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# Palestinians slam 'blackmail' after Trump threatens aid cut

## Jerusalem 'not for sale for gold or billions'

### Kuwait army chief unhurt after chopper crash in Bangladesh

**KUWAIT:** The defense ministry announced yesterday the safety of Kuwait Army's Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammed Al-Khuder and his accompanying delegation following a helicopter accident during an official visit to Bangladesh. The helicopter carrying Khuder and his accompanying delegation suffered an accident in Sylhet, where heavy fog obscured the pilot's vision, causing the chopper to crash into trees while landing at the designated site, the ministry said in a press release.

It added that Khuder contacted First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as well as Deputy Chief of Staff Gen Abdullah Nawaf Al-Sabah, stressing that only minimal material damage and moderate injuries were reported. The chief of staff and his entourage left Kuwait on Monday morning for an official visit to Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called Khuder to inquire about his health and that of his delegation following the accident. In return, Khuder extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Amir for his generous and paternal initiative to inquire about his health and his companions' safety, wishing the Amir lasting good health and wellness. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah made similar calls. — KUNA

The helicopter carrying a Kuwaiti delegation is seen after it crash-landed in Bangladesh yesterday. — KUNA

**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian leaders said yesterday they will not be "blackmailed" after US President Donald Trump threatened to cut aid worth more than \$300 million annually, his latest provocative move that could upturn years of careful diplomacy. Relations between Trump's White House and the Palestinians were already tense after the US president's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital last month. The Dec 6 announcement concerning the disputed city led Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas to say the United States could no longer play any role in the Middle East peace process.

Trump's threat in a tweet on Tuesday to try to force the Palestinians into negotiations caused further outrage, though Israeli ministers lauded it. The Palestinians rely heavily on international aid, with many analysts, including Israelis, saying such assistance helps maintain stability in a volatile region. The European Union is also a major contributor.

"We pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect," Trump tweeted. "They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue peace treaty with Israel. We have taken Jerusalem, the toughest part of the negotiation, off the table, but Israel, for that, would have had to pay more. But with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening all of the budget, worth \$319 million in 2016, according to US government figures. The United States has long provided the Palestinian Authority with much-needed budgetary support and security assistance, as well as an additional \$304 million for UN programs in the West Bank and Gaza. UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said so far it had not been informed by the United States of any changes in financing. Israel receives more than \$3 billion in military aid per year from Washington.

Abbas' spokesman said they were not against negotiations, but that talks should be "based on international laws and resolutions that have recognized an independent Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital". "Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the state of Palestine and it is not for sale for gold or billions," Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP. Senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said in a statement that "we will not be blackmailed". "President Trump has sabotaged our search for peace, freedom and justice," she said. "Now he dares to blame the Palestinians for the consequences of his own irresponsible actions!"

However, several Israeli ministers voiced support for Trump, with the country's right-wing government having seized on the US president's backing to push ahead with initiatives seen as dealing further blows to remaining hopes for a two-state solution. Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev, from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, said "you cannot on the one hand receive \$300 million in American aid per year and at the same time close the door on negotiations".

**Continued on Page 11**

### Iran general declares 'end of sedition'

**TEHRAN:** Iran's Revolutionary Guards chief announced the "end of the sedition" yesterday as tens of thousands rallied in a show of strength for the country's Islamic rulers after days of deadly unrest. General Mohammad Ali Jafari said the Guards only intervened "in a limited way" against fewer than 15,000 "troublemakers" nationwide, adding that a large number had been arrested. Protests over economic problems broke out in Iran's second city Mashhad on Dec 28 and quickly spread across the country, turning against the regime as a whole. A total of 21 people have died in the unrest, with protesters attacking government buildings and police stations in some areas.

"Today we can announce the end of the sedition," Jafari said, quoted on the Guards' website. "A large number of the trouble-makers at the center of the sedition, who received training from counter-revolutionaries... have been arrested and there will be firm action against them," he said. Jafari spoke after thousands of pro-regime demonstrators took to the streets. Chants of "Leader, we are ready" were heard as images showed thousands rallying in the cities of Qom, Ahvaz, Kermanshah and elsewhere. The demonstrators waved Iranian flags and pictures of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as well as placards saying "Death to seditionists".

AFP journalists reported a heavy police presence was still on the streets of Tehran, along with a large number

**Continued on Page 11**

**QOM, Iran: Pro-government demonstrators wave their national flag during a march yesterday. — AFP**

### 48 dead after bus careens off Peru cliff

**LIMA:** A bus plunged over a seaside cliff in Peru on Tuesday, killing at least 48 people after a collision with a truck on a precarious stretch known as the "devil's curve", officials said. The bus was traveling from Huacho, 130 km north of the capital, to Lima with 55 passengers and two crew on board when it went off the road about midday. It plunged 100 m and landed upside down on rocks at the edge of the sea. The incident "left at least 48 victims" dead, the statement posted on the interior ministry's website said.

Efforts to recover bodies from the overturned vehicle were suspended at nightfall because the tide had risen and reached the bus, the police said. A police helicopter had winched some rescue workers to the wreck of the blue bus while others made the precarious journey down on foot with the assistance of ropes. The navy sent a patrol boat to assist the rescuers trying to get everyone out before the tide came in. There were several survivors, although most on board the bus perished.

"For us it is very painful to suffer an accident of this magnitude. My deep solidarity lies with the pain suffered by the relatives," President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski wrote on Twitter. Maria Elena Aguilar, director of Alcides Carrion Hospital in El Callao, said her facility received five patients with multiple injuries. One other survivor was taken to a different hospital. The accident took place on a coastal highway about 45 km north of the capital Lima, said Colonel Dino Escudero, head of the police highway patrol division.

The Pasamayo highway on which the tragedy occurred is only used by trucks and buses, as cars travel a different route. It is a dangerous sea-hugging road where fog is frequent and high humidity can make the roadway slippery. The bus driver had a lot of experience and was working with an assistant, said Luis Martinez, a representative of Transportes San Martin de Porres, which owned the bus. Martinez could not confirm whether the driver had been killed or injured, but added that the bus underwent a mechanical check before leaving Huacho. — AFP

**Rescuers, police and firefighters working at the scene after a bus plunged over a cliff after colliding with a truck on a coastal highway near Pasamayo on Tuesday. — AFP**

### News in brief

#### Emirates to fly in fans

**DUBAI:** Emirates airlines yesterday announced Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, has instructed Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Emirates' Chairman and Chief Executive, to operate a special A380 flight to Kuwait for UAE supporters to attend the finals of the Arabian Gulf Cup. The UAE team will face Oman in the final match, which will be held tomorrow. Details of the special flight will be made available as soon as possible, the statement added.

#### Oslo suspends UAE arms sales

**OSLO:** Norway yesterday announced it has suspended arms and ammunition exports to the United Arab Emirates because of the nation's involvement in the Yemen war. The UAE is part of a Saudi Arabia-led coalition that has been fighting in Yemen since March 2015. The conflict has killed more than 8,750 people, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The suspension of arms exports, adopted on Dec 19, is a precautionary move and does not indicate that Norwegian weapons have been used in Yemen, Oslo said. Norwegian arms sales in the UAE had almost doubled in 2016 compared to the previous year, reaching 79 million kroner (\$9.7 million).

#### Saudi envoy presents credentials

**BEIRUT:** Saudi Arabia's new ambassador presented his credentials to Lebanon's president yesterday, a month after the crisis sparked by the Lebanese premier's mysterious resignation from Riyadh. President Michel Aoun said in an online statement that he received the credentials of Walid Al-Yaqoub. The move came days after Saudi Arabia agreed to the appointment of Fawzi Kabbara as the Lebanese ambassador. Kabbara had been in Riyadh for five months and the delay had been interpreted by some observers as a sign of strained ties despite reassurances from the Lebanese foreign ministry.

# UK Defense Secretary applauds Kuwait's anti-terrorism efforts

## Amir meets Secretary Gavin Williamson



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with UK Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with UK Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Head of the Ruling Family Council Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: The United Kingdom's (UK) Secretary of State for Defense Gavin Williamson heaped praise yesterday on Kuwait's leading role in the region through the country's participation in the international coalition to fight terrorist groups, chief among them the so-called Islamic State (IS).

Speaking after a meeting with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Williamson hailed Kuwait's well-chronicled humanitarian endeavors. He also commended Kuwait's role for dissolving regional disputes.

The British official hoped that his visit to Kuwait, the first since becoming defense secretary, would help build on the excellent military ties between the two countries, to push bilateral ties to new levels. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Defense Minister highlighted the breadth of his country's ties with the UK, saying that he discussed with Williamson issues of mutual concern, focusing on military ties.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Williamson, in the attendance of 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. The visiting UK official also met separately with His Highness the Prime Minister, in the attendance of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Etimad Khaled Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army General Sheikh Abdullah Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Head of the Ruling Family Council Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah. —KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with UK Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson.



## Kuwait, UK discuss military ties

## Amiri Diwan Minister meets Omani officials



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah (left) receives a memento from Oman's Football Association Chairman Sheikh Salim bin Saeed bin Salim Al-Wahaibi (center) and Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah received in his office at Bayan Palace yesterday the Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari, and the Sultanate's Football Association Chairman Sheikh Salim bin Saeed bin Salim Al-Wahaibi. —KUNA

## Speaker meets GCC parliamentary representatives



KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with members of parliamentary committees dealing with foreign relations from across the Gulf region. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday parliamentary committees dealing with foreign relations from across the Gulf

region. Ghanem commended the committees for their work to set the stage for a conference involving chief lawmakers from all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

member nations due on Monday, the Kuwaiti parliament's Al-Dostour news service reported. The meeting also brought together a number of Kuwaiti MPs. —KUNA

Local

# Cabinet seeks Chinese expertise to develop Silk City, Boubyan Island

## Three Kuwaiti officials shifted in reshuffle

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet instructed the monitoring body on developing the 'Silk City' and 'Boubyan Island' projects to coordinate with the Public Policies and Information Department of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) on benefiting from China's expertise for promoting these projects. This came during the Cabinet's weekly session held yesterday at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the beginning of Kuwait's non-permanent two-year term as a member of the UN Security Council. During a weekly meeting at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the cabinet referred to winning the UNSC seat as success for the balanced Kuwaiti diploma-

come of the visit to Kuwait on Tuesday by Bahraini Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and an accompanying delegation, as part of the distinguished ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah apprised the ministers on his recent visit to Saudi Arabia last Thursday. Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad offered an account of his talks with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Mohammad Bin Salman. The talks focused on the distinguished relations between the two nations in all fields, besides issues of mutual interest.



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA



### Cabinet condemns terror attacks

**New posts**  
Meanwhile, a trio of Kuwaiti officials took over new posts yesterday as the Cabinet appointed Dr Humoud Flaiteh as the director general of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS), with the rank of a ministry undersecretary, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said.

Speaking on the sidelines of meeting, Roudhan, who doubles as Minister of State for Youth Affairs, revealed that Dr Abdulkarim Taqi was named Director General of the Public Authority for Industry, with the rank of undersecretary. Meanwhile, he added that Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel now occupies the position of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

cy, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

It also enhances the already elevated status the State of Kuwait enjoys on the international level, as well as the country's support to the humanitarian issues on the regional and world's scenes. Kuwait spares no efforts to serve the international community, as well as issues of security and peace, and humanity at large. Then His Highness the Premier notified the cabinet of the out-

### Terror attacks

In the meantime, the Cabinet condemned the two terror attacks that hit Egypt's North Sinai Governorate and the district of Helwan, southern Cairo last week. The two attacks left many victims killed or wounded, among them military personnel. The Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The ministers voiced Kuwait's support to Egypt and whatsoever measures the country may take to protect its security and stability, praying for mercy for the dead and speed recovery

for the wounded, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

By the same token, the Cabinet condemned the terrorist bombing that targeted a supermarket in Russia' St Petersburg, leaving scores killed or wounded, last week. Also today, the ministers denounced the recent terrorist attack on a cultural center in the Afghan capital of Kabul, which killed and injured several people.

The Cabinet stressed that such acts of terrorism run against all human principles

and values, and are utterly disapproved by all faiths. It also reiterated Kuwait's initial and unwavering stance which rejects all forms of terrorism, urging the international community to double efforts to rid the world of the phenomena, and the ensued evils.

The Cabinet also reviewed regular reports submitted by some government bodies on collecting accumulated outstanding debts due for the state. Concluding the meeting, the ministers reviewed reports on the political developments on the Arab and international scenes. — KUNA

## State employees' payroll restructuring by early 2019

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Well-informed sources said that a study on restructuring government sector payrolls under the supervision of the finance ministry is almost complete after going through several phases over the past three years. The sources added that government employees' salaries are accordingly expected to be restructured by the beginning of 2019.

The study aims at equaling employees' incentives and salaries, the sources added, stressing that the study would not lead to reducing salaries, and would, contrarily, lead to increasing some by paying the difference between high and low wages paid to employees with the same qualifications. Notably, the study was done by a specialized company that set the principles of the new payroll alternative, giving more incentives to outdoor employees than those working in offices. The total payroll item in the 2016-2017 budget was KD 16.7 billion (\$50 billion).

Mutairi added that the national labor support act encourages citizens to work for non-governmental bodies in return for paying those working in handicrafts social and child allowances according to CSC regulations. He added that according to the constitution, all citizens are equal in rights and duties, which includes the right to have a job and a stable social life. "Accordingly, I suggest reducing the gap between the salaries and incentives given to citizens for working in different bodies in order to make the best use of national human resources as well as activate non-governmental bodies' role as partners in development," Mutairi stressed.

He explained the conditions of getting social and child allowances include working within Kuwait, being registered with the social security authority, being at least 21 years old for bachelors and 18 for married citizens, having at least one child, not being registered in an educational facility with the exception of those older than 25 and should be working for a non-governmental body for at least three years without getting any pension.

### Housing plots

An official at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare denied recent reports suggesting that citizens who have housing plots allocated in Sabahiya, Abu Halaifa and South Khaitan can sell them before 10 years have elapsed. He said a regulatory decision by the Cabinet stipulates that citizens cannot do anything with the plots until the set period has elapsed.

### Eighth Ring Road

The Ministry of Public Works said that the Eighth Ring Road project was cancelled due to security risks, because it goes through the Burgan oilfield. The ministry contracted an international consultation office on the 60-km project from Fahaheel Expressway that will intersect the southern regional road.

### Craftsmen allowances

The cases and legal studies manager at the Manpower and Government Restructuring program (MGRP) Fawwaz Al-Mutairi stressed that MGRP implements the laws related to paying social and child allowances to craftsmen working for non-governmental bodies in accordance with law number 391/2001. Responding to a verdict issued recently by the constitutional court in a case filed by a citizen contesting the constitutionality of clause no. 4 of article five of the aforementioned Cabinet decision, which was amended by decision number 572/2009 pertaining entitling employees older than 25 to get the allowance and depriving younger ones from pursuing further studies while in service, which is considered an unjustified discrimination.



**KUWAIT:** The head office building of the Civil Service Commission; the state authority that handles payment of public sector employees' salaries.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Flamingo birds gather at a beach in the Free Trade Zone in Kuwait. —KUNA

# Kuwait Fire Service Directorate to introduce new equipment soon

## Following KFSD Chief's visit to Chinese factory

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) has announced that it will soon be incorporating robotic equipment and tunnel ventilation systems into its arsenal. After inspecting fire apparatus at a factory in China's western city of Chengdu, KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad felt the need for an equipment overhaul, read a KFSD statement. With the new machinery, KFSD personnel will now be better equipped to deal with mishaps in the most inaccessible of places, the statement added. — KUNA



CHENGDU: KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad is seen during his visit to a factory in China's western city of Chengdu. —KUNA

## Abandoned vehicles removed in Jleeb

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality - Farwaniya Branch carried out a campaign to remove abandoned vehicles in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh recently. A total of 18 vehicles were removed in the campaign, which started one week after municipality workers placed stickers on the cars' windows to give their owners notice before they were impounded.



Local

# UNSC accession big accomplishment to Kuwait's foreign policy: Ambassador

Kuwait flag raised alongside those of UNSC members



NEW YORK: Kuwait's flag is raised alongside those of other UNSC member states. —KUNA

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said yesterday that Kuwait's accession to the Security Council is considered a major achievement of the Kuwaiti foreign policy, as it is considered one of the most important United Nations organs tasked with maintaining international peace and security where its decisions are binding.

Otaibi said in an exclusive interview on the occasion of the commencement of Kuwait's work in the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the years 2018-2019 that the importance of the Security Council lies in ensuring that its basic functions affect the security and stability of states and the prevention of conflicts, besides it is not easy to attain a membership as a majority of two-thirds of the General Assembly votes are needed.

He added that the most important and outstanding achievement is what will be achieved during the term of membership, especially that the council is currently pursuing great responsibilities and issues of concern to the State of Kuwait, as most of the issues on the agenda concern the Arab countries such as Palestine, Yemen, Syria and Iraq are issues also affecting the security of Kuwait and the region in general.



**Kuwait's role**

Otaibi said that membership of the Security Council is important to highlight the role of Kuwait and its support for preventive diplomacy, resolving conflicts through peaceful means and contributing to humanitarian

issues that have implications on international peace and security, especially that each crisis produces subsequent humanitarian crises.

He stressed that Kuwait will take its responsibilities seriously and will cooperate with all members in accomplishing the Security Council's tasks and responsibilities, affirming that Kuwait is one of the strongest supporters and defenders of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the goals and principles of the United Nations and will continue doing so.

Otaibi pointed out that the membership of Kuwait comes at a difficult time, especially since many countries in the Arab and Islamic world are witnessing continuous conflicts for several years which have negative repercussions on security and stability in the region.

He expressed hope that Kuwait will contribute through its membership in the Security Council and its presidency of the Council for February to contribute to the provision of security and stability, especially between the Arab and Islamic countries.

He said that Kuwait will take over the Security Council's Working Group on Documentation and Procedures in the Security Council, saying the team will carry out tasks and responsibilities that are very important to the work of the Security Council, pointing out that it will try to build on the previous presidencies and at the same time will come up with new ideas and will push for their approval in order to enhance its mechanisms.

Otaibi said that Kuwait's priorities during its membership will be focused on four dimensions; the human-

## Arabs urged to sever ties with states recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital

AMMAN: Chairman of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) Salim Al-Zanoun has urged the Arab countries to sever relations with any state that recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital or moves its embassy to the city, in line with a resolution of the 11th Arab Summit held in Jordan in 1980.

In a statement distributed by the Amman-based PNC, Zanoun said the 1980 resolution was reaffirmed by the Arab Summits in Baghdad, 1990, and Cairo, 2000. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Central Council (PCC) will seek during its meeting in Ramallah mid-January to conclude "suitable resolutions, and endorse a combative future vision as part of a national strategy on all levels," he said. The vision will be based on implementation of the PCC latest resolutions, reviewing the tasks of the Palestinian National Authority, and working on consolidating the institutions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people, Zanoun noted.

He also slammed the December 6 US President Donald Trump's decision recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital saying the move transgressed the rules of the international law, and "flagrantly violated the international legitimacy, through disgraceful use of the (UNSC) Veto." —KUNA

## Increased emissions from Doha power plant reported

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Environmental activist Khaled Al-Hajri noticed the Doha power plant was producing increased emissions yesterday, and reported it to the emergency hotline of the interior ministry. The power plant is operated by the Ministry of Electricity and Water, but Hajri didn't get any response from it. "The emissions of the Doha power plant and other power plants in both the north and south of Kuwait are toxic, caused by burning heavy oil to supply the station with energy, so the sulfur percentage is high. This causes massive pollution and should stop," Hajri,



Kuwait's Permanent Representative Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi (center) is surrounded by members of Kuwait's UN delegation.

itarian dimension, the prevention of conflicts and improvement of the working methods of the Council, as well as preventive diplomacy.

**Flag hoisted**

After the State of Kuwait officially took over as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, its flag was hoisted alongside those of the other 14 members. Otaibi raised his country's flag on Tuesday at a ceremony that gathered a large number of diplomats, including representatives of the UNSC members, and press people. Kuwait was elected to the Council during a UN General Assembly session on June 2, 2017 for the 2018-

2019 term, representing Asia-Pacific, four decades after its first membership.

It first served as UNSC non-permanent member in 1978-1979. Kuwait is replacing Egypt as representative of the Arab group of states at the Council. The other nine non-permanent members elected alongside Kuwait are: Bolivia (2018), Cote d'Ivoire (2019), Equatorial Guinea (2019), Ethiopia (2018), Kazakhstan (2018), Netherlands (2018), Peru (2019), Poland (2019) and Sweden (2018). Kuwait's agenda for the two-year membership focuses on Arab issues, notably Palestine, peacemaking, prevention of conflict, humanitarian issues, and enhancing the efficacy and transparency of the UNSC. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti-funded hospital reopens in Iraq's Mosul

BAGHDAD: A medical center in Iraq's war-battered city of Mosul is now up and running after completing Kuwaiti-financed renovations, the United Iraqi Medical Society said yesterday. The hospital, located in the eastern region of Mosul, has been completely overhauled with expenses covered by the Kuwaiti Society for Relief, the Iraqi Medical Society's chairman Ahmad Al-Haiti said. Copious amounts of Kuwaiti aid have poured into Iraq in a bid to prop up the country's ailing health-care sector. —KUNA

## No jurisdiction for courts over citizenship cases

By Mehsaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The appeals court struck out a ruling by the court of first instance, and reasserted that courts have no jurisdiction over cases related to citizenship. The case is about 19 persons of a family who had their Kuwaiti nationality revoked by a government decision. They then won a ruling in their favor, but the appeals court affirmed that issues of nationality cannot be considered by courts.

**CRIMES**

**Bootlegger arrested after police chase**

KUWAIT: Drugs Control General Department officers questioned an Indian man to find out the source of 84 imported liquor bottles found with him in Mahboula. Police found the man standing in a public area with a plastic bag placed on the ground next to him, which raised their suspicions. The man tried to flee when he saw police, who chased and placed him under arrest. Police busted a liquor brewery in Mishref that was run by two men and two women, all Asians. Large drums and brewing equipment were found. The four were arrested and sent to concerned authorities.

**Rape allegations**

The public prosecution released two businessmen - one on a KD 100 bail and another without bail - after several days of detention for questioning. An actress had accused them of rape in a villa that one of them owns. The case began 10 days ago when the actress claimed she was raped, but when the two men were asked about it, they denied the charge.

**Smuggling foiled**

An African woman was caught attempting to smuggle 8.4 kg of qat, which is banned in Kuwait, on arrival from her country. The suspect had the drugs hidden between food containers.



US accuses Pakistan of playing 'double game'

## Iran 'recruiting Palestinian militants' via South Africa



PAJU: South Korean Lieutenant Choi Don-Rim (left) communicates with a North Korean officer during a phone call at a military office near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), separating North and South Korea, in Paju, north of Seoul, as the two countries tested a hotline aimed at helping avoid naval confrontations in the Yellow Sea. —AFP

# Trump boasts of 'bigger' nuclear button

## North Korea reopens border hotline

SEOUL: North Korea reopened a long-closed border hotline with South Korea yesterday, hours after US President Donald Trump appeared to mock the North's leader by saying he has a "bigger and more powerful" nuclear button than he does. The North's decision to open the border phone line came a day after South Korea proposed high-level discussions amid a tense standoff over North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. That followed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's New Year address in which he said he was open to speaking with the South and would consider sending a delegation to the Winter Olympics to be held just across the border in Pyeongchang in February.

US officials said Washington would not take any talks between North and South Korea seriously if they did not contribute to denuclearizing North Korea. A State Department spokeswoman said North Korea "might be trying to drive a wedge of some sort". Kim ordered the reopening of the hotline at the truce village of Panmunjom at 0630 GMT yesterday, when South Korean officials at the border received a call from the North, the South's unification ministry said in a text message. Officials on both sides

were checking the line and conducting a conversation for about 20 minutes, the contents of which were not disclosed by the ministry.

That gesture came only hours after Trump, who has mocked Kim as "Little Rocket Man", again ridiculed the North Korean leader on Twitter. "Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!" Trump tweeted. Trump and Kim have exchanged a series of bellicose comments in recent months, raising alarm across the world, with Trump at times dismissing the prospect of a diplomatic solution to a

crisis in which North Korea has threatened to destroy the United States.

While appearing to open the door to discussing taking part in the Winter Olympics, Kim also warned that he would push ahead with "mass producing" nuclear warheads in defiance of UN sanctions. His New Year's Day speech came after a steep increase in missile launches in 2017, as well as the North's sixth and most powerful nuclear test. Kim, who has

vowed to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the United States, said he had a nuclear button on his desk.

### 'Serious and sincere'

The hotline with the South was shut down by North Korea in February 2016 in retaliation against the closing of a border factory town that was jointly operated by the two Koreas. "We will try to keep close communications with the south Korean side from sincere stand(sic) and honest attitude, true to the intention of our supreme leadership, and deal with the practical matters related to the dispatch of our delegation," the North's KCNA news agency quoted Ri Son Gwon, chairman of North Korea's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, as saying.

The talks would aim to establish formal dialogue about sending a North Korean delegation to the Olympics, Ri said. South Korean presidential spokesman Yoon Young-chan said the North's decision to open the hotline had "significant meaning" because it could lead to constant communication. US officials had voiced skepticism about the possibility of meaningful talks, particularly if they did not take steps towards banning North Korea's nuclear weapons. Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the United Nations, warned North Korea against staging another missile test and said Washington was hearing reports that Pyongyang might be preparing to fire another missile. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said both sides should seize the Olympics as an opportunity to improve ties and make concrete efforts toward alleviating tension. "All relevant sides



This combo shows US President Donald Trump (left) and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un. US President Donald Trump warned Kim Jong-Un he has a 'much bigger' nuclear button than the North Korean leader. —AFP

should grab hold of this positive trend in the Korean peninsula and move in the same direction," Geng told a daily news briefing in Beijing. North Korea regularly threatens to destroy South Korea, the United States and Japan, and says its weapons are necessary to counter US aggression. The United States stations 28,500 troops in the South, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War. —Reuters



## US downplays talks, urges North to abandon nuclear weapons

## Caste protests rock Mumbai

MUMBAI: Demonstrators from India's lowest caste blocked roads and railways across Mumbai yesterday in protest against violence involving Hindu nationalist groups at an event commemorating a 200-year-old battle. Members of the Dalit community obstructed roads, damaged buses and marched down railway tracks, delaying train services which are the life-line of India's bustling financial capital.

Some schools and business opted to close as a precaution while the city's famous lunchbox delivery men, called "Dabbawalas", also cancelled their services. The protests came in response to violence which broke out at a ceremony in a village near Pune in Maharashtra state on Monday, leaving one man dead. Dalits had gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon battle in 1818, in which they helped British colonial forces defeat the high-caste Peshwas.

Dalit leaders accused right-wing Hindus of inciting Monday's clashes, which spread to other areas of Maharashtra of which Mumbai is the capital. The state government has ordered a judicial inquiry into the clashes. Mumbai police said more than 100 demonstrators had been arrested and nine cases of unlawful activity had been registered. Yesterday politicians called for a peaceful end to the violence. —AFP

## Winter storm hits Europe

PARIS: Winter storm Eleanor swept into France, Belgium and the Netherlands yesterday after tearing through England and Northern Ireland, cutting power to tens of thousands while forcing airports and train services to halt operations. Heavy winds led the airports in Strasbourg and Basel-Mulhouse on France's border with Germany and Switzerland to close after gusts of more than 110 kilometers per hour were recorded. France's civil aviation authority told AFP, before they were reopened shortly after midday. Nine people were reported injured in France—four critically—and another in the Netherlands after a tree fell on a person in the southern village of Heesch.

At Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport, 60 percent of departures were delayed yesterday morning, as were a third of arrivals, while a handful of flights had to be rerouted before the winds eased back a bit. The winds were also wreaking havoc with train services in several French regions as officials issued severe weather warnings for 44 departments until early today.

About 200,000 homes across northern France were without electricity, while "particularly intense" flooding was expected on the Atlantic coasts. The Eiffel Tower, which attracts six million visitors a year, was closed until yesterday afternoon, while worries about falling tree branches prompted Paris officials to close all city parks for the day.

### 'Woken people up'

Eleanor barreled into continental Europe after whipping across England, Northern Ireland and Ireland, with the Thames Barrier, one of the largest movable flood barriers in the world, closed as a precautionary measure to protect London from swelling tides. "We have seen some heavy showers push through across the south of the UK along with hail, loud thunder and lightning, which has woken people up," said meteorologist Becky Mitchell.

Gusts of 160 kmh were recorded at Great Dun Fell in Westmorland, northwest England, while overturned vehicles and trees caused closures of major motorways. In Ireland, power supply company ESB said electricity had been restored to 123,000 customers, while 27,000 remained without power. Streets around



LONDON: Waves crash over the tidal wall as a motorist travels along the coastal road in New Brighton, north west England yesterday as Storm Eleanor swept over the country. —AFP

the docks in Galway on the west coast were flooded after high tides breached the sea defenses, prompting the deployment of about two dozen troops to support flood defence efforts.

Belgium was also put on "orange" alert, the third of four warning levels, with officials urging people to exercise caution when venturing out, in particular because of falling tree branches and other objects. Although the winds eased toward midday,

rescue workers in Brussels were kept busy with about 70 calls across the city, mainly after trees were knocked down, and several parks were closed. In the Netherlands, 252 of about 1,200 flights were cancelled at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, a main European hub, as weather alerts were issued for several regions. Several main roads and train lines were also closed as officials rushed to prepare flooding defenses. —AFP

## International

# Israel offers to pay migrants \$3,500 to leave, threatens jail

## Government sets a three-month deadline

**JERUSALEM:** Israel said yesterday it would pay thousands of African migrants living illegally in the country to leave, threatening them with jail if they are caught after the end of March. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in public remarks at a cabinet meeting on the payment program, said a barrier Israel completed in 2013 along its border with Egypt had effectively cut off a stream of "illegal infiltrators" from Africa after some 60,000 crossed the desert frontier. The vast majority came from Eritrea and Sudan and many said they fled war and persecution as well as economic hardship, but Israel treats them as economic migrants.

The plan launched this week offers African migrants a \$3,500 payment from the Israeli government and a free air ticket to return home or go to "third countries", which rights groups identified as Rwanda and Uganda. "We have expelled about 20,000 and now the mission is to get the rest out," Netanyahu said. An immigration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there are some 38,000 migrants living illegally in Israel, and some 1,420 are being held in two detention centers. "Beyond the end of March, those who leave voluntarily will receive a significantly smaller payment that will shrink even more with time, and enforcement measures will

begin," the official said, referring to incarceration. Some have lived for years in Israel and work in low-paying jobs that many Israelis shun. Israel has granted asylum to fewer than one percent of those who have applied and has a years-long backlog of applicants. Rights groups have accused Israel of being slow to process African migrants' asylum requests as a matter of policy and denying legitimate claims to the status. Netanyahu has called the migrants' presence a threat to Israel's social fabric and Jewish character, and one government minister has referred to them as "a cancer".

Teklit Michael, a 29-year-old asylum seeker from Eritrea living in Tel Aviv, said in response to the Israeli plan that paying money to other governments to take in Africans was akin to "human trafficking and smuggling". "We don't know what is waiting for us (in Rwanda and Uganda)," he told Reuters by telephone. "They prefer now to stay in prison (in Israel) instead." In his remarks, Netanyahu cited the large presence of African migrants in Tel Aviv's poorer neighborhoods, where he said "veteran residents" - a reference to Israelis - no longer feel safe. "So today, we are keeping our promise to restore calm, a sense of personal security and law and order to the residents of south Tel Aviv and those in many other neighborhoods," he said.—Reuters



**Some 38,000 African migrants live in Israel**



**TEL AVIV:** Christian African Eritrean migrants chat outside a makeshift church in southern Tel Aviv. Israel plans to force tens of thousands of African migrants to leave over the next three months by threatening to arrest those who stay. —AFP

## Week of deadly protests in Iran

**TEHRAN:** Violent demonstrations have rocked Iran since Thursday last week leaving at least 21 people dead, with protests that started over the economy turning against the Islamic regime as a whole. The wave of demonstrations, that kicked off in second city Mashhad on December 28 and quickly spread, is the biggest in the tightly controlled country since unrest over a disputed election in 2009. Here is a summary:

### First demonstrations

A few hundred demonstrators gather in Mashhad and several other towns on December 28 to protest high living costs after a call reportedly goes out on the Telegram social messaging service. Videos on reformist media show protesters focusing their ire on President Hassan Rouhani but there are also slogans lambasting the entire regime and Iran's involvement in conflicts around the Middle East.

### Protests spread

The next day larger-scale protests flare up in more cities including the western Kermanshah and religious centre Qom, where footage shows hundreds of demonstrators chanting "Death to the dictator" and "Free political prisoners". First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri suggests hardline opponents of Rouhani's government may be behind the demonstrations.

### Warnings, violence

On December 30, regime supporters rally around the country for officially sanctioned demonstrations to commemorate the defeat of the 2009 protest movement. Interior Minister Abdolrahman Rahmani Fazli calls on the public to avoid "illegal gatherings". But the protests grow. In Tehran, scuffles break out and videos show demonstrators attacking a town hall, overturning a police car and burning the Iranian flag.

### 10 die in one night

On December 31, the authorities issue more warnings and officials say 200 people were arrested during the demonstrations in Tehran and another 80 in Arak, some 300 kilometers away. In a bid to stall further demonstrations, the authorities block access to online messaging services, including Telegram. Rouhani insists people are "absolutely free" to express their anger but "criticism is different to violence and destroying public property". But the unrest continues as videos on social media show demonstrations hitting areas across the country for a fourth night. Iranian media and officials report 10 people died in protests overnight Sunday to



**AHVAZ:** An image grab shows pro-government demonstrators in the streets of the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz. — AFP

Monday in different areas in the west of the country. In a second statement on January 1, Rouhani plays down the protests as "nothing" and insists the Iranian people will "respond to rioters and lawbreakers". US President Donald Trump says it is "time for change" in Iran. As fresh protests break out in Tehran at nightfall Monday, state television says a policeman had been killed and three others wounded by fire from hunting rifles in the central city of Najafabad.

### More deaths, arrests

State television says nine people, including the policeman, were killed in unrest overnight Monday to Tuesday. Six died in the town of Qahderijan, in the central province of Isfahan, where protesters had tried to storm a police station, the state broadcaster reports.

### 'Enemies'

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei breaks his silence, saying on January 2 that Iran's "enemies have united and are using all their means" against the regime. Trump denounces a "brutal and corrupt" Iranian regime. The United Nations says

that now because now that plays into the regime's hands in a way that I don't frankly think the administration is going to want to do," said Nephew, now at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said on Tuesday that Trump has not made a final decision on whether to waive sanctions. Asked whether the protests had changed Trump's calculation, she replied: "Not necessarily."

### Blame the outsiders

Ray Takeyh, an Iran expert and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Iran's leaders will blame internal troubles on the United States and other outside powers, no matter what Washington does. "The regime's argument that the world is against us is a constant for 38 years," Takeyh said in a telephone interview. "The optics of waiving sanctions in the midst of all this - it just doesn't look good."

Takeyh and three US officials who follow Iran said the protests undercut Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate who took office in 2013 pledging to improve Iran's economy, more than they threaten the country's clerical rulers. Former CIA Director John Brennan, in a Twitter post, said the Trump administration with its condemnation of Iran and the nuclear deal over the last year has squandered an opportunity to bolster reformists in Iran and promote peaceful political change. "Bluster is neither a strategy nor a mechanism for exercise of US power and influence," Brennan wrote.

Yet in recent days, Trump and his top aides have charted a more careful course in reacting to the demonstrations, which have led to at least 21 deaths and hundreds of arrests. Trump in a Tweet on Tuesday called the Tehran government a "brutal and corrupt regime." But he and other US officials have shied away from suggesting Washington seeks the overthrow of Iran's Islamic theocracy, calling instead for Iranian

it expects "the rights to peaceful assembly and expression of the Iranian people will be respected" and the United States demands Iran end social media blocks. US envoy Nikki Haley calls for emergency sessions on Iran at the UN Security Council and the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Commission. Rouhani phones his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron to demand action against a "terrorist" Iranian opposition group he accuses of fomenting the protests. He appears to be referring to an exiled Iranian opposition group based in Paris and called the Mujahedeen-Khalq. The French president calls for "restraint and appeasement".

### Pro-regime defiance

On January 3, after few reports of anti-regime protests overnight, tens of thousands gather across the country in a massive show of strength for the regime. Chants of "Leader, we are ready" are heard as images show thousands rallying in the cities of Ahvaz, Kermanshah, Gorgan, and elsewhere. In a telephone call, Rouhani tells his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan the protests will end in a few days.—AFP

authorities to respect protesters' rights. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert on Tuesday urged Iranian security forces to exercise restraint in dealing with protests and called on Tehran to restore access to social media sites that have been restricted. Nauert suggested the US government could impose sanctions against Iranian officials who repress peaceful protests.—Reuters



**HAMBURG:** A demonstrator protests with a poster against the policy of Iran in front of Iran's consulate in Hamburg, northern Germany yesterday. — AFP

## Turkey president heads to France seeking EU thaw

**ANKARA:** Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan tomorrow visits Paris for talks with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, seeking to start the New Year by warming relations with the European Union after a torrid 2017. Macron will host Erdogan at the Elysee Palace with talks expected to range from Syria to trade ties, and the French side is also expected to sound concern over the human rights situation in Turkey.

But high on the agenda will be Turkey's relations with the EU, which Ankara has sought to join for the last 50 years in an epic membership saga that appeared to hit the buffers amid bitter rows in 2017. "By getting closer to France, Turkey is seeking to give a new boost to its EU membership bid," said Jana Jabbour, professor of Political Science at Sciences Po University in Paris and the author of a book on Turkish foreign policy. She said this need was especially acute at a time of diplomatic tensions with the United States following Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

### 'Starting somewhere'

The Turkish leader has been a frequent visitor to Russia, the Gulf and Africa over the last year but has been rarely sighted in Europe since the July 15, 2016 coup bid aimed at removing him from power. The visit to France will be his first since the botched putsch. Over the last year-discounting G20 and NATO summits-Erdogan's only trips to EU member states have been to Poland and Greece. Still absent from the presidential itinerary is a visit to Germany. Ankara endured its bitterest crisis in 2017 with Berlin, which was roundly critical of the crackdown that followed the failed coup and has left some 55,000 jailed.

While German Chancellor Angela Merkel has often talked tough on Turkey, Macron has however made clear the need to "avoid ruptures" with a country that is an "essential partner". Samim Akgonul, lecturer at Strasbourg University, said Turkey and the EU had "to start somewhere" in finding an improvement in relations and the only two countries who could do this were Germany and France. But he expressed doubt there could be any radical change for the better in 2018. "I don't think that relations can advance structurally."

### 'Won't sacrifice ties for rights'

Erdogan last week appeared to hold out an olive branch to the EU, saying "we must reduce the number of enemies and increase the number of friends." He praised Macron-as well as the German leadership-for support over the Jerusalem issue, saying the EU and Ankara were on the same page. The shared opposition of both Brussels and Ankara to Trump's move could itself stimulate better relations. "They (Paris) did not leave us by ourselves on this issue (Jerusalem)," Erdogan said. Ahead of the visit, Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin described France as a "leading ally" and expressed hope that the visit would further boost their alliance. The Elysee said that as well as Syria and the Palestinian issue, "the issue of human rights" would be discussed. Trade is also important with both sides looking to lift a current trade volume that stands at \$13.38 billion.

Meanwhile hosting Erdogan in Paris gives Macron—who since his election in May last year has sought a new prominence for France on the European and world stages—another high-profile and potentially sensitive guest. Macron has already hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin at the former royal palace of Versailles near Paris and took Trump for dinner at the Eiffel Tower. Jabbour said that Ankara welcomed Macron's accession to power, seeing him as a leader with a pragmatic foreign policy while the French president wanted a new relationship with Turkey based on mutual interests. "Macron will not totally sacrifice French-Turkish relations on the altar of human rights," she said.—AFP

## As protests rage in Iran, Trump's Iran policy faces sanctions test

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump has signaled support for anti-government protests in Iran, but in two weeks he faces a decision on US policy toward the Islamic Republic that suddenly seems riskier than it did a week ago. The six days of demonstrations in several Iranian cities began over economic conditions, and Trump must decide by mid-January whether to continue waiving US sanctions on Iran's oil exports under the terms of an international nuclear deal. If he reimposes sanctions on oil, it could increase the economic pain for Iran's leaders. But analysts said it could also send the wrong message about US support for Iran's people in the middle of the boldest challenge to the leadership in a decade.

The sanctions waivers were included in the 2015 nuclear pact with Iran that eased economic pressure on Tehran in exchange for limits on its nuclear program. Trump has repeatedly criticized the deal and promised to negotiate a better one. Reimposing oil sanctions would essentially kill the agreement. Reviving sanctions on Iran's main export would allow Tehran to argue that the United States is ultimately the cause of Iran's economic problems, said Richard Nephew, who worked on sanctions policy at the White House under President Barack Obama.

"Let's say Trump was inclined not to renew the waivers. I think that (the protests) make it very hard for him to do

## International

# Last chance? Merkel maneuvers for coalition re-run with SPD

## German leader's conservatives weakened

**BERLIN:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel put her reputation as Europe's consummate consensus-builder on the line, as she launches a second bid to form a coalition government after weeks of sniping between its would-be partners. Seeking a fourth term in office, Merkel saw her authority weakened in a national election in September, when support for her conservatives was eroded by the far right.

She is now under increasing pressure to reach a deal with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), which also lost ground in the election, but the two sides have bickered over a range of issues, notably immigration and taxation. At a meeting yesterday afternoon, Merkel will try to build trust with SPD leader Martin Schulz and the head of Bavaria's CSU conservatives, Horst Seehofer, by agreeing a structure for talks that are due to start on Sunday and could lead to official coalition negotiations in a few weeks.

Having failed before Christmas to form a coalition with the Greens and pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), Merkel is now leading an interim government with the SPD that is keeping things ticking over in Europe's biggest economy. Merkel's CDU/CSU alliance ruled in a 'grand coalition' with the SPD from 2013 to 2017 and, with investors fearing a protracted power vacuum that could delay reforms in Germany and the European Union, she is pressing for a re-run of that arrangement. But the SPD has shown reluctance, with some of its members

favoring a looser cooperation agreement or supporting a minority government.

### 'Verbal Shenanigans'

The two blocs are at odds on issues from healthcare and immigration to Europe and pensions and, if no deal is done, Merkel's future as chancellor would be thrown into doubt with new elections a distinct prospect. In recent days some conservatives, especially from Bavaria, have stoked tensions by calling for tax cuts for high earners and reductions in benefits for asylum seekers, which the SPD opposes. "Again verbal shenanigans from the Bavarian CSU," tweeted one of the SPD's deputy leaders, Ralf Stegner. "Always the same recipe: humor the lederhosen public. No sense of reality in terms of agreeing with the other parties." But Seehofer sounded more conciliatory yesterday, saying "important days" lay ahead. "We will do everything in these talks to reach sensible agreements," said the Bavarian before internal party talks yesterday morning.

One of Merkel's priorities will be to establish an atmosphere of trust between the parties, the absence of which led to the collapse of the talks with the Greens and FDP in November. Many within the SPD, which said it would go into opposition after the election in which its support slumped to its lowest level since 1933, fear sharing power with Merkel again will lead voters to punish it further. To keep the rank and file on board, the SPD leadership has said it will let its



## Merkel meets leaders of SPD, Bavarian CSU

members vote on Jan 21 on going ahead with detailed coalition talks after a first exploratory phase has been completed.



**BERLIN:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives in a car to attend consultations between the conservative CDU/CSU and the social democratic SPD parties in Berlin. —AFP

members vote on Jan 21 on going ahead with detailed coalition talks after a first exploratory phase has been completed.

"I have said that (a coalition deal) must be agreed at the very latest by Easter," said Seehofer.—Reuters

### News in brief

#### India calls off deal

**JERUSALEM:** India's Ministry of Defense has called off an order to buy Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Israel's state-owned defense contractor Rafael, the company said yesterday. The deal was worth about \$500 million and the announcement of its termination came just a couple of weeks before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due to visit India. Indian officials had no immediate comment. The countries have grown closer since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rose to power in 2014, broadening commercial cooperation beyond their long-standing defense ties. Modi became the first sitting Indian prime minister to visit Israel last summer, and Netanyahu will fly to India on Jan 14. "Rafael regrets the decision and remains committed to cooperating with the Indian Ministry of Defense and to its strategy of continuing to work in India, an important market, as it has for more than two decades, to provide India with the most advanced and innovative systems," the company said.

#### Vietnam blast kills 2

**BAC NINH:** A baby boy and a five-year-old girl were killed in an explosion east of Vietnam's capital Hanoi yesterday that destroyed several houses and wounded at least eight other people. Authorities are investigating the cause of the blast in Bac Ninh province's Yen Phong district, which occurred at 4:30 am demolishing buildings and sending debris flying through the air. The explosion completely razed four homes to charred rubble and shattered the windows of surrounding buildings. A one-year-old boy and a girl were killed, according to a report from the provincial health department seen by AFP. At least eight others were injured by the blast, district authorities said in a statement. Local resident Nguyen Thi Tap told AFP her house was badly damaged by the explosion, which jolted her from her sleep early in the morning. "We were so scared. I thought thunder had struck my roof... I hugged my daughter and the doors crashed down on us," she said.

#### Russian copter crashes

**MOSCOW:** A Russian helicopter crashed in Syria on New Year's Eve killing both pilots following a technical fault, Moscow's defense ministry said yesterday. The Mi-24 military helicopter was flying to Hama, northwestern Syria, and there was no firing from the ground, agencies quote the ministry as saying. "Both pilots died in a hard landing 15 km from the air base," the ministry said, adding that a technician had been injured and taken to another air base at for emergency treatment. The investigative blog Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) quoted a post from Forumavia aviation forum saying the helicopter had tripped over power line wires and crashed while escorting a convoy. The post did not specify whether the helicopter was escorting a humanitarian convoy or combat unit and the defense ministry did not give any further details. Russia became involved in the multi-front conflict in September 2015, when it began an aerial campaign in support of President Bashar Al-Assad's military.

#### Passenger 'sits on wing'

**MADRID:** The passenger of a Ryanair flight from London to Malaga in southern Spain, apparently tired of waiting inside the plane on arrival, got out and sat on the wing, a witness and the airline said yesterday. "We had been waiting around half-an-hour to get out of the plane," Fernando del Valle, another passenger, told AFP of the incident on Monday evening. "The man calmly went to the emergency exit, pulled the mechanism to open the door, looked out, came back to get his backpack and went out on the wing." Del Valle filmed the incident and posted it on his Facebook page. His footage reveals a man walking on the wing, putting his backpack down and sitting next to the bag. "The captain was stunned... he asked who had got out on the wing," said del Valle, a Spaniard who was coming back from London on the flight which left an hour late but arrived around 20 minutes after the planned time late on Monday.

## Taleban ex-hostage arrested, charged

**MONTREAL:** A Canadian man who was held captive by a faction of the Afghan Taleban for five years has been arrested on 15 charges including sexual assault, illegal confinement and issuing death threats, according to reports on Tuesday. Joshua Boyle was freed last October along with his American wife Caitlan Coleman and their three children born in captivity. The identity of the alleged victim was being withheld by a court, according to Boyle's lawyer Eric Granger.

Granger added his client was "presumed innocent" and had never been in any form of legal trouble before. "We look forward to receiving the evidence and defending him against these charges," he said, adding Boyle would appear before a court in Ottawa. According to news channel CTV, Boyle is facing eight counts of assault, two counts of sexual assault and two counts of unlawful confinement, as well

as one each of misleading police to "divert suspicion from himself," uttering a death threat, and administering a noxious substance, Trazodone.

In a statement to The Toronto Star and published on the newspaper's website, Boyle's wife would not comment on the specific charges "but I can say that ultimately it is the strain and trauma he was forced to endure for so many years and the effects that that had on his mental state that is most culpable for this."

She said "with compassion and forgiveness that I... hope help and healing can be found for him." Coleman added that she and the children were healthy. Boyle and Coleman, who have been married since 2011, were kidnapped by the Taleban during what they described as a backpacking trip through war-torn Afghanistan in 2012, and were later transferred to the custody of the Haqqani faction, known for its alleged ties to the Pakistani military.

They were freed on October 12, but refused to board a US military plane. Boyle, a Muslim convert and long-time advocate of freed Guantanamo inmate Omar Khadr, cited fears over his background. Upon his arrival in Toronto two days later Boyle accused his captors of raping his wife and killing his baby daughter, a fourth child-allegations swiftly refuted by the Taleban's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Mujahid admitted a baby had died



**SMITHS FALLS:** File photo shows freed Canadian hostage Joshua Boyle talking on the phone outside the Boyle family home in Smiths Falls, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

but said it was a result of a natural miscarriage. A month later Coleman also spoke of a sexual "assault" by two of her captors in an interview with ABC news. Boyle has been an outspoken advocate for Omar Khadr, a Canadian captured at the age of 15 in 2002 in Afghanistan and held at Guantanamo Bay before being transferred to Canada and later

released. He married Khadr's sister in 2009. Pakistan's military says the family was freed in a daring rescue operation. But some US and Canadian officials have questioned that account, suggesting to news outlets it may have involved a "negotiated handover" with the Haqqani network which Islamabad is said to covertly back.—AFP

## Japan suicide victim video sparks outrage

**TOKYO:** Japanese social media reacted with a storm of outrage to a video by YouTube star Logan Paul showing a suicide victim in a forest near Mount Fuji, as anger spread over the now-deleted video yesterday. Angry comments flooded Twitter after Paul, who gained notoriety on social media and has a popular video blog or "vlog", apologized for the footage, which was reportedly viewed six million times.

The video shows the 23-year-old discovering a body in Aokigahara, a dense woodland at the foot of Mount Fuji known as "the Japanese Suicide Forest", in a country that has long struggled with some of the highest suicide rates in the developed world. As news of the video and apology was reported in Japan yesterday, social media erupted with indignation over the film, which showed a man who had hanged himself.

"It is insane to show to the world the body of someone who died after being depressed. Shame on you," said one Twitter user @j\_rivoluzione. Others objected to Paul's appearance in a novelty hat, while outtakes showing the US internet celebrity laughing and joking about the incident also stirred anger. "It's good to raise awareness but you can do it without filming a person who committed suicide," @spiffymiffy1 said. "It looks like he did it for self-satisfaction. Suicide and depression are serious issues. There's nothing funny about them." Others said Paul's actions were irresponsible, with teenagers and tweens making up his subscriber base of 15 million.

In his apology, Paul said he had posted the video in a mistaken effort to draw attention to the problem of depression and suicide. "It's easy to get caught up in the moment without fully weighing the possible ramifications," he said in his statement. "I thought I could make a positive ripple on the internet, not cause a monsoon of negativity", he said, in comments that sparked derision and anger. Actress Anna Akana was among many in the US and elsewhere to hit out at Paul. "When my brother found my sister's body, he screamed with horror & confusion & grief & tried to save her," she tweeted.

"You do not walk into a suicide forest with a camera and claim mental health awareness." Japan has the highest suicide rate of any Group of Seven industrialized nation,



**LAS VEGAS:** Actor Logan Paul arrives at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. Actor and YouTube celebrity Logan Paul apologized for posting a video of a suicide victim in Japan that reportedly was viewed by six million people before being deleted. —AFP

with more than 20,000 people taking their own lives each year. Aokigahara, located 100 kilometers west of Tokyo, has become so notorious as a spot for desperate people to kill themselves that authorities have put up signs among the trees urging people with self-destructive thoughts to contact a suicide prevention group. "Life is a precious thing... Think again about your parents, siblings and children," the signs say. Local officials have also organized daily patrols to prevent suicides from taking place.

The suicide rate in Yamanashi prefecture, where the forest is located, was the worst in Japan for eight years until 2014. Suicides in Japan have fallen since their peak of 34,427 in 2003, with 21,897 taking their own lives in 2016. Google-owned YouTube indicated the video was removed because it violated the video-sharing platform's terms of service. "Our hearts go out to the family of the person featured in the video," a Google statement said. The statement added that YouTube prohibits "violent or gory content posted in a shocking, sensational or disrespectful manner" and that such content is allowed only "when supported by appropriate educational or documentary information."—AFP

## Eastern US braces for winter storm as bitter cold remains

**NEW ENGLAND:** A major winter storm will start hitting the US Southeast up through New England with freezing rain, snow and strong winds, adding to record-shattering cold that is keeping its grip on much of the eastern United States. The winter mix along with low wind chills could cause widespread power outages and ice over roadways, making commuting treacherous for millions of Americans from northern Florida to southern Virginia, the National Weather Service said in a series of warnings. "Travel will be dangerous and nearly impossible, including during the morning commute today," the service said in an advisory for northeastern Florida.

Eastern Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia will get as much as 6 inches (15 cm) of snow along with an accumulation of ice while parts of New England could see 12 to 15 inches (30-38 cm) of snow and wind gusts of 35 mph (55 kph) by the end of week, the service said. Late on Tuesday, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for 28 counties after the National Weather Service issued the winter storm warning. Florida Governor Rick Scott on Tuesday urged residents in the northern part of his Sunshine State to prepare for the cold. His office said cold weather shelters have opened or are planning to open in 22 of the state's 67 counties.

As the storm bears down, an arctic air mass will remain entrenched over the eastern two thirds of the country through the end of the week. The record-low temperatures is to blame for at least eight deaths in Texas, Wisconsin, West Virginia, North Dakota and Michigan over the past several days. A large swath of the Midwest was under a wind chill warning yesterday as places like Cleveland and Indianapolis had temperatures in the wind of 5 to 20 degrees below zero in Fahrenheit (minus 20 to minus 29 degrees Celsius) while the deep South faced deep freeze temperatures that threatened crops and pipes, the National Weather Service warned.—Reuters



International

# Do more to stop terrorism: US puts Pakistan on notice

## Washington accuses Islamabad of playing 'double game'

WASHINGTON: The United States has accused Pakistan of playing a "double game" on fighting terrorism and warned Islamabad it would have to do more if it wanted to maintain US aid. "They can do more to stop terrorism and we want them to do that," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told reporters. The White House said it would likely announce actions to pressure Pakistan within days, shortly after US Ambassador Nikki Haley said at the United Nations that Washington would withhold \$255 million in assistance to Pakistan. "There are clear reasons for this. Pakistan has played a double game for years," Haley told reporters. "They work with us at times, and they also harbor the terrorists that attack our troops in Afghanistan."

"That game is not acceptable to this administration. We expect far more cooperation from Pakistan in the fight against terrorism." The comments followed an angry tweet from President Donald Trump on Monday that the United States had been rewarded with "nothing but lies and deceit" for "foolishly" giving Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid in the last 15 years. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" he tweeted. Pakistani civilian and military chiefs on Tuesday rejected "incomprehensible" US comments and summoned American Ambassador David Hale to explain Trump's tweet.

Relations with Washington have been strained for years over Islamabad's alleged support for Haqqani net-

work militants, who are allied with the Afghan Taliban. The United States also alleges that senior Afghan Taliban commanders live on Pakistani soil, and has signaled it will cut aid and take other steps if Islamabad does not stop helping or turning a blind eye to Haqqani militants crossing the border to carry out attacks in Afghanistan. In 2016, Taliban leader Mullah Mansour was killed by a US drone strike inside Pakistan and in 2011, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was found and killed by US troops in the garrison town of Abbottabad.

### Pakistan needs to earn its aid

At the State Department on Tuesday, spokesman Heather Nauert said Pakistan knows what it needs to do, including taking action against the Haqqani network and other militants. Pakistan needs to "earn, essentially, the money that we have provided in the past in foreign military assistance," she said. Islamabad bristles at the suggestion it is not doing enough to fight militants, noting that its casualties at the hands of Islamists since 2001 number in the tens of thousands. Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday chaired a National Security Committee meeting of civilian and military chiefs, focusing on Trump's tweet. The meeting, which lasted nearly three hours, was brought forward by a day and followed an earlier meeting of army generals.

The committee, in a statement issued by the prime minister's office, did not name Trump but spoke of "deep

“ They work with us, and they also harbor terrorists ”



KARACHI: Activists of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council shout anti-US slogans at a protest in Karachi. Pakistan has summoned the US ambassador, an embassy spokesman said in a rare public rebuke after Donald Trump lashed out at Islamabad with threats to cut aid over 'lies' about militancy. —AFP

disappointment" at a slew of critical comments coming from US officials over the past few months. "Recent statements and articulation by the American leadership were completely incomprehensible as they contradicted

facts manifestly, struck with great insensitivity at the trust between two nations built over generations, and negated the decades of sacrifices made by the Pakistani nation," it said.—Reuters

## Equatorial Guinea 'coup' thwarted

MALABO: The West African state of Equatorial Guinea yesterday it had thwarted "a coup" in late December mounted by mercenaries who sought to attack President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, Africa's longest-serving leader. Sources told AFP that the country's ambassador to Chad had been arrested and was being held in a military camp. In a statement read on public radio, Security Minister Nicolas Obama Nchama said an attempted coup took place on December 24. "A group of Chadian, Sudanese and Centraficans [citizens of the Central African Republic] infiltrated Kye Ossi, Ebibeyin, Mongomo, Bata and Malabo to attack the head of state, who was in the Koete Mongomo presidential palace for the year-end holiday," he said.

The "mercenaries... were recruited by Equatorial Guinean militants from certain radical opposition parties with the support of certain powers," the minister said. The plot had been prevented thanks to an operation carried out "in collaboration with the Cameroon security services," he said. Formerly a Spanish colony, Equatorial Guinea is one of sub-Saharan's biggest oil producers but a large proportion of its 1.2 million population lives in poverty. Obiang, in power for more than 38 years, is accused by critics of brutal repression of opponents, electoral fraud and corruption.

### Arms

Yesterday's announcement came after Cameroon on

December 27 arrested 38 heavily-armed men on the border with the tiny state. Two days later, Equatorial Guinea's ambassador to France, Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifumu, referred to the incident as an "invasion and destabilization attempt". The suspects, taken into custody in a bus on the border, had rocket launchers, rifles and a stockpile of ammunition, according to his office. On Saturday, the 75-year-old Obiang said "a war" was being prepared against his regime, "because they say I have spent a lot of time in power".

The same day, the country's ambassador to Chad, Enrique Nsue Anguesom, was arrested in the district of Ebibeyin, on Equatorial Guinea's border with Cameroon, one of his cousins and a senior police officer said yesterday, speaking on condition of anonymity. He is being held in a military camp in Bata, Equatorial Guinea's economic capital, "in connection with the investigation concerning the arrests" on December 27, said one of the sources. Concurring sources said Equatorial Guinea's borders with Gabon and Cameroon were closed on December 27. Other sources said military reinforcements had been sent to the frontier with Cameroon. Officials could not be reached to confirm these accounts.

### Contested regime

Obiang took power in a coup on August 3, 1979, ousting his own uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema, who was shot by firing squad. He was re-elected to a fifth seven-year term in 2016, gaining more than 90 percent of the vote, according to the official results. Legislative elections on November 12 last year saw the ruling party win 92 percent of the vote, a result condemned as fraudulent by dissidents. The Citizens for Innovation (CI) opposition group, which secured one out of the 100 seats in the legislature,



President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo

reported that at least 50 of its members were detained after the ballot.

In 2004, mercenaries attempted to overthrow Obiang in a coup thought to be largely funded by British financiers. Mark Thatcher, son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was reportedly involved in the funding and was convicted and fined in South Africa. In October last year, a French court handed down a three-year suspended jail term to Obiang's son, Teodorin, who is also vice president, after convicting him of siphoning off public money to fund a jet-set lifestyle in Paris. He was accused of spending more than 1,000 times his official annual salary on a six-storey mansion in a posh part of the French capital, a fleet of fast cars and artworks, among other assets. His lawyers said they would appeal the ruling.—AFP

## Ecuador jailed VP stripped of office

QUITO: Ecuador's Vice President Jorge Glas lost his title late Tuesday because he has been absent for more than three months—locked up in prison on a six-year sentence for corruption. Glas, 48, is the highest-ranking Latin American politician to be convicted and imprisoned for his role in a continent-wide scandal involving a Brazilian construction group, Odebrecht, which gave bribes to secure public works contracts.



Ecuadorian Vice-President Jorge Glas

He was given his six-year sentence on December 13 by Ecuador's Supreme Court after being found guilty of receiving \$13.5 million in Odebrecht kickbacks. He says he is innocent and will appeal. But, taking into account his detention since October 2 pending his trial, he has not been able to carry out his duties. That means that at midnight Tuesday, Glas had failed to execute his functions as vice president for the three months allowed under the constitution. So he automatically lost his post. Asked if that was right, the executive secretary of the ruling Country Alliance, Ricardo Zambrano, said: "Of course." Zambrano added, in comments to the Ecuavisa television network, that President Lenin Moreno would have to ask Congress to choose a replacement.

The legislature on December 17 had voted to open proceedings to fire Glas. But that still required rulings from the Constitutional Court and a congressional panel before going to a vote before the entire Congress. It appeared the constitution's provisions would come into effect before that process ran its course. "Under the law, the three months of absence means that a temporary deficiency (of vice-presidential functions) becomes a definitive one, without the need for any congressional declaration," a constitutional expert, Rafael Oyarte said. Two people were seen as best-placed to succeed Glas: current acting vice president Maria Vicuna, and Industries Minister Eva Garcia. Ecuador's ruling party is split between Moreno and previous president Rafael Correa. Glas was an ally of Correa, who retired to Belgium but returned to his country in late November to battle Moreno for control of their party.—AFP

## A high-tech ship to resume hunt for flight MH370

KUALA LUMPUR: A US exploration firm said yesterday it has sent a high-tech vessel in hopes of soon resuming the hunt for flight MH370, whose disappearance is one of aviation's greatest mysteries. The Malaysia Airlines jet disappeared in March 2014 with 239 people—mostly from China—on board en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing after diverting from its flight path. No sign of the plane was found in a 120,000 square kilometer search zone selected by satellite analysis of the jet's likely trajectory. The sea search—the largest in aviation history—was called off in January last year but looks set to resume soon.

Exploration firm Ocean Infinity said it was sending a research vessel to the zone in the southern Indian Ocean and hopes to finalize a deal with the Malaysian govern-

ment to restart the hunt in the coming days. "We are moving the vessel, Seabed Constructor, towards the vicinity of the possible search zone," a spokesman for the company said. "This is designed to save time should the contract award be forthcoming, as hoped." The Norwegian research vessel being leased by Ocean Infinity set off from South Africa and was aiming to arrive in the search area by mid-January. The firm wants to start the hunt, which will be on a "no find, no fee" basis, during a period of good weather expected in January and February.

The vessel is carrying several autonomous submarines which can be launched from the ship to scour the seabed for the jet. Malaysia's Deputy Transport Minister Aziz Kaprawi confirmed negotiations with Ocean Infinity were in the final stages: "They know we are very serious in taking their offer." Ocean Infinity was one of three companies which had bid to resume the hunt. Australia's national science body CSIRO released a report in April suggesting the doomed plane was "most likely" north of the former search zone in an area of approximately 25,000 square kilometers. Only three confirmed fragments of MH370 have been found, all of them on western Indian Ocean shores, including a two-meter wing part known as a flaperon.—AFP

## Israel: Iran recruiting Palestinian militants through South Africa

JERUSALEM: Israel said yesterday it had cracked a Palestinian militant cell suspected of having been recruited and handled by Iranian intelligence officers who worked out of South Africa. Israel has long been locked in a shadow war with arch-foe Iran, which supports Islamist guerrillas in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and whose nuclear program is widely believed to have been targeted repeatedly by Israeli saboteurs. Israel's Shin Bet security agency said three Palestinians from the occupied West Bank had been indicted on espionage and terrorism charges after they confessed to accepting Iranian-assigned missions, including preparation of a suicide bombing and providing their handlers with Israeli cellphone SIM cards.

In its statement, the Shin Bet said the suspects' point of contact was a Palestinian who lived in South Africa and had been recruited by Iranian intelligence. It gave no indication whether the South African government knew of the alleged Iranian activity, or of the Palestinian man's where-

abouts. South Africa, where pro-Palestinian sentiment is strong, has strained relations with Israel, but the Shin Bet statement also suggested the country effectively served as an Iranian spy hub.

"It became clear, during the Shin Bet investigation, that Iranian intelligence used South Africa as a significant arena for locating, recruiting and running anti-Israel agents in the West Bank," the Shin Bet said, adding that several Iranian officers had travelled there "from Tehran" for the operation. South Africa's Foreign Ministry and Home Affairs Ministry and the Iranian embassy in Pretoria did not immediately respond to the Israeli allegations. The Shin Bet did not say when it cracked the Palestinian cell or when the trial of the suspects would begin.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told reporters on Wednesday the case showed that "Iran operates in a subversive and terrorist manner... not just in aiding terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, but also in attempts to organize terror activities within the State of Israel against its civilians". The Shin Bet did not describe any of the attacks or espionage missions allegedly planned by the suspects as having been near to fruition. It also did not say whether the three had been assigned lawyers or how they might plead to the charges. A Shin Bet veteran interviewed by Israel Radio about the case suggested the purported South African link may be unprecedented.—Reuters

### News in brief

#### Mormon leader dies

UTAH: Thomas Monson, leader of the Mormon Church, has died at the age of 90 at his home in Salt Lake City, Utah, the church said yesterday. Monson became the 16th President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - as the religion is officially known - in 2008. As president, he was believed by members of the faith to be a prophet who receives divine revelations. Monson died on Tuesday evening surrounded by his family, the church said in a statement on its website. Mormons worship Jesus, believing in a "restored" church with living apostles and prophets and an additional testament - the Book of Mormon - to those found in the traditional Bible. The church, which was formally organized in 1830 in Upstate New York, reported last year to have 15.8 million members worldwide. They include the 2012 Republican presidential nominee and former Massachusetts Gov Mitt Romney and actor Katherine Heigl. "President Monson had all the hallmarks of an unassuming servant of the Lord," the church said in a statement.

#### Costa Rica murder rate

SAN JOSE: Costa Rica recorded its highest-ever annual murder rate in 2017, authorities said Tuesday, blaming score-settling between gangs and drug trafficking for the rise. The nation of about five million people, still considered one of the safest relative to others in Central America, saw 603 homicides last year, according to preliminary data from the police service responsible for investigating them. That works out to a rate of 12.1 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of killings "is the highest in the history of the country," the deputy director of the Judicial Investigation Organism, Michael Soto, told a news conference. Much of Latin America suffers from homicide rates higher than the world average of 5.3 per 100,000 inhabitants given by the World Bank. By comparison, the United States has a murder rate of 4.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, according to recent FBI data. The World Health Organization considers a murder rate of more than 10 per 100,000 to be an "epidemic."

#### Suicide blast kills 14

KANO: Fourteen worshippers were killed yesterday when a suicide bomber attacked a mosque on Nigeria's border with Cameroon, civilian vigilantes said. The suspected Boko Haram jihadist blew himself up amid worshippers inside the mosque in Gaboru around 5:00 am, shortly before morning prayers. "Fourteen bodies have been pulled out of the rubble," said Umar Kachalla, a civilian militiaman, who said the mosque had been completely destroyed. "Only the muezzin has survived and we believe more bodies are buried under the debris," said Kachalla. "The death toll may likely rise." An hour earlier, a patrol of vigilantes spotted four suspected suicide bombers on the outskirts of the town and arrested one of them after a chase, said a second vigilante, Shehu Mada. "Two of them turned back and fled while the fourth disappeared into the darkness and we believe it was he who attacked the mosque," Mada said. Boko Haram's eight-year insurgency against the government of Nigeria has spilled into neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

#### Hundreds flee clashes

BANGUI: Hundreds of people in northwest Central African Republic have fled their villages following fresh violence between armed groups, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said. Villagers fled gunfire and machete attacks to arrive in the small town of Paoua, where thousands of people have already sought refuge since fighting erupted in the region in November. "There are clashes at almost every point all around Paoua. We have seen hundreds of people flee their villages to take refuge in Paoua" since Wednesday, said Jean Hospital, MSF's project coordinator in the region. "We received civilians who were directly targeted by gunfire or were attacked with machetes, while others are collateral victims of the clashes," he added. Rival armed groups the National Movement for the Liberation of the Central African Republic (MNL) and Revolution and Justice (RJ) began fighting on the outskirts of Paoua yesterday, following renewed violence in the region since November, sources said.

## Analysis

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## Washington Watch

## Defining what it means to be religious

By Dr James J Zogby

Ever since we learned that 80 percent of self-described "born-again" Christians supported Donald Trump's candidacy for president, there has been a discussion about how these Christians define their faith. This debate recently intensified when an even greater percentage of Alabama's "born-again" Christians voted for Roy Moore in that state's senate contest. At stake in this discussion are critical issues about how believers understand and practice being Christian.

It is important to note that this matter of understanding how people define and practice their faith is not unique to Christianity. It is a question being addressed by scholars in every religion. A few weeks ago, I was in Abu Dhabi speaking at the 2017 Global Peace Forum convened by Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah. The sheikh annually invites Muslim scholars, leaders, and government officials dealing with religious affairs together with Christian and Jewish figures to engage in dialogue on issues related to peace, tolerance, moderation in religion, and dialogue among the world's faiths.

I was asked to prepare a presentation for the Forum on how Arab Muslims view their faith and how their self-definition corresponds with their attitudes toward social and political life. While I have a PhD in Comparative Religions, I am also a pollster and have been surveying attitudes across the Middle East for over a decade and a half. And so, as I set out to examine how Arabs understand what it means to be religious, I thought it best to ask the question in polls and let a self-definition emerge from their responses.

During the past two years, we have been engaged in an exhaustive examination of the attitudes of Arab Muslims toward their religion. We have looked at how they understand their faith, how they practice it, and how they see its role in relation to the state and society. For my report to the forum, I drew on the findings of two major studies in which we surveyed 35,000 Muslim citizens in 10 Arab countries. For my report to the Forum I focused on the results from five countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Tunisia, and Morocco.

### Differences

What the poll data demonstrated was that not all Muslims are the same. There are differences, from country-to-country, in how they understand their faith and how they see its role in their lives and societies. What was interesting were the absence of any significant differences in the overall attitudes among demographic groups (age, gender, education, or income). The major differences we found were attitudinal - mainly between those who self-described as "very religious" or those who self-described as "moderately religious" or less. The differences between these two groups are profound.

Those who say they are "very religious" are more formalist in their view of their faith and more observant of rituals (we termed them "formalists"). They pray more often, go to their mosques more frequently, spend more time listening to religious programming, and consulting fatwas. They also say that they are less tolerant of other faiths and sects and have a negative view of modernity. The size of these self-described "very religious" varied from country-to-country. They were one-half of all Saudis, two-fifths of Tunisians, but only about one-quarter of Emiratis, Moroccans and Egyptians.

It is also noteworthy that this group of self-described "very religious" Muslims largely believe that their own countries are moving in the wrong direction. They say that they believe that religious groups should become more political and seek to govern. And when religious groups do govern, this group of self-described "very religious" Muslims see them as having been effective in making their countries stronger and protecting the rights of all citizens. As an extension of this, these self-described "very religious" Muslims are significantly more inclined to see a strong role for the state in religious affairs, and believe in the enforcement of a strict definition of sharia. And, to a significant degree, they believe in the importance of establishing the caliphate.

Finally, it is with some concern that we note that those who say they are "very religious" are somewhat more inclined than their compatriots to see extremist groups like Daesh or Al-Qaeda to be "mostly right", while disagreeing with things they have done. On the other hand, the second group we identified in our studies, are those who describe themselves as "moderately religious" or less. The size of this group also varies from country-to-country. They are three-quarters of Emiratis, Moroccans, and Egyptians, three-fifths of Tunisians, and one-half of all Saudis.

This group says that they pray and go to their local mosque "as often as they can" and do not report listening often to religious programming or consulting fatwas (we termed them "adapters"). They also say they are more tolerant of other faiths and sects and have a positive view of modernity. Self-described "moderately religious" Muslims strongly support the view that their own countries are moving in the right direction. Rather than rigid ritual observance, they tend to support the notion that religion should lead one to live a better more moral life.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



## Kim Olympic gambit pushes Trump button

US President Donald Trump is not one to hold back when it comes to indulging in nuclear and diplomatic brinkmanship with North Korea's leader whom he calls "Little Rocket Man". True to form, after Kim Jong-Un boasted that he could launch a devastating strike on the US mainland from his desk, Trump took to Twitter. With his trademark haphazard capitalization and punctuation, Trump demanded: "Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!"

But Kim's New Year speech had not been limited to similar bluster. He also suggested Pyongyang send a Winter Games team to South Korea - and Seoul, in turn, reciprocated by suggesting high-level talks. Trump's earlier response to this idea was more cautious: "Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not - we will see!"

Perhaps he was more ambivalent about the talks plan because, on the face of it, the North's 34-year-old dictator may be calling the bluff of an antagonist he has dismissed as the "mentally-deranged US dotard". Trump's "maximum pressure campaign" was designed to plunge Pyongyang into such international isolation that it is forced to give up its nuclear program. Instead, Kim is making overtures to Washington's ally South Korea.

South Korean President Moon Jae-In's party came to office promising smoother ties with its neighbor, only to see Kim test-fire missiles and Trump threaten "fire and fury". Moon's unification minister Cho Myoung-Gyon is now offering to hold "talks with the North at any time and

place in any form" - perhaps as early as next week. Washington has also suggested talks to end the stand-off, but only if Kim accepts he must give up his expanding nuclear arsenal before joining the international community.

If Moon's opening marks a crack in allied solidarity, it will be a blow for this policy, and not one that US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley would accept lightly. "We won't take any of the talks seriously if they don't do something to ban all nuclear weapons in North Korea," she told reporters at the United Nations on Tuesday. "We don't think we need a Band-Aid and we don't think we need to smile and take a picture," she insisted. "North Korea can talk with anyone they want, but the US is not going to recognize it or acknowledge it until they agree to ban the nuclear weapons that they have." Kim has shown no willingness to surrender his expensively assembled arsenal, especially now that it appears to include a missile theoretically capable of hitting US mainland cities.

### Will Moon blink?

In his New Year address, the provocative autocrat instead vowed to "mass-produce nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles and to speed up their deployment." So will Moon seize the opportunity of talks on North Korea's Olympics team to seek a way to live more safely on the doorstep of a new nuclear power? US State Department spokesman Heather Nauert insists not. "Kim Jong-Un may be trying to drive a wedge of some sort between the two nations - between our nation and the Republic of Korea," she said. "I can assure you that that will not happen. That

will not occur. We are very skeptical of Kim Jong-Un's sincerity in sitting down and having talks." Amid the uncertainty, risk specialists are nervous that a miscalculation by either side could lead to disaster. Ian Bremmer, president of the Eurasia Group, warns that the period when the world could put off a decision on the North's weapons has come to an end. "Now what we see is that there are certain trends moving towards breakthrough and there are certain trends moving towards confrontation," he told reporters. "The risk of miscalculation is high," he warned.

### Hell to pay

North Korea, he notes, has tested an intercontinental ballistic missile and now may feel more secure in terms of being able to deter a pre-emptive American strike. "That's a positive," Bremmer argued. "It allows them to talk about reaching out to the South Koreans, the Chinese ... you always want to negotiate from a stronger position." Seoul, meanwhile, sees that "Trump's policy is an 'America First' policy. It is not a South Korea first policy."

Bremmer, who has spoken recently to South Korean officials, said he sees a real chance Seoul may agree to freeze joint military exercises with the US to secure talks with Kim. This would be a win for China and a rebuff for Washington, which refuses to accept any equivalence between the US military stance and Kim's illegal nuclear program. Trump may choose to play along with such a regional solution, or even seek credit for it. Or he may continue to insist that Kim backs down - boosting the chance of war. —AFP

## Rouhani has most to lose in Iran protests

Iranian authorities are concerned that nationwide unrest will undermine the clerical establishment and want to stamp out the protests quickly, senior government officials say. But the person with the most to lose is President Hassan Rouhani. While several senior officials said there was concern that prolonged unrest would damage the legitimacy and influence of the country's religious leaders, few insiders see the unrest as an existential threat to that leadership, which has ruled since the 1979 revolution and is now controlled by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the ultimate authority in Iran's system of dual clerical and republican rule.

The biggest loser, they say, is likely to be Rouhani, who is much more closely tied to the country's economic policies. "Of course Rouhani and his government will have less power afterwards, especially because his economic policy was criticized during the unrest," said political analyst Hamid Farahvashian. "He will be a lame-duck president and Khamenei will have more power."

Much of the protesters' anger has focused on what Rouhani and his government have failed to deliver: an economic boom promised as the payoff for the 2015 deal that curbed Iran's disputed nuclear program in return for world powers lifting sanctions. Protesters are angry that Iran's youth unemployment rate is edging towards 30 percent, want higher wages and an end to alleged graft. They have chanted slogans against all of Iran's leaders, including the clerical elite, and attacked police vehicles, banks and mosques as the unrest widened.

"The continuation of the protests will lead to a legitimacy crisis," said one senior official close to Rouhani, asking not to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue. "People have economic demands ... of course these

demands should be taken seriously ... of course the establishment should listen to the people, but all these can be discussed in a calm atmosphere," the official said.

Some conservatives have pushed for a hardline approach, even though bloodshed could fuel more protests in the largest wave of demonstrations since nationwide unrest in 2009. "So far, security forces have not tried to prevent the demonstrations ... but this will change if (Khamenei) calls for an end to the street protests and demonstrators defy his call," said one former Iranian official from the reformist camp.

Even if the unrest is quelled, the demands of tens of thousands of restless working class youths who have taken to the streets are unlikely to dissipate. Khamenei spoke publicly for the first time about the crisis on Tuesday, accusing Iran's enemies of stirring unrest but saying no more. A statement on his website said he would address the nation about the events "when the time is right".

### The Limits of Rouhani's Power

The protesters have little chance of toppling the clerical leaders, who appear to be retaining control of the military, police, and security forces and have no compunction about using them, according to one US official following the developments. Rouhani, who was elected in 2013, is more exposed. He is seen as a pragmatist at odds with Iran's hardliners and has

said in response to the protests that Iranians have a right to criticize the authorities. But he has a fight on his hands because of growing resentment

over high prices and allegations of corruption. "His power is limited in Iran's ruling system. Public discontent is increasing ... people are losing their faith in the establishment system," a third Iranian official said. "The leaders are well aware of this fact and its dangerous consequences." US officials fear the likelihood of the protests is discrediting what one called Rouhani's "moderate brand of moderation" and a harsher crackdown by the clerical authorities. "It's an open question whether Rouhani ever intended to keep any of his promises, but he hasn't delivered, especially on the economic front, and that means he has no popular support and is expendable to Khamenei," said a second US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters. "He's likely to be one of the casualties, though maybe not immediately."

Rouhani has blamed his predecessor and the United States, Iran's long-time adversary, for the economy's shortcomings. But his government has also backtracked on planned fuel price rises and promised more jobs. Rouhani may need to spend more money to create more employment if he is to ease discontent, and could risk antagonizing powerful interests if he tries to address allegations of corruption. His vulnerability and the deep divisions in Iran's hierarchy have fuelled suspicions among some of his sympathizers that conservative rivals may have played a hand in the crisis.

"It was a coup against Rouhani and his achievements ... The aim was to harm Rouhani," said Saeed Leylaz, a political analyst close to the pro-reform movement. But a fourth official in Tehran said the nationwide protests had united Iran's leadership. "At this point it is not important whether a political faction initiated the unrest to harm the rival group," the official said.

"The unrest was hijacked by our enemies ... that is why all factions have united to protect the Islamic Republic." —Reuters





A picture taken yesterday shows the sunset during winter storm Eleanor in the French Riviera city of Nice. — AFP

## Palestinians slam 'blackmail' after...

Continued from Page 1

Trump came to office boasting that he could achieve the "ultimate deal" that secures peace in the Middle East, something that has eluded presidents since the late 1960s. For most of the past half century the United States has been seen as the indispensable - if sometimes imperfect - arbiter of the peace process. Trump's actions are likely to cast that further in doubt. He has heaped pressure on Palestinians to do a deal, threatening to close the de facto "embassy" in Washington in addition to recognizing Israel's contested claim on Jerusalem and now threatening aid.

Efforts to harness improved Arab-Israel relations to push a peace deal have been at least temporarily

derailed by Trump's Jerusalem recognition, breaking with decades of US policy. The decision sparked almost universal diplomatic condemnation and deadly protests in the Palestinian territories. Yesterday, a 17-year-old Palestinian was shot dead in clashes with the Israeli army near Ramallah, according to the Palestinian health ministry. Fourteen Palestinians have been killed since Trump's Jerusalem declaration, mainly in clashes with Israeli forces.

The declaration also prompted Abbas - 82 and facing the prospect of entering the history books as the leader who "lost Jerusalem" - to cancel a planned meeting with Vice President Mike Pence. Christian and Muslim leaders in Egypt took similar steps. Pence was forced to delay a December visit to the Middle East until later this month, and aides on Tuesday rejected rumors of further delays. "As we've said all along, the vice president is going to the Middle East in January," said Pence spokeswoman Alyssa Farah. "We're finalizing details and will announce specifics of the full trip in the coming days." — AFP

## Iran general declares 'end...

Continued from Page 1

of Revolutionary Guards. General Jafari added those behind the protests had "intervened massively on social media" but that "once restrictions were started, the troubles reduced". Telegram and Instagram were blocked on cellphones soon after the protests began on Dec 28. Telecoms Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi said Telegram would only be unblocked if it removed "terrorist" content. "I had mail exchanges with the head of Telegram and I told him that the continuation of Telegram's activities is conditioned on the suppression of terrorist content," he said.

There were few reports of anti-regime protests overnight, although it remained difficult to verify information from the provinces. President Hassan Rouhani expressed hope in a phone call with Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan that the protests would end in a few days, a Turkish presidential source said. The political establishment has closed ranks against the unrest, saying the protests were part of a foreign plot to destabilize the regime. "The enemy is always looking for an opportunity and any crevice to infiltrate and strike the Iranian nation," Khamenei said on Tuesday.

US President Donald Trump said Iranians were trying to "take back" their government, extending a drumbeat of encouragement for the protests. "You will see great support from the United States at the appropriate time!" he tweeted, without offering any specifics. UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on the Iranian authorities to defuse tensions and investigate the deaths. "It is incumbent on the authorities that their actions do not provoke a downward spiral of violence, as occurred in 2009," he said in reference to the last major protest movement against alleged election-rigging.

Even reformists in Iran, who backed the 2009 protests, have condemned the violence and the support the demonstrations have received from the United

States. But they also urged the authorities to address economic grievances. "Officials must acknowledge the deplorable situation of the country as the first step to hearing the protesters," tweeted Mohammad Taghi Karroubi, whose father Mehdi Karroubi has been under house arrest for almost seven years for helping lead the 2009 demonstrations.

Many have been turned off by the violence, which has contrasted with the largely peaceful marches in 2009. But on the streets of the capital, there is widespread sympathy with the economic grievances driving the unrest, particularly an unemployment rate as high as 40 percent for young people. "The poorer section of society is really under pressure," Sakineh Eidi, a 37-year-old pharmacist in Tehran, told AFP. "But I don't think it will continue. Even those who maybe acted emotionally, vandalizing things and setting fire to public property, know that the smoke will get into everyone's eyes and that insecurity in the country is not in anyone's interest."

Others rejected the official line that foreign powers were behind the unrest. "People have reached a stage where they can no longer tolerate this pressure from the authorities," said Soraya Saadaat, a 54-year-old jobless woman. Mojtaba Mousavi, a Tehran-based political analyst, said Iranians do not generally support violence, no matter how unhappy they are with their government. "There are certainly Iranians who aren't happy with certain policies, frustrated people who would like to protest against their economic situation, but history shows none of these people support violence and subversion," he said. But "this week's protests turned into riots".

Rouhani came to power in 2013 promising to mend the economy and ease social tensions, but high living costs and unemployment have left many feeling that progress is too slow. Rural areas, hit by years of drought and under-investment, are particularly hard-hit. Rouhani on Sunday acknowledged there was "no problem bigger than unemployment", and also promised a more balanced media and more transparency. In 2009, authorities ruthlessly put down protests against the re-election of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. At least 36 people were killed, according to an official toll, while the opposition says 72 died. — AFP



Palestinian artists paint a portrait of Ahed Tamimi, 16-year-old prominent campaigner against Israel's occupation, and Ibrahim Abu Thurayeh, who was shot dead in clashes between Israeli forces and protesters, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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## Sports

# 'Lucky' Munro blasts record century as NZ crush Windies

## First player to score three centuries in international T20s

## SCOREBOARD

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand:** Completed scoreboard in the third Twenty20 between New Zealand and the West Indies at Mount Maunganui yesterday:

| New Zealand   |     |
|---|-----|
| M. Guptill c Walton b Emrit   | 63  |
| C. Munro c Hetmyer b Brathwaite   | 104 |
| T. Bruce b Brathwaite   | 23  |
| A. Kitchen run out (Walton/Emrit)   | 9   |
| K. Williamson b Taylor  | 19  |
| G. Phillips not out   | 7   |
| M. Santner not out  | 6   |
| Extras: (lb4, w7, nb1)  | 12  |
| Total (for five wickets: 20 overs)  | 243 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-136 (Guptill), 2-191 (Bruce), 3-204 (Kitchen), 4-226 (Williamson), 5-226 (Munro)             |     |
| Bowling: Taylor 4-0-53-1 (Inb), Badree 4-0-51-0 (1w), Nurse 4-0-43-0, Brathwaite 4-0-50-2 (2w), Emrit 4-0-42-1. |     |

| West Indies  |     |
|--|-----|
| C. Walton c Munro b Southee  | 0   |
| C. Gayle c Phillips b Southee  | 0   |
| A. Fletcher b Sodhi  | 46  |
| R. Powell c Williamson b Kitchen   | 16  |
| S. Hetmyer run out (Guptill/Phillips)  | 7   |
| C. Brathwaite c Bruce b Boult  | 15  |
| A. Nurse not out   | 14  |
| R. Emrit lbw b Sodhi   | 5   |
| J. Taylor c Santner b Boult  | 13  |
| S. Badree c Bruce b Southee  | 2   |
| S. Hope Injured. Did not bat   |     |
| Extras: (w4, nb2)  | 6   |
| Total (for 9 wickets: 16.3 overs)  | 124 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Walton), 2-1 (Gayle), 3-42 (Powell), 4-49 (Hetmyer), 5-80 (Fletcher), 6-92 (Brathwaite), 7-99 (Emrit), 8-114 (Taylor), 9-124 (Badree). |     |
| Bowling: Southee 2.3-0-21-3, Boult 4-0-29-2 (3w, 2nb), Kitchen 4-0-33-1 (1w), Santner 2-0-16-0, Sodhi 4-0-25-2.  |     |
| Result: New Zealand won by 119 runs.   |     |

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** New Zealand's master blaster Colin Munro attributed his record-setting century to sink the West Indies in the third Twenty20 in Mount Maunganui yesterday to a hit-and-hope philosophy.

"I try and go out there and swing from ball one and see what happens," he said after blazing 104 off 53 deliveries. On the back of Munro's heroics, New Zealand won the third Twenty20 by 119 runs to complete a sweep of the tour by the West Indies, having

“ He took the game away from us ”

won both Tests, all three one-day internationals and two T20s.

Munro became the first player to score three centuries in international T20s, going one clear of four other players, including the West Indies' Chris Gayle. "If I'm lucky enough to get a good start, I try and carry that momentum and if it's my night, it's my night and if not then back to the drawing board," said the 30-year-old left-hander, who cracked 10 sixes and three fours.

New Zealand made 243 for five in their 20 overs and the West Indies' reply ended at 124 for nine in 16.3 overs, with Shai Hope unable to bat after being injured while fielding. Munro was named man of the series after scores of 53 and 104 in the two completed Twenty20s and 66 in the washed-out second match.

The West Indies, desperate to get at least one win on the tour, tried every trick in their playbook but captain Carlos Brathwaite admitted Munro was too good. "He took the game away from us," Brathwaite said.



**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** New Zealand's players celebrate their series win after the third Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and the West Indies at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. —AFP

"Some of (our) plans we executed and he got past them. Some of them we didn't execute as well as we wanted to and he capitalised," he added.

"What was good with his knock was that he always capitalised on our mistakes and we presented a few too many to him." Munro and Martin Guptill (63) put on 136 in 11 overs for New Zealand's first wicket.

That included 16 off the first over by Rayad Emrit, who was making his T20 debut at the age of 36. But Emrit claimed success in his second over when he had Guptill caught behind. Munro continued until the first

ball of the final over when he drove a Brathwaite full toss straight to Shimron Hetmyer at long on.

The West Indies reply began disastrously with Chadwick Walton and Chris Gayle out without scoring in Tim Southee's opening over. Andre Fletcher did his best to rebuild the innings and ensured the tourists kept up with New Zealand's run rate for the first eight overs. But the introduction of spin saw Ish Sodhi end Fletcher's innings for 46 and the momentum fizzled. From 80 for four after eight overs, the last five West Indies wickets fell for 44 runs in 51 balls. —AFP

## KSSC appreciates Amir's unlimited support for shooting

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Treasurer Essa Al-Buti Butaiban, Financial Director of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Seventh Shooting Grand Prix appreciated the unlimited support HH the Amir gives to shooting, as this International Grand Prix became one of the sought after events by shooters from all over the globe. Butaiban said preparations began early, as the Higher Organizing Committee, gave all concerned their duties, and held workshops to have everything ready on schedule, and all is ready including the ranges to launch the event.

He said that preparations are on going to receive guests as well as their stay, transport and food, as well as the financial prizes the winners will receive. Butaiban thanked the Public Authority for Sports, its Director General and his deputies, and all government authorities for supporting the KSSC, wished success to all.

## Starc returns for fifth Ashes Test

**SYDNEY:** Australia captain Steve Smith brushed off concerns about his fitness on the eve of the fifth and final Ashes Test against England yesterday before Mitchell Starc's return to spearhead the pace attack was confirmed as the only change to his team.

Left-arm quick Starc, the leading wicket-taker in the series after claiming 19 in the first three tests as Australia wrestled back the Ashes, missed the drawn fourth test in Melbourne with a bruised heel but confirmed his fitness in the nets. "Starcy's pulled up pretty well this morning and said he's ready to go," Smith told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG). "The break that he's had from bowling has helped his heel heal, it's coming on nicely, he's confident. You've got to take

the player's words sometimes, and hopefully he gets through fine ..." The Australia skipper, who has accumulated a series-leading 604 runs at an average of 151, left no one in any doubt that he would be leading his side out today despite missing training on Tuesday because of a bad back. "It's a little bit stiff but nothing I haven't dealt with before," Smith said. "I'll have a good hit and a good catch today and I'll be fine tomorrow. "I love batting out here at the SCG, it's my home ground and I've made a few good scores. So hopefully I can continue the run."

The side was confirmed after Australia's training session with Starc returning in place of Jackson Bird, who laboured as a stand-in on an Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch rated as "poor" by the governing International Cricket Council.

Left-arm tweaker Ashton Agar was also brought into the squad to offer Australia the option of going with two spinners if it looked like the SCG was going to offer a lot of turn. Smith, though, said the state of the pitch made it unlikely that one of the quicks would make way for Agar to play alongside off spinner Nathan Lyon as the hosts look to wrap up the series 4-0. — Reuters

## England's punt on leggie Crane not a short position

**SYDNEY:** Mason Crane's introduction to Test cricket for the fifth and final Ashes clash with Australia is perhaps a sign that England are finally prepared to invest the time it takes to develop a decent leg-spinner, whatever the short-term cost.

At 20, Crane will be the youngest England spinner for 90 years to make a Test debut when he wins his first cap at the Sydney Cricket Ground today in a series that England trail by an irretrievable 3-0.

In the corresponding fixture on the 2013-14 Ashes series, when England were 4-0 down, Scott Borthwick, Boyd Rankin and Gary Ballance were all handed debuts with only the latter going on to play a second Test.

Crane's elevation after taking 75 wickets at 44 in 29 first class matches could be seen in the same vein but for Joe Root's assertion to the contrary as he plots a win that he thinks is vital to England's success on their next trip Down Under.

"I want us to be the best side in the world ... and it's not going to happen by chucking guys in for the last game of a series," he said. "So it's really important

that we do it in a way which, over the next four years, gets us in the best place to perform well here, but throughout that period being as successful as we can be." The art of spinning the ball away from a right-handed batsman using the fingers and a full flick of the wrist can produce spectacular results but also be difficult to control. It has provided two of the most memorable moments in Ashes cricket - the Eric Hollies googly that bowled Don Bradman in the great Australian's final innings and the "Ball of the Century" with which Shane Warne dismissed Mike Gatting in 1993.

It can also be an expensive, though, as Warne had discovered on his Test debut at the SCG the previous year when he took 1-150 against India. While Warne was the greatest in a long line of top class Australian "leggies" also including Bill "Tiger" O'Reilly, Richie Benaud and Stuart MacGill, the English have often been accused of lacking the patience to develop the skill.

Borthwick's return of 4-82 from his leg spin in a losing cause at the SCG in 2014 was decent enough but he never played another Test, while Adil Rashid has since ended up on the test scrapheap after 10 matches, all abroad.

Crane's development may mark a sea change to this attitude and, while still not a regular for his county Hampshire, he has already played two T20 internationals. He linked up with MacGill when he came over to Australia in 2016-17 to play for Sydney's Gordon club and three seven-wicket hauls earned him a New South Wales call-up, the first for a foreigner since Imran Khan in 1984-85. He took 5-116 in his only Sheffield



**SYDNEY:** England spinner Mason Crane (C) speaks to captain Joe Root (R) as teammate Moeen Ali (L) bowls in the cricket nets during training at the SCG in Sydney yesterday, a day ahead of the start of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match against Australia. —AFP

Shield game against South Australia, a match played at the SCG where he will make his debut today after once again working with MacGill. Leg-spinners have to be aggressive and confident and it has been Crane's attitude that has most impressed his captain.

"He showed in the T20 matches that he's right up for international cricket and he's not someone who's going to back down," Root said yesterday. "On this surface, he's going to be a really good option. It looks like it's going to give a bit of turn throughout." —Reuters

## India's Jadeja a doubt for first South Africa Test

**CAPE TOWN:** India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is a doubt for the first Test against South Africa due to a viral illness, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said yesterday. The left-arm spinner has been suffering from the illness for the last two days and a decision on his inclusion for the opening test in Cape Town will be made before the first day of play starts on Friday.

"The BCCI Medical Team in consultation with the local medical team has decided that Mr. Jadeja will be taken to a hospital for treatment and expects him to fully recover in the next 48 hrs," the national governing body said in a statement.

"A decision on his availability ... will be taken on the morning of the match i.e. Jan. 5, 2018." Meanwhile, batsman Shikhar Dhawan has been declared fit after recovering from a minor ankle injury. Virat Kohli's side are atop the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Test rankings after winning nine successive series but their record on tour in South Africa is dismal. India have won just two of the 17 tests played there since 1992, losing five of the six series, with the 1-1 draw in 2010-11 their best return. The two teams will play three tests, six One-Day Internationals and three Twenty20 matches through to the end of February. — Reuters



**CAPE TOWN:** India's captain Virat Kohli (L) and South Africa's captain Faf du Plessis (R) pose with the 2018 Freedom Series trophy. — AFP

## Sports

# Two-time all-star Thomas scores 17 points in debut for Cavaliers

## Phoenix score 11 consecutive points to steal victory

### NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 113, Memphis 105; New York 91, San Antonio 100; Sacramento 111, Charlotte 131; Phoenix 104, Atlanta 103; Cleveland 127, Portland 110.

#### Eastern Conference

|              | W  | L  | PCT  | GB   |
|--------------|----|----|------|------|
| Boston       | 30 | 10 | 75.0 | —    |
| Toronto      | 25 | 10 | 71.4 | 2.5  |
| Cleveland    | 25 | 12 | 67.6 | 3.5  |
| Detroit      | 20 | 15 | 57.1 | 7.5  |
| Washington   | 21 | 16 | 56.8 | 7.5  |
| Milwaukee    | 19 | 16 | 54.3 | 8.5  |
| Miami        | 19 | 17 | 52.8 | 9    |
| Indiana      | 19 | 18 | 51.4 | 9.5  |
| New York     | 18 | 19 | 48.6 | 10.5 |
| Philadelphia | 17 | 19 | 47.2 | 11   |
| Charlotte    | 14 | 23 | 37.8 | 14.5 |
| Brooklyn     | 14 | 23 | 37.8 | 14.5 |
| Chicago      | 13 | 24 | 35.1 | 15.5 |
| Orlando      | 12 | 26 | 31.6 | 17   |
| Atlanta      | 10 | 27 | 27.0 | 18.5 |

#### Western Conference

|               |    |    |      |      |
|---------------|----|----|------|------|
| Golden State  | 29 | 8  | 78.4 | —    |
| Houston       | 26 | 9  | 74.3 | 2    |
| San Antonio   | 26 | 12 | 68.4 | 3.5  |
| Minnesota     | 24 | 14 | 63.2 | 5.5  |
| Oklahoma City | 20 | 17 | 54.1 | 9    |
| Denver        | 19 | 17 | 52.8 | 9.5  |
| Portland      | 19 | 18 | 51.4 | 10   |
| New Orleans   | 18 | 18 | 50.0 | 10.5 |
| LA Clippers   | 17 | 19 | 47.2 | 11.5 |
| Utah          | 16 | 21 | 43.2 | 13   |
| Phoenix       | 15 | 24 | 38.5 | 15   |
| Dallas        | 13 | 25 | 34.2 | 16.5 |
| Sacramento    | 12 | 25 | 32.4 | 17   |
| Memphis       | 12 | 26 | 31.6 | 17.5 |
| LA Lakers     | 11 | 25 | 30.6 | 17.5 |

LOS ANGELES: Damian Lillard outdueled Isaiah Thomas in a battle of returning All-Star guards on Tuesday night, but Thomas' team had the last laugh. Thomas scored 17 points off the bench in his season and Cavaliers debut to help host Cleveland top the Portland Trail Blazers 127-110 despite Lillard's 25-point night. Thomas, who missed the first 36 games of the season recovering from a hip injury, made 6 of 12 shots in 18 minutes. LeBron James totaled 24 points, eight assists and six rebounds, Kevin Love added 19 points and seven boards to help the Cavaliers snap a three-game losing streak. Lillard was returning from a five-game absence caused by a right hamstring strain, but he had little trouble duplicating his past scoring domi-



### Williams topped 30 points in six contests

nance. He also had six assists but committed seven turnovers in 32 minutes.

#### Spurs 100, Knicks 91

Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points on 8-of-20 shooting and grabbed eight rebounds in 30 minutes to pace San Antonio to a win over visiting New York. LaMarcus Aldridge finished with 19 points and five boards while Manu Ginobili scored 12 points and Pau Gasol had 11 and eight rebounds for the Spurs. Kristaps Porzingis was one of three Knicks with 13 points and also grabbed nine rebounds. Courtney Lee and Lance Thomas also scored 13. Enes Kanter had 12 and Jarrett Jack chipped in 12 for New York, which has lost five of six.

#### Suns 104, Hawks 103

Devin Booker scored 34 points, sinking five three throws in the final 12.3 seconds, and Phoenix scored 11 consecutive points late in the fourth quarter to steal a victory over visiting Atlanta. Dennis Schroder's driving



CLEVELAND: Isaiah Thomas #3 of the Cleveland Cavaliers guards Evan Turner #1 of the Portland Trail Blazers during the first half at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

layup with nine-tenths of a second remaining ended the Suns' 11-0 run, but Phoenix successfully inbounded the ball to end the game. TJ Warren scored 31 points on 15-of-21 shooting, and Chriss had 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Suns. Ersan Ilyasova had 21 points and Schroder and Kent Bazemore added 20 apiece for the Hawks.

#### Clippers 113, Grizzlies 105

Lou Williams scored 33 points to lead Los Angeles to a victory over visiting Memphis. Williams connected on all 15 of his free-throw attempts as the Clippers won their fourth consecutive game and their sixth in the past seven. Williams topped 30 points in four of the past six contests and is averaging 30.8 points during the stretch. Blake Griffin added 21 points and eight assists, and C.J. Williams scored 18 points for Los Angeles. Tyreke

Evans scored 18 points and Mario Chalmers added 15 for Memphis. The Grizzlies shot just 36.6 percent from the field in the second half to finish at 48.7 percent.

#### Hornets 131, Kings 111

Nicolas Batum scored 21 points, and Dwight Howard had 20 as Charlotte rolled to a victory over Sacramento. Jeremy Lamb and Johnny O'Bryant III each had 16 points, and Kemba Walker contributed 12 points and 10 assists for the Hornets. Charlotte shot 57.3 percent from the field and coasted after building a 20-point halftime lead that grew to 23 late in the third quarter. Zach Randolph finished with 24 points and 10 rebounds, and Skal Labissiere had 17 points and 15 rebounds for Sacramento, which has lost three straight home games since beating the Cavaliers last Wednesday. The Kings have lost five of six. —Reuters

## Lithuania 'hyped' to greet Ball teens

VILNIUS: Basketball-crazed Lithuania yesterday welcomed LiAngelo and LaMelo Ball, the two youngest sons of flamboyant Los Angeles entrepreneur LaVar Ball who recently made headlines due to a feud with US President Donald Trump. The teenagers will make their pro career debut in the Vytautas club, ranked last in the Lithuania basketball league and located in the small southern town of Prienai, population 10,000.

The contract has sparked interest on both sides of Atlantic. Basketball is dubbed the second religion after Catholicism in Lithuania, a Baltic EU state of 2.8 million that is ranked number five in the world. "It was shocking news not just in Lithuania's basketball community but also worldwide. At first I thought it was fake news, fake Twitter account or whatever," basketball analyst Donatas Urbonas told AFP.

The club, tied for last place in the 10-team Lithuanian league, called the contract a commercial experiment, and most analysts are cautious about the teens' realistic prospects in the game. The younger brothers of Lonzo, the star rookie point guard for the Los Angeles Lakers, will play more

minutes in the less competitive Baltic League, with their debut likely next Tuesday.

"Most of the journalists are hyped on their arrival, but not actual playing. We all understand that this deal is not about basketball at all," Urbonas told AFP, hours before Ball family is expected to land in the capital Vilnius.

#### TOWN 'GOT BALLS'

A scrolling red LED sign on a restaurant in the host town exclaimed "PRIENAI GOT BALLS!!!!!" ahead of the brothers' arrival. They will shoot hoops in the nearby 1,500-seat gym. "We were told they eat only pizzas and burgers. We have both so we don't need to change much," says Jaunius Malisauskas, the owner of TangoPizza.

Locals are hoping the Ball deal will put their town on the map. "Nobody knows where Prienai is. Maybe now they will," 49-year-old construction worker Rimantas Bisiukas added. Lithuania's Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicus also offered a warm welcome to the teens who will live just across the river in a luxury spa hotel in the resort town of Birtonas. "Looking forward to watch you playing in #Lithuania - the temple of #Basketball - Ball Brothers! Definitely winning destination!" Linkevicus tweeted.

LaVar Ball, the flamboyant father of the teens who calls himself the "Big Baller", became famous by getting into Twitter feud with US President Donald Trump. In November, Trump accused the outspoken



CHINO: Picture taken on September 2, 2017 in Chino, California, shows (L-R) LaMelo Ball, LiAngelo Ball and their father LaVar Ball attending Melo Ball's 16th Birthday. Basketball-crazed Lithuania yesterday, welcomed LiAngelo and LaMelo Ball. —AFP

Ball of being ungrateful for his personal help in getting LiAngelo returned to the United States from China, where he was arrested along with two UCLA teammates for shoplifting designer sunglasses.

"It wasn't the White House, it wasn't the State Department, it wasn't father LaVar's so-called people on the ground in China

that got his son out of a long term prison sentence - IT WAS ME," Trump tweeted.

"Just think LaVar, you could have spent the next 5 to 10 years during Thanksgiving with your son in China, but no NBA contract to support you," Trump continued, before calling the Ball patriarch an "Ungrateful fool!". —AFP

## Capitals rally for 5-4 overtime victory against Hurricanes

RALEIGH: Alex Ovechkin scored the tying and winning goals as the Washington Capitals rallied for a 5-4 overtime victory against the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night in Raleigh, N.C. Ovechkin's 26th goal of the season came unassisted 1:57 into overtime as the Metropolitan Division-leading Capitals snapped Carolina's six-game, home-ice winning streak. Ovechkin tied the game at 4-4 with 7:15 to play in regulation. Alex Chiasson, Devante Smith-Pelly and Dmitry Orlov also scored for the Capitals, who were playing in their only game of the week. Carolina (18-13-8) lost its second game in a row following a season-high, four-game winning streak. Victor Rask collected two goals for the Hurricanes, and Elias Lindholm and Teuvo Teravainen also scored.

#### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3, PREDATORS 0

Marc-Andre Fleury made 29 saves and recorded his 46th career shutout as red-hot Vegas blanked visiting Nashville. It was the eighth straight win for the Western Conference-leading Golden Knights, matching the longest win streak in the NHL this year by the Los Angeles Kings (8-0-0 from Nov. 25-Dec. 9). It also was the 13th consecutive game in which Vegas garnered a point, as the

Golden Knights are 12-0-1 over that stretch. Reilly Smith, Shea Theodore and Jonathan Marchessault scored goals and Alex Tuch had two assists for the Golden Knights, who haven't lost a game in regulation since a 7-4 defeat at Winnipeg on Dec. 1.

#### LIGHTNING 2, MAPLE LEAFS 0

Andrei Vasilevskiy recorded his second consecutive shutout and NHL-leading sixth of the season to lead Tampa Bay to a 2-0 road win over Toronto. Vasilevskiy turned aside 29 shots. Cedric Paquette scored his first goal of the season and Alex Killorn also tallied for the Lightning. Frederik Andersen stopped 34 shots for the Maple Leafs, who lost their third game in a row.

#### PENGUINS 5, FLYERS 1

Pittsburgh exploded for four goals in the second period to defeat the Flyers in Philadelphia. Phil Kessel, Ryan Reaves, Conor Sheary, Tom Kuhnhackl and Jamie Oleksiak each scored, while Riley Sheahan and Evgeni Malkin each added a pair of assists for Pittsburgh. The two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Penguins had dropped seven of their previous 10 games. Jordan Weal scored for the Flyers, who opened their four-game homestand in shaky fashion.

#### SHARKS 4, CANADIENS 1

Timo Meier scored twice and Marc-Edouard Vlasic added a goal and an assist as visiting San Jose defeated Montreal. The Sharks improved to 7-2-2 in their past 11 games. San Jose goalie Aaron Dell finished with 30 saves while winning his sixth consecutive start. Joe Thornton

scored the other San Jose goal and Kevin Labanc added two assists. Andrew Shaw had a power-play goal for the Canadiens.

#### BRUINS 5, ISLANDERS 1

Five players scored a goal apiece for Boston, which remained red hot with a win at New York. Danton Heinen scored in the first, Patrice Bergeron scored the go-ahead goal in the second, and Brad Marchand, Tim Schaller and Noel Acciari added to the lead. Boston has won seven of its past 10 (7-1-2). Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask recorded 25 saves in winning his sixth consecutive start. Jordan Eberle scored for the Islanders, who have lost three straight (0-3-0) and seven of 10 (3-6-1). Goalie Jaroslav Halak made 33 saves.

#### DUCKS 5, CANUCKS 0

Ryan Getzlaf scored a goal and added two assists as visiting Anaheim won for the fifth time in six games, shutting out Vancouver. Rikard Rakell added a goal and an assist, and Josh Manson was credited with three assists. Ducks goalie Ryan Miller turned away all 31 shots that got to him for his second shutout of the season. Canucks goalie Anders Nilsson stopped 15 of 19 shots before getting the hook. Jacob Markstrom saved seven of eight shots in relief.

#### KINGS 5, OILERS 0

Scoring three man-advantage markers in a 2:58 span early in the third period, visiting Los Angeles turned a close game into a rout and blanked Edmonton. The teams played 40 minutes of tight hockey. Only a rare Andy

Andreoff goal, his second of the season, in the second period separated the teams. Then Edmonton's Patrick Maroon delivered a hit to the head of Drew Doughty at 19:55 of the second period, earning a five-minute major and a game misconduct. Los Angeles took full advantage of the ensuing time with the man advantage. Power-play goals by Trevor Lewis, Dustin Brown and Adrian Kempe put the game out of reach, and Brown scored again late in the third period. Jonathan Quick stopped all 32 shots he faced for his third shutout of the season.

#### BLUE JACKETS 2, STARS 1

Oliver Bjorkstrand scored a pair of third-period goals in a less than a two-minute span, and visiting Columbus snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Dallas. After giving up 15 goals over the three-game skid, the Blue Jackets put together a dominant defensive performance against the Stars. Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky finished with 21 saves. After neither team could capitalize on several scoring opportunities, Dallas' Devin Shore finally broke through 44 seconds into the third period off a nifty passing sequence.

#### WILD 5, PANTHERS 1

Matt Cullen and Eric Staal each scored two goals, and Jared Spurgeon had three assists to lead Minnesota past visiting Florida. Devan Dubnyk 25 saves and Charlie Coyle also scored for Minnesota, which won for the third time in four games and snapped Florida's season-high, five-game winning streak. James Reimer stopped 23 of 26 shots and backup Harri Sateri stopped 13 of 14 for Florida. —Reuters

# Tiredness won't be a factor against Hammers: Pochettino

'It's not about revenge' it's an important game for us'

**SWANSEA:** Mauricio Pochettino does not believe fatigue will be an issue for Tottenham when they face West Ham in today's London derby. Pochettino's side will host their rivals at Wembley just 48 hours after their 2-0 victory at Swansea on Tuesday, which lifted the visitors above Arsenal into fifth place in the Premier League. An opening goal from former Swansea striker Fernando Llorente that appeared offside and a late strike from Dele Alli made it six victories in seven matches for Tottenham in all competitions.

But even his players have little time for recovery. Pochettino believes it will be the same for both sides. West Ham also played on Tuesday, beating West Brom 2-1, and Pochettino said: "I am not going to complain. I think we will arrive in the same condition as West Ham."

"It will be difficult for the players. We will need to rest and maybe make some changes to give fresh legs to the team. But it will be an opportunity for the other players in the squad."

"I know how it (the fixture list) has been. It was impossible to play before this time. We need to rest and make good decisions."

Pochettino suggested Harry Kane will be fit to start today. The England striker had been suffering from a heavy cold, but came on in the second half at Swansea and it was his pass that created the opening for Alli's 89th minute goal.

"We will see (about Kane). Our decision tonight was good, because it was difficult to run on that pitch. We hope he will be well and be ready to come back," Pochettino said. Pochettino will also assess the fitness of full-back Danny Rose, who missed the Swansea

match due to a knee injury.

Spurs lost 3-2 to West Ham back in October in the fourth round of the League Cup, after they had held a 2-0 lead. Pochettino was subsequently criticised for fielding a weakened team, but he insisted Thursday's match is not about revenge and he holds no regrets over his team selection.

## REVENGE NOT AN ISSUE

"It's not about revenge. It's an important game for us. In the League Cup, all that starting 11 had played in the Premier League or the Champions League. "That (losing the lead) was the massive mistake. We wanted to win, but we played so badly and conceded goals. But we took the competition very seriously. "Now, we need to win to fight for the top four. If we are 2-0 up at half-time then we need to be clever."

"They have improved a lot under David Moyes and it will be very tough game," Pochettino admitted. Spurs had gained some good fortune when the officials failed to spot Llorente was in an offside position when he scored the 12th minute

opener. "I didn't see the replay, but always in football you need some luck. But overall, I thought we deserved the victory. Maybe they can complain but that is football and it happens," he said. Swansea manager Carlos Carvalhal suffered his first defeat in charge, following a 2-1 victory in his first game at Watford on Saturday. Carvalhal refused to put too much blame on the officials over Llorente's goal and also for referee Bobby

"We will arrive in the same condition as West Ham"



**SWANSEA:** Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (C) watches as his shot gives them a 2-0 lead during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and Tottenham Hotspur at The Liberty Stadium in Swansea. — AFP

Madley's decision not to award a second yellow card to Davinson Sanchez for a foul before the defender was substituted. "Since I arrived in England I have refused to talk about referees," said Carvalhal.

"The official apologised and I understand it was a

mistake, but we all make mistakes. "Pochettino is a clever manager and he took the player (Sanchez) off. He knows why. "But we played against a very strong team and also we played three days ago, while they played six days ago. It made a massive difference." — AFP

## Palmer retires after 15 NFL seasons

**LOS ANGELES:** Arizona Cardinals quarterback Carson Palmer announced his retirement Tuesday after 15 NFL seasons. "Over the years, I've had teammates who decided to hang it up and I would ask them how they knew when it was time to walk away," Palmer, 38, wrote in a letter making the announcement. "The answer was almost always the same: You just know."

"For me that time is now. Why? Quite simply, I just know." Palmer's 2017 season-and ultimately his career-ended when he broke his left arm on Oct. 22 in London in a game against the Los Angeles Rams.

"For 15 years I have been lucky enough to play quarterback in the NFL and it has been the most incredible experience of my life," Palmer wrote. "There wasn't one second that I took it for granted or failed to appreciate what a tremendous privilege it is." Palmer passed for 46,247 yards and 294 touchdowns against 187 interceptions during a career that included stints with the Cincinnati Bengals and Oakland Raiders in addition to playing his final five seasons with Arizona. The yardage and touchdowns both rank 12th in NFL history, and Palmer stands 11th with 3,941 career completions.

Palmer was the No. 1 overall pick by Cincinnati in the 2003 NFL Draft. Arizona receiver Larry Fitzgerald, who is also considering retirement, said he relished being Palmer's teammate. "He's been an unbelievable teammate," Fitzgerald said. "I've seen him grow as a player, picking up this system and having some of the best numbers of his career."

Bruce Arians, who retired as Cardinals' coach on Monday, appreciated Palmer's contributions. "It's been fantastic, some of the best (years) of his career, some of the best of my career," Arians said of Palmer's time in Arizona. "His numbers and the wins. His leadership. It's just a shame he had the knee (injury) and now the arm, or I think he'd have done wondrous things in his time here."

Palmer submitted his retirement letter while on vacation with his family. He detailed that he will miss most by no longer being an NFL player. "I'll especially miss the grind," Palmer wrote. "It's the part I don't think people fully appreciate, maybe because many NFL players make the game look so easy and effortless. The mental and physical preparation it takes to compete — week in and week out, year in and year out—is draining and grueling but has always been my favorite part." Palmer was the 2002 Heisman Trophy winner while at Southern Cal. — Reuters

## Salah favourite to complete awards hat-trick

**ACCRA:** Liverpool star Mohamed Salah hopes to add the African Player of the Year award in Ghana today to his rapidly expanding collection of individual honours. The Egyptian, scorer of 23 goals in all competitions midway through his first season at Anfield, has been voted BBC African Footballer of the Year and Arab Player of the Year.

Salah, Liverpool team-mate Sadio Mane of Senegal and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of Borussia Dortmund and Gabon are the contenders for the highest African individual football honour.

The scoring feats of Salah have installed him as the public and media favourite to succeed Algerian Riyad Mahrez of Leicester City as the number one African footballer. "I want to be the best Egyptian footballer ever," said Salah after receiving the BBC award last month. "When I came to Liverpool I hoped to show everyone my abilities. I scored a lot of goals with Roma and am very happy being successful at Liverpool." Salah also starred for Egypt, scoring five of the goals that qualified his country for the 2018 World Cup in Russia after a 28-year absence from the global showpiece. Mane will also be in Russia next June, adding abundant creativity to a physically formidable Senegal side. Gabon did not qualify and Aubameyang shunned several World Cup call-ups, a fact that could count against him.

Salah and Mane will leave Accra soon after the awards ceremony as Liverpool have a Friday night FA Cup third-round derby date with Everton. However, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp did not hesitate to release his African duo for the Accra ceremony, which will include six other awards. "It is a sign of respect," he told reporters in Liverpool. "We sleep in a hotel and they sleep in a plane. That is the only difference."

## Speed queen Vonn ready for battle in Pyeongchang

**LOS ANGELES:** Lindsey Vonn has vowed not to take the safe option at what are likely to be her last Winter Olympics next month despite being dogged by questions about her health after recent crashes.

The 33-year-old American is the most successful World Cup women's skier of all time with 78 victories while clinching four overall titles, but has only two Olympic medals—a gold in downhill and bronze in super-G, both won in Vancouver in 2010.

In recent competitions, however, Vonn has seen a mix of crashes and wins, making her chances in Pyeongchang difficult to handicap. In early December she crashed twice at Canada's Lake Louise, where she has a long history of success, before racing to a super-G World Cup win at Val d'Isere in France two weeks later. "As long as I'm healthy and I'm confident, then I'll be in a great position when I get to Pyeongchang," she told the Vail Daily in November. "Everyone asks me if I'm afraid, after so many crashes do I take my foot off the gas pedal? And while I am smarter and I try to manage my risk better than I have in the past, it's still ski racing."

"You can try to manage risk as much as you want, but at the end of the day, it's a dangerous sport." Managing risk has been on her mind for the past four years after she missed the 2014 Sochi Olympics due to a right knee injury.



**ANFIELD:** File photo taken on December 6, 2017 shows Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah celebrating after scoring their seventh goal during the UEFA Champions League Group E football match between Liverpool and Spartak Moscow at Anfield. — AFP

Salah is a doubt for the Merseyside showdown, though, having missed the English Premier League victory at Burnley this week owing to a groin strain. Should Salah be named Player of the Year, he will be only the second Egyptian after 1983 winner Mahmoud al Khatib to hoist the symbol of individual brilliance. It would be the first time since 1986 that north Africans have won successive editions of the poll, which this year involved national coaches, journalists, officials and the public. Morocco midfielder Mohamed Timoumi was the 1985 winner, followed by compatriot Badou Zaki, one of two goalkeepers to be

voted the best African footballer.

Footballers from the west of the continent have dominated recently with Samuel Eto'o of Cameroon and Yaya Toure of the Ivory Coast each winning four times. While Salah has made the top three for the first time, prolific Bundesliga scorer Aubameyang finished first once and second twice in the past three award ceremonies. Mane came third last season, but his valuable input for Liverpool has been overshadowed by Salah, second in the Premier League scorers' charts behind Harry Kane of Tottenham Hotspur. — AFP



Lindsey Vonn

It was arguably the most serious of a career that had been relatively injury free during her first decade as a professional as she became a household name for her exploits on the slopes and off them, courtesy of a high-profile relationship with golfer Tiger Woods.

Since the February 2013 crash that contributed to her missing the Sochi Games she has endured a series of setbacks that include multiple broken bones, surgeries and gruelling rehabilitations. "I'm 33, I've been injured quite a

few times, but my passion for the sport has never changed," she said.

"Since I started skiing and started racing when I was eight years old, I've loved what I do, and I don't want to stop doing it. "As long as I'm enjoying it and I don't have to use too much duct tape to hold my body together, I'm good. "I'm focused on winning the World Cups, but just getting to February healthy is the only thing I should be really focused on." — Reuters



### Matches on TV (Local Timings)

#### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Tottenham Hotspur v West Ham United 23:00  
beIN SPORTS HD 2

#### SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Celta de Vigo v Barcelona 21:00  
beIN SPORTS HD 3

Leganes v Villarreal 21:00  
beIN SPORTS HD 4

Numancia v Real Madrid 23:00  
beIN SPORTS HD 3

Espanyol v Levante 23:00  
beIN SPORTS HD 4

Sports

# Guardiola loses Jesus for six weeks, slams festive fixtures

## Players have muscular injuries and need time for recovery

**MANCHESTER:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola will be without Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus for up to six weeks and warned that the intense festive fixture programme in the Premier League was risking players' health.

Jesus picked up a knee injury in Sunday's goalless draw at Crystal Palace and is set for a spell on the sidelines. "Gabriel will be out four to six weeks, maybe a bit longer, hopefully as soon as possible," Guardiola told reporters after Tuesday's 3-1 home win over Watford.

Kevin De Bruyne, who survived a wild challenge at Palace, was able to play but Guardiola has another injury concern with Kyle Walker struggling in the latter stages on Tuesday and set for further tests. While acknowledging the tradition in England of playing through the holiday period, Guardiola was critical of making his team play on Sunday and then Tuesday.

"What everyone saw in the last weeks how many injuries the players have. We are going to kill them. The bosses at the federation have to reflect. It's not normal to play the 31st and two days later," he said. "I know the show must go on, but they have to control it. They don't protect the players, the people come to watch, not the managers or the press conferences but the players."

"In England, you don't protect the players. You can't play every two days. The tradition is the tradition, we have to think about it a little bit. The players are artists and they are the reason we are here. You have to look for the quality not the quantity," he said.

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager said he would be happy to see games over the festive season but more spread out. "I'm not saying change Boxing Day, the great tradition... but it's not basketball or tennis, the players need recovery. Just see how many players have muscular injuries."

Guardiola was able to call on forward David Silva, who had missed recent games for personal reasons but said he could skip other games due to the same issues. "We are very happy he is back with us. We don't know how long he will be with us but you saw again today he essential player with us. He showed how important he is for us," said the Spaniard.

"He is free to stay or to leave. It depends. He wants to stay but family is the most important thing in life. The family is most important, I would never push him," he added. — Reuters



**MANCHESTER:** Manchester City's Argentinian defender Nicolas Otamendi (L) blocks a cross by Watford's Dutch defender Daryl Janmaat during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Watford. —AFP

### English Premier League table

**LONDON:** English Premier League table after Tuesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

|           |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |                |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----------------|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| Man City  | 22 | 20 | 2 | 0  | 64 | 13 | 62 | Huddersfield   | 22 | 6 | 6  | 10 | 18 | 35 | 24 |
| Man Utd   | 22 | 14 | 5 | 3  | 45 | 16 | 47 | Brighton       | 22 | 5 | 8  | 9  | 17 | 27 | 23 |
| Chelsea   | 21 | 14 | 3 | 4  | 39 | 14 | 45 | Newcastle      | 22 | 6 | 4  | 12 | 20 | 30 | 22 |
| Liverpool | 22 | 12 | 8 | 2  | 50 | 25 | 44 | Crystal Palace | 22 | 5 | 7  | 10 | 20 | 33 | 22 |
| Tottenham | 21 | 12 | 4 | 5  | 41 | 20 | 40 | Bournemouth    | 22 | 5 | 6  | 11 | 22 | 34 | 21 |
| Arsenal   | 21 | 11 | 5 | 5  | 38 | 26 | 38 | West Ham       | 21 | 5 | 6  | 10 | 24 | 39 | 21 |
| Burnley   | 22 | 9  | 7 | 6  | 19 | 19 | 34 | Southampton    | 22 | 4 | 8  | 10 | 21 | 32 | 20 |
| Leicester | 22 | 8  | 6 | 8  | 34 | 32 | 30 | Stoke          | 22 | 5 | 5  | 12 | 23 | 47 | 20 |
| Everton   | 22 | 7  | 6 | 9  | 25 | 34 | 27 | West Brom      | 22 | 2 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 30 | 16 |
| Watford   | 22 | 7  | 4 | 11 | 31 | 40 | 25 | Swansea        | 22 | 4 | 4  | 14 | 13 | 34 | 16 |

## Barcelona edge Real Madrid on TV income

**BARCELONA:** La Liga leaders Barcelona received a record 146.2 million euros (\$175.6 million) last season from television rights, figures from La Liga show, earning seven million euros more than champions Real Madrid.

The 20 clubs in Spain's top flight took in 1.247 billion euros, rising from 1.237 billion from the previous year, with Barca earning an extra 6.2 million than the year before. The income is distributed according to results in the last five years, explaining why Barca, champions in 2013, 2015 and 2016, earned more than Real, who won the title last season for the first time since 2012.

Real earned the second biggest amount, 140 million euros, Atletico Madrid picked up the third largest share, 99 million, while Athletic Bilbao took the fourth largest sum, 71 million.

Leganes, who in 2016 were promoted to the top flight for the first time ever, earned the smallest amount of all the teams, pocketing 39.3 million.

Barca are nine points clear of Atletico at the top of La Liga, which resumes on Saturday after taking a two-week winter break. Last season was the second campaign in which La Liga sold its television rights collectively following a change in the Spanish law in 2015. Under the previous system, based on club's negotiating their deals individually, the league earned a total 851 million euros from television rights.

La Liga, which controls the top two divisions in Spanish football, distributes 90 percent of income to the top flight, with 10 percent going to the second tier Segunda Division.

The league is currently negotiating its next television deal, coming into effect from 2019-20, which the organisation's president Javier Tebas says could be worth 2.3 billion. —Reuters

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**12** KSSC appreciates Amir's support for shooting



**13** Lithuania 'hyped' to greet Ball teens



**14** Liverpool star Salah favourite to complete awards hat-trick



Angelique Kerber of Germany hits a return against Eugenie Bouchard of Canada during their seventh session women's singles match on day five of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday.

## Buoyant Kerber fires in Hopman Cup

### Germany on track for first Hopman final in 20 years

**PERTH:** A buoyant Angelique Kerber beat a battling Eugenie Bouchard to lead Germany to a 3-0 win over Canada at the mixed-teams Hopman Cup yesterday. Former world number one Kerber notched her second straight-sets wins in Perth to start the new year, while Bouchard—once ranked fifth but now 83rd—was testy after yet another comprehensive defeat.

Kerber's win gave the Germans a perfect start to the Group A tie. Young gun Alexander Zverev then ensured they remained unbeaten after two outings with an emphatic win over Vasek Pospisil.

In the dead mixed doubles, the Germans completed a clean sweep with a straight-sets win. If the Germans beat Australia tomorrow they will be guaranteed a berth in Saturday's final.

As was the case in her 6-1, 6-4 loss to Australian Daria Gavrilova on Monday, Bouchard barely fired a

shot against Kerber in the first set but resurrected her game in the second. At 3-3 in the second set Bouchard held four break points. But Kerber staved them off, held serve and then strolled through the last two games comfortably to win 6-1, 6-3 in 57 minutes.

The contrasting moods of Kerber and Bouchard told the story, with the former rapidly regaining confidence in her own game after a frustrating 2017 in which she slipped from number one in the rankings to 21st.

With emphatic wins over Belgium's Elise Mertens

and Bouchard, who has troubled Kerber in previous meetings, the German was thrilled with her early-season form before the Australian Open, which provided her maiden Grand Slam in 2016. "I was feeling very good from the first point," she said. "I was trying to be aggressive and play my game."

**“I was trying to be aggressive and play my game”**

"It is not so easy to play against Eugenie but today it was a good match. "It's (her own game) feeling a little bit better than one week ago." But Bouchard could barely contain her frustration, complaining about match scheduling and the off-court

activities in Perth after an error-riddled performance.

The 23-year-old said she was trying not to be consumed by the pressure to climb back up the rankings. "It will take as long as it will take," she said. "For me, I can't worry about it, I'm trying to do my best. "However long it will take is what will happen, and I'll have to deal with that." World number four Zverev cruised past the 108th-ranked Pospisil in a 6-4, 6-2 win. The German called it his reward for putting in extra practice after his disappointing singles loss to Belgium's David Goffin on Monday.

The 20-year-old was delighted to have kept his team on track for the final of a tournament which Germany has won twice, most recently through Boris Becker and Anke Huber in 1995. "We have two wins now in the group, hopefully we can get one more," he said. "It is a team competition and we are in a good spot." — AFP

## Zidane, Real hoping for more glory in 2018

**MADRID:** After enjoying extraordinary success in 2017, with an unprecedented haul of five trophies, Zinedine Zidane begins his third year in charge of Real Madrid with a trip to second-tier Numancia in the Copa del Rey today.

The match will mark the second anniversary of Zidane's appointment as Madrid coach as the successor to the sacked Rafael Benitez. The Frenchman has since gone on to win eight out of a possible 10 trophies from just 116 games in charge, a remarkable tally for someone who had never previously coached at the top level.

"Your appetite comes from eating. We are never tired of winning," Zidane said at a press conference yesterday. "Perhaps it does wear you down a bit. Certainly, when you are at such a high, the only way to go is down a bit before you can then climb back up again." After last season's Champions League and La Liga double triumph, Real have already won three trophies this season. They followed their victories in the European and Spanish Super Cups at the start of the campaign by winning the Club World Cup in December to make it a record five trophies for the year. However, the year ended with a 3-0 home defeat to Barcelona in the clasico, a result that left them fourth in La Liga, 14 points behind their great rivals at the summit, albeit with a game in hand.

The Copa del Rey is the one trophy Real have not won under Zidane, and they will be eager to avoid a slip-up when they go to the bitterly cold northern town of Soria to face Numancia in the first leg of their last-16 tie. It is the start of what

will be a hectic month, as long as Real continue to progress in the Cup, before they host Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 of the Champions League in February. "I will try to finish the season as well as possible because we have a great chance of winning things again," added Zidane, who is without Karim Benzema due to injury. "That is what motivates me and the team. I am not looking beyond the next six months."

Meanwhile, Zidane was guarded on suggestions that the club would make a move for the Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga in this month's transfer window. "We have the possibility of signing players until January 31 so anything could happen."

"I am satisfied with my squad. I have built it myself, so I take responsibility for that." Holders Barcelona also play on Thursday, travelling to Celta Vigo, who eliminated Real last season in the quarter-finals. The return matches will be played next midweek. — AFP



Zinedine Zidane



## Business

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

**18** Gulf Bank features 'WISE' investment at ArabNet**19** GCC equity markets see minimal impact from global rally in 2017**22** EQUATE supports New Kuwait 2035 vision's economic goals

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

# S&P breaches 2,700 mark, Dow jumps

## MoneyGram tumbles after deal with Ant Financial collapses

NEW YORK: The benchmark S&P 500 breached the 2,700-mark for the first time shortly after open yesterday, while the Nasdaq and the Dow hit records on a strong run in technology stocks. Oracle and IBM rose about 3 percent following brokerage upgrades, helping the S&P technology index gain about 1 percent.

US stocks kicked off 2018 on a strong note on Tuesday, with the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq closing at record levels. "The sentiment is very much positive. We had a strong start and we are likely to see a follow through in the near-term," said Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James in St. Petersburg, Florida.

At 9:39 am ET (1439 GMT), the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 30.89 points, or 0.12 percent, at 24,854.9 and the S&P 500 was up 4.61 points, or 0.17 percent, at 2,700.42. The Nasdaq Composite was up 21.37 points, or 0.3 percent, at 7,028.27. However, gains in the technology sector were limited by a 2 percent drop in Intel following a report that its processor chips had a fundamental design flaw. Rival chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices was up about 5 percent. Other chipmakers

Nvidia and Micron were also higher. The Federal Open Market Committee is set to release minutes from its December meeting, when the central bank raised interest rates for the third time in 2017. Investors will parse the minutes, due at 2 pm ET, for hints on rate tightening action in the coming months and the impact of the US tax overhaul on the economy and inflation.

The odds of a March rate hike are at 56.3 percent level, according to the CME Group's Fedwatch tool.

"There's a lot more mystery surrounding the Fed. We see the Fed as being somewhat more hawkish in 2018, but this is the time when the risks of the policy are really starting to increase," Brown said.

In other stock moves, Scana Corp was up more than 23 percent after Dominion Energy said it would buy the utility in an all-stock deal worth \$7.9 billion.

MoneyGram International fell about 10 percent after Alibaba-owned Ant Financial's plan to acquire the US money transfer company in a \$1.2 billion deal collapsed due to national security con-

cerns. Harley-Davidson slipped 3.5 percent after brokerage Longbow Research downgraded the company's stock to "underperform".

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners on the NYSE by 1,587 to 988. On the Nasdaq, 1,402



## Oracle, IBM rise after rating upgrades

issues rose and 1,055 fell. Euro area borrowing costs edged lower yesterday, stabilizing as a sweeping reform of EU financial market rules took effect a day after hawkish comments by ECB rate-

setters drove a bond market sell-off. The yield on Germany's 10-year government bond, the benchmark for the region, was down 3 basis points at 0.437 percent, recovering from two-month highs it held on to for much of the morning session.

The gap with its Italian counterpart tightened to 160 basis points, as Italy's own 10-year borrowing costs dropped 6 bps to 2.03 percent. Most core eurozone bond yields were down 1-4 bps on the day. Analysts said that a significant bond redemption in Germany helped explain the fall in yields. "We've come a long way down in prices and we had a redemption in Germany, so there many have been some cash being put back to work," said Orlando Green, European fixed income strategist at Credit Agricole. Ireland was expected to kick off a very busy supply month for eurozone bonds with the launch of a 10-year syndicated issue later yesterday for between 3-4 billion euros.

European stock and bond volumes were generally light after major new securities regulations came

into force, although traders said there was little in the way of serious disruption. Under the new MIFID II - or Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II - rules, trades in financial assets and instruments must all be logged in a repository, forcing banks, asset managers and traders to report detailed information on trillions of euros of transactions.

Fixed income volumes were lower at 1000 GMT compared to their average at that time over the previous 30 days, according to data provider Trax, a subsidiary of MarketAxess that tracks around 65 percent of all secondary market deals. The new regulatory regime was delayed by a year due to its complexity, and regulators have had to issue eleventh-hour guidance to banks and financial firms to avoid trading freezes as well as calming the nerves of those not yet fully compliant.

Strategists said they expected investors to refrain from making large trades until they had a clearer sense of the impact of the reform. Bond investors were also keeping a close eye on the US Federal Reserve's December meeting minutes and USISM PMI manufacturing data, both due later in the day. — Reuters

## Pakistan allows use of yuan for trade, investment

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will allow the Chinese yuan to be used for imports, exports and financing transactions for bilateral trade and investment activities, in a move economists said yesterday would simplify a massive Chinese investment project. Both public and private sector enterprises may use the yuan for bilateral trade and investment, the central State Bank of Pakistan said in a statement issued Tuesday.

"As per current foreign exchange regulations, Chinese Yuan (CNY) is an approved foreign currency for denominating foreign currency transactions in Pakistan," it said.

"In terms of regulations in Pakistan, CNY is at par with other international currencies such as USD, Euro and JPY," it added. The bank said that in light of a massive Chinese infrastructure project in Pakistan, the move would "yield long-term benefits for both the countries". The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$54 billion project launched in 2013 linking western China to the Indian Ocean via Pakistan, has been



QUETTA: A Pakistani currency dealer counts Chinese currency for his customer at his shop in Quetta yesterday. — AFP

hailed as a "game changer" by Pakistani officials.

They hope the power stations and transmission lines built as part of the project will help ease Pakistan's chronic power crisis. Economic analyst and former government adviser on finance Salman Shah welcomed the State Bank's

move, saying that avoiding dollar transactions in the implementation of CPEC would "simplify matters very considerably".

The Chinese economy is now one of the biggest in the world, he said, justifying the use of the Chinese currency of choice. — AFP

## Qatar merger creates state-owned gas giant

DOHA: Qatar said yesterday that the two state-owned firms running the country's natural gas business had merged in a move aimed at cutting costs and creating a global energy giant.

Qatargas and RasGas, operators of the wealthy emirate's liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry, were merged under the brand name Qatargas. Qatar is the world's largest exporter of LNG and the tie-up comes at a time of political crisis for the Gulf state, which has been blockaded by neighboring countries for the past seven months. "On January 1, we announced the birth of the new Qatargas," the chief executive of national oil company Qatar Petroleum, Saad Al-Kaabi, told a press conference.

Kaabi said the merger will save two billion Qatari riyals (\$545 million) annually. When the plan was first announced in December 2016, Qatar said it wanted to create a truly unique global energy operator in terms of size, service

and reliability. Gas exports have helped make tiny Qatar one of the world's richest countries. Before the tie-up between the two companies, RasGas held no assets but oversaw and managed all LNG operations in the emirate.

Qatargas is the world's largest LNG producer with output of around 77 million tonnes per year. Last year, Qatar announced it would increase production in the North Field, the world's largest gas field which it shares with Iran, to 100 million tons by 2024.

Both of the merged companies had joint ventures with oil companies including ExxonMobil, Total and Shell. Senior executives from those companies were at Wednesday's press conference. Kaabi also confirmed that Qatar Petroleum is interested in investing in Iraq's energy market. He said he had held talks with Iraqi ministers about possible commercial tie-ups. "Iraq is a very important country in the region," he said. — AFP

## Business

# Gulf Bank features 'WISE' investment at ArabNet

## Tareq Al-Saleh presents Kuwait's first digital advisory and portfolio management service

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank successfully concluded its participation at the 2017 ArabNet Digital Commerce Forum in Riyadh which took place at the end of December 2017.

Considered the largest digital gathering in the kingdom, the conference saw Tareq Al-Saleh, Assistant General Manager for Investments at Gulf Bank, discuss the Bank's latest offering, WISE Investment Service at the 'Banking Innovation - Transforming Channels and the Branch' panel. WISE Investment is Kuwait's first digital and advisory portfolio management service to offer clients the opportunity to diversify their investments through international markets in an easy, transparent, and cost-efficient manner.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's participation, Al-Saleh, said: "The ArabNet panel provided an opportunity to explore innovation strategies that MENA banks are pursuing to strengthen online and offline experiences for their customers. WISE Investment by Gulf Bank is one such tool, it offers multiple, tailor-made portfolios based on each client's investment objectives, length of investment and risk preferences."

Discussing the rationale behind WISE, Al-Saleh

said: "Today's customers are all heavy users of digital and mobile banking. With the GCC fast becoming a core element in a hyper-connected world where customers are fast embracing new technologies, it's important that banks step up and provide seamless and optimized omni channel services. We listened to our customers about what they wanted and we developed a world-class investment experience based on that feedback. We've taken that principle and combined it with the latest technology to offer this one-of-a-kind investment platform."

WISE is based on the principle that the best risk adjusted returns are created by investing in a globally diversified portfolio with a long-term view. Al-Saleh also noted: "The extra value in our product is that we work with our clients, face-to-face and guide them through the process and are with them every step of the way. Gulf Bank's exceptional relationship managers bring the human touch to the digital service."

The conference featured over 30+ leading global and regional companies, allowing guests to share insights on the latest trends, applications,



and technologies and offered entrepreneurs opportunities to connect with the digital world.

ArabNet is a leading events, media and research company focused on digital business and entrepreneurship in MENA. ArabNet organizes major annual conferences in Beirut, Riyadh, Dubai, and Kuwait; publishes news and analysis of the digital sector on its online news portal and print 'ArabNet Quarterly' magazine; and creates original research reports about the region's digital industry.



### Largest digital gathering in Saudi Arabia

## Spain's unemployment shrinks in 2017

MADRID: Spain's jobless queue shrank by 7.8 percent last year, the labor ministry said yesterday, as unemployment continues to recede from the record highs seen in 2013 during the economic crisis.

The ministry said 3.4 million people were registered as out of work last year, some 290,000 fewer than in 2016. But one of Spain's most influential unions, UGT, retorted that the labor market was still suffering the effects of the crisis and austerity measures implemented by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's government.

"Jobs are increasingly temporary and in December just four out of every 100 contract signed were long-term and full-time," it said in a statement. According to the labor ministry, some 19.6 million temporary contracts were signed last year, up 7.1 percent from 2016, while just 1.9 million long-term contracts were handed out, a 12.6 percent rise.

Rajoy's conservative government has come under fire for the unstable and temporary nature of many new contracts, even as the jobless rate has come down sharply from the 26 percent reached in 2013 at the height of the crisis.

In the third quarter of 2017, it had dropped to 16.4 percent, but was still the second-highest level in the European Union after Greece.

"We are recovering more than 70 percent of jobs lost during the biggest crisis Spain experienced in decades," Rajoy said in televised comments. He added however that economic uncertainty persisted over the secession crisis in Catalonia. The official jobless rate—which measures the number of people out of work as a proportion of the working population—will be published later this month by Spain's statistics agency. —AFP

## Eurozone yields hold near highs after hawkish ECB comments

LONDON: Euro area borrowing costs held near record highs yesterday, after hawkish comments by ECB rate-setters and as a sweeping reform of EU financial market rules took effect.

The European Central Bank may end its bond buying program this year if the euro zone economy continues to grow strongly, rate-setter Ewald Nowotny

## Turkey inflation still stubbornly high in December

ANKARA: Inflation in Turkey eased slightly in December after reaching the highest rate in 14 years the month earlier, but remained stubbornly high at almost 12 percent, in a continued headache for policymakers, according to statistics released yesterday.

Consumer prices rose by 11.92 percent year-on-year in December, the Turkish statistical institute said, down slightly from 12.98 percent in November, which was the highest annual rate recorded since 2003. On a month-on-month basis, inflation stood at 0.69 percent in December from November, with the biggest price hikes seen in transportation, while clothing prices declined.

The Turkish central bank's official inflation target is an annual rate of five percent, but double-digit data over the last months have made a mockery of this.

Nevertheless, the bank has been unwilling to

told a German newspaper in an interview released late on Tuesday, echoing comments by ECB board member Benoît Coeure at the weekend.

Yields on 10-year German government bonds traded near two months highs yesterday at 0.456 percent. Most other core euro zone yields were flat to a touch lower, having risen sharply on Tuesday. Ireland is expected to kick off a very busy supply month for euro zone bonds with the launch of a 10-year syndicated issue later. "The upcoming supply and the comments from ECB policymakers being on the hawkish side acted as a double whammy for rates yesterday overnight," said ING senior rates strategist Martin Van Vliet.

Unprecedented transparency obligations known as MiFID II - or Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II - went into force on Wednesday, impacting European markets across the board.

make any substantial rate hikes to combat inflation, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is wary that raising borrowing costs could put the brakes on growth.

Economists at QNB Finansbank in Istanbul said the December reading of 11.92 percent was the highest year-end figure since 2003. They forecast that double-digit core inflation would persist throughout the first half of 2018 and could take longer to fall if the lira stayed weak.

"We think inflation will continue to ease over the coming months," added William Jackson, economist at Capital Economics in London, arguing the latest reading would take some pressure off the central bank for further tightening.

"Even so, headline inflation is likely to remain in double digits until late this year," Jackson said in a note to clients. Erdogan has built his popularity on solid stewardship of the economy in the wake of Turkey's devastating 2000-2001 financial crisis. Any signs of economic weakness would be a bad omen for the Turkish strongman as he prepares for 2019 elections.

Turkey notched up impressive growth of 11.1 percent in the third quarter, but economists warn this masks growing risk factors, such as inflation and a high current account deficit. —AFP

Under the new rules, trades in financial assets and instruments must all be logged in a repository, forcing banks, asset managers and traders to report detailed information on trillions of euros of transactions. With bond markets also on US Federal Reserve December meeting minutes due later in the day, the initial impact of the new regulatory regime was limited.

"There was little sign of an impact on trading volumes this morning," said ING's Van Vliet.

The new rules were delayed by a year due to their complexity, and regulators have had to issue eleventh-hour guidance to banks and financial firms to avoid trading freezes as well as calming nerves of those not yet fully compliant. The strong momentum in the euro-zone economy was reinforced by data that showed Germany's jobless total fell more than expected in December. —Reuters

## ECB governor calls for tax, regulation on bitcoin

BERLIN: A top European Central Bank official yesterday called for governments to regulate and tax bitcoin, labelling the cryptocurrency an object of speculation and a tool for money laundering.

"One ought to apply what the basic rule is in any other financial transaction: everyone involved should reveal their identity," ECB governing council member Ewald Nowotny told the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung. "We need a value-added tax on bitcoin, since it's not a currency," said Nowotny, who is head of Austria's central bank.

Nowotny's comments echo those by other ECB officials, who regard the bitcoin's spectacular surge in value as a bubble, rather than a sign it could be a digital competitor to the euro single currency used by its 19 member nations.

Nevertheless, the "digital gold" is a concern for central bankers as it can allow money launderers to dodge around increasingly strict rules in the traditional financial system. —AFP

### EXCHANGE RATES

#### Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

##### ASIAN COUNTRIES

|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Japanese Yen      | 2.683   |
| Indian Rupees     | 4.726   |
| Pakistani Rupees  | 2.737   |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 1.968   |
| Nepali Rupees     | 2.970   |
| Singapore Dollar  | 227.860 |
| Hongkong Dollar   | 38.683  |
| Bangladesh Taka   | 3.638   |
| Philippine Peso   | 6.056   |
| Thai Baht         | 9.323   |

##### GCC COUNTRIES

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Saudi Riyal    | 80.654  |
| Qatari Riyal   | 83.070  |
| Omani Riyal    | 785.473 |
| Bahraini Dinar | 803.110 |
| UAE Dirham     | 82.366  |

##### ARAB COUNTRIES

|                           |         |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Egyptian Pound - Cash     | 20.000  |
| Egyptian Pound - Transfer | 16.992  |
| Yemen Riyal/for 1000      | 1.214   |
| Tunisian Dinar            | 123.700 |
| Jordanian Dinar           | 426.420 |
| Lebanese Lira/for 1000    | 2.015   |
| Syrian Lira               | 0.000   |
| Morocco Dirham            | 32.500  |

##### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| US Dollar Transfer | 302.250 |
|--------------------|---------|

|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Euro              | 365.120 |
| Sterling Pound    | 410.610 |
| Canadian dollar   | 242.280 |
| Turkish lira      | 80.710  |
| Swiss Franc       | 312.400 |
| Australian Dollar | 238.630 |
| US Dollar Buying  | 301.500 |

##### GOLD

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 20 Gram | 249.070 |
| 10 Gram | 127.450 |
| 5 Gram  | 64.570  |

#### Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

| Rate for Transfer | Selling Rate |
|-------------------|--------------|
| US Dollar         | 301.900      |
| Canadian Dollar   | 241.565      |
| Sterling Pound    | 409.475      |
| Euro              | 364.345      |
| Swiss Frank       | 295.590      |
| Bahrain Dinar     | 801.265      |
| UAE Dirhams       | 82.585       |
| Qatari Riyals     | 83.410       |
| Saudi Riyals      | 81.365       |
| Jordanian Dinar   | 427.090      |
| Egyptian Pound    | 17.059       |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 1.969        |
| Indian Rupees     | 4.742        |
| Pakistani Rupees  | 2.734        |
| Bangladesh Taka   | 3.662        |
| Philippines Peso  | 6.078        |
| Cyprus pound      | 17.965       |

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Japanese Yen          | 3.675  |
| Syrian Pound          | 1.585  |
| Nepalese Rupees       | 2.967  |
| Malaysian Ringgit     | 75.265 |
| Chinese Yuan Renminbi | 46.885 |
| Thai Bhat             | 10.280 |
| Turkish Lira          | 80.265 |

#### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

| CURRENCY           | BUY      | SELL     |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| British Pound      | 0.405009 | 0.412509 |
| Czech Korune       | 0.006254 | 0.015554 |
| Danish Krone       | 0.044819 | 0.049819 |
| Euro               | 0.358458 | 0.365958 |
| Georgian Lari      | 0.134554 | 0.134554 |
| Hungarian 0.001085 | 0.001275 |          |
| Norwegian Krone    | 0.033088 | 0.038288 |
| Romanian Leu       | 0.061814 | 0.078664 |
| Russian ruble      | 0.005238 | 0.005238 |
| Slovakia           | 0.008993 | 0.018993 |
| Swedish Krona      | 0.032891 | 0.037891 |
| Swiss Franc        | 0.304210 | 0.315210 |

| Australia          | BUY      | SELL     |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Australian Dollar  | 0.227755 | 0.239755 |
| New Zealand Dollar | 0.207873 | 0.217373 |

| America         | BUY      | SELL     |
|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Canadian Dollar | 0.235937 | 0.244937 |
| US Dollars      | 0.298000 | 0.302420 |
| US Dollars Mint | 0.298500 | 0.302420 |

| Asia              | BUY      | SELL     |
|-------------------|----------|----------|
| Bangladesh Taka   | 0.003290 | 0.003874 |
| Chinese Yuan      | 0.044869 | 0.048369 |
| Hong Kong Dollar  | 0.036555 | 0.039305 |
| Indian Rupee      | 0.004120 | 0.004761 |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 0.000018 | 0.000024 |
| Japanese Yen      | 0.002604 | 0.002784 |
| Korean Won        | 0.000273 | 0.000288 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 0.071162 | 0.077162 |
| Nepalese Rupee    | 0.003014 | 0.003184 |
| Pakistan Rupee    | 0.002573 | 0.002863 |
| Philippine Peso   | 0.005918 | 0.006218 |
| Singapore Dollar  | 0.221761 | 0.231761 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee  | 0.001733 | 0.002313 |
| Taiwan            | 0.010089 | 0.010269 |
| Thai Baht         | 0.008943 | 0.009493 |

##### Arab

|                  |           |          |
|------------------|-----------|----------|
| Bahraini Dinar   | 0.794546  | 0.803046 |
| Egyptian Pound   | 0.014695  | 0.020413 |
| Iranian Riyal    | 0.000084  | 0.000085 |
| Iraqi Dinar      | 0.000185  | 0.000245 |
| Jordanian Dinar  | 0.421481  | 0.430481 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar    | 1.000000  | 1.000000 |
| Lebanese Pound   | 0.000150  | 0.000250 |
| Moroccan Dirhams | 0.022057  | 0.046057 |
| Omani Riyal      | 0.0778357 | 0.784037 |
| Qatar Riyal      | 0.078689  | 0.083629 |
| Saudi Riyal      | 0.079473  | 0.080773 |
| Syrian Pound     | 0.001280  | 0.001500 |
| Tunisian Dinar   | 0.118778  | 0.126778 |
| Turkish Lira     | 0.074950  | 0.085250 |
| UAE Dirhams      | 0.080825  | 0.082525 |
| Yemeni Riyal     | 0.000982  | 0.001062 |

Business

KAMCO GCC Equity Markets: 2017

# GCC equity markets see minimal impact from global rally in 2017

## Key markets close year on a positive note

**KUWAIT:** Emerging markets equities were the clear outperformers in 2017 as compared to advanced markets and other asset classes and recorded a gain of 34.3 percent during the year. However, this rally had minimal impact on GCC equity markets that closed the year with a mildly positive gain of 0.7 percent for the MSCI GCC Index as regional geopolitical concerns affected international flow of funds as well as domestic investments by local investors in the region. Also, performance of individual markets within the GCC was mixed as some markets gained ground while others declined.

Saudi Arabia, with almost 50 percent of the total GCC market cap, witnessed flat performance after last quarter recovery pushed yearly performance to +0.2 percent from a yearly low of -6 percent. On the other hand, UAE was one of the worst performing emerging markets during the year as a weak real estate market affected investor sentiments. Kuwait recorded the best yearly performance during 2017 with a return of 11.5 percent for the Kuwait Price Index, while liquidity in Kuwait doubled to \$19 billion.

Key markets globally closed the year in the positive zone continuing the trend seen in 2016, although the gains were much larger as compared to the previous year. The MSCI World index recorded a gain of 20.1 percent during the year aided by the emerging market performance. US market witnessed robust performance during the year and closed with a gain of 19.4 percent for the S&P 500 Index after touching the highest recorded level during mid-December.

The overall impact of oil on the direction of the GCC markets was relatively modest as compared to previous years. Oil closed above the \$60/b mark, the highest yearly close over the past four years, as supply disruptions from some of the producers is expected to push the oil markets towards a faster rebalancing in 2018 as compared to previous expectations.

The surge in global capital markets gained further momentum in 2017, led by both emerging as well as advanced markets.

Emerging Markets Index recorded the best yearly performance with a gain of 34.3 percent after posting high single digit gains during the previous year. Moreover, despite the modest performance recorded by GCC markets, the MSCI MENA index surged 21 percent during the year primarily on the back of gains recorded by Egypt (+21.7 percent), Tunis (+14.4 percent), Bahrain (+9.1 percent) and Kuwait (+5.6 percent), while the decline recorded by Qatar and UAE partially offset these gains. One of the biggest noticeable positive factor during the

GCC equity markets also made it highly reactive to regional issues and the current macroeconomic situation, resulting in frequent sell-offs. Nevertheless, a number of positive developments provided support from time to time thereby pulling some markets in the green. The year started on a positive note with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reaching multi-month highs continuing the momentum seen during late 2016. However, although Kuwait managed to maintain the momentum, Saudi Arabian indices declined to as low as 6 percent during the year on the back of oil price decline and regional issues. The positive sentiments surrounding FTSE qualification of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also pushed markets high-



### Kuwait records best yearly performance

er. Although, Saudi Arabia could not make it to the FTSE Secondary Emerging Market Index as the decision was postponed until March-2018, the gains prior to the actual decision was priced in the benchmark. The decision to include Kuwait in the aforementioned index provided a big boost to the local market and also supported market activity.

Qatar and UAE were the most noticeable decliners in the GCC resulting in these markets being among the worst performers in the global emerging markets. The diplomatic rift with Qatar affected performance of Qatari stocks resulting in the benchmark reaching a lowest point 7,714.3 points or a YTD-17 decline of 26.1 percent. However, the market witnessed a strong pull back during December-17 rising by 10.5 percent with all the listed stocks recording gains during the month. Moreover, the recently released economic data by Qatar points towards an easing of economic difficulties, while GDP growing sharply in Q3-17. On the other hand, the performance of UAE was marred by the Consumer Staples sector in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which witnessed the steepest decline as compared to other sectors led by slide in shares of Marka, DXB Entertainment and Aghia, among the prominent names. The Real Estate sector remained weak due to market sentiment while

performance of companies in this sector was underpinned by improving fundamentals in the oil market resulting in higher net profits.

The Industrials index also surged during the year by 24.3 percent backed by positive performance of large-cap stocks in the sector that include Agility which gained 42.3 percent followed by ALAFCO, Human Soft and Kuwait Cement recording gains of 56.3 percent, 38.5 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively.

The Bank index was the third best performing index in Kuwait with a gain of 12 percent buoyed by double digit gains recorded by bigger banks NBK (+17.6 percent), KFH (+17.3 percent) and Boubayan Bank (+15.9 percent) while the 8.1 percent and 3.3 percent decline in shares of AUB and ABK dragged down performance.

In terms of trading activity, the year witnessed strong indicators since the start of the year. Value traded during the year doubled to KD 5.7 billion (\$19 billion), while volume of shares traded during the year increased by 66 percent to 50.2 billion shares as compared to 30.3 billion shares

in 2016. Zain topped the monthly value chart with a total of 1.22 billion shares traded during the year worth KD 586.9 million. KFH and NBK followed with KD 533.9 million and KD 403.5 million worth of shares traded during the year. Prominent gainers during the year included Alimtiq Investment with a total return of 63.8 percent followed by ALAFCO and Quraib Petrochemical with gains for 56.2 percent and 47.8 percent, respectively. On the decliners side, Kuwait Food Company (Americana) was among the prominent decliners that recorded a decline of 46.5 percent for 2017.

#### Tadawul (Saudi Arabia bourse)

The performance of Saudi Arabian market remained volatile during the year given its size as the benchmark traded within a band of +3.9 percent and -6.0 percent and closed the year with an almost flat yearly performance of +0.2 percent. TASI's YTD-17 performance remained in the red for most part of the year and improved only towards the end of the year following gradual reversal of the benchmark's performance. Rising oil prices towards the end of the year played a crucial role in the reversal as Saudi Arabia made genuine efforts to reduce supply in the oil market by taking a higher share of the agreed upon production cuts that has now been extended till the end of 2018.

#### Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

After ending 2016 in the green, the ADX index declined in 2017 by 3.3 percent y-o-y. The index ended the year at 4398.4 points as sectoral performance was more skewed towards decliners in 2017. The best performing sectoral index was the Energy index, which rose by over 32 percent for the year, driven by gains in oil prices. The Insurance index and Industrials index followed with yearly gains of 13.6 percent and 1.2 percent respectively. Consumer Staples names were the worst performing, a trend that was visible in ADX's other UAE counterpart - DFM as well, as the sector declined by 26 percent y-o-y in 2017.

#### Dubai Financial Market

After closing 2016 as the best performing index, DFM reversed trends and ended 2017 in the red. The DFM Index did remain volatile through the year, and closed the year down by 4.6 percent y-o-y. The index closed at 3,370.1 points, and also witnessed declining trends in yearly trading activity, as both volumes and value traded were down for 2017. The volatility in the index was evident in monthly performance throughout 2017 as well, as monthly advances and declines were evenly distributed. Nevertheless, the index was pushed into the red due to the 7.3 percent drop that occurred from Nov-17 until year-end 2017. Sectoral performance was mixed between gainers and decliners.

#### Qatar Exchange

Qatar Exchange was the worst performing index in 2017, as regional diplomatic rifts weighed on performance of equity indices. The QE 20 index plunged by 18.3 percent in 2017 and reached 8523.38 points, while the broader All Share Index fell by 14.5 percent for the year. Sectoral performance in 2017 was negative as well, as all indices declined with the Transportation index witnessing the largest drop y-o-y, as the sector declined by 30.6 percent y-o-y. The Insurance and Industrials indices followed with declines of 21.5 percent and 20.8 percent respectively.

#### Bahrain Bourse

After remaining range bound in 2016, the Bahrain All Share Index was amongst the best performing indices in the GCC in 2017. The index was up 9.1 percent in 2017 and closed at 1331.7 points and was aided by a 3.7 percent gain in the month of Dec-17. The market capitalization as of Dec 17 end was BHD 7.7 billion, moderately up from the previous year, in line with index performance. In terms of sectoral performance in 2017, the Industrials index was able to close the year strong in the green, gaining by 88 percent driven mainly by Aluminum Bahrain, as the stock almost doubled.

#### Muscat Securities Market

The MSM 30 Index recorded the second-biggest decline in the GCC during 2017 after all the sectoral indices ended the year in red zone. The index plunged 11.8 percent during the year to reach 5,099.28 points. The Services Index witnessed the steepest decline amongst the three indices at 13.6 percent followed by Industrial Index and the Financial Index with declines of 7.7 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively. Gains during the year were minimal as seen from the peak YTD-17 performance of 1.5 percent, while declines were much deeper at 15.5 percent during mid-August-17 when the benchmark reached a 19-month low level of 4,889.3 points.

## Najma Account draw



**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait will hold the "Najma" Account draw, with the grand prize of KD 250,000. "Transfer Your Salary Campaign" draw, and the

quarterly prizes of "Mercedes GLE Coupe" (tomorrow (January 5) at 7 pm at the Avenues. All CBK customers are invited to attend the event.

## OPEC's focus on stocks risks prices overshooting

**LONDON:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is sticking doggedly to its plan to cut commercial oil inventories down to the five-year average to rebalance the oil market. But in doing so, the organization risks tightening the market too much, sending prices sharply higher and encouraging a faster-than-expected acceleration in production from US shale producers.

Saudi Arabia's oil minister, who is the organization's de facto leader, has reiterated that stocks are still around 150 million barrels too high and it would be premature to discuss an exit strategy or change of course. "Almost the single metric we look at is global inventories and of course the most transparent and trustworthy is the OECD," he said in an interview before Christmas. OPEC, the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the US Energy

Information Administration (EIA) all have slightly different figures for OECD commercial crude and products stocks, but they show a similar trend. OPEC estimates that total stocks were around 137 million barrels higher than the five-year average in October, down by around half since May. IEA puts commercial stocks about 111 million barrels above the prior five-year average at the end of October. EIA data shows commercial stocks 167 million barrels above the five-year seasonal average at the end of October, down from a surplus of 380 million barrels in July 2016.

While the specific numbers differ, mostly for definitional and methodological reasons, the data from each of the agencies shows the stock overhang compared with the five-year average has narrowed significantly. Most of the remaining overhang is concentrated in crude oil rather than refined products such as gasoline and heating oil. Product inventories are already tight in some cases, notably for middle distillates such as gasoil, diesel fuel and heating oil. OPEC seems determined to drive total stocks down to the five-year average, or very close to it, before starting to increase its own output. But that would almost certainly leave stockpiles uncomfortably low, send benchmark Brent prices well above \$70 per barrel and push the market into a big backwardation. — Reuters



year was the 20.1 percent gains recorded by developed market index, highlighting record levels achieved by US and Japan equity indices and more importantly the turnaround of European equities market with gain of almost 9 percent as against flat performance during the previous year. A number of policy changes announced by the new US government also provided support to market growth. One of key factors that underpinned growth in advanced markets was the improvement in global growth that pushed corporate profits higher coupled with a positive economic outlook that boosted investment activity. Moreover, inflation remained under control that helped drafting of accommodative monetary policies that expanded an expansionary outlook. According to Reuters, large and mid-size constituents from the MSCI World index added more than \$8 trillion in market capitalization during 2017. Commodities also had a rally towards the end of the year with Copper futures closing the year with a gain of 30 percent while other base metals recorded similar impressive gains by the end of the year. The run up in oil prices gained momentum in December-17 after a brief cooling period when it emerged that supply from two producers were hit thereby pushing oil prices above the \$ 60/b mark and sustaining at these levels for an extended period of time despite shale risks.

For 2018, KAMCO Research believes that global economic growth rate would moderate with almost three more rate hikes expected in 2018 making it costly for corporates to raise additional capital. In addition, the narrowing of yield spreads and cautious stance from investors highlight that good news may have already been factored in the current run up in markets.

After recording gains across the board in 2016, GCC equity markets witnessed mixed performance during 2017. Geopolitical issues hampered the performance of almost all the GCC markets to varying degrees, specifically resulting in a decline of 18.3 percent for the Qatari benchmark while limiting surge in other markets. In addition, the positive effects of rising oil prices was minimal despite oil being the largest contributor to economic growth in the region. The dominance of local retail investors in

the Telecom Sector remained the second biggest decliner in the UAE. The Banking sector remained resilient in Dubai with marginal gains but declined slightly in Abu Dhabi.

Trading activity in the GCC declined by a fifth to \$303.4 billion as compared to \$388 billion during 2016. The decline came primarily on the back of a 28 percent fall in value traded in Saudi Arabia while UAE recorded a decline of 14 percent. Kuwait was the only noticeable market which witnessed a doubling of trading activity in 2017 to reach \$19 billion.

Kuwait recorded the best yearly performance in the GCC and maintained this position consistently since the start of the year supported by strong buying interest in large-cap stocks. In terms of benchmark performance, the Kuwait Price index recorded a gain of 11.5 percent while Kuwait Weighted and the large-cap Kuwait 15 Index recorded gains of 5.6 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively. The gains during the year were initially led by a long pending rally that started towards the end of last year with the momentum continuing at the start of 2017. This rally was further supported by the enthusiasm surrounding FTSE inclusion that pushed indices to as high as 17.1 percent in September-17, although this was followed by a significant selloff in the market the saw the index reaching the lowest point during the year and was at the brink of falling in the negative zone in terms of YTD performance. Moreover, strong economic fundamentals for the Kuwaiti economy with the lowest break-even oil price in the GCC also provided underlying support to the market during the year.

According to the average of GDP growth rate expectations by IMF and World Bank, Kuwait's economy is expected to have bottomed in 2017 and is expected to see a strong growth of 3.0 percent in 2018. Regulatory changes announced by the CMA in 2017 also supported liquidity in the market as changes were made to qualify for FTSE upgrade and bringing the exchange more in line with norms in globally advanced exchanges.

In terms of sector performance, the Basic Materials index recorded the highest yearly return of 33.8 percent on the back of gain in shares of three out of four stocks in the sector. The positive

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Business

# Stocks smash new records as party rolls on

LONDON: World stocks hit fresh highs yesterday with European markets joining the party as early indications suggest 2018 will be another year of synchronized global growth led by a robust European economy.

After its biggest one-day gain in more than two weeks on Tuesday, and in the wake of its best year since 2009 in 2017, MSCI's index of global stocks, which tracks shares in 47 countries, pushed on to new record highs. The pan-European stock index was 0.2 percent higher following gains for their Asian and US counterparts overnight as manufacturing surveys pointed to a strong start for the European economy.

The single currency was holding near a four-month high of \$1.2081 hit on Tuesday. "Investors have woken up in the new year and looked forward to another firm year for global growth with very muted downside risk," said Investec economist Philip Shaw. But he warned against reading too much into the first two trading days of the new year.

"The converse is the sell-off in bond markets: the idea that inflation pressures may be firmer than expected and

central banks could take a slightly more aggressive approach than previously thought," Shaw added. ECB rate-setter Ewald Nowotny told a German newspaper that the European Central Bank may end its stimulus program this year if the euro zone economy continues to grow strongly.

Earlier in the session, Asian stocks struck a range of new peaks: a record high for Philippine stocks, a 24-year top for Thailand and a decade-high for Hong Kong. MSCI's index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.4 percent, having jumped 1.4 percent on Tuesday in its best performance since last March.

This came after Wall Street started the new year as it ended the old, scoring another set of record closing peaks. The Dow rose 0.42 percent, while the S&P 500 gained 0.83 percent and the Nasdaq 1.5 percent. The gains in riskier assets came as industry surveys from India to Germany to Canada showed quickening activity.

"The breadth of the recovery is extraordinary," said Deutsche Bank macro strategist Alan Ruskin, noting that of 31 countries covered, only three failed to show

growth while all the largest manufacturing sectors improved.

Elsewhere, spot gold reached its highest since mid-September at \$1,321.33, before edging back to \$1,317.32 per ounce. Oil prices surged again, inching towards 2-1/2 year highs hit on Tuesday as strong demand and ongoing efforts led by OPEC and Russia to curb production tightened the market. Brent crude futures was up 0.6 percent at \$67 a barrel, while US crude futures shot up 0.8 percent to \$60.87 a barrel.

Retailers stole the spotlight among UK stocks yesterday after Next delivered a strong Christmas update, as the FTSE 100 edged down from record highs. Britain's main stock index dipped 0.1 percent, weighed down by financials stocks and consumer staples.

Next shone, however, jumping 8 percent to the top of the index after its trading update surprised investors, with a sales beat driving the company to upgrade its full-year profit forecast. Cheery results from the first UK retailer to report on the crucial Christmas season caused a rally in retail stocks across the market, deliver-

ing relief to investors in a sector faced with significant challenges.

Next's update was in stark contrast to the start of 2017 when the retailer issued a profit warning and its shares sank. Yesterday gain brought it back to November levels before a third-quarter sales miss. "The Next share price rollercoaster continues," said Mike van Dulken, head of research at Accendo Markets.

"Management's update-by-update tinkering of guidance and sharp share price reactions only goes to reinforce how shareholders remain at the mercy of the UK consumer from one season to the next and exposed to short-termism."

The main non-food retailers drove the market, with Marks & Spencer up 2 percent while Primark owner ABF gained 2.6 percent. Mid and small-caps also jumped on the retail rally and the more domestically-focused indexes rose 0.2 percent each.

Fashion retailer N Brown rose 7 percent to the top of the FTSE 250, and shares in small-cap department store Debenhams rose 3.8 percent. — Reuters

| Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report |         |          |                   |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
|------------------------------------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|--------|---------------|--|
| Wednesday 03 January 2018          |         |          |                   |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| Index                              | Change  | Closing  | Last Closing      |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| Price Index                        | ▲ 88.56 | 6,401.08 | 6,312.52          |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| Weighted Index                     | ▲ 6.54  | 406.97   | 400.43            |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| KSX 15                             | ▲ 19.40 | 932.08   | 912.50            |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| Trades                             |         |          |                   |                  |              |                |        |               |  |
| Security                           | High    | Low      | Volume            | Value (KD)       | Trades       | Last           | Change |               |  |
| IFPG                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 383            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| NAPESCO                            | 813     | 813      | 100               | 81               | 1            | 813            | ▲      | 14.0          |  |
| ENERGYH                            | 30.0    | 28.5     | 1,690             | 48               | 3            | 28.3           | ▲      | 0.1           |  |
| GPI                                | 30.7    | 29.1     | 4,737,808         | 143,104          | 98           | 30.7           | ▲      | 1.6           |  |
| ABAR                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 84             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| <b>Oil &amp; Gas</b>               |         |          | <b>4,739,568</b>  | <b>143,233</b>   | <b>102</b>   | <b>969.11</b>  | ▲      | <b>10.50</b>  |  |
| KFOUC                              | 235     | 235      | 40,000            | 9,400            | 6            | 235            | ▼      | -5.0          |  |
| BPCC                               | 695     | 699      | 703,824           | 480,059          | 28           | 690            | ▲      | 20.0          |  |
| ALKOUT                             | 630     | 620      | 11,000            | 6,832            | 3            | 630            | ▲      | 3.0           |  |
| ALQURAIN                           | 326     | 321      | 116,730           | 37,780           | 18           | 321            | ▼      | -3.0          |  |
| <b>Basic Materials</b>             |         |          | <b>871,554</b>    | <b>534,671</b>   | <b>95</b>    | <b>124.37</b>  | ▲      | <b>14.60</b>  |  |
| KCEM                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 470            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| CABLE                              | 425     | 420      | 40,820            | 17,291           | 7            | 425            | ▲      | 5.0           |  |
| SHIP                               | 208     | 208      | 130               | 27               | 1            | 208            | ▲      | 2.0           |  |
| PCEM                               | 951     | 951      | 5,000             | 4,755            | 1            | 951            | ▲      | 26.0          |  |
| PAPER                              | 264     | 221      | 2                 | 0                | 2            | 264            | ▼      | -3.0          |  |
| MRC                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 76             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| ACICO                              | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 263            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| HCC                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 156            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| NOCB                               | 209     | 195      | 319               | 64               | 2            | 209            | ▲      | 2.0           |  |
| EQUIPMENT                          | 34.4    | 32.1     | 296,178           | 9,885            | 33           | 34.3           | ▲      | 0.5           |  |
| NOCI                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 90             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| GYPSUM                             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 95             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| SALBOOH                            | 59      | 47.2     | 389               | 20               | 5            | 47.3           | ▼      | -7.7          |  |
| AGLTY                              | 812     | 793      | 2,017,167         | 1,620,159        | 127          | 810            | ▲      | 13.0          |  |
| EDU                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 309            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| CLEANING                           | 49.7    | 44.5     | 280,932           | 12,875           | 10           | 49.0           | ▼      | -4.5          |  |
| KGL                                | 85      | 87       | 35,582            | 2,119            | 6            | 84             | ▲      | 3.5           |  |
| KCPK                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 140            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| HUMANSOFT                          | 3,737   | 3,565    | 4,744             | 17,174           | 6            | 3,737          | ▲      | 177.0         |  |
| NAFAS                              | 844     | 954      | 79                | 65               | 12           | 844            | ▲      | 140.0         |  |
| GFC                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 71             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| SHOOTING                           | 23.0    | 22.0     | 1,001             | 22               | 2            | 22.0           | —      | 0.0           |  |
| CGC                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 474            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| MTCC                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 56             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| UPAC                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 885            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| ALAFCC                             | 377     | 375      | 2,800             | 1,050            | 5            | 377            | ▲      | 2.0           |  |
| MUBARRAD                           | 66      | 64       | 99,900            | 6,482            | 9            | 65             | ▼      | -0.4          |  |
| LOGISTICS                          | 45.9    | 45.0     | 123,179           | 5,545            | 13           | 45.0           | ▲      | 0.5           |  |
| SCEM                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 90             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| GCEM                               | 80      | 78       | 410,660           | 32,549           | 17           | 80             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| QIC                                | 71      | 71       | 357               | 25               | 1            | 71             | ▼      | -0.5          |  |
| FCEM                               | 77      | 76       | 1,047,383         | 79,649           | 20           | 76             | ▲      | 1.0           |  |
| RKWC                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 82             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| SPEC                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 72             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| <b>Industrials</b>                 |         |          | <b>4,336,732</b>  | <b>1,808,787</b> | <b>277</b>   | <b>1829.47</b> | ▲      | <b>77.80</b>  |  |
| IPACO                              | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 84             | —      | 0.0           |  |
| CATL                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 246            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| DANAH                              | 70      | 70       | 19,078            | 1,368            | 2            | 70             | ▲      | 1.5           |  |
| FOOD                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 1,112          | —      | 0.0           |  |
| <b>Consumer Goods</b>              |         |          | <b>19,978</b>     | <b>1,288</b>     | <b>2</b>     | <b>850.33</b>  | ▲      | <b>8.80</b>   |  |
| ATC                                | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 1,100          | —      | 0             |  |
| VIACO                              | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 176            | —      | 0             |  |
| <b>Health Care</b>                 |         |          | <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>     | <b>1918.51</b> | —      | <b>0.00</b>   |  |
| KCN                                | 1,240   | 1,210    | 400               | 490              | 4            | 1,210          | ▼      | -40           |  |
| KHOT                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 246            | —      | 0             |  |
| SULTAN                             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 87             | —      | 0             |  |
| CABLETV                            | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 19.0           | —      | 0             |  |
| IFAHRI                             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 170            | —      | 0             |  |
| QULAFUEL                           | 112     | 111      | 14,736            | 1,641            | 13           | 111            | —      | 0             |  |
| MUNTAAHAT                          | 72      | 72       | 111               | 8                | 1            | 72             | ▲      | 2             |  |
| JAZEERA                            | 670     | 645      | 109,453           | 73,043           | 43           | 665            | —      | 0             |  |
| SOOR                               | 112     | 111      | 27,521            | 3,075            | 8            | 111            | —      | 0             |  |
| FUTUREKID                          | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 100            | —      | 0             |  |
| Alraj                              | 118     | 118      | 20,000            | 2,360            | 2            | 118            | ▼      | -1            |  |
| Jayd                               | 86      | 85       | 1,606,100         | 137,309          | 87           | 85             | ▼      | 0             |  |
| Mozan                              | 798     | 780      | 691,667           | 541,950          | 108          | 798            | ▲      | 22            |  |
| <b>Consumer Services</b>           |         |          | <b>2,468,988</b>  | <b>799,878</b>   | <b>246</b>   | <b>889.72</b>  | ▼      | <b>-1.00</b>  |  |
| ZAIN                               | 408     | 438      | 7,126,857         | 3,246,483        | 365          | 462            | ▲      | 24            |  |
| ORODOO                             | 1,090   | 1,046    | 2,807             | 2,967            | 7            | 1,046          | —      | 0             |  |
| AAN                                | 28.2    | 27.5     | 574,816           | 15,927           | 36           | 27.7           | ▼      | 0             |  |
| VVA                                | 800     | 785      | 17,311            | 13,631           | 27           | 788            | ▼      | -12           |  |
| <b>Telecommunications</b>          |         |          | <b>7,721,791</b>  | <b>3,279,908</b> | <b>435</b>   | <b>657.41</b>  | ▲      | <b>2.30</b>   |  |
| NBK                                | 742     | 725      | 4,095,726         | 3,010,285        | 167          | 740            | ▲      | 17            |  |
| GBK                                | 239     | 238      | 749,694           | 178,813          | 47           | 239            | ▲      | 2             |  |
| CBK                                | 409     | 409      | 59                | 24               | 1            | 409            | ▲      | 9             |  |
| ABK                                | 290     | 287      | 313,419           | 90,021           | 17           | 288            | ▼      | -1            |  |
| ALMUTAHED                          | 351     | 349      | 366,724           | 128,223          | 29           | 351            | ▲      | 2             |  |
| KIB                                | 233     | 228      | 1,323,637         | 306,622          | 42           | 231            | ▲      | 2             |  |
| BURG                               | 306     | 300      | 313,036           | 94,535           | 41           | 303            | ▼      | -1            |  |
| KFIN                               | 599     | 578      | 4,456,142         | 2,633,678        | 294          | 592            | ▲      | 13            |  |
| BOUBEYAN                           | 452     | 440      | 486,917           | 217,842          | 94           | 450            | ▲      | 10            |  |
| ALIB                               | 208     | 205      | 5,126,813         | 1,062,727        | 106          | 208            | ▲      | 2             |  |
| ITHMR                              | 48.3    | 45.8     | 27,705,091        | 1,314,445        | 494          | 47.9           | ▲      | 2             |  |
| WARBANK                            | 230     | 227      | 1,084,737         | 247,347          | 104          | 227            | —      | 0             |  |
| <b>Banks</b>                       |         |          | <b>46,031,565</b> | <b>9,284,559</b> | <b>1,406</b> | <b>922.09</b>  | ▲      | <b>13.10</b>  |  |
| KINS                               | 274     | 265      | 94,000            | 24,901           | 10           | 274            | ▼      | -1            |  |
| GINS                               | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 824            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| AINS                               | 470     | 420      | 91,472            | 36,431           | 3            | 470            | ▲      | 5.0           |  |
| WINS                               | 60      | 60       | 14,888            | 893              | 3            | 60             | ▼      | -0.1          |  |
| KUWAITRE                           | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 192            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| FTI                                | 66      | 66       | 500               | 33               | 1            | 66             | ▲      | 1.0           |  |
| WETHAQ                             | 38.0    | 36.0     | 2,500             | 90               | 2            | 36.9           | ▼      | -1.0          |  |
| BKQWT                              | 0.0     | 0.0      | 0                 | 0                | 0            | 355            | —      | 0.0           |  |
| <b>Insurance</b>                   |         |          | <b>263,368</b>    | <b>64,438</b>    | <b>19</b>    | <b>1069.17</b> | ▼      | <b>-31.90</b> |  |

| National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report |                |            |        |                     |                      |       |  |  |  |
|--|----------------|------------|--------|---------------------|----------------------|-------|--|--|--|
| At 02:00 PM Previous Day                               |                |            |        |                     |                      |       |  |  |  |
| Global Stock Indices                                   |                |            |        |                     |                      |       |  |  |  |
| Index  | Previous Close | Last Price | Change | Daily Performance % | Yearly Performance % |       |  |  |  |
| Dow Jones  | 24,719.22      | 24,824.01  | 104.79 | ▲                   | 0.42                 | 0.42  |  |  |  |
| NASDAQ   | 6,903.39       | 7,006.90   | 103.51 | ▲                   | 1.50                 | 1.50  |  |  |  |
| S&P 500  | 2,673.61       | 2,695.81   | 22.20  | ▲                   | 0.83                 | 0.83  |  |  |  |
| Financial Times  | 7,648.10       | 7,647.42   | -0.68  | ▼                   | -0.01                | -0.52 |  |  |  |
| DAX  | 12,871.39      | 12,910.50  | 39.11  | ▲                   | 0.30                 | -0.06 |  |  |  |
| CAC 40   | 5,288.60       | 5,303.52   | 14.92  | ▲                   | 0.28                 | -0.17 |  |  |  |
| Swiss  | 9,381.87       | 9,402.09   | 20.22  | ▲                   | 0.22                 | 0.22  |  |  |  |
| Nikkei 225   | 22,783.98      | 22,764.94  | -19.04 | ▼                   | -0.08                | 0.00  |  |  |  |
| Topix  | 1,819.03       | 1,817.56   | -1.47  | ▼                   | -0.08                | 19.69 |  |  |  |
| Hang Seng  | 30,515.31      | 30,560.95  | 45.64  | ▲                   | 0.15                 | 2.15  |  |  |  |
| Straits Times  | 3,430.30       | 3,464.28   | 33.98  | ▲                   | 0.99                 | 1.80  |  |  |  |
| MENA Stock Indices                                     |                |            |        |                     |                      |       |  |  |  |
| Index  | Previous Close | Last Price | Change | Daily Performance % | Yearly Performance % |       |  |  |  |
| Kuwait   | 6,312.52       | 6,401.08   | 88.56  | ▲                   | 1.40                 | -1.51 |  |  |  |
| Saudi Arabia   | 7,171.74       | 7,203.79   |        |                     |                      |       |  |  |  |

Business

# EQUATE supports New Kuwait 2035 vision's economic goals

## SAP helps EQUATE boost digital innovation in petrochemical industry

**KUWAIT:** EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, announced yesterday the next phase of its partnership with digital transformation enabler SAP, in an effort to drive the company's global business growth and support the New Kuwait 2035 vision's economic diversification goals.

In the highly-competitive petrochemicals industry, 94 percent of executives expect to increase investment in digital capabilities over the next three years, according to a recent report by Accenture.

Thanks to its long-standing partnership with SAP, EQUATE has full business visibility and real-time operational analytics. Business applications run on the SAP HANA in-memory platform for more than 2,000 employees. Now, EQUATE will move its applications to the SAP HANA Enterprise Cloud, a scalable and standardized cloud platform. By using a cloud-based opex model, EQUATE can optimize costs, scale up to meet future business needs and drive innovative business models.

"For this initiative, we drew up three goals: Enhance productivity, rapidly enter new markets and support sustainable growth," said Faisal Malallah, IT Leader,

Equate Petrochemicals. "With our digital transformation on the SAP HANA Enterprise Cloud, we now have the cloud solutions that can integrate and simplify our global systems, enhance our customer experience and drive business competitiveness. EQUATE is an innovation leader in Kuwait, and we are fully supporting the New Kuwait 2035 economic growth goals."

Across Kuwait, North America and Europe, EQUATE Group operates a wide range of industrial chemical facilities that produce more than 5 million tons of ethylene-related products per year. EQUATE is the world's second-largest producer of ethylene glycol, a thick liquid used primarily as antifreeze and in making polyester fibers. Also, a number of polyethylene product grades for a

### Cloud enables business agility and competitiveness

wide variety of applications, including consumer and food packaging, industrial packaging, agricultural film, medical and hygiene.

"EQUATE is showing global innovation leadership in using the SAP HANA Enterprise Cloud to reduce IT complexity and risk and optimize costs," said Gergi Abboud, Managing Director for SAP Gulf, Levant, North Africa, and Pakistan. "We are deepening our partnership and exchanging exceptional global prac-



**KUWAIT:** EQUATE Group announced the next phase of its partnership with digital transformation enabler SAP. Faisal Malallah, IT Leader, Equate Petrochemicals (center left) and Steve Tzikakis, President of Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) South, SAP (center right) lead the delegation.

tices in petrochemicals so that EQUATE is able to gain industry-leading critical business applications that run with cloud simplicity. The company will be able to free up staff to focus on delivering innovation."

In the coming months, EQUATE will examine adopting the SAP S/4HANA real-time business suite. The suite can support financials, supply chain and ware-

house applications as well as connect with innovations such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, machine learning and blockchain.

EQUATE is one of the longest-standing SAP customers in the Middle East and North Africa, having commenced on the "Partners in Success" digital business journey in 1998.

## Ethiad Aviation Group celebrates 2018 as the Year of Zayed

**ABU DHABI:** Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) has announced a year-long program of activities and humanitarian initiatives to mark 2018 as the Year of Zayed.

Ethiad's headquarters in Abu Dhabi inaugurated its Year of Zayed activities yesterday by holding a flag-raising ceremony attended by employees. The aviation group's offices and buildings around the world are now adorned with Sheikh Zayed's inspiring quote: "The union is our ticket to power and prosperity". The UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan declared 2018 the Year of Zayed, a nationwide initiative, which will highlight the UAE founding father's unparalleled role in establishing the UAE Federation, and his local, regional and international achievements as well as his values and principles.

Khaled Al-Mehairbi, Senior Vice President Abu Dhabi Airport, and General Manager of Etihad Airport Ground Services, who also serves as Chairman of Etihad Airways' Sports and Social Committee, and CSR strategy said: "We are tremendously proud of the rapid growth of Abu Dhabi and the union. All the people of the UAE are, and will always remain the most important element of our nation's development. This was our father Sheikh Zayed's main objective and vision.

"This year is a momentous one as we proudly honor his achievements and celebrate his legacy in Abu Dhabi and around the world." In support of the national initiative, and to reaffirm its commitment to the UAE, Etihad has launched a strategy based on the government's four Year of Zayed pil-



lars: Wisdom, Respect, Sustainability and Human Development.

To celebrate the event, Etihad has released a short film titled 'Running Boy' to honor Sheikh Zayed's legacy of human development in the UAE. The film follows a boy who runs through surroundings, which change through the years in celebration of the 46 years that have passed since the inception of the UAE.

Ethiad will also pay tribute to Sheikh Zayed's humanitarian spirit by planning initiatives focused on supporting societies and urban developments in many countries.

The first of many year-long initiatives is the Rohingya-focused charity campaign this month supporting Burmese children and families fleeing to Bangladesh. This will include a welfare trip to Bangladesh where more than 3000 refugees will receive winter clothes, blankets, tents, and solar lamp power.

Ethiad will also continue its ongoing

efforts to promote an eco-friendly environment within the UAE with the establishment of five greenhouses as part of its 'Greener Together' campaign.

Inspired by Sheikh Zayed's vision of the empowerment of youth, Etihad will support the establishment of libraries and skill development centers in a number of countries including Nepal, Morocco, Philippines and India, and will continue driving its global education initiative by supporting the refurbishment of elementary schools on Samboja Island in Indonesia. Etihad's global education campaign was launched in 2012 and has since helped more than 100,000 students around the world to continue their education.

A number of events to showcase values and tolerance are planned in the UAE this year, including an International Women's Day celebration at Etihad's headquarters in Abu Dhabi, and marking International Tolerance Day in November.

## Kuwait students bring home award from Huawei's competition

**KUWAIT:** A team of three students from Kuwait University walked away with a third-place prize at Huawei's International ICT Skill Competition finals and award ceremony in Shenzhen, China this week. The winners were selected following a grueling five months of qualifying rounds that saw participation from thirteen teams across 10 countries in the Middle East.

The ICT Skill Competition brought 13 finalist teams to China, which included 15 female students from the region. The finalists competed in day-long finals, participated in a technology workshop by global ICT experts, witnessed a high-level panel discussion by senior delegates from eight Middle East countries to China, and were invited to attend the ICT Talent Cultivation Summit.

The award ceremony was attended by senior Huawei executives, including Chen Lifang, Corporate Senior Vice President of Huawei Technologies, and Mr. Simon Lacey, Vice President of Huawei Global Government Affairs Department, and Mr. Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East. Sameeh Hayat Kuwait Ambassador in China, delivered the award to the winning team on stage, in the presence of other senior representatives from participating countries' embassies and consulates. Other high-ranking government officials at the event included Ding Lianpu, Director of the Center for China-Foreign People-to-People Exchanges in China's Ministry of Education, and Professor Zhao Jianhua, Deputy Director for the International Center for Higher Education Innovation at UNESCO.

In addition to a \$30,000 cash prize for the most outstanding team, Huawei awarded certificates, trophies, and prizes to two runner-up teams and three third place teams. The next seven teams received Excellence Prizes, while six tutors and five academic institutions received the Excellent Tutor and Best Academy Prizes. But more importantly, the all-expense paid trip gave the finalists invaluable expo-

sure to a leading global company's expertise and a priceless cultural experience.

"Building a pool of high quality ICT talent is a critical success factor for governments aiming to transition to knowledge-based economies. As one of the world's leading innovators, knowledge-transfer has always a core pillar of the Huawei ethos. Combining this with our commitment to support governments in the region as they work towards achieving their national vision goals, we are proud of the ICT Skill Competition and all that it has achieved over the past five months. The platform has demonstrated beyond a doubt that the young talent in the region has the potential to mature into world-class experts. Today, we re-dedicate ourselves to working even more closely with students across the region to better equip the next generation of technology leaders," said Charles Yang, President, Huawei Middle East.

Kuwait University and American University of The Middle East came forward to participate in an initiative that was supported by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait City.

All participants underwent highly selective examinations at the national level. Participants worked in real laboratories and tackled some of the industry's most complex challenges related to cloud computing, switching, routing, and other key ICT solutions and technologies related to digital transformation.

## KFH participates in 24th WIBC

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 24th Annual World Islamic Banking Conference WIBC themed "Drivers of Economic Growth and Risks: Policy Makers & Regulators" held in Bahrain Under the patronage of Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa.

KFH's participation as a platinum strategic partner for the 3rd consecutive year comes as part of its ongoing commitment towards taking part in the international financial forums that seek to improve Islamic banking and underscore the importance of this industry regionally and globally. The forum is considered to be a leading financial intelligence platform and was attended by many local and regional experts in the Islamic finance industry.

KFH participated in several discussion panels in collaboration with Central Bank of Bahrain in the presence of Rasheed Mohammed Al Maraj- Governor of CBB.

The conference saw the launch of a consortium dedicated to research & development in the sharia-compliant Fintech sector.



**KFH delegation at the conference.**

KFH Bahrain, Al Baraka Banking Group and Bahrain Development Bank set up Algo Bahrain that aims to support the regional Islamic banking sector by developing fintech products and other innovative, sharia-compliant banking solutions. The company's plan is to launch 15 new fintech products or plat-

forms within the next five years.

The WIBC aims to develop and strengthen the Islamic finance industry by making it more competitive and attractive for clients worldwide. The event has emerged as a global forum for communicating the values of Islamic banking to a wider audience.



## Technology

## Race for 'smart' hits fever pitch at electronics show

Artificial intelligence aiming to anticipate needs or desires



LAS VEGAS: This file photo taken on Jan 8, 2017 shows a robot developed by Taiwan engineers moving chess pieces on a board against an opponent at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES). —AFP photos



LAS VEGAS: This file photo taken on Jan 8, 2017 shows Armoto from HumaK, a next generation smart toy for children equipped with a mechanical switch, body sensor and AI speech engine offering a software and hardware platform, displayed at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES).

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Giving gadgets brains will be a hot theme at the Consumer Electronics Show set to open in Las Vegas, with device makers big and small touting hardware with "smarts." Whether it's a doorbell or refrigerator, a TV set or a toothbrush, chances are it will be connected to digital assistants powered by artificial intelligence aiming to anticipate needs or desires. "I think you're going to see the year of smart," said Jack Gold, a technology analyst with J Gold Associates.

One of the largest trade shows in the world, the January 9-12 CES will attract about 170,000 visitors and 3,900 exhibitors from 150 countries and will showcase innovations in computers, gaming, robotics, vehicle technology, virtual and augmented reality and more. Gold said gadgets will be increasingly tuned to glean insights about the people using them, with an aim of anticipating what might be desired at any given moment. "Your device will learn about you and will know your preferences, and it'll then try to get smarter about how to interact with you," he said.

**Smart voice**

As consumer electronics evolve, an overriding theme has become voice-assisted digital assistants being integrated into more devices, said Stephen Baker of the research firm NPD. "I think you are going to be overwhelmed by smart homes and voice-the voice speakers

yelling at you in the convention center and up and down the (Las Vegas) Strip will be overwhelming," Baker said of CES. He said gadget makers will infuse more products and services with virtual aides such as Amazon's Alexa, Google Assistant, Apple Siri and Microsoft Cortana.

"What happened is all the appliance and device guys gave up (on making their own isolated smart home systems) and instead are building an ecosystem in which pretty much everybody's devices will talk to Google or Amazon, or eventually Siri," Baker said. Still, says Gartner analyst Brian Blau, large and small tech firms are locked in battle to be at the heart of smart homes and devices.

"To some degree there is still a war on for the connected home platform," Blau said. "Communication standards are being worked out, but the other thing is whose allegiance you will commit your home to—will it be Samsung, LG, Amazon, Google?" Carolina Milanese of the consultancy Creative Strategies said major electronics firms like Bosch, Panasonic, Sony, Samsung are looking to showcase how several devices can work together with a con-

nected hub. "I definitely see the speaker still be key to controlling the connected home," she said.

**Tesla wannabes**

Bob O'Donnell, analyst and consultant with Technalysis Research, said artificial intelligence also opens the door to "computer vision" used in drones, autonomous cars and robotics which will be showcased at CES. Major carmakers will be on hand as well as makers of tech platforms for self-driving vehicles such as Intel's Mobileye and chipmaker Nvidia, along with a dozen exhibitors in the autonomous car "marketplace."

CES hosts the debut of a \$130,000 electric car from Fisker—a re-launched startup led by former BMW designed Henrik Fisker whose previous venture went bankrupt—and one of several challengers to rapidly expanding Tesla. Although CES ends just days ahead of a major Detroit auto show, O'Donnell said automakers are eager to show their new technology to a wider public. "It's a place to make a statement about technologies that

will have resonance," he said. "And the vast majority of the new innovations in cars are in fact tech things."

**Empathy factor**

O'Donnell said the success of these new technologies will depend on how well machines can think the way people do. "We are looking for ways these devices have contextual intelligence," he said. This would enable a device or assistant to understand multipart questions and develop responses which are adapted to the individual, O'Donnell said. "The whole idea of understanding context is a big theme in AI, and we'll see a lot of effort to improve the empathy of devices," he said.

O'Donnell said he expects to see "an evolution of the intelligence of those devices," adding that "AI is going to improve the experience of the device even if it doesn't change what they are." At this year's show, CES will include zones and marketplaces for sports technology, health and wellness, robotics, smart cities, product design and manufacturing and more, and conference panels on many of these topics. Keynote speakers include Ford Motor Co. chief executive Jim Hackett, Intel's Brian Krzanich and Huawei consumer chief Richard Yu. Conferences on tech policy will include US Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Federal Communications Commission chief Ajit Pai and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. —AFP

“Your device will learn about you”

## More than half of Norway car sales now electric

**OSLO:** Sales of electric and hybrid cars exceeded half of new registrations in Norway in 2017, a record aided by generous subsidies that extended the Nordic nation's lead in a shift from fossil-fuel engines, data showed yesterday. Pure electric cars and hybrids, which have both battery power and a diesel or petrol motor, accounted for 52 percent of all new car sales in 2017 in Norway against 40 percent in 2016, the independent Norwegian Road Federation (OFV) said. "No one else is close" in terms of a national share of electric cars, OFV chief Oeyvind Solberg Thorsen said. "For the first time we have a fossil fuel market share below 50 percent."

Norway exempts new electric cars from many taxes and road tolls and owners often get free parking and charging. Norway also generates almost all its electricity from hydropower, so the shift helps to reduce air pollution and climate change. Last year, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Norway was far ahead of other nations such as the Netherlands, Sweden, China, France and Britain in electric car sales.

By the IEA yardstick, which excludes hybrid cars which only have a small electric motor that cannot be plugged in, electric car sales in Norway rose to 39 percent in 2017 from 29 in 2016, when the Netherlands was in second on 6.4 percent. "The shift has gone faster than we'd thought, and the big car makers say they're going all in to produce non-fossil cars," Thorsen told Reuters. Norway's electric car policies contrast with its big offshore oil and gas production.

Christina Bu, head of the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association which represents owners, said it was too early to reduce incentives for electric cars, noting that parliament has set a goal of phasing out sales of fossil fuel vehicles by 2025. "It's an ambitious goal only seven years away," she told Reuters. A plan last year by the right-wing government to trim electric car incentives in the nation of 5.3 million people, dubbed a "Tesla Tax", was dropped in negotiations on the 2018 budget.

Norwegian car sales in 2017 were topped by the Volkswagen Golf, BMWi3, Toyota Rav4 and Tesla Model X. The Tesla is pure electric and others have electric or hybrid versions. Overall, sales of pure electric cars in Norway rose in 2017 to 21 percent from 16 in 2016. Sales of diesel cars fell most in 2017, to 23 percent from 31 in 2016. Some regions in Norway have started to charge higher road tolls for diesel cars than for petrol-driven vehicles. —Reuters

## Indonesia launches cyber agency to tackle extremism

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia launched a new cyber security agency yesterday as the world's biggest Muslim majority country moves to tackle online religious extremism and a flood of fake news on social media. Millions of Indonesians are going online for the first time just as concern about Internet hoaxes reaches a fevered pitch. One of the most high-profile cases in recent times was a false claim circulating on social media in December that Beijing was seeking to wage biological warfare against Indonesia. The viral hoax prompted the Chinese embassy to issue a statement saying that the reports were "misleading".

Yesterday, Indonesian President Joko Widodo named Major General Djoko Setiadi, former chairman of the country's encryption agency, to lead the new body. Setiadi's Herculean task will include cracking down on terrorist networks which communicate online and combating online hate speech that has been blamed for driving fundamentalism in a country once praised for its religious pluralism.

"We will control cyberspace," Setiadi said yesterday. "Our technology will not only be able to detect, but also to penetrate [terrorist] networks." Chief Security Minister Wiranto, who like many Indonesians goes only by one name, added: "We need this body to help maintain security nationally, regionally and globally." Last week, Indonesia said it was adding some 600 more personnel to the ranks of its counter-terrorism police in a bid to crack down on Islamic State-inspired groups and other militants.

The archipelago nation has long struggled with Islamic militancy and attacks, including the 2002 Bali

## How Facebook could stop a disease outbreak

**PARIS:** Facebook accounts and telephone records can be used to pinpoint the best individuals to vaccinate to stop a disease outbreak in its tracks, researchers said yesterday. Such people would be "central" in their social networks, and thus likelier to spread disease-causing germs from one group to another.

Assuming there is an outbreak, and not enough vaccines for every person in the world, immunizing these well-connected indi-

viduals would remove social "bridges" by which germs can spread, experts wrote in the Journal of the Royal Society Interface. The study, which tracked the digital and physical contacts of more than 500 university students, concluded that people who are central in their digital networks are also central in their real-life human networks.

"If you are a hub for your friends in the sense that you have many contacts via phone calls or on Facebook, making you a bridge between diverse communities, chances are high that you are also likely to be a bridge to connect those communities in case of an epidemic, such as influenza," study co-author Enys Mones of the Technical University of Denmark said. —AFP

## Spotify hit with new copyright suit in US

**NEW YORK:** A music publisher is seeking at least \$1.6 billion from Spotify for alleged copyright violations, the latest lawsuit to hit the fast-growing streaming company. Wixen Music Publishing, Inc.—which holds rights to songs of major artists including Neil Young, The Doors, Tom Petty and Santana—charged in a lawsuit that Spotify failed to seek licenses for significant parts of its 30 million-song catalog.

"While Spotify has become a multibillion dollar company, songwriters and their publishers, such as Wixen, have not been able to fairly and rightfully share in Spotify's success, as Spotify has in many cases used their music without a license and without compensation," said the lawsuit filed last week in a federal court in Los Angeles. The lawsuit said that Spotify initially tried to work with record labels but, "in a race to be first to market, made insufficient efforts to collect the required musical composition information."

Wixen, which is seeking a jury trial against the Swedish company, presented a list of 10,784 songs for which it questioned Spotify's permission to stream. —AFP



JAKARTA: A man (L) uses his laptop at a cafe. —AFP

bombings that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, in the country's worst-ever terror attack. A sustained crackdown weakened the most dangerous networks but the emergence of IS has proved a potent new rallying cry for radicals. Hundreds of Indonesian radicals flocked to fight with IS, sparking fears that weakened extremist outfits could get a new lease of life.

Meanwhile, more than 150 million out of 255 million Indonesians are now estimated to be Internet users. The

explosion in the number of Internet users comes amid global concern about the spread of fake news, with some critics claiming a flood of false stories circulating online may have helped Donald Trump win the US presidential election. Still, some worry that Indonesia's new cyber agency could threaten privacy rights. "It would be really unfortunate if it was going to be used to monitor public discussions because that is people's right," said Internet privacy expert Nukman Luthfie. —AFP

Health

# Albania losing its national symbol to mass poaching

The species number today has been cut in half

**TIRANA:** It is Albania's national symbol, but the eagle may soon only be found on the flag. The majestic bird is threatened with extinction due to widespread poaching of raptors. On the side of a national motorway, just 30 kilometers north of the capital Tirana, a vendor offers motorists a common buzzard for an average price of 7,000-10,000 leks (55-85 euros, \$65-100).

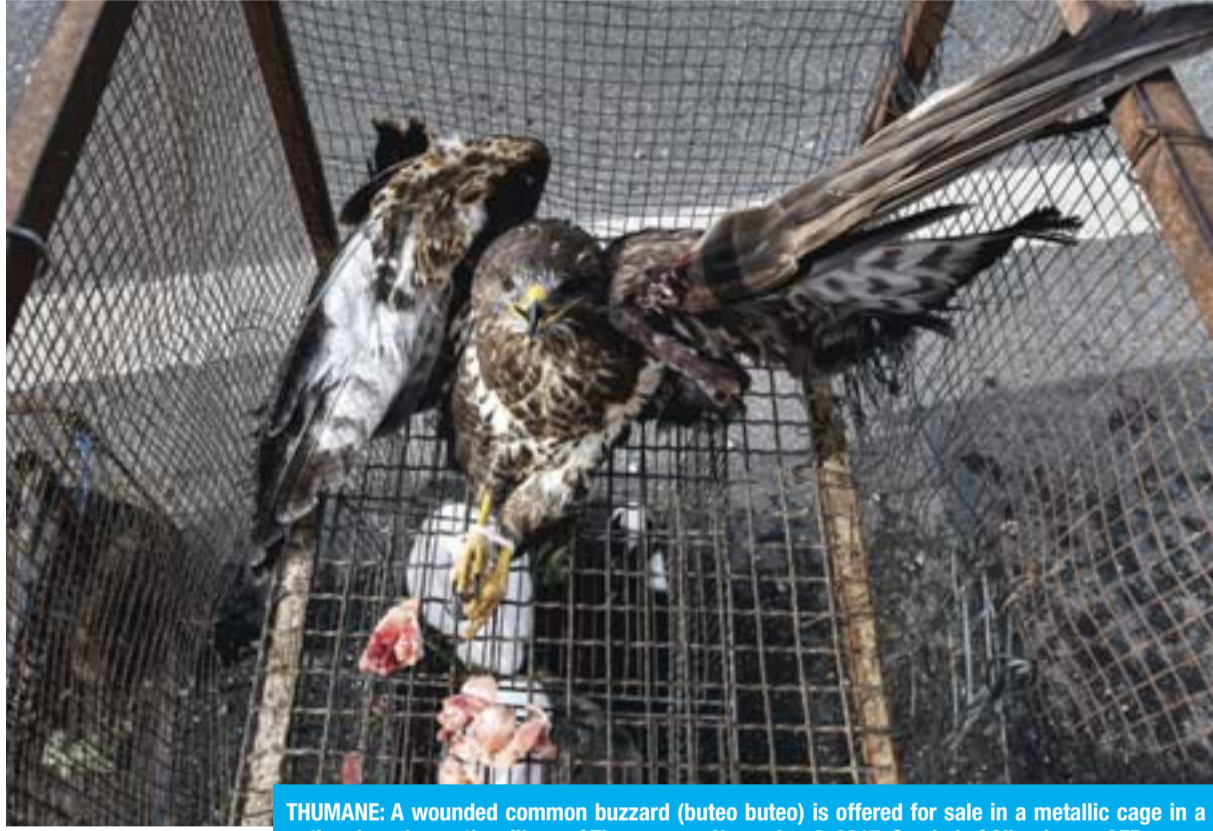
The buzzard is a protected species just like the golden eagle. But the man isn't concerned as he exhibits the bird with its wing wounded by a bullet and its talons tied. "I didn't wound it. I was given it to sell. The buyers will keep it in a cage in a bar or a restaurant," he says. Whether the customers want to stuff them or to keep them in captivity, they can find these birds for sale on the street.

Of the four species of vultures that used to exist in Albania, "only one, the Egyptian vulture, remains and its population has been extremely reduced," says Mirjan Topi, author of Albania's first bird guide. So too the dwindling number of golden eagles, a two-headed specimen of which features on the flag of this mountainous Balkan country. According to experts, some 25 years ago there were between 100 and 200 couples of golden eagles. That number today has been cut in half, "a dramatic decline", says Topi.

**Bar attraction**

For biologist Taulant Bino, president of the Albanian Ornithological Society, the golden eagle "is on the road to extinction". "Fifty years ago or even in the early 1990s, we could see it on every summit," he says. On a global scale, the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is not classified as a threatened species, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). But in Albania nowadays the place where you are most likely to see a golden eagle is "stuffed in bars, restaurants or hotels", Topi says.

The idea is "to decorate the interior to attract customers, at the price of a sickening spectacle, in violation of the law, and in defiance of the state and institutions", the bird specialist laments. In the southern region of Orikum, a man in his 50s, who would only identify himself as Petrit, is proud of the eagle he bought for 400 euros. He displays it in his bar next to the national flag and other stuffed birds. "It is rare to find an eagle," he notes. The state has threatened to close his bar if he continues to show off his trophy but Petrit is not worried. "I am ready to pay a fine, but I want to keep it." And in the mountains of Prenish along the border with Macedonia, a hunter who gave his name as Edmond appeared unfazed to be



**THUMANE:** A wounded common buzzard (*buteo buteo*) is offered for sale in a metallic cage in a national road near the village of Thumane on November 8, 2017. Symbol of Albania. — AFP

found with two buzzards he had just killed. The 35-year-old explained that he plans to use the birds as decoration in his bar "to get more customers".

**Poisoned carcasses**

There has been a hunting ban in Albania since 2014. Authorities say it has curtailed a large number of the 2,000-3,000 Italian hunters who are estimated to have killed more than 150,000 birds, including hundreds of raptors over the last decade. But they admitted, when contacted by AFP, that the ban's effectiveness is limited as it only imposes fines. According to Ermal Halimi, a specialist on the issue at the ministry of tourism and environment, there are plans to toughen the law, including "prison terms for all

offences that contribute to the disappearance of protected animals". But that's not the whole story.

Another threat, perhaps even more insidious, hangs over the raptors: the poisoned carcasses that shepherds leave in the field to protect their flocks from wolves. "A single carcass is enough to kill several vultures if they find it before the wolf," says Nexhip Hysolokaj, an environmental expert in the Orikum region where in March, six eagles and vultures were found dead from poison. Fines have never been issued over this practice which shepherds seem to have no intention of giving up. "The sheep are the ones who feed us, they are our pride and wolves massacre them! We have no choice," says 83-year old Sado Xhelili as he guards his flock. — AFP

## That's sick! Humans identify infected peers from photos

**PARIS:** Human beings can spot a sick person, on a photo, a mere two hours after he or she was infected by a germ, researchers said yesterday. Such an ability to detect infection early, and from the subtlest of facial clues, has never been demonstrated before, but is presumed to be part of a crucial survival skill called "disease avoidance", they wrote.

"An ability to detect sick people would allow people to avoid being close to sick people, and hence minimize the risk of becoming sick if the person is a carrier of contagious disease," study co-author John Axelsson of Stockholm University told AFP. The research team experimented with 16 healthy volunteers, all Caucasian. Each was given a shot of lipopolysaccharides (LPS) — molecules taken from bacteria. The LPS molecules are sterile, meaning that no live bacteria is injected. But they cause a strong immune response and flu-like symptoms that lasts a few hours-mimicking someone who is "acutely sick" and fighting off infection. It is a method commonly used to cause infections in humans and people for experimentation purposes.

On a second occasion, each participant received a placebo or "dummy" injection. The volunteers had their photo taken about two hours after each shot—thus once in a healthy state after receiving the placebo, and once "sick". After the LPS shot, some of the participants "felt very sick and others did not feel much sick at all" when their photo was taken, Axelsson explained. Both pictures, healthy and sick, of all participants were then showed to a different group of people, which had to rate whether the person was sick or healthy. "The raters could correctly discriminate 13 out of 16 individuals (81 percent) as being sick," said the study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B. — AFP

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## What's On

# Al Kout concludes celebrations with the arrival of 2018



**S**ouq Al Kout, part of the Al Kout project, Kuwait's largest waterfront retail and leisure destination, concluded its recent celebrations that marked the arrival of the new year amid a large number of visitors that included families and children who enjoyed live musical entertainment held under the theme of 'RHAPSODY' as well as a broad array of interactive activities that were held from the 29th to the 31st December 2017.

Souq Al Kout, for the 4th consecutive year, was the center of New Year celebrations across the State of Kuwait, with 'RHAPSODY' attracting a large number of visitors. The musical event was launched on the 31st December, where visitors enjoyed a nostalgic drive from past to present, in a fun filled environment that included a rich range of melodies and musical shows that were performed live by Afterthought band and Omar Afuni, as well as the Kuwaiti band 'Nujoom' and Suyouf Al-Sham Musical Group who presented a

unique Syrian folklore show. The event ended with a spectacular fire-works performance at midnight, welcoming 2018 in a fun filled and happy spirit.

Visitors also enjoyed other entertainment activities that were held throughout the day which included memorable portraits through a unique event themed 'Photo booth' as well as extensive arts activities that have been designed for families. In addition, on the 29th and 30th December, activities and a series of competitions were held to appeal to families, children including arts and crafts, face painting, musical statues, competitions and giveaways as well as pony rides.

Nermeen Bishady, Al Kout's Marketing Manager, expressed her sincere happiness with the successful rollout of the event in its 4th year running, especially with large turnout of visitors - from families, and children in different age groups, assuring that Al Kout is the prime and ideal destination for families to enjoy different occasions.



## AIP honors meritorious students

**A**ssociation of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait organized a grand function on December 29, 2017, at the auditorium of Salmiya Indian Model School (SIMS), Salmiya in order to felicitate the meritorious Indian students of class XII. Awardees were selected based on the CBSE examination results declared for the academic year 2016 - 2017, from all Indian Schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to the CBSE system of education of India. Gold/silver medals and certificate of merit were presented to the students who scored highest and second highest aggregates in science and commerce streams. Silver medals with certificates were presented to the students who scored 100 percent marks in any subject. Bronze medals and certificates were dispersed to those awardees who scored an aggregate of 90 percent or above. Indian Embassy Second Secretary Yashwant Chatpalliwar was the chief guest while Harpreet Singh Sethi on behalf of Kuldeep Singh Lamba, S K Wadhawan, Rajpal Tyagi, Ashok Kumar Angural, Rajesh Nair — Principal of Indian Community School, Amman Branch; K Gangadhar Shirsath - Principal of Indian Community School Khaitan and Dr Rubina Ali Chougale, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Consultant and an IVF Specialist at Al-Seef Hospital were the guests of honor.

AIP General Secretary Dr Kamlesh Kumari welcomed the guests and audience. She highlighted that the AIP Awards have now become a symbol of excellence. Dr Kamlesh Kumari extended her appreciation and thanks to all principals of Indian Schools in Kuwait who provided official information which facilitated the final selection of meritorious awardees. AIP Chairman Umesh Sharma stressed the need of the education and motivation of the younger generation for the multidimensional development of the society. Education and only education can bring peace and prosperity to this



world, he stated. Chatpalliwar appreciated the efforts of AIP for promoting Indian students through motivation, exposure and career guidance programs. He specifically mentioned that although, meritorious students in Kuwait are usually separately honored on different community and on school level basis, AIP award function is the one and only event where meritorious Indian students from all Indian schools in Kuwait are jointly honored at a single occasion. Chatpalliwar congratulated awardees and advised all students to pursue their career of their own choice.

A colorful souvenir which included awardees' photographs and depicting AIP's vision and mission was released by the Chief Guest, Guests of honor and executive committee members of AIP. Indian Educational School (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) was adjudged as the winner of 'AIP Best Academic Performance Award' for class XII of year

2016-17 and Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School-FAIPS (DPS) as the runners up. Best performing schools are selected on the weighted average method. Rolling trophies and mementos were presented to these schools by Chatpalliwar and Sharma.

Chatpalliwar, Harpreet Singh Sethi, Wadhawan, Rajpal Tyagi, Ashok Kumar Angural, Rajesh Nair, K. Gangadhar Shirsath, Dr Rubina Ali Chougale, Umesh Sharma, Dr Kamlesh Kumari, Sajeev K. Peter, and AR Subbaraman distributed medals, certificates, rolling trophies and mementos. Deepti Ravi Kumar, Leander George, Jessica Henry Serrao, Muqis Moiz, Riya George, Moses Reji Chandy, Clifton George Samuel, Rithikha Raghupathy, Simran Kaur, Jonathan Mahesh Najare, Afrah Rafi, Jitesh Seshan compered the awards distribution ceremony in an excellent manner. The gifts were presented to the anchors. Vote of thanks was delivered by Sajeev K Peter.



## Kuwait National English School Year 1 marks winter concert

**O**n 13th December 2017, the Year 1 pupils of Kuwait National English School celebrated their winter concert, titled 'Just Sing'. The theme of the concert was in keeping with the end of year festivities and celebrations. Pupils, dressed in vivid and colorful costumes, captivated the audience with their amazing performance of songs and dance. The number of parents that attended was incredible and they have been immensely supportive of the children. After the event, many parents commented that they could not believe how great the children were and how well they have progressed with their performances. They also commented positively on how well



choreographed the dances were and how beautifully their children sang and they looked forward to many more concerts in the future. Our school Director, Madame Chantal Al Gharabally, highlighted the importance of children in our lives as well as the need to treasure them and to guide them along the right path in life so that they can take their rightful place in society. The concert ended with children singing their hearts out to the two finale songs. The audience thoroughly enjoyed the performances.





TV



00:35 We Still Kill The Old Way
02:20 Nick Of Time
04:05 Life On The Line
05:55 Face/Off
08:20 The Net
10:20 Nick Of Time
11:55 Kingsglave: Final Fantasy XV
13:55 Face/Off
16:15 Iron Man
18:25 Rumble
20:05 I Am Number Four
22:00 Under Siege
23:45 Death Race 2050



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Bad Dog
03:35 Swamp Brothers
04:00 Swamp Brothers
04:25 Tanked
04:45 Treehouse Masters
05:15 Wildest Indochina
06:02 Untamed & Uncut
07:36 Night
08:00 Night
08:25 Swamp Brothers
08:50 Swamp Brothers
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Bad Dog
11:05 Wildest Indochina
12:00 Swamp Brothers
12:28 Swamp Brothers
12:55 Tanked
13:50 Treehouse Masters
14:45 Bad Dog
15:40 Wildest Indochina
16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 Whale Wars
19:20 Whale Wars
20:15 Bad Dog
21:10 Swamp Brothers
21:38 Swamp Brothers
22:05 Whale Wars
23:00 Whale Wars
23:55 Wildest Indochina



00:35 Last Tango In Halifax: Christmas Special
01:35 Top Of The Lake
02:40 New Tricks
03:30 Doctors
04:10 Last Tango In Halifax: Christmas Special
05:05 New Tricks
06:00 Eastenders
07:00 Dickensian
07:50 Doctor Who: Twice Upon A Time
08:50 Agatha Raisin
09:45 Doctors
10:15 New Tricks
11:10 Dickensian
12:00 Doctor Who: Twice Upon A Time
13:00 Agatha Raisin
13:50 Eastenders
14:50 New Tricks
15:40 Dickensian
16:25 Doctor Who: Twice Upon A Time
17:25 Doctors
17:55 Eastenders
19:00 New Tricks
20:00 Benidorm
21:00 Holly City
22:00 New Tricks
23:00 Doctors
23:30 Eastenders



00:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
01:00 Escaping Polygamy: After The Escape
02:00 Cursed
03:00 Psychic Kids: Children Of The Paranormal
04:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
05:00 Escaping Polygamy: After The Escape
06:00 Cursed
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
09:00 It Takes A Killer
10:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:00 Cold Case Files
12:00 The First 48
13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:00 It Takes A Killer
15:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
16:00 Cold Case Files
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 It Takes A Killer
19:00 The First 48
20:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Cold Case Files
23:00 Kids Who Kill



00:05 Workaholics
00:30 Broad City
00:55 Another Period
01:20 Another Period
01:45 Tosh.O
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.O
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
04:15 Kroll Show
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 Important Things With Demetri Martin
05:30 Impractical Jokers
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:50 The Dude Perfect Show
07:15 The Dude Perfect Show
07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Kroll Show
09:45 Key And Peele
10:10 Important Things With Demetri Martin
10:35 The Jim Gaffigan Show
11:00 Impractical Jokers
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:00 Impractical Jokers
12:45 Punk'd (Bet)
13:00 Punk'd (Bet)
13:30 Important Things With Demetri Martin
13:55 Friends
14:20 Friends
14:45 Workaholics
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Kroll Show
16:00 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwazef

16:30 Impractical Jokers
16:55 Friends
17:40 Disaster Date
18:05 Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35 The Dude Perfect Show
19:25 Impractical Jokers
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Nightcap
22:25 Graves
22:50 Teachers
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 Mythbusters
02:10 The Big Brain Theory
03:00 Zoltan The Wolfman
03:50 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
05:55 How It's Made
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
06:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
07:50 How It's Made
08:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Zoltan The Wolfman
11:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
12:00 Engineering The Impossible
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
16:10 Zoltan The Wolfman
17:00 NASA's Unexplained Files
17:50 Dinosaurs: Return To Life
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
22:00 Dinosaurs: Return To Life
22:50 Zoltan The Wolfman
23:40 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor



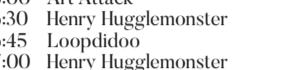
00:50 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
01:45 Swamp Murders
02:40 Village Of The Damned
03:35 Murder By Numbers
04:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
05:25 California Investigator
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Nightmare Next Door
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 On The Case With Paula Zahn
09:15 California Investigator
10:10 Nightmare Next Door
11:05 Betrayed
12:00 Murder Chose Me
12:55 On The Case With Paula Zahn
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Nightmare Next Door
15:40 Betrayed
16:35 Evil Stepmothers
17:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
18:25 California Investigator
18:50 California Investigator
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Nightmare Next Door
21:10 Betrayed
22:05 The Perfect Murder
23:00 Murder By Numbers
23:55 Reasonable Doubt



00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Elena Of Avalor
08:20 K.C. Undercover
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
09:35 Tangled: The Series
10:00 Frenemies
11:25 The Zhuzhus
11:40 Austin & Ally
12:05 That's So Raven
12:30 That's So Raven
12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
13:00 Bunk'd
13:25 Tangled: The Series
13:50 Jessie
14:15 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:30 Bizaardvark
15:55 Elena Of Avalor
16:20 Stuck In The Middle
16:45 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 K.C. Undercover
17:50 K.C. Undercover
18:15 Descendants Wicked World
18:20 Bunk'd
18:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
19:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:15 Liv And Maddie
19:40 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
20:05 Descendants Wicked World
20:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
20:35 Disney The Lodge
21:00 Alex & Co.
21:25 Alex & Co.
21:50 Lolirock
22:15 Lolirock
22:40 Evermoor Chronicles
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:45 Lolirock



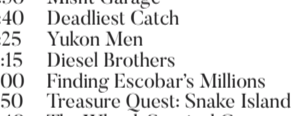
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00:40 PJ Masks
01:05 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopediddo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopediddo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:30 Loopediddo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopediddo
07:00 Calimero
07:15 PJ Masks
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 P-King Duckling
08:25 Puppy Dog Pals
08:50 Doc McStuffins
09:10 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:35 Sofia The First
10:00 The Lion Guard: Return Of The Roar
10:45 PJ Masks
11:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:25 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:50 The Lion Guard
12:45 Sofia The First
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 PJ Masks
14:30 Doc McStuffins
14:55 P-King Duckling
15:20 Vampirina
15:45 Sofia The First
16:10 Puppy Dog Pals
16:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:00 Doc McStuffins
17:30 Vampirina
18:00 PJ Masks
18:25 Puppy Dog Pals
18:50 Sofia The First
19:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:45 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 The Lion Guard: Return Of The Roar
22:45 Minnie's Bow-Toons
22:55 P-King Duckling
23:20 Puppy Dog Pals
23:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers



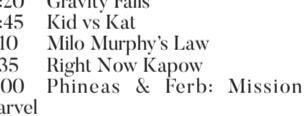
00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Gold Rush
01:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
02:35 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
03:20 Diesel Brothers
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Extreme Collectors
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Misfit Garage
08:20 Extreme Collectors
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Gold Rush
10:45 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
11:30 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
12:20 Extreme Collectors
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Gold Rush
16:15 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
17:05 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
17:50 Misfit Garage
18:40 Deadliest Catch
19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Diesel Brothers
21:00 Finding Escobar's Millions
21:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:40 The Wheel: Survival Games
23:30 Misfit Garage



00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Gold Rush
01:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
02:35 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
03:20 Diesel Brothers
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Extreme Collectors
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Misfit Garage
08:20 Extreme Collectors
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Gold Rush
10:45 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
11:30 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
12:20 Extreme Collectors
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Gold Rush
16:15 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
17:05 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
17:50 Misfit Garage
18:40 Deadliest Catch
19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Diesel Brothers
21:00 Finding Escobar's Millions
21:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:40 The Wheel: Survival Games
23:30 Misfit Garage



06:00 Disney11
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Marvel's Spider-Man
07:15 Right Now Kapow
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Walk The Prank
08:10 Phineas And Ferb
08:35 Mech-X4
09:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
09:25 Lab Rats
09:50 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
10:20 Gravity Falls
10:45 Kid vs Kat
11:10 Milo Murphy's Law
11:35 Right Now Kapow
12:00 Phineas & Ferb: Mission Marvel
12:55 Pair Of Kings
13:20 Pair Of Kings
13:45 Phineas And Ferb
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Phineas And Ferb
14:40 The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
15:30 Gravity Falls
16:20 Two More Eggs
16:25 Lab Rats
16:45 Kirby Buckets
17:40 Kirby Buckets Warped
18:05 Supa Strikas
18:30 Marvel's Ant-Man
18:55 Disney11
19:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Walk The Prank
20:05 Supa Strikas
20:40 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 El News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
03:40 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
04:35 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World
07:00 Mariah's World
08:00 El News: Daily Pop
09:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 My Fabulous Me
13:00 My Fabulous Me
13:30 My Fabulous Me
14:00 WAGS LA
15:00 WAGS LA
16:00 WAGS LA
17:00 WAGS LA
18:00 WAGS LA
19:00 WAGS LA
20:00 WAGS LA
21:00 WAGS LA
22:00 WAGS LA
23:00 The Platinum Life

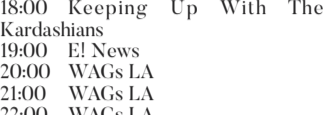


00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 El News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
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05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World
07:00 Mariah's World
08:00 El News: Daily Pop
09:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians

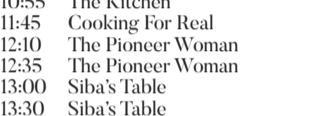
10:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 My Fabulous Me
13:00 My Fabulous Me
13:30 My Fabulous Me
14:00 WAGS LA
15:00 WAGS LA
16:00 WAGS LA
17:00 WAGS LA
18:00 WAGS LA
19:00 WAGS LA
20:00 WAGS LA
21:00 WAGS LA
22:00 WAGS LA
23:00 The Platinum Life

00:45 A Taste Of South Africa
01:10 What's For Sale?
01:40 David Rocco's Dolce India
02:05 Carnival Eats
02:35 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
03:30 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
04:25 Places We Go
04:50 Migue's Feasts
05:45 Sara's Australia Unveiled
06:15 What's For Sale?
07:10 David Rocco's Dolce India
07:35 Carnival Eats
08:05 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
09:00 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
09:55 Places We Go
10:20 Migue's Feasts
11:15 Sara's Australia Unveiled
11:45 What's For Sale?
12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces

00:00 Chopped
01:00 Bakers vs. Fakers
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped Junior
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:25 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:50 Bake With Anna Olson
07:15 The Kitchen
08:05 The Pioneer Woman
08:30 The Pioneer Woman
08:55 Siba's Table
09:25 Siba's Table
09:55 Cooking For Real
10:25 Cooking For Real
10:55 The Kitchen
12:10 The Pioneer Woman
12:35 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Cooking For Real
17:30 Cooking For Real
18:00 Chopped Junior
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Tia Mowry At Home
20:30 Tia Mowry At Home
21:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
21:30 The Big Eat - Middle East
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped



00:10 Chopping Block
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Cash Trapped
03:25 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
04:30 Little Boy Blue
05:20 Surprise Surprise
06:10 Chopping Block
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
09:05 Little Boy Blue
10:00 Surprise Surprise
10:55 Chopping Block
11:50 Cash Trapped
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Chopping Block
15:10 Cash Trapped
16:00 Catchphrase
16:55 Tonight At The London Palladium
17:50 Big Star's Little Star
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Catchphrase
21:50 Tonight At The London Palladium
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



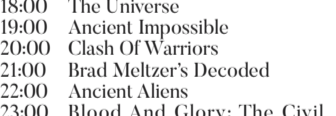
00:10 Extreme Ice
01:00 Mission Saturn
02:00 Titanic: The Final Word
04:00 Extreme Ice
05:00 Family Guns
06:00 The Link
07:00 Science Of Stupid Engineering
08:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:00 The Great Food Revolution
10:00 Strait Droids
11:00 Supercar Megabuild
12:00 To Catch A Smuggler
13:00 Live Free Or Die
14:00 Fish Tank Kings
15:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
15:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
16:00 Nazi Megastructures
18:00 To Catch A Smuggler
19:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
19:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
20:00 Nazi Megastructures
21:40 To Catch A Smuggler
22:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
22:55 Science Of Stupid Compilations
23:20 Fish Tank Kings



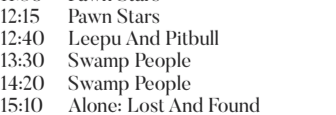
00:10 Chopping Block
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13:45 Coronation Street
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17:50 Big Star's Little Star
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Catchphrase
21:50 Tonight At The London Palladium
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
01:00 Ancient Impossible
02:00 Clash Of Warriors
03:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 The Greeks
05:30 Stan Lee's Superhumans
06:20 Ancient Impossible
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Clash Of Warriors
09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 The Greeks
12:00 America's Book Of Secrets
13:00 Ancient Impossible
14:00 Clash Of Warriors
15:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 The Greeks
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Ancient Impossible
20:00 Clash Of Warriors
21:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Harvey Beaks
13:48 Hunter Street
14:12 I Am Frankie
14:36 The Thundermans
15:00 Swindle
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Sanjay And Craig
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Ride



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
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19:00 School Of Rock
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19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Ride



00:45 A Taste Of South Africa
01:10 What's For Sale?
01:40 David Rocco's Dolce India
02:05 Carnival Eats
02:35 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
03:30 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
04:25 Places We Go
04:50 Migue's Feasts
05:45 Sara's Australia Unveiled
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10:20 Migue's Feasts
11:15 Sara's Australia Unveiled
11:45 What's For Sale?
12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
13:35 A Taste Of South Africa
14:30 Chef On The Road
15:25 Croatia's Finest
15:50 Migue's Feasts
16:45 Andy And Ben Eat The World
17:15 Andy And Ben Eat The World
17:40 What's For Sale?
18:10 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
19:05 A Taste Of South Africa
19:30 A Taste Of South Africa
20:00 Chef On The Road
21:00 Croatia's Finest
21:30 Migue's Feasts
22:00 Migue's Feasts
22:25 Andy And Ben Eat The World
22:55 Andy And Ben Eat The World
23:20 What's For Sale?
23:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces

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20:00 Nazi Megastructures
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22:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
22:55 Science Of Stupid Compilations
23:20 Fish Tank Kings

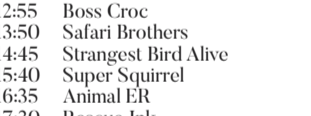
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01:00 Mission Saturn
02:00 Titanic: The Final Word
04:00 Extreme Ice
05:00 Family Guns
06:00 The Link
07:00 Science Of Stupid Engineering
08:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:00 The Great Food Revolution
10:00 Strait Droids
11:00 Supercar Megabuild
12:00 To Catch A Smuggler
13:00 Live Free Or Die
14:00 Fish Tank Kings
15:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
15:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
16:00 Nazi Megastructures
18:00 To Catch A Smuggler
19:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
19:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
20:00 Nazi Megastructures
21:40 To Catch A Smuggler
22:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
22:55 Science Of Stupid Compilations
23:20 Fish Tank Kings



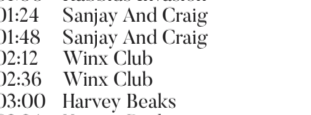
00:10 Extreme Ice
01:00 Mission Saturn
02:00 Titanic: The Final Word
04:00 Extreme Ice
05:00 Family Guns
06:00 The Link
07:00 Science Of Stupid Engineering
08:00 Fish Tank Kings
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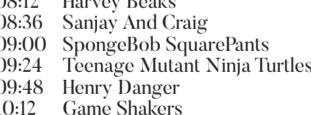
00:20 Attack Of The Big Cats
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 World's Deadliest: Jaws & Sins
02:50 Jobs That Bite!
03:45 World's Weirdest Animal Faces
04:40 Extreme Animal Babies
05:35 World's Deadliest: Jaws & Sins
06:30 Jobs That Bite!
07:25 World's Weirdest Animal Faces
08:20 Extreme Animal Babies
09:15 Animal ER
10:10 Rescue Ink
11:05 Animal Fight Club
12:00 Shark Island
12:55 Boss Croc
13:50 Safari Brothers
14:45 Strangest Bird Alive
15:40 Super Squirrel
16:35 Animal ER
17:30 Rescue Ink
18:25 Animal Fight Club
19:20 Strangest Bird Alive
20:10 Super Squirrel
21:00 Animal ER
21:50 Rescue Ink
22:40 Animal Fight Club
23:30 Shark Island



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Harvey Beaks
13:48 Hunter Street
14:12 I Am Frankie
14:36 The Thundermans
15:00 Swindle
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Sanjay And Craig
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Ride



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05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants

Stars

CROSSWORD 1800



ACROSS

1. A diagrammatic representation of the earth's surface (or part of it).
4. The positive fractional part of the representation of a logarithm.
12. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
15. (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
16. Any of several shrubs of the genus *Eleagnus* having silver-white twigs and yellow flowers followed by olive-like fruits.
17. The last (12th) month of the year.
18. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
19. Place (something) where one cannot find it again.
20. A master's degree in business.
21. A deep opening in the earth's surface.
23. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
25. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
26. A dialect of Chinese spoken in southeastern China.
27. Of or relating to or characteristic of Cuba or the people of Cuba.
29. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
30. (trademark) An alloy of iron and nickel having a low coefficient of thermal expansion.
33. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
35. Type genus of the Ranidae.
38. A drug (trade name Tagamet) used to treat peptic ulcers by decreasing the secretion of stomach acid.
41. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Daypro).
44. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
45. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
48. A three-year law degree.
49. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
51. 1 species.
54. A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
57. Wheelwork consisting of a connected set of rotating gears by which force is transmitted or motion or torque is changed.
58. A public promotion of some product or service.
60. A heavy brittle diamagnetic trivalent metallic element (resembles arsenic and antimony chemically).
61. Any of three isomeric hydrocarbons C<sub>4</sub>H<sub>8</sub>.
64. Spot, stain, or pollutant.
67. A theropod dinosaur of the genus *Eoraptor*.
71. Keenly excited (especially sexually) or indicating excitement.
73. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
74. Smelling of fermentation or staleness.
75. Of a cask or barrel.
77. Informal terms for a mother.
78. Paying particular notice (as to children or helpless people).
79. A festival featuring African-American culture.
80. Seed of a pea plant.

DOWN

1. Joint capital (with Riyadh) of Saudi Arabia.
2. A genus of Indrididae.
3. Having nine hinged bands of bony plates.
4. Informal terms for a mother.
5. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
6. Bandicoot rats.
7. United States abolitionist (1786-1865).
8. A small island.
9. Marked by or composed of disconnected parts or sounds.
10. (of champagne) Moderately dry.
11. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
12. Someone whose business is advertising.
13. The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
14. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
22. A member of the Himalayan people living in Nepal and Tibet who are famous for their skill as mountaineers.
24. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
28. The bivalent radical UO<sub>2</sub> which forms salts with acids.
31. The lowermost portion of a structure partly or wholly below ground level.
32. English historian noted for his constitutional history of medieval England (1825-1901).
34. An outlying farm building for storing grain or animal feed and housing farm animals.
36. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
37. A member of a people who have no permanent home but move about according to the seasons.
39. Functioning correctly and ready for action.
40. A Muslim trained in the doctrine and law of Islam.
42. Not only so, but.
43. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
46. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
47. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
50. Mosses similar to those of genus *Bryum* but larger.
52. Superclass of eel-shaped chordates lacking jaws and pelvic fins.
53. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
55. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
56. Small slender African monkey having long hind limbs and tail and long hair around the face.
59. English writer remembered particularly for his novel about Robinson Crusoe (1660-1731).
62. A yellow quartz.
63. Annual to perennial herbs of the Mediterranean region.
65. Flat blade-like projection on the arm of an anchor.
66. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
68. A tool for tamping (e.g., for tamping tobacco into a pipe bowl or a charge into a drill hole etc.).
69. A slender double-reed instrument.
70. Avatar of Vishnu.
72. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
76. The use of bacteria or viruses of toxins to destroy men and animals or food.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you want all eyes on you right now. You are poised to make some big things happen: you re plans are near to being born. You will be approached about lending your ear to someone's serious problem: you will be in the mood to give good input. Your temper could flare when someone complains to you about petty affairs. The urge to run far away to a place that offers only fun is tempting; think before you act. Be careful that you don't offend anyone by doing something for yourself they may not approve of. Put work choices on the back burner for now; you are in the midst of developing new talents. Much of your work can done from home just now. Make memories with those you love tonight, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you will be called on to locate and eliminate something that is causing slowdowns and reversals. A task will require you to pick and choose who will participate in a group effort: this could be an important project. Your attention will turn to your physical well being and dietary needs; perhaps a good time to try shopping at a new store offering healthy foods. Your mind doesn't stop; there are many new things to consider! You may consider your own life and your position in it: are you happy with your progress? you may feel trapped and unable to free yourself; this is a problem you created when you thought you wanted to go in this direction. You long to complete what you start but there is a situation you may have to let go unfinished, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, sentiments run high and stay very close to the surface today; you have the power of self-control. You could feel down in the dumps and pessimistic. Keep the positive state of mind and you will overcome. Wait on making any judgments or choices until your intuition is clear. Your physical health is functioning at a high level and will be valuable in getting some things done; you will feel that you can stick to certain chores until completed. Yoga, housework or anything that calls for movement would be excellent. You want to love and be loved; this could be a good time to consider a romantic interlude. You long for a different routine, new habits, saying goodbye to the past. This evening will be spent doing something you enjoy, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you want to be center stage and in the spotlight today. It is very important to you that others are grateful for what you do for them. This could be a time of great positive change and production, a time you will remember for a long time with great fondness. Your mind is on go; you will have the ability to verbally shoot down anyone challenging you wrongly. You know where you are coming from and can fluently explain yourself to anyone. You will focus on your self-care regarding body, mind and spirit; this will be a priority. Your quirks and different methods will be most helpful in finding solutions. This is the time for clear retrospection and consideration of your place in life; you may love what you discover, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, your hopes and dreams will be a big part of your day as you wish for better things to come. Though it may be tough as you think of the future let your thoughts be filtered by your prudent nature: employing realistic attitudes has helped you in the past. Consider the things that motivate you and try to incorporate them into the normal scheme of things. If you feel downhearted and thwarted in some of your efforts pick up on this vibration and change it. Take a long look in the mirror, figure out the role you play in your life and bringing people into it; do you like what you see? take some quiet time for yourself this evening by having a massage, picking up something new to wear or spending it with your mate or close friend, leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you will feel a need to be recognized and thanked for your contributions. You enjoy giving as much as you do receiving and you want those who receive your gifts to pay it forward. Through your example, you teach others to come from the truth and not their anger. If you feel excluded consider that you may have set yourself up for this by being overcritical or too conservative; there is a thing called give and take and you are good at it when you want to be. You could have a tough time regarding work or home just now; delay making your mind up about any important issues you may have at this time. Let your mind go to the accomplishments you have made. Put your feet up and enjoy dinner in front of the television tonight, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you are exactly where you planned to be professionally and the goals you've reached are exciting. You are grateful, but strange as it seems, the successful path has grown cold and, quite frankly, boring. Breaking away from your current position to pursue other mystic or artistic interests is ill advised and you know this: figure out a way to have both for it is possible. Your boss or other superiors could honor you with praise for a job very well done. A raise in pay could come with this. Someone may invite you to lunch and breakup your otherwise tedious day. No matter how you feel you appear to be interested and ready to help. You could feel that you want to rekindle intimacy with your mate or, if single, find someone you can love and trust, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

Scorpio, you may not feel right in your own skin; it may seem as though you've entered the twilight zone! Look honestly at yourself: have you said hurtful things or done something inappropriate to someone you care for? you would prefer riding horses or skiing but for now your attention is required by your duties. You could feel an urge to be in the limelight just now; someone will be happy to pay attention to you in an intimate way. You stay on track reorganizing a complicated assignment avoiding difficulties as you proceed. You will please a client with the results of your last project and could get more work because of it. Perhaps leaving your work at work and relaxing this evening will relieve stress and nervous energy, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Sagittarius, you long to evolve and step into a different phase of life. New circumstances at work do not match your desire for a change in direction; you may need to seriously consider a new position. You could feel thwarted and blocked with certain assignments you are given. You may experience conflict on an issue and the only way to see any positive results may be to stop insisting. You may want to be center stage. You would like to give but also receive. Motivation for positive outcomes is strong according to your chart. You are not alone when it comes to certain opinions regarding a tricky position. Relax and take a break tonight doing something unusual for yourself; a nice break from monotony would do you wonders now, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you are making memories that you will hold close for a long time. Your life seems disconnected, like you're watching from a distance. The written word, photography, film or painting will provide a great distraction for you now. It's time for you to recline, rest and evaluate all the gains you have made at this time in your life. You may be called on to help with ideas related to your creative side regarding money. You could find yourself working with a group in need of your thoughtful input. The timing is perfect as you feel like being the center of attention now. Enjoy the limelight, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, a surprise comes out of left field when a trusted coworker outright opposes your strategy. You can stay calm and listen with interest; you will gain much respect from your team! Your focus is personal life, acquiring land and property for the future as well as the present. You have entered a strong phase of wanting to create a family legacy. You may call for a family meeting regarding this; your energy is all project this attractive to most. You are drawn to creative efforts just now. Pick up that old project and dust it off; you are currently prepared to see it through to the end. Not a good time to change the work place, but the time to do so will come further into the new year. This period of time will warm your heart in years to come, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, first workday in the new year may call for quick decisions on an approaching deadline that can't be missed. Your solutions are right on target and others eagerly follow where you lead; if you happen to be a follower, doesn't it feel great that the smart choice to listen to another pisces' say, great minds think alike for a reason! While decisions are clear for others, they could be hard for you to make concerning yourself; take time, the answers will come. You value the feeling and opinions of others. You are an exceptional listener. Your body may call for movement today, perhaps a yoga class or aerobic workout would help; or a nice walk through the woods. Think before you shop today and remember the last impulse purchase you made, pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Friendship

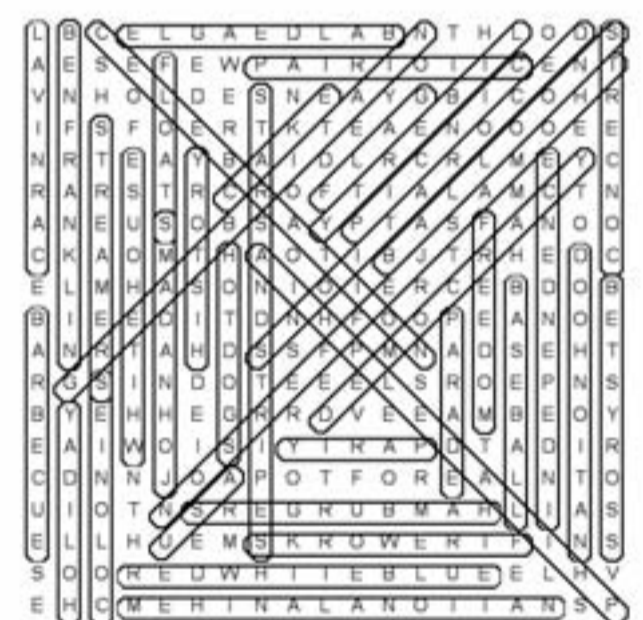
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word related to friendship.



- |              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| ACQUAINTANCE | COMPANION    | HONESTY    |
| AFFECTION    | COMRADE      | KINSHIP    |
| AFFINITY     | CONFIDE      | LOYALTY    |
| ALLY         | EMPATHY      | PAL        |
| AMIGO        | FAVOR        | ROOMMATE   |
| AMITY        | FONDNESS     | SHARE      |
| BOYFRIEND    | FRIENDLINESS | SUPPORTIVE |
| BUDDY        | FUN          | SYMPATHY   |
| CHUM         | GIRLFRIEND   | TRUST      |
| CLOSENESS    | GOOD TIMES   |            |

Yesterday's Solution

Fourth Of July



- |              |               |                 |                   |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| BALD EAGLE   | CONCERTS      | HOLIDAY         | PATRIOTIC         |
| BALLOONS     | DECORATIONS   | HOT DOGS        | PHILADELPHIA      |
| BARBECUE     | DEMOCRACY     | INDEPENDENCE    | PICNIC            |
| BASEBALL     | FIREWORKS     | JOHN ADAMS      | RED WHITE BLUE    |
| BEN FRANKLIN | FLAG          | LIBERTY         | STARS AND STRIPES |
| BETSY ROSS   | FLOATS        | NATIONAL ANTHEM | STREAMERS         |
| CAKE         | FREEDOM       | NATIONHOOD      | THOMAS JEFFERSON  |
| CARNIVAL     | GREAT BRITAIN | PARADE          | USA               |
| CELEBRATION  | HAMBURGERS    | PARTY           | WHITE HOUSE       |
| COLONIES     | HISTORY       |                 |                   |

The hidden quote is: THOSE WHO DENY FREEDOM TO OTHERS, DESERVE IT NOT FOR THEMSELVES

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

# Classifieds

Thursday, January 4, 2018

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

**STATE OF KUWAIT**  
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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

### Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

| WEATHER WARNING |           |           | No Current Warnings            |  |  |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| STATION         | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 03/01/2018 0000 UTC |  |  |
| KUWAIT CITY     | 22 °C     | 12 °C     |                                |  |  |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT  | 21 °C     | 05 °C     |                                |  |  |
| ABDALY          | 20 °C     | 08 °C     |                                |  |  |
| BUBYAN          | 24 °C     | 08 °C     |                                |  |  |
| JAHRA           | 21 °C     | 09 °C     |                                |  |  |
| FAILAKA ISLAND  | 21 °C     | 10 °C     |                                |  |  |
| SALMIYAH        | 20 °C     | 14 °C     |                                |  |  |
| AHMADI          | 20 °C     | 16 °C     |                                |  |  |
| NUWAISSIB       | 23 °C     | 08 °C     |                                |  |  |
| WAFRA           | 21 °C     | 07 °C     |                                |  |  |
| SALMY           | 18 °C     | 07 °C     |                                |  |  |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST |       |  |              |       |                |              |
|-----------------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY             | DATE  | WEATHER                                    | Temperatures |       | Wind Direction | Wind Speed   |
|                 |       |  | MAX.         | MIN.  |                |              |
| Thursday        | 01/04 | Fair                                       | 21 °C        | 05 °C | VRB-SE         | 06 - 26 km/h |
| Friday          | 01/05 | Fair and some scattered clouds will appear | 22 °C        | 09 °C | SE-VRB         | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Saturday        | 01/06 | Fair                                       | 23 °C        | 7 °C  | VRB-NW         | 06 - 28 km/h |
| Sunday          | 01/07 | Fair                                       | 22 °C        | 08 °C | NW             | 15 - 40 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES |       |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr         | 05:18 |
| Sunrise      | 06:43 |
| Zuhr         | 11:52 |
| Asr          | 14:43 |
| Sunset       | 17:02 |
| Isha         | 18:24 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| MAX. Temp.                           | 21 °C      |
| MIN. Temp.                           | 10 °C      |
| MAX. RH                              | 65 %       |
| MIN. RH                              | 25 %       |
| MAX. Wind                            | NW 53 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.             | 0 mm       |

**Required For a Technical Car Inspection Company**

**مطلوب لشركة فحص فني للسيارات**

- Car Inspection Technician
- Car Mechanic Technician
- Car Electric Technician

**Applicant must have:**

- Experience in the same field
- Knowledge of computer use and its application
- Transferable visa

Send CV to  
**work@superservicekw.com**  
 or WhatsApp **96000014**

**Airline**

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| American Airlines    | 22087425   |
| Kuwait Airways       | 22087426   |
| Jazeera Airways      | 171        |
| Jet Airways          | 177        |
| FlyDubai             | 22924455   |
| Qatar Airways        | 22414400   |
| KLM                  | 22423888   |
| Royal Jordanian      | 22425747   |
| British Airways      | 22425635   |
| Air France           | 22430224   |
| Emirates             | 22921555   |
| Air India            | 22438184   |
| Sri Lanka Airlines   | 22424444   |
| Egypt Air            | 22421578   |
| Swiss Air            | 22421516   |
| Saudia               | 22426306   |
| Middle East Airlines | 22423073   |
| Lufthansa            | 22422493   |
| PIA                  | 22421044   |
| Bangladesh Airlines  | 22452977/8 |
| Indian Airlines      | 22456700   |
| Oman Air             | 22958787   |
| Turkish Airlines     | 22453820/1 |
| Aeroflot             | 22404838/9 |

**REQUIRED**

**Executive Secretary**

- Experience in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, etc..)
- Transferable Visa
- Experience in (FMGC)

Please send your CV to:  
 Fax: **22479555**  
 E-mail: **export@barakadates.com**

**FOR SALE**

Household items like laptop, single bed, baby cot, cupboard, small tables, window curtains, baby car seat, Hyundai room heater, floor lamp, wall mirrors, etc. for sale in Salmiya. All items are in very good condition. Please contact 25736319 after 10 am. (C 5372) 29-12-2017

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, **Obanapu Shankaraiah**, holder of Indian Passport No. K2098394 issued at Kuwait on 27/01/2012 S/o Lakshminarasa Reddy shall henceforth be known as **OBULAPU SANKAR REDDY S/o LAKHMINARASA REDDY OBULAPU**, for the purpose of correction of wrong entries mentioned in my passport. 2-1-2018

**EMERGENCY 112**

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

**Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)**

**DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

| Arrival Flights on Thursday 4/1/2018 |      |            |       | Departure Flights on Thursday 4/1/2018 |      |             |       |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|--|------|-------------|-------|
| Airlines                             | Flt  | Route      | Time  | Airlines                               | Flt  | Route       | Time  |
| JAI                                  | 572  | Mumbai     | 00:05 | AIC                                    | 976  | Goa/Chennai | 00:05 |
| JZR                                  | 267  | Beirut     | 00:30 | JZR                                    | 528  | Asyut       | 00:15 |
| KAC                                  | 504  | Beirut     | 00:30 | JAI                                    | 573  | Mumbai      | 00:30 |
| JZR                                  | 539  | Cairo      | 00:50 | FDB                                    | 072  | Dubai       | 00:35 |
| KAC                                  | 102  | London     | 00:50 | PIA                                    | 240  | Sialkot     | 00:40 |
| PGT                                  | 858  | Istanbul   | 00:55 | MSC                                    | 412  | Asyut       | 01:00 |
| THY                                  | 772  | Istanbul   | 00:55 | JAI                                    | 571  | Mumbai      | 01:05 |
| RJA                                  | 642  | Amman      | 01:05 | JZR                                    | 502  | Luxor       | 01:30 |
| WAN                                  | 416  | Beirut     | 01:05 | KAC                                    | 142  | Doha        | 01:45 |
| SAI                                  | 441  | Lahore     | 01:30 | KAC                                    | 677  | Dubai       | 01:50 |
| UAE                                  | 853  | Dubai      | 01:45 | KAC                                    | 417  | Manila      | 02:00 |
| DLH                                  | 625  | Bahrain    | 01:45 | THY                                    | 773  | Istanbul    | 02:30 |
| THY                                  | 764  | Istanbul   | 01:50 | PGT                                    | 859  | Istanbul    | 02:30 |
| AXB                                  | 395  | Kozhikode  | 02:00 | SAI                                    | 442  | Lahore      | 02:30 |
| ETH                                  | 620  | AddisAbaba | 02:15 | DLH                                    | 501  | Frankfurt   | 02:45 |
| JZR                                  | 555  | Alexandria | 02:15 | AXB                                    | 396  | Kozhikode   | 02:55 |
| QTR                                  | 1086 | Doha       | 02:20 | KAC                                    | 351  | Kochi       | 03:05 |
| GFA                                  | 211  | Bahrain    | 02:30 | ETH                                    | 621  | AddisAbaba  | 03:05 |
| KLM                                  | 446  | Bahrain    | 02:30 | UAE                                    | 854  | Dubai       | 03:40 |
| OMA                                  | 643  | Muscat     | 02:55 | QTR                                    | 1087 | Doha        | 03:40 |
| KKK                                  | 1268 | Istanbul   | 02:55 | KLM                                    | 446  | Amsterdam   | 03:55 |
| MSR                                  | 606  | Luxor      | 03:05 | KKK                                    | 1269 | Istanbul    | 03:55 |
| ETD                                  | 305  | AbuDhabi   | 03:10 | OMA                                    | 644  | Muscat      | 03:55 |
| MSR                                  | 612  | Cairo      | 03:15 | THY                                    | 765  | Istanbul    | 04:00 |
| QTR                                  | 1076 | Doha       | 03:50 | MSR                                    | 607  | Luxor       | 04:05 |
| LMU                                  | 510  | Cairo      | 04:00 | ETD                                    | 306  | AbuDhabi    | 04:05 |
| KAC                                  | 382  | Delhi      | 04:15 | MSR                                    | 613  | Cairo       | 04:15 |
| KAC                                  | 544  | Cairo      | 04:25 | LMU                                    | 511  | Cairo       | 05:00 |
| KAC                                  | 418  | Manila     | 04:25 | QTR                                    | 1077 | Doha        | 05:30 |
| KAC                                  | 784  | Jeddah     | 04:35 | FDB                                    | 070  | Dubai       | 05:45 |
| FDB                                  | 069  | Dubai      | 04:55 | KAC                                    | 303  | Mumbai      | 06:05 |
| JZR                                  | 609  | Hyderabad  | 05:10 | JZR                                    | 560  | Sohag       | 06:25 |
| DHX                                  | 170  | Bahrain    | 05:20 | DHX                                    | 172  | Bahrain     | 06:50 |
| JZR                                  | 143  | Doha       | 05:25 | THY                                    | 771  | Istanbul    | 06:50 |
| THY                                  | 770  | Istanbul   | 05:25 | JZR                                    | 164  | Dubai       | 06:55 |
| KAC                                  | 358  | Kochi      | 05:40 | RJA                                    | 643  | Amman       | 07:05 |
| KAC                                  | 332  | Trivandrum | 05:40 | GFA                                    | 212  | Bahrain     | 07:15 |
| KAC                                  | 344  | Chennai    | 05:50 | KAC                                    | 167  | Paris       | 07:35 |
| KAC                                  | 302  | Mumbai     | 06:10 | JZR                                    | 902  | Beirut      | 07:50 |
| KAC                                  | 362  | Colombo    | 06:25 | KAC                                    | 501  | Bangkok     | 08:00 |
| KAC                                  | 678  | Dubai      | 06:30 | KAC                                    | 413  | Bangkok     | 08:10 |
| KAC                                  | 284  | Dhaka      | 06:30 | KAC                                    | 791  | Manila      | 08:35 |
| WAN                                  | 342  | Sohag      | 06:35 | FDB                                    | 054  | Dubai       | 08:35 |
| JZR                                  | 529  | Asyut      | 06:50 | KAC                                    | 787  | Jeddah      | 08:40 |
| KAC                                  | 206  | Islamabad  | 06:50 | BAW                                    | 156  | London      | 08:55 |
| BAW                                  | 157  | London     | 07:10 | KAC                                    | 613  | Bahrain     | 08:55 |
| KAC                                  | 204  | Lahore     | 07:10 | WAN                                    | 133  | Doha        | 09:00 |
| QTR                                  | 8511 | Doha       | 07:35 | KAC                                    | 117  | NewYork     | 09:00 |
| FDB                                  | 053  | Dubai      | 07:35 | QTR                                    | 8512 | Doha        | 09:05 |
| KAC                                  | 354  | Bengaluru  | 07:35 | JZR                                    | 534  | Cairo       | 09:10 |
| JZR                                  | 503  | Luxor      | 07:45 | KAC                                    | 561  | Amman       | 09:40 |
| WAN                                  | 332  | Alexandria | 08:00 | KAC                                    | 741  | Dammam      | 09:45 |
| KAC                                  | 384  | Delhi      | 08:00 | KAC                                    | 101  | London      | 09:45 |
| UAE                                  | 855  | Dubai      | 08:35 | ABY                                    | 126  | Sharjah     | 09:45 |
| IRA                                  | 667  | Esfahan    | 09:00 | KAC                                    | 671  | Dubai       | 09:45 |
| ETD                                  | 301  | AbuDhabi   | 09:05 | KAC                                    | 515  | Tehran      | 10:00 |
| ABY                                  | 125  | Sharjah    | 09:05 | UAE                                    | 856  | Dubai       | 10:00 |
| QTR                                  | 1070 | Doha       | 09:10 | IRA                                    | 668  | Mashhad     | 10:00 |
| FDB                                  | 055  | Dubai      | 09:40 | KAC                                    | 541  | Cairo       | 10:00 |
| FDK                                  | 803  | Damascus   | 10:00 | ETD                                    | 302  | AbuDhabi    | 10:10 |
| SVA                                  | 512  | Riyadh     | 10:00 | KAC                                    | 773  | Doha        | 10:10 |
| IRA                                  | 673  | Ahwaz      | 10:10 | KAC                                    | 617  | Doha        | 10:15 |
| GFA                                  | 213  | Bahrain    | 10:40 | QTR                                    | 1071 | Doha        | 10:20 |
| SYR                                  | 341  | Damascus   | 11:00 | KAC                                    | 155  | Istanbul    | 10:25 |
| WAN                                  | 114  | Bahrain    | 11:00 | FDB                                    | 056  | Dubai       | 10:35 |
| MSC                                  | 403  | Asyut      | 11:15 | JZR                                    | 778  | Jeddah      | 10:40 |
| QTR                                  | 1074 | Doha       | 11:20 | RSB                                    | 7867 | IQA         | 11:00 |
| JZR                                  | 165  | Dubai      | 11:30 | SVA                                    | 513  | Riyadh      | 11:00 |
| NIA                                  | 161  | Cairo      | 11:35 | FDK                                    | 804  | Dammam      | 11:00 |
| WAN                                  | 134  | Doha       | 11:45 | IRA                                    | 672  | Ahwaz       | 11:10 |
| MEA                                  | 404  | Beirut     | 11:55 | GFA                                    | 214  | Bahrain     | 11:25 |
| KAC                                  | 614  | Bahrain    | 12:10 | JZR                                    | 786  | Riyadh      | 12:00 |
| FEQ                                  | 933  | Sohag      | 12:40 | JZR                                    | 776  | Jeddah      | 12:00 |
| JZ                                   | R561 | Sohag      | 12:45 | SYR                                    | 342  | Damascus    | 12:00 |
| FD                                   | B075 | Dubai      | 12:45 | MSC                                    | 404  | Asyut       | 12:15 |
| UAE                                  | 871  | Dubai      | 12:50 | VIZ                                    | 202  | IQA         | 12:30 |
| KAC                                  | 742  | Dammam     | 12:50 | QTR                                    | 1075 | Doha        | 12:30 |
| MSR                                  | 610  | Cairo      | 13:00 | NIA                                    | 362  | Alexandria  | 12:35 |
| AXB                                  | 393  | Kozhikode  | 13:15 |  |      |             |       |
| KAC                                  | 792  | Madinah    | 13:20 |  |      |             |       |

## Lifestyle | Gossip



## BEYONCE APPROACHED SHEERAN ABOUT COLLABORATION

**B**eyoncé approached Ed Sheeran about collaborating after she saw him on YouTube. The pair recently topped the UK charts with a duet of Ed's single 'Perfect' but musician Jools Holland revealed that Beyoncé was impressed with Ed after spotting him on a clip from 'Jools' Annual Hootenanny', which she saw on YouTube. Jools told Event magazine that Beyoncé saw Ed sing Stevie Wonder's 'Master Blaster' on his 2014 show and Jools added: "I can't believe Beyoncé has seen me on YouTube. She said to Ed, 'I saw you on Jools.' My head became so big I could hardly get out the door." Jools also revealed he is a huge fan of Ed, who is performing on the BBC 'Hootenanny' again this year, and said he reminds him of legendary musician Ray Charles. He

said: "I remember when he first came on the show. He had such a strength of conviction in the delivery of a song that it cut straight through. It wasn't phoney or fake. It was like Ray Charles said years ago, 'You can like my music, or not like my music, you can like me, or not like me. As long as you know what I am doing is telling the truth.' I see a lot of that in Ed." However, he worries the 26-year-old star is too nice for the music business. He said: "Nobody likes a nice bloke in music. Want a pantomime villain or somebody who is a bit odd. Ed's a nice fellow but I think, in a way, that makes it harder for him."



## Joe Elliott wouldn't have replaced Brian Johnson with Axl Rose

**J**oe Elliott wouldn't have replaced Brian Johnson with Axl Rose if he was in AC/DC. The Guns N' Roses singer was drafted in for the latter part of the 'Highway to Hell' hitmakers' 'Rock or Bust World Tour' after Brian pulled out due to hearing issues, but the Def Leppard vocalist wouldn't have "dealt with" the situation in that way if he had been part of the group. He said: "I wouldn't have done it like that. 'I can't speak for [AC/DC guitarist] Angus [Young] and his team as to what their reasons were for doing what they did. 'But considering that we had a drummer [Rick Allen] lose an arm and we waited for him. The way that they dealt with it was not the way I would have done it, put it that way.' While he didn't agree with the way Axl took Brian's place in the band, Joe, 58, thought the 'November Rain' singer did a "pretty good job", but to him the current line-up doesn't feel like the AC/DC of old. Speaking on the 'Life in the Stocks' podcast, he added: "I saw some stuff on YouTube, and I think he did a pretty good job, actually. I've got to say, 'He certainly wouldn't have done them any harm. 'There are detractors in any walk of life, so somebody out there thinks it was awful, some people think it's the best thing ever. 'It kept AC/DC on the road I suppose but it's not really AC/DC anymore is it? It's basically just Angus and the other four now.' AC/DC went through a transformation last year with bassist Cliff Williams retiring, Angus' brother Malcolm Young - who quit the group in 2014 - passed away, and Brian pulled out of the tour due to his hearing problems.



## Johnny Marr gets mistaken for Noel Gallagher

**J**ohnny Marr has admitted he gets mistaken for Noel Gallagher at least "every month". The Smiths guitarist - who worked with Noel on 'If Love Is The Law' from his new High Flying Birds album 'Who Built The Moon?' - has told his friend that is regularly asked if he is the former Oasis rocker when he's out in public. Speaking in a new interview for Noel Gallagher's official Facebook page, he said: "I think he thought I was joking about this, until he saw it. If I'm walking around - if not every week, every month - someone says to me, 'Are you Noel Gallagher?' 'And I've told him this - I'm obviously not Noel, but it's because I look like a guitar player. So he's become the sort of generic term for 'rock musician', so I'm alright with that ... I sometimes go 'yeah'. But occasionally [if it's] some little kid in Manchester ... I go, 'Look, you know I'm not Noel Gallagher, right, 'cause he's so recognizable.' And they go, 'Well who are you then?' 'Johnny also explained how Noel is in a special group - including the likes of Madonna - who don't need a surname for people to know who others are referring to. He added: "The other thing about him as well, if someone says 'What you doing?', and I say I'm working with Noel, you don't have to say Noel Gallagher anymore ... So he's become one of those people, you just have the one name now like Madonna." The 54-year-old Mancunian musician discussed how Noel, 50, is a favorite with taxi drivers outside of the pair's hometown of Manchester. He explained: "Taxi drivers love him. I get it, 'cause I'm from the north and I guess I look like a musician. I get the 'You from Manchester then? I had Noel in my cab a few weeks ago. Great, top guy.' 'I won't tell you what the rest of the conversation goes like. 'Top man, top man - mates with him are you? Were you in Oasis?' Oh, it's a long story mate."

## Imagine Dragons tease 'massive' 2018

**I**mage Dragons have teased they have a "massive year" lined up in 2018. The 'Radioactive' hitmakers have found themselves in with a shot of taking home two Grammy Awards at the upcoming ceremony - which takes place at the end of this month - for their track 'Thunder', which is nominated for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance, and their album 'Evolve', which is up for Best Pop Vocal Album. However, the band have claimed winning the awards is just the tip of the iceberg for them, as they are set to have a fantastic year regardless of the award show's results. The band's drummer Daniel Platzman said: "There's so many amazing people nominated for Grammys - [winning] would be great, but it's not really the thing that's going to make or break our 2018. I don't want to give any spoilers, but I will say we definitely have some tricks up our sleeve for 2018. And that does include more than nearly touring the world and getting to take Imagine Dragons to audiences that have never seen us before. For me it's all about the live shows, so 2018 is going to be a massive year." Despite their two Grammy nominations, some fans were disappointed the band hadn't been placed in the 'Rock' category, although the band themselves are not "offended" by which genre they are labeled as. Daniel said: "Nothing really surprises us with genre anymore. I think genre has never meant less than it has in 2017 and onwards. I think it just comes down to the fact that today's listener is very sophisticated and has heard everything - it's just a game changer. It's like if you only had a couple of colors, but then suddenly you saw the whole spectrum. 'I love that people experience our music in a way that they want to call it rock. It doesn't offend us. And it doesn't offend us if people enjoy us and want to call it pop, that's fine."



There's some places where they literally described us as guitar music because there's guitar in it." The big plans for 2018 follow an "overwhelming" 2017 which saw the band release their third studio album 'Evolve' in June, following the success of their previous two ventures, 'Smoke + Mirrors' in 2015, and their 2012 debut 'Night Visions'. Speaking to Billboard, Daniel said of their past year: "It's been overwhelming, but in all the good ways. 2017 was a massive year for us. To release Evolve, to get the response we got just blew us away - we were not expecting it. I'm honestly scared that 2018, if it's any better, my heart will just explode with joy."

## Celine Dion wants Lady Gaga duet

**C**eline Dion would love to duet with Lady Gaga. The 49-year-old singer has admitted she would love nothing more than to get up on stage with the 'Million Reasons' hitmaker when she begins his Las Vegas residency at the end of this year, because she's such a huge fan of the pop megastar. Asked if she would ever duet with Gaga, Celine said: "Oh don't get me started now. I would love that. I love her so much. I can't wait. Come on, Lady Gaga, we're waiting for you!" But the 'My Heart Will Go On' hitmaker - who has had a wealth of experience when it comes to Las Vegas residency shows - had "no advice" for Gaga, 31, about her upcoming shows, because she thinks the star already knows what she's doing. Speaking during CNN's 'New Year's Eve Live' with Andy Cohen and Anderson Cooper, Celine said: "Do I have advice for Lady Gaga? No! First of all, this girl knows exactly what she's doing. She knows what to do. And I will never, ever, ever, in my whole life tell somebody professional, super talented like she is how to do things. I'm going to go see her show. When is she starting?" Gaga is due to perform 36 shows at the Park Theater at Monte Carlo in late 2018, after she confirmed the news in a press release last month. She said: "It's the land of Elvis, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra, the Rat Pack, Elton John, Judy Garland and Liza Minnelli. 'It has been a life-long dream of mine to play Las Vegas. I am humbled to be a part of a historical line-up of performers, and to have the honor of creating a new show unlike anything Vegas has ever seen before. I'll tell you exactly what I told my MGM and Park Theater partners - you can count on this performer always for one thing ... I'll leave my heart on the stage every single night. Thank you to my fans for always believing in me. Meet me in Las Vegas baby, we did it!"



## LOUIS WALSH PREDICTS GIRLS ALOUD REUNION

**A** Girls Aloud reunion can happen if the members put aside their differences, their former manager Louis Walsh has claimed. The 'X Factor' judge helped create the girl group when he was a judge on 2002 TV talent show 'Popstars: The Rivals' along with Spice Girl Geri Horner and producer Pete Waterman and is sure the five-piece can get back together if the members, Sarah Harding, Cheryl Tweedy, Nadine Coyle, Nicola Roberts and Kimberley Walsh can get on the same page. Speaking to The Sun newspaper, he said: "It needs to be the five of them. They'd do really, really well. If Bananarama could do it, why can't Girls Aloud do it?" The band played their final concert back in March 2013 after celebrating their 10th anniversary with a greatest hits tour and compilation album bringing an end to their stellar pop career. Since then the members have all gone in separate directions with Cheryl enjoying solo success on a par with Girls Aloud's chart performance. Louis, 65, knows a reformed Girls Aloud would do well because they had so many hits, such as 'Biology', 'The Promise' and 'I'll Stand By You'. He added: "There

would be a huge market for a Girls Aloud reunion. "They need to delay it for a while but they had great songs, brilliant, brilliant songs - some of the best songs for a long time. And they all look good." However, Louis - who has helped guide the careers of the likes of Westlife and Boyzone over the years - ruled out ever working with the girls again. He explained: "No, no, no - that would be too tough. It's different with Westlife, as we understand each other and I've never had a row with any of them. Girls are too much trouble." Since the band's split Kimberley, Cheryl and Nicola have remained close - the latter even working together in the studio recently - while there's a divide with Nadine and Sarah. Nadine recently admitted she didn't know the celebrations in 2013 would be so short lived, as she expected new music and further live shows. She previously said: "I thought we were going to continue. I thought we were going to do loads and loads of stuff. We had songs, we had a three-album deal and it seemed like a great time. Obviously the girls had different plans."



Lifestyle | Gossip



**Gunn** responds to Foster's superhero comments

**J**ames Gunn has responded to Jodie Foster's comments about superhero movies - insisting she is wrong about what "spectacle films" can be. The 55-year-old actress-and-director recently criticized the popular genre of movies in an interview with Radio Times in which she compared them to "fracking" and that they are "ruining the viewing habits" of the public. She said: "Going to the movies has become like a theme park. Studios making bad content in order to appeal to the masses and shareholders is like fracking - you get the best return right now but your wreck the earth. It's ruining the viewing habits of the American population and then ultimately the rest of the world." Now the 'Guardians of the Galaxy' has given his views on the Academy Award winner's comments and said she is looking at film in an "old-fashioned way" and not taking notice of the humane messages contained in the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies. Writing on Twitter, Gunn said: "I think Foster looks at film in an old-fashioned way where spectacle film can't be thought-provoking. It's often true but

not always. Her belief system is pretty common and isn't totally without basis. I say not without basis because most studio franchise films are quite soulless - and that is a real danger to the future of movies. But there are also quite a few exceptions. For cinema to survive I believe spectacle films NEED to have a vision and heart they traditionally haven't. And some of us are doing our best to move in that direction. Creating spectacle films that are innovative, humane, and thoughtful is what excites me about this job. "But, to be fair, at least from Foster's quotes, she seems to see filmmaking as something that's primarily about her own personal growth. For me, that may be part of why I do this, but spending many millions of dollars on a film has to be about more than that - it's communication - so my experience is merely one spoke on that wheel. But I respect Foster and what she's done for films and I appreciate her different way of looking at Hollywood's landscape. (sic)"



**Blunt** thinks daughter will reject her Mary Poppins

**E**mily Blunt is scared her daughter will "reject" her version of Mary Poppins. The 34-year-old actress will take on the titular role in the musical 'Mary Poppins Returns' - a sequel to the 1964 classic which starred Julie Andrews as the magical nanny - but she's terrified her three-year-old daughter Hazel, whom she has with her husband John Krasinski, will hate it because she's such a fan of the original. Speaking to Vanity Fair magazine, she said: "I have a deep dread she is simply going to reject my version. [I'm scared she'll] be, like, 'You are not Mary Poppins', because she is so in love with Julie Andrews and she knows every single song." Emily has enjoyed filming 'Mary Poppins' but has admitted she was forced to learn a "huge dance number," which she found highly "intimidating", and had to reshoot the scenes "55 thousand times" because she struggled to get it spot on.

She added: "There's a huge dance number, which was slightly intimidating for me. I think I did alright. I mean we did it 55 thousand times, so I hope they got something." Although Emily struggled with that one element, she is glad there has been a positive response to the production. Emily recently revealed a short teaser clip of her in the production, and she found it "very moving" to see the audience's positive react to the remake. She said: "The audience is so receptive and sweet and joyful, so they are the best kind of platform for you to launch a clip of your film. "We just finished a month ago, so it's still very real and present for me, and, you know, very new so it was very moving to see it with reacting like that." 'Mary Poppins Returns' is set to hit the big screens on December 25, 2018.



**CHRISTIAN BALE KEEN FOR STAR WARS ROLE**

**C**hristian Bale wants a role in a 'Star Wars' movie. The 43-year-old actor - who is most famous for portraying Batman in Christopher Nolan's 'The Dark Knight' trilogy - has spilled that he was in talks to star in the upcoming spin-off movie 'Solo: A Star Wars Story' after being contacted by Lucasfilm President Kathleen Kennedy, whom he worked with previously on Steven Spielberg's 1987 coming-of-age war film 'Empire of the Sun'. Although he didn't take up a role in the Han Solo-focused prequel, Bale is keen to be part of the sci-fi saga going forward because he is a huge fan of the franchise as are his family, wife Sibi Blazic, daughter Emmaline and son Joseph. Discussing his 'Solo' offer on Josh Horowitz's podcast Happy Sad Confused, Bale said: "Yes, [it was] very tempting. I not only love the films going back to my childhood but also have a very long relationship with Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall because they did 'Empire of the Sun' many years back. There was discussion, [and] I hope there will be future discussions. "Star Wars' I'm a huge fan. Yeah 'Star Wars' really interests me. I've still got the Millennium Falcon, I've got the AT-AT. My daughter, her first love was Darth Vader. She absolutely

adored Darth Maul. [She] stood near him at Disneyland and he growled and he's got those teeth and he stayed in character, really wonderful performance, and she was teeny and I thought, 'This is gonna scare the crap out of her, this is such a bad idea.' And then she stopped and she said, 'Daddy, I'm in love.' " Bale received universal acclaim for his portrayal of Bruce Wayne and his vigilante alter ego Batman in his three films but despite becoming a global icon due to his appearance as the DC Comics character he admits he's not a fan of superhero films. And the British star has not watched his successor Ben Affleck as The Caped Crusader in the DC Extended Universe. He said: "I have not seen [Ben Affleck's Batman]. Yes I'm interested [in seeing it], my son seemed like he was really interested but then I realised he just wanted to see the trailer. I tend to go see films that [my kids] want to see. I have to confess I'm not a huge superhero film fan. People seem surprised at that, I don't know why. I've not seen any of the 'Avengers' films or any of those films at all. I hear they're very good, but I'm quite happy just hearing they're very good."

**Williams** to compose theme for Han Solo movie

**J**ohn Williams is composing a theme for the Han Solo 'Star Wars' spin-off movie. The five-time Academy Award winning composer has created the score for all of the 'Star Wars' movies to date except one - 'Rogue One: A Star Wars Story' - and in a recent interview with Variety, Williams revealed he is creating a theme for 'Solo: A Star Wars Story'. Williams, 85, said: "The present plan is that I'm writing a theme for Han Solo, and John Powell is going to write the score, which he'll do brilliantly. His assignment is something I'm very happy about. What I will do is offer this to John, and to Ron Howard [director], and if

all parties are happy with it, then I will be happy." 'Solo: A Star Wars Story' focuses on the early years of Han Solo, the Millennium Falcon owning space smuggler who becomes one of the heroes of the Rebel Alliance in their mission to destroy the Empire. Alden Ehrenreich is taking over the iconic role from Harrison Ford, who portrayed the character in four films and for the final time in 2015's 'The Force Awakens'. Han and Chewbacca will be seen first meeting Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover) and they will also encounter Woody Harrelson's alter ego Beckett, who is believed to be a mentor to young Han who guides him on his journey to becoming an inter-

galactic criminal. Ron Howard took over the director's chair from Phil Lord and Chris Miller - who left the prequel spin-off due to creative differences - and although he felt the pressure of contributing a tale to the 'Star Wars' universe he relished every aspect of the job. Howard said: "Those are challenging projects. And they take, you know, a lot of very talented people's energy to try to live up to the legacy of 'Star Wars' and everything that it means. "Of course, no spoilers coming from me but I had a great experience and I think fans are going to really enjoy it."



**J.K. Simmons** felt intimidated starring as Commissioner Gordon in Justice League

**J**.K. Simmons felt slightly intimidated starring as Police Commissioner James Gordon in 'Justice League'. The 62-year-old actor made his first outing as the comic book character briefly in 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice' and reprised his role last year in the DC Extended Universe superhero flick, but has admitted he didn't let past incarnations of the character influence his interpretation. Speaking to the Metro newspaper, Simmons said: "There was definitely a little bit of an intimidation factor but I wasn't going to sit down in my living room, get out my DVDs and watch Gary Oldman. "I obviously had a tiny little part in the first movie and I did more reading of comics and talking to friends who were comic book aficionados rather than watching or listening to the wonderful actors who have played that character in the past." To date, the role of Commissioner Gordon has been played by a number of actors, most notably Oldman in Christopher Nolan's 'The Dark Knight' trilogy. The character was first created by Bill Finger and Bob Kane and made his first debut back in 1939 and became an ally to vigilante Batman in Gotham City. 'Justice League' isn't the first superhero movie Simmons has starred in after playing Daily Bugle newspaper editor J. Jonah Jameson in all three of Sam Raimi 'Spider-Man' movies. Simmons loved playing Jameson and would very much like to make a return to the character in Tom Holland's 'Spider-Man' films which are part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Speaking to Entertainment Tonight last year, he said: "I

never say never. I mean, you know, obviously I had an amazing time with Sam Raimi on those movies and Tobey Maguire and everybody. "That was a great, great time and huge for my career and my life, and just pure fun. If there were an opportunity to revisit that ... I don't know though. How old is 'Spider-Man' going to be if J. Jonah Jameson is this old?"



**Chalamet** thanks Hammer's wife in acceptance speech

**T**imothee Chalamet thanked Armie Hammer's wife for letting him "crawl" over her husband. The 22-year-old actor stars alongside 'The Lone Ranger' actor in the coming-of-age film 'Call Me By Your Name', and at the 29th Annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards Gala on Tuesday, Chalamet won the rising star award. At the event in California, Chalamet - who won the award alongside co-honoree Gal Gadot - thanked Hammer for his "brotherhood" but turned towards his wife Elizabeth Chambers and gave a more comical speech. He said: "It's truly an awesome feeling to get to be in the Rising Stars category tonight alongside Gal Gadot. Gal, your film has literally made 250 times more money than my movie has. I'm left feeling a little insecure, unqualified to be up here but it's OK. "Armie, it's a lot easier to be up here because you're one of my best buddies. Seriously I'm grateful for your big brotherhood and your guidance and friendship. "To have someone in your position, and as talented as you are, be a mentor to me for the last two years is invaluable to me. I really mean it, man. "And special thanks to Armie's wife, Elizabeth Chambers, who is here tonight, as well, who is as crucial to this process as anyone. "And for letting me crawl all over your husband for two months. Thank you for that." 'Call Me By Your Name' - which is based on the novel of the same name - follows the story of a young Italian

man named Elio (Chalamet) who meets Oliver (Hammer) after he visits the country to stay at his parents' villa. The pair then develop a passionate relationship, as they bond over their shared Jewish heritage and their sexuality. Both actors have been nominated for a Golden Globe for their performance in the new movie by Luca Guadagnino. — Bang Showbiz





Beyoncé, Eminem and The Weeknd

## CHINA BOX-OFFICE BACK TO STRONG GROWTH IN 2017

China's box-office revenues surged in 2017 after slowing sharply the preceding year, official media reported, as the world's second-largest movie market edges closer to overtaking the US. Ticket revenue grew 13.45 percent to 55.9 billion yuan (\$8.6 billion) in 2017, more than triple 2016's growth rate, state media Xinhua reported late Tuesday, citing data from the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT). China's box-office grew just 3.7 percent in 2016, dramatically slower than 2015's 48 percent growth.

Over half of 2017's ticket revenue came from domestic films, with record breaking patriotic action blockbuster "Wolf Warrior 2" collecting 5.7 billion yuan, topping the year's box office list. The American action thriller "The Fate of The Furious" came in second, with box-office revenue of 2.7 billion yuan. International films—most of which were made in the US—grossed 25.8 billion yuan and accounted

for 46 percent of 2017's total revenue, compared to 19 billion yuan and 42 percent in 2016.

Hollywood has a keen eye on China's potentially lucrative movie market, although Beijing strictly limits the number of foreign films that can be released in Chinese cinemas. China also takes measures to help boost domestic films' performance, including limiting the screening of foreign films during peak seasons and rewarding cinemas for playing more domestic titles. In December, authorities announced cinemas will be eligible for tax refunds if over 55 percent of their annual ticket sales come from Chinese films. Chinese cinemas pay a five percent tax on gross box-office revenue to the country's cinema regulator for a "movie industry development special fund". The number of Chinese cinemagoers rose 18 percent in 2017. Nearly 10,000 new screens were built, bringing the total number to 50,776, Xinhua said. —AFP

## Singapore bans film focused on indicted Palestinian teen activist

Singapore has banned a film festival from screening a documentary later this week that features a teenage Palestinian female activist whose arrest last month has made her a symbol of resistance to Israeli military occupation in the West Bank. Justifying the ban, authorities in the Southeast Asian city state said the film "Radiance of Resistance" was "skewed" and potentially divisive for Singapore's multi-ethnic population. The documentary, which looks at the Palestine-Israeli conflict through the eyes of 16-year-old Ahd Tamimi and another young female activist, lacked "counterbalance", the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA) said on its website.

"The skewed narrative of the film is inflammatory and has the potential to cause disharmony amongst the different races and religions in Singapore," the IMDA said. The documentary was due to have been shown at the Singapore Palestinian Film Festival on Thursday. It was screened at a number of festivals worldwide in 2017 and won Best Documentary at the Respect Human Rights Film Festival in Belfast, but has become even more topical following Tamimi's arrest last month.

Tamimi was charged on Monday with counts of aggravated assault and will be tried in an Israeli military court. An adult found guilty of assaulting a soldier could be jailed for up to 10 years, but Tamimi is a minor so such an outcome is unlikely. While Singapore's authorities are known to keep a tight rein on public speech and the media, especially when it comes to matters related to race and religion, outright bans are more rare. Adela Foo, the organizer of the Singapore festival, called the ban "understandable", without elaborating. "At the end of the day, the IMDA's position is one to be respected," the 23-year-old student told Reuters.

With a sizable Muslim minority and surrounded by Muslim majority neighbors where sympathy for the Palestinian cause runs high, Singapore maintains friendly diplomatic and military ties with Israel. But it has lined up with many other countries opposed to US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Around 15 percent of Singapore's 3.3 million resident population aged 15 years and over identify as Muslim, recent government surveys show. — Reuters

## Palm Springs International Film Festival



Director Patty Jenkins (left) and actress Gal Gadot attend the 29th Annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards Gala at Palm Springs Convention Center on January 2, 2018, in Palm Springs, California. — AFP photos



Actress Salma Hayek



Actress Saoirse Ronan attends the 29th Annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards.



Actress Jessica Chastain



Actress Allison Janney



Mary J. Blige



Actor Armie Hammer



Actress Octavia Spencer



Actor Willem Dafoe



Actor Sam Rockwell



Actor Sebastian Stan

## Wine about it: Disaster date ends with \$1.5m in art ruined

First dates can be awkward, even nerve-wracking. But the last thing a Texas attorney expected when he went out with a freelance court reporter was that the evening would end with red wine splashed across valuable paintings in his home, including a work by pop artist Andy Warhol. Anthony Buzbee's date with Lindy Lou Layman was by any measure a disaster. The 29-year-old woman had become "heavily intoxicated" while at Buzbee's home in the city of Houston, according to a prosecutor's account in court. "(Buzbee) called for an Uber driver," but Layman went back into Buzbee's home and shouted, "I'm not leaving," the prosecutor told a judge over the weekend while Layman, appearing in an orange jail uniform, stood listening.

After walking back into Buzbee's mansion, Layman poured wine on three paintings before tearing them down, and threw two abstract sculptures across the room, shattering them, according to prosecutors. At least one of the paintings was by Warhol and the total cost of the damage was more than \$1.5 million, Houston TV station KHOU reported.

Layman was arrested a little after midnight on Saturday and charged with a felony count of criminal mischief. The original charging documents stated she was arrested for damaging artworks of \$300,000 in value or greater. She posted \$30,000 bail on Christmas Day and was expected back in court Thursday. — AFP

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Edouard Manet's painting "Chez Tortoni" (top) is seen near an empty frame at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP photos



An empty frame at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.



People walk past the exterior of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

# Clock ticks down on \$10m art reward deadline

It's the largest property crime in US history: the three-decade-old theft of Rembrandt and Vermeer masterpieces from a Boston museum by thieves disguised as police officers in the dead of night. But as the clock ticked toward midnight on New Year's Eve, one detective sat patiently by the telephone and computer screen: could the next call or email finally lead to their recovery and the payout of a \$10 million reward? "It's hard to be confident. I'm very hopeful," said Anthony Amore, director of security at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, who worked previously for Homeland Security and likens his role to that of a private detective.



Anthony Amore, the director of security at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, stands inside of the courtyard.

"One hundred percent of our focus is following up on leads we have received." In May, the museum temporarily doubled to \$10 million a long-standing reward for information leading to the recovery of all 13 works in good condition, hoping that a deadline of midnight on December 31, 2017 would concentrate minds. It is, in the words of the museum, the "biggest private reward ever offered" for stolen property, and backed by the institution and its board of directors.

In the final countdown to the deadline, US press attention sparked an uptick in calls. "Attention is really snowballing," Amore told AFP. "A lot of calls and emails have been coming in." In perhaps the world's biggest unsolved art theft, the thieves walked into the museum in the early hours of March 18, 1990 and stole 13 works of art in 81 minutes, after handcuffing and tying up two security guards in the basement. The stolen art includes three Rembrandts, a Vermeer, and five sketches and watercolors by Degas, together estimated to be worth more than half a billion dollars.

**'What's time off?'**  
Last month's record-breaking auction of Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" for \$450 million in New York has probably made the missing masterpieces only more valuable. Investigators worked tirelessly, but the artwork has never been recovered. Isabella Stewart Gardner, the wealthy collector who endowed the museum, stipulated in her will that nothing should be changed. To that end, the empty frames of the pilfered art still hang in the same spots. In March 2013, the FBI identified the thieves publicly as a criminal organization based in the mid-Atlantic states and New England. But the statute of limitations ran out in 1995, meaning they can no longer be prosecuted.

The FBI in Boston urges anyone with information to come forward as soon as possible. "The investigation has had many twists and turns, promising leads and dead ends,"

spokesperson Kristen Setera said in a statement. "The investigation has led to Europe and Asia. There is no part of the world the FBI has not scoured following up on credible leads." As millions of Americans took time off over the holiday season, Amore stayed wedded to the job in hand. "What's time off?" he quipped. "We have paintings to find." But do rewards even work? Have the paintings not been damaged in the intervening years?

**'Incentive'**

"In my experience they do work, and this \$10 million reward is certainly a significant incentive for anyone with even an inkling of the whereabouts of the pictures to come forward," says Christopher Marinello, a world expert in recovering stolen art. "I still believe, and many people believe these will resurface one day," he told AFP. If experts were to hazard a guess, they would say the art is still in the wider Boston area. Stashed in the attic, hidden in the basement or shoved under a bed. "You can't hang it on the wall," said Amore.

"They are the true definition of priceless," he added. "They can never be sold or moved." While anyone found in possession could still be prosecuted for criminal liability, prosecutors have previously touted potential immunity as bait. "Our focus is not on prosecution. It's totally on recovery," said Amore. But while the reward led to calls, he is tight-lipped on the potential significance of any leads. Only "a few of them," he said, had been "very valuable." And while the \$10 million reward officially reverts to \$5 million on January 1, Amore refused to be drawn on whether it could be extended. "I'm really not thinking about post-deadline," he said. —AFP



This handout image released by Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum shows "Leaving the Paddock", a painting by artist Edgar Degas.



A painting is seen at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

# Arundhati Roy: The literary canary in India's coalmine

'Something will arise either out of destruction or of revolution'



Photo shows Indian author Arundhati Roy during an interview with AFP in New Delhi. — AFP

She may have returned to publishing fiction after a two decade hiatus, but Indian writer Arundhati Roy says she has no plans to sheath her polemical sword anytime soon in a world where the vulnerable are still being "smashed". Sitting in a cafe in the bowels of Old Delhi's labyrinthine streets on a chilly winter's afternoon, the 56-year-old still simmers with the kind of fiery political rhetoric that has made her one of her homeland's harshest modern day critics.

"I would find it very hard to live with myself in this country if I didn't talk about what was going on," she says. "Not only in India but all over the world, an economic system is being created that is driving people apart," she adds. "I'm writing about how this system is actually smashing up the vulnerable in this country." Roy has spent much of the year publicizing her new novel, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" - a sprawling and lavish tale published in June. But inevitably conversations stray onto the kind of political issues she is now equally well known for: Kashmir, Maoist insurgents, environmental activism and the rising communal tensions in modern day India. The novelist and the polemicist is a duality she has worn for twenty years and she's not going to stop now. The new book's dedication after all reads: "To, The Unconsoled."

**Fame and acclaim**

After years of struggling to find her voice, penning television and movie screenplays in Mumbai, the daughter of a Syrian Christian from Kerala and a Hindu Bengali burst onto the scene in 1997 with her debut novel "The God of Small Things". The story of twins Rahel and Estha and their traumatic childhood in Kerala was a publishing sensation, selling more than six million copies worldwide, scooping up the Booker Prize and turning Roy somewhat uncomfortably into a darling of the global literary set.

Many favorably compared her at the time to South Asia heavyweight writers like Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth. But those hoping for a swift series of fiction follow ups were disappointed.

Instead she turned herself into something resembling India's moral conscience, churning out essays on a broad range of topics that riled the country's elite and when it came to her harsh criticism of India's treatment of Kashmir - even earned her a sedition charge. "I get into so much trouble so many times and I keep promising myself

## 'Kind of pacy restlessness'

I won't write another (essay)," she explains. "But it comes from a place where just keeping quiet just doesn't seem to be an option." Her essays, she says, are written with a "kind of pacy restlessness".

But the new novel afforded her an opportunity to write more cautiously and slowly. "When I write fiction I'm the exact opposite. I'm just completely relaxed, completely take my time." Started some ten years ago, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" absorbs many of the leftist political subjects she has written about, forming "part of the foundation" of the book. Among the vast cast are Maoist guerrillas and Hindu nationalist mobs, a transgender community struggling against poverty and prejudice in Old Delhi and a love story set against the backdrop of the Kashmir's long-simmering insurgency.

**'Constructed chaos'**

Compared to her widely acclaimed debut, the reviews

for her belated follow-up are more mixed, with some saying the work is long and chaotic. It is a criticism Roy partially accepts, but brushes off. "I know a lot of people describe it as chaos, but that chaos is constructed," she explains. She expects her readers to spend time exploring the new book. "It's looking at the story as though it's a big city like Delhi," she says. "You can't really just read 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness', you have to get to know it, like you get to know a city: walk through big roads, small roads, courtyards, barren places."

Politics comes fairly easily to Roy, but fiction less so. "It took me a lot of time to recover from 'The God of Small Things'," she admits. "Not just because of the worldly success, but to write something that I dredged up from some place that was quite deep." It is unlikely she will shelve her polemical pen anytime soon. Roy says under the stewardship of Hindu nationalist prime minister Narendra Modi, India is at its most polarized place in years.

She reels off a list of ills, from protesters recently blinded by police shotgun pellets in Kashmir, to the ongoing prejudice against India's "untouchable" castes and rising fundamentalism. "There are mobs running around wanting to burn down cinema halls, there are mobs of huge mustachioed men celebrating sati," she fumes, referencing the historical but extinct tradition where a widow would throw herself onto her husband's funeral pyre.

Critics of Roy's essays say they can be hysterical and narcissistic. But Roy is unrepentant, seeing herself as a much needed canary in the coal mine. "It can't go on like this," she warns. "Something will arise either out of complete destruction or some kind of revolution. But it can't go on like this." — AFP

# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018



Acrobats perform on Tverskaya street in front of the Kremlin during a festival marking the New Year and Christmas in central Moscow on January 2, 2018. Russia celebrates the Orthodox Christmas on January 7th. — AFP

## India limits visitors to save Taj Mahal

India is to restrict the number of daily visitors to the Taj Mahal in an attempt to preserve the iconic 17th-century monument to love, its biggest tourist attraction. Millions of mostly Indian tourists visit the Taj Mahal every year and their numbers are increasing steadily as domestic travel becomes easier. Experts say the vast crowds increase wear and tear on the white marble tomb, which already must undergo regular cleaning to stop it turning yellow from polluted air, and could put pressure on its foundations. In future only 40,000 local tourists will be allowed to enter the historic complex per day, authorities said yesterday.

"We have to ensure the safety of the monument and visitors as well. Crowd management was emerging as a big challenge for us," an official with the Archeological Survey of India—which controls the monument—told AFP on condition of anonymity. The restrictions will not apply to foreigners, who pay 1,000 rupees (\$16) to enter. Indian visitors normally pay just 40 rupees, but will be able to buy the more expensive ticket if they want to get around the limit. The Taj Mahal was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth in 1631. Anyone wanting to see the main crypt, which houses the couple's spectacular marble graves inlaid with semi-precious stones, will also have to pay for the pricier ticket. The graves also date back to the 17th century but do not actually contain the bodies of the royal couple, who are buried under a separate lower chamber.

### Chaotic

Visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage site already have to contend with lengthy queues and heavy security. The plan to restrict visitors comes after five people were injured in a crush on the last day of the year, which often attracts large crowds. "It's a welcome move because the last time we came here it was very chaotic," Seema



Crowds gather to visit the Taj Mahal in Agra yesterday. — AFP photos

Sarkar, a tourist from the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, told AFP. Local tourist police inspector R.B. Pandey said it was a much needed step. "It's priceless heritage and if we don't cap the tourist numbers it will be lost for future generations," he said. "You just cannot control such huge crowds."

Daily visitors to the Taj Mahal average 10,000-15,000 but can be much higher at weekends, going up to around 70,000. Nearly 6.5 million visited the monument in 2016, according to government figures. The Taj Mahal has attracted world leaders and royalty, including former US President Bill Clinton. Diana, the late British

princess, was famously photographed alone on a marble seat there in 1992.

But the mausoleum faces an array of threats, including the yellowing effects of smog. In 2016, green stains on its rear wall were blamed on excrement from insects. Authorities have in the past covered the iconic monument's facade with "mud packs" made of fuller's earth, which draws out the impurities, to restore its whiteness.—AFP



Visitors take a photo in front of the Taj Mahal in Agra.



## 'Alphabet Series' author Sue Grafton dead at 77

Sue Grafton, the prolific author of the bestselling "Alphabet Series" mysteries featuring private investigator Kinsey Millhone, has died at the age of 77. Grafton died after a two-year battle with cancer, her daughter Jamie said on the author's Facebook page. Grafton was best known for her mystery series with alphabetical titles. The first book in the series, "A is for Alibi" came out in 1982 and the latest, "Y is for Yesterday," in August of this year. Her daughter said that would be the last. "Sue always said that she would continue writing as long as she had the juice," her daughter wrote on Facebook.

"Many of you also know that she was adamant that her books would never be turned into movies or TV shows, and in that same vein, she would never allow a ghost writer to write in her name," she said. "Because of all of those things, and out of the deep abiding love and respect for our dear sweet Sue, as far as we in the family are concerned, the alphabet now ends at Y." Kinsey Millhone, the main character in Grafton's "Alphabet Series," is a former police officer who left the force and became a private investigator. The books are set in Santa Teresa, a fictionalized version of Grafton's southern California hometown of Santa Barbara. Grafton's books have been translated into 26 languages, according to her website. —AFP



This file photo shows author Sue Grafton posing with a copy of her book 'R is for Ricochet' at the 10th annual Los Angeles Times Festival of Books at UCLA in Los Angeles, California. — AFP