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Minister extends amnesty for residence violators till April 22

Curbs relaxed on absconding domestics • MP warns PM against raising charges

Abbas calls for Mideast peace conference in rare UN speech

UNITED NATIONS: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas yesterday called for an international conference to be held by mid-2018 to pave the way for Palestinian statehood and launch a new, wider Middle East peace process. In a rare address to the UN Security Council, Abbas presented what he called a "peace plan" to revive the comatose Israeli-Palestinian talks with new international mediation - in which the United States would have less weight. "To solve the Palestine question, it is essential to establish a multilateral international mechanism emanating from an international conference," Abbas said.

President Donald Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem infuriated the Palestinians, who declared that Washington could no longer play a role as lead mediator in the Middle East peace process. Abbas put the blame for the failure of peace efforts squarely on Israel, saying it was "acting as a state above the law". "It has transformed the occupation from a temporary situation as per international law into a situation of permanent settlement colonization," he said.



NEW YORK: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas speaks at the UN Security Council yesterday. — AFP

Abbas said the conference should lead to full UN membership for the state of Palestine, mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine, and the creation of a new international mechanism to reach a final settlement. The Palestinian leader immediately left the council chamber following his address, leaving Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon to complain that he was once again

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Continued on Page 11

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday extended the amnesty for residence violators by two more months till April 22. The extension came in an official circular signed by the minister yesterday following reports that as many as 50,000 expatriate residency violators have benefited from the amnesty that was to end on Feb 23. The amnesty allows residency violators to leave the country without the need to pay any overstay fines and also allows them to return to the country if they manage to obtain a new work permit.

Initial reports estimated that as many as 100,000 expatriates were living in the country without legal residence permits. According to the latest population figures from the Public Authority for Civil Information, there are 3.1 million expatriates in the country against around 1.4 million nationals.

In a related decision, the director general of the residence department yesterday issued a decision allowing maids registered by their sponsors as absconding to transfer to a new sponsor without the prior consent of the original employer. Previously, workers and maids registered by their employers as absconding or runaways were not allowed to get their residence transferred without the consent of their sponsors, some of whom exploited this facility against the workers.

According to the decision, helpers registered as absconders can transfer their residence to a new sponsor, provided the new sponsor pays all the fines - if any - registered against them. The helper then cannot transfer to another sponsor until one year elapses from the date of the transfer.

Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday warned that he will hold the prime minister to account if the

Continued on Page 11

Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Company
congratulates

His Highness the Amir
Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

and His Highness the Crown Prince
Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

and all the Kuwaiti nationals
on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days
asking the Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people

Local

Amir receives commemorative coin from Central Bank Governor

Bank issues coin to mark its golden jubilee



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a commemorative coin from Central Bank of Kuwait's Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, who presented to His Highness a commemorative coin marking the 50th anniversary (golden jubilee) of CBK founding. Hashel also presented commemorative coins to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Hashel said in a statement that the bank minted the symbolic coin on the 50th anniversary of issuing Law

Kuwaiti Monetary Council in 1960. The Kuwaiti dinar was issued in 1961 as a national currency depicting the State of Kuwait sovereignty. He lauded the CBK for safeguarding the Kuwaiti dinar as one of the authentic globally traded currencies. One side of the coin is decorated with the national emblem, along with another slogan marking the occasion. The other side bears the CBK logo.

Separately, His Highness the Amir received Sheikhha Azza Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Head of Al-Sidra Association for the Psychological Care of Cancer Patients, and association members. The meeting was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri, Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting President of the State Audit Bureau Adel Abdul-Aziz Al-Sarawi.

Amir congratulates Crown Prince

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulation to His Highness the Crown Prince on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of assuming the post. In return, His Highness the Crown Prince sent a reply letter to His Highness the Amir, expressing appreciation for the kind gesture, as well as wishing His Highness the Amir utmost health.



A commemorative coin released by the Central Bank of Kuwait on its 50th anniversary.

32/1968 and regulations' issuance regulating banking on June 30, 1968. The law and its amendment constitute basic legislative framework for modern Kuwaiti monetary and banking sectors, Hashel said, also noting that the CBK had taken over jurisdictions from the former



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Head of Al-Sidra Association for the Psychological Care of Cancer Patients Sheikhha Azza Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Central Bank of Kuwait's Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.

Separately, His Highness the Amir is set to patronize and attend today a ceremony honoring winners of 21st Kuwait's Quran Memorization, Recitation Grand Competition. The ceremony will be held at Bayan Palace starting at 10:30 am. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince is set to patronize His Highness's Cup

and Prize for Horse Racing organized by Al-Jahra Equestrian Club. Kuwait's Capital Governor Retired Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhanna will attend the event on behalf of His Highness the Crown Prince at 4:30 pm today at Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah racetrack. — KUNA

Az-Zour North Power Plant ready for summer

KUWAIT: Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Company yesterday announced that successful conclusion of a site visit by the Ministry of Electricity and Water's (MEW) Power and Water Distillation Sector in preparation for the summer 2018 season.

Hosted on February 12, the site visit is part of an annual maintenance schedule carried out by the Ministry of Electricity and Water under the supervision of Assistant Undersecretary for the Water Plant Operation and Maintenance Sector Engineer Fouad Al-Oun, and the Director of Private Sector Projects Department (PSPD) Ayman Al-Hajji, who were received by Shamal Az-Zour CEO Andrew Paul Frain.

Oun also met with the company's Kuwaiti personnel, including engineers and technicians, to review their training and development progress as part of the company's program to train and empower Kuwaiti professionals to lead the plant's operations. The site visit concluded that Az-Zour North One Power and Water Plant is fully pre-

pared for the increase in demand expected for the Summer season of 2018.

Shamal Az-Zour CEO Andrew Paul Frain said: "It was our pleasure to guide the delegation through our preparations for the high-demand Summer 2018 season. Since November 2016, the plant is fully operational and is already contributing to the national grid and supply the Ministry of Electricity and Water with the necessary energy."

Az-Zour North One Power and Water Plant is the Kuwait's first independently owned power and water facility. The plant has a production capacity of 10 percent of Kuwait's power requirements at peak production (1,539MW) and 20 percent of water generation (107 million gallons per day).

The plant began operations in November 2016 and is the first stage of the country's plan to significantly increase capacity over the coming years and part of a larger effort to meet an anticipated peak demand of 25 gigawatts (GW) by 2025.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Wang Di. — KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with the Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Enayati.

Defense Minister hosts envoys, invited to Kuwait students union convention

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held separate meetings with the ambassadors of China, Iran and the Tajik Republic at Bayan palace yesterday. A ministry statement quoted Sheikh Nasser as praising during the meetings the depth of Kuwait's ties with the envoys' countries. The Chinese envoy Wang Di offered congratulations on Sheikh Nasser's recent assumption of the post.

The Iranian Ambassador Ali Enayati presented to Sheikh Nasser a letter of congratulations from his Iranian counterpart on his assignment to the post. He also invited him to visit Iran. As for the Tajik Ambassador Zubaydov Zubaydullo Najotov, he too delivered an identical message from Sheikh Nasser's Tajik counterpart and invited him to his country. Later yesterday, the minister hosted Chairman of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students - US branch - Talal Al-Enezi, who invited him to attend the union annual convention in the United States — KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with the Tajik Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydov Zubaydullo.



Local

Minister reiterates Kuwait's support to Palestinian cause

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled meets President Abbas in New York

NEW YORK: Kuwait is keen on supporting the Palestinian cause; the principal issue for Arabs and Muslims, Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday. "I was honored to meet President Abbas, as we talked about Kuwait's chairmanship of the UN Security Council in February and its efforts to shed light on Arab causes, primarily the Palestinian one. It is considered the earliest file at the UN, a matter that should seize to happen," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in a press release after meeting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas earlier in the day. "There must be a solution to this case according to a time-line and based on international community provisions," he noted.

"Such provisions include the two-state solution, establishing the Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as capital and as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative, all of which are principles the international community should see to implement," he said.

"We are coordinating with our Palestinian brothers regarding the file presented at the Security Council, as well as during activities at the UN," the Kuwaiti top diplomat noted. "The participation of the Palestinian President at the UNSC session is important in order for the international community to be briefed about

latest developments of the Palestinian cause."

Meanwhile, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyadh Al-Maliki lauded "the State of Kuwait's immensely honorable and supportive stance. If it was not for Kuwait's membership at the Security Council, we would have not been able to come here, and President Abbas would not have been able to attend the session." He voiced Palestine's indebted gratitude to Kuwait's leadership, represented by His Highness the Amir, as well as to the Foreign Minister and permanent delegate to the UN.

"Kuwait worked as hard as it could to provide such historic opportunity for Palestine and its president to attend and participate in this significant session, especially after US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as capital of Israel," Malki underlined. "We realize that Kuwait's position obliges it to allow the Israeli delegation to respond to President Abbas's speech, as it is a Security Council mechanism."

Attending President Abbas's meeting were Assistant Foreign Minister and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's office director Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Head of the Kuwaiti Permanent Mission to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi and Assistant Minister for International Organizations' Affairs Minister Delegate Abdullah Al-Hain. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. — KUNA

KIPCO announces Generation 8 of Proteges program

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) KIPCO held a press conference yesterday at KIPCO Tower to announce continuing its long-term strategic partnership with The Proteges. This was the launch of the partnership for Generation 8 of the Proteges program.

The Proteges is a non-profit mentorship program designed to positively influence the youth and push them towards realizing their own potential and becoming their improved selves. It is an all-inclusive program that combines workshops, lectures, activities, challenges, games, and fun; all guided by a group of the most talented experts. This program was founded to provide life and leadership skills to Arab generations.

"Young Arab people lack those skills which are required to improve and develop the community. Our main goal is to search for talented youth and give them a chance to excel. We hope that these young people will benefit from their participation in the Proteges program and will gain experience and knowledge that will change their lives forever," said Yarub Bu Rahma, Co-Founder and Mentor of Proteges.

Bu Rahma thanked HH the Amir, sponsors and partners for their systematic and continuous support, which made the Proteges program successful for the past seven years. "All subsidiary companies of KIPCO have supported the Proteges during the past five years. For instance, the American University in Kuwait offered its campus to host training courses taking place in Kuwait. Also, OSN channels have broadcast the commercials of the program. Recently, the Gulf Insurance Group

sponsored the seventh generation of the Proteges program - Kmala, in addition to numerous services from other subsidiary companies," added Bu Rahma.

Abeer Al-Omar, Director, CSR Department, KIPCO, said renewing the strategic partnership with The Proteges comes as a part of KIPCO's support and encouragement of talented youth in order to build a responsible generation. "We totally trust the achievements of the Proteges program and the excellent quality of graduates every year. Twenty-five students are accepted every year, who are carefully selected, and who work on their graduation program to succeed," she pointed out.

KIPCO supports the Proteges program completely to ensure its continuity. "We aim to make the Proteges program reach the desired level of its founders and instructors through providing the services and products of its subsidiary companies. This allows the accomplishment of each season in the best way and providing for the needs of students. Eight subsidiary companies of KIPCO are sponsoring this program annually - Burgan Bank, KAMCO, United Real Estate Company, Gulf Insurance Group, Qurain Petrochemical Company, American University of Kuwait, OSN, Kuwait Hotels Company and United Networks.

Registration is still open for this year's program. "Youth between 16-24 years of age are welcome to register in the Proteges as soon as possible. The Proteges will kick off on June 24 for six weeks. Applications for Generation 8 can be submitted online at www.theproteges.org," stressed Dana Hamada, Program Manager, Proteges.



KUWAIT: (From left) Dana Hamada, Abeer Al-Omar and Yarub Bu Rahma attend the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait Times

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture showing drones lined up to create the word 'Kuwait' in Arabic during Zain Kuwait's recent show featuring 300 drones. —KUNA

Zain awarded 'Best Mobile Operator' & 'Best Internet Service Provider' in Kuwait for 2017

Service Hero's awarding ceremony for service leaders

KUWAIT: For the sixth time, Zain, the leading telecommunication company in Kuwait, was awarded 'Best Mobile Operator' and 'Best Internet Service Provider' in Kuwait for the year 2017 Service Hero, the creators of Kuwait's only customer satisfaction index. The company ranked first among the telecommunications sector in two categories for achieving the highest customer satisfaction scores by providing the best quality service standards.

The awards ceremony, held in Symphony Style Hotel, witnessed the attendance of many private sector leaders from across various fields. The award came after an in-depth evaluation by an independent advisory council, which recognized Zain's role in launching advanced programs and exceptional promotions for its customer base, as well as playing a leading role in the development of the telecommunications sector.

Zain received the 'Best Mobile Operator' award and 'Best Internet Service Provider' award for achieving high



rates of customer satisfaction. The recognition from Service Hero for the sixth time demonstrates Zain's commitment in providing its customers with the highest levels of service.

Service Hero has appointed an Independent Advisory Council comprised of academic institutions as well as leading business professionals. As a neutral panel of experts, the Council's function is to supervise the assessment and ensure fair and empirical results that adhere to all procedures and norms.

This award reinforces Zain's commitment in maintaining the values of its brand. The company is motivated to continue its pledge in providing exclusive services to meet the needs of its customers as well as to facilitate their personal, professional, and business needs.

Service Hero was established by a team of professionals keen on identifying companies that are service leaders in their market. This team is backed by an advisory

Company launched advanced programs for customers



KUWAIT: Waleed Al Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Communications and Relations Director (left) receives one of Zain's awards.

council that is academic and independent, which assures results that are impartial, objective and accurately reflect people's preference. Service Hero's main goal is to measure the satisfaction level in the market by real consumers in order to help and empower companies to improve their service levels.

own abilities and set them up to achieve their potential. The bank will continue training and developing the group throughout the year.

Hamza Enki, General Manager of Human Resources at ABK said: "ABK is very serious about the development of future Kuwaiti leaders. This program will fast track them to become managers, and ensure a smooth transition to success, while instilling confidence along the way. We have a pool of young talent in this country and we hope to nurture them into key roles in the banking sector."

The event was also attended by senior ABK leaders, who shared their professional experience with the younger workforce by providing leadership insights and effective management tips to succeed in the banking industry.



KUWAIT: Abdulla Al-Sumait (DCGM, ABK), Fawzy Al-Thunayan (GM, Board Affairs, ABK) and Hamza Enki (GM, HRD, ABK) pose for a group picture with the Young Kuwaiti Development Program attendees.

CONDOLANCES



With deep sorrow, we would like to inform you the sad demise of Mr. Thomson P. K. (60) Years, Plavilayil House, Lakhoor, Mallassery, Pathanamthitta. He entered his heavenly abode on Sunday 18th February 2018 in Kuwait. Funeral will be held on 22 - 2- 2018 at 3:30 pm St. Marys Orthodox Church, Lakoor. Public viewing at sabah mortuary on 21 - 2 - 2018 at 1:00 pm

ABK launches Young Kuwaiti Development Program

KUWAIT: In a move to help its employees reach their potential, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) launched its inaugural Young Kuwaiti Development Program earlier this month at the Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City.

The Young Kuwaiti Development Program is designed to nurture ABK's young workforce who were handpicked as high potential, by familiarizing them with the skills required to become an effective manager and leader in the future.

The 10-month program will enable participants to learn about front-line management and supervision practices. In addition, they will be exposed to different techniques to boost their productivity and ensure effective time management. These high potential candidates will also be sensitized to the importance of maintaining a high level of financial awareness in line with industry best practice. At the end of the program, participants will leave with a wealth of knowledge that will instill confidence in their

Local

Two more Philippine Embassy officials recalled over maid's death

Embassy has repatriated 2,500

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Two more Philippine Embassy officials in Kuwait were recalled in connection with the death of Filipino housemaid Joanna Demafelis, whose body was found inside a freezer in a Maidan Hawally apartment two weeks ago. Labor Attache to Kuwait Attorney Alex Padaen and his assistant Lily Pearl Guerero were asked to return to Manila on Monday night. Last week, another assistant labor attache at the embassy's Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) Sarah Conception was recalled for inaction when the family asked for help when they couldn't reach Joanna. Their request was accepted by the office but little effort was exerted. "I am preparing to go back home. I cannot speak anymore on behalf of POLO," said Padaen yesterday when asked if he could comment on the repatriation of about 610 Filipinos yesterday as part of amnesty by the Kuwaiti government.

The recall order was confirmed by Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Rene Villa. "Yes, they were recalled, but I am not privy to the order. But if it is the case, I humbly request the Manila office to immediately send their replacements, because we need people on the ground to help us due to the amnesty and the labor ban. Approximately 80 to 100 people arrive daily. Although five people from POLO and three from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) have arrived from Manila to help, we still need permanent officials who will represent POLO in Kuwait," he added.

According to Villa, 2,500 Filipinos



KUWAIT: Filipino nationals wait outside their country's embassy building yesterday as they prepare to leave Kuwait and avail an amnesty for illegal residents. — Photos by Ben Garcia

have availed of the amnesty, with around 2,500 more who want to leave. "We have applications pouring in everyday and we hope they will be cleared soon so they can go back

President Rodrigo Duterte provided free chartered flights by Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific at 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm respectively.

Asked for the confirmation of Duterte's visit, the ambassador said the invitation was received on Monday from HH the Amir, but no confirmation has been given. "I asked about it in Manila - they said they have just received the invite, and there is no reply yet from Malacanang Palace if the invite has been accepted. But one thing is for sure - Kuwait is very serious on addressing the labor problems and communication is now coming from the highest officials of the Kuwaiti government. So yes, we are happy on the new development," the ambassador concluded.



80 to 100 people arrive to the embassy daily

home," he said. "From our side, we want all Filipinos staying illegally to avail of the amnesty," he said. A total of six buses transported the 610 Filipinos to the airport yesterday. Philippine

Interior Ministry pardons imprisoned police officers

KUWAIT: All police officers held behind bars for restraint cases will be freed on the occasion of the National days, the Ministry of Interior announced yesterday. A ministry statement said Undersecretary Lieutenant General Mahmoud Al-Dosari decided to free all the imprisoned policemen held for restraint offenses. The decision, taken upon instructions by the Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, will go into effect as of Saturday, February 24, 2018.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah said that

Minister officially halts private school fees increase

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Hamid Al-Azmi officially issued a decision yesterday with regards to private school fees for the year 2018/2019. The decision included a halt on fee increase for all private schools (American, English, bilingual, French, private Arabic, model Arabic, Indian, Pakistani, Filipino and the private Iranian school), and approved the fees of 2017/2018 for 2018/2019.

It also included that private and model Arab schools, Indian, Pakistani and Philippine schools must comply with the salaries issued in decision 19724/2002 issued on 18-19/11/2014 for the year 2018/2019, and they represent the minimum salaries, provided that they do not affect any additional rights for workers in the school.

The private education department will approve fees for schools that are to be licensed or stages to be added to existing schools starting from 2018/2019 with the same mechanism, and these schools must comply with the rules and standards set by the education ministry. The decision said the following penalties will be applied to schools that violate the rules of this decision:

The school will be warned in writing to remove the violation within 30 days. If the violation is not removed, all school transactions will be put on hold at state departments for one month, and the licensee must remove the violation during this period. If the violation is not removed during these two periods, the school license will be revoked effective at the end of school year in which the violation occurred. The licensee must still return the additional fees collected in violation of article 1 of the decision, and settle the salaries of workers.

Small and medium enterprises

Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan said the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) handed the National Fund for SME Development 500,000 sq m of land for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), adding that the national fund financed 489 projects in 21 months from April 2016 to December 2017. Roudhan said 180 Kuwaiti

Kuwait's National celebrations have come to epitomize the gaiety of such festive occasions. The minister made his remarks while presiding over a meeting to ensure that security measures are in place ahead of the national holidays. He urged citizens and expatriates alike to enjoy the festivities and cooperate with security forces to guarantee their safety, read a statement by the Kuwaiti interior ministry.

Addressing security forces, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah advised them to remain alert and prepared in their efforts to provide foolproof protection to the Kuwaiti people, which in turn, keeps the country on the path towards prosperity. Meanwhile, Dosari said the interior minister's explicit instructions would only accentuate the jovial mood during national celebrations. The statement also pointed out that the meeting outlined the details of an intricate plan the ministry has concocted in its determination to make sure that national celebrations go off without a hitch. — KUNA

industrial facilities have ventured out of the local market, adding that promoting the bourse to emerging market status will reflect positively on the volume of liquidity. Kuwait jumped six places in the field of improving business environment worldwide and seeks to be in the top third in less than five years, Roudhan noted.

Legal department

There are 214 Kuwaitis and 13 expatriates working in Kuwait Municipality's legal affairs department, the Minister of Municipality Affairs Abdulwahab Al-Roumi said. Asked about the reason why no Kuwaiti lawyers have been appointed at the municipality since 2005, Roumi explained that appointments were halted in the legal affairs department's cadre. He added that 1,867 cases were handled by the department in 2015/2016.

Separately, Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipality branch Falah Al-Shimmari said six engineering offices and six contractors were referred to concerned authorities in the municipality to face legal action for violation of municipality laws. All construction licenses in the governorate will be reviewed on March 1, he said, adding that violations were found in several buildings under construction, while one building was removed. Twelve other buildings were found in violation for adding extra floors, and removal procedures will be taken next month, Shimmari said, adding that the punishment is not just financial, as the violator will remove part of his building at his own expense.

Funeral services

Kuwait Municipality provides all needs for the funeral department, Deputy Director General for Services Affairs Khalaf Al-Mutairi said, noting that the department does not need donations. "The department's budget is sufficient, and all needs, including ambulances, administrative employees, gravediggers, and washers of dead bodies, in addition to shrouds, are available," he explained. The state, represented by the municipality, presents its services free of charge, Mutairi said, and denied that fees are collected for washing or shrouding the dead. Mutairi's statements come in response to reports claiming that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor requested Kuwait Municipality's approval for an application made by a local NGO to raise funds for funeral services, which are offered by the state free of charge. The alleged project, called the 'Hereafter Homes,' includes covering financial costs for funerals in Kuwait, constructing a women's washing building in Sulaibkhat, a washing area for men in Subhan cemetery and providing the basic needs for washing the dead.

Addicts say they use shabu to treat depression

KUWAIT: Three drug users told police upon their arrest that they abused shabu (methamphetamine) because it is an effective treatment for depression, but they were sent to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) anyway. Police noticed a car parked in a dark area with the three persons inside. The suspects were arrested after police found a bag containing shabu with them. They were arrested and charged with possession of drugs for personal use.

Smuggling foiled

Shuwaikh customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 4,000 imported liquor bottles and paan found inside an abandoned container. The container arrived from a Gulf country three months ago and no one claimed it, so officers opened it, removed computer sets from it, and found the liquor and paan. A search is underway to find out the owner.

Forged banknotes

Two citizens were placed under arrest after they were caught in Surra in an abnormal condition with forged KD 10 and KD 5 banknotes on them. Police found one of them is an ex-convict in drugs cases. The two suspects and the forged currency were sent to the forgery department to find how the notes were forged and why. They will be later be sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Physical assault

A man beat a car mechanic in Naayem scrap area and broke his nose, because the

used car spare parts he bought were not working. The Indian mechanic went to hospital then to the police and lodged a complaint. He told police that he did not know if the sold spare parts worked or not. He gave police the license plate number of the citizen's car. Detectives are handling the case.

Charges dropped

An Egyptian butcher dropped theft charges after he discovered the thief was the son of his Syrian neighbor. The Syrian man had noticed a strange wallet in his son's room, and when he opened it, he found out that the civil ID belonged to the butcher. He also found KD 264 in the wallet. His son denied any wrongdoing at first, then said he had opened a drawer and stolen the wallet. The thief was admonished by his father, who returned the wallet to the butcher and apologized to him. He asked him to punish his son in any way he wanted, but the Egyptian refused to punish him and dropped the charges.

Taking advantage

An Iraqi and Jordanian along with a female citizen confessed to police that they use drugs together, but they had differences on how to get it. The citizen said the expats took advantage of her need for drugs, so they gave it to her in exchange of making her sell it to addicts. Ahmadi police stopped the three in a car for being in an abnormal condition, and found what seemed to be a herbal material with the Jordanian. The woman gave police two bags containing white material and herbs, besides drugs paraphernalia, and said it belongs to the two, who give her drugs in exchange for selling them to other addicts. When the two were questioned, they said the woman is the one who supplies them and they only use it with her. The three were taken to the Drugs Control General Department.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Hala Feb offers

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Father of ‘boy smuggled in suitcase’ goes on trial

Defeats in Mideast driving IS fighters to Philippines

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EASTERN GHOUTA, Syria: Members of the Syrian civil defence evacuate an injured civilian on a stretcher from an area hit by a reported regime air strike in the rebel-held town of Saqba, in the besieged Eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus yesterday. — AFP

Nearly 200 killed in Syrian enclave

Situation spinning ‘out of control,’ UN warns

ARBIN: Air strikes hit Syria’s Eastern Ghouta for a third straight day yesterday, bringing the civilian death toll to nearly 200 as the UN warned the situation in the rebel enclave was spinning “out of control”. Air strikes and rocket and artillery fire have battered the rebel-held enclave since Sunday in apparent preparation for a government ground assault on the besieged region.

At least 194 civilians have been killed, among them 57 children, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. On Monday alone, 127 civilians, including 39 children, were killed in the bombardment—the single bloodiest day for Eastern Ghouta in four years. Fresh air strikes yesterday morning killed at least 50 civilians, including 13 children, the Britain-based war monitor said. Held by rebels since 2012, Eastern Ghouta is the last opposition pocket around Damascus and President Bashar Al-Assad is keen to retake it with an apparently imminent ground assault.

The UN’s regional humanitarian coordinator for Syria Panos Moutzsis has warned that the targeting of civilians in the enclave “must stop now”. “The humanitarian situation of civilians in East Ghouta is spiralling out of control. It’s imperative to end this senseless human suffering now,”

Moutzsis said on Monday. The UN has repeatedly called for a month-long ceasefire across Syria’s front lines, from Eastern Ghouta to the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in the northwest, which Turkey threatened yesterday to lay siege to in the coming days.

‘No words’

“February 19 was the one of the worst days that we’ve ever had in the history of this crisis,” said an exhausted doctor in a hospital in Eastern Ghouta. Identifying himself as Abu al-Yasar, he described treating a one-year-old brought into the Arbin hospital with blue skin and a faint pulse, rescued from under the rubble. “I opened his mouth to put in a breathing tube and I found it packed with dirt,” Abu al-Yaar said.

He pulled out the dirt as fast as possible, put in the breathing tube and managed to save the baby’s life. “This is just one story from among

hundreds of wounded.” The bloodshed prompted the UN children’s agency UNICEF to issue a largely blank statement yesterday to express its anger. “We no longer have the words to describe children’s suffering and our outrage,” the agency said in a brief postscript beneath the

pendence drive, which eventually prompted Madrid to impose direct rule on the region in October, sack its government and dissolve its parliament.

Political asylum?

The Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) held the balance of power in Catalonia’s parliament during that time, as Puigdemont’s ruling coalition lacked a majority and relied on the smaller party’s 10 seats to pass legislation and advance his independence “roadmap.” It called for action on the street after a banned independence referendum on October 1 was marred by police violence. Gabriel is the party’s most famous member, hugely popular with CUP supporters for her fiery speeches in parliament in favor of independence. In another interview with Swiss television RTS, she said she could seek asylum in Switzerland. The former university law professor said she was first going to try to settle in the country and possibly get academic work. But “if I can’t because there is an extradition request, I will ask for political asylum,” she said in fluent French. It is possible that a Spanish court will launch an arrest warrant when Gabriel fails to turn up at today’s court hearing in Madrid. In Le Temps newspaper, Gabriel said she has got death threats from far-right extremists, and charged that the government was not “doing anything to safeguard our security faced with fascists’ violence.” Gabriel accused Madrid of “repression,” likening the situation in Catalonia with “what is happening right now in Turkey”. —AFP



ARBIN, Syria: A Syrian opposition fighter from the Failaq Al-Rahman brigade takes a position on top of a damaged building on the frontline in the rebel-held enclave of Arbin in the Eastern Ghouta near Damascus. —AFP

empty space on the page. “Do those inflicting the suffering still have words to justify their barbaric acts?” More than 400,000 people live in Eastern Ghouta, which has been surrounded by government troops since 2013. Food, medicine, and other basic necessities are nearly impossible to obtain.

Imminent ground assault

Eastern Ghouta is mostly held by two hardline rebel groups—Jaish al-Islam and Faylaq Al-Rahman—though jihadists have a smaller foothold. The factions often fire rockets and mortar rounds into residential neighborhoods of east Damascus. —AFP

Leading Catalan separatist latest to leave Spain

GENEVA: A former Catalan lawmaker and major figure in the region’s secession drive has fled to Switzerland ahead of a court hearing and may seek asylum there, the sixth separatist to leave Spain in months. In an interview with Switzerland’s Le Temps newspaper published yesterday, Anna Gabriel, a top member of the far-left separatist CUP party, said she had decided to leave as she would not have “a fair trial at home.” She also compared the situation in Catalonia, whose separatist leaders are under investigation for their attempt to break from Spain, to Turkey’s post-coup crackdown.

“I won’t go to Madrid. I’m wanted for my political activities and the government press has already declared me guilty,” she told the paper. “As I wouldn’t get a fair trial at home, I looked for a country that could protect my rights.” Gabriel, in her early 40s, is the latest separatist to leave the country after deposed Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and four former regional ministers went to Belgium shortly after a failed bid to break from Spain. She was due to appear before a Supreme Court judge yesterday over her role in Catalonia’s failed inde-

5 Iran security officers killed at Sufi protest

LONDON: Five members of Iranian security forces were killed in Tehran yesterday night in clashes with protesters from a religious order, 300 of whom were arrested, the police said. Members of the Gonabadi Dervishes, who follow the mystical Sufi strain of Islam, considered a threat by the theocratic establishment, clashed with riot police after gathering at a police station to demand the release of members of their sect. Three riot police were killed when a bus was driven into their ranks, a volunteer Basij militiaman was run over by a car and another was stabbed, officials said. Some Sufis also surrounded the house of their 90-year-old leader, Nourali Tabandeh, in the same neighborhood in northern Tehran, shouting they would not tolerate his possible arrest.

The protests come weeks after a wave of anti-government demonstrations in more than 80 towns that resulted in 25 deaths and thousands of arrests. While the Sufi protests are unrelated, they are another show

of public defiance prompting a robust response from the Islamic Republic’s security forces. Police spokesman Montazer Al-Mahdi said that among the more than 300 people arrested were the two drivers of the “death vehicles”. Around 30 police officers and some protesters were injured, he said.

Majzooban, a website linked to the Gonabadi Sufis, said some protesters were shot by the police. Photos posted on social media showed Dervishes with faces covered in blood, and burning cars and motorcycles apparently torched by protesters. Online videos showed police firing tear gas to disperse demonstrators. Sufism is considered one of the most peaceful sects of Islam. Despite being under constant pressure by the Iranian authorities, dervishes have no history of armed clashes with the government.

According to the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), several Dervishes were arrested in the last two months. It said 10 were injured in the city of Kowar on Jan. 14 after police attacked a rally held to demand the release of Sufi detainees. A UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran voiced concern in 2017 about the “targeting and harsh treatment” of members of various Sufi groups, saying they “continue to face arbitrary arrest, harassment and detention, and are often accused of national security crimes such as acting against national security”. — Reuters

International

New woes for Israeli Prime Minister as associates probed in graft cases

Investigation focuses on Israeli communications group

JERUSALEM: Israeli police revealed yesterday they had arrested the controlling shareholder and CEO of the country's biggest telecoms company, as well as two former officials with close ties to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a corruption case. The arrests in the investigation dubbed "Case 4000" came just days after police recommended Netanyahu himself be indicted for bribery and fraud in other cases, known as "1000" and "2000".

Shaul Elovitch, a family friend of Netanyahu's who controls telecoms firm Bezeq through his Eurocom holding company, was arrested along with his wife, his son and Bezeq's CEO Stella Handler. Former Netanyahu spokesman Nir Hefetz and former Communications Ministry Director-General Shlomo Filber, both known as close confidants of the prime minister, were also arrested. All the arrests took place on Sunday, but the identities of the suspects were withheld for two days under standard Israeli criminal procedure.

Elovitch, his wife and son deny any wrongdoing, a Eurocom spokeswoman said. A lawyer for Handler said she is cooperating fully with the investigation and denies the allegations. Bezeq officials declined to comment. Filber's lawyer declined to comment. Hefetz's attorney could not immediately be reached. Netanyahu, now in his fourth term, has denied any wrongdoing in the various investigations which threaten his long dominance of Israeli politics. He has

dismissed any suggestion of illegality in his dealings with Elovitch or Bezeq.

The Israel Securities Authority (ISA) last year began investigating suspicions that Elovitch meddled in the 2015 merger between Bezeq and its satellite TV unit YES for personal financial gain. In its new probe, police suspect that Bezeq received regulatory benefits in return for enabling favorable media coverage of Netanyahu on Walla, a news website that is also controlled by Eurocom. "This is a new investigation in the Bezeq case as a result of evidence raised in the ISA investigation," a joint statement from the police and ISA said. "During the investigation suspicions mounted of offences of integrity, money laundering laws and the securities laws which were carried out over time."

In a Facebook post on Monday, Netanyahu - who has described the investigations against him as a "witch hunt" - said: "There has never been any payback or illegal act in interaction with Elovitch." Israeli media reports said Netanyahu is likely to face questioning in the police Bezeq probe. A statement issued on Sunday by a personal spokesman to Netanyahu said all decisions related to Bezeq "were made according to recommendations of expert committees and expert officials". The ISA said in November it had enough evidence to support criminal charges against senior Bezeq officials, leaving it to Tel Aviv prosecutors to decide whether to indict.—Reuters



Netanyahu under investigation in 2 separate cases



ASHKELON, Israel: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends an inauguration ceremony for a new emergency room at the Barzilai Hospital in the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon yesterday. —AFP

Turkey to lay siege to Afrin

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkish forces would soon besiege the town of Afrin as a Turkish cross-border offensive targeting a Kurdish militia enters its second month. On January 20, Ankara launched an air and ground operation supporting Syrian rebels against the People's Protection Units (YPG) in the Afrin region of northern Syria. Turkey views the YPG as a Syrian offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. "In the coming days, swiftly, we will lay siege to the centre of the town of Afrin," Erdogan told parliament.

While some analysts say Turkey and pro-Ankara Syrian rebels have made slow advances, Erdogan defended the operation's progress, saying it was to avoid putting the lives of both its troops and civilians needlessly "at risk". "We did not go there to burn it down," he said, insisting the operation's aim was to "create a safe and livable area" for Syrian refugees inside Turkey, who fled across the border after the conflict began in 2011 and who now number more than three million.

The Turkish army says 32 of its troops have been killed in the process. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor, Syrian rebels and Turkish forces have taken 35 villages since the start of the operation, most of them bordering Afrin. And Turkish security expert Abdullah Agar said troops involved in operation "Olive Branch" had captured around 300 square kilometers of territory. Over the past



AFRIN, Syria: A father comforts his wounded son who was injured in bombardment after he was taken out of intensive care at a hospital in Afrin yesterday. —AFP

month, 238 Olive Branch fighters—among them both Turkish soldiers and Syrian rebels—have been killed, along with 197 YPG fighters and 94 civilians, Observatory figures show. Ankara strongly denies there have been any civilian casualties.

Warning Damascus

Jana Jabbour, a political science professor at Sciences Po university in Paris, said the Turks were "struggling to move forward" because of the "organization of the Kurdish YPG forces and their combativeness". She said it was important to distinguish between political rhetoric, "even political propaganda", and the reality on the ground.

On the ground, Turkish fighting was now focused around the area of Arab Wiran in northeast Afrin, the Observatory said. If captured, pro-Ankara forces would control 50 continuous kilometers of Afrin's northern

border with Turkey. The operation is likely to be further complicated reports by the Syrian state news agency SANA that pro-government forces were expected to enter Afrin to counter the Turkish offensive. But, in what appeared to be a thinly-veiled threat to Damascus, Erdogan yesterday warned Turkey would brook no interference from outside forces. "We will block the way of those who come to help from outside the city or the region," he said.

Strained ties with US

The operation strained already-difficult ties with Washington which has given weaponry to the YPG as part of its fight against Islamic State jihadists in Syria. The US has called on Turkey to show restraint, warning that the offensive risked diluting the fight against the jihadists. And Erdogan has threatened to expand the offensive to the YPG-held town of Manbij. —AFP

Egyptian court puts Sisi critic on terror list

CAIRO: An Egyptian court put former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Abol Fotouh on a terrorism list yesterday, state news agency MENA reported, following his arrest for alleged contacts with the banned Muslim Brotherhood. Abol Fotouh, a former Islamist who leads the Strong Egypt party, was arrested last week a day after returning from London, where he had given interviews sharply critical of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi ahead of next month's presidential election.

The Interior Ministry said at the time that Abol Fotouh held secret meetings with leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood while in London to implement a plot to stir unrest and instability in the country, accusations he denied. Sisi is almost guaranteed to win a second term in a presidential election slated for March 26-28, but the vote has been criticized by rights groups after a number of potential competitors called off their campaigns, citing intimidation, and a top challenger was arrested. The electoral commission has said that it will ensure the vote is fair and transparent.

Abol Fotouh was among the first of several high-profile Egyptians to call last month for a boycott of the election. Individuals added to the terrorism list are generally subjected to an asset freeze and a travel ban and are permitted 60 days to appeal the decision. Abol Fotouh's lawyer, Abdelrahman Haridy, told Reuters he had not yet been notified of the court's decision but that the designation could "easily" be appealed in court. "It's clear that there is an insistence on tacking charges on to political figures in order to intimidate all politicians, even for just saying their



Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh

opinions," Haridy said. Abol Fotouh along with 15 others were added to the list after an investigation by the state security prosecution found they had joined an outlawed organization "aiming to harm the interests of the state," MENA said, without naming the organization. In an interview with Al Jazeera Mubasher, a Qatar-based channel banned in Egypt, Abol Fotouh last week criticized Sisi in unusually pointed terms, accusing him of pulling the army into politics, failing to curb deadly attacks by Islamist militants and mismanaging the economy.

The 67-year-old physician quit the Muslim Brotherhood in 2011 after disagreements over the role of religion in politics and founded the more centrist Strong Egypt party. He mounted an independent bid for the presidency in 2012 and took nearly 18 percent of the vote in the first round of elections. Egypt banned the Brotherhood in 2013 after Islamist President Mohamed Morsi was ousted by the military following mass protests. The group has since been declared a terrorist organization by the government but it maintains that its activities are peaceful.—Reuters

EU scraps Ukraine border projects

KIEV: The European Union is shutting down a border checkpoint scheme with Ukraine, deepening doubts about Kiev's ability to deliver reforms in return for billions in European aid. The project to upgrade six Ukrainian checkpoints on the EU's eastern frontier was launched in 2014, after Europe backed Kiev's pro-Western leaders during the Crimean crisis. The scheme aimed to help integrate Ukraine's economy with those of

its EU neighbors by building or modernizing checkpoints at crossings with Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. According to the EU, the projects were designed to cut border crossing times and improve customs procedures.

They foundered after a series of delays, missteps and cost overruns involving local officials and contractors, according to internal Ukrainian government correspondence, and correspondence between the European Commission and the Kiev authorities provided by a source at a government body. In a statement to Reuters, an EU spokesperson said: "Following our assessment we concluded that the projects could not be finalized in time. The 6 projects are now in the process of being closed, and the unspent money reimbursed." —Reuters

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International

Father of boy smuggled into Spain in suitcase walks free

Son’s testimony saves dad from jail

CEUTA, Spain: A Spanish court yesterday allowed an Ivory Coast man to walk free, with only a small fine to pay, after his son was found crammed into a suitcase at a border crossing. Prosecutors had initially sought a three-year prison term for Ali Ouattara, 45, for facilitating his son's illegal entry into Europe and threatening the child's life. "The child's life was endangered, he was inhumanly curled up in a tiny suitcase, without ventilation," judge Fernando Teson said as the trial got underway.

The heart-rending photo of the boy went round the world in 2015, during the peak of Europe's worst migrant crisis since World War II. The trial took place in Ceuta, a Spanish territory in Morocco which migrants from Africa regularly try to reach by scaling high border fences or smuggled through in cars. As the trial drew to a close, prosecutors asked that the court order Ouattara to pay a fine, because they found no evidence to prove the father knew his son would be trafficked in a suitcase.

Ouattara, who has already spent a month behind bars, was ordered to pay a €92 (\$114) fine by the three presiding judges. "It's all over and we can begin to resume out lives, together, my wife, my daughter my son and I in Bilbao," in northern Spain, Ouattara said as he emerged from the court. His lawyer, Juan Isidro Fernandez, explained to the court how the boy had been left with just his 18-year-old brother in Ivory Coast after their grandmother died.

The now 10-year-old boy, whose name is Adou, currently lives in a Paris suburb with his mother but travelled to Ceuta to testify. Adou told the judges he had difficulty breathing while in the suitcase, which he was forced into by a "Moroccan girl". It was ultimately his testimony that saved his father from jail. Adou said Ouattara had told him he would be taken "by car", and that there had never been any mention of a suitcase.



CEUTA: Ivorian Ali Ouattara, 45, sits in court during his trial in Ceuta, a Spanish overseas territory in northern Morocco yesterday. —AFP



Smuggling attempt was a first in Ceuta

Paid traffickers A5,000

The desperate smuggling attempt was a first in Ceuta. But only three months later, a 27-year-old Moroccan died of asphyxiation inside a suitcase placed in the trunk of a car on a



CEUTA, SPAIN: Photo shows 8-year-old Ivorian boy Adou Ouattara hidden in a suitcase. —AFP

ferry linking Melilla, another Spanish territory in Morocco, to southern Spain. The two Spanish enclaves are the only places in Europe which share a land border with Africa. Adou was reunited with his mother soon after arriving in Ceuta, while his father was arrested shortly after the police discovery.

Ouattara told the judge yesterday that he had been living in Spain legally for eight years, and that he had a stable

job. While his wife and daughter were able to join him, the Spanish authorities had rejected four requests for Adou to come because they deemed the father's €1,300 (\$1,600) monthly salary insufficient to cover the family's needs. A desperate Ouattara was misled by traffickers in Ivory Coast who charged him €5,000 (\$6,200) and did not tell him his son would be hidden in a suitcase. —AFP

Who are Cameroon’s English-speaking separatists, CACSC?

LIBREVILLE: Separatists in Cameroon's restive English-speaking regions have faced a violent crack-down since declaring the creation of "Ambazonia", a self-proclaimed republic independent from the majority French-speaking country. The violence has helped fuel support for a growing separatist movement, including armed groups, who in turn have carried out a string of attacks on police and the military. Dozens on both sides have died, and tens of thousands have fled into neighboring Nigeria. The political drive for the separatist cause began in 2016 after police broke up demonstrations by English-speaking lawyers and teachers who protested against working in French.

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), locally known as "the Consortium", was formed to campaign against what they viewed as discrimination and marginalization by the francophone majority. Although it campaigned for federal ties-not secessionism-the campaign met with unyielding opposition from octogenarian President Paul Biya. The Consortium was dissolved in January 2017, two of its leaders were arrested, and within the anglophone protest movement, the pendulum began to swing in favor of independence.

Raising Ambazonia

On October 1, prominent leader Sisiku Ayuk Tabe declared the self-proclaimed republic of "Ambazonia", named after Amba Bay on the Atlantic Ocean. The state has not been recognized internationally. Biya countered with a crackdown and enlisted the help of neighboring Nigeria in denying a haven to the "terrorists". In January, Ayuk Tabe and 46 of his supporters were extradited by Nigeria to Cameroon despite claims that many of them had lodged asylum applications. In this climate of spiralling mistrust and revenge, calls for separatism, rather than federalism, are dominant.

The loudest calls have come from the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), headed by Ayuk Tabe, which advocates peaceful means to advance independence. Many of its members are activists with a background in teaching, law or farming, but it also counts former leaders of the outlawed Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), which began the campaign for independence back in 1995. "Negotiations are our best weapon," said Millan Atam, a SCACUF leader. But since the crackdown and the roundup of Ayuk Tabe, the peaceful stance is being outflanked by radicals, some of whom advocate taking up arms against "the colonialist occupying forces".

'The argument of force'

The International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that there are likely to be several hundred fighters. On February 11, these groups and some other separatist movements gathered in an umbrella organization called the Ambazonia Recognition Collaboration Council (ARCC). Its most prominent member is a firebrand former student trade unionist, Lucas Cho Ayaba, who heads an armed group that calls itself the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF). The ADF claimed responsibility for kidnapping a government official on Sunday in Batibo, a town near the Nigerian border.

It says it has "thousands of fighters," although commentators say the figure more likely to be around a hundred or so. "We have a bloc defence strategy-every village, every group of young people can fight for Ambazonia, and we are ready to help them," he told AFP. Another armed group is Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF), led by Ebenezer Akwanga, like Cho Ayaba an ex-student trade unionist. In the late 1990s, the two were allies in challenging the moderate strand of separatism, taking their slogan about "the force of argument" and reversing it, to "the argument of force." The ADF and SOCADEF have claimed responsibility for most of the attacks in the anglophone areas. —AFP

Legacy of history drives Cameroon rift and secession

PARIS: Unrest has spread in Cameroon's English-speaking regions since October as a secessionist movement has pushed for independence. Tensions can be traced back to events a century ago, when Britain and France occupied Cameroon, taking over Germany's major colony in West Africa.

World War I split

Cameroon was a Germany colony until 1916, when British and French troops forced the Germans out. The two countries divided it into separate spheres of influence that were later formalized by the League of Nations, the forerunner to the UN. The much larger French colony gained independence in 1960. A year later, the British colony also gained independence. Some of the English-speaking areas choose to join newly-formed Nigeria, others to become part of the federation of Cameroon.

English-speaking regions

The two mainly English-speaking southern provinces are home to around a fifth of Cameroon's 23 million population. Named the Northwest Region and Southwest Region, they jut into southeastern Nigeria. The English-speaking areas were allowed some self-governance. But many English-speakers complained of discrimination at the hands of the francophone majority in areas such as education and the justice system, and alleged national wealth was not shared fairly.

Mission unclear in army takeover of Rio de Janeiro

RIO DE JANEIRO: The takeover of Rio de Janeiro's security by army generals was meant to bring clarity to a city mired in chaotic crime, but three days later the exact mission remains unclear. President Michel Temer signed a decree Friday putting the police in Rio under military command, the first such measure since the end of a two-decade military dictatorship in 1985. Temer said it was "an extreme measure" aimed at getting a grip on runaway violence by organized gangs.

The military is widely admired in Brazil. In fact it's seen by many as just about the only institution that works properly and is not corrupt. But does Temer really think the generals can resolve Rio's deep-rooted problems? Critics are asking why the government is not, for example, sending more teachers to the impoverished neighborhoods where crime thrives. "Without quality education we won't get anywhere. Nothing is done to help the young in the favelas to join the job market," said Marcos Valerio Alves, who coordinates residential associations in the Complexo do Alemao group of favelas, among the most dangerous in Rio. "Children only go to school in the morning or in the afternoon and the rest of the time they're in the street, where they watch other young people walking about with assault rifles. What future can they have?"

Playing politics

Sociologist Julita Lemgruber, who specializes in security issues at the Candido Mendes University, said the army intervention "could serve as Temer's political project." The bid to aid Rio has given Temer a welcome break in news coverage from a near constant stream of corruption scandals and his failure to push through controversial cuts to the pension system. Although he is the most unpopular president on record, there have been growing whispers

Disputed 'unity'

In 1972, the original federal structure was scrapped in a national referendum that approved the creation of one state. Calls for a breakaway English-speaking state mounted in the 1990s, with demands for a referendum on independence accompanied by low-level unrest. In 2001 banned protest rallies turned violent. Several people were killed when security forces moved in and secessionist leaders were arrested. The separatist Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) set up a "government" in Britain and leaders moved into exile.

2016 flare-up

Lawyers in the English-speaking regions, which are also strongholds for the political opposition, went on strike in late 2016 to demand the right to use Anglo-Saxon common law. Teachers followed, protesting at the appointment of francophones in the region's education system. Tensions rose in December, when the national flag was torched at protests and a separatist version hoisted. Clashes in some areas left several people reported dead. Prime Minister Philemon Yang, himself an anglophone, ruled out secession—"Unity is the bedrock of our country."

'Independence' declared

In January 2017 senior secessionist activists were arrested and charged with terrorism and rebellion. New protests brought several cities to a standstill, but the government hit back by cutting off internet access to flashpoint areas for several weeks, alleging the spread of "fake news". In an apparent effort to calm the situation, President Paul Biya halted the secessionists' trials in August



MFUM, Nigeria: Photo shows Cross River, the border and river that connects Nigeria with Cameroon near Mfum border station, in Cross Rivers State, southeast Nigeria. —AFP

Nigeria role

Since January 2018, much of the focus has shifted to Nigeria, which the Cameroon authorities suspected was being used as a safe haven for separatists. The two neighbors have experienced tensions in the past over various issues, but forged cooperation on fighting the Boko Haram jihadist insurgency. On January 29, Nigeria extradited 47 anglophone separatists, including Tabe, which was followed by fresh violence in English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Cameroon security forces, according to local sources, have also been seen among the estimated 30,000 people who have fled the violence to southeast Nigeria. —AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Soldiers stand guard along Flamengo beach, Rio de Janeiro. —AFP

that Temer may be considering running for re-election in October. He has previously indicated he would not try but an improving economy, after two painful years of recession, may give him new confidence. "His popularity is rock bottom and he is trying to change the tendency to see if he could manage to be a candidate," Lemgruber said. The problem for him, she said, is that there'll be no quick, convincing fix in Rio. "You can get short term results but it will be difficult to reorganize the police in that period."

Favelas in firing line

In the favelas, where most of the violence is concentrated, many unanswered questions also remain over what military control of security will mean on the ground. Shootouts between rival gangs or between gangs and police are daily events in these neighborhoods. In some cases, the police are themselves accused of working with the criminals.

Can residents trust in the generals more?

"People are afraid. The decree may be nothing more than politics, but people there are in the firing line," said Anderson Franca, author of the book "Rio in Flames" and a frequent poster on social media about the situation in the favelas. "Military intervention in Rio's security has always been violent, aggressive, repressive. I don't think the army will come to promote dialogue," he said. "The army is not answerable to anyone and soldiers can only be tried before military tribunals, which weakens the ability to denounce police abuses."

Defense Minister Raul Jungmann raised new questions by suggesting that authority should be given for "collective arrest warrants," which would apparently allow searches for suspects to extend far beyond a single address. At the Supreme Court, Justice Marco Aurelio Mello aired "serious doubts" in an interview with Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper about Temer's plan. —AFP

International

‘Thousand lira’ man: Italy’s ex-PM Berlusconi baffles as vote nears

Four-time PM makes string of confusing statements

ROME: At a recent business conference, Silvio Berlusconi puzzled his audience by boasting that, as prime minister, he had made sure Italians got monthly pensions of 1,000 lire - about the cost of an espresso. Leading a centre-right coalition that tops polls ahead of a national election on March 4, the 81-year-old leader is showing signs of fragility as he fights back from a ban from holding public office, sex scandals and legal entanglements.

“I have fought back against all the nastiness, all the attacks, all the lies that were thrown at me, from Bunga Bunga to the minors and all the rest,” he told the Rome conference. He also made a number of verbal slips, saying tax evasion in Italy totaled 800,000 euros, a fraction of the real figure, and economic output was just 1,600 euros, rather than 1.7 trillion. Yet to appear at any political rallies ahead of the vote, the billionaire has focused his campaign on cosy TV chat shows-and has cancelled some of those, pleading tiredness.

“He’s showing his age,” said Giovanni Orsina, professor of modern history at Rome’s Luiss University. “In the past 10 years the losses, the hits he has taken have obviously had a role in reducing his political abilities.” Support for his centre-right Forza Italia (Go Italy!) party has almost halved since 2001, and the rallies with supporters waving flags and singing “Thank Goodness for Silvio” as they did during his 2008 campaign are nowhere to be seen. Forza Italia only has a good chance of sharing victory thanks to a deal with far-right allies the League and Brothers of Italy, whose radical messages he often steps in to temper.

“I am still ahead of all the other political leaders even though I can’t stand for office,” he said, his face devoid of wrinkles thanks to repeated cosmetic surgery. “Obviously,



I don’t have the 75.3 percent approval I used to have.” According to a Demos poll published on Friday, Berlusconi came a lowly 8th on the list of Italy’s most respected political leaders, with an approval rating of 26 percent. Charges of paying for sex with an underage prostitute eventually led to an acquittal, but the only definitive conviction after numerous legal cases against him - in 2013, for tax fraud - was enough to banish him from parliament.

Earlier in the campaign, he said Malta had “14 million workers” (its population is less than 450,000) and promised to build “the straits of Sicily” (he meant a bridge over the Straits of Messina to connect Sicily to the mainland). On his Canale 5 television channel, he boasted of having “eliminated 411,000 taxes.” Italy’s fiscal jungle is estimated to impose around 100 taxes, not hundreds of thousands. He took a break from campaigning in late January, prompting concerns about his health 2-1/2 years after undergoing major heart surgery. He said he was feeling well but tired out by choosing candidates for the election.

Centre-right leads ahead of election

‘He built an empire’

Berlusconi’s continued appeal to part of the electorate, borne out in poll scores of roughly 16 percent for Forza Italia, often bewilders non-Italians. But for some voters, his old age and the fact he is already rich removes the suspicion that he is in politics for personal gain, a common fear in a country where corruption thrives. “If I were him, with all his money, I’d be lazing about,” said supporter Antonio D’Arcangelis, 53, a now jobless former state employee. “He must be doing it because he believes in it.” Many of his fans are attracted by the business acumen that made him a billionaire. He made his first big money in



ROME: Photo shows election posters in Rome ahead of March 4 general elections. — AFP

Milan real estate development, then founded Italy’s biggest private broadcaster and owned AC Milan soccer club for more than 30 years.

“We are putting our hope in a self-made man who built an empire,” said Giuseppe Bracciale, a 52-year-old cook from Torre del Greco in southern Italy, who plans to vote for Forza Italia. Promises to cut taxes and raise pensions, long the core of Berlusconi’s campaigns, still resonate with many in Italy, where a modest economic

recovery has not stopped a rise in poverty or brought unemployment down to the European Union average. “We have hit rock-bottom,” said Bracciale.

Berlusconi “is the only one who can help us get out of this situation.” The centre-right’s key proposal is a flat tax-a policy Berlusconi has repeatedly floated since entering politics in 1994, but never managed to implement despite spending more than nine years in power between 1994 and 2011. —Reuters

‘Baby factory’ man wins custody of 13 kids born to Thai surrogates

BANGKOK: A wealthy Japanese man was yesterday granted “sole parent” rights to 13 children he fathered through Thai surrogate mothers, in a court ruling that paves the way for him to take them to Japan. Mitsutoki Shigeta, 28, became the centre of a “baby factory” scandal in 2014 after Thai police found a plush Bangkok apartment packed with infants under the care of 24-hour nannies. A probe later found he had fathered 19 children in total, 13 surrogate babies living in Thailand and six others living in Cambodia and Japan, according to an official from Thailand’s Social Development and Welfare Department.

Four of the six children living in Cambodia and Japan were from Thai surrogates. Shigeta’s bizarre case threw a spotlight on the kingdom’s unregulated rent-a-womb industry, prompting authorities to bar foreigners in 2015 from paying for Thai surrogates. Shigeta, reportedly the son of a Japanese IT tycoon, left the country in the wake of the scandal and has never directly explained why he fathered so many children. But he later took Thailand’s Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to court to seek custody of the children.

On Tuesday a Bangkok court granted him legal rights to take the children, saying he had ample money to care for them and had prepared nurses and nannies at a safe residence in Japan. “For the happiness and opportunities the 13 children will receive from their biological father-who does not have a history of bad behaviour-the court rules them to be the plaintiff’s legal children,” the Central Juvenile Court said in a statement which did not mention Shigeta by name for privacy reasons. Shigeta, who did not attend the trial, was deemed “sole parent” of the children after the Thai surrogates had signed away their rights, the court added.

His lawyer Kong Suriyamontol said he would contact Thai authorities about the next steps to transfer the children from state custody, adding that the timeline would depend on the “readiness” of the youngsters-most of whom are aged around four. Thai officials had visited Shigeta’s homes in Japan as well as in Cambodia and



BANGKOK: Kong Suriyamontol (center-with sunglasses), the Thai lawyer for Japanese national Mitsutoki Shigeta, speaks to the press after his client was granted paternity rights to his children, at a juvenile court in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

deemed the children would be able to adapt to new surroundings. “The foster homes will seek my authorisation to release the children to their father’s custody... it won’t take more than 10 days,” Vitat Tachaboon of the Social Development and Welfare Department told reporters. Shigeta’s mother has also been visiting the children in Thailand and “they have got used to her”, he added.

Legal tussles

Shigeta hired the Thai surrogates before the ban on foreigners. Police said he paid them between \$9,300 and \$12,500 each. Thailand’s rewriting of its surrogacy laws sparked a series of legal tussles, including a 14-month custody war between a same-sex couple and a Thai surrogate who was eventually forced to give up the baby girl. Another high-profile case saw a Thai surrogate lose a

court battle to bring back a baby after learning the Australian father was a convicted paedophile. Sam Everingham, director of the Australia-based consultancy Families Through Surrogacy, said Shigeta’s case was an “abuse of surrogacy” services that had helped give the controversial industry a bad name.

After Thailand clamped down on the trade surrogacy agencies quickly migrated to neighboring Cambodia, which followed suit and barred the industry in 2016. In recent months there have been signs the business is growing in Laos, an opaque communist country with no restrictions on surrogacy. Some surrogacy agencies are now offering to carry out the embryo transfer in Laos and then provide pregnancy care for the surrogate in Thailand, a wealthier country with vastly superior medical facilities.—AFP

Defeats in Mideast driving IS fighters to the Philippines

MANILA: Foreign Islamic State fighters forced out of Syria and Iraq have been arriving in the Philippines with the intent of recruiting, and they have plans to attack two Philippine towns, the head of the country’s largest Muslim rebel group said yesterday. More than 1,100 people were killed last year when pro-Islamic State militants attacked and held the Philippine city of Marawi for five months, leading to massive destruction across the scenic lakeside town.

That could happen in other cities if Congress fails to pass a law to allow Muslims in the southern Philippines to run their own affairs, according to Ebrahim Murad, leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a separatist group which signed a peace deal with the government in return for greater autonomy.

“Based on our own intelligence information, foreign fighters who were displaced from the Middle East continued to enter into our porous borders and may be planning to take two southern cities - Iligan and Cotabato,” Murad said. The two cities are 38 km (24 miles) and 265 km (165 miles)

respectively from Marawi. Murad said fighters from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East were known to have entered the Philippines, including a Middle Eastern man holding a Canadian passport.

That man went to a stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf militant group, notorious for kidnapping and piracy, Murad said. Murad said militants had been recruiting fighters in remote Muslim communities, exploiting delays in the passage of legislation aimed at addressing long-standing Muslim grievances, the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). “These extremists are going into madrasas, teaching young Muslims their own version of the Koran, and some enter local universities to influence students, planting the seeds of hatred and violence,” he said.

Such a scenario would be a major headache for the military, which is fighting on multiple fronts on the southern island of Mindanao to defeat home-grown Islamic State loyalists, bandits and communist insurgents. Mindanao is under martial law. The military has said remnants of the militant alliance that occupied Marawi were trying to regroup and were using cash and gold looted from Marawi to recruit. Murad’s statement echoed those of President Rodrigo Duterte, who last month urged lawmakers to pass the BBL, or face re-igniting war with separatists after two decades of peace. “We cannot decisively win the war against extremism if we cannot win the peace in the halls of Congress,” Murad said.— Reuters



MANILA: Murad Ebrahim, chairman of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), reads a magazine with an image of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on the cover, during a Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) forum in Manila yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Two lynched in India

NEW DELHI: Two men suspected of raping and murdering a five-year-old girl in a remote northeast Indian state were dragged from a police station and lynched by an enraged mob, police said yesterday. The girl’s disappearance from Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh state, and the discovery of her badly disfigured body, sparked widespread anger. The accused, both plantation workers from neighbouring Assam state, were being questioned by police when a hundreds-strong mob carrying weapons stormed the compound on Monday. “The mob damaged the station and took away the accused before beating them to death with clubs, hammers and stones,” Lohit police chief Issac Pertin said. —AFP

Oxfam sex scandal

LONDON: Oxfam said yesterday it was investigating 26 new cases of sexual misconduct which had been reported since a scandal broke earlier this month over its handling of a 2011 case in Haiti. The British charity’s chief executive Mark Goldring told a parliamentary committee in London that 16 of the cases related to its international operation. “There are 26 cases that have come forward... They range in time frame from more recent events to long historic events where people did not report them at the time,” Goldring said. “We really want people to come forward,” he added. Goldring apologised “wholeheartedly” on behalf of Oxfam to the committee, which said it would conduct its own inquiry into abuses in the foreign aid sector.—AFP

Iran blasts Sweden

TEHRAN: Iran has formally criticised Sweden over its decision to grant nationality to an Iranian professor sentenced to death on spying charges, the foreign ministry said yesterday. Sweden granted citizenship last week to Ahmadreza Djalali, a Stockholm-based specialist in emergency medicine. He was arrested during a brief visit to Iran in April 2016 and found guilty in October of passing information about two Iranian nuclear scientists to Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency that led to their assassinations. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said the decision to grant a convict citizenship was “very strange, unprincipled and questionable” and that the Swedish ambassador was summoned on Monday. —AFP

Mexico probes police

MEXICO CITY: Mexican authorities said yesterday they are investigating whether police in the western state of Jalisco participated in the disappearance of three Italian citizens there. The Naples natives reportedly went missing on Jan 31 after being detained by police at a gasoline station in the municipality of Tecalitlan in southern Jalisco. State authorities are “evaluating, using available information” whether police were involved in the disappearance, said Jalisco general secretary Roberto Lopez. He said state authorities will collaborate in the investigation with Mexico’s attorney general’s office and foreign ministry and the Italian Embassy in Mexico. —Reuters

Boko Haram hits school

KANO: Boko Haram jihadists launched an attack on a girls boarding school in northeast Nigeria but the students and teachers fled to safety, witnesses said yesterday. A convoy of fighters in pickup trucks descended on Dapchi village in the Bursari area of Yobe state around 6 pm targeting the school, resident Sheriff Aisami said. “When they stormed the village they began shooting and setting off explosives,” Aisami said. “This drew the attention of the girls in the Girls Science Secondary School, so the girls and the teachers were able to escape before the attackers got into the school.” Unable to kidnap the girls, the Boko Haram fighters looted the school before fleeing. —AFP

Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
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Kazakhstan frozen billions sound alarm for sovereign funds

When a Belgian court ordered a bank to freeze \$22.6 billion of assets held in trust for a Kazakhstan sovereign wealth fund (SWF), it set a worrying precedent for other SWFs. The case is one of several brought to courts in Europe by Moldovan businessman Anatolie Stati who is attempting to force the Kazakh government to pay up in a dispute about his energy investments in the oil-rich country.

Court rulings imposing asset freezes in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Luxembourg are significant because they address the issue of whether SWFs should be treated as investment arms of governments, or as independent institutional investors. SWFs, which often invest the proceeds from the sale of national resources or manufactured goods, have traditionally enjoyed the legal immunity reserved for a sovereign to protect their assets in foreign jurisdictions.

The rulings in the Kazakhstan case made waves because they ignore that immunity. "This is a dangerous and worrisome precedent for other funds," said Paul Rose, an Ohio State University law professor specializing in SWFs. "Lots of funds will be looking very carefully at the outcome of this case and wondering whether their assets can be frozen." The Kazakh government has said it will challenge the judgements. Whether Kazakhstan succeeds in getting the accounts unfrozen or not, those watching the case reckon it is a landmark for SWFs, whose \$7 trillion in global investments range from real estate to equities and government bonds.

In countries such as Norway, where disputes between investors and the government are more likely to be dealt with through efficient and independent domestic courts, SWFs have little cause to worry, analysts say. But the Kazakh case should be a concern for countries with a poor track record on investor protection, as it could encourage disgruntled investors to target SWFs' offshore-held assets. Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, predicted repercussions from the Kazakh case. "SWFs represent a significant (share of) global capital and any attacks on SWFs may trigger significant market turbulence," he said.

Orders in Dutch and Belgian courts required Bank of New York Mellon to freeze monies it held in custody for the Kazakh National Fund and the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Dutch court order has since been lifted. The Belgian ruling is still in place but Kazakhstan will challenge it at a court hearing that has been adjourned until April 27. Kazakh assets in Luxembourg and Sweden are still frozen.

Alarm bells

SWF assets have been frozen before, but only in exceptional circumstances. For instance, the United Nations imposed a freeze on the Libyan Investment Authority's overseas assets in 2011 as it feared personnel in the deposed government would spirit them away. The Kazakh asset freezes followed a 2013 decision by the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce to award Stati and his co-investors some \$500 million in an arbitration. The body provides dispute resolution services to international businesses but it is not a court and is up to national courts to enforce its decisions.

Kazakhstan is refusing to pay and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's government said it has done nothing wrong. It has argued that this ruling was based on fraudulent information, according to a press release from the Kazakh Justice Ministry. Stati's petition to a Belgian court to enforce the award resulted in an order requiring BNY Mellon to freeze \$22.6 billion in Kazakh National Fund and Republic of Kazakhstan assets. The assets are held in custody by BNY Mellon's European bank, Brussels-based The Bank of New York Mellon SA/NV. BNY Mellon declined to comment.

Stati also obtained a separate order from a Dutch court to freeze an approximately \$5.2 billion stake in KMG Kashagan BV owned by Samruk-Kazyna, another Kazakh SWF. KMG Kashagan is a special purpose vehicle through which the country holds a stake in the Kashagan energy project. There were further orders to freeze assets in Luxembourg and Sweden.

Stati has also tried to get the award enforced in courts in London and Washington, according to press releases from the Kazakh Justice Ministry. Those decisions would apply to Kazakh assets held in England or the United States. Both attempts have run into difficulties. In a preliminary hearing in June 2017, the English High Court found that the initial arbitration award may have been obtained by fraud. Proceedings are ongoing, with a full trial scheduled to begin in October, the Kazakh Justice Ministry said. Kazakhstan has also filed a separate claim against Stati in Washington with regard to the alleged fraud.

Immunity in question

Industry participants are watching the court cases closely. "If 40 percent of a sovereign fund is frozen and you don't have access to it, that should be an alarm bell for policymakers," said Simon Quijano-Evans, a strategist at Legal & General Investment Management. "It's been assumed so far that these assets were relatively immune." SWFs have labored for years to position themselves as little different from any other institutional investor, mostly to allay concerns countries might have about selling assets to foreign governments. —Reuters



Poverty gnaws at Italian social fabric

Roberto Biondi's 89-year-old mother has Alzheimer's, is housebound and no longer recognizes her son. She is also the family's main breadwinner. Her state pension of €800 (\$990) a month covers her own living expenses and those of Roberto and her grandson, both of whom are unemployed and have little hope of finding jobs in Italy's underdeveloped south. "I have no idea how I will cope when she dies," said Roberto, 53, as he shopped for food in the coastal town of Herculaneum under the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. He receives no benefits of his own. "I am poor. I am not ashamed to admit it, there are millions of others like me in Italy. This country isn't working."

Italy holds national elections on March 4 and while much campaigning has focused on the divisive issue of immigration, pollsters say voters are most concerned about the economy, which has still not recovered from the 2008 financial crisis. The government argues that the worst is over, pointing to 14 straight quarters of economic growth, but many Italians have yet to feel the benefits of the upturn, helping to explain why the ruling center-left Democratic Party is trailing in the polls.

Italy's economy is still six percent smaller than it was at the start of 2008, hobbled by a slew of old problems, such as a huge national debt mountain, a chronically slow justice system and stifling bureaucracy. By comparison, output across the 19-nation eurozone as a whole has grown five percent over the same 10-year period. This anemic performance has pushed millions of Italians into poverty, stoking social discontent and fueling the rise of populist or anti-establishment parties, such as the far-right anti-immigrant League and the maverick 5-Star Movement.

The 5-Star looks set to emerge as the largest party next month and says it will introduce a universal wage for the poor if it wins power. Other parties are also promising to unleash billions of euros of fresh spending to revive the economy - money analysts say the country does not have. The number of Italians at risk of poverty has risen by more than 3 million since 2008, according to the Eurostat statistics agency, the largest increase seen in any EU nation. By contrast, 3.3 million Poles pulled clear of the poverty threshold.

The number of Italians living in absolute poverty, defined as not having enough money to buy a basket of basic goods and services, rose to 4.7 million in 2016, according to the latest data from statistics office Istat, a three-fold increase in a decade. "The rise in absolute poverty is a very Italian problem and the numbers are still growing despite the fact the economy has picked up," said Roberto Perotti, an economist with Bocconi University and a former government adviser. "It is the most serious problem facing Italy today."

Flight

Biondi's problems started in 2006 when he had to close

down the small clothing store he had opened as a teenager in 1983. Like many Italians, he believes the arrival of the euro currency in 2002 marked the start of the country's decline. "Things went well before, but then money dried up. I struggled on but eventually had to give up," he said. With no major industry in the area, he has never found a new job. Unemployment in Italy stands at 10.8 percent, four percentage points higher than in 2008, while in the south it stands at almost 18.3 percent, up 7.2 points in a decade.

Youth unemployment in the south is 46.6 percent, 13 points up on 2008 levels, spelling trouble for Bianchi's son Danilo, 24, who sees little hope of building a career in Italy and is planning to move to London at the end of the month. The rising tide of poverty and lack of economic opportunities has led to a surge in emigration. Between 2006 and 2017,

percent goes to those aged over 65, which is why pensioners often play such a vital role in family finances. Istat says having just one pensioner in a vulnerable household halves the risk of that family descending into outright poverty - but it is not a guaranteed safety net.

Angela Grossi is 48 and unemployed. She gets financial help from her elderly mother, but it was not enough to help her pay for rent so four years ago she and her two sons moved into a squat along with 60 families in an unoccupied building in Rome. They were evicted last August and since then Grossi and her boys, aged 12 and 14, have lived in tents under an exposed church porch less than a mile from the Italian parliament. "Rome is full of people sleeping under the arcades, on the streets, under the bridges, but no one looks at them, so who cares?" she said, standing in front of the baroque facade of the Santi Apostoli Basilica.

Promises

Grossi used to clean in a hotel, but lost the job when the business closed. Italy has no minimum wage and Grossi said she has since been offered €3 an hour on temporary contracts - a wage that would never give her enough money to pay rent. In another sign of growing poverty, the Federcasa housing association estimates some 49,000 public buildings are occupied by illegal squatters, up from 38,000 in 2006, driven in part by the influx of some 600,000 migrants in the past four years.

Some 89 percent of the squats were in southern and central Italy, which have been worst hit by the economic crisis. The widespread discontent within Italy over the economy means almost all parties have drawn up long lists of costly pledges that could unend Italy's finances if they are enacted. Former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right party is promising to double the minimum pension to some €1,000 a month and allow earlier retirement. The ruling PD says it will boost the minimum pension to €750 and give families €400 a month per child for three years.

Most parties are also offering various welfare schemes, including the 5-Star's flagship proposal of a monthly universal wage of up to €780 for the poor. Bocconi University's Perotti said such schemes risked entrenching poverty, by dissuading people from seeking work. "The most simplistic way to deal with poverty is to give money to everyone and hope the problem goes away."

In reality, not only is this measure hugely expensive, but it creates other problems, for example it creates a poverty trap," he said. Biondi sees the prospect of a universal wage as a potential godsend and he plans to vote 5-Star on March 4. "At the moment the government offers no help to people like me," he said. "I mean, it can't get any worse can it?" —Reuters



Economy as top concern before March 4 vote

the number of Italians officially registered as living abroad rose 60 percent, from three to almost five million.

The Fondazione Migrantes, which monitors migrant flows, believes the number is much higher, with many Italians failing to check in with their local embassy in their new foreign homes. Danilo's sister Carmen has already left, fed up with low-paying part-time jobs, and moved to Glasgow in Scotland, where she works for the McDonald's fast food chain. "I told her she should be back within three or four days. That was three years ago and she is adamant that she will never return," said Biondi. "That is hard for a father to hear, but there is nothing here for young people. No future."

Babies

The lack of faith in the future is reflected in Italy's plummeting birthrate. According to latest statistics, Italian couples had 373,075 babies in 2016, down 22 percent on 2008. Italy offers little welfare help to young people. Only 4 percent of all social spending goes to the under-40s, while 77.2

With meds running out, Venezuelans with transplants living in fear

Yasmira Castano felt she had a fresh chance at life when she received a kidney transplant almost two decades ago. The young Venezuelan was able to finish high school and went on to work as a manicurist. But late last year, Castano, now 40, was unable to find the drugs needed to keep her body from rejecting the organ, as Venezuela's healthcare system slid deeper into crisis following years of economic turmoil.

On Christmas Eve, weak and frail, Castano was rushed to a crumbling state hospital in Venezuela's teeming capital, Caracas. Her immune system had attacked the foreign organ and she lost her kidney shortly afterwards. Now, Castano needs dialysis three times a week to filter her blood. But the hospital attached to Venezuela's Central University, once one of South America's top institutions, frequently suffers water outages and lacks materials for dialysis.

"I spend nights not sleeping, just worrying," said Castano, who weighs around 35 kg, as she lay on an old bed in a bleak hospital

room, its bare walls unadorned by a television or pictures. Her roommate Lismar Castellanos, who just turned 21, put it more bluntly. "Unfortunately, I could die," said Castellanos, who lost her transplanted kidney last year and is struggling to get the dialysis she needs to keep her body functioning.

The women are among Venezuela's roughly 3,500 transplant recipients. After years leading normal lives, they now live in fear as Venezuela's economic collapse under President Nicolas Maduro has left the once-prosperous OPEC nation unable to purchase sufficient foreign medicine or produce enough of its own. Some 31 Venezuelans have seen their bodies start to reject their transplanted organs in the last month due to lack of medicine, according to umbrella health group Codevida, a non-governmental organization.

At least seven have died due to complications stemming from organ failure in the last three months. A further 16,000 Venezuelans, many hoping for an elusive transplant, are dependent on dialysis to clean their blood - but here too, resources and materials are sorely lacking. Nearly half of the country's dialysis units are out of service, according to opposition lawmaker and oncologist Jose Manuel Olivares, a leading voice on the health crisis who has toured dialysis centers to assess the scale of the problem.

In the last three weeks alone, seven people have died due to lack of dialysis,

according to Codevida, which staged a protest to decry the critical drug shortages. Once-controlled diseases like diphtheria and measles have returned, due partly to insufficient vaccines and antibiotics, while Venezuelans suffering chronic illnesses like cancer or diabetes often have to forgo treatment.

Hundreds of thousands of desperate Venezuelans, meanwhile, have fled the country over the past year, including many medical professionals. Amid a lack of basics like catheters and crumbling hospital infrastructure, doctors who remain struggle to cope with ever scarcer resources. "It's incredibly stressful. We request supplies; they don't arrive. We call again and they still don't arrive. Then we realize it's because there aren't any," said a kidney specialist at a public hospital, asking to remain anonymous because health workers are not allowed to speak publicly about the situation. Venezuela's Social Security Institute, tasked with providing patients with drugs for chronic conditions, did not respond to a request for comment.

'Straight to the cemetery'

Terrified transplant patients are indebted themselves to buy pricey medicine on the black market, begging relatives abroad to funnel drugs into the country or dangerously reducing their daily intake of pills to stretch out stock. Larry Zambrano, a 45-year old father of two with a kidney trans-

plant, resorted to taking immunosuppressants designed for animals last year.

Guillermo Habanero and his brother Emerson both underwent kidney transplants after suffering polycystic kidney disease. Emerson, a healthy 53-year-old former police officer, died in November after a month without immunosuppressants. "If you lose your kidney, you go to dialysis but there are no materials. So you go straight to the cemetery," said Habanero, 56, who runs a small computer repair shop in the poor hillside neighborhood of Catia.

A Reuters reporter went to the Health Ministry to request an interview, but was asked at the entrance to give her contact details instead. No one called or emailed. Reuters was also unable to contact the Health Ministry unit in charge of transplants, Fundavene, for comment. Its website was unavailable. Multiple calls to different phone numbers went unanswered. An email bounced back and no one answered a message on the unit's Facebook page.

Maduro's government has said the real culprit is an alleged US-led business elite seeking to sabotage its socialist agenda by hoarding medicine and imposing sanctions. "I see the cynicism of the right-wing, worried about people who cannot get dialysis treatment, but it's their fault: they've asked for sanctions and a blockade against Venezuela," Socialist Party heavyweight Diosdado Cabello said in recent comments on his weekly television program. —Reuters

Camel-based baby formula to hit shelves in Dubai



SHARJAH: Camels walk across the Al-Dhaid city desert northeast of Dubai yesterday.— AFP

DUBAI: A UAE-based company has unveiled what it calls the world's first camel-based baby formula, an instant powder mix aimed mainly at infants allergic to cow's milk. The Emirates Industry for Camel Milk & Products, or "Camelicious", on Monday unveiled the product at Gulfood 2018, an international food and beverage trade

event which runs from February 18 to 22 in Dubai. The milk, which it says is suitable for children ages one to three, primarily targets infants allergic to cow's milk.

Camel milk for centuries was a staple for Bedouin peoples across the Gulf, who continue to include the vitamin-rich milk in their modern-day diets. Both camel milk and

meat have gained popularity as a delicatessen in the Gulf in recent years, with camel chocolates, camel carpaccio, camel burgers and now camel baby formula making their way into restaurants and kitchens.

The company calls its latest product "the world's first instant baby milk processed from camel milk". "Camel milk

represents an integral part of the Arabic and Islamic culture in general and the UAE culture and heritage in particular," said Camelicious general manager Saeed Juma Bin Subaih. "This milk is genuinely complements the UAE values and traditions that are handed down from one generation to another". — AFP

Relax and invest, Saudi prince tells investors

RIYADH/DUBAI: Three months after Saudi Arabia detained scores of people in a crackdown on corruption, its rulers are trying to reassure investors that the kingdom remains open for business. Foreign and local investors have long complained about corruption, and confronting it is an important part of reforms unveiled by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to transform the country and reduce the economy's reliance on oil exports.

Yet some business leaders were unsettled by the swoop on top princes, businessmen and government officials in November because of the secrecy around the crackdown and their suspicions that it was at least partly politically motivated. "This is not a recommendation for why you should invest in Saudi Arabia," said a Western businessman with extensive contacts in the kingdom. "This whole thing has become one big ball of contradictions."

Saudi authorities are loathe to say they mishandled the anti-corruption campaign. But top officials, including Prince Mohammed, met senior local businessmen last month to reassure them that the crackdown was mostly over and that it was safe to do business, according to five Saudi and Western sources who spoke with people who attended the meetings. Most detainees have now been released.

In front of global political and business leaders at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss town of Davos last month, Saudi officials highlighted the positives of the detentions, dismissing worries about the way the crackdown was conducted but conceding that it might have been sold slightly differently. "It's true we could make mistakes here and mistakes there. Saudi Arabia is not a per-

fect country. Saudi Arabia is like any other country. But the ... road to success is always under construction and the whole momentum of Saudi Arabia is going toward that end," Minister of Commerce and Investment Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi told a Davos session.

Government spokesmen in Riyadh did not respond to requests for comment, but Attorney General Saud Al-Mojeb has described the sweep as "an independent judicial process" and "part of an overhaul to ensure transparency, openness and good governance". The message delivered in the January meetings underscores a difficult balancing act for Prince Mohammed and his team as they try to reform the country. They must deliver change, and one way to do that is by tackling corruption in Saudi Arabia's opaque business world. But the judicial system is underdeveloped and the crackdown contrasted sharply with Western-style due process.

That means each attempt at reform in the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom risks exposing other shortcomings. The government has said that financial settlements made with the detainees in exchange for their freedom have raised more than \$100 billion, mostly in the form of land, stakes in businesses and other illiquid assets rather than cash. That should help raise tens of billions of dollars for huge development plans, such as a \$500-billion economic zone in the northwestern desert.

But only a handful of specific allegations against those detained have been revealed. Details of the financial settlements are also being kept secret, and Reuters has been unable to verify the government's gross estimate. Authorities say that not naming detainees protected people's reputations, and settling cases out of court avoided protracted legal battles that would have distracted from other priorities. Yet the secrecy of the crackdown - during which detainees were held inside the same opulent hotel where days earlier investors had rubbed elbows at an international business conference - could undermine transparency promises. — Reuters

Minister extends amnesty for

Continued from Page 1

government raises charges on public services. The opposition lawmaker said that he has become a target of deliberate attacks by certain quarters and MPs because he has been exposing corrupt transactions and elements. Adasani said that a majority of lawmak-

ers and ministers are very good, but there are some who are hired by certain quarters and work for their interests. The lawmaker praised a draft law governing conflict of interests as a good means to fight corruption in the country.

The head of the Assembly's legal and legislative committee MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said a meeting of the committee reached a consensus over the conflict of interest legislation, but a lack of quorum prevented a vote on the law. He however expected the committee vote to take place before the Assembly session on March 5 and 6.

Abbas calls for Mideast peace ...

Continued from Page 1

"running away" from dialogue. "You have made it clear, with your words and with your actions, that you are no longer part of the solution. You are the problem," Danon said.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been deadlocked since a major push by the former US administration of Barack Obama ended in failure in April 2014. The Trump administration is preparing a new peace plan even though chances for agreement appear dim. The Palestinians hope that greater international involvement in the peace process will serve to counter what they see as a US stance biased in favor of Israel. Israel, which often accuses the European Union and the United Nations of bias against it, is reluctant to accept any other mediator than the United States.

UN envoy Nickolay Mladenov said the international community must continue advocating for "substantial Israeli policy changes" on settlements and stressed that

"these are not negotiations between equals". The Palestinians see East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state and UN resolutions call on countries to refrain from moving their embassies to the city until its status is resolved in an Israeli-Palestinian deal.

Abbas' address came just weeks after US Ambassador Nikki Haley launched a scathing attack on the Palestinian leader and accused him of lacking the courage needed for peace. Haley was accompanied to Tuesday's council meeting by Jason Greenblatt, the US envoy for Middle East peace and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in law and adviser on Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. In December, the General Assembly voted 128-9, with 35 abstentions, to reject the US decision to recognize Jerusalem.

That vote in the 193-nation assembly came after 14 of the 15 council members voted in favor of a similar measure. The United States vetoed that draft resolution. Tensions have also flared over the US decision to cut funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). The United Nations granted Palestine the status of a non-member observer state in 1992, but an upgrade to full membership would require unanimous backing from the Security Council - an unlikely outcome, given the near-certainty of a US veto. — AFP

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Sports academy in Egypt gives Syrian children hope

Those who train the youths go unpaid

ALEXANDRIA: When Amir al-Awad fled Syria for Egypt, he intended to cross the Mediterranean for a European country. But instead, the boyhood Syrian wrestling champion opted against the risky sea journey and found work at a restaurant in Alexandria, where he was introduced to the city's Syrian community.

Together they established the Syrian Sports Academy, and he replaced his dream of an Olympic medal with a goal to "create champions from the young refugees" from his country, says Awad. This was "so that one day they will be able to raise their flag as we have in the past after they return to Syria," says the 34-year-old.

The academy is squeezed into just 30 square metres (320 square feet), in a modestly equipped hall at the bottom of a residential building in the Alexandria neighbourhood of Khaled bin al-Waleed. Inside, Syrian children aged of seven to 10 dressed in T-shirts and jeans form a line after arriving at the end of a school day. "Let's go, guys, so you have enough time to study," Awad yells in encouragement, as he moves on to coaching them wrestling.

With a small administrative office, and the lone training hall, Syrian youngsters practise martial arts, aerobics, ballet, and gymnastics. In addition, the academy organises football tournaments, especially for Arab and African refugees in the city.

On its ageing walls hang pictures of international martial arts and weightlifting champions. The academy's founders began the project in 2016 with just 3,000 Egyptian pounds (about \$430 at the time).

“We’re keen to teach children sports ethics”

OBSTACLES ABROAD
The financing came from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which provided 25 percent used to buy equipment, and the rest from the Caritas humanitarian group. "We prepared the training hall step by step, including paint and design," says Awad.

The academy's growing reputation in the neighbourhood drove Egyptian parents to also enrol their children there. "We're keen to teach the children sports ethics: to learn how to win and how to lose, which helps them in their life, instead of giving in to a bad lifestyle," he says.

Karima Amer, an Egyptian mother from Khaled bin al-Waleed neighbourhood, cited "discipline" as the reason she takes her son and daughter to the academy. She praised "Captain Amir" and how he "talks with the children about everything: their problems, food, and ethics". Adel Bazmawi, 21, a co-founder and coach, says he transitioned from a professional wrestling to coaching martial arts after coming to Egypt from Idlib in 2013.

"In Egypt I'm not recognised as a wrestler who can participate in international competitions" given he does not carry the Egyptian nationality, says Bazmawi, who was Syria's freestyle wrestling champion for his age in 2006 and 2008.

Now "the most I can do is to fight in local clubs," he says. On the other hand, in addition to Alexandria, he says he has become known in other cities, including the Nile Delta provincial capitals of Tanta and Kafr el-Sheikh. Still, he says "I miss international competitions".



ALEXANDRIA: Syrian refugee Amir al-Awad (R) watches as Adel Bazmawi (C) teaches martial arts to youth at the academy in Egypt's second city of Alexandria on January 4, 2018. — AFP

Even after receiving invitations to tournaments in Canada and Germany in 2015, he was unable to go because "Syrian nationality has become an obstacle to obtaining visas to European countries."

DREAMS OF RETURNING HOME

There are more than 126,000 UN-registered Syrian refugees in Egypt, but the real figure is thought to be much higher. Bazmawi, who did not complete his studies in sports education because of the devastating seven-year war in his homeland, helps his family to prepare

Syrian shawarma at a restaurant close to the academy.

Those who train the youths go unpaid, something that is unavoidable given that 75 percent of the children are exempt from fees. "The academy's goal is to be developmental, and not to make a profit," says Awad.

But older youths pay a "token" fee, up to 100 pounds a month, which the academy uses to pay electricity bills and rent, he says. As busy as they are, Awad says his team "aren't able to compete in various tournaments because of their Syrian nationality," while to participate they need to officially register the academy. — AFP

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber calls tennis players to participate in Kuwait Tennis Open IX

KUWAIT: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF), announced the start of applying to play Kuwait Tennis Open IX. The competitions start on Sunday, March 4 to Sunday, March 18, 2018 at the Tennis Center of Kuwait Tennis Federation inside Yarmouk Sports Club in Meshref.

There will be 11 events to compete: (Boys Under 11 - Boys Under 13 Singles - Boys Under 17 Singles - Veterans Over 45 Singles - Veterans Over 55 Singles - Veterans Over 45 Doubles - Men's Singles - Men's Doubles - Girls Under 18 Singles - Ladies Singles - Diplomats Singles). Matches start at 4:30 pm and 9:00 am on Fridays and Saturdays.

The tournament will be open to all Kuwaitis and expatriates of all categories from all countries as well. Deadline for receiving applications with a copy of Civil ID Card is at 6:00 pm on Wednesday 28 February 2018 at KTF headquarters inside Yarmouk



Sheikh Ahmad Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah.

Sports Club, Meshref.

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called upon all tennis players in Kuwait of different categories and nationalities in addition to diplomats and veterans to participate in the tournament.

Kuwait Tennis Open IX is the biggest tennis event in the State of Kuwait. More than 450 players are expected to participate.

Sauber launch catch-up car after dismal 2017

LONDON: Sauber presented the first Formula One car of their new Alfa Romeo partnership yesterday, with a flurry of preceding sponsor announcements pointing also to a sounder future after a dismal 2017 season.

The Swiss-based team finished that campaign last overall, with Swedish driver Marcus Ericsson failing to score any points, after using a 2016 Ferrari engine rather than the latest specification. Ericsson's previous Mercedes-backed team mate Pascal Wehrlein has since departed, back to the German Touring Car (DTM) series, with Ferrari protégé and Formula Two champion Charles

Leclerc taking his place.

The Monegasque is seen as a future Ferrari prospect and his arrival, along with the steadying hand of team principal Frederic Vasseur who was appointed in July, has revived confidence. The new C37 car, with prominent Alfa branding on a red and white livery replacing the previous blue and white, was presented on the team's website (www.sauberf1team.com) and across social media.

"The aerodynamic concept has changed significantly, and the C37 has several new features in comparison to its predecessor," said technical director Joerg Zander. "We are positive that the new concept offers us more opportunities and will help us to make improvements during the course of the season. The 2018 Ferrari engine will also give us a boost in terms of our performance."

Vasseur said the target for the season starting in Australia on March 25 was clear: "We have to catch up with the field and con-

tinue improving our performance during the course of the season. "The return of Alfa Romeo to Formula One sets another milestone in the team's history, and I am proud that such a historical brand has chosen us for their return to the sport." Alfa Romeo, a brand in the Fiat Chrysler (FCA) stable which is also run by Ferrari president Sergio Marchionne, have a long history in the sport dating back to the pre-war years and the birth of the world championship in 1950.

The first two world championships in 1950 and 1951 were won by Italian Giuseppe 'Nino' Farina and Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio in Alfa cars, but the Italian marque has been absent for more than 30 years.

Vasseur, who was previously at Renault, said Ericsson would provide experience and accurate technical feedback while Monegasque newcomer Leclerc had shown his talent during a dominant F2 campaign. Testing started at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya on Monday. — Reuters

Lions trio boost Wales for Ireland 6 Nations clash

CARDIFF: Wales head coach Warren Gatland yesterday named British and Irish Lions trio Dan Biggar, Liam Williams and Leigh Halfpenny in his starting line-up for the weekend's Six Nations clash against Ireland.

Victory for Wales in Dublin would end Ireland's Grand Slam hopes and keep alive their own title chances, while an Irish win would increase the likelihood of a championship showdown against England at Twickenham on March 17.

Fly-half Biggar, who missed the opening Six Nations games against Scotland and England with a shoulder injury, replaces Rhys Patchell in the number 10 shirt. Elsewhere, full-back Halfpenny has recovered from a foot infection that ruled him out of Wales's 12-6 defeat to England and replaces Gareth Anscombe, while fit-again Saracens wing Williams takes over from Josh Adams.

Both Patchell and Adams drop out of the matchday 23, while Northampton wing George North is retained on the bench with Gatland opting for a back-three of Halfpenny, Williams and Steff Evans.

Biggar features for the first time since he was hurt during the Ospreys' European Champions Cup defeat

against Clermont Auvergne last month, while Williams suffered an abdominal injury during the autumn campaign and has not played for Wales since they beat Georgia in November.

The pack is unchanged and includes No.8 Ross Moriarty, who missed Gloucester's Premiership game against Worcester last weekend after suffering a shoulder knock. "It is great to be able to bring so much experience back into the starting XV and into the back-line," said Gatland, who takes charge of Wales for the 100th time.

"It is the first week we have had everyone in the 'green' in terms of availability, which is a nice luxury to have and a positive ahead of what is a very important Test match against a very good Ireland side.

"We have been pleased with the depth we have developed in the back three and pleased with how those players have gone but having the experience of Dan, Liam and Leigh coming back in is hugely important." Ireland currently top the Six Nations table on points difference from England after winning their opening two games against France and Italy.

Wales, who thumped Scotland 34-7 in their opening match, are third.

Wales (15-1) Leigh Halfpenny; Liam Williams, Scott Williams, Hadleigh Parkes, Steff Evans; Dan Biggar, Gareth Davies; Ross Moriarty, Josh Navidi, Aaron Shingler; Alun Wyn Jones (capt), Cory Hill; Samson Lee, Ken Owens, Rob Evans

Replacements: Elliot Dee, Wyn Jones, Tomas Francis, Bradley Davies, Justin Tipuric, Aled Davies, Gareth Anscombe, George North. — AFP

Du Plessis back in training ahead of Australia Test series

CAPE TOWN: South Africa captain Faf du Plessis will begin training today as he seeks to prove his fitness ahead of the four-match home test series against Australia starting on March 1. Du Plessis missed the majority of the one-day international and Twenty20 series against India after picking up a fracture to his right index finger.

"He will start batting tomorrow and we are hopeful he will come through that and be available to captain the team for the first test against Australia," team manager Mohammed Moosajee said in a news

release from Cricket South Africa yesterday.

Two more key players are on course to feature in the first test in Durban with AB de Villiers having fully recovered from a knee injury and wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock over his wrist problem.

Middle-order batsman Temba Bavuma will play in a club game on Sunday following his recovery from a hand fracture and if he shows no ill-effects, will be available for selection for the first Test. Seamer Dale Steyn, who is two wickets shy of becoming South Africa's most successful bowler in tests, remains a serious doubt for the first game of the series as he recovers from ligament damage in his foot.

"He is doing his running training and also increasing his bowling intensity," Moosajee said. "He will in all likelihood feature in the series against Australia, but the CSA medical team will want him to play some form of cricket before a test match." South Africa, who beat India 2-1 in a recent test series, have not defeated the Australians at home since 1969-70. They have won their last three test series in Australia. — Reuters



Faf du Plessis

Sports



US, Norway, Finns, Germans advance to Olympic hockey quarter-finals

US to face unbeaten Czech Republic in today's quarter-finals

GANGNEUNG: South Korea threatened an upset of mighty Finland before falling short while Norway snapped an 11-game Olympic losing streak to advance to the Pyeongchang men's hockey quarter-finals yesterday along with Germany and the United States. Finland, medalists in five of the past six Olympics, saw a three-goal lead trimmed to one before escaping with a 5-2 playoff victory over the Olympic hosts to secure today a quarter-final date with two-time defending champion Canada.

"They played great. I respect that," said Finland's Petri Kontiola, who scored twice. "They did a great job." After the game, the South Korean team took large flags onto the ice and skated laps around the rink in an emotional tribute to the screaming fans who were giving their winless team a standing ovation. "I felt so proud with the flags around me," tearful forward Park Woo-sang said. "We wanted to thank them for all the support." Down 3-0, the South Koreans roared back as Canada-born Radunske, the first player without Korean ancestry to play for South Korea after taking citizenship in 2013, scored 10:06 into the second period and Ahn Jin-hui followed only 2:03 later.

"The crowd deserved to see the puck go in the net. They have been behind us the whole way," said Korean forward Brock Radunske. "That was a little giveback to the fans. They have been with us every step of the way. The support has been unbelievable."

The Finns thwarted a Korean power play to start the

third period, then Juuso Hietanen struck for a power-play goal with 12:40 remaining. "They were working really hard. It wasn't an easy game," Hietanen said. "They should be proud." An empty-net goal late by Sakari Manninen doomed the South Korean upset bid. "I knew it was possible it could turn," said Finland's Sami Lepisto. "I wasn't nervous about the situation but you never know." Norway, which had not won since a 1994 11th-place consolation game, edged Slovenia 2-1 on Alexander Bonsaksen's over-time goal to book a

last-eight matchup against the Olympic Athletes from Russia. "This is historic," Bonsaksen said. "I'm really happy." The US men routed Slovakia 5-1 and will face unbeaten Czech Republic in today's quarter-finals while Germany edged Switzerland 2-1 on Yannic Seidenberg's over-time goal to set a quarter-final against unbeaten Sweden. Now the Americans, who haven't won

Olympic gold since 1980, face a Czech squad seeking its first Olympic crown in 20 years.

STRONG AND RESILIENT

Harvard University star Ryan Donato scored two goals as he did in an earlier win over Slovakia and US goaltender Ryan Zapsolski made 22 saves. Both shined after being flattened in the second period, with Michal Cajkovsky sent off for 25 minutes for a blow to Donato's head. "I just dipped my head for a second to look at the puck and looked up and had an elbow in my mouth," Donato said. "It didn't feel good." At the same



GANGNEUNG: Finland's players celebrate scoring in the men's play-offs qualifications ice hockey match between Finland and South Korea during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Gangneung Hockey Stadium. — AFP

moment, Ladislav Nagy was whistled for flattening Zapsolski, who was slow to rise off the ice.

"Jammed my neck, pinched my nerves and just kind of lost feeling in my hands and feet for a bit," Zapsolski said. "It was a little bit of a scary thing for me."

James Wisniewski, whose father Jim was quarantined with the norovirus at the Games, scored on the power play 18 seconds later for a 2-0 US edge and the rout was on. "It shows how strong and how resilient a team we are," Zapsolski said. — AFP

Wigan to probe crowd trouble after Man City FA Cup shock

LONDON: Wigan announced a full investigation yesterday into crowd disturbances that marred the club's dramatic FA Cup victory over Premier League leaders Manchester City. City striker Sergio Aguero became involved in a physical exchange with a Wigan supporter as thousands of fans spilled onto the pitch following the League One side's 1-0 victory in the fifth-round tie on Monday.

TV footage of the chaos at the DW Stadium appeared to show Aguero raising his arm to push away the fan and later having to be restrained. It is understood Aguero claims he was spat at. A number of fans also headed towards the end where City supporters were sitting to continue celebrations, sparking further disturbances..

Advertising hoardings were ripped out and thrown onto the pitch along with other objects, while missiles were also thrown from the pitch into the stand. There were also clashes between fans and police and stewards.

Police made two arrests on suspicion of affray following an incident outside the ground. "While we appreciate that the vast majority of supporters who ran on to the pitch did so spontaneously to celebrate a famous victory, we were disappointed with the action of a minority of supporters who acted in an inappropriate manner," said Wigan chief executive Jonathan Jackson.

"Player and staff safety is of paramount importance and we will conduct a full investigation." Chief Superintendent Stuart Ellison of Greater Manchester Police said such behaviour would not be tolerated.

"As soon as people were on the pitch, we immediately deployed our resources to the front of the stands, where they were able to keep the two groups of supporters apart and prevent any further disruption," he said. Police added in a statement that no injuries had been reported.

The Football Association is assessing the situation but is yet to say whether either club will be investigated. The report of referee Anthony Taylor and video footage will be taken into account.

The governing body could also look into a confrontation between City manager Pep Guardiola and his Wigan counterpart Paul Cook. The pair exchanged heated words after City's Fabian Delph was sent off late in the first half. Their argument continued in the tunnel after the sides left the field at half-time and television pictures showed Guardiola having to be held back by colleagues. Guardiola later played down that incident, suggesting he had been annoyed that Cook had left his technical area.

"Nothing happened in the tunnel, nothing happened with my colleague," the Spaniard said. "It was just 'please stay in your position', that's all, and then finished." Wigan's victory, courtesy of a 79th-minute strike from Will Grigg, ended City's historic quest for a quadruple. — AFP

Warrior Fourcade writes history with team gold

PYEONGCHANG: Martin Fourcade drew on all his warrior instincts to continue his rewriting of French sporting history at the Pyeongchang Olympics by delivering team gold in the mixed relay yesterday.

He delivered a storming performance on the final leg to become the second French athlete to win three gold medals at a single Winter Games after Alpine skier Jean-Claude Killy. The 29-year-old Fourcade was also the first athlete to claim three titles in Pyeongchang and he took his overall tally to a French record-extending five Olympic gold medals.

"It's a beautiful story for this team, it's a beautiful story for all the crew, who work really hard on our skis," Fourcade told reporters. "We often say that we are doing an individual sport but we are living more than 220 days a year together. Winning this medal together is something really emotional and we really enjoy it."

Fourcade's day job as a soldier may help his aim, but it is his never-say-die attitude that makes him so special. He shot impeccably and skied brilliantly in the relay, making the most of errors by his opponents as he swept to victory, waving the tricolour flag as he skated across the line and into the arms of his waiting team mates.

"I was very stressed because it is not a race like any other one, individual races. I go fast in the first lap and (I'm) shooting and no question in my head - go, just



PYEONGCHANG: France's Martin Fourcade celebrates at the finish line in the men's 15km mass start biathlon event during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games, in Pyeongchang. — AFP

that," he said. After a poor start to the Games in the sprint, Fourcade found his range and won the pursuit before edging out German Simon Schenpp in a thriller to take the mass start gold.

His performances have prompted congratulatory messages from French President Emmanuel Macron, but on Tuesday he had to share the plaudits with his

team mates. "It is not a man that crosses the finish line, but a team, and picks up the gold once again. Inspiring demonstration of the strength of the collective," Macron said on Twitter.

For all the President's celebration of the team, however, the French relay victory was firmly rooted in Fourcade's refusal to accept second-best. — Reuters

Team Toyota takes 'Start Your Impossible' to global stage at PyeongChang 2018

PYEONGCHANG: Over 50 athletes from 20 countries supported by Toyota compete at the Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games. Taking its ambitious "Start Your Impossible" movement to a new level, Toyota Motor Corporation, a worldwide partner of the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games, has supported more than 50 athletes from 20 countries who are competing at PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games. As they strive to skate, ski and

sled their way to victory, the Team Toyota athletes will embody the company's global corporate initiative, which envisions the creation of a more inclusive and sustainable society in which everyone can challenge their impossible.

The true challenge for Toyota and its President and CEO Akio Toyoda is to stimulate the 80-year-old company by reinforcing its core values and inspiring its 370,000 worldwide employees to help create a society where mobility is an opportunity for people to achieve their dreams. Sports are an excellent medium to accomplish this, with events like the Olympic Games uniting the world in friendship and solidarity to celebrate the highest realization of human potential.

"I have a profound respect for sports, which have a unique power to offer hope and purpose and inspire us all to never give up," said Akio Toyoda, President and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation.

"It is exciting to watch athletes from all over the world compete on a level playing field, where anything can happen. This concept, when carried over to society, means a place where everyone can participate and contribute,

where people turn their weaknesses into strengths with optimism and a fighting spirit and a strong and determined desire to improve and be better." Additionally, Toyota has built relationships with athletes around the world in different disciplines. While selecting the Team Toyota, which includes Toyota employees who have been training and practicing at the highest level while working at the company in Japan, the company, its affiliates, and distributors around the world looked for individuals that best reflect Toyota's core values. These values include: be caring, be a natural challenger, represent the kaizen spirit (a Japanese terminology for continuous improvement), have a love of learning and be curious, be honest with strong work ethic, be a team player, be accountable, be humble and thankful, and respect others.

Some of the athletes shared their personal stories at the Toyota Mobility Summit held in Athens, Greece in October last year, while others are featured in a video series that is part of the "Start Your Impossible" initiative. The company has plans to launch new videos and television commercials during the events of PyeongChang 2018.



Sports



Olympic relay joy for South Korea, Christie crashes again

Deafening cheers from a packed Gangneung Ice Arena

GANGNEUNG: South Korean short-track speed skating star Choi Min-jeong led the 2018 Winter Games hosts to women's 3,000 metres relay gold yesterday on a night when Briton Elise Christie's Olympic curse struck again. To deafening cheers from a packed Gangneung Ice Arena, the teenager speedster Choi raced the final two laps, holding off China in a frantic dash to the line as the Koreans successfully defended their Sochi title. The Chinese were subsequently disqualified along with Canada, promoting Italy to silver. Bronze went to the winners of the 'B' final, the Netherlands, who earned their place on the podium after setting a new world record of 4min 03.471sec. Italian Arianna Fontana, winner of the individual 500m, was claiming a record seventh short-track medal. "It feels great, I didn't really realise that until somebody told me after the race," said the 27-year-old. For Choi it was a second gold of the Games, after her 1500m success at the weekend, to make up for her disqualification in last week's 500m. The 19-year-old remains on track for a golden treble because she won her heat for the 1,000m to qualify for tomorrow's quarter-finals. Choi said: "It's my first Olympics, we tried our best to continue Korea's great record in the relay and of course it being in Korea we put lots of effort to do well at home." It was South Korea's sixth Olympic relay title out of a possible eight, the only two to get away coming in Albertville in 1992, won by Canada, and China's triumph in Vancouver in 2010.



GANGNEUNG: (L-R) South Korea's Choi Minjeong and Australia's Deanna Lockett compete in the women's 1,000m short track speed skating heat event during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games, at the Gangneung Ice Arena in Gangneung yesterday. —AFP

Steely Ledeska destined for glory: Coach

PRAGUE: Even as a five-year-old at her first training session Czech Ester Ledeska showed the competitive drive that would carry her to a shock Olympic Alpine skiing gold medal in Pyeongchang, according to her first coach. Jan Lukas, who trained Ledeska from the ages of 5-11 at Ski Klub Spindl, said he could see early on that she had the family support and steely determination required to make it to the top. "Her parents supported her, her grandparents sup-

ported her - they would stand for long hours at the foot of the slopes," Lukas told Reuters in a telephone interview. "She was competitive, she was really keen on it and that is the most important thing... You can be talented, but if you are lazy, than it is good for nothing. That must go hand in hand, the talents and hard work," he said. The 22-year-old Ledeska, who will also compete in the snowboard parallel giant slalom starting on Thursday, produced one of the biggest upsets of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics when she won the super-G on Saturday. The victory sent Czech media into a frenzy with Ledeska's image plastered over the front pages of newspapers and television repeating her run to a first gold among only three Olympic Alpine skiing medals for a country with a population of 10.6 million. Lukas missed his former pupil's medal-winning run and assumed she had won gold in her preferred sport

of snowboarding. "My first thought was 'Oh, have they've done the snowboard race already?'," Lukas said from the mountain resort of Spindleruv Mlyn, located about 150 kilometres from Prague. "We did it in a playful way with the kids, but we were also three times a week on that slope and Ester would then go for more with her parents. And she did both skis and snowboard," Lukas said. The coach stressed how Ledeska's family was always there to support her and her dad Janek, a famous rock musician, learned to ski when his daughter started training. Her grandfather Jan Klapac - a member of the 1972 world champion Czechoslovak ice hockey team and Olympic silver medalist - also provided inspiration for Ledeska. "We did not expect such success. We are now sitting with my wife debating what a journey Ester has had to go through. And what effort it took," he told CTK news agency. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Sevilla v Manchester United		22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
Shakhtar Donetsk v Roma		22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE		
CSKA Moscow v Crvena Zvezda		20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Cerezo Osaka v Guangzhou Evergrande		13:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Suwon Samsung Bluewings v Kashima Antlers		13:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
Buriram United v Jeju United		14:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Shanghai Greenland Shenhua v Sydney		15:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1		

Mark your calendars for the Red Bull Car Park Drift Kuwait Qualifier this March 9



Only a couple months since welcoming elite drifters competing for the 2017 King of Drift thrown at the Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final, Kuwait is, once again, ready to rev-up its engines for the local qualifier of the 2018 series on March 9 at Sirib Circuit. In celebration of ten years since the first ever Red Bull Car Park Drift event in Lebanon, drifters will be competing to clinch the crown of the Kuwait 2018 King of Drift. Having had hosted a successful adrenaline-filled Series Final on December 8, Kuwait is, no doubt, in the position to impress thousands of drifting and motorsport fans alike. Red Bull Car Park Drift is organized by Basel Salem AlSahah Motor Racing Club and is sponsored by Total, Falken Tyres, Drag 965, and Acqua Eva. Media partner, Kuwait Times will cover this popular event. Over 2,500 spectators will visit SIRIB Circuit on Friday, March 9, to witness thrown-thirsty drifters go head to head for the coveted title. With only one drifter from each participating country, Lebanon will welcome the 2018 Kuwait King of Drift at the Series Final this September 22 where he will compete to claim the Series Final throne. Kuwait's drifter will face a fierce challenge for the King of Drift title, competing against drifters from ten other countries that have participated in the series. The 2018

series kicked off in Oman on January 26 and the competition has continued since then with qualifiers in UAE and Egypt. Qualifiers will continue in Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Mauritius, and Lebanon. The competition, first hosted by Red Bull in Lebanon, is back providing drifting amateurs and professionals with the opportunity to highlight their skills and compete for the crown, while capturing the crowd's attention. Last year's final in Kuwait witnessed an exciting turnout, with Kuwaiti drifter, Ali Makhsood, claiming the King of Smoke by Falken Tyres title. Omani competitor, Refaat Al Yahyai, secured the King of Drift crown after a stellar performance. Lebanon hosted the first ever Red Bull Car Park Drift event in 2008 making it possible for all underground drifters to put their skills to the test, and placed the spotlight on rally champion Abdo Feghali, making him a drifting legend. On a global level, the story of drifting goes back to the 1960s on winding Japanese mountain roads. A bunch of likeminded racers set out to beat their A to B times by exceeding the grip limit of their tires when taking sharp corners. It did not do much to help their racing times but instead evolved into an entirely different discipline. Drifting was born, and a Red Bull manager discovered the sport in 2005 and decided to spark a fire in the Middle East, a fire that still burns to this very day.



13 Sports academy in Egypt gives Syrian children hope



14 Warrior Fourcade writes history with team gold



15 Olympic relay joy for South Korea, Christie crashes again



Messi gives Barcelona last-16 edge

Barca dominate possession for a large spell of first half



LONDON: Chelsea's Belgian goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois (2L) watches a shot go wide during the first leg of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 football match between Chelsea and Barcelona at Stamford Bridge stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Lionel Messi struck for the first time in nine games against Chelsea to give Barcelona the upper hand from the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie yesterday by salvaging a 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge. Willian's fine strike just after the hour mark had put Chelsea in command after earlier hitting both posts in the first half. However, one moment of carelessness cost Chelsea dear as Andres Iniesta intercepted Andreas Christensen's pass to tee up Messi to swing the balance of the tie in Barca's favour 15 minutes from time.

The English champions must now score when they travel to the Camp Nou on March 14 to have any chance of making the last eight. Chelsea manager Antonio Conte sprang a surprise before kick-off by leaving out both Olivier Giroud and Alvaro Morata with Eden Hazard

instead operating in the middle of a front three featuring Willian and former Barca winger Pedro Rodriguez.

And it was Hazard who sent the first warning that Barca were in for an uncomfortable evening when he fired just over from 20 yards five minutes in. Antonio Rudiger also headed just wide in a positive opening from the hosts, but it was Barca who had the first clear chance on 16 minutes. Chelsea constantly tried to surround Messi with three or four blue shirts to limit the Argentine's threat, but he dug out a cross to the far post where an unmarked Paulinho headed wide. Barca then went on to dominate possession for a large spell of the first half with their control of the ball reaching 80 per cent at one stage.

However, the visitors lacked penetration before the

break and were lucky to go in level at half-time.

Willian showed his ability to score from outside the box off either foot with a double against Hull City to take Chelsea into the FA Cup quarter-finals on Friday. He was inches away from another long-range stunner when he curled onto the post from 25 yards with Marc-Andre ter Stegen beaten in the Barca goal.

Barca had kept six clean sheets in their previous seven Champions League games, but once again had good luck rather than good defending to thank four minutes before the break when Willian hooked another effort from outside the box off the woodwork. Hazard then volleyed just over as Chelsea ended the half on a high.

Barca appeared to have restored order early second period, but failed to learn their lesson of Willian's danger

from the edge of the box. A short corner was worked into the Brazilian's path and he arrowed a low shot past the rooted Ter Stegen. However, Barca remain unbeaten in 31 La Liga and Champions League games under Ernesto Valverde thanks to a late rally. Luis Suarez had claims for a penalty waved away when he went down under pressure from Rudiger.

But Barca's protests had barely been silenced before they were level. Christensen's dangerous ball across his own box was a gift for an old scourge of Chelsea in Iniesta. At the end where he broke Chelsea hearts with a stoppage-time equaliser in a highly controversial semi-final in 2009, Iniesta this time squared for Messi to apply the finishing touch low past Thibaut Courtois for his 28th goal of the season. — AFP

Bayern romp home 5-0 after Besiktas suffer early red card

MUNICH: Bayern Munich, helped by two typical Thomas Mueller goals and two from Robert Lewandowski, romped to a 5-0 win over Besiktas in their Champions League tie yesterday after the Turkish champions played nearly the whole match with 10 men.

Besiktas defender Domagoj Vida was given a straight red card for tripping Lewandowski outside the penalty area in the 16th minute, the defining moment in the round of 16, first leg tie. Mueller, inelegant yet always effective, broke the deadlock with a miskick yet minutes before halftime to break Besiktas's resistance.

Kingsley Coman and Mueller added two more before Lewandowski helped himself to a late brace, virtually assuring the Bavarians of a seventh successive quarter-final appearance. Besiktas won all three away games in the group stage and came with the clear intention of attacking Bayern but their plans were torpedoed by Vida's red card.

A poor pass from Aliba Hutchinson went straight to

Lewandowski, who burst past Vida and was tripped as he ran at goal with only goalkeeper Fabri to beat. Besiktas could still have snatched a priceless goal minutes later when Vagner Love got past two Bayern defenders to give himself a clear shot on goal but his effort was high and wide.

Bayern then laid siege to Besiktas and Fabri denied them the opening goal with a superb one-handed save at point-blank range to turn away Mats Hummels's header. Having survived another scare when Ricardo Quaresma burst down the right and forced Sven Ulreich to save at his near post, Bayern broke the deadlock two minutes before halftime.

Coman got to the byline and crossed, Alaba touched it on and the ball fell to Mueller who turned, failed to make proper contact but poked it home. It was a typically scrappy effort from a player once described on the German Football Federation's Twitter feed as having the elegance of a swan on ice skates.

There was an air of inevitability about the second half as Bayern took complete control. Coman sidefooted in from Lewandowski's pass in the 53rd minute before Mueller struck again in the 66th, this time sticking his leg out to divert Joshua Kimmich's cross past Fabri. Lewandowski got in on the act by snapping up a rebound in the 79th minute, before Mueller set up the Pole's second and Bayern's fifth. — Reuters



LONDON: Besiktas' Brazilian midfielder Talisca (C) fights for the ball with Bayern Munich's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal and Bayern Munich's Spanish midfielder Javier Martinez (L) during the UEFA Champions League round of sixteen first leg football match Bayern Munich vs Besiktas Istanbul in Munich. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018

18 HSBC more than doubles pre-tax profits to \$17.2bn



19 KIPCO continues collaboration with Tmkeen to support entrepreneurs



21 Kuwait Finance House goes live with ITS ETHIX-Net



KUWAIT: Faten Abu-Ghazalah, president, Rafaella Bianchi, head of customer experience of Du, Adel Al-Majed, Vice Chairman & CEO of Boubyan Bank, Mona Dabbah, group customer service director at Al-Shaya. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Service Hero presents CSI Awards for 2017

Boubyan Bank, Qatar Airways, Mais Al-Ghanim overall country winners

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Service Hero, the region's only consumer powered customer satisfaction index, awarded yesterday the winners of its Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for the year 2017 at Symphony Hotel in Salmiya. "Our aim today is to award the companies that work hard for the satisfaction of their customers. Building a culture of service excellence requires consistent effort and taking action to create value for customers. We've all had our good and bad service experiences. And now there is a way to express these feelings in a secure and reliable way," Service Hero President Faten Abu-Ghazalah said.

Abu-Ghazalah told Kuwait Times it's not about the award, but about companies making a strategic decision to be customer-centric. "Companies in Kuwait will make progress in serving customers better when they understand the concept of customer expectations and needs. These strategic efforts require discipline and perseverance, but once a company starts on the journey of building loyal and satisfied customers, it will result in long term-financial gains," she said.

“Awards for hard work to provide customer satisfaction”

Abu-Ghazalah said Service Hero is keen to develop its offerings and continuously present customers with a better and more satisfying service. Active members who are reviewing the services of the companies will be rewarded by getting badges of expert, ambassador and influencer in the more than 80,000-member community. The rating platform empowers consumers to rate the service quality of places they visit. Your ratings tell companies their strengths and weaknesses and how they compare with competitors, she said.

She noted that Service Hero is a partner of the American Customer Satisfaction Index, member of ESOMAR and backed by an independent advisory council, ensuring results that are impartial, objective and that accurately reflect the voice of the consumer.

The overall country winners are: 1st place - Boubyan Bank, 2nd place - Qatar Airways and 3rd place - Mais Al-Ghanim.

The 16 industry categories that were rated in 2017 included cafes, casual dining, car service, clothes, electronics, fast food, fine dining, home furniture, Islamic banks, retail banks, ISPs, mobile operators, new car



sales, private hospitals, regional Arab airlines and supermarkets. Each industry category was measured by Kuwait's consumers on a 10-point scale across eight service dimensions, which are reliability, speed, product quality, staff quality, value for money, location, call center and website quality.

The winners of the cafe category: Caribou Cafe casual dining. Car service and new car sales category: Infiniti. Clothes category: American Eagle. Electronics category: Eureka. Fast food category: McDonalds. Home furniture category: Home Center. Casual Dining category: Mais Al-Ghanim. Islamic banks category: Boubyan Bank. Retail banks category: National Bank of Kuwait. ISP and mobile operator category: Zain. Private

hospitals category: Royal Hayat hospital. Regional Arab airlines category: Qatar Airways. Supermarkets category: Savaco.

Service Hero aims to collect a robust and rigorous sample exceeding 10,000 validated assessments that reflect key demographic groups. Assessments are predominantly collected online asking 20 questions using a 10 point scale, and it deploys key processes before reporting validated and authenticated data to ensure its integrity. Service Hero's assessment method is statistically rigorous, robust and relevant. From representative sample sizes to service quality checks and ratings scales, Service Hero's Index provides a rigorous annual snapshot of consumer feelings.

Dubai property slump to continue: S&P

DUBAI: A three-year downturn in Dubai's property market will likely continue until at least 2020, Standard & Poor's said yesterday, citing low oil prices, the introduction of VAT and a Gulf diplomatic crisis. A glut of housing units and weak demand were also key reasons for the decline, the credit ratings agency said in a report.

The emirate's real estate sector has been on the slide since 2014, when crude oil prices crashed, dealing a harsh blow to many Gulf investors. Home prices dropped more than 15

percent between then and mid-2017. The downward trajectory continued through to the end of last year, the S&P report said, with prices of residential units falling a further five to ten percent.

It said the introduction of a value added tax and a prolonged crisis between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors, including the United Arab Emirates, had also put pressure on real estate prices. S&P called the downturn a "correction" but said the sector may start to bounce back when Dubai hosts a six-month World's Fair in 2020. "We believe this correction will continue at least for this year and next, before prices stabilize in 2020 at the earliest," it said, adding that rents will likely follow the same trend.

Dubai's Expo 2020 is expected to attract up to 300,000 visitors a day when it opens in October 2020. —AFP

AUB reports a net profit of \$618.7m for 2017

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (AUB) reported a net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of \$618.7 million for the year 2017, representing a growth of 8.4 percent as compared to a net profit of \$570.6 million in 2016. The net profit in Q4/2017 was \$150.0 million as compared to \$128.5 million in Q4/2016.

Net operating income increased from \$986.6 million to \$1,030.4 million in 2017 (+4.4 percent), driven largely by a rise in net interest income (NII) of 5.8 percent to \$876.5 million (2016: \$828.2 million). The NII increase was achieved through higher spreads resulting from focused balance sheet management together with prudent growth in asset volumes within acceptable risk criteria. The disciplined cost culture within the AUB Group

resulted in a cost income ratio of 28.8 percent (2016: 27.6 percent). The Group's total assets grew by \$1.9 billion (+6.1 percent) to reach \$33.2 billion by 2017 year-end. This is attributable to a 4.8 percent growth in the loans and advances portfolio to \$19.5 billion (31 December 2016: \$18.6 billion) and a 7.8 percent growth in the investments portfolio to \$6.0 billion (31 December 2016: \$5.6 billion) to ensure a balanced funding profile.

Asset quality improved resulting from focused recovery initiatives during 2017. The non-performing loan ratio improved to 1.9 percent as at 31 December 2017 as compared to 2.3 percent as at 31 December 2016 while maintaining a very solid specific provision coverage ratio of 85.1 percent (31 December 2016: 84.9 percent). The total provision coverage ratio was 154.3 percent (2016: 155.6 percent), excluding available significant asset collaterals against these exposures.

Overall Return on Average Equity (ROAE) increased to 16.5 percent (2016: 15.6 percent) while the Return on Average Assets (ROAA) increased to 2.1 percent (2016: 1.8 percent).

The resultant basic earnings per share were US cents 7.7 for the year ended 31

December 2017 (2016: US cents 7.2). The Board of Directors has recommended distribution comprising a cash dividend of US cents 4.5 per share (2016: US cents 4.5 per share) together with a bonus ordinary share issue of 5 percent (2016: 10 percent).

Hamad Al-Humaidhi, AUB Chairman, commented: "AUB continued its solid performance in 2017 against the backdrop of continuing global and regional business volatility. Sustaining AUB's growth in net profit demonstrates its strong underlying fundamentals and the resilience of its diversified business and geographic model.

"While operating challenges remain, I am cautiously optimistic that AUB is well positioned and prepared to meet the challenges arising out of evolving market conditions both regionally and globally and to maintain its growth momentum into 2018," added Al-Humaidhi.



Hamad Al-Humaidhi

Infiniti Al-Babtain sweeps the automotive market by ranking first

Consumers vote in Service Hero 2017 for 5th consecutive year

KUWAIT: Al-Babtain Group, the authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait is proud to announce acquiring top positions in the authorized car dealers categories according to the customer-driven satisfaction index, Service Hero 2017.

Since 2013 Infiniti Al-Babtain has ranked first in the after-sales service in the authorized car dealers, which validate its superior and class-Leading service.

All the stages concluded on December 31 of last year, and the results were announced. Infiniti Al-Babtain ranked first in the 'Car purchase' for the purchase of a new car directly from an authorized car dealers, in addition to ranking first in the after-sales service. This survey is done by "Service Hero" every year, and is based on customers' voting for best companies in customer care service in Kuwait.

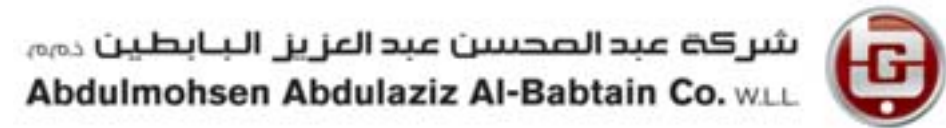
"Service Hero" is the first and only index in Kuwait measuring customers' satisfaction,

and it follows a strict protocol to ensure the real identity of the customers who have participated in it.

On this occasion, Saleh Al-Babtain, CEO Al-Babtain Group, commented that: "The Company is keen to provide best standard of service for its customers, and always aims to

meet their satisfaction through offering various promotions and high quality services". "We are proud of our important achievements which are reflected in the awards we win that speak of our dedication and adoption of the international quality standards and customer care," added Al-Babtain.

Laurent Pernet, GM Automotive division



commented on this saying that: "Achieving these leading positions by Infiniti indicates the high standard service provided to the client. Thousands of survey participants in voting for Infiniti increase our drive to provide the best always, and to work harder on preserving our leading position in serving customers".



Latvian CB chief says victim of smear campaign after detention

RIGA: Latvia's central bank chief, who was held in custody over the weekend on suspicion that he solicited a bribe, said yesterday he was the victim of a smear campaign because he has been leading a drive to stamp out corruption. Latvia's financial system has been rocked in recent days by US allegations that a leading bank engaged in money laundering and, separately, by the arrest of central bank governor Ilmars Rimsevics. Rimsevics' suggestion he had been targeted because he was tough on corruption may deepen worries about the transparency of the banking sector in the Baltic nation, which shares a bor-

der with Russia and has close links with its former colonial master.

"I have not demanded or received any bribes," Rimsevics told a news conference yesterday. "I have become the target of some Latvian commercial banks to destroy Latvia's reputation."

Neither police nor the anti-corruption authority have given details of the 100,000 euro bribe allegedly requested by Rimsevics, who sits on the European Central Bank's Governing Council, which sets interest rates for the eurozone. On Monday, Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis called on the central bank chief to quit. He

appeared to soften his stance yesterday, however, saying he could not rule out that the bribery allegations were an attempt to damage the reputation of Latvian authorities. The complaint against Rimsevics had come from Norvik Bank, a small Latvian lender, the prime minister said in a statement, adding that Norvik's owners had not provided evidence of wrongdoing despite being "repeatedly asked". "If the owners of Norvik Bank have evidence that the management of the Bank of Latvia has requested the President of the Bank of Latvia or another Latvian state official to take unlawful actions, I call for evidence to be provided at the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau," Kucinskis said.

Norvik Bank did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The allegations against Rimsevics and a warning from the United States that it was

seeking to impose sanctions on ABLV Bank have highlighted concerns over a number of small banks that operate in Latvia, often acting for clients based abroad.

The US Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) accused Latvia's third-largest lender ABLV Bank on Feb. 13 of "institutionalized money laundering" and helping breach North Korean sanctions. FinCEN said non-resident banking in Latvia increased the risk that criminals and shell companies could conduct fraudulent transactions or hide their financial dealings.

Last year, two Latvian banks were fined more than 2.8 million euros (\$3.26 million) for allowing clients to violate sanctions imposed by the European Union and United Nations on North Korea. Three others received smaller fines. — Reuters

Congo seeks relief talks with oil traders over \$2bn debt

LONDON: Congo Republic is set to become the latest African country to start debt relief talks with trading houses after borrowing \$2 billion from merchants such as Trafigura and Glencore but now finding its debt levels unsustainable, sources familiar with the matter said.

Trading houses regularly lend money to resource-rich clients in financial distress - be it countries such as Congo, Chad, Morocco or Iraq's Kurdistan region - when other lenders walk away. But traders often charge heavy interest on loans and require access to resources. Congo has recently appointed investment bank Lazard as an advisor to help it renegotiate debts with the traders, three banking and oil industry sources said.

Lazard declined to comment. The move is similar to Chad which has appointed Rothschild as an advisor in talks with Glencore and four bank lenders. The development in Congo is similar to the situation in Chad, which borrowed \$1.45 billion from Glencore guaranteed by crude cargoes at a time of high oil prices. The central African country was forced to seek a restructuring because it had to channel most oil revenue towards debt repayments instead of its own budget when oil prices fell.

Negotiations to restructure the loan for a second time have been on-going since mid-2017 and became fraught after Chad said it would cut off some of the oil going to Glencore when the two sides clashed over the terms. Like Chad, Congo Republic has come under pressure from the IMF to restructure its debt, which trade sources fear may result in painful and prolonged talks with the traders unwilling to unilaterally improve credit terms.

"The Republic of Congo's overall debt, including loans from oil traders, is unsustainable and the authorities are planning measures to restore medium-term debt sustainability," a spokesman for the IMF said. Glencore and Trafigura declined to comment.

Congo Republic's finance ministry declined to comment. Congo is seeking an IMF bailout and, as in the case of Chad, the IMF has laid out tough terms before releasing the funds.

Congo is regularly singled out by anti-corruption groups for the opaque management of its oil sector. In December, the country pledged to cut its 2018 spending by 9 percent in a bid to win the IMF's support. The IMF said in October that Congo's public or publicly guaranteed debt totalled \$9.14 billion or around 110 percent of its GDP as of the end of July.

Out of this total, the debt to traders represents about \$2.3 billion, the country's prime minister said in October, without providing a breakdown. He also said the country was weighing a moratorium on payments with private creditors. — Reuters

HSBC more than doubles pre-tax profits to \$17.2bn

HONG KONG: Banking giant HSBC more than doubled pre-tax profit to \$17.2 billion in 2017, it announced yesterday, after a recovery drive to streamline its business and slash costs.

Adjusted pre-tax profit also rose 11 percent year-on-year to \$21 billion as revenue growth outweighed operating expenses, the bank said. But analysts said that although HSBC had bounced back after restructuring and a string of financial scandals, it missed some profit forecasts with margins looking comparatively good in 2017 because of specific one-off losses the previous year, including the sale of the bank's Brazil business.

The bank's shares were down in afternoon trading, falling 2.09 percent in afternoon trading at HK\$81.8 (\$10.5). Analysts cited the lack of a reliable growth engine due to inconsistent markets and the threat of US interest rate hikes as problematic for the bank, with a lack of clarity on share buybacks weighing on the stock price.

The results came as new chief executive John Flint takes over from Stuart Gulliver, who steps down following seven years at the helm. Flint, who was previously head of retail banking and wealth management at HSBC, has said he wants to accelerate the pace of change at the bank. The Asia-focused firm has laid off tens of thousands

of staff since 2015 as part of a wide-ranging overhaul, including the sale of its Brazil business. Its strategy of expanding business in the Pearl River Delta, an area of southern China including major cities such as Hong Kong and Guangzhou, has boosted performance, with Asia business driving more than 75 percent of reported and adjusted profit in 2017, the bank said.

Gulliver described HSBC as "simpler, stronger, and more secure" than it had been when he became chief executive. But chairman Mark Tucker warned that while the bank was optimistic about the global economy in 2018, rising international tensions and the threat of protectionism could be disruptive.

Lack of focus

Yesterday's surge in reported pre-tax profit was a 141 percent rise on the \$7.1 billion it posted in 2016. Net profit stood at \$9.7 billion in 2017, up from \$1.3 billion year-on-year.

"We have been waiting for so long for the comeback of HSBC and I do really think that they are in better shape than other international banks," said Dickie Wong of Kingston Securities Limited, citing dividend yields and cost efficiency as among its strengths. But Wong said the firm still needed to find a focus for growth, a view



echoed by Jackson Wong of Huarong International Securities. "Sometimes it might be in the US, sometimes it might be in Europe, or sometimes they might think (it's) Asia, though none of these places is a consistent place that any bank has had a good grip," Wong said, adding that US interest rises could impact the Asia market and its growth potential. Gulliver said the bank had strengthened its compliance systems and ability to manage crime risk in the wake of a range of prosecutions and fines.

In December, US authorities lifted the threat of prosecution against HSBC, five

years after it admitted to widespread money laundering and sanctions violations.

In a landmark case, the bank agreed to pay \$1.9 billion in fines in 2012, after admitting it knowingly moved hundreds of millions of dollars for Mexican drug cartels and illegally served clients in Iran, Myanmar, Libya, Sudan and Cuba in violation of US sanctions.

Under the terms of the settlement, federal prosecutors agreed to drop all charges after five years if the bank paid the fine, took remedial action and avoided committing new violations. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

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

Euro	374.910
Sterling Pound	421.960
Canadian dollar	241.290
Turkish lira	80.500
Swiss Franc	324.500
Australian Dollar	239.620
US Dollar Buying	299.450

GOLD

20 Gram	260.52
10 Gram	133.18
5 Gram	67.43

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	300.050
Canadian Dollar	239.305
Sterling Pound	420.810
Euro	373.195
Swiss Franc	280.880
Bahrain Dinar	797.945
UAE Dirhams	82.095
Qatari Riyals	83.325
Saudi Riyals	80.910
Jordanian Dinar	424.475
Egyptian Pound	17.060
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.932
Indian Rupees	4.666
Pakistani Rupees	2.714
Bangladesh Taka	3.639
Philippines Peso	5.745
Cyprus pound	17.863

Japanese Yen	3.810
Syrian Pound	1.585
Nepalese Rupees	2.927
Malaysian Ringgit	78.035
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.690
Thai Bhat	10.535
Turkish Lira	80.195

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.413951	0.421451
Czech Korune	0.0066717	0.016017
Danish Krone	0.045658	0.050958
Euro	0.366328	0.373828
Georgian Lari	0.133795	0.133795
Hungarian 0.001101	0.001321	
Norwegian Krone	0.034545	0.039745
Romanian Leu	0.064150	0.081000
Russian ruble	0.005323	0.005323
Slovakia	0.008914	0.018914
Swedish Krona	0.033555	0.038555
Swiss Franc	0.315981	0.326981

Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.229602	0.241602
New Zealand Dollar	0.214699	0.224199

America		
Canadian Dollar	0.233358	0.242358
US Dollars	0.296300	0.300720
US Dollars Mint	0.296800	0.300720

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003224	0.003808
Chinese Yuan	0.046071	0.049571
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036522	0.039272
Indian Rupee	0.004229	0.004870
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002733	0.002913
Korean Won	0.000270	0.000285
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073044	0.079044
Nepalese Rupee	0.002997	0.003167
Pakistan Rupee	0.002520	0.002810
Philippine Peso	0.005697	0.005997
Singapore Dollar	0.223360	0.233360
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001641	0.002221
Taiwan	0.010306	0.010486
Thai Baht	0.009198	0.009748

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.790249	0.798749
Egyptian Pound	0.014064	0.019782
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202	0.000262
Jordanian Dinar	0.419076	0.428076
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154	0.000254
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022647	0.046647
Omani Riyal	0.773942	0.779622
Qatar Riyal	0.078223	0.083163
Saudi Riyal	0.079020	0.080320
Syrian Pound	0.001272	0.001492
Tunisian Dinar	0.121456	0.129456
Turkish Lira	0.074441	0.084741
UAE Dirhams	0.080362	0.082062
Yemeni Riyal	0.000976	0.001056

Business

KIPCO continues collaboration with Tmkeen to support entrepreneurs

Baim.com wins the award worth \$100,000 this year

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - continues to support young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs through its collaboration with the Youth Empowerment Symposium (Tmkeen) on the KIPCO Tmkeen Award for Young Entrepreneurs. Running its third year, this year's winner of the award - worth \$100,000 in services from the KIPCO Group - was Baim.com, an educational online platform.

KIPCO Vice Chairman (Executive), Faisal Al-Ayyar, received the Tmkeen representatives to discuss ways in which more mentorship and guidance can be provided by KIPCO and its Group companies to Kuwait's young entrepreneurial community. Commenting on this occasion, KIPCO Group Communications

Director, Eman Al-Awadhi, said: "The creativity and innovativeness of the young people of Kuwait is what makes their business ideas strong. At KIPCO, we constantly seek ways to support them and make their businesses more sustainable so that they can contribute to the local economy. It is the duty of the private sector to

educate young business owners, and we are delighted to have set up a platform together with Tmkeen, that allows our professionals to share their accumulated business experience."

KIPCO Group companies - including Burgan Bank, OSN, Gulf Insurance Group, KAMCO Investment Company, United Real Estate, Qurain Petrochemical Industries, AUK, AUS, United Networks and Marina FM - are supporters of the KIPCO Tmkeen Award for Young Entrepreneurs. The KIPCO Group is one of the biggest holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa, with consolidated assets of \$32 billion as at 30 September 2017. The Group has significant ownership

interests in over 60 companies operating across 24 countries. The group's main business sectors are financial services, media, real estate and manufacturing. Through its core companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, KIPCO also has interests in the education and medical sectors.

Al-Ayyar receives Tmkeen reps



KUWAIT: KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive) Faisal Al-Ayyar (second from right) receives the recognition plaque from Tmkeen CEO, Ali Al-Ibrahim.

Japan hopes US returns to TPP, but eyes tough negotiation

TOKYO: Japan welcomes a positive stance by the United States toward an Asia-Pacific trade pact, but indicated that altering the agreement at this point would be very difficult. Japan's chief negotiator for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Kazuyoshi Umemoto, told Reuters that an agreement among the remaining 11 member nations, set to be signed next month, may have had an impact on the United States.

"We have been working, motivated by hopes that the United States would return to the trade pact soon. We welcome it becoming positive toward the TPP," Umemoto said yesterday.

Japan took the lead in forging the revised trade pact after President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of an earlier 12-nation version last year, saying he wanted to seek one-on-one deals that would be more beneficial to the US. Eleven countries finalized the pact in January and are expected to sign it in Chile on March 8.

Last month, Trump told the World Economic Forum in Switzerland that it was possible Washington might return to the pact if it got a better deal. "It probably was high-profile that we reached the agreement among the 11 nations since it was right before the Davos meeting. That probably had a certain impact," Umemoto said. The final text of the revised TPP, now called Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement For Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), is expected to be published today. —Reuters

Walmart shares tumble after it reports Q4 earnings drop

NEW YORK: Walmart reported higher overall sales in the fourth quarter yesterday, but shares tumbled as the US retail giant's earnings were dented by higher costs and as online sales growth slowed.

Shares were down 6.5 percent in pre-market trading to \$97.94 after the chain reported a 42.1 percent drop in earnings to \$2.2 billion for the quarter ending January 31. Earnings translated to \$1.33 a share, four cents shy of analyst expectations, even as revenues rose 4.1 percent to \$136.3 billion. Walmart has spent aggressively in the last two years to expand its e-commerce offerings and to boost employee pay and beautify stores.

Those efforts helped it produce a solid 2.6 percent gain in comparable sales in US stores, which accounts for more than half of revenues.

However, quarterly earnings were hit by a 3.2 percent increase in costs to \$131.8 billion. Chief financial officer Brett Biggs said about two-thirds of the drop in profit margin was due to investments to keep prices low and to the effect of sales of lower-margin e-commerce items.

The remainder was because of



CHICAGO: In this file photo shows the Walmart logo displayed in the window of a Walmart Neighborhood Market store in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

markdowns associated with liquidating goods from 63 Sam's Club stores that were shut down during the quarter and from winding down a Brazilian e-commerce venture. Earnings also were marred by one-time employee severance costs connected to the Sam's closures.

The retailer's effort to beef up its e-commerce business to compete with Amazon have included acquisitions of Jet.com, smaller entities like the men's shopping line Bonobos and a joint venture with the Lord & Taylor department store chain.

Walmart US saw e-commerce sales increase 23 percent, slower than the 50 percent jump in the third quarter. Most of this slowdown was due to the accounting of

the Jet.com acquisition, but also due to unspecified "operational challenges that negatively impacted growth," said Walmart chief executive Doug McMillon. McMillon said the company would accelerate efforts such as "scan and go" and double its online grocery offerings in the US in 2018.

"We're confident in our strategy to transform the company," McMillon told analysts in a conference call. "It's really about providing more convenience to customers."

The world's biggest retailer provided earnings projections for the current fiscal year of between \$4.75 and \$5.00 a share, a relatively low range considering the consensus among analysts is for \$4.97. —AFP

WTO chief urges US to avoid paralyzing trade system

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization chief, in an interview with AFP, urged the United States to avert "paralysis" in the global trade dispute settlement system, as economic tensions between Washington and China ratchet up. The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) is seen as a crucial arm of the Geneva-based WTO, offering nations a forum to work through grievances while avoiding an exchange of tariffs that can ignite a trade war.

While President Donald Trump's protectionist administration has levelled hostile rhetoric towards the WTO in general, the DSB has been crippled by direct action.

Trump's trade officials, who claim DSB rulings unfairly favor developing nations like China, have blocked the appointment of any new judges, intensifying the backlog in a court already criticized for working too slowly. "If nothing is done and if we continue down this road, clearly there will be a paralysis of the system", the WTO's director-general Roberto Azevedo said.

He added that he talks to the US "constantly" about the judges issue, but that there were "no developments that would indicate that we are closer to a solution". The DSB is supposed to have seven judges to function properly, but currently only has four, one of whom is set to leave when their term expires in September. Each case must be heard by three judges.

Azevedo said he was "relatively hopeful" the WTO's 164 member-states are working on solutions that "will allow us to continue our work".

Trade war?

The US Commerce Department earlier this month recommended imposing heavy tariffs on China and other countries to counter a global glut in steel and aluminium which it says threatens national security. China immediately vowed to protect its interests.

Trump is due to make a decision on possible tariffs next month, but analysts warn he may endorse the measures, taking advantage of an opportunity to strike a highly public blow for his "America first" trade policy.

Should that happen, China could do what many nations have done in the past: assemble its lawyers and head to the DSB, arguing that the US actions violate rules that aim to create a level-playing field in global trade.

But with Washington continuing to degrade the WTO's mandate—both rhetorically and in practical terms—some fear the world's top two economies are on a collision course.

"The risk of a trade war is always present", Azevedo said. "There are periods when it is higher, there are periods when it is less likely."

But he warned that tit-for-tat unilateral action, outside the multilateral system that the WTO safeguards, is cause for serious concern. "Once that begins to happen you have the domino effect and then it may spiral out of control very easily," he said. "Every now and again there is the tendency to take measures into ones' hand and to fix it unilaterally and that is always a dangerous road to go".

No pullout

During his presidential campaign, Trump called the WTO a "disaster" and threatened to pull the US out if elected. While his administration has called for sweeping reforms within the organization, the pullout threat appears to have been more bark than bite. "There is nothing in my conversations with the United States that remotely indicates the possibility that the US is leaving the WTO", Azevedo told AFP.

"They do have concerns with several things that are happening here, but they also said, number one, that the organization is very important and does a lot of good." —AFP

BP sees self-driving electric vehicles crimping oil demand by 2040

LONDON: The emergence of self-driving electric cars and travel sharing are set to dent oil consumption by 2040, oil and gas giant BP said, forecasting a peak in demand for the first time.

In its benchmark annual Energy Outlook, BP forecast a 100-fold growth in electric vehicles by 2040, with its chief economist Spencer Dale painting a world in which we travel much more but instead of using private cars, we increasingly share trips in autonomous vehicles.

While travel demand more than doubles over the period as economies in countries such as China and India grow, higher oil demand will be more than offset by increased engine efficiency standards as well as the larger number of EVs and shared travelling.

Unlike many other forecasts, including previous BP Energy Outlooks, which looked solely at the growing share of EVs in the car fleet, BP this year focused on the share of vehicles kilometers powered by electricity.

Under BP's Evolving Transition scenario, which assumes that policies and technology continue to evolve at a speed similar to that seen in the recent past, some 30 percent of car kilometers are powered by electricity by 2040 from almost zero in 2016. At the same time, the number of EVs is set to increase from 3 million today to over 320 million by 2040, representing roughly 15 percent out of a total car fleet of 2 billion.

The gap between the increasing number of EVs on the road and the kilometers powered by electricity is due to the expected growth in so-called shared mobility by EVs, Dale said. "Cars will be used much more intensely over time," Dale told reporters in a briefing on Monday ahead of the release of the report yesterday. As a result, fuel demand from the car fleet is forecast to dip to 18.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2040 from 18.7 million bpd in 2016, when it represented around one fifth of total oil demand, according to BP.

Cheaper rides

BP expects autonomous vehicles to become available in the early 2020s. Their initial high cost means the vast majority of the cars will be bought by fleets offering



LONDON: Group Chief Executive of BP, Bob Dudley (C), speaks to journalists following the opening session at the International Petroleum (IP) Week 2018 conference in London yesterday. —AFP

shared mobility services. The average electric car is expected to be driven about two and a half times more than an internal combustion car, according to Dale.

"What we expect to see in the 2030s is a huge growth in shared mobility autonomous cars ... Once you don't have to pay for a driver, the cost of taking one of those share mobility fleets services will fall by about 40 or 50 percent," Dale said. The vast majority of the shared mobility is expected to be EVs because of their lower maintenance costs. Car makers including General Motors and high-tech giants such as Google Waymo and Uber Technologies have poured billions into the autonomous vehicles industry hoping gain a first-mover advantage. Robo-taxi services are seen as the main use for most self-driving vehicles.

BP sharply raised its estimate of growth in electric vehicles in the coming decades from last year's forecast that EVs would reach 100 million by 2035. The big upwards revision is due to an increase in hybrid cars and an expected sharp growth in EV purchases in the second half of the 2030s, Dale said.

Peak oil

London-based BP joined other oil companies such as Royal Dutch Shell in forecasting a peak for oil demand in the late 2030s, when it is expected to slightly decline at around 110 million bpd.

It did not foresee a peak in demand in its previous out-

looks that stretched into 2035. While the transportation sector will continue to dominate the growth in oil consumption, demand for plastic manufacturing will become the main source of growth in the 2030s. Oil companies such as BP, Shell and France's Total are betting on growing demand from the petrochemical sector in the coming decades.

Dale however said changes in regulations for plastics consumption such as stringent policies on plastic bags and packaging could dent oil demand by as much as 2 million bpd, roughly the same as the impact of EVs. Overall energy demand will continue to grow in the coming decades, rising by a third into 2040, or roughly 1.3 percent per year, driven by growth in China and India, but the world is learning to "do more with less energy" as economies become more efficient, Dale said.

For example, the European Union's gross domestic product is set to treble in 2040 from 1975 but the level of energy demand will be the same. China's energy demand will continue to grow but at a slower pace by the 2030s, when India will become the main driver of growth. BP once again revised upwards its forecast for growth in renewable power, which is set to grow by 40 percent by 2040, with its share in the energy mix increasing from 4 percent to 14 percent. The revision is due to technological gains as well as more aggressive government policies, particularly in India and China. — Reuters

Business

Kuwait Finance House goes live with ITS ETHIX-Net

Al-Kheshnam: ETHIX-Net delivers a new gen of online banking

KUWAIT: International Turnkey Systems Group (ITS), the market leading provider for comprehensive Islamic financial solutions suite, has announced the successful installation of its pioneering ETHIX-Net internet banking modules for Kuwait Finance House, Bahrain (KFHB), further enhancing the Bank's ETHIX Islamic finance platform.

ETHIX-Net is a secure internet banking application and part of ITS's ETHIX product range. The new modules enable banks to offer advanced, user friendly online banking services for both retail and corporate customers. The product is designed to be one of the core components that help Banks to transform and adapt their business in the new Digital Transformation age.

Commenting on the launch, Esam Al-Kheshnam, Chief Executive Officer of ITS, said: "KFHB have a strong track record leveraging cutting edge technology to elevate their

customers' banking experience and maintain market leadership. With this latest ETHIX online banking module, the Bank will deliver a new generation of online banking." He added: "As KFHB's long term, strategic digital partner, we look forward to further collaborations that will see the Bank pioneer the delivery of evolved banking solutions to their valued customers."

Abdulhakeem Y Al-Khayyat, Managing Director & CEO of KFHB said: "Enhancing customer experience and offering the best digital banking services is our primary objective at KFHB. ITS has a strong track record helping financial institutions leverage the latest technologies, so when the Bank decide to deliver next generation banking, they were the obvious choice. Upgrading our core platform with ITS's new ETHIX Net modules will help us achieve this objectives in the long and short run."

As a leading integrated information technology and service

solutions provider, ITS targets a wide range of industry segments to offers world-class IT solutions. The company showcases excellent technology competencies and high-end skill capabilities to meet today's dynamic market needs.

'ETHIX' is a modular banking system covering branch, international and back office activities. It includes Retail, Wholesale, Corporate, Trade Finance and other functions. It runs in more than 70 international banks in Middle East, North African, and East Asian regions, as well as the Caribbean. ETHIX is an open system that consists of multiple modules: Core Module, Central Module, Branch Module, and International Module. It is known for being secure, flexible, parameterized, multilingual, multi-branch, Real on line support for branches, and modules can be installed on a standalone mode. ETHIX represents the best process for the best performance of the customer's journey inside the branches.



Ford, Effat University help women make history in Saudi with safe-driving Course

DUBAI: Ford Motor Company is assisting Saudi Arabian women gain the power of mobility by hosting a special Driving Skills for Life program with Effat University. Calling on her fellow students to partake, Shams Hakim, Business HR student at Effat, made the announcement on YouTube yesterday, which you can view here: <https://youtu.be/JN5r8gt9qbM>.

The groundbreaking course - DSFL For Her - follows the landmark decision last year by the Kingdom, as decreed by His Highness, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, to lift the ban on females driving in Saudi Arabia. "Ford Motor Company was built on the belief that freedom of movement drives human progress, so we are honored to have the opportunity to support women in the Kingdom during such an extraordinary time, and to welcome them to the driver's seat," said Jim Vella, president, Ford Motor Company Fund. "Our DSFL For Her program provides access to training and experiences that will help women feel safe and confident as they get behind the wheel."

Based on its award-winning global safe driving initiatives, DSFL has customized an introductory program which focuses on building women's confidence behind the wheel, expanding their automotive knowledge, preparing them to take their driving lessons and instilling safe driving practices before they tackle public roads.

This will be the first-ever DSFL For Her introductory program anywhere in the world, with certified trainers providing the training on closed roads at Effat University's Jeddah campus.

The four-day DSFL For Her, held between March 5-8, will train more than 250 Effat University students, incorporating four specific modules of in-vehicle experience - Learning About Your Vehicle, Distraction, Impairment, and Braking - preceded by a briefing with the lead instructor.



Dr Haifa Jamalallail president of Effat University, said: "Effat University is well known for its innovative education, driving women forward to take their rightful places in society and the workforce. We are proud to be able to partner with Ford to ensure that our students are also prepared to become responsible, safe drivers. We believe in driving change, but driving safely, and this is exactly what the Safe Driving Skills for Life program is all about."

Driving Skills for Life is an international initiative for road safety created by Ford Fund in cooperation with the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and a panel of safety experts. Ford's signature award-winning program captures newly-licensed drivers' interest with free, hands-on ride-and-drive courses that pair new drivers with professional driving instructors and focus on the issues and obstacles that cause crashes, including impaired and distracted driving.

Now in its 15th year, Ford Driving Skills for Life has provided free training to more than one million newly-licensed drivers in more than 40 countries worldwide. In total, Ford has invested more than \$40 million in DSFL initiatives worldwide as part of its long-standing commitment to promoting safety on the road. Since its Middle East launch in 2013, more than 3,600 students have participated in Ford's Driving Skills for Life program, with sessions in three different cities across Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last year alone.

The new DSFL For Her installment will be an on-going program for women drivers in the Kingdom, with phase two coming later this year.



Eurozone yields up as ECB speculation mounts

LONDON: Eurozone government bond yields edged higher across the board yesterday as market speculation swirled over the next European Central Bank chief at a time when monetary policy is the main threat for bond markets. Eurozone finance ministers on Monday chose Spanish Economy Minister Luis de Guindos to succeed ECB Vice President Vitor Constancio in May, a move seen boosting the chances of someone from one of the "core" euro zone countries becoming head of the ECB next year when Mario Draghi steps down.

This in turn is seen as increasing the likelihood that the central bank takes a more "hawkish" stance in the future, erring on the side of tighter policy, which is negative for European government bonds.

For example, Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann, seen as one of the candidates for the top policymaker position, has consistently argued against the ECB's 2.55 trillion euro bond-buying scheme that pushed yields to record lows in recent years. "An ECB under Weidmann would lead to a faster interest rates normalization path than would otherwise be the case," said Ricardo Garcia, an economist at UBS Wealth Management.

"Given the high sensitivity of markets to the ECB, this

should support the euro and the euro zone banking sector, while exerting upside pressure on euro zone bond yields," he said in a note.

The ECB is largely expected to end extraordinary stimulus sooner rather than later, potentially by the end of 2018, having cut the program by half at the start of the year. This has pushed bond yields sharply higher in recent weeks, but a recent sell off in stocks and oil, along with some political uncertainty in Germany, kept a lid on yields on speculation that the ECB would tread cautiously.

But yields have cautiously edged higher this week so far. The yield on Germany's 10-year government bond yield, the benchmark for the region, was up 2 bps to 0.75 percent at one stage, before settling at around 0.74 percent.

It had dipped as low as 0.699 percent at the end of last week. French government bonds mirrored that move, taking the country's 10-year borrowing costs to around 1 percent.

Speculation over inflation in the United States has also contributed to a recent rise in yields, and as the US Treasury prepares to sell over a quarter of a trillion dollars' worth of new debt this week, borrowing costs were up both sides of the Atlantic. The yield on 10-year US Treasuries were up 2.5 bps to 2.90 percent and the "transatlantic spread" over the German equivalent was at 216 bps, close to a recent high.

Also yesterday, Germany sold 3.99 billion euros of 2-year "Schatz" after orders fell just short of the maximum 5 billion euro deal size. Meanwhile, Spain attracted over 22.5 billion euros of demand for its first 30-year syndicated benchmark bond sale in nearly two years. — Reuters

Kuwait Styrene Co announces \$94m in net profit for 2017

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Styrene Company (TKSC), the first and only producer of styrene monomer in Kuwait, announced yesterday a net profit of \$94 million for the fiscal year ending in December 31, 2017.

TKSC CEO Adel Al-Munifi, stated, "TKSC maintained a strong performance in 2017 driven by an optimized worldwide sales strategy and cost-efficiency measures that enabled us to continue delivering a high-quality product to our solid customer base while performing a number of planned maintenance works at the plant to enhance and sustain competitiveness and profitability on the long-term." In 2017, the global styrene monomer (SM) market continued to recover, with average prices reaching \$1200 per metric ton.

Al-Munifi added, "The Company's continued profitability is supported by our world-class operational standards, making TKSC one of the most successful joint ventures established in Kuwait. The Company continues to add significant value to its shareholders thanks to its strong position in the global industry. On behalf of the board and management, we thank EQUATE Petrochemical Company, Kuwait Paraxylene Production Company (KPPC) and The Kuwait Olefins Company (TKOC), public institutions and customers for their continued support.

Al-Munifi concluded, "With a strong financial position and an operational strategy to increase efficiency, TKSC is set to continue its growth in 2018."

The Kuwait Styrene Company (TKSC) was established in 2004 as an international joint venture between the Kuwait Aromatics Company (KARO) and the Dow Chemical Company (Dow). TKSC is part of greater EQUATE, operated by EQUATE Petrochemical Company, which also includes Kuwait Paraxylene Production Company (KPPC) and The Kuwait Olefins Company (TKOC). The firms operate under one integrated umbrella in Kuwait.



Adel Al-Munifi

VIVA launches 'My VIVA Box' offer to celebrate 'more' this February

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched "My VIVA Box" package starting at KD 31. Customers can enjoy "My VIVA Box" as part of the February offers coinciding with the National and Liberation Days of Kuwait.

"My VIVA Box", February edition, will be the first of "My VIVA Box" series to be launched giving customers a variety of choices designed to suit their needs on different occasions. With lots of fun and festivities, "My VIVA Box" packs the right combination of choices to make the customers' celebrations 'more' entertaining and offers 3 SIM cards (voice postpaid, family shared and shared data), free router, smartphones and gaming devices.

On the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day, VIVA congratulates His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Government and the people of Kuwait.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things 'More' for its customers by transforming communication, information and entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established a pioneer position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions; a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service.



Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on 18 February 2018 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 11 February - 15 February 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

The winners are:

(Sunday 11/02): Zahrah Ali Ahmed Laftah, Shafika Mehdi Mohammed

(Monday 12/02): Saleh Mahdi Omran Al-Jumaah, Ghalaa Yousef Fereeh Al-Khouotee

(Tuesday 13/02): Alaa Ammar Ibrahim Jamal, Hadi Lafi Abdullah

(Wednesday 14/02): Mohammad Tahseen Abdulrahman Khanfar, Maryam Abdullah Sultan Al-Malki

(Thursday 15/02): Nahla Salem Faleh Al-Azmi, Shaker Abbas Hasan Al-Mutawa

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2018 draw lineup includes daily draws (two winners per working day each receive KD 1000). Al-Danah's 1st quarterly draw for the prize of KD 200,000 will be held on 28 March, the 2nd quarterly draw for the prize of KD250,000 will be held on 27 June and the 3rd Quarterly Draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January, 2019 whereby the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

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

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

Only Al-Danah makes millionaires

Al-Danah also offers a number of unique services including: The Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al-Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount must be maintained as for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 charge will be made on a monthly basis to the account until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days.

Babies born in poorest countries still face ‘alarming’ risks: UNICEF

‘The majority of these deaths are preventable’

WASHINGTON: Babies born in the world's poorest countries, most of them in Africa, still face “alarming” risks of death that can be 50 times as high as those in the richest countries, according to a UNICEF report released yesterday. While the last quarter-century has seen broad improvements in older children's health, “we have not made similar progress in ending deaths among children less than one month old,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's executive director.

“Given that the majority of these deaths are preventable, clearly we are failing the world's poorest babies.” The differences are stark. A baby born in Pakistan—the country with the worst newborn mortality rate—faced a one in 22 chance of death, while a newborn in Japan had only a one in 1,111 risk of dying, the report said.

Preventable deaths

Of the 10 highest-risk countries, eight are in sub-Saharan Africa, countries where “pregnant women are much less likely to receive assistance,” due to poverty, conflict or weak institutions, according to the report. Those eight countries are the Central African Republic (a one in 24 chance of death); Somalia, Lesotho, Guinea-Bissau and South Sudan (all with a one in 26 chance); Cote d'Ivoire (one in 27) and Mali and Chad (both with a one in 28 chance). Each year, some 2.6 million babies do not survive through their first month.

The report was released in conjunction with the launch of a global campaign, called

Every Child Alive, aimed at ensuring “affordable, quality health care solutions for every mother and newborn.” More than 80 percent of newborn deaths can be prevented, the report says, “with access to well-trained midwives, along with proven solutions like clean water, disinfectants, breast-feeding within the first hour, skin-to-skin contact and good nutrition.” But shortages of properly trained health workers and mid-



Major problem in poorer nations

wives are a major problem in poorer nations.

While a rich country like Norway has 18 doctors, nurses and midwives for every 10,000 people, impoverished Somalia has only one. Every year, one million babies die the day they are born. “We know we can save the vast majority of these babies with affordable, quality health care solutions,” Fore said.

Rwandan success story

In general, babies born in richer countries

fare far better, but there are differences within countries. Babies born to the poorest families are 40 percent more likely to die than those born to the least poor. Sadly typical was the story of Mary James, an 18-year-old from rural Malawi. When her labor started, she and her sister made the long trek to a health center on foot. When her baby was delivered, he was small and terribly weak. She says an overstretched staff did its best, but by night the child was gone.

“I felt like my heart was breaking,” James told UNICEF staff. “I had a name for the child but he never opened his eyes.” Since improvements to health care can be expensive, “it is crucial to invest the money in a smart way,” UNICEF's global maternity and newborn program chief Willibald Zeck told AFP. That can mean something as simple as ensuring that a pregnant woman who has walked three days to a health care facility is received with “dignity,” so she remains long enough to receive proper postnatal care.

But the dearth of expensive equipment matters. Zeck, who worked as an obstetrician/gynecologist in Tanzania, said women were often unsure how pregnant they were, and he would have to use his hands to estimate whether a fetus was premature or seriously underweight. Still, among countries that have made dramatic improvements is low-income Rwanda, which more than halved its rate from 1990 to 2016, illustrating that “political will to invest in strong health



YAMBIO: In this file photo taken on March 11, 2014 a midwife cuts the umbilical cord of a newborn baby in a ward of the public hospital of Yambio, in the south of South Sudan. — AFP

systems... is critical,” the report said.

Education matters, too. Babies born to mothers with no education face nearly twice the risk of early death as babies whose mothers have at least a secondary education. The United States—generally affluent, but with considerable income inequality and wide variations in access to health care—was only the 41st safest country for newborns.

The countries with the lowest newborn mortality rates, after Japan, are mostly well-off countries with strong education and health care systems: Iceland (a one in 1,000 chance of death), Singapore (one in 909), Finland (one in 833), Estonia and Slovenia (both one in 769), Cyprus (one in 714) and Belarus, Luxembourg, Norway and South Korea (all with risks of one in 667). — AFP

Light pollution threatens Chile's skies

PARANAL: It seems nothing can escape the inexorable spread of light pollution—not even the giant telescopes probing the heavens above northern Chile, a region whose pristine dark skies, long considered a paradise for astronomers, are under increasing threat. The Atacama desert, 1,200 kilometers north of the capital Santiago, provides ideal conditions where astronomers study the stars in darkness so profound they appear like diamonds on velvet.

Scientists estimate that by 2020, Chile—a critically important country for optical and radio astronomy—will host 70 percent of the globe's astronomical infrastructure. But the ever-expanding use of cheap light-emitting diode (LED) lighting in the booming South American country is starting to concern astronomers desperately trying to safeguard some of the world's darkest skies. “Unfortunately, as we have more and more white lights, the deterioration of the skies has increased by up to 30 percent compared to the end of the last decade,” said scientist Pedro Sanhueza.

Chile takes the problem of light pollution so seriously that Sanhueza heads up an organization called the Office for the Protection of Quality of the Sky (OPCC). Its main task is to make the people of northern Chile aware of the particularly high night-sky quality and the negative impacts of light pollution. Sanhueza says that though the quality is good, the sky over northern Chile is becoming “an area of



In this file photo taken on February 06, 2018 astronomers check a telescope at the Observatorio in Paranal, some 1150 km north of Santiago, Chile. — AFP

risk,” threatening the profound nocturnal darkness required for the study of phenomena such as solar flares, planetary nebulae, black holes and supernovas.

Fueling the threat, he adds, are communities such as Antofagasta, Coquimbo and La Serena, where LED lights are increasingly used in homes, streetlights, store signs and billboards. A study published in December in the journal Science Advances has shown that global lighting has increased in both quantity and intensity by about 2 percent per year from 2012 to 2016.

Urban boom

At the Paranal Observatory deep in the Atacama desert, which houses the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope array—consisting of four telescopes—staff are doing all they can to limit light leaking out into the atmosphere. After sunset, vehicles travelling around the obser-

vatory are prohibited anything but their parking lights. Flashlights, if needed, are turned to the ground.

Astronomers' residences at the base — 2,635 meters above sea level—are dimly-lit, to avoid interfering with observation of the galaxies above. But the urban boom has been an unstoppable reality for 20 years in northern Chile, where cities have felt the economic effects of the boom in copper, of which the South American country is the world's largest producer. Halos of light above towns are easily visible from observatories within a 150 kilometer radius.

“We have measured the impact of this and we have already experienced difficulties making observations at 20 degrees above the horizon. That's going to increase a lot and will prevent us from studying the furthest stars,” said Chris Smith, head of the observatory at Tololo, some 80 kilometers from the town of La Serena. — AFP

Linger over lunch in order to lose weight

PARIS: People who wolf down their food could lose weight simply by chewing longer and pausing between bites, study results suggested yesterday. Research involving nearly 60,000 Japanese people showed a link between eating slower or faster, and losing or gaining weight. “Changes in eating speed can affect changes in obesity, BMI and waist circumference,” a research duo from Japan's Kyushu University wrote in the journal BMJ Open. “Interventions aimed at reducing eating speed may be effective in preventing obesity and lowering the associated health risks.”

BMI stands for Body Mass Index, a ratio of weight-to-height used to determine whether a person falls within a healthy range. The WHO considers someone with a BMI of 25 overweight, and 30 or higher obese. In line with recommendations by the Japanese Society for the Study of Obesity, however, a BMI of 25 was taken as obese for Japanese populations for the purposes of the study.

The researchers analysed health insurance data from 59,717 individuals diagnosed with



In this file combination photo created on April 01, 2016 in Paris shows (From L) obese people in Los Angeles, Mexico City and Manchester. — AFP

Type 2 diabetes—a form of the disease that generally hits in adulthood as a result of being overweight. The participants had regular check-ups from 2008 to 2013. Data captured included their age and gender, BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure, eating habits, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use. From the outset, the slow-eating group of 4,192 had a smaller average waist circumference, a mean BMI of 22.3, and fewer obese individuals — 21.5 percent of the total.

It's not a race

By comparison, more than 44 percent of

the fast-eating group of 22,070 people, was obese, with a mean BMI of 25. The team also noted changes in eating speed over the six years, with more than half the trial group reporting an adjustment in one direction or the other. “The main results indicated that decreases in eating speeds can lead to reductions in obesity and BMI,” they found. Other factors that could help people lose weight, according to the data, included to stop snacking after dinner, and not to eat within two hours of going to bed. Skipping breakfast did not seem to have any effect. — AFP

1 in 9 people infected after gut surgery

PARIS: More than 12 percent of people who have gastrointestinal surgery become infected within 30 days of going under the knife, researchers said in a study covering 66 countries. For low-income nations, the incidence of so-called surgical site infection was double the global average, according to the results, based on data compiled by a consortium of 2,500 doctors and researchers.

In wealthy countries, the rate of post-op infection was nine percent, and for middle-income nations it was 14 percent. In addition, one in five infections were resistant to antibiotics given before surgery as a preventive measure, the study found. “This increased to one of three cases in low-income countries,” said the University of Edinburgh's Ewen Harrison, leader of the GlobalSurg Collaborative which seeks to improve patient outcomes after surgery. Overuse of antibiotics—

especially in poor countries—is thought to be an important factor in post-operative infections.

The study, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, tracked more than 12,500 surgeries in 343 hospitals from January to July 2016. Before surgery, 96 percent, 87 percent, and 88 percent of patients were given antibiotics in low-, middle- and high-income nations respectively. Levels of post-surgery antibiotic treatment were 86 percent, 80 percent, and 46 percent. Antibiotic resistance varied according to a country's income level, ranging from 17 percent in rich nations to 36 percent in developing ones.

The most common types of surgery involved the removal of the gall bladder or appendix. Half of patients had emergency surgery. Surgical-site infections tripled the odds of dying during or soon after an operation, the study found. Altogether, five percent of the operations reviewed for the study resulted in death. “The cost of a surgical site infection in terms of mortality, morbidity, health-care costs, and loss of productivity—is enormous,” Robert Sawyer, a researcher at Western Michigan University's Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, said in a comment. — AFP

Superbug typhoid strain behind Pakistan outbreak

LONDON: An outbreak of typhoid fever in Pakistan is being caused by an extensively drug resistant “superbug” strain, a sign that treatment options for the bacterial disease are running out, scientists said yesterday. Researchers from Britain's Wellcome Sanger Institute who analysed the genetics of the typhoid strain found it had mutated and acquired an extra piece of DNA to become resistant to multiple antibiotics. An outbreak of drug-resistant typhoid that began in Hyderabad in Pakistan in November 2016 is still spreading, according to experts from Aga Khan University who worked with the Sanger team.

Official data on case numbers and deaths are not available, but local Pakistan media reports say health authorities detected more than 800 cases of drug-resistant typhoid in Hyderabad alone in a 10-month period between 2016 and 2017. The researcher

found the bacterial strain causing the outbreak is now resistant to five antibiotics in total, more than seen in any outbreak before.

“This is the first time we have seen an outbreak of extensively drug-resistant typhoid,” said Elizabeth Klemm, who co-led the analysis work at the Sanger Institute. “This outbreak was caused by a multidrug-resistant strain that had gone a step further and acquired an extra piece of DNA encoding additional genes for antibiotic resistance.” Typhoid is a highly contagious infection caused by the Salmonella enterica serovar Typhi bacteria. It is contracted by consuming contaminated foods or drinks and symptoms include nausea, fever, abdominal pain and pink spots on the chest. Untreated, it can be fatal.

Scientists at Aga Khan University in Pakistan anxious to find ways to tackle an ongoing outbreak there contacted the Sanger in the spring of 2017 and asked scientists there to genetically analyse samples. The team found it was being caused by a strain known as H58, which is already known to be linked to drug-resistant cases. Looking further, they found this H58 strain had gained an extra strand of bacterial DNA - a plasmid - that encoded for additional antibiotic resistance genes. The study's results were published in the scientific journal mBio. —AFP

Vampire bat’s blood-only diet a big evolutionary win: Study

It’s a miracle Dracula lived as long as he did

PARIS: At first glance, the cost-benefit ratio of a blood-only diet suggests that vampire bats—the only mammals to feed exclusively on the viscous, ruby-red elixir—flew down an evolutionary blind alley. Blood is not only teeming with bacterial and viral disease, it is also very poor in nutrients—too few carbs and vitamins, way too much salt. It’s a miracle Dracula lived as long as he did. But natural selection, according to a study published Monday, overcame these challenges and fashioned a genetic profile and intestinal ecosystem perfectly suited to a life of silent blood sucking.

“Vampire bats have an ‘extreme’ diet, in the sense that it requires many adaptations in the organism,” said lead author Lisandra Zepeda Mendoza, a biogeneticist at the University of Copenhagen and an expert on the microbiome, the community of microorganisms camped out in the digestive tract. To find out how the common vampire bat—aka *Desmodus rotundus*—engineered those changes, Mendoza and a 30-strong team of scientists sequenced its genome and microbiome.

Both, they discovered, stand apart from the 1,200 other species of bats that favor fruits, flesh, and/or insects. For starters, the genome—while typical in size—contains twice

as many so-called transposable elements, DNA fragments that can shift position. These vagabond bits of genetic code were concentrated in regions that govern the immune system and metabolism, functions that differed sharply compared to other species.

D. rotundus, for example, can assimilate or process the high levels iron and nitrogen waste found in blood. Its gut, meanwhile, hosts an impressive arsenal of protective bacteria—hundreds of which cause disease in other mammals—that produce anti-viral substances. Enter the microbiome, recently discovered to vary enormously not only from species to species, but from individual to individual within the same species (notably humans).

Generous feeders

“We wanted to look at how the genome and the gut microbiome work together to overcome the challenge” of a blood-only diet, said co-author Tom Gilbert, among a growing number of biogeneticists championing the more inclusive concept of “hologenome.” Gilbert speculated that vampire bats might have eased into pure-blood diet, starting with blood-gorged insects such as ticks and mosquitoes.



A handout photo taken on May 4, 2016 and released on February 19, 2018 by Nature shows a common vampire bat (*Desmodus rotundus*) going out for its nocturnal hunt. — AFP

“The beauty of it was that if they cracked the blood-diet code—and they did—then food became very plentiful, with not very much competition,” he said by email. “It was a big evolutionary win.” The three species of blood-drinking bats, all native to Latin America, have razor-sharp teeth that shave away hair before piercing their victims’ skin and opening the spigot.

Chemicals in the saliva prevent blood from coagulating.

The common vampire bat feed mostly on mammals, including humans, often returning night-after-night to the same animal for a meal. Recent research has shown that *D. rotundus* can recognize individual humans by their breathing sounds, much in the way we can differentiate voices. Vampire bats are also surprising generous, willing to share a (regurgitated) meal with a fellow bat that missed out, even if they are not related. — AFP

No-sweat exercise may prolong life for the elderly

PARIS: A few hours a week of light exercise—walking the dog, puttering about in the garden—lower the risk of death in older men, even if workouts are brief, researchers said yesterday. Their findings, reported in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, challenge two long-held assumptions about the benefits of physical activity for the elderly.

To improve health and reduce the risk of dying, accord-

ing to many national health authorities, workouts must be strenuous and more long-lasting. In Britain, for example, the elderly are advised to do moderate-to-intense exercise at least 150 minutes per week, divided up into segments of no less than 10 minutes. “UK and US physical activity guidelines don’t mention any benefits of light activity,” lead author Barbara Jefferis, an epidemiologist at University College London, told AFP. “When those guidelines were written there wasn’t enough evidence to make a recommendation.”

The study, which tracked 1,200 men without heart disease in their early 70s and late 80s, says such guidelines should be revised. “The results suggest that all activities—no matter how modest—are beneficial,” Jefferis said. Encouraging older adults to engage in no-sweat exercise

also appears to be more realistic. Only 16 percent of the volunteers lived up to current British exercise guidelines in sessions of at least 10 minutes. Two-thirds, however, did hit the weekly, 150-minute quota in shorter snippets of activity. The research drew on data from the British Regional Heart Study, which began in 1978 with nearly 8,000 participants aged 40 to 59 from a couple dozen towns scattered across Britain. In 2012, the 3,137 men still living underwent a physical check-up, and answered questions about their lifestyle and sleeping patterns.

Couch potatoes

The study focused on 1,181 participants who wore an accelerometer—a device that tracks the volume and intensity of physical exercise—for seven days. “The availability of

body-worn activity monitors has enabled us to investigate whether light activity is linked to longevity,” said Jefferis. The men, who averaged 78 years old, were monitored for five years, during which time 194 of them died. The study showed that each additional 30 minutes-a-day of light-intensity exercise was associated with a 17 percent reduction in the risk of death.

As expected, a half-an-hour of moderate-to-vigorous activity reduced the risk by even more — 33 percent. What counted, however, was the total time spent exercising, not how the time was divided up. The men who engaged in brief, sporadic bouts of moderately intense activity mowing the lawn, swimming, walking briskly—were as likely to avoid the grim reaper as men whose exercise time was parcelled into longer sessions.—AFP

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What's On

Ooredoo releases National Holidays song



Ooredoo Kuwait released a new song on YouTube dedicated to Kuwait on the occasion of the National Holidays. The song achieved more than 2 million views within 3 days on global social media platform YouTube. The release of the song comes to reiterate Ooredoo's commitment to taking a proactive role in sharing the joy of this auspicious occasion with the people of Kuwait.

The song, which is entitled "Devotees for a Country," is sung by a chorus of young women and men, and was written by lyricist Saad Al Musallam, composed by Fahad Al-Nasser. It features Kuwaiti singer Abdulaziz Al-Duwaihi, who appears in a traditional Kuwaiti 'samra' segment, which is a casual friendly gathering of live music-playing and song that is popular in Kuwait and the Khaleej region.

Reflecting Ooredoo's commitment to enriching youth, the song features a consortium of Ooredoo's athletic youth brand ambassadors, such as triathletes Najlaa Al-Juraivi and Abdulaziz Al-Rashed, in addition to Kuwaiti equestrian Rakan Al-Hassawi.



The song's video also features the 7th generation of the Protoges, the youth development program sponsored by Ooredoo for the second consecutive year. It is directed by Ahmed Al-Najjar.

Commenting on the release of the song and its widespread success within such a

short timeframe, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub said, "We dedicate this song to the leadership and the people of Kuwait on the happy occasions of the Liberation Day and National Day. We hope that it touches their hearts and contributes to the



festive celebratory spirit of this important occasion."

On her part, Ooredoo Kuwait's Branding Senior Manager Fatima Al-Mukhaizeem noted that the song's video blends between the traditional Kuwaiti heritage and culture with modern and trendy youth culture, to reflect

the deep-rooted love and devotion that the people from across all Kuwait's diverse society have for their country. The lyrics, likewise, are a blend of classical Arabic and Kuwaiti dialect, to reflect the same spirit of harmony between the traditional and the modern in contemporary Kuwait.

Sheraton Kuwait celebrates National & Liberation Days

On the occasion of the 57th National Day, the 27th Liberation Day, the 12 years of His Highness the Amir's reign, Sheraton Kuwait raised the banner of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait, in honor of these momentous occasions. The Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait is adorned with the Kuwaiti flag representing our high respect for this country and how thankful we are to have the opportunity to show our appreciation by engaging in the festivals on this meaningful occasions.

On the occasion of more than five



decades of the opening of the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel, which has become a real milestone of its landmarks, bringing up his track record of achievements and a prime location of successes, Fahed Abushaar expressed the pride in the role that the Sheraton Kuwait played, which extended for over 50 years as a pioneer and leader in the world of hospitality for Kuwait and its people. Abushaar

the General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait and Mounir Amer, the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait offer their most heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all the people of Kuwait and its residents.

NBK honors top performers at annual Elite awards

Human talent is at the core of National Bank of Kuwait's long term success. NBK has a proven track record of developing Kuwait's youth cadres, providing best-in-class professional development programs, workshops and training. To honor the hard work and dedication of its staff, National Bank of Kuwait recently held its annual Elite Awards ceremony at the newly opened Four Seasons hotel in Kuwait City. NBK's Elite Awards recognize and reward the bank's top performers for 2017.

NBK Consumer Banking Group staff was feted to a night of fun and entertainment, including awards and prizes for top performers, a raffle draw, dinner and a special light demonstration. Acknowledging the important role played by staff members. Senior members of the bank's Executive team attended the award ceremony including: Group Chief Executive Officer National Bank of Kuwait Isam J Al-Sager, Chief Executive Officer- Kuwait Salah Y Al-Fulaij, Deputy CEO - Kuwait, Sulaiman Barrak Al-Marzouq and Emad Al-Ablani General Manager - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait.

Chief Executive Officer- Kuwait Salah Y Al-Fulaij said: We are delighted to honor NBK's elite performers. These men and women are what make us great. They are the ones who come to the task at hand with dedication, professionalism and excellence. He added "I want to highlight some of our greatest achievements this past year. In 2017, National Bank of Kuwait recorded a solid net profit of KD 322.4 million, a growth of 9.2 percent year-on-year and Consumer Banking Group played a critical role in this achievement, "Consumer Banking is the foundation for our profits and the driver of our greatest opportunities, Al Fulaij concluded.



"Each year NBK's Consumer Banking Group organizes the Elite Awards to reward our most important asset, our staff," said, Acting General Manager of Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait Mohammed Al Othman. "It is through their professionalism, commitment and continued development that NBK continues to provide its customers with the highest and best-in-class customer service."

"NBK is known as the bank of human tal-

ent development in Kuwait. We devote a great deal of time, effort and resources to ensure that our staff is given relevant professional training opportunities, workshops, and educational opportunities with things like the NBK Academy, the High Fliers program and the "NBK Shabab Training Program"," said Emad Al-Ablani General Manager - Group Human Resources, National Bank of Kuwait.

Employees took home top awards across all divisions in Consumer Banking Group such as: Domestic Branches, Direct Sales, Call Center, and Most Collaborative Back-Office Units. NBK offers a range of professional development and training programs as a regular part of its human resources policy including courses on banking practices, change management, leadership and other soft and hard skills. NBK also implements an MVP (Most Valuable Player) award initiative aimed at encouraging employee engagement, contribution, loyalty and achievement. NBK also strives to develop lasting, long term employee relationships that reinforce positive behavior and teamwork, thus reducing turnover and employee dissatisfaction.

Symphony Style Hotel is the primary destination for National celebrations

Kuwait National Day and Liberation Day holidays are on the horizon and Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait, the jewel of Kuwait City welcomes you to enjoy an exceptional stay during these days. Located on the shores of Kuwait Bay, the hotel is the prime spot in the city to watch the festivities unfold. Bask in the celebratory atmosphere as the parades pass along Arabian Gulf Street which can be spotted from all the hotel's rooms and suites.

Enhance your experience with the contemporary dining in one of the refined restaurants. You can choose to dine at Cucina restaurants were the chefs excel with the dishes they prepare for the breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets. If you are more selective and favor ala carte menus, Luna Tuscan restaurant on the 18th floor of the hotel can be your choice. You can also enjoy your moments by indulging into a unique shopping experience at Symphony Mall connected to the hotel.

Six Senses Spa located in the hotel's 2nd floor, is your destination for ultimate relaxation during your stay. This renowned spa offers unique and locally inspired body treatments, signature facials and the traditional Hammam which allows you to get a journey of full pampering and rejuvenating. Younger guests have their own exclusive space to escape with the popular Symphony Kids Club, which offers a 500 sq multipurpose activity room, a dedicated cinema, library, dining and sleeping areas, all under the watchful eye of highly-qualified staff.

Symphony Style's commitment to guaranteeing a unique experience for all of its guests includes catering to older children with Teens Hub, a dynamic entertainment zone exclusively for teenage boys and girls from 10-14 years old. Visitors to the Teens Hub can indulge in the latest video games for Wii and PlayStation and the Interactive Magic Motion virtual reality experience.



PBL symposium at ACK

The Center for Project Based Learning at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) is organizing its third annual "Project Based Learning (PBL) Symposium" under the theme "PBL - Motivation and Creativity in the Classroom" on Thursday, March 22nd, 2018. Supported by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and set to be held at ACK's campus in

West Mishref, the symposium will bring together educators of various fields to share expectations, learning techniques and experiences that influence and shape the learning process of the next generation of professionals. With keynote speeches from Prof Alex Stojcevski, Dean of the School of Software & Electrical Engineering at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia, and Prof Xiangyun Du, Professor at Aalborg University UNESCO Center for Problem and Project Based Learning, Denmark and two internationally recognized experts for Project Based Learning will share their insights.



TV

AM MOVIES ACTION

02:00 Armageddon America
03:35 Somnus
05:00 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
07:20 Bloodsport
08:55 I Am Number Four
10:50 Kingsglave: Final Fantasy XV
12:50 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
15:10 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation
17:25 Savage Dog
19:05 Iron Man
21:15 Heat



00:50 Lone Star Law
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Cats 101
03:35 Dark Days In Monkey City
04:00 Dark Days In Monkey City
04:25 From WAGs To Riches
05:15 My Fat Pet
06:02 Wildest India
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Meet The Sloths
08:00 Meet The Sloths
08:25 Dark Days In Monkey City
08:50 Dark Days In Monkey City
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Cats 101
11:05 Wildest India
12:00 Dark Days In Monkey City
12:28 Dark Days In Monkey City
12:55 From WAGs To Riches
13:50 My Fat Pet
14:45 Cats 101
15:40 Wildest India
16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 Tanked: On Call
19:20 The Pool Master
20:15 Cats 101
21:10 Dark Days In Monkey City
21:38 Dark Days In Monkey City
22:05 Tanked: On Call
23:00 The Pool Master
23:55 Bahama Blue



00:25 Stella
01:15 The Coroner
02:00 The Moonstone
02:50 Silent Witness
03:45 Stella
04:30 Doctors
05:05 Holby City
06:00 Holby City
06:55 The Moonstone
07:45 Stella
08:35 Doctors
09:05 Holby City
10:00 Holby City
11:00 The Coroner
11:50 The Moonstone
12:40 Stella
13:30 Holby City
14:25 Holby City
15:20 The Coroner
16:10 The Moonstone
17:10 Stella
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Eastenders
19:00 The Coroner
20:00 Stella
20:45 The Durrells
21:35 The Coroner
22:25 Doctors
22:55 Eastenders
23:25 Stella



00:00 The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
01:00 Evil Up Close
02:00 Evil Up Close
03:00 The First 48
04:00 The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
05:00 Evil Up Close
06:00 Evil Up Close
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:30 It Takes A Killer
08:00 The First 48
09:00 Escaping Polygamy: After The Escape
10:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
11:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
15:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
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 Britain's Biggest Heists
23:00 Escaping Evil: My Life In A Cult



00:05 Nightcap
00:30 Broad City
00:55 Broad City
01:20 Chris Ramsey Stand Up
Central
01:45 Tosh.O
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.O
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
04:15 Kroll Show
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 Brotherhood
05:30 Impractical Jokers
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:50 Punk'd (Bet)
07:15 Punk'd (Bet)
07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Kroll Show
09:45 Key And Peele
10:10 Brotherhood
10:35 The Jim Gaffigan Show
11:00 Impractical Jokers
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:15 Impractical Jokers
12:40 The Dude Perfect Show
13:05 The Dude Perfect Show
13:30 Brotherhood
13:55 Friends
14:20 Friends
14:45 Workaholics
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Kroll Show
16:00 Comedy Central Presents Comedy Jazwafel
16:30 Ridiculousness Arabia
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends

17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35 Lip Sync Battle UK
19:00 Lip Sync Battle UK
19:25 Impractical Jokers
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Teachers
22:25 Tosh.O
22:50 Tosh.O
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 Now That's Funny
02:10 Now That's Funny
03:00 Out Of Egypt
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
09:05 Destroyed In Seconds
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Out Of Egypt
11:10 The Know It All Guide To...
11:35 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
12:00 Invent It Rich
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Destroyed In Seconds
14:05 Destroyed In Seconds
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Out Of Egypt
17:00 The Know It All Guide To...
17:25 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
17:50 Invent It Rich
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 The Know It All Guide To...
21:35 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
22:00 Invent It Rich
22:50 Out Of Egypt
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 Kiss Of Death
01:45 How (Not) To Kill Your Husband
02:40 Marked For Murder: People Magazine Investigates
03:35 Murder Online
04:30 Kiss Of Death
05:25 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
05:50 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Evil Online
08:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
08:25 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:15 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
09:40 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
10:10 Evil Online
11:05 Suspicion
12:00 Fatal Encounters
12:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Evil Online
15:40 Suspicion
16:35 The Perfect Murder
17:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
18:25 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
18:50 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Evil Online
21:10 Dead On Arrival
22:05 Married With Secrets
23:00 Kiss Of Death
23:55 Love Kills

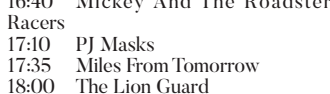


00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
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 LoloRock
10:50 LoloRock
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 LoloRock
13:45 LoloRock
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:00 The Zhuzzus
15:15 Jessie
15:40 Bunk'd
16:05 Tangled: Short Cuts
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 LoloRock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 Calimero
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 P-King Duckling
08:25 Jungle Junction
08:40 Special Agent Oso
09:00 Handy Manny
09:15 PJ Masks
09:30 Puppy Dog Pals
10:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:55 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
17:10 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
23:10 Puppy Dog Pals



00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Diesel Brothers
01:50 Gear Dogs
02:35 Jesse James Outlaw Garage
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Backroad Bounty
07:35 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
08:20 Backroad Bounty
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Diesel Brothers
10:45 Gear Dogs
11:30 Jesse James Outlaw Garage
12:20 Backroad Bounty
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Diesel Brothers
16:15 Gear Dogs
17:05 Jesse James Outlaw Garage
17:50 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Heavy Rescue
21:50 Railroad Australia
22:40 Outback Truckers
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
08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:30 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets
13:45 Supa Strikas
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 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 Elite Force
16:25 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
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:10 WAGs Atlanta
01:00 WAGs Atlanta
01:50 Botched

02:50 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
10:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
11:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Model Squad
17:10 WAGs Atlanta
19:00 E! News
20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
21:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 Endeavour
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 The Chase
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 Endeavour
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 The Chase
11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 The Chase
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Diana And The Paparazzi
16:55 Broadchurch
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 Diana And The Paparazzi
21:55 Broadchurch
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 How 2 Win
01:00 America's Book Of Secrets
02:00 In Search Of Aliens
03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
03:40 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Breaking Mysterious
05:30 How 2 Win
06:20 America's Book Of Secrets
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Cities Of The Underworld
09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Breaking Mysterious
12:00 How 2 Win
13:00 Cities Of The Underworld
14:00 In Search Of Aliens
15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Breaking Mysterious
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
20:00 In Search Of Aliens
21:00 America's Book Of Secrets
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Modern Marvels



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers
02:50 Britain's Bloody Crown: War Of The Roses
03:40 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
04:30 Swamp People
05:15 Swamp People
06:00 Mountain Men
06:50 Forged In Fire
07:40 American Restoration
08:30 Detroit Steel
09:20 American Pickers
10:10 Ax Men
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:30 Duck Dynasty
13:55 Duck Dynasty
14:20 American Pickers
15:10 Mountain Men
16:00 Forged In Fire
16:50 Counting Cars
17:15 Car Hunters
17:40 Detroit Steel
18:30 Mountain Men
19:20 Forged In Fire
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 Counting Cars
21:25 Car Hunters
21:50 Fifth Gear
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Mountain Men



00:15 Places We Go
00:45 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
01:10 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
01:40 Places We Go
02:05 Places We Go
02:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
03:30 Testing The Menu
03:55 One Man & His Campervan
04:25 My Dubai
04:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
05:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
05:45 John Torode's Asia
06:15 Miguel's Feasts
06:40 Eat Street
07:10 Places We Go
07:35 Places We Go
08:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
09:00 Testing The Menu
09:25 One Man & His Campervan
09:55 My Dubai
10:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
10:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
11:15 John Torode's Asia
11:45 Miguel's Feasts
12:10 Eat Street
12:40 Places We Go
13:05 Places We Go
13:35 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
14:30 John Torode's Malaysian Adventure

14:55 One Man & His Campervan
15:25 My Dubai
15:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:45 John Torode's Asia
17:15 Confucius Was A Foodie
18:10 Places We Go
18:35 Places We Go
19:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
20:00 John Torode's Malaysian Adventure
20:30 One Man & His Campervan
21:00 My Dubai
21:30 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
22:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
22:25 John Torode's Asia
22:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
23:50 Places We Go



00:10 Yukon Gold
01:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:00 The Witch Doctor.
04:00 Yukon Gold
05:00 Filthy Riches
06:00 Breakthrough
07:00 Cesar Millan: The Real Story
08:00 India's Mega Kitchens
09:00 Filthy Riches
10:00 Inside
11:00 Explorer XL
12:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
13:00 Breakthrough
14:00 India's Mega Kitchens
15:00 Killing Lincoln
17:00 Dog Whisperer
18:00 Dog Whisperer
19:00 The Story Of Us With Morgan Freeman
20:00 Breakthrough
20:50 Dog Whisperer
21:40 Dog Whisperer
22:30 The Story Of Us With Morgan Freeman
23:20 India's Mega Kitchens



00:20 Cat Fight
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Grizzly Cauldron
02:50 Monster Fish
03:45 Python Hunters
04:40 Maneater Manhunt
05:35 Grizzly Cauldron
06:30 Monster Fish
07:25 Python Hunters
08:20 Maneater Manhunt
09:15 Africa's Deadliest (2018)
10:10 Wild Love
11:05 Ultimate Animal Countdown
12:00 Secrets Of The Giant Manta Ray
12:55 Cheetah: Fatal Instinct
13:50 Monster Fish
14:45 Snakes In The City
15:40 World's Deadliest Animal Apocalypse

16:35 Africa's Deadliest (2018)
17:30 Maneater Manhunt
18:25 Ultimate Predators GPU
19:20 Snakes In The City
20:10 World's Deadliest Animal Apocalypse
21:00 Africa's Deadliest (2018)
21:50 Maneater Manhunt
02:20 Ultimate Predators GPU
23:30 Secrets Of The Giant Manta Ray



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 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:36 The Loud House
13:00 Rabbids Invasion
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 Henry Danger
18:36 Rabbids Invasion
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Regal Academy
20:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Sanjay And Craig
21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

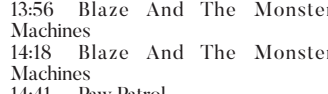


00:15 K-9
03:05 There's Always Woodstock
04:45 SuperBob
06:10 Impropmtu
08:00 Yoga Hosers
09:40 Tyler Perry's Boo: A Madea Halloween
11:35 SuperBob
13:05 Yoga Hosers
14:40 Hearts Of Spring
16:20 Double Take
18:05 Leap Of Faith
20:00 The Longest Yard
22:00 Jackass 3.5
23:30 Scorned



00:30 Slack Bay
02:35 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete

04:50 Sunny Day
05:13 Nella The Princess Knight
05:35 Shimmer And Shine
05:58 Wallykazam!
06:21 Zack & Quack
06:31 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
08:16 Kid-E-Cats
08:21 Bubble Guppies
08:45 Blaze And The Monster Machines
09:07 Paw Patrol
09:18 Paw Patrol
09:29 Shimmer And Shine
09:52 Nella The Princess Knight
10:15 The Day Henry Met
10:21 Paw Patrol
10:43 Rusty Rivets
11:07 Wallykazam!
11:30 Bubble Guppies
11:53 Team Umizoomi
12:16 Kid-E-Cats
12:21 Shimmer And Shine
12:44 Sunny Day
13:06 Max & Ruby
13:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:39 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:50 The Day Henry Met
13:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:41 Paw Patrol
14:53 Kid-E-Cats
14:57 Kid-E-Cats
15:03 Shimmer And Shine
15:25 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
17:14 Nella The Princess Knight
17:36 Shimmer And Shine
17:59 Wallykazam!
18:21 Zack & Quack
18:32 The Day Henry Met
18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines



19:00 Rusty Rivets
19:13 Paw Patrol
19:25 Paw Patrol
19:37 Dora The Explorer
20:00 Nella The Princess Knight
20:12 Kid-E-Cats
20:16 Kid-E-Cats
20:22 Bubble Guppies
20:45 Blaze And The Monster Machines
21:07 Paw Patrol
21:19 Paw Patrol
21:30 Shimmer And Shine
21:53 Nella The Princess Knight
22:15 The Day Henry Met
22:21 Paw Patrol
22:43 Rusty Rivets
23:07 Wallykazam!
23:30 Bubble Guppies
23:53 Team Umizoomi



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 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
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 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
09:50 Speechless
10:15 The Carmichael Show
10:40 Malcolm In The Middle
11:05 Gary Unmarried
11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:20 Making History
12:45 Baby Daddy
13:10 The Drew Carey Show
13:35 The Drew Carey Show
14:00 The Middle
14:25 The Middle
14:50 Malcolm In The Middle
15:15 Speechless
15:40 The Carmichael Show
16:05 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
17:00 Powerless
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 Modern Family
20:30 Will And Grace 2017
21:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:00 Future Man
22:35 Future Man
23:05 The Detour
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:25 The Dog Lover
02:10 Santa Claus
03:40 The Little Rascals
05:05 Christmas Trade
06:50 The Dog Lover
08:35 Santa Claus
10:05 The Secret Life Of Pets
11:35 The Little Rascals
13:00 Chilly Christmas
14:30 Pet Pals In Windland
15:55 The Angry Birds Movie
17:35 The Borrowers
19:05 Shelby: The Dog Who Saved Christmas
20:40 Chilly Christmas
22:10 Pet Pals In Windland
23:35 The Borrowers



01:15 K-9
03:05 There's Always Woodstock
04:45 SuperBob
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20:00 The Longest Yard
22:00 Jackass 3.5
23:30 Scorned



00:30 Slack Bay
02:35 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete

04:20 We Are Many
06:10 Newsies: The Broadway Musical
08:25 One True Thing
10:35 We Are Many
12:25 The Last 100 Days Of Diana
13:55 The Last King
15:15 Noble
17:15 The Quiet Hour
19:05 Charlotte's Song
22:20 Martha Marcy May Marlene



00:10 Simba The King Lion
02:15 Moomins And The Comet Chase
03:40 Beyond Beyond
05:05 Pacific Pirates
06:35 Louis & Luca And The Snow Machine
08:00 Felix All Around The World
09:30 Mia And The Migoo
11:05 Rha+ The Vampire Of Seville
12:30 Free Birds
13:55 Beyond Beyond
15:20 Pacific Pirates
16:50 Freddy Frogface
18:20 Rha+ The Vampire Of Seville
19:45 The Happy Cricket And The Giant Bugs
21:15 Emilie Jolie
22:35 Freddy Frogface

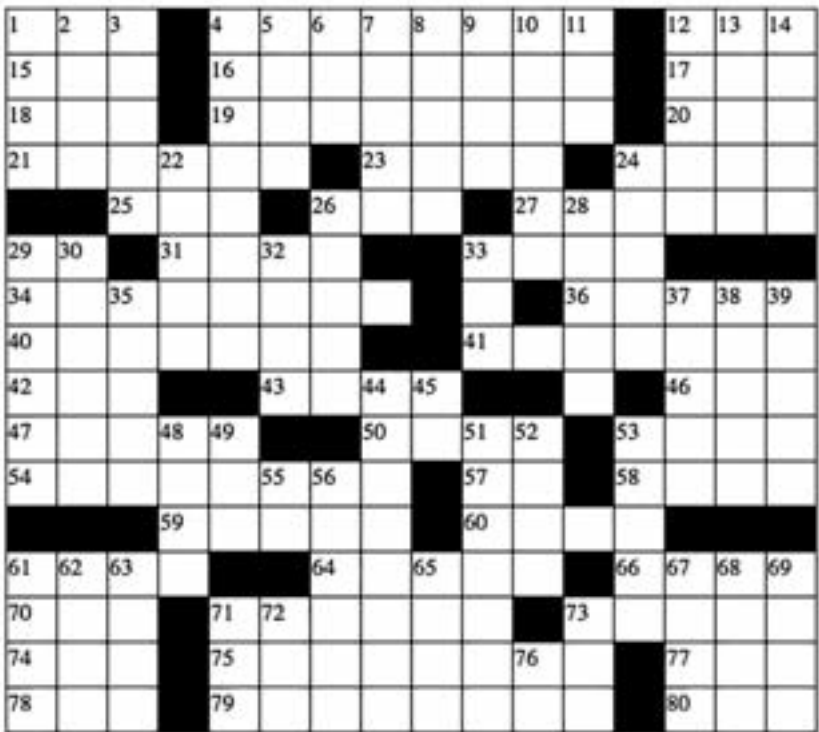


01:30 Natural Born Killers
03:45 Mr. Deeds
05:35 LA Bamba
07:35 Max
09:45 Rocky III
11:40 Loch Ness
13:35 The Portrait Of A Lady
16:05 Ride Along 2
18:00 The Break-Up
20:00 Hell Or High Water
22:00 Training Day



00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 X-Ray Mega Airport
03:10 Uncovering Aliens
04:00 Superhuman Showdown
04:48 Mythbusters
05:36 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Food Factory
06:24 X-Ray Mega Airport
07:12 Uncovering Aliens
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 Superhuman Showdown
09:14 Mythbusters
10:02 Uncovering Aliens
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 Food Factory
11:38 X-Ray Mega Airport
12:26 Superhuman Showdown
13:14 Mythbusters
14:02 How Do They Do It?
14:26 Food Factory
14:50 Uncovering Aliens
15:38 Superhuman Showdown
16:26 X-Ray Mega Airport
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 Uncovering Aliens
1

CROSSWORD 1841



ACROSS

1. Being six more than fifty.
4. Any plant of the genus Caragana having even-pinnate leaves and mostly yellow flowers followed by seeds in a linear pod.
12. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
15. An association of countries in the western hemisphere.
16. Germanic barbarian leader who ended the western Roman Empire in 476 and became the first barbarian ruler of Italy (434-493).
17. Gone by.
18. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
19. (chemistry) A substance that initiates or accelerates a chemical reaction without itself being affected.
20. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
21. Microscopic unicellular marine or freshwater colonial alga having cell walls impregnated with silica.
23. Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
25. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
27. An employee who mixes and serves alcoholic drinks at a bar.
29. A public promotion of some product or service.
31. A man who is a stupid fool.
34. Winner of a Nobel Prize.
36. The vertical triangular wall between the sloping ends of gable roof.
40. A dehydrogenated analogue of cortisol (trade names Orasone or Deltasone or Liquid Pred or Meticorten).
41. A shoe without a tongue and with decorative lacing up the instep.
42. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
43. A strip of land projecting into a body of water.
46. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
47. Large antelope with lightly spiraled horns of desert regions of North Africa.
50. A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
54. Former name for the order Crocodylia.
57. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
58. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
59. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
60. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
61. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
66. A long thin piece of cloth or paper as used for binding or fastening.
70. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
74. (informal) 'johnny' was applied as a nickname for Confederate soldiers by the Federal soldiers in the American Civil War.
75. Breathing in.
77. The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.
78. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
79. An ancient maritime country (a collec-

tion of city states) at eastern end of the Mediterranean.
80. How long something has existed.

DOWN

1. Weight to be borne or conveyed.
2. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir and avenger of Balder.
3. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
4. A valuable timber tree of tropical South America.
5. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
6. Decay usually accompanied by an offensive odor.
7. A genus of Indriidae.
8. A mountain peak in the Andes in Argentina (21,654 feet high).
9. Any group or radical of the form RCO- where R is an organic group.
10. A battle in 1645 that settled the outcome of the first English Civil War as the Parliamentarians won a major victory over the Royalists.
11. The products of human creativity.
12. A woman of refinement.
13. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
14. United States songwriter and playwright famous for his patriotic songs (1878-1942).
22. Wasting of the body during a chronic disease.
24. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
26. A minor Hebrew prophet (8th century BC).
28. (medicine) Chilly.
30. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Reticulum and Pictor.
32. A bluish-white lustrous metallic element.
33. Hormone produced early in pregnancy by the placenta.
35. (Norse mythology) God of light and peace and noted for his beauty and sweet nature.
37. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
38. A fabric woven with lisle thread.
39. Suggestive of the supernatural.
44. (British) A disparaging term for an appointee.
45. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
48. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
49. Being one more than ninety.
51. Relating to or caused by or afflicted with sciatica.
52. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
53. The event of dying or departure from life.
55. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
56. Flightless New Zealand birds similar to gallinules.
62. In bed.
63. A small cake leavened with yeast.
65. An island in Indonesia east of Java.
67. A sensation (as of a cold breeze or bright light) that precedes the onset of certain disorders such as a migraine attack or epileptic seizure.
68. Capital and largest city of the Czech Republic.
69. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
71. The extreme end of something.
72. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrazid) used to treat tuberculosis.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
76. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, if choices can be put off, you should and wait until a better time opens for making decisions. You receive an invitation to join someone after work; think about this one very carefully. Everywhere you look you seem to encounter blockages or cut-offs. You aren't comfortable in your own skin and there seems to be no escaping it; let meditation take you to a more peaceful place. Music is an important part of your life, especially now when you need it so much. You detest need and as a result you work very hard to accumulate financial wealth and real estate. You may find yourself in a library or book store in search of good fiction. You could have a problem keeping your cool this evening when confronted with the truth, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, it's best that you keep your thoughts and suggestions to yourself as you could experience problems getting others to understand. Working with groups is not advisable today but could open up for you tomorrow. Make a point to get your affairs in order during this phase: the energy of getting business taken care of is strongly present. You make a decision regarding a serious situation. Peace of mind is bestowed when you come to a correct conclusion: living life in a new way is empowering. Your way of thinking is required for finishing a certain project. Even though you feel like being alone, joining in the fun should be a mood lifter; go in and try! Now is the time for material acquisitions... Prosperity is coming to you through hard work, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, depression seems to be a thing of the past; you're surrounded by peaceful, positive vibrations even when perhaps you don't want to be. Relax and let these good times just be and don't worry about tomorrow. Your path is set and the way you live and learn is pretty much established; this is a time of feeling secure and cared for. Music is important as you work and discover ways to increase your income and acquiring some important items. You feel certain you have enough in place regarding planning for your future needs. Your ability to make things happen and see them through is strong. Things seem to magically fall into place as you start a new adventure. Happy times ahead with those who just happen to think like you do, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, awareness of possessions and what these are worth is top of mind for you now. You have entered a phase of material gains, investments and earnings; things unseen are also affected by this energy. A sense of being in a good, secure place is the hallmark of this period of time: sometimes life just seems to flow more smoothly and feels easier to navigate, here's one of those times. There could be dancing with someone you share strong, sexy chemistry. Your focus is one of productive activity; this includes progress made on any level of your life such as material, mental or emotional expansion. Memories linger around your childhood experiences with those you grew up with: an intense sense of sadness could accompany this tender time, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, someone dislikes what you have to say regarding their personal choices. You're considered to be negative and old-school; stand your ground but with an open mind. Strong emotional energy is available but manageable if you concentrate; you figure out the best way in the end. The foundation of your life is secure and comfortable in the form of home and hearth, domestic bliss; this is the prize jewel in your intimate, personal life. You stumble upon a happy musical surprise in an unexpected place. You acquire belongings such as furnishings, appliances, clothing and perhaps even a vehicle. Abundance is available in many areas of your life now; remember where you came from and be generous with those who have much less than you, generous Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, words are your friends as your mind is quick and alert; if you are an attorney you have a better than average day in court! You relay your opinions from your specific view point in an understandable manner. The vibrations indicate that you should stay away from shopping or making choices involving colors or designs; this is temporary, be patient. You enjoy a sense of being cared for and secure on an intimate level. Material gains are strongly present and you feel thankful to be free from want. You no longer choose to use old methods you feel could be improved upon; if someone complains ignore them. Someone could try to put pressure on you to do something you really don't want to do; remember saying no is always an option, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you shine brightly in business as some of the research and production you have created is a large success. The time to enjoy the results of your hard work has arrived and you should take pride and joy in every moment. Your career is at the top and brings great satisfaction to you personally. There could be someone near who's a bit envious, but this is temporary as the person loves and cares for you. Teamwork is appealing when you accept a project that takes lots of effort and skill. Someone challenges you in a good-natured way but there could be a seed of truth here; a new way to do something could be discovered. Your drive and determination take you a long way toward completion of paying off a loan or reaching salary or savings goals, Libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you could be down and upset about something you regret; regrets are the very best way to learn. Hold off on making choices or decisions where your personal life is concerned. Maintaining your focus upon home or office improvements helps lift your spirits and you feel productive. You receive an invitation to a uniquely themed party; someone you like is a huge help with your costume. A community issue needs your help in cutting through the red tape and getting directly to the problem; something related to natural beauty is indicated here. You're able to sneak away early today for a secret meeting about a surprise party for a loved one. Thoughts clear as you wind down with a great meal and movie with someone you love and enjoy, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, surprising progress at work encourages you to aim higher; a period of gains and abundance is prominent. You may be doing more on your own to reach your personal and professional goals. Don't forget your friends on the way to success; you're loved more than you know. Home and work demand your attention more now than ever before: a period of rapid change has arrived and brings an energy of movement that could take you to places you hadn't planned on. Love and affection keep you grounded and feeling secure with your life and those sharing it. Spending time with a new friend helps you understand something confusing; new connections and directions take you in interesting directions that help you grow, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you're sensitive to the feelings of those you spend time with today; a friend needs your strong energy. The group looks to you for leadership when a new situation arises. You could experience a confrontation from someone who regularly disagrees with you and your methods. Any blockages you experience today are of very short duration. As you speak, several people cut you off and make it impossible for you to finish; these people don't mean to do this, they're just thoughtless and rude. Fight the pessimism you feel creeping up; you know you can fight it and win! A sense of balance and peace characterizes your day; you smile as you feel grateful for your blessings. An opportunity to assist with a surprise comes tonight, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, working smarter not harder is strongly indicated. Your goal is to expedite and simplify. Traditional ways seem complicated when the team looks at new ways to reach goals. Insisting on change could disrupt the old guard; this could cause serious disagreements. Your one of a kind way is encouraged by open-minded people. Your patient observance unravels a problematic situation. Normalcy and security provide comfort and encouragement regarding your home life. A discussion with a colleague or friend uncovers facts that make sense; your logic kicks in. You feel badly for someone who has fallen on hard times. The stars are aligned to create an energy of being ready and contemplating! Rest well and have sweet dreams, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, friends ask for your assistance in a major project that could require weeks to complete. The realm of dreams and cosmic laws will continue to be an interest you can't resist; there are reasons for every occurrence, no matter how baffling. Put your designs on paper before you forget them; you'll have clear visions of something that could help many. You're determined to add a splash to your decor; you look in very different places and find just the thing! You may have the urge to examine your thoughts and motives; trust your heart and intuition, you are loved. You truly enjoy seeing a former coworker or perhaps this indicates a former student. No matter, you're held in high esteem and affection by most people you have worked with in any way, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Nursing Home 3

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 40 letters spell an Albert Einstein quotation.

Wordsearch grid with words hidden. Words to find: AGED, ALZHEIMERS, ATTENDANTS, BATHTUB, BEDROOM, BINGO, BREAKFAST, CARDS, CHAIRS, CHRONIC, DEPRESSION, DOWING, ELDERLY, ENEMA, EXERCISES, FALSE TEETH, FAMILY, FATHERS, FOOD, FRACTURE, GAMES, GARDEN, GLASSES, GLUCOMETER, ICE CREAM, ILLNESS, KITCHEN, LIBRARY, LUNCH, MEDICATION, MOTHERS, MUSIC THERAPY, NAPS, NEWSPAPER, NURSES, OXYGEN TANK, PARTIES, PERSONAL CARE, PHYSICIAN, PHYSIOLOGY, PLAYING CARDS, QUIET, RAILINGS, RECREATION, REPORTING, RESTRAINT, ROOMS, SAFETY, SHAMPOO, SHOTS, SHOWERING, STETHOSCOPE, SYRINGES, TOOTHBRUSH, CRAFTS, HOLIDAY EVENTS, INSULIN SHOT, PATIENTS, SLEEP, WALKER, WASH HAIR, WOUND CARE.

Daily SuDoku

		9			3		5
7			3		2		
		2	7		6	9	
8				2			
	4					2	
			1				4
	2	6			5	7	
		4		1			9
1		7			4		

Yesterday's Solution

Nursing Home 2

Wordsearch grid with words hidden. Words to find: ADMISSION, ASSIST, BEDPAN, BEDTIME, BOOKS, CALL BELL, CARD GAMES, CHARTING, CRAFTS, CEMENTA, DIABETES, DRYER, DISABILITY, DOCTOR, ELEVATOR, ENTERTAINMENT, EYEGLASSES, GERIATRIC, HEALTH, HOLIDAY EVENTS, INSULIN SHOT, LAXATIVES, LOCKDOWN, LOTION, LOUNGE, PILLS, PODIATRIST, MECHANICAL LIFT, RECLINER, RECREATION ROOM, HENDRY, NURSING, ROOMMATE, SEAGATIVES, SHOWER, SINGING, SLEEP, SNACK CART, SOAP, SOCIALIZE, STAFF, SUPPOSITORY, SYRINGE, THERMOMETER, TUBE FEED, VIRUS, VISITOR, WANDER ALARM, WASH HANDS.

The hidden message is: LIFE'S TRAGEDY IS THAT WE GET OLD TOO SOON AND WISE TOO LATE

Yesterday's Solution

6	7	8	4	9	5	1	2	3
1	2	4	7	3	6	5	9	8
5	3	9	2	1	8	7	4	6
7	5	2	1	8	4	3	6	9
8	4	6	9	5	3	2	7	1
9	1	3	6	2	7	4	8	5
3	6	7	8	4	1	9	5	2
4	9	5	3	6	2	8	1	7
2	8	1	5	7	9	6	3	4


T	A	B		A	V	I	O	N	I	C	S		M	Y	A	
A	R	A		M	I	C	R	O	D	O	T		A	E	C	
L	E	A	S	E	D		C	R	A	N	E		H	A	M	
C	A	L	A	B	A		A	M		T	A	K	A	H	E	
			T	A	R	O			G	A	M	I	N			
A	L	S	O			K	A	D	A	I		G		B	B	
M	A	A	R			C	A	R	E	E	N		A	N	O	A
O	B	I	I	S	M		A	B	A			C	L	A	N	G
E	L	L		H		M	B	A		P	A	I	N	E	D	
B	A	O	B	A	B			S	C	A	M		U	T	A	
A	B	R	A	H	A	M		E		R	A	I	S	E	D	
			N		B	A	D		S	N	I	P				
P	A	S	C	H	A			C	O	A	L	E	S	C	E	
I	D	A	H	O		A	I	O	L	I		C	A	L	I	
L	A	N		P	E	D	I	C	A	B		A	G	A	R	
E	D	D		I	N	D	I	A	N	A		C	O	D	A	

Wednesday, February 21, 2018



BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div> <div>SFC. CHART</div> <div>20/02/2018 0000 UTC</div>  </div>	
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	16 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	09 °C		
ABDALY	22 °C	09 °C		
BUBYAN	21 °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	23 °C	11 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	13 °C		
SALMIYAH	21 °C	16 °C		
AHMADI	22 °C	16 °C		
NUWAISIB	24 °C	11 °C		
WAFRA	24 °C	08 °C		
SALMY	20 °C	09 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	02/21	Warm and Partly cloudy	22 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	02/22	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for fog forming at	25 °C	14 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 38 km/h
Friday	02/23	Partly cloudy	25 °C	11 °C	SE-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Saturday	02/24	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be flurries at times	23 °C	12 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
Fajr	05:04	MAX. Temp.	25 °C
Sunrise	06:23	MIN. Temp.	12 °C
Zuhr	12:02	MAX. RH	48 %
Asr	15:15	MIN. RH	21 %
Sunset	17:41	MAX. Wind	W 46 km/h
Isha	18:58	TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm



Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 21/2/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 21/2/2018											
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	692	Muscat	14:15	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	QTR	1078	Doha	14:20	AIR	528	Asyut	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	JZR	528	Asyut	00:15	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	412	Bangkok	14:35	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	MSC	406	Sohag	00:30	JZR	124	Bahrain	14:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:55	MSC	412	Asyut	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:05
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	683	Madinah	15:05	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	JZR	504	Luxor	01:30	QTR	8512	Doha	15:25
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:10	JZR	142	Doha	01:45	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	562	Amman	15:30	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	JZR	787	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:45
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	QTR	1072	Doha	15:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
FEG	931	Alexandria	03:15	KAC	118	New York	16:00	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55	PAL	669	Manila	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	535	Cairo	16:00	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:00	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
KAC	796	Madinah	03:50	SVA	504	Madinah	16:00	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	WAN	436	Al Najaf	16:10	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	779	Jeddah	16:25	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	FDK	802	Damascus	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	KAC	522	Al Najaf	16:45	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	RJA	640	Amman	16:55	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	KAC	542	Cairo	17:05	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	WAN	954	Baku	17:15	LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	QTR	1091	Doha	05:05	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	KAC	205	Islamabad	05:20	KAC	361	Colombo	17:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:40	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45	SYR	342	Damascus	18:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	FDB	063	Dubai	18:10	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:15	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	JZR	177	Dubai	18:15	JZR	786	Riyadh	06:25	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50	JZR	538	Cairo	18:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	QTR	1080	Doha	18:50	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	KAC	744	Dammam	19:10	RJA	645	Amman	07:05	JZR	184	Dubai	18:30
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	KAC	167	Paris	07:35	WAN	115	Bahrain	18:50
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00	KAC	381	Delhi	18:50
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00	FDB	064	Dubai	19:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	674	Dubai	19:45	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:10	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:20
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	KAC	057	Dubai	19:50	KAC	165	Rome	08:15	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:55	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KNE	381	Taif	20:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40	QTR	1081	Doha	20:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	KAC	166	Rome	20:10	BAW	156	London	08:55	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	KAC	117	New York	09:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
IRC	6552	ABD	09:50	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	JZR	534	Cairo	09:10	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KIS	6032	Mashhad	10:00	KAC	512	Mashhad	20:40	KAC	561	Amman	09:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:45	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	NIA	162	Cairo	20:40
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:50
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	WAN	136	Doha	21:15	KAC	101	London	09:45	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	ETD	9882	SGN	09:50	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	KAC	1543	Cairo	21:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00	DLH	624	Bahrain	21:30
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	21:25	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:30	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10	KAC	411	Bangkok	22:05
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	617	Doha	10:15	KAC	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	WAN	116	Bahrain	21:50	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	798	Taif	12:45	KAC	564	Amman	22:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:05	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:40	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:35
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25	ZAV	4101	IQA	11:00	KAC	383	Delhi	22:40
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	SVA	514	Riyadh	22:30	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	KAC	445	Bahrain	22:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	JZR	241	Amman	22:40	IRA	674	Lar	11:40	KLM	460	Dubai	23:00
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:20	SVA	502	Jeddah	22:45	WAN	953	Baku	12:00	UAE	875	Madinah	23:05
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40	JZR	185	Dubai	23:10	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00	ICV	795	Hong Kong	23:10
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:15	MSC	404	Asyut	12:15	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40	QTR	1075	Doha	12:30	PIA	240	Sialkot	23:35
KAC	618	Doha	14:15	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	JZR	606	Kochi	12:45	WAN	337	Alexandria	23:45
				MSC	411	Asyut	23:55	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55				

Lifestyle | Music & Movies

New take on real-life hijack drama in ‘7 Days in Entebbe’

The counter-terrorism plot seems more far fetched than many action thrillers, yet “7 Days in Entebbe”, which premiered at the Berlin film festival Monday, depicts a real-life airline hijack drama. The movie recounts what is often called the most audacious hostage rescue mission ever staged, Israel’s 1976 “Operation Thunderbolt” in Uganda, but aims to be more than a tale of military heroism. Instead Brazilian director Jose Padilha (“Narcos”) explores the harrowing events from multiple perspectives: that of the hijackers and their hostages, and of the Israeli leaders forced to decide whether to negotiate or fight.

Several previous movies, said Padilha, had depicted “a gigantic military feat and ignored the interaction between the hostages and their hijackers and the political aspects in Israel”. Padilha, a previous Berlinale winner for “Elite Squad”, said he had met former hostages, flight crew and Israeli political and military veterans to get beyond the “standard military narrative”. The battle between Israel’s then prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and the more hawkish defence minister Shimon Peres illustrated why there is still no Middle East peace, said the director. “You see the dynamic, you realise how difficult it is for a politician in Israel to negotiate” with the enemy, Padilha said, adding that this was true on both

sides of the conflict and “still true today”.

Echoes of Holocaust

The hijacking of a Paris-bound Air France flight from Tel Aviv was a joint plot of Palestinian militants and their far-left German backers, who saw themselves as anti-imperialist revolutionaries. The militants—the two Germans are portrayed by Daniel Bruehl (“Good Bye, Lenin!”) and Rosamund Pike (“Gone Girl”) — took over the flight after an Athens stop-over. After a refuelling stop in Moamer Kadhafi’s Libya, they headed to Entebbe, Uganda, then ruled by brutal dictator Idi Amin, who is described in the film as a “lunatic” who feeds his enemies to crocodiles. The divergent motivations of the kidnappers become evident when they separate out the Israeli passengers in scenes that chillingly evoke the Holocaust.

Bruehl’s character Wilfried Boese, a book-seller who considers himself an anti-fascist urban guerilla, is portrayed as increasingly troubled. As the cracks widen, a Palestinian militant angrily tells Boese: “You are here because you hate your country. I am here because I love mine.”

‘Into his head’

The fear of a Jewish bloodbath also drives Rabin’s cabinet, where Peres puts together a plan involving 100 commandos in under-the-radar

flights who launch a surprise raid using a fake presidential limousine. On day seven, the special forces shot dead all the kidnappers and scores of Ugandan troops while rescuing all but four of the remaining 106 hostages. The only Israeli soldier killed was unit commander Yonatan Netanyahu, the elder brother of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

On their way out, the Israeli forces blew up Uganda’s fleet of Soviet MiG fighters, although the film does not depict the fiery end of the operation, instead interspersing the battle scenes with a dance choreography. The new version, based in part on testimony from flight engineer Jacques Lemoine, shows Boese deciding against massacring the Jewish passengers before he goes down in a hail of bullets.

“The hostages had got into his head,” Padilha told a press conference on the movie, which is screening out of competition, adding that this had helped to “save their own lives”. Asked whether he was ready for a “backlash” against showing “terrorists with a conscience”, the director said that, although they do “terrible, inexcusable things... terrorists are human beings”. —AFP



Brazilian director Jose Padilha, English actress Rosamund Pike and German actor Daniel Bruehl pose on the red carpet upon arrival for the premiere of the film ‘7 Days in Entebbe’ presented in competition during the 68th Berlinale film festival in Berlin. — AFP

Abused actress slams Kim Ki-duk's Berlinale defense

A South Korean actress assaulted by top director Kim Ki-duk yesterday rejected his defense at the Berlin film festival, saying it had left her “dumbfounded” and calling his invitation to the prestigious event “morally problematic”. The acclaimed South Korean director has won prizes at the Berlinale, Cannes and Venice festivals but is at the center of a #MeToo storm at this year’s Berlinale—which organizers said they wanted to spotlight misconduct in the industry—over the actress’ physical and sex abuse accusations.

Kim, 57, has been fined 5 million won (\$4,600) by South Korean prosecutors for physically assaulting her while shooting his 2013 film “Moebius”. They dropped sex abuse allegations against him for lack of evidence. In Berlin on Saturday Kim said he did not remember exactly what happened and did not agree with the ruling, but would accept responsibility. He admitted repeatedly slapping the actress on set for an “acting lesson” but said that his signature ultra-violent cinematic style did not reflect his own personality, describing himself as a “good human being”.

The actress—who refuses to be publicly identified—told AFP she was “so dumbfounded that I laughed”. “He does not even remember beating me. He said he is not a violent person,” she added. “A person who is not violent slaps a woman’s face like that and does not even remember?”



South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk poses during a photocall to present the film ‘Human, Space, Time and Human’ (Inkan, Gonkan, Sikan Grigo Inkan) in the Panorama Special section during the 68th Berlinale film festival in Berlin. — AFP

‘It is about power’

Kim told his audience in Berlin that none of the film crew had objected to his actions while making “Moebius”. The actress retorted that was the “king on his film set” where no one dared to voice opposition to his behavior. “He instinctively knew that no one would say a word.” The actress has accused Kim of forcing her into unwanted and unscripted nude and sex scenes, and has appealed against the decision by Seoul prosecutors to dismiss the sex abuse allegation for lack of evidence.

“The issue of sex violence is about power,” she told AFP. “It is not just about men versus women. It is about power. “People listen to the voices of famous, powerful victims and support them. “I’m a powerless person who risked everything in my life to speak out. I have nothing to protect me. I have no fame, no money, but that does not mean that my voice can be ignored.”

Public shaming

The Berlinale organizers have said the festival “condemns and opposes any form of violence or sexual misconduct.” The actress accused them of taking violence against women “too lightly” by inviting Kim. “If a festival that declared itself as a forum to discuss about and support #Metoo campaign made a decision like this... it is morally problematic,” she said.

Her allegations against the renowned director are a rarity in the male-dominated, tight-knit film industry in South Korea, which remains a patriarchal and conservative society despite its economic and technological advances. Women in the movie industry, both on screen or behind cameras, shy away from making public accusations against senior staffers or directors for fear of permanently damaging their careers.—AFP

Saoirse Ronan, Oscar veteran at 23, laughs off her chances

Saoirse Ronan is not like other Hollywood stars. Spread out on a sofa in a luxury Paris hotel in a “Mary Magdalene, sorry Maggie Marilyn” pyjama suit looking like a vamp from “The Great Gatsby”, she is joking about her bad skin. The sideburns of acne she has in “Lady Bird”, the acclaimed coming-of-age movie that has won her a third Oscar nomination at the age of 23, were very much her own, she laughed. “No, they were real!” she told AFP. “I had a bad skin at the time so we just didn’t cover it up.”

“Weirdly I never got bad skin as a teenager at all,” said the Irish actress, who was first nominated for an Academy Award when she was only 13 for “Atonement”. “It was only when I was 21 or 22 when I was doing loads of press that I got it. So, it was you that did it,” she laughed. Ronan is often talked about as one of the most talented actors of her generation—she won a best actress Golden Globe last month for “Lady Bird”, her “sensational” portrayal of a Sacramento teenager in the last year of high school whose lofty ambitions are often at odds with reality and her family’s precarious finances. She is also one of the most down-to-earth, seemingly unphased by having grown up in front of the camera as a child actor from the age of eight. “My Mam came away with me on every job till I was 18, and my Dad is an actor, so they understood the pitfalls.”

Puberty before the cameras

Even so, “going through puberty on screen can very easily be terrifying. You are so aware of what you look like, and to

have a lens pointed at your face,” she told AFP as she promoted “Lady Bird” in the French capital. “So you have to have the attitude that it is more important to get what you are doing right than worry whether you look pretty.” Doing good work has been Ronan’s watchword since she was very young, carefully choosing quality films rather than playing the fame game. “I was offered an action film at the same time as ‘Atonement’ (when she was 12) but I knew even then that that was not the direction I wanted to go in,” she said.

She was a more obvious choice to play an Irish immigrant in “Brooklyn”, and Ronan insisted that hooking up with indie star Greta Gerwig for her directorial debut on “Lady Bird” was also a “no-brainer”. “When you read a script where one of the introductory scenes is someone arguing with their mother and jumping out of a car it is a massive selling point.

With Greta I knew it would be smart, interesting and funny,” she said. Gerwig, who made her name both writing and starring in “Frances Ha” and “Mistress America” with director Noah Baumbach, said it was a marriage made in heaven. Even though the film is semi-autobiographical, Gerwig said she didn’t really “understand the character until (Ronan) started saying the lines... she is this flawed but amazing heroine.”

‘Momentous’ moment

And for her part, Ronan said she cried when Gerwig was nominated for an Oscar. Incredibly it was only the fifth time that a woman had been nominated for

best director. “She deserves it so much. It was a really momentous thing for the times we are in to have at least one woman nominated and completely deservedly. That means a lot to all of us,” said Ronan. In terms of empowerment, “getting to play a confident teenage girl” also mattered hugely, she said.

“It’s so rare to see a teenage girl just own it in a film — someone who just goes for it and isn’t afraid to fall on their face. There is a strength and a bravery you can catch from that person.” Ronan is acutely conscious that “Lady Bird” has already become a key cultural reference for many teenage girls. “She is quite outspoken which I am too. She is trying to find her people and her places. When I was around 18 I knew (like her that) I needed to get out and find who I was. “Like Greta and Lady Bird I wanted to go to New York. I was only there eight months but it was enough to say, ‘I’ve found myself!’” she laughed. As for finally lifting an Oscar next month at the third attempt, Ronan insists that she “hasn’t thought about winning. When you win you have to do all the press afterwards, and you don’t get a chance to have a dance. So it is also quite nice losing because you can enjoy the night.”—AFP



US-Irish actress Saoirse Ronan poses on the red carpet upon arrival at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP



Award-winning UK film on witch-hunts in Zambia hoped to curb attacks on women

An award-winning British film about witch-hunts in Zambia could play an important role in curbing violence against women if translated into local languages and distributed widely, according to human rights campaigners. The film “I Am Not A Witch” - which tells the story of an eight-year-old Zambian girl accused of being a witch - was named the most outstanding debut film on Sunday at Britain’s top film awards, the BAFTAs. Welsh-Zambian director Rungano Nyoni spent a month in a so-called “witch camp” in Ghana to research the low budget film about a girl banished from her village to stay with other women also branded as witches. Campaigners said films about often overlooked abuse of women such as female genital mutilation and child marriage - helped raise awareness about the reality of these practices and could help bust myths and false narratives spanning decades.

“Films on under reported or little known gender abuses are very important as they can bring these often hidden issues to the public’s attention and force them into the light,” said Shelby Quast, director of the charity Equality Now. “Bringing these stories to light can help survivors, civil society and communities to hold their government and duty bearers to account.”

Millions of women and girls in countries ranging from India and Pakistan to Tanzania,

Kenya and Nigeria are still branded witches - often by their relatives or neighbors - in a bid to usurp their land or inheritance, say campaigners. In many cases, victims are elderly widowed women who are humiliated, beaten, stripped and ostracized from their communities. Sometimes they are lynched.

Children are also targeted with their parents and communities misled into battering, maiming, drowning, burning and abandoning them. “In the African context, witch branding usually leads to alienation of women from the community and this denies her rights to own land or even inherit it and reduces her ability to fend for herself,” said ActionAid Kenya’s Philip Kilonzo.

“It is increasingly becoming a practice in some communities to lynch witches which leads to further violation of their rights by denying them the right to life.” Activists said it was key that films addressing these issues were seen where it mattered most. “The use of films can be limiting in challenging such forms of violence against women as films speak to the privileged in the society, yet issues such as witch branding happen in the very remote rural areas and informal settlements in urban areas,” said Makena Mwobobia, ActionAid Kenya’s Head of Policy.—Reuters

Disabled by alchohol - Van Sant brings cartoonist biopic to Berlin

It was a role Robin Williams wanted to play in honor of his friend “Superman” actor Christopher Reeve - the true story of a quadriplegic who despite his disability makes his name as a talented cartoonist. But while Williams, who committed suicide in 2014, never got the chance to play the part, his interest in cartoonist John Callahan helped bring the story to the screen, in a biopic competing for the top prize at the Berlin festival.

“Don’t Worry, He Won’t Get Far on Foot,” based on Callahan’s 1989 memoir, shows the young man partying while in thrall to alcoholism before a car accident on a drunken night out leaves him quadriplegic at age 21. It follows his career as the creator of bit-

ing cartoons that often addressed the darker side of human nature, while battling alcoholism. Director Gus Van Sant said Williams had asked him to work on adapting the memoir into a screenplay.

“He liked John Callahan’s work - he saw it in his local newspaper in San Francisco - and Christopher Reeve was a friend of his who had had an accident and he very much wanted to play a quadriplegic, partly in honor of his friend, who was a quadriplegic,” Van Sant said. The film shows Callahan at Alcoholics Anonymous, revealing how being abandoned by his mother as a child drove him to drink.—Reuters



(From left) US actor Joaquin Phoenix, US film director and screenwriter Gus Van Sant and German actor Udo Kier pose during the photo call for the film ‘Don’t Worry, He Won’t Get Far on Foot’ in competition during the 68th edition of the Berlinale film festival in Berlin yesterday. — AFP



Art work by Mona Al-Hazeem.



Art work by Suhaila AL-Atteyah.



Abdullah Al-kandri pose next to one of his paintings.



Hassan Al-Safar pose with one of his work.

Global hosts an arts gallery featuring paintings and photographs in conjunction with the National holidays



Photo shows artists with Global management.

Global Investment House ("Global" or the "Company"), a regional asset management and investment banking firm headquartered in Kuwait, with offices in major capital markets in the MENA region, hosted an arts gallery featuring paintings and photographs from 11th till 23rd of February 2018 at Global Tower, in conjunction with the National holidays. The first week of the exhibition was held in cooperation with several artists who portrayed some of the national and cultural figures and the Kuwaiti heritage in a way that expresses their artistic views. Ebtisam Al-Asfour, Suhaila AL-Atteyah, Wesal Al-Abdullaouf, Jamila Hussain, Samira Bu khamseen, Mona Al-Hazeem, Abdulrahman Al-Hamoud each had an active participation by presenting many of their paintings.

The second week featured photographs by professional photographers including Hassan Al-Safar, Ahmed Al-Safar, Sara Al-Saygh, Sara Al-Tuhaih, Mufadhal Mohammed, Abdullah Al-kandri, Abdullah Hamadah, Nasser Al-Qattan and Yaqoub Al-muhana. A

reception was held yesterday and was attended by art lovers who expressed their admiration for the works exhibited.

Nawal Mulla-Hussain, Chief Operation Officer at Global said, "The company's role in the social field is inseparable from its economic role, as its contribution to the community is a cornerstone of its business and activities. Global enjoys a strong track record in its diverse social activities targeting different segments of society."

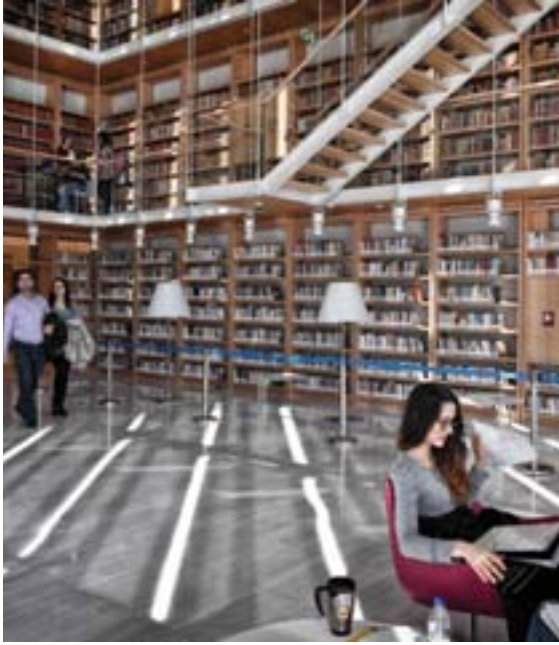
The gallery is the second of a series of exhibitions held by the company under its social initiative, "Global Art Gallery", to highlight the purposeful messages of artists and highlight the talents they enjoy by displaying their works of art such as paintings, photographs, sculptures, handcrafts amongst others. The first gallery was hosted last November under the theme "combating violence" in conjunction with the United Nations campaign for "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women".



Sara Al-Saygh pose with one of her work.



Moving boxes are seen as workers create an inventory at the old historic National Library of Greece in Athens.



People sit and walk at the new home of the National Library of Greece, at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, in Athens.



People walk at the new home of the National Library of Greece.

NEW CHAPTER: A LANDMARK MOVE FOR GREECE'S NATIONAL LIBRARY

Wearing masks and gloves, specialized staff gingerly place their treasured cargo inside wheeled, shock-absorbing boxes for a historic trip to the other end of Athens in the biggest book move in Greek history. From January until April, the National Library of Greece is moving root and branch, out of its 100-year-old home in central Athens and literally into the 21st-century. "This is no simple move. It's a journey into a new era," says library general director Filippos Tsimpoglou.

More than 550 staff worked on the two-year operation to clean, digitise, tag and relocate over 700,000 manuscripts and books, made possible by a massive donation from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), one of the country's leading philanthropic organizations. The foundation in 2016 unveiled the library's new home—a 20-hectare (49-acre) cultural center designed by famed Italian architect Renzo Piano on the Athens seafront that also hosts the national opera.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, named after one of Greece's most successful shipowners, cost nearly 600 million euros (\$735 million) and took eight years to design and build. Library staff say the move could not have come soon enough. And without private funds in crisis-hit Greece, it would never have happened. The relocation alone cost 500,000 euros. The Greek state nevertheless did manage to contribute-it and the SNF together paid the overall costs of the library revamp, which came to just over 10 million euros.

Room to grow

"For years, the library has been clamoring for space," library engineer Chrysanthi Vassiliadou told a media briefing earlier this month. "As a country we were a little behind in terms of services provided," she said. Since 1903, most of the National Library collection has been



Tourists take pictures in front of the old historic National Library of Greece building in Athens.

housed in the iconic Vallianeio neoclassic mansion in central Athens, designed by Theophil Hansen and built by Ernst Ziller, the architects that beautified 19th century Athens. But in a listed building that could not be easily remodeled and with a reading room of just 80 seats, staff say it was time to move on.

"The National Library had approximately 20,000 visitors and 21,000 readers each year. At its new facilities, the annual number of visitors and readers is expected to be 10 times higher," said reading room head Vasiliki Tsigouni. The library will now be able to provide ebooks and electronic journals, and for the first time also lend a selection of copies to readers. The reading room will be expanded to 400 seats. And thanks to SNF funds, the library has renewed its foreign-language collection for the first time in 20 years.

Founded in 1832, the National Library is the custodian of Greece's cultural heritage in written form—including rare copies of Homeric texts, 1,200-year-old manuscripts, maps, Byzantine-era music, 19th century Greek revolutionary archives and the personal papers of poet Dionysios Solomos, author of the Greek national anthem. In the past, it has been housed in an orphanage, a public bathhouse and a cathedral in Athens. Just planning how to display the collections in the new 22,000-square-metre library building took a year, with the British Library acting as consultant to the SNF.

Set for 25 years

"At the rate of today's book production, (the new building can meet our needs) for 25 years, if not more," said Vassiliadou. Four climate-controlled vaults will hold the library's rarest books and manuscripts, some of which date back to the 9th century, organizers said. Some of the oldest books were donated by prominent 19th century Greek citizens, monasteries and even foreign royals. Among its treasures is a 1674 chronicle written by Jacques-Paul Babin, a Jesuit missionary who was a frequent visitor to Athens, and published by French archaeology pioneer Jacob Spon.

"It is the first book on Athens in modern times... a

milestone in the history of Athens' 'rediscovery' by the Europeans in the 17th century," says Yannis Kokkonas, professor of historical bibliography at Ionian University. "Until then, references to Athens were vague medieval stereotypes of a once-glorious city now lying in ruins," Kokkonas said.

It 'hurt' to leave

Another prized relic is a 14th century prayer book that once belonged to Jovan Uros Nemanjic, one of the last members of a dynasty that ruled Serbia and parts of Greece in the Middle Ages. For all its limitations, veteran staff say the venerable Vallianeio building was hard to part with. Once restored, it will still be used to hold library archives and events. "When the building started emptying, it hurt us. We have been working here for many years, we identify with this building," said Vassiliadou. "Now it can be restored. We are impatient to see this work bear fruit in the new facilities. And then come back to fix this building and complete the circle," she said. — AFP



Librarians arrange newly arrived books in shelves at the new home of the National Library of Greece. — AFP photos



Models present creations by British fashion label Temperley London during a catwalk show on the third day of London Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2018 in London.



London Fashion: Erdem shows fancy florals; Kane goes for relationships

London Fashion Week saw a flurry of shows Monday emphasizing romance and femininity, often with exquisite workmanship and dashes of mystery and drama. Dresses dominated the runway. Christopher Kane offered a strong collection of very feminine, sometimes very revealing dresses at his catwalk show at the Tate Britain museum.



Canada-born designer Erdem Moralioglu turned the National Portrait Gallery into a showcase for his contemporary designs, which featured long, elaborately made dresses, many with floral themes offset by black back-grounds.

Christopher Kane channels 'the joy of relationships'
Kane went "old school" for his London Fashion Week show with a collection that overtly referenced two 70s' classics: "The Joy of Sex" and "More Joy of Sex" books. "I have never shied away from sex in the collections and this one is no different," said Kane. "Since the beginning, I have found it fundamental to our idea of women. Women with their own power who create their own worlds." Anyone who missed the

point was reminded by the none-too-subtle voiceover on the soundtrack encouraging people to experience more joy, more play and more love.

Many of Kane's dresses were semi-sheer and lacy, in simple but effective blacks and reds, along with some relatively demure knitwear, including an impressive deep purple dress. Kane made very effective use of black set off with silver, as well as primarily black outfits that seemed to shimmer with color. Pants were sometimes ripped or had fabric cut out and some blouses and dresses sported horizontal "peekaboo" slits. Kane used a wide variety of materials, including cotton canvas coats, raw wools and crushed velvet.



False alarm at Tate sends models into drizzly rain
There was an unexpected evacuation of the Tate Britain Museum several hours before the Christopher Kane show, sending visitors - and models - into a light rain outside while a fire alarm was checked. The models were rained on for about 20 minutes before the alarm was lifted, creating some challenges for makeup artists and stylists preparing for Kane's showcase event.

Erdem builds on a delicate, veiled theme

Erdem's London Fashion Week show made heavy use of veils - and black veil material - not only to shade the faces of many models but also as the fabric for leggings, long gloves and some shawls and capes. The veil material was detailed with black polka dots that became a design motif throughout the show, giving the models an unearthly and sometimes off-putting look when their faces were totally obscured.

A few outfits had retro flair, including some silver metallic skirts that evoked the flapper era, and some fused Asian designs that gave the show an international feel. Colors were rich and vibrant and the floral designs were complex and evocative. The show, with American Vogue editor Anna Wintour in her customary front-row seat, showed a remarkably uniform approach to design, each piece reinforcing and building on the look.

Glamorous night at Buckingham palace

Prince William's wife, Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, co-hosted a fashion reception at Buckingham Palace with Sophie, the Countess of Wessex and wife of Prince Edward, William's uncle. The two were acting on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II at the glittery event. Among the guests Monday night were model Naomi Campbell, designer Stella McCartney and Edward Enninful, the new editor of British Vogue. The event was a celebration of the Commonwealth Fashion Exchange, launched earlier this month to foster partnerships between established and emerging talents in the Commonwealth countries ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in April.

Blast from the past: Paulina Porizkova returns

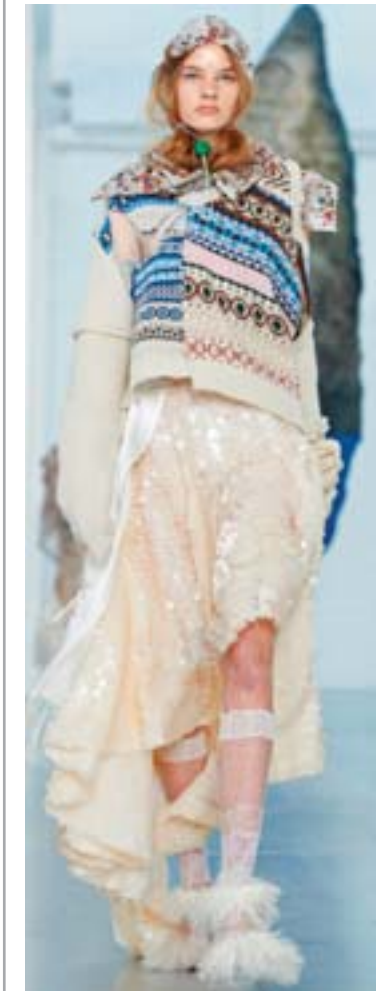
Almost overlooked in the flood of attention paid to Christopher Bailey's farewell show at Burberry was the return of Czech-born Paulina Porizkova, one of the original supermodels. She made a rare catwalk appearance Saturday to support designer Jiri Kalfar. —AP



Models present creations from designer Christopher Kane during their catwalk show on the fourth day of London Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2018 in London on February 19, 2018. — AFP photos



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, and designer Stella McCartney (right) chat during a reception to mark the creation of the Commonwealth Fashion Exchange initiative at Buckingham Palace.



Models present creations from Preen by Thornton Bregazzi during their catwalk show on the third day of London Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2018 in London.





Models present creations by ASAI during the Fashion East catwalk show.



Models present creations by Symonds Pearmain during the Fashion East catwalk.



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018



Revelers hold flares as they take part in the "flour war", during the celebration of "Ash Monday", a traditional festivity marking the end of the carnival season and the start of the 40-day Lent period until the Orthodox Easter, in the port town of Galaxidi. — AFP

Conciergerie Museum used to be a dreaded prison



Photos shows The Conciergerie Museum. — Photo Feature by Mariam Al-Zanki



The Conciergerie Museum used to be a luxurious palace for French kings till the 14th century. King Charles had transformed it into a court house and a prison where more than 2,780 people were executed for betraying the revolution. Among the renowned inmates was Marie

Antoinette, spouse of the Ling Louis XVI, and the last queen in France. The historic building houses a spacious church, vast celebration compounds and chambers that had been transformed into prison cells. The grand hall, or the soldiers' chamber, was one of the largest in Europe in the middle ages. — KUNA

FRENCH, DUTCH TEAMS UNVEIL TWO NEWLY RESTORED REMBRANDTS

Dutch and French art historians on Monday unveiled the surprising results of 18 months of painstaking restoration work on a pair of 17th century portraits by Dutch master Rembrandt. The portraits of a newly married Dutch couple were jointly bought in 2015 by the Netherlands and France for 160 million euros (\$174 million) from the wealthy Rothschild banking family in an unprecedented deal. Teams from the Louvre in Paris and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam spent the past 18 months researching the paintings, before carefully removing at least six layers of old varnish as part of "an exciting adventure" to restore the canvases. "They are undoubtedly completely painted by Rembrandt up to the smallest detail," Rijksmuseum general director Taco Dibbitts told reporters Monday, adding they were Rembrandt's first and only full-length portraits of a married couple. Wrangling over the portraits, captured around the time of the couple's wedding in 1634, had threatened to sour relations between France and the Netherlands. But the accord reached to avoid a bidding war will now see the two portraits alternate between the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre. Affluent Amsterdam couple Marten Soolmans, 20, and Oopjen Coppit, 22, commissioned Rembrandt to paint the separate portraits. Both dressed fashionably in black with white

lace ruffles, Soolmans is depicted holding a glove in his left hand, while Coppit holds a gold chain topped by a black-feathered fan and wears a four-row pearl necklace, with a band of pearls in her hair. Using sophisticated scientific techniques, including ultra-violet scans, X-rays and

macro X-ray fluorescence, restorers determined the two paintings once shared the same large piece of canvas. It remains unknown however if the portraits were painted together and then separated, although restorers believe the canvas was split prior to painting.



In this file photo people look at two full-length wedding portraits of Amsterdam couple Oopjen Coppit (right) and Marten Soolmans by Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), bought in a conjoint operation between the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre Museum, at the Louvre Museum in Paris, during a two-day state visit of the King and the Queen of the Netherlands in France. — AFP photos

Saving cultural heritage

Close analysis also revealed hidden details, such as doorways behind each person which Rembrandt later covered over by painting in a simple black curtain as a background. The restoration has infused the paintings with new light, to show off the "incredible modernity" of Rembrandt's original work, said Dibbitts. The details stand out, such as the exquisite lace ruffles on Marten's shoes. It "feels as if you press them they will bounce back," he said. Sebastien Allard, head of the Louvre's paintings department, praised what he called "an innovative" project, which after complicated negotiations "finally came to a European solution to protect cultural heritage." The project was a first for the team of restorers, who under a "pre-nup" agreement had to collaboratively agree on every detail of the restoration, Dibbitts quipped. Discussions are still underway as to how the paintings will be framed when they go back on exhibition—the Louvre preferring gilt frames, while the Rijksmuseum prefers plain black wood. For Anne Lepage, a restorer with the Louvre, it proved an enriching experience as the two teams shared their techniques, as they approached the two portraits with "great respect." "You never touch a painting without having done research, analysis and working with the archives. — AFP



This handout photo shows restorers working on a portrait of Oopjen Coppit, one of two full-length wedding portraits, by Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669) in Amsterdam.