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# Amir: Cooperation key to confront Gulf challenges

## Sheikh Sabah warns challenges mounting in region

**KUWAIT:** The 11th meeting of chairpersons and speakers of shura, representative councils and national assemblies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was inaugurated yesterday under the patronage and attendance of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Sheraton Hotel. During the opening speech, the Amir stressed on the need of cooperation between the Gulf states to face the mounting challenges, hailing the initiative of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who called for holding this meeting.

Sheikh Sabah spoke of the important decisions taken at the 38th Gulf Cooperation Council summit held in Kuwait in December, regarding joint GCC efforts and cooperation. HH the Amir also expressed his joy over hosting the 23rd football Gulf Cup, which concluded on Friday. He noted that such events bring GCC citizens closer.

The Amir said that it is the GCC leaders' responsibility to meet the needs and hopes of their people by cooperating with each other to set a roadmap for development, amidst different growing challenges in the region. He added the Gulf states had seen prominent achievements in the past four decades in representing the Gulf region at the international level. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah pose for a photograph with the heads of shura, parliament and national councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council yesterday. — AFP (See Page 2)

### News in brief

#### Kuwait Energy in merger talks

**DUBAI:** SOCO International, an oil and gas exploration and production company listed on the London Stock Exchange, said yesterday it was evaluating a merger with oil and gas firm Kuwait Energy. SOCO, which has a market capitalization of about \$500 million, said discussions with Kuwait Energy's newly constituted board were preliminary and no deal terms had been agreed. "SOCO confirms that, in the context of its stated objective to strategically reshape its business and grow its portfolio, it is evaluating a potential merger of equals with Kuwait Energy," the company said in a statement.

#### Saudi stadiums open to women

**RIYADH:** Sports stadiums in Saudi Arabia will open their doors to women to attend football matches for the first time ever on Friday, the government has announced. "The first match that women will be allowed to watch will be Al-Ahli versus Al-Batin on Friday January 12," the ministry of information said in a statement yesterday. It said women would also be able to attend a second match on the following day and a third one on Jan 18. Women from across the vast Gulf kingdom may be able to take advantage of this new freedom as the first match will be held in the capital Riyadh, the second in Jeddah on the Red Sea and the third in the eastern city of Dammam.

#### US police killed 987 in 2017

**WASHINGTON:** Police officers shot and killed nearly 1,000 people in the United States in 2017, slightly more than the previous year, according to a tally published yesterday by The Washington Post. A total of 987 people were fatally shot by US police last year, up from 963 in 2016 and down from 995 in 2015, the Post said. Nineteen unarmed black men were killed by US police in 2017, up from 17 in 2016 but down from 36 in 2015. Black men, both armed and unarmed, accounted for 22 percent of all people shot and killed by US police last year but make up just six percent of the total US population. Overall, police shot and killed 68 unarmed people in 2017, up from 51 in 2016 but down from 94 in 2015.

#### Jordan foils IS attack plot

**AMMAN:** Jordan said yesterday it had foiled an Islamic State plot that included plans for a series of attacks last November on security installations, shopping malls and moderate religious figures, state media reported. State news agency Petra said the country's intelligence department had arrested 17 members of the cell and confiscated weapons and explosives that the militant group had planned to use in several operations. The detainees were being interrogated before being put on trial in a military court, the authorities said.

## Syrian regime pounds rebels; drones attack Russian bases

**BEIRUT:** Regime forces upped the pressure on two of the last rebel bastions in Syria yesterday, pounding the Eastern Ghouta enclave near Damascus and the northern province of Idlib. Shelling and air strikes on Ghouta, which government forces have besieged for four years, killed at least 20 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The semi-rural area east of the Syrian capital is home to around 400,000 inhabitants and is targeted almost daily by regime forces trying to flush out rebel groups.

Yesterday, a woman and her three children were killed in regime strikes on Douma, which is the main town in Eastern Ghouta. Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Observatory, said. In the town's morgue, medics were wrapping the children's shredded bodies in shrouds amid the shrieks of bereaved parents, an AFP correspondent reported. Chaos engulfed the rudimentary facility as rescuers kept rushing in more wounded, some of whom died before they could receive life-saving treatment.

"I was at the market with my father, selling mint, parsley and onions. The next thing I knew, my foot was bleeding and my dad had a head injury," said Ahmed Hatem, an 11-year-old boy, as he sat on the floor wincing in pain. A child and two other civilians were also killed in strikes on the small town of Madira, the Observatory said. The violence also left



**MADERA, Syria:** The body of a child lies on the ground at a makeshift hospital following air strikes in this rebel-controlled town in the eastern Ghouta region yesterday. — AFP

another 13 civilians dead across Eastern Ghouta. The area, which had been designated as a "de-escalation zone" as part of an international deal last year to bring down violence levels, has witnessed major bloodshed in recent weeks. Syrian forces also managed overnight to pin back rebels who had surrounded a regime base there.

Continued on Page 11

## Bacteria makes blue jeans green

**PARIS:** They can be tight, flared, ripped at the knee. Jeans come in all styles and colors these days, but one hue will always be synonymous with the world's favorite garment: indigo blue. To satisfy the world's seemingly insatiable demand for blue denim, more than 45,000 tonnes of indigo dye are produced every year, with much of the waste making its way into rivers and streams, conservationists say. Yesterday, scientists announced they had developed a greener method to produce the coveted tint — using lab-grown bacteria.

While not yet commercially viable, the technique holds promise for a "much-needed update to the historic, but unsustainable, indigo dyeing process," researchers wrote in the journal Nature Chemical Biology. "Demand for the dye is higher than ever before, making its ecological consequences unsustainable," they warned.

Originally extracted from plants, indigo is one of the oldest dyes, with evidence of its use in textile coloring going back some 6,000 years. It is prized for being vibrant and long-lasting, and was an important cash crop until humans started making synthetic indigo in the early 1900s. Indigo crystals cling easily to the cotton fibers used in jeans and are resistant to laundry detergents, yet flake

Continued on Page 11



**PHUC SEN, Vietnam:** This file photo taken on Oct 22, 2015 shows indigo leaves used to dye materials by Nung ethnic women in this village in the northern province of Cao Bang. — AFP

## Conjoined Gaza twins separated in Saudi operation

**RIYADH:** Conjoined twin girls born in the blockaded Palestinian enclave of the Gaza Strip were separated in "successful" surgery in Riyadh yesterday, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said in a statement. Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Rabiah, who headed the team that operated on Farah and Haneen at the King Abdullah Specialist Children's Hospital, "affirmed the success of the separation surgery", SPA said.

The operation began yesterday morning, and involved nine stages of anesthesia and the separation of multiple organs, including the liver, as well as restoring organs in Haneen. The news comes months after a doctor and family member of the twins pleaded from Gaza that they be allowed to go abroad for the complex surgery.

Continued on Page 11



**GAZA CITY:** This file photo taken on Oct 22, 2017 shows then one-day-old Palestinian conjoined twins in an incubator at the nursery at the Al-Shifa Hospital. — AFP

# Kuwait's chief lawmaker pins hope on GCC parliament speakers meeting

Bahraini speaker acclaims Amir's Gulf meeting patronage



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top officials attend the 11th meeting of GCC parliament speakers.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that a conference involving chief lawmakers from across the Gulf could bring welcome respite in what appears to be a dismal state of affairs in the region. Addressing a conference involving all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) parliament speakers, Ghanem pointed out that a spate of high-profile events hosted by Kuwait, including the 23rd Gulf Arabian Cup, have allowed GCC states to rekindle goodwill among the neighbors.

He lamented that an ongoing Gulf diplomatic rift has deeply distressed Gulf leaders in a region that has long been accustomed to amity, saying that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad



## Attendance reflects Amir's eagerness for stronger GCC

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah finds gratification in seeing the people of the Gulf in solidarity. Kuwait's chief lawmaker stressed that his country never wavered in its belief that the bond between Gulf nations is largely impenetrable and that the region's leaders have built ties that will never be broken. He went on to thank his Gulf counterparts for attending the conference,

wishing the region continued prosperity.

### Gulf unity

Meanwhile, Bahraini Representatives Council Speaker Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mallah voiced much thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for patronizing and attending the 11th meeting of GCC parliament speakers. Speaking at the meeting, Mallah said the meeting is part of His Highness the Amir's initiatives aiming at maintaining Gulf unity, citing the recent

successful Gulf summit and 23rd version of the Arabian Gulf Cup as clear-cut paradigms in this regard.

He added that history and generations to come would never forget His Highness the

Amir's great efforts and unshakable keenness on consolidating and beefing up Gulf solidarity. The Bahraini parliament speaker hoped that this gathering, hosted by Kuwait, would come up with recommendations purposed to support the role of Gulf parliaments in ensuring bright future for all Gulf countries, people and coming generations.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech during the 11th meeting of GCC parliament speakers.



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem delivers a speech during the 11th meeting of GCC parliament speakers.



Bahraini Representatives Council Speaker Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mallah addresses the audience during the 11th meeting of GCC parliament speakers.

### Relentless eagerness

Addressing the gathering, GCC Secretary-General Abdul-Latif Al-Zayani said His Highness the Amir's patronage and attendance of this meeting reflected His Highness the Amir's relentless eagerness to keep the Gulf bloc stronger and firmer in the face of surrounding challenges. He also spoke highly

of all the GCC leaders' efforts to fulfill the expectations and hopes of the GCC people.

Zayani congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of the recent Gulf summit and Arabian Gulf Cup, held in Kuwait, which proved deep and concrete bonds among the Gulf brothers. He further voiced gratitude to the Gulf legislative councils for

their efforts over the recent period with a view to promoting and strengthening Gulf cooperation and coordination in the parliamentary field. The GCC chief also thanked them for having adopted laws and legislations aiming at maintaining Gulf security and stability and fighting terrorism and extremism. —KUNA

## Amir, Crown Prince receive GCC representatives

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Chairpersons and Speakers of Shura, Representatives Councils and National Assemblies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and GCC Secretary General Abdul-Latif bin Rashid Al-Zayani on the occasion of their visit to the country. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah later met with Ghanem and the GCC speakers' delegation. Protocol Chief at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended the meeting. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with GCC parliamentary representatives. —KUNA

## Cabinet applauds Gulf Cup organizers

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti cabinet yesterday highly commended the great efforts of the organizing committee of the recent 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup. During a weekly meeting held at Seif Palace and presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the cabinet appreciated the performance of all participating Gulf football teams. The key role of workers and volunteers in gearing up for, and organizing, this successful Gulf football champi-

onship, was also lauded during the cabinet's meeting.

In a related issue, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee Anas Al-Saleh, and the minister of commerce and industry and of state for youth affairs, and the minister of health affairs gave briefings on the circumstances of the accident at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium following the Oman-UAE final.

The accident, which was triggered off by a glass barrier collapse, left a number of Omani fans injured. They were immediately taken to nearby hospitals for necessary medical treatment. However, the cabinet did not forget to voice heartfelt and sincere congratulations to Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said and all Omani

people on their national football team's win of the Gulf sports event.

The Kuwaiti ministers underscored that this sports gathering embodied bonds of amity and solidarity as well as fair competition, wishing all Gulf people continued progress and welfare. They also congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the successful tournament, held in Kuwait between December 22 and January 5. Finally, the cabinet reflected on an array of crucial subjects and matters on the agenda of the National Assembly's, along with the latest Arab and international developments. —KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak chairs the cabinet's meeting. —KUNA

Local

# Kuwait to continue support until Iraq achieves security and stability: Jarallah

## Kuwait hosts Iraqi reconstruction conference on Feb 12-14

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah announced yesterday at the foreign ministry that Kuwait will host the international conference for Iraqi reconstruction on Feb 12-14, adding that Kuwait has performed its humanitarian, moral, Arab and Islamic role to help and support the brotherly country of Iraq. He stressed that Kuwait's support for Iraq "has not stopped and will not stop" until it achieves security and stability. He expressed his congratulations to Iraq on its victory over terrorist organizations.

Jarallah added Kuwait started preparing for the conference since His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced the country's intention to host it. "The conference will give the private sector a chance to participate, and this role will be crystallized through the entry of the World Bank as a major contributor to provide guarantees required for the private sector," he said. Jarallah stressed that Kuwait informed the Iraqi delegation at yesterday's meeting of the developmental and investment needs related to the Iraqi people, who are the main pillars of the conference.

### Outstanding issues

On the outstanding issues between the two coun-

tries, he said these files are few, praising cooperation by Iraq to resolve outstanding problems and looking forward to resolving the remaining files, noting the meeting of ministers of coalition countries fighting the Islamic State (IS) on Jan 13. "We look forward to this meeting with optimism, and we believe that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit, the Gulf Cup and the Gulf parliaments' meeting are contributing to ending the longstanding crisis," Jarallah said.

### A chance for private sector to participate

conference. We will prepare investment plans and reports on the volume of damage and the need for reconstruction according to field studies delivered to the World Bank, and will refer during the conference the subject of humanitarian operations in liberated areas," he said.

Alaq noted that the housing sector had suffered the greatest damage, then the oil and energy sector, along with basic services such as water and sanitation, and the reports include all the details. "At this conference, we look forward to major contributions from the coun-

Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Ministers Dr Mahdi Al-Alaq said \$100 billion is the amount needed for the reconstruction of Iraq. "This conference came after a series of meetings with our Kuwaiti brothers to agree on the papers of the conference and their research. The investment opportunities will be announced during the



**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Council of Ministers of Iraq Dr Mahdi Al-Alaq (left) and Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah attend a press conference at the Kuwaiti foreign ministry in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

tries of the world and active participation by the private sector," he added.

Director-General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) Abdulwahab Al-Bader said that the fund has been in Iraq for many years and at various

levels, notably in funding the education sector. "The fund is also preparing for this conference. A team from the fund was present at the end of last year to participate in the preparation of reports for this conference with other stakeholders," he said.

## PM receives Head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service of the United Kingdom Sir Alex Younger. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service of the United Kingdom Sir Alex Younger and his accompanying delegation on the occa-

sion of their visit to the country. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Chief of National Security Agency at the Ministry of Interior Affairs Maj Gen Essam Al-Naham. — KUNA

## India's minister Dr Singh due



Dr (Gen) V K Singh

**KUWAIT:** India's Minister of State for External Affairs Dr (Gen) V K Singh will visit Kuwait on Thursday (Jan 11). The visiting minister is scheduled to hold an interactive session with the Indian community at 5:00 pm on Thursday at the embassy auditorium, the Indian embassy informed. During his visit, the minister is expected to discuss a wide range of issues with the authorities here.

## Housing minister, Qatari official discuss bilateral cooperation



**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri meets with Minister of Transport and Communications in the state of Qatar Jassim Al-Sulaiti. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri received yesterday Minister of Transport and Communications in the state of Qatar Jassim Al-Sulaiti. Both ministers discussed ways to develop bilateral relations and strengthening bilateral cooperation in various fields especially in developing

national plans. Boushehri affirmed the strong social, economic and historic relations between Kuwait and Qatar and the keenness of the state of Kuwait to promote relations to serve the common interests of peoples of both countries. Minister Sulaiti expressed hope that the visit would achieve the desired goals in the interests of the two countries. — KUNA

# Kuwait Times

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A participant and his falcon take part in a falcon race held as part of the Gulf Popular Heritage Festival in Kuwait. —KUNA

# Bahrain Tourism Authority announces 4th shopping festival

To be held from Jan 11 to Feb 10



KUWAIT: Director of Tourism and Marketing Promotion at Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority Yousef Al-Khan (right) speaks during the press conference. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The fourth edition of the Bahrain Shopping Festival 'Shop Bahrain', the largest event in the kingdom, will be held from Jan 11 to Feb 10, 2018. This was announced during a press conference held in Kuwait organized by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority in partnership with stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

After the success of the previous versions, this year's festival has even more participants and offers more prizes. "This year the number of participating shopping malls increased up to 21, hotels increased to 27 and restaurants up to 44. 'Shop Bahrain' will include an impressive line-up of events and activities for the entire family to enjoy, including a unique shopping experience that will offer visitors the opportunity to win valuable prizes in raffle draws held during the 30-day event," said Director of Tourism and Marketing Promotion at Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority Yousef Al-Khan during the press conference held yesterday at the Four Seasons Hotel as part of their GCC roadshow.

The festival is organized by the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) in cooperation with partners from the public and private sectors such as Tamkeen, YK Al Moayyed, VIVA Bahrain and Gulf Air. "The festival is in line with the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority's long-term strategy 'Ours, Yours' that aims to attract visitors from neighboring GCC countries and around the world, as well as promoting the kingdom as an ideal and accessible family

destination, which contributes towards the national economy," noted Khan.

### Three sectors

The national event focuses on the kingdom's three main sectors - tourism, retail and culinary, offering visitors a unique shopping experience filled with valuable prizes, as well as an array of events and activities for the whole family to enjoy, including various in-mall activities and the much anticipated 'Festival City' that will host well-known social media influencers from Bahrain and the region, in addition to live concerts and other exciting activities. The new edition will also see the return of the 'Taste Tour', which will be held at various restaurants with an aim to showcase the kingdom's distinctive hospitality sector. The 'Taste Tour' will also offer visitors an unforgettable culinary experience by tasting the set menus available at the participating restaurants.

The period of the festival was chosen to suit GCC visitors in particular. "We were keen to host the festival during official holidays in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations in order to attract a large number of tourists to the country," Khan added. Throughout the duration of the festival, shoppers will be able to grab the opportunity of winning fabulous prizes by entering the raffle draws. For every BD 1 spent, shoppers will earn 3 points to enter the draw, and the more points collected, they increase their chances to win. Three raffle draws will be held every week.

### 'Festival City'

The calendar of events also includes the 'Festival City'



Pictures taken from last year's 'Shop Bahrain' festival.

located at Bahrain Bay, which will host a variety of activities and carnival games for all age groups, in addition to an outdoor market, live performances and acts in both Arabic and English. "Other highlights include the return of the 'Taste Tour', which aims to showcase over 40 mouth-watering restaurants located all around the Kingdom of Bahrain. Also, the excitement doesn't end here - shoppers registered in the festival's loyalty system at participating hotels and shopping malls will be able to enroll in raffle draws for a chance to win valuable prizes," stressed Khan.

The authorities in Bahrain have also recently eased the process and procedure of obtaining a visa to the kingdom,

including visas for tourists and businessmen along with residents of Gulf countries. Nationals from over 113 countries can now obtain a visa via the eVisa website ([www.evisa.gov.bh](http://www.evisa.gov.bh)) and nationals from 66 countries can obtain a visa upon arrival at the Bahrain International Airport.

Shop Bahrain is in line with the kingdom's historic position, further cementing its role as a regional commercial hub due to its strategic location. The government of Bahrain has been streamlining its efforts to attract foreign investment, which has resulted in the availability of many international brands and malls in the kingdom.

## Local

# Mother wins custody after child tells judge about 'abusive' father

## Visa formats' adjustment delays work permits

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** In a tragic family dispute case, a child was brought before the judge at the Ja'afari court yesterday in accordance with the child's law, and was asked which of his divorced parents he would like to live with. The child kept silent and nodded down, which touched the hearts of everybody present in the courthouse. The judge stepped down from his bench, kissed the child and reassured to pass a sentence according to his choice. The child responded, saying that he wanted to live with his mother because his father beats him and that they do not like each other. The mother's Attorney Howra' Al-Habib demanded that the court grants custody to the mother, which was sentenced.

### Work permits

Issuing work permits was suspended in various

labor departments as a result of ongoing operations carried out by the Ministry of Interior to adjust the entry visa formats. The Public Authority for Manpower is currently working with the Interior Ministry to solve the problem as soon as possible in order to avoid stacking piles of unfinished transactions. The malfunction appeared when electronic orders to issue work permits were given and on investigating the matter, IT staff found out that MOI had changed the entry visa forms' format, which caused a printing failure at the manpower authority.

### Air quality

The Environment Public Authority (EPA) revealed plans to offer a tender for bidding to build new air quality and pollution detection centers around Kuwait, EPA sources said. They added that 28 fixed mobile

units were already in service, including 15 run by EPA and 13 owned by the Ministry of Oil. The new units will be distributed in various areas, namely in new cities as a part of a project to monitor pollution through fixed and mobile units to develop air control monitoring programs. The project includes building national plants to detect all types of pollutants within the 2020-2035 plan.

### Food safety

Farwaniya department at the public authority for food and nutrition resumed its inspections yesterday in Rabiya, Khaitan, Farwaniya and Rai. The crackdown which resulted in filing various citations including hiring laborers without health certificates, using expired health certificates and not maintaining proper hygiene. The campaigns also resulted in confiscating and destroying 300 kilograms of inedible meat.



## Rental Laws in Kuwait

Legalese

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



The new year has started and people have been making changes in their lives, from new health and lifestyle options, to better careers, or new homes. So it is no surprise that I have been receiving many questions regarding rental laws in Kuwait and one major question has been about paying rent online.

When discussing housing laws, one thing that needs to be mentioned is that, thanks to technology, there has been a shift in rental laws around the world. New innovations were introduced, such as peer-to-peer housing like Airbnb and online Fintech solutions for payments, such as the local tech companies. The rental laws in Kuwait have not changed; in fact, the Kuwait rental law 35 has been in effect since 1978! But with that said, I think there is a shift in the Kuwaiti market with local concepts such as Ajar Online and Ajarity, online payment platforms for rent collection.

### Local app

**Question:** My landlord has asked me to pay my rent using a local app, through a notice, stating that the company will no longer accept cash or bank deposits. I am not sure if I should pay the rent online, as I am not sure if this will legally hold up in court. Can you please let me know if it is legal to pay rent online or not?

**Fajer:** It is legal for you to pay rent online, and when you are using online payment methods, there will still be proof of payment through the bank. I would just make sure that I am receiving electronic receipts and that you are not being forced to pay commission or other fees for using the app.

### Auto-renewal

**Question:** I have been living in an apartment for 18 months, but only had a one year contract. Does that mean that my contract automatically renewed itself for a year? And if so does that mean I cannot leave till the remaining six months are over?

**Fajer:** If the term of your rent contract ends, yet you continue to occupy the space and pay the rent in a timely manner, then your contract is renewed for the period of your rent payment. For example, if you pay monthly, then your contract is renewed month-by-month even though you initially had a one year contract. To put it in simple terms anything beyond the initial term of your contract is renewed according to what you are paying for.

### Different amount

**Question:** My rent is KD 600 but my landlord wants to put KD 800 on the rental contract and rental receipt. I am not agreeing to this and as a consequence they are refusing to let me pay rent or issue me a receipt. My discussions were all verbal with the haris (janitor) as the manager does not speak English. How do I deal with this?

**Fajer:** Your landlord is not being logical and although I do not want to assume things, but putting a higher price for the apartment than what it really is could give your landlord a lot of advantages, they can raise the rent even more than the KD 800 in five years, or they can even say that you have not been paying the actual amount!

I suggest you bring in a friend that speaks Arabic to try and talk to them and let them know that this is not acceptable, and if they refuse to take the rent, then you can pay your rent in court.

Questions or queries can be sent to ask@fajertelawyer.com

## MP Fahhad blasts delay in procedures over prisoners

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Islamist opposition MP Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi yesterday lashed out at those who are delaying procedures regarding completing the trial of opposition activists currently jailed for storming the National Assembly building six years ago. Enezi said that the procedures have been delayed "beyond the natural" duration and asked to whose interest the delay was.

The appeals court late November sentenced 67 opposition activists, including a number of MPs, to several years in jail for storming the National Assembly after they had been acquitted by the lower court. A large number of them had been taken to jail waiting for the court of cassation to start its procedures to look into their cases. But the procedures had been delayed which means the convicts will stay longer in jail.

## Fireman hurt in Salmiya blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Firemen dealt with a blaze reported in a five-storey Salmiya building yesterday. Firefighters from the Bidaa and Salmiya fire stations responded and evacuated the building before putting out the flames. A fireman suffered from smoke inhalation and was taken to hospital.

### KD 1 million debtor caught

Hawally police arrested a man wanted for several debt cases totaling more than KD 1 million. The suspect, Kuwaiti, was sent to the Civil Investigations Department, Al-Rai reported. Meanwhile, a Syrian man was arrested on a KD 7,316 debt and sent to concerned authorities.

### Mall inspection

Ahmadi violations removal team conducted an inspection in a Fahheel mall to check if signboard licenses were up to date and if workers' health certificates were valid. Head of the team Mohammad Al-Khalidi said 90 stores were inspected and 13 citations were issued.

Enezi deplored the "deliberate" delay of the court procedures and held the government responsible for any harm that may be inflicted on the prisoners. He said that legal experts have said that the prisoners are being held hostage because they are not either freed nor sent to court.

The lawmaker said that article 34 of the constitution bans any moral mistreatment of prisoners which includes delaying their trial. He said the situation have been aggravated after a number of prisoners went on hunger strike to protest mistreatment.

In the meantime, Kuwait Society for Human Rights yesterday declared its support and backing for the prisoners who began a hunger strike. The society said the prisoners have full right to observe a hunger strike to press for human rights demands or to protest ill treatment.

Among those who went on strike is MP Waleed Al-Tabtabai who was sentenced to seven years in jail. The strikers stress that the court handed them harsh sentences without enabling them to make their defense in a proper way.

### Early retirement

In another development, a controversy erupted

### Drug possession

Farwaniya police arrested a Kuwaiti citizen with possession of three envelopes of heroin. The man was sent to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD). Meanwhile, an Indian man was arrested with possession of four pieces of hashish and four envelopes containing shabu (meth), and he was sent also sent to DCGD.

### Bootleggers arrested

Two Asians were arrested for selling liquor to their compatriots. Both were sent for deportation. The duo were caught after a failed attempt to escape, and more than 5,000 liquor bottles were found with them.

### Addicts busted

A woman and two men were found in an abnormal condition inside a car in Andalus. They were arrested and sent to DCGD. Patrol officers grew suspicious of the car that was parked in a space in the area, and found the three individuals sleeping inside. None of the three carried any IDs with them.

### Thefts

Farwaniya detectives are looking for a thief who stole KD 1,000 from a Farwaniya Co-operative branch Society branch during Dhuhr prayer. The man reportedly switched off the CCTV cameras at the store to avoid being identified. Investigations are ongoing.

among lawmakers yesterday over a decision by the financial and economic affairs committee to refer a draft law on early retirement to a think-tank for revision. The draft law was supposed to go before the assembly for debate and voting today. A number of angry MPs strongly criticized panel members who supported the move.

A number of MPs however said they will reject the committee decision in today's session and insist it be debated immediately. But members of the panel said their decision was purely technical to know the exact consequences of the law. They also insisted that they also support the law but want to make sure that it is studied properly. The pension fund meanwhile said the cost of the law is too high and will impact the future of the fund.



MP Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi



KUWAIT: A firefighter tackles a blaze inside a Salmiya building yesterday.

Separately, chocolates and candies worth KD 660 were stolen from a vehicle owned by a sweets shop. In another case, a Syrian man informed police about goods worth KD 8,000 that were stolen from a warehouse. The stolen material included 125 stationery boxes, 150 boxes of kitchenware, in addition to a frozen food making machine. Detectives are working on the case. Meanwhile, an unknown person broke into a men's gym in Fintas and stole a bag containing KD 12,000 and mobile phones. Detectives are investigating.



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UK's N Ireland minister resigns over ill-health

## Indian police probe reporter after data leak story

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NEW YORK: People visit the 9/11 memorial during freezing temperatures in New York City. Much of the United States' east coast woke up to brutally cold and dangerous temperatures as the region recovers from a powerful blizzard that unleashed heavy snows and strong winds. —AFP

# Brutal cold grips East Coast; airport flooded

## Chaos at JFK airport with flood and storm backlog

NEW YORK: Chaos reigned at New York's flagship airport for a third consecutive day with one terminal flooded and irate passengers stranded by chronic delays blamed on brutal cold and a deadly winter storm. Arrivals were significantly disrupted into Terminal Four at John F Kennedy International Airport, where a water pipe broke, compounding chaos blamed on a "cascading series of issues." Water poured from the ceiling and the arrivals area was submerged by around three inches (eight centimeters) of water, through which a few intrepid passengers picked their way gingerly. CNN footage showed.

"What happened at JFK Airport is unacceptable," admitted Rick Cotton, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which is responsible for area airports. "We will hold those responsible accountable for any shortcomings we find," he added. The incident highlighted complaints about poor infrastructure serving the US financial capital, home to 8.5 million people, with a crisis in the subway and derailments in recent years on commuter trains.

The cause of the break appeared to be "weather-related" but would be investigated, as would why the pipe had not been weather protected and whether other failures contributed to the disruption, officials said. After the pipe broke and water began flooding the terminal, power to the affected areas was shut off for safety reasons, officials said. Domestic arrivals and departures, and international departures operated with delays. A string of international flights were diverted to other airports or terminals. Terminal 4 is used by more than 30 airlines, including Air India, Delta, Egyptair, El Al, Emirates, Etihad, KLM Royal Dutch, Singapore Airlines and Virgin Atlantic.

Crazy  
Temper flared for days among exhausted travelers, forced to sleep on the floor of terminals, with others stranded on planes for hours waiting to access a gate and massive delays in baggage claim. Hugo Zylberberg, a 28-year-old researcher, said while his 11-hour flight from Egypt was on time, it took an hour to find a gate, another hour at customs and then an hour and a half to wait for his luggage.

"There's still like a hundred people waiting for their luggage," he said. "I'm pretty exhausted. I'm waiting to get home. It's kind of crazy," he said. "People were starting to be pretty angry." Rajesh Varadarajan, a

41-year-old software consultant en route from India to Trinidad, whose connecting flight to the Caribbean had been delayed more than 24 hours, sat JFK cut a poor comparison to airports such as Dubai or Singapore, and newer airports in his home country. "It's far from it, because I mean just look around; there's no place to sit," he said. "Even Dunkin' Donuts is closed."

On Saturday, Terminal One was briefly closed and 94 flights cancelled and 17 diverted, as the extreme cold and storm recovery "created a cascading series of issues," said the Port Authority. The US East Coast has been gripped by days of record-breaking cold temperatures after a storm Thursday, dubbed a "bomb cyclone," which was blamed for at least 22 reported deaths. Boston, which saw some of the heaviest snow from the storm, froze with a Sunday morning low of minus two degrees Fahrenheit (minus 19 degrees Celsius) matching the previous January 7 record in 1896. Highs below freezing lingered on the East Coast as far south as North Carolina, with temperatures due to rise from today. —AFP



### A string of flights diverted to other airports, terminals

## Pakistan's water crisis: Poisonous and running out

ISLAMABAD: Barely 15 days old, Kinza whimpers at an Islamabad hospital where she is suffering from diarrhoea and a blood infection, a tiny victim among thousands afflicted by Pakistan's severely polluted and decreasing water supplies. Cloaked in a colorful blanket, Kinza moves in slow motion, like a small doll. Her mother, Sartaj, does not understand how her daughter became so ill. "Each time I give her the bottle, I boil the water," she said.

But Sartaj and her family drink daily from a stream in their Islamabad neighborhood—one of several waterways running through the capital that are choked with filth. Boiling the water can only do so much. They are not alone. More than two-thirds of households drink bacterially contaminated water and, every year, 53,000 Pakistani children die of diarrhoea after drinking it, says UNICEF. Cases of typhoid, cholera, dysentery and hepatitis are rampant. According to the UN and Pakistani authorities, between 30 and 40 percent of diseases and deaths nationwide are linked to poor water quality.

And it is costing the developing country billions. In 2012 the World Bank, which has warned that "substantial investments are needed to improve sanitation", estimated that water pollution costs Pakistan \$5.7 billion, or nearly four percent of GDP. "Water is the number one problem for the country," says professor Javed Akram, vice chancellor at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad. In Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city, the situation is even worse than in Islamabad.

The Ravi River which supplies the city's 11 million or so inhabitants with drinking water also serves as a spillway to hundreds of factories upstream. River fish are eaten by locals, but "some papers show that in the fish-bones, some heavy metal contamination (is) found," says

Sohail Ali Naqvi, a project officer with the conservation group WWF. The Ravi is also used to irrigate neighboring crops, which are themselves rich in pesticides, warns Lahore environmentalist Ahmad Rafay Alam.

### 'Absolute scarcity'

The lack of water infrastructure is glaring. In a country where the "environment is not part of the political agenda", there are "nearly no treatment plants", warns Imran Khalid, a researcher at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute. "Those who can afford it buy bottles of water, but what about those who cannot?" he says. In Karachi, a megacity whose population could be as many as 20 million people, mafias fill the vacuum left by the creaking local network, selling the precious water they bring in by tanker trucks at high prices.

In the face of widespread indignation, Sindh along with Punjab province, together home to more than half of the country's population, have already announced measures to improve water quality, though their efficacy is yet to be seen. But Pakistan's water is not only contaminated—it is becoming scarce. Official projections show the country, whose population has increased fivefold since 1960 to some 207 million, will run dry by 2025, when they will be facing an "absolute scarcity" of water with less than 500 cubic meters available per person in Pakistan. That's just one third the water available in already parched Somalia now, according to the UN.

### 'Lack of education'

Pakistan, a country of massive Himalayan glaciers, monsoon rains and floods, has just three major water storage basins, compared with more than a thousand in South Africa or Canada, says Bashir Ahmad of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council. As such any surplus is quickly lost, said Ahmad, who denounced "a lack of political vision" to counter the nationwide water crisis.

While official statistics show that 90 percent of the country's water is used for agriculture, the



ISLAMABAD: A girl fills a bottle at a water filtration plant in Islamabad. More than two-thirds of households drink bacterially contaminated water and, every year, 53,000 Pakistani children die of diarrhoea after drinking it, says UNICEF. —AFP

massive irrigation network, built decades ago by British colonists, has deteriorated. Much of its use appears to defy common sense. "We are neglecting the northern areas, where there (is) a lot of rainfall, to focus on irrigated areas like Sindh or Punjab," says Ahmad. There, in arid areas where temperatures can soar up to 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), Pakistan grows water-intensive crops such as rice and sugar cane.

"The crisis is looming. In all urban areas, the water table is going down day by day," warns Muhammad Ashraf, chairman of the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources. Pumps draw deeper and deeper into the water table, where the arsenic content is naturally higher, he warns. An international study in August said some 50 to 60 million Pakistanis are slowly poisoning themselves with arsenic-tainted water. —AFP

## Paid less than male peers, BBC editor quits, speaks out

LONDON: The BBC's China Editor Carrie Gracie has quit her post in Beijing to fight for her right to pay equality with male peers, posting an attack on what she called the "secretive and illegal BBC pay culture". Gracie's revolt is part of the fallout from pay disclosures the British broadcaster was forced to make last July, which showed that two thirds of the highest earners on air were men, and that some of them were earning far more than women in equivalent roles. Funded by a licence fee levied on TV viewers and reaching 95 percent of British adults every week, the BBC is a pillar of the nation's life, but as such it is closely scrutinized and held to exacting standards by the public and rival media.

Gracie's stand was one of the top news headlines of the day on the BBC itself and on other British media, and many prominent women from the BBC and beyond voiced their support on social media under the slogan #IStandWithCarrie. Gracie, who speaks fluent Mandarin and has reported on China for three decades, has not left the BBC. She said she was returning to her former post in the TV newsroom in London where she expected to be paid equally to men in equal jobs.

"I am not asking for more money. I believe I am very well paid already—especially as someone working for a publicly funded organization. I simply want the BBC to abide by the law and value men and women equally," she wrote on her website. Gracie said she was paid 135,000 pounds (\$182,800) a year as China editor. According to last July's disclosures, North America Editor Jon Sopel earned between 200,000 and 250,000 pounds a year, while Middle East Editor Jeremy Bowen was in the 150,000 to 200,000 bracket.

Europe editor Katya Adler, the BBC's only other female editor in foreign news, did not feature in the disclosures, meaning her pay was less than 150,000 pounds. Gracie said managers had offered to increase her pay to 180,000 pounds, but that was no solution. She rejected the rise and insisted that all four of the BBC's international editors should receive equal pay. "I was not interested in more money. I was interested in equality," she said during an interview on BBC radio. Britain enacted legislation outlawing sex discrimination in the 1970s and this was followed by an equality act in 2010, but women still earn less than men across much of the economy.

The BBC defended itself by saying its gender pay gap was below the national average and less bad than at many other organizations, adding that it was committed to wiping it out by 2020. It also said an independent audit of rank and file staff had found "no systemic discrimination against women" at the BBC. Several high-profile women seized on the Gracie story to say the problem was much bigger than the BBC and affected the whole of society. —Reuters

## International

# In jab at hardliners, Iranian president says protests were not only economic

## Rouhani calls for the lifting of curbs on social media

**LONDON:** Protests that shook Iran were not just aimed at the economy, President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday, remarks suggesting the real targets were powerful conservatives opposed to his plans to expand individual freedoms at home and promote detente abroad. The pragmatic cleric, who defeated anti-Western hardliners to win re-election last year, also called for the lifting of curbs on social media used by anti-government protesters in the most sustained challenge to hardline authorities since 2009.

"It would be a misrepresentation (of events) and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands," Rouhani was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. "People had economic, political and social demands." Iran's influential Revolutionary Guards said

on Sunday the security forces had put an end to a week of unrest fomented by what it called foreign enemies. The protests, which began over economic hardships suffered by the young and working class, spread to more than 80 cities and towns and has resulted in 22 deaths and more than 1,000 arrests, according to Iranian officials. Hamid Shahriari, the deputy head of the Judiciary said that all ringleaders of the protests had been identified and arrested, and they would be firmly punished and might face capital punishment. An Iranian lawmaker confirmed yesterday the death of one detainee in prison. "This 22 year old young man was arrested by the police. It was informed that he has committed suicide in jail," Tayebeh Siavashi was quoted as saying by ILNA news agency. Many of the protesters questioned Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East, where it has intervened in Syria and Iraq in a battle for influence with rival Saudi Arabia.



**22 killed in unrest, more than 1,000 held**

### Iranians can criticize 'everyone'

The country's financial support for Palestinians and the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah also angered Iranians, who want their government to focus on domestic economic problems instead. Rouhani won re-election last year by promising more jobs for Iran's youth through more foreign investment, as well as more social justice, individual freedom and political tolerance - aims questioned by his main challenger in the contest. Echoing some of his campaign rhetoric, Rouhani said yesterday people should be allowed to criticize all Iranian officials, with no exception.

Demonstrators initially vented their anger over high prices and alleged corruption, but the protests took on a rare political dimension, with a growing number of people calling on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to step down. The Supreme Leader is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and appoints the heads of the judiciary. Key ministers are selected with his agreement and he has the ultimate say on Iran's foreign policy. By comparison, the president has little power. "No one is innocent and people are allowed to criticize everyone," said Rouhani. Rouhani also dismissed calls from hardline clerics who had asked the government to permanently block access social media and messaging apps.

As protests have ebbed, the government has lifted restrictions it imposed on Instagram, one of the social media tools used to mobilize protesters. But access to a more widely used messaging app, Telegram, was still blocked. The government has said the restrictions would be temporary.

"People's access to social media should not permanently be restricted. We cannot be indifferent to people's life and business," Rouhani said. State television showed live pictures



**QOM, Iran:** An Iranian shopkeeper stands inside his store near the Massoumeh shrine in the holy city of Qom, 130 kilometers south of Tehran. —AFP

of more pro-government rallies in several cities, including Sanandaj in western Iran, as marchers carried posters of Ayatollah Khamenei and chanted slogans in his support.

Iranian Vice-President Masoumeh Ebtekar tweeted yesterday that Rouhani has insisted that all detained students should be released. Mohammad Bathaei, the education minister said

yesterday there were many school children among the detainees and he was asking for their release before exam season. Amnesty International said last week that more than 1,000 Iranians had been arrested and detained in jails "notorious for torture and other ill-treatment over the past seven days", with many being denied access to families and lawyers.—Reuters

## Egypt to hold presidential election on March 26-28

**CAIRO:** Egyptians will head to the polls on March 26-28 in the first round of a presidential election, National Elections Authority chief Lasheen Ibrahim said yesterday. A second round will be held on April 24-26 if required, he told a news conference in Cairo. Ibrahim said the commission would accept applications from presidential hopefuls between January 20 and 29. "The provisional list of candidates and the numbers of their supporters will be published" in state-run newspapers Al-Ahram and Al-Akhar on January 31, he said.

Once any appeals by rejected candidates are settled, "the final list of candidate names and their symbols will be announced and published in the official gazette and Al-Ahram and Al-Akhar newspapers" on February 24, he said. That will mark the official start of the campaign, which will run until March 23, Ibrahim said, with final results to be announced on May 1. Egyptians living abroad can vote between March 16 and

18, he added, with second round ballots on April 19-21 if necessary.

Incumbent Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi is widely expected to stand for re-election and win in the first round. The former army chief was elected in 2014, a year after leading the military to oust his predecessor Mohamed Morsi amid mass protests against the Islamist's year-long rule. On Sunday, former premier Ahmed Shafiq, once seen as a main challenger to Sisi, said that he would not be a candidate, reversing a previous pledge to stand. Shafiq was appointed premier by Hosni Mubarak shortly before he was toppled from the presidency in the 2011 uprising, and only narrowly lost out in the 2012 election to Morsi.

### Years of turmoil

After years of political, security and economic turmoil since Mubarak's ouster, many Egyptians might have voted for Shafiq, nostalgic for a continuation of Mubarak's rule, analysts believe. Other potential candidates include Khaled Ali, a rights lawyer and 2012 presidential candidate who challenged the government over Red Sea islands Egypt gave to Saudi Arabia. In November, Ali announced his intention to stand again in 2018.

However, he had been sentenced in September in absentia to three months in jail on accusations of "offending public decency", a ruling he appealed. The sentence was over a photograph Ali says was fabricated and that appeared to show him making an obscene gesture while cele-



**CAIRO:** National Elections Authority chief Lasheen Ibrahim gives a press conference yesterday to announce that Egyptians will head to the polls on March 26-28 in the first round of a presidential election. —AFP

brating a court ruling in the case of the islands' transfer. Ali has said only the committee organizing the election can decide whether that ruling would disqualify him as a candidate.

Another hopeful, colonel Ahmed Kongsowa, was given six years in prison in December by a military court after the previous month announcing his intention to stand. Kongsowa's lawyer said his client

was given the sentence for stating political opinions while still a serving officer, even though Kongsowa said he had been trying to resign from the military for more than three years.

Lawyer Asaad Heikal said Kongsowa had only followed Sisi's example in announcing his candidacy. Sisi was in uniform when he did so, before later resigning as defense minister. —AFP

## Corruption crackdown in Vietnam

**HANOI:** Vietnam brought 22 executives to court over losses at the state oil firm yesterday, in the most important trial of a widening crackdown on corruption. Among those being tried was the first politburo member to be arrested in decades. In a separate trial in Ho Chi Minh City, a banking fraud case began with 46 defendants. As well as shedding light on graft, mismanagement and nepotism within state firms at a time privatization is accelerating, the arrests show the ascendancy of a more conservative faction within the ruling Communist Party.

### How many people are involved?

Scores have been arrested across PetroVietnam and the banking sector. Some have been tried and sentenced already. The most senior figure arrested is former PetroVietnam Chairman Dinh La Thang, among those whose trial started yesterday. Neither he nor his lawyer was available for comment. Germany has accused Vietnam of kidnapping one PetroVietnam suspect, Trinh Xuan Thanh, who was also among the 22 in court. More than 100 other officials are also under threat of prosecution or have been demoted or fired. In another case linked to the corruption crackdown, a Vietnamese tycoon was arrested last week after being sent home from Singapore.

### What is PetroVietnam?

PetroVietnam is a tangled enterprise of 15 direct units, 18 subsidiaries and 46 affiliates in which it owns smaller stakes. Hundreds of millions of dollars in losses have been racked up at units ranging from banks to construction firms and power plants to textile mills. The scandals at PetroVietnam are connected to the banking sector through a deal in which the oil firm lost \$35 million in an investment in Ocean Bank. The lender's former chief executive - a previous PetroVietnam chairman - was sentenced to death.

### The crackdown

It shows a concerted effort to rein in large-scale corruption through which some officials had secured massive personal wealth and tarnished the ruling party's image. But it has also allowed the current Communist Party leadership to strengthen its hand under General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong after winning out in a power struggle with former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung last year. Whether or not the arrests go even higher, Trong's supremacy is assured through a term that lasts until 2021 and the faction is better placed to maintain its dominance even beyond.

### Groups in ruling party

Although the party presents a public image of unity, there are diverse views on everything from the pace and openness of reforms to Vietnam's delicate diplomatic balancing between China, the United States and other powers. What best characterizes the current leadership is conservatism in preserving the party's absolute authority in close alignment with the security establishment. It marks a change of style from the leadership under Dung and his allies, some of whom emerged as personalities in their own right and shown signs of readiness for greater political openness. Alongside the corruption arrests, Vietnam has also arrested more bloggers, activists and other critics this year than in any other since a 2011 crackdown on youth activists.

### Corruption crackdown

Few tears are shed in Vietnam over the arrests of former officials, but there is also skepticism over the real motives. The day-to-day corruption of low-level officials and police is still a factor of Vietnamese life.

### Impact on PetroVietnam

PetroVietnam's net profit margin in 2016 was its lowest in at least seven years at just over 7 percent from over 15 percent in 2009. The company told Reuters the oil price was the biggest factor, but it has also said failed projects, wrongdoing by officials and the investigations themselves had an impact. PetroVietnam's shares are not listed on a stock exchange, but some of its units have underperformed its Thai peer PTT since 2009.



**HANOI:** Dinh La Thang (left), former politburo member and former Vietnam's National Oil Company PVN (PetroVietnam), is escorted by policemen to the courtroom at Hanoi People's Courthouse yesterday. —AFP

### Reform and privatization

Although the crackdown points to the political strengthening of the party, the leadership has shown less sign of delaying economic reform than the previous administration. Facing pressure because of its budget deficit, the government has accelerated plans to sell major stakes in the most attractive assets - including the sale of a majority stake in brewery Sabeco late last year. It is also selling stakes in three units of PetroVietnam. Some economic and business analysts believe the fear among officials of being branded corrupt could further hold up bureaucratic decision making in state-run firms and ministries. —Reuters

## News in brief

### Communal violence kills 83

**ABUJA:** At least eighty-three people have been killed in communal violence in Nigeria since Dec 31, government and police officials said, much of it involving clashes between Muslim cattle herders and Christian farmers. The killings endanger efforts by President Muhammadu Buhari to bring security and stability to Nigeria - a central pledge of his campaign for election in 2015. Muslim herdsmen, mainly of the Fulani ethnic group, and Christian farmers often clash over the use of land in parts of the Middle Belt. The region is one of Nigeria's most diverse, where religious, ancestral and cultural differences have frequently kindled conflict. Terve Akase, chief press secretary to the governor of Benue, attributed 71 of the deaths from Dec 31 to Jan 6 in the state to killings by the Fulani. Reuters was unable to verify the figures. "The attacks happened in very remote villages," said Akase. "Now, with security operatives on the ground, villagers have been going about the bush to pick up more corpses."

### Kick gambling addiction

**HELSINKI:** Finnish researchers yesterday said they were to launch a study to see if gambling addiction can be treated with a fast-working nasal spray. The spray contains naloxone, an emergency treatment for opiate overdoses (heroin, opium, morphine) that blocks the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter linked to pleasure with a central role in addictions. "The spray goes to the brain in a few minutes so it's very useful for a gambler... if you crave gambling, just take the spray," Hannu Alho, professor of addiction medicine at the Helsinki-based National Institute for Health and Welfare, told AFP. Up to 130 volunteers will take part in the experiment, which is "the first of its kind globally to use nasal spray," Alho said. Half will use the treatment for three months, and the other half will get a placebo.

### Worldwide 'No Pants' ride

**JERUSALEM:** Tram passengers in Jerusalem stripped down to their underwear Sunday for the worldwide annual "No Pants Subway Ride", drawing embarrassed smiles and dumbfounded stares from fellow travelers. In bracing 10 degree Celsius weather, around 20 young men and women met up at an open-air tram stop on the city's central Jaffa Street and boarded carriages for the 20-minute ride to Mount Herzl. "The goal of this event is simply to have fun, to do something strange for the people, so when they board the tram suddenly something strange happens with people taking off their pants," one man who declined to give his name said. Another, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said friends had voiced concerns that the show of flesh could bring trouble in a "powder keg" of a city where Orthodox Jewish and Muslim sensibilities are acute. "But every year this proves to be wrong," he said.

### Soldier, 5 rebels killed

**MANILA:** Five Muslim rebels and a soldier were killed during a weekend ground and air assault by Philippines security forces on militants supportive of the Islamic State group in a restive southern region, the military said yesterday. The Philippine army pounded some 50 militants with artillery in a five-hour attack on the island of Mindanao Saturday, according to regional military spokesman Captain Arvin Encinas. One soldier and at least five members of the rebel Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed in the clash, he said, adding that while small and fragmented the militant group was a threat in the region. "They have enough people to conduct atrocities, and they are actively recruiting," he said. The Muslim minority of the mainly Catholic Philippines considers Mindanao as its homeland. Decades of armed rebellion in the region has claimed more than 100,000 lives by official estimates. Last year another group pledging allegiance to IS occupied the Mindanao city of Marawi and fought a bloody conflict with US-backed Philippine government forces for five months, leaving more than 1,100 people dead.

## International

# '160 attempts daily' to access online porn in UK parliament

## Britain's Northern Ireland minister resigns over ill-health

LONDON: Around 160 requests a day were made in late 2017 to access pornography websites from computers within the Houses of Parliament, Britain's Press Association (PA) reported yesterday. A total of 24,473 attempts were made since last June's general election from devices connected to the parliamentary network, according to data obtained by a PA Freedom of Information (FOI) request. Prime Minister Theresa May is already reeling from a wave of sexual misconduct allegations in Westminster. She was forced to dump minister and long-time friend Damian Green last month after he apparently misled police over claims pornography was found on computers in his Westminster office in 2008.

The parliamentary internet network is used by MPs, Lords in the upper house and their staff. Authorities claim most attempts are not deliberate and point to a decrease in recent years. Parliament blocked 113,208 attempts in 2016, down from 213,020 the previous year. "All pornographic websites are blocked by parliament's computer network," a parliamentary spokesman told PA. "The vast majority of 'attempts' to access them are not deliberate. "This data also covers personal devices used when logged on to parliament's guest Wi-Fi."

### Minister resigns

In another development, Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary James Brokenshire resigned from his post yesterday due to ill-health, nearly a year to

the day since the collapse of the once-troubled province's semi-autonomous government. Brokenshire resigned in a letter to Prime Minister Theresa May saying he needed surgery, on the same day the premier plans a wider reshuffle of her cabinet.

"I have a small lesion in my right lung which needs to be removed. Clearly, my long term health and my family are my priorities and I intend to proceed with surgery at the earliest opportunity," he wrote. Brokenshire, 50, has hosted repeated unsuccessful negotiations between republicans Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party to form a power-sharing executive in British-ruled Northern Ireland. Following the breakdown of talks, the province is on the brink of direct rule by civil servants in London who have already been managing its budget.

The prime minister backed Brokenshire's decision to step down at "an important moment for politics in Northern Ireland", thanking him for his efforts with a letter in which she urged the parties to re-establish the power-sharing government. The administration collapsed in January last year after Sinn Fein pulled out over a scandal involving a renewable energy funding scheme. The government was set up as a result of the 1998 Good Friday agreement, which brought to an end three decades of mostly sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland that claimed the lives of 3,500 people.

Talks are still stalled on two key demands from



LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May (center) walks out of 10 Downing street with newly appointed chairman of the Conservative Party Brandon Lewis (4th left) and deputy James Cleverly (2nd right) in London yesterday. British Prime Minister Theresa May began a major reshuffle of her cabinet by replacing the chairman of her Conservative Party, ahead of more ministerial changes. —AFP

Sinn Fein, which backs the legalization of same-sex marriage and legal protection for the Irish language. Tensions have been raised further after the DUP struck a power deal with May's ruling Conservatives after a general election in June, in which she lost her

parliamentary majority. Sinn Fein argues that the deal gives the DUP unfair influence over British government policy in Northern Ireland, including over Brexit negotiations that will have major implications for Ireland's economy. — Agencies

## Pentagon, diplomats urged to play bigger role on arms sales

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration is nearing completion of a new "Buy American" plan that calls for US military attaches and diplomats to help drum up billions of dollars more in business overseas for the American weapons industry, going beyond the assistance they currently provide, US officials said. President Donald Trump as early as February is expected to announce a "whole of government" effort to ease export rules on purchases by foreign countries of US-made military equipment, from fighter jets and drones to warships and artillery, according to people familiar with the plan.

Trump is seeking to fulfill a 2016 election campaign promise to create jobs in the United States by selling more goods and services abroad to bring down the US trade deficit from a six-year high of \$50 billion. The administration is also under pressure from US defense contractors facing growing competition from foreign rivals such as China and Russia. But any loosening of the restrictions on weapons sales would be in defiance of human rights and arms control advocates who said there was too great a risk of fueling violence in regions such as the Middle East and South Asia or arms being diverted to be used in terrorist attacks.

Besides greater use of a network of military and commercial attaches already stationed at US embassies in foreign capitals, senior officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said another thrust of the plan will be to set in motion a realignment of the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations (ITAR). It is a central policy governing arms exports since 1976 and has not been fully revamped in more than three decades.

This expanded government effort on behalf of American arms makers, together with looser restrictions on weapons exports and more favorable treatment of sales to non-NATO allies and partners, could bring additional billions of dollars in deals and more jobs, a senior US official said, without providing specifics. The strategy of having the Pentagon and the US State Department take a more active role in securing foreign arms deals could especially benefit major defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing Co.

"We want to see those guys, the commercial and military attaches, unfettered to be salesmen for this stuff, to be promoters," said the senior administration official, who is close to the internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity. A State Department official, asked to confirm details of the coming new policy, said the revamped approach "gives our partners a greater capacity to help share the burden of international security, benefits the defense industrial base and will provide more good jobs for American workers." The White House and Pentagon declined official comment.

Defense industry officials and lobbyists have privately welcomed what they expect will be a more sales-friendly approach. It is unclear how deeply the diplomats and military officers overseas will delve into dealmaking and what guidelines will be established, said officials in the administration. Trump, a Republican, has the legal authority to direct government embassy "security assistance officers," both military personnel and civilians, to do more to help drive arms sales. Administration officials see this group, which already has duties such as managing military aid overseas and providing information to foreign governments for buying US arms, as underutilized by previous presidents.

"Back seat" for human rights? One national security analyst said that easing export restrictions to allow defense contractors to reap greater profits internationally would increase the danger of top-of-the-line US weapons going to governments with poor human rights records or being used by militants. —Reuters

## With a renewed vigor, US Supreme Court scrutinizes curbs on voting

WASHINGTON: Government officials across the United States try to maintain accurate voter rolls by removing people who have died or moved away. But a case coming before the US Supreme Court tomorrow explores whether some states are aggressively purging voter rolls in a way that disenfranchises thousands of voters. The justices will hear arguments in Republican-governed Ohio's appeal of a lower court ruling that blocked its policy of erasing from voter registration lists people who do not regularly cast a ballot.

Under the policy, such registration is deleted if the person goes six years without either voting or contacting state voting officials. "Voting is the foundation of our democracy, and it is much too important to treat as a 'use it or lose it' right," said Stuart Naifeh, a voting rights lawyer with liberal advocacy group Demos, which is representing plaintiffs challenging Ohio's policy along with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Voting rights has been an important theme before the Supreme Court during their nine-month term that began in October, in particular the question of whether actions by state leaders have disenfranchised thousands of voters either by marginalizing their electoral clout or by prohibiting them from voting. Two other cases could have a big impact on US elections. At issue is whether Republican-drawn electoral districts in Wisconsin and Democratic-drawn districts in Maryland were fashioned to entrench the majority party in power in such an extreme way that they violated the constitutional rights of certain voters. The practice is called partisan gerrymandering.

The conservative-majority court also could take up other voting rights disputes this term including a bid by Texas to revive Republican-drawn electoral districts that were thrown out by a lower court for discriminating against black and Hispanic voters. Most states periodically

## Bannon backs away from remarks that drew Trump's ire

WASHINGTON: Former Donald Trump adviser Steve Bannon on Sunday sought to back away from incendiary remarks quoted in an explosive new book that have landed him in hot water with the president he helped elect. Bannon has found himself in dire straits since excerpts of Paul Wolff's "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" - an explosive behind-the-scenes account that questions the president's fitness for office - were first published on Wednesday.

He has been abandoned by financial patrons, condemned by erstwhile political allies and ridiculed by Trump himself over his reported comments in the book, which he has not denied making. In the book, Bannon is quoted as saying a pre-election meeting involving son Donald Trump Jr. and a Kremlin-linked Russian lawyer was "treasonous," and that prosecutors investigating possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia would "crack Don Junior like an egg on national TV."

In a statement to the Axios news website, Bannon, who was a senior Trump

adviser until he was ousted in August, said: "Donald Trump Jr is both a patriot and a good man. He has been relentless in his advocacy for his father and the agenda that has helped turn our country around." His criticism, Bannon said, was aimed at one-time Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, "a seasoned campaign professional" who "should have known (the Russians) are duplicitous, cunning and not our friends."

### 'I regret my delay'

But in "Fire and Fury," Bannon is quoted as saying that "the top three guys in the campaign" - Manafort, Donald Jr and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner attended the meeting he described as "treasonous." The closest Bannon came to an actual apology was saying he regretted the timing of his response. "I regret that my delay in responding to the inaccurate reporting regarding Don Jr has diverted attention from the president's historical accomplishments."

Trump on Sunday continued his daily assault on "Fire and Fury" and its author, tweeting that the book - which paints him as disengaged, ill-informed and unstable, with signs of serious memory loss - was a "Fake Book, written by a totally discredited author." A day earlier, seeking to refute Wolff's suggestion that he lacked stability, Trump called himself a "very stable genius." Senior Trump policy adviser Stephen Miller treated the book derisively while insisting that his boss was in fact "a



WASHINGTON: Photo shows the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC. —AFP

cleanse their voter rolls to prevent irregularities, such as someone voting more than once on Election Day. Ohio is one of seven states, along with Georgia, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, that purge infrequent voters from registration lists, according to the plaintiffs who sued Ohio in 2016. "Among those, Ohio is the most aggressive. It has the shortest timeline for removing people for non-voting," Naifeh said.

### 'Efficiency and integrity'

Republican Ohio Secretary of State John Husted noted that the state's policy has been in place since the 1990s under Republican and Democratic secretaries of state. "Maintaining the integrity of the voter rolls is essential to conducting an election with efficiency and integrity," Husted said when the court agreed to hear the case last

May. In Ohio, registered voters do not vote for two years are sent registration confirmation notices. If they do not respond and do not vote over the following four years, they are purged.

Democrats have accused Republicans of taking steps at the state level, including laws requiring certain types of government-issued identification, intended to suppress the vote of minorities, poor people and others who generally favor Democratic candidates. A 2016 Reuters analysis found roughly twice the rate of voter purging in Democratic-leaning neighborhoods in Ohio's three largest counties as in Republican-leaning neighborhoods. The 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati ruled in September 2016 that Ohio's policy ran afoul of a 1993 law that prohibits states from striking registered voters "by reason of the person's failure to vote." — Reuters



WASHINGTON: A man holds a copy of the book 'Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House' by Michael Wolff after buying it at a bookstore in Washington, DC. — AFP

political genius," in an interview with CNN on Sunday. Wolff, Miller said, "is a garbage author of a garbage book." He assailed Bannon, reportedly a key source for the author, as "vindictive" and "out of touch with reality."

### 'Not going to succeed'

Wolff defended his work on Sunday, telling NBC he "absolutely did not" violate any off-the-record agreements in his

reporting but conceding, of the total three hours he said he spent with Trump, that the president "probably did not think of them as interviews." He also portrayed a high level of concern in the White House over whether Trump risks being removed from office as unfit, as is possible-if difficult under the constitution's 25th Amendment. Almost daily, he said, White House aides would say, "We're not at a 25th Amendment level yet." —AFP



International

# Big family but divided: North and South Koreans in China

## North and South Korean officials to hold rare talks

SHENYANG: While North and South Korean officials hold rare talks this week, in a bustling Korea town in northeast China the rival communities have little to say to each other. Although their nations are separated by a heavily militarized border, North and South Korean restaurants operate side by side in Xita, the Korean neighborhood in the city of Shenyang. Billboards and signs in Korean script hang across the area, which boasts South Korean beer and fried chicken joints, cosmetics counters and clothing stores. But North Korean businesses now face a deadline to clear out as China enforces United Nations sanctions banning their presence following Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests. After months of tensions that raised fears of nuclear warfare, North and South Korean officials will hold their first dialogue for more than two years today.

But in this corner of China, relations between Koreans are tense and show no signs of thawing. "We're one ethnicity, a big family, but they have a different way of thinking than us," said a North Korean waitress who works at the Pyongyang Rungrado restaurant. She has lived in Xita for three years but has never spoken to a South Korean. She declined to give her name. Across the street, the owner of a South Korean restaurant called Number 8 Storeroom said she has never had any contact with the owners of the two North Korean eateries near her establishment. "I don't want to talk to them," said Jin Meihua, 43, whose restaurant serves eel and steak barbecue to a mostly Chinese clientele.



### North and S Korean restaurants operate side by side in Xita

Koreans. In recent years it became a destination for North Koreans privileged enough to travel overseas. North Korean eateries and small hotels popped up to feed and lodge them. South Korean boutiques became popular for shopping. But both sides of Shenyang's Korea town have become ensnared in international disputes. South Korean businesses took a major financial hit after China imposed punitive economic measures on Seoul over its decision to host the THAAD US anti-missile defense system, which Beijing sees as a threat to its own security. "The whole area is in a slump," said Lu Chao, director of the Border Studies Institute at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences in Shenyang. "Last year there was the THAAD issue with South Korea. Then North Korea created problems with its nuclear testing. Chinese have lost interest in spending their money in Xita." Many South Koreans packed up and went home as their businesses failed, locals say. "Things haven't been good since then," said 27-year-old Jin Zhenyou, an ethnic Korean waiter at a South Korean restaurant. The North's own dining establishments are likely to be hard hit by dwindling visitors and a blanket order from China's commerce ministry to shut down North Korean businesses today. Some estimates put their number at around 100 across China. In Xita, only one has apparently closed so far and waitresses at other establishments said they had no plans to close.

#### Socialists vs capitalists

China's ethnic Koreans could bridge the divide between the two sides, but even they say making friends with North Koreans can be difficult. "They don't like South Koreans.



SHENYANG: A man rides on an electric bike past a North Korean restaurant located at one of China's largest Korea towns in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province. —AFP

They won't eat in our restaurants. There's no overlap at all," Jin said. With the shifting geopolitical situation now hitting the North, South Koreans say they won't be sad to see them go. South Koreans and North Koreans "don't share any special relationship," said a man surnamed Gong at the local Korea Society in Shenyang. The citizens "don't hold any events for building friendly relations, they don't know each other and don't communicate with each other," Gong said.

In 2016 the South Korean embassy told citizens to avoid the North's restaurants for safety reasons, according to Chung Young-June, a scholar with the Institute for Sinology at Yonsei University. The government warning filtered into North Korean eateries, further straining relations between the neighboring restaurant owners. "The South Korean government doesn't allow them to eat our food," said the North Korean restaurant waitress. —AFP

#### Caught in the middle

Shenyang, a city of 8.3 million, is not far from China's border with the North and houses many of China's ethnic

## Indian police probe reporter after data leak story, scandal

NEW DELHI: Indian police are investigating the reporter behind a story on alleged leaks from a government database containing the personal details of more than a billion people, sparking accusations of media censorship. Police said yesterday they were investigating a complaint of cheating, forgery and impersonation against the journalist, who reported last week that it was possible to buy information in the Aadhaar database for just 500 rupees (\$7.89). Aadhaar is a controversial government scheme that uses fingerprints and iris scans to provide users a unique identity number they can use to access government and other services.

It was intended to reduce official corrup-

tion, but critics say it violates citizens' right to privacy. The Unique Identification Authority of India, which administers the government identity card scheme, has denied any security breach but complained to police over the sting. A police report documenting the complaint names the reporter, Rachna Khaira, as well as her newspaper The Tribune and "unknown persons" behind the alleged data leak. The Editors' Guild of India said the criminal investigation amounted to an attack on press freedom.

"It is clearly meant to browbeat a journalist whose investigation on the matter was of great public interest," it said in a statement. Harish Khare, Tribune's editor-in-chief, said he stood by the report and regretted that the authorities had "misconceived an honest journalistic enterprise". Aadhaar was set up as a voluntary scheme, but has in recent years become compulsory for a growing number of services, including opening a bank account and paying taxes. Opponents say that its use for what are effectively essential services means their right to privacy is being violated. There have also been concerns about leaks, but the government has always maintained the system was secure. —AFP



NEW DELHI: An Indian bicycle rickshaw driver pedals down an alleyway on a foggy morning in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

## Malaysia's Mahathir, 92, eyes comeback in opposition he once crushed

KUALA LUMPUR: At the age of 92, Malaysia's one-time strongman Mahathir Mohamad is again seeking the leadership, but this time at the helm of the opposition that he crushed while in power. Mahathir was named the opposition's prime ministerial candidate Sunday after weeks of infighting, in an extraordinary turnaround as his heirs in government face a massive financial scandal. He will be the world's oldest leader if the coalition backing him wins a general election due by August, although analysts believe this is unlikely.

The authoritarian leader known for his acid tongue ruled the country for 22 years until 2003, making him Malaysia's longest-serving premier. He jailed opposition members without trial on security grounds in 1987 and was seen as an authoritarian figure who trampled over human rights. Even in retirement, he could not resist sniping at his successors. When allegations emerged that huge sums were looted from a sovereign wealth fund set up by current Prime Minister Najib Razak, he broke from the ruling party and established a new political outfit to try and oust a man who was once his protégé.

The US Justice Department alleges \$4.5 billion was stolen from the investment vehicle, IMDB, in a campaign of fraud and money-laundering. Najib denies any wrongdoing and has cracked down hard, purging critics from his government and curbing domestic investigations. The most remarkable aspect of Mahathir's return to frontline politics has been a rapprochement with his former nemesis and jailed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, a dramatic shift after the pair's falling out dominated the political landscape for two decades. Anwar was heir apparent to Mahathir until the premier sacked him in 1998 over political differences, and was then jailed for six years on sodomy and corruption charges.

After being released Anwar led the opposition to its best-ever showing in 2013 elections, but was imprisoned again in 2015 under Najib's government. Anwar has condemned his convictions as politically motivated. After Mahathir cut ties with ruling party the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) he sought to mend his broken relationship with Anwar, with the pair meeting in



SHAH ALAM: Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad delivers a speech after he was elected as the opposition's prime ministerial candidate. —AFP

2016 for the first time in 18 years. His party, Bersatu, joined the main opposition coalition Pact of Hope, which includes Anwar's party and many other former sworn enemies, and on Sunday he was endorsed as the grouping's candidate at their convention.

#### 'It is ridiculous'

If the opposition ousts the UMNO-led coalition which has ruled Malaysia since independence in 1957, Mahathir's position as premier is supposed to be temporary, with Anwar taking over once he is released from jail and has secured a royal pardon to overturn a ban on politics. The opposition hopes that Mahathir will boost its chances with Muslim Malays, who make up over 60 percent of the population, with the rest comprising mainly ethnic Chinese and Indians. Tian Chua, a lawmaker from Anwar's People's Justice Party, said Mahathir could deliver the knock-out blow to a government already reeling from the IMDB scandal. "Mahathir will invoke the glorious days of his 22-year reign and that will draw support from rural Malays, who are disgruntled with the rising cost of living," he told AFP.

But ruling party MPs quickly dismissed his candidacy and social media was flooded with angry comments criticizing the decision to put forward a man accused of ruling with an iron fist. "It is ridiculous. He is over 90 and he started all the problems we are facing," said Facebook user Radha Dulip Singh. Analysts said a victory for Pact of Hope looked unlikely. A survey by pollster the Merdeka Centre last month showed the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition potentially regaining its crucial two-thirds parliamentary majority, needed to amend the constitution. —AFP

## Tap and donate: How a cashless society is creating jobs for the homeless

LONDON: A bitter January wind is biting in central London and passers-by shrink into their coats. But Liam, who is homeless, is still smiling as he tries to get people to stop and talk to him. Aside from his winning smile, he also offers intrigue - what is that strange box hanging from his neck? "I say to people: Hi, like to come and talk about this box?" The box makes people stop," said Liam, 34, who is currently sleeping in a night shelter. People can tap their credit or debit cards on his box to give a three pounds (about \$4) donation via contactless payment.

Two pounds goes towards Liam's wages; the other pound is donated to two homeless charities. In return, donors get a small art card depicting one of the week's news events. Tapping into the increasing use of contactless payments for everything from commuting to rounds of drinks, social enterprise TAP London is offering work for the homeless as charity fundraisers, all without any cash changing hands. Homelessness is on the rise in England, with at least 4,100 people sleeping rough on any given night in 2016, according to the homeless charity Crisis.

At the same time, use of contactless payments more than doubled last year, according to trade group The UK Card Association. All of TAP London's vendors are homeless and telling their personal stories often persuades people to donate. Since being kicked out of his family home at the age of 16, Liam has spent the last 18 years on and off the streets, struggling with cocaine and alcohol addiction. Following rehab, he's been clean for 13 months. "I'm trying to do something different rather than sit there and moan that the government won't do anything to help me," said Liam, who declined to give his full name.

The idea for the social enterprise came after TAP co-founder Polly Gilbert tried to donate food to a homeless man one evening. He rejected the hot dog she offered, explaining he had already been given five that evening. "Both of us had cared about homelessness but were frustrated at not knowing what to do," fellow co-founder Katie Whitlock, 28, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Newspaper reports about street beggars making lucrative gains by pretending to be homeless and concerns about donated money supporting addictions have left people confused about whether to give money, said Whitlock. —Reuters

### News in brief

#### Restaurant fire kills five

BANGALORE: Five workers were killed yesterday when a bar and restaurant in southern India caught fire, police said, less than two weeks after a blaze at another eatery killed 14. Police said an electrical short-circuit probably caused the fire at the Kailash Bar & Restaurant in the southern technology hub of Bangalore. All five victims were employees who were sleeping at the premises, Bangalore Deputy Commissioner of Police MN Anucheth told reporters. In late December 14 people were killed in a fire at a rooftop restaurant in Mumbai, many of them young women at a birthday party. The incidents have raised concerns over lax enforcement of safety rules in India, where fires are common. Such disasters are particularly frequent in Mumbai, where millions live in cramped and dilapidated properties because of high rents. Activists say builders and landlords often cut corners on safety to save costs and have accused civic authorities of negligence and apathy.

#### House fire kills four

MONTREAL: Four children were killed in a house fire in the eastern Canadian province of Nova Scotia, local media reported Sunday, quoting family members on the tragedy. The fire tore through a home in Pubnico Head, in the province's Yarmouth County, 260 kilometers southwest of Halifax. Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers said they responded to a call shortly after midnight. "We can confirm there are fatalities. The RCMP is at an early stage of this investigation," spokeswoman Jennifer Clarke told reporters around midday. Local media reported that two children who lived in the house were involved, as well as another two who were not part of the same family but were in the house at the time of the fire. The province has been dealing with frigid temperatures; it was minus 13 Celsius (8 Fahrenheit) at the time.

#### India reviews gay sex ban

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court yesterday announced a review of a hugely controversial ban on gay sex, saying no one should have to live in fear because of their sexuality. The court said it would take up a legal challenge by five high-profile Indians who said the colonial-era law created an atmosphere of intimidation. "A section of people... who exercise their choice should never live in a state of fear," said the court in its ruling, adding that "societal morality" was subject to change over time. The announcement is the latest chapter in a long-running legal tussle between social and religious conservatives and the gay community over the law passed by the British in the 1860s. Section 377 of the Indian penal code bans homosexual acts as "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and allows for life imprisonment, though prosecutions for same-sex activity have been rare. Gay sex was effectively decriminalized in India in 2009 when the Delhi High Court ruled that banning it violated a person's fundamental rights.

#### 11 dead after gun battle

MEXICO CITY: The aftermath of a gunfight on the outskirts of the Mexican seaside resort of Acapulco that pit residents of a small town against members of a local, self-appointed community police force has left 11 dead, state officials said on Sunday. The exchange of gunfire took place in the farming community of La Concepcion, just south of Acapulco, after elements of the community police detailed a young man for disorderly conduct during town festivities early Sunday morning. Eight local residents were killed in that exchange. After Army soldiers and state police later moved into the town, three members of the community police were shot dead after resisting them, Roberto Alvarez, a state security official, told reporters. Another 30 members of the local police, which had been authorized by state officials to operate in the small town, were arrested in the operation. Acapulco is the biggest city in the southern state of Guerrero, one of Mexico's most lawless and a center of opium poppy production.

## Analysis

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## What Republicans mean when they talk about US welfare reform

US President Donald Trump had indicated he would like to rein in spending on US social welfare programs to follow up on his 2017 victory in overhauling the US tax code. Some Republicans, including House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan, welcomed the effort. Others, including Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, indicated they are hesitant to tackle this politically volatile issue in a congressional election year.

Trump said after speaking to congressional leaders that they may need to delay pursuit of a welfare overhaul, prioritizing immigration changes and infrastructure spending. There are roughly 80 welfare programs. Here are some that Republicans, who voted last month to add \$1.5 trillion to the US national debt over 10 years to pay for tax cuts, may target as they seek to cut federal spending.

### Medicaid

Federal and state governments jointly fund Medicaid. The health insurance program for low-income, disabled, elderly and other individuals is administered by the states. About 68 million people - about one in five Americans - are insured by Medicaid. The program cost about \$553 billion in 2016. It is open-ended, meaning its cost can fluctuate if more individuals qualify for Medicaid coverage. Ryan has said capping Medicaid spending is a long-time goal.

As a candidate, Trump promised not to cut spending for Medicaid, the Medicare health insurance program for the elderly or the Social Security retirement program. But a White House budget blueprint released in May proposed slashing more than \$600 billion from Medicaid's budget over a decade. The Trump administration is examining ways to limit Medicaid eligibility. Seema Verma, head of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said in November the administration would encourage states to add work requirements to the program.

### CHIP

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) offers health insurance for 8.9 million children in lower-income families. It is run jointly by the federal and state governments. Congress allowed CHIP funding to expire at the end of September 2017. States warned that they could be forced to shut down their programs or freeze enrollment. Under a deal to keep the government open through Jan. 19, Congress approved \$3 billion for in CHIP funding through March, when it will need another congressional reauthorization.

### TANF

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) provides federal block grants to states for programs to help needy families. TANF grants in 2017 aided 1.1 million families. The program has an annual budget of about \$16.5 billion, which Trump proposed trimming by 10 percent in his May blueprint.

### EITC

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit for low- and moderate-income taxpayers, particularly those with children. Roughly 28 million taxpayers claimed it in 2015. Republican tax legislation approved in December left the EITC largely unchanged.

### Child Tax Credit

The Child Tax Credit is a partially refundable tax credit for taxpayers with children, which is phased out at higher income levels. The Republican tax legislation increased the credit to \$2,000 from \$1,000, setting the refundable portion at \$1,400 for those with earned income of \$2,500 or more. The bill made the credit available to higher-income families. The credit now phases out as income surpasses \$400,000 for married couples filing joint tax returns. Children must have a Social Security number for their parents to claim the credit.

### SNAP

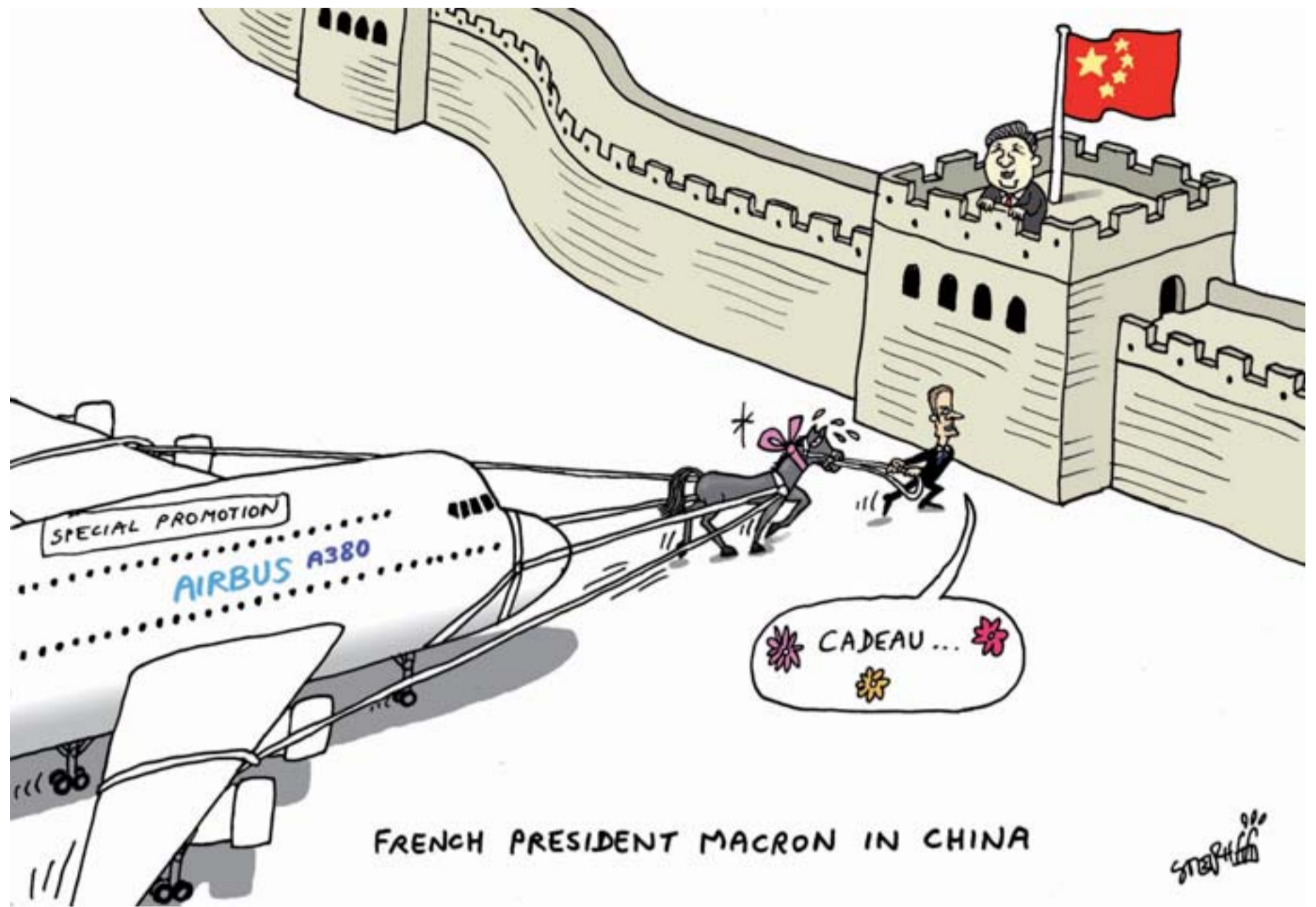
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is better known as food stamps. It helped nearly 44 million Americans in 2016, with an annual budget of about \$71 billion. Trump's budget proposed cutting more than \$192 billion from SNAP over a decade. The Agriculture Department said recently it will give states greater control over SNAP, potentially opening the door to drug testing or stricter work requirements.

### WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal block grants to states for supplemental nutrition and nutrition education for infants, young children and pregnant and post-partum women. More than half of all US-born infants get WIC benefits. WIC provided about \$6.5 billion in assistance in the 2017 fiscal year. About 7.7 million individuals received WIC benefits per month in 2016. Trump proposed cutting \$200 million from WIC's 2018 budget. House Republicans suggested a similar figure.

### SSDI

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) provides income benefits to disabled people unable to work who have paid past payroll taxes, which fund the program. SSDI benefits can be temporary or permanent. They are based on past earnings and do not run out so long as the person is disabled and cannot work. About \$143 billion in SSDI benefits were paid in 2016 to 10.2 million people. Trump's budget proposed reducing the time-frame for which recipients can obtain retroactive benefits and cutting \$64 billion from the program over the next decade. —Reuters



## Refugee women unprotected against violence

Rolling up the sleeves of her long black robe to reveal a scar from a cigarette burn on her arm, refugee Sara shows how her husband pressed a pillow over her face to shut her up when he attacked her. The abuse began as soon as they got married in 2009, just a year after Sara had fled her home in Myanmar, where her fellow Rohingya - an ethnic Muslim minority - are shunned and persecuted in the Buddhist-majority nation.

She landed in Malaysia and married her husband, a 42-year-old Rohingya man, the following year. "I wanted to be a good wife but he was always very angry. He would not allow me to go out, he would expect me to have all the food ready, and prepare him a hot towel and a glass of water when he gets home. He would hit me if he was not happy. If I cried, he covered my mouth with a pillow so our neighbors could not hear me," said Sara, who used a pseudonym for fear of retaliation from her husband.

The 30-year-old eventually escaped her home with her six-year-old son and the pair has been living for five months in a shelter run by an organization that supports migrant workers and refugees. Stories like Sara's are not unusual among the refugee community in Malaysia, which hosts over 150,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the majority of them from Myanmar and some of whom have lived in the country for over a decade. Rights groups say uncertainty over their future and years of living in a host country where they are considered illegal migrants have taken a toll on their mental health, and driven up cases of domestic violence among refugee families.

### 'Silent in Fear'

Kuala Lumpur-based Tenaganita, a campaign group which works with refugees, said there was "extensive" gender-based violence against refugee women in Malaysia. Since last year, the group has been working with the University of

Colorado in the United States to conduct a two-year survey among some 500 Rohingya families in Malaysia on the prevalence of gender-based violence.

Tenaganita's executive director, Glorene Das, said although the survey is still underway, early indications showed both male and female respondents acknowledged physical and emotional abuse happened within their families. "Not being



### Physical and emotional abuse happens within their families

able to resettle or taking a long time adds stress to the family," Das told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Ultimately husbands or the male family members tend to take it out on their female partners."

She added that the fact refugees are not recognized by the government also means that victims of violence have no legal avenue to turn to when they want to seek recourse. "Their deemed 'illegality' renders the women silent in fear," Das said. While the refugees are recognized by the UN's refugee agency UNHCR, Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which means all refugees are viewed as illegal migrants awaiting resettlement in a third country. The country also does not extend protection, job opportunities or education to them, leaving many refugees end up finding odd jobs in the informal sectors as cleaners, waiters or construction workers.

to seeds that better stand up to harsher conditions, as well as better fertilizers. They also get a guaranteed price for their crop, as long as they produce good-quality potatoes on time, said Wachira Kaguongo, head of the National Potato Council.

### Fair Deals

The consortium, which was set up in 2016 by the National Potato Council, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa and the Grow Africa partnership, aims to increase private investment in agriculture by linking potato farmers with food processors across the country, Kaguongo said.

“The cold damages potato vines with frostbite while heat makes them wilt”

Each production agreement is reviewed and approved by the National Potato Council, which ensures it is fair to both parties, said Willy Bett, cabinet secretary of the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

"Businessmen will always want to get farmers to sign something that may not be favourable to them," Bett told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We're trying to prevent that by ensuring that

Campaigners say the lack of a formal status often leaves refugees vulnerable to abuse, and at risk of arrest as well as deportation under immigration laws. Some refugees are resettled by the United Nations in so-called third countries, such as the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic and Australia. Responding to a query from the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the UNHCR could not say how long on average it takes for a refugee in Malaysia to be resettled because applications are handled on a case by case basis.

But its data showed number of refugees who left Malaysia for resettlement fell from over 12,500 in 2015, to about 8,100 in 2016 and plummeted to 2,338 to the end of Oct 2017. "Given the limited numbers of resettlement places, UNHCR must prioritize those with acute and pressing vulnerabilities," UNHCR spokeswoman Yante Ismail said in an emailed reply. "For those who do not have a pressing need for resettlement, the process can take much longer, or may not even be an available option," she added.

### Refugee Ban

Although President Donald Trump lifted a temporary ban on most refugee admissions in October, the number of refugees admitted to the United States has dropped, according to a Reuters analysis of State Department data. UNHCR's Yante said the uncertainty refugees feel about their future brings a "corrosive effect" on their mental and physical health and called on Malaysia to do more to protect them in the country.

Meanwhile violence - especially against women - continues. Noor Arifah Bujang, who provides counselling to refugee women, said they often told her stories of how their husbands were in constant fear of being arrested and struggled to make ends meet. "The (husbands) become stressed and they tend to beat up their wives or children. Marital rape is the most common," she said. —Reuters

farming activity is done on a contract basis in Kenya." Contract farming has allowed farmers to sell produce to food giants such as the fast-food chain KFC, formerly known as Kentucky Fried Chicken. Macharia's potatoes now fetch 22 shillings (\$0.20) per kilo, more than double what he used to get when selling them at the Kippiri open air market. "I am paid in cash at my farm," he said. "And I do not have to travel to the market when I don't want to." So far 5,000 farmers have signed up to the system, with a total of 23,000 expected to have made the switch by 2020, said Kaguongo.

### Supply Shortage?

Felix Matheri, a researcher at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, said that while contract farming provides farmers with a steady income, it risks depriving poor families of their food supply. "Contracts bind farmers to supplying an agreed amount of potatoes, meaning that when the harvest is low farmers are forced to sell all their produce to meet their obligations," he explained. "But potatoes are rich in starch and a critical source of nutrients - farmers should save some for home consumption," he said.

Others have concerns about contract farming as well. Louise Wangari, a roadside seller of potatoes in Nyandarua County, said she is worried it might affect the supply she gets from farmers. "The quantity of potatoes I was getting from farmers was already decreasing due to extreme weather," she said. "If they start signing contracts with other buyers, then I may be out of business soon, as I can't afford to pay them as much as the food processors." —Reuters

News

## Explosion risk for oil tanker ablaze off China

BEIJING: An Iranian oil tanker ablaze off China's east coast was at risk of exploding or sinking yesterday, as fears grew for 32 missing sailors amid warnings of a potential environmental disaster. The huge fire was still raging yesterday morning around the stricken vessel, which had been carrying 136,000 tonnes of light crude oil, some 36 hours after it collided with a cargo ship. But China's English-language state broadcaster CGTN later posted a video on Twitter showing the fire seemingly under control as a second vessel sprayed it with water.

Earlier the transport ministry said rescuers trying to locate the crew of 30 Iranians and two Bangladeshis were being beaten back by toxic clouds. The Panamanian-flagged 274-m tanker Sanchi is "in danger of exploding or sinking", the ministry said. Rescuers had recovered one unidentified body as of yesterday afternoon, said foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang. "Conditions... are not that favorable for search and rescue work," he said, adding that "we are also investigating how to prevent any secondary disaster."

The body was found three or four miles from the tanker and "cannot be easily identified" even though the victim had a fire safety vest, Alireza Irvash, from Iran's

consulate in Shanghai, told Iranian state broadcaster IRIB. The accident happened on Saturday evening 160 nautical miles east of the city. The tanker, operated by Iran's Glory Shipping, was heading to South Korea when it collided with a Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship, the CF Crystal, carrying 64,000 tonnes of grain.

Ten government vessels and "many fishing ships" were helping with the ongoing rescue and cleanup effort, the transport ministry said, adding that a South Korean coastguard ship was also on the scene. A US Navy aircraft took part in the search on Sunday, scouring a wide area before returning to Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan.

### Environmental fears

As Chinese authorities raced to contain the ship's leaking oil, experts expressed fears the accident could create an environmental disaster. Greenpeace said in a statement it was "concerned about the potential environmental damage that could be caused by the 1 million barrels of crude oil on board". If all of the Sanchi's cargo spills, it would be the biggest oil slick from a ship for decades. By comparison, in the sixth-worst spill since the 1960s, the Odyssey dumped 132,000 tonnes some 700 nautical miles off Canada's Nova Scotia in 1988, according to figures from the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation website.

"It's very possible this will kill off marine life across a wide area," Wei Xianghua, an environmental expert at Beijing's Tsinghua University, told AFP of the latest threat. Even under a best-case scenario, it would take a



This frame grab yesterday shows smoke and flames coming from a burning oil tanker at sea off the coast of eastern China. — AFP

"long time" for the area to get back to normal, Wei added. "At present, the only thing to be done is make the best effort to not allow the oil to spread to other places."

China had two vessels working to contain the spill early yesterday morning, the transport ministry said. Iran's Petroleum Ministry said the tanker belongs to the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) and was

delivering its cargo to South Korea's Hanwha Total. The ship and its cargo were insured, a statement said. It was the second accident in less than two years involving a tanker owned by the NITC. In August 2016 an Iranian supertanker and a container ship collided in the Singapore Strait, causing damage to both vessels but no injuries or pollution. — AFP

## US ends protected status for 200,000 Salvadoran residents

WASHINGTON: The US government announced yesterday the end of a special protected status for about 200,000 Salvadoran immigrants, a move that threatens with deportation tens of thousands of well-established families with children born in the United States. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen announced the end of the "temporary protected status" (TPS) granted to Salvadorans already in the United States in 2001, when two major earthquakes rocked the Central American country.

They were given 18 months to leave or be deported, which officials said is enough time for a legislative solution to be crafted by Congress to allow them to stay. "Only

Congress can legislate a permanent solution addressing the lack of an enduring lawful immigration status of those currently protected by TPS who have lived and worked in the United States for many years," said the DHS. The move came in the wake of the termination of similar TPS protections for 59,000 longtime resident Haitians and 5,300 Nicaraguans late last year, after having been allowed to set deep roots inside the United States for decades.

### Crackdown on illegal immigration

DHS said Nielsen made the decision after a review determined "that the original conditions caused by the 2001 earthquakes no longer exist" and so extending the 17-year-old TPS cannot be justified. But the decision also comes as part of a broader crackdown on illegal immigration by President Donald Trump. Many if not most of those in the TPS programs had originally entered the country illegally or overstayed visas, but TPS had effectively allowed them to settle down without the constant fear of deportation. Previous governments rolled over TPS status with lit-

tle debate, but Trump has pursued a tougher "law and order" approach to the issue.

### Important to economy

Without a change in the law, the move will force some 195,000 Salvadorans to leave the country by Sept 9, 2019. It impacts large communities of deeply-rooted people in California, Texas and around the US capital, more than 135,000 households, according to the Center for Migration Studies. Nearly all have jobs, over a quarter own homes with a mortgage, 10 percent are self-employed and about 10 percent have married US citizens.

The decision will also impact nearly 193,000 children of Salvadorans born inside the United States - and who therefore have citizenship rights unlike their parents. "They are employed, support families, own homes and pay taxes. They are human beings pursuing the American Dream," said John Boardman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Washington DC area local of the UNITE HERE union, which counts many Salvadoran hotel and restaurant work-

ers as its members.

"If that is not enough, then understand that they are an integral part of our economy and the failure to recognize that comes with dire consequences for industries like hospitality," Boardman said. Democrats in Congress condemned the decision, many noting that the high level of insecurity in El Salvador, where criminal gangs run rampant, puts the lives of returnees in danger.

"Today's decision is a poignant reminder that we have an anti-immigrant president who turns his back on hard-working families and insists on governing by fear and intimidation," said Nevada Senator Catherine Cortez Masto. "Revoking TPS for Salvadorans will not only tear families apart, deportation could expose thousands of them to potentially dangerous and life-threatening situations," she said. Immigrant advocates and many lawmakers held out hopes for a deal with the White House that would allow the Salvadorans to stay, and a senior official, speaking to journalists Monday, suggested that the administration would be amenable to action by Congress. — AFP

## Syrian regime pounds rebels...

Continued from Page 1

Rebels led by the Jaish al-Islam group had in recent days surrounded the army's only military base in the area but the state news agency SANA said yesterday the siege had been broken. "Units from the Syrian Arab Army have brought an end to the encirclement of the Armored Vehicles Base in Harasta," it said, adding that operations were ongoing to fully secure the base. According to the Observatory, the fighting in Harasta since the base was surrounded in late December left 72 regime fighters and 87 rebels dead.

Syrian and Russian aircraft also pounded targets in the northwestern region of Idlib, pressing a week-old operation targeting the last province in the country to escape government control. Raids Sunday left "at least 21 dead, including eight children and 11 members of the same family" west of the town of Sinjar in the southeast of the province, the Observatory said. "Regime and Russian strikes are continuing today on several parts of Idlib" province, Abdel Rahman said.

Russian-backed regime forces launched an operation on the edge of Idlib province in the last days of 2017 and have retaken villages every day since. After the collapse of the Islamic State group in both Syria and Iraq late last year, President Bashar Al-Assad's regime is bent on restoring its grip over the country. Idlib province, which borders Turkey, is almost entirely controlled by anti-gov-

ernment forces that are dominated by a jihadist outfit known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) consisting mostly of fighters from a former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Among the other groups present in the province are thousands of militants from Central Asian states and members of the Muslim Uighur ethnic minority of China's Xinjiang province. An explosion on Sunday in the city of Idlib at a base for the group Ajnad al-Qawqaz, made up of men from the Caucasus who fight alongside HTS, left at least 43 dead, including 28 civilians, the Observatory said. The toll went up from 23 after rescuers found more bodies in the wreckage and the most critically injured died of their wounds. It was not immediately clear whether the blast was caused by air strikes or was the result of the kind of internal clashes that sometimes break out between jihadist and rebel factions.

After shrinking to barely a sixth of the country at the height of the nearly seven-year-old conflict, the areas under government control now cover more than 50 percent of Syrian territory. More than 340,000 people have been killed and millions have been driven from their homes since Syria's conflict erupted with anti-government protests in 2011.

Meanwhile, pilotless drones carrying explosives attacked Russian bases in Syria over the weekend without causing any casualties or damage, Russia's defense ministry said yesterday. "Ten drones carrying explosives attacked the Russian air base at Hmeimim and three others targeted the Russian naval base in Tartous", both in western Syria, the ministry said in a statement run by Russian press agencies. The "terrorist" attacks took place on Friday night causing "neither casualties nor material damage", the statement said. — AFP

## Conjoined Gaza twins separated...

Continued from Page 1

Allam Abu Hamda, head of the neonatal unit at Gaza's Shifa Hospital, told AFP in October the girls were born joined at the stomach and pelvis and that the complicated condition could not be dealt with in the

enclave. Israel has maintained a blockade of the enclave for a decade, citing security fears over Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas. Conjoined twins who share key organs have a low chance of survival.

Farah and Haneen, whose condition Abu Hamda said was stable, have one shared leg but separate hearts and lungs. Conjoined twins born in Gaza in Nov 2016 later died. In 2010, conjoined twins from Gaza were transferred to Saudi Arabia for surgery to separate them, but doctors in Riyadh said their condition was too delicate to operate and they died. — AFP

## Bacteria makes blue jeans green...

Continued from Page 1

off slightly with wear-and-tear to yield the sought-after worn-in look.

Some four billion denim garments are produced every year, the vast majority indigo-tinted, said the study authors, and warned of "a serious sustainability problem". The first danger: Producing indigo dye requires the use of toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde and hydrogen cyanide. Furthermore, synthesized indigo is insoluble in water, meaning chemicals are needed to make it suitable for dyeing. One such chemical is sodium dithionite, which decomposes into sulfate and sulfite which can corrode equipment and pipes in dye mills and wastewater treatment plants.

"Many dye mills avoid the additional cost of wastewater treatment by dumping the spent dye materials into rivers, where they have negative ecological impacts," said the research team. The new method mimics the workings of the Japanese plant *Persicaria tinctoria*. Instead of a plant, "we engineered a common lab strain of *Escherichia coli*, a bacteria found in our gut, to be a chemical factory for the production of indigo dye," study co-author John Dueber of the University of California's bioengineering department told AFP.

Like the plant, the bacteria produces a compound called indoxyl, which is insoluble and cannot be used as a dye. By adding a sugar molecule, the indoxyl is turned into indican - a precursor of indigo. Indican can be stored and transformed into indigo directly on the cloth when dyeing, by adding an enzyme to the mix. The lab is working to make the process commercially feasible, Dueber said. For now, producing five grammes of indigo to color one pair of jeans would require "several litres of bacteria," he said, and would be more expensive. — AFP

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Sports

# Australia complete dominant 4-0 Ashes series rout of England

## Root hailed for leaving sick bed to bat

**SYDNEY:** Australia ruthlessly extinguished England's resistance to claim an innings victory in the fifth Ashes Test and complete a 4-0 series rout on the final day in Sydney yesterday. The beleaguered tourists, with skipper Joe Root weakened by a stomach bug and unable to continue batting, dissolved after lunch, losing their last four wickets for their fourth comprehensive defeat of the series.

"It has been a great couple of months. The cricket that we have played in the last couple of months has been outstanding," Australia skipper Steve Smith said. "We have just been able to get on top and win those key moments and not let them back in the game which is crucial."

Paceman Pat Cummins led the Australian offensive in Sydney with four wickets for 39 to finish man-of-the-match and the leading wicket taker in the series with 23. "To get through the five Tests and end the series here at home, I couldn't ask for much more," said an ecstatic Cummins.

All four of Australia's front-line bowlers finished with 20 or more wickets each for the series. "I think all the bowlers did an exceptional job. The guys have bowled together as a group, bowled in partnerships, bowled for one another and helped us take the wickets that we've needed to take four Test matches," Smith added.

England finished at 180 for nine off 88.1 overs as Australia won by an innings and 123 runs. It followed comprehensive losses on the troubled five-Test tour in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. The fourth Test was drawn in Melbourne.

Stricken Root did not come out to bat after lunch as he continued to experience discomfort after his overnight stomach bug. "He has a gastro bug and he has not been too well through the night and the heat yesterday didn't help. He is asleep in the dressing-room trying to recover," said vice-captain Jimmy Anderson, deputising for Root at the post-



**SYDNEY:** Australia's cricket team celebrates after retaining the Ashes trophy, defeating England on the final day of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match at the SCG in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

match presentations.

"To be honest we have been overplayed in the key moments of each game," he added. "We have been in the games to an extent but just not been able to capitalise on any opportunities. Australia have played great in this series."

### CHANCES DISAPPEAR

Cummins struck twice in three balls after lunch, trapping Jonny Bairstow leg before wicket for 38 and having Stuart Broad caught behind off a brutish bouncer for four. Mason Crane got another vicious Cummins bouncer which he gloved to wicketkeeper Tim Paine for two and Anderson was caught behind off Josh Hazlewood for two to end the innings.

Root went to hospital overnight with England initially saying he had "severe dehydration" after fielding and batting in intense heat on Sunday. But team officials later said Root had in fact been weakened by the

effects of a gastroenteritis bug.

He came out to bat on the dismissal of Moeen Ali for 13 an hour into the final day's play and reached his fifth half-century of the series, although he was unable to convert any of them to a century. England's remote chances of saving the Test disappeared when Root failed to appear at the crease after lunch, retiring ill for a second time.

Spinner Nathan Lyon claimed Moeen's wicket for the seventh time in the series when he trapped him leg before in the morning session, which Moeen did not review. Lyon took three wickets for 54 off 35 overs to finish with 21 wickets for the series and 290 in his career.

The Australians took a grip on the final Test with a massive 303-run innings lead and then reduced the battle-weary tourists to 93 for four by the close on the fourth day and finished off the job mid-afternoon Monday. All five Tests went into the fifth day, indicating the attritional nature of the series. — AFP



### SCOREBOARD

**SYDNEY:** Scoreboard at the close on the final day in the fifth Ashes Test between Australia and England in Sydney yesterday:

<b>England first innings 346</b> (J. Root 83, D. Malan 62; P. Cummins 4-80)	J. Anderson c Paine b Hazlewood 2 Extras (lb2, pen5) 7 Total (all out: 88.1 overs) 180
<b>Australia first innings 649</b> for 7 declared (U. Khawaja 171, S. Marsh 156, M. Marsh 101; M. Ali 2-170)	Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Stoneman), 2-15 (Cook), 3-43 (Vince), 4-68 (Malan), 5-121 (Ali), 6-144 (Bairstow), 7-148 (Broad), 8-156 (Crane), 9-180 (Anderson) Bowling: Starc 16-4-38-1, Hazlewood 17.1-6-36-1, Lyon 35-12-54-3, Cummins 17-4-39-4, Smith 2-0-6-0, M. Marsh 1-1-0-0.
<b>England second innings</b> (overnight 93 for 4)	Result: Australia won by an innings and 123 runs Series: Australia 4-0 Man-of-the-match: Pat Cummins (AUS) Man-of-the-series: Steve Smith (AUS)
A. Cook b Lyon 10	
M. Stoneman lbw b Starc 0	
J. Vince c Smith b Cummins 18	
J. Root retired ill 58	
D. Malan lbw b Lyon 5	
J. Bairstow lbw b Cummins 38	
M. Ali lbw b Lyon 13	
T. Curran not out 23	
S. Broad c Paine b Cummins 4	
M. Crane c Paine b Cummins 2	

## Philander blasts South Africa to win over India

**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa's fast bowlers, led by Vernon Philander, blasted through India's batting as the host nation gained a 72-run win on the fourth day of the first Test at Newlands yesterday. Set 208 to win the first of three matches between the world's two leading Test teams, number one-ranked India were bowled out for 135 by their nearest challengers. Philander took six for 42 with Morne Morkel and Kagiso Rabada claiming two wickets each as India were subjected to a pace barrage in bowler-friendly conditions. South Africa were reduced to three fast bowlers because of a heel injury suffered by Dale Steyn while bowling on Saturday. Earlier, it had been the Indian bowlers who held sway when South Africa were bowled out for 130 in their second innings, losing their last eight wickets for 65 runs. India's run chase started promisingly with Murali Vijay and Shikhar Dhawan putting on 30 for the first wicket, although Vijay was reprieved on review twice after being given out against Philander, for leg before wicket and a catch behind the wicket.

But then Dhawan was caught at gully off his bat handle when he got into a tangle against a lifting ball from Morkel. Six balls later it was third time lucky for Philander as Vijay edged a catch to AB de Villiers at third slip. Philander claimed the key wicket of Indian captain Virat Kohli, who had looked confident in scoring 28 before he was trapped leg before wicket.

Philander struck again when Rohit Sharma was bowled off an inside edge and Rabada dismissed first innings top scorer Hardik Pandya for one, caught by a diving De Villiers at third slip. Rabada trapped Wriddhiman Saha leg before with the last ball before tea to leave India in a desperate situation in a match which hastened to a conclusion despite the loss of the third day because of rain.

Ravichandran Ashwin and Bhuvneshwar Kumar put on 49 for the eighth wicket before Philander took the last three wickets in the space of four balls. Wriddhiman Saha became the first Indian wicketkeeper to make ten dismissals in a Test match when he held five catches in South Africa's second innings on the fourth day of the first Test at Newlands yesterday. Saha also took five catches in the first innings. He broke the record held by Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who made nine dismissals, with eight catches and a stumping, against Australia in Melbourne in 2014/15.

Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah were the main destroyers of the South African batting, taking three wickets each. Shami started the collapse, dismissing Hashim Amla with the ninth ball of the morning and taking three wickets for 28 runs. Bumrah took three for 39, including



**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa bowler Vernon Philander (3rd R) celebrates dismissing India batsman Jasprit Bumrah and winning the match by 72 runs during day four of the First Test between South Africa and India in Cape Town, yesterday. — AFP

the wicket of South African captain Faf du Plessis, who fell to an unplayable delivery which lifted sharply off a good length and flicked a glove.

Despite being ruled out of the rest of the series, Steyn, who arrived at the ground on crutches, limped to the wicket as the last batsman in an effort to keep company with De Villiers, who top-scored with 35. He managed to

defend four balls from Kumar but De Villiers was caught off Bumrah in the next over by Kumar, one of eight fielders stationed on the boundary. Wicketkeeper Saha set an Indian record by taking ten catches in the match, five in each innings. After being under covers for two nights and a day, the pitch offered plenty of seam movement and occasional steep bounce. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

**CAPE TOWN:** Final scores on the fourth day of the first Test between South Africa and India at Newlands yesterday:

<b>South Africa, first innings, 286</b>	<b>India, second innings</b>	
<b>India, first innings, 209</b>	M. Vijay c De Villiers b Philander 13	
<b>South Africa, second innings</b> (overnight 65-2)	S. Dhawan c sub (Morris) b Morkel 16	
A. Markram c Kumar b Pandya 34	C. Pujara c De Kock b Morkel 4	
D. Elgar c Saha b Pandya 25	V. Kohli lbw b Philander 28	
K. Rabada c Kohli b Mohammed Shami 5	R. Sharma b Philander 10	
H. Amla c Sharma b Mohammed Shami 4	W. Saha lbw b Rabada 8	
A. de Villiers c Kumar b Bumrah 35	H. Pandya c De Villiers b Rabada 1	
F. du Plessis c Saha b Bumrah 0	R. Ashwin c De Kock b Philander 37	
Q. de Kock c Saha b Bumrah 8	B. Kumar not out 13	
V. Philander lbw b Mohammed Shami 0	Mohammed Shami c Du Plessis b Philander 4	
K. Maharaj c Saha b Kumar 15	J. Bumrah c Du Plessis b Philander 0	
M. Morkel c Saha b Kumar 2	Extras (lb1) 1	
D. Steyn not out 0	Total (42.4 overs) 135	
Extras (w2) 2	Fall of wickets: 1-30 (Dhawan), 2-30 (Vijay), 3-39 (Pujara), 4-71 (Kohli), 5-76 (Sharma), 6-77 (Pandya), 7-82 (Saha), 8-131 (Ashwin), 9-135 (Shami)	
Total (41.2 overs) 130	Bowling: Philander 15.4-4-42-6, Morkel 11-1-39-2, Rabada 12-2-41-2, Maharaj 4-1-12-0.	
Fall of wickets: 1-52 (Markram), 2-59 (Elgar), 3-66 (Amla), 4-73 (Rabada), 5-82 (Du Plessis), 6-92 (De Kock), 7-95 (Philander), 8-122 (Maharaj), 9-130 (Morkel)	Result: South Africa won by 72 runs	
Bowling: Kumar 11-5-33-2 (2w), Bumrah 11.2-1-39-3, Mohammed Shami 12-3-28-2, Pandya 6-0-27-2, Ashwin 1-0-3-0.	Series: South Africa lead the three-match series 1-0	

Zimbabwe starting January 15 — would be hauled from the stands and tried on the spot by judges in temporary courtrooms, a cricket board official said.

"Betting will be treated as a public nuisance. Anyone found involved will be convicted and punished instantly in the stadium," Bangladesh Cricket Board chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury told AFP.

The special courts will continue to target gamblers during Sri Lanka's tour of Bangladesh, which starts at the end of January after the tri-nation series. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will play two Test matches and two Twenty20 internationals.

Gambling is illegal but rampant during cricket

matches in Bangladesh, where punters exploit a brief delay between live play and the official broadcast of results to place frantic bets. Authorities threw nearly 80 spectators out of matches for placing bets using their mobile phones during the latest edition of the Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament, which concluded last month.

At least a dozen of them were foreigners. Police in November deported at least five Indians caught gambling during these short format matches. So-called "mobile courts" are popular in Bangladesh. In October, more than 200 people accused of abuses against Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's southeast were jailed by special courts there. — AFP

## No need for England overhaul despite Ashes defeat: Anderson

**SYDNEY:** England are on the right track and do not need to overhaul their squad despite crashing to a 4-0 Ashes series defeat to Australia, vice captain Jimmy Anderson said yesterday. Anderson has experienced two 5-0 whitewashes in Australia, including the chaotic 2013-14 trip Down Under which resulted in a string of retirements and the resignation of coach Andy Flower. But despite England's bowlers failing to take 20 wickets in any of the matches and the batsmen scoring just three centuries, one of those after the series was lost, Anderson felt England were on the right trajectory. "We have improved over the last 18 months. We've definitely made strides in the right direction," the 35-year-old said after the tourists fell to an innings and 123-runs defeat in the fifth and final test in Sydney. "It doesn't feel like a series where it should be a big upheaval. We've actually played some good cricket along the way. We've not been blown away in every game."

"Every game has gone to the fifth day. It doesn't feel like a completely disastrous series. We know we've got to improve in a number of areas." Anderson said the absence of all-rounder Ben Stokes, who was suspended after an incident outside a nightclub in September, and various off-field incidents at the start of the series had not had an impact on the series.

He also thought the preparations had been adequate. "I don't know what we could have done differently," he added. "You can do all the preparation you want. We've worked tirelessly in the nets. We've planned very well, meticulously. But you can't prepare for being out in the middle when the pressure is on. "The only thing that can prepare you for that is being in it and we've not dealt with those pressure situations well with bat or ball and that's been the difference in this series." A veteran of seven Ashes series, Anderson said he hoped to be around to play an eighth in England next year as a 37-year-old. "I'm going to do everything I possibly can be to be ready for that series in 2019," said the seamer, who took 17 wickets at 27.82. "I'm still hungry to play. I'm delighted I've got through these five test matches and bowled pretty well."

Anderson also thought Joe Root, who left his sick bed to try to save a draw on Monday, had been outstanding as captain. "You ask any captain that has toured Australia, it is not an easy place to come, not an easy place to play, especially when you're on the wrong end of results," he said.

"I think the way he has carried himself is a real credit to himself. He's been fantastic all the way through, a very level-headed guy. "He's not looked down at any stage and he's led the guys brilliantly both on and off the field. He should be very proud of what he's done this trip." — Reuters

## Bangladesh to try cricket gamblers in special courts

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh will set up special courts at its cricket stadiums to try and convict any punters caught gambling during an upcoming international series, an official said yesterday. Gamblers caught during the tri-nation series against Sri Lanka and

## Sports

# Murray announces hip surgery, eyes for grasscourt season

## Azarenka pulls out of Australian Open

**LONDON:** Andy Murray announced he had hip surgery in Australia yesterday and is hoping to return to competitive tennis in time for the grasscourt season midway through the year. The 30-year-old Scot has not played competitively since being knocked out of the Wimbledon quarter-finals last year and last week withdrew from this month's Australian Open.

"Today I underwent successful right hip surgery at the St Vincent Hospital in Melbourne," the former world number one said on Facebook. "I'd like to thank Dr John O'Donnell and all of the staff for looking after me. I look forward to returning to competitive tennis during the grasscourt season. Thanks to everyone for all the well wishes and support over the last few days. I'll come back from this."

The three-time Grand Slam champion, who dethroned Novak Djokovic from the top of the rankings towards the end of 2016, has slipped to 19th in the world due to his lengthy lay-off. He first felt pain in his right hip during his French Open semi-final loss to Swiss Stan Wawrinka in June.

The grasscourt season starts after the French Open, with the first event taking place in Stuttgart, Germany, from June 11.

Murray is a two-time Wimbledon winner and has been champion at Queen's in London on five occasions, both of which are played on grass courts. The BBC reported that he hopes to be hitting balls on court in about seven or eight weeks and has been given a timescale of 14 weeks as a guide for a return.

But Murray said he is not "interested in coming back for a specific tournament", in comments reported by the BBC. "My plan is to be back playing around the grass-court season-potentially before then-but I'm certainly not going to rush anything," he said. "I want to know when I come back that I'm ready."

"The surgeon felt that my hip will be feeling better than it did a year ago," Murray added. "Obviously, I was still doing fine a year ago-I was ranked number one in the world."

"I'm certainly not going to be putting in the same amount of tournaments and effort to try to get to number one in the world. I'll be playing a reduced schedule, and then focusing more on trying to win major events and big tournaments rather than trying to achieve certain ranking goals."

A host of top names are battling to be fit for the first Grand Slam of the year, which starts in Melbourne on January 15. Japan's Kei Nishikori has already pulled out and world number one Rafael Nadal and six-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic remain huge doubts, having yet to play a competitive match this year.

Meanwhile, former champion Victoria Azarenka, who has been locked in a custody battle over her young son, pulled out of the Australian Open yesterday. The two-time winner had been handed a wildcard into the opening Grand Slam of the year in Melbourne, starting on January 15, but will not be making the trip.

"It's unfortunate that Azarenka is unable to travel to



**ABU DHABI:** File photo taken on December 28, 2017 shows Andy Murray of Great Britain taking part in a tennis practice session in Abu Dhabi prior to heading to compete in the Australian Open in January. — AFP

Australia this year," tournament director Craig Tiley tweeted. "The Australian Open is her favourite tournament and she's looking forward to returning to Melbourne next year." Azarenka returned from maternity leave in the middle of last year but skipped the US Open after a Los Angeles judge presiding in a custody case over her son Leo ruled she could not leave

California until the matter had been settled. She had been in doubt for Melbourne Park after pulling out of last week's Auckland Classic. The Belarusian is the latest top name to withdraw from the Australian Open. Serena Williams, herself a new mother, opted out last week, saying she was still not at the level needed for a major tournament after giving birth. — AFP



## Grasscourt season starts after the French Open

## US runner-up Miner snubbed for Olympics

**LOS ANGELES:** Ross Miner was denied a men's berth at next month's Winter Olympics by a US Figure Skating selection committee Sunday, hours after his runner-up effort at the US championships. Teen star Nathan Chen, who landed five quadruple jumps to defend his US crown Saturday at San Jose and remain unbeaten this season, heads the American team for Pyeongchang, which also includes third-placed teen Vincent Zhou, like Chen the son of Chinese immigrants, and fourth-place Adam Rippon, the 2016 US champion.

Miner rose from fifth after the short program with a strong free skate Saturday to finish second. But it wasn't enough to convince the selection committee he deserved a spot in South Korea over Zhou or Rippon. It was the second selection controversy in as many days at the US championships, with former world silver medalist Ashley Wagner left off the team after a fourth-place finish.

Selectors on Saturday stuck with the women's podium finish to decide spots in sending Bradie Tennell, Mirai Nagasu and Karen Chen to Pyeongchang. Wagner was named as an alternate but Miner was tabbed only as a second alternate behind Jason Brown.

Chen, 18, has won two Grand Prix Series titles and the Grand Prix Final this season and is the only man in the world to be credited with landing five different types of quadruple jumps in global competition.

Zhou, who was skating in his hometown, was last year's US runner-up and the 2017 world junior champion. Rippon finished second at two Grand Prix events this season and was fifth in the Grand Prix Final.

Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue broke through for their first national ice dance crown after three straight runner-up finishes as competition concluded Sunday. Their score of 118.02 on their sultry, blues-tinged free dance gave them a total of 197.12 and catapulted them past three-time world medallists Maia and Alex Shibutani.

The "Shib Sibs"—winners of world silver in 2016 and world bronze in 2011 and 2017 — had led by more than three points after an impeccable short dance. But her slight stumble cost them in the free dance and the two-time defending US champions finished with a total of 196.93 points, hanging on for silver ahead of Madison Chock and Evan Bates.

Selectors later confirmed the three duos would carry US hopes at Pyeongchang, where Canadians Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir and France's Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron are expected to be the top ice dance contenders.

"I'm actually kind of thrilled because we did not have a perfect skate," Donohue said. "We have a lot of room to grow in both our programs—that really puts us in line with what we intend podium-wise for Pyeongchang."

Selectors also named US champions Alexa Scimeca-Knierim and Chris Knierim to the only American pairs berth in Pyeongchang. — AFP



**PITTSBURGH:** Matt Hunwick #22 of the Pittsburgh Penguins reaches for the puck against Patrice Bergeron #37 of the Boston Bruins at PPG PAINTS Arena On Sunday in Pittsburgh. — AFP

## Backstrom scores on a breakaway as Capitals down Blues

**WASHINGTON:** Nicklas Backstrom scored on a breakaway at 4:17 of overtime Sunday as the Washington Capitals downed the St. Louis Blues 4-3 at Capital One Arena in Washington. T.J. Oshie took the puck away from Colton Parayko at the Washington blue line and zipped a diagonal pass to Backstrom near the St. Louis blue line. Joel Edmundson couldn't catch Backstrom, and he roofed a wrist shot over Carter Hutton for his ninth goal. The Capitals extended their Metropolitan Division lead over New Jersey to three points, while the Blues lost for the second time in as many days but picked up a point to edge ahead of Nashville for second place in the Central Division. St. Louis forced overtime with Carl Gunnarsson's first goal in 27 games, a point shot at 15:51 of the third period that deflected off Alex Ovechkin and eluded goaltender Braden Holtby.

### PENGUINS 6, BRUINS 5 (OT)

Evgeni Malkin scored the game-winning goal 2:51 into overtime to help Pittsburgh edge Boston, 6-5, in a thriller at PPG Paints Arena in Pittsburgh. Malkin finished with two goals and has 17 on the season. Jamie Oleksiak, Phil Kessel, Kris Letang and Riley Sheahan also scored for the Penguins (22-19-3). Boston (23-10-7) snapped a three-game winning streak but extended its points streak to 11 straight games (8-0-3).

### BLUE JACKETS 3, PANTHERS 2 (SO)

Artemi Panarin, Jack Johnson and Josh Anderson scored in an eight-round shootout as host Columbus defeated Florida, 3-2. Aleksander Barkov and Mike Matheson scored for the Panthers in the shootout. Barkov also scored with 1:34 left in the third period to help send the game to overtime.

### BLACKHAWKS 4, OILERS 1

Chicago received goals from four different players and goaltender Anton Forsberg turned aside 32 shots to record

just his second win of the season in a 4-1 victory over Edmonton at the United Center in Chicago. Nick Schmaltz, Alex DeBrincat and Brandon Saad scored goals in the opening two periods and defenseman Jordan Oesterle scored against his former team to complete the win for the Blackhawks.

### JETS 4, SHARKS 1

Mathieu Perreault scored twice while Matt Hendricks and Marko Danon both lit the lamp once to give Winnipeg a 4-1 victory over San Jose at the Bell MTS Place in Winnipeg, Manitoba. That offense was more than enough to combine with a 31-save outing from goalie Connor Hellebuyck for the Jets to strengthen their hold atop the National Hockey League's Central Division.

### ISLANDERS 5, DEVILS 4 (SO)

Brock Nelson scored the only goal of the shootout Sunday as New York came back from a two-goal, third-period deficit to beat New Jersey, 5-4, in a shootout at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, NY. Nelson scored in the fifth round, as the Islanders snapped a five-game losing streak heading into their "bye week."

### FLYERS 4, SABRES 1

Sean Couturier scored two goals and Shayne Gostisbehere and Ivan Provorov each scored one goal, leading Philadelphia past Buffalo, 4-1, at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. Backup goaltender Michal Neuvirth started for the first time since Nov. 28 and earned the win with 30 saves on 31 shots on goal. Brian Elliott had started the previous 16 games.

### CANADIENS 5, CANUCKS 2

Brendan Gallagher scored the winning goal and added an assist as Montreal beat Vancouver, 5-2, in Montreal. The Canadiens (18-20-4) earned their second straight win, while the Canucks (16-20-6) have lost four straight games and 12 of the past 14.

### LIGHTNING 5, RED WINGS 2

Yanni Gourde had two goals, Nikita Kucherov scored his league-leading 27th goal and Tampa Bay snapped host Detroit's four-game winning streak. Louis Domingue made 34 saves in his Lightning (30-9-3) debut. Gustav Nyquist and Justin Abdelkader scored for the Red Wings (17-17-7). — Reuters

## IOC extends North Korea's Winter Olympics deadline

**LAUSANNE:** The International Olympic Committee has "extended the deadline" for North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympics, it announced yesterday. "We will be as flexible as we can be," an IOC spokesman told AFP over North Korea sending a team to the Pyeongchang Games in South Korea.

Talks between the two Koreas hosted by IOC president Thomas Bach will take place at the Olympic movement's headquarters in Lausanne today. "We welcome the discussion which will take place... between the governments of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)," the IOC said. "The IOC has been having discussions with both sides for a long time. "In doing so we have kept the door open by extending the deadline for registration, and by offering support to North Korean athletes in the qualification process, whilst always respecting United Nations sanctions."

On Saturday, North Korea Olympic body member Chang Ung said the isolated state was "likely to participate" in the Pyeongchang Games from February 9-25, Kyodo news agency reported. Today's Lausanne summit comes days after the two Koreas agreed to hold their first official dialogue in more than two years to discuss the North's participation in the Winter Olympics. — AFP

## Patriots open title defense against Titans

**TENNESSEE:** The New England Patriots begin their quest for a third Super Bowl title in four seasons on Saturday when they meet the Tennessee Titans in the NFL playoffs. Champions in the 2014 and 2016 seasons, the Patriots (13-3) are aiming for a sixth Super Bowl title, all with the now 40-year-old Tom Brady at quarterback.

They will be big favorites in the American Football Conference (AFC) divisional round having won their last six meetings with the Titans, including a 2015 game. Tennessee (10-7), who have not won in New England since 1993, advanced to Saturday's game with a 22-21 wildcard victory over the AFC West champion Kansas City Chiefs. The top team in the National Football Conference, the Philadelphia Eagles, host the Atlanta Falcons (11-6) on Saturday. Atlanta, who blew a 25-point lead in an overtime loss to New England in last year's Super Bowl, scored a 26-13 wildcard victory over the NFC West champion Los Angeles Rams. The Eagles, who won the NFC East with a 13-3 record but are missing injured quarterback Carson Wentz, hold an 18-14-1 all-time mark against the Falcons, with the last win coming in 2016. Divisional round games continue on Sunday with the AFC North champion Pittsburgh Steelers (13-3), who like the Patriots and Eagles had a first-round bye, hosting AFC South winner Jacksonville Jaguars (11-6).

NFC North winner Minnesota Vikings (13-3) face NFC South champion New Orleans Saints (12-5). Jacksonville, who beat the Buffalo Bills 10-3 to set up a meeting with the Steelers, enjoy a surprising 13-11 all-time record over Pittsburgh, including a 30-9 victory in October.

New Orleans held off the Carolina Panthers for the third time this season on Sunday, winning 31-26. The Vikings are 21-11 all-time against the Saints including a 29-19 regular season victory in September.

Next weekend's divisional winners will meet on Jan. 21 for Conference titles with the victors playing for the Super Bowl on Feb. 4 in Minneapolis. — Reuters

Sports

# Real fall 16 points behind Barca after draw with Celta

## Madrid stay fourth in the standings on 32 points

**BARCELONA:** Real Madrid's faltering title defence continued as they were held to a thrilling 2-2 draw at Celta Vigo on Sunday which saw them fall 16 points behind runaway leaders Barcelona, who beat Levante 3-0 to stay nine points clear at the top of La Liga.

Real looked to be heading for a second successive league defeat after their 3-0 loss to Barca in their last outing when Daniel Wass lobbed over Keylor Navas to put Celta ahead in the 33rd minute. Gareth Bale instantly responded by scoring twice in three minutes to put the stuttering champions in front before halftime but Celta came right back at Zinedine Zidane's side, with Iago Aspas squandering a penalty before Maxi Gomez levelled with a header in the 82nd minute.

Aspas was denied another penalty late in the game while down at the other end Real's Lucas Vazquez hammered the ball straight at Celta goalkeeper Ruben Blanco, while Cristiano Ronaldo fired wide of the near post.

Real stay fourth in the standings on 32 points while Barca have 48 although they have played one game more. Real travelled to Vigo without Dani Carvajal, striker Karim Benzema and captain Sergio Ramos while Celta, who knocked Real out of the King's Cup last season, were emboldened after drawing 1-1 with Barca in the Cup on Thursday.

Bale made his first start in the league since Sept. 20 after finally recovering from persistent muscle problems and pulled Real level after Wass's strike with a slick first-time finish before giving them the lead by knock-

ing a pass from Isco in with his back heel.

Celta appealed for Navas to be sent off when he felled Aspas and was only shown a yellow card while the Costa Rican was also let off when he stepped off his line before diving to his right to palm away the striker's spot-kick.

"We made a lot of errors, we gave the ball away a lot, something we don't normally do and we did it at important moments in the game, when we could have caused them more damage," Real coach Zinedine Zidane told reporters.

"We have to stop making these errors and be more consistent."

Barcelona had seen their lead over nearest challengers Atletico Madrid reduced to six points on Saturday but restored the gap to nine after Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Paulinho scored in a routine win over Levante.

**“We made errors, we gave the ball away a lot”**

### CUSHIONED HEADER

Messi was back in the starting line-up after missing the King's Cup draw with Celta Vigo on Thursday and marked his 400th game in La Liga by opening the scoring in the 12th minute, volleying Jordi Alba's cushioned header into the net.

Suarez struck his fifth goal in four games running by controlling a cross from Sergi Roberto and slamming the ball high into the net in the 38th minute.

Brazilian international Paulinho added an extra shine to the win by tapping in as the game drew to a close.

"We wanted to continue our run of wins and



**VIGO:** Real Madrid's midfielder Lucas Vazquez (C) jumps for a header during the Spanish league football match Celta de Vigo vs Real Madrid at the Balaidos stadium in Vigo on Sunday. — AFP

although we were favourites we knew Levante were a strong side that hadn't lost away from home in the league since September," said Barca coach Ernesto Valverde. "We were very good in the first half but the pace changed in the second half and Levante could

have scored." After the game club record signing Philippe Coutinho appeared at the Nou Camp to pose for photographs a day after completing his 142-million-pound (\$192.54-million) move from Liverpool to Barca. — Reuters

## Shocks and sackings, FA Cup talking points

**LONDON:** Arsenal were dumped out of the FA Cup by an inspired Nottingham Forest on a day of major shocks in the competition a day after Mark Hughes was sacked by Stoke City.

West Ham and Leicester survived testing ties against lower-league opponents while Manchester City came from behind to crush fellow Premier League side Burnley 4-1.

And Virgil van Dijk made an instant impact for Liverpool following his mega-money move from Southampton.

Here are some of the major talking points from the third round of the FA Cup.

### ROMANCE NOT DEAD

The FA Cup weekend was a throwback to the time when the third round used to be a red letter day in the English football calendar, giving the game's minnows a

chance to give the big boys a bloody nose. In the biggest shock, Nottingham Forest ejected holders Arsenal from the competition on Sunday, while former winners Leeds United were sent packing by a feisty Newport County, who play their football in the fourth tier of the English game. Stoke City crashed out to Coventry City the previous day. The increasing dominance of the Premier League and the high-profile Champions League have pushed the FA Cup down clubs' list of priorities but there are flickers of life in the world's most famous domestic cup competition.

### HUGHES RUNS OUT OF TIME

Mark Hughes ran out of time at Stoke City-becoming the seventh Premier League manager to be sacked this season after his side's ignominious FA Cup defeat to League Two Coventry. Hughes, 54, was in charge at Stoke for exactly 200 games, following managerial spells with QPR, Fulham, Manchester City, Blackburn and Wales. Speaking after the defeat, Hughes suggested that going out of the Cup could help the club, who are in the relegation zone. "The fact we've gone out, even if it's a little bit raw at the moment, might help us," Hughes said. "At the moment we don't want to discuss Premier League games, but maybe when we wake up on Monday the reality clearly has to be our league form." But it was not to be.

### VAN DIJK FITS THE BILL FOR LIVERPOOL

Virgil van Dijk's debut for Jurgen Klopp's side could not have gone much better. The most expensive defender in history, who joined from Southampton this month for £75 million (\$102 million, 85 million euros) added presence at the back and powered home a late winner from a corner against Everton for a 2-1 win. Liverpool, buoyed by their impressive array of attackers, have been on a good run in recent weeks but questions about their defence have never completely disappeared. Klopp will be hoping that the Dutch defender can help his side end their long trophy drought, which dates back to 2012.

### MOURINHO V CONTE

The war of words between Chelsea boss Antonio Conte and Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho shows no sign of abating. Conte dubbed his Stamford Bridge predecessor "a little man" following his team's goalless draw against Norwich. Responding to Mourinho talking about Conte in relation to a past match-fixing scandal in Italy, the former Juventus boss said: "We all know him very well. But it's always the same. This is his way. It's not a surprise for me. I think when you try to hurt a person, especially if you know very well the truth of what happens, the court proved my innocence, when you do this it means you are a little man." — AFP

## City need trophies to be 'big club'

**LONDON:** Pep Guardiola says Manchester City must match Manchester United and Liverpool by winning trophies in order to become one of the game's giants-and dazzling football is not enough. The runaway Premier League leaders maintained their relentless charge in four competitions by sweeping into the FA Cup fourth round at Burnley's expense on Saturday.

They are now eyeing a place in the League Cup final as they host Championship side Bristol City in the first leg of their semi-final today. "A win helps to win more, then we are there, going to go to London to play the final," said the City manager.

"It's important (to win trophies). To become a big club like the teams I have faced, or teams like (Manchester) United or Liverpool, with a really big history, you have to win. "Nobody can take away what we have lifted so far-the pleasures from this team of the last three or four months, they belong to us. In the process, when you live in good moments, I say to the players, 'Enjoy it'. It is so complicated it may not happen again.

"But after, of course, to give real value to what we have done so far, what we are going to do in the future, you have to lift the titles. Without that, it's OK, it's good, but not enough." The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss was pleased to see Leroy Sane back on the scoresheet in the 4-1 victory against Burnley.

The winger has been one of several standout City performers this season but the strike was the 21-year-old's first since October and Guardiola feels he still has much to do to reach his full potential.

"He has a special talent," said Guardiola. "Of course it was important to score another goal. We need his goals, but also his assists, crosses, how he defends backwards. "He made a lot of very good things but at 21, 22 years old-I met only one player in my life at that age who knew absolutely everything and he could do absolutely everything. The other guys have many, many things to improve, and Leroy especially." —AFP

## Neymar, PSG run riot in French Cup

**PARIS:** Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria all scored twice as a rampant Paris Saint-Germain shrugged off the absence of Edinson Cavani to win 6-1 away to Ligue 1 rivals Rennes in the French Cup on Sunday.

PSG are bidding to win the trophy for the fourth season running, something no club has ever done before, and they showed Rennes no pity in Brittany. Leading scorer Cavani was not involved after returning late from his Christmas and New Year break in Uruguay, so Di Maria came into the attack alongside Mbappe and Neymar.



**Cavani was not involved after returning late**

Mbappe opened the scoring inside nine minutes, finishing after being picked out by Thiago Silva's long ball over the top. A brilliantly worked goal saw PSG double their lead, with Adrien Rabiot and Marco Verratti combining to tee up Neymar for the finish.

Di Maria turned in a Yuri Berchiche cross from the left for the third goal midway through the first half and the pick of the bunch came as Neymar made it 4-0 two minutes from half-time.

PSG started the move in their own penalty box before Neymar broke downfield and eventually applied the finish from Mbappe's pass. Rennes did pull one back in the second half from a Benjamin Bourigeaud penalty after a Thiago Motta handball, but there was still time for Unai Emery's side to score twice more.

Mbappe set up Di Maria to make it five and the



**RENNES:** Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (L) vies with Rennes' French midfielder Benjamin Andre during the French cup football match Rennes vs Paris SG at the Roazhon Park in Rennes. — AFP

Argentine returned the favour with an assist for Mbappe to complete the rout. PSG have now won their last 34 consecutive domestic cup ties, a run they can extend further as they go to Amiens in the League Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday.

Ligue 1 clubs were entering the French Cup in their first outings of 2018 after a two-and-a-half-week winter break, and most of the leading sides made it through. Guido Carrillo scored a hat-trick as Monaco won 5-2 at fourth-tier Yzeure on Saturday, while Maxwell Cornet's last-gasp free-kick saw Lyon win 3-2

at Ligue 2 side Nancy and a Jordan Amavi goal in extra time gave Marseille a 1-0 victory at home to second-tier Valenciennes.

With Mario Balotelli out and Wesley Sneijder allowed to leave to complete a move to Al Gharafa of Qatar, Nice were beaten 1-0 at Toulouse. The biggest shock came as Bordeaux went down 2-1 away to fourth-tier Granville in Normandy despite having taken the lead through Younesse Sankhare. Last season's beaten finalists Angers were also eliminated, losing 2-0 at home to second-tier Lorient. —AFP



**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

### ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP

Manchester City v Bristol City 22:45  
beIN SPORTS HD 2

### SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Atletico de Madrid v Lleida Esportiu 21:30  
beIN SPORTS  
Valencia v Las Palmas 23:30  
beIN SPORTS

### FRENCH COUPE DE LA LIGUE

Nice v Monaco 23:00  
beIN SPORTS

**13** Australia complete dominant 4-0 Ashes series rout of England



**14** Murray announces hip surgery, eyes for grasscourt season



**15** Real fall 16 points behind Barca after draw with Celta



BARCELONA: Barcelona's new Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho (CR) poses with his new jersey beside Barcelona FC President Josep Maria Bartomeu (CL) during his official presentation in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

## Coutinho completes 'dream' Barca move

### Liverpool had put up a fight to keep the player

**BARCELONA:** Philippe Coutinho officially completed his "dream" 160-million-euro (\$192 million) move from Liverpool to Barcelona yesterday, making him the third most expensive player in history. Coutinho, 25, signed a five-year contract in a ceremony sitting alongside Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu before posing on the Camp Nou pitch in a Barcelona shirt.

"I am very happy to be here. This is a dream come true and I hope to meet everyone's expectations on the pitch," Coutinho said. Minutes before the Brazilian midfielder put pen to paper after a whirlwind few days, the club said a thigh injury would delay his debut until the end of January.

Barca's swoop for Coutinho is outranked only by Paris Saint-Germain's stunning world record 222-million-euro signing of Neymar from Barcelona last year, and the Paris club's capture of French striker Kylian Mbappe in a deal eventually worth 180 million euros.

His arrival will help Barcelona to move on from the humiliation of losing Neymar to Qatar-backed PSG, and his presence alongside Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez will help take the pressure off another of the club's stars, 33-year-old Andres Iniesta.

Bartomeu said the club had secured "one of the stars of

world football" and admitted that Liverpool had put up a fight to keep the player. "It was not easy and other clubs expressed an interest in him, but he was determined to come here," the president said.

Barcelona had made a bid for Coutinho in the summer, but Liverpool stood firm. In the end, the lure of a huge profit on a player they paid just £8.5 million when he joined from Inter Milan in 2013 proved too strong for the English club.

#### A GOOD FIT

Coach Ernesto Valverde predicted Coutinho will comfortably fit into his star-studded team. He could now make his debut at home to Alaves on January 28. Coutinho played with Suarez for 18 months at Liverpool before the Uruguayan made the same move to Spain in 2014.

"Everybody knows about his quality. He has been play-

ing at the highest level for years now and that is important," Suarez said. "Now we need to make sure he feels at home because we know that changing club is always difficult, but I think he is the type of player who will fit well into the team."

“I hope to meet everyone's expectations on the pitch”

Valverde admitted that it would be a challenge shoe-horning his new recruit into a squad already running away with the Spanish league title. "Coutinho is a player who I think can bring a lot to us," said Valverde.

"He's an important signing." "I have seen him play in various positions-on the right, the left, in the middle, on the wings." The timing of Barca's move for Coutinho has been

questioned because he will not be able to play in the Champions League this season having already played in the competition for Liverpool.

But he is likely to be used to give Iniesta a rest, keeping

the veteran midfielder fresh for the Champions League as Barcelona seek to wrest the trophy back from bitter rivals Real Madrid. Rio-born Coutinho scored 54 goals for Liverpool in all competitions, although he won no silverware during his five-year stay at Anfield and he never made a secret of his desire to move to a club where Brazilians such as Ronaldinho and Romario have shone in the past. His departure now is a blow to Liverpool as he had just returned to top form after an injury-hit start to the season, scoring seven goals in the last eight games of 2017 to put his side firmly in the Champions League places.

"It is no secret that Philippe has wanted this move to happen since July, when Barcelona first made their interest known," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said at the weekend. "Philippe was insistent with me, the owners and even his teammates this was a move he was desperate to make happen." Liverpool have been tipped to quickly reinvest their windfall from the Coutinho sale. Despite already paying Southampton £75 million for defender Virgil van Dijk, Klopp will be chasing an attacker with Leicester City's Algerian winger Riyad Mahrez and Monaco midfielder Thomas Lemar already linked with a switch to Anfield.—AFP

## Lakers snap 9-game skid with win over Hawks

**LOS ANGELES:** The Los Angeles Lakers snapped a nine-game NBA losing streak on Sunday with a 132-113 victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Brandon Ingram scored 20 points to lead the Lakers, who hadn't won a game since a December 20 victory over the Houston Rockets. The victory quieted some of the noise growing around the embattled young team, including comments by outspoken basketball patriarch LaVar Ball-father of Lakers rookie Lonzo Ball-who told ESPN that coach Luke Walton had lost the confidence of his players. "I would disagree with that," Walton said at shootaround on Sunday morning, telling reporters that even as the defeats piled up his players were playing hard. The difference against the Hawks, Walton

said after the much-needed win, was a defensive commitment that set up the Lakers' transition offense. "I think it triggered everything for us tonight," Walton said. "Once we got engaged and we were crashing back on the glass and able to get out and run ... it was good to see the guys get back to that mode where defense anchors what we do offensively."

Lonzo Ball, playing just his second game after missing six with a shoulder sprain, was under scrutiny after his father's latest remarks. He scored 13 points and pulled down 10 rebounds while handing out six assists.

When he departed the game with 2:53 remaining, along with Kyle Kuzma, Larry Nance Jr. and Julius Randle they were cheered by fans-a turnaround from the boos heard during a loss to Charlotte on Friday.

At 12-27 the Lakers remain at the bottom of the Western Conference. But they avoided matching the longest losing streak in franchise history. Walton, while encouraged, said he wasn't expecting smooth sailing for his young players, but he said insisted their growing pains wouldn't tear them apart.

"The team's been fine," he said. "We've got guys and a group that are still figuring things out. It's nothing new when young teams that are trying to get better go through hard times."

Western Conference contenders San Antonio and Oklahoma City both endured defeats on the road. In Portland, CJ McCollum flashed to the basket and floated in the game-winner with 5.9 seconds left as the Trail Blazers edged the San Antonio Spurs 111-110.

LaMarcus Aldridge had chance to answer for the Spurs, but his mid-range jump shot bounced off the back rim at the buzzer. The Spurs were missing four regulars, including Tony Parker and All-Star Kawhi Leonard, who has a partial tear of a muscle in his left shoulder, according to San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich.

Portland were also short-handed, as point guard Damian Lillard was a late scratch with a calf injury. The close contest featured four lead changes in the final 248. Aldridge led the Spurs with 30 points and 40-year-old Argentinian veteran Manu Ginobili chipped in 26 to become the oldest player to score 20-plus points in back-to-back games.—AFP



LOS ANGELES: Lonzo Ball #2 of the Los Angeles Lakers grabs the rebound against the Atlanta Hawks on Sunday. — AFP



## Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2018

**19** Kuwait's consumer sector on the mend amid broad-based recovery**20** World stock rally rolls on with good start in 2018**21** KFH strategic partner of Kuwait Motor Show Auto Moto 2018

RIYADH: The listing of Saudi Aramco is a mammoth undertaking and any banks chosen to be global coordinators will join JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and HSBC, who were appointed last year.

## Aramco invites bankers to discuss IPO

## Citi, Goldman among banks invited to meetings on listing

**LONDON/DUBAI:** Saudi Aramco has invited banks pitching for roles in its stock market listing, including Citi and Goldman Sachs, for meetings in the kingdom in the coming weeks to make their case, according to three banking sources familiar with the matter.

The meetings are an indication that preparations for a 2018 initial public offering, which could be the biggest IPO in history, are progressing despite market speculation it could be delayed or even shelved.

Executives from Citi, Goldman and Deutsche Bank, which are all bidding to be global coordinators for the share sale, are among the teams invited to present their pitches in person, said the three sources, including two bankers who expect to attend the meetings. The talks will be held at the end of January or beginning of February in the Eastern Province city of Dhahran, where the state oil company is headquartered, they

added. Two of the sources said the talks would involve members of the banks' equity capital markets teams, executives who would be directly involved in an IPO, rather than top management.

Saudi Aramco, Deutsche Bank, Citi and Goldman Sachs all declined to comment. The stock market listing of the national champion is a central part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's reform drive aimed at restructuring the kingdom's economy and reducing its dependence on oil revenue.

The government, which aims to float up to 5 percent of the company this year, says Aramco is worth \$2 trillion - but several industry experts have questioned whether a valuation that high is realistic. Aramco had asked the banks to present written pitches last month,

according to the sources. The oil giant told bankers not to come up with a valuation, saying it had not provided enough financial

\$70 per barrel, the highest since mid-2015, giving Aramco a better chance to achieve its desired valuation and become the world's most expensive company.

**Crown prince**

The listing is a mammoth undertaking, and any banks chosen to be global coordinators will join JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and HSBC, who were appointed last year.

With so many banks expected to share the fee pool, the advisory mandates are not viewed in the industry as particularly lucrative. But bankers see such roles as a gateway to a host of other deals they expect to flow from the kingdom's plan to revamp its economy. In another sign that plans for the IPO are moving ahead, Saudi Arabia has changed the status of Aramco to a joint-stock company as

of Jan. 1, according to a cabinet decree published in the kingdom's official bulletin last week. The change of status is a requirement for Saudi companies before they can list, a senior Aramco source told Reuters.

However the final decision about if and when the listing takes place rests with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to several banking sources.

The prince led an anti-corruption purge which saw several Saudi royals, ministers and businessmen detained late last year. It was the latest in a series of steps he had taken to assert Saudi influence internationally and amass more power for himself at home.

As well as the economic reforms, the daunting list of challenges undertaken by the 32-year-old since his father, King Salman, ascended the throne in 2015 include going to war in Yemen and cranking up Riyadh's confrontation with arch-foe Iran. — Reuters



**Saudi giant's IPO could be the biggest in history**

information to do so, two of the sources said. Preparations for the IPO might be gathering speed just as the price of oil has approached

## German metalworkers launch mass strikes

**BERLIN:** Germany's powerful metalworkers' union launched mass strikes yesterday over pay and working hours that could impact a key industry and the shape of labor nationwide.

IG Metall are not just asking for a pay rise but also demanding that all workers have the option to temporarily switch to a 28-hour week in the pursuit of better work-life balance.

Even more controversially, it wants shift workers and those caring for children or elderly relatives to be compensated for some of the salary loss that would come with clocking up fewer hours. Employers say such a drastic change would be illegal and have threatened to go to court to stop the industrial action.

Dozens of walkouts began across the country in the morning, at firms like car industry titan

Volkswagen and its subsidiary Porsche, train manufacturer Bombardier or elevator maker Otis.

IG Metall also announced the names of 143 firms targeted for strikes today. So-called "warning strikes" are a familiar feature of the annual collective bargaining process, with workers downing tools for a few hours to demonstrate at factory gates and in town squares.

IG Metall expects up to 700,000 to participate in the ritual, running for at least a week from Monday. Strikes will stretch from Germany's "rust belt" in western North Rhine-Westphalia state to Brandenburg, Saxony and Berlin in the former communist east and the hyper-modern car factories of southwestern Baden-Wuerttemberg. If the two sides cannot agree on the terms of the negotiation by late January, the stage could be set for longer, more damaging walkouts. There has been no nationwide, open-ended strike in Germany since 2003.

**Trailblazers**

Boasting some 2.3 million members, IG Metall is Europe's largest trade union, representing workers of all kinds in industrial conglomerates like Siemens or Thyssenkrupp, steelmaking, the auto industry, electronics and textiles. The sheer weight of the metal and electrical industries' 3.9

million workers often draws other sectors along in its wake when it comes to pay deals and 2018's showdown could make for massive changes. Unions are demanding a pay rise of 6 percent this year. While the figure is triple bosses' initial offer of 2 percent, it is a classic starting position to wring out a compromise. Far more contentious is their other headline demand—the right for workers to switch from 35 to 28 hours per week for up to two years, with the employer guaranteeing the right to return to full-time work—as well as paying some of the salary shortfall in certain cases.

IG Metall says the proposal would give workers a better quality of life. "Our demands are economically sensible, affordable and the right answers in the modern work environment," Bernd Kruppa, the chairman of IG Metall in Leipzig, told DPA news agency. Employers fear up to two-thirds of workers could be eligible, leaving factory floors bare and prompting a new administrative tangle. And they argue that the change would be unfair to those who have already taken a pay cut when switching to part-time.

The Gesamtmetall employers' federation has blasted the demands and any industrial action workers take to achieve them as outright "illegal", threatening to take the question to court.

Industry leaders in metal and electricals-key



STUTTGART: Employees of the Porsche AG company hold flags with the logo of Germany's metalworkers' union IG Metall as they demonstrate yesterday in front of their plant in Stuttgart, southern Germany. — AFP

sectors for Germany that are in otherwise rude health—are keen to avoid a drawn-out industrial dispute. "In general, strikes are not an appropriate means to resolve salary disputes. They hurt

exports, and thereby the company and in the end the employees," said Bertram Brossardt, head of the employers' association for the sector in southern state Bavaria. — AFP

Business

# Federal Reserve ready to lie low as tax overhaul kicks in

## Consumer pull or investment push ?

PHILADELPHIA: US Federal Reserve policymakers have come to view Donald Trump's tax overhaul as a short-term economic boost that will neither permanently supercharge the economy, as the president says, or cause an immediate disruption that would require a central bank response, as some analysts have warned. That view emerged in recent interviews with four central bankers across the policy spectrum, from those eager to keep interest rates low, to those more inclined to raise rates as a guard against asset bubbles or any unexpected inflation jolt.

The interviews offer the most detailed look yet at a key issue—whether the changes in the tax code might prompt the Fed to raise rates more quickly and thus blunt the new law's impact. The issue has divided analysts, with even staff at Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation assuming an "aggressive" Fed reaction to the new law.

But all four of those interviewed by Reuters shared a common conclusion that the law would provide some short-term benefit without raising any near-term risks.

They predict that the combination of corporate and household tax cuts will raise growth by up to half a percentage point annually for the next couple of years, and help keep unemployment at near record lows and thus perhaps raise wages.

In addition, depending on how companies respond in terms of increased investment, the plan might raise long-run potential growth by a small amount.

What they do not see is any great risk that the tax stimulus will fuel inflation or a run-up in asset prices that would prompt the Fed to raise interest rates any faster than it already plans. Though not an endorsement of the legislation, it is an important sign the Fed will not stand in its way.

"I don't feel any urgency to do something preemptively," Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland President Loretta Mester said in an interview with Reuters on the sidelines of the American Economic Association annual conference in Philadelphia.

Mester has been among those more inclined to lift

rates from crisis-era levels, but sees no reason to rush because of the tax overhaul, which she predicts will raise annual growth as much as a half a percentage point for the next few years. The Federal Reserve's most recent economic projections forecast three interest rate rises in 2018. Market pricing currently indicates two.

Some private-sector economists recently penciled in four rises, partly because of the tax plan's impact and how it might affect the Fed. Central bankers, however, seem poised to stick with their current plans, confident that inflation will stay tame and that the recent record run on US stock markets is largely the result of economic fundamentals, not dangerous speculation.

The view is not universal, with some officials cautioning that the corporate tax cut in particular may be funneled into share buybacks or other financial maneuvers that could drive asset prices to unreasonable levels. The increase in the deficit is also a long-term concern. But the overall wait-and-see stance was implicit

in the policy statement and economic projections the Fed issued in December after it raised its target interest rate. Policymakers upped their forecast for economic growth at the time but held steady their expectation on rate rises.

### New Fed chair

The tax cuts will kick in just as the Federal Reserve transitions to a new leadership, with former banker

### 4 central bankers warn of possible asset bubbles



Jerome Powell taking over from Janet Yellen, who over four years as Fed chair focused on lowering the jobless rate in hopes of healing household finances after the 2007-2009 financial crisis and recession. With the fiscal stimulus, some policymakers say the unemployment rate could now drop as low as 3.5 percent next year, in what World Bank Chief Economist Paul Romer said amounts to an important "experiment" in determining just how low unemployment can go in a post-crisis, low-inflation world.

"The balance of risks right now suggests that it would be a good idea to experiment with pushing employment a lot harder," Romer said in Philadelphia.

The unemployment rate is currently 4.1 percent, well below the 4.5 percent to 5 percent level that standard economic models say should lead to higher inflation. But



The US Federal Reserve in Washington, DC

so far, inflation remains tame. "We keep our powder dry," said Philadelphia Fed President Patrick Harker, who, far from accelerating the pace of rate hikes, on Friday indicated he was ready to slow them down because wage growth remained weak. The tax cuts are split between a deep reduction to 21 percent on corporate profits, changes in the personal income tax that will shave what many households pay, and an increase in the value of the child tax credit, among other changes.

How that affects the economy will depend on the degree to which it fuels consumption by putting more money in people's pockets, versus "supply side" changes that could cause companies to invest more as a result of the lower tax rates. Policymakers like St. Louis Fed President James Bullard and John Williams of the San Francisco Fed said in interviews those changes would

raise short-term growth and could possibly raise longer-term potential - though not by as much as the Trump administration expects.

"You're doing it in an environment where you have very low inflation already so you probably don't have to worry as much about the monetary policy push-back that you would get in some other environments," Williams told Reuters.

Bullard noted the tax cut "is actually not that big in the big scheme," parceling out to about \$150 billion a year in a more than \$18 trillion economy.

The more important effect, he said, may only become apparent over the long term if it does in fact raise potential, or "trend," growth. If that happens by increasing productivity, for example, and compounding over time, "even a couple tenths means a lot," he said. —Reuters

## Sri Lanka to raise \$500m via bonds, divesting state hotels amid debt

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka aims to raise \$500 million this month via development bonds and is in the process of divesting two state-owned hotels, the central bank and a ministry said yesterday, as the government faces unprecedented debt repayment this year.

President Maithripala Sirisena's administration must repay an estimated 1.97 trillion rupees (\$12.85 billion) in 2018 - a record high - including \$2.9 billion of foreign loans, and a total of \$5.36 billion of interest. The central bank announced plans to raise \$500 million in 2-year, 3-year, 4-year, and 5-year Sri Lanka Development Bonds (SLDB) out of planned \$3 billion for this year at both fixed and floating rate arrangement, the central bank said in a posting on its website.

The cabinet last week approved plans to borrow some \$5 billion in 2018, including \$2 billion of sovereign bond sales and

\$3 billion of development bonds to refinance big debts that fall due this year.

A total of about \$2.5 billion worth of SLDBs mature this year. The government has also called for a request for proposal (RFP) to find investors for 45 billion rupees (\$293 million) worth of Grand Hyatt Colombo property that includes a 458-room, 5-star hotel and 100 apartments.

The government has offered 100 percent shares in Grand Hyatt Colombo property and said an investor would be selected through a competitive process, the Ministry of Public Enterprise Development said in a posting on its website. The government has entered into a 20-year management contract with the Hyatt Group to run the hotel, which is due to be completed and to begin operations this year.

The government also said it was seeking investors for a 51 percent controlling stake in a 350-room 5-star hotel in the heart of the capital, Colombo, which Hilton International runs under a management contract. The ministry said Hilton International had indicated its desire to renew the contract after the current one ends in 2019. The divestment of state-owned hotels comes as the repayment of expensive infrastructure foreign loans starts this year, which has left the island nation facing a debt crisis. —Reuters

## Pension crisis looms as Afghanistan grapples to fix public finances

KABUL: In a country not short of problems, a looming pensions crisis that could cripple Afghanistan's budget in coming years is a new headache for a government dependent on increasingly war-weary foreign donors. Pension liabilities - set to swallow the equivalent of a third of the current \$5 billion budget within 15 years unless something is done - typify accumulated problems the government is now trying to tackle. "Previously, they kicked the can down the road and it's snowballing right now and needs to be fixed," said Deputy Finance Minister Khalid Payenda.

Many countries face pension problems but it is especially unwelcome in Afghanistan, struggling to restore an economy shattered by four decades of war. Provisions that award government workers with service of 40 years benefits equivalent to full final salary were originally introduced to compensate for low pay. Many pensioners, who complain that actual benefits are meager and often paid late, would be surprised to hear the system described as generous. But with no separate pension fund to generate investment income and benefits paid directly from the Treasury, payments are set to spiral out of control as more of almost 900,000



KABUL: This photograph shows an Afghan vendor displaying onion harvest for sale along the Kabul-Jalalabad highway on the outskirts of Kabul. —AFP

government workers retire over coming years. "The economics of it doesn't work. It's not sustainable and at a certain point it will explode," Payenda said from his office in the ministry, where he is overseeing a drive to make the budget more transparent and spending more efficient. "It's the start of a process but it will take a few years," he said, adding that it was vital that foreign donors showed "understanding" and do not cut off funds abruptly.

### 'Leakages, bloated structures'

Although down since most international troops withdrew in 2014, foreign aid still accounts for 54 percent of the budget. But donor willingness is not eternal and most funding pledges run only to 2020. While progress has been made in increasing revenues, preparing for a reduction in aid is urgent, especially given likely disruption around presiden-

tial elections next year. As in each of the past eight years, parliament is wrangling over budget approval, an opaque process that has encouraged backroom deals, waste and corruption. "There are leakages, bloated structures and there is unnecessary expenditure on conspicuous items," Payenda said. "We want to see where there are problems and fix them."

As long as security accounts for 40 percent of spending, Afghanistan's public finances will be unbalanced and the room for investment to boost revenue in areas like mining or agriculture limited. But there are many areas where improvements are possible. Due to weak administrative capacity, funds assigned to ministries are often not fully used, with unspent amounts carried over to following years, reducing accountability and making it harder to track real spending. In future, the government plans a "use it or lose it" approach. —Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.683
Indian Rupees	4.26
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

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.405259	0.412759
Czech Korune	0.006285	0.015585
Danish Krone	0.044942	0.049942
Euro	0.358669	0.366169
Georgian Lari	0.134621	0.134621
Hungarian 0.001139	0.001329	
Norwegian Krone	0.033560	0.038760
Romanian Leu	0.064650	0.081500
Russian ruble	0.005300	0.005300
Slovakia	0.009000	0.019000
Slovenia	0.032118	0.038118
Swedish Krona	0.303918	0.314918
Swiss Franc		
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.229772	0.241772
New Zealand Dollar	0.210814	0.220314
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.238480	0.247480
US Dollars	0.298150	0.302570
US Dollars Mint	0.298650	0.302570
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003284	0.003868

Chinese Yuan	0.044864	0.048464
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036760	0.039510
Indian Rupee	0.004138	0.004779
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002596	0.002776
Korean Won	0.000274	0.000289
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071671	0.077671
Nepalese Rupee	0.003016	0.003186
Pakistan Rupee	0.002559	0.002849
Philippine Peso	0.005952	0.006252
Singapore Dollar	0.222585	0.232585
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001734	0.002314
Taiwan	0.010370	0.010550
Thai Baht	0.009046	0.009596
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.794943	0.803443
Egyptian Pound	0.014704	0.020422
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000185	0.000245
Jordanian Dinar	0.421693	0.430693
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000155	0.000255
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022073	0.046073
Omani Riyal	0.778747	0.784427
Qatar Riyal	0.078731	0.083671
Saudi Riyal	0.079513	0.080813
Syrian Pound	0.001281	0.001501
Tunisian Dinar	0.117831	0.125831
Turkish Lira	0.075810	0.086110
UAE Dirhams	0.080866	0.082566
Yemeni Riyal	0.000982	0.001062

Business

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

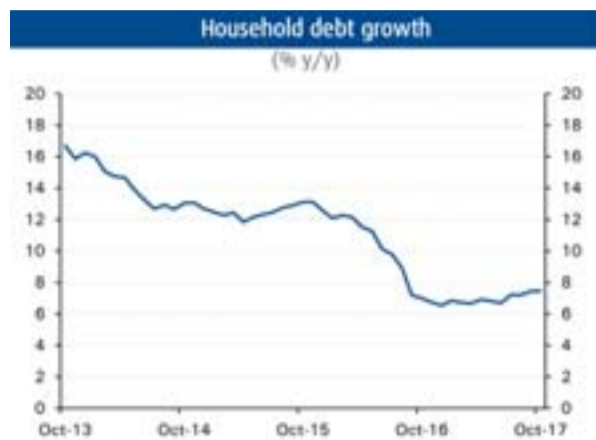
# Kuwait's consumer sector on the mend amid broad-based recovery

## Consumer confidence shows renewed strength

**KUWAIT:** The consumer sector appears to be on the mend, with clear signs of a recovery in 3Q17, following a noticeable slowdown in 2016 and 1H17. The recovery is broad based with strength materializing in card spending, consumer confidence and household credit, though most consumer indicators remain below the double-digit growth of previous years. Nonetheless, employment remains healthy, providing support to the sector.

Consumer spending growth continued to recover in 3Q17, with growth nearing its 2015 pace. Spending growth on credit and debit cards at point-of-sale machines improved to 12.5 percent year-on-year (y/y) during the third quarter, up from -0.7 percent y/y in 3Q16. Growth in total spending including ATM withdrawals, which has been slower, has also been improving, accelerating to 8.5 percent y/y in 3Q17.

Durable goods continue to show some weakness, though a turn-around is expected soon. The contraction in car imports has moderated to a 5 percent y/y decline during the first nine months of 2017. The Ara consumer confidence index has also hinted at a possible rebound.



The durable goods sub-index registered its highest 3-month average in a year, coming in at 119 in November, up 16 percent y/y.

Overall consumer confidence has also improved



noticeably. The Ara general index registered its sixth consecutive month above 100, settling at 113 in November and averaging 107 since June 2017, compared to 94 over the same period in 2016.

The improvement in consumer confidence appears to be helping household loan growth pick-up steadily in 2017. Growth in personal facilities excluding credit for the purchase of securities has picked up in recent months to average 7.3 percent y/y between July and October 2017; this is compared to an average of 6.8 percent during the first half of 2017. The average monthly gain in such loans also rose to KD 92 million over that same period, well above 1H17's KD 58 million average.

Employment growth among Kuwaitis strengthened in 2Q17 following some moderation in 1Q17. The number of new civilian jobs among Kuwaitis totaled 4,200 in 2Q17, driven by a strong increase in government hires. Growth in employment, however, was steady at 2 percent y/y, around the slowest pace it has been in over seven years.

The consumer sector is likely to finish 2017 on a strong note. The decision to implement more moderate hikes in utility prices and the slow recovery in the real estate market activity, combined with a government commitment to limit its spending cuts, should continue to provide decent support to the consumer sector.

## Mercedes-Benz claims luxury pole position in 2017

**FRANKFURT:** Mercedes-Benz said yesterday it had defended its top spot as the world's biggest luxury carmaker in 2017, with a surge in sales, particularly in China, enabling it to clock up another record year. The Stuttgart-based group reported sales of around 2.3 million cars last year, an increase of almost 10 percent on the figure for 2016 and its seventh record year in a row.

Much of the growth was attributable to Mercedes' breakthrough expansion in China, where sales grew by 26 percent, and the ever-rising appeal of its SUVs, with the luxury four-wheel-drive vehicles accounting for more than one in three sales worldwide.

The group claimed its three-pointed star remained the top high-end car

brand worldwide, after overtaking Munich-based rivals BMW in 2016.

BMW has yet to release full-year sales figures for 2017, but the latest release from November shows the group significantly lagging Mercedes. "Success in our core business provides the basis for us to actively shape the mobility of the future," said Dieter Zetsche, chief executive of Mercedes parent company Daimler.

Like other carmakers, Mercedes is investing heavily in hybrid and all-electric vehicles, as well as more efficient, less polluting traditional motors. Manufacturers are racing to polish up their environmental credentials and meet more stringent emissions requirements. — AFP

## ASAR acts as legal counsel to KIPCO

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ruwayeh & Partners (ASAR), Kuwait's leading and most prominent corporate law firm, and one of the region's top tier firms, acted as Kuwait legal counsel to both Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) K.S.C.P. (as Issuer) and the Joint Lead Managers in the Issuer's KD100 million bonds issuance which was successfully completed on 28 December 2017. KAMCO Investment Company K.S.C.(Public), Gulf Bank K.S.C.P., and Watani Investment Company K.S.C.C. acted as Joint Lead Managers under the bond issuance transaction. The bond issuance was well received by both institutional and high net worth investors and was oversubscribed. Of note, the bond issuance is the first seven year corporate bond issuance to be issued in Kuwait.

Commenting on the bond issuance, Rob Little, Counsel at ASAR said: "We are very pleased to have been part of KIPCO's bond issuance transaction. While global and GCC markets remain under some pressure, we believe that similar transactions are key to the overall stability of steady economic growth. ASAR has a long established history of acting in leading capital markets transactions, and this current transaction is no exception."

Ibrahim Sattout, Partner at ASAR said: "Our involvement in KIPCO's latest bond issuance transaction and the popularity it received is a testament to the solid development of the local market. We strongly believe that Kuwait's private sector is steadily growing to align with the country's develop-



Ibrahim, Rob and John

ment plan. Today's announcement reaffirms the proficiency that ASAR enjoys, and we look forward to continue to assist our existing and new client's in achieving their goals and corporate objectives." John Cunha, Partner at ASAR said: "We are delighted to have acted on behalf of KIPCO and the joint lead managers on KIPCO's latest bond issuance. This transaction is a testament to the strength and depth of local and regional financial capital markets. The successful conclusion of this transaction is the result of the hard work of KIPCO, the joint lead managers, and the relevant regulators in Kuwait such as the CMA." With dedicated offices in Kuwait and Bahrain coupled with its associated offices and relationships,

ASAR provides clients across an extensive range of industry sectors with comprehensive legal advice and support for their business activities in Kuwait, Bahrain, across the GCC and beyond.

The firm has been consistently rated as the leading corporate and commercial law firm in Kuwait by reputable legal guides such as the Chambers Global Guide, International Financial Law Review (IFLR) and the Legal 500. In 2017, ASAR was awarded with the "IFLR National Law Firm of the Year Award"; an award which ASAR has been delighted to receive for the 9th consecutive year. Also in 2017, the firm won the "IFLR M&A Deal of the Year Award" and the "IFLR Restructuring Deal of the Year Award".

## Cryptocurrency may be getting quietly channeled to N Korea university

**SEOUL:** A cybersecurity company said it has found software that appears to install code for mining cryptocurrency and sends any mined coins to a server at a North Korean university, the latest sign that North Korea may be searching for new ways to infuse its economy with cash.

The application, which was created on Dec. 24, uses host computers to mine a cryptocurrency called Monero. It then sends any coins to Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang, said cybersecurity firm AlienVault, which examined the program.

"Crypto-currencies may provide a financial lifeline to a country hit hard by sanctions, and as a result universities in Pyongyang have shown a clear interest in cryptocurrencies," the California-based security firm said in a release, adding that the software "may be the most recent product of their endeavors."

The company added a caveat that a North Korean server used in the code does not appear to be connected to the wider internet, which could mean its inclusion is meant to trick observers into making a North Korean connection. Kim Il Sung University, however, plays host to foreign students and lecturers, not just North Koreans. Kim Il Sung University did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Government officials representing North Korea at the United Nations were not immediately available for comment.

Others have flagged increasing signs of North Korean interest in cryptocurrencies and underlying blockchain technology. "With economic sanctions in place, cryptocurrencies are currently the best way to earn foreign currency in North Korea's situation. It is hard to trace and can be laundered several times," said Mun Chong-hyun, chief analyst at South Korean cybersecurity firm ESTSecurity.

Cryptocurrency watchers say technical details of Monero, the 13th-largest crypto asset in the world, according to www.coinmarketcap.com, with a total value of more than \$7 billion, make it more appealing than bitcoin to those who value secrecy.

Monero funds go to an unlinked, one-time address generated with random numbers every time a payment is issued. That makes it less traceable than bitcoin, where transactions can be linked to specific, albeit anonymous, private addresses, cybersecurity experts said. South Korea-based Bithumb, the world's busiest cryptocurrency exchange, is also the largest Monero

trading exchange in the world, with about 24 percent of trading volume. The next largest were Europe-based exchange HitBTC and Hong Kong-based Bitfinex, as of Monday.

Cybersecurity firm FireEye cited in a November blog post a series of North Korean activities against South Korean cryptocurrency targets such as exchanges. Analyst Luke McNamara wrote that "it should be no surprise that cryptocurrencies, as an emerging asset class, are becoming a target of interest by a regime that operates in many ways like a criminal enterprise."

In early November, Federico Tenga, the Italian co-founder of bitcoin startup ChainSide, posted on his Twitter account pictures and comments on his visit to lecture on bitcoin and blockchain technology at the Western-funded Pyongyang University of Science and Technology.

"The lectures were at a quite basic level to give a general understanding of blockchain technologies, which are also very relevant to trade, supply chains and other e-business," a spokesman for the university said. "We believe this teaching can give the next generation of North Korean professionals additional concepts that may be valuable as they seek to develop their country," the spokesman added. "We're acutely aware of issues around sanctions, which we keep under regular review and take care to avoid any sensitive or proscribed areas."

Tenga said his lectures were geared toward explaining the underlying technology of cryptocurrencies. "The focus of the lectures was to make the students understand what the blockchain is, how it works (special focus on proof of work) and what are the main use cases. My aim was simply to spread technical knowledge, not suggesting them how to use it," Tenga told Reuters in a series of messages. AlienVault's report said one North Korean IP address, 175.45.178.19, has been active on bitcoin trading sites. That is the same address used to control compromised web servers in 2014-15 cyberattacks on South Korean energy, traffic, telecommunications, broadcasting, financial and political institutions, according to security firm AhnLab.

The report also observed that North Korean IP addresses have downloaded several episodes of the automotive TV series Top Gear and documentaries by the show's former presenter James May. — Reuters

## Data machine cranks back into high gear for 2018

**LONDON:** Data in the week ahead will enable investors to gauge the strength of German and British industry. US spending and Chinese trade at the end of last year - and the first hints on the strength of economic activity at the start of 2018. The German economy has been firing on all cylinders in recent months, with consumption, state spending and rising exports driving growth in both industry and services.

With interest rates low and the labor market performing well, the economy has so far weathered the political impasse resulting from Chancellor Angela Merkel's failure to form a government since an election in September. She launches coalition talks on Sunday with the Social Democrats, her partners from the 2013-17 administration. Industrial orders have been strong in recent months, suggesting this sector of Europe's biggest economy should gain steam at the start of 2018, although actual output has unexpectedly slipped following a more than six-year high hit in August.

Analysts at HSBC think that imbalance is likely to have rectified itself to some degree in November, and they forecast a hefty rise in output in particular. "We expect the order level to be unchanged in November after having risen in the three consecutive months," they wrote in a note to investors. That

## US job gains disappoint, unemployment holds at 4.1%

**NEW YORK:** The US economy's job creation ability disappointed in December, despite solid hiring in manufacturing and construction, according to government data reported Friday.

But with the country believed to be near full employment, the jobless rate still held steady at its 17-year low of 4.1 percent. Employers added just 148,000 new hires in the final month of the year, all but 2,000 of them in the private sector far below economists' expectations of 200,000 jobs or more.



JAKARTA: A vendor works in a shop in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

would undercut the Reuters consensus forecast for a 0.5 percent rise in orders. But HSBC expects production to have rebounded by 2.2 percent month on month in November, outstripping the Reuters consensus call for 1.8 percent.

The German orders data is due out yesterday, with output figures to follow today. By contrast, British industrial output has been buoyant, expanding in October at its fastest annual pace in almost a year. While the economy has lost momentum as sterling's tumble after the Brexit vote sent inflation climbing, some exporters have gained from the weaker pound and the rebound in the euro zone

economy. "While actual manufacturing output may not be as strong as ... surveys suggest, the uniformly sharp pick-up reported by them implies growth has been decent in November," analysts at Investec wrote in a note. "Additional support may come from utilities output as temperatures dropped to more typical seasonal levels after a particularly mild October." Investec sees industrial production rising 0.8 percent on the month, more than double the Reuters consensus forecast for a 0.3 percent pickup. The data is due out tomorrow. There are no major central bank decisions due in the coming week. — Reuters

nearly at full employment that is finding it hard to find workers to fill open positions, a sentiment seen in many business surveys.

Many firms have reported the need to raise wages to attract new workers, and that was reflected in the increase in average hourly earnings to \$26.63 from \$26.54 in the prior month, and from \$25.98 at the end of 2016. That marks a 2.5 percent increase in wages over last year, slightly ahead of consumer inflation.

The manufacturing sector added 25,000 new jobs in December, while the construction sector added 30,000, and health care added 29,000. But retail employment fell by 20,000, and professional and business services slowed sharply to a gain of just 19,000 after two months, with increases of close to 50,000. — AFP

Business

World stock rally rolls on with good start

LONDON: World stock markets hovered close to all-time highs yesterday as the best start to a year in eight years showed little sign of running out of steam...

Against a basket of currencies the dollar was up 0.31 percent but close to its weakest level since September. Positive eurozone economic data - economic growth in the eurozone is on its best run in a decade - has helped the euro...

The synchronized global recovery has prompted central banks across the world to follow the Federal Reserve's lead and start moving towards tighter monetary policy in recent months, supporting their currencies against the dollar.

Attention in the US now turns to the quarterly earnings season, the biggest event of this week, with Wall Street expecting solid growth of around 10 percent. Analysts at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said that the global economy had entered 2018 "firing on all cylinders".

Oil prices held just below the near-three-year highs hit last week. A slight decline in the number of US rigs drilling for new production kept prices in check. Gold prices dipped after the dollar gained, with spot prices down 0.1 percent.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Monday January 8, 2018. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing. Includes sections for Trades, Oil & Gas, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecommunications, Financial Services, Investment Instruments, Technology, Parallel Market, and Insurance.

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

Business

# KFH strategic partner of Kuwait Motor Show Auto Moto 2018

## Show coincides with KFH's 40th anniversary

**KUWAIT:** Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh said that the Kuwait Motor Show Auto Moto 2018 coincides with the 40th anniversary of establishing KFH, the leading Islamic financial institution.

Speaking on the press conference of announcing the kickoff of the Moto Show, Al-Ruwaieh added that KFH has been the strategic partner for the 4th consecutive year. This confirms the bank's keenness to serve customers and the society.

Meanwhile, Senior Manager Auto Finance, at KFH, Wael Alkharraz reiterated the bank's readiness to offer visitors a vast and comprehensive array of financing solutions. KFH's active role and contributions in auto market reiterate its prestigious status and leading position in financing automobiles. KFH builds strong ties with the domestic suppliers for the benefit of customers and the national economy.

"KFH, thanks to its extensive experience, distinguished relationships with customers

and suppliers, and the long track record of achievements, managed to develop strategic relationships with all car suppliers in Kuwait. KFH's car showrooms have become a major destination for people who wish to

KFH spares no efforts in strengthening its role in the auto market by revitalizing the market, increasing sales and addressing the requirements of customers and suppliers alike.

It is worth noting that the Kuwait Motor Show Auto Moto 18 is considered as the largest auto show in Kuwait. It encompasses the best and the top economy and luxury car brands. It is attended by local and international car agents' representatives, which comprises a chance to know more about the latest developments in this important industry. KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services,

where it offers a wide array of Islamic products and services, not to mention a high standard of innovation and client service.

KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 480 branches, including KFH-Turkey, in order to offer services for the bank's clients in Turkey,



**Bank keen on serving customers and the society**

own a car. At Shuwaikh showroom, KFH encompasses over 20 brands and 80 makes of cars under one umbrella which gives customers the opportunity to choose and compare between cars in a streamlined manner. This adds value to the car-buying experience," added Alkharraz.



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and Wael Alkharraz at the press conference.

Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, and Dubai.

KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of client service, while developing common interest for all those concerned with the

financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world.

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on Sunday announcing the names of its winners for the week of 2 January - 4 January 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

**The winners are:**

- (Tuesday 02/01): Narjes Mohammad Abdullah Al-Abdullah, Hashem Bader Al-Sayed Al-Refaei
- (Wednesday 03/01): Jasti Sailaja Kumari, Salah Sulaiman Othman Al-Nasralla
- (Thursday 04/01): Ali Mahmoud Abdulreda Khashawi, Faisal Bader Sulaiman Al-Qenace

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2017 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day and each receive KD 1,000). Al-Danah's final draw for KD 1 million will be held on 11 January, 2018 whereby the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

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

**Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the best:**

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million and the largest international bank prize according to Guinness World Records
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD 500,000



- 3) Two winners of KD 1,000 every working day
- 4) The most chances to win
- 5) Only bank that transfers your chances to win from the previous year to the current year

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

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

## 26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account this week

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw. Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the 3rd of January 2018. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car.

On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26

new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300.

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Tareq Bader Al-Jenahi.

25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Ali Al-Buloushi, Humoud Salem Al-Rasheedi, Turki Abdullah Mohammad Alhowaidi Al-Enezi, Abdulrahman Fahad Al-Khumairi, Abdulhakeem Ibrahim Mubarak Esmail, Bader Saud Shebeeb Osman Al-Sehali, Maha A A Qasim, Mohammad Mahmoud Al-Hareeri, Talal Nayef Rasheed, Abeer Moris Kamel Youssef, Ali Abdullah Ali Al Yaseen, Mohammad Abdullah Yousef Al Kandari, Mohammad Matar Mazyad Al-Shammari, Abdulaziz Satem Awwad Al-Shammari, Sameerah Abdulaziz Salem Al-Barouni, Mohammed Hussain Ahmed Hameed, Athra Mohd Ridha Abbas Mondegar, Pawandeep Singh Arora, Alawi S. Abbas Ahmed Isa, Anthony Lawrence Stevens, Prasanna Venugopalan, Mohd Yousif Ahmed



Hasan, Mohammed Ahmed Mohamed Jamal, Harjit Kaur Lotay and Abdulla Ashoor Khalil Al-Nachas.

Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions

Ahli United Bank added, "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year."

Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.

## CBK announces winners of Al-Najma Account

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the daily draw on "Al-Najma Account" on Sunday at the Bank's Head Office to select 3 winners to win a cash prize of KD 7000 for each. The draw was held in the presence of Jassim Al-Otaibi, representative of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The following names were announced as winners of the prizes:

1. Jenan Adnan Maarafi
2. Zuzana Drobiova
3. Saeed Fadel Alah Vesal

Al-Najma Account allows its customers to win a daily prize of KD 7,000 which is the highest daily prize in Kuwait. In addition, the Account offers quarterly draws that provide customers with opportunity to get their dreams turned to reality by winning great prizes starting from KD 100,000 for the first quarter escalating thereafter by KD 50 thousand for each quarter to reach KD 250,000 in the last quarter. Customers can enjoy additional benefits including obtaining ATM card and a credit card against the customer's account along with enjoying all other banking services.

The bank congratulates all the lucky winners and draws their attention that the cash prizes will be credited into their accounts with the bank. Further, the Bank appreciates the Ministry of



Commerce and Industry's significant role and its continuous cooperation and effective supervision on the draw that was smoothly and transparently organized.

## Stocks are still attractive, 2018

By Hayder Tawfik

2017 was another good year for international equity investors worldwide. The US Standard & Poor's 500 was up more than 19 percent, the Nasdaq up 28 percent and the Dow Jones is up by 24 percent. The Japanese stock market enjoyed one of those good and rare occasions as it has risen 19 percent last year. The European Euro Stoxx 50 is up by 9 percent which somehow below the excellent performances elsewhere. The outlook for the Eurozone economies have improved significantly over the past few months. This sets up the ground for good performance for European equities for the next couple of years.

The US S&P 500 index which has done very well in 2017, also should have a good performance in 2018 if the price/earnings ratio remains constant as it has for the past two years. The S&P 500 should be up, in line with earnings of about 11 percent, year-over-year on revenue growth of about 5 percent, off record levels reached in 2017. Market expectation is that most of the S&P 500 corporates should deliver good earnings for 2018. Also, the earnings per share for the Morgan Stanley World Index (MSCI AC World Index (ACWI) is above \$30.

Equity investors should take the comfort from the fact that global economic growth has been expanding over the past few years and is expected to increase further into 2018/2019 as reported by the IMF and the World Bank. All the largest economies that are tracked by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is expanding. Economists are forecasting acceleration in world gross domestic product in 2018 and 2019 from 2017 levels. Chinese economic growth should register 6.8 percent growth for 2017. There has been a noticeable and gradual transformation of the Chinese economy. Domestic retail sales and consumption plus industrial production and fixed asset investment have been contributing greatly to the Chinese Gross Domestic Products.

Most central banks in the developed economies are still pursuing easy money policy that has helped in accelerating economic growth and contributing to very positive financial markets. The ECB, BOJ and PBOC continue to pump far more liquidity into the global economy than is removed by the Federal Reserve's tapering and the Federal Reserve's balance sheet topped over three years ago anyway so it's not like that has been the marginal driver of the equity bull run in the first place.

Europe and Japan continue with quantitative easing policies. Corporates in the US have been leading the way in bond issuance. Money raised from bond issuance has been used for stock buyback, increase in

dividend, acquisitions, retiring expensive debts and capital investments. These activities have been bullish for stocks. Overall, corporate balance sheets are in much healthier position than in the past.



Relatively and historically global inflation levels have been low, averaging around 2 percent in the US. It is roughly the same in the developed economies. This low inflation level has supported central banks in keeping interest rates on the low side. Globalization and the efficiency of modern technology are the most important drivers of the muted low level of inflation. It is most likely that inflation rate will stay on the low side for the next couple of years.

The US passed tax reform which is an historical event that should have very positive ramifications not only for the US economy and its financial markets but also for the rest of the world. There have been some debates about its impact on the US economy but it is certainly very positive and awesome for US equities. Europe needn't be excluded from the rally despite the appreciation of the euro, as the historical low level of unemployment in Germany and falling elsewhere in the Eurozone should lead to more consumption demand and corporate capital investments.

Over the past few years, the technology sector has been transformed in a way that was never imagined. This transformation has created market shift to technology, strong secular growth drivers. Some of the big technology companies have aggressively shifted their business into retail, entertainment, media, advertising, auto industry and the industrial use. The shift to a technology dominated economies increases efficiency, gives customers greater choices and at the same time keeps inflation on the low side. But above all it provides a boost to earnings growth rates.

Another boost for US corporate earnings is the weak US Dollar. The dollar measured against the basket of developed economies is down on average of 9 percent throughout 2017. This makes US goods and services that are produced and supplied form the US more price competitive abroad.

The equity supply/ demand is still positive and should continue for the rest of the year. International investors are putting more money into the stock market whenever there is an even a small dip or correction. This proves that equity investors are still pouring more cash into global stocks. It is the optimistic sentiment that has supported the global stock markets over the past few years. If short and long-term interest rates stay on the low side, fresh money should continue pouring into equities.

I believe that there are strong and good reasons for a positive outlook as we go into a new year. @Rasameel

## Technology

# Tech faithful gather to worship at the cathedral of innovation

## Leaders looking to the cutting edge for salvation

**LAS VEGAS:** After a rollercoaster year for the tech world, many industry leaders are looking to the cutting edge for salvation. As tech industry players converge in Las Vegas for the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show, an overriding theme is that gizmos, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and superfast internet connections hold answers to many if not all ills—the new religion. One of the world's largest trade shows, CES is drawing an expected 170,000 people and 40,000 exhibitors from dozens of countries showing wares in robotics, digital health, artificial intelligence, sports and more.

Technology will continue to improve communication, enchanting us with bolder and brighter screens, exhibitors say—but it additionally vows to end urban congestion, treat cancer and depression, and help us live fitter and more productive lives. Jensen Huang, chief executive of the computer chip and artificial intelligence group Nvidia, said advances in machine learning have opened up vast possibilities, including the ability of software writing software. “This means we can solve previously unsolvable problems,” Huang told a media event Sunday, ahead of the official Tuesday opening of the trade event.

Some exhibitors envision a world where self-driving cars could be summoned any time of the day, eliminating struggles to find parking or petrol stations. Machines would tend to the tedium of traffic, which would run smoother since vehicles would wirelessly “talk” to one another to optimize travel efficiency. A new “intuitive and intelligent” car from Chinese startup Byton aims to tackle the billions of hours lost to traffic congestion around the world each year.

Those times lost “could be used for things which are so much more fulfilling,” Henrik Wenders, vice

president of Byton, said Sunday at one of the first media events at the show. While tech is being touted as a solution to many ills, there is also a darker side, noted analyst Bob O'Donnell of Technalysis Research. “Tech is being seen as the cure for everything, but it can also be the cause of societal issues,” O'Donnell said, citing concerns over cybersecurity and a recently revealed flaw in computer chip technology that could leak data. “Most people in tech are optimistic, but they may be naively optimistic.”

### Digital doctoring

Robin Raskin, who heads the CES segment called Living in Digital Times, pointed to advances in health and medicine in recent years, particularly new technologies to assess cancer and treatment possibilities. Startups and major firms are also using new apps and technologies to tackle diabetes and depression.

One startup on Sunday unveiled eye-tracking technology to analyze ailments including autism, concussions and Parkinson's disease. RightEye co-founder and chief executive Adam Gross heralded the technology as “a game-changer” for the health care and sports industries, emphasizing the ability to quickly and accurately generate “amazing insights” into health, vision and performance. In collaboration with doctors or trainers, the information could be used to guide therapies or exercise routines.

“The potential for this technology to change people's lives around the world is incredible and really exciting,” Gross said. Technology will automate and augment the treatment of disease in the years ahead, predicted Consumer Technology Association research manager Lesley Rohrbach. “You can talk with a health care provider through an app, and get

“We can solve previously unsolvable problems”

”



LAS VEGAS: E-vone smart shoes with falling alert are displayed at CES Unveiled Las Vegas, a press preview event before the start of CES. —AFP

remote monitoring,” Rohrbach said, speaking at CES. “You can visit your doctor without actually physically visiting them.” Virtual reality is also being incorporated into therapy, used to treat traumas, phobias and even dementia from aging, according to Rohrbach.

### Cities smarten up

As much of the global population migrates to urban areas, technology is powering “smart cities”—where sensors, cameras and cloud computing work

like house elves to manage needs like recycling, trash disposal, traffic, pollution and road repairs. Inside homes, devices can make sure water and air stay clean, and that people are sleeping well.

Technology can also keep us safe, exhibitors say. Biometrics including fingerprint, iris and facial recognition are being built into smartphones, computers and padlocks as security features. Robots, meanwhile, are being designed to do everything from patrol oceans for fish poachers to watching after us, especially as we age. —AFP

## Using ‘digital Lego’, urban communities redesign India’s slums

**MUMBAI:** When urban designer Trupti Vaitla asked residents of a Mumbai slum what new features they'd like to see in their dilapidated public space, she was surprised by one popular answer: a patch of grass. The Lotus Garden is the only open area for about 200,000 people who live in cramped and squalid tenements abutting the city's biggest landfill. The municipal corporation had done little for its upkeep and it was littered with trash.

Three years ago, Vaitla and her team were tasked with transforming it into a space that people would actually use. They expected residents to suggest elements like lighting, elaborate landscaping and a gym. The team didn't expect such enthusiasm for a simple lawn. “But they were excited to be involved, and for them, a patch of green was really important — a small oasis in their otherwise drab and congested world,” said Vaitla, chief executive of Mumbai Environmental Social Network (MESN). Vaitla's team, backed by funding from United Nations Habitat, which promotes sustainable urban development, spent months cleaning up Lotus Garden. They installed lights and water, planted shrubs and grass, and built an open-air gym.

From the very first day, residents including women and children who had earlier avoided the space, swarmed in. Vaitla said. The appetite for areas like the Lotus Garden is not surprising. In Mumbai, with its population of 18 million and counting, soaring real estate prices and relentless construction, public spaces are shrinking. “In a crowded slum, these spaces are particularly relevant, as people have nowhere else to go,” said Pontus Westerberg, digital projects officer at UN-Habitat. “These spaces also impact on their health, sanitation, safety, access to emergency services.”

### Digital Lego

Encouraged by their success with Lotus Garden, MESN and UN-Habitat collaborated on another space in the nearby Gautam Nagar neighborhood. This time, they decided to use technology to encourage even more community involvement. The team settled on Minecraft, a video game that allows players to build their own worlds using virtual Lego-like pieces. For the past five years, UN-Habitat has used Minecraft in its Block by Block program, which aims to encourage some of the poorest communities in the developing world to participate in upgrading their common spaces.

The program is a partnership between UN-Habitat, Mojang, the creator of Minecraft, and Microsoft, which owns Mojang. “It can be a challenge to mobilize people in slums — especially the youth — who are resigned to their environment and don't feel a sense of ownership,” said Westerberg by telephone from Kenya's capital, Nairobi. The traditional approach, using maps and drawings, often draws little interest from residents, he said. “But with an interactive design tool like this — I call it digital Lego — they are so engaged, and that makes the process more democratic,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The Block by Block program was launched in Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum. It has since been used in about 50 locations in more than 20 countries including Indonesia, Nigeria and Mexico. Once UN-Habitat selects a site, a Minecraft model of the site is built using photographs, videos, maps and Google Street View, if it is available. UN-Habitat then holds a workshop. Residents are put into groups of mixed ages and genders, and given a laptop with the Minecraft model. —Reuters

## Virtual aide market a ‘wildfire’ at CES

**LAS VEGAS:** Voice-commanded virtual assistants packed into speakers and other devices will be a “game-changing” trend this year, Consumer Electronics Show researchers said Sunday. Sales of smart speakers are expected to nearly double in the US, to \$3.8 billion, from last year according to Lesley Rohrbach and Steve Koenig, researchers with the Consumer Technology Association, which organizes the annual CES trade event.

“That market is not just heating up, it is a wildfire,” Koenig said while discussing industry trends expected to play out at CES and globally in the coming year. “Compatibility with digital assistants has become table stakes (in the consumer electronics industry).” Being able to order items, select music, get information, and more by speaking to digital assistants such as Amazon's Alexa, Google Assistant, and Microsoft's Cortana has been such a hit that pressure will be on for more ways to interact with machines using voice, the researchers predicted.

At the same time, artificial intelligence will improve, with machines getting better at thinking like people, anticipating desires, and holding conversations instead of simply taking orders, according to Rohrbach. The CES show-floor was expected to be rife with appliances, televisions, vehicles, speakers, robots, and more augmented with virtual assistant software such as Alexa, Cortana, Google Assistant or Samsung's Bixby.

“We will truly be able to converse with our AI devices,” Rohrbach said while envisioning where smart speaker technology was heading. “AI is going to know you and you will be able to trust the device.” Behind the scenes, telecommunications service providers around the world will continue to roll-out fifth-generation, or 5G, networks capable of moving seemingly limitless amounts of data blazingly fast, according to the researchers.

## Startup unveils ‘car of future’ for \$45,000

**LAS VEGAS:** A Chinese startup unveiled its vision for the automobile of the future Sunday, promising to deliver an “intuitive and intelligent” car to global markets starting next year from around \$45,000. The electric-powered concept car shown by Byton at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas is touted as a computing device on wheels, equipped with a “digital” lounge featuring a panoramic display acting as a hub for navigation, entertainment and even monitoring the health of its occupants.

Backed by more than \$200 million from investors including Chinese tech giant Tencent, Byton—whose name was chosen to suggest “bytes on wheels”—is among the latest entrants to a crowded field of startups and established players looking to emulate Tesla in the race for a new kind of vehicle which can be adapted for autonomous driving. “This is a product which is tailor-made for the future, which is autonomous and shared,” said Daniel Kirchert, president and co-founder of the Nanjing-based startup.

Byton, led by former executives from Tesla, BMW, Apple and Google, said it expects to launch in China by 2019 and in the United States and Europe by 2020. “This will be the most advanced vehicle in the market as of 2019,” said chairman and chief executive Carsten Breitfeld, a former BMW executive, at a presentation in one of the first media events at the huge electronics show. The Byton car will use facial recognition to unlock and adapt to the driver and offer a range of other ways to interact including voice control with Amazon Alexa, touch and gesture. It will include 5G connectivity to the inter-



LAS VEGAS: Bellus3D Face Camera Pro, a 3D face scanning camera that can create 3D face models for applications such as eye wear, wigs virtual try-on, 3D virtual makeup, before and after results of dental/medical/cosmetic surgery, and 3D printing, is displayed during a press event for CES 2018. —AFP

Such 5G networks will be key to enabling machines such as self-driving cars to process sensor data quickly enough to make real time decisions, they said. “Clearly, we don't want self-driving vehicles to hesitate for even a millisecond, so we are going to need 5G,” Koenig said. Those higher speeds will also be necessary to “make virtual reality really wireless,” handle data used to manage “smart cities,” power augment-

ed reality, and even to channel the flood of high-definition video streamed online. “5G and AI are heralds for the coming data age,” Koenig said. Spending on consumer electronics devices and streaming services in the US alone was expected to climb slightly more than 3 percent this year to \$351 billion, with the number of “connected” devices in the country rising to 715 million from 671 million last year. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: The Byton connected car is seen during its launch at CES 2018. —AFP

net cloud and improve its functions with artificial intelligence. “It will improve your experience the more it knows you,” said Kirchert. While other concept electric cars have been promoted at prices of \$100,000 or more, the new Byton will face competition from the Tesla Model 3 and offerings from major automakers. Byton said the car will have a range of

more than 500 kilometers (300 miles) before needing a recharge and will be able to “top up” its battery in 15 to 30 minutes. It will be offered with “level 3” autonomy which enables some functions without a driver and be capable of “level 4” for near-autonomous function from 2020, according to the company. —AFP

Health

# Power stacked against Asia's poor as China dams Mekong

Daily catch has been shrinking by the year

## Toll from listeria outbreak reaches 61 in South Africa

**JOHANNESBURG:** The number of deaths from a year-long outbreak of listeriosis, caused by a food-borne bacteria, has jumped to 61, South Africa's health minister said yesterday. Listeriosis is caused by *Listeria monocytogenes*, a naturally-occurring germ typically transferred through contaminated food, although it is readily treatable with antibiotics. A total of 727 cases have been confirmed since January 2017, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said in a statement.

As of December 5, the confirmed death toll stood at 36, but has since risen to 61. Because of the disease's "rapid spread and unusual or unexpected behavior", it has been elevated to the country's list of inten-

sively monitored, serious conditions, Motsoaledi added. A poultry abattoir in the capital Pretoria was identified by health officials as suffering from listeriosis contamination but it was unclear whether the facility was the source of the outbreak, the statement said. *Listeria* bacteria can be found in soil, water, vegetation and the faeces of some animals. Contamination in humans can result in flu-like illness, infection of the bloodstream and, in severe cases, infection of the brain which can prove fatal. People with compromised immune systems, like some of those living with AIDS and pregnant women, are at a heightened risk, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). — AFP

**KANDAL:** Cambodian fisherman Sles Hiet lives at the mercy of the Mekong; a massive river that feeds tens of millions but is under threat from the Chinese dams cementing Beijing's physical and diplomatic control over its Southeast Asian neighbors. The 32-year-old, whose ethnic Cham Muslim community live on rickety house boats that bob along a river bend in Kandal province, says the size of his daily catch has been shrinking by the year.

"We don't know why there are less fish now," he told AFP of a mystery that has mired many deeper into poverty. It is a lament heard from villages along a river that snakes from the Tibetan plateau through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam before emptying into the South China Sea. Nearly 4,800 km long, the Mekong is the world's largest inland fishery and second only to the Amazon for its bio-diversity. It helps feed around 60 million people across its river basin. Yet control over its taps rests to the north with China, whose premier Li Keqiang will land in Phnom Penh on Wednesday to lead a new regional summit that could shape the river's future. Beijing has already studied the Mekong's upper reaches with six dams and is investing in more than half of the 11 dams planned further south, according to International Rivers.

Environmental groups warn the blockages pose a grave threat to fish habitats by disrupting migrations and the flow of key nutrients and sediment—not to mention displacing tens of thousands of people with flooding. Communities in the lower Mekong countries have reported depleted fish stocks in recent years and are blaming the dams. Experts say it is too early to draw full conclusions given a lack of baseline data and the complex nature of the river's ecosystem. But what they do agree on is that China has the upper hand over a resource that serves as the economic lifeblood of its poor southern backyard. The lower Mekong countries are "not able to stand up to China geo-politically," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a foreign policy expert at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. That allows Beijing to keep "undermining habitats and millions of livelihoods downstream."



**KANDAL PROVINCE:** This photo taken on January 5, 2018 shows fishermen pulling their nets in the Mekong river. — AFP

### China rewrites the rules

With control over the headwaters of the river-known there as the Lancang Beijing can dam its section of the river while the impacts are felt downstream. It can also modulate water levels, a powerful bargaining chip displayed in 2016 when China opened dam gates on its soil to help Vietnam mitigate a severe drought.

The regional superpower is now asserting its authority through the nascent Lancang-Mekong Cooperation forum, while appeasing its Southeast Asian neighbours with investment and soft loans. Leaders from all six Mekong countries will attend the LMC this week in Cambodia. China's foreign ministry bills the forum, which also covers security and trade issues, as a way to foster "economic prosperity, social progress and a beautiful environment". But environmentalists say the LMC aims to replace the long-standing Mekong River Commission—a regional body that has tried to manage development along the river—albeit without China. "There is major concern that China's leading role and relative influence

will see it prioritising its own interests over meaningful co-operation," warned Maureen Harris, Southeast Asia programme director at International Rivers. Chinese companies are investing billions of dollars in many of the dams but have so far failed to carry out full environmental and social impact assessments. Firms and state agencies from Thailand, Vietnam and Laos also stand to gain from their investments in the hydropower projects.

"Much of the benefit will be reaped by the financial and business interests involved, with impacts to hit hardest local communities along the river," Harris said. Calls to protect the river have largely gone unheeded in Southeast Asia, where governments are eager to meet energy needs and unwilling to stand up to China or resist its cash. That makes the Mekong's dependents, such as fisherman Sles Hiet, an afterthought. "We depend on the Mekong river," he said. "Even though there are less fish we are still trying because we don't have any other jobs and we have no land to farm." — AFP

## SpaceX launches Zuma mission

**MIAMI:** SpaceX on Sunday blasted off a secretive US government payload known as Zuma, a mission whose nature—and the agency behind it—remains a mystery. "Three, two, one, ignition and liftoff," said a SpaceX commentator as the Falcon 9 rocket launched under cover of darkness from Cape Canaveral, Florida, at 8:00 pm (0100 GMT Monday).

The launch was initially supposed to take place in November but was postponed so the California-based company could take a closer

look at potential problems with the fairing, or the nose cone part of the rocket that protects the payload. Just what exactly needed such special protection and secrecy is still unknown. Northrup Grumman, the maker of the payload, said it was for the US government and would be delivered to low-Earth orbit, but offered no other details.

SpaceX and the Pentagon did not respond to requests for comment about the nature of the mission. SpaceX has launched national security payloads in the past, including a spy satellite for the National Reconnaissance Office, and an X-37B space plane for the US Air Force. The company's live webcast did not show video coverage of the Zuma spacecraft after it separated from the first stage of the rocket, but confirmed that the fairings deployed and the payload was well on its way to low-Earth orbit. — AFP

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PAGE

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

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## What's On

## PAAET training week gets underway



Activities of the second day of the first training week, organized by the team of the Innovation and National Business Pioneers competition, and launched by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Cooperation with the Manpower Restructuring program got underway at Ibn Al-Haitham training center. The day of training included two workshops, the first was led by manpower trainer Dr Kalthoum Awad and the second was by quality and small project advisor Eng Munther Al-Maatouq. Activities of the first training week will continue until January 11.



On Sunday, a delegation of the Green Hands Environmental Team visited Omani football fans who were wounded in a stampede after a UAE-Omani Final game at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

## Patriarchal Vicar of Jacobite Churches meets fellow heads of Churches



His Eminence Mor Eusebius Kuriakose, on his maiden visit to Kuwait after assuming the charge as Patriarchal Vicar, an appointment the Supreme Head of Antioch and All the East, HH Mor Ignatius Aphrem II has made, has met with heads of fellow churches in Kuwait. On 6th Jan 2018, Saturday Mor Eusebius met Arch Bishop of Greek Orthodox Church in Kuwait His Eminence Ghattas Hazim at his archbishopric in Salwa along with priests and officials of both churches.



The same day Mor Eusebius also met Rev. Michael Mbona, Chaplain of St. Paul's Anglican Church and Chairman of Inter Congregation Committee (ICC) in a separate meeting held at Fahahel. St Paul's Anglican Church in Ahmadi is the

oldest existing Christian worship facility in the country, where Christians of various streams worship harmoniously. Vicar of St Mary's Jacobite Syrian Church, Kuwait Rev Fr Eldo Chackkiattil and other church offi-

cial also attended the meetings. Mos Eusebius thanked both the church leaders for the support extended to Syrian Jacobite community in Kuwait and sought means to strengthen the bilateral relations further.

## FAIPS celebrates grade 1 annual day

Helping children tap their passions and talents is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. It helps them connect to the soul of the world. Realizing that there is no greater self esteem booster than to know who you are and be passionate about what you have to offer the world. FAIPS (DPS) class 1 organized their Annual Day on 18th December 2017, based on the theme "WONDERS OF THE WORLD".

The program was graced by the chief guests Vijay Kapoor who is the owner of the 'Bestow' in Salmiya and a flourishing furnishing businessman and Banani Bose a director for an Art school. The parents eagerly took their seats expecting sublime performances by their little ones. Principal Mrs. Anju Dheman and Vice Principal

Vineeta Munshi and Headmistress Seema welcomed the chief guests and parents with warm greetings.

The program commenced with the Inaugural dance, invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesha, admired as the remover of obstacles and more generally the lord of beginnings. The Hindi and French songs presented by our young kids created an aura of happiness. The dances from the Arabian culture as well as from India added a colorful flavor and captivated both the hearts and minds of the spectators. The colorful drill display and the synchronized energetic Aerobic Dance with the glittering costumes was a thrilling and unique experience for the parents.

The program concluded with a speech by chief guests where they showered the young performers with praise for their scintillating performance. The Principal Anju Dheman congratulated the parents, teachers and students for the tremendous effort taken to make the function an event to remember. The morning of 18th December will remain inscribed in the hearts of everyone for many days to come.

## ACK achieves the new version of ISO 9001:2015

As part of ACK's commitment to providing quality higher education and training, the college is proud to announce that it has been awarded ISO 9001:2015 Certification, the most updated version of the Quality Management System Standard. ACK is the first and only private higher education institution in Kuwait that has received the ISO 9001:2015 certification, under its quality policy of adopting a continual improvement approach to ensure quality service to its students, alumni, trainees, and stakeholders while delivering ACK services through effective management of its resources and operations. The new version of this standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a leadership focus, risk based thinking, process approach and continual improvement. Applying ISO 9001:2015 helps ACK to ensure that pertinent stakeholders get consistent and good quality services.

## Procedure for re-verification of mobile connections for NRIs

A large number of overseas Indians have been making representations about facing difficulty in operating their mobile connections procured in India as the telecom operators are insisting on linking Aadhaar number with the mobile number. As most of them do not possess Aadhaar Card, they are unable to link their Indian mobile number with the Aadhaar number. The matter was taken up with the Department of Telecom (DoT) for

exempting overseas Indians from linking Aadhaar with their Indian mobile connections and issuing suitable advisory to telecom service providers (TSPs). The DoT has issued alternate procedure and format attached herewith as Annexures. The Annexures cover the following categories:

1. Subscribers of Foreign Nationality and not having Aadhaar.
2. NRI Subscribers not having Aadhaar or having mobile number not linked to his/her Aadhaar and therefore not registered with UIDAI.

All members of the Indian community in Kuwait and any foreign nationals in possession of Indian mobile connections are requested to download the information as applicable to them. For any queries/clarifications, please contact Embassy of India's PIC Wing personally or telephonically at 22550171 and 97229915 on any working day between 0900 to 1700 hours.

## KNES year 2 winter concert: 'Change the World'

Kuwait National English School recently opened its doors to host the Year 2 Winter Concert in the newly refurbished Al Faraby School Theatre. The theme of the concert was "Change the World" which is in keeping with our schools mission statement and philosophy and our school's involvement in the UNESCO project on Climate Change initiated by its headquarters in Paris. The evening comprised a variety of musical acts including songs, dances and an opening percussion ensemble by talented pupils from Year 2, which was the highlight of the evening. Pupils, in vivid and colorful costumes, paid tribute to our earth home, with particular focus on preserving the beauty of our world through song and dance.

Our school Director, Madame Chantal Al Gharabally, highlighted various issues and challenges facing our world. She further stated that our mission and focus at Kuwait National English School was in educating our little ones not only through lessons in the classroom, but also through regular assemblies and other forums to be aware of their responsibility towards tackling these issues and challenges, thereby sending off well-rounded, responsible and fully-fledged young men and women to take their rightful places in society. It was a wonderfully festive evening enjoyed by staff, pupils and parents. Madame Chantal thanked all who attended the concert and congratulated our very talented performers, staff and the music teachers for the success of the evening.

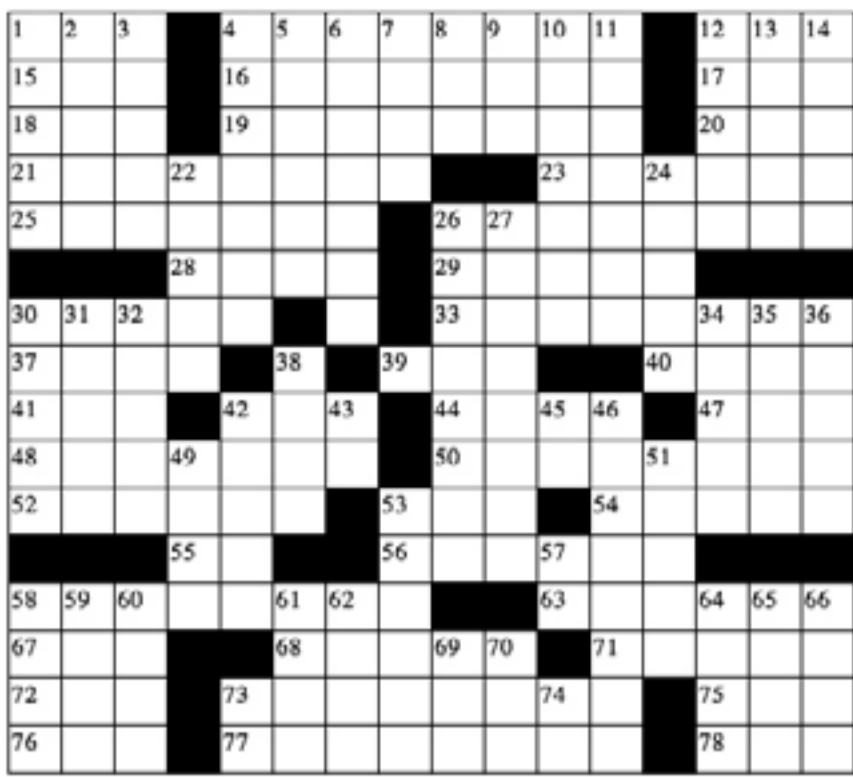






Stars

CROSSWORD 1804



ACROSS

- An accountant certified by the state.
- Remove surgically.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- Of or relating to a caesura.
- A pass between mountain peaks.
- An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
- In an ardent manner.
- A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
- (zoology) Of or relating to or belonging to the family Filaridae.
- Type genus of the family Ostreidae.
- Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- A member of the people inhabiting the Aleutian Islands and western Alaska.
- Botswanan statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
- Speak unfavorably about.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- A sheath worn to protect a finger.
- Type genus of the family Unionidae.
- (used especially of persons) Having lived for a relatively long time or attained a specific age.
- Suggestive of the supernatural.
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- Showing sorrow.
- A living organism characterized by voluntary movement.
- A poisonous colorless flammable gas used in organic synthesis and to dope transistors and as a poison gas in warfare.
- Constituting the full quantity or extent.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- The unit of plane angle adopted under the System International d'Unites.
- Italian architect (1508-1580).
- Related on the father's side.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of five and one.
- United States architect (born in China in 1917).
- A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
- A player in a band (especially a military band).
- An advanced law degree.
- Administer an oil or ointment to.
- Mites and ticks.
- Of or relating to or venerating the Virgin Mary.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Employed in accomplishing something.
- A large cask especially one holding a volume equivalent to 2 butts or 252 gals.
- The products of human creativity.
- Of animals.
- A heavenly place (peaceful and beautiful) where those who are favored by the gods can go when they die.
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- Industrial city of Belarus southeast of Minsk.
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- About three feet long exclusive of tail.
- A dicotyledonous genus of the family Ericaceae.
- Any of various widely distributed beetles.
- 100 halers equal 1 koruna.
- Yellow-fever mosquitoes.
- Not trimmed.
- A crown-like jewelled headdress worn by women on formal occasions.
- Industrial city of Belarus southeast of Minsk.
- A self-replicating protein molecule that occupies a fixed place on a chromosome.
- Infections of the skin or nails caused by fungi and appearing as itching circular patches.
- A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
- A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
- A long Turkish knife with a curved blade having a single edge.
- Something that resembles a pill in shape or size.
- A unit of weight equivalent to 1000 kilograms.
- (of linens or clothes) Smoothed with a hot iron.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- In bed.
- Set down according to a plan.
- Fallow deer.
- (computer science) A graphic symbol (usually a simple picture) that denotes a program or a command or a data file or a concept in a graphical user interface.
- The upper angle between an axis and an offshoot such as a branch or leafstalk.
- An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
- Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
- The compass point that is one point south of due east.
- Lacking in light.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.

DOWN

- Soreness and warmth caused by friction.
- A selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor commonly prescribed as an antidepressant (trade name Paxil).

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, this cycle ushers in an intense need to know: your deepest fears challenge your evolution. You could become overbearing and undesirable to be around even to yourself! You will want to explore every level of your life and choices and to rebuild some bridges that were burned. Speaking of building, you could find plans to an old project that would need input from an old friend; you may find that someone is looking to pay back a debt! Now would be an easier time to step away from your isolation and let you anger cool along with your temper. Remember that living things do not thrive when isolated and this includes you, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, your focus may not be on your job or finances at this time. You may feel a deep need to be with family and friends in a home setting. Your council may not be meant for others just now; tend to you and yours with honest intent. You could make things happen that seem impossible and your people, family or friends, will be ever so grateful. Melancholy may pester you today. Make no long-term arrangements today as it is likely they will have to be re-worked. Your ability to communicate is at a high but your ability to act may seem blocked. Take care of personal business you have been putting off; you may discover something previously overlooked and problematic. Your attention to your intimate living situation is needed, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you could be opposed by someone who just can't seem to see your side. Things could generally seem out of the ordinary and uncomfortable today. You could be rudely interrupted multiple times by someone that loves to hear the sound of his or her own voice. Certain people could drain your energy; you may elect to feel and say nothing in a group of overbearing people. Take a good look around you: are these the friends you want to spend time with and if so look at the reason you desire their company. Consider making changes that would be to your benefit: doing something for yourself could come easy this evening. Tonight you will shine as you enjoy your evening preparing dinner for someone you love; there may be flowers for the table, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you will be held in high esteem for your leadership and the ability to make sound decisions that could affect others. You are in tune with what trends society follows at this time. You could be offered a membership to an elite group dealing with causes close to your heart. Someone younger watches and follows your example. You will have a meaningful discussion with someone who is on the same page. This should go smoothly today when dealing with a new acquaintance or co-worker; your training skills are strong. You could find the answer to a long-asked question. You could look at making you cozy home cozier. Welcome quiet time tonight as you make plans for the new year with someone you love and cherish, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you could find yourself in an unusually difficult spot when dealing with a demanding person today. You may be forced to make a decision on the spot; never fear, this will turn out exceptionally well. You could come to the aid of friends who are trying to get moved into a new home, or perhaps helping with a paint job is where you would help the most. While you are with your friends, you will find yourself giddy and feeling very relaxed; you will be very grateful for those you can be yourself with. You are likely to experience substantial gains in areas of your life. You will catch the ball today and you will run with it much to the delight of those you are associated with. You and your friends may decide to go to a movie or a play this evening, leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you could have a sense of being trapped or uncomfortably committed to a living situation you no longer want; this could pertain to the energy of your life at this time. You could feel disconnected from an important source of affection or perhaps income. You may experience conflicts around you today that involve you; remember to hold your tongue if at all possible. You will take the lead in a certain, tricky project that has confounded others; you have a sense of accomplishment and confidence that reassures those around you. A new co-worker will need your guidance today and you will be able to help them understand a tricky part of the new job. You could find yourself out with friends for a trending new movie; beware long lines, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you will finally be allowed to turn in your objectives and plans to reach them; the group will take convincing but your words are clear and concise today. If you've wanted to join a writers group or take painting lessons this could be the right time. You would prefer staying home today and let your imagination run wild. The creative energy of the universe calls to you; finish that center project while your chart supports such flair. Affairs of the heart will move into the center of your world and what you do with it will be interesting. You could attend a professional dinner this evening. You will inspire many with your positive outlook and attitude toward abundance; you may be called upon to share your secrets of success and health, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you tackle some work-related issues with ease; unfortunately, tomorrow may call for a total redo. You will be able to see through a tough situation enough to find the answers needed by the group to move forward. Optimism is important now. The quality of your life will be impressed upon you by a surprising event later today. You enjoy the finer things in life and seek to surround yourself with them no matter the cost. An interest in different types of investments such as art or the stock market may appeal to you now. Further education can improve your working status and should soon be considered. You will be asked about your opinions relating to religion or politics. Watch your wallet, as you could be tempted to go way over budget, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, taking some time to think about where you came from and where you want to go could be valuable now. Things cannot be forced today. Social issues could cause a stir among friends. You could discover that you like yourself better than you have in a while. A different job or hobby may appeal to you later today. You may feel a need to separate yourself from a group that doesn't seem to fit your beliefs or goals any longer. A trip to the bookstore or library could lead you straight to some information you have been searching for. You will be clearly show how your friends and family feel about you; smile and embrace it. You may daydream off and on throughout the day. Tonight cuddle up with a hot cup of cocoa and a book, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, the true purpose of life and death are a focus for you now. The healing of body, mind and spirit are important as well as your sexual being. Financial interests occupy your thoughts as you reflect upon your plans for change. Perhaps too much attention has been given to sex and money. Desire for someone or something could become an obsession. Be careful! Social affairs could draw attention to your flair for style, elegance and intellect. Blockages may pop up but today is a great day for problem solving and you always come through when it counts. Emotional clashes could occur and the day may seem somehow off-kilter. By the end of the day challenges could prove beneficial and force you toward the answers, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you are completely in touch with your thoughts and ideas today. Your talents of diplomacy and debate will serve you very well when someone disagrees with you. It seems you run into brick walls at the office as well as at home; now is not the time to try to fix things, just wait it out. You will make clear your feelings with ease later tonight when you state your position with the perfect words. There will be opportunity to take care of something you've been contemplating for a while and a new way of doing an old chore will be discovered. Make no final judgments regarding important affairs at the time. At the end of the day you may consider taking a long ride with a friend or family member, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you could find yourself accepting an award for excellence in your field of endeavor! Everyone you know loves you, with the exception of a few that have seen your secret side. You love your place in life and embrace it with thanks. The heavens have smiled on your choices and decisions regarding your mate and family. You are drawn to new ways of thinking and working; you could be an advocate of working from home and a supervisor will strongly disagree. Try to remember all things do pass, times get better, so careful what you say aloud. Laughter is a big part of the afternoon—you may enjoy a meal later today with a couple of good friends. You may entertain close friends or beloved relatives using new recipes you created together, pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs With Girls' Names

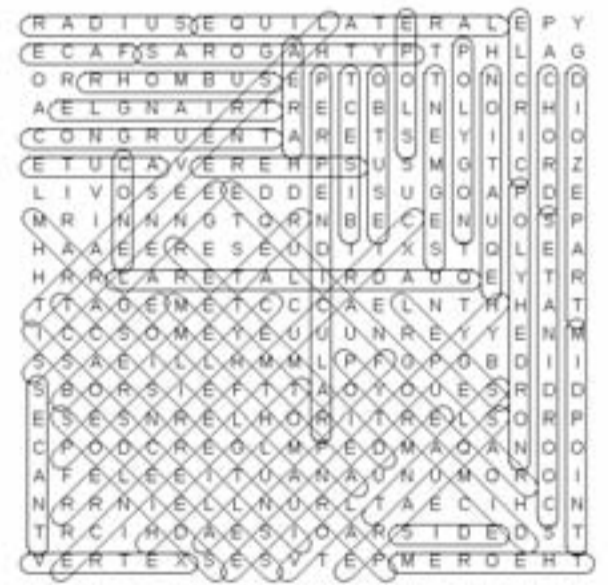
Find and circle all of these songs that have a girls name in the title. The remaining letters spell an additional song title.



- |             |                |                |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| ADIA        | OSANA          | MY SHARDNA     |
| ALISON      | ELEANOR RIGBY  | NKITA          |
| AMANDA      | ELVIRA         | OH SHERIE      |
| ANGIE       | GLORIA         | PEGGY SUE      |
| BARBARA ANN | JOANNA         | RHANNON        |
| BETH        | JOLENE         | ROXANNE        |
| BILLIE JEAN | KYRIE          | RUBY TUESDAY   |
| BRANDY      | LAYLA          | SARA           |
| CANDIDA     | LITTLE JEANNIE | SHERIE         |
| CAROL ANNE  | LUCILLE        | SUSIE Q        |
| CICILIA     | MAGGIE MAY     | SUZANNE        |
| CLAIR       | MANDY          | SWEET CAROLINE |
| DELLAH      | MICHELLE       |                |
| DELTA DAWN  |                |                |

Yesterday's Solution

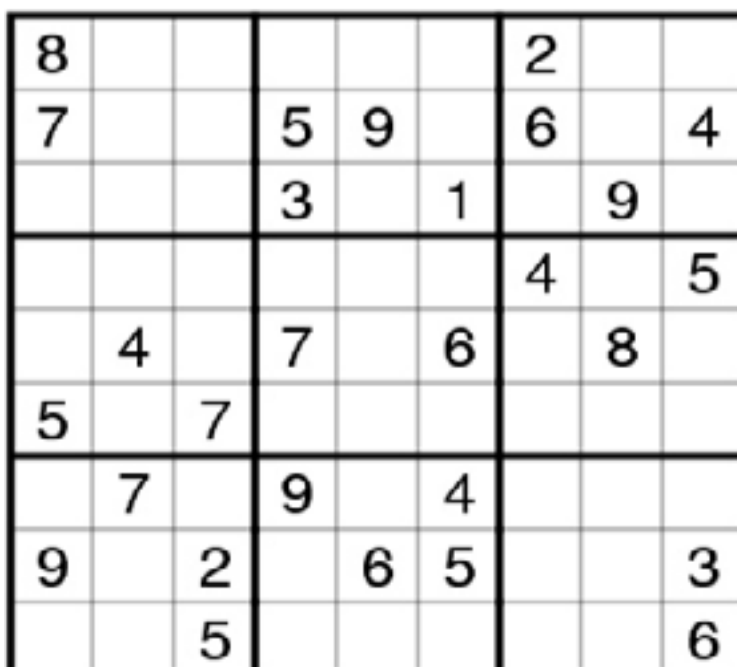
Geometry



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|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| ACUTE         | EQUATION      | PERIMETER     | SIDE        |
| APOTHEM       | EQUILATERAL   | PERPENDICULAR | SLANT       |
| AREA          | EQUILATERAL   | POLYGON       | SLOPE       |
| BASE          | FACE          | POLYHEDRON    | SOLIDS      |
| BISSECT       | FORMULA       | PYRAMID       | SPHERE      |
| CHORD         | HYPOTENUSE    | PYTHAGORAS    | SQUARE      |
| CIRCLE        | HYPOTENUSE    | QUADRILATERAL | THEOREM     |
| CIRCUMFERENCE | INTERSECT     | RADIUS        | TRANSVERSAL |
| CONE          | ISOSCELES     | RHOMBUS       | TRAPEZOID   |
| CONGRUENT     | LEGS          | SCALENE       | TRIANGLE    |
| COORDINATES   | MIDPOINT      | SECANT        | VERTEX      |
| CYLINDER      | OBTUSE        | SEGMENT       | VOLUME      |
| DIAMETER      | PARALLELOGRAM |               |             |

Hidden sentence: PYTHAGORAS LIVED DURING THE SIXTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Lifestyle | Awards



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows (From top left to right) Meryl Streep (left) and Ai-jen Poo, Jessica Chastain, Nicole Kidman, Saoirse Ronan, Penelope Cruz, Angelina Jolie, Laura Dern, Dakota Johnson, Reese Witherspoon, Elizabeth Moss, Kerry Washington, Heidi Klum, Kate Hudson, Isabelle Huppert, Emilia Clarke, Salma Hayek (left) and Ashley Judd, America Ferrera (left) and Natalie Portman, Eva Longoria, Sarah Jessica Parker, Naomi Campbell, Alison Brie, Halle Berry, Diane Kruger, Jessica Biel, Margot Robbie, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Kendall Jenner, Gillian Anderson, Mariah Carey, Michelle Pfeiffer, Christina Hendricks and Viola Davis arriving to attend the 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, wearing black dresses to draw attention to sexual harassment in showbiz and other industries, a culture of abuse revealed in the downfall of mogul Harvey Weinstein and others. — AFP photos



Dakota Johnson

Sarah Paulson

# 'Blackout' on Globes red carpet for harassment victims

Usually at the Golden Globes, the red carpet is awash in color. This year, it was a total blackout. Hollywood's A-listers on Sunday turned out en masse in black—a sartorial show of force to draw attention to sexual harassment in showbiz and other industries, a culture of abuse revealed in the downfall of Harvey Weinstein and others. “ON SUNDAY WE WEAR BLACK to stand in solidarity with men and women everywhere who have been silenced by discrimination, harassment and abuse,” said a tweet from the Time’s Up initiative launched by hundreds of prominent women in Tinseltown to shine a light on the issue.

the red carpet. “As a father, as a husband, why wouldn’t you be 100 percent in support of this?”

### ‘Awakening’

Streep was not the only actress who walked the red carpet with an activist. Michelle Williams (“All The Money in the World”) arrived with Tarana Burke, the creator of the #MeToo hashtag that exploded in the wake of the revelations about Weinstein as women recounted their experiences online. Amy Poehler entered with Restaurant Opportunities Center United president Saru Jayaraman. The protest movement did not preclude Tinseltown’s finest from making fashion statements.

Oscar winner Catherine Zeta-Jones, who starred in last year’s hit TV series “Feud: Bette and Joan,” opted for a daring sheer lingerie-inspired black gown with plenty of artfully placed sequins and emerald green earrings. Alicia Vikander’s gown had a rather Victorian buttoned-up bodice with full coverage, sheer sleeves and a bare back. The only pops of color were minor—a streak of bright green eyeshadow here, a snippet of white fabric at a neckline there, or an orange sash at the waist. “Tonight is not a mourning. Tonight is an awakening,” actress-director Amber Tamblyn wrote in an opinion piece for The New York Times. — AFP

## ON SUNDAY WE WEAR BLACK

Women and men alike strutted into the Beverly Hilton for the gala event in their finest, the wide majority of them in basic black. “People are aware now of a power imbalance. It’s led to abuse in our industry. (...) It’s everywhere,” Meryl Streep, who is vying for a Globe for her work in media drama “The Post,” told E! network on the red carpet. Streep—who has come under fire over her denials that she knew about Weinstein’s misconduct-brought Ai-jen Poo, the head of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, as her plus one.

Indeed, the women behind the Time’s Up initiative have called special attention to their “sisters” in less than glamorous blue-collar jobs. Streep, a three-time Oscar winner, said Hollywood’s men and women now felt “emboldened to stand together in a thick, black line.” Indeed, the men of Hollywood took some flack ahead of the gala for saying they too would wear black, with some saying they would have worn tuxedos anyway.

But many donned black shirts as well, and offered their impassioned support for the movement. “I don’t think this is a silent protest. This is going to make people talk about the issue.” David Thewlis, who starred in last year’s box office smash “Wonder Woman,” told AFP on



Amy Poehler (left) and Restaurant Opportunities Center United president Saru Jayaraman



Catherine Zeta-Jones



Activist Tarana Burke (left) and Michelle Williams.

Lifestyle | Awards

Tuesday, January 9, 2018



Shailene Woodley



Actress Salma Hayek



Alicia Vikander



(From top left) Activist Tarana Burke, Michelle Williams, America Ferrera, Jessica Chastain, Amy Poehler, Meryl Streep, Kerri Washington (bottom left) Natalie Portman, activists Ai-jen Poo and Saru Jayaraman attend the 19th Annual InStyle And Warner Bros Pictures Golden Globe After-Party.



Naomi Campbell



Carmen Electra



Allison Brie



Mariah Carey



Actress Chrissy Metz



Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban



Helen Mirren



Kendall Jenner



Nikki Reed



Actor Gwendoline Christie



Jamie Chung



Kelly Clarkson



Zuri Hall



Actor Yvonne Orji



Actor Tracee Ellis Ross



Actor Kit Harington

Lifestyle | Awards



(From left) Martin McDonagh, Sam Rockwell, Frances McDormand, Graham Broadbent and Peter Czernin pose with the award for Best Motion Picture Drama for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" in the press room during The 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



The cast of "The Handmaid's Tale" pose with the trophy for Best Television Series - Drama during the 75th Golden Globe Awards.

# HOLLYWOOD ALL IN BLACK FOR GLITZY GOLDEN GLOBES



(From left) Actresses Laura Dern, Nicole Kidman, Zoe Kravitz, Reese Witherspoon and Shailene Woodley pose with the Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television trophy for 'Big Little Lies'.

Hollywood's elite turned the red carpet black Sunday at the Golden Globes, the glitzy launch of the entertainment industry's awards season, with sexual harassment scandals casting a long shadow over the party. Billed as the most raucous event in the showbiz calendar, the champagne-drenched Hollywood Foreign Press Association's annual prize-giving is a draw for filmmakers and actors looking to create some buzz ahead of the Oscars in March. But this year's ceremony, seen as the first big opportunity for the industry to unite against a pervasive culture of sexual misconduct brought to light by the downfall of disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, may strike a more serious tone.

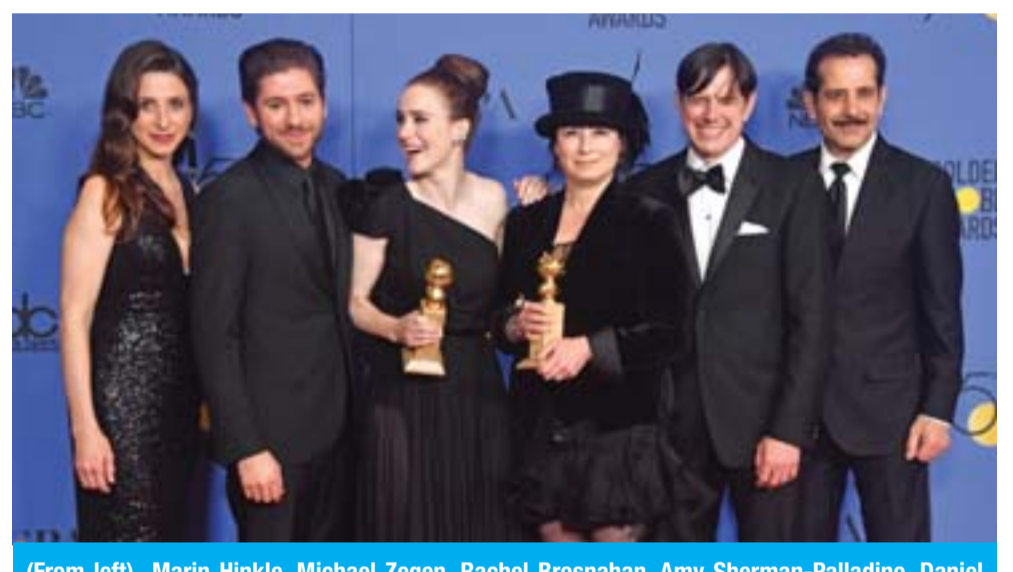
Actors and actresses turned out in black this year in solidarity with victims of Weinstein and numerous other figures exposed by the harassment and abuse scandal, including Kevin Spacey, Brett Ratner and Dustin Hoffman. And the overall message was a call for continued change. "People are aware now of a power imbalance. It's led to abuse in our industry. (...) It's everywhere," Meryl Streep, who is vying for a Globe for her work in media drama "The Post," told E! network on the red carpet. Streep, a three-time Oscar winner, said Hollywood's men and women now felt "emboldened to stand together in a thick, black line."

Viola Davis added: "It's all of these women just embracing their authentic voices and standing in solidarity with each other." Meyers, making his debut as Globes host, opened the show with joke after joke about Hollywood's post-Weinstein reckoning. "It's 2018, marijuana is finally allowed and sexual harassment finally isn't. It's going to be a good year," the late night NBC funnyman Meyers said. "For the male nominees in the room tonight, this is the first time in three months it won't be terrifying to hear your name read out loud."

### 'Shape of Water' vs 'The Post'

The ceremony at the Beverly Hilton is not as reliable at predicting Oscars glory as the galas held by Hollywood's acting, producing and directing unions. But it remains one of the most high-profile and glamorous events of the awards calendar and tends to generate more headlines for tippy tributes and wacky one-liners. Leading the pack this year is Guillermo del Toro's fantasy romance "The Shape of Water" with seven nominations, while "The Post" and "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" went into the night tied for second, with six each.

Overall, 25 awards are given out — 14 for movies and 11 for TV—and, as usual, the 90-member HFPA has sprung more than a few surprises in the nominations, placing horror satire "Get Out" in the best comedy-musical category. But there were no nominations at all for female filmmakers despite huge successes in 2017 for Greta Gerwig ("Lady Bird"), Patty Jenkins ("Wonder Woman"), Dee Rees ("Mudbound"), Kathryn Bigelow ("Detroit") and Sofia Coppola ("The Beguiled"). The first awards of the evening went to Nicole Kidman, who was named best



(From left) Marin Hinkle, Michael Zegen, Rachel Brosnahan, Amy Sherman-Palladino, Daniel Palladino and Tony Shalhoub pose with the award for Best Television Series Musical or Comedy for "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel."

actress in a limited series or television movie for her role as an abused wife in HBO's "Big Little Lies."

"I hope we can elicit change through the stories we tell and the way we tell them," Kidman told the audience. Sam Rockwell took home the best supporting actor in a film prize for crime drama "Three Billboards." He paid tribute to his "actor-friendly" director Martin McDonagh and co-star Frances McDormand, whom he described as "a force of nature."

### Wide open

While many fields are wide open, James Franco ("The Disaster Artist") is almost certain to win best actor in a musical/comedy movie, according to awards prediction website Gold Derby, ahead of Daniel Kaluuya ("Get Out"). The site expects Saoirse Ronan ("Lady Bird") to pip Margot Robbie ("I, Tonya") in the parallel race for best actresses for her acclaimed performance as a troubled teen. Among other awards for the small screen, "The Handmaid's Tale" took home the prize for best drama series, and star Elisabeth Moss took home the prize for best actress in a drama. Moss thanked Margaret Atwood, who wrote the best-selling dystopian novel on which the Hulu series was based. "Margaret Atwood, this is for you and the women who came before you and after you who were brave enough to speak out against intolerance and injustice and to fight for equality and freedom in this world," Moss said. — AFP



Actor Gary Oldman poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture Drama.



Actor Sam Rockwell holds his award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture.



Actors Sally Hawkins (left) and Frances McDormand, winner of Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture Drama for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri."



Timothee Chalamet, Laurie Metcalf, Greta Gerwig and Saoirse Ronan poses with the award for Best Motion Picture Musical or Comedy in 'Lady Bird'.



Dave Franco (right) poses with James Franco and his trophy for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.



Composer Alexandre Desplat poses with his award for Best Original Score Motion Picture for 'The Shape of Water'.



Actor Sterling K Brown poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actor in A Television Series - Drama.



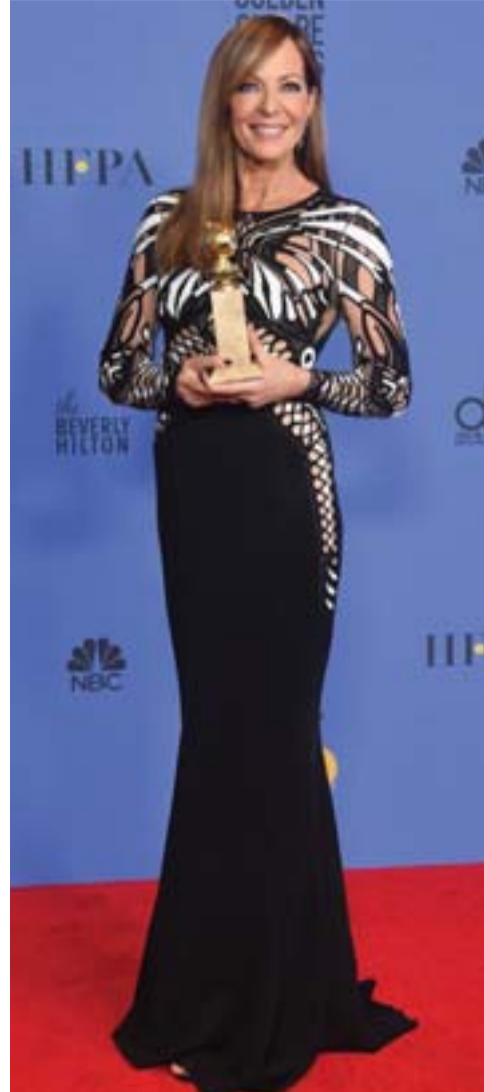
Songwriting duo Benj Pasek (left) and Justin Paul pose with the trophy for Best Original Song - Motion Picture.



Director Guillermo del Toro poses with the trophy for Best Director - Motion Picture.



Actress Nicole Kidman poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television.



Actress Allison Janney poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture.



Actress Diane Kruger and director Fatih Akin pose with the trophy for and his award for Best Motion Picture Foreign Language, 'In The Fade.'



(From left) Producer Darla K. Anderson, director Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina pose with the Best Motion Picture - Animated trophy for "Coco".



Actor Ewan McGregor poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actor in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television.



Actor Aziz Ansari poses with his award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series Musical or Comedy for 'Master of None'.

## Winners

Here is the list of winners for the 75th Golden Globe Awards, which were handed out on Sunday in Beverly Hills:

### FILM

Best film, drama: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"  
 Best film, musical or comedy: "Lady Bird"  
 Best director: Guillermo del Toro, "The Shape of Water"  
 Best actor, drama: Gary Oldman, "Darkest Hour"  
 Best actress, drama: Frances McDormand, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"  
 Best actor, musical or comedy: James Franco, "The Disaster Artist"  
 Best actress, musical or comedy: Saoirse Ronan, "Lady Bird"  
 Best supporting actor: Sam Rockwell, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"  
 Best supporting actress: Allison Janney, "I, Tonya"  
 Best screenplay: Martin McDonagh, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"  
 Best foreign language film: "In the Fade"  
 Best animated feature: "Coco"  
 Best original score: Alexandre Desplat, "The Shape of Water"  
 Best original song: Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, "This Is Me" from "The Greatest Showman"

### TELEVISION

Best drama series: "The Handmaid's Tale"  
 Best drama actor: Sterling K Brown, "This is Us"  
 Best drama actress: Elisabeth Moss, "The Handmaid's Tale"  
 Best musical or comedy series: "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"  
 Best musical or comedy actor: Aziz Ansari, "Master of None"  
 Best musical or comedy actress: Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"  
 Best limited series or TV movie: "Big Little Lies"  
 Best limited series or TV movie actor: Ewan McGregor, " Fargo"  
 Best limited series or TV movie actress: Nicole Kidman, "Big Little Lies"  
 Best supporting actor in a series, limited series or TV movie: Alexander Skarsgard, "Big Little Lies"  
 Best supporting actress in a series, limited series or TV movie: Laura Dern, "Big Little Lies". — AFP



Actress Elisabeth Moss, winner of Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series Drama for 'The Handmaid's Tale.'



Actress Saoirse Ronan poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.



(From left) Matt Damon, Taika Waititi, Amazon Founder/CEO Jeff Bezos and Chris Hemsworth attend Amazon Studios' Golden Globes Celebration at The Beverly Hilton Hotel.



(From left) Laura Dern, Jean-Marc Vallee, Nicole Kidman, Nathan Ross, Alexander Skarsgard, David E. Kelley, Zoe Kravitz, Gregg Fienberg, Jeffrey Nordling, Bruna Papandrea, Shailene Woodley and Per Saari pose with the Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television award for 'Big Little Lies'.



Actress Laura Dern poses with the trophy for Best Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or TV Movie.



Actor Alexander Skarsgard poses with the trophy for Best Supporting Actor in a Limited Series or TV Movie.



Actress Rachel Brosnahan poses with the trophy for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy.



Singers Alexis Boyd (second from right), Ash Minor (right) and fellow contestants of "The Four" attend FOX, FX and Hulu 2018 Golden Globe Awards After Party.



Alexis Bledel, Madeline Brewer, Yvonne Strahovski, Elisabeth Moss, Samira Wiley and Amanda Brugel attend FOX, FX and Hulu 2018 Golden Globe Awards After Party.

# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2018



(From left) Actresses Laura Dern, Nicole Kidman, Zoe Kravitz, Reese Witherspoon and Shailene Woodley pose with the Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television trophy for 'Big Little Lies' during the 75th Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

## OPRAH DECLARES 'NEW DAY' FOR WOMEN IN CAMPAIGN-LIKE GLOBE SPEECH

Oprah Winfrey on Sunday declared a "new day" for women and girls facing down abusive men as her powerful speech to the Golden Globe Awards stirred talk that she has a political future. Within moments of the daytime television trailblazer's remarks at the Hollywood gala, effusive fans called for her to challenge President Donald Trump in 2020, although she has given no indication she is interested. The 63-year-old Winfrey, whose former talk show ushered in an era of confessional television and helped make her a billionaire, delivered a forceful but tightly focused speech that brought together issues of gender, poverty and race as she accepted a lifetime achievement award.

She saluted the #MeToo movement that has quickly gained steam after revelations of rampant sexual misconduct by film mogul Harvey Weinstein. Paying tribute to Recy Taylor, an African American woman who daringly reported her 1944 gang rape by six white men in Alabama and died last month just short of her 98th birthday, Winfrey deplored "a culture broken by brutally powerful men." "For too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dare speak the truth to the power of those men. But their time is up! Their time is up!" Winfrey said to a standing ovation and even some tears in the audience. "So I want all the girls watching here now to know that a new day is on the horizon," Winfrey said.

"And when that new day finally dawns, it will be

because of a lot of magnificent women—many of whom are right here in this room tonight—and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure that they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say 'me too' again," she said.

### Hailing role of media

Winfrey highlighted her own life rising up from a violence-scarred childhood. She recalled her awe as a girl watching television in Milwaukee when Sidney Poitier became the first black person to win the Oscar for best actor in 1964. She also hailed the role of the media, so often maligned by Trump as "fake news." "It's the insatiable dedication to uncovering the absolute truth that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and to injustice," she said.

"I want to say that I value the press more than ever before as we try to navigate these complicated times." At the start of the Golden Globes, host Seth Meyers playfully encouraged Winfrey to run for president against Trump, who made history by winning despite never holding a previous political or military position. Meyers had appeared at the now infamous 2011 White House Correspondents Association dinner where he and then president Barack Obama mocked the idea of Trump in the White House. The real estate mogul fumed in his seat. "Some have said that night convinced him to run. So, if

that's true, I just want to say, Oprah, you will never be president. You do not have what it takes," Meyers said, while also proposing actor Tom Hanks as a vice presidential candidate.

### Fans see White House

For some of Winfrey's fans, a presidential run didn't seem far-fetched after her speech, with the topic quickly taking off on social media. "As I sit here in tears...I have never ever seen such a speech," the country singer Billy Gilman wrote on Twitter. "@Oprah, my friend. Please run for President. This world needs more of THAT. WOW." Winfrey had generally stayed away from overt politics until the 2008 election when she campaigned vigorously for Obama in an endorsement credited with helping him secure the Democratic Party's nomination.

The then governor of Illinois briefly considered Winfrey to replace Obama in the Senate, but she did not voice interest. With her vast audience and quickly relatable style, Winfrey has long been considered one of America's most influential celebrities. Her show has helped raise discussion in the United States on issues ranging from gay rights to abusive puppy breeding mills, while her endorsement power is avidly sought by the publishing industry. — AFP



Oprah Winfrey poses with the Cecil B DeMille Award.

## Dior Paris fashion exhibition breaks 112-year record

More than 700,000 people flocked to a record-breaking Paris exhibition dedicated to the Christian Dior French fashion house, its organizers said yesterday. The six-month-long show which ended on Sunday was the most popular ever held at the city's Museum of Decorative Arts, with visitors queuing for an average of four hours to see some of the luxury brand's most iconic designs. "Christian

Dior, couturier du reve" (roughly translated as "Christian Dior, Designer of Dreams") was organized to mark the label's 70th anniversary, and told the story of the brand through some 300 of its haute couture dresses worn by stars from Marlene Dietrich to Rihanna.

The museum's director David Cameo told AFP that the turn-out was "an absolute record", the highest for

a single show in its 112-year history. It also attracted a string of Hollywood stars and top models—who were spared the queues—including Jennifer Lawrence, Robert Pattinson and Bella Hadid, some of whom are ambassadors for the brand. But not everyone was happy with the show. The French magazine Marianne lambasted the venerable institution, which is next to the Louvre museum, for selling out.

### Museum as 'shop window'

Writer Agnes Poirier accused the museum of becoming a "shop window for commercial brands... under the cover of art", and also criticized its earlier link-up with toymaker Mattel for another hugely popular show on the Barbie doll. However, Cameo told AFP that the huge attendance had been a financial boon for the museum, helping it to notch up a large surplus that would "help us re-equip and pay for an overhaul of our restoration studios".

An retrospective of American fashion designer Marc Jacobs' work attracted more than 200,000 visitors to the museum in 2012, which was then a record for the publicly-funded institution. It is hoping to follow up its success with Dior with another fashion-themed show in March, tracing the enigmatic and mysterious Belgian-born designer Martin Margiela's years at Hermes. It will be one of two spring exhibitions in the French capital dedicated to the creator, with a retrospective of his work due to open at the Palais Galliera fashion museum also in March.

Despite breaking records, the Dior show was far from being the most popular Paris art show of 2017. That title is held by the "Icons of Modern Art" exhibition at the Louis Vuitton Foundation, which drew 1.2 million people. It featured the cream of the staggering collection of 250 paintings put together by collector Sergei Shchukin before the Bolshevik Revolution, which had never before been seen outside Russia. — AFP



This file picture shows a man adjusting a dress prior to the opening of the Dior exhibition that celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the Christian Dior fashion house, at the Museum of Decorative Arts (Musée des Arts Décoratifs) in Paris. — AFP photos



File photo shows dresses exhibited during the Dior exhibition that celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the Christian Dior fashion house at the Museum of Decorative Arts (Musée des Arts Décoratifs) in Paris.