor accidents to be settled instantly at police stations

New curbs on absconding domestics during amnesty • Mobile labor office to serve expats

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry announced yesterday the activation of articles 2 and 5 of the traffic law no. 41 approving settlements at police stations for accidents of limited damage. Motorists who cause a minor accident will pay KD 20 at the police station and acknowledge their responsibility, thus relieving personnel and civilians involved of a lot of time and effort. The interior ministry's relation and security information department said this was decided at a meeting of the ministry's investigations department and the Kuwait Insurance Association held at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Deputy General Manager of the Investigations Department Jamal Al-Reesh said the implementation of the plan will begin from the Capital governorate. He said these items already exist in the law and the investigations department merely decided to activate them. He said receipt books will be distributed to police stations and will be given to those who pay the KD 20 charge. He said this will reduce the documentary cycle from 18

months to a few hours.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports Affairs Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah said that due to increased demands by citizens over the status of domestic helpers who absconded from their sponsors and wish to benefit from the amnesty without leaving the country, they can do so after paying the due fines with a condition that they can only transfer their residencies after a year.

Separately, the Manpower Public Authority's Deputy Director for Labor Protection Abdullah Al-Motoutah said that the authority has set up a mobile office to receive complaints by laborers working in remote areas who cannot reach the authority's departments easily. Motoutah added that the mobile center is equipped with various administrative and regulatory needs to provide easy and swift service. He said the center is currently manned by a special emergency team including investigators and inspectors working in collaboration with the Humanitarian Foundation for Legal Aid that has provided volunteer translators and lawyers.



**KUWAIT:** Officials are seen during the interior ministry meeting at the Chamber of Commerce yesterday. — KUNA

## Freed Kuwaiti returns from Iran

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti citizen Faleh Al-Azmi, who was released by Iranian authorities, has returned home and is in good condition, Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Sami Al-Hamad said yesterday. Kuwaiti diplomats received Azmi yesterday morning following his release, Hamad told reporters at Kuwait airport. The foreign ministry exerted every possible effort to secure the release of Azmi, who was held in captivity for months, he said. Azmi was arrested in September when he mistakenly entered a military zone on his way back to Kuwait from Turkey. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti citizen Faleh Al-Azmi is welcomed at Kuwait airport yesterday. — KUNA

## Global market panic fading; Kuwaitis lose big in bitcoin

**LONDON/KUWAIT:** A collective sigh of relief swept across global trading floors yesterday as bargain hunters swooped on Wall Street stocks, stemming a hemorrhage that had been spreading panic among investors. With Asian and European equity markets plunging, New York stocks started their trading day with another jaw-dropping fall as the Dow index dived nearly three percent, adding to the previous day's record-breaking loss. But within minutes a fierce battle appeared to



**NEW YORK:** Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) yesterday. — AFP

be playing out between those betting on a further downturn and those who thought that the market correction had gone too far, leading to some wild price swings.

Meanwhile, bitcoin continued its spiral

downwards after some banks banned their customers from buying it with credit cards. The news is the latest to hit the cryptocurrency after recent crackdowns by authorities

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**MANILA:** Crushed luxury vehicles are seen at the customs yard yesterday after they were seized for being smuggled illegally. — AFP

## Philippines crushes sports, luxury cars in graft warning

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte watched bulldozers flatten dozens of sports cars and other luxury vehicles yesterday as part of a drive to fight corruption at the country's customs bureau. A Jaguar, a Lexus, a Corvette Stingray, and dozens of top-end German sedans and Japanese SUVs were crushed at a customs yard in the capital Manila. The vehicles were seized after they were smuggled in, authorities said.

A total of 30 vehicles worth a combined 61.6 million pesos (\$1.2 million) were scrapped in Manila and two other cities on Duterte's orders. The president has made fighting corruption and illegal drugs the cornerstones of his six-year term. "Reduce them to scrap metal," Duterte said in a speech to customs employees after the event. Normally, seized smuggled vehicles are impounded and then auctioned with the government taking the proceeds. "I will pay for them, no problem," Duterte said.

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## Assembly guards assault journalist

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A journalist covering the National Assembly news for local Arabic daily Al-Jarida claimed he was physically assaulted by the commander of the National Assembly guards yesterday after preventing him from doing his work. The newspaper decided to suspend its coverage of the National Assembly following the incident, which took place after a verbal encounter between the journalist and the Assembly guards. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the incident will be investigated today, adding that he had called the editor of the newspaper. He affirmed his respect for both the media personnel and the Assembly guards for maintaining order at the building.

Journalist Ali Al-Sunaideh Al-Ajmi told Al-Jarida that he was covering an incident where the Assembly guards were trying to calm down military pensioners who were in the spectators' gallery. The men wanted MPs to

debate a draft law that gives them more financial rights and refused to keep quiet when asked by the speaker. Then the guards intervened and asked them to leave.

At this point, the guards asked the journalist not to cover the encounter, but he insisted as he was doing his job. He said the guards spoke to him roughly. He then went to their commander who was watching and complained that they were preventing him from doing his job. The commander did the same and asked him to leave. Ajmi said he refused since he was doing his duty. At this point, the commander ordered him to hand over his Assembly ID and leave the building, which he did. As he was being escorted by the guards towards the gate, the commander hit him from behind, Ajmi claimed.

Meanwhile, the Assembly session passed yesterday without any significant output, except a number of decisions on work to do in the coming sessions. Lawmakers decided to discuss a draft law on naturalizing stateless people known as bedoons and allowing them to join the army in today's session. They decided to debate the new economic charter on Feb 20 after threats by MPs to grill the finance minister.

MPs also agreed to debate an investigation report about a huge rise in so-called hospitality spending by the interior ministry, which the budgets committee



**KUWAIT:** National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem gestures during a session of the National Assembly yesterday. — KUNA

recommended be referred to the public prosecution. However, the Assembly could not debate the issue as the session ended. During the session, MPs criticized the government failure to bring down the cost of recruiting domestic helpers from abroad and the failure of the newly-established Al-Durra company to do the same.

Continued on Page 11

## More civilians killed in deadly Syrian strikes

**SAQBA, Syria:** Fresh regime strikes on a besieged rebel-held enclave near Damascus killed 47 civilians yesterday despite mounting Western pressure on Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. The bloodshed came a day after another 31 civilians were killed in Eastern Ghouta and as the United Nations pleaded for a truce in the seven-year-old war to allow for aid deliveries. Eastern Ghouta and Idlib, a northern province where violence also flared this week, are both so-called de-escalation zones agreed last year in a bid

to pave the way for an end to the conflict.

A UN-mandated committee however said the recent escalation "made a mockery" of the deal, which has failed to take hold as the Syrian government continues its nationwide military re-conquest. The latest casualties in Ghouta came as Washington threatened military action over the reported use of chemical weapons in the enclave, which regime and allied forces have besieged since 2013. The death toll there rose from an initial report of 16 to 47 and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights warned it could climb further as bodies were still being pulled from the wreckage and many of the 197 wounded were in critical condition.

All too familiar scenes of chaos engulfed the towns scattered across the semi-rural rebel-held area of Ghouta

Continued on Page 11



**DOUMA, Syria:** The bodies of a Syrian man and child who died in air strikes on this rebel-held besieged town in the eastern Ghouta region are seen at a morgue yesterday. — AFP

# Amir receives outgoing Ambassador of Somalia

## Crown Prince represents Amir at Janadriyah festival



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Somalia Abdulqader Amin Sheikh. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Ambassador of Somalia Abdulqader Amin Sheikh on the occasion of ending his tenure in Kuwait. The reception was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Separately, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulations to President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus on the occasion of his re-election as President for a second term, wishing him all the best and more prosperity for his country. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince is set to leave today along with his accompanying official delegation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he is expected to represent His Highness the Amir inauguration of the 32nd national festival for heritage and culture (Al-Janadriyah). The visit is in response to an invitation extended by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz to His Highness the Amir to attend the event which takes place in Riyadh. — KUNA



### Amir congratulates Cypriot president on re-election

Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz to His Highness the Amir to attend the event which takes place in Riyadh. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti delegation meets Palestinian President in Ramallah

RAMALLAH: A Kuwaiti official delegation arrived yesterday in the West Bank city of Ramallah aboard a Jordanian helicopter to partake in the scheduled festival Jerusalem Capital of Muslim Youth 2018. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas received the delegation, headed by His Highness the Amir Envoy, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Khaled Al-Roudhan. A number of senior Palestinian officials also welcomed the Kuwaiti delegation upon arrival by air in the main town. The festival kicked off yesterday in Ramallah, under sponsorship of President Abbas. Delegations from 26 Arab and Islamic states will attend the festival and visit Jerusalem and Hebron today.



RAMALLAH: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan meets with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. — KUNA

**Amir's approach**  
Kuwait's participation in the festival affirms the approach of His Highness the Amir towards the Palestinian cause, Roudhan said. "Our participation along with a number of sisterly states is also an affirmation that Jerusalem is capital of State of Palestine," he said in a statement upon his arrival.

"We as Kuwait Capital of the Arab Youth, celebrate with our Palestinian, Arab and Muslim brothers Jerusalem as the Capital of Muslim Youth. "Kuwait's bonds with the Palestinian cause is solid and historic... and its continuous

support for the Palestinian cause has not changed for decades and years. "We will robustly seek to ensure success of this convention and help our Palestinian brothers with whom we have been bonded with cordial links, same religion, blood and Arab identity." He underscored significance of the gathering for bolstering steadfastness of Jerusalem's population.

**Unwavering stance**  
Prior to his departure from Amman, Roudhan re-affirmed Kuwait's unwavering stance in support of the Palestinian cause at regional and international quarters. The Kuwaiti minister stated that the Kuwaiti participation in the event constitutes practical

response to US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as capital of the occupation state.

It also manifests support for the Palestinian people in the face of the continuous Israeli aggression and practices against Islamic sanctities in Jerusalem, Roudhan added. The event is the first of its kind following the emergency Islamic summit on Jerusalem, hosted by Istanbul, Turkey, two months ago. Young citizens from a number of Islamic nations are partaking in 20 programs and activities during the festival, also attended by a large number of ministers from member states of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). — KUNA

## Zain sponsors 'Ma'a Hamad Show' on Al-Rai TV



KUWAIT: Zain Telecommunication Company announced providing platinum sponsorship to the third season of the famous interactive TV show "Ma'a Hamad Show," which is broadcasted on Al-Rai TV every Saturday and presented by the social media star Hamad Al-Ali. Zain said in a statement that it is sponsoring the show for the third straight year out of its keenness on supporting Kuwaiti youth and their creative ideas in various fields.

## Kuwait Expo 2018 underway

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Over 200 exhibitors from 24 countries are participating in the Kuwait Expo 2018 held at the Kuwait International Fairground from February 6 to 10, 2018 in Hall 6 and 5. This major event is organized by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and participants include companies, embassies, organizations and individuals. The expo is being held for the

second consecutive year.

Hall 6 hosts a commercial exhibition for member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in addition to participants from all fields including food, textiles, perfumes, construction, spare parts, decor, steel, electronics, kitchenware and others.

Hall 5 hosts the Maker Faire Kuwait exhibition, which is sponsored by the Kuwait Investment Co and displays products by individuals, including inventors and small entrepreneurs from various countries. This event also includes a raffle draw for three Kuwait-Dubai-Kuwait air tickets daily. Timings from Tuesday to Saturday are from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm and from 4:30 pm to 10:00 pm, and from 4:30 pm to 10:00 pm on Friday.

## Kuwait invites Bhutan to partake in Asian workshop

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan Damcho Dorji yesterday received an invitation to partake in Asia Dialogue's second workshop due in the State of Kuwait on March 14. The State of Kuwait Embassy in the Kingdom of Bhutan said in a statement that the invitation was delivered by the Acting Charge

d'Affaires, Fadhel Al-Hassan, during a meeting with minister Dorji, in the Kingdom.

The Kuwaiti diplomat conveyed during the meeting greetings from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The embassy statement quoted the Bhutanese minister as expressing eagerness to visit Kuwait and pursue activities within the Asia Dialogue framework, in addition to examining issues of common concern. Minister Dorji has participated in the previous session at this level, hosted by Thailand. Moreover, the two sides during the meeting examined other topics, namely projects of four prospected agreements, to be inked during a senior official's predicted visit to Kuwait. — KUNA



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Local

# Duterte, Kuwaiti envoy to discuss labor suspension developments

## Electricity and Water Ministry pushes 'Kuwaitization' efforts forward

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**MANILA/KUWAIT:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will meet with Kuwait's Ambassador to the Philippines Musaed Saleh Al-Thwaikh today to discuss the suspension of overseas foreign workers (OFW) deployment to Kuwait, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III announced yesterday.

At a press briefing, Bello said Duterte and Thwaikh may also discuss the long-delayed signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will give Filipino workers greater protection in Kuwait, the Philippine-based GMA News reported. Bello said they are still evaluating "conflicting" reports from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) regarding the condition of OFWs in Kuwait.

Duterte's meeting with Thwaikh and the results of the report of the Philippine labor attache in Kuwait will be major factors in assessing whether or not the deployment suspension will be lifted, Bello said. If, however, just one of the maltreatment cases under investigation turns out to be factual, Bello said they will strongly consider a total deployment ban.

Duterte will also meet with labor groups today to discuss the executive order that will ban signing contracts if it interferes with

a worker's right to secure tenure, organize into unions, and bargain collectively. Bello announced on Monday that they are still mulling whether or not they will "make the suspension a total ban or to lift it." There is an estimated 250,000 OFWs in Kuwait, 75 percent of them working as domestic helpers.

### MEW staff

The Ministry of Electricity and Water's (MEW) total employees till Dec 2017 were 20,440, including 19,078 citizens, 704 Arab

2017 with 19,078 workers, while expats dropped to only 1,362.

### Construction violations

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi urged the construction violations committee he recently formed to enforce the law without abuse or leniency. Speaking on the sidelines of his meeting with the committee, Manfouhi said the municipality has succeeded in enforcing municipal laws and it will not step back. He added that the committee has been granted all powers including referring violators for relevant investigations.

Manfouhi said that the committee was asked to set a clear mechanism to administratively and legally deal with violators, as well as document its work. In addition, Manfouhi stressed the need to execute various construction violations' demolition verdicts and put a limit on people taking the law lightly. The committee's chairperson Amshaa Al-Mutairi said that the municipality will coordinate with MoI to execute final demolition verdicts by force and at the violators' own expense. She added that one of the violators was fined KD 25 million.

### Egyptian produce

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a resolution extending the period of precautionary inspection and examination of agricultural products imported from Egypt (lettuce, capsicum, onion and guava)



**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte wears a hardhat as he watches the destruction of luxury vehicles at a ceremony at the customs yard in Manila yesterday, after they were seized for being smuggled illegally. — AFP

for an extra three months. The decision also included listing all companies importing those items. Notably, the decision is a continuation of the ministry's decision to lift an embargo on Egyptian produce issued in Nov 2017 on the condition of providing health certificates with each shipment, providing a certificate on testing for pesticide residues in agricultural products and holding all shipments until specimens are examined to make sure the products are safe for human consumption. The ministry also issued a ban on importing all poultry - fresh, chilled, frozen or processed - from India and Japan because of bird flu outbreaks in those

countries. The decision also included lifting an embargo on importing the same from Zimbabwe and Mexico.

### Food inspection

Mubarak Al-Kabeer food and nutrition manager Abdullah Ahmed said the department's inspection teams recently inspected various restaurants and food outlets in Subhan, Qusour and Adan. Ahmed added that the raids resulted in filing three citations for handling food items without having health certificates and violating hygiene conditions, in addition to issuing 48 warning notices.



## Municipality fights construction violations

expats, 630 Asians, 24 Africans and four expats of other nationalities, technical supervision and statistics manager Iqbal Al-Tayyar said. Tayyar added that MEW has been on replacing expatriate staff working in various sectors with citizens for years. She added that citizens formed 93.3 percent of the ministry's employees in Dec

## 50 kg marijuana found in citizen's house

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Criminal detectives arrested a citizen who planted marijuana for trade purposes. Detectives, after making sure the information was correct, obtained a warrant and raided his house. They found nine seedlings ready for use, besides 50 kg of marijuana, seeds in addition to special supplements for marijuana growth. They also found a piece of hashish and drugs paraphernalia. The suspect was arrested while he was preparing a sale.

### Fire drill

The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) carried out an exercise yesterday at the oil sector complex which includes the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and the Oil Ministry. The exercise is within the KFSD's plans to keep firemen's efficiency at its best while training employees on how to act in case of emergencies.

### National Day

The interior ministry is participating



**KUWAIT:** Marijuana seedlings found in a citizen's house that police raided yesterday.

in the 57th National Day exhibition being held at the Mishref International Fairgrounds until Feb 10. It said its participation includes several sectors to inform the public about the duties of these sectors and the modern scientific methods used in events and security development. The exhibition is open from 10 am to 1:30 pm and from 5 pm to 9:30 pm, and from 5 pm to 10 pm on Fridays.

## Kuwait concerned over chemical weapons claims



**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's Permanent Ambassador to the UN and current Security Council President Mansour Al-Otaibi (left) speaks at the UN Security Council. —KUNA

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's Permanent Ambassador to the UN and current Security Council President Mansour Al-Otaibi said it was hoped that the issue of chemical weapons use in Syria would have been closed in 2013 after it was proven to have been the case. In a speech to the Council after the adoption of UNSC resolution 2118, he said Security Council members had the opportunity to illustrate its "solidarity and resolve" in ending the matter back then. This would have ensured that this crime "is not repeated and its perpetrators held accountable," he said.

Otaibi said he regretted seeing a "huge retreat" on facing the issue due

to a state of division amongst Security Council member states, who were unable to extend the joint investigative mission's presence in Syria, which conducted its role in the "utmost professionalism, impartiality and objectivity." He went to express "extreme anxiety" on the ongoing claims of chemical weapons use in Syria, most recently yesterday in Idlib and Eastern Ghouta last week. He also condemned the use of heavy artillery against civilians and the targeting of healthcare facilities in Syria. Otaibi also said he looked forward to the upcoming the fact finding mission's report on the two recent attacks. — KUNA

# Kuwait Times

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## Local

# Ooredoo Kuwait wins Excellence in Social Media Accounts Award

## Kuwait Public Relations and Customer Service Award

**KUWAIT:** Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Ooredoo Kuwait was awarded the Excellence in Social Media Accounts Award.

The event held recently at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center was attended by 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.

Representing Ooredoo at the event were Ooredoo Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Dr Hamad Al-Nuaimi, Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub, and Public Relations and Internal Communication Senior Manager Fatima Dashti.

Ooredoo won in the category of Excellence Award in Social Media Accounts for the great work it has done throughout the year in terms of engaging and connecting with their customers through their growing social media channels. Commenting on this, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub said: "We are proud to be winning such a distinguished award, and we dedicate this to our beloved customers for believing in us. We at Ooredoo are always striving to connect better with our customers, which reflects from our deep-rooted values of caring, connecting and challenging. We are honored to see our efforts awarded, and we promise to deliver and engage even more with our customers."

The Public Relations and Customer Service Awards is hosted by the Kuwait Public Relations Association and is aimed at developing the public relations and customer service sectors in both government and private sectors



Ooredoo officials pose with the event's organizers after receiving the award.

and pushing them forward in measuring the extent to which their employees apply international standards. In launching the award the association took into account the institutional work and the extent of cooperation between the departments to provide the best services to customers especially that the public relations and customer service are considered the most difficult professions because they depend on the employee's way of dealing with the public.



**KUWAIT:** Public Relations and Internal Communication Senior Manager Fatima Dashti receives Ooredoo's award.

## KOC, GOFSCO organize photo gallery to celebrate anniversary

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and Gas and Oil Fields Services Company (GOFSCO), one of the largest integrated service providers in Kuwait specializing in the upstream oil and gas sector, both onshore and offshore, held a photo gallery in celebration of the 12-year anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's accession as the ruler of Kuwait. The photo gallery which is installed at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center - Flag Square, featured exclusive photographs of His Highness the Amir throughout his journey of ruling Kuwait.

KOC and GOFSCO's organization of the photo gallery aims to express their pride in His Highness the Amir's long history of committed leadership to the people of Kuwait and his international recognition as the World Humanitarian Leader. The inauguration of the photo gallery involved the attendance of Ahmad Abulazeem Al-Hamad, Deputy CEO (Admin and



Finance Affairs) at KOC, Mohammed Al-Basry, Manager (Public Relation and Information) at KOC, Hussam Ali Marafie - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at GOFSCO, and Sahar Al-Akabi.

It is worth mentioning that during the period between 25-26 February 2018, KOC will have the photo gallery installed at the Avenues Mall for mall visitors to walk through the history of Kuwait's Humanitarian Leader.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti businessman Jawad Bu Khamseen hosted a reception yesterday in honor of a visiting delegation of Iraqi journalists headed by President of the Federation of Journalists of Iraq (IJS) Moaid Allami. Representatives of Kuwait's Ministry of Information and Kuwaiti media attended the gathering. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



## Iraq's top journalist hails Amir's support

**KUWAIT:** An Iraqi journalist hailed the generous initiative by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in hosting Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI), including his constant support for Iraq that won the hearts and minds of Iraqis.

Speaking after arrival in Kuwait heading a delegation of journalists, President of the Federation of Journalists of Iraq (IJS) Moaid Allami said the visit comes as part of media preparation for the conference, scheduled to take place on February 12-14.

Allami added that the KICRI represents a huge step for Iraq, due to the support given by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait with an initiative that will bolster relations between the two countries, in addition to the humanitarian aspect to it. The IJS chief also expressed his thanks to media higher committee in charge of KICRI headed by Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhasan, Ministry of Information, and Kuwait Journalists Association for the efforts in ensuring success to the conference.

Undersecretary of the External Media at the Ministry of Information Faisal Al-Mutlaqqem said meanwhile that the visit by the Iraqi delegation comes in coordination with the higher committee, and to ensure success for the conference. Mutlaqqem added the invitation to IJC delegation also to give them more time to interview officials prior to the conference. —KUNA



Local

# Puppies rescued after being found inside school

## Call for creating government facility for animal welfare

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Five puppies ended up at the Royal Veterinary Hospital in Rai after they were tossed and thrown into a garbage bin by students at a local school. A video of the incident, filmed by one of the students, went viral in Kuwait earlier this week. A local animal rescue team, Become a Foster Guardian (BFG), along with other local animal protection groups Rescue, Adopt, Foster and Help the Animal Kuwait, worked with the school principal to rescue the pups and send them for treatment.

Anwar Jawhar, BFG group volunteer, said the school promised to pay the hospital bills of the five puppies of around KD 270. According to Jawhar, the students found the puppies inside the school early morning on Monday. The school does not know where they came from, but according to Jawhar, they could be pups of stray dogs left there by their mother.

"The kids are clearly making fun of the dogs in the video. They were playing but did not know they were hurting the puppies. It is a cruel thing to do, but it also reflects the way these kids are raised at home," Jawhar

said. According to him, when the headmaster of the school learned about the incident, he was deeply concerned and the school immediately took the necessary action. "The puppies were taken to the vet hospital in Rai by the schoolboys who were seen playing with them," he said.

"The boys said the mocking was unintentional; they were not laughing in the video because they were witnessing the dogs being tortured. According to them, they were laughing because some of the boys were scared of the puppies. So, I think the moral lesson is that the government should take some serious steps on running more awareness campaigns on how to treat animals. Secondly, we have to consider having more facilities for animal welfare. We have facilities, but they are in the desert - too far away," Jawhar said.

### Awareness campaigns on how to treat animals needed

He pointed out that Kuwait should create a separate department for animal welfare. "Look how the animals are sadly treated at the pet market. Our behavior mirrors the way how we respect human and animal rights in the country. Stray dogs are killed through poisoning - they die a slow death by this inhumane method of killing animals and no one cares."



Kuwait has no official, licensed animal shelter, as the only one closed down in December. Kuwait, along with other Gulf Cooperation Council states, has seen a growing rise in cases of animal abuse and mistreatment, often

videotaped and shared across social media. At the same time, a growing community of animal rescuers and activists has emerged to protect animals, but it receives no government support.

## Driver falls asleep in middle of the road

**KUWAIT:** A Sudanese man obstructed traffic in Ardiya after he stopped his car in the middle of the road and fell asleep under the influence of drugs. Motorists called police after he did not respond. Police arrived and found him sleeping with a hashish cigarette still burning in his hand, so they opened the car and woke him up. He was arrested and drugs were found on him. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD).

Meanwhile, Farwaniya police arrested a Jordanian man with two hashish joints, an envelope containing drugs and drugs paraphernalia, and he was sent to the DCGD. The man was stopped by police because his car was in need of repairs. When the policeman spoke to him, he seemed to be in an abnormal condition, then refused to get out of the car, so he was forced out despite resisting.

Separately, two men, Syrian and Jordanian, were arrested in Salwa late at night under the influence of drugs. The two were stopped by a police patrol, who found drugs and psychoactive pills on them. They were taken to the DCGD.

**Fugitives caught**  
Police in Salhiya arrested an Egyptian

after he ran away from them. He first denied having an ID on him, so he was fingerprinted and identified. He was found wanted on a forgery case that took place two years ago. He was taken to residency affairs detectives for further legal action before being deported.

In a separate case, police in Industrial Shuwaikh asked a man for his ID, but he fled and disappeared among the garages, so they searched the area and found him hiding under a car. Police discovered he is a Lebanese wanted for a felony committed in 2016. He is also wanted in a civil case. He was taken to the police station to face legal action. The suspect is also in violation of the residency law.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

## Airport passenger traffic up by 24 percent

**KUWAIT:** Passenger traffic at Kuwait International Airport increased 24 percent in January 2018 to 1.37 million compared to 1.11 million last year, airport authorities said on Monday. This included 716,114 arrivals compared to 553,935 arrivals, as departures also increased recording 716,114 compared to 553,935, a Directorate General of Civil Aviation official said.

Some 10,090 flights took place compared to 8,701 flights, including 9,664 commercial flights up from 8,284 commercial flights, said Deputy Director-General for Aviation Safety and Air Transport Emad Al-Juluwi. Meanwhile, air cargo movement at the airport recorded 19,610 tons compared to 16,530 tons, including 14,570 tons of incoming freight up from 13,490 tons and 5,030 tons of dispatched cargo compared to 3,030 tons. —KUNA

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Maldives crisis deepens; opposition leader seeks intervention from India

## Rohingya women find peace in 'widows camp' barred to men

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BAGHDAD: Iraqis look at printed profiles of Islamic State (IS) group members released by Iraqi authorities yesterday. Iraqi authorities issued a new list of 'internationally wanted terrorists,' headed by IS group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. —AFP

# Iraq publishes list of 'most wanted fugitives'

## Iran-backed Iraqi groups urge full US withdrawal

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi authorities published a list of most wanted fugitives yesterday headed by elusive Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and his number two. It was the second list Iraq had published this week of people wanted on suspicion of belonging to the Islamic State group, Al-Qaeda or the Baath Party of executed dictator Saddam Hussein. "They are more dangerous than those who appeared on the first list published on Sunday and they are wanted internationally whereas the others are wanted only by the Iraqi courts," a security official said.

The IS leader appears on the list under his real name Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali Al-Badri Al-Samarrai. His deputy is listed as Abdel Rahman Al-Qaduli rather than his nom de guerre Abu Alaa Al-Afari. Seven other Iraqis are on the list as are five foreigners accused of IS membership—two Saudis, a Jordanian, a Yemeni and a Qatari. Sunday's list contained the names of 60 wanted suspect, all but one of them Iraqis. It includes the name of Saddam's daughter Raghda, who lives in neighboring Jordan. It also features 28 suspected IS

jihadists, 12 from Al-Qaeda and 20 Baathists.

### Full US withdrawal

In another development, two major Iraqi Shiite groups backed by Iran are demanding all US forces leave Iraq, opposing plans by Baghdad and Washington to keep some there for training and advisory purposes. An Iraqi government spokesman said US forces - who number more than 5,000 - had begun reducing their numbers but some would remain. The Badr Organization, a Shiite group that has a minister in Prime



### IS leaders, Saudis, Jordanian, Yemeni and Qatari named

Minister Haider Al-Abadi's government, in charge of the interior, said any remaining US, troops would be cause for instability.

"The two governments should coordinate to ensure a full withdrawal. US presence will be cause for internal polarization and a magnet for terrorists," Badr spokesman Kareem Nuri said. Kataib Hezbollah, a more militant, secretive and anti-American group, repeated threats to attack US forces. "We are serious about getting the Americans out, using the force of arms because the Americans don't understand any other language," its spokesman, Jaafar Al-Husseini, told Beirut-

based al-Mayadeen TV on Monday evening. Kataib Hezbollah has strong links to Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps and has threatened to attack US forces several times in the past, describing their presence as an occupation. A US official in Baghdad said: "We take anything that sounds like a threat from anyone against Americans seriously." "There's not that many of us here and we are all operating within Iraqi military bases. A lot of this is frankly just political posturing and trying to take advantage of stories in the press to make broader political points," he added. The US-led international military coalition helped Iraqi forces recapture territory taken by Islamic State in 2014 and 2015, providing air and artillery support in the battle for Mosul, and trained tens of thousands of elite Iraqi soldiers. "The Coalition will tailor our forces in consultation with our Iraqi partners in order to ensure the lasting defeat of Daesh (Islamic State)," the coalition's director of operations, Brigadier General Jonathan Braga, said in a statement on Monday.—Agencies

## Israel kills Hamas member suspected of murdering rabbi

**NABLUS:** Israeli forces yesterday shot dead a Hamas member suspected of killing a rabbi as two deadly attacks against Israeli settlers in a month increased tensions in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinian suspect in the murder of the rabbi on January 9 was shot dead in a pre-dawn raid hours after another Israeli was killed in a stabbing in the West Bank. Several hundred mourners attended the funeral yesterday for Itamar Ben Gal, the 29-year-old man killed a day earlier who was also a rabbi. There was no indication of a direct link between the two attacks, with violence common in the West Bank between Palestinians and Israeli settlers or security forces. Islamist movement Hamas said the suspect killed overnight was a member of its armed wing. The 19-year-old believed to have committed Monday's stabbing remained at large. "The security forces will catch whoever tries to attack Israeli citizens and we will deal with them to the fullest extent of the law," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday. "So it will be with the murderers of Rabbi Itamar Ben Gal."

Both attacks have led to Israeli calls for more settlement building in the West Bank, which has been under Israeli occupation for more than 50 years. Earlier this week in response to the rabbi's murder on January 9, Israel's government in a rare move decided to "legalize" the rogue West Bank outpost where he lived, Havat Gilad, essentially creating a new settlement. There were further calls for more settlement construction at yesterday's funeral for Ben Gal held at the Har Bracha settlement where he lived, Israeli media reported.

### Hamas welcomes attack

The overnight raid occurred in the village of Yamoun near Jenin, where the 22-year-old suspect, Ahmad Jarrar, was said to be hiding. It came after a weeks-long manhunt for Jarrar, the son of a Hamas figure killed by Israeli forces during the second intifada of the early 2000s. Beginning late Monday and into yesterday, dozens of Israeli army jeeps entered Yamoun and besieged a part of the town. Heavy clashes broke out with live fire, according to a Palestinian security source. Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency said that "during the attempted arrest, the terrorist came out of a building where he was hiding armed. "Security forces fired in his direction. An M-16 assault rifle and a bag containing explosives were found near his body," the agency said in a statement. Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, claimed Jarrar as a member and welcomed the attack on January 9 that saw Raziq Shevach, 35, shot dead. "Our heroes in the occupied West Bank wrote a heroic epic that made the Zionists lose sleep and put their security establishment on alert," the Al-Qassam Brigades said in a statement. It said a "Qassam bullet" was responsible for the murder, though it was unclear if the Hamas leadership was claiming direct responsibility for the attack or whether the cell acted on its own. Israeli forces had been hunting for the assailants since the murder, with roadblocks and checkpoints set up following the attack. —AFP

## In Iraq, death-row militants 'confess' on prime-time TV

**BAGHDAD:** Every Friday in Iraq, a gripping show on state television beams the alleged confessions of death-row jihadists into homes around the country. At peak viewing time, it broadcasts gruesome images of their purported crimes before interviewing the convicts, who appear clad in orange or yellow jumpsuits. Baghdad declared victory against the Islamic State group in December, after years of fighting to regain vast stretches of territory the jihadists seized in 2014.

Iraq has detained thousands of suspected members of IS, a group infamous for deadly attacks, mass killings and the execution of detainees in orange jumpsuits. Once a week, a show titled "In the grip of the law" escorts convicted jihadists back to the scene of their crime under heavy security. By spotlighting IS atrocities, the show aims to stamp out any remaining support for the jihadist group's ideology, its presenter says. "I get tipped off by the interior ministry, the defense ministry or national security, who captured them," Ahmad Hassan, 36, says. "They choose the case to highlight and I ask the justice ministry for permission to interview the convict," says Hassan, whose show is aired by state channel Al-Iraqiya. The program is up to its 150th episode, he says, and not about to end any time soon. "Even if IS has lost militarily, its ideology still exists," he says. "Its supporters view others as non-believers and will continue to murder as long as its ideology lives on."

### 'Detective agency'

Dressed in a beige suit and brown tie, on a set meant to evoke a detective agency, Hassan starts his show each week with shocking images. One episode opens with a photo of dozens of Sunni tribesmen lying in a pool of their own blood, after



BAGHDAD: Video editors prepare for an episode on the set of the show titled 'In the grip of the law' in Baghdad. —AFP

their 2014 execution by IS in the town of Heet, northwest of Baghdad. It then introduces Mithaq Hamid Helmet, 41, one of those condemned over the massacre, who recounts the killings in chilling detail—even citing the names of others who took part. On the show's set, a mahogany desk, stacks of papers, maps of Baghdad and mugshots of the day's convict seek to create an intriguing atmosphere to draw in viewers.

In another episode, former IS finance official Mohammad Hamid Omar, nom de guerre Abu Hajjaj, describes his speciality: extorting funds from pharmacies, schools, real estate agencies, petrol stations and doctors. Hassan says all of his interviewees have been found guilty and sentenced—most to death, but some to lengthy prison terms. They are mostly Iraqis, but also sometimes nationals from other Arab countries. Some have since been executed, Hassan says, but "that's the justice ministry's business, not mine". Iraq executed more than 100 people last year, mostly after "terrorism" convictions, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said.

The country's anti-terrorism law orders the death penalty for any person who commits, plans, funds or assists in acts of "terrorism".

### 'Why kill my sons?'

Hassan says all his convict interviewees take part "voluntarily", and know participating will in no way help to alleviate their sentence. "They do it because they have regrets," he says. "They want to show the horrendous acts they have committed and reveal the thinking of the group they belonged to, to persuade others not to make the same mistake." The show's most poignant moments are meetings set up between the convicts and the mothers of their purported victims. In one such scene, the mother of two policemen killed by IS vents her anger. "Why did you kill my sons Ahmad and Hamid?" she asks three sentenced jihadists, who hang their heads in response. "They were your friends. Did they ever wrong you? Why did you destroy my family?" asks the woman, dressed from head-to-toe in black. —AFP

## International

## Gaza health facilities face closure over fuel shortage

## Gaza deep in political and energy crisis

**GAZA:** Fuel for emergency generators that keep Gaza's hospitals and sanitation services operating will run out within 10 days, the United Nations said yesterday in an appeal for immediate donor support. The shortage stems from a dispute between Gaza's dominant Hamas Islamist group and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority (PA). Both signed a unity deal in October but have failed to finalize the details of political power-sharing.

So far generators have stopped at three of Gaza's 13 hospitals and 14 of its 54 medical centers, said Ashraf Al-Qidra, the Hamas-appointed spokesman for the impoverished territory's Health Ministry. Officials at the affected facilities said they were directing seriously ill patients to other health facilities and operating at limited capacity.

With Gaza's electrical grid supplying only about four to six hours of power a day to Gaza's two million people - a complicated crisis also largely rooted in the Hamas-PA rivalry - back-up generators are a lifeline for health care and sanitation facilities.

At Durra Hospital for Children in Gaza City, which normally treats up to 180 patients a day, many of its 90 beds were empty yesterday. Doctors said fuel ran out a week ago and services were operating at minimum levels. "We are working in life-saving mode," the hospital's director, Majed Hamada, told Reuters. He said doctors were providing primary health care and, in emergency cases, transferring patients to other hospitals after stabilizing them. In a statement, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Palestinian territories said emergency fuel for critical facilities in Gaza "will

become exhausted within the next ten days".

It said emergency and diagnostic services, intensive care units and operating theatres were at risk, as well as the running of 55 sewage pools, 48 desalination plants and solid waste collection facilities. Hamas, which seized the enclave in 2007 from Fatah forces loyal to the PA's leader, President Mahmoud Abbas, said the Authority was withholding payment for the fuel, which is supplied via Israel.

The PA said Hamas had failed to transfer money collected from the sale of medicine to patients in Gaza, funds the Authority uses to buy the fuel. OCHA said \$6.5 million is required to provide 7.7 million liters of emergency fuel in 2018 - "the bare minimum to stave off a collapse of services". "Without funding, more service providers will be forced to suspend operations over the coming weeks, and the situation will deteriorate dramatically, with potential impacts on the entire population," the OCHA statement quoted Roberto Valent, the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the Palestinian territories, as saying. "We cannot allow this to happen."

In Durra hospital, mothers sat beside their sick children and complained that politics were endangering lives. "We blame all parties. Why should these children be at risk of dying because Hamas and Fatah failed to reconcile?" said one mother, whose three-year-old daughter has been waiting a week for an X-ray. A US decision to cut aid to the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA), which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, also threatens to deepen hardship in Gaza.—Reuters



### Hamas and PA trade blame for fuel shortage



**GAZA:** Palestinians take part in a protest against the US move to freeze funding for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) at the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. —AFP

## Nigeria President Buhari attacked by predecessors as elections loom

**LAGOS:** Ibrahim Babangida has become the latest former leader in Nigeria to criticize President Muhammadu Buhari, as elections approach and the incumbent is yet to confirm he will stand again. The man who once described himself as Nigeria's "evil genius" said in a statement issued on Sunday that "analogue" Buhari should make way for "digital" leaders. "There comes a time in life when personal ambition should not override national interest," he added. Babangida, who ousted Buhari as military ruler in a bloodless coup in 1985, later distanced himself from the statement, which he attributed to his spokesman. He then put out another in his own name, calling on any realignment of forces to be lawful.

Babangida's intervention follows that of Olusegun Obasanjo—another former military ruler in the 1970s, who became the first civilian president when democracy was restored in 1999. He said last month that Buhari needed a "deserved rest" and had shown a poor grasp of the economy, foreign policy and Nigeria's complex internal politics during his time in office. Many people in Nigeria have interpreted Babangida's comments as support for Obasanjo, who has thrown his weight behind a new movement that could yet evolve into a political party.

#### No easy ride

Nigerians go to the polls to choose a new president and parliament on February 16 next year. Politicians and their parties are already jostling for position. Buhari, 75, was dogged by an unspecified illness last year but is still expected to seek a second, four-year term. Commentator Chris Ngwodo said high-profile criticisms from two powerful political figures were an indication of growing opposition among prominent Nigerians to Buhari's re-election.

Buhari made history in 2015 by becoming the first opposition candidate to unseat an incumbent president, securing national support in a country split between a Muslim north and Christian south. "The consensus that supported Buhari to win the popular vote in 2015 is falling apart," said Ngwodo. "His support base, particularly from his military constituency, is no longer cohesive. If he runs, he is likely to face a more formidable challenge. It will not be an easy ride for him."

Buhari's office has brushed aside Obasanjo's criticisms and both men were seen laughing and joking together at a recent African Union summit in Addis Ababa. There has been no formal response to Babangida. The criticisms of both may ring true for many voters, however, with Nigeria having only recently emerged from recession that has increased financial hardship. At the same time, it may give greater scrutiny to Buhari's campaign pledges, in particular to get tough on security, with Boko Haram still active and new threats elsewhere. Buhari is also under pressure because of perceptions he has failed to act against his Fulani kinsmen, a herder community blamed for a wave of attacks against farmers.

#### Not enough time

Ngwodo said Buhari—if he stands—will be judged on his record and that with a little over a year to go to the polls, there was still time for the opposition to mobilize. So far, only the governor of the southern state of Ekiti, Peter Fayose, and Obasanjo's former vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, have declared their intention to run.

Both are likely to struggle to gain the necessary support outside their respective regions, while their Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is weak and divided. Dapo Thomas, a history and politics lecturer at Lagos state university, said the status quo was likely to remain unaltered, unless Buhari's health worsens.—AFP

## Men with guns rule in Libya as return to 'ghost town' blocked

**TRIPOLI:** More than six years after they were forced to leave their homes in the civil war that toppled Muammar Gaddafi, tens of thousands of residents of the Libyan ghost city of Tawergha were finally meant to start going home last week. It never happened. Armed groups blocked the road, shattering the hopes of families, casting a long-negotiated settlement into doubt, and demonstrating yet again the human cost of life in a country ruled by men with guns who appear to answer to no one.

The case of Tawergha, a city built among date palm groves about 200 km (124 miles) south-east of Tripoli, has become a symbol of division and conflict in Libya following the Nato-backed uprising against Gaddafi. Tawergha was used by pro-Gaddafi forces attacking the nearby city of Misrata during the war. After the fighting, Misrata forces emptied Tawergha of its inhabitants. The city was abandoned as a ghost town, while its residents, many the dark-skinned descendants of sub-Saharan African slaves, lived in squalid temporary camps.

After years of negotiations, the Tawergha residents were finally meant to start going home on Feb 1. But after days on the road they said militia fighters never let them through. "My kids were carrying doves with them to release as a sign of peace, and they were carrying olive branches too," said one woman at a camp for displaced people on Tripoli's airport road whose family tried to reach the city in a convoy. "The elders stopped the cars and asked us to wait," said the woman, who asked not to be identified for security reasons. "Suddenly the cars were driving fast and there was shooting."

"We were asked (by the elders) to wait until the problem could be solved. But after three days, and with the shooting at us, my son started crying uncontrollably. His dream has collapsed." More than six years since Gaddafi was captured hiding in a sewer and killed, Libya still has no government that can exercise control of the streets. The internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli is opposed by a rival government and



**TAWERGHA:** Displaced Libyans from the western city of Tawergha wait by their cars to enter the city, which lies about 250 kilometers east of the capital Tripoli as armed groups from nearby Misrata set up roadblocks. —AFP

allied factions in eastern Libya. Towns and cities are largely carved up between militia groups, many of which draw salaries from the state but answer only loosely at best to either government.

The GNA had promoted the return to Tawergha as a major breakthrough. But when convoys of residents tried to approach the town last week from the west, armed men from GNA-linked brigades halted them. Other residents were turned back approaching from the east, before reaching Sirte, controlled by Misrata since forces led by the city's brigades ousted Islamic State from the city in 2016. Officials from Misrata, itself divided between moderate and hardline groups, had called for a delay to the planned returns, saying more preparations were needed to ensure security for returnees, and arguing that some terms of a 2016 deal between Misrata and the Tawergha had not been fulfilled. Yousef Zerzah, chairman of Misrata's dialogue committee with Tawergha, defended the groups that

halted the returns. "They have some legitimate demands, including some points of the agreement between Misrata and Tawergha, such as recognition of the revolution of February 17 (2011), and an official apology from Tawergha authorities to the people of Misrata," he said at a press conference. The UN mission in Libya blamed the reversal on "some extremist elements", and denounced "attempts at financial extortion in exchange for (residents) return".

Tawergha remains abandoned and in ruins, and it is not clear how residents can resettle there before basic infrastructure has been restored. Still, the GNA, which has struggled to impose its authority in the capital and beyond, had tried to mediate a solution to the stand-off. "We held a meeting with municipality of Misrata, the commander of central military region, and the commander of military police," Yousef Jallalah, minister of refugees and displaced people, told reporters on Monday. "The meeting lasted till midnight but we didn't get a positive result."—Reuters

## Uprooted, again: War catches up with Syrians in Idlib

**SARMADA:** The shabby, mud-covered tent in northwest Syria is the only home Abu Khaled's family has left. Uprooted four times in six years, they say war is practically stalking them. "As soon as we settle down somewhere for a year or a little more, the bombardment arrives and we change places," says the elderly man, originally from a neighboring province. The tent where he, his wife, and his 12 children now live is pitched alongside dozens more in Syria's Idlib, the only province that still largely escapes government control. More than a million Syrians from other parts of the country now live in the northwestern province, after they fled fighting or as a result of negotiated settlements to escape suffocating sieges.

In Idlib, they hoped to find a shred of normalcy and stability—but since late 2017, the province has been the target of a blistering Russian-backed government offensive. "I lost my land, my trees, my home. I left my house only with the clothes I had on my back," says Abu

Khaled, a native of the neighboring province of Hama. He fled Hama in 2012, settling in Idlib province. Battered by rain, the makeshift camp where he now lives outside the town of Sarmada has turned into a massive mud pit. Rows of tents made of plastic tarpaulins, blankets and curtains are stained with dirt, and chunks of mud are wedged into pairs of shoes piled outside. Young girls wash a saucer in a large brown puddle and men slip and slide past the tents.

#### 'Day of tears and blood'

Rebels and jihadists overran Idlib in 2015. But since then, hardliners have expanded their control and the influence of mainstream rebels has shrunk drastically. At the same time, the province's population has swollen, particularly with tens of thousands of people—rebels and civilians—bussed out of besieged opposition enclaves elsewhere. Abu Mohammed, 48, was among them. Along with his wife and six children, he was bussed out of the town of Daraya near Damascus in August 2016 under a negotiated settlement to end years of crippling government siege.

"It was a day of tears and blood. You're in the bus, you can't speak—you're leaving your town behind," he recalls. They settled in Jarjanaz, a town in Idlib province. But a little more than a year later, they found themselves fleeing the government assault on Idlib. "The strikes started to escalate and people were sending their women and



**BATABU, Syria:** Abu Khaled washes his hands in a large puddle of rain water at make-shift camp for internally displaced people in Batabu, on the border between Syria's Idlib and Aleppo provinces. —AFP

children away. Two rockets and some barrel bombs hit near our house," says Abu Mohammed. They moved closer to Idlib city in December, now living in a sparsely furnished apartment. "There's no work here. Jarjanaz had become like our second home—we knew everyone," says Abu Mohammed, a scarf tied around his head.

**13 months, five homes**  
Marwa Taleb and Saleh Abu Qusay

were similarly displaced. In December 2016, the married couple was bussed out of their native Aleppo, Syria's second city, under one of the war's most controversial evacuation deals. The agreement capped a ferocious month-long government assault on the city and several months of siege, and saw tens of thousands of civilians and rebels evacuated. In the 13 months since they left Aleppo, Taleb and Abu Qusay have been displaced five times.—AFP

## International

# 100 years of women suffrage: How one group changed British history

## One great tragedy put an end to intolerable torture

**LONDON:** British women won the right to vote 100 years ago after an intense struggle marked by a violent fringe campaign that shocked the country but helped to change the world. On February 6, 1918, the Representation of the People Bill became law and added to the voting roll around eight million women who were aged over 30 and met other conditions. It was not until 1928 that British women gained the same voting rights as men, but the 1918 act was a major step that put the country ahead of some contemporaries such as France. Among those involved in the decades-long British campaign, the Suffragettes stood out for militant actions that were unprecedented at the time, although their influence is still debated.



### Representation of People Bill became a law Feb 6, 1918

**Bombs, a martyr**  
Suffragettes chained themselves to railings, broke shop windows and blew up post boxes as part of their fight. They cut electricity lines, disrupted meetings and even bombed the house of a government minister. It was a deliberate move into militancy preached by Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) which became known as the Suffragettes. In the most shocking act, Suffragette Emily Davison became a martyr to the cause when she was killed throwing herself under the king's horse at the 1913 Derby. She was convinced "one great tragedy ... would put an end to the intolerable torture of women," Pankhurst wrote in her 1914 autobiography "My Own Story".

**Hunger strikes**  
Hundreds of Suffragettes were jailed for their actions but they continued their protest in prison by refusing to eat. Many were force fed, a harsh practice that ended in 1913 with legislation that allowed authorities to release hunger-striking women prisoners when they became too weak and re-arrest

them when they had recovered. Pankhurst was jailed and released 11 times. Detractors said the actions of the Suffragettes showed that women were emotional and irresponsible and therefore not fit to vote. Some historians credit the role of women in World War I as more important in securing voting rights than militant activism. But in 1999 Time magazine named Pankhurst as one of the 100 most important people of the 20th century. She "shaped an idea of women for our time; she shook society into a new pattern from which there could be no going back," it said. "The militant campaign was absolutely essential to moving the vote forward," Krista Cowman, history professor at the University of Lincoln in Britain said. "There was 50 years of peaceful campaigning before that really hadn't done anything."

**Men's work**  
When World War I broke out in 1914, Pankhurst called a halt to the militant campaign in support of the government's war effort. Women stepped into crucial jobs vacated by men sent to fight. In a revolution of their role in society, they worked in fields, factories and beyond. "Many of these feminists hoped that patriotic support of the war would enhance the prospects for women's suffrage after the war," according to the historian Joshua Goldstein in "War and Gender". As the war wound down, the first steps towards equal right votes were allowed. "It's very much a start," said Cowman, who was historical advisor to the 2015 film "Suffragette" in which Meryl Streep played Pankhurst. "There's a whole raft of legislation that comes in Britain in the 1920s that's about improving lives for women, like divorce law reform, equal access to professions."

#### Men's work

**Around the world**  
While the Suffragette campaign attracted much publicity, Britain was not the first country to enfranchise women. New Zealand led the way in 1893, followed by Australia in 1902, Finland in 1906 and Norway in 1913. In the period between the two World Wars, women in more than two dozen countries acquired voting rights, including the Soviet Union in

1917, Germany in 1918, the United States in 1920, and Brazil and Thailand in 1934. Other countries lagged, though, including France whose own Suffragettes—inspired by their British sisters but without the militancy—eventually gained the right to vote in 1944. —AFP



**LONDON:** The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan (left) flanked by historian Lucy Worsley pose in Trafalgar square against a backdrop of life-size pictures of members of the Suffragette movement to mark the centenary of women's suffrage yesterday. —AFP

1917, Germany in 1918, the United States in 1920, and Brazil and Thailand in 1934. Other countries lagged, though, including France whose own Suffragettes—inspired by their British sisters but without the militancy—eventually gained the right to vote in 1944. —AFP

1917, Germany in 1918, the United States in 1920, and Brazil and Thailand in 1934. Other countries lagged, though, including France whose own Suffragettes—inspired by their British sisters but without the militancy—eventually gained the right to vote in 1944. —AFP

### News in brief

#### 12 patients stabbed

**GOMA:** Unidentified assailants stabbed 12 patients in their hospital beds in the restive DR Congo city of Goma, with fears it was the work of Ugandan Islamist rebels, officials said yesterday. Three of the victims were seriously hurt in the knife rampage overnight Sunday-Monday in two health centers in the Goma district of Mbocho, provincial health minister Martial Kambumbu said. "It is the first time we have seen patients being stabbed in health facilities in Goma," said Etienne Kambale, civil society rapporteur in North Kivu province, of which Goma is the capital. "It is surprising. We are wondering if it was the ADF who have turned up in Goma, because this is the way they killed people in Beni." —AFP

#### 9/11 convict complains

**WASHINGTON:** The only person convicted in the United States for the 9/11 attacks is suing President Donald Trump over his conditions at a high-security prison in Colorado. In a four-page handwritten complaint seen by AFP Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen, says "I want to be heard" and claims to have been subjected to "psychological torture in solitary detention." According to the document, filed in December, Moussaoui accuses the Trump administration and the US prison bureau of denying him access to a lawyer in order "to break me psychologically and stop me to expose the truth about 9/11." US courts have rejected previous applications by Moussaoui, whose mental health was the object of questioning at the 2006 trial that sentenced him to life in prison. —AFP

#### G5 Sahel summit

**NIAMEY:** Leaders of five Sahel countries met with France's defense minister yesterday to discuss funding for an unprecedented joint force to combat jihadism in their vulnerable region. The presidents of the so-called G5 Sahel nations—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—met with French Defense Minister Florence Parly, whose country is the initiative's major backer. On Sunday, Malian Defense Minister Tieman Hubert Coulibaly said the G5 force "will be operational by the end of March." The five countries, along with Nigeria and Cameroon, are at the brunt of jihadist attacks in west Africa that have left thousands dead, unleashed a humanitarian crisis and sapped economies that are already among the poorest of the world. —AFP

#### Deadly landslides in Jakarta

**JAKARTA:** At least four people were killed and two more are missing after Indonesia's capital region was hit by severe flooding and landslides, authorities said yesterday, as thousands fled waterlogged neighborhoods. The bodies of three people were pulled from a pile of mud and rock after a landslide triggered by torrential rain inundated a village in the city of Bogor south of Jakarta, the disaster mitigation agency said. Hundreds of rescuers, including members of the army, police and local community, are digging through the debris to find two others buried in that incident. Near Jakarta's main airport, a 24-year-old woman was rescued after spending some 14 hours trapped inside a car buried under a landslide that stove in part of an underpass retaining wall. —AFP

#### Militia chief surrenders

**KANANGA:** A militia chief accused of waging a weeks-long terror campaign in DR Congo's Kasai region has surrendered to the authorities, a local official said yesterday. "Chief Kalamba Dilondo came to Kakenge of his own accord (on Monday)," Jacopo Pembe Longo, administrator of Mwaka territory in Kasai said. "He was received by the governor of the province, who handed him over to the regional sector commander" of the Congolese army, Pembe Longo said. —AFP

## Hong Kong activists walk free in victory

**HONG KONG:** Joshua Wong and two other leading Hong Kong democracy activists won an appeal against their jail terms at the city's highest court yesterday in a case seen as a test for the independence of the city's judiciary, which some fear is under pressure from Beijing. But the trio warned it was not a time for celebration because the city still faced threats to its freedoms. Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow were jailed in August last year for their role in the mass pro-democracy Umbrella Movement protests of 2014 after Hong Kong's government pushed for more severe sentences.

A lower court had originally given Wong and Law community service orders and Chow a suspended sentence. But after the government's intervention they were jailed for between six and eight months by the Court of Appeal. All three activists were later bailed pending their appeal. Chief justice Geoffrey Ma said Tuesday that the terms given to the trio were "significantly more severe" than the range previously given for unlawful assembly offences. The judgment backed the decision of the magistrate who originally handed down non-custodial sentences, saying she had not "erred in principle" by taking into account factors including the defendants' idealism, their youth and the fact that they had not offended before.

The government's move to seek jail sentences for the activists was seen as further evidence of Beijing's growing influence over the semi-autonomous city, with Chinese authorities particularly riled by the emergence of activists calling for independence for Hong Kong. Wong and Law's political party Demosisto wants self-determination for the city. But while yesterday's judgment found in favor of the



**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's leading democracy activists (left to right) Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow arrive outside the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

activists, it also endorsed the view of the sentencing court that unlawful assembly involving violence must be deterred, saying even the "relatively low" degree of violence in the trio's case could in future lead to jail terms. "According to the judgment, maybe more activists will be locked up," said Wong outside court after the ruling. "It's not the time for any congratulation or celebration," he added. Wong, 21, who became the face of the Umbrella Movement, could soon return to prison for another protest-related offence, for which he is currently on bail pending appeal.

#### Disappearing freedoms

The unlawful assembly charges for which Wong, Law and Chow were jailed related to their involvement in the storming of a fenced-off government forecourt known as Civic Square in September 2014. Their arrests sparked the

wider Umbrella Movement rallies which brought parts of the city to a standstill. The protests called for fully free leadership elections to replace a system where the city's chief executive is selected by a pro-Beijing committee, but failed to win any concessions. Since then there have been growing signs that China is increasing its control over Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has been governed under a "one country, two systems" deal since 1997, when Britain handed the territory back to China. The deal allows citizens rights unseen on the mainland, including freedom of speech and a partially directly elected parliament, as well as an independent judiciary. But the jailing of democracy activists, the disqualification of opposition lawmakers from the legislature at Beijing's request and the lack of answers over the disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers who resurfaced in the mainland have fuelled concern. —AFP

## Court rejects legal bid to 'stop Brexit'

**EDINBURGH:** A Scottish court rejected yesterday a legal attempt to ask the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to clarify whether Britain could unilaterally stop the Brexit process. The case was brought by a group of anti-Brexit lawmakers in an attempt to show that Britain's decision to leave the European Union could be reversed if London withdrew its notification of Article 50 - the process by which Brexit was formally initiated.

But judge J. Raymond Doherty of Scotland's top civil court declined to refer the matter to the ECJ. "I am not satisfied that the application has a real prospect of success. Permission to proceed is refused," he said. A lawyer for the group who brought the case said they would appeal against the ruling. At stake is an attempt to clarify whether Britain theoretically has the option of unilaterally withdrawing its Article 50 notification, regardless of whether the 27 other EU members authorize it to do so. To date, there are no plans to stop Brexit and opinion polls have shown no clear sign of a change of heart. In 2016, Britain voted to leave the EU by 52 to 48 percent.

But a recent poll showed most Britons would support a vote on whether or not to leave once the terms of departure are known. And British lawmakers defied the government in December by giving parliament a much more substantial say on whether to accept the final Brexit deal. Prime Minister Theresa May's government is divided on exactly what the terms of Brexit should be but it is clear that Britain will be leaving the European Union in March next year. Anti-Brexit campaigners have been arguing that once the negotiated terms of Brexit are known, lawmakers should be given the option to vote on the deal. In that case, one of the options should be to reverse Brexit and stay in the EU, they say.



**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Theresa May arrives in Downing Street for the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday. —AFP

#### 'Legal route to revocability'

Jo Maughan, a lawyer funding the Scottish legal case, said the case was plainly in the national interest. "I will support an appeal against this decision - to the Supreme Court if necessary," he said. He argues that while there is no doubt that Britain could stop Brexit with the permission of the other 27 members, it should seek to establish a legal right to do so unilaterally whether the rest of the bloc likes it or not.

"To improve the bargaining position of the UK, to ensure we retain the opt-outs and rebates that we presently enjoy, and to place the decision entirely in the hands of the UK's Parliament and - if it chooses - its people, we must seek to establish a legal route to revocability," he wrote in an explanatory blog. Yesterday's decision can be appealed in Scotland and then, if permission is granted, to the UK Supreme Court in London. From there it could be referred to the ECJ, which rules on the meaning of EU law. The lawmakers behind the challenge represent electoral areas in Scotland which voted strongly to remain in the EU in the 2016 referendum, against the grain of the United Kingdom which as a whole voted to leave. —Reuters

## Fighters, refugees stoke terror risk in Germany: Police

**FRANKFURT AM MAIN:** Fighters returning to Europe after the collapse of the Islamic State (IS) and radicalization among refugees could increase the terror threat in Germany, a high-ranking police official warned yesterday. "We know that the risks have not shrunk because of the influx of refugees" into Europe's most populous country since 2015, Federal Criminal Police chief Holger Muench told the European Police Congress in Berlin.

"If their dreams are not fulfilled" of a better life in Europe, some among the more than one million arrivals since that year could become radicalized, he warned. Meanwhile, Muench said that "we must assume that there will be those who return" from battlefields in Iraq and Syria to Europe, he said, and that "people prepared to carry out attacks" will enjoy support from underground networks communicating via the internet. "IS is very adaptable," he added.

The number of people listed as "dangerous" potential terrorists by German police has increased from 139 five years ago to 743, while some 970 people are known to have travelled from the country to the would-be caliphate. Most attacks or attempted attacks in Germany since 2015 have been carried out by asylum seekers. Security forces could combat the increased threat by working together more closely and sharing information at the national and European levels, Muench said, as well as upgrading their digital sleuthing skills. —AFP



International

# Maldives top judges arrested; state of emergency declared

## Maldives opposition calls for Indian intervention

**MALE:** An exiled former president of the Maldives urged India yesterday to send an envoy backed by military to release political prisoners after the government of the Indian Ocean archipelago imposed a state of emergency and arrested two senior judges. Best known as an "A-list" holiday destination, the Maldives plunged into crisis last week after the Supreme Court quashed terrorism convictions against nine leading opposition figures including the country's exiled, first democratically elected president, Mohamed Nasheed. Having defied the court ruling to release the detainees, President Abdulla Yameen declared an emergency and ordered security forces to seize control of the court and arrest the chief justice and another judge.

Nasheed, who was granted asylum by Britain after the government allowed him to leave jail for medical treatment abroad in 2016, sought Indian intervention to resolve the island nation's most serious political crisis in years. "On behalf of Maldivian people we humbly request: India to send envoy, backed by its military, to release judges & pol. detainees... We request a physical presence," Nasheed, who is currently in Colombo, said in a Twitter post.

He also urged the United States to block financial transactions of Yameen's government. Since Yameen took control of the overwhelmingly Muslim country of 400,000 people in 2013, his government has faced heavy criticism over the detention of opponents, political influence over the judiciary and the lack of freedom of speech. Addressing the nation on state television, Yameen said he had acted to prevent a coup, and suggested that the judges had chosen to side with his opponents because they were being investigated for corruption.

"I declared the state of emergency because there was no way to hold these justices accountable. This is a coup. I want-

ed to know how well planned this coup," he said. As part of the crackdown, police also detained Yameen's half-brother, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who had ruled the Maldives for 30 years until 2008 and now stands with the opposition. Gayoom was detained at his residence along with his son-in-law. But Gayoom's son Faris, who was one of the imprisoned opposition leaders that the court ordered to be freed, was released yesterday, his lawyer said. Other opponents of Yameen remained in prison.

### Rival influences

Located near key shipping lanes, the Maldives have assumed greater importance after China began building political and economic ties as part of its so-called 'String Of Pearls' strategy to build a network of ports in the Indian Ocean region. Having historically held more clout in the islands, India has sought to push back against China's growing influence there.

## Maldives plunges into crisis; president defies court orders

India, the United States and Britain have urged Yameen to honor the rule of law and free the detainees. "President Yameen has systematically alienated his coalition, jailed or exiled every major opposition political figure, deprived elected members of parliament of their right to represent their voters in the legislature, revised laws to erode human rights ... and weakened the institutions of government," the US State Department said in a statement. Indian intervention in the Maldives would not be unprecedented, as New Delhi sent troops in 1988 to foil a coup, purportedly involving foreign mercenaries. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said it was an internal matter for the Maldives.

"We believe that the Maldives government, political parties and people have the wisdom and ability to cope with the present situation themselves," Geng told a daily news briefing.



**MALE:** Photo shows an aerial view of the island of Male, capital of the Maldives. The Maldives yesterday sought to reassure tourists they would be safe as governments warned their citizens to steer clear of the troubled honeymoon islands amid a spiraling political crisis. —AFP

China has had good ties with Yameen's government and a free trade agreement between the two countries was signed in December, despite criticism from the opposition. Any Indian involvement would risk raising tensions further in the overwhelmingly Muslim archipelago of 400,000 people and intensify the rivalry with China. Aside from the intervention in 1988, India has generally tried to avoid meddling in the Maldives' internal affairs, although it has continued to provide military

and economic assistance. The tumult comes during the peak tourism season in Maldives, which earned \$2.7 billion in 2016 from holidaymakers visiting luxury hotels and dive resorts scattered round the myriad tiny islands and coral atolls. China, the United States and India have already issued advisories against travelling to the tropical islands, though most tourists would only pass through rather than stay in Male, the densely populated capital where the political tensions are highest. —Reuters

## Rohingya women find peace in 'widows camp' barred to men

**BALUKHALI:** It is known as "widows' camp"—a sanctuary off limits to men inside Bangladesh's congested refugee settlements, where Rohingya women and children traumatized by violence find rare moments of peace. The cluster of orange tarpaulins strung across bamboo offers a safe haven for dozens of widows and young children left fending for themselves after fleeing into Bangladesh in an exodus of nearly 690,000 Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar.

They escaped atrocities likened by the UN to "ethnic cleansing" but their husbands did not, leaving them to compete for food, shelter and survival in a border zone teeming with close to one million refugees. Among them is Swaleha Begum, who crossed alone after her husband of just three months was killed in an army-led crackdown on their village. At just 18 she oversees the women-only encampment separated from other refugee tents in a crowded and dusty valley.

The sense of ownership and pride in their basic refuge is strong among the 60-odd widows, who maintain their own bathrooms, run prayer sessions and share responsibility for scores of children and orphans. "Those who have husbands can make their own accommodation using bamboo and tarpaulins," Swaleha said. "We got this by the grace of god," she added, gesturing at the simple tents lined with thin sleeping mats and cooking utensils. One of her primary tasks is ensuring men-even teenage boys-venture nowhere near their shelters, where the inhabitants are comfortable enough to eschew the veil worn by most Rohingya Muslim women in public areas.

### 'Sisters' in the camp

Aid workers say women and girls are most at threat from predators and human traffickers lurking in the poorly supervised camps. This risk is compounded when Rohingya women-uncomfortable at sharing toilets with men-venture far away for privacy in the forest after dark.



**UKHIA, Bangladesh:** Women walk inside the 'widow's camp' at the Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh's Ukhia district. —AFP

The International Organization for Migration has documented cases of refugee women being lured away from the camps with promises of marriage or jobs that end instead in forced labor or sex work.

More than half the Rohingya refugees who escaped the bloodshed in Myanmar's westernmost Rakhine state are women and children, the UN Women agency said. They made it out alive but not without scars. The UN Women agency says almost every woman and girl in the sprawling Balukhali camp is a victim of unimaginable violence—a survivor of rape, or witness to the sexual assault, murder or burning alive of their family and friends.

Mabiya Khatun, who said her husband and two sons were butchered as their village was razed by soldiers, cherished the solidarity among her "sisters" in the widows' camp. "I like it here. I find it very peaceful. We get to live a life of respect here, a dignified life," she said. The mood shifts at talk of returning to their homeland. Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to a two-year timetable for repatriating some 750,000 refugees to Rakhine on a voluntary basis, but the process has stalled. Despite the safety in Bangladesh, and the horrors inflicted against their people in Myanmar, some Rohingya living in the widows' camp yearn for the lives they left behind. —AFP

## US, North Korea trade warnings on nuke strikes

**GENEVA:** The United States said yesterday that North Korea may be only months away from being able to strike the US mainland with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile, while Pyongyang said Washington was considering a pre-emptive strike against it. The clash came at the United Nations-sponsored Conference on Disarmament days after the Trump administration said it will expand its nuclear capability. US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood, addressing the Geneva forum, also warned that arsenals in China and Russia were expanding, drawing rebukes from their respective delegations.

"Russia, China and North Korea are growing their stockpiles, increasing the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security strategies, and - in some cases - pursuing the development of new nuclear capabilities to threaten other peaceful nations," Wood said. North Korea "may now be only months away from the capability to strike the US with nuclear-armed ballistic missiles", he said, giving no further detail on the source of the statement.

North Korea is under tightening UN Security Council resolutions for its banned nuclear and ballistic missile programs, but

relations with South Korea have softened in the lead-up to the Pyeongyang Olympic Games opening on Feb 9. North Korea accused the United States of seeking to aggravate the situation on the divided Korean peninsula by "deploying large nuclear assets" nearby and lay the ground for a possible pre-emptive strike against it.

"In view of the nature and scale of US military reinforcements, they are designed to make a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK," North Korean diplomat Ju Yong Chol told the talks, referring to his country's official name the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "US officials including the defense secretary and the CIA director repeatedly talked about DPRK nuclear and missile threat to justify their argument for a military option and a new concept of a so-called 'bloody nose', a limited pre-emptive strike on the DPRK is under consideration within the US administration," Ju said. Wood took the floor to retort: "If you claim to want peace, end your nuclear and ballistic missile tests and stop your provocative behavior and threats".

### Missile defense test

In another development, China yesterday successfully conducted a test of a ground-based missile defense system amid rising tensions on the Korean peninsula. Concern over a potential conflict with nuclear-armed North Korea is growing following a series of bellicose statements between Washington and Pyongyang. Monday's test of the mid-range missile



**PYONGYANG:** An unidentified missile and mobile launcher makes its way through Kim Il-Sung Square during a military parade in Pyongyang. —AFP

system "achieved its anticipated goal" according to a brief statement by the Chinese defense ministry. "This test was defensive. It does not target any country," it added. The US has deployed a missile defense system, known as THAAD, in South Korea to guard against threats from North Korea, despite objections from Beijing, which considers the installation a threat to its own security.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have been pushing a diplomatic strategy to convince North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un to come to the table and negotiate away his nuclear weapons. But other senior figures in the Trump Administration have reportedly endorsed the idea of a "bloody nose" strike to damage Kim's nuclear sector and show the US means business, hopefully without provoking a wider war. Trump's pick for ambassador to South Korea, Victor Cha, was dropped after refusing to endorse the idea, according to a recent article in the Washington Post. —Agencies

## News in brief

### Priests, teacher murdered

**ACAPULCO:** Two priests and a primary school teacher were shot dead Monday in the violent Mexican state of Guerrero as they returned home from a village dance, authorities said. Another four people were wounded when gunmen opened fire on the group's car in the early morning hours on the highway between the towns of Taxco and Iguala, the southern state's security ministry said. "A black vehicle blocked the road and several suspects immediately opened fire" on the other car, it said. Police found the black vehicle abandoned 1.5 kilometers (about a mile) away with a rifle strap inside. The local Catholic archdiocese condemned the killing, saying it "has left our entire community in mourning" and calling on authorities to find those responsible. —AFP

### Japan princess' wedding delayed

**TOKYO:** The wedding of Princess Mako, the eldest granddaughter of Emperor Akihito, and her college sweetheart will be postponed until 2020 due to lack of "sufficient preparations", news reports said yesterday. Mako and Kei Komuro, both 26, had been scheduled to become formally engaged in a traditional court ceremony next month before their wedding on November 4. But the couple have decided there was not enough time to make "sufficient preparations", Mako said in a statement quoted by Jiji Press. They have already informed the emperor and empress that their wedding-related ceremonies will be delayed until 2020, since the imperial family's schedule will be tight next year as Akihito abdicates, Jiji said. "I'm very sorry for causing a big trouble and extra burden to those who have sincerely helped our wedding," Mako said. —AFP

### Pirates release ship

**NEW DELHI:** A tanker with 22 Indian crew on board has been released by pirates who had seized the vessel off the coast of West Africa, the company that manages the ship said yesterday. The Panama-registered MT Marine Express, loaded with 13,500 tons of petrol, was anchored off Benin when authorities lost contact on Thursday. "Marine Express, which was the subject of a pirate attack and seizure in the Gulf of Guinea on February 1st, is now back under the command of the captain and crew," the Hong Kong-based Anglo-Eastern said in a statement. "All crew members are reported to be safe and well, and the cargo of 13,500 tons of gasoline remains on board." —AFP

### Heavy snow hits Japan

**TOKYO:** A heavy snowfall in central Japan brought road traffic to a standstill yesterday, trapping some 1,000 cars, local officials said, adding they have asked the military for help but have not heard of any injuries or illness among those trapped. Snow has reached 1.36 meters in Fukui prefecture, 320 km west of Tokyo, as of 2:00 pm yesterday, the heaviest snowfall in nearly four decades in the region, a local meteorological observatory said. The traffic standstill, stretching for about 10 km in the prefecture, was caused by some cars going off the shoulder of the road in the snow-storm and others stopping to put on tire chains as a precautionary measure, an official at a local office of the Transport Ministry said. —Reuters

### Vietnam activist jailed

**HANOI:** A Vietnamese environmental activist was jailed for 14 years yesterday over protests against a toxic waste dump that killed tons of fish in the communist country, whose leadership is accused of cracking down on critics. The toxic dump in 2016 by Taiwanese steel firm Formosa destroyed livelihoods along swaths of coast in central Vietnam and sparked rare nationwide demonstrations that saw several activists put behind bars. Hoang Duc Binh, 34, was convicted of "abusing democratic freedom" and "resisting public officers" following a half-day trial in the central province of Nghe An held under heavy security, his lawyer said. —AFP

## Analysis

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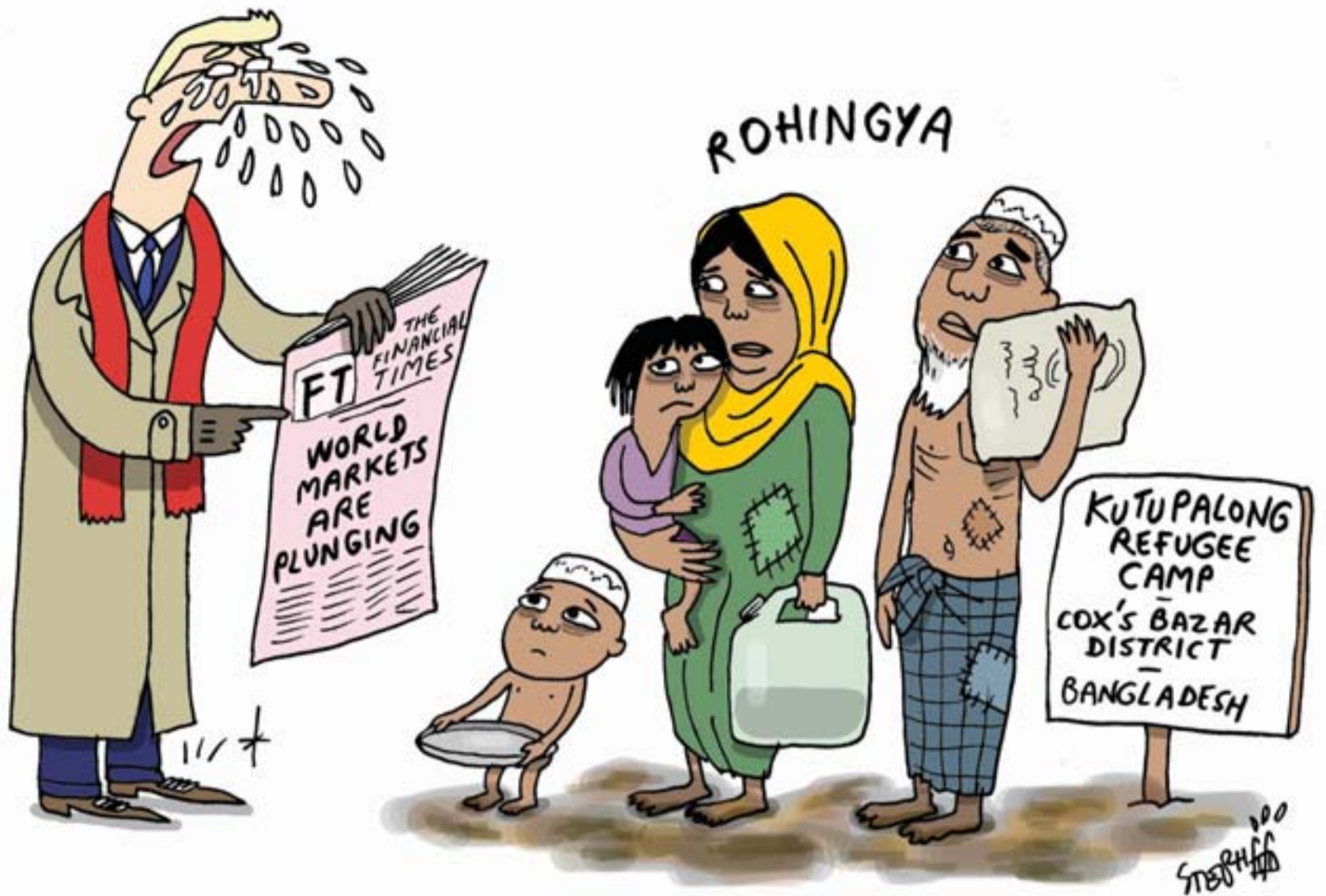
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## Stock market crash or healthy correction?

The dramatic fall in stock prices on Wall Street that has spooked equity markets around the world yesterday is making investors nervous that this could be the start of a new stock market crash. But the underlying strength of the global economy seems to suggest that the sell-off might actually be just a temporary - but long overdue - correction to a more or less uninterrupted market rally since Donald Trump was elected US President in late 2016.

On Monday, New York's Dow Jones Industrial Average saw its steepest ever one-day point drop, shedding a total of 1,175.20 points or a hefty 4.6 percent in value. That has triggered panic in Asia and Europe, where stock prices fell sharply yesterday. "We haven't seen swings of such magnitude for a long time and in that sense, it's traumatic," said Jean-Francois Robin, bond strategist at Natixis. "Lots of investors have become unaccustomed to so-called 'bear' markets."

The downturn began on Friday when bright US non-farm payrolls data sparked fears that inflation will surge this year - and that the Federal Reserve will be forced to raise borrowing costs more quickly than anticipated. At the same time, US Treasury yields shot to four-year peaks, as bonds become more attractive for investors than stocks. Behind all this were concerns that central banks could start to wind down their ultra-expansive monetary policy measures more quickly than anticipated. "Protected by central banks' generosity, investors have got used to low borrowing rates, low inflation and an absence of volatility," said Jean-Louis Mourier, economist at Aurel BGC.

### 'Herd instinct'

The current configuration of the market tends to "favor the herd instinct which can partly explain the ferocity of the sell-off," said Robin at Natixis. But optimism still holds the upper hand, at least for now. "We can say it's a correction, but I don't believe we're witnessing large-scale panic," said Jean-Laurent Bonnafé, head of BNP Paribas at the bank's annual news conference. For many analysts, the current bout of selling fever is primarily a matter of "market psychology," said Christopher Dembik, chief economist at Saxo Banque.

But it is the scale of the current sell-off that is putting investors on edge and because of this, what happens over the next few trading sessions will prove crucial. "Markets sometimes have a tendency to create their own reality," said Vincent Juvyns, strategist at JPMorgan AM. The pick-up in inflation and the rise in bond yields were already making investors jumpy and so the US jobs data on Friday could have just been a convenient excuse to start selling, he said. "Objectively, the conditions are not in place for a real crash," Juvyns said. "From an economic point of view, nothing has changed. On the contrary, the latest indicators confirm that the global economy remains robust."

### 'Healthy correction'

Robin at Natixis said that markets "are still traumatized by the events of 2008, the worst financial crisis since the 1930s. "But we're not in 2008," he said. "There is no reason to panic. Corporate earnings are on the up. Business indices are at their highest levels in decades." At the current juncture, a stock market correction is "actually rather healthy," Robin argued. That view is shared by many market players, with the US S&P 500 in January putting in its best start to the year since 1997.

Mourier at Aurel BGC suggested that investors "are finding out that assets regarded as risky, such as shares, are just that". Investors were being reminded that "inflation and volatility haven't disappeared and central banks won't always be there" as a backstop, added Robin. Nevertheless, the current correction "offers new opportunities," the expert said.

"The shares in the (French) CAC 40 index, for example, aren't expensive, particularly in view of the outlook for corporate earnings and economic growth. It's actually more of an opportunity to buy shares," Robin concluded. —AFP



A display showing the German stock market index DAX is pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt yesterday. —AFP

## Investors lick their wounds and hunt

It had been a long time coming. The speed of Monday's jaw-dropping sell-off on Wall Street had traders and investors bumped and bruised. But few seemed surprised that a pullback had actually happened. Some were looking for the right time and opportunity to wade back in - but wary of catching a falling knife. "We finally got the correction we were all kind of figuring would happen," said Paul Nolte, portfolio manager at Kingsview Asset Management in Chicago. "It feels a lot more painful only because we haven't seen it in 14-15 months or so, and it's certainly, from the way we look at it, healthy."

Stocks have been on a bull run since 2009, accelerated in the last year by strong earnings and the Trump administration's corporate tax cut. The S&P 500 rose 19 percent in 2017 alone. But with valuations sky high after the buying binge carried deep into January, something had to give. The down days started last week. The shakeout accelerated on Friday, with the S&P's biggest drop since September 2016 after jobs data raised the specter of inflation and spooked investors.

Monday started out in the red, but calm. The afternoon was anything but, as frantic selling set in. "The market panicked for whatever reason," said Phil Orlando, chief equity strategist at Federated Investors in New York said in the afternoon. "The sharp reversals you saw in the last hour or so is recognition of the fact that things got overdone."

### Catch a falling knife?

The Dow briefly entered correction territory on Monday with a 10 percent dip from its Jan. 26 record. It ended down 4.6 percent on the day, while the S&P 500 fell 4 percent. Since the S&P's Jan. 26 all-time high it has fallen 7.8 percent. Of its 11 sectors, energy led the decline with a 10.5 percent drop followed by a 9.4 percent drop in healthcare and an 8.8 percent drop in materials. The best performer was utilities with a decline of just under 4 per-

cent (3.97) followed by real estate which fell 5.1 percent and telecom, which fell 5.5 percent.

After the close of trading, equity futures traded sharply down, indicating another day of selling was ahead. "If I were running a hedge fund, I wouldn't be rushing to buy; I'd be waiting," said Michael Purves, chief global strategist at Weeden & Co in New York. No S&P sector looked like a safe bet in the current environment. "I have a strong feeling that this sell-off is going to intensify because bears are

dividend yields look less competitive compared with bond yields. That leaves some strategists talking up cyclical sectors such as financials, industrials, materials and technology as beneficiaries of a strong economy.

### Looking for the safest bet

"Right now there's no safe place to hide," said Robert Pavlik, chief investment strategist and senior portfolio manager at SlateStone Wealth LLC in New York. However Pavlik said he bought stocks on Friday, and on Monday as he was banking on a continuation of strong economic growth and a rapid increase in US earnings. "This is not going to be a protracted sell-off. This is going to happen relatively quick because the economic numbers are still so good," he said.

Since the S&P's financial sector fell 5 percent on Monday, some investors said they saw the decline as a buying opportunity as bank profits are boosted by rising interest rates because they can charge customers more for borrowing money. "You have a great opportunity to buy financials here," said Phil Blacato, CEO of Ladenburg Thalmann Asset Management in New York. "With a strengthening consumer that's going to continue to borrow and spend your best opportunity is in financials and technology." In particular Apple Inc, which fell 6.7 percent in the last two sessions, looked like a bargain to Blacato, who said he bought the stock Monday. "Apple is getting very inexpensive."

While the broader market is punished by inflation anxiety, Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist at the Leuthold Group in Minneapolis says investors should buy stocks in energy and materials companies and in a diverse array of commodities to profit from rising commodity prices. "If commodities rise maybe stocks go down over all. Even energy and materials stocks might come down but they might outperform," said Paulsen. —Reuters

“Right now there's no safe place to hide”

seeing blood on the Street and all they want is right in front of them," Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at ThinkMarkets, London

Even so, some investors went shopping as they kept their focus on strong economic data and earnings growth. The utilities and real estate indexes performed better than the S&P on Monday, but with declines of 1.7 percent and 2.7 percent, the traditionally defensive sectors could hardly be called safe havens. These are considered bond proxies, and along with consumer staples and telecommunications, are seen as relatively safe in even the roughest markets due to their high dividend yields and predictable if slow growing earnings. But with interest rates rising, the

## Bond bears smell blood, others claw for opportunity

Some of the biggest US investors believe the bond market has slipped into a bear phase. Others believe it has turned into one of the best buying opportunities in years. Pimco, one of the world's largest bond fund managers, and widely followed Guggenheim Partners are among the investors who say benchmark 10-year Treasuries yielding 3 percent - now within reach - are too hard to resist. Other players, such as Wall Street bond king Jeffrey Gundlach, see a lot more selling pressure to come.

"Valuations are beginning to look more interesting," said Dan Ivascyn, group chief investment officer at Newport Beach, California-based Pacific Investment Management Co, known as Pimco, which oversees more than \$1.75 trillion in assets. "We can see some further weakness in rates, especially the first half of year. But we still see limited upside for yields from here."

Scott Miner, global chief investment officer at Guggenheim, who helps oversee more than \$260 billion in assets, agreed. "We're waiting for 3 percent," he said. "We definitely will add there. No one will perfectly time the bottom." Investors have already pounced on bonds even below the 3 percent level. On Monday, investors rushed into Treasuries as the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average nosedived more than 4 percent - reversing a move on Friday when a spike in bond yields, which move inversely to prices, triggered an equity rout. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury ended the session at 2.71 percent, down dramatically from 2.852 percent on Friday, the highest level since January 2014. Some investors doubt the

flight to safety into Treasuries will be long-lasting: Inflationary fears, strong economic data and an announcement of bigger Treasury auctions have and will continue to drive yields higher, they say. Indeed, the 10-year Treasury yield hit a four-year high on Friday after the latest monthly U.S. jobs report showed solid wage gains, effectively confirming an expected rate increase at the Federal Reserve's next meeting, in March.

Investors have been bracing for such moves in Treasuries. Yields in the \$14 trillion market for US government debt touched record lows in 2016, driven by years of aggressive central bank intervention in the wake of the 2008-2009 financial crisis to keep interest rates low to stimulate the economy. Now, as the Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates three times this year and as some economists predict that the European Central Bank will start to raise rates later this year, investors are grappling with the effects of prolonged rising rates for the first time in nearly 10 years.

With inflationary pressures and massive budget deficits having become the topic du jour this year, the bond-market "vigilantes" term has made its way back onto trading floors. The term "bond vigilantes" was coined by Ed Yardeni, the longtime Wall Street strategist now president at his namesake research firm. Yardeni was describing the demand by investors in the 1980s for high yields to compensate for the perceived risks of inflation and budget deficits.

All told, the jump in Treasury yields has yet to make its way into the broader economy in the form of higher borrowing costs, yet it will likely start to dampen the housing and auto markets as consumer loans become more expensive, said Gary Cloud, a portfolio manager of the Hennessy Equity and Income Fund. That, in turn, will make it less likely that the Fed raises rates more than three times this year, he said. "We're not haters of the bond market here at all. Treasuries look very cheap compared to



A trader works on the floor at the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange on Monday in New York. —AFP

other income classes" such as high-yield credit or mortgage debt, he said.

### Technical signs

Not all prominent bond fund managers are buying in. Billionaires Bill Gross and Ray Dalio believe the bond market is at the beginning stages of a bear market. Gundlach, the chief executive of DoubleLine Capital, told Reuters on Saturday that it is "hard to love bonds at even 3 percent when GDPNow for Q1 2018 is suggesting annualized nominal GDP growth above 7 percent," referring to a new indicator of economic growth from the Atlanta Fed.

Meanwhile, benchmark 10-year note yields have broken above a long-term downtrend in effect since the 1980s, which some technical strategists see as a bearish indicator going forward. If yields continue to rise, it could further confirm

the breakdown of the more-than 30-year bull run. Paul Ciana, a technical strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, sees the next major support level for 10-year notes at around 2.95 percent, the 150-month simple moving average, which they last touched in 2007. A break above that could lead the yields to next test 3.28 percent, the 200-month simple moving average, which has not been reached since 1989.

Ciana sees a monthly close above 3.03 percent as technically confirming a so-called double bottom, which is when yields retest a previous low and which can signal a trend reversal. A close above that level could send the benchmark yields "well into the mid-4 percent area," Ciana said in a report on Monday. Richard Bernstein, chief executive of Richard Bernstein Advisors, said he would be a buyer when the yield curve inverts. —Reuters

News

More civilians killed in deadly...

Continued from Page 1

which lies just east of Damascus. Rescuers from the White Helmets, an award-winning organization featured in an Oscar-nominated documentary this year, could be seen rushing shredded bodies covered in white dust to ambulances hurtling down streets littered with rubble.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman added that few rebels were among the dead because they rarely left their tunnels and had better protection from air strikes than civilians, estimated to number around 400,000 in Ghouta. He described yesterday's bloodshed as the deadliest since efforts to broker a truce in Ghouta failed and the government intensified its operations against the enclave six weeks ago. In apparent retaliation, rockets were fired on several Damascus neighborhoods, killing three civilians, the state news agency SANA reported.

Although less deadly, regime attacks involving suspected chlorine-filled munitions on Ghouta have also been on the up in recent weeks. The US State Department said on Monday it had recorded six suspected chemical attacks in Syria in the past 30 days. Washington, which last year launched cruise missiles on a regime airfield in retaliation for a nerve agent attack in Khan Sheikhun that killed scores of people, has threatened more military action. France last month blacklisted companies and nationals it said had links to Syria's alleged chemical program.

US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley clashed with her Russian counterpart at a meeting of the Security Council on Monday after proposing a statement condemning Damascus "in the strongest terms". Russia,

Assad's main backer, retorted that "no perpetrators have been identified" and accused the United States of orchestrating a "propaganda campaign" against the Syrian government. The UN said it was looking into the reports of chemical attacks and condemned what it described as an escalation in violence in Ghouta and Idlib. "Over the last 48 hours, the scale and ferocity of attacks has increased dramatically," the UN-mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry said in a statement.

In Idlib, the last province in the country to largely escape government control, daily fighting is also claiming a growing human toll and displacing thousands. The UN commission said at least three hospitals were hit in recent strikes and shelling. "These reports are extremely troubling, and make a mockery of the so-called 'de-escalation zones' intended to protect civilians from such bombardment," said Paulo Pinheiro, chair of the commission.

After talks in Russia and Austria last month failed to yield a breakthrough, the UN's humanitarian coordinator and top envoys in Syria issued a statement in Damascus Tuesday calling for a month-long truce. The measure would "enable the delivery of humanitarian aid and services, evacuation of the critically sick and wounded, and alleviation of people's suffering, to the extent possible, wherever they are," the UN said.

The UN said existing agreements on the delivery of aid were not being honored and stressed that "if access was granted, three convoys could be dispatched each week, reaching over 700,000 people in these areas in two months". While the fighting is abating in some parts of the country, the humanitarian crisis is still in full swing and aid groups predict a further 1.5 million people will be displaced in 2018. There was no immediate comment from the regime or any of the other belligerents on the UN's appeal. — AFP



British students at the Connaught School for Girls in London connect via a video call on Feb 1, 2018 with Palestinian refugee students from Al Fallouja and Haifa schools in Damascus, which is run by UNRWA. — Reuters

Love of K-pop links UK teens with Palestinian refugee students

LONDON: The sugary pop songs of South Korean groups BTS, EXO and BlackPink might be sung in Korean but it has not stopped Palestinian refugee teenager Tasnim from being an avid fan from her home in war-torn Syria. To Tasnim's surprise, it is a love shared by students at London's Connaught School for Girls with whom her school in Damascus holds Skype calls as part of a project to connect refugee students in the Middle East with European and US pupils.

"My favourite kind of music is K-pop music, Korean music," exclaimed Tasnim during a recent video call, sitting alongside classmates from two schools in the Syrian capital run by aid agency United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA). "Do you like BTS?" 14-year-old British student Asiya replied, before excited chatter erupts between the two groups about their favourite 'K-pop' performers. "Did you hear their latest song? Do you like BlackPink?" said Tasnim, wearing a white hijab, as does Asiya in London.

More than half a million Palestinian refugee students attend 700 UNRWA schools across Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, the aid agency says. UNRWA was established by the U.N. General Assembly in 1949 after thousands of Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes in the 1948 war that followed Israel's creation. "Even

though we are worlds apart ... we're all teenagers, so we found some common ground," said Asiya, who volunteered to join the 'My Voice, My School' project run by UNRWA and social enterprise Digital Explorer to learn more about refugees. "It was quite ironic because we were on a conference call to people in Syria and we were talking about Korea."

UNRWA says it currently supports 5.3 million Palestinians across the Middle East, including in Gaza and the West Bank. But the United States, the agency's biggest donor, said last month it would withhold about half of a \$125 million aid package after President Donald Trump questioned the value of such funding amid a widening rift with Palestinian leaders.

UNRWA spokesman Christopher Guinness said the funding cut would put the stability of the Middle East at risk. "It's a time when extremists are in full recruitment mode. It's simply unwise to have 500,000 children not in schools," he said in a phone interview from Jerusalem. UNRWA has launched a global campaign for countries and private donors to help it deal with a shortfall in funding.

Seven countries - Switzerland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Russia - had already transferred early funds while four - Belgium, Kuwait, the Netherlands and Ireland - had pledged to do so soon, the agency said last week. "Our education is at risk because of a funding reduction," Palestinian refugee Mulham, 14, told students in London, asking for their support to ensure they have access to education.

British student Asiya said hearing about Mulham's and Tasnim's circumstances firsthand has made her appreciate her education and inspired her to do more. "Although we sometimes complain a lot about school, we found that their situation is a lot worse and we should be grateful for what we have," she said. — Reuters

Philippines crushes sports, luxury cars...

Continued from Page 1

The Bureau of Customs collects duties on imports and is one of the state's key revenue-generating agen-

cies. It consistently tops independent surveys as one of the country's most corrupt government agencies. Customs commissioner Isidro Lapena said in a speech at the ceremony that he has reassigned 691 of his some 7,000 employees since he took office in August last year. Two other employees were dismissed and 16 others have been suspended over alleged illegal activity, he added. — AFP

Global market panic fading...

Continued from Page 1

in India, South Korea, China and Russia. A report in Al-Anbaa daily yesterday said approximately 12,000 investors in Kuwait have lost half the value of their portfolios trading in the volatile cryptocurrency market. Recent weeks have seen a widespread sell-off in the digital asset, with the value of bitcoin falling from its all-time high of \$19,500 in December to below \$8,000.

The collapse has been felt strongly in Kuwait, where investors reportedly account for 1.5 percent of the total value of cryptocurrencies. The average investment size is estimated at \$10,000, which exploded in value to \$70,000 by the end of the year. BitFils, a prominent local exchange, reported that Kuwaitis were buying bitcoin with their credit cards with an average monthly investment of \$6,000, including commissions and other fees. One trader admitted that he had lost more than \$20,000 in just 18 days.

Yesterday, the Kuwaiti stock index fell 1.3 percent to 6,624 points. "Traders don't know which way to turn as uncertainty is running high," said David Madden, market analyst at CMC. "The colossal range on the US indices sum up how irrational equity traders are at the moment, and while some go bargain hunting, others are fearful we could see another leg lower." Even as the Dow index gyrated in and out of positive territory, the feeling spread that the worst of the brutal downturn was over. "Dow up! Panic over, as you were everyone," tweeted James Hughes, chief market analyst at AxiTrader, during a brief breather for the index. Jasper Lawler, head of research at London Capital Group, tweeted "Trader's paradise out there right now", in a reference to volatility which boosts brokers' earnings

from trading fees.

European stock markets were helped off the day's worst levels by the Wall Street recovery, but remained deeply in the red at the close. The selloff striking fear in investors' hearts began last Friday when bright US non-farm payrolls data sparked concern that inflation will surge this year - and that the Federal Reserve will in response raise borrowing costs more quickly than anticipated. New York's Dow Jones Industrial Average saw its steepest ever one-day point drop on Monday, shedding a total of 1,175.20 points or a hefty 4.6 percent in value, while 10-year US Treasury yields set four-year peaks.

The downturn was so rapid that some investors wondered whether they were headed for a crash, but others welcomed what they saw as a reality check for an overbought market. "It's not doom and gloom, and it's not financial markets Armageddon: it's just a much needed and much overdue correction," AxiTrader's Hughes told AFP. "Markets usually grind to the upside, but fall like a rock," said analyst Naem Aslam at trading firm ThinkMarkets. "Traders have been looking at the market for the past year moving in one direction which was skewed to the upside. Now, it's time for the bears to take their revenge."

Prior to the chaotic selloff, Wall Street had enjoyed an impressive record-breaking run ever since Trump's 2016 election on hopes over the US president's pro-business tax-cutting policies. Asia and Europe had meanwhile reaped bumper gains from the improving economic outlook. "If investors had been waiting for an opportunity to take profits, the prospect of higher than expected inflation and tightening by the Fed provided just that," Richard Hunter, head of markets at online stockbroker Interactive Investor, told AFP.

Yesterday, Tokyo stocks led a collapse throughout Asia, briefly diving almost seven percent before closing down 4.7 percent. Hong Kong lost more than five percent in its worst day since summer 2015, while Sydney and Singapore each sank three percent. — Agencies

Assembly guards assault journalist...

Continued from Page 1

MPs also insisted that the government should speed up a key reform law on regulating conflict of interests to allow the prosecution of MPs and ex-lawmakers accused of accepting bribes from the government. State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh told the Assembly the law has been approved by the gov-

ernment and will be sent to the Assembly soon. The Assembly then gave the legal and legislative panel one month to complete the legislation.

Head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said that the Assembly should not debate a government draft law stipulating to allow the government to borrow as much as KD 25 billion until his panel completes the revision of the state's financial status within one month. The government wants the law to be able to borrow from the domestic and international markets to finance the budget deficit resulting from low oil prices. The Assembly then started to debate the housing problem, but could not finish the debate before the session was adjourned for today.

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## Sports

# Japan skate king Hanyu ready to rumble at Olympics: Coach

## Hanyu, strong favourite to win back-to-back Olympic figure skating titles

**PYEONGCHANG:** Japan's figure skating king Yuzuru Hanyu will be ready to defend his Olympic title in Pyeongchang, his coach said yesterday, after an ankle injury threatened to scuttle his double dream. The 23-year-old, widely considered the greatest skater ever, damaged ankle ligaments attempting a quadruple lutz in training in November and has been training in secrecy since.

But coach Brian Orser promised Hanyu would be fit in time for the men's short programme on February 16 at Gangneung Ice Arena. "He is training quite well," the Canadian told reporters. "In the last few weeks everything has been coming together and all of us have been very optimistic.

"We need every minute between now and the competition, but I am really impressed with the way he has been able to manage all of this," added Orser. "Every day he keeps getting better, but we have goals. We know exactly what has got to be worked on and what we have to achieve, and we do it."

A fit Hanyu would arguably be a strong favourite to become the first man to win back-to-back Olympic figure skating titles since American Dick Button in 1948 and 1952. But tetchy Japanese skate officials have refused to discuss Hanyu's progress since his injury scare, adding to

the sense of drama before one of the most watched sports of the Games, which open on Friday.

American Nathan Chen, Spain's Javier Fernandez and fellow Japanese Shoma Uno—runner-up to Hanyu at the 2017 world championships—are among those lurking. China's Jin Boyang could also provide a threat after his recent Four Continents gold.

Doubts linger over how competitive Hanyu will be after his ill-timed training accident and the absence of the Japanese star, one of the most recognisable athletes of the Games, would be a major blow to organisers.

However, Orser gave the Japanese superstar's legions of devoted fans a boost by dismissing fears he would not be ready to compete. "He will be 100 percent," Japan's Kyodo news quoted him as saying. "I remember in

the summer we got back to training in July and saying then he's ready for the Olympics. He was ready in August.

"So we have all that work behind us and it is sort of in the bank. Thank goodness for that because now it is all coming to fruition. "We are kind of peaking again and it's mainly conditioning right now and getting some run-throughs done," Orser added. "He has done a lot of conditioning off the ice so in some ways he is much stronger than ever, but we need the extra time." — AFP

“We need every minute between now and the competition”



MOSCOW: File photo taken on October 21, 2017 shows Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu competing during the senior men's short programme at the ISU Grand Prix Rostelecom Cup in Moscow. — AFP

## Coaching change rekindles Chan's skating passion in time for Games

**GANGNEUNG:** Patrick Chan said yesterday that a drastic coaching change weeks ahead of the Pyeongchang Winter Games had helped him rekindle his appreciation for figure skating to make the most of his third and last Olympics.

Speaking to reporters after his second practice in South Korea, the 27-year-old said his bold decision to return to his native Canada and hire a new coach with only a few months left in his competitive career had already yielded benefits.

"I think it has already helped me," said Chan, who has said he would retire after Pyeongchang. "It's a big change mid-season. I think it's not a very normal way of doing things. But I just had to trust my gut and I needed a change." The turning point for Chan came at the Skate Canada grand prix event in October last year, where he finished a disappointing fourth.

"At Skate Canada, at that time I was really uncomfortable and unhappy," he said. "I was just unhappy about skating. Period. I did not like it." After withdrawing from the grand prix event in Japan in November—a move he said was needed to "get organised mentally"—Chan parted ways with Marina Zoueva, with whom he trained in the United States, moved to Vancouver and hired Canadian coach Ravi Walia.

Chan said he wanted to be mentally happy for the end of his career, and moving back home has contributed to that. "Not many people have done a change - moving places, changing coaches and then having to train and not have as much time as you would like," Chan said. "I only really had two months of training by that time."

The new training regime has been helped along by teaming up with different trainers and physiologists to get Chan ready for competition. "It has ended up being enough time to be trained to be really comfortable and confident," he said.

### IT'S A JOB

A three-time world champion and seasoned Olympian, Chan knows the Olympic drill. "It feels a little more normal," he said. "I don't feel like, 'Oh my God, this is the Olympics'. It's just like another... it's a job almost. I'm just coming in, doing my plan and I'm focused on my practices every single day."

Chan, who finished fifth at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, clinched silver behind Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu in Sochi in 2014, where he had been favoured to win.



Patrick Chan

Despite taking an additional silver in Sochi for the team competition, Chan sat out the next season before a comeback in 2015-16. Chan is known for his artistry in an era of ever-increasing quadruple jumps, a trend he has regarded with caution amid concerns about skater safety.

In the 2017 world championships in Helsinki, Chan landed three quadruple jumps in his free programme for the first time, but still only finished fourth, with each of the podium finishers, Japanese duo Yuzuru Hanyu and Shoma Uno, and China's Jin Boyang, landing four.

Chan is set to represent Canada in the team event once again, something he said would be "another great moment at the Olympics." "We have a great chance, we have a great team," he said. "All I can think about is how I can contribute my best. I feel confident because of what I can offer because I'm confident in myself." — Reuters

## Olympics Death and denial in top flight ski-racing

**PYEONGCHANG:** Elite downhill racers will strap on their skis at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics aware of the risks but sometimes in denial about the real dangers despite two deaths in the run-up to the Games. German teenager Max Burkhardt and France's two-time Olympian David Poisson both died in racing incidents in Canada, the first fatalities on the professional circuit since 2001, casting a dark shadow over the sport.

"We know we do a risky sport," said Poisson's teammate Blaise Giezendanner. "You accept wrecking a knee, you accept sliding into the nets. Injuries are part of the game. But the game is not about dying. At no moment do we downhillers say to ourselves 'this morning, I'll maybe die'."

That said, there is an element of denial among the elite racers given the taxing nature of a sport that combines sheer speed with technical prowess. Dressed in a skin-tight catsuit, back support and helmet, begoggled racers shot through course falls, snakes and rolls, on a wide variety of terrain, in parts propelling them 60 metres in the air, only to slam down for icy traverses that severely test technical ability and mastery of well-honed equipment.

Norwegian Kjetil Jansrud, who won

super-G gold and downhill bronze in Sochi and giant slalom silver in 2010, said: "You have to compartmentalise things, and it's tough. "We talk about it, we know that sport has a lot of risks, but we forget our sport is a dangerous one.

"When you crash, you can hurt yourself - a knee, an elbow - but this (death) is difficult to accept." Jansrud added: "I've tried not to think too much about it because that brings fears, a lot of nerves, I'll try to keep that away so that I don't make any mistakes myself."

Luc Alphand, France's 1997 world downhill champion and erstwhile Dakar Rally driver, confirmed that "the word 'fear' is taboo in our sport". "However, every skier has periods when he's less physically in form and when he feels fear," Alphand said. "It's up to the skier to manage those periods, it's up to him to look after himself, it's a massive mental task."

### RISK MANAGEMENT KEY

Mental issues to one side, Bernhard Russi, who won a gold and silver for Switzerland in the Olympic downhill in 1972 and 1976, insists there is also the physical side of risk management: that is, ski racers knowing just how far they are willing to push themselves.

"99 times out of 100, racers will say 'no, I'm not scared. I have respect for the mountain'," Russi, the designer of Olympic downhill courses for the International Ski Federation since 1980, told AFP.

"Once they stop, they'll remember moments when they were scared. But they'd never admit to that today, they have to protect themselves. —AFP

## Local wheelchair basketball tourney to conclude today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The local wheelchair basketball tournament, organized by the Handicapped Sports Club will come to a conclusion today as the third day of the tournament resulted in Aboudka team beating Tahreer by the score of 54-45 and the Lakers defeated the Olympic by the score 63-48.

KHSC Secretary General Abdallah Al-Azmi said he was pleased with the tournament which proved to be a good preparation for upcoming events abroad, as the teams who participated include several national team players.

He said KHSC board members are happy with the turnout, which shows a good interest in the club's activities and is being supported by them.

He concluded by thanking all those who made the tournament possible adding that there will be many events to come as part of the club's sports season.



## Sports

# Brazilian jockey Ricardo bags world record 12,844th victory

## 'My life has always been about horse racing'

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** For years, Brazilian jockey Jorge Ricardo battled for one of the least heard-of, yet toughest titles in sport—most horse races won—and on Monday he got there with a 12,844th victory. The win in the rain at Rio de Janeiro's Hipodromo race track equalled the extraordinary world record held by Ricardo's career-long Canadian rival Russell Baze.

But with the California-based Baze already retired, Ricardo now needs only one more win—practically a formality—to own the record. The hard work is done. A grizzled 56-year-old who has been racing since he was 15, Ricardo cried and raised his fist aloft. Well-wishers, family and journalists mobbed the rider and the sweat- and rain-streaked winning horse Jubileia. "I waited long for this and finally I got it," Ricardo said through tears. Although based in Argentina, Ricardo came to his native Rio on Sunday, needing only three wins to equal Baze's record. Riding seven races he won twice, and on Monday evening he rode six more before hitting the magic number. Now he will return to seek that extra record-making 12,845th win in front of his Argentinian fans.

### NON-STOP WINNING MACHINE

Ricardo has been racing for 41 years, which is just under 15,000 days, meaning on average he has won almost one race every day. The feat is staggering and unlikely to be matched, much less bettered any time soon. Apart from the now out-of-action Baze, there's no other jockey in the world who has even reached 10,000 wins.

"I never in my life imagined I'd win so many races,"

Ricardo told AFP. "If you were going to think something up, you'd never imagine winning nearly 13,000." Fans praise Ricardo's professionalism, intelligence and guts. But another reason for his spectacular numbers is sheer time spent on the horse. He estimates having ridden 70,000 races and has never taken a long holiday. "I never had much time for vacations. I took a week, occasionally two," he said. "My life has always been about horse racing."

### RELENTLESS DUEL

The duel between Ricardo and Baze for that top spot was a relentless, slow motion contest with few, if any equivalents in sport. For about 15 years they shadowed each other, one reaching the 10,000 mark first, then the other 11,000 and so on.

"I think we have something of a connection," Ricardo said. "He must have known about the races I was winning here and I always checked out what he won there. There was a symbiosis." Strangely, they only met a few times, including at a special 2014 head-to-head in Brazil, which Ricardo won.

But really the rivalry became more a war of attrition, not just against each other, but against age and the inevitable injuries facing people who hurtle around on thoroughbred horses. Asked what bones he has broken over his career, Ricardo needed to pause and think, before calling himself "half-bionic" and coming up with this list: collarbone, humerus, maxilla, shoulder blade, elbow, finger, rib. "It's a very risky profession," he said. "You fight with your body and sometimes you're lucky, sometimes not."



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazilian jockey Jorge Ricardo crosses the finish line to win at Rio de Janeiro's Hipodromo race track in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Ricardo rode his 12,844th win at Rio de Janeiro's Hipodromo race track on Monday. —AFP

### EMOTIONAL DRAIN

As well as the sheer battering, Ricardo has been sick with lymphoma, and even he admits that 56 "is not a normal age for a jockey." But beyond those physical travails is the emotional drain of an extreme life. Ricardo's wife Renata Teixeira, 42, said he was a loving but often "absent" father and that their children "although feeling proud, miss him." She rarely watches his races live, because "I get quite nervous," and longs for him to retire.

The diminutive, tough-as-granite jockey seems not to notice the advice. "Every time he wins he seems to be even more excited. He gets even worse," she told AFP. "I don't think he'll stop, no." Maybe reaching the record might seem like an ideal moment to hang up the spurs, but there's no sign that Ricardo agrees.

Asked moments after Monday's big win if he would now take it easy, Ricardo stopped crying. He grinned. "It hasn't entered my head to stop yet," he said. —AFP

## IOC will not exclude Asian cities from 2026 Games bid

**PYEONGCHANG:** Asian cities considering a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympics will not be excluded despite the continent hosting three consecutive Games, International Olympic Committee Vice President Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr said yesterday. Japan's Sapporo has expressed an interest in hosting the Games for 2026 but its chances of winning are considered slim with South Korea's Pyeongchang hosting the 2018 winter Games starting this week and Beijing staging the 2022 edition.

Japanese capital Tokyo has been awarded the 2020 summer Games, completing the trio of consecutive Asian hosts. "The thing here is flexibility," Samaranch, who also heads the IOC coordination commission for the 2022 Games in Beijing, told the IOC session when asked whether Sapporo should be excluded due to the number of Asian hosts.

"We are going to be flexible to make sure we organise the best possible Games in the best possible place for the best athletes in the world," said Samaranch, the son of the late former IOC President. "It is not up to the executive board to exclude anybody. We are in a dialogue stage. It is not a formal process with a list of questions and answers. We will accept anybody who wants to talk to us." Unlike some other sports organisations there is no official rotation system by region for the Olympics.

Switzerland's Sion and Stockholm have also expressed interest in the Games as well as cities from Austria and the United States and Canada among others. After a newly-introduced dialogue phase the IOC session in October will invite specific candidates to bid, with a decision to be taken in 2019. The bid process has been overhauled after a string of cities pulled out in previous bids, fearful of the Games' cost, size and environmental impact. —Reuters

## S Lanka's injured Mathews ruled out of Bangladesh tour

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's limited-overs skipper Angelo Mathews has been ruled out of the rest of the Bangladesh tour due to a hamstring injury, the country's cricket board said yesterday. Mathews, who sustained the injury during the tri-nation ODI tournament that Sri Lanka won in Bangladesh last month, will miss the second and final Test against the hosts as well as the two subsequent T20 matches. Mathews, 30, was recently named as Sri Lanka's captain in the shorter format until the 2019 World Cup.

But he has been beset by injuries and now faces a race against time to be fit for a T20 tri-nation tournament at home involving Bangladesh and India. The tri-series will be played at Colombo's R Premadasa Stadium from March 8. Mathews has suffered "a right hamstring tightness (and) will not take part in the two T20 matches", Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement. "His participation in the Nidahas Trophy 2018 will be decided after an assessment of his medical conditions."

Thisara Perera is likely to stand in as captain

## Disgraced ex-Pakistan skipper Butt to play in Bangladesh

**DHAKA:** The disgraced former Pakistan captain Salman Butt has arrived in Bangladesh to play his first full-fledged competition outside his homeland since serving a five-year ban for spot fixing, an official said yesterday.

He was cleared by the Pakistan Cricket Board to play

for the two T20 games in Bangladesh on February 15 and 18. Mathews' absence from the deciding Test starting Thursday is unlikely to trouble Sri Lanka plans given their dominant batting performance in the drawn first game in Chittagong.

Sri Lanka's top-order fired in their only innings, with three of their batsmen hitting centuries including a fine 196 by Kusal Mendis to post a mammoth 713-9 declared. Bangladesh have already indicated a change in strategy for the deciding game after adding strength to their batting by bringing in Sabbir Rahman. Veteran left-arm spinner Abdur Razaq is also expected to make the starting XI in Dhaka.

Bangladesh have been a dominant side at home after registering memorable Test wins against England and Australia in the 2016-17 season. Their only Test win against Sri Lanka came in their landmark 100th Test in Colombo, when the visitors drew the two-match series 1-1. Former captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who scored 92 in the first Test in Chittagong, said the team had "every chance to win the series 1-0". "In the last Test, bowlers did not get the purchase from the wicket, that's why they could not be effective," the senior batsman said yesterday.

"Hopefully the Mirpur wicket will be different. I have full faith in our bowling department. We have good memories here as we beat both England and Australia in Dhaka, so obviously the team will be confident." —AFP



Angelo Mathews

in the latest edition of the Dhaka Premier League, a popular Bangladesh club franchise which runs until March 20. Butt has committed to a full season for local giants Mohammedan Sporting Club, a club captained by Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan. The former Pakistan skipper is expected to make his debut against Brothers Union today.

Mohammedan official Wasim Khan said the club was looking for a left-handed opener and Butt "easily fit" the profile, adding they were not concerned about his past. "It happened long, long ago. He already served out his ban," he said. "We don't think it should be an issue now. We have seen him scoring runs and that is important to us."

Butt was captain of Pakistan when fast bowlers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir delivered deliberate no-balls during a Test match against England at

Lord's in August 2010. The trio admitted to working with a bookmaker and served time in prison in England before being suspended for a minimum five years by the International Cricket Council.

The ban ended on September 1, 2015. Amir has since returned to international cricket but Butt and Asif's careers were limited to Pakistan's domestic competition. Butt was allowed to play two matches in a Twenty20 competition in the United Arab Emirates in January—one controversial match in that event is under investigation by the ICC Anti-Corruption Unit—before being cleared to play in Bangladesh.

Dhaka Premier League is a 50-over tournament featuring many retired international players including Pakistan's Wasim Akram and Shahid Afridi, Sri Lanka's Arjuna Ranatunga and Sanath Jayasuriya, India's Ajay Jadeja and England's Neil Fairbrother. —AFP

## BeInspired Series holds run event with a twist

**KUWAIT:** The BeInspired Race Series, sponsored by Gulf Bank, held its fourth race, the Mud Run and Obstacle Mud Run, on 27 January 2018 at Inspire Sahara Health Club which is located in Sahara Golf Club. The Mud Run, which took place on a sandy

track, had two walk or run distance categories, 5km or run 10km. Participants could also choose to run a 5-km obstacle course, also on the same sandy track. The event was a crowd pleaser, attracting 450 participants. Post-race, winners of all distance categories were announced, the winners for the 5km mud run were: Sulaiman Abbas Ahmad, Ali Al Thajeel, and Khalid Al Shimmari. The winners of the women's 5km were: Ms Najlaa Al Juraiwi, Ms Renata Hoppova, and Ms Fatima Shaheen Al Ghanim. Judges also announced the 10km mud run winners: Ahmed Bakry, Younes

Bannis and Mohammed Khalil while the winners from the women's side were: Ms Durra Al Subouei, Ms Meghann Cleary, and Ms Lisa Jennings.

The winners of the 5km Obstacle Mud Run were Ms Sarah Al Safti, Ms Maryam Khaja and Ms Lamees Najem from the females group, and Maali Babiker, Ahmed Al Sharhan and Talal Al Miahi from the males group. Commenting on the race and the BeInspired Series, Ms Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank said: "Promoting a healthy lifestyle is a key component of our corporate social responsibility strategy and we are pleased to be sponsoring the BeInspired series of events held by Inspire Gym, and in cooperation with our friends at Pro-Vision Sports Management. This series clearly is appealing to sports lovers as evidenced by its growing popularity."

Noting feedback from participants, Ms Al-Qatami continued: "Pleased with the success of the Mud Race, as well as all previous races within BeInspired series, participants noted the excellent organization and provision of safety measures. Another key factor in



the series success is the beautiful scenery and venue of the Sahara Club. On behalf of Gulf Bank, I would like to congratulate those who won today and encourage everyone to continue maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The next and final

race will be the winners' competition, to be held in March 2018." For more information about Gulf Bank's corporate social responsibility initiatives and activities, please log on to [www.gulfbank.com](http://www.gulfbank.com) or visit its social media channels.



Sports

# Watford thrash Chelsea 4-1 after three late goals

Chelsea stay fourth with 50 points, Watford in 11th spot

**LONDON:** Ten-man Chelsea suffered another setback in their stumbling season as they lost 4-1 at Watford on Monday after conceding three late goals to go down to their second straight Premier League defeat.

Daryl Janmaat, Gerard Deulofeu and Roberto Pereyra all scored late on in response to Eden Hazard dragging Chelsea back into the game with a curler in the 82nd minute after Tiemoue Bakayoko was sent off for a second booking on the half-hour.

Chelsea cruised to the title in coach Antonio Conte's first campaign in England last season but they are 19 points behind runaway leaders Manchester City and are focused on finishing in the top four Champions League qualification spots.

Chelsea sit in fourth spot, a point behind third-placed Liverpool and one ahead of Tottenham Hotspur in fifth. "I tried to warn everyone about the difficulty of our path in the league and Champions League," said Chelsea coach Antonio Conte. "We performed very bad but maybe I made the mistakes with the starting XI today. My choice was very poor I think." Mid-table Watford had taken the lead in the 43rd with a Troy Deeney penalty after Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois brought down on-loan Barcelona winger Gerard Deulofeu.

By that stage, Chelsea were down to 10 men after

their France midfielder Bakayoko was booked twice for challenges in the space of a few minutes before the half-hour mark. Watford reacted quickly to Hazard's equaliser as defender Janmaat exchanged passes with Pereyra before shooting low past Courtois. Deulofeu sealed the win in the 88th with his first goal for the club before Pereyra got the fourth in added time.

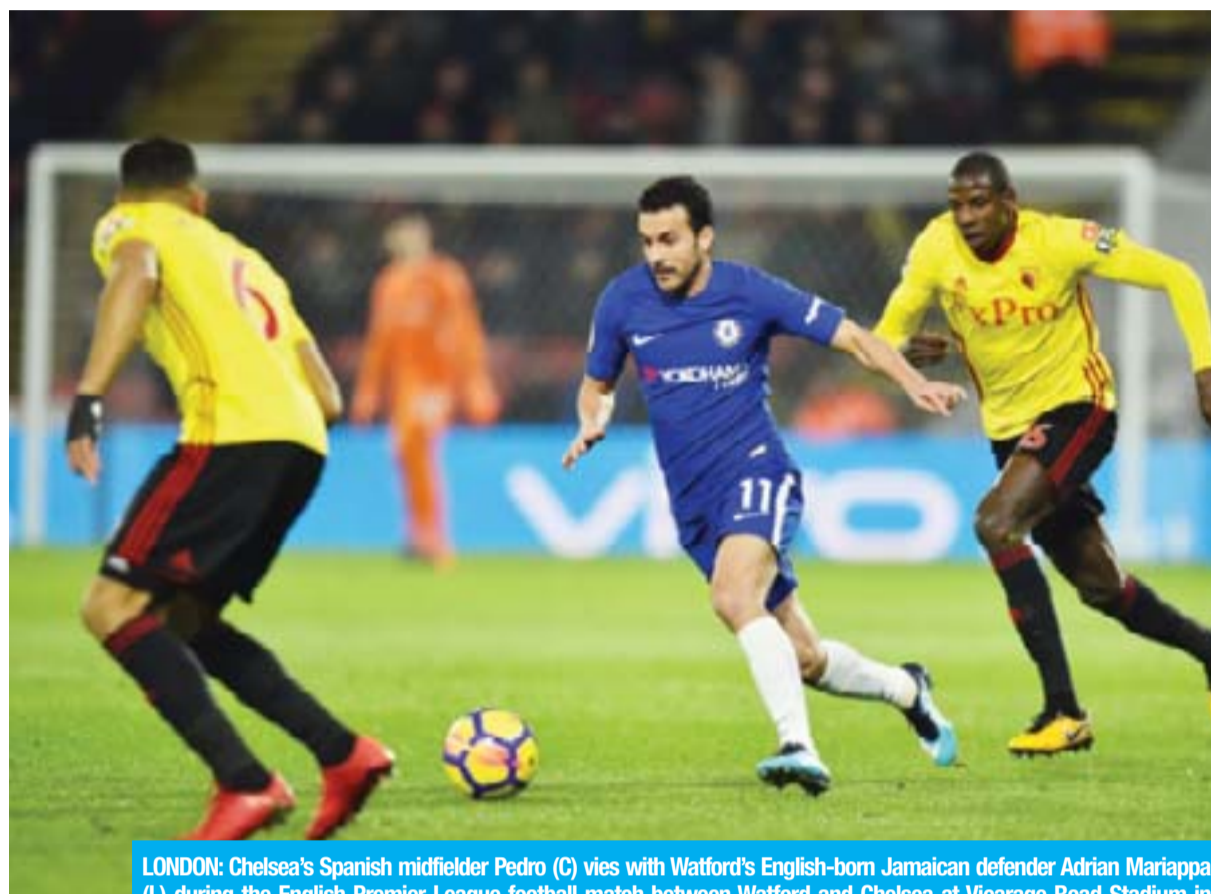
Monday's loss has added to the pressure on Conte, who faces more questions about his future after a poor start to 2018 which has seen Chelsea knocked out of the League Cup by Arsenal before they lost 3-0 at home to Bournemouth last week in the league.

## Bakayoko sent off on the half hour

"My position? It is the same. I stay here, try to work and put all myself in the work," Conte told Sky Sports.

"The pressure? What is the pressure? I work - if this is enough it is, OK. Otherwise the club has to take another decision."

It was a different story for new Watford manager Javi Gracia who modestly described the victory in his first home match in charge as a "good beginning" for his side, who sit in 11th place but are still only six points clear of the relegation zone. "I think it is important not only for three points but for the motivation to believe in our possibilities," Gracia told reporters. "I think it is very important today." — Reuters



**LONDON:** Chelsea's Spanish midfielder Pedro (C) vies with Watford's English-born Jamaican defender Adrian Mariappa (L) during the English Premier League football match between Watford and Chelsea at Vicarage Road Stadium in Watford, north of London. —AFP

## New-look Arsenal just the tonic for Arsene Wenger

**LONDON:** Just days after Arsenal were lurching towards another crisis, Arsene Wenger can suddenly look to a brighter future thanks to a revitalised attack spearheaded by Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

An error-strewn 3-1 defeat at struggling Swansea last Tuesday was the latest low-point of a troubled season for Arsenal. Coming just days after Alexis Sanchez finally got his wish to leave Arsenal in a blockbuster move to Manchester United, Wenger was once again under fire from angry fans frustrated by the club's failure to win the Premier League since 2004.

But a week is a long time in the frenzied world of English football and by the final whistle at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday, the Arsenal manager was all smiles as he reflected on the speed at which perceptions can change. It was little wonder Wenger was in such an upbeat mood as he had just watched Gabon striker Aubameyang, a £56 million (\$78 million) club-record signing from Borussia Dortmund, and Armenia midfielder Mkhitaryan produce superb first appearances at their new club's stadium in a 5-1 demolition of Everton. Aubameyang's pace and movement tormented the Everton defence as he netted with a composed first-half finish, while Mkhitaryan's range of passing provided three assists as he linked up with fellow playmaker Mesut Ozil to devastating effect.

A blur of one-touch passing, with Ozil, Mkhitaryan and Alex Iwobi switching positions behind Aubameyang, Arsenal's effervescent performance was by far their most encouraging of a season that sees them engaged in a draining battle to qualify for the

Champions League.

Before kick-off in north London even that target seemed further away than ever. Not only was Arsenal's malaise a cause for concern, but there were also doubts over Wenger's moves for former Dortmund team-mates Aubameyang and Mkhitaryan. After a disappointing spell at United, Mkhitaryan was dismissed in some quarters as a fading force and nothing more than a makeweight in the deal that sent Sanchez to Old Trafford.

### 'POSITIVE SWING'

Aubameyang's goal record with Dortmund was exemplary but there were questions about his volatile personality. Even he described himself as a "crazy kid" - a trait that led him to him clashing with his Bundesliga club on several occasions. Those issues may yet resurface, but for now Wenger is keen to accentuate the positives after the eye-catching clan with which Mkhitaryan, making his first Arsenal start, and Aubameyang, on his debut, stole the show against Everton. "When you have new players it gives always a little positive swing, and it wakes everybody up as well, because there's suddenly competition so they have to live with that as well," said Wenger, who now faces the conundrum of how to use previous record signing Alexandre Lacazette.

"Overall, I think as well we have a game based on team spirit so that kind of acceptance is very important and when they show on a football field that they accept our game, they are even easier to integrate into the team. "Your main target is just to get the players to enjoy the game they play, to share it with the fans, so when you have that positive experience it's great for you." Aubameyang's impact was even more impressive given he had only two 45-minute training sessions and was battling an illness ahead of his debut. But it was Mkhitaryan, so assured in possession, who caught Wenger's eye, drawing comparisons with Santi Cazorla, whose metronomic passing was such a key for Arsenal before his injury problems took hold.



Arsene Wenger

"There are similarities there. Santi was an exceptional football player. But he for sure has the technical level to play in our team," Wenger said. "I met Mkhitaryan before, before he came here, because I always liked his game but he's a player completely focused on football, dedicated totally to the game. "He looks happy to play football because he just loves it." — AFP

## Premier League looking to introduce 'winter break' before 2022

**LONDON:** The Premier League said yesterday that it is open to introducing a mid-season break, with British media reporting that it could be implemented before 2022 as part of the next TV rights deal.

Talks have been ongoing between the Football Association (FA) and the English Football League (EFL) regarding the proposal as they explore the possibility of bringing the English fixture schedules in line with the top leagues in Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

According to reports, the prospect of a European winter break is referenced in the tender documents that have been sent to potential broadcast partners. The next domestic TV rights deal will cover 2019 to 2022, the results of which are due to be announced next week.

In response to media speculation, the Premier League released a statement yesterday saying it was examining ways to ease fixture congestion, including a winter break. "The Premier League has been in discussions with the FA and EFL for several months regarding the challenges of the increasingly congested English football calendar, and ways in which we can work together to ease fixture congestion while also giving players a mid-season break," the statement said.

"Provided space can be found in the calendar, we are open to this in principle and will continue constructive discussions with our football stakeholders to seek a workable solution." It is reported that the break would take place in January and would not impact the traditional English festive fixture schedule.

A winter break has long been mooted in the Premier League, not least by overseas coaches who have argued that the existing schedule is too taxing on players. Louis van Gaal described playing through the English winter as "evil" during his tenure as Manchester United manager. His successor, Jose Mourinho, said in November that it hampers English clubs' chances in the knockout stages of European competitions.

There have also been suggestions that the lack of a break leaves Premier League players tired for international competitions and in particular has been part of the reason behind the England national team's poor tournament record in recent years.

England manager Gareth Southgate, however, expressed doubt in December about whether a break would significantly enhance the team's prospects of winning a first major trophy since 1966. — Reuters

## Mariam Erzuqi wins gold in 10m Air rifle

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait shooter Mariam Erzuqi won the gold medal in the 10m Air rifle event at the Fourth Women's Clubs tournament being held in Sharjah, UAE from Feb 2-12, with the participation of 15 Arab countries in various games.

Erzuqi scored 619.2 points, while Bahrain's Safa Al-Dousary took second place with 617.7 points and her compatriot Nouf Al-Dousary took third place with 615.5 points.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti team of (Mariam Erzuqi, Fatima Abdelmalek and Munira Al-Anjari) won second place in the same event as Bahrain won gold and the bronze went to Oman.

Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi dedicated the win to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people, as the achievement coincides with the celebrations of the national days, as well as the 12th anniversary of HH the Amir's ascension to power.

Al-Osaimi lauded the spirit of Kuwait shooters and their determination to win, adding that Kuwait Shooting Sport Club is proud of what they have achieved.

Al-Osaimi thanked the Public Sports Authority and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and his deputies for their continued support of Kuwait shooting.



**Live** Matches on TV  
(Local Timings)

**SPAIN COPA DEL REY**

Sevilla v Leganes 23:30  
beIN SPORTS HD 3

**13** Japan skate king Hanyu ready to rumble at Olympics: Coach



**14** S Lanka's injured Mathews ruled out of Bangladesh tour



**15** Watford thrash Chelsea 4-1 after three late goals



INDIANAPOLIS: Mike Scott #30 and Ian Mahinmi #28 of the Washington Wizards goes up for a rebound against the Indiana Pacers on Monday at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana.— AFP

## Wizards top Pacers, Pistons beat Blazers

### Dirk Nowitzki reaches 50,000 minutes

**LOS ANGELES:** Bradley Beal scored 21 on 9-of-16 shooting to lead eight Washington players in double figures in a win at Indiana. The Wizards have won five consecutive games, all since John Wall went down with a knee injury. He had a procedure last week and is expected to be out six to eight weeks. Kelly Oubre Jr. contributed 15 points and Otto Porter Jr. 13 for the Wizards, who shot 54.9 percent from the field. Washington's Markieff Morris contributed 11 points and a team-high 10 rebounds. Indiana's Bojan Bogdanovich scored 29 points.

#### LA CLIPPERS 104, DALLAS 101

Dirk Nowitzki became the sixth NBA player to reach the 50,000-minute milestone, but Danilo Gallinari stole the spotlight with two lead-changing free throws with 24 seconds remaining Monday, helping the host Los Angeles Clippers overtake the Dallas Mavericks 104-101. Gallinari, playing just his third game since missing almost two months with a partially torn left glute, finished with a season-best 28 points. Tobias Harris added 19 for the Clippers, who scored the game's final 13 points after trailing 101-91 with 4:42 to go. The win was the Clippers' fourth in their past five games and 14th in their past 20. Wesley Matthews had 23 points and Devin Harris 16 for the Mavericks, who missed their last

seven shots and mixed in three turnovers in their game-ending scoring drought.

#### PISTONS 111, TRAIL BLAZERS 91

Blake Griffin posted 21 points, nine rebounds and six assists, and Detroit stretched its winning streak to four games by pulling away from visiting Portland. Detroit reached the .500 mark and is 3-0 since Griffin joined the starting lineup. The five-time All-Star was acquired from the Los Angeles Clippers a week ago. Andre Drummond racked up 17 points, 17 rebounds and five assists for the Pistons, and Anthony Tolliver scored 13 of his 15 points during the fourth quarter. Damian Lillard led the Trail Blazers with 20 points.

#### MAGIC 111, HEAT 109

Jonathon Simmons drove the lane for a game-winning dunk with 1:31 left as Orlando—which entered with

the worst record in the NBA—upset host Miami. Miami had a chance to send the game to overtime on its final possession with 13 seconds left, but Josh Richardson missed a contested mid-range jumper. Miami's Tyler Johnson grabbed the rebound, but his shot was blocked by Bismack Biyombo. After a review in which a goaltending call on Biyombo was overturned, Miami got one more chance with 1.8 seconds left, but Justise Winslow's bad inbound pass was intercepted by Orlando to end the game.

### Gary Harris scores 27 points

#### JAZZ 133, PELICANS 109

Rodney Hood came off the bench to score 30 points as hot-shooting Utah won its sixth consecutive game with a victory at New Orleans. The Jazz made 58.4 percent (52 of 89) of their field-goal attempts, including 66.7 percent (14 of 21) of their 3-point tries. Utah's Ricky Rubio had 20 points and 11 assists. Derrick Favors scored 19, Rudy Gobert had 19 points and 10 rebounds, Joe Ingles scored 18 and Royce O'Neale had

13. Jrue Holiday paced the Pelicans with 28 points.

#### NUGGETS 121, HORNETS 104

Gary Harris scored 27 points and host Denver used an array of 3-point shooting to produce a victory over Charlotte. Seven Denver players hit at least one 3-point basket, topped by Harris with five (on seven attempts). Jamal Murray, who made four treys, and Will Barton, who supplied eight assists, both posted 18 points. Nikola Jokic added 15 points and 16 rebounds for the Nuggets, who completed a 3-0 homestand. Kemba Walker scored 20 points and Dwight Howard added 19 points for the Hornets.

#### KINGS 104, BULLS 98

Bogdan Bogdanovic scored a team-high 15 points, and Sacramento rallied from a 21-point, first-half deficit to beat visiting Chicago. George Hill scored 14 points for the Kings, and Garrett Temple had 12. Zach LaVine scored a season-high 27 points to lead the Bulls, who lost their seventh game in a row. Chicago center Robin Lopez was ejected late in the first half for screaming at officials about what he believed should have been a foul call. Lopez, who is a candidate to be traded this week, threw a chair in the tunnel on his way to the locker room. — Reuters

## Qatar stadium to be completed by end of year

**DOHA:** The Qatar World Cup venue designed by celebrated Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid will be finished by the end of 2018, officials responsible for the project said yesterday. The 40,000 capacity, \$575 million (465 million euros) Al-Wakrah Stadium is expected to be one of two further 2022 venues completed this year. Building work on the 60,000 Al-Bayt stadium is also expected to be completed by December. If so, it will mean Qatar—which has said it is spending almost \$500 million a week on World Cup-related projects—will have built almost half of its proposed eight venues with

four years still to go to the tournament.

The Khalifa International Stadium, also the venue for the 2019 World Athletics Championships, was completed last year. "We will be finishing hopefully by the end of this year and then ready to use," Thani Al-Zarraa, Al-Wakrah's project manager told AFP.

One of the major tasks ahead is to fit the stadium's distinctive retractable roof—meant to resemble the sails of a traditional dhow fishing boat—comprised of some 1,400 pieces, which will be shipped to Qatar from Italy.

Once completed, 2022 World Cup officials will trial the stadium with "test matches" including potential international friendlies, said Zarraa. He said the design would also make it "one of the loudest stadiums" in 2022.

"All the ambience and cheering will hit the roof and come back into the stadium," he said. Al-Wakrah, some 15 kilometres south of the capital Doha, will be used during the World Cup for games up to and including quarter-finals.

After the World Cup, the capacity will be

reduced to 20,000. It was one of Hadid's last major designs before her death in March 2016, aged 65. Major works by Hadid include the Guangzhou Opera House in China, the Bergisel ski jump and the aquatics centre at the 2012 London Olympics.

Zarraa said the stadium would "be one of her (Hadid's) legacies". The project has not been without controversy. Qatar has come under intense pressure for its human rights record and treatment of its huge migrant labour force, numbering some two million, since winning the right to host the 2022 World Cup.

Hadid took successful legal action when it was claimed she had no concern for the plight of labourers in Qatar helping build Al-Wakrah. She also had to defend claims that the stadium's design was offensive and resembled female genitalia. Baghdad-born Hadid called such criticism "embarrassing". Qatar is building eight stadiums for the World Cup, although FIFA has yet to decide on a final number of venues and could instruct the gas-rich Gulf state to build a ninth. — AFP



DOHA: Qatar's Thani Al-Zarraa, project Manager of Al-Wakrah Stadium, a World Cup venue designed by celebrated Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, directs workers at the site yesterday. — AFP



# Business

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2018

**18** Kuwait's real estate activity remained buoyant in 2017

**19** Boeing, Embraer near deal on commercial air business

**21** KAMCO wins 'Best Kuwait Equity Fund' by MENA FM



## Kuwait oil output to hit 3.225m bpd by March

### Production cut agreement helps balance market: Al-Rashidi

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's oil production capacity will reach 3.255 million bpd by the end of next March, Kuwait's Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rashidi said. Al-Rashidi said in an interview with KUNA yesterday that the volume of Kuwaiti exports of crude oil is about 2.1 million barrels per day, while the daily production volume is about 2.7 million barrels per day in line with the agreement to cut production between the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and producers from outside the cartel.

He said that the producers' agreement from within and outside OPEC to reduce production, which came into force in January 2017, contributed to the efforts to restore the balance of markets, which reflected positively on oil prices, which rose in the past period following improvement in the balance of demand and supply in the markets.

He explained that the agreement proved effective in controlling the balance of demand and supply in order to achieve balance in the markets, stressing that the fundamentals of the market will be reviewed at the Ministerial Conference of (OPEC) in June.

He pointed out that the recent decision on the extension of the agreement to reduce production until the end of this year will achieve the balance required by the end of next year amid an obvious recovery in the basic market factors associated with supply and demand.

Al-Rashidi pointed out that oil prices are affected by a

combination of factors, most notably the recovery of growth rate of demand, improving the rate of growth of the global economy and the geopolitical and technical developments, which affect production of some countries.

#### No specific fair price

On the current oil prices, he said that there is "no specific fair price" because it changes permanently according to market conditions, as the price level reflects the state of the oil market, noting that the state of improving the fundamentals of the oil market will strengthen prices levels in the coming months.

With regard to the impact of US rock oil at price levels, he said that increased production led to imbalance of the market with the increase in supply, which contributed to the weakness of crude oil prices in previous years and other factors, pointing out that there are expectations of continued increase in rock oil production in the coming months. On KPC's new strategy of producing 4.750 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2040, he said that the KPC has translated its strategic directions into a roadmap to ensure its achievement and supports Kuwait's domestic and international role as a reliable source of energy security.

He pointed to the need to invest in exploration and development of production, including the development of heavy and light oil production to achieve the goals set to raise the production capacity of Kuwaiti crude oil. Al-

Rashidi said that the strategy of the oil sector is always working to raise the volume of proved reserves through exploration operations and increase oil extraction rates. On the impact of Kuwait's oil projects on the fluctuation of oil prices, he pointed out that they are strategic long-term and diversified projects covering all oil fields, stressing that the KPC is continuing to implement them regardless of fluctuating prices.

#### Al-Zour refinery

On the importance of the project of environmental fuel and Al-Zour refinery at the moment, he stressed that they are environmentally strategic projects aimed at protecting the environment and meet the local and global needs in accordance with the highest standards for the specifications of petroleum products.

He pointed out that the environmental fuel project aims to produce an environmentally-clean Kuwaiti production in line with global demand patterns in the markets as well as "maintaining our markets and secure new markets", noting that the completion rates in the project is 90 percent and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

The oil minister said that Al-Zour refinery project will be completed in 2019, as nearly 45 percent has so far been achieved. On petrochemicals industry, he pointed out that Kuwait has a pioneering experience in this industry, which is receiving increasing attention in the KPC' strategy.



Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rashidi

pointing to existing projects in the field of aromatics and olefins inside and outside the country, as well as the existence of many investment opportunities under study.

He pointed out that the strategy of KPC is based on the principle of complementarity between the various activities carried out by the oil and gas industry in Kuwait, which starts from production and ends at the delivery to customers, a strategy that ensures protection against fluctuations in oil prices and maximize the added value of Kuwaiti crude oil. — KUNA

## ABK operating profit grows by 9.4% to KD 97.8 million in 2017

**KUWAIT:** Building on its strong business performance from last year, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2017. ABK grew its Operating Income by 6.4 percent, from KD 147 million to KD 157 million, and its Operating Profit by 9.4 percent, from KD 89.4 million to KD 97.8 million. ABK reported a net profit of KD 35.7 million for the year, a growth of 10 percent, against KD 32.5 million in 2016. Earnings Per Share stood at 22 fils, compared to 20 fils in 2016. The Bank continued to aggressively add to its total provisions, which reached KD 58 million in 2017 against KD 52.4 million in 2016. This was supported by impressive performances in Kuwait and Egypt. Asset quality remained strong with the NPL ratio falling to 1.67 percent with a NPL coverage of 400 percent. Capital adequacy ratio was robust at 17.23 percent. In Egypt, the Bank continued to expand its presence, with assets increasing 40 percent, loan and credit facilities growing by 52 percent and deposits up 46 percent. The ABK Board of directors have proposed a distribution of 12 fils per share cash dividend compared to 11 fils in 2016, subject to the approval of ABK's General Assembly Meeting.

Furthermore, ABK's credit ratings remained constant with a rating of A2 from Moody's and A+ from Fitch. This reflects the Bank's healthy capital position and excellent liquidity, which is fully compliant with the Central Bank of Kuwait's conservative and robust regulatory system.

Recognized by Global Finance Magazine as one of the top ten safest banks in the region and ranking No. 29th in Emerging Markets, ABK also received prestigious awards from Banker Middle East, Asian Banker, NASEBA, International Finance Magazine (IFM), Arabian Business Magazine, and The European, a Thomson Reuters Affiliate. This is attributed to the Banks' outstanding performance throughout the year including its successful implementation of the new Finacle core banking system in the UAE and Kuwait, as well as its investment in digital banking to maximize ABK's reach across the region.

Earlier in the year, ABK further diversified its funding sources when it launched a successful debut senior bond issue of \$500 million. This issue was enthusiastically received by the international financial markets and drew strong interest from investors in SE Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

## Canada's trade deficit widens in December to Can\$3.2bn

**OTTAWA:** Canada's trade deficit widened to Can\$3.2 billion (US\$2.6 billion) in December, capping off 2017 with a drop in trade with its neighbor the United States, the government statistical agency said yesterday. The figure was up from a Can\$2.7 billion deficit posted the previous month, and higher than analysts had forecast of Can\$2.2 billion.

Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK said: "Over the year we maintained our cautious approach, consolidating our financial position while embracing new opportunities for expanding our business across our markets, especially in Egypt. I am particularly proud that this success has been achieved through the close working relationships developed across the business at all levels. This year will go down as one of our most memorable years as we mark our 50th year of operations in the region. We will continue to demonstrate a cautious approach, consolidating our financial position while embracing new opportunities for expanding our business across our markets."

Michel Accad, Chief Executive Officer at ABK commented, "Today, it is crucial to focus our attention on preparing the Bank to meet the growing needs of our customers. We are substantially simplifying our processes to ensure greater efficiency and drive revenue growth, and we are investing in new products, channels, customer service and information technology to improve the overall customer experience. At the same time ABK is at the forefront of the implementation and roll-out of the new International Financial Reporting Standard IFRS9 from the beginning of 2018, as well as for the forthcoming introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) in Kuwait."

This year, ABK's commitment to 'Simpler Banking' was further strengthened through numerous enhancements including the launch of the new core banking system in its UAE and Kuwait operations. This new system, which will also be introduced in ABK - Egypt, will ensure customers receive consistent service, regardless of where their ABK account is held, through greater interaction within the Bank's systems, and increased efficiency in responding to customer needs and requests.

According to Statistics Canada, total imports climbed 1.5 percent to a record Can\$49.7 billion in December, while exports rose for a third consecutive month, up 0.6 percent to Can\$46.5 billion-both led by energy products. Crude oil and bitumen imports increased 23.9 percent while refined petroleum energy products imports rose 17.8 percent, mainly on higher imports of diesel and fuel oils. Imports of logging, mining and construction machinery and equipment also rose to a record Can\$897 million.

"These gains precede new emissions regulations affecting off-road diesel engines and machines. As of January 1, 2018, imports of equipment not meeting the new standards are no longer permitted," Statistics Canada said. There were also higher imports of passenger cars and light trucks from Germany as well as refined petroleum energy products from the Netherlands.

Imports of aircraft and other transportation equipment, following two strong sales months, however, fell as fewer airliners were imported from the United States.—AFP



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani



Michel Accad



Business

NBK Economic Report

# Kuwait's real estate activity remained buoyant in 2017

## Investment and commercial sectors fall behind

KUWAIT: Activity in Kuwait's residential sector was strong while the investment and commercial sectors fell behind. Overall activity improved as the number of transactions rose 6.5 percent to 4,524. However, sales decreased again in 2017 but a slower rate (6.9 percent; to KD 2.2 billion) than in the past two years. While residential activity grew by 22 percent, sales in the investment and commercial sectors fell 19 percent and 37 percent, respectively. The real estate market benefited from some optimism during the year as oil prices improved. The year also saw a stable consumer sector which may have provided some impetus to the residential property market.

Real estate sales were up slightly in December, but compared unfavorably to strong figures reported a year ago. Sales rose to KD 171.4 million in December, but were down 40.5 percent year-on-year (y/y) mostly as the commercial sector posted much weaker numbers compared to the prior year.

Residential sector sales were stable in December 2017 as prices continued to improve. Though the number of transactions in the sector was down 10 percent y/y in December 2017 (to 246 from an average of 280 for the year), sales activity grew by 1 percent y/y in terms of value, to KD 82.3 million.

Prices increased in the residential real estate completed 2017, especially in the residential home sector. The NBK Residential Home price index posted positive annual growth for the first time in two years, rising 0.2 percent y/y to reach 152.2. The Residential Land Index declined 3.4 percent y/y, but compared to the 2017 overall, the pace of decline has eased.

Investment property sales were lackluster in December. Contracts in the month amounted to KD 39.1 million, down 39 percent y/y and marking the ninth month of negative annual growth in 2017. Transactions also slowed to 76, down 22 percent y/y. Two-thirds of the transactions were apartment units located predominantly in Mahboula and Bneid Al-Gar. The investment sector prices improved in



December, but declined compared to last year. The index reached 183.6 in December 2017, rising 1.2 percent m/m, but remained down 3.4 percent y/y. The index appeared to stabilize in 2017, notwith-

standing a temporary dip in the 3Q17 which was reversed in 4Q17.

Commercial sector activity picked up pace after a slow November, but was well below levels recorded

during a period of strength a year ago. December saw just one commercial transaction: a building in Salmiya sold for KD 50 million. Sales were down 65 percent y/y.

## GM profit beats estimates, margins up despite sales drop

DETROIT: General Motors Co yesterday posted quarterly results that beat analyst expectations as cost-cutting and higher vehicle prices offset a double-digit decline in US sales volume, and said it expected 2018 would be a strong year globally and in North America.

Speaking to reporters, Chief Financial Officer Chuck Stevens said that despite recent stock market volatility due to concerns that the US economy may be overheating, the No 1 US automaker is "not overly concerned about inflation."

"Our forecast is premised on continued growth in the US economy," Stevens said. He said GM expects interest rates to rise 75 basis points in 2018. GM's results came despite selling 135,000 fewer vehicles to dealers in North America in the fourth quarter and nearly 450,000 fewer in the full year than in 2016.

Thanks to cost-cutting and higher transaction prices for its more popular, and higher-margin, SUVs and pickup trucks in North America, the automaker's global pre-tax margin rose to 8.2 percent in the quarter versus 6.5 percent in the same quarter in 2016.

GM reported a fourth-quarter loss of \$4.9 billion or \$3.46 per share, compared with a profit of \$2.1 billion or \$1.36 per share a year earlier. Excluding one-time items, GM posted earnings per share of \$1.65. On that basis analysts had expected earnings per share of \$1.38. —Reuters

## Australia holds rates as inflation remains soft

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank yesterday kept interest rates at a record low in its first meeting of the year, with inflation still soft and the outlook for household spending uncertain.

The Reserve Bank of Australia has not adjusted rates since August 2016, following a series of cuts from November 2011 that took it to 1.50 percent in a bid to boost non-mining sectors of the economy.

Governor Philip Lowe said in a statement that the current monetary policy stance was supporting economic growth. "The low level of interest rates is continuing to support the Australian economy," he said after the RBA board meeting.

"Further progress in reducing unemployment and having inflation return to target is expected, although this progress is likely to be gradual."

The economy has endured a bumpy exit from an unprecedented resources investment boom, but recent data has pointed to a strengthening labor market and business investment. Even so, wages growth remains weak while household debt is high, keeping the central bank on the sidelines with economists tipping a possible rate rise only later this year.

"One continuing source of uncertainty is the outlook for household consumption. Household incomes are growing slowly and debt levels are high," Lowe said. "Notwithstanding the improving labor market, wage growth remains low." Another concern has been the strength of the Australian dollar owing to weakness in the greenback, with the RBA reiterating that an appreciating exchange rate could slow growth in economic activity and inflation.



SYDNEY: Pedestrians are reflected in the marble wall of the Reserve Bank of Australia in Sydney yesterday. —AFP

Underlying or core inflation—which strips out volatile items and is closely watched by the central bank—is at an annual 1.9 percent, just below the RBA's target band of 2.0-3.0 percent.

Lowe added that the bank expected consumer prices to remain low for some time, "reflecting low growth in labor costs and strong competition in retailing". "A gradual pick-up in inflation is, however, expected as the economy strengthens," he added. JP Morgan

interest rate strategist Henry St John told AFP that weak inflation forecasts and below-trend growth weighed on the normalization of monetary policy in the near-term. "Inflation outcomes have remained weak ... alongside that we continue to see growth outcomes as below trend," he said.

"So on the basis of that as well as financial stability issues around household balance sheets, we see little prospects for the RBA to move rates over this year." —AFP

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.752
Indian Rupees	4.695
Pakistani Rupees	2.720
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.946
Nepali Rupees	2.957
Singapore Dollar	228.630
Hongkong Dollar	38.448
Bangladesh Taka	3.604
Philippine Peso	5.842
Thai Baht	9.524
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.227
Qatari Riyal	82.630
Omani Riyal	781.315
Bahraini Dinar	798.860
UAE Dirham	81.932
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.700
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.985
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.207
Tunisian Dinar	126.860
Jordanian Dinar	424.050
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.004
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.406
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	300.650

Euro	374.910
Sterling Pound	421.960
Canadian dollar	241.290
Turkish lira	80.500
Swiss Franc	324.500
Australian Dollar	239.620
US Dollar Buying	299.450
GOLD	
20 Gram	260.52
10 Gram	133.18
5 Gram	67.43

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	
US Dollar	300.100
Canadian Dollar	242.420
Sterling Pound	425.125
Euro	375.360
Swiss Frank	280.865
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	4.685
Pakistani Rupees	2.715
Bangladesh Taka	3.640
Philippines Peso	5.830
Cyprus pound	17.865
Selling Rate	
US Dollar	300.100
Canadian Dollar	242.420
Sterling Pound	425.125
Euro	375.360
Swiss Frank	280.865
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	4.685
Pakistani Rupees	2.715
Bangladesh Taka	3.640
Philippines Peso	5.830
Cyprus pound	17.865

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.413580	0.421080
Czech Korune	0.006700	0.016000
Danish Krone	0.045855	0.050855
Euro	0.366158	0.373658
Georgian Lari	0.120704	0.120704
Hungarian O.001105	0.001295	0.001295
Norwegian Krone	0.034092	0.039292
Romanian Leu	0.083192	0.080042
Russian ruble	0.005213	0.005213
Slovakia	0.008925	0.018925
Swedish Krona	0.033544	0.038544
Swiss Franc	0.316008	0.327008
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.227671	0.239671
New Zealand Dollar	0.212664	0.222164
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.234166	0.243166
US Dollars	0.296550	0.300970
US Dollars Mint	0.297050	0.300970

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003249	0.003833
Chinese Yuan	0.046187	0.049687
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036359	0.039109
Indian Rupee	0.004203	0.004844
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002678	0.002858
Korean Won	0.000264	0.000279
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073607	0.079607
Nepalese Rupee	0.002999	0.003169
Pakistani Rupee	0.002530	0.002820
Philippine Peso	0.005844	0.006144
Singapore Dollar	0.221848	0.231848
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001689	0.002269
Taiwan	0.010103	0.010283
Thai Baht	0.009168	0.009718
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.790912	0.799412
Egyptian Pound	0.014079	0.019797
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000197	0.000257
Jordanian Dinar	0.419429	0.428429
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021893	0.045893
Omani Riyal	0.774591	0.780271
Qatar Riyal	0.078291	0.083231
Saudi Riyal	0.079087	0.080387
Syrian Pound	0.001273	0.001493
Tunisian Dinar	0.121561	0.129561
Turkish Lira	0.074187	0.084487
UAE Dirhams	0.080430	0.082130
Yemeni Riyal	0.000977	0.001067

## Business

# Boeing, Embraer near deal on commercial air business

## US giant announces service orders worth nearly \$1bn

**NEW YORK/SINGAPORE:** US aerospace giant Boeing and Brazil's Embraer are close to an agreement to combine their commercial air operations into a new company, a person familiar with the talks told AFP yesterday.

Boeing would hold 80 to 90 percent of the new company, which would be based in Chicago. Embraer's military operations would not be affected by the transaction and would remain under Brazilian control, the source said. That structure could address the main roadblock to the deal between the two aerospace companies: Brazilian government opposition.

The companies in December confirmed they were in talks on a possible combination, a move that was seen as part of Boeing's strategy to counter archrival Airbus' ambitions in the smaller commercial aircraft category with a venture with Canadian company Bombardier.

However, the talk of a deal drew immediate objections from the government in Brazil, which holds a so-called golden share with veto power over Embraer transactions.

Brazil's defense ministry has referred to that control of Embraer as "a matter of national sovereignty." According to the report in Brazilian daily Valor Economico, the government would retain the "golden share" in Embraer.

Boeing chief Dennis Muilenburg told investors last week that the combination with Embraer would be "a

great strategic fit." "These discussions are productive and we're continuing to have active dialogue with the key stakeholders," Muilenburg said.

Boeing said yesterday its global services unit has signed deals worth nearly \$1 billion at the Singapore Airshow in areas like parts, maintenance, modification and training. The deals underscore the growing importance of the huge commercial aviation market in the Asia-Pacific region. "Boeing is serious about helping customers optimize performance of their fleets and reduce operational costs," said Stan Deal, president and chief executive of Boeing Global Services.

Among the deals is an agreement with Malaysia Airlines to receive overhauled landing gear from an exchange pool maintained by the US aviation giant. Singapore Airlines signed a contract to use electronic logbooks on its Boeing 777 and 787 airliners.

Boeing did not give individual values for the deals but said they totalled more than \$900

million. Its European rival Airbus said yesterday that air traffic will triple in the Asia-Pacific region over the next 20 years, making it the world's biggest aviation market. The region will require 14,450 new aircraft during that period, worth a combined \$2.3 trillion. This accounts for more 40 percent of global demand, Airbus said. The Singapore Airshow, the biggest such event in Asia, is held every two years. Analysts say they do not expect major plane orders at this year's show. —AFP



**Boeing to hold 80 to 90% of new company**



**RENTON, WA:** Employees check out the first Boeing 737 MAX 7 aircraft as it sits on the tarmac outside of the Boeing factory on Monday in Renton, Washington. — AFP

## Carillion's former finance boss denies 'being asleep at the wheel'

**LONDON:** The former finance director of collapsed British construction firm Carillion denied being "asleep at the wheel" yesterday as lawmakers questioned whether the company had taken on too much risk, putting thousands of jobs on the line.

Carillion, which employed nearly 18,000 people in Britain, collapsed on Jan. 15 when its banks halted funding, triggering Britain's biggest corporate demise in a decade and forcing the government to step in to guarantee public services from school meals to roadworks.

The failure has ignited a row over Britain's system of outsourcing public services - everything from hospital meals and prison security to the maintenance of nuclear warheads - to competing private companies who rely on government work for a large part of their income.

"No I don't believe we were asleep at the wheel," former FD Zafar Khan said. "I believe I did everything that I could have done essentially." His replacement as finance director Emma Mercer, who had held other finance roles at the group, said accounting had become more aggressive in the years before it collapsed but Khan denied that there had been a concerted effort to take risk. Khan's comments prompted a rebuke from



**LONDON:** A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) yesterday shows (left to right) Carillion CEO, Keith Cochrane, Finance director Emma Mercer and former Finance director Zafar Khan answering questions at a joint hearing of the Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and the Work and Pensions Committee on the collapse of Carillion at Portcullis House in London. — AFP

opposition lawmaker Rachel Reeves. "Four months after you left, the company went into liquidation with just 29 million pounds left, leaving thousands of people potentially without jobs, and thousands of people saving for pensions without the pensions they'd expected, but you did everything right at the right time," she said.

"Well done Mr Khan."

Earlier in the hearing interim Chief Executive Keith Cochrane had apologized for the company's collapse.

"I'm truly sorry," he said. "It was the worst possible outcome. This was a business worth fighting for and that's certainly what I sought to do during my time as chief executive."

Responding to questions, Cochrane said that net debt was too high at the end of 2016 and the company was trying to reduce it before it faced a deterioration of cash flow after March 2017.

The government is working to protect some jobs but 829 redundancies have already been made. — Reuters

## Toyota forecasts record net profit for full fiscal year

**TOKYO:** Japanese car giant Toyota yesterday revised its earnings forecast, saying it expected to see a record annual net profit thanks to a weaker yen and US tax cuts.

Japan's top carmaker expects to bank a net profit of 2.4 trillion yen (\$22 billion) for the fiscal year to March 2018, up from its November estimate of 1.95 trillion yen. Annual sales are now forecast at 29 trillion yen, up from an earlier projection of 28.5 trillion, the Prius maker said. In May, the company announced its first drop in annual profit for five years, which it blamed on the cost of customer incentives in the key US market. Toyota said net profit rose 40.5 percent to 2.0 trillion yen for the nine months to December, on sales of 21.8 trillion yen, which were up 8.1 percent.

Toyota officials said the profits were the result of several factors, including a weaker yen, US tax cuts and company cost-cutting measures. "In the US, the corporate tax cuts of 2017 resulted in a reduction in income taxes of 291 billion yen," helping push up net income, senior managing director Masayoshi Shirayanagi told reporters.

Executive vice president Koji Kobayashi said Toyota was "seeing the benefits coming from cost reductions faster than I thought." Analysts also pointed to the effects of a weaker yen across Japan's auto industry.

"So far, foreign exchange has been a positive factor for the Japanese auto industry, but it's hard to predict if the impact will continue as the yen has recently become strong," said Satoru Takada, an analyst at TIW, a Tokyo-based research and consulting firm.

"Foreign exchange will remain a decisive factor for the industry," Takada told AFP before Toyota's announcement. — AFP

## Just weeks into 2018, banks rethink year-end bond yield forecasts

**LONDON:** Little over a month into 2018 and several banks have already raised their forecasts for where key US and European bond yields will end the year, another sign that the tide for bonds has turned as an era of easy monetary policy comes to an end.

While this week's global equity rout has driven investors to seek safety in bonds and pushed yields sharply lower, that is just a sign that the march higher in borrowing costs will not be a straight line upwards. It has done nothing to change analysts' minds that the only way for yields is up. Yesterday, HSBC told clients that it now forecasts German Bund yields to end the year at 0.90 percent from a previous estimate of 0.60 percent.

It joins a series of banks - UBS, Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan, Mizuho, Commerzbank and HSBC - which over the past three weeks have revised US or European bond yield forecasts higher. Other banks such as ABN AMRO and Rabobank said they were in the process of revising their forecasts against the backdrop of a faster-than-anticipated rise in bond yields at the start of the year.

US 10-year Treasury yields rose to four-year highs at around 2.89 percent this week, while German equivalents climbed to their highest in more than two years. "The bearish momentum in bonds has surprised us," said Richard McGuire, head of rates strategy at Rabobank in London. "The reason the selling pressure was more pronounced this year is that the arguments in favor of higher yields are numerous." Another large European bank told Reuters it had revised its US bond yield forecasts higher but was unable to disclose details due to regulatory factors. Swiss bank UBS expects 10-year bond yields in Germany, the eurozone's biggest economy and its benchmark bond issuer, to end the year at 1 percent versus a previous forecast of 0.90 percent. It has raised year-end US 10-year Treasury forecasts by 0.2



**MUMBAI:** Indian stock traders look at share prices during intra-day trade at a brokerage house in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

percent to 2.90 percent, while Deutsche Bank estimates Treasury yields could rise to 3.25 percent, upping its previous forecasts of 2.95 percent.

Robust economic data, a pickup in inflation expectations and hawkish central bank talk have prompted investors and analysts to reassess the outlook for bonds. Even after this week's recovery in bond markets, 10-year yields in Germany and the US are 26-30 basis points higher compared with where they ended last year. Those rises are significantly higher than comparable moves in the first six weeks of 2017, setting the backdrop for the rethink on bond forecasts so early in the new year.

JPMorgan in mid-January raised its forecast of 10-year US bond yields to 2.85 percent from 2.70 percent. For Europe, the rises in bond yield forecasts were generally more modest, reflecting caution about inflation, which remains below the European Central Bank's near 2 percent target. ING lifted its year-end German Bund forecast by a modest 0.1 percent to 0.85 percent. HSBC and Mizuho said a pricing in of higher interest rates by euro zone money markets was the main reason for upward revisions to bond yield forecasts in Europe. Forward money market rates suggest a 10 basis point rate rise from the ECB is priced in for early 2019. "Market expectations for a rate hike are more aggressive than what we think is likely," said Peter Chatwell, head of rates strategy at Mizuho. "But unless the ECB massively downgrades its inflation forecasts at upcoming meetings, it's unlikely the rate-hike risk-premium will be priced out by markets." — Reuters

## US trade deficit rises to 9-year high on robust imports

**WASHINGTON:** The US trade deficit widened more than expected in December to its highest level since 2008, as robust domestic demand pushed imports to a record high, potentially putting pressure on the Trump administration as it renegotiates trade deals.

The import-driven surge in the trade gap reported by the Commerce Department yesterday also suggests a 3 percent annual economic growth may be hard to achieve. Imports, which subtract from gross domestic product, could get a further boost from a \$1.5 trillion tax cut package that became effective in January. The fiscal stimulus comes when the economy is almost at full employment, which means the resulting increase in demand will likely be satisfied with imports.

"When an economy is at full employment, an acceleration in demand tends to be accompanied by a pickup in import growth and a wider trade deficit," said John Ryding, chief economist at RDQ Economics in New York. The trade deficit increased 5.3 percent to \$53.1 billion, the highest level since October 2008. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade gap widening to \$52.0 billion in December. Part of the rise in the trade gap reflected higher commodity price increases. The deficit surged 12.1 percent to \$566.0 billion in 2017, the highest since 2008. That represented 2.9 percent of GDP, up from 2.7 percent in 2016.

The politically sensitive US-China trade deficit increased 8.1 percent to a record \$375.2 billion last year. President Donald Trump has vowed to shrink the trade gap through his "America First" trade policies, which aim to shut out more unfairly traded imports and renegotiate past US free trade agreements. Trump has repeatedly threatened to terminate the North American Free Trade Agreement unless the 1994 pact linking Canada, Mexico and the United States can be made more favorable to Washington. And his administration has launched an investigation into China's intellectual property practices that could lead to major new trade sanctions on Beijing.

"The terms of trade are not completely unfair," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG in New York. "Don't forget it is American companies assembling goods outside the country and then bringing them back in which is the problem with the trade imbalance in goods." The surge in the December trade deficit was flagged by an advanced goods trade deficit report published in late January. When adjusted for inflation, the trade deficit increased to \$68.4 billion from \$66.5 billion in November.

The jump in the so-called real trade deficit at the end of the year puts trade on course to be a drag on GDP in the first quarter. Trade subtracted 1.13 percentage point from economic growth in the final three months of 2017. The economy grew at a 2.6 percent annualized rate during that period, helping to lift growth in 2017 to 2.3 percent from 1.5 percent in 2016.

The US dollar held onto gains against a basket of currencies after the data. U.S. stock index futures were mixed after two straight days of heavy losses on Wall Street. Prices of U.S. Treasuries were trading higher.

The Trump administration believes a smaller trade deficit, together with deep tax cuts, could boost annual economic growth to 3 percent on a sustained basis. Late in January, Trump imposed broad tariffs on imported solar panels and large washing machines, and is considering slapping tariffs or quotas on steel and aluminum for national security reasons. Such actions may prove politically popular with Trump's working-class supporters. — Reuters

Business

Investors flocking to safe-haven bonds

LONDON: Eurozone government bond yields tumbled yesterday as a sell-off in world stock markets drove anxious investors into safe-haven debt markets.

fell as low as 0.695 percent, down 5 basis points on the day and below Monday's more-than-two-year highs at 0.774 percent.

Central Bank President Mario Draghi said that the bank is increasingly confident that inflation will rise along with economic growth, but currency market volatility is a potential obstacle.

en heavily in recent sessions as a risk-off mood across markets, worries about a regulatory clampdown, and moves by banks to ban buying bitcoin on credit cards have rattled investors, pushing prices lower.

an advertising ban on Facebook have hit sentiment. Several banks announced in recent days that they were banning customers from buying cryptocurrencies using their credit cards.

However, a rout in world stock markets, with US shares sliding more than 4 percent on Monday with Asian and European stocks following yesterday, arrested the sell-off in bonds for now.

Both are seen, along with German Bunds, as safe havens. European stock markets were down over 2 percent in early yesterday's trade.

Bitcoin briefly slid below \$6,000 yesterday to its lowest point so far this year in a sell-off that has seen the cryptocurrency lose more than half its value.

On the Luxembourg-based Bitstamp exchange, bitcoin fell to as low as \$5,920, its weakest since mid-November, before recovering back above \$6,000.

"This is an extremely volatile market," said Iqbal Gandham, managing director at trading platform eToro.

Germany's 10-year bond yield, the benchmark for the bloc, was set for its biggest one-day fall in over two months. It

In a speech on Monday, European

Bitcoin briefly slid below \$6,000 yesterday to its lowest point so far this year in a sell-off that has seen the cryptocurrency lose more than half its value.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday, February 06, 2018. Index: Price Index 6,624.13, Weighted Index 410.47, KSX 15 835.42. Trades: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, Commodities.

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Business

# KAMCO wins 'Best Kuwait Equity Fund' by MENA FM

## Recognition for consistent, outstanding, risk-adjusted fund performance

**KUWAIT:** KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, has won the prestigious "Best Kuwait Equity Fund" award from MENA Fund Manager Magazine (MENA FM), specializing in asset management within the MENA region.

During the MENA FM award ceremony held in Dubai, KAMCO was recognized for its consistent, outstanding, risk-adjusted fund performance throughout 2017. The firm's top performing fund, the KAMCO Investment Fund ("KIF"), achieved a notable 21.4 percent return during 2017, ranking it as the top performing fund in the region. Salah Al-



Salah Al-Wuheib

Wuheib, Chief Assets Officer of KAMCO, and Mahmood Tifouni, Acting Head of the MENA Asset Management Department, accepted the award on behalf of the Company.

The event was attended by a number of senior representatives from the local and international investment scene.

On this occasion, Al-Wuheib said, "We would like to sincerely express our gratitude and appreciation towards the MENA FM team for presenting us with this prestigious award. This award further reflects our leadership role within the local markets, which is backed by a skilled team of experienced fund and portfolio managers who

rely on strong research and analytics to make investment decisions. This award will also serve as a catalyst to consistently offer optimal products and services to our investors and clients."

Al-Wuheib added, "We will continue to further enhance our comprehensive and complex approach in actively growing our clients' portfolios through our distinctive investment performance levels, benefiting our investors and shareholders."

He also mentioned that the Kuwaiti market has been one of the best performing markets and the trend is expected to continue. The entry of Kuwait into the international indices, improvement in corporate earnings, and governance standards are attracting both institutional and retail investors. He also noted that the fund, with its excellent performance, will be in higher demand.



Tifouni receiving the award



## Explore the world with Jet Airways

**KUWAIT:** Jet Airways, India's full-service, premier international airline, is offering guests the opportunity to make huge savings on flights to global destinations across its net-

work. Guests who book during this offer period, ending February 12, 2018, will enjoy great savings up to 15 percent discount on prevailing fares on the Jet Airways' flights from Kuwait to selected destinations in India and beyond including Bangkok, Colombo, Dhaka, Hong Kong, Kathmandu, and Singapore.

Tickets booked as part of the promotion will be valid for travel from February 6, 2018 onwards with applicable terms and conditions. The special fares will be applicable only on flights operated by Jet Airways and guests can book their tickets via the airline's website at

www.jetairways.com, the airline's mobile app or via their travel agent. Bipin Balakrishnan, Country Manager-Kuwait, Jet Airways, said, "This special promotion provides our guests a wonderful opportunity to pencil in their next trip home or embark on an adventure across the Far East. Our destinations across the Far East are perfect for those keen to experience vibrant cities full of culture and character as well as those looking for a relaxing break".

Discount based on base+yq of promotional fare against regular fare. Offer subject to applicable terms and conditions.

## Grozny joins Air Arabia's Russia network

**SHARJAH:** Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC), announced yesterday its new route to Grozny, capital of the Chechen Republic in Russia. Air Arabia will begin flights to Grozny on 20th April, 2018.

Air Arabia's Russia network, which recently increased by launching flights to Shermetyevo International Airport adding a second route for travel to the Russian capital, has been extended to include the city of Grozny from April 2018.

The Grozny flight will operate three times a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, departing Sharjah International Airport (SHJ) at 13:00 hours and arriving at Grozny International Airport at 016:10 hours local time. The return flight will depart Grozny

at 17:15 hours, landing in Sharjah at 19:50 hours local time.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, said: "Expanding our Russia network, to include the new state capital of Grozny, forms an important part of Air Arabia's ongoing commitment to our passengers to access affordable and unique holiday destinations.

This new flight option will offer passengers the opportunity to explore Grozny and experience the rich history and culture of this exciting city, at great value. The new route adds to our existing network in Russia, which already includes Moscow".

Located on the banks of the Sunzha River, Grozny has a rich and diverse, history and is home to the Akhmad Kadyrov Mosque, one of the most lavish in the world. Completed in 2008, it is locally known as the Heart of Chechnya and is by far the largest mosque in Russia. Air Arabia, currently operates flights to 140 routes across the globe from five hubs located in the Middle East and North Africa, continues on the mission to create an ever expanding network of diverse destinations, allowing for high-quality and cost-effective travel.

## Boursa Kuwait concludes tour for students from AUK

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait recently hosted students from the American University of Kuwait (AUK) at its premises, where it presented them with a dedicated tour of the trading hall: the heart of Boursa Kuwait, where the actual trading activity takes place on a daily basis.

During the tour, students were informed of

the Boursa Kuwait journey, as the first privatized entity in Kuwait and its main objective, which focuses primarily on continuously upgrading the exchanges infrastructure and business environment, in accordance with best practices and international standards.

Boursa Kuwait also presented the students

with a thorough brief of the various functional sectors within Boursa Kuwait, the responsibilities of each and the role they play in assuring productive and efficient operations. Moreover, students also learned about the Kuwaiti stock market history, and the nation's proud trading heritage.

Boursa Kuwait is keen to adopt initiatives that contribute to raising awareness of the exchange and its operations: as a key investment driver and a significant contributor to the Kuwait economy, among young students, who are the leaders of Kuwait's prosperous future.



## VIVA launches 'Free' Internet roaming offer during February



**KUWAIT:** VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched new internet roaming offer during February, celebrating the National and Liberation Days.

This new offer allows all VIVA's customers to enjoy "free" internet roaming 500 MB in the GCC, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, by simply sending "I" to 102. It's worthy to note that VIVA's roaming internet plans give customers unlimited internet in the GCC, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan for 3 Days, 7 Days and 30 Days successively for KD 5, KD 7 and KD 18. For the rest of the world, 500 MB, 1 GB and 2 GB internet plans for the same prices. Customers can benefit from add-on service for discounted rates once they consume their quota for KD 5 and 7 plans. These new plans offer postpaid, prepaid and data customers, ease and flexibility during their travels outside Kuwait to meet their roaming needs. Customers can subscribe to any of these plans by sending an SMS "I" to 102.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom opera-

tor 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. VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation of the most advanced fourth generation "4G LTE" network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability, and has been recognized as "Speedtest Award Winner 2017 - Kuwait's Fastest Mobile Network", based on Ookla's analysis of Speedtest Intelligence data in Q2-Q3 2017.

## German pay deal heralds end of wage restraint

**STUTTGART, GERMANY:** A hard-fought deal on pay and working hours for industrial employees in southwestern Germany sets a benchmark for millions of workers across Europe's largest economy and heralds wage growth in the coming years.

The agreement between labour union IG Metall and the Suedwestmetall employers' federation, struck overnight, foresees a 4.3 percent pay raise from April and other payments spread over 27 months. Tough pay negotiations are expected to end years of wage restraint in Germany, potentially aiding the European Central Bank as it tries to get euro zone inflation back up to the bank's target rate of just below 2 percent.

On an annual basis, the agreement is equivalent to a 3.5 percent increase in wages, according to Commerzbank analyst Eckart Tuchtfield, well below IG Metall's initial demand for a 6 percent hike over 12 months, but was still seen as a good deal.

"The agreed pay rises, and accompanying measures, are at the top end of expectations and should result in annual wage increases of close to 4 percent over the next couple of years," Pictet economist Frederik Ducroz said. The "pilot" deal, struck against a backdrop of a strong economic recovery and the lowest unemploy-

ment since German unification in 1990, covers half a million employees in southwestern Germany, home to industrial powerhouses like car maker Daimler AG.

It is expected to be applied in the rest of Germany as well and is likely to influence negotiations in other industries.

Germany's second-biggest union, Verdi, is due to publish its wage demand for public sector workers tomorrow. Verdi and IG Metall together account for about 15 percent of the German workforce. IG Metall's deal will reinforce market expectations for the ECB to dial back stimulus further this year as growth in the bloc is now self-generating and wages are moving slowly upwards. It comes as world stock and bond markets are selling off on fears that a jobs bonanza in the United States may force early interest rate hikes there.

But the euro zone outlook is much different with the jobless rate still at almost 9 percent and the broader slack, which includes part-time and temporary workers, perhaps twice as high, economists say.

### Work-life balance

Employers also agreed to give workers the right to reduce their working week to 28 hours from the standard 35 to care for children, or for sick or elderly relatives, for up to two years, which had been a major sticking point in negotiations. "Workers' priorities have shifted. Instead of higher wages, work-life balance is now in focus," BayernLB economist Christiane von Berg said. In return for bowing to IG Metall's demand on working hours, employers have been given the ability to take on more staff willing to work for up to 40 hours - creating the flexibility they need to ramp up

production during periods of high demand.

IG Metall had staged a series of 24-hour strikes and threatened to ballot its members for extended industrial action if employers failed to offer concessions at Monday's sixth round of pay talks. Last week's strikes cost carmakers, automotive suppliers and engineering firms almost 200 million euros (\$249 million) in lost revenues, affecting big firms like Daimler, BMW and Airbus and dozens of smaller suppliers. As is often the case in Germany's ritualized system of wage bargaining, the details of IG Metall's wage deal were highly complex.

At the end of the day, regional employers' association Suedwestmetall's negotiator Stefan Wolf said, the cost to employers would work out at below 4 percent per year, which industry players said will push companies to their limit.

In addition to April's 4.3 percent pay rise, employees will receive a one-off payment of 100 euros extra for the first quarter. From 2019, they will receive an additional fixed annual sum of 400 euros as well as a payment equivalent to 27.5 percent of their monthly pay. Some workers can choose to have more time off instead of receiving the additional money.

"This wage agreement hurts especially the many Mittelstand companies in the machinery and plant engineering sector," Thilo Brodtmann, managing director of engineering association VDMA, said yesterday. This may prompt more companies from the Mittelstand - the many medium-sized, privately held businesses that form the backbone of Germany's economy - to seek labor agreements with their workers without the involvement of unions like IG Metall, he said. — Reuters

## Technology

# Trappist planets have water and may be 'habitable': Researchers

'All the traffic lights we have passed so far are green'



This handout image obtained from the European Southern Observatory (ESO) shows an artist's impression of an imagined view from close to one of the three planets orbiting an ultracool dwarf star just 40 light-years from Earth that were discovered using the TRAPPIST telescope at ESO's La Silla Observatory. —AFP photos

PARIS: Seven planets recently spotted orbiting a dim star in our Milky Way galaxy are rocky, seem to have water, and are potentially "habitable", researchers studying the distant system said Monday. Though much remains unknown about the planets' surfaces and atmospheres, the new measurements have not ruled out the possibility that they may harbor even rudimentary life, the scientists reported.

"So far, no sign allows us to say that they are not habitable," said University of Birmingham astronomer Amaury Triaud, the co-author of a study on the subject. "All the traffic lights we have passed so far are green." Research teams gleaned more information about the dwarf star at the centre of the Trappist-1 system, as well as improved measurements of the size and mass of each planet, and the composition of their atmospheres.

All seven are mostly made of rock, with up to five percent of their mass in water—though it may be in the form of gas or ice, or trapped deep inside the rocky orbs, researchers said. On Earth, the oceans account for about 0.02 percent of our planet's mass. A year ago, researchers announced the discovery of the seven Earth-like planets orbiting Trappist-1, an "ultracool" red dwarf star some 39 light years from our home.

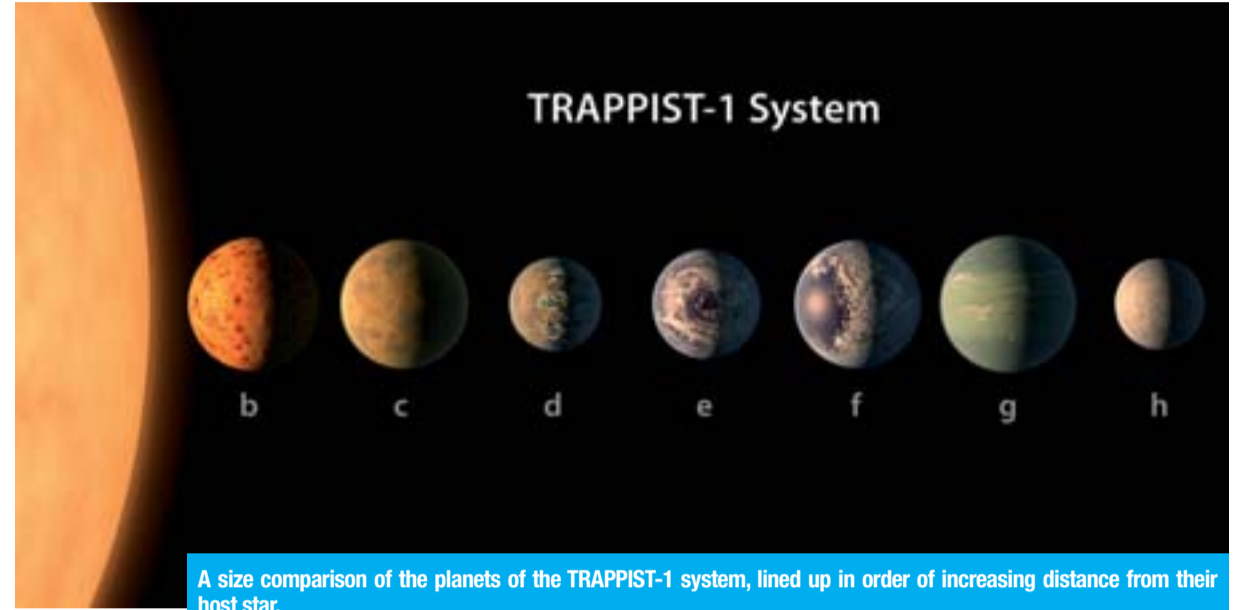
As for the odds of the planets hosting organic life forms, "we cannot say at this stage, as they are vastly dif-

ferent from the only planet we know to harbor life (Earth)," Triaud told AFP. "But they have suitable characteristics and are to date the best place beyond the edge of our (Solar) system to search." The presence of liquid water is considered essential for life to exist anywhere. Astronomers used



**Water is considered essential for life**

the Hubble Space Telescope to learn more about the Trappist system by studying the planets' atmospheres as they passed in front of their star, appearing as a dark, travelling dot from the observer's point of view. Findings were published Monday in two papers in the journals *Nature Astronomy*, and *Astronomy and Astrophysics*.



A size comparison of the planets of the TRAPPIST-1 system, lined up in order of increasing distance from their host star.

## Cooler than the Sun

All seven planets were considered potential candidates for harbouring water, but the chances to find it in liquid form are highest in the temperate "Goldilocks" zone—not too far from the star for it to be frozen, nor too close to evaporate. The Trappist-1 system is considered the current best hope for finding evidence of alien life.

"When we combine our new masses with our improved radii measurements, and our improved knowledge of the star, we obtain precise densities for each of the seven worlds, and reach information on their internal composition," said Triaud. "All seven planets remarkably resemble Mercury, Venus, our Earth, its Moon, and Mars." According to study co-author Simon Grimm from the University of Bern, the third and fourth planets from the star are "the most likely" to host some form of life.

"The more we learn about these planets, the more habitable they seem to be," Grimm told AFP by email. Compared to our Solar System, the Trappist-1 family is very tightly-knit. With orbits ranging from 1.5 to 12 days, the planets would have fit comfortably in the distance between the Sun and its closest planet, Mercury. Trappist-1 has a mass less than 10 percent the mass of our Sun and is much cooler, which explains why its planets can orbit so nearby. —AFP



An artist's impression showing an imagined view from the surface of one of the three planets orbiting an ultracool dwarf star just 40 light-years from Earth.

## High levels of cellphone radiation linked to tumors in male rats

WASHINGTON: Male rats exposed to very high levels of the kind of radiation emitted by cellphones developed tumors in the tissues around their hearts, according to a draft report by U.S. government researchers on the potential health risks of the devices. Female rats and mice exposed in the same way did not develop tumors, according to the preliminary report from the US National Toxicology Program (NTP), a part of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. The findings add to years of research meant to help settle the debate over whether cellphone radiation is harmful. Although intriguing, the findings can not be extrapolated to humans, NTP scientists and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said on Friday. They noted that the animal studies were meant to test extreme exposures to cell phone radiation, and that current safety limits on cellphone radiation are protective. However, the two 10-year, \$25 million studies - the most comprehensive assessments of health effects and exposure to radiofrequency radiation in rats and mice to date - do raise new questions about exposure to the ubiquitous devices. In the studies, about 6 percent of male rats whose entire bodies were exposed to the highest level of cell phone radiation developed schwannomas - a rare type of tumor - in nerve tissue near their hearts, while there were no schwannomas in animals that were not exposed to radiation.

### Higher risk

"The intriguing part of this is the kind of tumors we saw were similar to tumors noted for quite some time in some epidemiological studies in heavy duty cellphone users," John Bucher, a senior scientist with NTP, said in a telephone interview. "Of course, these were in the nerves in the ear and next to the brain, but the tumor types were the same as we saw in the heart."

Dr Otis Brawley, chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society, noted that the studies were negative for common tumors. "These draft reports are bound to create a lot of concern, but in fact they won't change what I tell people: the evidence for an association between cellphones and cancer is weak, and so far, we have not seen a higher cancer risk in people," he said in a statement on Twitter. Brawley said if cellphone users are concerned about this data in animals they should wear an earpiece.

Unlike ionizing radiation such as that from gamma rays, radon and X-rays, which can break chemical bonds in the body and are known to cause cancer, radiofrequency devices such as cellphones and microwaves emit radiofrequency energy, a form of non-ionizing radiation. The concern with this type of radiation is that it produces energy in the form of heat, and frequent exposure against the skin could alter brain cell activity, as some studies have suggested.

In the NTP study, rats and mice were exposed to higher levels of radiation for longer periods of time than what people experience with even the highest level of cellphone use, and their entire bodies were exposed all at once, according to the draft report. Bucher said the effect likely only showed up in the male rats because they were larger, and likely absorbed more radiation than the female rats or mice. —Reuters

## Third time lucky for another Samsung leader

SEOUL: Samsung heir Lee Jae-Yong on Monday became the third generation of his family to benefit from merciful legal treatment, when most of his bribery convictions were set aside and his jail sentence was replaced with a suspended term. Lee, 49, is vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, the world's largest smartphone maker and the flagship of the Samsung Group founded by his grandfather in 1938.

Lee's father Lee Kun-Hee went on to build up the tech empire but was convicted of bribery in 1996. The Seoul Central District Court also found him guilty of tax evasion and other charges 10 years ago but suspended sentences meant he never served time in jail. Similarly, his grandfather Lee Byung-Chull, who founded Samsung ("Three Stars") as a trading company in 1938, was engulfed in a huge case of smuggling involving his fertilizer manufacturing subsidiary in 1966. He avoided being charged after "donating" the firm to the state.

Lee himself was sentenced to five years in prison for bribing the then-South Korean president Park Geun-Hye and her secret confidante, and spent almost a year in custody after first being detained in February 2017. But an appeals court on Monday dismissed most of his bribery convictions and gave him a suspended sentence for the rest, paving the way for his release.

### 'Minus touch'

Mild-mannered and often smiling inscrutably, bespectacled divorcee Lee Jae-Yong cuts a different figure from his father—a visionary but eccentric and reclusive leader who rarely made public appearances. Lee Kun-Hee is credited with transforming a once-obscure electronics firm into a global powerhouse that today is the world's biggest maker of both mobile phones and memory chips. But his son is not seen as having inherited his management prowess, with some critics instead ascribing to him a "Minus touch" after several of his pet projects at Samsung fizzled out.

Profits at Samsung Electronics have soared despite his absence—last week it announced record numbers for

## New LNG terminals get smaller to offer flexible supply deals

VANCOUVER: The liquefied natural gas market is growing every year, but the terminals that ship and receive the fuel are shrinking.

The booming sector's next-generation infrastructure is being designed for an emerging-market buyers that want smaller volumes on shorter, more flexible contracts. LNG export terminals, where the gas is liquefied and put on vessels for

shipping, have traditionally been massive, custom-built facilities that cost tens of billions of dollars. And so to justify the investment, they have typically required equally massive, long-term supply deals, often lasting a decade or more.

Numerous terminal projects on the horizon, by contrast, are new modular-style designs built to snap together like Legos, allowing for small to mid-scale liquefaction or regasification plants that can be expanded if and when demand grows. The first next-generation liquefaction plant is under construction in the US state of Georgia and is expected to begin operating mid-year. These facilities, with far smaller liquefaction units - known as trains - are "more consistent with market conditions," said John Baguley, chief oper-

ating officer of Australia-based LNG Ltd, which has proposed mid-scale LNG plants in the United States and Canada. The new designs reflect a maturing market with a more diverse base of customers that will drive future growth.

### Liquefied fuel

In 2008, the average contract was for 18 years and more than 2 million tons per annum (Mtpa). By 2016, it had dropped to less than eight years and less than 1 Mtpa, with new buyers in emerging markets like China, India and Pakistan seeking flexibility due to market uncertainty. These new buyers are fueling small utilities and industrial users such as fertilizer plants and factories, said Alfred Moujaes, Houston President for Atlantic, Gulf and

Pacific Company. The firm is building small, modular plants for LNG buyers, who need to convert the liquefied fuel back to a gas form after shipping.

Typically, such markets will be small at first, but the hope is that demand will grow as additional customers convert to LNG, Moujaes said. The modular plants allow terminals to grow with the market. Demand for liquefied natural gas, or LNG, has taken off in recent years as it is a cleaner fuel than oil or coal, and abundant supply has driven its price sharply lower. Overall global consumption of LNG rose to 33.1 billion cubic feet per day in 2016, about 10 percent of total natural gas usage; it is expected to grow by 75 percent by 2027, according to the US Energy Information Administration. —Reuters



SEOUL: This file photo taken on August 25, 2017 shows Samsung Group heir Lee Jae-Yong (C) arriving at Seoul Central District Court. —AFP

both the fourth quarter and the 2017 full year — and its share price has roughly doubled in two years. The junior Lee earned a degree in Asian history at South Korea's top Seoul National University before studying business at Japan's elite Keio University and later Harvard. In 1998 he married the granddaughter of the founder of South Korean food giant Daesang. The couple had a daughter and son but divorced in 2009 and Lee remains single.

He started his career at Samsung Electronics in 1991 before a rapid climb up the corporate ladder—common among offspring of the founding families of the South's powerful family-run conglomerates known as chaebol. He became an executive in 2001, a vice president in 2010 and a president less than a year later, when the firm was

growing rapidly thanks to its burgeoning smartphone business. He was made vice chairman in 2012, a banner year when Samsung dethroned Apple as the world's top smartphone maker and shattered profit records every quarter. But the stellar performance was largely credited to his father and an elite coterie of Samsung veterans at the now-disbanded Future Strategy Office, which dictated key management decisions at the sprawling empire.

Since a heart attack in 2014 left his father bedridden, Lee has functioned as the group's public face, attending major events and meetings with visiting luminaries. But how much he has contributed to Samsung's business decisions remains unclear. The Lee clan is known for its secrecy, with neither the scion nor his father having ever given a media interview. —AFP

Health

# UK experts urge smokers to switch to e-cigs for improved health gains

Likely to be far less harmful than regular tobacco cigarettes

**LONDON:** Vaping, or using e-cigarettes, poses only a fraction of the health risk of tobacco smoking and should be encouraged among smokers to reap substantial health benefits, British public health experts said yesterday. In a review of evidence on e-cigarettes commissioned by the government-backed authority Public Health England, experts said e-cigarettes could already be helping some 20,000 UK smokers a year to quit tobacco - and possibly many more.

The report said there was "much public misunderstanding" about nicotine, with fewer than 10 percent of adults understanding that the vast majority of the harms from smoking are not caused by nicotine. It said the evidence does not support concerns that e-cigarettes are a gateway into tobacco smoking among young people.



## Growing scientific consensus

due to false fears about their safety."

The PHE report comes a few weeks after a US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report on e-cigarettes. Summarising data from hundreds of scientific studies, that report also said e-cigarettes are likely to be far less harmful than regular tobacco cigarettes. PHE called on smokers and health authorities to act now on the evidence reviewed in these latest reports.

Any smoker who has struggled to quit should try switching to an e-cigarette and get professional help, it said, adding: "The greatest quit success is among those who combine using an e-cigarette with support from a local stop smoking service." It also called on Britain's National Health Service to ensure e-cigarettes are available in hospital shops along with other nicotine replacement products such as gum and lozenges. The UK campaign group Action on Smoking and Health welcomed the report, saying it was part of a growing scientific consensus that e-cigarettes are much less harmful than tobacco. "We hope this reports will...encourage the 40 percent of smokers who've failed to quit but never tried vaping to go ahead and switch," it said in a statement. —Reuters



CAPE TOWN: A woman smokes a cigarette prior to the Met horse race. —AFP

### Fraction of the risk

"Our new review reinforces the finding that vaping is a fraction of the risk of smoking, at least 95 percent less harmful, and of negligible risk to bystanders," said John Newton, a professor and director for health improvement at PHE. "It would be tragic if thousands of smokers who could quit with the help of an e-cigarette are being put off

## Indonesia declares Papua measles outbreak over

**JAKARTA:** A deadly measles-and-malnutrition outbreak that killed scores of children in Indonesia's remote Papua province is over, authorities said. Official figures showed a total of 72 children died while hundreds more were sickened as a result of the "extraordinary" outbreak, which hit several isolated communi-

ties in Papua's Asmat district between September 2017 and February 4, local officials said. No new measles cases had been identified following the deployment of military and medical teams to the region last month. "The extraordinary status of the measles event has been revoked and is over," Asmat district chief Elisa Kambu said in a letter dated Monday. No figures were given for the number of children sickened but earlier official figures said the number topped 800. The statement marks a de-escalation of a health crisis first made public in mid-January that highlighted a severe lack of medical care and other basic services in a far-flung island region.

Earlier reports suggested more than two dozen other children and adults had died in a remote community, but their deaths came earlier than the outbreak's official date range. Papua has been the site of a low level insurgency

against Jakarta's rule for decades and it remains the most impoverished region in the sprawling Southeast Asian archipelago.

Harrowing footage of rail-thin children with exposed ribs at under-equipped hospitals fuelled criticism that wealth from the region's abundant natural resources is not being evenly shared with the ethnic Papuan population. President Joko Widodo ordered military and medical teams to several locations across the vast region to treat the sick and undertake a mass immunisation campaign. But the head of the military medical teams acknowledged to AFP that Jakarta's response was slow. Observers blamed the crisis on a complex mix of government inaction, lack of jobs, logistical hurdles in reaching remote communities and resettlement efforts that pose a serious threat to many Papuans' traditional hunting-based lifestyles. —AFP

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What's On

# NBK hires new batch of employees



The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)'s Al-Watani Academy recently received the 19th batch of new employees. They met the conditions of selecting young Kuwaiti graduates to undergo special four-month training course on banking skills such as banking principles, risk management, team work, financial accounting, marketing, negotiation, consumer and corporate loans and practical training in various bank departments with the aim of working in NBK. On this occasion, Ahmed Al-Ablani stressed that NBK is proud to be one of the largest private sector investing in national youth through attracting them into the banking sector and accordingly qualifying them. Al-Ablani added that the training course was designed according to the highest international standards and latest techniques.

## LOYAC volunteers bridge cultural gaps between Kuwait and Thailand



Under the patronage of NBK, Young students from local high schools recently joined LOYAC on a community service trip to Thailand. The program stems from LOYAC's keenness to implement opportunities for youth to engage in various experiences and gain skills that would develop their character and increase their self-reliance.

The program which served 18 adolescents ages 14 to 17 offered a rich collection of self-development, volunteer service, cultural and recreational workshops. It enabled the youth to thrive in a collective atmosphere and encouraged openness to other cultures. The program also encompassed classes to teach children the English language alongside other workshops that taught them Thai cuisine and the several uses of bamboo. Moreover, the program allowed the youth to experience visiting elephant reserves and identifying ways of preserving them, in addition to enjoying the Thai sports and community service in the areas of education, agriculture and development. Such profound learning experiences couldn't have been made possible without the support and sponsorship of

the National Bank of Kuwait. Community Service Manager at LOYAC, Ninnar Al Qames said that Thailand's trip had many goals. The main goal revolves around enhancing the concept of self-development through such programs offered by LOYAC to the youth. "These trips organized by LOYAC focus on the importance of cultural interaction and the strengthening of communication and dialogue among people;

which correspondingly promotes the principle of peace, and therefore is in line with the vision of LOYAC, enlightened youth for peace and prosperity." Al Qames thanked the National Bank of Kuwait for sponsoring the trip to Thailand, as part of its mission to support all segments of society and its voluntary institutions that support the youth and meet their needs and requirements for a better future.



## KIB sponsors 'Portable Foldable House' project of petroleum engineering students

In line with its ongoing efforts to support youth as key players in the community's development, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored a number of graduation projects for students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University. This sponsorship reflects the Bank's strong belief in the importance of supporting the forward-looking vision and innovative ideas of ambitious youth, believing them to be key players in the nation's advancement across various different areas.

KIB's sponsorship included the "Portable Foldable House" project developed by students Mariam Al-Alimi, Marwa Al-Harz, Aseel Ramadan and Esraa Al-Saleh. The project aims at developing mobile accommodation suitable for both internal trips and camping that can be loaded and installed anywhere via an automatic folding mechanism.

Speaking on this occasion, Corporate Communications Manager at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "KIB always strives to support students by participating in a number of activities and initiatives. We are also dedicated to sponsoring the projects and ideas of students, as we believe that the youth segment is crucial to building a brighter future for the nation. For this reason, KIB considers youth empowerment to be a cornerstone of its social responsibility program." Najia further added that KIB commits itself to engaging with youth in Kuwait by establishing a line of direct communication with them. Additionally, the Bank offers a number of products and services specifically designed to cater to the modern lifestyles and needs of youth, including the Shabab Al Dawli Account, which combines both the benefits of saving and investing.

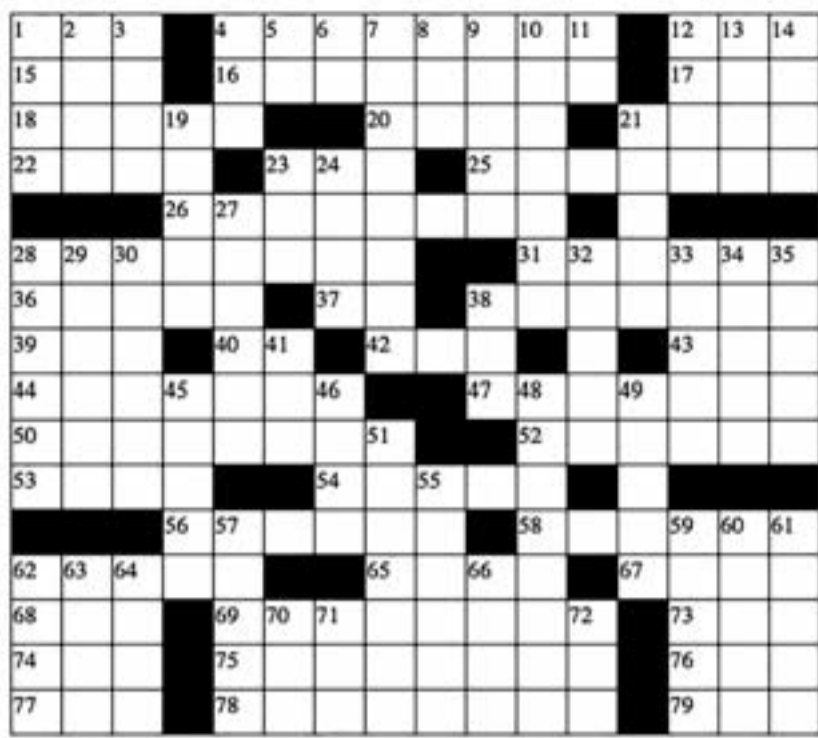


Under auspices of the first deputy PM and Minister of Defence, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed and with the attendance of the Amiri Diwan undersecretary, Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed, Kuwait Formative Arts Association (KFAA) honored the winners of the 12 Formative Creation Festival in which 75 artists took part with 116 paintings and creations. The ceremony was also attended by KFAA chairman and the head of Arab Formative Artists Union, Abdul Rasoul Salman, artists and art lovers.





CROSSWORD 1829



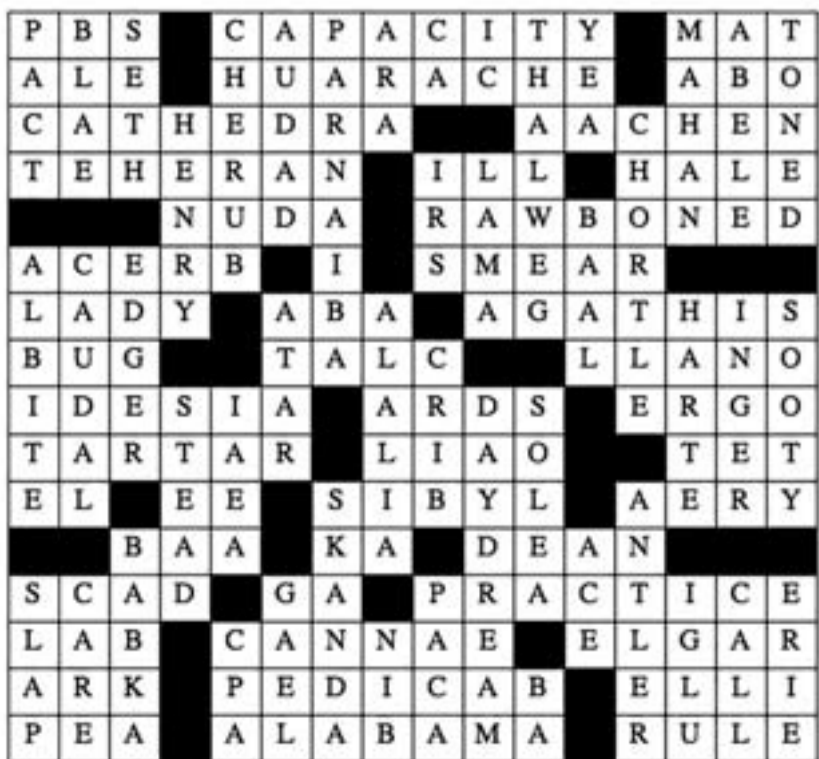
ACROSS

- The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
- A resident of Alabama.
- A change in the electrical properties of the skin in response to stress or anxiety.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- Add nonfissionable material to (fissionable material) so as to make unsuitable for use in an atomic bomb.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglelike part of an organism.
- An honorary arts degree.
- The basic unit of money in Uruguay.
- Not only so, but.
- Of a leaf shape.
- Inflammation of the aorta.
- Any plant of the genus *Acanthus* having large spiny leaves and spikes or white or purplish flowers.
- Consider or hold as true.
- The 10th and last incarnation of Vishnu.
- Being one more than one.
- Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus *Iva* with small greenish flowers.
- A doctor's degree in religion.
- A rapid bustling commotion.
- Measure of the US economy adopted in 1991.
- Lead someone in the wrong direction.
- Thick heavy expensive material with a raised pattern.
- A workplace where baked goods (breads and cakes and pastries) are produced or sold.
- Away from the mouth or oral region.
- Toward the mouth or oral region.
- Perennial northern temperate plant with toothed leaves and heads of small purplish-white flowers.
- Gay or light-hearted recreational activity for diversion or amusement.
- The wife of a sheik.
- A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
- (trademark) A type of inflatable air mattress.
- Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- The semantic relation that holds between a whole and its parts.
- A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
- Being two more than fifty.
- A small slow-growing deciduous tree of northern Iran having a low domed shape.
- The month following February and preceding April.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- In 1649 the place was captured by Oliver Cromwell, who massacred the Catholic inhabitants.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
- Being nothing more than specified.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- An associate degree in nursing.
- Genus of North American plants with showy pealike flowers and an inflated pod.
- Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
- True mosses.
- The act of arousing.
- A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- A thin strip (wood or metal).
- A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
- A cut of meat (beef or veal or mutton or lamb) from the upper part of the leg.
- Reconnaissance (by shortening).
- Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
- Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles.
- Terrestrial game birds of the Old World and Australia.
- Salted roe of sturgeon or other large fish.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- Long pod containing small beans and sweetish edible pulp.
- The younger brother of Edwy who became king of Northumbria when it renounced Edwy.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- Written on a typewriter.
- A numbered compartment in a post office where mail is put to be called for.
- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- A projecting ridge on a mountain or submerged under water.
- Trailing grass native to Europe now cosmopolitan in warm regions.
- (Christianity) Saved from the bondage of sin.
- Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
- Lengthen in time.
- An architectural support or base (as for a column or statue).
- Any of various small plant-sucking insects.
- Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- 100 agorot equal 1 shekel.
- Concerning those not members of the clergy.
- 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.
- A harp used by ancient Greeks for accompaniment.
- Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
- A toilet in England.
- An affirmative.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you step away from the usual way of doing things; this pertains to electronic gadgets, work related methods or transportation options. You open your mind to new technologies and thereby gain abundance in many areas of your life: real estate, finances, possessions. You're confident and unafraid to cut a new path in new areas of endeavor. While you're considered a risky bet, you're focused on the way to prosperity as you see it; listen well to your intuition. Someone could complain about a suggestion you make later but the rest go with the flow and understand what you're saying. You reject a new age type idea in favor of traditional beliefs. You agree to take the lead when planning a project with new team members. Stargaze 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, communications with those younger than yourself are called for. A certain task falls to you as the group can't make a decision about how to move forward. You have entered a cycle of abundance in material, financial and spiritual aspects. A new design or method makes itself known today and becomes a regular part of your routine. Your memory is occupied by someone who's passed away; let your heart be light and try to remember the times of joy you shared. The tendency for broadening your mind is strong; leaving a mark with your work is important and your efforts reflect this. Enjoy this evening beneath the stars or perhaps at a planetarium would be fun; spending time with someone special makes a difference in your sleep tonight, Gemini!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you could be tempted to venture where perhaps you shouldn't socially; someone critical is watching you closely. You may feel as though you're not comfortable in your own skin. You could be challenged by someone who rarely agrees with you. You're able to avoid an argument by using your natural charm; make a note to stay away from a certain person when possible. A very sensitive situation comes to your attention through a surprising connection; intimate hurts require a special kind of healing. Hold your head up as you work to grow and evolve; it's not everyone who can manage to follow this difficult, sometimes painful, path. You're invited to a small dinner with friends featuring a new dish. Unwind later with a favorite book, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you let physical concerns go to the wayside as your attention is fully focused on the true meaning of dreams and intuitive experiences. Be careful to let your logical side play a role in new beliefs and notions. You may have the sensation of watching your own life unfold from a distance, almost like an out of body experience. Pay attention to new information; it could hold ideas and answers you aren't prepared for. A new place to grocery shop is just what you're looking for. You make an effort to pay attention to the needs and wants of others. Being a bit too much into yourself sometimes creates friction you don't want at this time! Your advice is golden when you're approached by someone new who's in a volatile situation that could be serious, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you could actually accept an invitation to a special gathering later; remember, with the new phase you have entered you'll feel free to be you most of the time. A domestic project for a friend introduces you to new people and new food. Kicking back and enjoying yourself feels like something you want to do regularly; go for it! You could notice a certain radiance in your physical appearance; the new lifestyle changes are working for you. You enjoy the perks of life such as nice clothes, vehicles and home as well as art, jewels and real estate; you value these things very highly right now and are in a cycle of acquiring. Friends gather round to celebrate a nice occasion; you feel humbled and grateful for the blessings and good fortune you enjoy, Virgo!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, some things that have confounded you could be cleared up and put away today. You could have to deal with an urge to spend, spend, spend just now. You don't intend to pass a good deal when you see it; watch your purse strings as you try to stay within your budget. Your tax plans need your attention today as you could have forgotten to add or subtract important information. You should get to the center of an issue at work with ease and accuracy. You have a social gathering on your mind; perhaps you have been asked to cater or address invitations. Make an effort to slow your pace so that nothing is overlooked. Make a list and check off chores as you go for better focus and peace of mind. Put your feet up tonight and let your hair down, Libra.



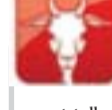
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you try something new and bold like bright colors in clothing or paint; whatever this is makes a definite statement. Your mind shifts dramatically in thinking; what before seemed foreign now seems as though you've found your home. A friend agrees with your ideas and supports them. Duties and tasks go quickly and smoothly during this period of positive energy opening up. This new cycle could represent a good time to take risks at an emotional level; you can offer fine contributions to a relationship. Tensions could run high with a family member who only wants the best for you. Later, you seek fun and laughter with friends at a new place in town; you could find yourself running into someone new and exciting in a friendly sort of way, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, you notice strong discomfort in general with surroundings, people, even thoughts. You could hold your affections back due to lack of warmth in your mood. Friends call on you for help in a trying matter; your input is valuable and most appreciated. Your quiet nature is useful as you stand back and observe while making your own plans. This new cycle is the perfect time to uncover important theories and ideas that represent the future. A new assignment has your name written all over it; you're relieved and prepared to make your mark on this. You could write an emotional note that speaks of your true feelings. You receive a surprise gift from someone who loves you; this gesture fills your heart. Reading helps get you to sleep, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you look and feel good as you focus on getting things done. You could feel something amiss, something that just niggles and irritates but you can't tell exactly what. A new project progresses and the teamwork is excellent; someone could challenge some of your decisions on this! A quick visit with someone sparks your thoughts and ideas as you connect on a mutual understanding and agree to pursue this together. Warm feelings for someone younger brighten your day; you feel strongly about the future being with those of the younger generation and you contribute to this in some way. Your energy is very positive, your heart is light and it feels good! A new romantic interest invites you for a light dinner to become more acquainted, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, today brings a sense of ease when communicating on all levels. Your gains in money and material items are a focus for you now; remember to be grateful for all that you have now! You find it hard to focus on anything but reaching your goals; pay attention to personal issues. Your sense of worth when looking at purchases or projects is very sharp; your judgment is on target. You shine when addressing a group with updates and plans. There may be a difficult family discussion later; you have the ability to take the bull by the horns and get to the heart of the matter. A certain sentimental item could be argued over when the subject comes up; is possession of this worth family unrest you learn some interesting facts tonight, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you receive information regarding someone who is a large part of your emotional landscape. Activities with family members takes prominence over any other relationships. A discussion with others helps strengthen the bonds you share; if you have done or said anything you are confronted with remember it's just better to be honest so that feelings can be repaired. An older person may want you to do something that would go against your morals; remember shysters aren't right or good just because you're related. Money and control are very attractive to you; sexual acceptance and fulfillment are strongly desired. It is up to you to destroy circumstances and behaviors that are hurtful to others; look at both sides of the coin, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

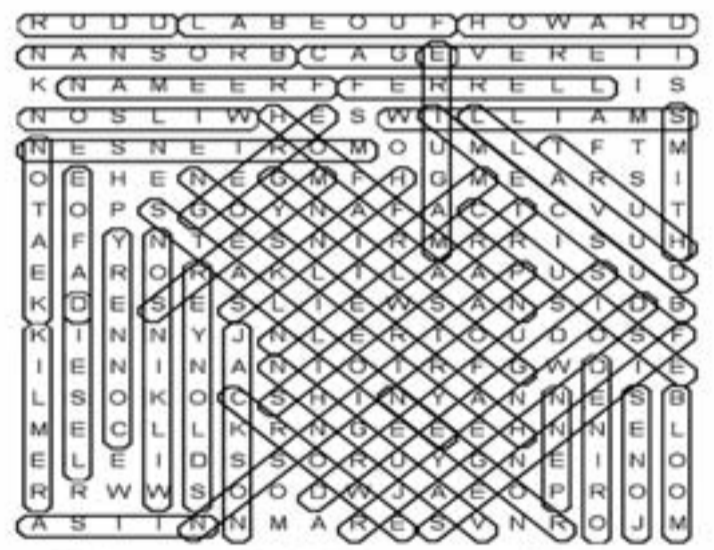
Movie Actors 3



- 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 Forest Whitaker won an Oscar.
- |                     |                  |                     |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| ARKIN, Alan         | GLOVER, Danny    | PACINO, Al          |
| BALE, Christian     | GOODING JR, Cuba | PAXTON, Bill        |
| BANDERAS, Antonio   | HARRIS, Ed       | PITT, Brad          |
| BROADBENT, Jim      | HAWKE, Ethan     | QUAD, Dennis        |
| BRODERICK, Matthew  | KINGSLEY, Ben    | RADCLIFFE, Daniel   |
| BRODY, Adrien       | MACY, William H. | SINISE, Gary        |
| BYRNE, Gabriel      | MALKOVICH, John  | SLATER, Christian   |
| CRAIG, Daniel       | MCGREGOR, Ewan   | STRATHAIRN, David   |
| DAY-LEWIS, Daniel   | MURPHY, Eddie    | THORNTON, Billy Bob |
| EASTWOOD, Clint     | NICHOLSON, Jack  | WALKEN, Christopher |
| FIRTH, Colin        | NORTON, Edward   | WASHINGTON, Denzel  |
| FISHBURNE, Laurence | OLDMAN, Gary     | WHITAKER, Forest    |
| FRASER, Brendan     |                  | WILLIS, Bruce       |

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actors 2



- |                   |                         |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ASTIN, Sean       | FENNES, Ralph           | MARTIN, Steve       |
| BLOOM, Orlando    | FREEMAN, Morgan         | MORTENSEN, Viggo    |
| BROSNAN, Pierce   | GERE, Richard           | MYERS, Mike         |
| BUSCEMI, Steve    | GOSSLING, Ryan          | PATTINSON, Robert   |
| CAGE, Nicolas     | HANKS, Tom              | PENN, Sean          |
| CONNERY, Sean     | HARRELSON, Woody        | REYNOLDS, Ryan      |
| CROWE, Russell    | HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour | ROGGEN, Seth        |
| CRUISE, Tom       | HOWARD, Terrence        | RUDD, Paul          |
| DAFOE, Willem     | HURT, William           | SMITH, Will         |
| DE NIRO, Robert   | JACKSON, Samuel L.      | STALLONE, Sylvester |
| DIESEL, Vin       | JONES, Tommy Lee        | STEWART, Patrick    |
| DOWNEY JR, Robert | KEATON, Michael         | VAUGHN, Vince       |
| DREYFUSS, Richard | KILMER, Val             | WILKINSON, Tom      |
| DUVALL, Robert    | LABOUF, Shia            | WILLIAMS, Robin     |
| EVERETT, Rupert   | MAGUIRE, Tobey          | WILSON, Owen        |
| FERRELL, Will     |                         |                     |

The hidden movie title is: KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Lifestyle | Gossip



## The Cure's ROBERT SMITH curating Meltdown Festival 2018

The Cure's Robert Smith will curate this year's Meltdown Festival. The 'Friday I'm In Love' hitmaker is thrilled to be organizing the bill for the prestigious 10-night music event held at London's Southbank Centre from June 14 to 24, and has teased that he has chosen some of the most "inspirational" acts to perform. He said: "I am honored and excited to be curating the 25th Meltdown Festival. More than 30 of my all-time favorite artists - some of the most exciting, inspirational, intense and influential performers of the last 40 years - will make sure this 10-night extravaganza at London's Southbank Centre is the must-see event of the summer!" For the first time in its 25-year history, Meltdown will cover the entire venue, including the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room. Smith, 58, follows in the footsteps of the likes of the late David Bowie, Nick Cave, Jarvis Cocker and last

year's curator M.I.A. in the role. A month later, The Cure will mark their 40th anniversary as a band with a special gig at Barclaycard presents British Summer Time Hyde Park. The punk rockers have produced 30 million combined sales of 13 studio albums and more than 40 singles during their four-decade career, and will celebrate the milestone performing at the iconic landmark on July 7, with support from Interpol, Goldfrapp, Editors, Ride, Slowdive and The Twilight Sad. James King, Senior Vice President, AEG Presents commented: "The Cure playing at Barclaycard presents British Summer Time Hyde Park will be an incredible day where The Cure join the list of other global legends who have played the Great Oak Stage. On July 7 we celebrate the 40th anniversary of a truly iconic British band and it's an honor that they have chosen to share this magical experience with us in Hyde Park."

## James Bay teases new song Wild Love

James Bay is set to release brand new track 'Wild Love' today. The 'Hold Back The River' hitmaker will give fans the first taste of his second record with the song, his first new music since his 2015 debut LP 'Chaos and the Calm'. Alongside a snippet of the music video for the new



track, James wrote on Twitter: "WILD LOVE. February 8th 2018. #WildLove (sic) The 27-year-old singer/songwriter recently revealed that he was inspired by Frank Ocean and Chance The Rapper on his new album. James insisted he has always had a "souful non-rock side" and was excited about taking a diverse

range of influences and fusing them together. He said: "Chance the Rapper's 'Coloring Book' and Frank Ocean's 'Channel Orange' were really big influences this time around. "I went on holiday to the Caribbean and must have placed 'Channel Orange' 15,000 times. "I know that probably makes me sound like some organic guitar dude who is now deep into hip-hop but I've always had a souful, non-rock side. "The interesting thing to me was having those two in my left hand, and David Bowie and LCD Soundsystem in my right and smashing them together." James chopped his long hair and ditched his trademark fedora for his second album campaign, but knew all along he wanted to do something "unexpected" and become a "different person". He said: "Round two has been about thinking outside the box and doing something unexpected. "As a competitive person, I set myself that challenge. I was more than ready to cut my hair off and put my hat on the stand and walk out a completely different person this time. "Of course, telling your team that this is how you want to play it takes courage. "But I'm confident. The opposite of doing that is being boring. So it was a no-brainer - go courage." But James admitted he was left with a "void" once he'd finished touring and promoting his first record around the world in December 2016. He said: "Touring was over. The bubble had burst. "When you've dispersed from the tight-knit family you've created on the road, you lose your sense of purpose for a minute. I was standing in front of this void."

## Chester Bennington's widow says she has been blamed for his death

Chester Bennington's widow has been blamed for his suicide by "cruel" online bullies. The late Linkin Park front man's wife Talinda Bennington has spoken candidly over his suicide in July 2017, and insisted nobody is to blame for his death. Discussing mental health at the Canadian Event Safety Summit, she said: "As much as social media has been a huge support for me, I do every now and then get people blaming me - straight-up blaming me - for him dying, for not saving him, for mistreating him. Who knows why these people behind their devices are saying these horribly cruel things to me? But, you know, it is a little stab in the heart, but what I have to remember is that it's not



my fault, it's not my children's fault, it's not the band's fault - it's nobody's fault." Although Talinda admitted it was naive, she did explain how she thought her husband - who had been sober for six months - was "in the clear" with his demons. She added: "My husband had had a past ... in the past, he had attempted suicide, but I thought to myself, 'It was 'cause he was wasted. He was this or that. So [before] he did pass, I thought very naively, we were in the clear. We had a very, very dear friend, Chris Cornell, take his own life. And I felt that, 'OK, Chester sees what Vicky and [their] kids' - we're godparents to their children - 'what they're going through and this will never happen.'"

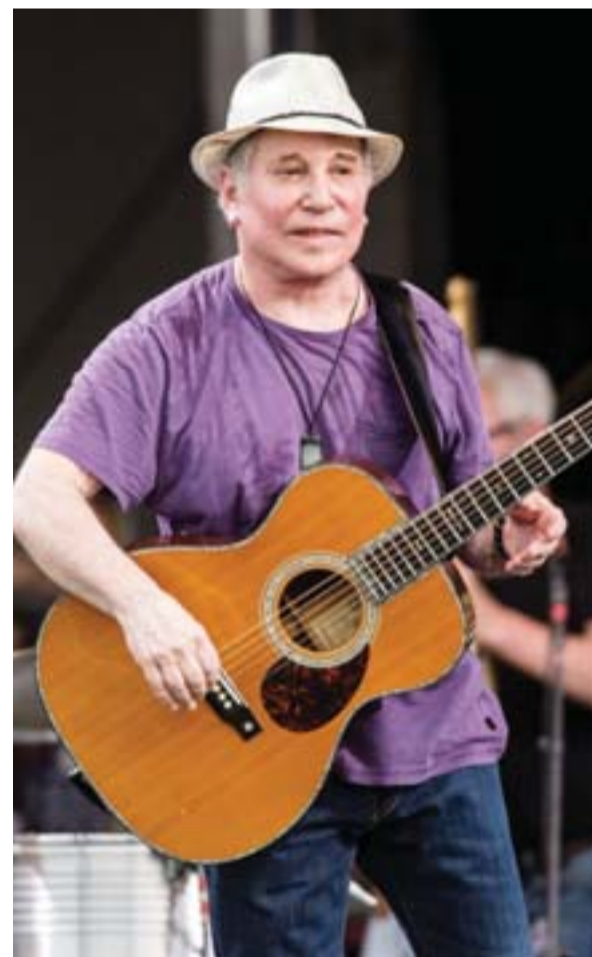
## AC/DC to carry on with Axl Rose and release music?

AC/DC will reportedly carry on with Axl Rose as frontman and potentially release a record with the Guns N' Roses singer. The 'Thunderstruck' rockers' biographer, Murray Engleheart - who penned the tome 'AC/DC: Maximum Rock & Roll' in 2012 - has seemingly confirmed the legendary rock band will continue to perform with Brian Johnson's replacement and that new music could be in the pipeline. In a post on Facebook, he insisted: "Speculate all you want but I've said it before and I'll say it again: AC/DC will continue with Axl on vocals - new album, touring, the whole nine yards. What was a massive gamble by Angus turned out to be an equally enormous triumph that has set the scene for the future. (sic) The 'Welcome to the Jungle' hitmaker was drafted in for the latter part of AC/DC's 'Rock or Bust World Tour' in 2016 after Brian pulled out due to hearing issues. The 'Back in Black' stars went through a transformation last year with bassist Cliff Williams retiring, guitarist

Angus Young's brother Malcolm Young - who quit the group in 2014 - passing away, and Brian pulling out of the tour due to his hearing problems. However, not everyone is keen on the idea of another legendary band member replacing Brian. Def Leppard's Joe Elliott recently said he wouldn't have replaced the 70-year-old frontman with Axl if he was in AC/DC, because he wouldn't have "dealt with" the situation in that way if he had been part of the group. He said: "I wouldn't have done it like that. "I can't speak for [AC/DC guitarist] Angus [Young] and his team as to what their reasons were for doing what they did. "But considering that we had a drummer [Rick Allen] lose an arm and we waited for him. The way that they dealt with it was not the way I would have done it, put it that way." While he didn't agree with the way Axl took Brian's place in the band, Joe, 58, thought the 'November Rain' singer did a "pretty good job", but to him the current line-up doesn't feel like the AC/DC of old.



## PAUL SIMON ANNOUNCES FAREWELL TOUR



Paul Simon has announced a 'Farewell Tour' and confirmed he will retire from work as a touring musician this summer. The 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' singer has had an illustrious career including 18 studio albums - five of which were recorded with fellow musician Art Garfunkel - and 12 Grammy Awards. In a touching statement, Simon, 76, has revealed he sees the upcoming shows as a "natural end" to his time on the road, citing the difficulties of being away from his family as a big part of his decision. He said: "I've often wondered what it would feel like to reach the point where I'd consider bringing my performing career to a natural end. Now I know: it feels a little unsettling, a touch exhilarating, and something of a relief. "I love making music, my voice is still strong, and my band is a tight, extraordinary group of gifted musicians. I think about music constantly. Sadly, we lost our lead guitarist and my friend of 30 years, Vincent N'guini, who died last December. His loss is not the only reason I've decided to stop touring, but it is a contributing factor. "Mostly, though, I feel the travel and time away from my wife and family takes a toll that detracts from the joy of playing. I'd like to leave with a big Thank You to the many folks around the world who've come out to watch me play over the last 50 years." The US and Canada leg of the 'Farewell Tour' starts in Vancouver, BC at the Rogers Arena on May 16 before ending on June 20 at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, TN. From there, Simon will move onto mainland Europe with a performance at Stockholm's Ericsson Globe, ending that run in Amsterdam on July 7 at the Ziggo Dome. He will call time on his legendary career with four UK performances - Manchester Arena, Glasgow's SSE Hydro, the ROS Arena in Dublin and a headlining slot in at Hyde Park's British Summer Time Festival. On the final run of shows, he added: "After this coming tour, I anticipate doing the occasional performance in a (hopefully) acoustically pristine hall, and to donate those earnings to various philanthropic organizations, particular those whose objective is to save the planet, ecologically."

## Gene Simmons: Working with Bob Dylan was like winning lottery

Gene Simmons has compared collaborating with Bob Dylan to winning the lottery. The Kiss rocker and the legendary singer/songwriter penned the track 'Waiting For The Morning Light' in 1991, and it was later released on the 'Crazy Nights' hitmaker's 2004 solo record "A\*\*\*\*\*e". The 68-year-old shock rocker says that it was a matter of luck that he got to work with Dylan, 76, and recalled how after contacting his manager to ask to speak to the 'Like a Rolling Stone' hitmaker, he turned up outside his home two days later, and the rest is history. Appearing on 'The Pulse Of Radio' recently, Simmons said: "Everybody buys lottery tickets. "What are their chances of winning? Not much. "So what? There is a chance you can win, and I'm like that. So I called his manager: 'Can I speak with Bob?' "What do you wanna talk to him about? "I ... I wanna write a song with Bob." "[Laughs] And all of a sudden within two days, an unmarked van shows up at my house and Bob gets out with an acoustic guitar in his hand, and tells his driver, 'I'll see you at the end of the day,' comes up and we start strumming. I mean it was just like that." Simmons released 'Gene Simmons - The Vault Experience: 1966-2016' last year, which includes a never-heard-before 15-minute clip of him in the studio with Dylan. The 'Lick It Up' singer says getting to discuss how he writes music with the 'Blowin' in the Wind' star will forever be a career "highlight". Recalling their time working together, he said: "He was asking



me - and that's in the box set - 'So, how do you write songs?' 'Well, y'know, I write stuff and Paul (Stanley) comes up with stuff. . . "He goes, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, and then the other guys play it?' "I go, 'Well, I usually tell 'em what parts to play' - he goes: 'You do?' (Laughs) I couldn't believe I was having this discussion. Yeah, we were talking about how we write songs, and it's still a life highlight."

## Drake shoots video at Miami school and donates scholarship

Drake presented \$25,000 dollars to a high school after shooting his latest music video there. The 'Hotline Bling' rapper surprised pupils at Miami Senior High School in Florida when he arrived on campus to shoot the video for his latest hit single 'God's Plan'. Drake,



31, then thanked the kids for being extras in the video by donating \$25,000 dollars to the school and promising to design and supply them all with new uniforms, according to The Miami Hurricane. The rapper also presented student Destiny James, whose Facebook profile says she is studying biology, with a \$50,000 dollar university scholarship. After performing 'God's Plan' on a raised terrace while camera's filmed the crowd, Drake said: "I'll tell you one thing. I've been to a lot of places in the world. I don't think I've ever been to a more turnt [excited] school than this. I wish you all the best in life, a lot of love, a lot of happiness for you, your friends and your family." Representatives from Cash Money Records patrolled the campus with signs stating students entering the area were consenting to be filmed. Footage on social media also shows Drake performing on a hydraulic crane above the crowd. Meanwhile, Drake recently named LeBron James as one of his biggest inspirations. The chart-topping rap star has hailed the NBA star after he passed the 30,000 career points milestone, and Drake has admitted he regards LeBron to be one of his heroes. He shared: "Seems like every time we look up, you're setting another milestone or breaking another record and I always tell you that you're one of the most inspirational people in my life." In fact, Drake said that LeBron's career achievements encouraged him to go into the studio and make new tunes. He told Billboard: "Every time you do something like this I always try to get in the studio and make the song that would go with the moment." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Gossip



**LETITIA WRIGHT**  
learnt so much from  
Angela Bassett on Black Panther

Letitia Wright learned a lot from Angela Bassett on the set of 'Black Panther'. The 24-year-old actress plays Shuri in the new Marvel Cinematic Universe movie 'Black Panther' alongside the 'American Horror Story' star, and initially she was "really nervous" working with Bassett, 59. But Wright had no need to be pensive as Bassett took her under her wing and supported her on the set of the action blockbuster. Speaking to Time Out London magazine, Wright said: "I learned a lot from her. I was really nervous during the first couple of weeks. I wanted to hide in the background and do my lines. She noticed that and built up my confidence." Chadwick Boseman stars as the titular hero Black Panther aka T'Challa, a character that was created by legendary Marvel Comics writer Stan Lee and the equally iconic artist-and-writer Jack Kirby, first appearing in 'Fantastic Four #52' back in 1966. The motion picture is expected to expand on the storyline that was first introduced in 'Captain America: Civil War' of how T'Challa becomes Black Panther. T'Challa's father T'Chaka is king of fictional 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 leaving his son to take on the mantle. The film also Lupita Nyong'o, Forest Whitaker, Danai Gurira, Martin Freeman and Andy Serkis - who are both reprising their roles as Everett K. Ross and Ulysses Klaue respectively in the new film. The movie has been hailed by critics for having a cast predominantly made up of black actors and although Wright admits it is "refreshing" it is totally necessary to the story being told on screen. Wright - who was born in Georgetown, Guyana, but raised in London, England, from the age of seven - said: "The cast is pretty much all black, which is refreshing, but we want that to be normal. Every time we see a period drama, we don't say, 'Oh my God. It's white folks in the 60s'. It's just a story." Although shooting to fame in the Channel 4 series 'Top Boy' and now starring in a Hollywood blockbuster, Wright admitted she wants to do more arthouse movies. She said: "Arthouse films. I want to do stuff like 'Lady Bird'. I want people to say, 'She told amazing stories.'

**James Mangold hates post-credit scenes**

James Mangold finds post-credit sequences "embarrassing". The 54-year-old filmmaker recently helmed the R-rated 'X-Men' spin-off movie 'Logan', but even though his movie didn't have a post-credit scene - which has become a regular contribution to superhero films - Mangold has revealed his views on how he feels about the teasing of future films. He vented: "Now we've actually gotten audiences addicted to a bonus in the credits. It's embarrassing. It means you couldn't land your movie, is what it means. Even if you got 100,000 Twitter addicts who are gambling on what scene is going to happen after the credits, it's still cheating. "[Post-credits scenes are] selling them the next movie while you're making this movie, and kind of all that s\*\*t that I find really embarrassing. "Like, that audience are actually asking for scenes in the end credits when those scenes were first developed for movies that suck, so they put something extra at the end to pick up the scores when the movie couldn't end right on its own feet." Now, after making these comments at the beginning of the month, Mangold took to Twitter this week to continue venting about the scenes which are so popular with cinema goers. The director - who is currently making 'Captain Nemo' - wrote: "Many folks commented on my diatribe re: end credits scenes. Good points made by some who disagree. My vehemence comes from a belief these scenes r cinematic MSG/crack. Of course

they feel good. They are designed to do that, like ads, as they hook you to buy the next film/s and at the same time, I feel like the omnipresent expectation of them cheapens the integrity of a theatrical experience as the movie doesn't stick its ending but rather dribbles to an end with a series of pleasing vignettes/ads for the thing they will sell you next year ... So its not so much the scenes I despise as much as I fear that movies (an art form I deeply love) are not advanced when they are no longer functioning as a form with a beginning middle and end but rather as part of a serialized money machine. These scenes promote a slightly false sense of fully realized "universe" as if everyone behind scenes knows exactly what's next in a saga, when the truth is a bit less charted despite what many tell a sycophantic press that makes \$ on the "universes" & the gossip mill they create "Lastly, the term "easter egg" is a bit infantile &, at least 2 me, feels condescending toward a thoughtful & intellectual audience that might be treated w/ more respect than imagining them as kids jumping around trying to guess storylines from breadcrumbs dropped by corporations. "One more thing. The argument that these scs. make people watch end credits is just lame. "If you have to offer shiny objects to keep people watching the names of the crew, then they are not showing an ounce of respect for the crew. Just waiting like dogs for milk bones. [sic]"



**Bruce Willis joins Motherless Brooklyn**

Bruce Willis, Alec Baldwin and Gugu Mbatha-Raw have joined the cast of 'Motherless Brooklyn'. The trio of major stars have been signed up for the project by Edward Norton, who is starring in and directing the project. Norton has also penned the screenplay, an adaptation of Jonathan Lethem's 1999 detective novel of the same name which is set in 1950s Brooklyn and focuses on protagonist Lionel Essrog, a Tourette syndrome sufferer who works with the characters Tony, Danny and Gilbert as a group known as the Minna Men for Frank Minna, the owner of a "seedy and makeshift" detective



agency, but their world is rocked when their boss is stabbed to death. Essrog will then become obsessed with solving the murder and his investigations will lead him to closely-guarded secrets that have ramifications for 'The Big Apple'. Norton will play Essrog and Willis has signed up to portray Minna with the previously announced Willem Dafoe taking on the part of Paul Randolph. Other confirmed cast members include Cherry Jones, Ethan Suplee, Leslie Mann, Josh Pais, Fisher Stevens, Michael K. Williams and Robert Wisdom and shooting on the project is already underway in New York City.

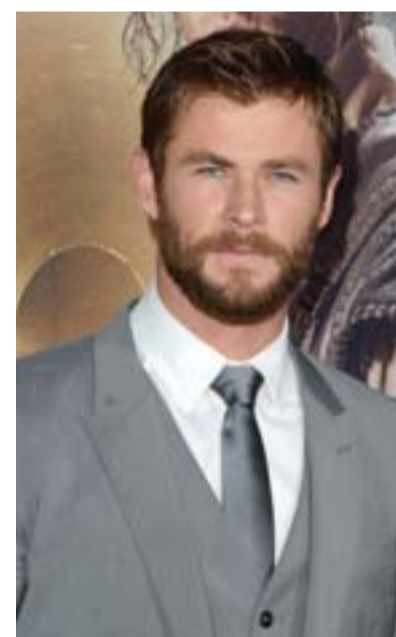
**Chadwick Boseman couldn't breathe in Black Panther suit**



Chadwick Boseman struggled to breathe when he first wore his 'Black Panther' suit. The 41-year-old actor was first seen as T'Challa aka Black Panther in 2016's 'Captain America: Civil War' but admitted the tight, spandex suit felt too restricting and said he felt like he was "suffocating" when squeezed into it. Speaking to Variety, Boseman said: "It was suffocating. Literally, it closed off every possibility of air getting to you. I was in it, put the mask on. I said, 'Hey, you got to get me out of this!'" Now, Boseman is donning the suit once more for his standalone movie as the superhero and revealed he has become more comfortable with the costume. He said: "I think it begins to feel like skin after a while. But it takes time to get to that place." The Black Panther character was created by legendary Marvel Comics writer Stan Lee and the equally iconic artist-and-writer Jack Kirby and first appeared in 'Fantastic Four #52' back in 1966. Ryan Coogler directed the movie which will take on the plot which was first introduced in 'Captain America: Civil War' of how T'Challa becomes the superhero the fictional African nation of Wakanda. Boseman doesn't think a white filmmaker could have helmed 'Black Panther' because they wouldn't have the "same conflict" that Coogler could bring to it as an African American man. He said: "Well, is it possible for them to make? It could be, yes. Would they have his [Coogler] perspective? Probably not. It wouldn't be nuanced in the same way because they wouldn't have the same conflict. They don't have the African-American conflict that exists: whether you're conscious of it or not, you have an ancestry that is very hard to trace."

**Chris Hemsworth would love to do Crocodile Dundee reboot**

Chris Hemsworth is "open" to making a 'Crocodile Dundee' movie following his popular Super Bowl advert. The 34-year-old Australian actor appeared in a star-studded commercial created by Tourism Australia, which left fans speculating a possible reboot of the classic 1986 movie, which starred Paul Hogan in the titular role. And after the \$36 million dollar clip proved popular with fans, Chris - who played himself in the promo - admitted he would love to be involved with a potential reboot. Speaking to News.com.au, he said: "Hearing such a positive response from a fan point of view, I would definitely be open to it. "You'd have to find a story and a great script but it's certainly made me stop and think what the future holds and my next few jobs and whether we could make something like this work." In the commercial, American comedian Danny McBride played the central role as Dundee's long lost son, who returned to the outback to save his father. He was then taken by the 'Thor' actor to see "pristine beaches" and taste some "of the finest wines in the entire world", and it didn't take Danny long to realize he is actually in an advert for Australia rather than a film. Chris said: "Yes, but listen, You're the best 'Crocodile Dundee' since 'Crocodile Dundee'" The camera then cut to Hogan sitting in his iconic outfit holding a glass of beer. The A-listers in the advert included Margot Robbie, Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe, Isla Fisher and Chris' younger brother Liam.



**Luca Guadagnino hopes to empower woman in Suspiria**

Luca Guadagnino hopes to empower women in his 'Suspiria' remake. The 46-year-old director is due to helm a remake of Dario Argento's 1977 cult classic, and he admitted he hopes the film will be a "showcase



of the female artistic experience". In an interview with Yahoo Movies, Guadagnino said: "I hope that this movie, made by a man, turns out to be experienced through the horrors as a sort of fierce showcase of the female artistic experience. The relentless, unsentimental idea of femininity that I grew up witnessing, that I've been accompanied by in my life. It's going to be the witches are back." 'Suspiria' tells the story of Suzy, an American ballet dancer who wins a place at a renowned German academy only to notice numerous disappearances and deaths on campus and soon discovers that dark powers are at work and the town is filled with witches. The original was set in the town of Freiburg, however, Guadagnino has moved the setting to Berlin. The remake is set to feature Dakota Johnson taking on the lead as Suzy alongside Chloe Grace Moretz, Mia Goth and Tilda Swinton. Guadagnino and Swinton previously worked together on the drama 'I Am Love' and the director has also worked with Johnson on 'A Bigger Splash'. He hopes to be joined by American composer John Adams to make the score for the film. — Bang Showbiz

**Domhnall Gleeson surprised General Hux survived Star Wars: The Last Jedi**



Domhnall Gleeson was surprised General Hux survived in 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The 34-year-old actor portrayed the young, ruthless officer in the First Order in both 'The Force Awakens' and 'The Last Jedi' - which saw Supreme Leader Snoke being killed - and Gleeson couldn't believe his character has made it this far. Speaking on the Happy Sad Podcast, Gleeson said: "I'll be honest, I was very surprised that I survived. I kind of imagined myself getting blown up in a ship pretty early on. Spoiler alert, I suppose. There's also this moment where [Kylo]

Ren [Adam Driver] is on the ground, and it looks like maybe I'll finish him. It's like, what state would the franchise be in if like Snoke and Ren are gone? And it's just Hux going right. "Can you imagine how annoyed people would've been?" Although Snoke's death caused outrage among fans, Andy Serkis - who portrayed the terrifying villain - has teased his 'Star Wars' alter ego could make a return to the franchise. Serkis said: "Look, it's 'Star Wars', so you never know how life, or whether life can be come back to or not. Whether you can be resuscitated or brought back. I was shocked. Dramatically, it felt absolutely right for that moment in the film, so I didn't question it. "I just think it's a very, very important scene, so I didn't question it. But I do know it's left fans feeling, like, that they were really searching for something there. And what I'm saying is, who knows?" Serkis isn't the only actor who doesn't know his future in the 'Star Wars' franchise as Lupita Nyong'o admitted she has no idea whether she'll appear in 'Star Wars: Episode IX'. The 34-year-old actress plays alien Maz Kanata and had a significant role in the J.J. Abrams-directed 'The Force Awakens', but Nyong'o doesn't know what the future holds for her character. Gwendoline Christie - who plays Captain Phasma - would also love to continue playing the commander of the First Order's legions of Stormtroopers, but she doesn't yet know if she'll be afforded the opportunity after appearing to be killed by Finn (John Boyega) in 'The Last Jedi'.

## Lifestyle | Music &amp; Movies

## Berlin filmfest to spotlight #MeToo moment

This month's Berlin film festival, Europe's first major cinema showcase in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein revelations, will shine a light on sexual misconduct in the industry, its director said yesterday. Berlinale chief Dieter Kosslick told a news conference that the screenings and guests from Hollywood and the global film industry at the 68th edition would open up a long-overdue "debate" on rampant discrimination and abuse problems. "The international resonance of #MeToo quickly made clear that the problem isn't limited to Hollywood," he said as he announced the some 400 films set to screen during the event's 11-day run.

"The Berlinale sees itself as a forum where problems can be aired and it will host a range of events that should contribute to concrete change." He said these would

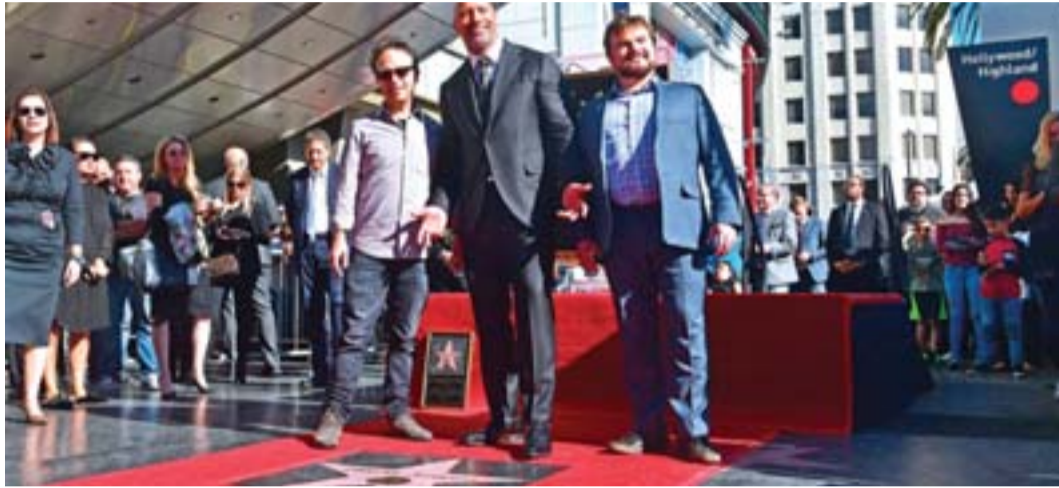
include panel discussions on fighting sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry, generating financing for more female-led movies and getting more women into technical areas of filmmaking. Berlin ranks with Cannes and Venice among Europe's top film festivals and is generally considered the most politically minded.

Kosslick told a separate briefing for the foreign press that he had disqualified certain productions from participating this year—"less than five," he said—because a director, screenwriter or star attached to the production was facing credible sexual misconduct allegations. He declined to say what films were excluded. Kosslick added that four of the 19 films in competition for the Golden Bear top prize were directed by women: "not great but there you go". The event will kick off on February 15 with

the world premiere of Wes Anderson's "Isle of Dogs", an animated feature voiced by stars including Bill Murray, Jeff Goldblum, Greta Gerwig and Liev Schreiber—all expected on the Berlinale's red carpet. Tom Tykwer, one of the German directors behind the blockbuster miniseries "Babylon Berlin" now appearing on Netflix, will lead a gender-balanced jury including Belgian actress Cecile de France ("The Young Pope"), "Moonlight" producer Adele Romanski, Time magazine critic Stephanie Zacharek, Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto and Spanish film historian Chema Prado. — AFP



Berlinale Director Dieter Kosslick points at the poster of the 68th Berlinale as he poses for photographers during a press conference prior to the 68th Berlinale film festival in Berlin yesterday. — AFP



This file photo shows Dwayne Johnson as he poses with Jack Black and Jake Kasdan (left), director of the new Jumanji film on Johnson's Hollywood Walk of Fame Star after it was unveiled at a ceremony in Hollywood, California. — AFP

## Sony's 'Jumanji' in rare return to top box office in N America

Sony's "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" managed the rare feat this weekend of regaining the No. 1 spot in North American box offices on its seventh week out, industry figures showed on Monday. Taking in \$10.9 million for the three-day weekend—as competition with football's Super Bowl depressed ticket sales—"Jumanji" became the first film since "Titanic," in 1998, to win a February weekend following a nationwide release in December. After holding top spot for three consecutive weekends, the film closed out January in second place.

The family flick, starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Jack Black and Kevin Hart, follows a group of teens who find themselves transported inside the video game world of Jumanji. Its domestic cumulative take of almost \$338 million makes it only the third Sony film to reach that mark. Last weekend's North American leader, Fox's "Maze Runner: The Death Cure," slipped to second place with a take of \$10.5 million, according to industry tracker Exhibitor Relations. The dystopian sci-fi film follows the harrowing adventures of three teens who have survived a destructive virus infecting the world.

In third spot was a new release, "Winchester" from Lionsgate, with takings of \$9.3 million despite abysmal reviews. The movie, a gothic thriller, was inspired by the real-life story of Sarah Winchester, the 19th-century heiress to the Winchester gun-making fortune, who built an enormous, spookily elaborate mansion in California to appease the spirits of people killed by her family's firearms. Despite the draw of Helen Mirren in the title role, the film scored a paltry nine percent on the Rotten Tomatoes website. Even she could not "class up... this super-silly feature," The New York Times said.

Fox's "The Greatest Showman," with Hugh Jackman as larger-than-life circus impresario P.T. Barnum, clung to fourth spot, taking in \$7.7 million. Fox's "The Post," starring Meryl Streep as newspaper publisher Katharine Graham, spent a second weekend at fifth place grossing \$5.2 million.

Rounding out the top 5 were:  
"Hostiles" (\$5.1 million)  
"12 Strong" (\$4.7 million)  
"Den of Thieves" (\$4.6 million)  
"The Shape of Water" (\$4.4 million)  
"Paddington 2" (\$3.3 million). — AFP

## 'Frasier' dad John Mahoney dies at 77

Actor John Mahoney, who portrayed the no-nonsense father in the TV sitcom "Frasier," has died in Chicago at the age of 77, his longtime theater company said Monday. Mahoney played the iconic role of Martin Crane for all 11 seasons of the popular sitcom until 2004. He won numerous acting accolades including nominations for Emmys and Golden Globes. The Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago said Mahoney, who was a member of the ensemble for 39 years, died Sunday due to complications from cancer while in hospice care. The character actor was born in England, but moved to the United States at the age of 19 to teach English at a college in Illinois, according to Variety. Chicago was his longtime home, and he had said he felt happiest when in the Windy City. "John Mahoney was a fixture on the Chicago stage," Mayor Rahm Emanuel said in remembrance. "Even as his fame grew through his fantastic work in movies and television, John stayed connected to his artistic home here in Chicago. "Though he will be missed, his work and impact will endure for generations to come."

Mahoney got his acting start in Chicago relatively lately, when he was 40 in the late 1970s, after fellow actors John Malkovich and Gary Sinise invited him to join the then-nascent Steppenwolf,

according to the Chicago Tribune. "So many wonderful plays together over the years," Sinise reminisced on Twitter. "A wonderful actor I'll never forget his 1985 performance in Orphans (Chicago and New York)." Mahoney appeared in more than 30 productions at the prestigious theater, including "The Rembrandt" in September.

"John was a beloved member of our Steppenwolf family who was known for his extraordinary kindness, generosity of spirit and quick smile," Steppenwolf spokeswoman Madeline Long said in a statement. "John's impact on this institution, on Chicago theater, and the world of arts and entertainment is great and will endure." Mahoney appeared in numerous films and TV shows, and continued to appear on television as recently as 2015 in the TV series "Foyle's War."

His more than three decades-long career in film saw him appear in movies such as "The American President," "Moonstruck" and "Say Anything." "Rest In Peace, John Mahoney. 'Say Anything' is one of my favorite films of all time," said actor Ken Jeong. Mahoney won a number of acting awards, including Tony and Screen Actors Guild trophies. — AFP



In this file photo taken on September 13, 1998 the cast of the television situation comedy 'Frasier' pose with their Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series at the 50th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles (From left) Dan Butler, John Mahoney, Peri Gilpin, Kelsey Grammer, Jane Leeves and David Hyde Pierce. — AFP

## Show must go on: NY Fashion Week weathers #MeToo storm

New York Fashion Week kicks off the global fall/winter 2018 season fighting to stay relevant blighted by sexual harassment scandals, an industry in chaos, and designers jumping ship. More than 230,000 people flood the US financial capital to attend the style fest that generates nearly \$900 million a year for the city. It is currently scheduled twice-yearly in February and September. But as social media influencers wrestle power from fashion editors and buyers, more labels than ever are opting out this season, abandoning New York for Europe or tearing up the runway show altogether. Here is a look at the top trends expected to dominate when Fashion Week formally gets underway on Thursday, preceded by three days of men's shows.

## #MeToo

The sexual harassment watershed engulfing the United States and rocking the fashion industry has seen the Council of Fashion Designers of America unveil new guidelines in an attempt to clamp down on misconduct. "We have zero tolerance for unsafe environments and strongly encourage everyone in our industry to report abuse in the workplace," wrote CFDA chairman Diane von Furstenberg in a letter announcing the guidelines, which also raise awareness against eating disorders and advocate greater diversity. Misconduct accusations have seen celebrated photographers Terry Richardson, Mario Testino and Bruce Weber barred from collaborating with Vogue and Vanity Fair publisher Conde Nast.

The magazine empire has issued a new "Code of Conduct" to include bans on alcohol on sets, on under-18 models without a chaperone, and for nudity or "sexually suggestive" poses to be agreed beforehand. But the Model Alliance has demanded "meaningful and lasting change," saying "voluntary standards" without education, proper complaint mechanisms

and independent enforcement "are not going to work." Marchesa, the label of Harvey Weinstein's estranged wife Georgina Chapman, cancelled their Valentine's Day show, still reeling from the fallout of his downfall over multiple allegations ranging from sexual harassment to rape, in favor of "an updated format."

Added to the schedule is a #MeToo fashion show-named for the movement against sexual harassment—on Friday to raise awareness. "The only way to change things is to be united... and stand up and say, 'That is not OK, we are not going to accept this anymore,'" organizer Myriam Chalek told The Daily Beast.

## Period of chaos

Alexander Wang, the New York king of cool whose urban chic is so adored by off-duty models, is making his swansong before this summer ditching the traditional February-September calendar in favor of June-December. His departure follows the exit of Proenza Schouler and Rodarte for couture week in Paris on the same schedule, and Altuzarra, which moved to Paris Fashion Week. "Why do something that's not working?"

Stephanie Horton, chief strategy officer at Alexander Wang told a recent industry event in New York. "The business model needs to change because the consumer has changed." Steven Kolb, president and CEO of the CFDA, predicts that other designers could follow suit. "I think it'll be a period of chaos, maybe, but chaos always calms down at some point," he told the same event in New York.

## Great escape

Tommy Hilfiger is taking his see-now, buy-now fashion roadshow to Milan, Rihanna's Fenty collaboration with Puma

is taking a break, and rap superstar Kanye West chose to unveil his latest installment for urban sportswear brand Yeezy last week on Instagram, modeled by his wife Kim Kardashian. British former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham is marking her last show in New York before celebrating her label's 10th anniversary in London. Spanish label Delpozo is already moving to London and Tome to Paris.

Bucking the trend is Italian luxury house Bottega Veneta, showing at the American Stock Exchange on Thursday as a one-off to celebrate a new boutique on Madison Avenue.

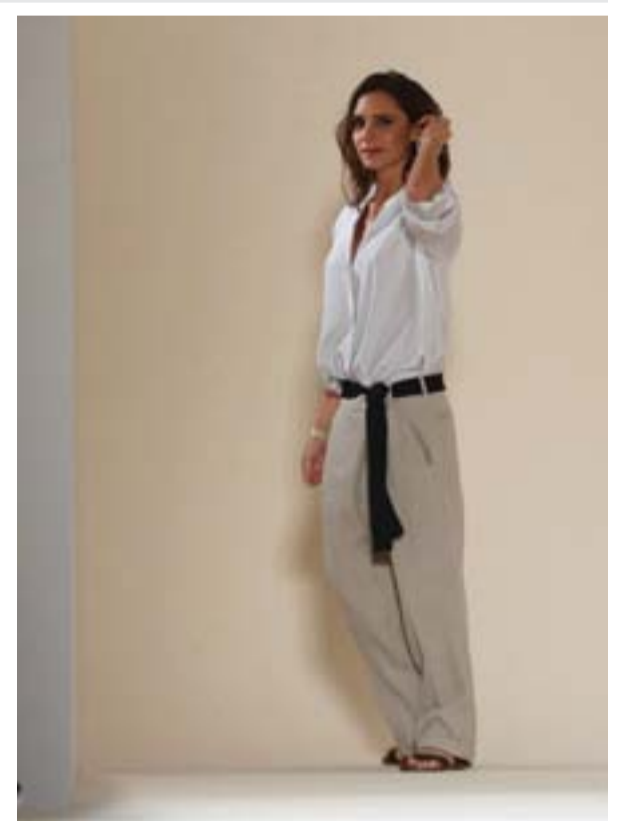
## New York state of mind

Look out for the influencers—the breed of bloggers, Instagramers and celebrities whose followings can shift markets and who are particularly dominant in New York. "We're so embedded in pop culture, in media and entertainment," explains Kolb.

## Model royalty

Face and figure alone are no longer a guarantor of hitting the big-time. Instead it's genes, having the right name and an Instagram following. Think 16-year-old Kaia Gerber, look-alike daughter of Cindy Crawford already collaborating on a collection with Karl Lagerfeld, Kendall Jenner, half-sister of Kim Kardashian, and Gigi and Bella Hadid, daughters of "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star Yolanda Hadid.

No longer just the face of brands, their huge celebrity following is a meal ticket for brands and they can monetize that. Think Calvin Klein's recent underwear campaign featuring the Kardashians.—AFP



In this file photo designer Victoria Beckham is applauded during her Spring Summer 2017 show at New York Fashion Week in New York.



File photo taken on September 10, 2016 a model displays the fashion of Alexander Wang during New York Fashion Week in New York. — AFP photos



In this file photo a model displays the fashion of Proenza Schouler during New York Fashion Week in New York.



In this file photo taken on February 14, 2015 models present creations by designer Altuzarra during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Fall 2015 in New York.

Lifestyle | Awards



Oscar nominees including Steven Spielberg, Guillermo del Toro, Gary Oldman, Timothee Chalamet, Daniel Kaluuya, Sally Hawkins, Margot Robbie, Saoirse Ronan, Greta Gerwig, Meryl Streep, Willem Dafoe, Richard Jenkins, Sam Rockwell, Kobe Bryant, Mary J Blige, Allison Janney, Laurie Metcalf, Jordan Peele, and Octavia Spencer attend the 90th Annual Academy Awards Nominee Luncheon at The Beverly Hilton Hotel on February 5, 2018 in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos

# HIGH FIVES AND A BLACK EYE: SCENES FROM OSCAR NOMINEES LUNCHEON

The Oscar nominees luncheon brings together A-listers and rising stars - artists from every aspect of filmmaking - for an afternoon of celebration and mutual fandom. With little on the agenda other than posing for a group photo, Monday's gathering was a chance for nominees to bask together in their exalted status together before the Academy Awards are presented on March 4.

First-time acting nominees Timothee Chalamet and Daniel Kaluuya high-fived at every opportunity. Greta Gerwig and Meryl Streep chatted on the risers before the class photo next to a cardboard cutout of Agnes Varda brought to the event by her "Faces Places" co-director JR.

Gerwig playfully choked best supporting actor nominee Sam Rockwell on the red carpet, and many of the stars and filmmakers exchanged laughs as they assembled - all 170 of them - for the class photo. The nominee having the most fun was Kobe Bryant, whose "Dear Basketball" is up for animated short. Bryant wore a permanent grin and posed for photos with anyone who asked. The event includes some pointers about giving good speeches, and also a chance for nominees to reflect on their place in this Oscars season. Here are some more moments from interviews with nominees conducted by The Associated Press at the nominees' luncheon event:

### Best picture mistake still stings

Returning Academy Awards host Jimmy Kimmel has been poking fun at last year's best picture mix up in promotional spots for this year's Oscars, but it's not a laughing matter for some. "La La Land" lyricist Justin Paul says the envelope gaffe was a bit of a soft spot for some of his friends and colleagues involved in the film. Paul says that he understands why it's still being talked about and to not mention it at all would be awkward.

"We have some wonderful, brilliant friends and colleagues who you know, it was a little bit of a soft spot, a sore spot in that moment, so we can totally understand it but I don't know if

we're the ones laughing along the most," Paul said Monday.

"La La Land" was mistakenly announced as the best picture winner at last year's Oscars before the error was caught and "Moonlight" was named the winner of the evening's top prize. Paul and Benj Pasek are nominated year for "The Greatest Showman" song "This is Me." They said that they're able to enjoy awards season a little more this time and are five percent less terrified at every event.

“Monday's gathering was a chance for nominees to bask together”

### Dee Rees looks behind her historic nomination

"Mudbound" director and co-writer Dee Rees said Monday she is more interested in the future than she is excited about making history. Rees recently became the first black woman to get nominated for a best adapted screenplay Academy Award. "Mudbound" also scored another historic nomination for cinematographer Rachel Morrison, who became that category's first female nominee.

Rees said she wants the entertainment industry to get to a place where this is an everyday occurrence and not news. "I think it's like cause for reflection and to really ask ourselves you know could there have been other moments and why is this the first time," Rees said. "And again I think it's more about using the moment to think how do we make the future a place where this isn't news making or this is an everyday occurrence."

Unlike many of the nominees, her film was released by Netflix on the streaming platform. Rees says it proves that audiences are interested in content and not business models. She says watching Indiana Jones on television growing up didn't impact her awe of the filmmaking.

### Oh, I get it now

"The Shape of Water" director Guillermo del Toro was still riding high Monday from his Directors Guild Award win on Saturday night. The Mexican director was all smiles thinking about the evening with his peers. Del Toro said the night was fun and praised Judd Apatow's hosting skills, although he admitted that one joke aimed at him went over his head at the time.

Apatow poked fun during Saturday's ceremony at del Toro's director's photo, quipping that it was like an eHarmony profile picture. Del Toro said Monday that he didn't actually know what eHarmony was when Apatow made the joke and that he had to look it up. He thinks it's quite funny now.

### Bruised, but not giving up on basketball

Common was looking so dapper Monday for the nominees' luncheon you could hardly tell he was trying to hide a black eye. The musician and producer said he was trying to look good after getting beat up on the basketball court this weekend. Common donned a pair of glasses in hopes of hiding the little remaining bruise, although he was quick to pull out his phone and show photos of how his face looked after the accidental hit.

Common laughed that might have gotten a mild concussion from it. It certainly didn't sour him on basketball: he was one of numerous stars who posed for photos with retired Lakers star Kobe Bryant, who is nominated for his short animated film "Dear Basketball." Common is nominated for a best original song alongside Diane Warren for "Stand Up for Something" from the film "Marshall." —AP



Actor Sam Rockwell (left) attends the 90th Annual Academy Awards Nominee Luncheon at The Beverly Hilton Hotel.



Actress Octavia Spencer



Actor/singer Mary J. Blige



Actress Saoirse Ronan



Actor Laura Dern speaks onstage during the 90th Annual Academy Awards Nominee Luncheon.



Director Firas Fayyad



Actor Timothee Chalamet



Actress Meryl Streep (left) and director Greta Gerwig.



Actor Willem Dafoe



Actor Gary Oldman



Daniel Kaluuya

## Agnes Varda is happy, but not proud, of her Oscar nomination

Documentarian Agnes Varda is not only the oldest person ever nominated for an Academy Award, she's the first woman to receive an honorary Oscar and a competitive nomination in the same season. And while she's quite delighted by the recognition, the 89-year-old notes that she is "not proud." She is so not proud that she mentions it several times during a brief telephone interview from her home in France last month after learning that "Faces Places" was nominated for best documentary feature. "There is nothing to be proud of, but happy," Varda said. "Happy because we make films to love. We make films so that you love the film." She sees herself as more modest than proud. "I love my own work and I've done it for so many years, so I didn't do it for honor or money," she said. "My films never made money." Varda shares the Oscar nod with her co-director, JR, and her daughter, Rosalie Varda, who produced "Faces Places."

The film was inspired by the elder Varda's connection with JR, a 34-year-old street artist known for installing massive portraits on real-world landscapes: a boy peering over a border wall in Mexico, a pair of giant eyes on a



French film director Agnes Varda, nominated for her documentary 'Faces Places' poses as she receives an award while attending the 23rd Lumieres Awards ceremony at the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) in Paris.

pair of water tanks. The film follows the French New Wave pioneer and journeyman photographer as they travel through France, meeting people, capturing their images and talking about art. Varda said they spent more than a year and a half making the film, diligently shooting

one week a month. "I could not shoot more than one week a month," she said. "Because it leaves me tired, you know, I'm old!" "Faces Places" was released in US theaters in October.

She did not attend Monday's luncheon for nominees, but JR made sure she was in the class photo: he brought a cardboard cutout of Varda holding a cat that he displayed on the red carpet and on the risers with the rest of the assembled nominees. In November, Varda danced with Angelina Jolie at the film academy's Governors Awards, where Varda received an honorary Academy Award recognizing her decades of filmmaking.

"Everyone was there in the room, so I was very welcomed and I felt very good," she recalled of the untelevised ceremony. The honor came with an invitation to the 90th Academy Awards on March 4, so Varda was already planning to attend with her daughter, even before they were nominated. "But I won't change my hair, my double-color hair," Varda said, though no one has suggested she should. "We are happy. Nothing to be proud of." —AP



Streetartist JR (center) poses with a cutout of French filmmaker Agnes Varda and John Bailey (right), President of the Academy of Motion Pictures on arrival at the Annual Academy Awards Nominee Luncheon at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. — AFP photos

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2018



Models walk the catwalk during the Simof 2018 (International Flamenco Fashion) in Sevilla on February 4, 2018. — AFP

## PARIS OPENS A DOOR TO EXILED ARTISTS

It was when Kubra Khademi stopped the traffic in Kabul, and men began to throw stones at her and bay for her blood, that she knew she was going to have to leave the country. The young performance artist had walked alone into one of the Afghan capital's busiest intersections wearing tin armor over her breasts and backside to highlight the harassment women face in the streets.

“Paris has historically always been a place where exiled artists came to”

Even as she made her escape in a taxi, one of the mob touched her behind. “I had to hide out in Kabul until they could get me away,” she told AFP of her flight to France. Twice condemned to death for criticizing the Khartoum government, Sudanese poet Moneim Rahma did not think twice when an unexpected chance to flee the country presented itself. While Syrian director Samer Salameh knew he was putting himself at risk by making a film about his devastated Damascus neighborhood of Yarmouk—once described as “the worst place on earth” by aid agencies—while serving as an army conscript.

All three eventually made it to the French capital, which a half century after it was last the prime destination for writers and artists fleeing oppression, is again becoming a haven for emigres. Next to a cash-and-carry in a working-class district of northern Paris, a drop-in center has been

helping some 200 artists find their feet in France since October. The Studio of Artists in Exile does not pretend to be a panacea for the problems artists face when they suddenly find themselves “a fish out of water” in a new country.

### France is easier for artists

But, despite operating on a shoestring budget and in donated premises, it can help artists navigate the maze of relaunching their careers, said co-founder Judith Depaule. “In ways France is attractive for artists and easier for them to work in because, unlike Germany—where you have either the underground or subsidized state art organizations, — in France there is a lot in-between,” she said. “The system itself makes it easier here,” she added.

“Paris has historically always been a place where exiled artists came to. In the 1920s, we had the Russians and then the artists who fled the civil war in Spain to join Picasso,” Depaule said. While it has been nearly half a century since Paris, often dubbed a “museum city”, was a major destination for artists, “the cycle is perhaps changing”, Depaule insisted. Last week French Culture Minister Francoise Nyssen publicly backed the studio, inviting its artists to her offices even as her government tightened rules making claiming asylum more difficult in France. She praised the “extraordinary” way some in the arts had embraced the newcomers and urged others to follow their lead to “enlarge the way we see the world and open up our culture”.

Nyssen also invited 15 exiled artists, including Khademi and Rahma, to show their work in her ministry. Khademi, 28, has fully embraced her new life since arriving in the French capital two years ago, going back to university and being honored by the government as a “knight of arts and letters”.

### Backwards over the Pyrenees

“I walk a lot in Paris and that is where I think about my art,” she said. In fact, she walked backwards over the Pyrenees to recreate the philosopher Walter Benjamin’s



Sudanese artist Moneim Rahma poses at the agency of artists in exile, an organisation that identify artists in exile from all origins and disciplines in Paris. — AFP photos

escape from Nazi occupied France to Spain during World War II. With her work getting noticed, and a commission for a performance in the French Museum of Immigration, her career is taking off. For Rahma, 57, whose family is stuck in Ethiopia, the situation is more complicated. With much of his energy devoted to trying to get his wife and four children away from “the long arm of the Sudanese secret police”, he is less at ease.

Yet he has published a book with 10 French painters on what it is like to be a refugee, written “lots of poems” and is starting his third novel. But his focus remains firmly on his homeland. Getting to France allowed Syrian Palestinian Salameh to finish his film showing the fate of Yarmouk during the war—“194. Us, Children of the Camp”. It has since been shown at festivals in Europe. Yet even for a 32-year-old, the adaptation to a new life has not been painless. “It is quite weird but even during a war your homeland can

feel easier, softer, because it is your country, your language,” Salameh told AFP. “Here is quite tough. It’s a big capital, you see people living in the street, it can be scary sometimes. There are lots of opportunities but a lot of competition as well. But I am OK, and I am starting to have some ideas to do films here now.” — AFP



Sudanese artist Mohamed Abdulatif poses at the agency of artists in exile.



Palestinian filmmaker Samer Salameh poses at the agency of artists in exile.



Afghan artist Kubra Khademi poses at the agency of artists in exile.