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NGOs pledge \$330m as Iraq seeks \$90bn for reconstruction

Urgent funds needed to restore basic infrastructure, services

Zain's OGM has record quorum of 84.69% Sale of treasury shares transparent, best value for stakeholders



(From left) Hussain Al-Ghareeb, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and Ossama Matta during the general assembly meeting.

KUWAIT: Zain Group yesterday held its ordinary general assembly at its head office with an attendance rate of 84.69 percent at the request of a group of shareholders who own more than 10 percent of the company's shares to discuss the Zain board of directors' decisions regarding the company's recent share transactions, the factors considered, the adoption of sound corporate governance principles and compliance with regulatory requirements regarding potential conflict of interest cases and the alignment with the interests of the shareholders.

Speaking to a packed audience, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said: "The company's board of directors and executive management have followed and taken into consideration all the laws, regulations, administrative and financial rules related to the sale of treasury shares, and in conformity with the Capital Markets Authority's (CMA) regulations." Kharafi added: "The board of directors has relied on the authorization granted by the ordinary general assembly meeting held on March 12, 2017 to buy or sell the company's shares not exceeding 10 percent of the number of its shares in accordance with the minutes of the meeting." (See Page 17)

KUWAIT: Iraq needs nearly \$90 billion to rebuild after three years of war with the Islamic State group, officials said yesterday, with large parts of the country in ruins and tens of thousands left homeless. As a three-day international reconstruction conference got underway in Kuwait, officials were seeking pledges from donors and investors to restore Iraq's devastated homes, schools, hospitals and economic infrastructure.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was joining the conference after holding talks yesterday in Cairo, where he launched his latest Middle East tour. The State Department has said it will not be making "direct contributions" to finance the reconstruction efforts but that over 150 American companies would travel to Kuwait as part of its private sector drive for the conference. Baghdad declared victory against IS in December, after Iraqi forces, backed by a US-led coalition, regained control of the large parts of the country seized by the group in mid-2014.

Aid groups made pledges of \$330 million on the first day of the conference, but officials said much more was needed. Planning Minister Salman Al-Jumaili said an assessment by Iraqi and international experts put reconstruction costs at \$88.2 billion. "The funds will be initially used to reintegrate displaced people and also for rebuilding the infrastructure of public services," the minister told AFP.

Mustafa Al-Hiti, the head of Iraq's reconstruction fund, said some work had started but that funds were needed urgently to restore basic infrastructure and services in many provinces. "What we have accomplished is less than one percent of what Iraq needs," Hiti said. "We have more than 138,000 houses damaged, more than half this number completely destroyed," Hiti said, adding that more than 2.5 million Iraqis are still displaced.

After suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of IS, Iraqi forces regrouped with foreign help, eventually forcing the jihadists out of its territory including second city Mosul. But the fight-back left much of the country devastated. In Mosul, entire city blocks were reduced to rubble. The IS takeover also dealt a heavy blow to Iraq's economy. The country sits on some of the world's largest crude reserves, which Baghdad puts at 153 billion barrels, but the war and a slump in world prices have diminished its oil revenues.

Raja Rehan Arshad of the World Bank said investment is required across sectors, with more than \$17.4 billion needed for housing alone. Nearly \$30 billion is needed to restore energy and industrial infrastructure, he said. The conference brings together hundreds of representatives of countries, aid groups, UN agencies and corporations. The \$330 million pledged by non-governmental organizations yesterday included \$130 million from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Continued on Page 11

Manila slaps ban on 'all' Filipinos bound to Kuwait

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Philippines yesterday imposed a total ban on its workers bound to Kuwait. The ban, which took effect immediately, comes in the light of several reported cases of deaths, abuse and mistreatment, especially of domestic helpers. "The order is for a total ban of all Filipino workers bound for Kuwait. It was signed by the secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment and went into effect immediately. It's a level 4 alert, which means a total ban on Filipinos bound for Kuwait. It includes even for vacationing overseas Filipino workers," Philippines Ambassador to Kuwait Renato Villa told Kuwait Times.

"The Philippine Embassy will clarify the matter and hopefully there will be some considerations and exemptions to the policy. For now, my advice to Filipinos in Kuwait who are planning to go on vacation is to delay it until clear guidelines are issued from Manila. I will ask the Department of Labor and Employment to clarify the ban, because I have been flooded with calls from the Filipino community," he added.

Yesterday, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello announced the total ban will be implemented on 'all' OFWs. It means it covers both articles 18 and 20 visa holders. DOLE earlier suspended the processing of new employment certificates for Kuwait-bound OFWs after the death of seven workers in Kuwait, including Joanna Demafelis, whose body was found inside a freezer. DOLE promised to help OFWs find new jobs, and they may be deployed to China or Russia, among others.

Filipinos who want to go back to their country will be assisted by the embassy, but those who want to stay can remain and work in Kuwait as long as they want. But vacationing OFWs are anxious, as some families will be separated because of the recent turn of events. "My husband is in Kuwait and I am in Manila on emergency leave. I fear I will be stuck in the Philippines and cannot come back to Kuwait."

Continued on Page 11

Hashem: Expats should be banned from hiring maids

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Safa Al-Hashem went into overdrive yesterday in her tirades and abnormal proposals that blame expats for almost every problem Kuwait faces. The lawmaker, who has been tirelessly trying to build her political popularity by criticizing expatriates, said she will propose to ban expats from recruiting and hiring housemaids, blaming them for mistreating their maids and distorting Kuwait's image.

She said disasters come only from expatriates mistreating their domestic helpers, in reference to a standoff between Kuwait and the Philippines, which has issued a total ban against Filipino workers coming to Kuwait.

Hashem cited the example of an expatriate couple who allegedly killed their Filipina maid and stuffed her body in a freezer, where it was found after more than a year, further straining Kuwait-Philippines relations.

Hashem has repeatedly made very strange and sometimes racist proposals to deprive expatriates of their basic rights, suggestions that often brought her criticism from her own colleagues in the National Assembly. Laws in Kuwait permit expatriates to recruit or hire housemaids, but they have to fulfill certain conditions, including earning good salaries and the payment of an annual fee of KD 200. No Kuwaiti government agency has ever blamed expatriates alone for mistreating and abusing house-

maids, and the blame has been for citizens and foreigners alike.

On the diplomatic standoff with the Philippines, Hashem called on the foreign ministry to send a "stronger" message to Manila by stopping aid to the Southeast Asian nation and opening the door for the recruitment of workers from other countries. She also called for halting the recruitment of Filipino manpower. Hashem criticized the Assembly's interior and defense committee for rejecting her proposal to increase the fees for driving licenses for expatriates to KD 1,000 annually from just a dinar currently. She said that she will not stop presenting proposals to resolve the imbalance in the demographic structure, which is in favor of expatriates, who form 70 percent of Kuwait's population of 4.5 million.

Hashem, the only female lawmaker in the 50-member house, also lashed out at donations by Kuwaiti charities for the reconstruction of Iraq, saying repeated Iraqi governments have failed in the field



Safa Al-Hashem

of reconstruction and development. She called against giving any aid to the Iraqi government and called instead to entrust Kuwaiti companies to carry out reconstruction projects.

Netanyahu, US discuss annexing of settlements; Abbas meets Putin

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday he has been discussing legislation with the United States that would effectively annex settlements in the occupied West Bank, but the White House denied it in a rare show of disunity. The move would severely harm remaining prospects for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and draw international outrage. "Regarding the issue of applying sovereignty, I can tell you that I have for some time been speaking with the Americans about it," Netanyahu told lawmakers from his Likud party, according to comments relayed by a spokesman.

Later yesterday, the White House denied having such discussions and a senior Israeli official said Netanyahu had not made a specific annexation proposal to Washington. "Reports that the United States discussed with Israel an annexation plan for the West Bank are false," White House spokesman Josh Raffel said. "The United States and Israel have never discussed such a proposal, and the president's focus remains squarely on his Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative."

Netanyahu said he wanted to coordinate any such move with the United States because of the country's strategic

Continued on Page 11



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) meets Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas at the Kremlin yesterday. — AFP

Local

EU will work with Kuwait for success of KICRI: Mogherini

IOM official hails Kuwait's humanitarian role

BRUSSELS: EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini yesterday expressed her thanks to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for inviting her to represent the 28-member EU and co-chair Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI). "I am very grateful to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait for having invited me, as representative of the European Union, to co-chair the Conference. We will work together to make it a success, for the sake of the Iraqi people, but also for our entire region, including Europe. We all share an interest in a lasting stability and prosperity of Iraq," she said in an exclusive interview. "In Kuwait, the European Union and the international community will confirm that we will stand by the people of Iraq, as they write a new page in the history of their country," stressed the EU foreign policy chief.

She underlined that "in this delicate moment, the conference gathers all friends of Iraq, from the region and beyond, around one shared commitment: we want to support Iraq and the Iraqi people to rebuild the country - not just its buildings, but its society, its education system, its institutions."

Critical juncture

Noting that Iraq is at a critical juncture of its history, Mogherini said "the government, army and people of Iraq worked hard for the territorial defeat of Da'esh. It is now time to consolidate the gains against Da'esh and 'win the peace', so we are ready to contribute - as we did so far - with our support to the stabilization and reconstruction of the country." The EU High Representative lauded Kuwait as "a force for moderation and dialogue in the region."

"Against the background of rising regional tensions, Kuwait's engagement has helped prevent a greater escalation. It is a truly precious contribution, in difficult times like ours, and our cooperation has become even more intense than before," she said. Mogherini highlighted that "Kuwait has also become an important humanitarian actor - not only in Iraq but also in Syria and elsewhere. It contributes to conflict resolution, early recovery and relief, with political, financial and logistical support." She carried on saying that Kuwait's recent decision to fund the UN agency UNRWA's operations in Syria couldn't be more timely, in a crucial moment for the Agency and for Palestinian refugees.

"We are keen in this regard to strengthen our coordination with Kuwait, including within the United Nations Security Council, where the country is serving as non-permanent member," she said.

Mogherini announced that this year the EU will deepen its cooperation with Kuwait. "We see in Kuwait a partner and a friend in the Gulf region. We have intensified our relations over the past years, with the signature of a Cooperation Arrangement in 2016. This year I expect to deepen our common work on the economy, energy and humanitarian action," she said.

Delicate moment

Turning to EU's ties with the six-member GCC, she said "we have always valued our engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council as a forum, as well as with its individual members. The Middle East is going through a delicate and complex moment: there are some opportunities to take, such as the territorial defeat of Da'esh, but there is also great instability and the constant risk of new escalations. "It is more important than ever to keep all channels for dialogue open. The EU has good relations with all countries around the Gulf, and we are ready to contribute in any possible way to help establish a more positive regional dynamic," the EU's top diplomat said.

Mogherini said that the territorial defeat of the so-called Islamic State is a turning point in Iraq's history, and it can give hope to the entire region. With investments of more than 650 million Euros (\$796 million) since 2014, the EU is already a major supporter to Iraq, she added.

Humanitarian role

Separately, President of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) mission in Kuwait Iman Eriqat said yesterday that hosting Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) affirms its humanitarian standing and role in helping the Arab nations.

Eriqat said that Kuwait's initiative and hosting of conferences confirms its leading humanitarian role in

the world, through His Highness the Amir's initiative to help support the humanitarian situation in Iraq and rebuild the war-torn country. Eriqat said that her UN mission participating in the conference comes to shed light on its previous achievements and efforts to support displaced Iraqis, through a presentation in exhibition on the sidelines of the conference, including showing the agency's past efforts after Iraq's war on the so-called Islamic State (IS).

“We want to support the Iraqi people to rebuild their country”

Massive displacement

Eriqat said that Iraq is facing more than three years of massive displacement to its population in the north, amounting to nearly five million people because of that war, which resulted in heavy pressure to many other areas that have been shaken by war, adding that not only people that were displaced but war ruined infrastructure. Eriqat added that they are working on the process of returning those displaced Iraqis to their former homes and cities on all territories inside Iraq, adding that the liberated areas suffer from the destruction of its infrastructure, which requires the reconstruction of those areas.

The official stressed that aid and support provided by the State of Kuwait and other countries to the displaced Iraqis has contributed greatly to enable the UN mission to play its role, which facilitated the task of getting displaced people to various services they urgently needed.

On KICRI, Eriqat praised the large participation from various countries, regional, and international



Federica Mogherini

organizations, considering such big participation reflects on the importance of these events. Eriqat expressed hopes that the conference will have "positive results and best serve the interests of Iraqi people, and the process of development and progress moves forward in order to achieve security and stability in the region." — KUNA

Kuwait geared up to host meeting of anti-IS coalition

KUWAIT: Kuwait is all geared up to host the ministerial meeting for the coalition to fight the so-called Islamic State (IS) today. The meeting is part of a series of international conferences that took place in order to build a formal coalition to destroy the IS, which had taken over large portions of Syria and Iraq in 2014. Since then, the coalition is now 68 countries strong beside other decision-making international organizations, namely the US, the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Turkey, in addition to members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Iraq, Jordan and Morocco.

The first of these conferences took place in September 2014 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Egypt and Jordan, met with former US Secretary of State John Kerry on what each of these countries would contribute to their common security in the matter. At the end of the conference, the Jeddah communiqué came out declaring support to the American military effort, and commitment to unite against the threat of terrorism, including that of IS. In addition, the signatories vowed providing military support and humanitarian aid towards the effort, as well as agreeing to stop the flow of foreign fighters through neighboring countries, countering terror financing and extremist ideology, and enforce the necessary measures of justice against violators.

Five-point plan

In December of the same year, another meeting was held in NATO headquarters in Brussels, which resulted in a five-point plan to uphold the coalition. In January 2015, former British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond hosted the counter IS meeting in London. Twenty-one countries gathered as a small group of the global coalition.

The 21 key members of the global coalition reviewed efforts to degrade and defeat IS, not just through military force but also by addressing the underlying narrative of the organization, its financing, its flow of foreign fighters and by reasserting

commitment to Iraq. In June 2015, Paris hosted yet another counter IS coalition conference, where all participants reasserted that The Global Coalition is united and committed to defeating IS.

Rome was the next host of the anti-IS international coalition meetings, as in February 2016, 23 countries reviewed operations and new ways of cooperation. The meeting was chaired by the US Secretary of State back then John Kerry and former Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

Kerry had underlined that there should be no doubt that IS will be destroyed. The meeting also reviewed achievements made against IS in 2015 and analyzed future operations, as well as it explored new ways of cooperation. In July the same year, Washington hosted the Foreign and Defense Ministers of the Counter-IS Coalition Small Group, with Military Coalition and members that have made major non-military contributions convened to refine their common approach to IS affiliates in many regions of the world.

Berlin hosted the next version of meetings in November 2016 to review progress of collective effort to liberate Mosul, northern Iraq and to build momentum towards the isolation and liberation of Raqqa in Syria; both under the clutches of IS at the time.

Full coalition

In March 2017, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson hosted the foreign ministers and senior leaders of the Global Coalition working to defeat IS in Washington. This meeting was the first for the full coalition, at 68 members, since December 2014. It included a detailed discussion of priorities for the coalition's multiple lines of effort, including military, foreign terrorist fighters, counterterrorist financing, counter-messaging, and stabilization of liberated areas, to increase the momentum of the campaign. Additionally, the ministers discussed the ongoing humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria that are affecting the region.

In November 2017, Amman hosted meeting for the political leaders of the Global Coalition against IS with representatives of 27 countries, as well as four international organizations attending. It coincided with the positive developments in the war against terrorism in Iraq and Syria, as participants discussed the coalition's efforts to fight IS, especially after the liberation of Mosul and Raqqa from the terrorist group. The Global Coalition against IS was formed in September 2014 and is committed to degrading and ultimately defeating the extremist group. — KUNA

Finance minister, World Bank discuss Iraq conference

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf held talks yesterday with the Vice President of the World Bank for the Middle East and North Africa Hafez Ghanem, focusing on preparations for a Kuwait-hosted conference on reconstruction in Iraq. The two officials also discussed a number of projects the World Bank is pursuing in Kuwait, in an encounter attended by a number of Kuwaiti foreign ministry officials and representatives of the global financial institution.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Director General Rabah Al-Rabah said that hosting Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) reflects its important humanitarian role and keenness to ensure security and stability of Iraq and the region.

Rabah assured keenness of His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the success of the conference and the importance of working to achieve progress in developing countries of the region, as well as benefiting its peoples, adding that this was what Kuwait has been working on throughout its history.

Rabah added that KCCI will contribute and participate in this conference through hosting the "Invest in Iraq" conference, which will start tomorrow with the participation of about 1,850 representatives from 49 countries, which will seek investment opportunities in Iraq, and to be aware of the guarantees provided to investors, international institutions, including the World Bank.

Rabah noted the existence of guarantees on investment opportunities in Iraq through international and regional institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, which give greater encouragement to those wishing to invest and help with the reconstruction of Iraq. The Director General pointed out that the conference 'Invest in Iraq' will be held in the presence of Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi, who will deliver a speech, noting that the conference will review investment opportunities in Iraq, totaling 157. — KUNA

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Local

Conference manifests Kuwait's belief in humanitarian action: IICO chief

Kuwait drumming up efforts to help heal Iraq's wounds



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Islamic International Charity Organization Abdullah Al-Maatouq speaks during the NGOs Conference to Support the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq.



Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (right) attends the conference.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: A total of \$330.130 million is the total amount of pledges announced at Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Conference to Support the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq, which concluded yesterday. The conference convened at the attendance of Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Holding the conference manifests Kuwait's belief in humanitarian action, said Abdullah Al-

Maatouq, chairman of the Islamic International Charity Organization (IICO). His remark came during a speech at the opening of the conference yesterday, noting that by holding such gathering, Kuwait is drumming up efforts in order to help "heal Iraq's wounds" as Kuwait is "following a steady and methodical approach" to preserve international peace and security while easing plight of the suffering. Three years passed with more than five million displaced Iraqis live harsh

and almost inhumane conditions, he noted, adding "but with \$200 million in aid from Kuwait, a new window of hope was open." The conference kicked off yesterday to tackle latest developments in the humanitarian situation. It coincides with Kuwait's hosting of the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq. The conference is being held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti government. — KUNA

List of pledging NGOs

KUWAIT: The pledges made during the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Conference to Support the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq came out as follows:

- Kuwait:**
- Zakat House and the Awqaf General Secretariat (\$35 million)
 - Salam Charity Society (\$15 million)
 - Islamic International Charity Organization (\$10 million)
 - Kuwaiti Aid Society (\$10 million)
 - Najat Charity (\$10 million)
 - Direct Aid Society (\$10 million)
 - Al Eslah Society (\$10 million)
 - Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage (\$10 million)
 - Abdullah Al-Nouri Society (\$5 million)
 - Patients Helping Fund Society (\$5 million)
 - Red Crescent Society (\$2.5 million)
- International:**
- International Committee of the Red Cross (\$130 million in programs)
 - Human Appeal of the UK (\$30 million)
 - Qatari Education Above All Foundation (\$13.5 million)
 - Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (\$10 million)
 - United Iraqi Medical Society (\$5.1 million)
 - Qatar Charity (\$5 million)
 - French (\$4 million)
 - Islamic Relief of the UK (\$4 million)
 - Muslim World League (\$2.7 million)
- In addition to \$4 million from a French Muslim society and another \$4 million from an Iraqi organization.



KUWAIT: (From left) Mustafa Al-Hitti, Abdulwahab Al-Bader, Abdullatif Al-Hamad and Mahdi Al-Alak. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Supporting Iraq prevents terrorism's return

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: A high-level experts' meeting for Iraq's reconstruction and the role of finance institutions kicked off yesterday at JW Marriot Hotel. "Iraq has been subjected to a fierce attack by terrorism that has led to the displacement of more than five million Iraqis from their homes," said Abdulwahab Al-Bader, Director-General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

During his opening speech, Bader pointed out to the need to help Iraq and support its reconstruction to prevent terrorism from returning. He expressed happiness that Kuwait was chosen to be the place where he revealed Iraq's vision for reconstruction and economic development, pointing out that the losses touched infrastructure, transport facilities, electricity, water, education, health and others.

Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers of Iraq Mahdi Al-Alak said that the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq is based on three pillars - reconstruction, sup-

porting the processes of stability and encouraging investment opportunities. He added that Iraq has submitted an integrated strategy document, including a field study on the damage caused by the war on terrorism and the real needs of post-war reconstruction, pointing out that despite the large resources Iraq has, international support for Iraq is important for reconstruction. He thanked Kuwait and international partners such as the World Bank and the United Nations for the success of the conference and achieving its goals.

Meanwhile, the President of the Reconstruction Fund for Areas Affected by Terroristic Operations in Iraq Mustafa Al-Hitti affirmed that the human dimension is one of the most important principles on which it is based. He stressed on the other hand to maintain the pace of economic process and face unemployment, in addition to rebuilding destroyed infrastructure. Hitti said that of the 138,000 housing units affected by the war on terror, half of them are completely destroyed, adding that citizens are waiting to return to their homes.

Abdullatif Al-Hamad, Director General - Chairman of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) said the tragic situation experienced by Iraq, which suffered over many years as a result of the destruction of the infrastructure, has exceeded its capacity for reconstruction. "The situation in Iraq requires all of us to cooperate and be in solidarity in providing support for reconstruction," he explained.

Iran welcomes KICRI

TEHRAN: Iran welcomed yesterday the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) hosted by the State of Kuwait. Tehran welcomes such conferences and considers international participation in the reconstruction of Iraq as necessary and an important step in this regard, Iranian local media quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasimi. Qasimi added that Tehran would have an 'active and con-

structive' role in the reconstruction and development of Iraq's economy as it will also continue to support and assist Iraq in other fields.

Qasimi stressed that the contribution of the international community in the reconstruction process of Iraq is a necessary step in the right direction, stressing that the participation should be "honest and unconditional."

Kuwait is hosting an international conference on the reconstruction of Iraq with the participation of contributing countries and international and regional organizations to help with the reconstruction of Iraq after the wars and conflicts. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Participants walk past brochures of previous funds collected by the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO), during the NGOs Conference to Support the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KFH among first to cooperate with the MGRP in recruitment, training

Proven track record of employing and training national labor

KUWAIT: Fawzi Al-Majdali, Secretary General - Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), hailed the genuine partnership that binds the (MGRP) and Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and the private sector in general in line with the government's strategy that aims at strengthening partnership between the public and private sectors in efforts to achieve the national goals of comprehensive development.

Majdali indicated in a press release on the sidelines of the Recruitment Forum held at the MGRP Headquarters in

Reggie area, that KFH is considered among the first banks to cooperate with the MGRP in the recruitment and training fields. He praised the direct collaboration with KFH that offers its job opportunities to the job seekers and those registered in the program.

It is worth noting that KFH's participation in the Recruitment Forum themed "because you deserve" emanates from its endeavors to support the Kuwaiti youth in the labor market, while to effectively strengthen partnership with the government institutions in an attempt to

achieve the common national goals and the comprehensive economic development.

This also serves in encouraging the youth to work in the private sector as this contributes in easing the burden laid on the government in the field of training, employing and absorbing the huge number of job seekers. The Recruitment Forum included a presentation from KFH to demonstrate the available positions and vacancies in the bank. Also, a specialized recruitment team from KFH was accessible at the MGRP Headquarters to receive recruit-

ment applications, conduct interviews with applicants, and proceed with the recruitment procedures once candidates meet all recruitment.

KFH has a proven track record of excellence in the field of employing and training national labor. It received several awards in this regard.

KFH has recently held a comprehensive training program for 36 new recruits in an attempt to improve their proficiency in banking transactions and financial services to better serve customers and meet their aspirations.



Gulf Bank recognized for its customer contact center

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank was pleased to receive the 'Excellence in Call Center Service' Award from Kuwait's Public Relations Association. Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the awards ceremony recently took place at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

The event was attended by numerous government officials and dignitaries, including Hind Al-Sabeeh, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor; Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs; Sheikh Khaled Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Supreme Committee of Kuwait's Public Relations Association, who jointly presented the award to Gulf Bank representatives.

Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications said: "Receiving this prestigious award is a testimony for our ability to provide our cus-

tomers with the level of services they need, as well as our capability to maintain and improve those services to meet the increasing demand. On behalf of the Bank's management, I would like to thank Kuwait's Public Relations Association for this recognition and for efforts to reward those who excel in the field of customer service and public relations."

"Our Customer Contact Center offers customers easy access to their accounts whenever they want and wherever they are, by simply answering security questions customers can navigate through their accounts and credit cards, transfer funds, pay their bills, request a statement, apply for a new cheque and inquire about an issued one, check their Gulf Rewards, and ask for information about any services and/or products," added Qatami.

The awards aim at underscoring the importance of customer service and public relations that require unique skills and high experience, and at highlighting the efforts invested in the fields of public relations and customer service across all industries, from the public and private sectors.

A judging committee was formed to select the winners. It consisted of international and local public relations and customer service experts. The evaluation was based on international standards in regard to the level of client servicing and the ability to meet the clients' needs.

The event also featured a number of workshops about the strategies of public relations and customer service targeted at employees of ministries and organizations, in addition to a small exhibition area where participants showcased their products and services.

The Kuwait Public Relations Association promotes the role of the State of Kuwait in public relations practice and functions, creates channels of cooperation with international and regional public relations associations, and raises awareness of the importance of this industry.



Local

Balanced foreign policy attracts investors to Kuwait: Roudhan

Calls for more price control to prevent unjustified hikes

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The economic situation in Kuwait is stable and the country has a great chance of attracting foreign investments thanks to its well-balanced foreign policy, a government official said. Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan made those statements during a seminar hosted at former MP Yousef Al-Zalzal's diwan Sunday night.

Commenting on prices, Roudhan stressed that they are subjected to supply and demand. "Nonetheless, prices did not increase a single fils throughout 2017," he underlined, noting that he also worked on improving the business environment in Kuwait, focusing on small and medium projects as well as consumer protection. He added that the small and medium projects fund needs to change its policy and to define such projects. "We will for instance allocate 10 percent of commercial spaces at the airport and various co-ops for those projects," he added.

Roudhan said that since he assumed to office, he has been keen on meeting with the public and listening to them without any barriers. "Positions do not last," he stressed, noting that after all, he was a devoted Kuwaiti citizen keen on making achievements that will eventually benefit Kuwait and citizens.



Commerce Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan

Unjustified hikes

Meanwhile, Zalzal stressed the need to have more price control to prevent unjustified hikes. He added that even when prices went up because of high oil prices, they remained the same when oil prices dropped, leading to a drop in the Kuwaiti dinar's value. "This reflects some defects that need to be handled," he stressed.

Zalzal hailed the role played by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's (MoCI) consumer protection department and urged the public to contact it in

"These discouraging reports are made by expats who deliberately wish to hold citizens' transactions because of their low salaries," he explained, calling for having citizens make the reports because they know more about their fellow citizens. "Low salaries of employees at the small projects fund can also open the door of corruption amongst employees who pass projects worth millions," he added, calling for more incentives for the fund's Kuwaiti employees. Finally, Zalzal wondered about a project proposed in 2005 to build a free trade zone between Kuwait and Iraq, noting that Jordan profited from the idea and already built one with Iraq.

'Save it to Last'

Kuwait Food Bank's Deputy Chairman Meshaal Al-Ansari stressed that the food bank focuses on developing charity work in Kuwait by helping needy families. Speaking on the occasion of launching the food bank's first charity campaign 'Save it to Last', Ansari said that it is the first ever drive launched in Kuwait by a charity with the aim of protecting schoolchildren's health and promoting awareness about the need to rationalize food purchases to avoid throwing away excess food. Instead it should be saved in special containers at homes or schools to be given to the needy.

"The food bank aims at spreading the culture of preserving food and correctly recycling it as a form of thanking Allah for such blessings," he underlined, noting that the campaign helps needy families regardless of religion, gender or race. Finally, Ansari added that the food bank accepts donations 24/7 through text messages of amounts of KD 1, 5 or 10, or through its website www.kuwaitfoodbank.org.



Food bank launches first charity campaign

case of commercial fraud. "However, even the consumer protection department cannot stop these irrational price hikes. Prices are like ghouls that consume citizens' incomes," he said. Zalzal said that decisions are made slowly at the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development because of linking it to local banks and having to make reports about entrepreneurs.

Ban on Filipinos to work in Kuwait
By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Kuwait is a beautiful country with a diverse society and is a place of great opportunity. In fact, Kuwait currently holds, for the third year in a row, the UN title of Global Humanitarian Center and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been rightfully referred to internationally as a Humanitarian Leader. Therefore, it is really confusing to hear that there is a ban on Filipino nationals to come and work in Kuwait in the future, because of what seems to be incidents of human rights violations. With that said, there is no denying that there have been unfortunate incidents in the past. Some that I have worked with personally were of people from different nationalities who were mistreated.

But as a lawyer, you understand that law violations happen in every country. Also as a lawyer in Kuwait, I understand how supportive the government has been in the last decade and how much change and effort has been made in order to keep everyone safe, for example: 1) The laws have changed for the best. 2) The government has set up shelters for those who are being mistreated to go to. 3) There have been governmental departments set up for help. 4) Awareness campaigns. 5) Legal aid has been provided by non-profit organizations supported by the government, and the list goes on.

Filipino nationals are an integral part of our society in Kuwait. I cannot imagine a Kuwait without them, and although the Philippines has every right to protect its citizens in Kuwait and abroad, it is very sad to see many of them leave. I have received many questions over the past week regarding the situation, and therefore today's column is dedicated to answering them.

Cannot come back

Question: Some of my employees have left for holiday to the Philippines and they want to come back now, but they cannot? Is this not a breach of the contract?

Fajer: This situation is what we would call under law a force majeure event - an act that is beyond the parties' control. A force majeure is usually included in the contract and allows the parties to suspend or terminate the performance of their obligations should that performance be impossible or impractical, and since employers cannot physically come back to fulfill their obligations under their employment contract, then they are not in breach here.

No regulations

Question: I have Filipino employees and I want to know what happens if they leave. My company depends on them, and my understanding of Kuwaiti law is that I am supposed to receive a three-month notice? What happens if they decide to leave tomorrow?

Fajer: From my understanding, that there are no regulations that force Filipino nationals to leave Kuwait. They only have that option should they feel that they are in danger. From a legal point of view for private employees under an open-ended contract, they are supposed to submit a three-month notice. But if they have been mistreated or if the employer commits legal violations, such as keeping the employees' passport or not paying them overtime, then the employees have the right to leave without providing a three-month notice. As for those who are not under any violations and want to leave now and therefore are not providing their employer with a three-month notice, under the Kuwaiti labor law, they should compensate their employers with a three-month salary.

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

Bootleggers arrested in Hawally

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Police found 12 drums filled with liquor as well as 51 bottles ready for sale during a raid in Hawally, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said yesterday. Police had chased a man who escaped on foot after they stopped him at a street in the area. The Indian man was eventually caught inside a house along with two others. The contrabands were found inside after the place was searched. The suspects confessed that the alcoholic drinks were homebrewed and prepared for sale.

KJA holds general assembly meeting



KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) held its ordinary general assembly meeting yesterday, in which they approved the board of directors' financial



and administrative reports of 2017, as well as the estimated 2018 budget and hiring Al-Buzai and Partners to audit its accounts in 2018. The meeting was attended

by KJA Chairperson Fatima Hussein, Secretary Adnan Al-Rashed, Treasurer Jassim Kamal and Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) representatives.

Infected meat could have entered Kuwait

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Former director of the imported food department at Kuwait Municipality Al-Humaidi Abbad Al-Mutairi filed a complaint with the prosecutor general about allowing Brazilian meat suspected of being infected with mad cow disease into the country. Mutairi said 13 tons of imported meat were proven to be infected. He said that he discovered the incident after taking over as the director of the imported food department.

25 percent

The Manpower Public Authority said registered the food meals sector, which was within the restaurants and food meals union, in the labor recruitment category which allows restaurant and kitchen owners to bring in 25 percent of workers from abroad without paying fees, informed sources said. Once the 12 percent ratio is reached, owners can bring up to 50 percent of workers from abroad after paying a KD 250 fee per employee according to certain rules, most important of which is that the area of the kitchen should not be less than 300 sq m, the sources added.

Finals' timings

Education Minister Hamid Al-Azmi denied reports that the ministry plans to adjust the timings of final exams for the current school term. Azmi said the issue was never discussed and the tests will be on their pre-set dates. Social media reports had said the education ministry plans to change final exams dates for all school stages as they clash with the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Official educational sources had earlier said the ministry is studying the possibility of changing the exam dates for the 2017/2018 school year for the secondary stage because of Ramadan. But Education Ministry Undersecretary Haitham Al-Athari said he hasn't received any final decision in this regard.

Four imams suspended

Awqaf Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Mosque Affairs Dawood Al-Asousi said four imams were suspended in 2017 - three Egyptians and one Kuwaiti. All four were punished for deviating from the mosques' charter and getting into violating subjects. He said the mosques' sector organized several courses

for imams to enhance their performance. It also established an imam diwaniya, besides printing books on the Friday sermon.

Asousi said there is a special committee that prepares a model Friday sermon, which touches on current events. This model sermon is outstanding in its composition, facts and ideas, making many imams in Kuwait and abroad use it. He said there are no foreign contracts at the current time as per Civil Service Commission decisions as well as the state's instruc-

tions. He said that there is no ban on any cultural or social activity in mosques provided that official permissions are obtained.

He said the awqaf ministry still gives incentives to imams, as it organizes an umrah trip every year for outstanding clerics. Their allowances have also been increased in cooperation with the Awqaf secretariat general, such as school expenses for their children from KD 200 to KD 250, and housing allowance from KD 110 to KD 150.

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India Prime Minister inaugurates summit and a temple in UAE

Tea, haircuts, fish bones: Letting the light into Pakistan

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RAMADI: Photo shows a destroyed house reportedly belonging to members of the Islamic State (IS) group in the city of Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar Governorate.—AFP

Revenge awaits families of IS fighters

'If they come back - then blood will flow'

RAMADI: In Iraq's Sunni-dominated Anbar province, residents struggling to rebuild after years of Islamic State group rule are adamant: there will be no return for the families of jihadists. Omar Shiham Al-Alwani, who fought against the group, warned that revenge awaits the relatives of IS fighters who try to come back. "Anbar is a tribal society. If someone's brother or father is killed, he takes blood revenge by killing someone from the murderer's tribe," Alwani said. The bearded 35-year-old wore a red-checkered headscarf as he sat in his traditional reception room, two months since Iraq declared victory over IS. "We do not want IS fighters to come back and start a spiral of revenge," he said. "We're totally against that. If they come back then blood will flow and neither tribes nor military operations will be able to stop it." That sentiment is a far cry from the support the jihadists once enjoyed in the western desert region.

The radical group's predecessor emerged from Iraq's Sunni heartland in 2006 and was welcomed by many Anbaris, who saw it as offering protection against Shiite-dominated authorities in Baghdad. The jihadists

were kicked out by pro-government forces, but five years later, in late 2013, tribal fighters allied with the group revolted against Baghdad. The jihadists seized the chance to take over large areas of territory. But many tribes turned against IS, especially as its brutality became apparent. The group imposed a hardline interpretation of Islam, sending religious "police" to flog people in public and executing members of tribes who refused to pledge allegiance.



Residents, still counting the cost of IS rule in blood and destruction

'Intruders'
Today residents, still counting the cost of IS rule in blood and destruction, insist they do not want to repeat the errors of the past. "They are outcasts and society rejects them," said Khamis Al-Dahal, 60, as he got his hair

cut at a barbershop. "The government is not going to force us to accept back people who killed men, women and children in Anbar." Some take a more moderate line but are still very wary. "We are not against them returning but the timing is bad and would risk provoking unrest and a return to bloodshed in the streets," said former tribal fighter Omar Ibrahim. "They should be in a camp under the supervision of the Iraqi government and they should receive daily instruction on how to live together and to combat extremist ideologies." Some are already living in camps.

Currently around 380 families of jihadists, women and children, are detained in two Anbar camps where conditions are harsh. Late last year US advocacy

group Refugees International reported that women and girls believed to be linked to IS jihadists had been sexually abused by camp guards. Those who do leave often have nowhere to go. In the city of Ramadi, residents said houses belonging to the families of IS jihadists have been destroyed-reprisal for a similar tactic the jihadists used against their enemies. No one was willing to say who was responsible.

The city is still heavily scarred by fighting and airstrikes by a US-led coalition during a battle that saw it recaptured by government troops in early 2016. Erfan Ali, Iraq representative for the UN Human Settlements Program, said that over 8,000 homes are destroyed or badly damaged, as are some 1,200 in the city of Fallujah. While the jihadists' self-declared cross-border "caliphate" lies in tatters, many still fear Iraq's weak central government will not be able to prevent their return indefinitely. Such is the fear that some residents have still not dared remove signs of the group's presence. The graffiti remains daubed across the walls of their houses: "Property of the Islamic State". —AFP

Egyptian forces kill 28 jihadists

CAIRO: A major operation against jihadists in Egypt has killed 28 fighters in the Sinai Peninsula since it was launched by the military on Friday, the army said yesterday. Another 126 jihadists have been arrested since "Operation Sinai 2018" was launched in the Sinai across from Israel, the central Nile Delta and the Western Desert near the border with Libya, the army said. The security sweep comes as President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is seeking re-election in March, after a first term in office that has seen him crack down on an Islamist insurgency and other opponents.

Egypt's security forces have been increasingly targeted by jihadists since the army in 2013 - then headed by Sisi - overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. Militants linked to the Islamic State group have waged a deadly insurgency in the Sinai against Egyptian security forces. The Egyptian air force and the navy have been taking part in the operation, with the Sinai sweep focusing on targets in the north and centre of the peninsula. On Sunday the army said it had killed 16 jihadists in the Sinai, and on Monday spokesman Tamer el-Rifai reported 12 others were killed in clashes with troops.

In total 126 jihadists have been arrested and as many of their hideouts destroyed, the army has said. The operation has also destroyed several vehicles and warehouses, it added. In November, Sisi ordered his armed forces chief of staff to restore security in Sinai within three months after militants killed more than 300 worshippers at a mosque. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Egypt has been under a state of emergency since April last year, after two suicide bombings at churches claimed by IS killed at least 45 people in the cities of Tanta and Alexandria. —AFP

Syria frontline town divides NATO allies

ISTANBUL: A dispute between Turkey and the United States over control of a north Syrian town has put the NATO allies on opposing sides of the conflict's front line, deepening a diplomatic rift ahead of a visit to Turkey by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. This week's talks, already challenging given disagreements over President Tayyip Erdogan's crack-down after a failed 2016 coup, the detention of US consulate staff and citizens, and the trial of a Turkish bank executive for evading US sanctions on Iran, have been given added edge by the dispute over Syria.

Turkish and US troops, deployed alongside local fighters, have carved out rival areas of influence on Syria's northern border. To Ankara's fury, Washington allied itself with a force led by the Kurdish YPG, a militia which Turkey says is commanded by the same leaders overseeing an insurgency in its southeast. The dispute has come to a head over the Syrian town of Manbij, where Turkey has threatened to drive out a YPG-led force and warned the United States - which has troops there - not to get in the way.

"This is what we have to say to all our allies: don't get in between us and terrorist organizations, or we will not be responsible for the unwanted consequences," Erdogan said last month, days before launching a military offensive against the YPG in the northwestern Syrian region of Afrin. Turkey would turn its attention to Manbij, about 100 km east of Afrin, "as soon as possible", he said. But Washington says it has no plans to withdraw its soldiers from Manbij, and two US commanders visited the town last week to reinforce that message.

It has also warned that Turkey's air and ground offensive in Afrin risks exacerbating a humanitarian crisis in Syria and disrupting one of the few corners of the country that had remained stable through seven years of civil war. In a blunt but possibly understated assessment of Tillerson's visit, a US State Department official said Washington expected "a difficult conversation" in Ankara. For Turkey, the dispute has pushed relations with the United States to breaking point. "We will discuss these issues during Tillerson's visit, and our ties are at a very critical stage," Foreign Minister Mevlut



ATME, Syria: A picture taken from the Syrian village of Atme in the northwestern province of Idlib, shows Turkish tanks firing from across the border. —AFP

Cavusoglu said on Monday. "Either we will improve our ties, or they will completely deteriorate."

'Gung-Ho' military

As the grievances between Washington and Ankara have escalated, Turkey has built bridges with rival powers Russia and Iran - even though their support has put Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad in the ascendancy while Turkey still backs the weakened rebels seeking his downfall. The three countries agreed a so far ineffectual plan to wind down the fighting between the Syrian army, which is supported by Russian air power and Iran-backed militias, and jihadist fighters and Turkish-backed rebels. Turkey says it also won agreement to launch its Afrin operation from Russia, which controls most of the air space in western Syria. In contrast, it says the United States has yet to honor several pledges: for Washington to stop arming the YPG, to take back those arms after Islamic State was defeated in Syria, and to pull back YPG forces from Manbij.

Last week's visit to Manbij by US military commanders was a short-sighted and thoughtless "military gung-ho gesture" by the Americans, according to Erdogan's senior adviser on international relations, Gulner Aybet. "It is not helpful, at

a time when the United States and Turkey are trying to find common ground ... for US generals in the field to undertake a flippant and provocative display in Manbij next to the YPG," she said. Describing relations with the United States as "fragile and frustrating", Aybet said there was a lack of coherence between the messages sent by the US military and its diplomats, who have been more receptive to Turkey's concerns over the increasing Kurdish power on its southern border.

US viewed unfavorably

Erdogan has also said Turkey will "strangle" a force which the United States plans to develop in the large sweep of northern Syria which the YPG and its allies currently control, including more than 400 km of the border with Turkey. His tough language, a year before presidential and parliamentary elections, resonates in a country where 83 percent of people view the United States unfavorably, according to a poll published on Monday. The poll for the Center for American Progress also found that 46 percent of Turks think their country should do more to confront the United States, compared with 37 percent who believe it should maintain the alliance. —Reuters

International

A night at Ritz-Carlton: Riyadh '5-star prison' back in business

Hotel's reopening shrouded in secrecy

RIYADH: Leaping bronze stallions adorn the lobby. Western consultants hobnob over tea and scones and a sumptuous buffet is laid out-Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton appears exactly as it was before it became a gilded prison. Guests trickled in after the palatial 500-room hotel reopened on Sunday to find few signs of the three-month incarceration of princes, ministers and business moguls in an unprecedented anti-corruption purge. "The only difference is that the front gates are open," a smiling hotel employee told guests checking in.

"The guest list is also quite different I imagine," quipped a Western diplomat, sipping a cardamom latte in the ornate lobby as a traditional oud musician performed in the background. Many of the 381 suspects, including flamboyant billionaire Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal-dubbed the Warren Buffett of Saudi Arabia-have been released in recent weeks in exchange for what officials call financial settlements. Other high-profile detainees included former National Guard chief Prince Miteb bin Abdullah, construction magnate Bakr bin Laden and media mogul Waleed bin Ibrahim. Each detainee was given his own room-with room service and television, but no internet or telephone access to prevent contact with the outside world, according to multiple business associates interviewed by AFP. Sharp objects such as glass items and curtain chords were also removed to prevent suicide attempts, they said.

All those services and items were available in an eighth-floor deluxe room that an AFP reporter checked into on Sunday. It was impossible to know whether a detainee had stayed there or the room had been refurbished. Many of the high-profile detainees are believed to have been kept in apartment-like royal suites, which comprise bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room and a living room, according to the hotel website. As service resumed at the hotel, staff appeared to have been instructed not to talk to journalists about the purge, launched by powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

'Too sensitive'

One staff member said he was away on holiday for the

last three months. Another said he was present throughout the Kafkaesque ordeal, but declined to say anymore under the watchful gaze of his superiors. When asked how the crackdown had affected the brand of the hotel-widely labeled a "luxury prison"-a public relations manager declined to comment, calling the matter "too sensitive". Hotel authorities did not permit AFP to film inside the hotel.

But the public relations manager gave AFP a tour of the hotel's bowling alley and extravagant indoor pool with a sky-blue ceiling painted with clouds. He also showed off the hotel's Italian, Chinese and Oriental restaurant, boasting a lavish seafood bar with poached mussels, shrimp and calamari. All the sites were largely empty. But the cafe in the lobby saw a handful of Saudi families, enjoying the novelty of taking selfies at the famous hotel.

The hotel staff were also tight-lipped about occupancy. There were only a trickle of guests but the front manager apologized profusely for being unable to offer some guests a front-facing "fountain view" room. They included foreign businessmen who had been forced to decamp to other hotels on the night of November 4 when the detentions started. "We were suddenly told 'we have an event, you have to move,'" said a Western consultant, who like many people interviewed at the hotel were unwilling to be named. "It's good to be back."

'Fear bigger than resentment'

The hotel's reopening appeared to be as shrouded in secrecy as the crackdown itself. The government has not revealed all the names of the 381 suspects or the charges and nature of settlements, prompting alarm among international investors at the apparent lack of due process, observers say. "As the Ritz re-opens with a lavish food buffet and an upgrade of services, it will take more than a fresh coat of paint to convince investors that Prince Mohammed's kingdom is completely safe to check-in to," Andrew Bowen, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute said. "Ironically, by quickly re-opening the rather ostentatious hotel, the new glitz of the old Ritz illustrates how the sins of the past are still very present in the king-



RIYADH: Photo shows the main entrance of the Ritz Carlton hotel in the Saudi capital Riyadh following its reopening for business, three months after it became a holding place for princes and ministers detained in the biggest anti-graft purge of the kingdom's elite in its modern history. —AFP

dom." But proponents of the crackdown say it reached its objective of prompting "behavioral change" among the once-untouchable elite-seen widely as a living embodiment of corruption.

"The crackdown has also succeeded in telling people to fall in line" with Prince Mohammed's so-called Vision 2030

program of reforms for a post-oil era, said the Western diplomat. "Fear is bigger than resentment I imagine." As the night wore on, the hotel lobby was empty of guests. Around midnight, the only people around were liveried staff vacuuming and swabbing the intricately patterned marble floor.—AFP

News in brief

Poacher eaten by lions

JOHANNESBURG: A suspected poacher was mauled to death and eaten by a pack of lions close to the Kruger National Park in South Africa, police said yesterday, adding that little was left of the victim's body. The remains were found at the weekend in the bush at a private game park near Hoedspruit in the northern province of Limpopo, where animals have been poached in increasing numbers over recent years. "It seems the victim was poaching in the game park when he was attacked and killed by lions. They ate his body, nearly all of it, and just left his head and some remains," Limpopo police spokesman Moatshe Ngeope said.—AFP

Pakistan child killer case

LAHORE: A Pakistan court yesterday charged a man with raping and murdering a young girl in a case that enraged the country and sparked major riots in his home district. Imran Ali, 24, pleaded not guilty to the offences against six-year-old Zainab Fatima Ameen in the Punjab city of Kasur last month, said defense lawyer Mehr Shakeel Multani. "The police have leveled baseless and false allegations against my client," Multani said. The hearing was held in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat prison for security reasons. Witnesses will be called today.—AFP

Volcano rescue mission

PUEBLA: Two US diplomats were involved in an accident while climbing Mexico's highest summit-the inactive Citlaltepetl volcano-authorities said, adding that bad weather forced them to postpone air rescue efforts. Officials did not specify the exact roles of the unidentified diplomats, one of whom suffered a fall, forcing the other to seek help from the US embassy. "In coordination with Mexico's mountain rescue brigade and the United States embassy, action is being taken to rescue two diplomats missing on Citlaltepetl," the civil protection authority for the state of Puebla said in a statement. "They did not advise any authorities, municipal or state, about the route or date of their ascent," a local government source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.—AFP

'Pornographic' party

PHNOM PENH: Seven of the 10 foreigners arrested on pornography charges after a pool party in the Cambodian tourist town of Siem Reap have been deported, a court official said yesterday. Police accused the group of "singing and dancing pornographically" after their arrest two weeks ago at a party in a private villa in Siem Reap, the launchpad for visitors heading to Cambodia's famed Angkor Wat temples. A Siem Reap court charged them with producing pornographic pictures and materials and a prosecutor said party organizers circulated obscene images online to promote the bash. The group of five Britons, two Canadians, a Norwegian, a New Zealander and a Dutch national faced up to a year in prison but their lawyer sought and received bail for seven of them on grounds that they had not organized the party.—AFP

IS-linked militant jailed

JAKARTA: The Indonesian leader of an Islamic State-linked militant group was jailed for seven years yesterday over plans to smuggle weapons from the southern Philippines, a court said. Zainal Anshori, 43, head of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, was found guilty of committing a "criminal act of terrorism" by the Jakarta court. His group is believed to be responsible for several terror plots in Indonesia including a January 2016 attack in Jakarta that left eight people dead, including four militants. Prosecutors had called for a 10-year prison term. The cache of some 50 weapons, which did not reach their destination, were intended to be used in future attacks in Indonesia, the court said.—AFP

India Primer inaugurates summit and a temple in UAE

DUBAI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi capped a whirlwind visit to the UAE on Sunday, giving a keynote address as guest of honor at the World Government Summit in Dubai. Modi praised the United Arab Emirates, home to 3.3 million Indian nationals, for having "harnessed technology" and "managing to create a unique economic miracle that we rarely see in the world".

Highlighting his government's cutting-edge initiatives, such as a unified ID system linked to mobile phones and bank accounts, Modi appeared right at home

in the tech-obsessed emirate. "We missed the industrial revolution, but we joined the digital revolution," he said. But ties are also inextricably linked to the oil-based economy. On Saturday, Modi oversaw the awarding of a 10 percent stake in an Abu Dhabi offshore concession to a consortium of Indian oil firms—a first according to UAE state media.

"We have progressed from a buyer and seller relationship to an era of mutual investments in the oil and gas sector," Modi said, cited by the state news agency WAM.

The Indian leader also unveiled a model of what will be the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, calling it a "testament to tolerance" in the Muslim Gulf nation. It is also a testament to the importance of the Indian diaspora, which counts a mammoth blue collar labor force as well as professionals among its ranks. Later on Sunday, Modi flew to Oman where he met Sultan Qaboos and members of the Indian community in Muscat.—AFP

Saudi Crown Prince promises a return to moderate Islam

BRUSSELS: Saudi Arabia has agreed to give up control of Belgium's largest mosque in a sign that it is trying to shed its reputation as a global exporter of an ultra-conservative brand of Islam. Belgium leased the Grand Mosque to Riyadh in 1969, giving Saudi-backed imams access to a growing Muslim immigrant community in return for cheaper oil for its industry.

But it now wants to cut Riyadh's links with the mosque, near the European Union's headquarters in Brussels, over concerns that what it preaches breeds radicalism. The mosque's leaders deny it espouses violence, but European governments have grown more wary since Islamist attacks that were planned in Brussels killed 130 people in Paris in 2015 and 32 in the Belgian capital in 2016.

Belgium's willingness to put its demands to oil-producing Saudi Arabia, a major investor and arms client, breaks with what EU diplomats describe as the reluctance of governments across Europe to risk disrupting commercial and security ties. Riyadh's quick acceptance indicates a new readiness by the kingdom to promote a more moderate form of Islam - one of the more ambitious promises made by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman under plans to transform Saudi Arabia and reduce its reliance on oil.

The agreement last month coincides with a new Saudi initiative, not publicly announced but described to Reuters by Western officials, to end support for mosques and religious schools abroad blamed for spreading radical ideas. The move towards religious moderation - and away from the extreme interpretation of Islam's Salafi branch that is espoused by modern jihadist groups - risks provoking a backlash at home and could leave a void that fundamentalists try to fill.

But Saudi Arabia's recent moves on religion are seen by Belgian diplomat Dirk Achten, who headed a government delegation to Riyadh in November, as a "window of opportunity". "The Saudis are disposed to dialogue without taboos," he told Belgium's parliament last month after the mission was hastily put together after the assembly urged the government to break Saudi Arabia's 99-year, rent-free lease of the mosque. But he also cautioned: "Some do not, or barely, admit that this form of Salafism leads to jihadism."

Details being finalized

Details of the mosque's handover are still being negotiated but will be announced this month, Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon said. The diplomatic contacts, led by the countries' foreign ministers, were intended by Belgium to prevent what Jambon called an "exaggerated response" from Saudi Arabia-indicating the Belgian government had sought to ensure there was no diplomatic backlash. This, he said, was "under control" following a visit to Belgium last month by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir. Before Saudi Arabia took control in the late 1960s, the Grand Mosque was a disused relic of the Great Exhibition of 1880 - an Oriental Pavilion.

Saudi money converted it to cater to migrants from Morocco invited to work in the country's coal mines and factories. It is run by the Makkah-based Muslim World League (MWL), a missionary society mainly funded by Saudi Arabia. Concerns about the mosque grew as mili-



DUBAI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers a speech during the opening of the World Government Summit in Dubai. —AFP

Muslim youth to more radical ideas, sources with access to the report said.

"The mosque has influence to spread this hateful 'software'," a senior Belgian security source said. "Nobody paid attention for decades." Belgium's parliament said what it preached was "a gateway or even a predisposition to a more combative Islam that is violent", calling in October for an end to the Saudi lease. The same month, immigration minister Theo Francken tried to expel the Grand Mosque's Egyptian imam of 13 years, calling him "dangerous", but a judge reversed that decision. But Belgian security sources say there is no proof imams at the Grand Mosque preached violence or have had links to attacks.

Some who went to fight in Syria had studied there but men are more prey to recruiters for militant groups online and on the streets of underprivileged boroughs such as Molenbeek, in Brussels, where some of the Paris attackers lived, they say. Tamer Abou El Saoud, who was appointed director of the Grand Mosque in May, says there are problems over the way it is perceived but denies it espouses a fundamentalist version of Islam. He says he is ready to work with Belgian officials. "There are changes happening already and there are even more changes coming in the very near future," he told Reuters.

'European Islam'

Belgian leaders say they want the mosque to preach a "European Islam" better aligned with their values - a familiar refrain across Europe following the Islamic State attacks of the last few years. But it is unclear who will operate the sprawling mosque complex, which receives about 5 million euros (\$6 million) a year through the MWL, which has for decades promoted a hardline interpretation of Islam at dozens of institutions worldwide.

The MWL has recently adopted a more conciliatory tone. In just over a year since being appointed, its secretary-general, Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, has met with Pope Francis and taken a public stance against Holocaust denial. Issa told Reuters in November the organization's new mission was to annihilate extremism. For Saudi Arabia, the mosque is a chance to prove it is turning over a new leaf after years of accusations it turned a blind eye to - if not actively endorsed - extremist ideology.

Crown Prince Mohammed has already taken some steps to loosen ultra-strict social restrictions, scaling back the role of religious morality police, permitting public concerts and announcing plans to allow women to drive this summer. The changes, however, may be too late since most militant groups that emerged at some point from Saudi networks have grown independent, says Stephane Lacroix, a scholar of Islam in Saudi Arabia. "That this is going to solve the problem of radical Islam because if the Saudis change, everything's going to change: It's not the case," he said.—Reuters



Giving up control of Brussels mosque, Saudi sends a signal

tant groups such as Islamic State started recruiting among the grandchildren of those migrants, many of whom say they still feel they do not belong in Belgian society, opinion polls show.

Belgium has sent more foreign fighters to Syria per capita than any other European country. Belgian officials now suggest the Muslim Executive of Belgium, a group seen as close to Moroccan officialdom, should run the Grand Mosque. Although the Saudi government has denied any role in the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks against the United States which killed more than 3,000 people, 15 of the 19 airplane hijackers who carried them out were from Saudi Arabia and linked to late Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the plot's Saudi-born mastermind.

Bin Laden was a follower of Wahhabism, the original strain of Salafism which has often been criticized as the ideology of radical Islamists worldwide. Yet many of Islamic State's positions are far more radical than Wahhabism, the ultra-conservative branch of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and founded by 18th century cleric Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab. A classified report by Belgian security agency OCAD/OCAM in 2016 said the Wahhabi branch of Islam promoted at the mosque led

International

Pakistani Taliban confirm deputy killed by drone, appoints new one

Pakistan warns India against any cross-border raid

PESHAWAR: The Pakistani Taliban confirmed yesterday that their deputy leader was killed in a suspected US drone strike last week and said they had appointed a new deputy in his place. A pair of suspected US missile strikes killed the militant leader, Khalid Mehsud, also known by his alias Sajna, on Thursday last week in Afghanistan's Paktika province, near the border with Pakistan, Pakistani security officials said.

But there were conflicting accounts of the drone attack from Pakistani intelligence officials and militant sources. A spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, also known as Pakistani Taliban, who are fighting to bring down the Pakistani state, told Reuters the drone strike was in the North Waziristan region, on the Pakistani side of the border. "We confirm that deputy head of the TTP Khalid Mehsud died in a drone strike," said the spokesman, Mohammad Khurasani.

He said Pakistani Taliban chief Mullah Fazlullah appointed a commander called Mufti Noor Wali Wali to replace their dead deputy. Wali, like his predecessor, would lead militants in South Waziristan, a rugged mountainous region on the Afghan border which has long been home to Pakistani, Afghan and al Qaeda-linked foreign militants. Militant sources said Wali, known by the nickname Ghar Starga, is a ruthless leader with experience working in Pakistani urban areas including the southern city of Karachi.

He studied in a seminary in Faisalabad city in the heartland province of Punjab and recently wrote a book eulogizing the founder of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, who was killed in a 2009 drone attack. While US and Afghan forces accuse Pakistan of failing to stop Afghan Taliban militants using safe havens on the Pakistani side of the border, Pakistani Taliban militants have been waging a campaign of bombings and other attacks on Pakistan's security forces. The Pakistani military mounted a major offensive against the militants in 2014, forcing many of them to withdraw into Afghanistan.

The border region is off limits to journalists and verifying information independently is difficult. US drone strikes in the border region have picked up since US President Donald Trump took office in January 2017, though they are a long way off their peak in 2010. Relations between the United States and Pakistan have been strained since Jan 1 when Trump's denounced Pakistani "lies and deceit" over its support for the Afghan Taliban and their allies. Last month, the United States suspended about \$2 billion assistance to Pakistan. Pakistan denies sheltering militants.

Pakistan warns India

In another development, Pakistan warned India against cross-border strikes in the disputed region of Kashmir after Indian authorities blamed a Pakistan-based group for an attack on an army camp in which soldiers and their families were targeted. Saturday's attack on the camp near Jammu, the

Mufti Wali replaces the dead deputy

winter capital of the revolt-torn state of Jammu and Kashmir, was the worst in months, with five soldiers and the father of one of the soldiers killed and women and children among the ten wounded.

India said the heavily armed attackers were members of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant group, drawing criticism from Pakistan about rushing to judgment without a full inquiry. "It is a well established pattern that Indian officials begin making irresponsible statements and leveling unfounded allegations, even before any proper investigation in any incident has been initiated," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement.

India, it said, was making these allegations to divert attention from its brutality in trying to control the armed revolt in Kashmir, and warned against any retaliatory measures across the Line of Control that divides Kashmir between the nuclear-armed countries. "We hope that the international community would urge India to stop the untold atrocities and gross violations of human rights in IoK (Indian Occupied Kashmir) (and) refrain from any



KASHMIR: Indian supporters of the Hindu nationalist Dogra Front and Shiv Sena Jammu and Kashmir supporters burn the Pakistan national flag during a protest rally in Jammu. —AFP

misadventure across the Line of Control..." it said. India has long accused Pakistan of training and arming militants and helping them infiltrate across the heavily militarized Line of Control into Jammu and Kashmir, its only Muslim majority state.

The head of the Jammu and Kashmir state police, SP Vaid, told reporters over the weekend that they had communications intercepts pointing to the JeM, which has emerged as a top group fighting hundreds of thousands of Indian forces in Kashmir. The army said the attackers wore

fatigues and had assault rifles, a grenade launcher and grenades. In 2016, India said its elite troops had crossed the Line of Control into Pakistan and carried out a raid on militants after 18 soldiers were killed in an attack on an Indian army base in Kashmir. Pakistan denies giving material aid to the fighters in Kashmir and says it only provides diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination. Yesterday, Indian soldiers foiled an attack on another camp in Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian Kashmir. —Agencies

Merkel and SPD under renewed fire over German coalition deal

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leader of the Social Democrats (SPD) faced further criticism yesterday from within their own parties over a new coalition deal that must still be approved by disgruntled SPD rank-and-file members. Germany has been without a proper government since an inconclusive election last September, which saw Merkel's conservatives and the centre-left SPD both lose seats and a far-right party enter the Bundestag lower house for the first time.

Merkel annoyed members of her Christian Democrats (CDU) by agreeing in the coalition talks to cede the finance ministry to the SPD. And members of the SPD could yet reject the coalition deal in a ballot whose results will be announced on March 4. On Sunday Merkel defended "painful" concessions she made to the SPD to win herself a fourth term as chancellor, and she said criticism among her conservatives was not a sign her authority was waning. Guenther Oettinger, a senior CDU member and the European Union's budget commissioner, rushed to her defense yesterday: "I find her still strong... and am sure she will meet the expectations of our party and the public in the coming days."

But Oettinger also conceded that this would be her final term as chancellor, if the new 'grand coalition' goes ahead, addressing a succession debate that is starting to take hold as the CDU slowly starts to look ahead to a post-Merkel era. "It is clear to everyone that the chancellor is going into a last term," he told Deutschlandfunk radio, adding that she would "skillfully set in motion the succession in these four years". Paul Ziemak, leader of the conservatives' youth wing, welcomed Merkel's readiness to set out her picks for ministerial posts before a CDU party conference on Feb 26, but lamented the decision to give up the powerful finance ministry to the SPD. "That did not go down well with our (party) base," he said.

'Orderly procedure'

Many in the SPD rank and file are also unhappy with the coalition deal, which will renew an awkward ruling alliance with Merkel's bloc that has governed Germany since 2013. The leader of the SPD's youth wing is travelling around Germany urging the party's 464,000 members to vote against the deal in the postal ballot. Top SPD officials will meet on Tuesday to decide on a change of leadership. Martin Schulz said last week he would quit as leader so the party could reinvent itself, and urged members to back parliamentary floor leader Andrea Nahles as his successor.

Schulz on Friday then gave up plans to become German foreign minister, hoping to shore up support among SPD members for the new coalition - but the manner in which he anointed Nahles as his successor rankled with many in the party. "We can't have a situation where two, three or four people have a discussion and say who does what. Rather, there should be an orderly procedure," said SPD lawmaker Hilde Mattheis. Ralf Stegner, one of the SPD's deputy leaders, called for an end to "indiscipline" in the party. Merkel said on Sunday that if SPD members rejected the coalition agreement, Germany would probably hold a new election. —Reuters

Kenya women club together to leave slum life behind

KISUMU: The thought of getting old, retiring and still living in a slum used to scare Emma Ochieng. Now the 55-year-old primary teacher has a new house on an estate about a 45-minute drive from the city of Kisumu in western Kenya. For over 20 years, the single mother of one lived in Kisumu's overcrowded Nyalenda slum, polluted by poor drainage, waste, noise and high crime rates. "Staying in a decent neighborhood was beyond my means," Ochieng said. "Owning a house in the city was but a wild dream!"

But in 2015, she began contributing 500 Kenyan shillings (\$4.95) per month to the Nyalenda Housing Cooperative, part of the Kisumu Local Urban Forum which helps members in five of the city's slums access decent housing. Ochieng also joined Kenya's National Cooperative Housing Union (NACHU), an umbrella body that builds affordable homes for low-income earners on estates known as "greenfields". With people migrating from rural areas in search of jobs as local farm business suffer

from extreme weather and rising food imports, the rapid pace of urbanization has pushed 56 percent of Kenya's city dwellers into slums. "Informal structures are coming up faster than government planning," said George Wasonga, CEO of the Civil Society Urban Development Platform. "People are moving into areas before the government can offer infrastructure for basic services like roads, water, sewer connections, electricity and security." Today, across the globe, nearly one billion people live in slums and informal settlements in about 100,000 cities - about a quarter of the urban population.

Many are located on riverbanks or near dump sites and industrial areas, often on degraded soils and in swampy, steep or flood-prone areas susceptible to disasters. Poorly constructed homes expose communities to extreme temperatures, a lack of ventilation and toxic waste - all detrimental to their health. Of the 10 million more people added each year to sub-Saharan Africa's urban population, 7 million end up in slums. Only 2 million of them can expect to move out to a better environment, according to figures quoted in a 2016 UN report on slums.

Savings groups

Ochieng is one of the lucky ones. She got the key to her two-roomed house in April 2016, enabling her to leave the Nyalenda slum. Jessica Wekesa, NACHU's Nyanza regional coordinator, explained how the cooperative assists people to save



KISUMU: Esther Akinyi cleans outside her home on the Kibos Kisumu housing estate, Kisumu, Kenya. —Reuters

on a small scale so they can acquire their own land and homes. In groups of 20, they identify a suitable parcel of land. NACHU then conducts a background check and helps them register the land, also making a loan for its purchase. The organization constructs starter homes of two rooms with a bathroom and kitchen, and hands them over to the owners, who can expand their property into a three-bedroom house. Over a few years, the client pays for the

land, the starter home and related services at a 14 percent rate on the reducing balance of their loan, after which they get the title deed. In the past seven years, NACHU and its partners have built about 2,000 housing units in seven regions of Kenya for low-income earners, ranging from small traders to motorcycle taxi operators and teachers. "We use cheap, locally available technology," said George Kopallah, coordinator of the Kisumu Local Urban Forum. —Reuters

Russia hunts for body fragments, clues after crash

MOSCOW: Emergency workers in Russia searched snow-covered fields outside Moscow yesterday, looking for body fragments and clues after a fatal plane crash a day earlier killed all 71 people on board. President Vladimir Putin has ordered a special commission to investigate what caused the AN-148 plane operated by Saratov Airlines to crash outside Moscow shortly after taking off for the city of Orsk about 900 miles (1,500 km) southeast of the capital.

Among the possible causes investigators are looking into are weather, human error and the plane's technical condition. The crew did not send any distress signals. Experts plan to study the plane's two flight recorders, which were recovered, as well as plane fragments. Footage from a CCTV camera that captured some of what happened was posted online yesterday. It showed what looked like a large ball of fire streaking through the sky.

Investigators, who have opened a criminal case into the tragedy, said in a statement however that the plane had been in one piece when it plummeted towards the ground and not on fire. An explosion had occurred only after it crashed, they said. Debris and human remains were spread over a radius of



MOSCOW: An aerial picture taken in the Ramensky district shows emergency rescuers working at the site of the plane crash which occurred. —AFP

one km (less than a mile) around the crash site and recovery teams had found over 200 body fragments so far, the RIA news agency reported, saying the search could carry on for a week.

Mourning

Officials from Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry told a meeting broadcast on state TV yesterday that DNA tests were being organized with the relatives of those killed to try to identify body fragments. The plane, manufactured in 2010, had been carrying 65 passengers and six crew. The passenger list showed many young people were on board, including a five-year-old girl. Mourners left flowers, soft toys and photographs at Orsk

airport yesterday. "We believed until the very end yesterday that at least someone would survive," said a distraught Ekaterina Zakladnaya, 20, whose mother Natalia was killed in the crash. "We phoned the airports and barely managed to get through and then they published the lists and mummy was second from the bottom."

The plane's operator, Saratov Airlines, said in a statement yesterday it was temporarily grounding its fleet of AN-148 planes until investigators had established what happened. It said the plane involved in the crash had undergone thorough checks last month and that it had successfully flown several other routes on the same day as the crash. —Reuters

Tell-all writer on trial over France's 'heist of the century'

MARSEILLE: The suspected mastermind of France's "heist of the century" went on trial yesterday nearly half a century after robbers tunneled through sewers to snatch the equivalent of 29 million euros from a bank vault. The 1976 robbery at a Societe Generale branch in the southern city of Nice confounded the police for decades. Only one person was ever charged with the crime, with most of the gang disappearing, and the loot - 46 million francs, about 29 million euros (\$36 million) in today's money - was never found.

But in 2010, the case took an unexpected twist when a career criminal wrote a book in which he portrayed himself as the heist's mastermind. He used a pen name but investigators quickly concluded the writer was Jacques Cassandri, a key mafia figure in Marseille, where he is now standing trial. He had assumed he was safe because the crime was too old to be prosecuted, but Cassandri is being charged with laundering the millions from the heist - a crime for which France has no statute of limitations.

Police found the manuscript on Cassandri's computer, and his children later confessed that their father had often bragged about the robbery. He eventually admitted to orchestrating the intricately planned job that involved at least six people and 30 tanks of acetylene to fuel the welding torches used to cut into safes and safety deposit boxes. He said he got only the equivalent of about two million euros, which he quickly spent. But an investigating magistrate was not convinced, saying Cassandri was broke in 1976 but now sits atop an empire that includes several businesses and real estate. —AFP

International

Seoul seeks communication, less tension ahead of N Korea summit

Pence raises prospect of US talks with N Korea

SEOUL: South Korea said yesterday it will try to arrange more reunions for families divided by the Korean War and seek to lower military tensions with North Korea as the first steps towards establishing grounds for a rare summit between the two Koreas. The statement from the Ministry of Unification came after a high-level North Korean delegation concluded a three-day visit which included an invitation for South Korean President Moon Jae-in to travel to Pyongyang for talks. "(The visit) shows that North Korea has a strong will to improve inter-Korean relations and that Pyongyang can make unprecedented and bold measures if deemed necessary," the ministry said.

The visit of the delegation, which included North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's younger sister Kim Yo Jong, intrigued many in South Korea, but also met skepticism about the North's sincerity and willingness to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons. "Although many Koreans are welcoming North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, there are also significant criticism and concerns both domestically and internationally," the statement said.

During the visit, Kim Yo Jong had delivered a letter from her brother asking South Korean President Moon Jae-in to visit Pyongyang at his earliest convenience. Moon had replied, "Let's create the environment for that to be able to happen," according to the presidential Blue House. Such a meeting, if it came about, would mark the

first inter-Korea summit since 2007. The two Koreas are still technically at war after the 1950-53 conflict on the Korean peninsula ended in a ceasefire and not a truce.

The Unification Ministry said steps regarding the improvement of ties would be led by the two Koreas, but also in cooperation with related countries and the support of the international community. "Under a strong position for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, Korea will faithfully implement the international sanctions on North Korea, while also adhering to the principle of resolution through peaceful means," the statement said. "If there is certain progress to set the conditions for denuclearization, a full-fledged progress in inter-Korean relations will become possible," it said, without elaborating.

The United States and South Korea have agreed on terms for further diplomatic engagement with North Korea, first with Seoul and then possibly leading to direct talks with Washington without pre-conditions, Vice President Mike Pence said in a newspaper interview published on Sunday. Speaking to the Washington Post aboard Air Force Two on his way home from the Winter Olympics in South Korea, Pence said Washington would keep up its "maximum pressure campaign" against Pyongyang but would be open to possible talks at the same time.

In previous years, North and South Korea have held reunions to bring together family members who have been separated by the war. Seoul made a standing offer



PYONGYANG: Photo shows Hwasong-15 ballistic missile during the military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the Korean People's Army at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang. —AFP

to North Korea last year regarding another such reunion, details of which have yet to be hammered out between North and South Korea. Kim Yo Jong and her delegation spent three days dining with top government officials,

including Moon, watching the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and cheering for the united women's ice hockey team the two Koreas have fielded at this Olympics.—Reuters



Steps toward denuclearization highly needed

leading to direct talks with Washington without pre-conditions, Vice President Mike Pence said in a newspaper interview published on Sunday. Speaking to the Washington Post aboard Air Force Two on his way home from the Winter Olympics in South Korea, Pence said Washington would keep up its "maximum pressure campaign" against Pyongyang but would be open to possible talks at the same time.

Mumbai's 'last big' hope lies in docklands' inclusive revival

MUMBAI: It was a trip few Mumbai residents had made before - to a smelly dock on murky waters in the city's southern tip, to see colorful art installations inspired by the fishing community, the city's original residents. The Sassoon Dock Art Project, which ran until the end of December, gave many Mumbai residents their first excuse to walk through one of the city's oldest docks, an area set for a massive overhaul under a plan to redevelop the docklands. Mumbai's most valuable piece of land, the docklands sprawl across 752 hectares, about one eighth of the island city. They are located along a 14 km stretch along the waterfront, dotted with defunct warehouses, jetties and slums.

The proposed redevelopment of the land, owned by the government-run Mumbai Port Trust, is the biggest opening up of land in the city since the redevelopment of about 600 acres of textile-mill land in the heart of Mumbai in the 1990s. That redevelopment was meant to create equal quantities of open spaces, public housing and commercial real estate. Instead, it drove tens of thousands of mill workers from their homes, as planners prioritized offices, bars, malls and multi-storied parking, according to campaigners who fought for their rehabilitation.

Two decades on, the docklands redevelopment offers perhaps the last chance for a more sustainable and inclusive future for residents in the space-starved city, home to some of the priciest real estate in the world, experts say. "It is absolutely essential that we get it right this time - this is the last big chance to seriously tackle the challenges that Mumbai faces," said Bimal Patel, urban planner and president of CEPT University in Ahmedabad. "The development can, and should, adopt an urban design model that does not falsely and needlessly pit real estate development and the creation of new floor space against public interest," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Original settlers

The name Mumbai is believed to come from Mumba devi, patron deity of fishermen, or kolis. They are among the city's earliest inhabitants, with settlements dating back more than 400 years. As the city morphed into a financial hub, the kolis have been squeezed into smaller spaces to make way for high-rise buildings and business districts, while the docks became less critical to the economy.



MUMBAI: Sassoon Dock, one of the oldest docks in Mumbai, is set for modernization as part of a planned redevelopment of the city's docklands, the biggest parcel of land to be opened up in the financial hub of India. —Reuters

Plans to redevelop Sassoon Dock, which was built in 1875 on reclaimed land by a prominent member of the city's Jewish community, stalled before. But with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on making India more business-friendly, a new plan to redevelop the port land, including Sassoon Dock, was drawn up. While the plan has not been made public, it has sparked a debate among architects and planners who have seen it. They say the plan demarcates 30 percent of land for open spaces, 30 percent for transport and infrastructure, and the remainder for mixed-use developments - businesses, offices and homes, including for those displaced by the redevelopment.

Alongside, the government must also provide alternate opportunities for those who depend on the docklands for a living, said Neera Adarkar, an urban planner in Mumbai. "That entire belt provided livelihoods to people for more than two centuries - not just fishing, but also manufacturing," said Adarkar, who was involved in the rehabilitation of the city's mill workers. "The needs and aspirations of the city are very different from those of the market, and it's very important that the government address the concerns of the people who otherwise cannot benefit from the market," she said.

2016 and hopes to reach 1 million people by 2020. "There is room for many companies to make a difference in the lives of these communities."

Leapfrog

While the government is investing heavily in coal-fired power plants, tapping into underground coal reserves, private investors are exploring renewable energy. A similar 'off-grid revolution' is afoot across Africa due to fast-dropping costs and plenty of sun. Currently only four percent of Pakistani households tap into solar power due to lack of awareness, limited supply chains and a shortage of consumer financing for relatively high up-front costs, according to the World Bank.

Nizam Bijli installs pay-as-you-go solar systems in homes and businesses, where customers pay 2,000 Pakistani rupees (\$18) a month over 16 months for three bulbs, one fan and two USB slots to charge their mobile phones. Ahmad believes this is affordable as families spend a similar amount on kerosene and charging mobile phones in nearby towns. The average income in Pakistan is about \$1,450, according to World Bank data. Ahmad is certain the only way out of Pakistan's energy crisis is to bypass the grid and leapfrog straight into low-carbon sources like wind and solar. "The whopping costs associated with grid extension (and) low electricity consumption by rural communities dispersed over large swathes presents a barrier to investment," he said. Pakistan already has one major solar park in the eastern province of Punjab, built with Chinese investment. Meanwhile, the parliament in Islamabad switched to solar energy in 2016 and sells excess energy it produces back to the grid.

Tea, haircuts, fish bones: Letting the light into Pakistan

MURID KHOSO: Reclining comfortably on a bed outside his mud home, 75-year-old farmer Mohammad Khoso watches life go by. His family is now the centre of everyone's envy in the southern Pakistani village of Murid Khoso - they have electricity. "Now I can eat fish and not worry about bones getting stuck in my throat," Mohammad told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, describing how he enjoys a well-lit evening meal since his son, Ghulam Nabi, installed solar bulbs in his home three months ago.

For nearly a decade, chronic power shortages have hobbled Pakistan's economy, leaving 144 million people without electricity or enduring lengthy blackouts, the World Bank says. Globally, more than one billion people, or one in seven, lacked access to electricity in 2014 and many more suffer from poor supply, which keeps them trapped in poverty, reliant on wood, candles and kerosene, experts say.

These numbers may be grim but young entrepreneurs like Saad Ahmad see this as huge growth potential in Pakistan, which generates only two-thirds of its energy needs. "There is massive opportunity for business," said Ahmad, 26, chief executive of solar energy supplier Nizam Bijli, which has powered 1,300 homes since it started in

Lung space

In Mumbai, nearly 60 percent of the 18 million population lives in slums and other informal homes, many lacking amenities such as running water and toilets. Across the country, there is a shortage of nearly 20 million urban homes, according to consultancy KPMG. Mumbai's eastern waterfront, controlled largely by the port trust, includes several docks, hundreds of shanties, as well as colonial-era buildings, mangroves and mud flats frequented by flamingos several months of the year.

But residents only have limited access to the waterfront, which is unfortunate for a coastal city like Mumbai, said Patel. Urban design models in India generally waste vast amounts of land in the mistaken belief that having adequate floor space for businesses and homes, as well as a robust network of streets and parks, is impossible, he said. The revival of docklands in cities such as Singapore, New York and London shows it can be done, he said. "The traditional urban design model should be abandoned in favor of one that is not wasteful, so that Mumbai's acute shortage of floorspace, as well as public spaces can be addressed," Patel said. "Otherwise, an opportunity to galvanize Mumbai's economy by creating new jobs and housing will be lost." —Reuters

Tea and cigarettes

Allah Dino's barber shop in Khorwah, 180 km east of Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, is connected to the grid. But intermittent power had forced him to close by sunset. Now he has solar, his business is open until close to midnight. "There is never an idle moment and my men now work in shifts," Dino said. Next door in Bhitai roadside restaurant, solar has also been good for Mohammad Azeem. It allows truckers to stop by throughout the night to drink his tea, brewed on wooden stoves.

Azeem said he plans to add more fans when it gets hot in summer to make customers more comfortable and blow away flies for the longer customers sit, the more tea they drink. Ali Mohammad, who runs a cigarette kiosk inside the restaurant, has seen his business pick up as well. "My shop would remain open using a torch but hardly anyone came," he said. "Now my corner is well lit and Azeem's customers stop by on their way out."

Scaling up Nizam Bijli has proven challenging as Ahmad has to wait 16 months for payment for the solar kits, which means a lack of working capital to buy more stock in the interim. Many banks find the prospect of lending to a company whose customers live on or below the poverty line too risky, he said. Promises by aspiring politicians do not help either, as Pakistan counts down to polls next year.

"Potential customers often say they will wait for free handouts as they know a nearby village has been given solar by some politician or other to win over their constituency," said Ahmad. "This phenomenon is quite common near elections." —Reuters

Sister act: Kim Yo Jong dominates S Korea headlines

SEOUL: A friendly face promising better times, or a mask to conceal a brutal dictatorship? South Koreans are divided on Kim Yo Jong, the sister of the North's leader, and her landmark visit to their country. The first member of the North's ruling dynasty to set foot in the South since the end of the war, Kim has been an instant object of fascination for South Korean and global media since she rode down the escalator at Incheon airport on Friday, calmly surveying the scene.

She shook hands several times with the South's President Moon Jae-in, cheered a unified ice hockey team with him, and conveyed her brother's invitation to a summit in Pyongyang. Every detail of her visit as the key member of a diplomatic delegation to the South's Winter Olympics has been scrutinized, from the clothes she wore and her facial expression to the bag she was carrying and even her handwriting. One calligrapher expert described her as "positive, upbeat and very goal-oriented" based on the precisely angular, somewhat girlish script she left in the guestbook at the South's presidential Blue House.

Her brother-the third generation of her family to rule the isolated and impoverished North-will be pleased with her international diplomatic debut, said Yang Moo-Jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies at Seoul. "Kim kept smiling but at the same time was rarely seen having her head down during the visit, even to our president," he said. "So maybe Kim Jong Un must be applauding at home." But reactions among ordinary South Koreans have been more mixed. "They fired missiles until recently and conducted a nuclear test before suddenly launching this peace campaign," businessman Kim Byoung-gwan said. "I don't trust it."

Others questioned the attention devoted to her. "All the media in the South and the around the world are going gaga about Kim Yo Jong," said one commentator online. "Looks like they would soon join the North's propaganda media to worship and idolize her." Moon has long pushed engagement with the North-which is accused of widespread human rights abuses and subject to multiple sets of UN sanctions over its banned nuclear and ballistic missile programs-to bring it to the negotiating table.

His approval ratings have fallen since the deal for the North to take part in the Games was struck, with the decision to field a unified women's ice hockey team proving particularly controversial. But one of the most widely welcomed moments of Kim Yo Jong's visit was when both she and the North's ceremonial head of state Kim Yong Nam stood as the South's flag was raised and anthem played at the Olympics opening ceremony in Pyeongchang. "I hate Moon and I hate the North," read an online comment. "But the scene was undeniably impressive. I hope the action came from sincerity for peace, not a fake gesture." Educated in Switzerland like her brother, Kim Yo Jong has risen rapidly up the ranks since he inherited power from their father Kim Jong Il, and she is now one of his closest confidantes in a country where elite politics have always been a family affair. —AFP



SEOUL: South Korea's President Moon Jae-in (right) poses with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister Kim Yo Jong before their meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul. —AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
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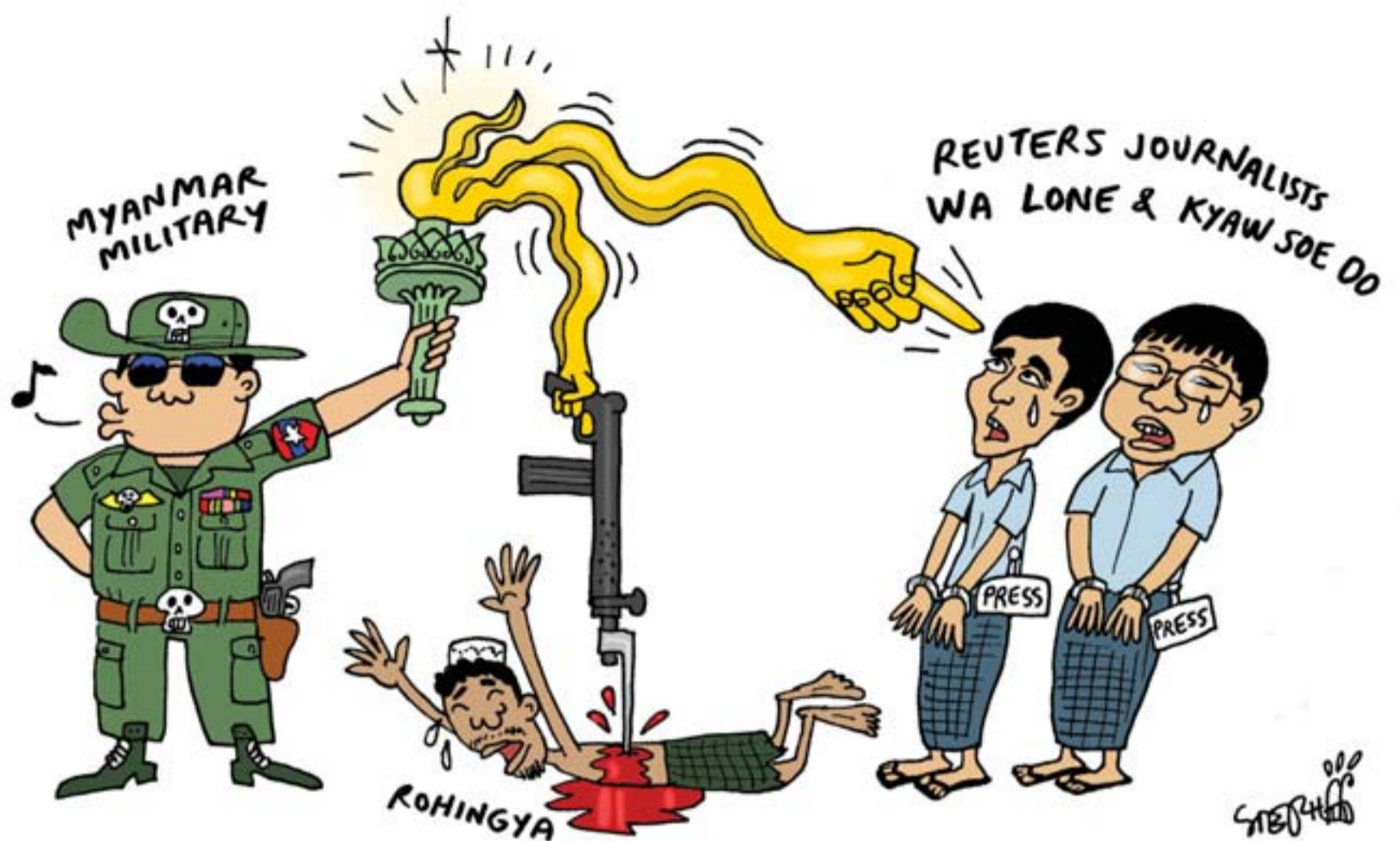
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FACING 14 YEARS IN JAIL FOR THE "CRIME" OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ...



Neither Israel nor Iran seek war

A confrontation at the weekend in Syria has turned up the heat between arch-foes Israel and Iran, but neither side seems to want a war for now, analysts said. Israel carried out major air raids in neighboring Syria on Saturday, including against what it described as Iranian targets in the country. It was the first time Israel publicly acknowledged hitting Iranian targets in Syria since the 2011 start of the civil war there.

The strikes came after what Israel said was an incursion by an Iranian drone into its airspace and the shooting down of one of its F16s - believed to be the first loss of an Israeli jet in combat since 1982. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke Sunday of forces inflicted a "heavy blow" to Iranian and Syrian forces, and Israel's military says a preliminary assessment shows around half of Syria's air defenses were taken out.

Iranian media close to the leadership in Tehran has focused on the shooting down of the Israeli warplane by Syrian air defenses, with one paper declaring it "the end of secure skies for the Zionist regime in Syria". Tensions between the two enemies over Syria had been building for some time, with at least three separate interests at work, several analysts say. Israel does not want Iran, which is supporting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, to entrench itself militarily next door. Iran seems determined to remain there.

Syria, meanwhile, feels it now has the upper hand in the civil war and is more emboldened to stop Israeli air raids inside the country, analysts say. Assad is also supported by Russia and Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah. Israel acknowledges carrying out dozens of air strikes inside Syria to stop what it says are advanced arms deliveries to Hezbollah, with whom it fought a 2006 war.

'One miscalculation away'

Even before the weekend strikes, the International Crisis Group think tank warned Iran's activities in Syria were fuelling Israeli fears of Iranian bases on its borders.

Data overload: Commodity hedge funds close as computers dominate

"Chocfinger" made his name and his money by taking bold bets on cocoa markets. But after nearly four decades of trading, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, Anthony Ward threw in the towel. Ward blames the rise of computer-driven funds and high-frequency trading for forcing him and some other well-known commodities investors to close their hedge funds and look for opportunities where machines can't make a difference.

While computerized trading is not new, Ward and others argue its steady rise has reached a tipping point that is distorting prices and creating uncertainty not only for investors, but for chocolate firms, carmakers and others who rely on commodities. It was in Jan 2016, after a slide in cocoa prices, that Ward decided the days of traditional commodity investors doing well from taking positions based on fundamentals such as supply and demand may be numbered. "It was just too big, too quick, too dramatic. And completely against the fundamentals," Ward told Reuters.

Commodity markets fell across the board that month after weak factory data in China raised fears of lower demand from the world's top consumer of raw materials. Ward blamed the slide in cocoa on what he regarded as misplaced selling by computer-driven funds reacting to the Chinese data, given China has scant impact on the cocoa market. "The actual fundamentals in cocoa were extraordinarily bullish in January 2016. We were forecasting the largest harmattan in history, which is exactly what happened," he said.

His prediction that a hot, harmattan wind from the Sahara desert would hit harvests in Ivory Coast and Ghana and drive cocoa prices higher did come to pass - but not before the fund had been forced to cut its losses when the market slumped. At the end of 2017, Ward closed the CC+ hedge fund that had invested in cocoa and coffee markets for years. And at the end of January, commodity hedge

"A broader war could be one miscalculation away," it wrote in a report released Thursday. ICG senior analyst Ofer Zalberg told AFP following the latest confrontation that it increased the chances of war over the longer term. "We've moved a step closer," he said. "Not because of the incident itself necessarily but because we are seeing that the parties are now taking more assertive stances."

Mujtaba Mousavi, a political analyst in Tehran, said Syria's heavy anti-aircraft fire that brought down the



Emboldened Syria feels it has upper hand in civil war

Israeli plane signaled a "shift in the strategy of Syria and its allies". "Iran will not step back and will not leave Syria as it is an important geostrategic ally after years of fighting and paying the price for saving it," he said. "Israel and the United States are trying to prevent or limit Iran's presence in post-war Syria."

Israel says Saturday's incident began when an Iranian drone entered its airspace. Iran denies the Israeli version. According to the Jewish state, an Israeli helicopter shot down the drone inside Israel, north of the city of Beit Shean. Eight Israeli warplanes then carried out a retaliatory raid on "Iranian control systems in Syria" which had been flying the pilotless aircraft, the Israeli army said. It said those aircraft came under heavy Syrian anti-aircraft

fund Jamison Capital Partners run by Stephen Jamison closed. He told investors that machine learning and artificial intelligence had eliminated short-term trading opportunities, while commodities did not offer obvious benefits in the long term.

Also in 2017, renowned oil trader Andrew Hall, who earned \$100 million in 2008, called time on his main Astenbeck Commodities Fund II. He had said in an earlier letter to investors that extreme volatility caused by "non-traditional investors and algorithmic trading" made it difficult to hold onto long-term positions when the market moved against them. In 2016, Michael Farmer, founding partner of the Red Kite fund that specializes in copper, also accused high-frequency traders using super-fast computers of distorting the market and getting an unfair advantage.

Distortion?

Other investors have taken refuge in related sectors or left commodities altogether, exasperated by the automated trading that drives about half of US commodity futures trading. A study by the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission last year showed computerized trading on the world's largest futures exchange, CME Group, accounted for 49 percent of the volume in agriculture contracts and 58 percent for some energy contracts. At the same time, data from industry tracker Hedge Fund Research shows the average hedge fund returned 8.64 percent in 2017 but commodity hedge funds eked out returns of just 0.43 percent. Ward estimates that while in the past automated trading would distort the market by 10 percent to 15 percent from prices justified by fundamentals - which he said was irritating but often manageable - it can now reach 25 percent to 30 percent. Algorithmic, or systematic, funds use computers to make decisions after processing vast amounts of data, or trade on signals such as market momentum or when prices hit key levels.

Those who run automated funds argue that they inject much-needed liquidity while capturing the dynamics of the market more efficiently than traditional trading strategies. Farmer and others say, however, that it is unfair for exchanges to allow high-frequency trading (HFT) groups to have co-location platforms, allowing them to put super-computers in the same data centre as the exchange servers. They say that gives HFTs the tiny advantage they need to jump ahead of incoming orders, effectively piggybacking. Traditional investors say this exacerbates market moves and in turn makes it more

fire and the F16 was hit, crashing in northern Israel's Jezreel valley. Both pilots survived, though one was seriously wounded.

The air force then launched a second wave of "large-scale" strikes, including against "four Iranian targets that are part of Iran's military establishment in Syria", an Israeli military statement said. Six people were killed in the strikes, including four non-Syrians fighting with the regime and two Syrian soldiers, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor.

'The worst timing'

Sima Shine, formerly deputy director general for Iran at the Israeli ministry of strategic affairs, said the chain of events suggested Iranian military personnel in Syria may not have coordinated the drone operation with the political leadership in Tehran. "From the political point of view of Iran, I think it was the worst timing," she said, citing domestic economic and social protests, as well as Tehran's diplomatic efforts to preserve a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

She said she believed it likely the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps had decided, either in its Tehran headquarters or at its mission in Syria, "that this was the operational best time for them". She said further such incidents were likely, but not full-out conflict. "For the time being both sides will restrain their responses and there will not be an escalation in the very near future," she added. The ICG's Zalberg agreed there was little taste for war. "I think that this incident is likely to be contained," he said. "In general the parties are not looking for a war."

But other commentators noted that when heavily armed neighbors engage in brinkmanship, it's easy to step over the brink. "Most of the wars in the Middle East have been the result of unintended developments," columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in Israeli paper Yediot Aharanot. "A game of chicken gone wrong, a terror attack that was too successful, the pressure of public opinion." —AFP

costly for them to take out hedges when price moves go against them.

Mind-boggling data

Systematic fund managers see the rise of their sector as a part of a trend that is transforming not only financial markets but wider society with the advent of artificial intelligence, robots and machine learning. "I don't feel too sorry (for traditional fund managers)," said Anthony Lawler, co-head of GAM Systematic, the quantitative part of Swiss money manager GAM Holding, which had assets under management (AUM) of 148.4 billion Swiss francs (\$158 billion) at the end of September.

"Information, which used to be expensive, difficult to get, not easily shared, is now ubiquitous. It's truly mind-boggling the depth of data available," Lawler said. "That means it's much more difficult to have an information edge and advantage to the player who can digest and analyse the data the quickest."

GAM Systematic, which had \$4.3 billion of assets at the end of September, regards commodities as one of many markets it monitors for opportunities by crunching data such as weather forecasts and shipping data that shows how full a vessel is. He acknowledged that algorithms can lead to mistakes and over-generalization, but said that should just open up opportunities for traditional fund managers. "If you're a great discretionary trader, then sit on the sidelines and wait for those missteps ... I would be super happy if that trader is successfully picking off some of these missteps," said Lawler.

Systematic funds also make decisions based on the structure and technical levels of markets. Some analysts argue that markets absorb fundamental information before many analysts are aware of it and automated funds are simply more efficient. "I used to do a lot of fundamental analysis when I was in equities and I realised it doesn't really matter, it was a waste of time," said Guy Wolf, global head of market analytics at commodities broker Marex Spectron. "The truth is fundamental analysis is effectively the work of a historian, seeking to provide explanation for what has already occurred," he said.

Some fund managers and analysts say computerized trading has been amplified in commodities because other participants such as banks and pension funds have cut exposure to the sector. Total global commodity assets under management more than halved from 2012 to 2015 to under \$200 billion, though the total has since recovered to just over \$300 billion, according to Barclays. —Reuters

Colombia war tribunals hope to heal wounds, punish atrocities

Every time Maria Alejandra Mahecha sees the machete scar on her father's face, she is reminded of a brutal attack 15 years ago and the visible wounds of Colombia's war that he bears. Mahecha says rebels from the Marxist FARC - known until recently as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - carried out the attack that forced her family to flee their home in the south where they owned a shop. "It nearly cost my father's life," says 23-year-old Mahecha.

Colombia's five-decade civil war pitted leftist rebels against government forces and right-wing paramilitary groups. The conflict killed at least 200,000 people, drove 7.5 million from their homes, and saw at least another 60,000 listed as missing, according to government figures. But following a 2016 peace accord between the government and FARC - now a political party known as the Revolutionary Alternative Common Force - Colombia is gearing up to investigate those responsible for atrocities.

A number of war tribunals and truth commissions are expected to begin work once a legal framework is finalized - and that could happen by September, a government official says. Their task is to investigate those responsible for human rights atrocities committed during the war, including forced displacement, disappearances and massacres. Controversially, they have limited sentencing powers. "The first step is understanding and accepting that this is transitional justice and not ordinary justice," says Mahecha, who represents young people on one of the provincial war victim committees. "That's a necessary step that must be taken for any sort of justice to happen."

If, and how, Colombia delivers justice and holds those responsible for war crimes is a key test for the nation, experts say, and a measure of its ability to move beyond decades of war. Victims' rights groups are among those who have said that delivering justice is essential for peace, reconciliation and a chance to break the cycle of violence. "Justice for victims is knowing the truth," says Mahecha. "We have to know what happened."

Colossal task

Over the next decade, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) - the judicial body responsible for the process - will sift through tens of thousands of victim testimonies, and try former rebels, military and civilians accused of rights abuses. The war's length and the number of armed groups involved means uncovering the truth and apportioning blame is a colossal task, says Mirtha Linares, president of the JEP.

Prioritizing cases will prove key to the JEP's success, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Those cases are likely to include forced disappearances and displacement, as well as recruitment of children into armed groups. Colombia's high court is currently considering whether thousands of cases of sexual violence, including rape, which all factions committed, will be tried by the JEP or be dealt with by the criminal justice system.

In the coming months, the JEP's judges - more than half of whom are women - will select the cases they consider to be most representative of atrocities committed. They will aim to deliver verdicts speedily. "If we don't achieve this, it not only would imply the failure of the JEP ... but, beyond that, the failure of hope that these conflicts between human beings can be solved in a peaceful way and through negotiation," says Linares. The process could reveal uncomfortable truths, including the nexus between the political elite and armed groups, she says. "(There is) a political class that has very serious stains of corruption, of commitments, including those with illegal armed groups like the paramilitaries and others," Linares says.

Crime and no punishment?

For Linares the JEP is about "restorative justice". That means an emphasis on finding the truth and providing reparations for victims, including handing back stolen land and property. But many Colombians do not agree with that approach. They fear those responsible will get lenient sentences for serious violations. Human Rights Watch has echoed those concerns. Under the terms of the peace deal, rebel fighters who admit to war crimes will be sentenced to between five and eight years of "alternative punishment".

Quite what that will mean in practice is unclear. Options could include community service, restricted freedom or house arrest. Those who do not confess and are subsequently found guilty could face up to 20 years in jail. About 1,750 state security forces and 3,500 demobilized rebel fighters, including former top FARC commanders, are expected to appear before the JEP. Among them is former FARC rebel leader Rodrigo Londoño, who heads the group's political party. The presidential candidate pledged earlier this month that he would tell the truth. The issue of justice continues to dominate heated debate ahead of presidential elections in May. "I feel the pressure every day," says Linares. Although the terms of the peace deal are controversial, many victims, including Mahecha, say the JEP offers hope. "You have to give and take ... it would be naive to think that they (FARC) are going to pay years in jail," says Mahecha. —Reuters

News

Netanyahu, US discuss annexing...

Continued from Page 1

importance to Israel. The comments come as Netanyahu is under pressure from right-wing politicians to move ahead with legislation that would apply Israeli sovereignty to settlements in the West Bank. Two lawmakers, including one from Netanyahu's party, have such proposed legislation.

Netanyahu blocked it from being advanced on Sunday, with officials citing the need to focus on security issues following a confrontation that led to Israeli air strikes in Syria at the weekend. Unilateral annexation of settlements would be sure to draw international outrage, though Netanyahu's government has been bolstered by the unstinting support of US President Donald Trump. Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December in a move praised by Netanyahu as "historic", but denounced by the Palestinians and most of the rest of the world.

Nabil Abu Rdainah, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said any annexation would "destroy all efforts to try and save the peace process". "No-one has the right to discuss the situation of the occupied

Palestinian lands," Abu Rdainah said from Moscow, where Abbas was holding talks with President Vladimir Putin amid reports they may discuss new options for Middle East mediation. Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization, condemned the remarks as amounting to "land theft" with US complicity.

Putin said yesterday at the start of talks with Abbas that he had discussed the Middle East conflict with Trump. "I just spoke with American President Trump," Putin told Abbas before continuing the talks behind closed doors. "Obviously we spoke about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." The "situation is far from what we want to see," Putin told his guest, adding that he has "always supported the Palestinian people". "It is very important for us to know your personal opinion in order to set the record straight and put in place a common approach to solve this problem," Putin said.

Abbas has refused any contact with Trump's administration since Washington's decision at the end of last year. "Given the atmosphere created by the United States' actions, we... refuse any cooperation with the United States as a mediator," said Abbas. "In case of an international meeting, we ask that the United States be not the only mediator, but just one of the mediators." Abbas' meeting with Putin came two weeks after Netanyahu also visited Moscow.

As Netanyahu's comments made headlines yesterday, an Israeli official issued a clarification. Netanyahu "did not present the United States with specific annexation proposals, and in any case the United States did not give its consent to the proposals", the official said on condition of anonymity. "Israel updated the United States on various proposals raised in the (parliament), and the United States expressed its clear position that it seeks to advance President Trump's peace plan." The official added that Netanyahu's position "is that if the Palestinians persist in their refusal to negotiate peace, Israel will present its own alternatives".

While Israel would expect to retain certain settlements



Benjamin Netanyahu

in any two-state peace deal, longstanding international consensus has been that their status must be negotiated. The same consensus has been in place for decades regarding the status of Jerusalem, with the Palestinians wanting the eastern sector of the city as the capital of their future state.

Israeli settlements are located in what is known as Area C of the West Bank, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the Palestinian territory. Annexing all settlements would leave little space for a Palestinian state. Netanyahu heads what is seen as the most right-wing government in Israeli history, and prominent ministers openly oppose a Palestinian state. Those who oppose a Palestinian state advocate for Israel to annex most of the West Bank, citing Jews' historical ties to the land from the biblical era.

Netanyahu says he wants the Palestinians to govern themselves, but in recent months has declined to specify whether that would mean an independent Palestinian state or some lesser form of autonomy. He has stressed recently that Israel must retain security control in the Palestinian territories under any peace arrangement. "Whether or not it's defined as a state when we have the military control is another matter, but I'd rather not discuss labels, but substance," he said when meeting German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel on Jan 31. Gabriel said there was "growing frustration" in Europe with Israel's actions.

While Trump has offered strong support of Israel, he said in an interview published Sunday that he was "not necessarily sure" the country was seeking to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians. "Right now, I would say the Palestinians are not looking to make peace. They are not looking to make peace," Trump said in the interview with right-wing Israeli paper Israel Hayom. "And I am not necessarily sure that Israel is looking to make peace. So we are just going to have to see what happens."

Trump also expressed concerns about Israeli settlement building, although his administration has been far less critical of settlements than his predecessor Barack Obama. Trump's ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, has in the past been a supporter of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. "The settlements are something that very much complicates and always have complicated making peace, so I think Israel has to be very careful with the settlements," Trump said. — Agencies

Tillerson says US backs Egypt over security

CAIRO: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said yesterday Washington stood by Egypt in its fight against Islamist militants as he began a Middle East tour at a time of increasingly complex local and proxy conflicts. Tillerson stressed a need for free and fair elections in all countries ahead of a March presidential vote in Egypt, but withheld direct comment on what critics say is a crackdown on some rivals seeking to challenge President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi at the polls.

The United States has become more embroiled, diplomatically and militarily, in regional conflicts since President Donald Trump took office more than a year ago. It stepped up support for Kurdish-led forces in Syria before its NATO ally Turkey began a military operation against them last month, and has sided firmly with Israel in recognizing Jerusalem as its capital, angering Palestinians and drawing rebukes from Arab leaders.

The United States has also forged closer ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states while taking a tougher line against Iran since Trump took office. Tillerson and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry delivered a message yesterday that relations remained strong with one of the key Arab allies. "We agreed we would continue our close cooperation on counter-terrorism measures," Tillerson said. "Egypt deals with the threats of ISIS themselves and are dealing with it certainly currently in the Sinai. The US commitment in continuing to support Egypt in its fight against terrorism and bringing security for the Egyptian people is steadfast and will continue," he said.

Egypt last week launched a large military operation against Islamist militants, focused on defeating Islamic State in the Sinai peninsula. Tillerson arrived in Egypt, one of the main recipients of Washington's foreign aid,

at the start of a regional tour amid heightened tension between Israel, Syria and Damascus's ally Iran after an Israeli F-16 aircraft was shot down crashing in northern Israel.

Shoukry said Cairo and Washington had agreed to hold strategic dialogue talks at the level of foreign ministers later this year. "This relationship is essential to achieve stability in the region," he said. Tillerson also met Sisi before leaving the country. He was to attend a conference on Iraqi reconstruction in Kuwait.

Sisi is running against a single competitor in the March 26-28 poll after more challenging opponents pulled out, some citing intimidation of supporters and other tactics designed to give the incumbent an easy win. Sisi, a former military chief, gave the armed forces three months to clear Sinai of militants after more than 300 people were killed by gunmen at a mosque in Sinai in November. The Egyptian army said at least 28 suspected militants have died in clashes since the operation began on Friday.

Egypt receives \$1.3 billion annually from the United States. Last year, Washington withdrew some financial aid to Egypt saying it had failed to make progress on respecting human rights and democracy. Asked about concerns over the election, Tillerson said the United States supported a credible, transparent vote in Egypt, Libya and elsewhere. "We have always advocated for free and fair elections, transparent elections not just in Egypt but in any country," Tillerson said.

Egypt says it will conduct free and fair elections, but opponents of Sisi have criticized what they say is a government-led crackdown on challengers. He said the United States was also keen to continue supporting Egypt in its economic recovery, after the country implemented tough economic reforms tied to a \$12 billion International Monetary Fund loan.

Shoukry said Egypt stressed the need for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "We discussed how to reach a solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of a two state solution and the importance of maintaining U.S. efforts to reach this final settlement," Shoukry said. — Reuters



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meets US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson yesterday. — AFP

NGOs pledge \$330m as Iraq seeks \$90bn...

Continued from Page 1

A number of Kuwaiti NGOs made pledges worth \$122.5 million, and the rest came from NGOs from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Britain. The UN refugee agency said the conference offered a "unique opportunity" to help displaced Iraqis rebuild their lives. "Sustainable return is not just about bricks and mortar," Bruno Geddo, UNHCR's representative in Iraq, said in a statement. "Rebuilding and restoring communities is a complex effort, covering everything from clearing explosive hazards to repairing damage to infrastructure to restoring basic services, and facilitating social cohesion so that communities can again begin to flourish."

UN agencies UNICEF and UN-Habitat called for urgent investment to restore basic infrastructure and services for children and families. "Violence may have subsided in Iraq, but it has upended the lives of millions across the country, leaving one in four children in poverty and pushing families to extreme measures to survive," they said in a joint statement. The World Health Organization called for investment in hospitals and other medical facilities, pointing to more than 14 hospitals and 170 health facilities destroyed.

Today, the conference will focus on private sector investment while tomorrow, national leaders are expected to announce governmental aid packages. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, whose country is a key member of the anti-IS coalition, visited Iraq yesterday ahead of attending the conference. "I have come to tell you of France's support and to accompany you. We will always be there. We were there to participate in the coalition. We will also be there in the reconstruction phase," Le Drian said after landing in Baghdad.

Manila slaps ban on 'all' Filipinos...

Continued from Page 1

This is very bad for us as family," said Shiela, who spoke to Kuwait Times via Facebook.

The move prompted a local company to put the annual leaves of its Filipino employees on hold, citing the case of an employee who was barred from returning to Kuwait despite holding a valid work permit. In a circular seen by Kuwait Times, the company said the move aimed to protect its employees, adding those who still want to leave can do so at their own risk after notifying the management.

Philippines authorities have not ruled out revoking the permits of Filipinos currently working in Kuwait or of previous hires returning on new contracts. "With the

advent of the series of reports involving abuses and deaths of overseas Filipino workers in Kuwait, a total ban on deployment of all overseas workers ... is hereby enforced," Bello said, reading an order. "This order takes effect immediately." The move would affect thousands of workers, labor spokeswoman Abegail de Vega said. The fresh move came after President Rodrigo Duterte last month barred Filipinos from seeking work in Kuwait, although the ban exempted those who had already secured permission. The Philippine foreign affairs department said yesterday authorities were repatriating 10,000 overstaying Filipinos from Kuwait, taking advantage of an amnesty program arranged with the Kuwaiti government.

In an earlier interview in Manila, Bello said they may lift the ban if Kuwait agrees to sign a memorandum of agreement for the protection of OFWs. "We have received copies of the investigation reports from the Kuwaiti interior ministry regarding the deaths of seven OFWs. Our president wants to know the real reason why they died. We are going to translate these documents before sending them to Manila," he said.

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Sports



Sour taste from Sochi led us to Olympic gold, says Canada's Moir

Canada revised team plan after Sochi letdown

GANGNEUNG: Canada's ice dance star Scott Moir said yesterday's Olympic figure skating team gold was inspired by the sour taste left by their too "casual" approach at Sochi four years ago. Moir with partner Tessa Virtue helped Canada live up to their mantle as favourites with a commanding win over defending champions Russia and the United States for the Winter Games' heavyweights first gold in South Korea. Moir and his compatriots came in second best in Sochi, a defeat that the 30-year-old said was irking for "a country born on ice". "We weren't happy with our approach in Sochi, it was too casual," he said. "We came home with a sour taste in our mouth, so we set a four year plan, we wanted to win it, we believed in ourselves."

"Canadians are born on the ice, we think we are best in world... we are proud we took it more seriously, especially against two very good teams." They took command on Friday, despite Sochi dual silver medallist Patrick Chan tumbling in his men's short programme.

Competing in their third Olympics, Virtue and Moir earned a maximum 10 points for their short programme, and matched that in the concluding free with an exhilarating four-and-a-half minute performance to the music of Moulin Rouge. Canada finished on 73 points, with Russia on 66 and the USA a further four points behind.

This was the first silver of the Pyeongchang Games for Russia, featuring teenage starlets Evgenia Medvedeva and Alina Zagitova.

“**Canadians are born on the ice**”

'NAIL IT'

Chan said "determination" made the difference between Sochi silver and Korean gold. "We saw the potential we had in Sochi and didn't capitalise on it. This time we really wanted to nail it into the coffin and win this thing," he said. Italy came in fourth with Japan last of the five that went through to the final five segments of the competition held over three days. While Japan had to make do without defending men's Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu, Canada went into battle with all their stars present. And they didn't let them down at the Gangneung Ice Arena. For Russia, competing in South Korea as Olympic Athletes from Russia after the country's state-sponsored doping ban, it was always going to be a struggle to recover from Mikhail Kolyada's flop in the men's short. But they gave it a shot, with Medvedeva and Zagitova dominant in both ladies' sections. Medvedeva conjured up a world record score in Sunday's short routine, with Zagitova producing a personal best in her free dance to Don

Quixote. "Today I got my best score, a season's best and I am pleased with that," said the 15-year-old after this latest chapter in a remarkable first senior season. "I was very nervous because I wanted to skate well and I did," added the freshly-minted European champion. Training partners under coaches Eteri Tutberidze and Sergei Dudakov, the teenagers will turn from teammates to foes next week for a mouthwatering women's title showdown. As for the men, US quad boy wonder Nathan Chen, rated one of Japanese skating golden boy

Hanyu's main dangers, will be working overtime in training after making mistakes in his short routine. Hanyu sat out the team competition as he gave his body every chance of being at its best for the defence of his crown after ankle ligament damage threatened to



GANGNEUNG: Canada's Scott Moir holds the Canada flag beside Canada's Tessa Virtue after the venue ceremony after winning gold in the figure skating team event during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Gangneung Ice Arena in Gangneung yesterday. —AFP

scuttle his Olympic dream last November. Meanwhile Moir, 30, is already looking to the future, but not his own. "I will judge our success on the generation that comes after us, if good skaters emerge that will speak volumes to us." —AFP

scuttle his Olympic dream last November. Meanwhile Moir, 30, is already looking to the future, but not his own. "I will judge our success on the generation that comes after us, if good skaters emerge that will speak volumes to us." —AFP

Olympic Village welcoming Russians despite abuse claim

GANGNEUNG: Olympic Village residents are behaving well towards athletes from Russia despite a verbal abuse complaint, says a top Russian women ice hockey player. "Everything is good. People are pretty friendly," said Olympic Athlete from Russia (OAR) standout Valeria Pavlova after the team lost their first match of the 5-0 to Canada.

"It seems like everyone is one family in the village. We go around like normal people." Russia were banned from the Pyeongchang Olympics over doping but 168 'clean' athletes were allowed to take part under a neutral flag and using the OAR name.

Six Russian women's hockey players were barred because of the sanctions. Earlier this month a Russian hockey coach said he had been verbally abused in the Village over the doping scandal.

While it was unclear who made the offending remark, the Canadian Olympic Committee issued an apology. After the OAR squad lost their opener to four-time defending Olympic champion Canada, the Canadian coach Laura Schuler said the verbal abuse and apology issue wasn't on the radar screen.

"We've been focused on ourselves and what we're here to do," she said. Schuler said ensuring a level playing field without doping was a matter for the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

"Our focus is on us and progressing," she said. "We put our trust in the IOC and WADA on making sure it's an equal playing ground for everybody." As for the OAR having to play without some of their top players, Schuler noted, "It was great they were able to field a team." Russian coach Alexei Chistyakov said through a translator that he did not think lacking the six players hurt the spirit of his team. "We always come out with determination to win," OAR's Maria Batalova said. —AFP

Martineau soaking up 'real' Olympics

PYEONGCHANG: The 2010 Vancouver Olympics holds a special place in the memory of Canada's Barrett Martineau. The giddy feeling during the Nordic combined event when he took his mark and peered down from the top of the ski jump.

The rush of the descent, the whirring of the cameras and the relief of landing the jump in front of a roaring home crowd. A teenage dream fulfilled in all respects, bar one - he wasn't actually competing.

Martineau was just a floor jumper who had been called up midway through the event to test out the jump when conditions became a little windy. "I was kind of like the test dummy," Martineau, now really competing in the Pyeongchang Games as a skeleton racer, told Reuters yesterday.

"It was windy so they put me up there and I think the announcer actually thought I was the athlete from Austria that was coming up. "So he announced it and the crowd roared. It got super-loud, it was awesome.

"The cameras were on me like it was on TV and stuff, so I got the jump and it felt like the real thing. Only it wasn't." Martineau had just missed out on qualifying for Canada's Nordic combined team at the age of 18 but he felt his jump was probably better than some of the real skiers' efforts.

"The Olympic committee owns the video ... I found it on Youtube once many years ago," he said. "It wasn't a very good jump but I certainly wouldn't have finished last in the ski jumping event." Eight years on, the 26-year-old Calgary native is soaking up being an actual Olympian.

LEAP AWAY

The sliding sport of skeleton may seem a fair leap away from Nordic combined but they both have adrenaline in common. The seed of the switch was planted at Vancouver when Jon Montgomery claimed the skeleton gold, keeping the title in Canadian hands following Duff Gibson's triumph four years before in Turin.

"I was in the Canada House when (Montgomery) came by to give a speech and in the village when he walked by me with a pitcher of beer and I thought it was pretty inspiring," Martineau said.

American figure skater Ashley Wagner, who is not competing in Pyeongchang, wrote on Twitter that Zagitova's programme was "not a performance," although she respected its "competitive approach." "She killed time in the beginning and then just jumped the second half," Wagner wrote. "It's not a performance. I understand that this is what the system allows but it's not all figure skating is about."

BEING 15

As Medvedeva sat out the Grand Prix Final in December with a fractured foot, Zagitova seized her opportunity to stand out in her first senior season and even threatened her 18-year-old compatriot's world records. With her European title and stellar performance on Monday, devoid of the jitters sometimes seen among first-time Olympians, Zagitova has made Olympic gold a toss up between her and Medvedeva, a two-time world champion.

"To be 15 and go out on Olympic ice without trembling and just executing what she can do is a huge experience," pairs skater Evgenia Tarasova told a news conference of her team mate. "She might be 15, but she is quite a grown person."

Zagitova and the other OAR figure skaters are relocating to Japan this week, away from Olympic excitement to focus on preparing for the individual events that lay ahead. Zagitova is set to perform her short programme on Feb. 21 and her long programme two days later.

"I can't imagine how a 15-year-old girl can compete at the Olympics," ice dancer Ekaterina Bobrova told a news conference. "All I say is that I wish her luck. She perfectly understands that she has to do what she is able to do. And what happens, happens." —Reuters



GANGNEUNG: Barrett Martineau of Canada corners in his mens' skeleton training session at the Olympic Sliding Centre, during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea yesterday. —AFP

"I thought it was a pretty cool sport. I retired from ski jumping and six months later I thought about that moment and I kind of jumped on the bandwagon and started skeleton." Having won medals in Turin and Vancouver, Canada's skeleton racers drew a blank in Sochi, so getting funding for Pyeongchang has been a battle.

But a full quota of six Canadians will compete, a testament to the athletes' commitment to the fringe sport, said Martineau. "The funding structure kind of fell apart after Sochi 2014 and we had to start from the beginning," he added.

"Me and my team mate Dave (Greszczyszyn) were both in the top 10 (of world rankings) at vari-

ous stages and we are completely self-funded, the only ones in our programme.

"It's been a hard experience but it's been a good one." Clinching a medal could help prise open the coffers again and Martineau is confident the skeleton tournament, which starts with the men's event at the Olympic Sliding Centre on Thursday, is wide open.

But he will just be glad to hear the announcer call out his name when he gets his slide ready at the start of the track. "From day one it was, 'I want to go to the Games,'" he said. "It's a fulfilling feeling to know that I am basically on the road to achieving what I set out to achieve." —Reuters

At 15, Zagitova dazzles in Olympic debut

GANGNEUNG: Floating gracefully on the ice to secure silver in the team event for the Olympic Athletes from Russia (OAR) in Pyeongchang yesterday, 15-year-old Alina Zagitova showed she is the one to beat.

Wearing a flashy red tutu, Zagitova cleanly executed all elements of her jump-packed free skate to take first place with a more than 20-point lead over second-place finisher Mirai Nagasu of the United States.

Zagitova seemed unfazed about stepping onto Olympic ice for the first time. She was eager to gain experience on the world's most prestigious stage. "It's one more experience for me," the soft-spoken teenager told reporters. "Nothing has been proven yet. I still have to do well in the individual event."

The European champion, whose performances are reminiscent of ballet, added that she would try to approach the women's individual event like any other competition. The free skate at the Olympic team event is not the first time the Russian has impressed.

Last month she handed training partner Evgenia Medvedeva her first defeat in more than two years at the European championships in Moscow, winning gold in front of a jubilant home crowd. But the design of her programme, in which jumps come late in a bid to receive a higher score, has drawn some criticism.



GANGNEUNG: Russia's Alina Zagitova competes in the figure skating team event women's single skating free skating during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Gangneung Ice Arena in Gangneung yesterday. —AFP

Sports



Angry snowboarders hit out at 'dangerous' Olympic final

Prestigious men's downhill skiing moved to Thursday

PYEONGCHANG: Angry snowboarders said the "dangerous" women's slopestyle final at the Pyeongchang Olympics should have been cancelled after vicious winds caused a string of crashes yesterday. Nearly all the athletes, including American winner Jamie Anderson, tumbled at some point at the frigid Phoenix Park, where strong winds forced Sunday's qualifiers to be scrapped and also delayed the final for more than an hour yesterday.

It was the latest event at the Games to be disrupted by the swirling wind, with the prestigious men's downhill skiing moved to Thursday. None of the snowboarders suffered major injury, but the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Ski Federation (FIS) faced questions as to why the final was not shelved.

The FIS admitted that conditions were "challenging" but defended the decision to go ahead with the event, saying the safety of the athletes was their top priority. Enni Rukajarvi mastered the conditions better than most and took bronze behind defending champion Anderson and Laurie Blouin of Canada, but the Finn said her achievement had been overshadowed.

"Most happy that no one got hurt really bad," she said. Asked whether it had been the right decision to hold the event, she replied: "It wasn't. It was better in the practice, but then it got really bad, so they should have cancelled it or moved it."

The 27-year-old added: "The weather was bad and too dangerous and I got a lot of wind in my run,

so that was bad, too. I had a fall and hurt my chin a little bit so it wasn't too nice." On Sunday, 17-year-old Tess Coady, the youngest member of the Australian team in South Korea, was forced out of the Games after wrecking her left knee in training.

Coady blamed the weather and Austrian rival Anna Gasser said: "So many people got hurt because of the wind already." Gasser, who finished 15th, called the competition "a lottery" and said: "I don't think it was a fair competition and I'm a little disappointed in the organisation that they pulled through with it. "From my point of view I think it was not a good show for women's snowboarding."

'HUGE GUSTS'

Britain's Aimee Fuller, who finished 17th after crashing, branded the conditions among the toughest she had competed in and said she had "no chance" of landing her last jump when she was caught by one strong gust. "It was for sure not what I wanted, not what I expected, not what I dreamed of for my Olympic final," said the 26-year-old, who

was unhurt in the fall. "There were huge gusts of wind-I've decided to call it the Pyeongchang Gust."

Anderson, 27, became the first woman to win two Olympic snowboarding golds, despite briefly falling too in her final run. But all the talk was about the wind, which coupled with the sub-zero temperatures made life tough for athletes and spectators. In the build-up to competition, Britain's Katie Ormerod and



PYEONGCHANG: (From L-R) France's snowboarders Sophie Rodriguez, Mirabelle Thovex and Clemence Grimal pose at the end of a press conference. Angry snowboarders said the "dangerous" women's slopestyle final at the Pyeongchang Olympics should have been cancelled after vicious winds caused a string of crashes yesterday. —AFP

teenager Coady both suffered Games-ending injuries on the slopestyle course, which features high rails and huge jumps.

Coady ruptured her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), abruptly ending her first Olympics and leaving her facing several months on the sidelines.

In a statement, winter sports' governing body said: "FIS always aims for the athletes to be able to stage their best performances, which some athletes have expressed was not the case today. "But the nature of outdoor sports also requires adapting to the elements." —AFP



None of the snowboarders suffered injury

Olympic hopes over for unified Korean hockey team after 8-0 drubbing

GANGNEUNG: North Korea's band of all-female supporters was unable to inspire the historic joint Korean women's ice hockey team as they were dumped out of the Pyeongchang Olympics with an 8-0 defeat to Sweden yesterday.

The unified team for the Winter Games in South Korea was the product of a landmark deal between the South and North Korea—the neighbours still technically at war—after a year of high tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests.

The home crowd-seated among them the North Korean cheerleaders-roared their players as they skated onto the ice in their blue-and-red jerseys, "KOREA" emblazoned over a pale blue silhouette of the divided peninsula. The joint team is deeply symbolic, but as a hockey side they were at the Games with little hope of making a serious impression in terms of the competition. And so it proved as they were hammered 8-0 for the second time in a row, this time to the Swedes, ranked five in the world.

Sweden were 3-0 up in just 10 minutes and the heavy defeat means Korea play Japan on Wednesday in their final match in a deadrubber. But even as the home team were being pounded, the 200-strong North Korean cheerleaders in red, blue and white tracksuits chanted, "Cheer up", clapping and waving mini-unification flags in unison and setting off a Mexican wave. The unity was interrupted when a four-member South Korean cheering group, in tight white T-shirts and pink shorts, skipped and hopped to Avril Lavigne's "Girlfriend".

The North Koreans responded with songs of their own—mostly old folk numbers, including a ballad longing for one's home town—showing a deep cultur-



GANGNEUNG: Unified Korea's Ko Hyeon (L) and Sweden's Annie Svedin fight for the puck during the women's preliminary round ice hockey match between Sweden and Unified Korea during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Kwandong Hockey Centre in Gangneung yesterday. —AFP

al divide between the two halves of the peninsula. The Games have triggered a rare moment of reconciliation between the two Koreas.

Only a few months ago, Pyongyang's missile and nuclear tests and exchanges of threats with Washington were driving tensions sky-high. But in a whirlwind of Olympic diplomacy, hundreds of North Koreans came South last week to attend the Pyeongchang Games, and in extraordinary scenes the North Korean leader's sister Kim Yo Jong cheered the unified team together with the South's President Moon Jae-in.

'PLAY WITH ONE MIND'

The unified hockey team was hastily assembled only two weeks before the Olympics began—and it showed in the one-sided losses to Switzerland and now Sweden. Local fans at the stadium were more

bothered about the significance of the joint team.

"I know we lack skill compared to other teams but I hope they will play with one mind," said Kim Sang-wook, 62, from Seoul. Koo Bon-jae, a 20-year-old student from the South Korean capital, added: "I was initially against it but I was touched after seeing them on the ice together." But not everyone was in favour and the addition of North Korean players to the team had provoked controversy in the South, with accusations that Seoul was depriving some of its own players the chance to compete at a home Olympics for political purposes.

Since the division of the peninsula the two Koreas have only competed as unified teams in 1991, when their women won the team gold at the world table tennis championship in Japan, and their under-19 footballers reached the world championship quarter-finals in Portugal. —AFP

Finland's Valila oldest Olympic hockey woman at 44

GANGNEUNG: Finland forward Riikka Valila, who followed her brothers into hockey at age seven, is now a mother of three and the oldest women's hockey player in Olympic history at age 44. In Finland's 3-1 opening round-robin loss to the United States on Sunday in their Pyeongchang opener, Valila also became the oldest Winter Olympian in Finland history, replacing figure skater Ludowika Jakobsson-Eilers, who was 43 in 1928. "To be able to do it once again, to be able to do it in that age, I'm very thankful," Valila said. "After Sochi, I felt good in my body and I still felt that I can improve, I can be better on the ice. I don't have to prove anything to myself or anybody else. I just enjoy playing... I'm getting better and I can help the team. "After this season is over, if everything feels good, then I continue." Valila, who has played on six bronze-medal world championship Finnish teams, helped Finland to Olympic bronze in 1998 in women's Olympic ice hockey debut. She was also on the 2002 squad that placed fourth but retired in 2003 to start a family.

GREAT FUN

She now has two sons and a daughter with husband Mika, a 1990s pro hockey player in Sweden and Finland, and after a decade off returned in 2013 and played in Sochi 2014. "I was quite tired of hockey when I was around 29, 30," she recalled. "When I got my first child, I wanted to be with him a lot. Then I got the second and third children too and had difficulty leaving them. I wanted to concentrate on the children and had also started working and living as an ordinary person.

"I was a manager in the Finland women's team in 2012-13, the season before Sochi. We had a joke that I should make a comeback. Somewhere, however, this feeling was awakened that it would be great fun to join again."

Valila, who hopes to play in next year's world championships, became the oldest woman to score an Olympic goal when she netted one against Russia in 2014. That's when thoughts of Pyeongchang began.



GANGNEUNG: Finland's Riikka Valila waits for the puck to drop in the women's preliminary round ice hockey match between Finland and the US during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Kwandong Hockey Centre in Gangneung. —AFP

"I had been training for one season, one year, and then it was like, why not? Why not keep on doing it because I love to train and I love to play hockey," she said. "It would have been almost for nothing to only play for one year." Now she's a physiotherapist and playing for Swedish club HV71, following her brother Lasse Nieminen into the pro ranks just as she followed him onto the frozen rinks all those years ago.

"I have two big brothers who play hockey and I wanted to do the same as them," she said. If Finland can reach the podium again, she will become the third Winter Olympian to capture medals 20 years apart after Swiss hockey player Bibi Torriani in 1928 and 1948 and Japanese ski jumper Noriaki Kasai in 1994 and 2014. —AFP

Medals Table

LONDON: Olympic Games complete medals table on day three in PyeongChang.

Rank	Country	G	S	B	Total
1	Germany	4	0	2	6
2	Netherlands	3	2	2	7
3	Canada	2	4	1	7
4	USA	2	1	1	4
5	France	2	0	1	3
6	Norway	1	4	3	8
7	Sweden	1	1	0	2
8	South Korea	1	0	0	1
9	Austria	1	0	0	1
10	Japan	0	1	1	2
11	Oly Ath from Russia	0	1	1	2
12	Czech Republic	0	1	1	2
13	Australia	0	1	0	1
14	Slovakia	0	1	0	1
15	Finland	0	0	2	2
16	Italy	0	0	1	1
17	Kazakhstan	0	0	1	1
Total		17	17	17	51

G = Gold
S = Silver
B = Bronze

Hanyu takes first glides towards gold defence

GANGNEUNG: Defending men's figure skating champion Yuzuru Hanyu yesterday took several glides towards emulating a 66-year-old record by winning back-to-back Olympic gold medals with his first public appearance since a training injury last November.

The wildly popular Hanyu was forced to drop out of the Grand Prix series after a hard fall while practising a quad Lutz, sustaining an ankle ligament injury that has kept him out of competition since.

Coach Brian Orser has repeatedly said Hanyu, 23, is back at full strength and landing quads, but with no sign of him on the ice questions have been rife about whether he was up to taking on rivals including American jumping ace Nathan Chen and training partner Javier Fernandez from Spain.

The last man to win consecutive Olympic golds was American Dick Button in 1952. But on Monday, a day after arriving in South Korea, Hanyu took to the practice rink in the Gangneung Ice Arena.

Gliding across the ice during a 10-minute warm-up session, Hanyu tested the edges of his skates and circled slowly, every so often performing a light, one-rotation jump amid a barrage of camera clicks.

As the music for his short programme - Chopin Ballade No. 1 began to play, he executed a few moves of his routine, skated to the centre of the ice, bowed and left the rink. But even that was enough for one Japanese wire service to issue an alert.

To reporters he said only "I look forward to your support" before disappearing. On Sunday, when Hanyu arrived in South Korea, Hanyu said he was looking forward to competing. "I've had to miss a lot of events, and that was really frustrating for me. I'm glad to finally be here," he said.

Asked about the chances of a golden repeat, he said: "I'd be lying to myself if I said I wasn't thinking about this. I do want to win back-to-back golds, but that isn't my only goal." Hanyu, whose fans follow him around the world shouting "Yuzu!" and showering the ice with flowers and stuffed animals, is set for a longer practice today. The men's singles competition begins on Friday with the short programme to be decided on Saturday. —Reuters

Sports

Crosby scores 400th career goal to seal win for Pittsburgh

Colin Wilson scores 100th goal of his NHL career

PITTSBURGH: Sidney Crosby scored twice, including his 400th career goal, and the Pittsburgh Penguins dominated the host St. Louis Blues 4-1 on Sunday. Crosby, who ended a 10-game scoreless drought, has 19 goals on the season. The two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Penguins are surging toward the playoffs and have won 12 of their past 17 games. Penguins goalie Matt Murray came up huge with 33 saves on 34 shots. He is 5-0-1 in his last six decisions. Kyle Brodziak had the only goal for the Blues, who saw their three-game winning streak end.

SHARKS 3, DUCKS 2 (SO)

Joe Pavelski and Logan Couture scored in a shootout to cap the Sharks' rally from a two-goal, third-period deficit, helping San Jose win at Anaheim. San Jose goalie Martin Jones stopped Adam Henrique's slapper to start the shootout and got help from the goalpost, which stoned Rickard Rakell's attempt in the second round. Couture buried his attempt to end the tiebreaker. Jones finished with 25 saves for San Jose, while John Gibson made 37 saves for Anaheim. The Sharks forced overtime when Timo Meier bagged his 14th marker of the season at 19:06 of the third period.

FLYERS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1

Sean Couturier had a goal and two assists, and Michal Neuvirth made 38 saves to lead Philadelphia to a road victory over Vegas. Andrew McDonald, Claude Giroux and Radko Gudas also scored for the Flyers, who won for the fourth straight time. Neuvirth improved to 7-2 this season with his second victory in 24 hours after prevailing in relief during a 4-3 shootout win at Arizona on Saturday night. Brayden McNabb scored the lone goal for Western Conference-leading Vegas, which fell to 19-4-2 at home and lost back-to-back games at T-Mobile Arena for the first time in the team's young history.

BRUINS 5, DEVILS 3

Adam McQuaid scored the go-ahead goal to lead visiting Boston to a win over New Jersey. Torey Krug scored two goals to lead Boston, which has won four of five and 10 of 12. The Devils dropped their fourth consecutive game, and with the slide, they find themselves in fourth place in the Metropolitan Division. Patrice Bergeron added an insurance goal with 39 seconds left in the game. Boston won despite losing the shots-on-goal battle 38-27.

AVALANCHE 5, SABRES 4

Colin Wilson scored the 100th goal of his NHL

career and added an assist as Colorado used five different marksmen to snap a tie with Buffalo. Jonathan Bernier made 28 saves as the Avalanche snapped a two-game losing skid. Colorado scored early in all three periods against a Buffalo squad that was without leading goal-scorer and point-producer Jack Eichel, who is expected to be sidelined four to six weeks due to an ankle injury.

FLAMES 3, ISLANDERS 2

Matthew Tkachuk scored his second goal of the third period to snap a tie with 1:05 left, lifting Calgary to a come-from-behind win over host New York. Mark Jankowski also scored for the Flames, who trailed 2-0 in the second period before winning for the fourth time in five games. Calgary goalie Mike Smith made 23 saves but was injured sprawling for a last-ditch shot by John Tavares in the waning seconds. Smith had to be helped off the ice, and David Rittich came in for the final faceoff with 1.1 seconds left.

CANUCKS 6, STARS 0

Vancouver scored four goals in the first 25 minutes and ended a four-game losing streak with a blowout victory at Dallas. The Stars, who came into the day on a season-best-tying, five-game winning streak, played their third game in a four-day span and performed on both offense and defense as if they needed some time off. The Canucks won for just the sixth time in 18 games (6-11-1). Jacob Markstrom turned away 30 Dallas shots to earn his second shutout of the season.

RED WINGS 5, CAPITALS 4 (OT)

Tomas Tatar scored his second goal of the game with 2:13 left in overtime, giving Detroit a victory at Washington. Tatar took a cross-ice pass from Dylan Larkin and slid a backhand past Washington goalie Braden Holtby for the game-winning goal. Alex Ovechkin had a goal and an assist for the Capitals.

RANGERS 3, JETS 1

Jimmy Vesey scored with 3:53 remaining in the third period to break a tie as New York beat host Winnipeg. Vesey scored his 11th goal after missing the previous three games due to a concussion sustained Feb. 3. Michael Grabner added an empty-net goal for New York, getting his seventh such tally a few minutes after hitting a post on a breakaway. The Rangers won consecutive games for the first time since beating Philadelphia and Buffalo at home in mid-January. The Jets lost consecutive home games for the first time all season. — Reuters



LAS VEGAS: Jonathan Marchessault #81 of the Vegas Golden Knights skates with the puck against Valteri Filppula #51 of the Philadelphia Flyers in the second period of their game at T-Mobile Arena on Sunday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Flyers won 4-1.—AFP

NHL results/standings

Pittsburgh 4, St. Louis 1; NY Rangers 3, Winnipeg 1; Detroit 5, Washington 4 (OT); Vancouver 6, Dallas 0; Colorado 5, Buffalo 4.

Eastern Conference						Western Conference							
Atlantic Division						Central Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Tampa Bay	38	14	3	198	145	79	Nashville	33	12	9	169	140	75
Boston	34	12	8	180	131	76	Winnipeg	32	15	9	179	151	73
Toronto	33	19	5	188	159	71	St. Louis	34	21	3	167	147	71
Detroit	22	23	9	147	165	53	Dallas	33	20	4	175	151	70
Florida	23	23	6	147	167	52	Minnesota	30	19	6	165	156	66
Montreal	22	26	7	144	172	51	Colorado	30	21	4	174	163	64
Ottawa	19	26	9	144	188	47	Chicago	24	23	8	157	155	56
Buffalo	16	30	10	132	185	42	Pacific Division						
							Las Vegas	36	15	4	187	152	76
							San Jose	30	18	8	165	156	68
							Calgary	29	19	8	159	159	66
Washington	32	17	6	173	161	70	Los Angeles	30	20	5	159	133	65
Pittsburgh	31	22	4	176	171	66	Anaheim	27	19	11	160	164	65
Philadelphia	28	19	9	165	162	65	Edmonton	23	27	4	152	177	50
New Jersey	27	20	8	163	170	62	Vancouver	22	28	6	147	180	50
Carolina	26	21	9	151	166	61	Arizona	13	32	10	129	193	36
Columbus	28	23	4	147	155	60							
NY Islanders	27	24	6	193	210	60							
NY Rangers	27	24	5	164	172	59							

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)

Russian whistleblower lives in fear in USA

NEW YORK: Doping guru Grigory Rodchenkov has emerged from hiding, donning a disguise and reiterating that Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to silence him for good. The controversial whistleblower and former head of Moscow's anti-doping laboratory says he is risking his life by exposing Russian doping secrets. In his first televised interview since fleeing his native Russia, Rodchenkov told the American news programme 60 Minutes on Sunday night that he continues to live in fear in the United States. "Kremlin wants me to stop talking," Rodchenkov told interviewer Scott Pelley.

Since fleeing to America in November 2015, he has gone into hiding because he says Putin wants him dead—a claim he has made several times previously. The news magazine programme allowed Rodchenkov to wear a disguise and showed him putting on and walking around in a bulletproof vest. "(The disguise) was done for security reasons," says Rodchenkov, who dyed his hair a different colour and shaved his mustache. "There is information that my life is in jeopardy and we took all necessary steps." Rodchenkov's escape to America followed the sudden death of two senior officials from Russia's anti-doping agency. There is a warrant out for his arrest back home.

"I am not a liar. I was not telling truth in Russia but coming to United States I am telling the truth." Rodchenkov said he now wants to dedicate his time to exposing drug cheats and being an advocate for change.

He doubts whether the Olympics will ever have a level playing field for the athletes. "You could believe but in fact it is human nature," he said. "It is our sins. It has nothing to do with sports. There are 10, 15 percent who are incorrigible. You can do nothing, they are cheaters by nature." Because Rodchenkov was one of those self-admitted cheaters, he is apologizing for his role in the scandals and the deception that he says still goes on, using formulas and techniques that he helped develop. "I am sorry to create such a problem because of my experience and knowledge," he said. "Now it is effective and working and it is not my contribution to fight against doping." As a result of his whistleblowing the Russians were stripped of Olympic medals and Russia was banned from this week's Pyeongchang Games. But the International Olympic Committee allowed a large group of Russians deemed clean to take part as "Olympic Athletes from Russia."—AFP

Rusty Serena puts on brave face after comeback defeat

ASHEVILLE: Former world number one Serena Williams said she felt on the "right track" despite a crushing loss in her long-awaited comeback to tennis on Sunday playing alongside big sister Venus in a Fed Cup dead rubber.

The duo, who have combined to win 22 doubles titles, were outgunned by the unheralded Dutch pairing of Lesley Kerkhove and Demi Schuurs who were playing in their first ever outing together. The Williams lost 6-2, 6-3 with 36-year-old Serena appearing particularly slow on her feet and poor in her shot selection after more than a year away from the sport.

But she was determined to put on a brave face after the loss took some of the shine off the Americans' otherwise decisive 3-1 win that booked their place in the next round against France in April. "It felt really good to be back the court. I've been training and it was just exciting to be out there," she said.

"I honestly feel better than I thought I was gonna feel. I feel like I didn't expect to play you know like that for me. So I feel like that I'm on the right track." It was Serena's first competitive match since winning her 23rd major at the 2017 Australian Open.

The American star took time away from the sport to give birth to her daughter Alexis Olympia and get married, to Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian. Both were in attendance over the weekend, seated just behind the players' box. Serena had previously said that her path back had been full of "ups and downs", crediting Venus with helping her regain her rhythm. On Sunday she was



ASHEVILLE: Serena Williams of Team USA waits on a serve from Lesley Kerkhove and Demi Schuurs of the Netherlands during a doubles match in the first round of the 2018 Fed Cup at US Cellular Center on Sunday.—AFP

happy with the power behind her shots even if her accuracy wasn't quite where it should be.

"I didn't expect to have that much power on my serves," she said. "Even though they didn't go in, it's just the start, I feel like that's a very good step in the right direction." And she hinted she needed to juggle the demands of motherhood against her career better.

"I didn't manage my time well," she said. "This is literally my first time travelling with the baby and everything so I'm gonna try to do better."

HOME CROWD SUPPORT

There had been speculation Serena may drop out of Sunday's doubles match, after she did not turn up for practice in the morning with the three other US players.

But team captain Kathy Rinaldi confirmed her participation after Venus won her singles match against Richel Hogenkamp to seal overall victory for the US. "Serena's

gonna be joining her sister Venus!" she announced, to roars of approval before Williams appeared dressed in a white top, dark blue shorts topped off with a red headband. The Americans had enjoyed enormous support all weekend from the sold-out 5,200-capacity crowd in the mountainous city of Asheville, North Carolina, famous for its historic architecture, breweries and vibrant art scene.

The dead-rubber was supposed to be the feel-good, icing on the cake, but the Dutch players had other ideas. "To play the two Williams sisters, it's amazing because we won the match," said Kerkhove, 26.

"We knew it just 30 minutes before the match. We just both gave it our all and we just had nothing to lose." The Dutch players' ability to soak up the pressure was all the more remarkable given that Schuurs, the younger of the pair, was just six-years-old when Serena won her first major tournament. —AFP

Al-Jassar to support weightlifters, boxers

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Interior Committee who is running the affairs of boxing and weight lifting federations and Chairman of the two fed-

erations committee Talal Al-Jassar said the procedures of having each federation independent from the other are going ahead as one of the important conditions to lift the suspension by the International Olympic Committee or the International Weight Lifting Federation.

He said that the committee, in cooperation with Public Authority for Sport officials are working hard to complete the procedures as fast as possible, due to the instructions of Commerce and Industry Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan who is following the matter, along with the

interaction of Dr Humoud Fulaiteh on the matter.

Al-Jassar said the Federation and clubs participating in the weight lifting events appeal to PAS officials to build modern facilities as soon as possible to serve athletes and hold local competitions.

He said, the media coverage of the game was not of good standard as it should be although Kuwaiti athletes achieved outstanding results abroad.

He said the federation will continue its support to weight lifters in the clubs to maintain the levels and results they made previously.



Talal Al-Jassar

Sports

Liverpool's Mohamed Salah is the idol of his Egyptian village

‘Never stop dreaming, never stop believing’

CAIRO: Deep in Egypt's Nile Delta region, the children of Nagrig village have a clear goal in life: they want to become football stars like Mohamed Salah. Liverpool's top scorer and Africa's top player. Salah, who hails from their village, has been one of the sensations of the Premier League since joining Liverpool—his goal in the victory against Southampton on Sunday was his 29th of the season. Further enhancing his status as a national hero, Salah played a key role in leading Egypt to the World Cup finals in Russia later this year. Tomorrow his talent will be on show in the Champions League as Liverpool tackle Porto.

Mohamed Abdel-Gawad, 12, gazes in admiration at the three-storey house where Salah was born and raised, which overlooks a narrow dirt road like most of the houses in the village, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) northwest of Cairo.

“I hope to be like Mohamed Salah when I grow up,” Abdel-Gawad told AFP. “Mohamed Salah has become a professional player because of his ethics and humbleness.” In Nagrig as well as in Basyoun, the closest town, the youth centres were renamed after the Egyptian star.

“I hope to be like Mohamed Salah when I grow up”

Salah's journey, figuratively as well as literally, was anything but easy. “His talent clearly showed from the beginning,” said Ghamri Abdel-Hameed el-Saadani, who was the juniors coach at the Nagrig Youth Centre, where Salah started training at the age of eight.

Still, Salah's success is not just due to his talent, “it's also a product of a will of steel, effort, and determination”, said Saadani. The mayor of the village, Maher Shateyya, a family friend, bursts with pride when he talks about Nagrig's most famous son.

“Mohamed was only 14 when he joined the Arab Contractors club in Cairo, and he had to spend nearly 10 hours a day in transport to make it to and from practice,” said Shateyya of Salah's “journey of torment”.

Nagrig to Basyoun, then to Tanta city, the capital of Al-Gharbiya province, then a bus to downtown Cairo, and a final ride to the Nasr City neighbourhood where the club is located. Salah grew up in a sporty family, with his father and two uncles having played football at the youth club in Nagrig.

“When his father noticed his son's talent, he strived to enrol him at a big club,” said Shateyya. “In the beginning, Salah played with the team in Basyoun town, then he moved to Tanta city before he was taken by the Arab Contractors team.” Starting in the under-15s, Salah spent five years there before his talent earned him a moving abroad and Swiss club Basel. Salah “imposed himself, and his ability to penetrate the other team's defences shone”, Arab Contractors coach Said el-Shishini told AFP.

He recalled the dribbling ability that characterises Salah's goal scoring exploits for Liverpool: “He would take the ball from the middle of the pitch straight into the penalty area.” From Basel, Salah moved to Chelsea but failed to break into the first team.

He went to Italy where eye-catching performances for Roma caught Liverpool's attention and he signed last year in a deal that could eventually be worth 44 million pounds (49.5 million euros, \$60.8 million).



SOUTHAMPTON: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah runs with the ball during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Liverpool at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England on Sunday. — AFP

SUMMER RETURN

Salah was raised in a traditional family where both his parents had government jobs at the village. In addition to his government role, Salah's father also traded in Jasmine flowers, Nagrig's main harvest exported for perfume production.

In Nagrig, as far as the eye can see, the fields are filled with jasmine, which flowers in the spring. Salah married Magi, a fellow Nagrig resident, when he was

20, and she has given birth to a girl they named Makka, the Saudi Arabian city that is home to Islam's holiest site. The Liverpool winger still spends his annual leave with his wife and daughter in Nagrig, where he has never forgotten his roots. He has donated money to an intensive care unit at Basyoun Central Hospital and to a religious centre in Nagrig that is yet to be built, said Saadani. Salah also founded a charity in Nagrig that provides up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds (\$2,800) a month for people in need. “He is very modest... eight-year-old Mohamed is the same Mohamed (as he is now), Africa's top player.” — AFP

Spurs stand between Allegri, Champions League grail

TURIN: Massimiliano Allegri may be breaking records in Italy but the Juventus coach's quest for the elusive Champions League grail continues today against English side Tottenham Hotspur. The 50-year-old marked his 200th game in the Juventus dugout with a 2-0 win in Florence on Friday, capping a record breaking three-and-a-half years in Turin.

A surprise replacement for Antonio Conte in July 2014, the former AC Milan boss has won seven consecutive trophies with the Turin giants including the last three Serie A titles. Italy's national side are in disarray after the four-time winners' humiliating World Cup exit, but Juventus are in fine form under Allegri.

So much so that his name has not only been among those touted as the future Italy boss but as a potential manager of English giants Chelsea and Arsenal. The six-time defending champions are currently engaged in a gripping battle at the top of the Serie A table with Napoli for the Scudetto.

Juventus have won 11 matches in a row in all competitions, conceding just one goal in 16 games—an all-time club record. But two Champions League final defeats in the past three editions have dented Allegri's standing.

A 3-1 loss to Barcelona in 2015 was followed by another crushing 4-1 defeat to Real Madrid last year after which Allegri revealed he almost quit. “I wondered if I should write the final chapter to my story at Juventus,” said Allegri at the time, saying that his “love of teaching” had encouraged him to continue.

“It is truly the joy of my life. I like making players better and smarter. I know I still have a lot to prove. And I know I still have a lot to teach.”

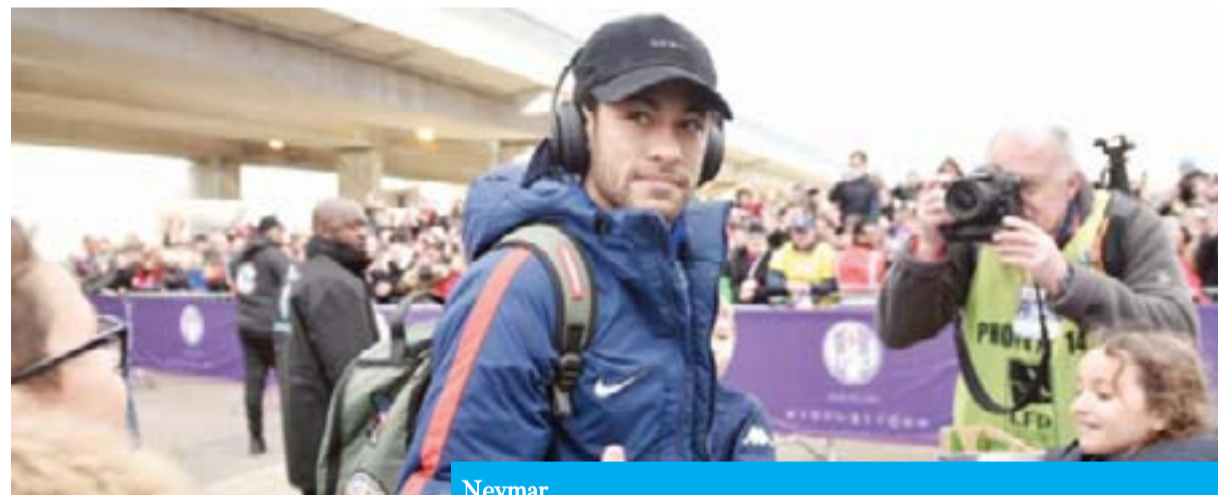
AGEING SQUAD

Instead he signed a new contract until 2020 and his Champions League quest continues with a last 16, first leg meeting with Mauricio Pochettino's Tottenham. Taking over from Conte—who went on to coach Italy and Chelsea—could have been a hard act to follow, but Allegri has managed to stamp his mark on the Turin side with even greater success than his predecessor.

Conte took Juve to three Serie A titles and oversaw the team's return to the summit of Italian football after the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal of 2006. Allegri's 200 games in charge may be dwarfed by Giovanni Trapattoni's record 596 but his percentage of wins are in a class of their own — 142 in total—a success rate of more than 70 percent. Allegri has accumulated a 238-point haul in Serie A to overtake the previous records of 234 by Conte and Carlo Carcano back in the 1930s.

He plays down the coach's role, insisting “the players win, I try to do the least damage possible”. But an ageing squad could hamper Allegri's quest for the European title Juventus won in 1985 and 1996.

The team's domination of the Serie A is largely down to the side's formidable defence, commanded by goal-keeping legend Gianluigi Buffon, 40, who reached a milestone 500 league games on Friday. Defenders Giorgio Chiellini and Andrea Barzagli are 33 and 36 years old respectively, with star striker Gonzalo Higuain a sprightly 30. Injuries are also a concern with Barzagli and Paulo Dybala in a race against time to be fit, and Juan Cuadrado, Blaise Matuidi and Benedikt Howedes out of action. — AFP



Neymar

Could Real Madrid lure PSG's Neymar to the Bernabeu?

MADRID: As Paris St Germain gear up for their blockbuster Champions League last-16 first leg tie against Real Madrid tomorrow, much of the media attention has focused on whether their most prized asset Neymar will eventually make a sensational move to the Santiago Bernabeu. The Brazilian became the most expensive player of all time last August when PSG swiped him from Barcelona for 222 million euros (\$272.1 million), although Real have coveted the forward since he was 13-years-old.

Real president Florentino Perez recently said his side tried to sign Neymar before he joined rivals Barca in 2013 and reiterated his desire to bring the Brazilian to Madrid. Neymar has scored a remarkable 28 goals in 27 games in all competitions for the runaway Ligue 1 leaders, although he has not always cut a happy figure in Paris.

His furious dispute with strike partner Edinson Cavani in September over the right to take set pieces reared its head again last month when the Brazilian refused to allow the Uruguayan to take a penalty against Dijon that would have made him the club's all-time top scorer.

The incident prompted some PSG fans to boo Neymar, even though he scored four goals in the 8-0 win. Paris-based journalist Joao Henrique of Brazilian website Universo Online told Reuters Neymar would be interested

in joining Madrid eventually, but does not envisage him leaving PSG in the immediate future.

“Neymar was disappointed when he first got to Paris, he soon realised the club was nothing like as big as Barca and the quality of the league was worse than in Spain, then he had the problem with Cavani which kept rumbling on,” he said. “But now seeing the quality of PSG has encouraged him and there are no more ego disputes. He wouldn't say no to Madrid because he played for Barca, he admires their grandeur and being the heir to Ronaldo excites him, but his short term plans are to win the Champions League and Ballon d'Or with PSG.”

Neymar scored the only goal in a 1-0 win at Toulouse on Saturday, after which defender Thiago Silva insisted his compatriot was content in France. “I don't know, I can't speak for him but I hope Neymar stays with us. I think he's very happy with us, he has a very important place in the dressing room,” he said.

Real have suffered a dramatic fall from grace after winning the Liga and Champions League last season and are 17 points adrift of league leaders Barcelona, with beating PSG looking like coach Zinedine Zidane's last opportunity to cling to his job. The Frenchman usually refuses to comment on transfer speculation but even he could not resist praising the Brazilian last month, declaring “he's a player who everyone on planet football loves”. Real left back Marcelo has also talked enthusiastically about his Brazil team mate joining the 12-times European champions. “I would love to see Neymar come to Madrid and I think he would fit in perfectly in the team,” Marcelo told Brazilian network Esporte Interativo last week. “He is a great player and the best players have to play for Madrid, and I think one day he will play for Madrid.” — Reuters

Leicester boss Puel welcomes Mahrez back after ‘mistake’

LONDON: Leicester City manager Claude Puel believes winger Riyad Mahrez's 10-day standoff with the Premier League club was a mistake and is eager for everyone to move on from the incident. Mahrez returned to training on Friday for the first time since handing in a transfer request last month with local media reports saying the 26-year-old was absent as he was ‘depressed’ following a failed move to Manchester City.

The Algeria international missed two games and six

training sessions after Leicester rejected the bid but returned to action in Saturday's 5-1 defeat by league leaders City. “I think since the beginning of the situation it was tough to manage, but all the time we kept united about this situation and about Riyad,” Puel was quoted as saying by the Leicester Mercury. “That was the most important thing. “Sometimes some players can make a mistake. It was the first time for him and it was a mistake but the most important thing is to look forward and put it right. “He is fantastic player for us, his team-mates and the fans. It is a pleasure to watch him... It is important we continue together.”

Mahrez hit out at “untrue assumptions” in a statement ahead of his return, shredding further doubt on the exact reasons for the playmaker's absence but Puel was tight-lipped on the matter. “Everything will stay within the club, remain between me, Riyad, the club and the players,” Puel added. “I think it was important he came back quickly with a good attitude. “Riyad coming back is a good thing for us and now it is important he has a good focus and concentration about his football.—Reuters

Porto warm up for Liverpool by thrashing Chaves

LISBON: Brazilian Tiquinho Soares scored twice as Porto warmed up for tomorrow's Champions League tie against Liverpool with a 4-0 thumping of Chaves on Sunday to retake top spot in Portugal from Benfica. Sergio Conceicao's side had beaten Sporting Lisbon in the first leg of the Portuguese Cup semi-finals in midweek, when Soares scored the winner. Former Nantes coach Conceicao named a strong side for the trip to Chaves and was rewarded as two first-half strikes from Soares ensured Porto had to waste little energy ahead of the last-16, first leg clash with Liverpool. “We played a game well above average and I'm happy with the performance of all the players,” said ex-Portugal winger Conceicao. “We must continue towards our goal, which is the league. We give priority to the league and that is our main aim.”

Soares made the most of a rare league start with Vincent Aboubakar rested, with his second goal a magnificent first-time volley. Moussa Marega grabbed his 16th league goal of the season after half-time to wrap up the points, although the Malian international is still searching for his first Champions League goal. Sergio Oliveira completed the scoring late on, as Porto moved two points clear of Benfica with a game in hand. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Juventus v Tottenham Hotspur	beIN SPORTS HD 1	22:45
Basel 1893 v Manchester City	beIN SPORTS HD 2	22:45
ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Melbourne Victory FC v Ulsan Hyundai	beIN SPORTS HD 3	11:30
Kawasaki Frontale v Shanghai SIPG	beIN SPORTS HD 1	13:00
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors v Kashiwa Reysol	beIN SPORTS HD 7	13:30
Tianjin Quanjian v Kitchee	beIN SPORTS HD 2	15:00
Persepolis FC v Nasaf Qarshi	beIN SPORTS HD 3	16:45
AlWasl v AlSadd	beIN SPORTS HD 2	18:00
Al Rayyan v Esteghlal/Teheran		18:10
Al Hilal v AlAin	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:25

12 Sour taste from Sochi led us to Olympic gold, says Canada's Moir



14 Rusty Serena puts on brave face after comeback defeat



15 Could Real Madrid lure PSG's Neymar to the Bernabeu?



BOSTON: Terry Rozier #12 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball during a game against the Cleveland Cavaliers at TD Garden on Sunday in Boston, Massachusetts. —AFP

New-look Cavs spoil Pierce's jersey party

George helps Thunder win without Westbrook, Carmelo

LOS ANGELES: On the day the Celtics retired Paul Pierce's number, LeBron James stole the spotlight, leading the new-look Cleveland Cavaliers to a 121-99 victory against former teammate Kyrie Irving and host Boston on Sunday. James had 24 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds. Cleveland was playing its first game with a full squad after making a series of deadline-day trades to retool its roster, with George Hill, Rodney Hood, Jordan Clarkson and Larry Nance Jr. all making their Cavs debuts. Clarkson finished with 17 points while Hood and J.R. Smith each added 15. Hill had 12 and Nance chipped in five to help the Cavs to a second straight win. Irving led the Celtics with 18 points and five assists. Marcus Morris was the only other player in double figures with 17 for Boston, which dropped its second straight.

Rockets 104, Mavericks 97

Chris Paul guided host Houston to a victory over undermanned Dallas. Paul finished with 25 points, eight rebounds, nine assists and three steals, providing the spark down the stretch of the third quarter that enabled the Rockets to extend their winning streak to eight games. James Harden added 27 points, six rebounds and five assists, and Clint Capela posted a double-double (16 points, 11 boards) for Houston. The Mavericks left Dirk Nowitzki, Wesley Matthews and J.J. Barea back in Dallas following their home triumph over the Los Angeles Lakers on Saturday night. They received 20 points from Yogi Ferrell and a 18 points and 12 rebounds from Dwight Powell.

Thunder 110, Grizzlies 92

Paul George amassed 33 points, eight assists and three steals as short-handed Oklahoma City routed visiting Memphis. George helped the Thunder win without Russell Westbrook (sprained left ankle) and forward Carmelo Anthony (sprained right ankle), who missed each missed a second consecutive game. Marc Gasol led the Grizzlies with 18 points, but Memphis dropped its sixth straight.

Raptors 123, Hornets 103

DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points and visiting Toronto wore out travel-weary Charlotte. CJ Miles posted 24 points off the bench and Jonas Valanciunas supplied 21 points for Toronto, which shot 56.3 percent from the field. The Raptors won their fifth game in a row, though the other four came at home. The Hornets had returned home Saturday morning after finishing a four-game West Coast trip with Friday night's loss at Utah. A night earlier, they lost in overtime at Portland. Charlotte lost its fourth game in a row Sunday despite 23 points from Kemba Walker and



17 points and 13 rebounds from Dwight Howard.

Timberwolves 111, Kings 106

Karl-Anthony Towns' 22-footer broke a late tie, and Minnesota went onto beat Sacramento in Minneapolis for its 13th consecutive home win. Towns led all scorers with 29 points for the Timberwolves, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Jimmy Butler added 18 points, and Andrew Wiggins added 16 points to go with eight rebounds for Minnesota. Rookie De'Aaron Fox had 23 points for the Kings, who lost for the fourth time in five games.

Raptors win fifth game in a row

Hawks 118, Pistons 115

Dewayne Dedmon converted a three-point play that gave Atlanta a late lead and then knocked down a clutch 3-pointer to help the Hawks beat visiting Detroit. Atlanta was down 107-104 with 2:24 play but mounted an 8-0 run, fueled by Dedmon, to take the lead. Dedmon grabbed an offensive rebound, hit a layup and made the ensuing free throw that put the Hawks in front. He followed with a 3-pointer from the right wing as the shot clock was winding down on

Atlanta's next possession that put the Hawks up 112-107. Dennis Schroder scored 23 points and went 6-for-6 from the foul line in the final seconds to seal the win for Atlanta. Dedmon finished with 20 points and 13 rebounds. Andre Drummond scored 25 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, and Reggie Bullock added 20 points for the Pistons, who have dropped two straight.

Pacers 121, Knicks 113

Victor Oladipo scored 30 points to lead Indiana past New York in Indianapolis. Oladipo added nine assists and eight rebounds to go along with six steals. Bojan Bogdanovic had 20 points, and Thaddeus Young delivered a double-double with 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Pacers. Enes Kanter and Tim Hardaway Jr. shared top-scoring honors for the Knicks with 17 points. Kanter, who had 11 rebounds, was able to return after missing the previous game following oral surgery.

Jazz 115, Trail Blazers 96

Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points and Joe Ingles 24 to lead visiting Utah past Portland. Rudy Gobert contributed 12 points and 11 rebounds as the Jazz won their ninth consecutive game and ended Portland's nine-game home winning streak. Jae Crowder-donning a Utah uniform for the first time after a three-team trade-chipped in 15 points and five rebounds off the bench. Damian Lillard, coming off a 50-point game Friday at Sacramento, led the Trail Blazers with 39 points. Portland's CJ McCollum added 22. — Reuters

Cannavaro, Oscar spearhead Chinese Champions League assault

HONG KONG: Guangzhou Evergrande coach Fabio Cannavaro and Shanghai SIPG's record signing Oscar will spearhead a four-pronged Chinese assault when the 2018 AFC Champions League group phase begins this week.

Evergrande, Asian champions in 2013 and 2015, have Cannavaro back at the helm for the second time and open their campaign at home to Thailand's Buriram United tomorrow in Group G. Oscar, a 60-million-euro signing a year

ago, is looking for a first trophy with SIPG after they crashed out in the semi-finals last season under Andre Villas-Boas, having beaten Evergrande in the quarter-finals. Villas-Boas has been replaced at SIPG by fellow Portuguese Vitor Pereira who has vowed to win a trophy and gets the first test of his management away to Japan's Kawasaki Frontale, who reached the quarter-finals last season, today. "The opening match is particularly important if we want to qualify for the knockout stage, so we have to prepare well," said Kawasaki's Yu Kobayashi, who netted six goals in the competition last season. "Shanghai have Oscar and Hulk, who are experienced, high-quality players." Joining them in Group F are South Korea's Ulsan who open with a long journey south to Melbourne Victory in Australia. Cannavaro resigned at Tianjin Quanjian just days after steering them into the Champions League for the first time. Tianjin have a new Portuguese coach in Paulo Sousa who is already beginning to like what he is seeing from Cannavaro's high-profile French recruit Anthony Modeste, who scored both goals to beat Ceres Negros of the

Philippines 2-0 in a playoff to reach the group phase.

Sousa's side will begin at home to Hong Kong debutants Kitchee, who have signed 38-year-old former Manchester United and Uruguay striker Diego Forlan to bolster their challenge. Shanghai Shenhua, minus expensive misfit Carlos Tevez who has returned to Argentina, complete the Chinese quartet with Wu Jingui in charge for their first group match since 2011, having replaced Gus Poyet in September.

But they face a tough baptism away to Japan's Kashima Antlers in Group H which also sees Sydney FC host Suwon Bluewings, who will field new signing Dejan Damjanovic up front after snaring the 36-year-old K-league goal machine from FC Seoul last month.

For the second year running there will be no defending champions taking part. Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds failed to qualify despite beating Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in November's two-legged final.

And last season the 2016 winners Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors were kicked out of the Champions League for their part in a match-fixing, scouting and bribery scandal, though

they return this year after serving their ban.

The tournament will feature games in the Western region, which will remain separated from the Eastern region until the final. Al Hilal and Al Ain have come closest to breaking the East's stranglehold on the trophy in recent times—the sides finished runners-up in 2017 and 2016 respectively—and they face off in one of the clashes of the round in Group D in Riyadh today.

The UAE's Al Ain have strengthened their line-up by signing former Asian player of the year Ahmed Khalil to team up with shaggy-haired star Omar Abdulrahman in a formidable attacking line-up.

Abu Dhabi's Al Jazira, fresh from hosting the FIFA Club World Cup in December, welcome Qatar's Al Gharafa who will have former Real Madrid and Inter Milan midfielder Wesley Sneijder, 33, making his AFC Champions League debut. The Dutch maestro will play alongside another new signing, Iran's Mehdi Taremi, who bagged seven goals last season as Persepolis reached the semi-finals for the first time in their history. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2018

18 Chevrolet Alghamdi wins prestigious 'Excellence in Website Services' Award



19 Al-Tijari declares net profit of KD 55.4 million for 2017



21 Air Arabia delivers record 2017 net profit of AED 662m, up 30%



Zain's OGM has record quorum of 84.69%

The sale of Treasury shares was fully transparent and compliant and achieved the best value for all stakeholders

KUWAIT: Zain Group yesterday held its ordinary general assembly at its head office with an attendance rate of 84.69 percent at the request of a group of shareholders who own more than 10 percent of the company's shares to discuss the Zain board of directors' decision regarding the company's recent share transactions, the factors considered, the adoption of sound corporate governance principles and compliance with regulatory requirements regarding potential conflict of interest cases and the alignment with the interests of the shareholders.

Speaking to a packed audience, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said: "The company's board of directors and executive management have followed and taken into consideration all the laws, regulations, administrative and financial rules related to the sale of treasury shares, and in conformity with the Capital Markets Authority's (CMA) regulations." Kharafi added: "The board of directors has relied on the authorization granted by the ordinary general assembly meeting held on March 12, 2017 to buy or sell the company's shares not exceeding 10 percent of the number of its shares in accordance with the minutes of the meeting."

Provided background information, Kharafi said: "On June 13, 2017, the board of directors received an offer from Omantel to buy 25.7 million treasury shares representing 9.84 percent of Zain's fully paid in and issued share capital. The offer was discussed with the board of directors and the sale price was agreed at 600 fils per share, representing a total cash consideration of \$84.6 million (KD 254.4 million). Citibank was appointed as a third independent party to evaluate the offer and the feasibility study of the transaction, considering the book value of the share, which was 302 fils at that time," he said.

- Citibank acted as the independent advisor and recommended that the price offered for treasury shares was fair with many benefits
- There was no conflict of interest and the board performed its duties with no personal benefit
- The deal reduced the indebtedness of the group by \$846.1 million, plus annual savings of \$25 million in interest expenses
- The sale price of the treasury shares came at a 33% premium on the share price a day before the deal was announced
- Zain's stock price rose 13.3% between the initial announcement of the deal and its completion two weeks later adding \$515 million value to shareholders
- The 600 fils purchase price of treasury shares reflects a value equivalent to 7.3 times EBITDA
- Sale of treasury shares increased cash flow and shareholders' equity by KD 255 million



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

Bader Al-Kharafi: The Board of Directors' sole intention to sell treasury shares was in the interest of the company and its shareholders, undertaking all necessary requirements in coordination with official and regulatory bodies

"Citibank presented a report showing the importance of the offer, that the price offered is fair and acceptable, and the benefit that will accrue to the company from that transaction. The board approved the offer in principle on the recommendations of Citibank, and decided to take the necessary steps to start implementation and request approvals from the relevant authorities, headed by

the Capital Markets Authority and the Bursa Kuwait," Kharafi said.

He pointed out that a letter was sent to the CMA on June 22, 2017 seeking approval of the sale of the treasury shares. The company thereafter obtained approval from the CMA on July 16, 2017 to sell such treasury shares for a period of six months from the date of obtaining the approval. This approval was announced on July 17, 2017 on the website of the CMA and Bursa Kuwait, according to the law.

Kharafi stated that the board unanimously decided to approve the transaction on August 9, 2017. The transaction was announced to the CMA on August 10, 2017, thereby commencing the start of the auction for 10 working days in accordance with Bursa Kuwait's instructions, where more than 5 percent of shares are offered.

"Following, on August 13, 2017, at the request of the CMA, a complete disclosure of the transaction was made which further elaborated the financial impact of the sale of treasury shares. On August 24, 2017, the auction result was announced without any party bidding more than 600 fils, which confirms that this price was the best offer that could be obtained for the stock at that time. Accordingly, the transaction was

completed and the treasury shares were sold to Omantel," he said. "Based on the procedures outlined in the timeline described above, the board of directors undertook all necessary measures, taking into account the coordination with the official and regulatory bodies and carrying out all required disclosures in accordance with the CMA's provisions," Kharafi said.

Kharafi reiterated: "There was no conflict of interest, and the Board achieved its duty with no personal benefit. The transaction was completed only in the interests of the company and shareholders." Regarding the benefits of the deal, Kharafi said: "The transaction increased the company's cash liquidity which clearly was beneficial for shareholders as it helped to reduce the company's indebtedness by \$846.1 million debt and reduce interest expenses of \$25 million on an annualized basis through early repayment."

Furthermore, Kharafi said: "Zain's stock price rose 13.3 percent between the initial announcement of the deal and its completion two weeks later adding \$515 million value to shareholders. The sale price was 33 percent above the price of Zain's share price, a day before the deal was announced. The sale came at a 38 percent premium over a three-month weighted average price per share."

Kharafi concluded: "The liquidity from the sale of these treasury shares will significantly enhance Zain's strategic and financial flexibility at a time where we continue to seek opportunities in the digital space and invest in upgrading our modern networks to enhance the mobile experience for our customers, supporting our aspirations of becoming a premier integrated digital lifestyle operator."

The below summarizes what Kharafi said during the Assembly of the benefits of the deal.

Transparency and professionalism

Bader Al-Kharafi told reporters after the General Assembly: "The meeting today was held professionally and transparently, and responded to all questions and enquiries by shareholders, and this is their inherent right."

Sale of treasury shares

• The monthly average price per share before the sale of treasury shares was about 440 fils.

• The sale of treasury shares of which the Group received \$846 million, which greatly enhanced the solvency and reduced the pressure on the balance sheet of the Group.

• The purchase price of treasury shares of 600 fils is equivalent to 7.3 times EBITDA, and is relatively high when compared

with the corresponding transactions across the region and our peers in the industry.

• Within a short period after the sale of treasury shares, the share price rose to 550 fils, which greatly benefited shareholders with the market value of Zain Group increasing from \$6 billion to more than \$7 billion.

• Omantel bought 425,711,648 shares worth 600 fils per share on August 24, 2017.

• The book value as of June 30, 2017 was equivalent to 302 fils.

• The selling price was 33 percent premium on the share price a day before the deal was announced, and the sale came at a 38 percent premium over the weighted average price per share within three months.

The benefits of Zain's treasury shares sale

• Reduction of net debt to EBITDA from 2.1 times to 1.5 times.

• The group's financial position was substantially enhanced by reducing the group's debt by KD 254 million (net debt was KD 896 million at the end of the second quarter of 2017 and decreased to KD 642 million at the end of the third quarter of 2017).

• The deal comes at a time when the management needs cash to continue injecting investments into its subsidiaries and to meet the necessary changes of the telecommunications industry, which has given the management a high valuation outlook for the sale.

• The group has saved \$25 million in annual savings on interest payments through early repayment of debt.

• Sale of treasury shares increased cash flow and shareholders' equity by KD 255 million.

Effect on the stock price and market capitalization

• The market value of Zain's shares on the day of the announcement of the agreement rose by 14.4 percent, reflecting a value creation of \$260 million to shareholders on the same day.

• Zain's stock price rose 13.3 percent between the initial announcement of the deal and its completion two weeks later, adding \$515 million value to shareholders.



From left: Omar Mohammed, Hussain Al-Ghuroob, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and Ossama Matta during the general assembly meeting.

Business

Chevrolet Alghanim wins prestigious 'Excellence in Website Services' award

Award conferred at Kuwait's PR and Customer Service event

KUWAIT: Chevrolet Alghanim, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, was awarded the "Excellence in Website Services" award at the annual Public Relations and Customer Service Awards held by Kuwait's Public Relations Association under the noble patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In attendance at the ceremony were 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.

Awarded for improving customer experience by serving customers' online enquiries in a timely manner, providing them with the latest offers and launches, as well as enhancing the personalized service provided in its showrooms, the integrated website allows customers to explore and customize vehicles at their convenience and comfort of their home.

Redesigned in 2017 with the customer at heart, the website chevroletalghanim.com features the latest 360 degrees visualizer which functions through the WebGL technology, enabling customers to choose from their preferred configurations and add them to the vehicle of their choice.

Not only does it allow customers to personalize a vehicle, the visualizer provides an interactive platform as well to view car models inside and outside, visualize them in various environments, and enjoy a high-definition finish close to reality. The visualizer allows

customers to jump inside a vehicle as in a test drive experience, change the interiors and interact with the vehicle's functions also in a high-definition finish.

Chevrolet Alghanim's website also comes with more experience-enhancing services highlighted by the online and live customer service chatting and booking abilities.

The company's website was designed and developed to be customer-centric, making navigation easier to all customer segments. The website is responsive to any device, and makes booking for the desired service easy by placing customers a click away from booking for a service online and at their preferred showroom or center.

The website sets a new milestone in the series of customer-centric services launched by Chevrolet Alghanim, which all aim to provide customized solutions, expand the customer-base and exceed customers' expectation day after day.

Chevrolet Care Program "I Care"

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons benefit of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for four years.



Recognition for speedy and timely online services response



جائزة التميز في خدمات الموقع الإلكتروني
شركة يوسف أحمد الغانم وأولاده للسيارات
وكلاء شفروليه



President Trump determined to devalue dollar

By Hayder Tawfik

The relentless appetite for the dollar goes on regardless of what Donald Trump or his politicians are up to. Tax cuts of \$1.5 trillion plus possibly similar amount for infrastructure spending as promised during Donald Trump's campaign is on its way to the congress for approval. For sure it will be approved, possibly even bigger spending. Meanwhile, the US budget deficit is ballooning further. But who is going to pay for these spending?

International creditors and investors are always complaining about the huge US deficit but they don't mind keep funding them. They are not worried because they know that the US government's ability to bill it has never been in doubt. However, the only way for the US government to keep paying back its creditors is by issuing more US dollars and the only way to make the government's deficit attractive is to devalue the dollar. Some Congressional Republican members once known for hating bigger budget deficits are now happy to see more government spending. International creditors are ready to fund more as the US government is looking forward to spending more in the coming years.

Just like businesses most governments do run budget deficits from time to time but living beyond ones means cannot be sustainable. The US government has been running budget deficits for a long time and to its credits it has never failed in paying its cred-



itors and will continue to do so. However, there is a price to pay and unfortunately the price is paid by US creditors in the form of a devalued dollar. Throughout its history, consecutive US governments always wanted a strong dollar as they believed that a strong dollar is good for the prosperity of the country. I am not sure and I do not contribute to such an argument. Over the past 50 years, the dollar has been weakening years after years.

Now President Trump wants a much weaker dollar as he promised during his election campaign. He is already delivering on that promise. He believes that just like the US biggest trading partners i.e. China, Japan, and Germany a devalued dollar is the path to prosperity. Economic prosperity is about exporting and importing but for Trump it is about exports only. To be fair to him I think it is about time US's major trading partners play to the same rules that determine international fair trades. Overall, the United States imports more than it exports and that is why the president is arguing for a weaker dollar.

The dollar weakness is a double-edged-sword that could be beneficial for the US economy and it should not be a reflection on a weaker US economy. While the US economy is weak by historical standards it is still growing faster than those of the eurozone, Japan and much of the rest of the world, except for China. For global investors, the US economy stands out against world economies. It has a stable political and legal system that protect international investors. A weak dollar makes US goods and services more affordable in comparison to the offerings of competitors. It also has the effect of increasing the value of corporate profits from overseas operations once it is translated into the dollar. In the likelihood of a weakening dollar, investors must think first to offset currency weakness and secondly how to benefit from it. While it will be difficult for the US economy to stand out relative to other developed economies for long period but it is likely that it will continue the outperformance for a while to come.

As for equity investors, a cheaper dollar means that they should overweigh their exposure to US equities, particularly to those companies that have very high export ratios. In general, US companies that have most of their business located outside the country will fare better by weakening US\$. Finally, investors should give some thought to the impact of a weakening dollar on investing in equities and the impact on returns, the ultimate decision should be based on company's is fundamental factors, interest rates and profitability. @Rasameel

Commodity hedge funds close as computers rule

LONDON: "Chocfinger" made his name and his money by taking bold bets on cocoa markets. But after nearly four decades of trading, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, Anthony Ward threw in the towel. Ward blames the rise of computer-driven funds and high-frequency trading for forcing him and some other well-known commodities investors to close their hedge funds and look for opportunities where machines can't make a difference.

While computerized trading is not new, Ward and others argue its steady rise has reached a tipping point that is distorting prices and creating uncertainty not only for investors, but for chocolate firms, carmakers and others who rely on commodities.

It was in January 2016, after a slide in cocoa prices, that Ward decided the days of traditional commodity investors doing well from taking positions based on fundamentals such as supply and demand may be numbered.

"It was just too big, too quick, too dramatic. And completely against the fundamentals," Ward told Reuters. Commodity markets fell across the board that month after weak factory data in China raised fears of lower demand from the world's top consumer of raw materials.

Ward blamed the slide in cocoa on what he regarded as misplaced selling by computer-driven funds reacting to the Chinese data, given China has scant impact on the cocoa market.

"The actual fundamentals in cocoa were extraordinarily bullish in January 2016. We were forecasting the largest harmattan in history, which is exactly what happened," he said.

His prediction that a hot, harmattan wind from the Sahara desert would hit harvests in Ivory Coast and Ghana and drive cocoa prices higher did come to pass - but not before the fund had been forced to cut its losses when the market slumped.

At the end of 2017, Ward closed the CC+ hedge fund that had invested in cocoa and coffee markets for years.

And at the end of January, commodity hedge fund Jamison Capital Partners run by Stephen Jamison closed. He told investors that machine learning and artificial intelligence had eliminated short-term trading opportunities, while commodities did not offer obvious benefits in the long term.

Also in 2017, renowned oil trader Andrew Hall, who earned \$100 million in 2008, called time on his main Astenbeck Commodities Fund II. He had said in an earlier letter to investors that extreme volatility caused by "non-traditional investors and algorithmic trading" made it difficult to hold onto long-term positions when the market moved against them.

In 2016, Michael Farmer, founding partner of the Red Kite fund that specializes in copper, also accused high-frequency traders using super-fast computers of distorting the market and getting an unfair advantage. —Reuters

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	280.865
Swiss Frank	798.075
Bahrain Dinar	82.110
UAE Dirhams	83.335
Qatari Riyals	80.920
Saudi Riyals	424.545
Jordanian Dinar	17.024
Egyptian Pound	19.48
Sri Lankan Rupees	4.685
Indian Rupees	2.715
Pakistani Rupees	3.640
Bangladesh Taka	5.830
Philippines Peso	17.865
Cyprus pound	

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.411655	0.419155
Czech Korune	0.006647	0.015947
Danish Krone	0.045633	0.050633
Euro	0.363441	0.370941
Georgian Lari	0.134107	0.134107
Hungarian 0.00134	0.001324	
Norwegian Krone	0.034219	0.039419
Romanian Leu	0.064339	0.081189
Russian ruble	0.005202	0.005202
Slovakia	0.008946	0.018946
Swedish Krona	0.033357	0.038357
Swiss Franc	0.314769	0.325769
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.227363	0.239363
New Zealand Dollar	0.212391	0.221891
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.234267	0.243267
US Dollars	0.297000	0.301420
US Dollars Mint	0.297500	0.301420

Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.003255 0.003839
Chinese Yuan	0.046258 0.049758
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036612 0.039362
Indian Rupee	0.004180 0.004821
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018 0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002687 0.002867
Korean Won	0.000267 0.000282
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073423 0.079423
Nepalese Rupee	0.003004 0.003174
Pakistan Rupee	0.002526 0.002816
Philippine Peso	0.005816 0.006116
Singapore Dollar	0.221717 0.231717
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001693 0.002273
Taiwan	0.010331 0.010511
Thai Baht	0.009145 0.009695
Arab	
Bahraini Dinar	0.792106 0.800606
Egyptian Pound	0.014106 0.019824
Iranian Riyal	0.000083 0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000198 0.000258
Jordanian Dinar	0.420066 0.429066
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000 1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154 0.000254
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021944 0.045944
Omani Riyal	0.775760 0.781440
Qatar Riyal	0.078415 0.083355
Saudi Riyal	0.079207 0.080507
Syrian Pound	0.001275 0.001495
Tunisian Dinar	0.121218 0.129218
Turkish Lira	0.073882 0.084182
UAE Dirhams	0.080553 0.082253
Yemeni Riyal	0.000978 0.001058

Business

Al-Tijari declares net profit of KD 55.4 million for 2017

CBK Board recommends 18% cash dividend and 10% bonus shares

KUWAIT: Subsequent to Commercial Bank of Kuwait's disclosure of the financial statements for the year ended 31/12/2017, Ali Al-Mousa, the Bank's chairman said that "I would like to invite our valued shareholders, investors and stakeholders to read the details of the published financial statements which serve as an objective guidance on the Bank's financial performance."



Ali Al-Mousa

The profitability indicator of the Bank's 2017 financial results showed high improvement with profitability increasing remarkably which in its turn translated the Bank's Management focus to enhance profitability ratio in 2017 regardless of assets growth. As a result, the Bank reported net profit of KD 55.4 million for the year ended 31/12/2017, a growth of 10 percent from the 2016 net profit of KD 50.4 million. The earnings per share are 33.9 fils compared to 30.8 fils for the last year. The Board of Directors recommended the distribution of cash dividends of 18 fils per share (18 percent) and a bonus issue of 10 shares for each hundred shares (10 percent), compared to last year's 15 fils cash dividend and a bonus issue of 10 shares.

Commenting on the Bank's financial results, Ali Al-Mousa, the Bank's Chairman explained that the Bank witnessed a healthy growth in all the key areas of its business. Net interest income grew by 10.4 percent and fee income grew by 7.8 percent. The total provisions held with the Bank against its credit portfolio were KD 137 million. The NPL ratio to total loan portfolio is 0.53 percent which is the lowest NPL ratio at the level of Kuwaiti banks. KD 32 million were recovered from the written-off debts during 2017, while cumulative recovery during the last six years has been KD 138 million. Further, the Bank saw a growth in its shareholders' equity which amounted to KD 655 million in 2017 with growth of 8.5 percent compared to KD 604 million in 2016.



Bank witnesses a healthy growth in all key areas of its business

The Bank's Management endeavored to develop the techniques of providing more secured and innovative banking services to customers through the self service system recently developed by the Bank's IT concerned departments. It is worthwhile to note that the majority of our customers were satisfied with the self-service functionalities. Furthermore, a number of flexible e-services were introduced such as the smart deposit & withdrawal ATMs. The Bank is well under the way to further develop and upgrade its automated systems with prime focus on security features.

Al-Mousa took the opportunity to thank the Bank's shareholders, valued customers, staff and regulatory authorities for their support, emphasizing that the Bank's Management continues to implement all the required procedures for safeguarding the interest of the Bank, its shareholders and all other stakeholders.



Financial Results For The Year Ended 31st December 2017

Operating Profit	104.4 KD Million	↑ 3.2%
Net Profits	55.4 KD Million	↑ 10.0%
Earnings Per Shares	33.9 KD Million	↑ 10.0%
Total Assets	4,394.6 KD Million	↑ 6.5%
Capital Adequacy Ratio		18.60%
Non-Performing Loans (NPL's)		0.53%

Cash Dividends	18%
Bonus Shares	10%



Business

World markets attempt to bounce back

LONDON: World shares climbed half a percent yesterday, attempting to brush off fresh rises in global bond yields while equity futures also pointed to a firmer session on Wall Street...

week's turmoil, current levels are well above the long-term average around 11 percent, in a sign that investors' nerves are still jangling. The continued move-up in bond yields is reinforcing the fear of more volatility ahead.

ble than a full-blown correction to the nine-year long equity bull market as bond investors priced in an improved economic outlook. "Even at 2.90 percent, 10-year Treasury yields are still low," he added.

US equity futures rose 1 percent. Data from the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission showed equity funds had cut long positions in S&P 500 futures, reducing exposure to a market which has fallen about 8 percent from Jan. 26 record highs.

Inflation, dollar

While equity markets attempt to recover, the question is whether they can withstand another sharp move up in bond yields - something will be put to the test by econom-

ic data this week. In China, banks extended a record amount of new yuan loans in January, blowing past expectations, which is likely to support growth not only in China but underpin liquidity globally.

Analysts forecast U.S. consumer price inflation, to be released on Wednesday, to have slowed to 1.9 percent in January from a year earlier, while the core measure is seen ticking down to 1.7 percent. Given it was fears of faster inflation - and more aggressive rate rises - that triggered the global rout in the first place, an above-forecast figure could well spark a fresh selloff in stocks and bonds.

bond curve but the soft dollar showed the former currently had the upper hand. The gap between short- and long-dated US yields is at the widest in more than three months - the so-called curve steepening which indicates higher inflation expectations and economic activity.

Sterling meanwhile inched higher, off last week's three-week lows but Britain's shaky economy and rocky Brexit process kept it fragile. Yesterday's more cheerful market mood also lifted commodities, with Brent crude futures rising two percent after last week's 9 percent fall, copper bouncing off two-month lows and gold up 0.2 percent, well off five-week troughs. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Monday, February 12, 2018. Includes tables for Index, Trades, and various stock categories like Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Consumer Goods, etc.

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

Business

Air Arabia delivers record 2017 net profit of AED 662m, up 30%

Airline BoDs proposes a cash dividend distribution of 10 fils per share

SHARJAH: Air Arabia (PJSC) yesterday announced full-year financial results for 2017 as the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier once again delivered high levels of profitability and growth across the breadth of its operations.

Air Arabia's net profit for the full year ending December 31, 2017 was AED 662 million, a 30 per cent increase compared to AED 509 million registered in 2016. Turnover for the full year 2017 was in line with the preceding 12 months reaching AED 3.74 billion. More than 8.5 million passengers flew with Air Arabia in 2017 and the average seat load factor - or passengers carried as a percentage of available seats - in 2017 stood at an impressive 79 per cent.

Following its solid full year 2017 performance, Air Arabia's Board of Directors proposed a dividend distribution of 10 per cent of share capital, which is equivalent to 10 fils per share. This proposal was made following a meeting of the board of directors of Air Arabia and is subject to ratification by Air Arabia's shareholders at the company's upcoming Annual General Meeting.

Air Arabia added 21 new routes to its global network in 2017 from its five operating hubs in the UAE, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan. The carrier took delivery of 4 new aircraft

and ended the year with a fleet of 50 Airbus A320 aircraft operating to 140 routes across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe.

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammad Al-Thani, Chairman of Air Arabia said: "Air Arabia has enjoyed consistent and sustained growth in 2017 driven by its network expansion strategy and cost control measures helping us to once again deliver a strong set of results. While

network reflects the strength of our business model and the carrier's management team". In the fourth quarter of 2017, Air Arabia reported a net profit of AED 26 million, an increase of 177 per cent compared to a net loss of AED 33 million registered in the last quarter of 2016. Turnover for the three months ending December 31, 2017 was AED 858 million, an increase of 5.4 per cent compared to AED 814 million in the same period in 2016. Air Arabia flew over 2 million passengers in the final quarter of 2017 at an impressive seat factor of 78 per cent.

"The solid operating metrics and high seat load factor that Air Arabia achieved in the fourth quarter were positively impacted by improvement in yield margins and capacity rationalization that the market have seen in the last quarter," Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammad Al-Thani continued: "We are extremely confident about the long-term fundamentals of the aviation sector in the region which is driven by the underlying demand for air travel, major investments undertaken in aviation infrastructure in the region as well as the region's hub position on the global map".

He concluded: "We believe Air Arabia has the right business model, operating base and infrastructure in place to continue delivering



**Q4 net profit increased 177%;
21 new routes added to network**

political and economic challenges continued to impact the performance of the aviation sector in 2017, we have focused more keenly than ever on ensuring the highest level of operational efficiency and appealing product offering".

He added: "Air Arabia's ability to continue to report sustained profitability and achieve solid growth margins across our



innovative value driven services to our customers. We will continue to explore opportunities and enter into new ventures that will best serve the airline's ambitious growth plans and at the same time provide highest returns to our shareholders".

Air Arabia continues to be recognized, locally and internationally, for its strong performance and community efforts. In 2017, Air Arabia won "Outstanding Performance -

Robust Performance and Community Initiatives" by the Aviation Achievement Awards 2017 at the Aviation Annual Gala Evening 2017. The carrier's corporate social responsibility program "Charity Cloud", which aims at providing sustainable education and healthcare initiatives in underprivileged communities across the world, embarked on 10 new projects spread across Kenya, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Sudan, Egypt and Jordan.

Shop at Landmark Group brands with NBK cards and avail a 20% discount

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait customers can now enjoy special discounts when shopping with their NBK credit card or Shabab prepaid card at Landmark Group stores. The instant 20 percent discount will be available at Centrepoint, Home Centre, ICONIC, New Look, Steve Madden, MAX, Bossini, Carpisa, Aerosoles, Pablosky and Paprika (inside Bossini).



"NBK is delighted to partner with Landmark Group to offer our customers this exclusive benefit," said Rym Mohammed Bourenane from NBK Merchant Business and Customer Loyalty department, National Bank of Kuwait. "NBK customers rely on us to make their spending and saving easier with exclusive rewards and discounts". The special instant discount is the latest move by NBK to reward its loyal customers with valuable offers tailored to meet their lifestyle needs.

"Landmark Group is a popular shopping

destination in Kuwait and we are happy to partner with NBK to offer their customers such a valuable discount," said Ali Hussain, Head of Marketing, Landmark Group.

NBK credit card or Shabab prepaid card holders can shop for clothes, furniture, shoes, children's clothing or toys and home furnishings. NBK customers must pay with their eligible NBK credit card or Shabab prepaid card to enjoy the 20 percent instant discount at checkout. Not valid on already discounted items. The offer is valid until 21st February 2018.

NBK offers a range of credit cards suitable for every occasion. Customers can utilize the 'Right card for me' tool on the NBK.com website to select the right credit card based on their individual needs. The Right Card for Me tool will direct customers through a series of basic questions - age, salary, benefits desired to find the right fit. NBK offers 12 different credit card options for individual account holders, each with a select and tailored set of benefits and criteria.

All credit card holders, however, have access to NBK's Rewards program, the largest loyalty program in the country with more than 700 participating local and international brands in fashion, dining and lifestyle.

NBK credit card customers can earn reward points for spending at home and abroad, another reason to plan, book and travel using NBK cards. NBK customers can also enjoy benefits that make travel - whether for holiday or business - more convenient, safer and easier. For instance, NBK credit card holders may receive free lounge access, travel discounts on airlines, car rental and hotel bookings, secure shopping, travel insurance and more.

Turkish Airlines announces its 2018 January passenger, cargo traffic results

KUWAIT: The national flag carrier of Turkey reached the highest Load Factor in January with 79.8 percent in its history. Total number of passengers carried went up by 37 percent reaching 5.7 million passengers. Thus, 5 million passenger level is exceeded first time in Turkish Airlines history for the month of January. Making the whole world more accessible for its passengers by flying to 300 international destinations than any other airline in the world, Turkish Airlines consistently continues to increase its total passenger number.

According to the recently announced 'January 2018 Traffic Results', Turkish Airlines reached the highest Load Factor in January with 79.8 percent. Total Load Factor improved



by 7.3 points to 79.8 percent with an increase of 17 percent in Available Seat Kilometer, while international LF increased by 7.5 points to 78.6 percent. Domestic and International flights have reached the highest January LF of Turkish Airlines history.

Double digit growth in demand (revenue per kilometer) that commenced in July 2017, kept on with 29 percent demand growth in January 2018. Excluding international-to-international transfer passengers (transit passengers), number of international passengers

went up by 45 percent. In January, cargo/mail volume increased by 34 percent, compared to January 2017. Main contributors to the growth in cargo/mail volume, are Middle East with 45 percent increase, Domestic Lines with 44 percent increase and Europe with 39 percent increase. In January, Load Factor increased for all regions. North America, Middle East, Central America, South America and Africa showed visible growth among other regions with 13 points, 1 points, 9 points and 8 points increase, respectively.

Ahli United Bank booth at the State Audit Bureau

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced its presence at the State Audit Bureau with a dedicated kiosk from 11 to 15 February during the State Audit Bureau's official working hours. The objective is to increase awareness



amongst the Tower's visitors of the advantages of the Bank's products and services, and their associated benefits, and to engage with potential customers.

Commenting on this participation, AUB

stated in a press release: "The presence and availability of our Bank staff at the State Audit Bureau is to ensure direct communication with existing and prospective customers, and to assist the Bank in identifying their needs and preferences. It is also an excellent opportunity to acquaint visitors with its banking and financing services and products designed to cater for the needs of all segments of society.

Amer Najem, Head of Branches, went on to say "We are very happy with the welcome we have received from the State Audit Bureau. This generous welcome deepens our appreciation of their trust in our customer services and facilitates the process by which the State Audit Bureau's visitors can obtain information on our products and services, thereby promoting our customer satisfaction objectives and deepening the impact of our activities in the local market".

AUB's management is keen to be present more frequently at various locations, including malls and government entities, in order to introduce the Bank's account services, promotions and ever-renewing marketing campaigns to the employees of those entities and to the public.

Najem added, "We will continue to make every effort to reach customers, existing and prospective, across all parts of Kuwait, by providing the best in banking services and enhanced customer propositions as reflected in our package of high-value banking and finance products and related offers."

VIVA, Boubyan Bank ink multi-currency financing agreement of KD 40 million

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, and Boubyan Bank inked a multi-currency financing agreement of KD 40 million includes Murabaha facility according to Islamic Sharia Compliance, to finance VIVA's plans to upgrade its network and expand in the State of Kuwait, with 5 years tenor, yesterday.

Eng. Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran, VIVA's Chief Executive Officer and Adel Abdulwahab Al-Majed, Boubyan Bank's Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, signed the agreement in the presence of VIVA's CFO Mohammed Bin Abdulmohsen Al-Assaf, in addition to VIVA and Boubyan officials.

Commenting on this occasion, Al-Badran said: "Coinciding with VIVA's first decade celebration, this strategic partnership with Boubyan Bank is a robust ground to further expand and develop VIVA's operations by investing in its network and its high quality of services, products and technical solutions. The financial strength that VIVA witnesses today reflected in VIVA's recent announcement of its financial results 2017, fosters customers' loyalty and trust that we endeavor to maintain it since VIVA's inception."

"Our strong competition in the Kuwaiti telecom market through meeting our customers' aspirations and ambitions, proves our leadership and promotes our capability to deliver the best", he added.

On his part, Al-Majed said: "The relationship of Boubyan Bank and VIVA is a remarkable one, and stands as an example for strate-

gic alliance which benefits the local economy". He further expressed that he was glad to continue such a relationship with one of the most prominent telecom companies in the region.

"Such a financing would help fund the company's expansion plans and reflect positively on the company's clients and help achieve the company's domestic expansion targets", he added. "Over the past years, Boubyan Bank succeeded in achieving remarkable growth rates in its corporate credit portfolio by attracting a number of operational companies known for their financial and economic credit-worthiness while continuing to maintain the highest standards of credit quality, studying and diversifying risks", he added.



Technology

US looking at privatizing the International Space Station

'Capabilities of the ISS as part of a future commercial platform'

WASHINGTON: Could the International Space Station become a commercial venture run by private industry? That is the wish of the White House, which hopes to end funding for the costly program within a few years. The Washington Post reported Sunday. The US plan, the paper said, involves privatizing the ISS, a low-orbit space station piloted by the US space agency NASA and developed jointly with its Russian counterpart.

The station has allowed international crews—notably in collaboration with the Canadian, European and Japanese space agencies—to pursue scientific research in the environment of a low Earth orbit. "The decision to end direct federal support for the ISS in 2025 does not imply that the platform itself will be deorbited at that time," says an internal NASA document obtained by the Post. "It is possible that industry could continue to operate certain elements or capabilities of the ISS as part of a future commercial platform."

Smooth transition

"NASA will expand international and commercial partnerships over the next seven years in order to ensure continued human access to and presence in low Earth orbit," the document says. A budget request to be issued today by the Trump administration will call for

\$150 million to be spent on the ISS in the 2019 fiscal year, and more in succeeding years, "to enable the development and maturation of commercial entities and capabilities which will ensure that commercial successors to the ISS... are operational when they are needed."

To ensure a smooth transition, the White House would ask the private sector to provide market analyses and development plans, the Post reported. The plan is expected to face stiff opposition. The United States has already spent some \$100 billion to launch, operate and support the orbital station. Beginning during the presidency of George W. Bush (2001-2009), NASA has subcontracted certain ISS support operations, starting with the supply flights now carried out by the SpaceX and Orbital ATK companies—a trend that gained speed during the Obama presidency. It was not clear, however, how private companies might profit from taking over the aging station—its first section was launched in 1998. NASA did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Expected to face stiff opposition

Russia reschedules Soyuz launch

Elsewhere, Russian space agency Roscosmos has delayed the launch of a Soyuz rocket carrying a Progress cargo ship by two days after Sunday's planned lift-off was aborted at the last minute. "During the



This NASA image taken April 17, 2015, shows the Canadarm2 reaching out to grapple the SpaceX Dragon cargo spacecraft and prepare it to be pulled into its port on the International Space Station (ISS). — AFP

launch, an order was made for the engines to be automatically turned off, the causes are being clarified," a Roscosmos statement said. "The launch is rescheduled for the reserve date of February 13."

The supply freighter, known as Progress 69, was mounted atop a Soyuz2.1a which had been scheduled to

lift off from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan with the aim of reaching the International Space Station (ISS) in a record three-and-a-half hours. Earlier, a source in the Russian space agency told news agency Interfax that the launch may have failed due to a computer failure in the control system. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: Eric Dickerson plays Hologate virtual reality shooting game during Leigh Steinberg Super Bowl Party 2018. — AFP

VR may reduce paranoia in psychotics

PARIS: Virtual reality-based therapy combined with standard treatment reduced paranoia and anxiety in people with psychotic disorders, scientists reported Friday. In clinical trials involving 116 patients in the Netherlands, virtual reality exercises led to less fraught social interactions, a team wrote in The Lancet Psychiatry. More research is needed to confirm the long-term benefits of such technology, which gave the impression of being in an alternate reality populated by life-like avatars.

Up to 90 percent of people with psychosis suffer from paranoid thoughts, leading them to perceive threats where there are none. As a result, many psychotics avoid public places and contact with people, spending a lot of time alone. So-called cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) — in which therapists help patients break down seemingly overwhelming problems to render them less threatening—helps reduce anxiety, but does little to quell paranoia.

Researchers led by Roos Pot-Kolder of VU University in the Netherlands extended this method into a virtual environment. For the trial, the 116 participants—all receiving standard treatment, including antipsychotic medication

and regular psychiatric consultations—were divided into two groups of 58. Only one group practised social interactions in a virtual environment. The treatment consisted of 16 one-hour sessions over 8-12 weeks in which the participants were exposed, via avatars, to social cues that triggered fear and paranoia in four virtual settings: a street, a bus, a cafe and a supermarket.

Therapists could alter the number of avatars, their appearance, and whether pre-recorded responses to the patient were neutral or hostile. The therapists also coached participants, helping them to explore and challenge their own feelings in different situations, and to resist common "safety behaviors" such as avoiding eye contact. Participants were assessed at the start of the trial, as well as three and six months afterwards. Exposure to virtual reality did not increase the time participants subsequently spent with other people, the study found. But it did affect the quality of their interactions.

"The addition of virtual reality CBT to standard treatment reduced paranoid feelings, anxiety, and use of safety behaviours in social situations, compared with standard treatment alone," said lead author, Roos Pot-Kolder, a researcher at VU University, Netherlands. The virtual reality CBT group—which showed no adverse effects—went on to use fewer "safety behaviors". "With the development of virtual reality and mobile technology, the range of tools available in psychotherapy is expanding," Kristiina Kompus of Bergen University said in a comment also carried by the journal. — AFP

Amazon paid \$90m for camera maker's chip technology

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon.com Inc paid about \$90 million to acquire the maker of Blink home security cameras late last year, in a secret bet on the startup's energy-efficient chips, people familiar with the matter told Reuters. The deal's rationale and price tag, previously unreported, underscore how Amazon aims to do more than sell another popular camera, as analysts had thought. The online retailer is exploring chips exclusive to Blink that could lower production costs and lengthen the battery life of other gadgets, starting with Amazon's Cloud Cam and potentially extending to its family of Echo speakers, one of the people said.

Amazon views its in-house devices as key to deepening its relationship with shoppers. The Cloud Cam and Echo currently need a plug-in power source to operate. Blink, which says its cameras can last two years on a single pair of AA lithium batteries, could change that. Amazon declined to comment on the acquisition's terms or strategy.

The deal so far has drawn little attention. The camera maker announced its takeover by Amazon with scant details in a Dec 21 blog post. Analysts have viewed Blink as part of the retailer's strategy for Amazon Key, a new program where shoppers can set up a smart lock and surveillance camera so delivery personnel can slip packages inside their homes when they are away. Amazon also sees opportunity in the security camera market as smart-home technology expands.

But Blink was not merely a camera business. Its little-known owner, Immedia Semiconductor, was started in

Massachusetts by old hands from the chip industry. Chief Executive Peter Besen and two of his co-founders came from Sand Video, which had designed chips in the early 2000s that decoded a new and improved video standard.

In 2004 they sold Sand Video to Broadcom Ltd and remained there as executives, according to an Immedia website. The group left in 2008 to create Immedia, aiming to design chips for video conferencing, and later targeting laptop makers as potential customers. Dan Grunberg, a co-founder who left Immedia in 2016, said that plan fell through. Laptop makers were unwilling to pay \$1 per chip when cheaper options were on the market. So Immedia pivoted. "If we make our own camera, we don't have to sell a hundred million" chips, he said. Grunberg declined to discuss Immedia's sale to Amazon.

'Battery life is a big issue'

The Blink security camera, which hit the market in 2016, did not require a power cable like many rival products.



VERTOU, France: This file photo taken on December 28, 2016 shows the logo of US electronic commerce and cloud computing company Amazon. — AFP

Scientists said on Wednesday that unlike in people and most other animals, in this bat species the structures called telomeres located at the end of chromosomes, thread-like strands inside a cell's nucleus that carry genes determining heredity, do not shorten with age.

Only 19 mammal species are longer-lived than humans relative to body size. Eighteen of them are bats, some living more than four decades. The other is a weird African rodent called a naked mole rat. The researchers identified two genes in the greater mouse-eared bat that may be responsible for its unique longevity adaptation. These mechanisms could be the focus of future studies on aging, with an eye toward extending healthy lifes-

pan in people, the researchers said. Telomeres are protective caps at the ends of chromosomes that shorten each time a cell divides. This drives the natural aging process, leading to a breakdown of cells that over time can drive tissue deterioration and eventually death. "Studying exceptionally long-living mammals that have naturally evolved mechanisms to fight aging is an alternative way to identify the molecular basis of extended 'health spans,'" said biologist Emma Teeling of University College Dublin in Ireland, one of the study leaders. "Bats are an exciting new model species that will enable us to identify new molecular mechanisms that drive healthy aging." — Reuters

making it easier to place around users' properties. It was cheaper, too, starting at \$99. Amazon's wired Cloud Cam launched at \$119.99, while Netgear Inc's wire-free Arlo cost more still. Netgear said last week it plans to spin off its Arlo business.

"Battery life is a big issue in connected devices," said Scott Jacobson, a former Amazon devices manager and now managing director of Madrona Venture Group. "Always-on cameras that last for months and don't require a wired connection or an electrician to install could be game-changing." As Blink's sales rose on Amazon's website, the retailer took notice, sources said, leading to talks with the camera maker about a deal.

Flybridge Capital Partners, Comcast Ventures, Baker Capital, Dot Capital and some suppliers were investors in the company. Amazon's regulatory filings show it spent \$78 million on acquisition activity in the quarter ended Dec. 31. Sources said the bid was competitive, and that compensation and incentives offered by Amazon pushed the deal's value to about \$90 million. Madrona's Jacobson, who had no knowledge of the acquisition's details, speculated that Amazon might apply the Blink team's expertise to cameras in drones or in its new checkout-free stores.

The chips could give Amazon other advantages, too. The proprietary chip design will make it harder for rival retailers to copy Amazon's devices, said Matt Crowley, chief executive of Vesper, a sensor and semiconductor company that makes microphones. And now that Amazon owns its own chips, it can go straight to the manufacturers, cutting out middlemen chip designers such as Ambarella Inc, which has powered GoPro Inc products. Amazon has a division called Annapurna Labs that makes an unrelated kind of chip, and it was not clear which supplier it uses for chips that primarily process video. "Vertical integration reduces cost," Crowley said. Digital video chips "are one of the more expensive components" in a camera. — Reuters

Less-cool Facebook losing youth at fast pace: Survey

WASHINGTON: With mom, dad and grandma signing up in increasing numbers, Facebook is losing younger users in the United States at a faster pace than previously estimated, researchers said yesterday. A report by eMarketer said Snapchat is drawing youths away from Facebook at a quicker clip than Facebook-owned Instagram. Facebook is still growing in the US market, according to research firm, mainly due to increases in usage by older age groups.

The report is the latest to highlight Facebook's problem with attracting and keeping young people, who have long been a core user base for the world's biggest social network. The research firm said it expected the first-ever decline in the 18-24 age group in the US, a drop of 5.8 percent this year. It also said that for the first time since its research began, less than half of the 12-17 age group in the United States would be on Facebook, with a 5.6 percent drop in that segment.

The under-12 age group meanwhile will see a decline of 9.3 percent this year, eMarketer said. The same trend is expected to continue into 2019 and 2020, with declines in all segments of US users under 25, the report added. Facebook will lose an estimated two million users under 25 this year, with Snapchat and Instagram the main beneficiaries. The report said Snapchat will add 1.9 million users under 25 in 2018 and Instagram will add 1.6 million.

Snapchat, which is known for its disappearing messages, will continue to have more users aged 12 to 24 than Instagram, the researchers said. But Snapchat could end up facing a similar problem as it seeks to increase its user base and reach all ages. "Snapchat could eventually experience more growth in older age groups, since it's redesigning its platform to be easier to use," eMarketer analyst Debra Aho Williamson said. "The question will be whether younger users will still find Snapchat cool if more of their parents and grandparents are on it. That's the predicament Facebook is in." — AFP

Bat genetic trait holds secrets of longevity

WASHINGTON: Bats are the longest-lived mammals relative to body size, and a species called the greater mouse-eared bat lives especially long. Researchers now have unlocked some of this bat's longevity secrets, with hints for fighting the effects of aging in people.

Health

Galapagos hosts nursery for new species of giant tortoise

One of three centers in archipelago's national park

PUERTO AYORA: Crowded under a rock in the Galapagos archipelago, the baby tortoises wait for the sun to go down to leave their shelter. Nothing disturbs these eastern Santa Cruz tortoises (scientific name *Chelonoidis donfaustoi*), which were determined just two years ago to be a new species native to the Ecuadorian islands that inspired Charles Darwin. Kept safe on Santa Cruz island and raised in captivity, their nursery is one of three centers in the archipelago's national park where 12 species of giant tortoises, unique in the world, are bred.

Stretching their necks and poking their heads out of tiny shells, they nibble on nutritious, starchy leaves of tropical plants brought in from the continent 1,000 kilometers away. Digestion plunges them into afternoon slumber. "We let them stay a little hungry. That way, when they return to the wild they go looking for their food," the director of the national park, Walter Bustos, told AFP.

It's not yet time to let the tortoises go free. For that, their shells have to be 23 to 25 centimeters (nine to 10 inches) long, meaning around four or five years of age. That's an insignificant span for these reptiles that can live

up to a century and a half, reaching up to two meters (over six feet) long and weighing up to 450 kilograms. The eggs hatched several months earlier in the center, with several broods. In all, the park now has 120 of the eastern Santa Cruz tortoises born in captivity, joining the better-known Galapagos giant tortoise (*Chelonoidis nigra*) on this string of volcanic islands in the Pacific.

Protective captivity ensures their survival



Ancient genus

Giant tortoises arrived in the Galapagos around three or four million years ago, and it appears ocean currents likely scattered them across the islands. They developed into 15 species, of which three are extinct, each adapt-

ing to its territory.

The tortoise population was decimated by pirates and whale-hunters who captured them for their meat, and who introduced invasive species such as dogs, goats and rats. The tortoises' fat, transformed into oil, for a long time fueled street lamps in Ecuador's capital Quito and the city of Guayaquil on the Pacific coast. "The tortoises are sorts of engineers in the ecosystem," Washington Tapia, a biologist at the US-based Galapagos Conservancy, said.



PUERTO AYORA: A Santa Cruz Island adult giant tortoise (*Chelonoidis Donfaustoi*) is seen in the wild on Santa Cruz Island, in the remote Ecuadorean archipelago 1000 km off South America's Pacific coast. — AFP

"Through their movements they shape their environment, creating spaces where other species can develop, and they are the best sowers of grain that exist."

Tortoise patrols

Up until 2002, the scientific community believed all the tortoises on Santa Cruz island, the second biggest in the Galapagos, came from the same species, *Chelonoidis*

porter. But after years of genetic studies it was discovered in 2015 that those on the eastern part of the island, on Cerro Fatal (Deadly Hill), were a species apart: *Chelonoidis donfaustoi*. There are not many of them, fewer than 400, and the threat of predators prompted park authorities to collect their eggs to hatch them and raise the babies in protective captivity to ensure their survival.—AFP

Australia struggles to improve lives of Aboriginal

SYDNEY: Australia is making some progress in improving health and education among its indigenous population, an annual report said yesterday, but it is still missing most targets to reduce Aboriginal disadvantage a decade after launching a major campaign. The 10th "Closing the Gap" study found authorities were on track to meet just three out of seven targets to help health, education and employ-

ment outcomes among Aborigines catch up with the non-indigenous population.

Efforts were showing results in areas such as reducing Aboriginal child mortality and improving rates of high school qualifications. But four other areas including boosting indigenous employment and life expectancy were falling behind. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said results were improving, after Australia had been on track to meet just one target the year before. "Three of the seven targets are on track this year, giving us the most promising result since 2011," he told parliament. "The last decade has given us a richer understanding about what works and what does not," he said, adding the most valuable lesson had come from working more closely with indigenous people.

Aborigines, who make up about three percent of the total national population of 25 million, are among the most disadvantaged Australians. Monday's report—marking a decade since former prime minister Kevin Rudd made a historic apology to Aboriginal people for centuries of injustice—showed the target to halve the gap in child mortality with non-indigenous Australians by 2018 was on track to be met. The mortality rate for indigenous children under four years old has fallen from 217 per 100,000 in 1998 to 145 per 100,000 in 2016, but it is still far higher than the rest of the population. There was also progress in the aim to have 95 percent of all indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025, and on improving the number of Aborigines who finish high school by 2020 with a recognized qualification.

But overall school attendance goals were not being met and nor was the proportion of indigenous children achieving national minimum standards in reading and numeracy. Indigenous employment was also falling, while raising life expectancy levels remained a challenge. Rudd, who launched what has become a bipartisan strategy to close the gap on indigenous disadvantage, said it was critical to maintain "political commitment, policy effort and funding support" to better Aboriginal lives. "With strong political leadership, prepared to make a difference, with policy consistency and creativity, and with funding resolve, we can build an Australia where the First Australians are not simply an integral part of our national identity," he said yesterday. "But (they) are full and equal partners in the charting of our national future as well." —AFP

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What's On

Make your grand gesture at Hilton this Valentine season

Treat your loved ones with a romantic gift from a selection of memorable experiences and luxurious hospitality packages at Hilton Kuwait Resort this Valentine season. Offering stylishly decorated premier rooms with breathtaking views of the Arabian Gulf, and delightful dining options, Hilton Kuwait Resort is a perfect love nest for couples, families and friends. For the ultimate Valentine celebration, Hilton Kuwait Resort is offering a series of month-long activities and events that will fill all days throughout February with love!

A romantic date in style

Celebrate the love season with your valentine in a place where romance and luxury blend perfectly. Hilton Kuwait Resort's Palm Court Terrace will transform your night into a fairy-tale story as you dine and enjoy delectable food. With three selections of sumptuous full course menus, couples will relish a gourmet dinner in a private beach tent decorated with flowers and candles to set the mood. Lovebirds will also get complimentary gifts such as sparkling juice and a spe-

cial cake to top off their Valentine getaway.

Eat your heart out

Spoil your loved ones with an evening of good food and romantic music at Teatro restaurant. A special dinner buffet will be prepared by Hilton Kuwait Resort's talented team of chefs. Arranged with heart-shaped balloons and live romantic music, Teatro's exclusive buffet experience will also feature a special pink blush chocolate fountain and a bottle of sparkling red Grape juice for each couple. Valentine's Day is also a day for a guilt-free sweet tooth. Hilton Kuwait Resort's Song Bird Cafe offers a variety of uniquely flavored cakes perfect for the season. Cakes can be enjoyed by 4-6 people.

A hearty recreation

Treat yourself and a loved one to a spa break this Valentine's Day at The Spa. Guests can choose from any 60-minute massage plus Mud wrap session with very special price and will be surprised with their very own Valentine gift, courtesy of Hilton Kuwait Resort.



'Pringles Deserter' retail promotion winner announced

Leading food and beverage Distributor Alyasra Foods announced the lucky winner from its latest "Pringles Deserter" campaign earlier this month. Following 45 days of excitement, the grand prize 'Jeep Wrangler' reached its new owner in a special ceremony conducted in the presence Al Yasra Foods and Kellogg's & Pringles-Kuwait delegates at Alyasra Foods

head office. With joy, Asraa Qasem proudly received her prize from Ayman Mahmoud, Al yasra Food Senior Director, and Preeti Bhambani, GCC Sales head of Kellogg's & Pringles.

The interactive campaign involved competition seeking consumer engagement, involving coupons in packs distributed through Kuwait's market to win several prizes including a Jeep Wrangler, 5 ATVs and smaller assured gifts. Pringles has gotten to witness a substantial growth in Kuwait, with the aid of its consistent presence with activities highlighting and encouraging consumer engagement. Following Kuwait's consumers positive feedback on and active engagement in the latest 'Pringles Deserter' promotion, Alyasra Foods made the announcement that the promotion will carry on during the Hala February 2018 festivities.

Sheraton Kuwait wins the maximum gold medals at Horeca Kuwait 2018

The renowned team of chefs of the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel was crowned with the highest number of gold medals in this year's hospitality exhibition Horeca Kuwait 2018, which was attended by a number of chefs from inside and outside Kuwait. Like every year, culinary experts from around the world participated in this exhibition, along with VIP guests and attendees. The high performance of the Sheraton Kuwait team was apparent to everyone. The winning team was led by Chef Frank Nowak, who created and presented everything with luxurious touches. They also praised the superior quality of the ingredients used by the chefs. Gold medals were won by the Sheraton Kuwait team in the following categories:

- Best wedding cake
- Best occasional cakes
- Best fruit carving
- Best sushi preparation
- Best dinner menu
- Best Asian cooking
- Best pasta dishes

Chef Frank had joined the Sheraton Kuwait & Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait family four years ago, bringing with him more than 30 years of experience gained in his country, Germany, as well as in many international hotels where he added and accumulated experiences and skills. And now he is continuing his splendid journey of creativity and excellence along with the Sheraton team, especially in presenting a combination of unique-



ness to suit the modern palate. At this accomplishment, Fahed Abushaar, General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait, expressed pride in this distinguished performance of the team under the supervision of Chef Frank. He also praised the great efforts of the entire Sheraton team who are constantly striving to succeed and achieve the best and get the desired results, now and always.



Treasure your loved ones with a luxury Valentine's treat at Symphony Style Hotel

Valentine's Day is a unique occasion and a moment to treasure with that special someone in your life. Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait is here to ensure you have an unforgettable Valentine's this year. Demonstrating its love of creating luxury experiences for every guest, the hotel is offering special dining occasions and gift options allowing you and your Valentine to share in the love of culinary excellence.

Symphony Style Hotel's award-winning Luna restaurant is offering the ultimate, lovingly prepared Valentine's Dinner, a 3-course set menu of Tuscan classics. Share in the myriad flavors of authentic Italian dishes, mastered by expert chefs and bask in fine food and time with your

loved one while enjoying the distinctive sounds of live violin music created for the occasion.

If you are looking to celebrate love in a more laid-back atmosphere, Cucina restaurant is hosting a themed buffet, inspired by the red of Valentine's Day, while reflecting the warmth and ambiance of the special moment. Live music from a saxophonist and guitarist will add to the special ambiance. Looking for a special Valentine's gift? Then make it a night to remember for your special someone with a luxury hamper from Symphony Gourmet. Comprising signature, mouthwatering chocolates and carefully selected flowers among other goodies, this gift is something to treasure.

KIB sponsors activities of Al-Sidra at Faisal Al-Sultan Park's exhibition

As part of its strategic partnership running for the third consecutive year, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored activities held by Al-Sidra Association for the Psychological Care of Cancer Patients. The Bank's sponsorship included Al Sidra's participation in an exhibition held at Faisal Al-Sultan Park in commemoration of Gulf Cancer Awareness Week; the event featured the participation of notable figures from both the public and private sectors.

Held under the auspices of Sheikha Azza Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, the exhibition was part of the launch for an awareness campaign to combat cancer. The campaign aims at spreading awareness about the importance of early detection, modern and natural treatments, as well as various prevention methods. Additionally, the exhibition hosted a number of cancer survivors and invited them to come forward and share their expe-



periences and challenges with the community.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "We are always dedicated to participating in initiatives and activities that affect a diverse number of segments in the local community. As a leading national financial institution, KIB has continuously sought to promote the importance of early diagnosis and detection in disease prevention, stemming from its mission to enhance health and well-being across the entire community." Najia added that KIB has dedicated a number of its efforts towards sponsoring health

activities and initiatives that cater to the well-being of all members of the community, as part of its leading social responsibility program and humanitarian duties.

It is worth noting that KIB is a firm believer in the important role health plays in the development of the community. Accordingly, the Bank always strives to sponsor initiatives and activities that promote health awareness, particularly those related to cancer. KIB considers health awareness to be a key factor in promoting early detection and treatment, as it believes prevention to be much more effective than treatment.

Happy Birthday

Baby Aarna Harivallabha turns 4 on 13th Feb 2018. Happy Birthday wishes coming from her ever loving sister Aadhya, parents Gayathri & Badhri, Grandparents, uncles, aunts and all her friends from India, US and Kuwait."



The Wedding of Fathima Mullick D/O Samina and Mozammal Mullick with Zain Shaikh S/O Rubina and Arif Shaikh was a glimpse of Indian cultures under the roofs of Burjil Arab, Ritz Carlton and Atlantis. Guests from all over the world adored the Indian traditions and cultures. Glitter charm and brilliance wrapped up the wedding in a beautiful way that made minds to recollect the fairytales of the olden days. All this was achievable by the up most blessing of the Almighty.

TV



01:20 Flight World War II
02:45 The Huntsman: Winter's War
04:40 The Call Up
06:15 Street Fighter
08:00 The Huntsman: Winter's War
09:55 Star Wars: Episode v - The Empire Strikes Back
12:05 Hunting The Phantom
13:40 Crossfire
15:15 Street Fighter
17:00 The Phantom
18:50 Star Wars: Episode VI - Return Of The Jedi
21:05 Captain America: The First Avenger



23:10 Hardcore Henry
00:50 Lone Star Law
01:50 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Bad Dog
03:35 Going Ape
04:00 Going Ape
04:25 Attack Of The Giant Jellyfish
05:15 Intruders
06:02 Wild Iberia
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Meet The Sloths
08:00 Meet The Sloths
08:25 Going Ape
08:50 Going Ape
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Bad Dog
11:05 Wild Iberia
12:00 Going Ape
12:28 Going Ape
12:55 Attack Of The Giant Jellyfish
13:50 Intruders
14:45 Bad Dog
15:40 Wild Iberia
16:35 Lone Star Law
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 World's Ugliest Dog Competition
19:20 My Fat Pet
20:15 Bad Dog
21:10 Going Ape
21:38 Going Ape
22:05 World's Ugliest Dog Competition
23:00 My Fat Pet
23:55 Wild Iberia



00:20 Father Brown
01:10 The Level
01:55 The Corner
02:45 Casualty
03:40 Call The Midwife
04:40 The Corner
05:30 Doctors
06:00 Casualty
06:50 The Musketeers
07:45 Eastenders
08:15 Stella
09:05 Casualty
10:00 Casualty
10:55 The Corner
11:45 The Musketeers
12:40 Stella
13:30 Casualty
14:25 Casualty
15:20 The Corner
16:10 The Musketeers
17:10 Stella
18:00 Holly City
19:00 The Corner
20:00 Silent Witness
20:50 Stella
21:40 The Corner
22:30 Holly City
23:25 Silent Witness



00:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 It Takes A Killer
02:30 It Takes A Killer
03:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
04:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers
05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
06:00 It Takes A Killer
06:30 It Takes A Killer
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:30 It Takes A Killer
08:00 The First 48
09:00 Escaping Polygamy
10:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
11:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
15:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
21:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
22:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
23:00 The First 48



00:05 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
00:30 Nightcap
00:55 Natasha Leggero: Live From Bimbos
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 Chappelle's Show
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
03:25 Tosh.0
03:50 Detroiters
04:15 Kroll Show
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 I Live With Models
05:30 Impractical Jokers
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:50 Framework
07:40 The Jm Gaffigan Show
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Kroll Show
09:45 Key And Peele
10:10 I Live With Models
10:35 The Jm Gaffigan Show
11:00 Impractical Jokers
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:15 Impractical Jokers
12:40 Punk'd (Bet)
13:05 Punk'd (Bet)
13:30 I Live With Models
13:55 Friends
14:20 Friends
14:45 Workaholics
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Kroll Show
16:00 Comedy Central Presents Comedy Balwazef
16:30 Ridiculousness Arabia
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends

17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35 Framework
19:25 Impractical Jokers
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:37 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Another Period
22:25 Another Period
22:50 Another Period
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 Finding Bigfoot
02:10 Atlas 4D
03:00 How We Invented The World
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
05:55 How It's Made
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds
06:40 Destroyed In Seconds
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made
08:15 How It's Made
08:40 Destroyed In Seconds
08:45 Destroyed In Seconds
09:30 Tanked
10:20 How We Invented The World
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12:00 Now That's Funny
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19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Now That's Funny
22:00 Now That's Funny
22:50 How We Invented The World
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 Killer Confessions
01:45 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
02:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
03:35 Once Bitten: People Magazine Investigates
04:30 Killer Confessions
05:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Evil-In-Law
08:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
08:25 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:15 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
09:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
10:10 Evil-In-Law
11:05 Florida's Craziest Crimes
12:00 Grave Secrets
12:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Evil-In-Law
15:40 Florida's Craziest Crimes
16:35 Fatal Encounters
17:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
18:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
18:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Evil-In-Law
21:10 Florida's Craziest Crimes
22:05 The Perfect Murder
23:00 Murder At Sea: People Magazine Investigates
23:55 Murder Online



00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermore Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Jessie
07:25 Tangled: The Series
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Stuck In The Middle
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25 Lolo Rock
10:50 Lolo Rock
11:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
11:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
12:05 Hank Zipzer
12:30 Alex & Co.
12:55 Alex & Co.
13:20 Lolo Rock
13:45 Lolo Rock
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:00 The Zhuzhus
15:15 Jessie
15:40 Bunk'd
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 Elena Of Avalor
16:35 Bizaardvark
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
17:50 Stuck In The Middle
18:15 K.C. Undercover
18:40 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
19:05 Bunk'd
19:30 Austin & Ally
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Liv And Maddie
20:25 Jessie
20:50 Tangled: The Series

21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 K.C. Undercover
21:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:10 Bizaardvark
22:35 Girl Meets World
23:00 Star Wars Forces Of Destiny
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:45 Lolo Rock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopedidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopedidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopedidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 PJ Masks
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 P-King Duckling
08:25 Jungle Junction
08:40 Special Agent Oso
09:00 Handy Manny
09:15 PJ Masks
09:30 Puppy Dog Pals
10:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:25 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:55 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:50 The Lion Guard
12:15 The Lion Guard
12:45 Sofia The First
13:10 Sofia The First
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 PJ Masks
14:30 Doc McStuffins
14:55 P-King Duckling
15:20 Vampirina
15:45 Sofia The First
16:10 Puppy Dog Pals
16:40 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:05 Mission Force One: Connect And Protect Shorts
17:10 PJ Masks
17:35 Miles From Tomorrow
18:00 The Lion Guard
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
19:00 Sofia The First
19:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
20:00 The Lion Guard
20:30 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 PJ Masks
22:30 Sofia The First
23:00 P-King Duckling
23:30 Puppy Dog Pals



00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Blowing Up History
01:50 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murder Declassified
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska Monsters
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Backroad Bounty
06:45 Backroad Bounty
07:30 Alaska Monsters
08:20 Dirty Jobs
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Blowing Up History
10:45 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murder Declassified
11:30 What On Earth?
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14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Blowing Up History
16:15 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murder Declassified
17:00 Dirty Jobs
17:40 Dirty Jobs
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Kings Of The Wild
21:50 Bear Grylls: Breaking Point
22:40 Man V Expert
23:30 Alaska: Battle On The Bay



06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Walk The Prank
08:10 Walk The Prank
08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:00 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
09:50 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
10:45 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:50 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:20 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:45 Supa Strikas
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 Right Now Kapow
15:05 Right Now Kapow
15:30 Milo Murphy's Law
15:55 Two More Eggs
16:00 The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Lab Rats
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Supa Strikas
18:30 Marvel's Ant-Man
18:35 Walk The Prank
19:00 Gravity Falls
19:25 Milo Murphy's Law
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Mech-X4
20:20 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Kid vs. Kat
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats Elite Force
22:10 Lab Rats Elite Force
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



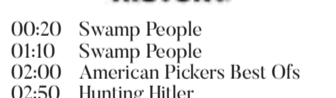
00:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:55 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
02:50 Botched
03:50 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Botched
06:55 El News Middle East
07:10 Botched
08:10 El News Daily Pop
09:10 WAGs Atlanta
12:00 El News Middle East
12:15 WAGs LA
15:00 El News Middle East
15:15 El News Daily Pop
16:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
17:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
18:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
19:00 El News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Botched
23:00 El News Middle East
23:15 WAGs Atlanta



00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 The Voice UK 2018
04:40 Royal Stories
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 The Voice UK 2018
09:55 Royal Stories
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Endeavour
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
21:00 Endeavour
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
00:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
01:00 UFO Files
02:00 UFO Files
03:00 Engineering Disasters
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 10 Things You Don't Know About...
05:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
05:55 Smartest Guy In The Room
06:20 UFO Files
07:10 The Universe
08:00 UFO Files
09:00 Engineering Disasters
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
12:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
12:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
13:00 United Staff Of America
14:00 UFO Files
15:00 Engineering Disasters
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
18:00 The Universe
19:00 United Staff Of America
20:00 UFO Files
21:00 Engineering Disasters
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Breaking Mysterious



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers Best Of
02:50 Hunting Hitler
03:35 Barbarians Rising
04:30 Swamp People
05:15 Swamp People
06:00 Mountain Men
06:50 Forged In Fire
07:40 Hunting Hitler
08:25 Barbarians Rising
09:25 American Pickers
10:10 Ax Men
11:00 Forged In Fire
11:50 Hunting Hitler
12:35 Barbarians Rising
13:30 Duck Dynasty
13:55 Duck Dynasty
14:20 American Pickers
15:10 Mountain Men
16:00 Forged In Fire
16:50 Hunting Hitler
17:35 Barbarians Rising
18:30 Mountain Men
19:20 Forged In Fire
20:10 American Pickers Best Of
21:00 Ice Road Truckers
21:50 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Mountain Men



00:15 Places We Go
00:45 John Torode's Asia
01:10 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
01:40 Places We Go
02:05 Places We Go
02:35 World's Best Beaches
03:00 The Game Chef
03:55 John Torode's Asia
04:25 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
04:50 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
05:20 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
05:45 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
06:15 Building Wild
07:10 Places We Go
07:35 Places We Go
08:05 World's Best Beaches
09:00 The Game Chef
09:25 John Torode's Asia
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21:00 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
21:30 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
22:00 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
22:25 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
22:55 Building Wild
23:50 Places We Go



00:10 Somewhere In China
01:00 India's Mega Kitchens
02:00 Nazi Megastructures
03:00 Supercar Megabuild
04:00 Somewhere In China
05:00 Shark Men
06:00 Brave New World
07:00 The Long Road Home
08:00 Science Of Stupid
08:30 Science Of Stupid
09:00 Shark Men
09:40 Empire Of The Snake King
11:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
12:00 Air Crash Investigation
13:00 Test Your Brain
14:00 Engineering Connections
15:00 Fish Tank Kings
16:00 Yukon Gold
17:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
18:00 Air Crash Investigation
19:00 The Witch Doctor, A
20:00 Yukon Gold
20:50 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
21:40 Air Crash Investigation
22:30 The Witch Doctor, A
23:20 Engineering Connections



00:20 Hyena Queen
01:10 World's Deadliest
02:00 Top Cats
02:50 Monster Fish
03:45 Wild Case Files
04:40 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
05:35 Top Cats
06:30 Monster Fish
07:25 Wild Case Files
08:20 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
09:15 Monster Croc Wrangler
09:40 Monster Croc Wrangler
10:10 Dead Or Alive
11:05 Nordic Wild
12:00 Dinofish
12:55 Gangster Jackals
13:50 Monster Fish
14:45 Wild Case Files
15:40 Wild 24
16:35 Monster Croc Wrangler
17:00 Monster Croc Wrangler
17:30 World's Deadliest Killers
18:25 Secret Life Of Predators
19:20 Wild Case Files
20:10 Wild Case Files
21:00 Monster Croc Wrangler
21:25 Monster Croc Wrangler
21:50 World's Deadliest Killers
22:40 Secret Life Of Predators
23:30 Dinofish
Nickelodeon HD
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Harvey Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Breadwinners
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
13:48 Hunter Street
14:12 I Am Frankie
14:36 The Thundermans
15:00 Rabbids Invasion
15:24 School Of Rock
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Massive Monster Mayhem
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Harvey Danger
18:36 Rabbids Invasion
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Regal Academy
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21:24 Sanjay And Craig
21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

00:15 The Drew Carey Show
00:40 The Drew Carey Show
01:05 The Middle
01:30 The Middle
01:55 Gary Unmarried
02:20 Malcolm In The Middle
02:45 Making History
03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
04:00 Alone Together
04:25 LA To Vegas
04:50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
05:40 Malcolm In The Middle
06:05 Gary Unmarried
06:30 Making History
06:55 Baby Daddy
07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Alone Together
09:25 LA To Vegas
09:50 Brooklyn Nine-Nine
10:15 Marlon
10:40 Malcolm In The Middle
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17:00 Making History
17:30 Baby Daddy
18:00 The Drew Carey Show
18:30 The Drew Carey Show
19:00 The Middle
19:30 The Middle
20:00 Speechless
20:30 The Carmichael Show
21:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:00 Playing House
22:30 Playing House
23:00 Ballers
23:25 Late Night With Seth Meyers

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22:30 Playing House
23:00 Ballers
23:25 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:50 The Kids From 62-F
02:45 Jen And The Holograms
04:45 The Little Rascals
06:10 A Miracle On Christmas Lake
08:10 The Kids From 62-F
10:05 Santa Claws
11:45 The Little Rascals
13:10 Ratched And Clank
14:45 Pitches Who Don't Do Anything
16:15 Step Dogs
17:45 The Adventure Club
19:15 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder
20:45 Ratched And Clank
22:20 Pitches Who Don't Do Anything
23:50 The Adventure Club



01:35 Ghost Team One
03:00 Surviving Christmas
04:35 Six Dance Lessons In Six Weeks
06:25 Are We Done Yet?
08:00 Wayne's World 2
09:40 Once I Was A Beehive
11:40 Six Dance Lessons In Six Weeks
13:30 Are We Done Yet?
15:05 Summer Villa
16:35 Cops And Robbersons
18:15 Article 99
20:05 Peggolando
22:00 Garden State
23:45 Born Romantic

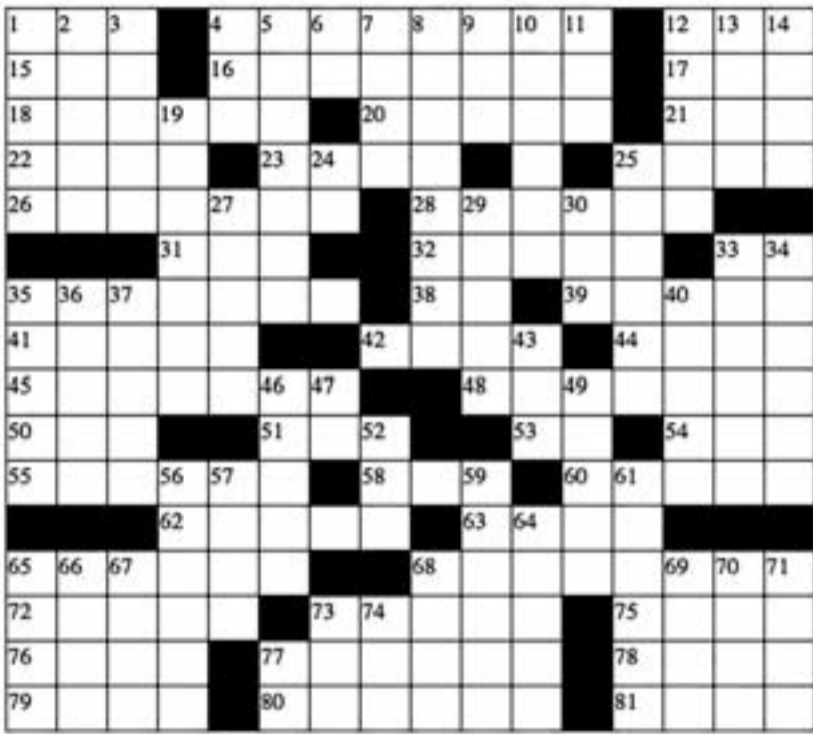
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05:36 Shimmer And Shine
05:59 Wallykazam!
06:22 Zack & Quack
06:32 The Day Henry Met
06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
07:00 Rusty Rivets
07:13 Paw Patrol
07:24 Paw Patrol
07:37 Dora The Explorer
08:00 Nella The Princess Knight
08:12 Kid-E-Cats
08:17 Kid-E-Cats
08:22 Bubble Guppies
08:45 Blaze And The Monster Machines
09:07 Paw Patrol
09:18 Paw Patrol
09:30 Shimmer And Shine
09:53 Nella The Princess Knight
10:14 The Day Henry Met
10:21 Paw Patrol
10:44 Rusty Rivets
11:06 Wallykazam!
11:30 Bubble Guppies
11:53 Team Umizoomi
12:15 Kid-E-Cats
12:22 Shimmer And Shine
12:44 Sunny Day
13:06 Max & Ruby
13:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:40 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:50 The Day Henry Met
13:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:41 Paw Patrol
14:53 Kid-E-Cats
14:57 Kid-E-Cats
15:04 Shimmer And Shine
15:26 Nella The Princess Knight
15:37 Paw Patrol
16:00 The Day Henry Met
16:06 Max & Ruby
16:28 Dora The Explorer
16:51 Sunny Day
17:12 Nella The Princess Knight
17:35 Shimmer And Shine
17:59 Wallykazam!
18:22 Zack & Quack
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05:

Stars

CROSSWORD 1834



ACROSS

- British informal term.
- Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
- An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others.
- A monastery for lamas.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- Norwegian explorer of the Arctic and director of the League of Nations relief program for refugees of World War I (1861-1930).
- An important question that is in dispute and must be settled.
- Light informal conversation for social occasions.
- Prevent from being included or considered or accepted.
- A quantity of no importance.
- Covered with paving material.
- An attendant who carries the golf clubs for a player.
- Water soaked soil.
- Leafless East Indian vine.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- Deciduous shrub of North America.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- The yield from plants in a single growing season.
- Being the one previously mentioned or spoken of.
- A member of the Mayan people of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.
- A canvas bag that is used to feed an animal (such as a horse).
- (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A strong emotion.
- 40th President of the United States (1911-).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Measuring instrument in which the echo of a pulse of microwave radiation is used to detect and locate distant objects.
- Capital of Nigeria in the center of the country.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- A sultanate in northwestern Borneo.
- Worn or shabby from overuse or (of pages) from having corners turned down.
- Type genus of the family Ulvaceae.
- Armor plate that protects the chest.
- A radioactive transuranic element that is similar to uranium.
- Someone whose job is to dye cloth.
- A tax on employees and employers that is used to fund the Social Security system.
- Straighten up or out.
- A river in central Italy rising in the Apennines and flowing through Florence and Pisa to the Ligurian Sea.
- snakes and poisonous insects (e.g., spiders and scorpions).
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- Relating to or resembling a cone.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
- The square of a body of any size of type.
- A sudden short attack.
- (Old Testament) A son of Jacob and a forebear of one of the tribes of Israel.
- A potent estrogen used in medicine and in feed for livestock and poultry.
- Any of several coarse tall perennial grasses of most warm areas.
- The organ of sight ('peeper' is an informal term for 'eye').
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- A large quantity of written matter.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Enduring strength and energy.
- Before noon.
- act between parties with a view to reconciling differences.
- Formerly a gold coin of various European countries.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- A doctor's degree in dental medicine.
- Minute blackish gregarious flies destructive to mushrooms and seedlings.
- Sturdy carnivorous burrowing mammal with strong claws widely distributed in the northern hemisphere v l.
- Deduce (a principle) or construe (a meaning).
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- A numbered compartment in a post office where mail is put to be called for.
- The feeling of being bored by something tedious.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.
- The cry made by sheep.
- God of wisdom or prophecy.
- In bed.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- A port city in southwestern Iran.
- Type genus of the Alaudidae.
- (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
- East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
- In or relating to or obtained from urine.
- More or less flat-topped cluster of flowers in which the central or terminal flower opens first.
- (Welsh) Corresponds to Iris Ler.
- Kitchen appliance used for baking or roasting.
- Edible starchy tuberous root of taro plants.
- Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.

DOWN

- Toxin secreted by animals (by certain

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, the week opens with good energy for you. Your performance in an early meeting brings confidence and positive attitudes regarding a new project or plan. You gain support for the suggestions you make regarding new methods of operating. Later in the morning you discover a helpful hint about the working of new software or perhaps this is a new security system. The day drags as you long for the end of it to come: time sometimes drags when we are anxious. Someone turns to you for help concerning a very personal situation; think about this as you don't want to get caught in a lie. The heavens are aligned to bring you insight to what the cause is for this problem. Enjoy your evening knowing you have come to the aid of someone dear, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you long to find enjoyment and relief from daily pressure. The fun and entertaining activities in life hold a strong appeal: a chance to get away may present itself from a surprising source. This is a good period to share time with loved ones or those who know you very well: the outside world can wait for a bit, no worries. Your thoughts are your own as you review some past activities you'd rather not share with anyone; these are your cherished memories, and you're entitled to them. Your support system is valuable now as you realize exactly who's on your side and who's not. Tonight an unexpected visitor delivers dinner and a movie; you're due to take some time for yourself and let others do for you what you normally do for them, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, your good qualities are well known by many; someone who cares for and respects you lends a kind ear and agrees with your opinion. You may feel prickly and not in the mood to be with those who irritate you; remember it's not a bad thing to do what's best for you. Working through inner turmoil is called for and positive vibrations are available to help with this. Your good taste and quirky ways are strong and influence your ideas. This is a good time to create new ways of doing something most people have to do: a successful invention could be indicated. Being outdoors brings good energy. Your evening goes smoothly as you find that you're ahead of schedule on something important around the house. Relax and be happy this evening, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, the feelings of others take precedence today as your sensitivities are in tune with those around you. Communication to large numbers of people is done with ease and clarity today; many look to you for leadership. Remain honest with yourself as you learn more about cosmic or mystic questions you may have regarding oracles such as tarot cards or rune stones. Just because you have never tried something doesn't mean it's not worth taking a look at. Someone could object to your style or opinions. Avoid arguments with those who reject change and/or growth; they're usually afraid of new ways of thinking such as you now actively seek. Your inner workings become clearer as you continue educating yourself about new thoughts and theories, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you are able to influence others with ease. Words flow as you express your thoughts and ideas to others who are looking for answers. An in-depth conversation with loved ones relays encouraging news. Something you say could reveal your plans to the wrong person; take care. Some members of your circle disagree with a life choice you make; perhaps they can't break away from old ways and ideas but they're also worth listening to! An argument you could avoid but choose not to could result in long lasting emotional wounds. Tread lightly around a sensitive situation at home that you have instigated and made worse; it's okay to be wrong once in a while. Take a yoga class this evening for the most optimum sleep you have had in a long time, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, cleansing is an empowering, positive event you should enjoy and welcome; there could, however, be some parts that are difficult. People who aren't good for themselves ask to join you for a celebration; while you have learned a powerful lesson, and choose to stay away from them, so have they, if they're capable and if they have not learned, you can send them off to teach someone else! The areas affected by shedding outmoded energy are: finances, associations, physical well-being and attitudes. Your focus on a positive future won't be distracted or knocked off-track. Hold tightly to your logic as you fight the urge to daydream and wish the day away. Friends pull you out of your daze by insisting on a visit to the theater to take in a newly released movie, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, your mind isn't on the work of the day, but instead lingers upon your hopes and wishes and if-ones. Important tasks await your attention and you make progress quickly as you're the best at what you do! You have worked hard to get where you are, but personal circumstances threaten to dominate your time and energy. You insist on the sex life you need and could reconsider your current source if those needs aren't met; this could also indicate an emotional need not being filled. Be mindful your current phase can create an energy of wanting to control things; beware the tendency to become a control freak. A daring challenge later this evening just might unnerve you and possibly cause a deep rift between friends depending on how you handle it, Libra.



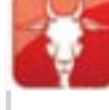
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, your passions run high and demand fulfillment. This energy could be directed at political, religious, social or emotional/sexual matters. Your mental and emotional considerations undergo transformation down to the cellular level; you refuse to deal with hurt feelings or anyone who attempts to make you feel guilty. You choose to address things directly and honestly for this is the only true path to peace and productivity; the stars are aligned for organization and things being put right on every level. A new customer or client represents a prosperous project or association. Your ability to take care of business in a timely manner is well known and much appreciated. Pay attention to the vibrations of in-born intuition regarding choices, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, the urge to nourish and care for others could lead you to adopt a pet or perhaps even take in a foster child. You desire to share your many blessings with others. Your ways are not those of tradition, you prefer to work smarter not harder. You might receive criticism from someone older! You're invited to a quick lunch by someone who respects you. You get your message across perfectly at a meeting you dreaded and receive respect for your input. You figure out what causes a problem between coworkers; you know how to repair this without causing any problems. Going with the flow is effortless for you during the new cycle you have entered; you eagerly join in a fun hobby with several nice new friends you have become fond of, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, your intuitive side indicates that something worrisome could be on the horizon. Tap into this and create positive energy in its place for a more acceptable outcome. Visually appealing things are available for purchase today; you find one item you'll treasure forever. Congratulations! Time seems to slip away as you rush to complete a project on deadline; focus and don't allow frustration or panic to rule you. You can overcome whatever restrictions you encounter. Friends need your help on a tricky domestic project that could end up requiring quite a bit of time but end in total success. You sit back and watch someone. You're unfulfilled in the romance department; you can definitely do something about this if you truly wish, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, this is not the time for giving advice; you could feel the strong desire to stay near home and health sharing time with loved ones. There could be a problem with someone you care for; do you feel like a beautiful bird in a gilded cage, longing for freedom only you can change your circumstances; take a few moments and listen to your heart. If you need encouragement, accept it from a kind person who has your best interests at heart today. You could realize that someone has been avoiding you, figure out the role you have played in this. Someone could be offended by something new you're trying. You could have a deep conversation with someone you respect. Perhaps a movie or delicious dinner out with someone who thinks as you do tonight, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, your new attitudes and goals don't fit with your current work situation. You may experience thoughts of changing the field you work in: if you're in retail you may want to change to food, for example, but whatever the change is, it's near! You could have to use other, primitive methods of communicating. Confrontation with younger people could prove very unpleasant; this is a result of children growing into adulthood. There could be some strong disagreements but remember who's in charge and who's not if this isn't with children, elders are indicated. Someone comments on your excellent taste or attitude. Pulling things together in an organized way helps reach your goals of rearranging and creating perfect fung shui, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Movies: Science Fiction 2

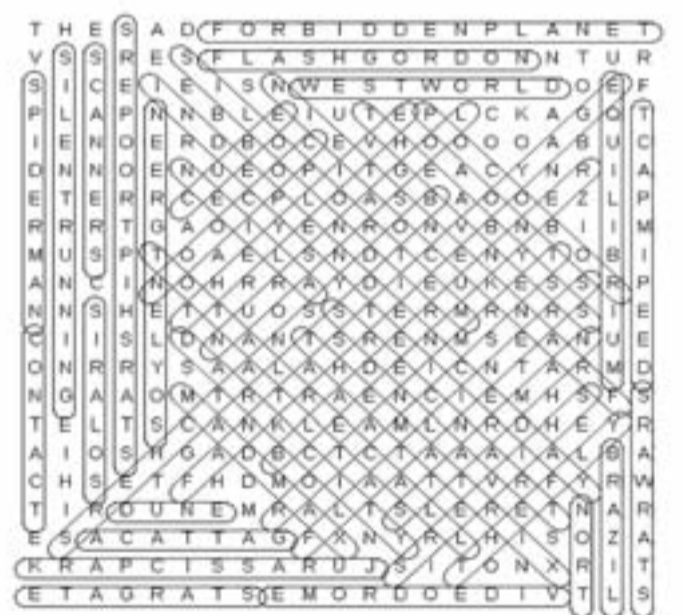
Find and circle all of the Science Fiction movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the title of an additional Science Fiction movie.



- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| AEON FLUX | FREQUENCY GAMER | OUTBREAK | SPECIES |
| ALLEN NATION | GOODZILLA | PANDORUM | STAR TREK |
| ALZENS | HULK | PREDATOR | SUNSHINE |
| ARMAGEDDON | INCEPTION | PUSH | SUPERMAN |
| AVATAR | IRON MAN | RED PLANET | THE ABYSS |
| CLOVERFIELD | JUMPER | ROLLERBALL | TIMECOP |
| DARK STAR | KING KONG | SCANNERS | TINCRIMES |
| DEATH RACE | KNOWING | TRANSFORMERS | WATCHMEN |
| DEJA VU | MEN IN BLACK | SLEEPER | ZARDOZ |
| FLATLINERS | MI6 | SLITHER | |
| FREEJACK | MOON | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Movies: Science Fiction



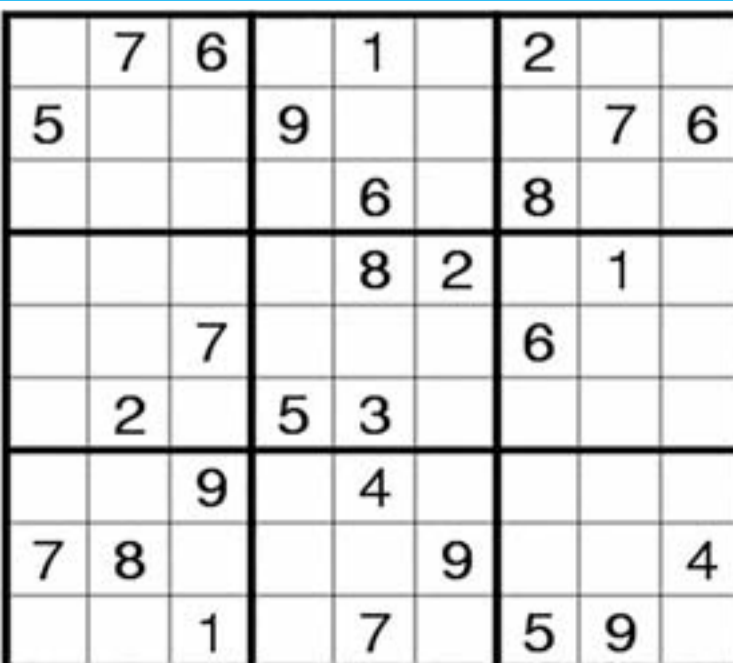
- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| ALIEN | FANTASTIC VOYAGE | ROBOCOP | TERMINATOR |
| BLADE RUNNER | FLASH GORDON | SCANNERS | THE ABYSS |
| BODY SNATCHERS | FLATLINERS | SHIVERS | THE FLY |
| BRAZIL | FORBIDDEN PLANET | SILENT RUNNING | THE MATRIX |
| COCCON | FRANKENSTEIN | SOLARIS | THEY LIVE |
| CONTACT | GATTACA | SPIDER-MAN | TOTAL RECALL |
| CUBE | INDEPENDENCE DAY | STAR WARS | TRANCERS |
| DARK CITY | JURASSIC PARK | STAR WARS | TRON |
| DEEP IMPACT | LOGAN'S RUN | STAR WARS | VIDEODROME |
| DUNE | MAD MAX | STAR WARS | WESTWORLD |
| EQUILIBRIUM | METROPOLIS | STARSHIP TROOPERS | |

Hidden movie: THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI ACROSS THE EIGHTH DIMENSION

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Tues day, February 13, 2018

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STATE OF KUWAIT
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h.

BY DAY: Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind changing to south westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

WEATHER WATCH			Fresh wind	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 12/02/2018 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	27 °C	18 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	28 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	29 °C	14 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	30 °C	16 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	17 °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	15 °C		
NUWAISIB	27 °C	15 °C		
WAFRA	29 °C	12 °C		
SALMY	32 °C	14 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	02/13	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rising dust over open areas	35 °C	14 °C	SE-SW	20 - 50 km/h
Wednesday	02/14	A significant decrease in temperature and some high clouds will appear	25 °C	14 °C	NW-N	15 - 42 km/h
Thursday	02/15	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	24 °C	10 °C	NE-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	02/16	Partly cloudy to cloudy	25 °C	13 °C	NE-SE	15 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:09
Sunrise	06:29
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:12
Sunset	17:36
Isha	18:53

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	27 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	92 %
MIN. RH	17 %
MAX. Wind	SE 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

REQUIRED
 A Leading Kuwaiti Company requires a **Sales Representative (Indian)**
 • With 4 - 5 Years Experience in Sales, to Visit Oil Companies etc.
 • Having Valid Kuwaiti Driving License
Interested Candidates with transferable Residence 18 Only
 Please send your C.V. by
 E-Mail: thuwayni@thuwayni.net

Manpower Required Urgently For Hospital Project
 • Duct Fabricators (20 Nos.)
 • Duct Fitters (50 Nos.)
 • Duct Helpers (100 Nos.)
For Bayan National Co.
 Contact Eng. Shabaik Tel# 66302738
 Mr. Tripathy # 56640098

ACCOMMODATION
 Sharing accommodation For Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available from February 25, Contact 94418396 or 69972330 12-2-2018

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMERGENCY 112

Airline

American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635

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

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 13/2/2018					Departure Flights on Tuesday 13/2/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	QTR	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	QTR
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	1078	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15	1078
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	059	JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25	059
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	672	KAC	124	Bahrain	14:30	672
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	692	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00	692
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	286	KAC	673	Dubai	15:05	286
KAC	102	London	01:20	221	MSC	406	Dubai	15:10	221
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	500	FDB	072	Doha	15:25	500
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	529	MSC	412	Bahrain	15:25	529
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	788	JAI	571	Doha	15:25	788
JZR	267	Beirut	02:10	304	JZR	142	Doha	15:30	304
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	303	KAC	677	Jeddah	15:45	303
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	562	KAC	285	Doha	15:50	562
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	645	KAC	417	Riyadh	15:50	645
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	857	THY	773	Dhaka	15:50	857
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	1072	PGT	859	Dammam	16:00	1072
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	118	DLH	625	Doha	16:00	118
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	801	AXB	396	Kozhikode	16:05	801
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	127	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	16:10	127
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	779	QTR	1087	Doha	16:10	779
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:05	051	KLM	446	Amsterdam	16:10	051
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	640	KKK	1269	Muscat	16:10	640
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	341	OMA	644	Muscat	16:10	341
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	542	THY	765	Istanbul	16:10	542
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	510	MSR	607	Luxor	16:15	510
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	215	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	17:15	215
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	125	MSR	613	Cairo	17:30	125
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	777	LMU	5511	Cairo	17:30	777
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	325	KAC	205	Islamabad	17:40	325
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	984	KAC	303	Mumbai	17:45	984
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	063	QTR	1077	Doha	17:45	063
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	177	FDB	070	Dubai	17:45	177
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	620	JZR	786	Riyadh	18:00	620
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	1080	JZR	560	Sohag	18:00	1080
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	744	THY	771	Istanbul	18:00	744
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	776	JZR	164	Dubai	18:15	776
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	662	RJA	645	Amman	18:15	662
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	123	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:15	123
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	555	KAC	167	Paris	18:20	555
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	156	KAC	171	Frankfurt	18:20	156
BAW	157	London	07:15	217	KAC	501	Beirut	18:30	217
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	356	KAC	165	Rome	18:30	356
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	161	FDB	054	Dubai	18:50	161
KAC	358	Kochi	07:40	674	KAC	787	Jeddah	18:50	674
ETD	995	Abu Dhabi/Bahrain	07:50	057	KAC	613	Bahrain	19:10	057
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	616	BAW	156	London	19:30	616
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	166	KAC	117	New York	19:30	166
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	620	KAC	691	Muscat	19:30	620
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	647	KAC	561	Amman	19:30	647
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	4565	KAC	671	Dubai	19:30	4565
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	1088	KAC	101	London	19:30	1088
JZR	787	Riyadh	09:50	624	ABY	126	Sharjah	19:30	624
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	675	ETD	9882	SGN	19:30	675
WAN	342	Sohag	10:15	168	KAC	541	Cairo	19:30	168
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	307	KAC	515	Tehran	19:30	307
IRA	675	Lar	10:40	402	UAE	856	Dubai	19:30	402
ZAV	4101	ZRM	11:00	229	KAC	773	Riyadh	19:30	229
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	786	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	19:30	786
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	172	KAC	617	Doha	19:30	172
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	859	QTR	1071	Doha	19:30	859
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	219	KAC	155	Istanbul	19:30	219
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	445	FDB	056	Dubai	19:30	445
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	116	JZR	778	Jeddah	19:30	116
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	564	SVA	513	Riyadh	19:30	564
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	1082	GFA	214	Bahrain	19:30	1082
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	309	IRA	674	Lar	19:30	309
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	987	JZR	776	Jeddah	19:30	987
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40	239	MSC	404	Asyut	19:30	239
QTR	8511	Doha	13:55	241	QTR	1075	Doha	19:30	241
PAL	668	Manila	14:00	185	JZR	606	Kochi	19:30	185
KAC	618	Doha	14:15	574	MEA	405	Beirut	19:30	574
KAC	516	Tehran	14:20	405	SAW	702	Damascus	19:30	405
KAC	206	Islamabad	14:20	043	JZR	240	Dubai	19:30	043
				071	SR	611	Cairo	19:30	071

Lifestyle | Music & Movies

'Cyborgs' war drama replays real-life Ukraine battle

A new Ukrainian feature film called "Cyborgs" has become the first to depict the bloody war against Russian-backed separatists, focusing on a battle for a highly symbolic airport. The patriotic drama details the clash for Donetsk airport, a gleaming international hub rebuilt as the eastern industrial city prepared to host the Euro 2012 football championship. After the ongoing conflict broke out in 2014, rebels seized control of Donetsk and for more than eight months besieged government forces defending the airport in fierce fighting that reduced the terminals to a charred steel skeleton. The Cyborgs title refers to a nickname for soldiers holed up in the airport who withstood tank attacks and shelling despite limited logistical support from Kiev.

"Wow, how cool you are! You can't be human, you're probably cyborgs!", a unit commander exclaims at the start of the film as his men opt to stay inside the ruined airport despite facing deadly danger. The 45-year-old director Akhtem Seitablayev told AFP the movie was about "the armed men who protect our country and thanks to whom I am able to get up every morning, kiss my kids and indeed, make movies." Since a December release, it has earned 22.2 million hryvnias (\$800,000, 640,000 euros) at the box office, becoming Ukraine's top-grossing film made with state funding.

Some screenings have taken place in Kiev-held towns in the conflict zone in the east of the country, but it has not been released in Russia. The film has yet to recoup the total budget of 42 million hryvnias-half of which is state funding that does not need to be reimbursed. Scenes show volunteers-including school teachers, students, engineers and even actors — fighting alongside professional military and struggling with a lack of water, food and ammunition. The 242-day siege of Donetsk airport has been compared by Ukrainian media to the long drawn-out siege of Stalingrad during World War II. The airport finally fell to the rebels with 200 Ukrainian soldiers dead and separatist losses estimated at up to 800.



People leave from a cinema featuring a poster for the Ukrainian blockbuster film 'Cyborgs' in Kiev. — AFP photos



'Cyborgs' film's producer Ivanna Diadiura speaks to AFP during an interview.

Fighters as consultants

Real-life Ukrainian fighters provided the inspiration for some characters and acted as consultants during filming. One of the leading roles, a unit commander with the nom de guerre Serpen, or August in Ukrainian, is partly based on Andriy Sharaskin, an actor who went to the frontline as a volunteer. In one scene, Serpen and others make emotional phone calls to their loved ones as they await a major attack. "We really did say our goodbyes then. We called our relatives to hear them for the last time," Sharaskin said, recalling a phone conversation with his daughter. Amid such human tragedy, "Cyborgs" includes comic episodes as the soldiers tell jokes against the backdrop of bloody battles.

"Did you call a taxi to the airport?" an officer asks troops as they wait for an armed personnel carrier to take them to the terminal-with slim chance of a return journey.

The director said he was moved to make the film after hearing of many well-educated and successful people who risked their lives to fight as volunteers. "Their optimism and their clear understanding of why they went there can contribute to the birth of a new Ukrainian political nation," said the director.

'Not a civil war'

At the end of a packed viewing in Kiev, some spectators could not hold back tears. "Unexpectedly, I liked the film. We are used to the fact that war films are propagandistic, but this one is actually realistic," viewer Kateryna Esmanova told AFP. Following overwhelming evidence of Moscow funneling in troops and arms, the film stresses this is a war with Ukraine's former Soviet master Russia, rather than pro-Russian insurgents. Packed with dialogue

about the meaning of patriotism, "Cyborgs" appears to be aimed at Ukrainian audiences, but producer Ivanna Diadiura told AFP they wanted to show it at international film festivals too.

The director said he believed the message would resonate with all audiences. "It seems to me that we managed to structure the drama in such a way that anyone—even someone who knows nothing about these events—will see this is not a civil war," Seitablayev said. "Our characters speak both Ukrainian and Russian and this is a war about a civilizational choice between a Soviet past and, I hope, a European future." The fighting in Ukraine has cost more than 10,000 lives since April 2014. — AFP



In this file photo French rock singer Johnny Hallyday (left) poses with his wife Laetitia Boudou, inside a new night-club, Amnesia, that Hallyday part-owns in Paris with a glittering bash filled with friends and celebrities. — AFP photos



In this file photo (left), wife of late French singer Johnny Hallyday, David Hallyday, son of Johnny Hallyday and daughter Laura Smet (center) stand during the funeral ceremony for Johnny Hallyday outside the Eglise de la Madeleine (La Madeleine Church) in Paris.

ROW OVER FRENCH ROCKER HALLYDAY'S WILL REVEALS FAMILY AT WAR

The daughter of French rock legend Johnny Hallyday caused a sensation yesterday by challenging his will after he left everything to his fourth wife Laetitia, who was 32 years his junior. Actress Laura Smet laid bare the tensions inside France's first family of showbiz, revealing that she had long been forced to call and meet her father in secret. Hallyday's death in December of lung cancer plunged France into mourning, and brought hundreds of thousands of his fans onto the streets of Paris for his funeral in scenes not seen since the death of Edith Piaf.

Smet said she was "stupefied and hurt" after learning that she and her brother David—the singer's only two biological children—had been left nothing by the "French Elvis". Instead all of Hallyday's wealth and the rights to the 110 million records he sold will eventually go to Jade and Joy, the girls he adopted in Vietnam with Laetitia. Smet's lawyers said her half-brother David Hallyday was also contesting the "rewritten" will, which was made in California, where Hallyday spent much of his later years.

Under French law, a wife does not automatically inherit all of her husband's estate, and generally must share it with his children. In an open letter to AFP, Smet, 34, exploded the myth of the "united front" that Hallyday's extended family

managed to maintain for the huge "people's tribute" of his funeral, where French President Emmanuel Macron called him a "national hero". She also strongly hinted that Laetitia, a 42-year-old former model, prevented her from seeing her father before he died aged 74.

"It is still killing me not to have been able to say goodbye to you. Papa do you know that at least?" Smet wrote. "So many questions without answers. All those times when we had to hide to see and call each other," she added. Yet "I found out a couple of days ago that you have rewritten your will to totally disinherit David and me," Smet wrote.

Heart-rending letter

"It was only a few weeks ago that we were having a meal together and you said to me, 'So when are you going to have a child?' 'But what can I tell that child about you, someone whom I have admired so much?' she asked. In the heart-rending letter Smet, whose mother is the actress Nathalie Baye, said her father comes to her in her dreams every night. "You are handsome, with no tattoos, you are finally free..." Hallyday began getting tattoos in the 1990s around the time he met Laetitia in Miami, marrying her just after she turned 21 in 1996.

"I would have preferred if all this had stayed within the family," Smet wrote, "but unfortunately, in our family this is how it is. I am proud to be your daughter. I love you Papa," she added. Smet's lawyers earlier told AFP in a statement that she was "stupefied and hurt to learn that her father's will leaves all his wealth and rights to his wife Laetitia, using California law." Smet—a talented actress who reportedly attempted suicide after her father nearly died in 2010 — was left without even "a souvenir—one of his guitars or motorbikes, not even the sleeve of the song 'Laura,'" they said.

The mother of her half-brother David Hallyday, 1960s pop star Sylvie Vartan, was the singer's first wife. Although Hallyday was never taken seriously abroad, he was by far the best-known rocker in France. The fanatical biker's funeral cortege through Paris was escorted by hundreds of leather-clad motorcyclists, and others followed the coffin to his burial in the Caribbean island of St Barts. Born Jean-Philippe Leo Smet, he took his stage name from an American relative and mentor, Lee Hallyday, who introduced him to rock 'n' roll. — AFP

BOLD, BLACK AND BEAUTIFUL, 'BLACK PANTHER' HOPES FOR CULTURAL SHIFT

Some film critics are calling it the best Marvel movie so far; others say it's a correction after years of neglecting minority talent in Hollywood. The predominantly black cast of superhero movie "Black Panther" hope its combination of African pride, beauty and kick-*** adventure will also mark a cultural shift in the movie industry and beyond. The Disney movie, opening worldwide this week, tells the story of T'Challa/Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), the new king of the futuristic, wealth-laden African nation Wakanda, who is challenged by factions within his own country.

"Marvel has a way of really affecting popular culture," said Lupita Nyong'o, who plays the Wakandan warrior spy, Nakia. "Hopefully it changes the general idea of what being an African is. Too often times we see Africa as a place that is wanting, and here it's a place that you want to go," she said. The movie, directed by Ryan Coogler and also featuring Michael B. Jordan, Angela Bassett, Forest Whitaker and



A picture taken in February 1919 shows US 369th Infantry Regiment Jazz orchestra aboard the SS Stockholm heading to the United States. — AFP photos

Daniel Kaluuya, arrives to stellar reviews after years of criticism about the under-representation of movies, actors and filmmakers of color in Hollywood. Analysts expect it to rake in some \$150 million at the North American box office on its opening weekend, and the filmmakers hope it will encourage studios to invest in more mainstream, racially diverse films.

"It's not often that you see two black men in a movie playing a role of this importance. You

see it with white actors, (like) 'Ocean's Eleven' where it's Brad Pitt and Matt Damon and George Clooney, and it's like 'why does that never happen with us?'" Boseman said. "Hopefully the success of this will make it be commonplace. It'll make Hollywood stop saying 'well, your movies don't travel,' he said.

"Black Panther" also offers a new type of villain through Jordan's Killmonger, an empathetic former military black-ops agent, who wants to distribute Wakanda's wealth to arm the world's black population and help them rise to power. Wakanda is depicted as a verdant land with stunning waterfalls where spacecraft designed like tribal masks soar over a modern metropolis. "The aesthetic of it is so pleasing, and so black and so Afro-centric and African and modern and worldly and futuristic," said Bassett. "All this brilliance and excellence... It's extremely important. Especially for our young people," she said. — Reuters

100 years ago today, jazz broke loose in Europe

A hundred years ago in World War I, a group of American soldiers stormed Europe—not to the boom of guns, but the swinging rhythm of saxophones, drums and horns.

They came to fight in the mud against the Germans in a war approaching its end—but their arrival also marked the start of a sweeter, cultural conquest. A hundred years ago on Monday, the 369th Infantry's "Harlem Hellfighters Band" gave what is said to have been the first jazz concert on European soil—in the northwestern French city of Nantes.

"When the band had finished and the people were roaring with laughter, their faces wreathed in smiles, I was forced to say that this is just what France needed at this critical moment," wrote one of the band members, Noble Sissle, in his memoirs.

Yesterday Nantes launches a series of concerts, conferences and exhibitions to mark the centenary of that legendary gig. Among the guests of honor at opening were three of the grandchildren of the orchestra's leader, Lieutenant James Reese Europe—the black American bandleader known as the "king of jazz".

Catching the jazz bug

After that night at Nantes's Theatre Graslin, Europe would never sound the same again. It "turned France upside down", according to local press reports from the time. "The 'Jazz germ' had hit them," Sissle wrote, "and it seemed to find the vital spot." The 369th Infantry

was one of the four African American regiments sent from the racially segregated United States to fight under French command. James Reese Europe "was the first African American officer to lead troops in a wartime attack," said Matthieu Jouan, head of the "100 Years of Jazz" commemorations in Nantes.

The officer also put together the 40-strong band which included "some of the best of the time", Jouan added. When they were not fighting at the front, they played to entertain the troops and locals. "People went crazy everywhere they toured to," said Jouan.

Music from No Man's Land

The 369th Infantry received the Croix de Guerre French military decoration for bravery. France also awarded the Legion d'Honneur to 171 members of the regiment for liberating the village of Sechault, where a monument to them now stands. Lieutenant Europe composed one of his best-known tunes, "One Patrol in No Man's Land", while lying injured in hospital. He returned from the war a hero, only to die months later in May 1919 at the age of 39 — stabbed in the neck by one of his bandmates. The headlines in the American press read: "The king of jazz is dead," said Jouan. But the officer's death coincided, he added, with the rise of three great musical stars: Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. The jazz age had begun. — AFP



A picture taken in 1918 in Paris shows US 369th Infantry Regiment Jazz orchestra conducted by James Reese performing for war wounded in front of the Hotel de Tunis.



A picture taken in February 1919 shows US 369th Infantry Regiment Jazz orchestra aboard the SS Stockholm heading to the United States. — AFP photos

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Revelers of the Mangueira samba school perform during the first night of Rio's Carnival.



Revelers of the Vila Isabel samba school perform.

Mayor's backside and Dracula mark politicized Rio carnival parade

President Michel Temer as Dracula, crooked politicians, and a giant backside mocking Rio de Janeiro's mayor set the tone for this week's unusually politicized samba parades as the Rio carnival hits its peak. The Sambodromo parades, running through Sunday night and restarted yesterday, were as always a lush cocktail of glamor, eccentric costumes, pounding samba anthems and sweaty, pulsating sensuality. But amid the feather headdresses, sparkly G-strings and dancers dressed as everything from trees to Chinese merchants, serious politics intruded this year.

schools competing, nor the 72,000 spectators crammed into the Sambodromo are immune to the country's anger.

Kick up the backside

One target of that anger overnight Sunday was Rio Mayor Marcelo Crivella. A bishop in the evangelical mega-church founded by his billionaire uncle, Crivella can hardly conceal his disdain for the carnival's excesses of the flesh ahead of the start of Roman Catholic Lent on Ash Wednesday. Even though the carnival is a huge revenue earner for the city, Crivella has halved subsidies to the annual bash and refused so much as to attend the Sambodromo parades. In a video released just after the first parades got underway Sunday, the mayor said he was leaving to Europe.

For Paraiso do Tuiuti—one of the 13 schools vying in the epic talent contest—the mayor has declared war. They replied by putting a large, bare and cellulite-riddled pink backside on one of their floats. Hidden under a temporary covering on the right cheek was Crivella's name, said organizer Erick Erasmo, 40, just before the school started marching. "There's a heart with Crivella written on it-like you have on a tattoo," he said. "The bum represents the mayor for cutting our budget, for trying to end our happiness," said another organizer, Helton Dias, 28.

President Dracula

Center-right President Michel Temer—said by opinion polls to be the most unpopular president Brazil has ever known—was also taking a ribbing. Temer came to power in 2016 after leftist president Dilma Rousseff was ejected in an impeachment vote driven by Temer's close allies. Since then, his government has been rocked by almost continuous corruption scandals, while his push for economic austerity measures has sent popular support plummeting. The Paraiso do Tuiuti school depicted him as Dracula on Sunday. "I am a vampire who is meant to represent the president of the republic," said history teacher Leo Morais,



The Paraiso do Tuiuti samba school performs during the first night of Rio's Carnival.

39, as he sat having makeup applied for his role as the undead version of Temer.

Morais, who already had his face painted white and would later don big black wings and a lot of fake dollar bills, said the carnival was a chance for Brazil's poor to be heard. "The samba schools have a social role," he said. "They speak out for ordinary people." Paraiso do Tuiuti was also deploying a squadron of people dressed as yellow bath ducks, a symbol of mass demonstrations against corruption and against the government that helped bring down Rousseff. The ducks were portrayed as being manipulated by a politician's giant hand a reference to claims that the street protests were organized by forces hoping to see Temer take power.

Jailed politicians

The face-off between the samba schools in the purpose-built Sambodromo is taken every bit as seriously as the city's other great love, football. Each school gets about an hour to parade with some 3,000 dancers, singers and drummers dressed in over-the-top costumes. Last year, the contest ended in a draw between the Mocidade and Portela schools. The new champion will be announced on Wednesday. One of the big names to watch in the session running overnight from will be the Beija-Flor school. They too are going political, with dancers dressed as politicians and businessmen behind bars—a nod to the sprawling Car Wash anti-corruption probe that has put many powerful Brazilians in prison. — AFP



Revelers of the Imperio Serrano perform on the first night of Rio's Carnival at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP photos

Latin America's biggest country is only just emerging from its worst recession on record. Violent crime in cities like Rio is rocketing, and politics is riddled with corruption and lack of leadership ahead of October presidential elections. The carnival still claims to be "the greatest show on Earth." But neither the 13 elite samba

CARNIVAL IN HAITI: A UNIFYING RELEASE, DESPITE CONTROVERSIES

Tens of thousands of people began Sunday three days of watching their favorite musicians and letting off steam in Haiti, forgetting their daily troubles and the controversies the festivities never fail to attract. Under a blazing sun, dance troops paraded all afternoon on the Champ de Mars in Port-au-Prince. At night, a crowd took over the huge public square to follow the floats. Everybody knows when carnival takes place, but nevertheless, each year it is organized at a snail's pace until the very last minute. It's an effort not helped by the fact that, although it is Haiti's largest cultural event, every year a new provisional committee is appointed to manage the event's finances and artistic aspects.

"Every year, there are planning difficulties—but every year, we do the same thing again," Emmelie Prophete, spokeswoman for the committee—set up just two months ago—admits with a smile. "The difference this year is that we are trying to pull off a carnival without debt. Before, there were always suppliers who were not paid—then the

following year, they did not want to work with the committee. But we needed them, the offer of services being very limited," Prophete explained.

A political carnival

The annual improvisation benefits the political sector, which can easily influence the most important decisions—such as the artists selected for the nighttime parades. "The big bands are chosen because they have been part of carnival for years," Prophete said regretfully. "Then, we try to choose the most popular 'meringue' (Haitian dance) musicians to live up the course. Then, inevitably, politicians will have their say on this or that group. Carnival is very political." The politicization of carnival has increased since Michel Martelly, known as musician Sweet Micky—a carnival star for two decades—served as president from 2011 to 2016.

The participation of Martelly's group in this year's edition has sparked controversy—as his salacious attitude



and tendency to insult critics prompted two cities to ban him from their parades. Despite the protests of some feminist groups, the former president will perform on the Champ de Mars. The carnival spirit of freedom and debauchery delights most—and many of the songs composed for the occasion are not kind to those in charge. "We say everything we want," said Carel Pedre, an animator who runs a website compiling carnival "meringue" music. So far, the 2018 edition lists over 800 titles.

"We've received lots of carnival meringues talking about the Petrocaribe case and corruption," Pedre said. "They also talk about the big problem we have with garbage. There's even one very popular song that talks about the bad behavior of our leaders, in their cars, with their sirens. "Through all these meringues, you can get a complete view of the situation in the country: of a Haiti that suffers, that has its political problems, but also a Haiti that celebrates and has fun," he added. But cathartic as the songs may be, they're also a reflection of the dire state of Haiti's music industry.

Rich and poor

"There are no other chances to showcase yourself, especially for young talents. We don't have an awards ceremony, we don't have big national music festivals—so everyone wants to make themselves known during carnival," Pedre said.

While Haiti is one of the most unequal countries on the planet, carnival brings together Haitians from all economic and social backgrounds. "Whether rich or poor, we dance to the same songs by the same bands," said Pedre. "If we united like this all year round, Haiti would already be a developed country." — AFP



Revelers perform on the first day of the 2018 National Carnival Parade in Port-au-Prince. — AFP photos

Abayas only NY show spotlights rise of modest fashion



Designer Vivi Zubedi walks the runway during New York Fashion Week: The Shows at Industria Studios in New York City.

Indonesian designer Vivi Zubedi made her New York solo runway show debut Sunday, wowing the crowd with her abaya-only collection as she hopes to capitalize on the growing market for modest, Muslim fashions. In September, she showcased her signature look in a joint show shared with other designers from her homeland. It went so well that she jetted back to New York with the aim of drumming up more business. "Very excited!" Zubedi giggled backstage after being mobbed by friends and family, taking selfies with stylish US bloggers who admire her fashion-forward Islamic style dressing even if they're not Muslim.

"I have a lot of clients here actually," she giggled again. It was standing room only as Zubedi sent down the runway a collection of batik prints, black and midnight blue velvet, pearl-rimmed hijabs and American baseball-style hats perched on the top of headscarves. Unlike the average US catwalk display of leg and cleavage, there was barely a strand of hair in sight, and even hands were cloaked in leather gloves or shielded by flouncy lace cuffs.

Zubedi's signature product is the abaya—the loose, flowing head-to-toe black garment obligatory in Saudi Arabia and adopted by some of the most strictly observant Muslim women elsewhere. But it was far from the throw-on-an-abaya-to-head-to-the-shops kind of look. This was luxury, crystal-embossed material shimmering in the light, pearls draped around the neck, ruffled sleeves and hip hop meets tradition—a daring black leather jacket zipped up on top. "I thought the show was amazing," US blogger and stylist Dyandra Raye told AFP. "I would wear all of them! I'm super dramatic!" Fashion writer Kristen Martin agreed, another of the scores of impeccably dressed guests—some of whom queued outside in the rain. "I absolutely loved it," Martin told AFP. "I think it's really important for us to embrace each other's culture."



Models walk the runway for Vivi Zubedi during New York Fashion Week: The Shows at Industria Studios in New York City. — AFP photos

'Excited'

"The line was just really detailed and it made me excited," she added. Since Zubedi established her eponymous label in 2011, modest fashion—designed specifically for the affluent, modern, religiously observant Muslim woman—is gaining traction as designers eye the consumer potential in conservative communities all over the world. Dolce and Gabbana has produced a collection of hijabs and abayas. In 2016, Burberry produced its first ever Ramadan collection and Japanese high street label Uniqlo has moved into the modest market as well.

Nike has produced a hijab line for Muslim female athletes. US fashion houses DKNY, Tommy Hilfiger and Oscar de la Renta, as well as Spanish giants Zara and Mango, have all also produced a Ramadan line. On Thursday, US

retail giant Macy's will start selling a modest clothing range that includes dresses, tops and hijabs, created by a woman who struggled to find clothes after she converted to Islam. Making the announcement this month, Cassandra Jones, senior vice president of Macy's Fashion, said the collection will help the retail giant to "better serve our customer looking for modest fashion."

Zubedi enthusiastically welcomed the move. "That's a brilliant project," she told AFP of Macy's initiative. "Now there's a lot of people looking for modest wear and modest wear is not only for hijabi people or Muslim people, but for everyone." After her shared show in September, Zubedi said she attracted attention from buyers in Dubai, Hong Kong and the United States. Her next ambition? To open a

store for overseas customers, who currently can purchase her wares only online. "Anywhere-but outside Indonesia," said the Jakarta-based designer when for her preferred location. "Department store, would be perfect!" — AFP



Beckham 'quiet' in NY ahead of London 10th anniversary

Victoria Beckham laid on a quiet presentation of her fall/winter 2018 collection in New York on Sunday, before hightailing it to London for the 10th anniversary of her label. The former Spice Girl, entrepreneur and mother of four broke with her traditional format for what she called "a quiet celebration of where we have come" since her first appointments in New York a decade ago. Husband David, last month awarded a Major League Soccer franchise in Miami, sat next to Vogue editor in chief Anna Wintour in the front row with three of the couple's four children, Romeo, Cruz and Harper.

His wife, who appeared at the end to acknowledge the applause dressed elegantly in black pants and a sweater, hair swept into a chignon, unusually walked over at the end to give her family members each a quick hug. It was a layered, working women's approach to fall/winter 2018, the safari suit look, belted macs, buttoned-up collars and big belts with enormous slouch bags, worn on the shoulder half dangling open. There were scarf hemlines and layering—suitable for the global customer who travels or lives in warmer climes—and a smattering of animal print to break up the olive, sand, brown, black and gray.

Shoes were flat, with overhanging buckle strips for a collection that had an undeniable London feel, rather austere and slightly androgynous. She selected an imposing Upper East Side Beaux Art mansion, which she called a "more intimate space (that)



Models walk the runway for Prabal Gurung during New York Fashion Week: The Shows at Gallery I at Spring Studios in New York City. — AFP photos

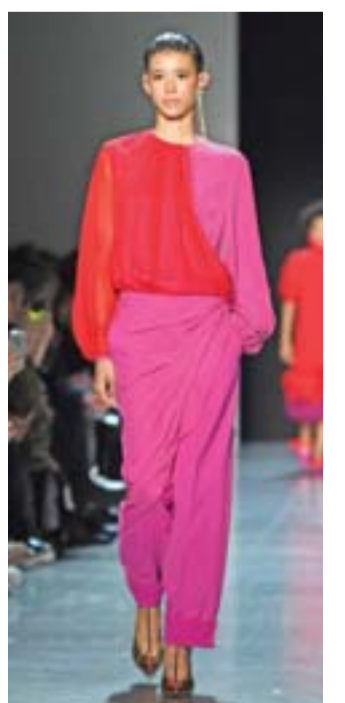


Models walk the runway at Victoria Beckham fashion show February 2018 during New York Fashion Week in New York City. — AFP photos

allows for the construction and details of the garments to be seen from a new perspective." Next season Beckham leaves New York to celebrate in London the 10th anniversary of a label that has transformed her from 1990s pop star into bona fide designer admired by editors and with a loyal following.

She and the four other members of the Spice Girls, the best-selling female group ever, sent fans into overdrive by announcing earlier this month plans to explore "incredible new opportunities" in the future. Speaking to British Vogue, Beckham hit down the idea that she would get back on the road, but was warm about what the original "Girl Power" band might do in a post #MeToo world, a reference to the social media movement against sexual harassment. "I'm not going on tour. The girls aren't going on tour," she said. "There's something so strong in the message of what the Spice Girls stood for. What is that in the future? What does that look like? We were just bouncing ideas around. Brainstorming," she said. "This is what I do," she added, glancing over at her collection. — AFP

NEW YORK Fashion Week



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A worker prepares roses for packing ahead of Valentine's Day, at a flower plantation in Tabio, Cundinamarca department, Colombia. — AFP photos



A worker checks the quality of roses ahead of Valentine's Day.

Valentine's day

a rosy opportunity for jobless Colombians



A worker wraps a bunch of roses for export ahead of Valentine's Day, at a flower farm in Tabio, Cundinamarca department, Colombia.



A worker selects pink roses to be packed ahead of Valentine's Day, at a flower farm in Tabio.



A worker wraps and classifies roses ahead of Valentine's Day.

Valentine's Day is a crazy rush for Colombia, one of the biggest flower exporters in the world, resulting in huge demand for labor in greenhouses near Bogota. That's how Rubiela Mendez and William Perez found themselves shivering in a cold they'd never known, preparing roses in a hangar 500 kilometers (300 miles) from their hometown of Cucuta, on the jungle-steamy eastern border with Venezuela. They are among hundreds of Colombians and Venezuelans brought in on buses a 12-hour trip over not-so-great roads to ready the fragrant flowers for shipment to the United States.

Valentine's Day on February 14 is one of the times of year Americans spend the most on gifts. That means a bonanza for Colombia, which is the source of 74 percent of US flower imports. Last year, between January and November, Colombia's flower industry earned \$1.3 billion. Those working to prepare the roses see only the minimum wage — \$300 a month—but for Mendez and Perez and laborers like them from the border, that's far better than what they had been earning. Although Colombia has a nationwide unemployment rate of 10 percent, joblessness in Cucuta is significantly higher, reaching 16 percent last year. Mendez said the situation has

worsened in past months with Venezuelans who are fleeing economic despair in the country coming over the border to work for half the rate paid to Colombians in the town. "The situation in Cucuta is very difficult.

No one wants to go back there because

there's no work," the 26-year-old said, before adding: "But me, I have to return, because my little girl is there." This work stint in Tabio, a town just north of Bogota, was the first time she had been separated from her four-year-old daughter. The task involves taking cut roses and

scrupulously maintaining the "cold chain"—a supply chain that ensures the flowers are kept at very low temperatures in storage and transport so they still appear fresh when sold in shops. Mendez and other workers gather and package bouquets of a dozen roses in spaces refrigerated to 10 degrees (50 degrees Fahrenheit), while listening to tropical music on the radio. They sleep in heated shipping containers, and are fed by the horticultural companies employing them. Despite the basic conditions, the money is better than what Mendez pocketed back in Cucuta. There, after losing a \$7-a-day restaurant job, she barely made ends meet by selling contraband jerrycans of cheap Venezuelan gasoline.

'People suffering'

Her employer, Sunshine Bouquet, had initially sent recruiters to the border thinking it could hire Venezuelan migrants willing to handle the roses. Instead it found a desperate and willing Colombian work force. That's how it came to be, in mid-January, that it transported in 600 people, 80 percent of them Colombians, to its production center. In Cucuta, "there are people suffering, and who very much want to work," said the company boss, Felipe Gomez.

Perez, a 24-year-old Colombian, was relieved when he was chosen. He had spent seven years in Venezuela, and had returned home as the crisis there obliterated previous oil-buoyed prosperity. "There is fear, horrible despair" in Venezuela now, he said, describing rampant public safety woes and lack of food. The outflow of people from Venezuela is reversing a trend that had once seen Colombians heading to their neighbor to escape a half-century conflict between their government and Marxist FARC rebels.

Today, the FARC has disarmed and transformed into a political party. And Venezuela has become destitute, prey to hyperinflation. Colombian officials say more than 550,000 Venezuelans have crossed the border, legally or illegally, and the number is expected to double by June. But the outflow is even greater, once repatriating Colombians are taken into account. According to Ivan Daniel Jaramillo, at a labor observatory in Bogota's Del Rosario University, unemployment in Cucuta spiked "because it is a border zone receiving this migratory pressure."

The rose business in Tabio, as seasonal as it is, doesn't represent a longterm solution for the 600 laborers brought in. But it is a temporary fix that has given them some respite. — AFP



A worker selects pink roses to be packed ahead of Valentine's Day, at a flower farm in Tabio.

Back to basics: Taiwan's industrial chic

With watches made from cement, furniture fashioned from factory pipes, and accessories created from motorbike leather, Taiwanese designers are winning new fans at home and abroad with their own brand of industrial chic. The style reflects the island's sprawling cities and aims to breathe new life into mundane materials more often found on building sites or in workshops. Jewelry and watchmaker Sean Yu uses concrete for his products, starting out by making rings from the material.

After experimenting with different types of concrete, he now uses a mix similar to the formula used to construct buildings. His latest top-selling item is a mechanical watch with a concrete surface in the shape of a spiral staircase. It launched last year and set a sales record on crowd-funding website Zeczec, raising over Tw\$12 million (\$400,000) in pre-orders. Yu says his style is inspired by acclaimed Japanese architect Tadao Ando, known for his mastery use of concrete. "I design for myself and for like-minded people who are avant-garde and rebellious, and who like novel things," Yu told AFP. "What attracts me most about concrete is that when you treat an ordinary material well, you can deliver new values." His products are also on sale in Britain, Japan and the United States. Plumber-turned-interior designer Daniel Cheng uses iron piping to create everything from lights to shelves and sofa frames.

Cheng branched out into furniture design when he was seeking to expand his business and also uses steel bars, tyres, truck wheel rims and car seats for his creations. "My inspirations are simple, I was a plumber and it's something I worked with everyday," he said. "I want to use my imagination to make something interesting and meaningful." Cheng says most of his clients order custom-made products, with local celebrities among his fans, as well as businesses that have hired him to decorate restaurants, cafes and clothes shops.

Ginger Chang of the Taiwan Design Centre, which promotes local designers and brands, said the industrial look featuring cement, brass, alu-



Jewelry and watchmaker Sean Yu displaying watches made with a cement surface during an interview in Taipei.

minum and granite is increasingly popular as an interior design trend on the island. "The public like fresh things and they are looking for something special in terms of materials. They like the one-of-a-kind feel," Chang told AFP. Consumers are also drawn by a green element to some of the industrial chic products. Balance Wu says he wants to prevent motorcycle seat-pads and scrap leather from ending up as garbage, so uses them to create wallets, bags and accessories. There's no shortage of material—Taiwan's cities are clogged with mopeds and Wu's creations are now sold in design shops from Taipei to New York. "Motorcycle leather is a humble and durable material that has to withstand wind, rain and sun every day," says Wu, who co-designs the products with his wife Chin Yang. "We are turning this durable material into products that can be used for a long time." — AFP



This photo shows Balance Wu, who co-designs products with his wife, displaying a leather bag made of recycled motorcycle seat in Taipei. — AFP photos



A man arranging a lineup of watches designed by jewelry and watchmaker Sean Yu made with a cement surface in Taipei.



Photo shows jewelry and watchmaker Sean Yu displaying a clock with a cement surface in Taipei.

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2018



A reveler of the Mangueira samba school performs during the first night of Rio's Carnival at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

Iraq's girl weightlifters also boost family finances



Iraqi weightlifter Khadeeja Ismal Abdullah, 12, trains at a club in Sadr City, east of Baghdad. — AFP photos



Iraqi weightlifter Rogaya Ahmed, 12, trains at a club in Sadr City, east of Baghdad. — AFP photos

The weightlifters on Iraq's national women's team train hard every day, both to bring home the medals and to help ease the financial burden of running a home. Jerking weights heavier than themselves at a rundown gym in Baghdad's conservative Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, the young women and girls come together for three hours every day. The girls are focused as they work out between the small gym's peeling pale mint walls, one of which is adorned with a giant painted Iraqi flag.

With their dark hair in high buns and dressed in team green tracksuit tops, black shorts and leggings, they raise an arm and turn from side to side to warm up. Then they work out hanging from a pull-up bar, before moving to different mats to get down to the business of lifting weights. "To those who say weightlifting is not for girls, I say we can do everything men do," says Huda Salim Al-Saedi, 20, patting chalk powder from her hands.

"I challenge men to lift weights and I'm proud of it," says the weightlifter, her eyebrows trimmed neatly and a black bandana keeping her hair from falling in her face. Huda was one of the first to be recruited when coach Abbas Ahmed in 2011 set out to create Iraq's first national female weightlifting team. At first, it was an uphill battle.

Society's rejection

"It was very, very hard," says the former men's coach, who is now 54. "Society rejected the idea," with conservatives considering the sport

inappropriate for women and girls. There was also no state funding for the project. So Ahmed first approached families whose members were already fans of the sport. Huda seemed like an ideal candidate.

"I challenge men to lift weights and I'm proud of it"

She had practiced Taekwondo since the age of eight and had long been a fan of weightlifting on television. Today, she's a cornerstone of the



Iraqi women's team and its most promising member. Huda helped to train her sister Hadeel, who just turned 17, and last year both of them competed in Asian championships.

The 20-year-old won bronze in the "snatch" discipline in her category at the Asian Championships in Turkmenistan, lifting 90 kilos in one swift motion above her head. She finished first overall at the Asian Junior Championship in Nepal. Her younger sister Hadeel also competed there taking 10th place lifting 68 kilos in the "snatch," while in another competition in Kathmandu, the Asian Youth Championships, she came in fourth overall. But beyond making their relatives proud, Huda and Hadeel's accomplishments have also provided their family with some financial security. "Thanks to weightlifting, I have a salary and money to cover my family's needs every month," Huda says, with her

sister's pay cheque also helping make ends meet.

'Welcomed as heroes'

The women's team is sponsored by the police club, which pays each of its eight members a monthly salary of \$400 to \$800 — a considerable sum for some families. If Huda and Hadeel did not receive support from the club, their family could not pay their monthly rent of some \$330, their father Salim Noma says. Over time, he says, support has grown for the girls in the conservative neighborhood. "Everybody has ended up supporting them. They're welcomed as heroes every time they return from a competition," says Noma as he watches his daughters train.

Female weightlifting has provided an unexpected source of pride-and safety net-for some families in the working-class neighborhood. Loujain Hazem, 15, gave up her studies to focus on the sport, winning a silver medal at the West Asia championships in Jordan last year. "Our coach has taught us determination and perseverance," she says. "I'm sure our efforts will pay off, in terms of both weightlifting and money." The younger generation is also dreaming big. Every day after school, the father of 12-year-old Rogaya picks her up and they weave through the traffic jams of Baghdad on his moped to the gym in Sadr City. With her hair tied in a pink bow, she lifts two large red weights above her head. "I hope one day to take part in the Olympics," says Rogaya, already aiming high. — AFP

FRANCE HANDS BACK NAZI LOOTED ART TO JEWISH FAMILY

France returned three paintings by the Flemish master Joachim Patinir yesterday to the descendants of a Jewish family who were forced to sell them as they fled the Nazis. The Bromberg family fled to Paris from Germany in late 1938 and were forced to sell the 16th-century "Triptych of the Crucifixion" depicting Christ on the cross the following year, along with several other paintings so they could get to the United States via Switzerland.

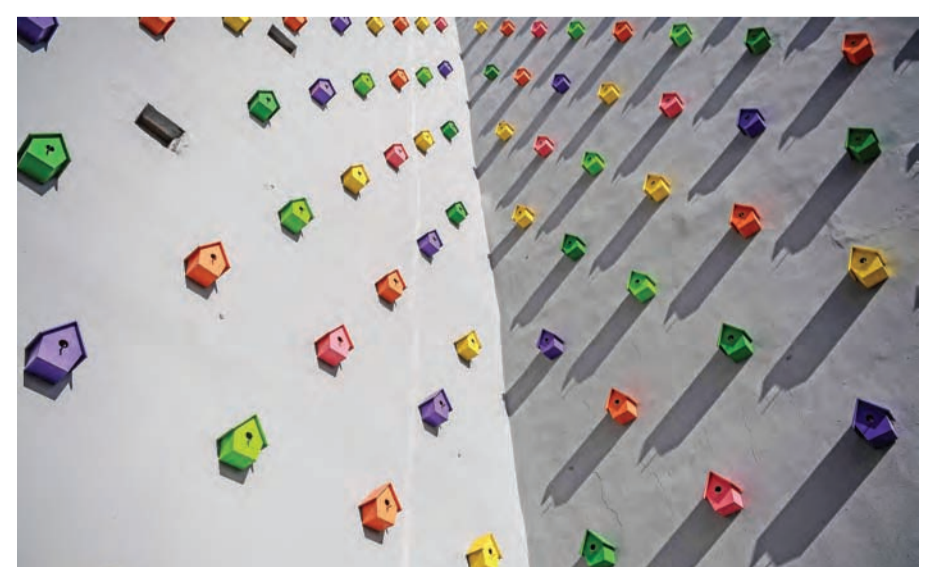
The paintings are to be formally handed over to the descendants of Herta and Henry Bromberg at the Louvre Museum by French Culture Minister Françoise Nyssen. It is the second time in two years that the French state has returned despoiled art to the family. In 2016 it handed over another 16th-century painting, "Portrait of a Man", by one of the followers of Antwerp artist Joos van Cleve. The Patinir paintings had languished for nearly seven decades unclaimed in the French state collections after they were recovered in Munich after World War II.

The triptych had been bought at a knock-down price after the German occupation of Paris and was destined for

Hitler's Fuhrermuseum in his home town of Linz in Austria, where he wanted to build "the ideal museum". Patinir is regarded as the father of landscape painting, and developed the panoramic style that became a hallmark of the northern Renaissance. France has stepped up its efforts to return art looted during World War II to its rightful owners, using genealogical experts to try and trace families.

"It is no longer acceptable to wait for descendants to turn up and ask for the restitution of their family's art for them to be given their due," said former culture minister Audrey Azoulay, who now heads UNESCO.

It is thought that up to 100,000 works of art, and millions of books, were stolen from French Jews or Jews who had fled to France before the German occupation. The Allies found around 60,000 of the missing artworks after the war, and France has been returning works to families since the 1960s—although only 30 were given back up to 1994. Since then there has been a more concerted effort with a commission of experts, historians and archivists dedicated to resolving the problem since 2013. — AFP



An art installation by Turkish artist Yan Kose featuring bird nesting boxes mounted on the side of an apartment building and entitled "Tek G'z Oda" (One eye room) is displayed in Istanbul. — AFP