



**2** Amir holds talks with visiting Bahraini PM



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## Ghanem visits jailed MPs as panel fails to meet again

### Muwaizri urges speaker to withdraw Assembly storming case

#### Kuwait enters UN Security Council

UNITED NATIONS: Kuwait, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Peru, Poland and the Netherlands formally joined the ranks of the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council yesterday "to make a difference", the body's president said. "Peace and security are difficult to achieve," Kazakh envoy Kairat Umarov, who took the rotating presidency in January, told council members at a special ceremony. "You are going to have a real chance to make a difference." One after the other, ambassadors representing the council's six new member countries - five men and a woman, Polish envoy Joanna Wronecka - placed their flag among those of the body's nine other members.

The UN Security Council has 15 members, including five with permanent seats who have the power to veto resolutions - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States. Three women and 12 men are among the 15 ambassadors who will soon be seated at the U-shaped table in the center of the Security Council's chamber. In addition to Wronecka and US envoy Nikki Haley, Karen Pierce will take her seat later this month as Britain's new ambassador. The six countries that left the UN Security Council on Dec 31 are Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday visited MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash and a number of activists jailed in connection with storming the Assembly building in 2011. The speaker described the visit as "successful and smooth", denying reports and rumors about the visit. He said that he met the two lawmakers and a number of activists. Earlier reports had claimed that a number of activists had refused to meet Ghanem.

In a related matter, four activists jailed in the same case formed what they called the Democratic Party from their jail ward with the aim to create "a new political class to safeguard the constitution and work to develop it". The appeals court last month sentenced about 67 opposition MPs and activists to harsh jail terms for storming

the Assembly building in Nov 2011 during a protest.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri lashed out at Ghanem and urged him to withdraw the case against the activists. He said that many such cases had been withdrawn by public entities and the cases ended, and the speaker should do the same. Muwaizri also threatened to grill Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh.

In a related development, the Assembly's legal and legislative affairs committee failed to meet yesterday for the second time in a row to discuss a letter by the two jailed lawmakers to allow them to attend Assembly sessions. But a subcommittee assigned by the Assembly to review the letter held a meeting and heard the constitutional views of two lawyers on the matter, head of the committee MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said.

He said that the panel asked the two



Marzouq Al-Ghanem



Waleed Al-Tabtabaei



Jamaan Al-Harbash

experts to present their viewpoints in writing to include it in the report. Subaei said the main legal panel failed to meet because some of its members have travelled, but added they assured him they will attend the panel meeting next Monday, when the report will be ready for voting. The letter challenges the

arrest of the two lawmakers, who enjoy parliamentary immunity. MP Osama Al-Shaheen held the government responsible for foiling the legal committee's meeting "because its pro-government MPs abstained", adding that this is a sign of the government's unwillingness to cooperate with the Assembly.

#### Pak summons US envoy, hits back at Trump tweet

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan angrily dismissed threats by US President Donald Trump to cut off aid as "completely incomprehensible" yesterday, in the latest diplomatic row to rock the shaky alliance between Washington and Islamabad over militancy. The "recent statements... by the American leadership were completely incomprehensible as they contradicted facts manifestly," read a statement issued by the prime minister's office after a meeting of the National Security Council. Trump's comments "struck with great insensitivity" and "negated the decades of sacrifices made by the Pakistani nation", it added.

The statement was the first formal comment from Pakistan since Trump lashed out on Monday, making Islamabad his inaugural Twitter target of 2018. "The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies and deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools," Trump said. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"

Pakistan, which says it has lost more than 62,000 lives and \$123 billion since 2003 in its war on extremism, disputed the \$33 billion figure in the statement. "(T)he huge sacrifices made by Pakistan... could not be trivialized so heartlessly by pushing all of it behind a monetary value - and that too an imagined one," it said. Foreign minister Khawaja Asif also mocked the figure on Twitter, suggesting Trump hire a US audit firm to check it "on our expense". Trump's words drew praise



LAHORE: Pakistani activists with the Jamaat-ud-Dawa group shout anti-US slogans at a protest yesterday. — AFP

from Pakistan's old foe, India, and neighboring Afghanistan, but longtime ally China defended Pakistan.

Trump first hinted at cutting aid to Pakistan in an August speech charting his Afghan policy, and administration officials including Vice President Mike Pence have also intimated cuts in recent months. But the Pakistani statement said recent interaction with US officials had been "useful", citing visits in recent months by Pentagon chief James Mattis and Secretary of State

Rex Tillerson as "robust and forward-looking".

Observers said that without further information the tweet could just be more hot air between the allies, whose often fractious relationship has taken a nosedive under Trump. "Trump is in the habit of issuing headline statements which only spoil the atmosphere and violate diplomatic niceties," analyst Hasan Askari told AFP, adding that Pakistan should seek more information.

Continued on Page 11

#### News in brief

##### 650 arrested during holidays

KUWAIT: Authorities arrested around 650 criminals and handled 53 cases related to drugs and alcohol during the New Year holiday, the interior ministry said yesterday. Security forces detained 118 offenders, 90 of whom were illegal residents, while 378 carried no form of identification and 54 others were arrested in absentia, said a statement by the ministry. It added that police received 2,501 calls during the holiday period and registered 1,363 traffic violations, while assistance was provided to 1,075 cases. The statement stressed security forces will not hesitate to use the full force of law against all offenders.

##### Expats remitted \$15bn

KUWAIT: The GCC Central Statistics Center's annual report showed expatriates in Kuwait remitted \$15 billion (around KD 5 billion) in 2016, while total expat remittances from GCC states amounted to \$111 billion in the same year. The report added that Saudi Arabia topped the list, where expats transferred \$39 billion, followed by those in the UAE, who remitted \$32 billion.

#### Khamenei blames Iran's 'enemies' for stoking unrest

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader blamed the country's "enemies" yesterday for days of unrest that have seen 21 people killed and hundreds arrested in the biggest test for the Islamic regime in years. In a speech carried on state television, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei broke his silence on the protests for the first time since they erupted last Thursday. "The enemies have united and are using all their means, money, weapons, policies and security services to create problems for the Islamic regime," the supreme leader said. "The enemy is always looking for an opportunity and any crevice to infiltrate and strike the Iranian nation."

Even reformists, who backed the last major protest movement in 2009, condemned the unrest and the support it has received from the United States. But they also called on the authorities to address economic grievances that have fuelled the protests. "The Iranian people are confronted with difficulties in their daily lives... and have the right to peacefully demand and protest," said a statement from the Association of Combatant Clerics, headed by reformist ex-president Mohammad Khatami.

A fifth night of unrest Monday to Tuesday saw



TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivers a statement yesterday. — AFP

six protesters killed during an attack on a police station in Qahderijan in the central province of Isfahan, state TV said. At least three other towns near the cultural hub of Isfahan also saw violence overnight, causing the deaths of a young member of the Revolutionary Guards, a policeman and a bystander.

Continued on Page 11

#### 2017 safest year for post-war civil aviation

WASHINGTON: Last year was the safest year for civil aviation since plane crash statistics were first compiled in 1946, two industry studies have found. US President Donald Trump hailed the results yesterday, and credited his "very strict" stance on commercial aviation for the positive data in the United States. A total of 10 crashes of civil passenger and cargo planes claimed 44 lives, said the Aviation Safety Network in a statement published Monday. "The year 2017 turned out to be the safest year ever for commercial aviation," ASN said.

Five of the fatal accidents involved cargo flights and five passenger flights. The previous year, ASN recorded 16 accidents and 303 lives lost. No major airline crashed a plane, the To70 agency said in its annual report, also published Monday. "The past year has been another exceptionally good year for civil aviation safety," To70 said. "2017 was much better than could reasonably (and statistically) be expected, and was again better than last year's remarkable performance," said To70 researcher Adrian Young.

The chances of dying in a plane crash are now one in 16 million, Young said, making air travel the safest means of transport even as worldwide air traffic grew by three percent in 2017 over 2016. The To70 report used data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which is to



This file photo taken from an airplane on July 4, 2017 shows an early morning aerial view of Washington, DC. — AFP

issue its own annual report soon. Accidents involving military planes, including military transport aircraft, were not taken into account in the study.

ASN President Harro Ranter said the low number of accidents was "no surprise," coming after a steady decline of fatalities in recent years. But "despite the good news, a note of caution needs to be sounded," the To70 report warned. "Whilst the safety levels of modern civil passenger airplanes remain high, the extraordinarily low accident rate this year must be seen as a case of good fortune," it said. One worry for the future is the many pieces of electronic equipment that passengers carry in luggage because of the risk of fire or the danger of lithium-ion batteries exploding, the report said. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait, Bahrain promote, boost diplomatic relations

## Amir receives Bahrain Prime Minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received visiting Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with visiting Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace yesterday. 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 were present at the meeting. During the meeting, they had friendly talks that reflected the depth of fraternal distinguished relations between both sisterly countries, and ways of promoting and bolstering them in all fields for the common interest of both nations within the GCC framework of firm historical relations.

The meeting was also attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh and several other senior officials. His Highness the Amir later held a luncheon banquet in honor of visiting Bahraini Prime Minister and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace. —Agencies



## KFH main sponsor of Horeca 2018

KUWAIT: Horeca Kuwait 2018 exhibition recently made a new achievement by winning the trust of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) which joined the exhibition as the main sponsor for this unique phenomenal activity in Kuwait, said the Leaders Group Company for Consultancy and Development, noting that it would organize the exhibition in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co at Mishref International Fair Ground - January 15-17, 2018. In a special press statement issued by hospitality Group, the organizing committee welcomed KFH sponsorship.

This they said will enhance and highlights Horeca's success in winning the trust of the banking sector as well as boosting the sector's relation with tourism and hospitality sectors. The statement also stressed that it was not strange that KFH sponsors such national events that would help diversify investment activities as well as enhance non-oil skills as it aims to boost the economic and commercial movements in general. "This sponsorship is a profound expression of the strong bonds between the banking sector, tourism and hospitality, especially in view of expectations of the economic growth in 2018", added the statement, noting that it would help achieve the 2035 Kuwait vision. Because KFH is one of the banks most interested in deposits and investments, its sponsorship indicates that transforming industries, tourism, transport, telecommunication, financial and banking services are the ones bound to lead regional non-oil economies.

## Sewage treatment project referred to Audit Bureau

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The PPP Authority referred the documents of the Um Al-Haiman sewage water treatment project to the Audit Bureau for auditing, said informed sources, noting that the project will be the largest of its kind in Kuwait. The sources added that the project's documents will be reviewed by the Audit Bureau prior to establishing a shareholding company to build, operate and manage the project for 25 years, as agreed with MPW. The sources said PPP had selected a consortium led by Germany's Wassertechnik GmbH, and includes International Financial Advisors to execute the extension of the plant. In addition, the sources said a contract will be signed in March between PPP and the winning consortium of a total cost of KD 1.1 billion, of which the state's share will be KD 384 million.

### Environment-friendly city

MEW's technical control manager Eqbal Al-Tayyar said that ministry is coordinating with the Housing Authority concerning building a smart and environment-friendly city in Southern Saad Al-Abdullah in collaboration with a Korean company. She added that a meeting was held to discuss providing the city with electricity and water supplies as well as building three

centers - one for electricity, one for water and one for consumers' affairs and payments.

### Inspection campaigns

During the second half of 2017, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) intensified its inspection campaigns on various companies, which resulted in doubling the number of disciplinary measures taken against violating companies to 37, in addition to referring six other companies for prosecution over suspicions of criminal violation of CMA's charter and regulations. According to reports, penalties imposed on violating companies varied between notices and fines of a total value of KD 230,000, compared to only KD 74,600 during the first half of the year.

### Expats employees fired

The Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs terminated a number of expat employees working in its various departments, said informed sources, noting that exceptions were made for some, such as accountants, who could not be replaced by citizens qualified to do the job. The sources added that the authority has notified CSC to fill the new vacancies with citizens.

MPW allocated KD 12 million to build a number of tunnels within three years to protect Kuwait Bay and prevent the flow of processed and rainwater into it.

### Drop in temperature

Meteorologist Abdul Aziz Al-Qarawi expected a noticeable drop in temperature today with few clouds, light to moderate northwesterly wind (15-35 kph) and 2-5-meter-high waves. Qarawi also expected temperatures to keep dropping tomorrow to reach a minimum of 9 Celsius, amid cloudy weather. He forecast cold weather to continue until Friday, before it gets warmer on Saturday.

Local

# 95.5% of job seekers use online job sites to find, apply for jobs

## Nearly 30 million CVs are now registered on bayt.com

DUBAI: When it comes to job searching in the Middle East and North Africa region, there are many different steps that job seekers can follow to find their ideal opportunity. The internet is a good start and it can be used to streamline just about any task, including the job search. In order to measure how job seekers find their ideal jobs in the region, Bayt.com - the Middle East's #1 Job Site - conducted a poll titled 'Job Seeker Journey in the Middle East and North Africa', in which almost all respondents (95.5%) claimed that they use online job sites to find and apply for jobs.

### Applying for jobs online

Almost all of those surveyed (81.1%) said that job sites are an easy and user-friendly way to apply for jobs, compared to only 7.4% who disagreed. 11.5% of job seekers were neutral in response to this question. Further, the majority (83.4%) of respondents also agreed that they can find many relevant jobs online related to their background and experience, while 7.7% of respondents were neutral in response to this statement and only 8.9% disagreed.

When asked why online job sites are effective, nearly two thirds (66.2%) of respondents said that online job sites are useful because they "group all available jobs into one easy to access place". In addition to this benefit, more than one in five (22.2%) respondents said that online job sites are useful because they help job seekers "improve their CV and professional profile", allow job seekers to "track their application" and "provide

them with "job alerts".

When respondents were asked about how useful they find online job search tricks, tips and information, more than three in four respondents (76.5%) said that they find them "very" useful, compared to 14.0% who said they find them "somewhat" useful, and only 9.5% who said they don't find them useful.

"As the leading job site in the Middle East, it is important for us to regularly conduct thorough research regarding job seekers' opinions and experiences and share that information with the region. The 'Job Seeker Journey in the Middle East and North Africa' poll has allowed us to collate highly useful data on the way job seekers go about applying for new career opportunities. For instance, the majority of respondents believe online job sites, such as Bayt.com, to be very effective, user-friendly, and easy for finding and applying for jobs," said Suhail Masri, Vice President of Employer Solutions, Bayt.com. "At Bayt.com we want to be there every step of the way for job seekers in the region, and we are proud to provide the necessary tools and technologies for nearly 30 million professionals. It is important for us to regularly check in with job seekers and find out that they are, in fact, making great use of our technologies and information."

### Managing the job seeker journey

When it comes to creating a CV more than four in five (80.7%) respondents claimed that they have a picture on their CV and five in eight (62.5%) respondents claimed that they "always" send a cover letter with their appli-

cation. 22% of job seekers said that they "sometimes" send a cover letter, while only 15.5% said they "never" send one.

When it came to looking at how often job seekers search for jobs online, more than seven in ten (71.8%) respondents claimed that they look for jobs on a daily basis, this was followed by respondents saying that they look for jobs two to three times per week (16.5%), and 6.9% who said they look only a few times a month.

More than half of job seekers (56.9%) also claimed that they wait up to one week before applying for a different job, whereas 23.5% of them said that they don't wait at all. Moreover, almost all (96%) respondents agreed that it is useful to know if their application has been viewed by the employer or not. This way they can more strategically plan their search activities.

When respondents were asked about whether they research a company before going to an interview, more than four in five respondents (85.4%) said that they "always" research the company, compared to 11.4% who said they "sometimes" do, and only 3.2% who said they "never" do.

### Preferred job search device

Discussing the device that job seekers like to use when searching for a job, the majority (81.6%) of respondents said that they prefer to use a desktop or a laptop computer, this was followed by 13.5% who said they prefer to use a smartphone or a tablet, and 4.9% who claimed that they have no device preference.

However, when applying for jobs more



than six in 10 respondents (61.6%) said that they like having a job search mobile application because they can "search and apply for jobs on the go". 25.4% of respondents agreed and also said that a job search mobile application gives them "24/7 access to their application status", "sends them job alerts", and is "easier and more efficient to use".

Masri adds: "Job seekers like to have many options. Some prefer using their computers, while others relish the efficiency and convenience of Bayt.com's job seeker application. On top of that, the region's job seekers are stepping up their game by focusing on all the ele-

ments they have to add to their CV and application when they apply for jobs online. They are also heavily utilizing technologies such as automated job alerts, and 'who viewed my profile' and applications on Bayt.com."

Data for the 2017 Bayt.com 'Job Seeker Journey in the Middle East and North Africa' poll was collected online from July 30th, 2017 to September 13th, 2017. Results are based on a sample of 9,481 respondents. Countries that participated are the UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Iraq and others.

## Kuwait Defense Minister receives Chinese envoy



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received China's Ambassador to Kuwait Wang Di at Bayan Palace yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed a number of key issues that concern both sides,

the Defense Ministry's public relations department said in a press statement. Sheikh Nasser Sabah hailed deep relations between friendly countries, saying that they addressed ways of promoting and developing cooperative relations between both friendly nations, it added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Tower still represents Kuwait's most prominent landmarks and the symbol of its renaissance after 42 years of its construction. The Kuwait Towers are a group of three slender towers in Kuwait City, standing on a promontory into the Arabian Gulf. The Kuwait Towers were officially inaugurated in March 1979 and are regarded as a landmark and symbol of modern Kuwait. The towers were closed for maintenance from March 2012 to 8 March 2016, with

a massive fireworks festival commemorating the re-opening. The main tower is 187 meters (614 ft) high and carries two spheres. The lower sphere holds in its bottom half a water tank of 4,500 cubic meters and in its upper half there is a restaurant that accommodates 90 people, a cafe, a lounge and a reception hall. The upper sphere, which rises to 123 meters (404 ft) above sea level and completes a full turn every 30 minutes, holds a cafe. — KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A silhouette of Kuwait City during a beautiful sunset. —KUNA

# An Asian woman killed in a 4-way vehicle collision

## Kuwaiti shoots sister, surrenders

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** An Asian woman was killed and three others were injured in a four-way vehicle collision on the Seventh Ring Road towards Kabd. Firemen received a call about a collision between two water tankers and two cars and rescued the trapped individuals and the deceased.

### Car on fire

Mishref firemen put out a fire that started in a car which was parked in Al Salam area. No injuries were reported.

### Kuwaiti attacked

A citizen's husband was arrested for assault after

police had to rescue her from him. The victim lodged a complaint and submitted a medical report stating her injuries.

### Kuwaiti shoots sister

A Kuwaiti surrendered himself to Farwaniya police after shooting his sister for unknown reasons. The man, in his forties, said he killed her by shooting her in the abdomen. Investigations are underway.

### Two stabbed

An Iranian was arrested for assaulting and stabbing two citizens at a cafe. The injured were rushed to the hospital.

### Under the influence

Police arrested a motorist who collided with a police patrol while under the influence of drugs in an attempt to escape. The suspect had drugs and paraphernalia on him.

### 42,639 entries; 45,768 exits

The Central Operations Directorate said land borders recorded 42,639 entries and 45,768 exits by citizens, while 49,909 Gulf nationals entered and 51,532 exited the country. Meanwhile, Residency detectives uncovered nine companies in Jahra with 46 laborers under their sponsorship who are working somewhere else. The Social Affairs Ministry was contacted to take the necessary legal action.

### Citizen acquitted

The Court of Misdemeanors acquitted a citizen accused of stealing 43 Rolex watches (of a total value of KD 500,000).

### Course on sign language

The Public Authority for the Disabled organized a training course on sign language for a number of its employees with the aim of qualifying and enabling them to deal with citizens with hearing and speech disabilities. The authority's media coordinator Dhoza Fayeز Khamees said the course was the first of its kind and was taught by sign language instructor Bader Al-Doukhi, who is expected to organize two more courses.

## Kuwait naval exercises

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait naval forces will carry out live ammunition exercises at the sea shooting range from 7 am until 5 pm today. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement on Monday that the drills would be held at approximately 16.5 nautical miles east of Ras Al-Jelaiaa - all the way to Garu Island and six nautical miles east Ras Al-Zor - all the way to Umm Al-Maradem Island. Sea-goers are advised to avoid these areas during the above mentioned exercise schedule. —KUNA

## Italy's SACE offers \$625 credit line for Kuwait oil project

**ROME:** The Italian Export Credit Agency SACE has guaranteed a \$625-million loan issued by a pool of international banks in favor of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC). "The line of credit will help finance KNPC's Clean Fuels strategic project, amounting to \$14.5 billion, which includes the modernization and expansion of the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries in order to create a highly-efficient, integrated complex that can satisfy the local and international demand for high-value added petroleum products with reduced environmental impact," the SACE said in a press release.

It clarified that the new transaction concluded by SACE under its Push Strategy, the new proactive approach introduced with the 2016-2020 business plan, which strives to facilitate and strengthen the competitiveness of Italian exports among selected foreign buyers. The agency stated that specific meetings, for this purpose, between the top management of the Kuwaiti petroleum group and interested Italian companies and business match-making events were organized in Abu Dhabi during the ADIPEC international trade show. "New meetings are to be organized in coming months to facilitate the awarding of contracts to potential Italian exporters interested in the opportunities offered by the broad business plan of KPC, which will require investments of \$300 billion by 2030," reads the statement. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Camel races are a popular winter sport in Kuwait. Tourists often visit the Kuwait Camel Racing Club in Kabd to watch the races. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

# GCC lawmakers assemble in Kuwait for a crucial meeting

## MP calls for actual steps to protect Arab interests

**KUWAIT:** All six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member nations will be represented when chief lawmakers from the Gulf region assemble for a conference in Kuwait next week, the country's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim said yesterday. Al-Ghanim told reporters that Gulf parliamentary delegations will arrive in the country today, five days before the conference takes place. He expressed hope that the conference, sponsored by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, would be productive. Kuwait's chief lawmaker also wished the nation well as the world welcomes a new year. Al-Ghanim announced last week that Kuwait would be hosting a conference involving parliament speakers from across the Gulf region on January 8.

In another development Kuwaiti and Arab Parliament (AP) MP Ali Al-Deqbasi has called for moving to a practical phase to take definite steps for the protection of Arab interests. Talking to KUNA after the conclusion of an AP session in Cairo, Al-Deqbasi said that he had submitted a paper on developing Arab joint action. It was supported by a majority. The AP issued a resolution condemning the continuity of Iran's threats to the Arab national security through supporting armed militias seeking to penetrate it. The resolution was taken after hectic discussions on the content, he said. It represents a "quantum shift" in AP's performance, he stressed.

Deqbasi said that the AP includes various views, but finally "It passed with an overwhelming majority." Meanwhile, the AP issued a resolution denouncing the recent US President Donald Trump's decision recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Kuwaiti legislator said. Al-Deqbasi called for actual and practical steps toward an Arab unified stance on the issue. He lamented the lack of such stand on Libya or Syria.

**Arab Parliament's plan**  
Meanwhile, the Arab Parliament has adopted a work plan that will seek to see Sudan removed for the list of states sponsors of terrorism. An adhoc committee has been formed for the purpose, chaired by AP Speaker Dr Meshal Al-Salmi. According to the plan, the AP will move on the Arab, regional and international levels, focusing on Sudan's active role on the three scenes, Al-Salmi said. He referred to Sudan's efforts for combating terrorism, both in the Arab and Muslim world "as a pivotal state in the 41-nation Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance against terrorism." Sudan is also a member of the Arab Coalition Supporting Legitimacy in Yemen, and it cooperates effectively on the African and international scenes to combat terrorism, Al-Salmi said. He



### Arab Parliament adopts a work plan for Sudan



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim



MP Ali Al-Deqbasi

pointed to Khartoum's positive and active role for countering regional interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries, as well as for achieving security and safety in Africa. The AP will work in coordination with the Sudanese foreign ministry, the Sudanese National Assembly (parliament) and the Arab League, on the broad lines of AP's moves. —Agencies

## Inspection campaigns target stores and cafes



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality PR said that Farwaniya Emergency teams had conducted wide scale inspection campaigns on various stores and cafes around the governorate. In this regard, Farwaniya Municipality Cleanliness and Road Blockages manager Saad Al-Khurainej said that his team had filed 23 citations for unlawfully using outdoor spaces without

getting municipality permits, which is a violation of ministerial decision number 149/2006. On his part, the head of the inspection team Ahmed Al-Sheriekeh stressed that the campaigns would continue to track down all violators and hold them accountable. He added that his team had filed 27 citations for unlicensed and unauthorized ads on government property,



## Kuwait delivers 16 more power generators to Yemenis

**RIYADH:** Kuwait has delivered 16 power generators to Yemen; the fourth such batch for securing electricity for the health sector. Yemeni Minister of Public Health Dr Nasser Baoum expressed in a statement yesterday, gratitude to Kuwait for providing assistance to the medical sector; delivering medicines, equipment, ambulance vehicles, buses and various tools. Kuwait has launched "Kuwait by your side" relief campaign to support the Yemeni people.

Meanwhile Al-Sheikh Abu-Ismael Al-Qurashi, the executive director of the Kuwaiti fund for aiding patients, said Kuwait has totally delivered 45 power generators to help keep services ongoing at the Yemeni medical facilities.

Al-Qurashi added that the power engines, provided by the Kuwaiti Relief Society, would be distributed in Aden and several governorates, where recurring and lengthy power outages have been affecting medical services. Kuwait has provided various kinds of aid to the Yemenis including food, water, heaters and blankets. —KUNA



SANAA: Working class Yemenis sit in a waiting-room at a health centre sponsored by the Doctors of the World organization, in the Yemeni capital Sanaa yesterday. —AFP

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Legalized marijuana off to blazing start in California

## S Korea proposes high-level talks with North

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NEW YORK: Two women take a selfie photo in front of a frozen fountain in Bryant Park on a frigid day in Manhattan. —AFP

# Record-shattering cold freezes US

## Stiff breezes expected to create dangerously cold wind chills

ORLANDO: Record-shattering arctic cold reached as far south as Florida on Monday with freeze warnings in place from Texas to the Atlantic Coast and the Northeastern United States facing another cold wave at the end of the week, forecasters said. Temperatures ranged from 20 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit (11 to 17 degrees Celsius) below normal across the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, with only southern Florida untouched by the arctic blast.

"That degree of cold will be with us until tomorrow," said Brian Hurley, a National Weather Service meteorologist at College Park, Maryland. "Tuesday morning, we're looking at temperatures with very high probability of record lows." Along Alabama's Gulf Coast, the temperature in the city of Mobile could hit a low of 16 F (minus 9 C) overnight. Stiff breezes were expected to create dangerously cold wind chills across southeastern Georgia and most of northeastern Florida, the weather service said.

Michael Kimberl, co-founder of Sean's Outpost, an encampment for homeless people in Pensacola, Florida, said he was handing out propane fuel and extra blankets to residents. "Our community is very unequipped for weather of this type," he said by phone. Homeless shelters

were also making special accommodations, including one site available for women and children, he said.

The mass of frigid air pumped south by a dip in the jet stream sent temperatures plunging across the US heartland. Omaha, Nebraska, posted a low of minus 20 F (minus 29 C), breaking a 130-year-old record, and Aberdeen, South Dakota, shattered a record set in 1919 with a temperature of minus 32 F (minus 36 C). The cold will be unrelenting across the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern United States, with up to two dozen low-temperature records expected in those regions over the next day or two, Hurley said.

Although the cold should ease across most of the United States after Tuesday, the northeastern quarter of the country will see a repeat of the frigid temperatures from Thursday to Friday as another arctic blast hits the area. The private AccuWeather fore-

caster said the cold snap could combine with a storm brewing off the Bahamas to bring snow and high winds to much of the Eastern Seaboard as it heads north today and tomorrow. The only part of the United States spared the deep freeze is the Southwest, with above-normal temperatures and dry weather expected to linger there, the weather service said.

### Deep freeze keeps grip on east

The record-shattering Arctic freeze kept its grip on much of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains yesterday but temperatures everywhere except the Northeast were expected to warm within 24 hours. Many

school districts shut their classrooms due to the cold snap, which claimed four lives over the long New Year's weekend.

The National Weather Service issued wind chill warn-

ings for Tuesday as dangerously low temperatures were due from eastern Montana across the Midwest into the Atlantic coast and the Northeast and down through the deep South. School districts in Iowa, Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina canceled or delayed the start of classes as bitterly cold temperatures, 20 degrees to 30 degrees Fahrenheit (11 to 17 degrees Celsius) below normal, were expected across the eastern half of the United States.

"Just the bitter cold which is just too dangerous to put kids out on the street waiting for a bus that may not come," Herb Levine, superintendent of the Peabody Public Schools, north of Boston, told a local CBS affiliate television station. The cold was blamed for the deaths of two men in separate incidents in Milwaukee, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. A homeless man was found dead on a porch in Charleston, West Virginia, while another man was found dead outside a church in Detroit and police said he may have froze to death, local news outlets reported. Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser urged residents to call the city if they saw people outside. "We want every resident to have shelter and warmth," she said in a tweet. —Reuters

“ Very unequipped for weather of this type ”

## France vows crackdown after attack on police

PARIS: The French government vowed a crackdown on urban violence yesterday after shocking video footage emerged of a policewoman being beaten on New Year's Eve. She was one of two officers attacked by a crowd of youths after police were called to a party in the Paris suburb of Champigny-sur-Marne, in an assault President Emmanuel Macron called "a cowardly and criminal lynching". A third officer was beaten up Monday while trying to inspect a stolen scooter inside a sprawling housing estate in the suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois.

More than a thousand cars were burned across France on New Year's Eve, a ritual for youths living in deprived high-rise suburbs. "This violent society cannot continue in the years to come. It must be stopped," Interior Minister Gerard Collomb told Europe 1 radio yesterday, calling the attacks against police "unacceptable". Officers had been called to clear a crowd of three or four hundred people attempting to see in 2018 at a warehouse party in Champigny-sur-Marne.

They fired tear gas after "a group of particularly

violent individuals laid into the police," local security chief Jean-Yves Oses said, with revelers beating and kicking two officers. Videos of the policewoman writhing on the floor as she is kicked by the crowd, as well as revelers flipping over a car, have gone viral on social media. Two people were detained on suspicion of vandalism, but no one has been arrested for attacking the police. Macron vowed that the culprits would be "found and punished".

### 'Urban guerillas'

A total of 1,031 cars were torched across France as the country welcomed the New Year-up from 935 a year ago-while arrests rose from 456 to 510, according to the interior ministry. Collomb said reforms were needed to improve lives in "pauperized, ghettoized" French suburbs, which have long suffered a reputation for violence and poverty. "These are neighborhoods that must change," Collomb said, ahead of new pilot schemes in local policing set to begin next month following a large-scale consultation with security forces.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen urged reforms to laws governing police officers' right to self-defense, blasting "insecurity that sometimes comes close to that of urban guerillas" in tough neighborhoods. Macron set out a raft of policies to fight poverty in downtrodden districts in November after critics labeled him a "president of the rich" due to his generous tax cuts for high earners. He reached out to the poor again in his New Year's message, promising a "grand social project" in 2018.

French police have long suffered testy relations with youths in poor immigrant-heavy suburbs, not least since



PARIS: Police investigators look for evidence around a damaged truck which windshield was smashed, yesterday in the Paris suburb of Champigny-sur-Marne, near a party hall where clashes with the Police erupted on New Year's Eve. —AFP

the nationwide riots in 2005 sparked by the death of two teenagers who were electrocuted while hiding from officers. The assault of a young man by police in Aulnay-sous-Bois-which led to officers being charged, including for rape after a truncheon was shoved up the youth's

anus-sparked fresh unrest last year. An attack on two officers who were badly burned when Molotov cocktails were thrown into their car in the southern Paris suburbs in October 2016 prompted weeks of protests by police demanding safer working conditions. —AFP

International

# What has brought Iranian protesters onto the streets?

## A sign that Iran is taking the protests more seriously

**LONDON:** Iran is stepping up a crackdown against anti-government protests that pose the most audacious challenge to its clerical leadership since 2009. Following are factors that have brought Iranians to the streets and the challenges the authorities face.

### How serious are the protests?

The demonstrations, which began last week, are the most serious since unrest in 2009 that followed the disputed re-election of then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Political protests are rare in Iran, where security services are pervasive. And yet tens of thousands of people have protested across the country since Thursday. In a sign that Iran is taking the protests more seriously, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused what he called enemies of the Islamic Republic yesterday of stirring unrest. Khamenei, the ultimate authority in a cumbersome system of dual clerical and republican rule, said he would address the nation about the recent events "when the time is right".

Unlike the pro-reform demonstrations of 2009, the latest protests appear more spontaneous and don't seem to be orchestrated by leaders who can be identified and rounded up by the authorities. Calls made across the country for an end to economic hardship and alleged corruption are especially sensitive because Iranian leaders often portray the 1979 Islamic revolution which overthrew the US-backed Shah as a revolt by the poor against exploitation and oppression.

Although there are a variety of demands from different classes of society, videos posted on social media suggest young, working class people make up the biggest numbers. That could be more dangerous for the authorities because they have regarded the less well-off as loyal to the Islamic republic, as opposed to the more middle class protesters who took to the streets nine years ago.

According to official figures, 90 percent of those arrested were under 25 years old. Many young people are much more

interested in jobs and change than in the Islamist idealism and anti-west sentiment that the old guard clings to. Security forces may be calculating that they can still contain the unrest as no political group inside the country has put its weight behind the movement, and the workers lack strong unions to support them.

### Why can't the government find a quick solution?

The government's main challenge is to find a way to suppress the protests without provoking more anger as demonstrators attack police stations, banks and mosques. So far, while the authorities have threatened strong measures, in practice they have largely been restrained, arresting hundreds of people but holding back elite forces that have crushed past unrest.

Hardline measures could agitate those Iranians who have been calling for the downfall of the clerical leadership, including Khamenei. Authorities want to take control while avoiding a repeat of 2009. In June that year, a video showing protester Neda Agha-Soltan's last moments after being shot in the chest made her an icon of the opposition movement. The state has a powerful security apparatus but so far it has refrained from sending in the elite Revolutionary Guards, the Basij militia and plain-clothed security forces which crushed the 2009 uprising and killed dozens of protesters. Still, prolonged demonstrations could force the government to act. Iran's leaders believe they can count on support from many of the generation that took part as youths in the 1979 revolution because of their ideological commitment and the economic gains they have made under the Islamic government, analysts say.

### What are the main demands of the protesters?

Iranians across the country want higher wages and an end to alleged graft. But as the unrest has spread, protesters have directed their anger at the religious establishment. Many also question the wisdom of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East, where it has intervened in Syria and Iraq in a battle for



TEHRAN: Iranians walk on a street in the capital Tehran. —AFP

influence with rival Saudi Arabia. The country's financial support for Palestinians and the Lebanese Shi'ite group Hezbollah also angered Iranians, who want their government to focus on domestic economic problems instead. Some demonstrators even shouted "Reza Shah, bless your soul" a reference to Iran's ruler from 1925 to 1941, and his Pahlavi dynasty which was overthrown by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's first leader.

### What are Iran's economic prospects?

President Hassan Rouhani championed a deal struck with world powers in 2015 to curb Iran's nuclear program in return for the lifting of most international sanctions. However, he has failed

to deliver on promises of prosperity in the OPEC oil producer where youth unemployment reached 28.8 percent this year.

Still, the economy has improved under Rouhani's government and it is no longer in dire straits. Inflation dropped into single digits for the first time in about a quarter century in June, 2016. Gross domestic product growth soared to 12.5 percent in the year to March 20, 2017, although this was almost entirely due to a leap in oil exports. However, growth has been too slow for the overwhelmingly youthful population. Iran's recovery has been curbed by tensions with the United States. President Donald Trump has raised the possibility that sanctions could be re-imposed or new ones introduced. —Reuters

## Winds the reason behind Costa Rica plane crash

**PUNTA ISLITA, Costa Rica:** Strong winds were seen as a factor in the crash of a small plane in Costa Rica that killed all 10 US passengers on board and two local crew members, according to officials and witnesses. The accident, which occurred Sunday in the country's northwestern Guanacaste region popular with tourists seeking pristine tropical beaches, killed all on board the small Cessna 208 Caravan owned and operated by domestic airline Nature Air. The plane burst into flames on impact, according to rescue officials and locals.

Costa Rica's civil aviation agency said the pilots had tried to land at Punta Islita, a beachside town in Guanacaste, earlier Sunday to get the passengers but aborted because of "the gusts of wind." The aircraft was up-to-date with its certifications and had been inspected a month earlier, the agency said. "There had been a lot of wind, really strong," one resident in the area told AFP on Monday.

She said when she and other locals arrived at the crash site, up a steep hillside, "we couldn't see, absolutely everything was black." She added: "The front part of the plane was all on fire, and the tail part was the only bit intact." Police and fire crews arrived within 25 minutes of the crash, which happened shortly after midday (1800 GMT), she said. Another resident, Efraim Rojas, told the newspaper La Nacion that the plane was "too low" after take-off. "It did a turn to the left. For us, it looked like some sort of problem, and it was trying to get back to the runway. With the turn it did, it had one wing up vertical, and the other hit the trees," he said. "When we arrived, it was all in flames.... The plane, when it came down, apparently exploded, caught fire," he said.

### Family killed

The plane came down minutes after taking off from a small sealed airstrip in Punta Islita, where the Americans had boarded. "We can confirm the death of ten US citizens in an airplane crash in Costa Rica on December 31, 2017," a US State Department official said by email on



The tail of the burned fuselage of a small plane that crashed is seen near trees in Guanacaste, Corozalito, Costa Rica. —AFP

Monday. "We express our condolences to all those affected by this tragedy," the official said, adding that consular assistance was being extended. An American family of five from the town of Scarsdale, a suburb of New York City, was wiped out in the crash, US media reported. Bruce and Irene Steinberg and their three sons William, Zachary and Matthew were all killed while on a family vacation.

The other US victims were named as Thibault Astruc, Amanda Geissler, Charles Palmer, Leslie Weiss and Sherry Wu. The Costa Rican pilot was Juan Manuel Retana, 52. He was the cousin of former Costa Rican president Laura Chinchilla, who spoke of their ties on Twitter. His co-pilot was Emma Ramos, also Costa Rican. Guanacaste is a popular vacation destination, especially this time of year, when US and European tourists arrive in bigger numbers for an end-of-year respite from the northern hemisphere's winter.

### 'Difficult moment'

The process of recovering the bodies went into late Sunday, and their remains were transported to the capital San Jose on Monday. Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis expressed his condolences Sunday in a statement posted to social media. Solis said his government "gives its commitment to do everything necessary to work with the relatives of the victims to give them what they need in this difficult moment."

Americans are by far the biggest group of tourists visiting Costa Rica, accounting for around 1.3 million arrivals per year in this nation of nearly five million. Major air accidents are uncommon in Costa Rica. The last comparable accident dates back to August 26, 2000 when eight foreign tourists and two Costa Rican crew members all died when their small plane crashed into the side of a volcano near San Jose. —AFP

## Israel law tightens hold on occupied Jerusalem sectors

**JERUSALEM:** Israel's parliament yesterday gave final approval to legislation aimed at making it more difficult for the government to hand the Palestinians parts of Jerusalem under any future peace deal. The bill, approved by a 64 to 51 vote, is the latest blow to remaining hopes for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's office said US President Donald Trump's recent declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the new Israeli law amounted to a "declaration of war". Formulated by Shuli Moalem-Refaeli of the far-right Jewish Home party, the new law comes weeks after Trump's decision on Jerusalem sparked deadly protests in the Palestinian territories.

It also follows a vote earlier this week by the central committee of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party in favor of extending Israeli sovereignty over settlements

in the occupied West Bank. The Likud vote was non-binding, but was a further expression of the hopes of many right-wing Israelis who oppose the creation of a Palestinian state.

The law approved yesterday determines that any ceding of lands considered by Israel to be part of Jerusalem would necessitate a two-thirds majority vote in parliament — 80 out of 120 members of the Knesset. It also enables changing the municipal definition of Jerusalem, which means that sectors of the city "could be declared separate entities", a statement from parliament read. Israeli right-wing politicians have spoken of unilaterally breaking off overwhelmingly Palestinian areas of the city in a bid to increase its Jewish majority. However, the new law is not necessarily definitive. It can be changed by a regular parliamentary majority of 61.

### 'Declaration of war'

Israel occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. It claims all of Jerusalem as its united capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern sector as the



BETHLEHEM: A Palestinian youth holds a burning tire during clashes with Israeli forces following a protest against the US' decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, on December 27, 2017 in, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. —AFP

capital of their future state. The issue is among the most contentious in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "We've ensured the uni-

ty of Jerusalem," Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who heads Jewish Home, said after the vote. —AFP

## Notes from students help Indian police nab traffickers

**CHENNAI:** High school teacher Rajkumar Kotal had run out of ideas. News about his students being pushed into early marriage and lured by traffickers reached him, but often too late to stop it. But when police officials put a letter box in a discreet corner of the Ramgarhat High School in east Indian state of West Bengal, the problem was suddenly solved. "The anonymity of that box gave students the confidence to ask questions, alert authorities and slowly we built a campaign around it to stop child marriages and prevent trafficking," Kotal, who teaches English, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

West Bengal accounted for 44 percent of human trafficking cases reported in India in 2016 and also had the most missing children reports, according to government data. Young girls from poor families are lured with promises of marriage or jobs and trafficked to cities where they are sold to brothels or into domestic slavery, campaigners said. The state government and charities working to prevent human trafficking have initiated a host of measures, including efforts to create a database of known traffickers.

The letter box scheme is part of a larger initiative by the West Bengal police which has proved so successful that now more than 20,000 students across 200 schools in the most vulnerable districts of the state have "shared secrets" and sought help. Recognizing the impact of the initiative, the UN children's agency UNICEF has now partnered with the police to expand the scope of the program across the state.

### Rescue missions

"Girls from the state were being trafficked and then dumped on the streets of Delhi to die," said police officer Ajey Ranade, who is heading the initiative that is largely targeting school girls in vulnerable districts. Police officers in plain clothes first started visiting schools in South 24 and North 24 Parganas districts - identified as trafficking hotspots - in 2016 to talk to students.

Many policemen had been on rescue missions and had been "emotionally moved" by the plight of trafficking survivors as they saw the impact it was having on young girls, Ranade said. In schools, adolescents were at first reluctant to engage. "We started playing a game called share your secret and suddenly information was flowing," said Suravi Sarkar of non-profit banglanatak.com which helped the police reach students. Under the program, the police set up committees in schools to educate students about trafficking traps.

"Girls appear to be more alert now and information has started flowing in," Ranade said. "Students are telling us if a classmate has missed school for a few days, strangers hanging around the school route are being reported and some of this information has even led to arrests." Kotal, who has been a teacher for 10 years, said he found courage to confront his students' problems with police backing. "Earlier some students would ask for help but we couldn't do much. This initiative has brought students, law enforcement, parents and teachers on the same platform," he said. —Reuters

## International

# Legalized marijuana off to blazing start in California

## Expected to be the world's largest market for the plant

**DESERT HOT SPRINGS:** It's the first day that marijuana can be bought and sold legally in California, and store owner Nicole Salisbury's stock of pot edibles is already running low. The phone has been ringing non-stop for weeks with people from out-of-state expressing an interest in sampling her wares. "I'm so excited but I'm also a little bit nervous," says Salisbury, who has been in the marijuana business for a decade and opened Green Pearl Organics as a medical dispensary two years ago. "For the first time, I feel comfortable telling people that I own a marijuana shop," added the 35-year-old, who has vibrant blue-green hair.

Eight states as well as the capital Washington have already legalized recreational use of the drug, though it remains outlawed at the federal level. But California's sheer size—roughly 40 million people make it America's most populous state—as well as its booming economy mean it is expected to be the world's largest market for the green flowering plant. California became a pioneer when it legalized medicinal use of pot in 1996, and its decision to expand that to recreational use effective Monday will be watched closely around the world by countries hoping to cash in on the so-called "green rush."



### Some unhappy at the heavy taxes applied

have been coming to the store since it opened—are annoyed that they now have to wait in long lines. Some complain that only medical use should have remained legal, while others are unhappy at the heavy taxes applied to cannabis, which exceed 20 percent when state, sales and municipal taxes are added. Buying involves showing a driver's license or other form of ID as proof you are 21 or above, and customers receive their goods in an opaque white bag. Californians can get up to 28.5 grams (one ounce) of cannabis without a prescription and grow up to six plants per residence.

The waiting room is filled with men and women of all ages, many regulars who live in this desert region, some two hours east of Los Angeles. "It's great to come get marijuana without actually having to see a doctor," says Andrew Jennings, who is originally from Texas. "There's no place in Texas where you can go—with a doctor's recommendation or without," he adds. "A lot of people think you just sit on your couch and watch TV, but depending on the strength, it can actually increase your focus," adds the bearded 32-year-old, who was accompanied by his yoga-teacher girlfriend. "If you're selling alcohol in this country, you should also sell weed—it brings taxes, we get great marijuana that's being tested, so everybody's winning," adds Jennings, who is between jobs and says he enjoys cycling in nature when he gets high.

#### 'I don't want to be a stoner'

Christina, a 50-year-old behavioral therapist for special needs children, who declined to give her last name, has come to buy marijuana oils hoping they will restore her hormonal balance and calm her anxiety. "I'm trying to get a natural medicine, (but) I don't want to be a stoner," she says, adding that she would rather her 12-year-old son does not know



LOS ANGELES: A 'budtender' helps a customer as others wait their turn at the Higher Path medical marijuana dispensary in the San Fernando Valley area. —AFP

because she doesn't want to encourage him as she believes marijuana is bad for developing brains.

According to the new law, marijuana cannot be consumed in public places or while driving—nor can it be used within 1,000 feet of a school or other place for children. Desert Hot Springs is hoping to carve out a niche as a destination for marijuana lovers—as well as the curious—from all over the country. Many business owners are also investing in farms—Salisbury is planting her seedlings in a plot at the

back of the store while also working with a network of growers. Both the mayor and the police have backed the industry, which is projected to be worth \$5.8 billion in California by 2021, according to consultancy firm ArcView. For Salisbury, it's also a matter of personal dignity. "I felt social shame—I felt as though I were a prostitute or a stripper even though I always obeyed the law and paid my taxes," she says. "Now I can tell my truth, say this is what I do." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Gunmen kill 14 churchgoers in brutal Nigeria shooting

**WARRI:** Gunmen killed at least 14 churchgoers returning from a midnight service on Monday in Nigeria's Rivers State, a police source told AFP, the latest violence to hit the oil-rich region. "The gunmen opened fire on a set of worshippers at about 12:30 am on Monday," said Ugochi Oluogbo, a relative of one of the victims who were attending a New Year's Eve service. The shooting took place in the town of Omoku about 90 kilometers from the southern oil hub of Port Harcourt. "Fourteen persons died on the spot, while 12 who sustained gunshot wounds were rushed to the hospital and are receiving medical attention," said a police source who asked to remain anonymous. Rivers State police public relations officer Nnamdi Omoni said the number of casualties could not be confirmed at the moment. "The commissioner of police, Ahmed Zaki, has also launched a manhunt for the bandits to ensure they are arrested and prosecuted," Omoni said.

#### Internet restored in Congo after protests

**KINSHASA:** Internet was restored in the Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday after the government cut services for three days on the eve of protests against the president. AFP reporters said. The Congolese minister for telecommunications Emery Okundji ordered mobile operators to cut internet and SMS services "for reasons of state security" on Saturday. Catholic and opposition groups on Sunday pushed ahead with banned demonstrations, which were met with a deadly crackdown by authorities, who fired tear gas into churches and bullets in the air to break up gatherings at Catholic masses. At least eight people were killed and dozens arrested, including 12 altar boys leading a march in Kinshasa. Internet cuts are common during anti-government demonstrations in the vast, mineral-rich central African country, which has been wracked by tension over delayed elections. Protesters want President Joseph Kabila to promise he will not further extend his time in power in DR Congo, a mostly Catholic former Belgian colony.

#### Cold sparks chaos in Canada airports

**MONTREAL:** Snow, lengthy de-icing procedures and missing crews created havoc at Canada's main airports on Monday, with hundreds of flights cancelled or delayed out of the country's biggest city Toronto. A deep freeze has settled over large parts of Canada and the United States, bringing extreme cold, piles of snow, and icy conditions. From the early hours of New Year's Day, Air Canada warned that holiday travel could be hectic, issuing a travel alert for passengers using airports in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa and waiving the usual fee for ticket changes. As the day wore on, the delays mounted, with take-off delays of four to five hours, according to data collected from airport websites. In Toronto, snow aggravated the situation, and by 2030 GMT, nearly 500 flights had been cancelled or delayed, according to flight tracker FlightAware. Passengers asked for help—and vented their ire—on social media. "You ppl have cost me two days of my vacation and a day's salary," traveler Carla Whyte said on Twitter.

## German far-right MP faces police complaint over 'incitement'

**BERLIN:** German police have filed a complaint against a prominent member of Germany's far-right AfD party over a tweet on New Year's Eve which they say violated anti-incitement laws. Beatrix von Storch, deputy leader of the party's parliamentary faction, had criticised Cologne police for sending a New Year's greeting in Arabic on Twitter. "What the hell is going on with this country? Why is an official police site... tweeting in Arabic?" she wrote. "Did you mean to placate the barbaric, Muslim, gang-raping hordes of men?"

Von Storch's tweet appeared to reference chaotic 2015 New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne, which were marred by mass sex assaults on women by men of mostly North African origin. Cologne police told AFP their complaint alleges that the tweet flouted laws against incitement

to hate. Separately, prosecutors in the western city said they had received hundreds of complaints over the AfD lawmaker's comment.

Von Storch's account was blocked by Twitter for 12 hours following her post, and the tweet has since been removed. She posted the same comment on Facebook, which then also took it down, citing "incitement to hate (paragraph 130 of the German penal code)". Twitter and Facebook's tough stance came as an anti-online hate speech law came into effect on January 1 in Germany. Social media companies that fail to remove illegal inflammatory comments could face up to 50 million euros (\$60 million) in fines.

AFD chief Alexander Gauland took aim at the new rules, saying in remarks carried by national news agency DPA that the regulations are "Stasi methods that remind me of communist East Germany". Gauland, who is not active on social media, encouraged users of such websites to "keep publishing" the erased comments from von Storch. A Cologne police spokesman said it was long-standing practice to send out information in several languages during large gatherings and events. "We simply want people to be able to understand us," said the spokesman. The AfD seized 92



BERLIN: This file photo taken on September 27, 2017 shows Beatrix von Storch, leadership member of Germany's hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, arriving for a meeting of the AfD's parliamentary group at the Marie-Elisabeth-Lueders-Haus parliamentary building. —AFP

parliamentary seats in September elections—the strongest showing for a far-right party in the post-war era—as it capitalized

on discontent over the more than one million asylum seekers who arrived in Germany since 2015. —AFP

## Shunned, homeless: LGBT Ukrainians find shelter in Kiev

**KIEV:** Staring at the Berlin Wall mural of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev kissing East German leader Erich Honecker on the mouth, Yevhenii Kalashnyk knew it was time to come out as gay. The 20-year-old Ukrainian kissed a friend in front of the graffiti painting in September and posted the photo on Instagram. The decision changed his life. "I was emotionally full," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

He said he had only kissed another man for the first time a few months earlier and had arrived in the German capital about 60-days into his first trip to Western Europe where he hoped to find some peace of mind after a difficult period. For while gay sex has been legal in Ukraine since 1991, it remains socially taboo with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people facing stigma, discrimination and sometimes violent attacks, rights groups say.

Ukrainian authorities have increased their support for gay rights since a pro-Western government took power following the Maidan protests in 2014 and in 2015 passed a law banning workplace discrimination against the LGBT community. But critics say homophobic attitudes remain widespread. The country scored 19 out of 100 points in a 2016 survey by EU-funded Rainbow Europe ranking LGBT people's rights in Europe. Shortly after posting the kiss photo, Kalashnyk received a call from his mother. "She asked: 'Are you gay?'. I said 'yes' ... Then she started saying very bad things," he said, adding that his father also threatened him.

#### Rainbow safe house

Too afraid to go home to Nikopol, Kalashnyk headed to Kiev when he returned to Ukraine about a month later where he found accommodation with Insight, a local gay rights group. The organization runs Ukraine's first and only LGBT shelter a four-room flat, with bunk beds, a kitchen and communal area, in an old apartment block outside Kiev's city centre. Up to eight guests at a time can receive food, clothing, medicines, a travel card, as well as legal and psychological help, and can stay up to three months,

extendable on an ad hoc basis, Insight says. "It's a great opportunity for people to adapt and start a new life. You don't have to worry about finding work without knowing where to sleep," said Pavel, a 48-year-old resident from Donetsk, who declined to give his real name.

The facility was launched in June 2014 to help LGBT people fleeing the conflict in the country's east but has since opened its doors to those from other regions. More than 10,000 people have been killed and 1.6 million forced from their homes since pro-Russian separatists in the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk rebelled against Kiev's pro-western government in 2014.

Members of the LGBT community were also affected by the violence with many losing their jobs, having their houses damaged or suffered homophobic attacks amid the upheaval, said Olga Olshanskaya, the Insight shelter coordinator. She said transgender people were particularly vulnerable to abuse as they had to show ID documents that did not reflect their appearance or sex at checkpoints in conflict-hit areas.

"No one wants to leave their home, but (for many) coming to Kiev was the only hope," said Olshanskaya in a room adorned by rainbow flags at Insight's headquarters in central Kiev. Oksana, a 35-year-old transgender woman from Donetsk, said a militiaman manning a checkpoint pointed a gun at her head because of her looks weeks before she left for Kiev in 2014.

She had started undergoing hormone treatment two years earlier after another weapon - a hunting rifle she held against her head - misfired in a failed suicide attempt. Until then she had kept her sexuality quiet, fearing the wrath of her family. "I was born with all the right organs, two legs, two feet but ... not in the right body," she said. "To live life as some else is very difficult". Oksana, who preferred not to use her full name, spent just over a month at the Insight shelter in Kiev, long enough to find work at a law firm, and has since founded an advocacy group for transgender rights called T-ema.

But life in Kiev can also be difficult. Kalashnyk said he sometimes suffers verbal abuse and always carries pepper spray to fight off potential assailants. In 2015 several dozen protesters attacked a gay pride march, throwing flares and clashing with police. In June this year, the same event went ahead largely without incident under heavy security following threats from ultra-nationalist groups supporting what they say are traditional Ukrainian values. Pavel, who works in the pharmaceutical sector, decided against attending the rally in case colleagues recognized him. "It could have been the end of my career," he said.—Reuters

## US, Britain warn S Sudan parties over ceasefire violations

**JUBA:** The United States, Britain and Norway have called on parties in the South Sudan conflict and their field commanders to stop violating the ceasefire signed last month, their head of missions in Juba said yesterday. There have been at least five violations reported, blamed on both sides in the conflict. The United States, Britain and Norway form a group that supported the 2005 accord leading to the independence of South Sudan from Sudan. They have threatened to impose individual or group sanctions for those violating the ceasefire.

Signed in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, the ceasefire is the latest attempt to end a four-year civil war that has killed tens of thousands. It is also designed to allow humanitarian groups some access to civilians caught in the fighting. It aims to revive a 2015 peace deal that collapsed in 2016 after heavy fighting erupted in the capital Juba. President Salva Kiir's decision to sack his deputy, Riek Machar, in 2013 triggered the war in the world's youngest country. It has been fought largely along ethnic lines between forces loyal to Kiir, who is Dinka, and Machar, who is Nuer. The war has forced a third of the population to flee their homes.

"We call on all signatories, and the field commanders who answer to them, to immediately end all military operations," the three Western countries said in a statement. They added that field commanders and their political bosses would be held accountable for violating the ceasefire and impeding humanitarian assistance. There was no immediate comment from the army or the rebels. The ceasefire was to be followed by further talks focusing on a revised power-sharing arrangement leading up to a new date for polls. —Reuters



## International

# South Korea proposes more high-level talks with North

## North's participation in Winter Olympics on the table

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday proposed high-level talks with Pyongyang on January 9, after the North's leader Kim Jong-Un called for better relations and said his country might attend the Winter Olympics in the South. Kim used his annual New Year address to warn he has a "nuclear button" on his table, but sweetened his remarks by expressing an interest in dialogue and taking part in the Pyeongchang Games next month.

South Korea's unification minister Cho Myoung-Gyon told a press conference that Seoul was "reiterating our willingness to hold talks with the North at any time and place in any form". "The government proposes to hold high-level government talks with North Korea on January 9 at the Peace House in Panmunjom," Cho said, referring to a truce village on the border between the two Koreas. "We hope that the South and North can sit face to face and discuss the participation of the North Korean delegation at the Pyeongchang Games as well as other issues of mutual interest for the improvement of inter-Korean ties."

The Koreas, divided by a Demilitarized Zone since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, last held high-level talks in 2015 to try to ease tensions. Those talks failed to reach an agreement. "Just the fact that they are meeting will be meaningful because it signals an attempt on both sides to improve relations," said Koh Yu-Hwan, a political science professor at Dongguk University. But once they sit down, the North could put Seoul in a difficult position by making unacceptable demands such as an end to its annual joint military drills with the United States, Koh added.

"What North Korea is trying to do is re-establish its relations as a nuclear state (with Seoul). The South's dilemma is whether we can accept that." South Korean President Moon Jae-In, who has long favored engagement to ease tensions with the North, earlier yesterday

welcomed Kim's suggestion of an opportunity for dialogue. However, he indicated that improvements in ties must go hand in hand with steps towards denuclearization of the North.

### 'Positive response'

North Korea has rattled the international community in recent months with multiple missile launches and its sixth and most powerful nuclear test—purportedly of a hydrogen bomb. It has shrugged off a raft of new sanctions and heightened rhetoric from Washington as it drives forward with its weapons program, which it says is for defense against US aggression.

Kim's comments on Monday were the first indication of North Korea's willingness to take part in the Winter Games from February 9-25. Moon called them a "positive response" to Seoul's hopes that the Pyeongchang Olympics would be a "groundbreaking opportunity for peace" and urged officials to come up with measures to realize the North's participation. Beijing, Pyongyang's main ally, welcomed developments.

"We support the two sides in taking advantage of this opportunity to make concrete efforts to improve bilateral ties... and realize the denuclearization of the peninsula," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang. Washington considers China key to a resolution of the crisis on the Korean peninsula, and has asked Beijing to do more to rein in Pyongyang. While China has supported UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea, it has proposed a freeze-for-freeze approach under which the US would stop military drills in South Korea and the North would halt its weapons programs. But the idea has been rejected by Washington and Seoul, and Pyongyang insists it will continue its nuclear and missile projects.

“An attempt on both sides to improve relations”



SEOUL: South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-Gyon leaves after a press conference at a government complex. —AFP

### 'Same blood'

In his speech Monday the North's leader said the Olympics could provide a reason for officials from the neighbors "to meet in the near future". "Since we are compatriots of the same blood as South Koreans, it is natural for us to share their pleasure over the auspicious event and help them," Kim said in his address.

The main venues for the Games are just 80 kilometers from the heavily fortified border with North Korea and the build-up to the event has been overshadowed by the

nuclear weapons standoff. But Seoul and the Games' organizers are very keen for the North to take part. Analysts say its participation at Pyeongchang is likely, given Kim's remarks about sending a delegation there. Two North Korean athletes—pairs figure skaters Ryoum Tae-Ok and Kim Ju-Sik—qualified for the Games but Pyongyang's Olympic Committee missed an October 30 deadline to confirm to the International Skating Union that they would participate. They could still be invited to compete by the International Olympic Committee. —AFP

## Japan's emperor greets well-wishers as he prepares to abdicate

TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Akihito yesterday delivered his traditional New Year address with tens of thousands of well-wishers flocking to the Imperial Palace for one of the last such occasions before he abdicates next year. It was the final New Year appearance alongside Akihito for Princess Mako, his eldest granddaughter, who is scheduled to wed her college sweetheart in November and leave the royal family. The Imperial Palace said more than 73,000 people attended his address, many waving small Japanese flags and shouting "Banzai" or "Long live".

"Happy New Year. I'm sincerely glad to celebrate the New Year together with you," the emperor said in a televised address from a glass-covered balcony at the palace, where he was flanked by Mako and other family members. They will make two further appearances before the crowd in the afternoon. The emperor shocked the country in 2016 when he signaled his desire to take a back seat after nearly three decades in the job, citing his age and health problems.

He will be the first emperor to retire—on April 30, 2019—in more than two centuries in the world's oldest imperial family. Akihito's eldest son, 57-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito, is set to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne a day later. The status of the emperor is sensitive in Japan given its 20th century history of war waged in the name of Akihito's father Hirohito, who died in 1989. Akihito has keenly embraced the more modern role as a symbol of the



TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Akihito (5th L) and Empress Michiko, along with members of the royal family, wave during the royal family's annual New Year's greeting to well-wishers gathered at the Imperial Palace. —AFP

state imposed after World War II ended. Previous emperors including his father, Hirohito, had been treated as semi-divine. The palace, surrounded by stone walls and mossy

moats—is opened to the general public twice a year—on the emperor's birthday and the second day of New Year—for the royal family to greet well-wishers. —AFP

## Detained Vietnamese developer seeks passage to Germany

SINGAPORE: A Vietnamese property developer detained in Singapore is seeking passage to Germany to avoid being sent back home, where he could face the death penalty amid a crackdown on corruption, his lawyers said yesterday. Phan Van Anh Vu, 42, who is wanted in Vietnam for revealing state secrets, according to media, was detained in Singapore on Thursday as he tried to leave for Malaysia, said Remy Choo, one of at least three lawyers engaged by Vu's family to represent him.

Choo and another lawyer in Singapore, Foo Chow Ming, said they had been unable to contact Vu, and yesterday filed an application in Singapore's High Court to try to gain access to their client. A third lawyer told Reuters he had filed an application to German authorities to allow him to go there. "I have made an application for Germany to accept him," said Victor Pfaff, a lawyer in Frankfurt. Germany's foreign office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Singapore has no extradition treaty

with Vietnam, but its immigration authority has the power to repatriate people under certain circumstances, according to the city-state's Immigration Act. "My client's family is concerned there is an imminent risk of repatriation to Vietnam," said Choo. Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security said last month it was seeking the arrest of Vu, a developer in the communist state's central city of Danang, where the local leadership was shaken up after corruption accusations last year.

Vietnamese media quoted police as saying Vu was wanted for revealing state secrets. They did not say what these related to or whether that was linked to his role as a property developer. Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority and its Ministry of Home Affairs did not respond immediately to a request for comment. Vietnam's foreign ministry also did not respond immediately to a request for comment on Vu's detention in Singapore and whether Hanoi had sought his extradition.

Serious security offences, such as revealing state secrets, can carry the death penalty in Vietnam. Singapore also has the death penalty for some crimes. Singapore has close diplomatic and trade ties to Vietnam. This year, Singapore is also chairing the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations grouping, which has sought to strengthen regional cooperation. Dozens of Vietnamese officials and business figures have been arrested in a crackdown on corruption that has gathered pace since the security establishment gained greater sway in the ruling Communist Party in 2016. —Reuters

## Australian investigators hope to recover seaplane

SYDNEY: Accident investigators hope this week to raise a seaplane which crashed into an Australian river with the death of six people, including a high-profile British chief executive. Richard Cousins, the boss of catering giant Compass, his sons Edward and William, fiancée Emma Bowden and her daughter Heather Bowden-Page were killed in the accident on the Hawkesbury River north of Sydney on New Year's Eve. Pilot Gareth Morgan also died.

Nat Nagy, executive director of transport safety for the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, said the investigation would cover the plane's maintenance record as well as its components and any recordings of the flight. "So that could involve avionics or instruments that are attached to the aeroplane, but also things like mobile phones, iPads, GoPros that we will be able to recover data from," Nagy said, announcing the intention to recover the DHC-2 Beaver Seaplane this week.

A preliminary report is expected in a month. The sightseeing aircraft, which was heading to Rose Bay in Sydney Harbor, made a sharp turn before plummeting straight into the water in the suburb of

Cowan 50 kilometers north of Sydney. Witnesses on a nearby houseboat told national broadcaster ABC how they dived into the river, which was covered with aviation fuel, in an attempted rescue. Three men repeatedly plunged in to try and open the plane's doors as it sank. Unsuccessful, they tied the aircraft's tail to their dinghy but were unable to move it.

"Dead set, they could have died," said Will McGovern of his three friends. "The whole time I was freaking out that this fuel was going to spark. This plane was moving fast, it was going down fast—they could have got sucked in." The families of these poor people, they need to know people were there risking their lives trying to help their family members. There was someone there trying to do something."

The Britons had watched England in the fourth Ashes Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and were set to watch the final Test in Sydney this week, Sydney's Daily Telegraph reported. England's Barmy Army cricket supporters paid tribute to them. "It's very sad to hear of the loss of any cricket fan around the world especially when it's so close to home," the Barmy Army's Chris Millard told the Telegraph. "Our thoughts are with their families."

The Barmy Army were set to hold a minute's silence before two upcoming fan matches against Australian cricket supporters, the newspaper added. Former England captain Michael Vaughan tweeted yesterday: "Saddened to hear of the passing away of Richard Cousins and some family members in Sydney ... Great man who loved the game of cricket ... Thoughts to all his family ... #RIP" —AFP

### News in brief

#### India buys Israeli missiles ahead of Netanyahu visit

NEW DELHI: India is to buy 131 surface-to-air missiles from Israel in a \$70 million deal, the defense ministry announced yesterday ahead of a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Barak missiles made by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems are to be used for India's first aircraft carrier which is under construction. Netanyahu will lead a business delegation to India on a four day trip expected in mid-January. Israel has become a major defense supplier to India, selling an average of \$1 billion of military equipment each year. Last April the two countries signed a military deal worth nearly \$2 billion which includes the supply over several years of medium-range surface-to-air missiles, launchers and communications technology. It was unclear whether the deal announced yesterday was part of that. The Indian defense ministry also said it had approved the purchase of 240 bombs from Russia's JSC Rosoboron Exports for \$188 million.

#### Two dead, thousands flee in storm-weary Philippines

MANILA: Two people were killed and thousands fled strong winds and floods as a tropical depression hit the central Philippines yesterday, following deadly back-to-back storms during the Christmas season. The deaths were reported on Cebu Island, where an elderly woman was killed in a landslide while a man died after he hit his head on the pavement as the storm cut off electricity in the area. Tropical Storm Kai-Tak killed 47 people in the central Philippines last month, while Tropical Storm Tembin killed 240 on the southern island of Mindanao. The state weather service warned the new disturbance was poised to hit the western tourist island of Palawan with gusts of 65 kilometers per hour later yesterday. "The residents are really sad. It is tough that we have three storms coming one after another. People have lost their livelihood and have had no rest since Christmas," Gil Acosta, information officer of the island, said. Palawan accounted for 37 of the recorded Tembin deaths, with 60 other people still missing, Acosta added.

#### Jakarta launches airport train to tackle gridlock

JAKARTA: Jakarta launched the first train connecting its international airport to the city centre yesterday as the sprawling Indonesian capital moves to tackle the gridlock that can make the trip an hours-long headache. The new system links Soekarno-Hatta International Airport on the outskirts of Jakarta to downtown in 55 minutes, cutting driving time by half or more. President Joko Widodo inaugurated the new system that officials hope will convince travelers to make the switch from private to public transportation on the 38 kilometer route. Jakarta is also building its first subway and light-rail systems, with service expected to start in 2019. "Thank god that after three years and working hard to finish this Soekarno-Hatta airport train, this morning we can inaugurate it and we know that this train is a way to provide transportation in Jakarta to reduce traffic jams," Widodo said. The direct link cost 3.6 trillion rupiah (\$266 million) with a total of 42 trips scheduled daily. The service is to run from dawn to shortly before midnight.

## Analysis

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FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24835619  
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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## N Korean Olympic overture aimed at blunting pressure

After a year of making threats and weapons advances, North Korea's leader appears to be using the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in South Korea as a tool to blunt growing international pressure on Pyongyang while leaving his nuclear arsenal untouched. Kim Jong Un, in his annual New Year's Day speech, called for reduced tensions on the Korean peninsula and flagged the North's possible participation in the Games next month, just across the border in Pyeongchang.

South Korea has been eager to involve North Korea to ensure the Games are not disrupted by any further nuclear or missile tests and as a way of re-establishing dialogue with the reclusive state. Analysts say Kim's gambit is aimed at driving a wedge between Seoul and Washington, which has advocated a strategy of maximum pressure and insisted that all options, including military ones, are on the table.

But the move also targets the broader international consensus involving major players China, Russia and Japan that has tightened sanctions and deepened isolation for North Korea in recent months. "A major part of the Kim family playbook is to exploit and to widen the divergences in the interests, in the first instance between the U.S. and South Korea, but more broadly among the five major neighbors," said Daniel Russel, the top US diplomat for East Asia until last April and now at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

North Korea has long followed such a strategy of intense provocations followed by conciliatory phases aimed at exposing rifts, he said. "This is a classic united we stand, divided we fall situation," Russel said. "It's always easier to maintain five party solidarity when North Korea is behaving badly." US President Donald Trump has led a drive to step up global sanctions on North Korea as it seeks to develop nuclear-tipped missiles capable of hitting the United States.

Yesterday, Trump said sanctions and other pressures were starting to have a big impact on North Korea but he withheld judgment on Pyongyang's offer to talk. "Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time," Trump wrote in a Twitter post, using his nickname for Kim. "Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not - we will see!" Washington says the full cooperation of China, Russia and other countries is vital to the success of this effort, which includes significant restrictions on trade and other ties with North Korea. China, which remains North Korea's major partner, has curtailed trade in line with United Nations sanctions, but Washington has called for it to do more to isolate Pyongyang.

### 'Absurd Overture'

South Korea's government publicly welcomed Kim's overture, and President Moon Jae-in has pushed to ease tensions ahead of the Games by postponing joint military drills with American troops until after the Olympics. Moon also said on Tuesday the improvement of inter-Korean ties was linked to resolving North Korea's nuclear program. The White House has yet to make a detailed response. However, powerful Republican Senator Lindsey Graham suggested the United States would boycott the Games if North Korea attends.

"Allowing Kim Jong Un's North Korea to participate in Winter Olympics would give legitimacy to the most illegitimate regime on the planet," Graham said on Twitter. "I'm confident South Korea will reject this absurd overture and fully believe that if North Korea goes to the Winter Olympics, we do not." The participation of North Korean athletes and officials in Olympic events may create some awkward moments for international leaders who have spent months painting the country as a pariah state, said Robert Kelly, a professor at South Korea's Pusan National University. "It puts the South Koreans in a weird position because it potentially creates tension between US and Japan who have gone to lengths to isolate the regime," he said.

Japan's relationship with South Korea is already seen as under some strain, with one former Japanese diplomat saying Tokyo was suffering from "fatigue" with Seoul and lacking confidence in Moon. Still, analysts were sceptical Kim's gambit would do lasting damage to the alliance between Seoul and Washington, or to the international push for sanctions. "I doubt that there will be a substantial reversal in global economic and political isolation measures in the near term," said Scott Snyder, director of US-Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

### More Missile Tests

At the heart of analysts' skepticism is Kim's apparent lack of appetite for compromise on the main points of nuclear weapons, missile testing, or human rights. "Participation in things like the Olympics are pseudo-concessions, because the North doesn't actually have to give up anything," Kelly said. In his speech, Kim vowed he would spend 2018 "mass-producing nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles" to "give a spur to the efforts for deploying them for action".

That means further missile tests are almost certain, with more focus on "realistic" exercises than developmental tests, said Joshua Pollack, a senior researcher at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California. "The major theme here for strategic forces is shifting from development to serial production, deployment, and increased readiness," he said. —Reuters



## Writers, Slovaks, scandal cast Prague Spring spell

Fifty years ago, writers - including Milan Kundera - and a bizarre scandal helped spark a fleeting but heady spell of openness in communist Czechoslovakia before Soviet tanks rolled in to crush it. The 1968 Prague Spring that brought "Socialism with a human face" to Czechoslovakia was personified by the smiling Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak who had become Communist Party (KSC) chief on Jan 5 the same year. But according to sociologist Jirina Siklova who participated in the events, the short-lived breath of freedom in the Soviet bloc had deeper roots stretching back to the Czechoslovak writers' congress the year before.

She believes that dissident writers like Kundera - whose 1967 satirical novel "The Joke" focused on totalitarianism - and Vaclav Havel, who decades later became Czech president, paved the way to greater openness by demanding the ruling Communist Party guarantee freedom of expression. "The KSC started to split and it was clear something would happen," Siklova, who was a Communist Party member at that time, told AFP. "I thought that if we became more liberal, the Soviet Union would leave us alone because we're so small. The expectations were immense," she added.

### Human touch

Petr Pithart, also a communist at that time and later speaker of the Czech Senate (1996-1998 and 2000-2004), recalls that a clash between Czech and Slovak communists also snowballed, giving rise to change. "The Slovaks wanted to live with the Czechs as equals, and they understood a direct attack was the only option," said Pithart. Slovak communists, who felt marginalized by the faraway Czech-dominated central government based in Prague, lobbied for a greater say in decision-making. Their demands were met when Dubcek replaced hardline President Antonin Novotny - a Czech unpopular among Slovaks and Prague intellectuals - as KSC boss.

Dubcek's charming smile and human touch set him apart from his dour-faced party peers. "He went out to meet the people, he went to a public swimming pool and joined ordinary people to watch football or ice hockey," Oldrich Tuma, a historian at the Czech Academy of



This file photo taken on Aug 25, 1968 shows Prague residents surrounding Soviet tanks in Prague as the Soviet-led invasion by the Warsaw Pact armies crushed the so-called Prague Spring reform in former Czechoslovakia. —AFP

Sciences' Institute of Contemporary History, told AFP. Facing popular discontent over the chronic shortage of everyday goods, the Dubcek-led KSC kicked off cautious economic reforms. This was enough to raise eyebrows in the Kremlin, which grew increasingly angry.

### Clover seed scandal

A colorful scandal erupted when top military officials were caught taking handsome bribes for the illegal sale of prized military stockpiles of clover seed to state farms. One of the key suspects was President Novotny's protégé, General Jan Sejna, who - facing prison - fled to

Italy and then the United States, where he applied for asylum and got it. Sejna's high-profile defection finally toppled Novotny, who stepped down as president on March 22, 1968.

This opened the floodgates: Prague dropped censorship, allowing the press freedom demanded by writers - a first in the Soviet bloc. "This was a top-class scandal and within two or three days, all barriers fell, the media suddenly wrote about everything," said Pithart. New non-communist organizations such as "K 231", a club of former political prisoners, or the "Club of Active Non-Partisans" soon promised to evolve into opposition parties. —AFP

## Johannesburg suffocates in shadow of mine dumps

"Look at my spinach. That is the sand from the mine. The yellow one in the soil - it's destroying everything," said Thabo Ngubane as he tended his small allotment in Soweto. In Johannesburg tens of thousands of poor South Africans like him spend their lives in the shadow of vast mine dumps, exposing them to toxic substances like arsenic, lead and uranium. The gold rush from 1886 that caused the imposing slag heaps to spring up around South Africa's largest city saw many investors and miners become fabulously wealthy.

The same was not true of those who lived and worked near the pits, and were exposed to dangerous cocktails of dust and chemicals. More than 200 mounds of earth contaminated with heavy metals, notably uranium, lie within sight of South Africa's commercial capital according to the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic. They include the one close to where 50-year-old Thabo tends his vegetables in Snake Park in the north of the Soweto township. "When there is heavy rains, all the mine waste comes here and erodes everything," he said. "This month 22 of my baby pigs died... I think it's because of the

mine." When the waste comes into contact with water, oxidation causes an extremely dangerous solution to form.

### 'Toxic sand'

The company responsible for the slag heap built a storage pool to allow contaminated water to evaporate in an effort to protect the neighboring homes from pollution. But the pool walls have been poorly maintained allowing acid water to leak into Thabo's agricultural plot for much of the past year. "I'm coughing all the time... My daughter also," Thabo complained. He has no doubt that tainted vegetables and toxic dust are to blame.

His case is far from unique. Several other areas in Soweto, which is home to more than a million and a half people, have also fallen foul of Johannesburg's mining legacy. Twenty kilometers east in Riverlea Extension 1 is a community of 2,500 people including Rose Plaatjies whose home is surrounded by three mine dumps. Rose, a retired laborer, has been there since 1962 when she was forced to move to comply with the apartheid-era rules on segregated living.

Black people from the region often moved to Soweto while "coloreds" like Rose moved to Riverlea. Now 63, she suffers from shortness of breath and is dependent on an oxygen tank - all of which she blames on the mines. "The toxic sand affects a lot of us - I can't breathe because of the dust," she said. During the dry months of July and August, wind blows tons of dust from the mounds onto the streets, coating laundry, sweeping into homes and contaminating food.

"In almost every street in this community, people are living on oxygen machines," said David Van Wyck, a researcher at South



A picture taken on Dec 14, 2017 shows children playing on mattresses abandoned at a dump site in Riverlea, a impoverished suburb on the fringe of one of the biggest mine dumps in Soweto, Johannesburg. —AFP

Africa's Benchmark foundation, a Christian NGO. More than half of Riverlea's residents claim to suffer from a cough, asthma, sinusitis or tuberculosis according to a report published by Benchmark. "Our children have eczema, our children have eye problems... (a neighbor had) twins with undeveloped lungs - one has died," said Rose. Statistics show that Riverlea is an outlier. Respiratory and cardiac illnesses are far more prevalent among the elderly in the area than in similarly poor neighborhoods elsewhere, according to the South African Medical Research Council.

### 'A lot of people suffer'

The Council also found that the yard at

the local school had abnormally high levels of lead. "A lot of people suffer from skin complaints like eczema... as well as asthma," confirmed a local doctor who declined to be named. But in the absence of any large-scale study, authorities are wary of blaming the conditions suffered by the local population on the waste heaps that encircle them. "There are no studies that make a direct link, to our knowledge, to the exposure there and the health problems that people are experiencing," said Council member Angela Mathee. Such research would be the responsibility of the central government, which has not yet commissioned such a study, she added. —AFP



Camels walk across the Liwa desert, some 250 km west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi, during the Liwa 2018 Moreeb Dune Festival yesterday. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a variety of races (cars, bikes, falcons, camels and horses) and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

## Pak summons US envoy, hits back...

Continued from Page 1

The statement came one day after US ambassador David Hale was called to the foreign ministry in Islamabad in a rare public rebuke. Neither US nor Pakistani officials have commented on what was said at the meeting. After the Sept 11 attacks on the United States, Washington forged a strategic alliance with Islamabad to help in its fight against militancy. But Washington and Kabul have long accused Islamabad of supporting militant groups including the Taliban, believed to have links to Pakistan's shadowy military establishment which aims to use them in Afghanistan as a regional bulwark against arch-nemesis India.

Islamabad has repeatedly denied the accusations, lambasting the US for ignoring the thousands who have been killed on Pakistani soil and the billions spent fighting extremists. Yesterday, China, which has stepped up a multi-billion dollar economic investment in Pakistan, spoke out in its defense, with a foreign ministry spokesman praising its "outstanding contribution to the global cause of counter-terrorism".

Trump's August speech, in which he accused Islamabad of harboring "agents of chaos", triggered a series of high-level diplomatic meetings in the US and Pakistan. The Trump administration also told Congress it was weighing whether to withhold \$255 million in earmarked aid to Islamabad over its failure to crack down more effectively on terror groups. But though Islamabad said yesterday that recent meetings had created a "better understanding", it has given few signs of

concessions since August.

Of foremost concern in the US is Islamabad's attitude toward the powerful Haqqani network, whose leader Sirajuddin Haqqani is the deputy of the Afghan Taliban. The group, accused of some of the most lethal attacks on US forces in Afghanistan, has been dubbed a "veritable arm" of Pakistani intelligence. For many years it found safe haven in Pakistan's tribal areas, however the military launched an operation there in 2014, and now insists it has eradicated all safe havens in the country.

For Pakistan, analyst Imtiaz Gul noted, the assumption is that archrival and fellow nuclear power India is fuelling Trump's hostility towards Islamabad. India has long vied with Pakistan for influence in Afghanistan, and Trump and other administration officials have called on New Delhi to become more involved there - an idea that is anathema to Pakistan, which fears encirclement. "Now Pakistan's first attempt will be to neutralize India's narrative of Pakistan," Gul said.

Afghan defense spokesman General Dawlat Waziri said Trump had "declared the reality", adding that "Pakistan has never helped or participated in tackling terrorism". Jitendra Singh, a junior minister at the Indian prime minister's office, said Trump's comment had "vindicated India's stand as far as terror is concerned and as far as Pakistan's role in perpetrating terrorism is concerned."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, asked during a briefing about Trump's tweet, did not mention the United States. "We have said many times that Pakistan has put forth great effort and made great sacrifices in combating terrorism," he said. "It has made a prominent contribution to global anti-terror efforts." Pakistani officials say tough US measures threaten to push Pakistan further into the arms of China, which has pledged to invest \$57 billion in Pakistani infrastructure as part of its vast Belt and Road initiative. — Agencies

## Khamenei blames Iran's 'enemies'...

Continued from Page 1

The estimated death toll is now 21 since protests began in second city Mashhad and quickly spread to become the biggest challenge to the Islamic regime since mass demonstrations in 2009.

As violence has grown, authorities have stepped up arrests, with at least 450 people detained in Tehran since Saturday and 100 more around Isfahan on Monday, officials told local media. US President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly criticized Tehran since the latest protests began, praised the demonstrators for acting against the "brutal and corrupt" regime and said Iranians had "little food, big inflation and no human rights". Iran's foreign ministry fired back that the US leader was "wasting his time sending useless and insulting tweets" and would be better off focusing on "homeless and hungry people" in his own country.

The unrest in Iran appears leaderless and focused on provincial towns and cities, with only small and sporadic protests in Tehran amid a heavy police presence. Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, described the unrest as a "proxy war against the Iranian people" and said online accounts in the United States, Britain and Saudi Arabia are fomenting protests.

Many on the streets of Tehran agreed with his assessment. "When there is a protest, you can be sure other countries will take advantage of it and interfere," Mehdi Rahmani, a 30-year-old architectural engineer, told AFP. But he well understood the economic grievances driving the unrest. "I have managed

at last after a long time to find a job, but with a very low salary. The root of people's protests is merely their economic problems, the problem of youth unemployment," he said.

Moderate President Hassan Rouhani has tried to play down the unrest, which began over economic woes but quickly turned against the regime as a whole. In a statement Monday he called them "nothing" and vowed Iranians would deal with "this minority who... insult the sanctities and values of the revolution". Pro-regime rallies were held across several towns and cities - reflecting continued support among a large conservative section of society. The head of Tehran's revolutionary court, Mousa Ghazanfarabadi, warned that as violence grows punishments for demonstrators would get "heavier". "We no longer consider them as protesters demanding rights, but as people targeting the regime," he told the conservative Tasnim news agency.

Rouhani came to power in 2013 promising to mend the economy and ease social tensions, but high living costs and a 12 percent unemployment rate have left many feeling that progress is too slow. The young are the most affected, with as many as 40 percent jobless according to analysts, and rural areas particularly hard-hit. Rouhani acknowledged there was "no problem bigger than unemployment" in a speech on Sunday, and also vowed a more balanced media and more transparency.

Turkey yesterday expressed concern about the unrest in a statement calling for "common sense" to "prevail to prevent any escalation". The European Union on Monday pushed Iran to guarantee the right to protest. In 2009, authorities ruthlessly put down protests against the re-election of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. At least 36 people were killed in 2009, according to an official toll, while the opposition says 72 died. — Agencies

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## Sports

# Federer cruises towards Australian Open with another Hopman Cup win

## Belinda Bencic, on the comeback trail after injuries



PERTH: Roger Federer of Switzerland hits a return against Karen Khachanov of Russia during their sixth session men's singles match on day four of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

PERTH: Roger Federer took another impressive step towards his Australian Open title defence yesterday with a straight-sets win over Russian Karen Khachanov at the mixed teams Hopman Cup, as many of his main rivals faltered due to injury.

Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Milos Raonic and Kei Nishikori are also under injury clouds, while world number eight Jack Sock succumbed to a hip problem earlier in the day in Perth, forcing him to retire from his singles match.

But there were no such dramas for the elder statesman Federer, who 12 months ago stunned the tennis world by ending an almost four-year Grand Slam drought with a victory at the Australian Open, after also preparing at the Hopman Cup. The 36-year-old was too good for Khachanov, making it two straight-sets wins from as many singles matches this week as Switzerland beat Russia 3-0 in their Group B tie in front of a record Hopman Cup crowd.

Federer was stretched by Khachanov, particularly in

the second set when the pair traded powerful groundstrokes. The Russian held a set point in the tie-breaker and also saved two match points held by Federer, before the Swiss champion prevailed after Khachanov hit a forehand perilously close to the line.

It was called in by the linesman, but Federer challenged and was rewarded when replays showed the ball was out by millimetres, handing the 19-time Grand Slam champion a 6-3, 7-6 (10/8) win. "I thought the intensity was great and the level high too," Federer said.

"It was a good match overall and I was happy with my



PERTH: Belinda Bencic of Switzerland hits a return against Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia during their women's singles match on day four of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth. — AFP

performance." The 74-ranked Belinda Bencic, on the comeback trail after injuries stalled her promising career, then upset world number 15

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in three sets, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 in just under two hours to clinch the tie for the Swiss.

In the dead mixed doubles rubber, the Swiss completed a clean sweep with a three-set win under the Fast4 format.

### PAT CASH'S RETURN

Both Switzerland and the United States' pairing of Sock and CoCo Vandeweghe, who beat Japan 2-1 in contentious circumstances earlier in the day, have won their opening two ties. The victor in their clash on

Thursday will advance to Saturday's final and Federer said he expected Sock to be fit for that tie.

Sock retired early in the second set of his men's singles clash with Japan's Yuichi Sugita, having injured his hip during a first set tie-breaker. The Group B tie ended with an exhibition mixed doubles match featuring the return of 52-year-old former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash to the court to team with Vandeweghe, who he coaches.

Cash also played in the inaugural Hopman Cup in 1989. Prior to Sock's injury, Japan's Naomi Osaka had withdrawn from her singles match with Vandeweghe due to illness. The end result of the injury and illness for both sides was the United States being given an intriguing 2-1 win, as Japan was ruled to have forfeited the women's singles and mixed doubles before the Sock injury. However, the fitness of Sock for the remainder of the tournament, and more importantly the upcoming Australian Open, was in doubt after he limped off the court. Vandeweghe and Sock were beaten by the French team of Kristina Mladenovic and Richard Gasquet in last year's decider. — AFP



## Jack Sock succumbed to a hip problem

and oppressive humidity as Kronic fought back to win the second set on a tiebreak. Muguruza received treatment from the physio on court before the start of the decider and broke Kronic, only to collapse while serving to consolidate the service break. "I continued to think that with the match they (cramps) might go away, and then they were increasing, increasing. And then I had a lot of my body cramping," Muguruza said.

The loss ends any hope Muguruza had of leapfrogging Simona Halep and becoming world number one before the seedings are decided for the Australian Open, which begins on January 15. Kronic will now play Anastasija Sevastova after the seventh-seeded Latvian crushed Sorana Cirstea of Romania 6-2, 6-1. Britain's fifth seed Johanna Konta survived a two-and-a-half hour marathon against Croatia's Ajla Tomljanovic in the evening match. Konta came back from losing the first set to win the match 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. Last year's runner-up Alize Cornet eased into the final eighth with a straight-sets win over Croatia's Mirjana Lucic-Baroni. Cornet, who won her first-round match when fourth seed Caroline Garcia retired injured, was too consistent for Lucic-Baroni and won 6-1, 7-5.

Murray suffered a right hip injury in 2017 and has not played on the ATP tour since losing a tough five-setter to American Sam Querrey in the quarter-finals at Wimbledon.

The 30-year-old Scot issued a statement yesterday announcing his withdrawal from

the tournament, and did not say whether he would be able to play the year's first Grand Slam. Murray said he would stay in Brisbane as he "works towards returning to the tennis circuit".

"I'm very disappointed to be withdrawing from the Brisbane International," he added. "I came here with every intention of making a strong start to the year, but sadly my team and I don't feel that I'm where I need to be just yet to compete at the high-

est level." Earlier, 21-year-old South Korean Chung Hyeon stunned fifth seed Gilles Muller from Luxembourg 6-3, 7-6 (7/1), while US qualifier Michael Mmoh upset Argentine Federico Delbonis 6-3, 6-4. Britain's Kyle Edmund survived a barrage of 18 aces from 18-year-old Canadian Denis Shapovalov to win in three sets 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, and Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin downed seventh-seeded Bosnian Damir Dzumhur 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-2. — AFP

## French Open champ Ostapenko suffers defeat in Shenzhen

SHENZHEN: French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko slumped to a shock defeat in the first round of the Shenzhen Open yesterday only days after beating Serena Williams in the American's comeback match. Number two seed Ostapenko of Latvia lost to the big-serving Czech Krystina Pliskova 6-1, 6-4 in just an hour and 20 minutes. Ostapenko had beaten Williams via a super tie-break 6-2, 3-6, 10-5 in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, but she had no answer to the power of Pliskova, identical twin sister of former world number one Karolina.

"I felt a bit nervous in the second set, but my serve was really working today, which was a big help," Pliskova said after the match. Pliskova, third on the WTA Tour's ace charts last season, raced out to a 5-0 lead to start the match. "My serve was great today, especially in the first set. I feel like it's really fast here, so that can be tricky for both of us, and the first of us playing fast won the point." It was not the start to 2018 that Ostapenko wanted, with the first Grand Slam of the year, the Australian Open, starting in 13 days' time. Earlier there had been disappointment for the home crowd when Chinese number three seed Zhang Shuai was bundled out in three sets by Kazakhstan's Zarina Diyas. — AFP

## Brisbane too hot for Muguruza as Murray withdraws

BRISBANE: World number two Garbine Muguruza suffered a fitness scare ahead of this month's Australian Open when she was forced to retire from the Brisbane International yesterday with severe cramping. The men's draw also suffered a major blow when Andy Murray withdrew—the second star player to pull out after top seed Rafael Nadal did so late last week. Wimbledon champion Muguruza was ahead 2-1 in the deciding set against Serbia's Aleksandra Kronic in the second round of the warm-up tournament for the season's first Grand Slam event, when she collapsed after a serve.

The Spanish top seed could not continue and handed the match to Kronic 5-7, 7-6 (7/3), 2-1. "I felt in trouble in the second set when I was 2-0 up," Muguruza said. "I started to feel my calves were cramping."

Muguruza had won a tight first set and appeared heading for a straight sets win over Kronic when she opened up a 5-2 lead in the second. However, she began to struggle in the 30 Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) heat

said to her at the net, I thought it was a great quality match. In the end, I won it so I have another opportunity to keep going." Despite Riske's early lead, Sharapova hit 34 winners, nearly three times Riske's total.

The world number 59 was helped by 11 aces, and managed to save seven out of 10 break points. French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko meanwhile slumped to a shock defeat yesterday only days after beating Serena Williams in the American's comeback match.

Number two seed Ostapenko of Latvia lost to the big-serving Czech Krystina Pliskova 6-1, 6-4 in just an hour and 20 minutes. Ostapenko had beaten Williams via a super tie-break 6-2, 3-6, 10-5 in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, but she had no answer to the power of Pliskova, identical twin sister of former world number one Karolina.

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"My serve was great today, especially in the first set. I feel like it's really fast here, so that can be tricky for both of us, and the first of us playing fast won the point." It



SHENZHEN: Maria Sharapova of Russia hits a return against Alison Riske of the US during their women's singles second round match at the WTA Shenzhen Open tennis tournament in Shenzhen. — AFP

was not the start to 2018 that Ostapenko wanted, with the first Grand Slam of the year—the Australian Open—starting in 13 days' time. Earlier there was disappoint-

ment for the home crowd when Chinese number three seed Zhang Shuai was bundled out in three sets by Kazakhstan's Zarina Diyas. — AFP

## Sharapova downs Riske in tough test at Shenzhen Open

SHENZHEN: Five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova came back from a set down to defeat American Alison Riske at the Shenzhen Open yesterday and book a spot in the quarter-finals. Riske, who had been hoping for her first win against the former world number one, proved to be a tough opponent early in the match before the Russian finally overcame her 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in just under two and a half hours. "I'm glad I got this kind of match. Although I would've wanted a quick and easy victory, these are the kind of matches that you need, especially with such a short preparation going into the Australian Open in terms of matchplay," Sharapova said afterwards. "I'm just glad that I came back. She played a really great match and as I

## Edmund battles past Shapovalov in Brisbane opener

BRISBANE: Kyle Edmund was taken the distance before he outlasted talented Canadian teenager Denis Shapovalov in the opening round of the Brisbane International yesterday. Edmund, who prevailed 6-7(5) 7-6(4) 6-4, struggled with his serve right from the start of the match but managed to save five out of six break points to overcome his opponent in two hours and 30 minutes. "Everyone wants to start well but the year is so long that if there's positivity you feel good but even if you don't start well it doesn't mean the year is going to be a bad one," the Briton said.

"It's always good to come to Brisbane, I made the quarters last year, got a good win this year so it's definitely helped my game going into the year." Edmund next plays Chung Hyeon after the South Korean world number 58 withstood a barrage of booming serves from fifth seed Gilles Muller before winning 6-3 7-6(1). Earlier, former world number one Andy Murray's lingering hip issues forced him to withdraw from the event with the Briton admitting he was unsure whether he could recover in time for the Australian Open later this month. — Reuters

Sports

# England ponder taking a spin with Crane in Sydney

## Sydney Cricket Ground has a reputation as a turning wicket

**SYDNEY:** Leg-spinner Mason Crane's experience playing in Sydney may prove the clincher to earn him a debut as England try to salvage their Ashes series with a win over Australia in tomorrow's final Test.

Trailing 3-0 and the Ashes lost, England are considering a possible team change for the fifth Sydney Test with Moeen Ali's place under threat and Crane pushing for his first cap. Moeen has played 48 Tests and came to Australia as an accomplished all-rounder but he has under-performed, taking only three wickets and averaging 19 with the bat.

The Sydney Cricket Ground has a reputation as a turning wicket, enhancing Crane's chances of playing. The 20-year-old Hampshire leggie also boasts a five-wicket haul playing at the famous ground for New South Wales last year.

Crane, who was impressing in Sydney club cricket, was called up by NSW and took five wickets in the Sheffield Shield victory against South Australia.

"With the series lost it gives us the opportunity to look at some different people," England's Australian coach Trevor Bayliss said this week.

Asked if Crane was ready for Test cricket, Bayliss added: "There's maybe no time like the present to find out. "We think he's a guy that has got the goods and the more he plays at this level the better he will get. You have got to start somewhere." England outplayed Australia for large tracts of last week's fourth Test in Melbourne only for Steve Smith to bat out the entire last day with an unbeaten century for a draw.

### A BETTER TEAM

Prior to Melbourne, experienced pair Alastair Cook and Stuart Broad were having lean series and under pressure for their spots. But Cook carried his bat with an unbeaten 244 in the highest Test score at the Melbourne Cricket Ground by an overseas player, while Broad bounced back to form with five wickets in the

match. "We are a better team than what we've played on this trip and that is a benchmark for our side moving forward," captain Joe Root said after the Melbourne draw. "We will try to make sure that we go one better in Sydney and get the win that we want."

But to break through in Sydney, where they have won twice in the last four Ashes Tests, England must find a way of shackling the freescoring Smith. Smith has enjoyed a phenomenal series, scoring three centuries including a Test best 239 in Perth to amass 604 runs in six innings at an astonishing average of 151.

The Australia skipper, who averages 63.55 in his 60 Tests, is now in outright second place for the highest-ever ICC ranking points behind Don Bradman. "I'm adapting to each of the bowlers, I'm changing my plans to them and how they're trying to get me out," Smith said. "Hopefully, I can just keep working and keep getting better as well." Root said his team had to keep believing they can get Smith

out. "We just have to keep trying every option if he does get in and if it is a good surface to bat on, and keep trusting and believing in what we do," Root said.

Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc, who missed the Melbourne Test with a bruised heel, is vying with recalled off-spinner Ashton Agar to likely replace Jackson Bird in the final Australia XI.

### TEAMS (PROBABLE)

Australia - David Warner, Cameron Bancroft, Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith (capt), Shaun Marsh, Mitchell Marsh, Tim Paine, Mitchell Starc/Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Nathan Lyon.

England - Alastair Cook, Mark Stoneman, James Vince, Joe Root (capt), Dawid Malan, Jonny Bairstow, Moeen Ali/Mason Crane, Chris Woakes, Tom Curran, Stuart Broad, James Anderson.

Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena (SRI) Joel Wilson (WIS) TV umpire: Sundaram Ravi (IND) Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (SRI). — AFP



MELBOURNE: File photo shows Australia's captain Steve Smith celebrates scoring his century against England on the final day of the fourth Ashes cricket Test match at the MCG in Melbourne on December 30, 2017. —AFP

“We are a better team than what we’ve played on this trip”

## India's winning run under threat from S African green tops

**CAPE TOWN:** India's long winning streak in Test cricket is under threat in a quick-fire three match series against South Africa this month, where their status as the top ranked nation in the format faces a stiff examination.

Virat Kohli's side have won nine successive series to climb to the top of the International Cricket Council's rankings but most of the success has come on batting friendly wickets.

South Africa are expected to prepare 'green top' wickets for the Tests in Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg, all squeezed into January, to hand India an unfamiliar and difficult challenge.

India have traditionally struggled against the home bowling attack with just two victories in 17 previous Tests on tour in South Africa. But while past touring sides have crumbled under the barrage of pace, this is an experienced India squad, 13 of whom have previously toured South Africa and will know what to expect.

"All I can say is the team is up for the challenge," said India coach Ravi Shastri ahead of the first test at Newlands, which starts on Friday. "If you asked me four years ago, I would have said no. But this team has gained in experience," he added.

"The beauty of this team is it does not matter who opposition it is. For us every game is a home game. Even this is a home game for us at Newlands. You see the pitch, you adapt. No excuses, no complaints.

"Tomorrow you go to England and it might be seam-



MUMBAI: File photo shows Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni (R) wears a Santa Claus cap as teammates Kuldeep Yadav (C) and Hardik Pandya (L) look on during celebrations after India won the third T20 international cricket match against Sri Lanka at The Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on December 24, 2017. —AFP

ing all over the place. You come to India it might be turning. If you want to be rated as a side, you adapt to the conditions. It's as simple as that."

South Africa, who are second in the ICC test rankings, are at full strength for the first time in almost two years as AB de Villiers returns from a lengthy absence from the

first class game. The bowling department is also reinforced by the return from injury of Dale Steyn and his long-time new ball partner Vernon Philander. The three Test series is followed by six One Day Internationals and three Twenty20 clashes between the two countries through to the end of February. — Reuters

## Selection headache for South Africa ahead of Test

**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa have a selection conundrum as they consider their team to face India in the first Test on Friday with veteran bowler Dale Steyn far from sure of a place in the side, coach Ottis Gibson said yesterday.

"We have to try and pick the best team for the conditions and it is clearly a selection headache, but it is a good headache to have all the best players back and available to play," he told a news conference.

AB de Villiers has returned after a two-year hiatus from the test arena while Steyn is available again after a year-long lay-off and major shoulder surgery for the three match series against the top-ranked test team. But Steyn, five wickets shy of becoming South Africa's top test wicket taker, will only play if South Africa decide to go

with an extra bowler on what is expected to be a green, seamer-friendly wicket at Newlands.

"We don't know just yet whether we will play him in the first test but, depending on the selection, he might well play," Gibson said. The 34-year-old Steyn has not had a rigorous examination of his injury since returning to action in November and it is a risk to play him, particularly if he breaks down as he did against England in late 2015 and Australia in 2016. "I don't think that if we were to pick a three-man seam attack plus a spinner we would want to put him in, in case something happens and he leaves the team vulnerable if he can't finish the game," Gibson added.

"I'm not saying that will happen, but you don't want to take that risk with the first test. We have to look at the best combination to try and win the game and he will certainly come into the discussion but it depends on the formation of the team we put on the field."

### QUICK WICKET

Gibson, recently appointed South Africa coach after previously serving as England's bowling coach, said the hosts had asked for a quick wicket to be prepared and that looks likely to be the case



Dale Steyn

at the toss on Friday. But he warned the bowlers they still had to efficiently use the favourable conditions. "With some grass on the wicket, bowlers sometimes tend to get a bit carried away. You still

have to put the ball in the right area. However the wicket looks, you still have to play well on it. We will be playing the best team in the world, so we have to bring our A-game," he said. — Reuters

## ICC rates MCG pitch as poor after drawn Test

**MELBOURNE:** The Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch for the fourth Ashes test has been rated "poor" by the International Cricket Council (ICC) after last week's drawn clash between hosts Australia and England saw only 24 wickets fall over five days.

The track drew criticism from both competing teams after Australia scored 327 and 263-4 declared in their two innings while England scored 491 in their only innings. "The bounce of the MCG pitch was medium, but slow in pace and got slower as the match progressed," match referee Ranjan Madugalle said in his report to the ICC, reflecting the concerns of the match officials over the performance of the pitch.

"The nature of the pitch did not change over the five days and there was no natural deterioration. "As such, the pitch did not allow an even contest between the bat and the ball as it neither favoured the batsmen too much nor it gave the bowlers sufficient opportunity to take wickets."

### DISAPPOINTING

Cricket Australia (CA) has two weeks to respond to the report, the sport's governing body said in a statement. CA Chief Executive James Sutherland said CA will strive to avoid a repeat and discuss the matter with the administrators of the ground.

"Such a rating is extremely disappointing for all involved," Sutherland said. "We work closely with all our venues to encourage the best possible international cricket playing environment. "We'll be taking on board advice from the ICC, players and relevant experts to work with the Melbourne Cricket Club to ensure this rating is not repeated."

The MCG test was the last to be rated under the ICC's pitch and outfield monitoring process, with a revision of the process set to come into effect from Thursday. Under the new process, if a pitch or outfield is rated as being substandard, that venue will be allocated a number of demerit points, which will be active for a five-year period.

### POOR AND UNFIT

"One demerit point will be awarded to venues whose pitches are rated by the match referees as below average, while three and five demerit points will be awarded to venues whose pitches are marked as poor and unfit, respectively," the ICC said.

"When a venue accumulates five demerit points, it will be suspended from hosting any international cricket for a period of 12 months, while a venue will be suspended from staging any international cricket for 24 months when it reaches the threshold of 10 demerit points." The fifth Ashes Test begins in Sydney tomorrow. — Reuters

## Sports

# Speed merchants still kings of the hill as skiers seek a place in history

## Snowboarding are doing a great job to attract younger audiences

**LONDON:** Olympic downhill have a special allure, with the fastest and bravest Alpine skiers going full tilt for gold and a place in history.

Pyeongchang will see no change there but newer events more targeted at millennials and younger audiences may be muscling in on the limelight enjoyed by the traditional blue riband races.

The mixed team event, run already at world championships and featuring male and female skiers in a parallel slalom format with races lasting some 25 seconds, should be a hit on its Olympic debut.

"I think it will be one of the highlights of the Olympics," women's Alpine race director Aile Skaardal, a two times men's Super-G world champion for Norway, said before the season started. Freestyle skiing, slopestyle and big air snowboarding - another eye-catching 2018 Olympic newcomer - have the added appeal of proving more accessible to skiers from non-Alpine nations.

Traditional Alpine skiing has been woven into the fabric of the Games since 1936, even if the men's downhill did not appear until 1948, and a core element for broadcasters and the commercial sector alike.

That remains the case, despite the increasing range of media platforms and fragmentation of the audience as a whole. "Alpine is always going to be the blue riband," Matt Humphreys, winter sports boss at the UK division of ski suppliers Head told Reuters.

"When you look at these other events like slopestyle, skicross, the younger sports, they do capture the imagination probably a little bit better than Alpine because it's newer and fresher. "But ... I think it's always going to be the Alpine that wins out."

### DAINGEROUS AND DAUNTING

Reflecting its big ticket status, the men's downhill will be held on the opening Sunday of the Games at the Jeongseong Alpine centre. About as extreme as it gets, the dangerous and daunting discipline sees racers

hurtling in excess of 130kph down the mountain - and the winner often a surprise from far down the list of favourites. For US audiences the women's race on Feb. 21 could be an even bigger deal than the men's, with American speed queen Lindsey Vonn and all-rounder Mikaela Shiffrin two of the more recognisable names on the slopes. Vonn, the most successful women's World Cup ski racer of all-time with a record 78 victories, has a portfolio of sponsors that includes Under Armour, Red Bull and Head and was ranked by Forbes as the third highest earning athlete at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. NBC television said Pyeongchang, 14 hours ahead of US Eastern Time (ET), will be their "most live primetime" Winter Games yet and live Alpine skiing will feature on 11 of the 18 nights.

The US network has already reported increased viewing figures for the North American rounds of the World Cup season. Eurosport Chief Executive Peter Hutton said his broadcaster was also seeing increased viewing figures across snow sports, with all the Olympic competitions to be available on mobile devices. "Sports such as

snowboarding are doing a great job to attract younger audiences," he added.

Eurosport will also, for the first time, have a dedicated 'Radical Van' mobile social media studio at the PyeongChang Snowpark and other venues to cater for new audiences. The growth of the newer sports, however, was not cannibalising the traditional Alpine events and was in fact benefiting them, according to Rob Prazmark, founder and chief executive of 21 Sports and Entertainment Marketing Group.

"That's a good thing, for the Olympic Winter Games, that they are able to change up the sport to appeal to a younger and a different demographic," he told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"I think interest in Alpine grows because of the addition of different or extreme sports - or sports that are really most popular with a younger demographic.

“ I think it will be one of the highlights of Olympics ”



American speed queen Lindsey Vonn

The whole business of Alpine is growing.

"Downhill Alpine is still extreme," added Prazmark, who has been involved in every Olympics since 1984 as a consultant and rights negotiator. That said, he was aware from his own family how the recreational landscape was changing. "I've got four kids. They run in

ages from 34 to 21. My 21-year-old has never been on skis. She's only been on a snowboard," he said.

"And she doesn't quite understand the attraction of skis. "So that's where there's a big shift into the extreme sports, I believe. "It's a generational, millennial thing as well." — Reuters

## Without NHL players, Team USA hockey looks to Europe

**NEW YORK:** Stanley Cup winner Brian Gionta will captain a US men's Olympic ice hockey team made up of players from European leagues or the North American development ranks at next month's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

Gionta, who has played 15 years in the NHL, was named on Monday amongst more than a dozen little-known Americans playing professionally in Europe, along with a hodgepodge of minor leaguers and ex-NHL players for the Feb. 9-25 Olympics. He is the only player in the squad to have previous Olympic experience, having played for the U.S. at the 2006 Games in Turin and is well aware the team has precious little time together to try and challenge for a medal in Pyeongchang.

"The biggest challenge is getting the team to gel together as quick as possible," Gionta, who won a Stanley Cup in 2003 with the New Jersey Devils, told reporters on Monday. "We have four practices or so before we come together and start competing in games." Next month's Olympics are the first since 1994 not to include players from the National Hockey League. The league said last April it would not release players after failing to reach a deal with the International Olympic Committee to cover players' travel and insurance costs.

The NHL also were unhappy with the prospect of a nearly three-week interruption to the regular season schedule. USA Hockey named the bulk of their squad during the NHL's Winter Classic New Year's Day game between the New York Rangers and Buffalo Sabres.

Most are drawn from leagues around Europe, with a few playing in the US minors and former NHL players like Gionta. Only four come from the college ranks, ensuring the team does not mark a full return to the pre-NHL era when the last American team to win gold at the Lake Placid Games in 1980 in the 'Miracle on Ice' were predominantly collegiate players.

The 2018 team features many of the players who went to the Deutschland Cup in Germany in October in what amounted to both a trial and their only warm-up games ahead of Pyeongchang.

They lost all of their games against Slovakia, Russia and Germany and were outscored 12-4. "Obviously from a selection process it's been a real battle for us," coach Tony Granato said. "I think we've put together an outstanding group of players that will represent us well come February and give us a great chance to ... compete for a medal."

The team's first group game is on Feb. 14 against Slovenia before they face Slovakia on Feb. 16. They also face a stiff challenge on Feb. 17 from an unknown collection of Russians, who will play under the Olympic flag. — Reuters

## Bears dump Fox, Lions ditch Caldwell, Cardinals' Arians retires

**DETROIT:** The Chicago Bears and Detroit Lions rang in the New Year by firing their head coaches, while Arizona Cardinals' Bruce Arians ended a stellar career when he announced his retirement on Monday after five years at the helm. However, on what traditionally has become known as 'Black Monday', the carnage was relatively light in the National Football League. John Fox was sent packing following three seasons at the Bears, while Detroit sacked Jim Caldwell after four campaigns, bringing to six the number of teams publicly searching for a new head coach. The New York Giants ditched head coach Ben McAdoo four weeks ago and on Sunday the Indianapolis Colts dumped head coach Chuck Pagano after six seasons and the Oakland Raiders dispensed with Jack Del Rio following three campaigns. Del Rio's departure was perhaps the only surprise, with the others widely expected. But it was not one-way traffic to the exit door on Monday, with Hue Jackson retaining his position at the Cleveland Browns despite presiding over a winless season.

An emotional Arians announced his retirement after compiling a 49-30-1 record at Arizona. "The tears you see are really tears of joy, peace," said the 65-year-old, who has suffered some health problems recently, including a kidney cancer scare. "I'll miss the players. I'll miss coming out of the locker room, hearing the national anthem because it still gets me." Before becoming a head coach, Arians built a strong resume as an assistant coach, including two Super Bowl rings during his time with the Pittsburgh Steelers, where he helped develop Ben Roethlisberger into a champion quarterback. Fox, meanwhile, departs Chicago after a 5-11 season, and a 14-34 overall record. "Today is the tough part of our results-oriented business but I wish the Bears organization the best for years to come," he said in a statement released by the

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**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait knows its customers well and creates the best rewards tailored to their tastes and interest. Now NBK card holders can earn a chance to win 3 tickets to see the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia Final courtesy of Visa in Moscow in July, 2018.

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Bruce Arians

team. Fox previously spent four seasons in Denver, guiding the team to a losing Super Bowl appearance in the 2013 season. Caldwell leaves Detroit after compiling a 36-28 record, the first head coach at the franchise to compile a winning record since the early 1970s.

The Lions made the playoffs twice under Caldwell, but have not won a post-season game since the 1991 campaign. "I believe Jim is one of the finest leaders we've ever had as our head coach," Lions owner Martha Firestone Ford said in a statement. Jackson, meanwhile, has been retained by the Browns, receiving a vote of confidence from owner Jimmy Haslam. The Browns have the first and fourth overall picks in the 2018 draft, decisions that could decide the long-term fate of Jackson, who is 1-35 in Cleveland. "It's not going to be words," he said. "It's going to be actions and it's going to be what we do. "I think being 0-16, the stigma that comes with that is that we are going to have to do some recruiting everywhere." — Reuters



Mohammed Al Othman

amazing reward package," said Mohammed Al Othman, Deputy General Manager-Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait. "We give our customers the best rewards because we believe in developing long term, lasting and loyal relationships." Nearly 98% of available tickets for the FIFA World Cup final to be held in Moscow, Russia in July 2018 sold out in the first 24 hours, making tickets to the match one of the most sought after events of the global football season. The FIFA World Cup final pits some of the globe's best and strongest teams against each other in what are considered the premier sporting event of the world. NBK credit card and debit card holders are eligible for the draw, which will take place after the campaign period, which runs from beginning from 1 January 2018 until 17 March 2018. "NBK credit card holders enjoy exclusive, premier rewards, promotions and discounts," explained Al Othman. Choose from Visa and find the credit card that suits your needs. NBK's Reward Program is the largest loyalty program in the region with more than 700 lifestyle retailers, shops and restaurants.

## One-legged Egyptian soccer players aim for a league of their own

**CAIRO:** A group of Egyptian soccer players have formed a team for one-legged players, hoping to start league for disabled players in the country. "The Miracle Team," consists of twenty-five players from across Egypt who meet twice a week to train on a pitch in Cairo. While the team began training in freestyle soccer - a non-competitive art where players perform tricks with a ball - they soon decided to aim higher.

"I started bringing the people in and coach Yousry, the team coach, called me to start training me on freestyle football," team captain Mahmoud Ibrahim Tawfik, who lost a leg in a road accident more than 20 years ago, told Reuters. "I told him I have another dream of becoming a real life soccer player not just a freestyle footballer who has skills." The team hope to inspire other disabled Egyptians to take up the sport and eventually establish a federation which could regulate a domestic league for the disabled.

"In each governorate we are asking the players to form a team to spread the game," said team coach Yousry Mohamed Ibrahim. Despite their enthusiasm, the team faces a raft of challenges: a lack of funding, a paucity of special playing crutches and difficulties finding a regular pitch for training.

Amputee Football has special rules: seven leg-amputee players play on each opposing team, and the goalkeepers must have one arm. Crutches are not allowed to touch the ball and there is no offside rule or limits to substitutions. There are 42 nations who now have national amputee football federations, according to the World Amputee Football Federation. The next amputee football World Cup is being held in Mexico later this year. — Reuters

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Sports

# Design flaws leave Arsenal, Chelsea with uncertain futures

## Sanchez and Ozil are out of contract at the end of the season

**LONDON:** Arsenal and Chelsea have been reduced to also-ran status by Manchester City's blistering pace in the title race, but there is still a lot to learn when the London rivals clash at the Emirates Stadium today.

With champions Chelsea lagging 14 points behind City and Arsenal sitting six points outside the top four, there's clearly plenty of room for improvement in both teams. Here AFP Sport looks at the problem areas for Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger and Chelsea boss Antonio Conte:

### REBELS WITH A CAUSE

After boldly deciding against selling Alexis Sanchez and Mesut Ozil before the start of the season, Wenger has seen his gamble backfire as speculation about Arsenal's contract rebels has been a constant distraction. Sanchez and Ozil are out of contract at the end of the season and have refused to sign new deals, raising the possibility that both could be sold in January to avoid losing them for free in June. Making matters worse, Sanchez, who was frustrated by Wenger's refusal to let him join Manchester City in August, has pouted his way through the campaign-frustrating players, coaches and fans in the process.

City, Paris Saint Germain and Real Madrid are all contenders to rid Wenger of the Sanchez problem, but the damage has already been done. German midfielder Ozil, wanted by Manchester United and Barcelona, has been less overtly troublesome, but his inconsistent performances have hardly suggested complete commitment to the cause.

No wonder former Arsenal star Martin Keown said: "Wenger puts so much trust in his players but Sanchez and Ozil have been overindulged. You wonder where they would be had these two been fully committed for the whole season."

“Wenger puts so much trust in his players”

Although Alvaro Morata has been a qualified success in his first season at Chelsea, the former Real Madrid striker has been virtually the sole goal threat for Conte's men. Morata has scored 12 times, but only twice in his last seven league games.

With 39 league goals this season, the Blues have scored less than the other teams currently in the top four. Solving that problem has been impossible for Conte because Belgian forward Michy Batshuayi, the main back up for Morata, has scored only twice in the league and hasn't netted since October.

Conte is certain to push for a new striker to be signed in the January transfer window, with Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi and Sassuolo's Domenico Berardi among potential targets.

### DEFENSIVE WOES

Having leaked 26 league goals this term—more than any other team in the top seven—Wenger once again finds his failure to fix Arsenal's leaky defence is undermining his side's ambitions. While Wenger has switched formations from a back three to a back four, changed defensive personnel and tried to protect them with different holding midfielders, the root cause of Arsenal's Achilles heel remains philosophical.

Wenger's commitment to an attacking game-plan which relies on a smooth-passing style earns plenty of plaudits from the purists. But the Frenchman's tactics often leave Arsenal's full-backs out of position and his midfielders too far forward, while his reliance on diminutive playmakers allows opponents to bully the Gunners.

### SEARCH FOR MOTIVATION

Manchester City's sensational first half of the season has left Conte with the tricky task of keeping his players



**WEST BROMWICH:** File photo shows Arsenal's Chilean striker Alexis Sanchez (R) celebrates after scoring the opening goal with a deflected free kick during the English Premier League football match between West Bromwich Albion and Arsenal at The Hawthorns stadium in West Bromwich. — AFP

motivated when it seems they have little to play for in the league. At times, Chelsea were fatally unfocused when they faced opponents who didn't immediately inspire respect and the result was lethargic and damaging defeats at lowly Crystal Palace and West Ham. Conte is a notoriously demanding coach and there has been growing speculation that his players are tired of Italian's intense training ses-

sions. Balancing a need to remain in charge of his stars, while also keeping them inside could be a challenge for Conte given the lack of drama in the title race, but he has no intention of changing his style.

"You must always have a great desire to do this job. My wish for myself is to continue to have this desire for many years," Conte said. — AFP

## Mourinho lashes out at 'critical' Paul Scholes

**LIVERPOOL:** Jose Mourinho has lambasted former Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes after he criticised the manager and key players in his role as a TV pundit. Scholes singled out Paul Pogba, the club's record signing, after his anonymous performance in the weekend draw with Southampton.

But the French international was far more impressive in the 2-0 victory at Everton on New Year's Day, which ended a run of three consecutive United draws and put the Red Devils 12 points behind runaway leaders Manchester City. The victory allowed Mourinho to launch a remarkable verbal attack on Scholes, one of the storied "Class of 92" who was a key part of some of the greatest successes in United's history.

"I think the only thing Paul Scholes does is criticise," said Mourinho. "I don't think he comments, I think he criticises, which is a different thing. Not every one of us has to be phenomenal like he was as a player. That does not mean that we all have to be phenomenal."

Scholes accused Pogba of coasting through games and failing to make the sort of impact his £89 million (\$120 million) transfer fee demands. But Mourinho was clearly in the mood to defend his player and claimed that part of Scholes' attitude was fuelled by jealousy.

"Paul tries to do his best all the time," he said. "Sometimes he plays very well, sometimes he plays well, sometimes he doesn't play so well. It's not Paul's fault that he made much more money than Paul Scholes. It's just the way football is. I think Scholes will be in history as a phenomenal player, not as a pundit. I prefer to look at him as a phenomenal player that gave so much to the club that I am proud to represent."

The United manager, who won at Goodison thanks to superb goals from Anthony Martial and Jesse Lingard, both of which were set up by Pogba, also believes that Scholes has a desire to break into management.

The former United player recently claimed that his



**LIVERPOOL:** Manchester United's Portuguese manager Jose Mourinho gestures during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

application for a job managing United's under-23 team was turned down by the club's management. "If Paul one day decides to be a manager I wish that he can be 25 percent as successful as myself," said Mourinho.

"50 percent of that is 12.5 silverware, 25 percent is around six. If he's 25 percent, he'll be quite happy."

Mourinho did round off his criticism by adding that he believed Scholes was "a phenomenal player" and called him "one of the best I've ever seen playing in midfield". "The prestige of this club is based on people like him, so successful here," he said.

Scholes is the latest of the "Class of 92" to have voiced criticism of United under Mourinho, after Ryan Giggs and Gary Neville also made uncomplimentary comments - a point not lost on Mourinho who described them as "the kings of rock and roll."

He said: "I think the performance was really good so maybe I am lucky this time - and the kings of rock and roll who say I was under-performing last match say, this time, I performed. I think they would love to be here. They would love to be at the club and that's a problem I cannot resolve." Giggs was an assistant to previous United manager Louis Van Gaal. Mourinho also revealed that Romelu Lukaku, who was stretched off early in the draw with Southampton, did not suffer a concussion and will be available for selection for United's FA Cup tie with Derby on Friday.

Arsene Wenger made a similar criticism of former Arsenal striker Thierry Henry on Sunday, saying "I don't listen to what he says" after the Frenchman claimed the Arsenal squad was riven by divisions over the attitude of Chilean star Alexis Sanchez. — AFP

## Wenger charged by FA over West Brom outburst

**LONDON:** Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has been charged by the Football Association (FA) over his conduct following the 1-1 draw with West Bromwich Albion on Sunday English football's governing body announced yesterday.

The 68-year-old Frenchman reacted furiously to referee Mike Dean's decision to award a penalty to West Brom in the 89th minute for handball by Calum Chambers.

The FA said the charge against Wenger was for his conduct in the match officials' dressing room after the final whistle—he has till 1800GMT on Friday to respond to the charge.

Wenger did not sound repentant earlier yesterday at his press conference on the eve of their game with Chelsea. "It was very disappointing," Wenger said. "What is more frustrating for me is it happened many times this season—at Stoke, Watford, Man City, now West Brom."

"It is a concerning coincidence for me. That is why as well I was not at all happy with the movement the referee made as to why he gave the penalty. It did not correspond at all with what happened. On that front it's a bit worrying. He saw what he wanted to see." — AFP



**LONDON:** File photo shows Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger arrives for the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Arsenal at Selhurst Park in south London. — AFP

## Klopp quashes renewed talk of Coutinho sale

**BURNLEY:** Jurgen Klopp insists Philippe Coutinho was genuinely injured for Liverpool's 2-1 win at Burnley as he laughed off talk of the Brazil forward joining Barcelona. Coutinho missed Monday's Premier League fixture at Turf Moor with a thigh injury amid a backdrop of speculation over a move to the Nou Camp in the January transfer window.

The rumours were fuelled further by pictures - subsequently removed - of a Barcelona shirt with Coutinho's name appearing on the website of Nike, the Catalan club's kit manufacturer, over the weekend.

However, Reds boss Klopp claims there was nothing untoward behind the 25-year-old's absence from Liverpool's squad at Turf Moor as he responded to questions about the Nike pictures.

"I heard about it. Somebody told me and I thought 'wow'. But I couldn't be less interested in anything in the world!" Klopp said. "Him (Coutinho) and Mohamed (Salah) are injured, not massively but enough for today, no chance and at least a doubt for Everton." Despite Coutinho and Salah's absences, Estonia defender Ragnar Klavan scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner for Liverpool after Johann Berg Gudmundsson had cancelled out Sadio Mane's opener.

And Klopp was most satisfied with the fortitude shown by his defence on a day when they might have wilted against a dogged Burnley side. "I am really happy about our attitude and character," Klopp said. "You need to win your average games, win with attitude when you are not 100 percent."

"Burnley were an opponent motivated at the highest level. We needed to be ready for the wind, rain. It was cold and you need first of all concentration, you need readiness to work really hard, organisation, discipline and a little bit of luck. We deserved the three points. We need the wins on the not sunny days. It was a fantastic moment when we scored. I was never in doubt about the character of my boys."

Mane's goal was his eighth of the season and Klopp praised the Senegal winger for his determination when Liverpool's top players were missing. "Sadio is unbelievably important for us," Klopp said.

"He is strong, quick, so many things. He scores a goal like this and it is like 'wow!'. He comes into the dressing room and the whole team gives him a hand. We need him, we need him so much for all teams coming. I am happy because I had a lot of players with moments where it wasn't clicking and he still scores." Klopp also confirmed he will show respect by allowing Mane and Egypt forward Salah to attend an awards ceremony in Ghana this week. — AFP



**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

### ITALIAN CUP

Juventus v Torino 22:45  
beIN SPORTS HD

### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal v Chelsea 22:45  
beIN SPORTS HD 2

**12** Federer cruises towards Australian Open with another Hopman Cup win



**14** Speed merchants still kings of the hill as skiers seek a place in history



**15** Mourinho lashes out at 'critical' Scholes



KUWAIT: UAE's Mohammed Marzooq (2L) attempts a shot at goal during the 2017 Gulf Cup of Nations semi-final football match between Iraq and UAE at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Oman, UAE reach Gulf Cup final

Own goal downs Bahrain • Iraq pay the penalty

By Ahmad Jabr

**KUWAIT:** Oman will square off against the UAE in the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup final after the teams beat Bahrain and Iraq respectively in the semifinals played yesterday at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. The finale, set for Friday, will be a rematch of their group stage encounter, which ended with a 1-0 victory for the Emiratis.

UAE and Iraq, playing in front of 25,538 fans, failed to score in regular and extra time, ultimately settling for penalty shootouts, which UAE won 4-2. Iraq seized the momentum to begin the game, setting the tone early with their fast-paced approach. However, they failed to translate this pressure into real scoring opportunities. "We were close to winning, but we couldn't take advantage of our chances," said Iraq's coach Bassem Hamdan, who praised his players for putting up a "good match". "It was a very tough match," UAE coach Alberto Zaccheroni said. "Iraq fought till the very end."

The UAE defense struggled early to contain Iraq's offense, but eventually managed to slow the pace down near the end of the first half. The roles reversed in the second half, however. "Iraq changed their game formation from 4-4-2 in the group stage to 4-3-3, which enabled them to control play in centerfield," Zaccheroni said. "But we played with balance... and played better in the second half."

Earlier, Oman advanced to the finals after beating Bahrain 1-0 in front of 22,795 spectators. Oman controlled the pace of play in the first half, but much of their early offense presented no real pressure to the Bahraini net. The story changed after 20 minutes of

play, as Oman picked up their offensive intensity, which yielded an own goal nine minutes later by Bahrain's Mahdi Abdul-Jabbar.

Oman controlled the pace of play to end the first half. Bahrain came in the second half determined to score, piling pressure on the Omani net, but to no avail. Their last chance came in the 88th minute when Abdullah Omar fell in the penalty area after appearing to make contact with an Omani defender, but no call was made. Oman's coach Peter Verbeek said that he was very proud of his players, but admitted that his team have played better games during the tournament. "We were not so much in control as we were in the previous three matches," he said, adding that Bahrain's play in the second half which focused on long passes to its tall strikers presented some problems for his team. "It was not the plan to go back in our own half, but because of the way in which they started to play, we had to go back more than we normally do... But I think defensively, we were well-organized."

Verbeek mentioned a survey published in the Omani press in which 70 percent of respondents said Oman had no chance to advance in the tournament. "However, we're in the finals at the moment. So I think we've proved something," Bahrain's coach Miroslav Soukup was defiant after the match, proclaiming that he did not feel that his team lost a match in the tournament, given that their only loss came as a result of an own goal. "I have respect for my team," he said at the press conference. "We were much better in the second half, and my team fought till the last second to score." Both the coaches affirmed the tournament presented a good opportunity to prepare for the Asian Cup next year.



KUWAIT: Oman's Harib al-Saadi (front) and Fahmi Said Rajab Dubein fight for the ball against Bahrain's Sayed Bager during the 2017 Gulf Cup of Nations semi-final football match between Oman and Bahrain at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium in Kuwait City yesterday. — AFP

## Flanagan admits assaulting girlfriend

**LONDON:** Liverpool defender Jon Flanagan admitted yesterday a charge of assaulting his girlfriend last month and will be sentenced on January 17. The 25-year-old, who spent last year on loan with Burnley, was captured on CCTV footage in Liverpool city centre beating and kicking Rachael Wall, his girlfriend of 18 months.

Judge Wendy Lloyd told Flanagan he could expect a community sentence. "I need to be reassured that these circumstances will never be repeated again," she said. Flanagan's lawyer Lionel Greig said Wall had not provided a statement and there had been no previous instances of



Jon Flanagan

domestic violence in their relationship. He said both Flanagan—who won his only England cap in a warm-up friendly prior to the 2014 World Cup—and Wall were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident. Flanagan came through Liverpool's academy system and made his senior Reds debut in 2011, though he has played just once this season in the League Cup. — AFP

## Second seed Carreno Busta out of Qatar Open

**DOHA:** Second seed Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain crashed out of the Qatar Open in the first round beaten by rising Croatian star Borna Coric in three sets yesterday. Coric saved three match points and came from a set behind to win in a final set tie-break 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (10/8) to record a notable victory in an enthralling match lasting 2 hours 41 mins.

The 21-year-old Croat, who beat Andy Murray last year at the Madrid Open, described it as a "huge win". "I think I played very good," he told reporters. "I didn't

know what to expect, it's the first match of the year, it's always a little bit tricky.

"But, I can say from the beginning that I was playing very good." He added, however, that the win did not compare to beating Murray. Coric is ranked 38 places lower than world number 10 Carreno Busta but said it was his aim to break into the world's top 20 this season.

"I think I can do it but I need to play very good for the whole season." Coric had considerable success adopting a serve-and-volley approach and won 17 out of 21 points at the net in the deciding set.

Overall he hit 44 winners during the match. He will play Nikoloz Basilashvili in the second round. The Georgian has won their previous two encounters. The tournament's number three seed, Thomas Berdych was in action later. The Czech is one of three former finalists in action on Tuesday, the others being Frenchmen Richard Gasquet and Gael Monfils. Number one seed, Austria's Dominic Thiem, won his first round match in straight sets on Monday. — AFP



## Business

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2018

**18** KAMCO hosts management development workshop**19** New Year jitters for EU bond markets as ECB trims stimulus**22** Luxury driven by intelligent performance with Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10

SEOUL: South Korea's Financial Services Commission chairman Chol Jong-Ku (third left) and officers celebrate the New Year's opening of the stock market at the Korea Exchange in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

## Wall St kicks off 2018 on a solid note

## European stocks fall as dollar under pressure

NEW YORK: Wall Street's main indexes were higher yesterday, the first trading day of the year, buoyed by gains in technology and consumer discretionary stocks. Major stock indexes closed out 2017 with their best performance since 2013, powered by a combination of strong economic growth, solid corporate earnings, low interest rates and hopes of corporate tax cuts.

"The first week of trading usually suggests the overall trend of the markets which we expect to be positive," Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at First Standard Financial in New York, wrote in a note. Oil prices hovered near their mid-2015 highs on Tuesday amid large anti-government rallies in major exporter Iran and ongoing supply cuts led by OPEC and Russia.

Gold and copper prices continued their upward march, but the greenback began the year on the back foot, with the dollar index slipping to its weakest level since September.

"While we don't expect the Iranian unrest to reach a full blown political situation just yet, the protest will add to an already positive uptrend in oil and gold prices," Cardillo said.

December payrolls report, data on manufacturing and service sectors are among leading indicators expected during the week, and will be scrutinized for signs of improving economic health and the number of interest rate hikes this year.

Minutes from the Federal Reserve's December meeting, when the central bank raised rates for the fourth time since the 2008 financial crisis, will be issued today. Six of the 11 major S&P sectors were higher, led by gains in technology and consumer discretionary stocks.

Shares of Walt Disney rose 1.6 percent, giving the biggest boost to the Dow, after brokerage Macquarie upgraded the company's stock to "outperform".

Global stock markets greeted 2018 in mixed fashion yesterday, with euro and pound strength depressing Europe while Wall Street and Asia gained ground. Trading was mostly thin as many investors were still away from their desks on extended holidays.

London and the main eurozone exchanges posted losses as the euro and pound rose against

the dollar, weighing on the share prices of export-oriented multinationals. Signs of weak US inflation weighed on the greenback amid fears that the Federal Reserve may not raise interest rates as quickly as expected in 2018, possibly allowing



## Asia markets open year on a positive note

other central banks to catch up with rate hikes of their own. Higher interest rates tend to support a currency. "The US dollar is the story for the first trading day of 2018," said James Hughes, chief

market analyst at AxiTrader. Wall Street opened mildly firmer, shaking off doubts for now about the sustainability of a strong run seen throughout 2017. Asian stocks earlier mostly kicked off the year with gains, fuelled by strong data, improving corporate profits and hopes that US President Donald Trump's tax cuts will fire US and world growth. Sentiment was also boosted by news that both Chinese and Indian manufacturing activity continued to expand in December.

## 'Bit of profit-taking'

In Europe, however, Frankfurt, London and Paris slid in subdued deals as investors took profits and also absorbed various manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) surveys.

"A bit of profit-taking in the mining sector and the continued weakness of the dollar appeared to be driving trading, especially in Europe, with the manufacturing data having little impact on proceedings," Spreadex analyst Connor Campbell told AFP.

London stocks sagged despite news of solid manufacturing output and order growth in December. "Today is all about the latest PMI manufacturing surveys: China's looked good and India is even better, while the UK posted a decent figure," noted analyst Russ Mould at online stockbroker AJ Bell. Asian stocks mostly opened the year with gains yesterday as traders drift back to work after the festive break, with Hong Kong the standout performer, though the dollar faced fresh pressure from most other currencies. Regional investors shrugged off dips in New York on the last day of 2017, instead building on the healthy advances fuelled by strong data, improving corporate profits and hopes Donald Trump's tax cuts will fire US growth. They are also keeping an eye on the release of key US jobs figures at the end of the week, which will provide fresh clues about the strength of the world's biggest economy.

Hong Kong led yesterday's rally, jumping 1.6 percent to its highest level since late 2007, while Shanghai was one percent higher, boosted by data showing manufacturing activity in China continued to expand in December. — Agencies

## China boosts investment in Sri Lankan mega-project

COLOMBO: China will invest \$1 billion in the construction of three 60-storey buildings at a mega-project near Sri Lanka's main port, Colombo said yesterday, as Beijing aims to boost its influence in the Indian Ocean.

The deal follows an earlier Chinese investment of \$1.4 billion to carry out reclamation work for the wider Colombo International Financial City development, strategically located next to Sri Lanka's harbour, the only deep sea container port in the region. The countries hope the project, initiated by former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse, will create a financial center in the Indian Ocean comparable with those in Singapore and Europe, drawing billions in foreign investment and thousands of jobs.

Sri Lankan officials said 60 percent of the 269 hectare (672 acre) reclamation, due to finish next year complete with yacht marina, had already been completed. No completion date was given



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (2L) inspects progress during a visit to the Chinese-funded \$1.4 billion of reclamation land next to Colombo's main sea port yesterday. — AFP

for the buildings, the first for the development. "China Harbor (company) will put in \$1 billion to build three buildings," Sri Lanka's Urban Development Minister Champika Ranawaka told reporters in the capital. "These three 60-storey buildings will be able to attract more foreign companies into Sri Lanka." The controversial project was formally launched after a visit to Colombo by

Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2014 but work was suspended by the new administration, which came to power in January the following year. It resumed after the state-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) entered into a fresh agreement with the new government in August 2016, despite geopolitical concerns from regional super power India. — AFP

## UK factory growth cools in December from 4-year highs

LONDON: Growth in British manufacturing cooled last month from four-year highs struck in November, but the sector remained a bright spot in Britain's economy heading into 2018, a survey showed yesterday.

In contrast to accelerating growth in the euro zone, the IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dropped to 56.3 from 58.2 in November. That was at the bottom end of forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists that had pointed to a reading of 58.0. While growth in new business, output, export orders and employment slowed in December, the PMI stayed above its average for 2017 as a whole.

Alan Clarke, a fixed income strategist with Scotiabank, said the disappointing figures for the month probably represented only a temporary setback for the sector which accounts for 10 percent of the country's overall economic output. "I would only start to worry if we see further declines of this magnitude in the coming months," Clarke said. Sterling and

British government bond prices were unchanged by the survey. Overall, it added to signs that British manufacturers will prosper next year, when a slowdown in the overall economy is likely to deepen as Britain approaches its departure from the European Union in March 2019. British factories have been boosted by a resurgent European economy above all else.

Last month, euro zone manufacturers enjoyed their strongest growth since PMI records began more than 20 years ago, easily outpacing their British peers.

Samuel Tombs, an economist with consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the gap between British and eurozone manufacturers in December was the widest since June 2008. "We expect the recovery in the manufacturing sector to lose its current vitality soon," he said, citing growing backlogs of work caused by recruitment problems and cuts to investment since the Brexit vote. — Reuters



Business

# New Year jitters for EU bond markets as ECB trims stimulus

## Euro-zone periphery bond yields widen

**LONDON:** Borrowing costs across the euro area shot higher yesterday as a cut in monthly ECB asset purchases became a reality, with hawkish comments from a top official and strong data hurting sentiment towards bonds on the first trading day of the year.

Peripheral bonds markets, the biggest beneficiaries of European Central Bank stimulus, bore the brunt of the selling. Yields in Italy, Spain and Portugal rose 6-7 basis points each, widening the gap over German peers. But even "core" or top-rated bond markets were left unscathed from the selling pressure, with Germany's 10-year bond yield hitting two-month highs. Benoit Coeure, the Frenchman in charge of carrying out the ECB's bond purchases, sees "a reasonable chance" the 2.55 trillion euro stimulus program will not be extended again when it expires in September, he told a Chinese financial magazine at the weekend.

The comments highlight that the days of extraordinary monetary stimulus are nearing an end given stronger economic conditions and signs of a pick-up in inflation. Data on Friday showed inflation in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, hit its highest level in five years in 2017. A survey yesterday showed eurozone

manufacturers ended 2017 by ramping up activity at the fastest pace in more than two decades.

ECB monthly bond purchases, which have long underpinned bond yields, have fallen to 30 billion euros from 60 billion euros. That cut in purchases from the start of January, unveiled in October, comes just as investors brace for a

supply," said Rainer Guntermann, a rates strategist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. "The more hawkish commentary from the ECB is also weighing on markets."

Germany's 10-year bond yields rose 2.5 basis points to 0.46 percent, the highest since late October. German 30-year bond yields jumped almost 5 bps to 1.31 percent, their highest since mid-November. In Italy, where borrowing costs rose last week after the president called a general election for March 4, 10-year bond yields extended their rise to a two-month high just above 2 percent.

That pushed that gap over German equivalents to around 163 bps, its widest in more than two months. Spanish and Portuguese bond spreads also widened against Germany in a sign that investors were reducing their exposure to southern European bond markets. "The widening in peripheral spreads shows that the market is concluding that the recent spread tightening is inconsistent with a more hawkish ECB," said Peter Chatwell, head of rates strategy at Mizuho. Analysts said Portuguese five-year bonds were also coming under pressure from



**Euro area growth momentum, inflation pick up**

hefty month of supply—a potentially powerful headwind for bond markets. "While the cut in ECB asset purchases is not a surprise, there is some uncertainty as to how the markets will adjust to this in an unusually heavy month for



Sales tags on men jackets at a mall in Talange, northeastern France, on the first day of the regional winter sales, a week ahead of the start of the national sales. — AFP

expectations of a syndicated bond deal of this maturity next week.

Most other euro zone bond yields were up 2-3 basis points, with trade subdued after

Monday's New Year's holiday. There was also some caution ahead of the implementation on Jan. 3 of the wide-ranging EU financial markets directive known as MiFID II. — Reuters

## China factory activity accelerated in December: Caixin

**BEIJING:** Chinese factory activity accelerated in December, according to independent data released yesterday, a positive indicator for the world's second-largest economy to kick off the new year.

The Caixin Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) — an indicator of conditions at small manufacturers — rose to 51.5 in December, up from 50.8 in November and the highest reading since August.

The official PMI indicator of 51.6 for December was released on Sunday by China's National Bureau of Statistics and showed a slight deceleration from November, although it largely maintained momentum. A PMI figure above 50 represents growth while anything below points to contraction.

Caixin's index focuses on economic activity at small and medium sized enterprises, and its continued strength may reflect the resilient global demand for many of these exporting firms.

China's exports saw solid growth during the final months of last year. "Manufacturing production continued to increase across China at the end of 2017" Caixin said in a statement with data compiler IHS Markit. "Manufacturing operating conditions improved in December, reinforcing the notion that economic growth has stabilised in 2017 and has even performed better than expected" Caixin analyst Zhengsheng Zhong wrote. "We should not underestimate downward pressure on growth next year due to tightening monetary policy and



BEIJING: A worker rides a bicycle along a street in Beijing yesterday. Chinese factory activity accelerated in December 2017 according to independent data. — AFP

strengthening oversight on local government financing." Caixin said firms used existing inventories of finished items to satisfy some new orders and cut slightly their inventories of finished goods.

Meanwhile, China's central bank lifted its official yuan midpoint to the highest level in nearly four months to 6.5079 per dollar yesterday, reflecting broad dollar weakness and solid spot yuan performance in the previous trading day.

Tuesday's official midpoint was 263 pips or 0.4

percent firmer than the previous fix of 6.5342 on Friday and was the strongest since Sept. 11. The dollar fell to its lowest in over three months against a basket of major currencies on Friday, marking its steepest annual drop since 2003.

The Chinese yuan registered a rise of around 6.8 percent against the greenback in 2017, recovering from a roughly 6.5 percent loss a year earlier and reversing three straight years of depreciation. — Agencies

## China's WeChat denies storing user chats

**HONG KONG:** Tencent Holdings' WeChat, China's most popular messenger app, yesterday denied storing users' chat histories, after a top businessman was quoted in media reports as saying he believed Tencent was monitoring everyone's account. "WeChat does not store any users' chat history. That is only stored in users' mobiles,

computers and other terminals," WeChat said in a post on the social media platform.

"WeChat will not use any content from user chats for big data analysis. Because of WeChat's technical model that does not store or analyze user chats, the rumour that 'we are watching your WeChat everyday' is pure misunderstanding."

Li Shufu, chairman of Geely Holdings, owner of the Volvo car brand, was quoted in Chinese media on Monday as saying Tencent Chairman Ma Huateng "must be watching all our WeChats every day". Like all Chinese social media platforms, WeChat is required to censor public posts deemed "illegal" by the Communist Party. WeChat's privacy policy says it may need to retain and disclose users' information "in response

to a request by a government authority, law enforcement agency or similar body".

WeChat did not immediately respond to a request for further comment. According to a report by Amnesty International, Tencent ranked at the bottom of 11 tech firms running the world's most popular messenger apps for how they use encryption to protect user privacy.

China's cyber watchdog in September announced a new rule making chat group administrators and companies accountable for breaches of content rules. In the same month it handed down maximum penalties to tech firms including Tencent, Baidu Inc and Weibo Corp for failing to properly censor online content, and asked them to increase content auditing measures. — Reuters

## US home values soar in 2017, renters shell out record

**WASHINGTON:** In a hot housing market, the value of all US homes soared to a record this year, as did the monthly payments by renters, online real estate giant Zillow said.

With the steady increase in demand for housing driving prices and rents higher, the value of all homes was up nearly \$2 trillion, according to the year-end data. The 6.5 percent increase over 2016 was the biggest gain in four years and drove the total to nearly \$32 trillion.

"This was a record year for home values," Zillow Senior Economist Aaron Terrazas said in a statement. "Strong demand from buyers and the ongoing inventory shortage keep pushing values higher, especially in some of the nation's booming coastal markets." The value is up \$9 trillion from the worst point in the global recession, the report said.

Meanwhile, with the supply of homes for sale tight but improving, the increase in rents slowed, though the figure still hit a new all-time high. Renters paid one percent or \$5 billion more in 2017 compared to last year, to a record \$486 billion, Zillow said. Renters in New York



WASHINGTON: The value of all US homes soared to a record this year, as did the monthly payments by renters, online real estate giant Zillow said.

and Los Angeles spent the most over the past year, while in San Francisco's famously competitive market "rents are so high that renters collectively paid \$616 million more in rent than Chicago renters did, despite there being 467,000 fewer renters."

The Los Angeles and New York markets each

account for more than 8 percent of the value of all US housing, and are worth \$2.7 trillion and \$2.6 trillion, respectively. San Francisco is the only other housing market worth more than \$1 trillion.

Among the 35 largest US markets, seven cities saw growth of 10 percent or more, with Columbus, Ohio gaining 15.1 percent. —AFP

### Bait.com report

## The art of giving and receiving feedback

Giving and receiving feedback well is an art and one of the most important necessities for any organization. In the absence of good feedback, it is impossible to determine where an individual, team or project stands. While the concept of feedback is well-understood, it is not always implemented with optimal effectiveness. No matter how well intentioned, comprehensive and precise the feedback you have been giving or receiving may be, the effectiveness of its delivery and the impact it has on the receiver matter, too. If the feedback does not impact the receiver in the intended way, it becomes useless. Feedback is equally useless if the receiver does not know what to do with the feedback they receive.

In this guide, Bait.com, the Middle East's leading job site, will cover how to optimize given or received feedback in a way that makes it more meaningful and proactive.

### Giving feedback

**\* Evaluate Your Intentions**  
It is tempting to link your criticisms to personality flaws, but you shouldn't. Doing so would cross the line from professional to personal. You need to remember that your sole responsibility is to comment on behavior and performance. Focusing the attention on the person's actions creates a separation between the problems you are raising and their identity, which helps them focus on what you are saying instead of feeling personally confronted.

You should also consider the reason you are giving feedback. Even if it is for an annual performance review, you should ask yourself where your feedback is coming from, and with what purpose. Solely giving feedback to appease a third party is not good enough. Instead, your aim when giving feedback should be to guide the other person and express concern and support. This will help ensure that the feedback is sincere, which, in turn, will be easier to accept.

### \* Lead with questions

Beginning the conversation by asking the receiver questions helps ease some of the nerves and tension. Before launching into your assessment, ask them how they think they have been performing. Allowing them to assess themselves first will give them joint ownership of the feedback process and give you some added perspective on the employee.

### \* Constructive criticism sandwich

An effective method of giving feedback is to pack it together in what is referred to as a constructive criticism sandwich. Instead of leading with the problem, you first dilute its potency by giving praise first, then addressing the problem then finishing off with more praise. The more positively feedback is framed the more likely it is that the receiver

will work on making the changes you want to see.

### Receiving feedback

**\* Request feedback often**  
The best way to prepare for criticism and not be caught off guard by it is to ask for feedback openly and often. Avoid being caught off guard by a shocking piece of information at the end of the year by inviting feedback often from those you trust and whose opinion you respect as well as your direct report. This will allow you to take the steps to make the necessary changes ahead of time.

You should ask questions about your performance, such as "How do you think I can handle my tasks more effectively?" or "If you had to give two suggestions for improving my work what would they be?"

### \* Reflect before responding

After the person speaking to you is done giving feedback, and only then, you need to think about how to respond. It might be tempting to become defensive or "explain away" the criticism, but you must listen deeply and then ask thoughtful follow-up questions. If you feel that you are unable to respond immediately, ask for some time to reflect on what you have heard and tackle it one element at a time. Acknowledge the points they have made and ensure the other person feels that you have listened to them and considered their point of view.

### \* Be dynamic

While most of us have a hard time receiving feedback, especially if it is negative, there are some people out there who thrive on feedback. These types of people have what is called a growth mindset. What this means is that they embrace challenges, persist in the face of obstacles, see trial-and-error as the path to mastery, learn from criticism and find lessons and inspiration in the knowledge of others. As a result, these types of people tend to grow more and achieve greater success than those with a static or "fixed" mindset.

The growth mindset can be developed by starting small, learning from failures and slowly gaining confidence and expertise with each new step taken. Think of it as learning an instrument. You won't immediately know what to do, and your performance will be very basic at first. But, by keeping at it, practicing and trying frequently, you will eventually master the instrument. Similarly, by learning from your mistakes and trying new ways to succeed, you, too, will become a master at what you do.

Lastly, you should embrace failure. It is in our nature not to accept criticism that challenges the way we view ourselves and it may be tempting to blame your shortcomings on external factors. However, embracing failure is an excellent way to make good use of the feedback you receive and to grow more in your career.

Business

Dollar starts 2018 in doldrums; oil flat

LONDON: The ailing dollar fell to its lowest in over three months yesterday, while surprisingly upbeat Chinese manufacturing data ensured there was no serious new year hang-over for world shares despite a groggy start for Europe.

Its pain was the euro's gain though, with the single currency enjoying its strongest year against the dollar in 14 years. Yesterday, it jettied to a near-four-month top of \$1.2081 as data showed that eurozone manufacturers ramped up activity last month at the fastest pace in more than two decades.

It had already sliced through major resistance on the yen in Asia, reaching highs not seen since late 2015 at 135.45 yen. The rally against dollar meanwhile meant euro bulls were now eyeing the September peak of \$1.2092, a break of which would take the currency to ground last trodden in late 2014.

"Forward-looking indicators bode well for the new year," Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit which compiled the manufacturing data, pointing to a near record pace of new orders and job creation by eurozone firms.

The pound, Swiss franc and Scandinavian

currencies were also up solidly against the struggling dollar.

That combined with a two-month high in bond yields in Germany and Italy, two of the eurozone's biggest debt markets, pushed stock markets in London, Frankfurt and Paris 0.4-0.7 percent into the red.

Carmaker stocks caused the biggest dent, skidding 1.4 percent on weaker new car registrations data from France and forecasts that those in Britain would see as much as a 5 percent drop later in the week.

Dollar wallows

US traders were gearing up for what was expected to be a steady first session of 2018, having seen the S&P 500 leap 22.5 percent last year but the dollar dive almost 10 percent.

A major hurdle for the US currency will be today's release of minutes from the Federal

Reserve's December meeting, when it raised interest rates. Two policymakers voted against the move amid doubts inflation would accelerate as hoped.

With the market now pricing in a 68 percent chance of a March hike and two hikes for 2018, there will be close inspection to assess just how shaky their confidence is for any pick-up in inflationary trends said Chris Weston, chief markets strategist at broker IG in Sydney.

"That said, the US dollar is underloved and oversold and it won't take much to promote a bout of profit-taking from the shorts." The skid in the dollar, combined with strength in Chinese demand, has benefited commodities priced into the currency.

Copper dipped back a little yesterday to \$7,235.50 a ton, but that follows a rise of 31 percent in 2017 to a four-year top. Aluminum amassed gains of 34 percent.

Gold was 0.7 percent firmer at \$1,311 an ounce, after advancing by 13 percent

in 2017 for its best performance in seven years. Brent crude oil futures ended the year with a 17 percent rise, while US crude climbed 12 percent on strong demand and declining global inventories.

Yesterday, Brent added another few cents at \$66.92 a barrel, while US crude firmed 7 cents to \$60.48.

Alongside the upbeat China data, factory activity had also hit a five-year high in India and the best in 6-1/2 years in Taiwan. In emerging Europe, Hungary's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) recorded its strongest December on record, Czech data was at the highest since 2011 while Turkey's reading rose for a 10th straight month.

"Some of the PMIs have been really strong and in central/eastern Europe we have seen some of the strongest numbers on record. So it looks like 2017 ended on a strong note in growth terms and that's translating into better sentiment on markets," said William Jackson at Capital Economics. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday 02 January 2018. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades. Includes sub-sections for Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecommunications, Financial Services, Investment Instruments, Technology, Parallel Market, and Banks.



BEIJING: A woman looks at boards showing stock prices at a securities company on the first trading day of the year in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

Wall Street Week Ahead

Wall Street eyes 2018 gains with a side of caution

NEW YORK: US stocks are expected to keep rising in 2018 because a massive drop in the corporate tax rate is seen boosting the economy and corporate profits, but strategists say sizable gains could either be short-lived or elusive.

The bull market is on track to mark its ninth birthday in March, with the S&P 500 climbing 20 percent for 2017 - its biggest increase since 2013. The drop in the corporate tax rate in 2018, to 21 percent from 35 percent, is seen by many as the biggest factor for the stock market next year.

Yet 2018 share gains are expected to be smaller than 2017 with the S&P 500's price/earnings ratio - a measure of stock prices against expected profits - is around its highest level since June 2002.

Many on Wall Street cite potential pitfalls even though they see no signs of a recession. "We've had six years in a row where stocks have (outperformed) earnings, and I think we break that streak with stocks going up but not as much as earnings," said Robert Doll, chief equity strategist at Nuveen Asset Management in Princeton, New Jersey.

Some say the tax bill's benefit will be short lived. David Kelly, chief global strategist at J.P. Morgan Asset Management described the bill as "more carbs and less protein," because the tax overhaul will improve spending but does nothing to boost productivity.

"It'll be a one-year wonder," said Kelly. "People should enjoy the party while it lasts but just make sure you know where your coat is." Several strategists cite the risk that faster economic growth could cause inflation to increase at a pace that would lead the US Federal Reserve to

raise interest rates faster than expected. Wall Street's rosy forecasts seem "well supported by the tremendous string of good news which the economy has delivered," according to Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist with Leuthold Group in Minneapolis.

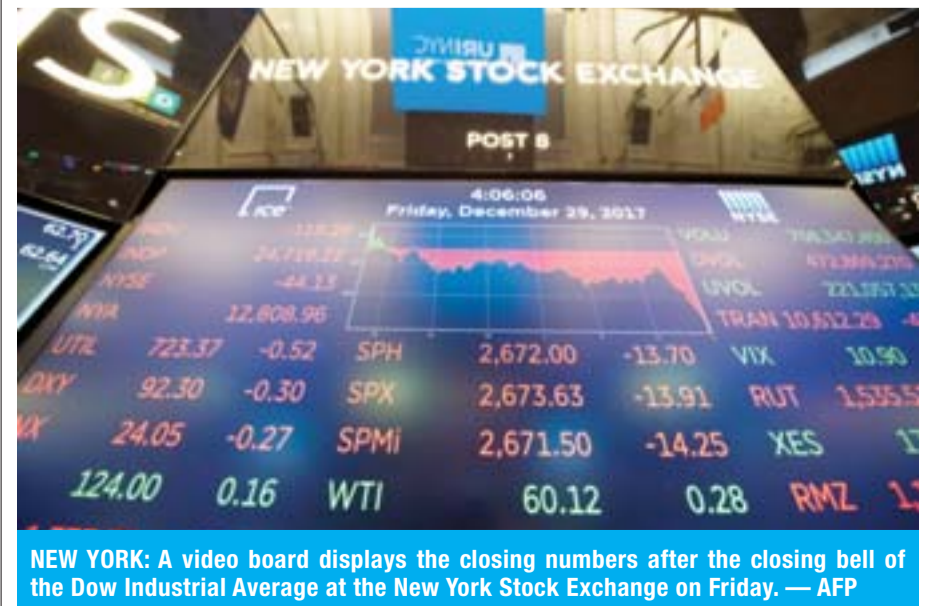
But he said, the news is too good: "The problem with getting good news is that at some point you can't be positively surprised anymore." Paulsen does not expect a recession. But when the economic surprise index - which compares economic data to consensus expectations - is at high levels, equity performance tends to be weaker, according to Paulsen.

The Citi Economic Surprise index was at 77 on Thursday, not far from its almost six-year high of 84.5 reached on Dec. 22. "We're going to have a 10-15 percent correction at some time in 2018. I wouldn't be surprised if we're down for the year," Paulsen said. "If we get a correction and people get scared I'll probably be buying again."

Investors will keep a close watch on the US mid-term elections in 2018 because a Republican loss of control of the Senate or the House of Representatives could stall the party's agenda. In 10 of the last 17 US mid-term election years, equity price moves for the full year followed January's direction, according to Jeff Hirsch, editor of the Stock Trader's Almanac.

Investor moods in January may depend on whether the US Congress reaches an agreement to raise the country's debt ceiling. Investors will also be hoping Congress can reach a 2018 budget pact by Jan. 19. These are just some of the worries traders are contending with.

But the market has history against it. The S&P 500 rises on average 1.3 percent in the so-called Santa Clause rally - the period between Dec. 22 and Jan. 3 - according to Hirsch. This year, five days in, the S&P has risen just 0.1 percent. "The failure of stocks to rally during this time tends to precede bear markets or times when stocks could be purchased at lower prices later in the year," Hirsch wrote in a blog post. — Reuters



NEW YORK: A video board displays the closing numbers after the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange on Friday. — AFP

## Business

# ALARGAN CEO showcases green residential projects in KISR talk

## Energy-efficient developments come up in Kuwait and Oman

**KUWAIT:** In the PechaKucha night curated by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) themed "Conversations on Conservation" to provoke thought and generate interest in energy efficiency, ALARGAN International Real Estate Company CEO and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, Khaled Al-Mashaan, showcased the company's development of energy-efficient projects in Kuwait and Oman in his presentation titled "LEED-ing the Way".

Presenting its successful development of the ARGAN Business Park, in which the company's headquarter is certified by the industry benchmark, the US Green Building Council (USGBC), with the highest Platinum rating in the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED), Al-Mashaan demonstrated how the development method of the Park has enabled it to consume 30 percent less energy, 35 percent less water and emit 40 percent less CO2.

Al-Mashaan said: "ARGAN Business Park was

designed with productivity, growth and sustainability in mind. Its architecture creates a community environment that combines work and lifestyle in a setting of rich greenery, health, open views and fully integrated services to help tenants do business. The development process and final building had to reflect the concept. Being certified by the industry benchmark for sustainability is a testament to our successful experience in efficient green buildings."

ALARGAN CEO also showcased savings achieved in the construction of a single townhouse in accordance to the LEED for Homes certification. Al-Mashaan demonstrated that could be achieved using solar photovoltaic panels, greywater recycling technology, insulated building blocks, low energy lighting and air conditioning and low-flow sanitary fixtures.

Al-Mashaan stated: "The cost of developing an energy-efficient home following the LEED for Homes guidelines would be 20 percent more than building a

normal house, however would provide the homeowner annual savings of 67 percent in energy consumption and 35 percent in water consumption."

The single townhouse, which is part of a multi-use development in Muscat, would allow to save OMR1 million when replicated across all houses in the multi-use development and with the removal of subsidies on electricity alone.

At present, there is a housing waitlist of 50,000 houses in Oman. Scaling this model across the country for these houses would save OMR42 million annually, an amount that could be essentially utilized to provide

energy-efficiency upgrades on another 3,500 houses every year.

Al-Mashaan concluded: "Urban development is a core challenge as we work to meet the needs for housing, leisure and social spaces. At ALARGAN, we have taken a responsibility to develop sustainable buildings that support an economically and socially viable urban environment. We are developing residential and community projects to last, in an aim that they remain an integral part of the larger urban development process and add value to their surrounding communities."

ALARGAN has previously affirmed its commitment to sustainability and to creating sustainable development in the real estate sector in Kuwait and every country where it operates, in line with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would transform the world and fulfilling pillars in Kuwait's Vision for 2035.



Khaled Al-Mashaan

## Zain launches exclusive new device offer for loyal customers

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the launch of new and exclusive offer for loyal postpaid customers (voice subscription), allowing them to choose from a wide range of smartphones, tablets and internet routers, as well as "PlayStation and Xbox" entertainment devices.

Available in all Zain branches, the exclusive 'loyal' offer provides all postpaid customers the opportunity to add a device from the long list to their current subscription packages, starting at KD2.5 per month added to their current subscription.

Zain customers will have the opportunity to purchase the iPhone 8, iPhone X and Samsung Galaxy Note 8 at the starting price of KD15 per month, or optionally the opportunity to acquire the devices iPhone 7, Galaxy S8, S8 plus, iPad Pro, HTC U11 and Huawei P9 + at the starting price of KD10 per month added to their current subscription.

Additionally, this offer extends to providing customers with entertainment devices, such as PlayStation 4 Slim and Xbox One S - 1TB starting at KD5 per month added to their current subscription.

Also the company offers customers who want a wider choice of mobile and fixed data transfer devices the new BOLT router, which offers revolutionary CAT11 technology for high-speed Internet to enhance their experience on its network, starting at KD2.5 per month added to their current subscription.

Zain's new offer on its most popular postpaid plans are part of the company's commitment to offer the most flexible and competitive offerings in the market, reinforcing its leadership position and its



pledge in offering the best services and offers to meet customers' practical and personal telecommunications needs. The introduction of this offer highlights Zain's eagerness in keeping pace with the ongoing changes of needs and wants of its customers. With this latest announcement, Zain strengthens its leading position in providing special services and offerings designed for loyal postpaid users.

## AUB signs cooperation agreement with Omniya Project

**KUWAIT:** Within the framework of supporting the communities that we are part of, Ahli United Bank has signed a cooperation agreement with Omniya Project to recycle plastic waste used at the Bank's Head Office and in the surrounding areas.

This initiative includes the distribution of recycle bins in the Ahli United Bank's head office and surrounding areas, to be used to collect the used water plastic bottles or any other plastic containers. The containers, which carry the world-standard code PET1, will then be delivered to the Omniya Project for further collection and recycling.

Commenting on this initiative, Tareq

Muhmood, Senior Deputy CEO - Banking Group stated: "Our strong desire to cooperate with Omniya was prompted by our commitment to spreading the culture of recycling, and to educate and increase the awareness amongst our employees and customers."

As a company, and as individuals, we have a responsibility to support the preservation of our environment.

Muhmood explained that the Bank's cooperation with Omnia Project, which is managed and operated by a group of young Kuwaitis led by Sanaa Al-Qamlas and Farah Shabaan, reflects our appreciation of the initiatives launched by these young ambitious Kuwaitis who accepted an important challenge of preserving and maintaining the environment to achieve sustainable development and enhance the industry in Kuwait.

He added that "Ahli United Bank always seeks to make a difference in society and the environment through unique environment-related initiatives. With this in mind, our efforts will continue in order to increase awareness and enrich the environment culture."



Tareq Muhmood and Sanaa Al-Qamlas signing the cooperation agreement.

## Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Khaled Bander Awad Al-Harbi
2. Ahmad Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Faylakawi
3. Salem Shnan Naser Alshamari
4. Aqelab Abod Sabeeh
5. Thamer Saleh Saud Aldakheel

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win. Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENA region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

## KFH winner of first draw of 'Enjoy your Italian Tour with Ferrari' campaign

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the winner of the first draw in the new card-usage campaign themed "Enjoy your Italian tour with Ferrari" to encourage customers to use KFH MasterCard Credit and Prepaid cards while making purchases in Kuwait and overseas.

The draw took place under the supervision of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce. The winner is Ahmad Nawaf AlKhas. He won an exciting 5-day tour in Italy in a Ferrari sports car along with a companion. In addition to driving a Ferrari car in Italy, round-trip business class tickets from Kuwait to Italy, hotel stay in Italy as well as a visit to the Ferrari Factory Museum.

The campaign, which kicked off November 1 2017, runs for three months

and allows KFH MasterCard cardholders chances every month to win. All customers need to do is spend a minimum of KD 100 on purchases each month using their KFH MasterCard Credit or Prepaid card, which will automatically enter them in the monthly draws. Every KD 1 spent locally will result in 1 chance and every KD 1 spent internationally will earn customers three chances in the monthly draw.

This campaign is part of KFH's continuous effort to offer the most rewarding and attractive promotions to its customers by presenting additional value and providing customers with enriching experiences. This unique and exciting campaign offers enormous value to KFH customers who can have an extraordinary experience of travelling to Italy and driving a top sports car like Ferrari through the stunning landscape of Italy. With such delightful privileges added to card usage, the KFH card becomes much more rewardingly exciting and gives the customer an excellent shopping experience.

KFH is committed to constantly launching new campaigns and offers that meet the aspirations of its customers. KFH is keen on rewarding its customers with unprecedented promotions and innovative products and services. This reflects the pioneering position of KFH, the world's leading Islamic financial institution that aims at enhancing the bank's presence in the field of banking cards.



The representative of the Ministry of Commerce with KFH staff after announcing the winner.

## CBK announces winners of 'Al-Najma Account' daily draw

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the daily draw on "Al-Najma Account" yesterday at the Bank's Head Office to select 5 winners to win a cash prize of KD 7000 for each. The draw was held in the presence of Jassim Al-Otaibi, representative of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The following names were announced as winners of the prizes:

1. Tareq Mohammad Al-Ostad
2. Zahraa Mohammad Dashti
3. Safeya Dawoud Waus Zada
4. Omar Nabeel Al-Mosalem
5. Mostafa Mohammad Hadeed

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



the first quarter escalating thereafter by KD 50 thousand for each quarter to reach KD 250,000 in the last quarter. Customers can enjoy additional benefits including obtaining ATM card and a credit card against the customer's account along with enjoying all other banking services.

The bank congratulates all the lucky winners and draws their attention that the cash prizes will be credited into their accounts with the Bank. Further, the Bank appreciates the Ministry of Commerce & Industry's significant role and its continuous cooperation and effective supervision on the draw that was smoothly and transparently organized.

## Technology

# Luxury driven by intelligent performance with Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10

Designer model epitomizes elite lifestyle with a premium look and feel



**KUWAIT:** Huawei has announced that its flagship luxury smartphone – the Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10 – in the State of Kuwait with collaboration of Kuwait Porsche Club, with immediately available in the market. The designer smartphone model epitomizes the elite lifestyle with a premium look and feel featuring a distinguished Porsche racetrack stripes design to show off its speed heritage.

The signature craftsmanship sports a polished ceramic-texture design and is exclusively available in exclusive Diamond Black color. Inspired by the Porsche Design's aesthetic craft, which is famous for its seamless curved edges and extremely smooth aesthetic, the graphite-coated texture and symmetrical design is mirrored in the Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10.

The device is the most powerful Mate Series smartphone, with a 6GB RAM + 256GB ROM storage solution that maximizes performance. Also the world's most powerful Artificial Intelligence (AI) smartphone, the best in class device boasts a customized User Interface that complements the overall design to showcase the unique sense of speed and customization of Porsche Design.

Commenting on the launch of the Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10 in Kuwait, Peter Wu, Managing Director

of CBG, Kuwait said: "Kuwait is a market that appreciates and honors innovation and craftsmanship just as much as we do, which is why we believe our latest limited edition will be sought after by trendsetters across the country. The Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10 is built for luxury aficionados, purveyors of style and the crème de la crème of society, who want to experience the joy of unmatched speed, unsurpassed performance and unrivaled design. Just as Huawei is known for its innovative and intelligent devices, Porsche is renowned for its high horsepower and design standards, making this the perfect partnership to develop a unique, luxurious and brilliant model. We deeply value partners with a passion for performance and design."

Eng. Zakaria Dashti, President of Porsche

Club Kuwait said: "We are always delighted to cooperate with Porsche official partners, special on this exciting event that is anticipated by all Porsche owners all over the world, and we like to thank Huawei for such a privilege and exclusive opportunity to see the new Amazing Porsche Design Huawei Mate10."

Featuring Kirin 970, the world's first smartphone chipset with a dedicated Neural Network Processing Unit, the Mate 10 series marks the beginning of a new

## Porsche racetrack stripes design to show off its speed heritage



era of smartphone development that brings the future to life with the first ever truly intelligent devices. Meanwhile, in true Middle East style, the Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10 is delivered in special premium packaging with exclusive accessories and VIP member services.

The Porsche Design Huawei Mate 10 comes with Mate 10 Care offer that includes an initial 6 months screen damage warranty service available at Huawei Service center in Salmiya, Kuwait. Mate 10 Care program also includes one-time free engraving service and device sanitizing.

## UK may use taxes to get tech giants to do more to fight extremism

**LONDON:** Britain may impose new taxes on tech giants like Google and Facebook unless they do more to combat online extremism by taking down material aimed at radicalising people or helping them to prepare attacks, the country's security minister said. Ben Wallace accused tech firms of being happy to sell people's data but not to give it to the government which was being forced to spend vast sums on de-radicalization programs, surveillance and other counter-terrorism measures. "If they continue to be less than co-operative, we should look at things like tax as a way of incentivizing them or compensating for their inaction," Wallace told the Sunday Times newspaper in an interview.

His quotes did not give further details on tax plans. The newspaper said that any demand would take the form of a windfall tax similar to that imposed on privatized utilities by former Prime Minister Tony Blair's government in 1997. Wallace accused the tech giants of putting private profit before public safety. "We should stop pretending that because they sit on beanbags in T-shirts they are not ruthless profiteers," he said. "They will ruthlessly sell our details to loans and soft-porn companies but not give it to our democratically elected government." Facebook executive Simon Milner rejected the criticisms. "Mr Wallace is wrong to say that we put profit before safety, especially in the fight against terrorism," he said in an emailed statement. "We've invested millions of pounds in people and technology to identify and remove terrorist content."

YouTube, which is owned by Google, said it was doing more every day to tackle violent extremism. "Over the course of 2017 we have made significant progress through investing in machine learning technology, recruiting more reviewers, building partnerships with experts and collaboration with other companies," a YouTube spokeswoman said.

Britain suffered a series of attacks by Islamic extremists between March and June this year that killed a total of 36 people, excluding the attackers. Two involved vehicles ramming people on bridges in London, followed by attackers stabbing people. The deadliest, a bombing at a concert in the northern city of Manchester, killed 22 people.

Following the second bridge attack, Prime Minister Theresa May proposed beefing up regulations on cyberspace, and weeks later interior minister Amber Rudd travelled to California to ask Silicon Valley to step up efforts against extremism. "We are more vulnerable than at any point in the last 100 years," said Wallace, citing extremist material on social media and encrypted messaging services like WhatsApp as tools that made life too easy for attackers. —Reuters

## Canon Middle East supports 'World Arabic Language Day' 2017

**KUWAIT:** Canon Middle East (CME), a leader in imaging solutions, commemorated the United Nation's (UN) World Arabic Language Day in 2017 through a series of activities that support and celebrate the Arabic language across the region. These initiatives included sponsoring the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Knowledge Foundation (MBRF) 'Bil Arabi' initiative in its fifth edition as well as launching a region-wide social media campaign to emphasize the importance of promoting Arabic in the digital age.

Held annually on the 18th December since 1973, UN Arabic Language Day aims to celebrate multilingualism, cultural diversity and the equal use of all six of its official working languages. By extension, 'Bil Arabi' also seeks to engage all members of society in the UAE and around the world, to bridge cultural differences and gain a deeper understanding of the Arabic language as well as promote its history and significance among native Arabic speakers.

Mai Youssef, Corporate Communications & Marketing Services Director, Middle East & Africa - ?Canon Middle East said, "The Arabic language is very rich, complex and is engulfed with immense history. It is for this reason, that we all should play a role in preserving it for generations to

## Tech icon ordered back to China sends wife instead

**BEIJING:** A major Chinese tech entrepreneur has defied regulators' orders to return home, writing yesterday that his wife and brother would deal with the debt woes plaguing his LeEco conglomerate.

Jia Yueting, the 44-year-old head of a tech empire that has spanned electric cars and smartphones, posted a letter on social media to the Beijing branch of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, which last week ordered him to return to China before the end of 2017.

The one-time billionaire is believed to be in the US, attempting to build up his Los Angeles-based electric car company Faraday Future. He was added to a national blacklist of debt defaulters by Chinese courts last month over hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid loans.

"I have entrusted (wife) Ms. Gan Wei and (brother) Mr. Jia Yuemin with full power to exercise my rights as the public company shareholder and fulfil my shareholder responsibilities," Jia wrote in the letter published on the

come. Encapsulating the vision of our great leaders, the 'Bil Arabi' initiative is designed to cement the role and status of the Arabic language amongst the community and encourage future generations to be proud of their heritage. At Canon, we will continue to partner and support the government's vision for this worthy cause, which is also a true reflection of our corporate philosophy of Kyosei, meaning living and working together for the common good."

This year CME also engaged the community at large on social media by asking them to express their appreciation of the Arabic language by sharing their favorite Arabic quotes and sayings. A winner was then selected and an animated calligraphy of their quote was produced and shared on Canon's social media channels. In addition, Canon issued a call to action for individuals to send videos pledging to contribute towards using Arabic in written and digital communications to support this ancient language continue to flourish in modern times.

"Canon Middle East knows the importance of the Arabic language in the region, and to ensure that we effectively communicate with our partners and customers in Arabic all our products and solutions are supported with an Arabic interface, and we are emphasizing this further through sponsoring 'Bil Arabi' and creating a social media campaign," added Mai. "Our aim is to also support the creation of Arabic digital content which is in high demand, but unfortunately quite limited. Based on various reports, Arabic digital content stands at only 2-3 percent globally, which is not in proportion to the number of Arabic speakers worldwide. Canon's imaging products and solutions are some of the tools to encourage youth in the region to create their own content in Arabic and expand Arabic digital resources. As the world becomes more digitized, Canon will continue to support the growth of the Arabic language

Twitter-like Weibo platform.

He said Gan and Jia Yuemin would deal with the debt issues of Leshi Internet, LeEco's main publicly traded arm. Separately on her own Weibo account, Gan said she would be meeting creditors to "resolve the debt problems".

The 33-year-old Gan, an actress and producer on several feature films, said her husband owed 6.9 billion yuan (\$1 billion) on loans connected to pledged shares. He has paid 1.7 billion yuan (\$267 million) in interest on related loans since 2014, she wrote yesterday.

Leshi Internet's filings show that nearly all of Jia's shares were pledged to back loans, though a Beijing court said last month that it had seized more than one billion shares—Jia's entire holding—of Leshi Internet to repay creditors. The court also seized Jia's two homes in Beijing and \$200,000 from a bank account.

"Jia Yueting has no other bank deposits available, no other home registration records, and no vehicle registration records," the Beijing First Intermediate Court said at the time.

Gan said in a New Year's Eve Weibo post she had "returned to complete a mission". Her location was tagged as Beijing airport. Leshi Internet had a market capitalization of roughly \$9.4 billion in April last year, but it has suspended trading in its shares since then.

Troubled conglomerate  
Investment firms have already marked down their hold-



so it is an integral part of the Smart vision adopted by several governments regionally."

Youth in the region today are extremely digitally savvy with one of the highest internet and smart mobile phone penetration rates in the world. Their desire to access to technology and information in Arabic is driving the push for increased digital Arabic content. The prospects of creating and expanding digital Arabic content will not only benefit Arabic speakers gaining access to information and knowledge, but as a result promote long-term economic diversity and growth.

ings. If the company were to delist completely, it could be one of the largest failures of a Chinese publicly traded company—possibly wiping out the investments of its 185,000 shareholders.

Jia in his letter blamed LeEco's debt woes on one bank which sued him after he was "only a mere two weeks overdue on a 30 million interest payment".

Afterwards, in July, as creditors began to swarm, "the production and operation of non-public companies came to an abrupt halt", he wrote. "Over 10,000 employees were forced to be dismissed, and the only thing left for the company was to sell its assets to repay the debt."

Jia founded the troubled conglomerate in 2004 as an online video streaming platform, but pushed the tech company into a variety of new business lines—from gaming to sports and more recently, cars.

He brought in hundreds of small-time investors to fund the rapidly growing list of projects, publicly announcing more than \$3 billion in funding for the far-flung projects, which now appears in jeopardy.

Jia's Los Angeles-based electric car company Faraday Future has said it is in the process of raising \$1 billion to start production of electric cars.

The "US FF company (Faraday Future) financing has already achieved major progress," Jia wrote.

"At present there is much work to be done for me to push it forward." —AFP

Health

# Algerian breast cancer survivors rejected, shunned as 'half-women'

'I want a whole woman, not three-quarters of one'

**ALGIERS:** As if losing a breast to cancer was not traumatic enough, Algerian mother-of-three Linda was then spurned by her husband for being "mutilated" and a "half-woman". "Cancer? It's nothing compared with being rejected after 18 years of marriage," the 50-year-old medical assistant said, still clearly upset years later.

Linda is one of hundreds of Algerian women to have been abandoned by their husbands or fiances after being diagnosed with breast cancer, a charity says. Thousands of women are found to suffer from the disease every year in Algeria, leaving many with no option but to surgically remove a part of their body deeply associated with their femininity. Hayat says her fiance dumped her after she told him she had an emergency operation to remove a breast. "He told me: 'I want a whole woman, not three-quarters of one,'" the 30-year-old student said, bursting into tears.

Samia Gasmii, the head of a cancer charity, says many women are dropped by their husbands just after they are diagnosed, leaving them alone to face drastic treatment-and sometimes even without a roof over their heads. "Some sink into depression," said the head of Nur Doha, which means "Light of Day" in Arabic. "Others end up in shelters because they have nowhere else to go once their husbands abandon them." In a country where breast cancer is viewed as a private matter, patients are often reluctant to speak up-even sometimes hiding it from their own family.



ALGIERS: Linda, an Algerian mother-of-three who was abandoned by her husband after being diagnosed with breast cancer, sits in Algiers. — AFP

"It has nothing to do with religion, it's education," he said. Islam "urges spouses to support each other," he said, and an honorable man should look after his wife. But not all men follow the code of conduct. Saida, a doctor who is now 55, says she met her husband at university. We "married for love. He even took part in protests for women's rights," she said.

**'Who will want me?'**

But when she had a breast removed to fight cancer, he sought a divorce and custody of their son even before she had been released from hospital. To add insult to injury, she said, he cleaned out her bank account. "I hit rock bottom," Saida said. "I didn't have the energy to fight everything" at once. Between 9,000 and 10,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed a year in Algeria, according to Farid Cherbal, a professor and expert in cancer genetics at the University of Algiers.

That is five times more than 20 years ago, which experts

say is due to better means of detection, as well as lifestyle changes such as less physical activity, unhealthy diets and smoking. Around 3,500 Algerian women die of the disease a year, Cherbal says. Leila Houti, an epidemiologist and lecturer at the University of Oran's medicine faculty, said breast cancer was often diagnosed too late. Among the survivors who have become single, some despair of ever finding a life partner again.

"Who will want a woman like me?" asked Safia, a 32-year-old who has lost 10 kilograms in a year due to chemotherapy and radiotherapy. But life is beginning to improve for others. Saida, the doctor, won custody of her son. Five years after her operation, Hayat, the student, is healing after therapy, breast reconstruction abroad and the support of friends and family. And Linda, shunned by her husband for being a "half-woman", is in remission and doing well with her children's support. With hindsight, she said, cancer actually freed her of a man who beat her and stole her salary. — AFP

## Indian doctors on strike over alternative medicine plan

**NEW DELHI:** Doctors across India went on strike yesterday over a controversial bill that would allow practitioners of alternative therapies such as homeopathy to practice as medical doctors. More than 300,000 private and public doctors in the country of 1.25 billion cancelled all outpatient services, forcing the government to delay a planned vote on the controversial bill in parliament.

The bill proposes to reform the country's ailing healthcare system and address a chronic shortage of doctors, particularly in rural areas. It would allow those qualified in areas such as homeopathy and ayurveda—a traditional form of Indian medicine—to practice Western medicine after completing a "bridging course" of an unspecified duration. India has nearly 800,000 practitioners of traditional medicine who undergo rigorous training in their own fields, but are not currently allowed to prescribe drugs. The national president of the Indian Medical Association said the move could be "disastrous" for patients. "This bill is anti-patient, anti-doctor, irrational and unscientific," KK Agarwal said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to promote India's traditional therapies since his right-wing Hindu nationalist party won power in 2014, creating a dedicated ministry and successfully lobbying the UN to recognize a World Yoga Day. — AFP

CLINIC  
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## Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader

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What's On



Abdullah Abbas Bowair recently held a special reception at the Crowne Plaza Hotel to celebrate the publishing of his book and his album of the photos and documents of HH the Amir. The reception also included honoring a number of statespersons, ruling family members and diplomats. The celebration also included the screening of a short documentary about HH the Amir.

### Dr Masoud Rasheedi issues his latest publication 'Field Development Plan'

Dr Masoud Rasheedi, Assistant Professor at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) issued his latest scientific publication entitled "Field Development Plan". In this book, targeting engineers, oil and gas companies, and the author provides the best possible technological solutions to develop oil and gas reservoirs for on-shore and off-shore fields.

The field development plan covers all the detailed information required to achieve an economically successful detailed plan to develop any proposed field. Such information is not limited technical data and calculations regarding geology and geophysics,



reservoirs, production engineering, well drilling, design and construction, but also elaborates the environmental infrastructure, health, safety and underground facility issues, as well as surface facilities, economic and risk assessment.

In his book, the author stresses that the field development plan for oil and gas sector serves as a specific task for each filed.

However, a similar model can be developed and implemented on all fields. In a nutshell, the oil and gas field development plan resembles the soul for all activities in this sector; without it nothing can be done. Currently, the book is the only publication in this field in the entire world. It is anticipated that it will shortly serve as a global reference for universities and corporate entities.

### Malabar launches 7th Gold & Diamonds Festival

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the BIG 5 jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 195 retail outlets spread across nine countries has unveiled the details of their 7th edition of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' in Kuwait commencing from 27th December, 2017. This season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds showcases the latest collection of gold, diamond & precious gems jewelry in their outlets, to celebrate this festive period.

This much-awaited festival is one of the biggest jewelry events in GCC and the customers get unprecedented

opportunities to win hundreds of gold coins. A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival will captivate the customers by exhibiting eye catching designs in gold, diamonds, platinum, and precious gems from different parts of the world to flaunt any occasion or event and are well priced too.

Customers can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly on purchase of gold jewelry worth KWD 200 via Scratch N Win coupons. With every diamond jewelry purchase worth KWD 250, customers get a free 1 gram gold coin. To add more glitter to this season, they have also unveiled the latest collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine-Indian Heritage Jewelry and Precia - Gem Jewelry.

### ICSK senior partakes in nature's bounty

Blaise Pascal said, "Nature is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." ICSK Senior's very own Nature Club contemplates environmental conservation and ventures toward widespread awareness, with its industrious team of spirited students led by the dedicated Mariam Sam. The club has plunged into cultivating and fostering the campus garden on the school terrace. This has helped inculcate students with knowledge on gardening methodologies, the life cycles and survival of plants, and producing and harvesting fruit. Plants of different varieties are grown - including tomatoes, sweet potatoes and lady's fingers, and medicinal plants.

The advent of winter impelled the crops in the garden of ICSK to bloom with promise. On the 21st of December, the Nature Club manifested its flourishing yield at the school assembly which accompanied the onset of Christmas. The Harvest was seen as a seasonal gift from Mother Nature. The harvest was auctioned off energetically by Joel D'Souza, assisted by Mariam Sam, Jayabala Jayaram and Atiq Dhanse. The students and staff of ICSK participated in the auction



enthusiastically. The stars of the event were what Mr. Joel crowned, "the three kings of vegetables - Fresh tomatoes, aubergines and bell-peppers." In a very short time, three basketfuls of produce were sold out.

The Nature Club continues to instill students with a sense of civic responsibility

toward nature, and emboldens students to be part of the solution in the ever-growing environmental problem. Students witness the painstaking rewards from Nature and joyously revitalize the ecosystem. When we invest our efforts on Mother Nature, the fruits of our labour will always be paid back in full.



### Indian families celebrate New Year



A group of Indian families gathered on the eve of the New Year at a chalet in Kabb area to usher in 2018 in an atmosphere of joy and bonhomie. They organized several

fun-filled musical programs and games for adults and children and winners were presented prizes and gifts. A cake was cut to mark the advent of the New Year.









## Lifestyle | Gossip



## THE VAMPS WANT TAYLOR SWIFT COLLABORATION

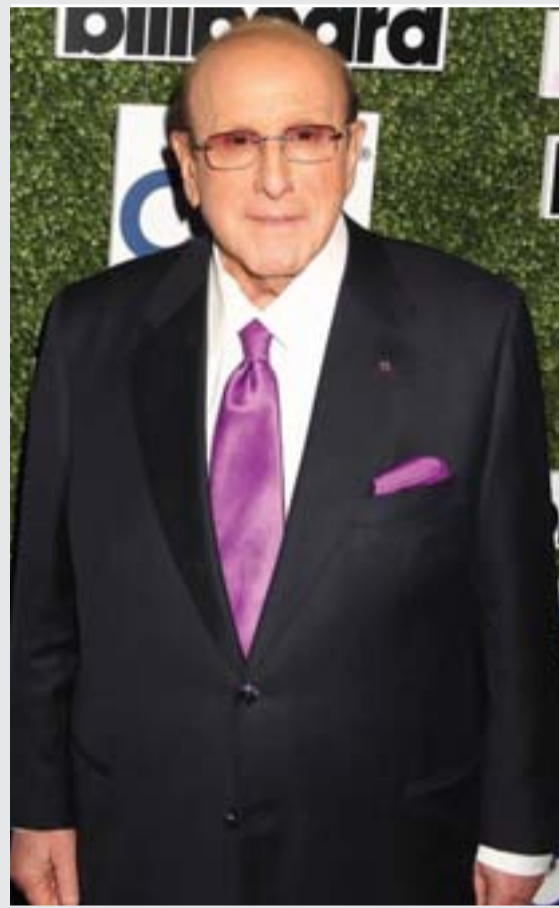
**T**he Vamps want to collaborate with Taylor Swift. The 'Personal' group - which comprise Brad Simpson, James McVey, Tristan Evans and Connor Ball - are thrilled the 'Look What You Made Me Do' singer made her musical comeback this year and think they have a "way in" to making it happen. James said: "I am a massive Taylor Swift fan. It's really good to hear her having new music out. It would be awesome to collaborate. I don't know how we would get that working. We are on the same label actually. Maybe we would have a way in, we'd love to." And the group are also hoping to team up with EDM superstar Steve Aoki, but need to find the time to make it work. James exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "I spoke to Steve six months ago around the time when we released the song 'Middle of the Night'. We really want to work together but it is just quite difficult because he is so busy and we are as

well. "We are waiting for a song to come along, for us to write a song that would work with him. He's definitely interested. We've sent a couple of tracks back and forth to each other, but we are still working on finding the one that works. We'd love to work with him, he's a legend." The quartet recently teamed up with rising star Maggie Lindemann for their single 'Personal', and the American singer was thrilled to be involved. She said recently: "I love the song and the meaning behind it - I think everyone has gone through it. My manager and I were on our way to Norway and he played me a very rough demo of the song that only had Brad on it. I thought the concept was so cool! We recorded it a couple of weeks later. The Vamps were amazing to work with, super good energy all the time. They're cool guys!"

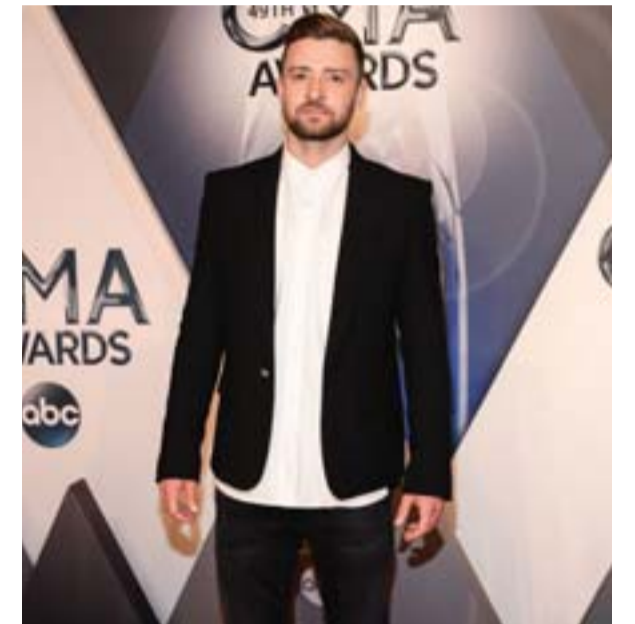
## Liam Gallagher's son wants to be in a band

**L**iam Gallagher's son wants to start a band. The 45-year-old rocker has admitted his 16-year-old son Gene - whom he has with his ex-wife Nicole Appleton - is "desperate" to follow in his footsteps and start making music with people and form a group but, right now, he's at school. Asked why Gene and his older brother Lennon, 18, aren't joining their father on his current tour of Australia, Liam told Herald Sun: "They're still in school. I'm kinda in trouble at the moment for bringing them out of school on tour. I did offer to bring them out, but I think travelling to Australia is just a little bit too far for their little brains. They'll regret it man. "Lennon does a bit of modeling for whoever, he does stuff in New York. Gene's still in sixth form but he's desperate to be in a band. He plays guitar and drums, he's on the look out for band members." And, although he's never heard his son sing before, he's sure he'll do well in the industry because he can play guitar and has the right look to be a rocker. Asked what his voice is like, Liam replied: "I've not heard him sing, but he's got the attitude and the look for sure. He's a good little guitar player, he's better than me. I mean, I can't play, but he's good." Meanwhile, Liam recently admitted he and his brother Noel Fielding - whom he's been feuding with for years - settled their differences just before Christmas. The rocker said that him and Noel, 50, "all good again" but that doesn't mean they'll ever have an Oasis reunion because they're both doing their own thing now. Asked whether their reconciliation could lead to a potential Oasis reunion, Liam recently said: "God no, no. Oasis isn't getting back together, not at all. I'm doing my thing, [Noel's] doing his thing and that is the end of it."

## CLIVE DAVIS' WHITNEY SHOCK



**C**live Davis is still in shock over Whitney Houston's death. The 48-year-old singer drowned in a bathtub in 2012 at the age of 48, just hours before she was due to attend Clive's pre-Grammys gala at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles and the music veteran admitted he still finds it hard to believe his protege is dead. Speaking on The Hollywood Reporter's Awards Chatter podcast, Clive said: "Her death was just a tremendous shock. I had just been with her 48 hours before, and she was vibrant and looking forward to making a new album." And Clive, 85, will always consider Whitney one of the greatest singers of all time. He said: "The three greatest singers of all time are Aretha Franklin, Barbra Streisand and Whitney Houston. Whitney could do anything." Meanwhile, unreleased Whitney Houston recordings were made public as part of a brand new soundtrack to mark the 25th anniversary of 'The Bodyguard' this year. The collection called 'Whitney Houston - I Wish You Love: More From The Bodyguard' was released on November 17, and featured a host of unheard pieces from the late singer's legendary career. The collection was released exactly 25 years after the release of 'The Bodyguard: Original Soundtrack Album', which the 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody' singer co-executive produced with Clive. The Grammy Award-winning album was the first record to sell more than one million copies in a single week, and has sold more than 45 million across the world to date. It's the top-selling soundtrack of all time - while 'The Bodyguard' marked the star's movie debut - and it has gone on to become one of the best selling albums of all time.



## Justin Timberlake drops hints about new music

**J**ustin Timberlake has dropped hints that he is set to tour after the Super Bowl. The 36-year-old singer will headline next year's Super Bowl Halftime Show on February 4 and it is believed he will release new music and embark on a tour afterwards. Justin recently trademarked the phrase 'Man of the Woods' and now his official website, JustinTimberlake.com only directs to a mysterious logo with the letters MOTW. According to documents previously obtained by TMZ, Justin has trademarked the phrase in order to use it for "CDs, DVDs, downloadable music, clothes, concert posters and live performances and tours". In October, Justin confirmed his performance at the U.S. Bank Stadium in Minnesota on his Twitter account via a short clip alongside talk show host Jimmy Fallon. In the skit, Justin asks Jimmy if he has the time and he replies with the same question to which the 'Can't Stop the Feeling' hitmaker says: "I do have the time." Jimmy then says: "You do half time?" Justin replied: "I do half time." The pair repeated the same questions and answers a few times before an excited Jimmy asked: "You're doing the Halftime Show at the Super Bowl?" Justin pulled a face and looked at the camera before shouting, "I'm doing the Halftime Show", while he and Jimmy jumped around the room. He captioned the clip: "I DO have the time. Half the time...#PepsiHalftime #SBLII @Pepsi @NFL @JimmyFallon @FallonTonight (sic)" Justin's last Super Bowl performance was a controversial one in 2004 when he ripped off part of Janet Jackson's outfit, exposing her breast for a brief moment. In August, former Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo said it would be a "home run" if Justin were to perform at the Super Bowl. He said: "Oh, I love Justin, I think he's a great guy, I think if he got Justin, it would be a home run. I think he's one of the rare guys that everyone thinks is great and he's super talented." Super Bowl LII will take place on February 4 in Minneapolis.

## T-Pain was on Rockstar original

**T**-Pain has claimed he was meant to feature on Post Malone's hit track 'Rockstar'. A version of the top-charting track featuring him and Joey Bada\$\$ leaked online this week - sparking speculation they'd done a remix - but the 32-year-old rapper - whose real name is Faheem Rashad Najm - has claimed he was always on the song but was taken of at the last minute and replaced with 21 Savage. Taking to his Twitter account, he wrote: "That's the original. They took me off. And put 21 on. Me and Joey had it first." Bada\$\$, 22, backed up the claims and even said he co-wrote the song with Post. He said: "This is facts. I actually co-wrote the song w post quietly got my first #1 off that. (sic)" Meanwhile, Malone recently admitted that he once received career advice from Bob Dylan, whom he has a tattoo of, who suggested he work harder at his lyrics. He said: "I'm a big Bob Dylan fan. I have a nice Bob Dylan tattoo. He's a genius and I heard that his grandson played my music for him and he liked the music he said I need help with lyrics." Dylan also influenced him to pick up the guitar on his forthcoming project 'Beerbongs & Bentley', which features the chart-topping single 'Rockstar'. He explained: "I played a lot more guitar on this album. I wanted to push boundaries and change the standard of what music is, and it's a genre-less style of music instead of hip-hop."



## Liam Payne's surprising studio habits

**L**iam Payne drinks warm milk and smokes cigarettes while recording new music in the studio. The 24-year-old singer - who kicked off his solo career this year with 'Strip That Down' - has a number of unusual habits in the studio, according to his 'Bedroom Floor' collaborator Charlie Puth. Charlie told Billboard: "I played it for Liam when he was in the studio. And fun fact, he has no air conditioning in the studio. He keeps it at about 80 degrees. He drinks warm milk, I think smokes a bunch of cigarettes, and sings the song perfectly. I don't really understand how that's possible. I mean, it works for him. I don't know if I would be able to pull that off - I go to bed at like, 9 pm every night." Charlie also revealed the song was inspired by leprechauns. He explained: "That was the most fun I had ever had, writing that record. It was with Little Aaron [Aaron Jennings], Noell [Zancanella], J Kash [Jacob Kushner] and Ammar Malik - really, really talented writers. And we were all at Conway, which is a really nice recording studio. And we were all just messing around; nothing was really coming when we were writing. I just pictured what a leprechaun would sing, because I think there were Lucky Charms

in the room or I had had them for breakfast. Like, what would a leprechaun melody be? And Noel, who works with Ryan Tedder and OneRepublic, had this cool sound like 'boom boom boom' and I was thinking, 'Oh, it could be like a dance record or something like that.' And out of nowhere, that melody, that joke melody I had, fit perfectly on to one of the dancey chords. The song originally started [with] two parts and we flipped the two parts and then it was over, and we were like, 'Oh it's so great! Your clothes are talking!' We were dancing around, such a fun song-writing session." Meanwhile, Liam recently admitted he can't believe how his solo career has taken off. The One Direction singer is amazed by how well his solo tracks have been received this year and says performing on his own at Wembley Stadium has been one of his highlights of 2017. He wrote on Instagram: "I've got to perform to some amazing crowds this year, starting with 80,000 people at Wembley Stadium! With the boys you had the chance to bounce off each other, when you're on your own it's just you and you have to get out and just do it! (sic)".



## Ed Sheeran breaks another album record



**E**d Sheeran's "" has enjoyed more spells at number one than any other male solo artist in the UK. The 26-year-old singer-songwriter has had an incredible 2017 with the release of his third album, which features hits such as 'Perfect' and 'Shape of You', and now Ed has achieved another record-breaking feat with which to complete the year. The Brit recently returned to the top of the album charts and in the process, achieved an unprecedented seventh stint at the summit of the music industry in the UK. Ed beat the record previously set by Sam Smith following the release of his debut album 'In The Lonely Hour' in 2015. In total, Ed's third album has now spent 19 weeks at the top of the UK album chart. Meanwhile, Ed recently revealed that although life on the road as a solo star can be lonely, he has invited some of his old schoolmates, who he sang about on the song 'Castle on the Hill', to join him on tour. Ed feels especially grateful towards them as his friends are married with kids and he appreciates that, in reality, they probably don't want to "go out in Tokyo at two o'clock in the morning". He explained: "I've had three mates on tour with me and next year I've got four, who are my schoolmates. They are all the 'Castle on the Hill' people. I don't have a band and all of my team, God bless them, are married with kids so don't want to go out in Tokyo at two o'clock in the morning."



Lifestyle | Gossip



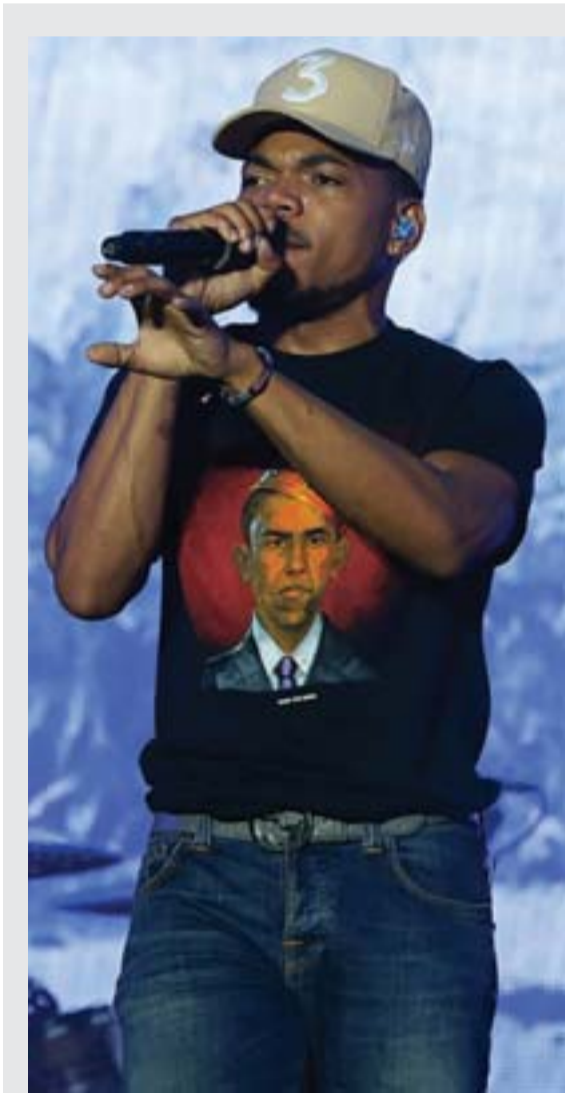
## BRITNEY SPEARS 'EXCITED' FOR 2018

**B**ritney Spears is "excited" for what 2018 will bring after she concluded her four-year 'Piece of Me' Las Vegas residency on New Year's Eve. The superstar singer performed a special set on Sunday night at The AXIS at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in Sin City, and she shared some "2018 shenanigans" with her man Sam Asghari as they briefly reflected on the end of the run, with two songs - 'Toxic' and 'Work B\*\*h' - aired live during 'Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest'. In a video uploaded to Instagram, Britney's boyfriend asked if she was excited for the year ahead, and was met with a resounding "yes". It comes after Sam revealed how proud he was of his partner in a gushing post to mark the end of her four-year run in Vegas. He wrote: "4 years of legacy, 4 years of greatness, a change in entertainment for the better! 'Extremely proud of my baby for kicking ass

again tonight, but this time to end #pieceofme In Vegas after 4 years of residency. What a night. Happy New Year. #GOAT#britneyspears (sic)" Britney, 36, is leaving the future open, as her manager Larry Rudolph revealed they have "made zero decisions" past the end of the residency. He told The Las Vegas Review-Journal: "Anything is possible. We have made zero decisions. We expect a lot of interest from all parties. Britney basically sells out every show, and she loves Las Vegas, she loves performing in Vegas, and Vegas is a possibility going forward. She might tour, she might work on a new album. It's too early to talk specifics about anything."

## Mark Wahlberg to direct Caron Butler biopic?

**M**ark Wahlberg wants to make his directorial debut on the Caron Butler biopic. The 46-year-old actor is already producing the movie, about the NBA player's journey from drug dealer to All-Star, and he will also act in it but Mark is now eyeing the director's job. TMZ reports that Mark is "very passionate about the project - and thinks it could be the perfect movie to make his directorial debut". Mark recently admitted he had a project in mind that he'd love to direct and although he did not specify the Butler biopic, he gave a strong hint when he explained that it is set in Wisconsin, where Caron was born and raised. Speaking to Collider, he said: "It's either going to happen this time next year, or maybe five years from now, who knows? But maybe this time next year. I have one specific project that I'm thinking about. It takes place in Wisconsin. It's a true story." However, the directing job may not fall into Mark's hands after all, as he revealed he's already sent the script to his frequent collaborator Peter Berg, who he says is also keen to helm the project. If Mark does make the transition into directing, it will come after a hugely successful acting career which saw him named as Hollywood's highest-paid actor earlier this year. The star topped Forbes' list for 2017 after earning a whopping \$68 million, thanks to huge roles in 'Daddy's Home 2' and 'Transformers: The Last Knight'. Mark isn't in too much of a rush to head off into directing though, as the star previously said being a father to daughters Ella, 13, and Grace, seven, and sons Brendan, eight and Michael, 11 - who he has with his wife Rhea Durham - is his number one priority. When asked if being a spiritual person affected which roles he chose, he shared: "Absolutely. And also being a dad. And a husband. What I'm willing to do and not do. I never want to compromise my artistic integrity. But at the same time, with [playing a porn star in] 'Boogie Nights', I already did that. I'd be hard-pressed to do something in that world today ... "Sometimes you have no control [over a film's success]. Once you've done everything you can to create something, it goes out there and it either works or doesn't. At the end of the day I just know I did everything I could do to make it the best it would be. Then you gotta be able to move on. Let it go."



## Chance The Rapper wants to make film on President Donald Trump

**C**hance The Rapper wants to make a movie about President Donald Trump. The 'No Problem' hitmaker took to his Twitter account to pitch a new film idea to fans and potential executives as he explained the plot would revolve around an old iPod and the music on it would change the way the controversial Republican leader - who took over from Barack Obama this year - viewed the world. He tweeted: "Alright I gotta movie pitch: a thread. 'President Trump gets an old Ipod for christmas... This is his very first ipod... But not only is it his first Ipod, he's actually never listened to music before in his life. 'This Ipod has music from the past, present & FUTURE... And like A Christmas Carol, It's a Wonderful Life or What Women Want this Ipod drastically changes how President Trump sees the world (sic)..." He referred to the future film as a "Suspense Thriller/ Sappy Christmas Musical" and asked his fans to help him come up with an ending for the movie as well as a title and who they would like to play the President and the other characters in the film. He wrote: "HOLLYWOOD (& TWITTER) IM TAGGING YOU IN: I need Songs, actors, a title, an ending! Whatever you got I'm all ears (sic)". Despite his well-thought out plot, the 24-year-old rapper is adamant he's not making the switch from music to movies anytime soon and urged fans not to make the film. He said: "I was just joking im not making either movie. "I was just checking to see how yall felt about it. It was just jokes. Dont go make that movie. It would be dangerous (sic)."

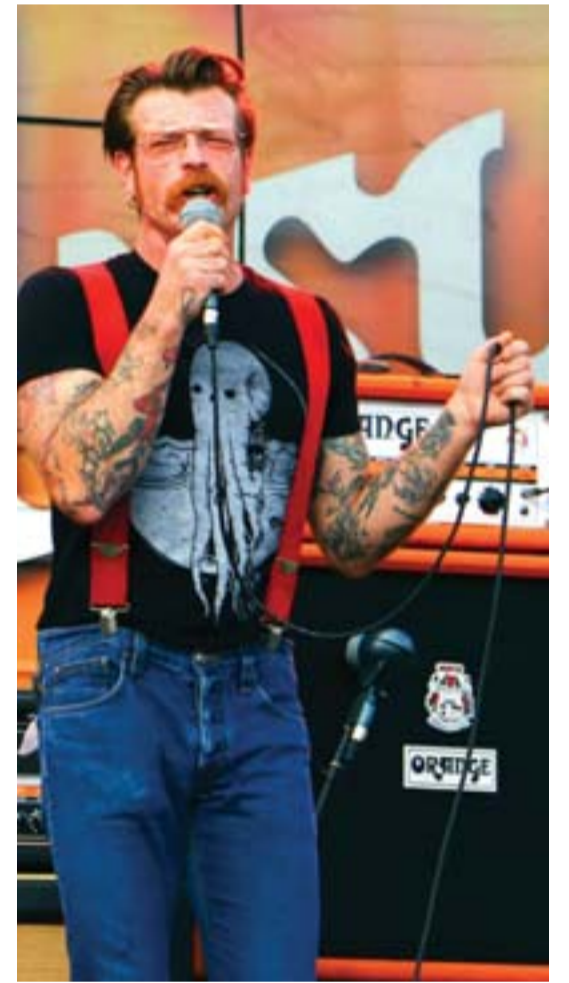


## Ariana Grande teases new album

**A**riana Grande has hinted she will be releasing a new album this year. The 24-year-old singer - whose most recent record was 'Beautiful Woman' in 2016 - has given fans a snippet of a sneak peak from the studio on social media, and suggested new material could be on the way. Along with a clip of her humming uploaded to Instagram, the 'One Last Time' star sent fans into a frenzy as she seemingly confirmed fans will be hearing fresh tunes, writing that she would "see you" in 2018. Earlier in 2017, Ariana revealed she was working on new music after responding to a fan account which had posted a "very old or fake" picture suggesting she was in the studio again. In response, she took a screenshot of the picture and wrote on her Instagram Stories: "I'm pretty sure dis is very old or fake. If u wanted confirmation that I've been workin why didn't you just ask? (sic)" She then shared an image of herself in the studio, followed by a short clip of herself working away on production. In October, Ariana admitted she was keen to get back into the studio as soon as possible following her 72-date 'Dangerous Woman Tour'. She said: "I don't even want to go home and relax. At the same time, it [the tour] has been a lot emotionally. It's been very challenging for all of us involved. "So it would be nice to really hold my loved ones close for a little while, stay home for a little bit. "But knowing me, I'm going to be in the studio because I love it, and I want to create. I started an album already a year ago, over a year ago, but I want to keep creating, and it's not done yet. So I'm going to take my sweet ass time, so I'll be rested and ready to go again as soon as possible."

## French film based on Bataclan terror attack is shelved

**T**he French film based on the 2015 terror attack on the Bataclan music venue in Paris has been put on hold. 'Ce soir-la', which follows the fictional romance between a single mother and an Afghan refugee who meet on the night of 13 November as they rescue survivors of the attacks, was in the middle of being edited when it was shelved after the families of those killed in the horrific incident branded the film "scandalous." Claire Peltier - whose partner David was among those killed in the terror attack - told the Agence France Presse news agency that it was "too soon" for such a "painful story" to be told on the big screen. She added: "We are scandalised that such a film could see the light of day so soon after a violent event." The mother-of-two has since started a petition, which has attracted 39,000 signatures, to block the film. France 2 said the film was still being edited and added: "No transmission date had been fixed for the film... which has not yet been seen by the station's management." The Eagles of Death Metal were performing to around 1,500 people at the Bataclan when masked gunmen stormed the venue, firing and the band and their fans, killing 90 people and injuring hundreds. Meanwhile, the band - who cancelled their tour after the shocking incident - returned to the French capital last month for a surprise gig to mark the two-year anniversary of those who sadly lost their lives in the attack. The event was setup by some of the survivors and held at the French capital's town hall in the 11th district. The group dedicated 'I Love You All the Time' and 'Save a Prayer', which was the last track they performed before gunshots echoed around the venue two years ago, to those who tragically died. Before giving everyone in the crowd white roses as a sign of respect, Jesse said: "I'm so happy and pleased to see all of you. The only reason we're still standing is because you all still love rock and roll."



## Hugh Jackman says quality TV has improved Hollywood movies

**H**ugh Jackman says prestige TV helped 'The Greatest Showman' to be a better movie. Hugh was first attacked to the movie in 2009 but it didn't start filming until 2016 and Hugh believes that the quality of TV shows in the current climate has forced Hollywood movies to improve in order to tempt people out of their homes. He explained to Collider: "There's been now for a while this belief and this commitment to giving people more than they expect, changing things up, taking some risk. The landscape in TV has been changing so rapidly and there's such high quality - high-quality writing and acting - and that it's inevitable. If we're gonna convince people to go out to a cinema, we have to give them more than they're gonna get at home." In the new movie, which also stars Zac Efron and Zendaya, Hugh stars as P.T. Barnum of the famed Barnum and Bailey Circus and Hugh, 49, had to have his stitches from skin cancer redone after singing a line from the musical. The actor wasn't going to let the fact he could have "ruptured" 80 stitches in his nose stop him from performing one part of the movie. He said: "There was a lot riding on the final read through, but I'd had a skin cancer removed from my nose the day before and my surgeons said I must not on any account sing because it could rupture the 80 stitches. "A stand in was going to sing my part, but when it came to the big final number I was so taken up by the moment that I sang my heart out. "When I finished it was a good showbiz moment and everyone was happy but there was blood trickling down my face and I had to be re-stitched. But, it was so worth it!"



Trail runner Stone Tsang (right), 39, looking at the city from Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.



This picture shows trail runner Stone Tsang, 39, running on Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.— AFP photos



Trail runner Stone Tsang, 39, looking at the city from Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.

## NATURAL THERAPY: HONG KONG'S MOUNTAIN WARRIORS

Wooded hillsides, craggy ridges and wheeling birds of prey are a world away from Hong Kong's famous skyscrapers but the city's country parks are a necessary balm for its stressed out residents. With some of the world's highest property prices, many can only afford tiny apartments, some living in infamous "cage homes" big enough only for a bed. Hong Kong's fast-paced lifestyle and long working hours also take their toll. Fortunately, within easy reach of the densely packed tower blocks and traffic, there is an extensive network of hiking trails which snake over hundreds of peaks across the territory and along its coastlines.

now regularly asked for tips about routes by local walkers and have teamed up for campaigns with environment NGOs and outdoor clothing brands. "Our message is about protecting nature and the environment," says Renault, a freelance photographer. He worries about the future of Hong Kong's trails—the housing shortage has sparked government proposals to build on the outskirts of the country parks. But with hiking becoming more popular, particularly among young people, he hopes those plans will fail. "More and more people like hiking and go out and do it. Because of that there's more resistance to development than in the past," he said.

### Soul healing

On a cool sunny morning, Stone Tsang skips sure-footed along a shady path beneath Hong Kong's highest peak, Tai Mo Shan. The city's most famous trail runner, Tsang, 39, regularly wins long-distance competitions and recently completed a gruelling local hill race which saw him cover 298 kilometers (185 miles) in 54 hours, snatching naps when he could no longer keep his eyes open. As a paramedic and father of two, he says getting out into these wide open spaces is a vital stress relief. "When I come to the mountains it's like therapy for me," he told AFP. "It's healing for my soul."



A woman posing on a rock for photos on Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.

Forty percent of Hong Kong is protected country park and nature reserves, amounting to 443 square kilometers (274 sq miles), drawing hikers, runners and campers all year round. For 29-year-old Dai-yu Cheung, those natural landscapes changed his life. As a keen amateur photographer he decided to document some of the city's remoter areas, never having explored them before. His discoveries led him to ditch long hours in his job as a graphic designer, during which he had developed a bad back, and go part-time as he sought a healthier, happier existence. Cheung lives with his family and cut down his financial outgoings so he could work three days a week, often hiking with friends.

"When we go hiking, we feel free, relax and forget our troubles," he told AFP, carefully gathering scattered litter as he walked through tall grass to a rocky outcrop in the northern New Territories. He and his friend AM Renault, 29, also a keen hiker, have set up Facebook and Instagram pages under the name Yamanaka Yuko, sharing photos and video of their hill climbs in Hong Kong and abroad. They describe themselves as artists inspired by nature. With a growing band of followers the pair are



Trail runner Stone Tsang, 39, as he looks at the city from Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.



Dai-yu Cheung (right), 29, and AM Renault, 29, chatting as they walk on Hong Kong's highest peak Tai Mo Shan.

Hitting a dirt trail, rough with gnarled tree roots and scattered boulders, is part of the Hong Kong hill experience. But over the years, many paths have been covered with concrete in an attempt to make them safer, something which Tsang is leading a popular Facebook campaign to stop.

He says former government technicians who helped establish paths using natural materials have now retired and contractors have little knowledge of how to do so. Not only is the concrete alien to the natural environment, it also becomes slippery and causes soil erosion, says Tsang. "Most mountain rescues are because inexperienced people get lost or dehydrated, there are very few injuries because of the trail conditions," he explained.

Tsang is lobbying the government to stop pouring any new concrete and has introduced them to international experts who are showing workers and members of the public how to refurbish paths naturally. The agriculture, fisheries and conservation department told AFP it would use natural materials "as far as possible". Tsang now wants to bring hiking tours into the country parks to foster a love of the mountains in the face of the threat of development. "The country parks are a very valuable asset to Hong Kong, not just for us, but for future generations," says Tsang. "This kind of thing you cannot just see - you have to go out and feel it." — AFP

## Swimming with whale sharks in Mexico

They may be called whale sharks but there's nothing to fear encountering one of these giant fish in the ocean—so much so that tourists in northwestern Mexico can swim alongside them on organized tours. "These are tropical animals, very gentle, that you can swim with, and which go along at a maximum eight kilometers (five miles) an hour," explained Fabricio Mujica, who handles these up-close sessions in La Paz Bay, in Mexico's Baja California. Starting in October, when these massive creatures—Latin name *Rhincodon typus*—come close to shore, tourists converge on the area in boats carrying 10 people.

The whale part of the fish's name is a misnomer. They are indeed sharks, but the non-dangerous carpet shark type that feeds on small animals on the seabed. They are around nine meters (30 feet) long and weigh some nine

tons. As the boats get close, the engines are cut so as not to frighten the animals. Then the tourists slip into the water, following instructions from their guide. "It's a species that is really sensitive to boats and noise. They have a highly developed sense of smell—they notice any sort of chemical product or oil and that makes them flee, which is good because it lets them survive," Mujica said.

One tourist, Eduardo Rodriguez, has returned a second time to float in the water next to these giants. "It's an experience difficult to put into words... It's really spectacular," he said. These observation activities are regulated in Mexico by the environment ministry, which checks on groups getting too close and fines any boats not sticking to the rules designed to protect the whale sharks. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Top Italian chef to open community kitchen in Paris

Top Italian chef Massimo Bottura, whose Osteria Francescana was named the world's best restaurant last year, is in talks to open a community kitchen in Paris that would serve the homeless and other people in need. "Discussions are under way to set up a canteen in the basement of the Madeleine Church," Jean-Francois Rial, chief executive of the group Voyageurs du Monde, told AFP. "It is still just a project, nothing is done but discussions have been positive with the association" that manages the existing restaurant in the church. For more than 40 years, the Foyer de la Madeleine, an associative restaurant, has been serving lunch for about 9

euros on weekdays in the vaulted basement of the Madeleine church.

But people in need pay just one euro. Bottura, along with Rial and French artist JR, is piloting the project under his "Food for Soul" nonprofit organization which fights food waste and social exclusion. Born out of an initial project in Milan in 2015, the top chef created his first canteen during the city's expo, with international chefs cooking meals for free from surplus ingredients and serving them to homeless and other disadvantaged people. Since then, the group has opened a number of canteens in Italy and recently opened a project in London. The project in Paris,

if successful, would open sometime in March and would serve between 70 to 90 people every night.

"It will not be a soup kitchen but high-quality cuisine, made by chefs trained by French-starred chefs" who will cook from unsold ingredients, Rial said. Set in the heart of Modena in northern Italy, the Osteria already boasted three Michelin stars before it snapped up first prize at the World's 50 Best Restaurants Awards in June 2016 thanks to a creative cuisine that reinvents Italian traditional dishes. — AFP



This file photo shows Italian chef Massimo Bottura posing in the kitchen of his restaurant "Osteria Francescana" in Modena. — AFP



Cheesed off: Italian regions highly strung over mozzarella

Defenders of buffalo mozzarella in the Campania region of southern Italy have vowed to fight a decision made this week by the farming ministry which allows a cow mozzarella from neighboring Puglia to be given special status. Even before Brussels has given its opinion over the DOP (protected designation of origin) label, the defense consortium of buffalo mozzarella announced an appeal at the administrative court. "The cheese products of Puglia are delicious, but for the typical character of the local productions and the full interest of the value of the resources of all regions, the only DOP mozzarella is—and must remain—ours, exclusively made with buffalo milk," warned the Campania region in September.

Buffalo mozzarella was awarded the DOP label in 1996, and following a difficult

start in trading has had a record decade: some 44,000 tons were produced in 2016 — up 31 percent in 10 years—of which 14,000 tons were exported—up 168 percent in the same period. Buffalo milk costs three times more than cow's milk, and even though the taste of both products is different and the ministry has set constraints for dairies in Puglia to clearly display that it is cow mozzarella, Campania fears confusion. "The game is not over," said Domenico Raimondo, president of the defense consortium of buffalo mozzarella. "We will go to the end and we will use all the means at our disposal to avoid what appears to us clearly an own goal for Italy, that both the markets and consumers will understand." — AFP

Latest 'Star Wars' passes \$1 billion mark in third week: Disney

The latest episode in Disney's colossally popular "Star Wars" series has passed the \$1 billion mark in worldwide revenues after just three weeks, a Disney spokesperson confirmed Sunday. That helped provide a positive spin to what has been a year of ups and downs for Hollywood, while giving a clear boost to Disney, now the only studio to surpass \$5 billion globally for the last three years, according to Deadline.com. "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" is expected to surpass another Disney film, "Beauty and the Beast," as the year's top-earning film. "Beauty" took in more than \$500 million domestically and exceeded \$1.3 billion worldwide.

"Jedi" is expected to earn about \$65.6 million over this four-day holiday weekend in North America, for a \$530.3 million total since its opening three weeks ago, said industry watcher Exhibitor Relations. The space saga stars Daisy Ridley, Oscar Isaac, Adam Driver and two members of the series' original cast, Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker and the late Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia. Its domestic earnings come on top of an international take estimated at \$523 million for this eighth episode in the series. "Jedi" is now the year's number one film in European theaters. If the estimates are borne out, "Jedi" will be the eighth highest-grossing domestic movie of all time, according to Variety.com.

A struggle to fill seats

Hollywood has had its struggles this year, however. Based on early estimates, North American revenue is expected to reach about \$11.1 billion, down more than two percent from the year before, industry analysts comScore reported. With more people curling up to



This file photo shows Stormtroopers and Praetorian guards posing on the red carpet for the European Premiere of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP

watch movies at home, theater attendance appears set to hit a 22-year low. But in the meantime, holiday viewership provided a boost not just for "Jedi" but for Sony's "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle." That family adventure, starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, is expected to surge on Monday after trailing "Jedi" through most of the four-day weekend to earn a total \$67 million in North America.

In third was "Pitch Perfect 3" from Universal, at \$22.7 million for the four days. The cast, led by Anna Kendrick, follows the continuing adventures of glee singers the Bellas. Next was "The Greatest Showman," from Fox, at \$20.3

million. The musical features Hugh Jackman as legendary circus impresario P.T. Barnum. In fifth spot was the animated family feature "Ferdinand," the story of a peaceful Spanish bull forced to take on the world's most famous bullfighter. The Fox film netted \$15.2 million.

Rounding out the top 5 were:

- "Coco" (\$8.8 million)
- "Darkest Hour" (\$7.4 million)
- "All the Money in the World" (\$7.2 million)
- "Downsizing" (\$6.0 million)
- "Father Figures" (\$5.5 million). — Reuters



OSN starts 2018 with an outstanding line-up of exclusive television this month

This January, OSN promises the biggest and most explosive line-up of television yet, with an outstanding array of exclusive films and series, perfect for the whole family in the new year. Don't miss new and existing premieres, fresh episodes, exciting mid-season finales, gripping blockbusters and seasonal hits first and exclusive on OSN.

OSN First Home of HBO HD

Highly anticipated is the return of The X-Files - newly reinstated as FBI agents Mulder and Scully continue the search for their son William on January 7 (9pm KSA). For a great comedy, watch Season 2 of Divorce as Frances suddenly begins to reassess her life and her strained relationship with her husband, showing January 15 (9:30pm KSA); and Season 2 of crime drama, StartUp, where a desperate banker, a Haitian-American gang lord, and a Cuban-American hacker are forced to work together to unwittingly create their version of the American dream, January 31 (10pm KSA). For a season finale don't miss the gripping and thrilling Berlin Station January 1 (10pm KSA) and Season 2 of Chance on January 12 (9pm KSA). Mystery min-series Mosaic premieres January 23 (10pm KSA), starring Sharron Stone and directed by Steven Soderbergh, which follows a high-profile disappearance, airing daily until January 27.

OSN Series First HD

Watch season 7 of Suits which continues the story of a brilliant college-dropout who finds himself a job working with Harvey Specter, one of New York City's best lawyers, from January 1 (7pm KSA). Season 13 of Criminal Minds premieres January 7 (7pm KSA) and follows an elite group of profilers who analyze the most dangerous serial killers. A woman with a troubled past is drawn to a small town in Maine where fairytales are to be believed in Season 7 of Once Upon a Time airing January 12 (8pm KSA).

OSN Series Comedy HD

Catch Season 5 of Brooklyn Nine-Nine where a talented and carefree cop who has never had to follow the rules now faces new challenges in the job, showing January 1 (8pm KSA). Don't miss Season 2 of Speechless as Maya DiMeo, fiercely protective of her husband, Jimmy, and their three children, Ray, Dylan, and J.J. - who has a condition that leaves him with unique mobility and communication challenges; on January 2 (8pm KSA). Popular series The Good Place returns for its second season, continuing Eleanor's afterlife journey, premiering January 7 (8:30pm KSA). As a spin-off of Black-ish, Season 1 of Grown-ish starring Yara Shahidi, tells the story of Zoey Johnson heads to college and begins her journey to adulthood where she quickly discovers that life isn't everything she hopes, showing January 5 (8pm KSA).



OSN YaHala Al Oula HD

Catch-up with all the best Turkish drama in January starting with series, Ishq w Domou, which tells the story of Yasmeen who comes from a poor background, while Jehan's wife Deyala is wealthy. They both gave birth in the same hospital on the same day 15 years ago, but a mistake was made that would change their destinies forever, showing Sundays-Thursdays (9pm KSA) from January 21. Starting Sundays-Thursdays (10pm KSA) is Bitter Sweet about Nazli is a young ambitious lady who dreams of becoming a big cook and

owning her own restaurant while hoping that her financial situation improves.

Continuing Egyptian drama, Nasiby w Qesmetek, revolves around certain cases relating to the life struggles Arab women face, showing Sundays-Thursdays (11pm KSA); and Kuwaiti social and psychological drama, Amani El Omr, tells the story of four girls gathered in a psychiatric hospital, Sundays-Thursdays (8pm KSA). A'elat Al-Hagg Noa'man continues tale of the 'Noa'man' family conflicts, starring Taim Hassan, Mondays-Thursdays (7pm KSA).

OSN YaHala Cinema HD

Don't miss new and exclusive movies every Friday (9pm KSA), starting on January 5 with El-Asleyen where Samir receives a phone call that will change his life forever. January 12 presents Listen, where a sound engineer takes a leap toward his love to pull her into his universe of sound. Yabani Asli airs January 19, where Moharram risks losing his family when his Japanese wife takes them back to her hometown; and Antar Abn Shadad, where the grandson of Antar Abassi enters a bitter struggle with a rival to win the heart of the most beautiful girl in the tribe, on January 26.

Faten Hamama Pop-Up Channel

In loving memory of The Lady of the Arabic Screen, Faten Hamama, OSN is celebrating her life with a dedicated pop-up channel from January 17-27, featuring ten classic movies from her cinematic career - Al-Hob al Kabir; Al-Zawga Al-Aazraa; Ayannah El-Helwah; Doaa AL-Karawan; El-Tarek El-Masdoud; Embratoryat Meem; Zaman Al-Agaeb; Al-Bab Al-Maftouh; AL-Khet Al-Rafeaa; and Al-Mohareg Al-Kbeer.

Catch up on your favorite shows and watch live TV anytime, anywhere with OSN Play and OSN On Demand. For more information visit, osnplay.osn.com

Ooredoo Kuwait signs a strategic partnership with OSN

Ooredoo Kuwait has signed a partnership agreement with OSN - the region's leading entertainment network - to provide its customers access to OSN's all-new online and mobile app entertainment platform, 'WAVO'. Available on mobile devices and tablets (iOS/Android), Samsung and LG Smart TVs or PCs, WAVO combines a unique blend of live and catch-up TV, including English and Arabic family and kids shows, hit TV series, blockbuster movies and live and exclusive sporting events.

WAVO will be available as part of the unique "Shamel Home" offer that Ooredoo Kuwait recently launched. Customers can select either the WAVO Entertainment, WAVO Movies or WAVO Sports package as part of this offer and get the remaining two packages at no additional cost, until the end of February 2018.

Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "We're happy to announce our strategic partnership with OSN and to offer WAVO's best-in-class digital entertainment services to our customers. We see our customers consuming TV content increasingly on their mobile devices and smart TVs and WAVO with its wide array of exclusive entertainment is a perfect fit."

Francesco Perta, VP Telecom Partnerships, OSN, said: "This new agreement with Ooredoo Kuwait

ensures we deliver on our goals of providing customers more value and an unrivalled TV viewing experience anytime, anywhere. WAVO's offering is unbeatable in the region and we are extremely pleased that now even more customers across the region can enjoy all the amazing entertainment WAVO has to offer."

Amine Tazi, Head of Strategy and Business Development, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "OSN's unique entertainment platform, WAVO, perfectly fits with our strategy of offering the best digital products and experiences for our customers and differentiates us in the market. This is a new milestone for Ooredoo's digital transformation journey and we would like to further extend the breadth of our offerings in collaboration with OSN going forward."

WAVO capitalizes on some of OSN's top exclusive partnerships with leading studios, including HBO and Disney, giving Ooredoo Kuwait customers unprecedented access to their favourite TV entertainment, anytime, anywhere. Top shows include Emmy Award winning hits, Game of Thrones, Westworld and Big Little Lies; as well as Disney family favourites. In addition, with 21 live TV channels and a huge volume of exclusive Hollywood and Arabic content available on catch up TV and on demand, WAVO's offering is unmatched in the region.



# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2018



A street performer points with a giant hand on Tverskaya street in front of the Kremlin during a festival marking the New Year and Christmas in central Moscow yesterday. Russia celebrates the Orthodox Christmas on January 7th. — AFP

## Brands lace-up to map 'invisible' shoemakers in south India

When the 55-year-old woman stood up to speak at a meeting of shoemakers in south India earlier this month, she was seeing her employers for the first time. She told them about the decades she had spent hunched up in her home, repeatedly pulling a needle through tough leather as she sewed shoe uppers, the meager income she earned, her failing eyesight and the wounds on her hands. For manufacturers and brands, her story was a revelation. The meeting brought women workers, manufacturers, charities and brands face-to-face for the first time in a bid to map the role of homeworkers - an "invisible workforce" in a global supply chain making high-end shoes - and improve conditions.

"It was a historical meeting in that sense," said Annie Delaney of the Australian RMIT School of Management, who has documented the condition of homeworkers and attended the meeting a fortnight ago in Vellore in Tamil Nadu. "Homeworkers described their reality. It was a powerful experience for not just the women but also for

the manufacturers and brands who were meeting them for the first time."

There are hundreds of thousands of women from poor, marginalized families who work for cash, stitching, embroidering and weaving at home to put the finishing touches to products that are sold globally, campaigners said. Most of them are not recognized as formal workers so have no access to social security or fair wages. Vellore district in Tamil Nadu is the hub of a growing industry in India producing leather footwear for export. In 2016, India exported 236 million pairs of shoes up from 206 million in 2015, according to the World Footwear Yearbook. It also has one of the highest concentrations of homeworkers in India - largely women hand stitching uppers of leather shoes.

### Cheap labor

While factories in the area employ people at higher salaries to assemble the shoes, manufacturers find it cheaper to outsource the labor intensive process of

stitching uppers to women who work from home, using middlemen, campaigners said. The meeting saw Britain-based Pentland Brands - the first company to map homeworkers in its supply chain - share their interventions with other participating brands including UK-based Clarks and the Switzerland-based AstorMueller Group, according to a stakeholder who attended the closed door meeting.

None of the companies were immediately available to comment. Pentland, with annual sales of USD \$3 billion across 190 countries, owns sports, outdoor and fashion brands including Berghaus, Speedo, and holds a majority stake of JD Sports. Since 2016, Pentland has worked with non-profit groups Cividep in India and Homeworkers Worldwide to identify homeworkers making shoes for them and is at present mapping their pay and hours worked to ensure better wages.

None from Pentland was immediately available to comment on the initiative, which according to their website aims to provide direct employment to homeworkers,

better training and to work with suppliers for sustainable improvement of labor conditions. Campaigners say homeworkers are paid by the piece and the exact number of hours they work are not tracked.

The women are paid less than \$0.14 per pair of shoes, which are sold in Britain for between \$60 and \$140, according to a 2016 report by Cividep India and British non-government organizations Homeworkers Worldwide and Labor Behind the Label. The report highlighted how the industry relies on homeworkers who earn less than the minimum wage, lack legal rights and suffer from chronic headaches and body pain. "Homeworkers have been under the radar for a long time," Delaney said. "A start was made in Vellore to collaborate and ensure they get their dues." — Reuters

## New Year decorated metro train



Passengers sit inside a New Year decorated metro train in Moscow yesterday.



Passengers leave a New Year decorated metro train.



A New Year decorated metro train. — AFP photos



Passengers sit inside a New Year decorated metro train.



Passengers sit inside a New Year decorated metro train.



Passengers sit inside a New Year decorated metro train.