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Health minister: Treat critical patients first, collect fees later

Hashem: Charge expats KD 1,000 for driving license, KD 500 for annual renewal

Panel to amend charter over jailed MPs; pension bill sent back for study

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday asked its legal and legislative committee to study within two weeks an amendment to the Assembly's internal charter stipulating to ban sending MPs to jail without a final court ruling. The resolution was passed by the Assembly following a tense debate over the jailing of opposition MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei after they were convicted along with 65 activists for storming the Assembly six years ago.

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By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision prioritizing the treatment of urgent cases at all hospitals without any delay in diagnosis or providing immediate treatment in order to save patients' lives and stabilize their condition. The minister's resolution emphasized fees should only be collected once the patients are out of danger.

In other decisions, Sheikh Basel decided to transfer the citizen service department under the direct jurisdiction of the ministry undersecretary. He also ordered forming a special committee to investigate financial violations in a contract signed with a medical company as well as delays in not responding to Audit Bureau reports about financial violations. Sheikh Basel also ordered re-forming the committee entrusted with inspecting dental services. In addition,

the minister canceled a previous decision referring the head of the Amiri Hospital's physiotherapy department Najla Al-Shami to prosecution.

Meanwhile, MP Safa Al-Hashem filed a parliamentary proposal to resolve the problem of traffic jams in Kuwait, calling to impose exorbitant fees on expats when issuing driving licenses, renewing them and registering vehicles in their names, in addition to restrictions on renewing the registration of expats' vehicles older than 10 years.

The proposal, addressed to the speaker of the Assembly, said, "In coordination with the government's plan to expand and develop road grids and in view of the current traffic congestions resulting from ongoing construction on various roads, I propose the following:

- Collecting KD 1,000 to issue a driving license to expats.
- Collecting an annual fee of KD 500 for renewing these licenses.



Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah



Safa Al-Hashem

- Collecting a fee of KD 500 and multiples thereof from expats owning more than one vehicle.
- Automatically linking expats' driving licenses to their work permits to prevent forgery and exemptions - the

license validity is annulled in case of not meeting any of the issuance conditions.

- Banning the renewal of expats' vehicle registrations if the car is more than 10 years old."

200 held, dozens hurt in fresh Tunisia unrest

TUNIS: More than 200 people have been arrested and dozens hurt during clashes in several parts of Tunisia, the interior ministry said yesterday, after a second night of unrest driven by anger over austerity measures. The North African country has been hailed for its relatively smooth democratic transition since its 2011 uprising, but seven years after the revolution tensions over economic grievances are high. Tunisia has seen rising anger over hikes in value-added tax and social contributions after a tough new budget was applied at the start of the year.

Interior ministry spokesman Khalifa Chibani told local radio that 49 police officers were wounded during clashes across the country and that 206 "troublemakers" were arrested overnight. Properties were damaged, he said, including a branch of the Carrefour supermarket chain in the suburbs of Tunis that was looted. A witness said youths threw stones at shop windows on Tuesday evening, taking advantage of the chaos to steal goods including electrical appliances. The police intervened, firing tear gas. The army has been deployed around banks, post offices and other government buildings in the country's main cities, the defense ministry said.

In Tebourba 30 km west of the capital Tunis, hundreds of young people took to the streets on Tuesday after the funeral of a man in his 40s who died in the unrest. Police have insisted they did not kill the man. The results of an autopsy have not been made public. Unrest



TUNIS: Tunisian protestors throw stones towards security forces in the Djebel Lahmer district early yesterday. — AFP

was also reported in the working-class neighborhoods of Djebel Lahmer and Zahrouni on the outskirts of Tunis, the central cities of Gafsa and Kasserine, and the northern town of Jedaïda. But AFP correspondents said calm had returned to these areas yesterday morning.

In the central town of Sidi Bouzid, the cradle of the protests that sparked the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings,

youths blocked roads and hurled stones, causing the police to retaliate with tear gas, an AFP reporter said. A representative of Tunisia's Jewish community said two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the entrance to two Talmudic schools on the Mediterranean island of Djerba, but their interiors were not damaged.

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Fears of abuse as Kenya to lift Gulf work ban

NAIROBI: Working as a tutor for three children from a wealthy family in Qatar, Kenyan migrant Wairimu did not suspect that her employer's offer to take her for a medical checkup was a ploy to confis-

cate her passport. Three months later, she is trapped as she has yet to muster up the courage to ask her to return the document so that she can quit her job. "I came here to be a tutor ... but my boss wants me to do housework and still help the children ... It is too much work," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Doha. "Without a passport, I can neither get another job nor travel back home ... (My employer) has also become hostile and rude to me and it is hard for me to approach her."

Kenya plans to lift a ban on its citizens working in the Gulf - introduced in 2014 because of abuses - with new safeguards, such as requiring recruitment agencies to pay a security bond so they can repatriate any distressed migrants. But experts fear that the new rules will not protect them amid corruption, greed and desperation for a better life. Lured by the promise of well-paid work and a chance to escape joblessness at home, hundreds of thousands of Kenyans are thought to be employed in the Middle

East, sending much-needed remittances to their families every year.

Domestic workers are often kept under lock and key by their employer, forced to work more than 18 hours a day, deprived of food and wages and physically and sexually abused, activists say. Visa-sponsorship rules in Qatar, known as the kafala system - used in several Gulf Arab countries - mean migrant workers like Wairimu cannot change jobs without their employer's consent and can

Continued on Page 11

Turkey tensions with US, Iran, Russia mount

ISTANBUL: Turkey yesterday warned Iran and Russia to make their Syrian regime ally stop bombing the rebel-held northern Idlib province, as tensions mounted ahead of mooted peace talks later this month. Ankara has been working closely with Russia and Iran to end the Syrian conflict over the last months but has stepped up pressure on Moscow and Tehran as the bombardments on Idlib intensified amid fears of a humani-

tarian catastrophe. Russia wants to bring all the parties in the Syrian conflict together for a conference in its Black Sea resort of Sochi at the end of this month but the tensions with Ankara are proving a major obstacle.

Meanwhile, sources in the Turkish foreign ministry said yesterday the US charges d'affaires in Ankara has been summoned to the Turkish foreign ministry over recent developments in Syria. They gave no details of Ankara's concerns. Turkey and the United States have been at loggerheads over Washington's policy of support for the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara views as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) waging an insurgency in southeastern Turkey.

Continued on Page 11



HAMOOURIA, Syria: A volunteer of the White Helmets carries a wounded girl after digging her out of the rubble following an air strike yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Groundbreaking heart transplant

KUWAIT: A group of Kuwaiti and German surgeons have successfully transplanted a heart for a 14-year-old Kuwaiti citizen. Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah announced yesterday. The minister said in a statement that the operation, which lasted for seven hours, was conducted at Adan Hospital. It is the 61st of its kind globally and the first in the Middle East, he said.

Qatar slams 'economic warfare'

DOHA: Qatar yesterday said a Saudi-led boycott, now in its eighth month, amounted to "economic warfare" as Doha plans to seek compensation for those hit by the sanctions. "This is economic warfare," foreign ministry spokeswoman Lulwa Al-Khater said at a press briefing. Khater said the energy-rich emirate would "not leave a stone unturned" in legally pursuing claims for businesses. Tensions have escalated in the Gulf since Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut all ties with Qatar in June, largely isolating the emirate in the oil-rich Gulf. They have banned all flights to and from Doha and cut off most trade links. Qatar says the sanctions have hit companies as well as citizens and expatriates. It has set up a committee to pursue claims, which Doha says are potentially worth billions of dollars.

Bannon quits Breitbart News

NEW YORK: Donald Trump's former White House strategist Steve Bannon has stepped down from Breitbart News, the conservative news outlet announced Tuesday, amid controversy over his incendiary comments about the president quoted in a new book. The reported remarks used in "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" - an explosive behind-the-scenes account that questions the president's fitness for office - have led to a very public split with Trump. Bannon has been abandoned by financial patrons, condemned by erstwhile political allies and ridiculed by Trump himself over his comments, which he has not denied making but has since tried to walk back.

Trump: I'll beat Oprah

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump weighed in Tuesday on fevered speculation about a potential 2020 White House bid by Oprah Winfrey, saying she probably would not run against him, but if she did, he would win. "I'll beat Oprah," Trump said of the Oscar-nominated actress and talk show host. "I like Oprah," he said, noting that he had appeared on her long-running afternoon program. "I know her very well," he said, before adding: "I don't think she's going to run." Winfrey's rousing speech at Sunday's Golden Globes Awards ceremony ignited speculation that the billionaire talk show queen is harboring Oval Office ambitions. (See Page 32)

Amir, Crown Prince meet Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff

One week after military official survived helicopter crash



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khuder. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammed Al-Khuder.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khuder and a number of senior military officials. The meeting comes precisely a week after Khuder survived a helicopter crash while visiting Bangladesh.

Shortly after the encounter, Kuwait's senior military officer told the press that he was honored to have met His Highness the Amir and His

Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying that His Highness the Amir's "paternal advice" was highly appreciated.

He profusely thanked His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people for their concern over the tragic mishap, reciting prayers over his safe return to the country.

"This horrific accident is now behind us," Khuder added, saying that

the incident would have no bearing on his country's ties with the southern Asian nation.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince met with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as former minister Dr Roula Dashti. —KUNA

Pope Francis hails Amir's global peace role



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis meets with Badr Al-Tunaib, Kuwait's Ambassador to Switzerland and non-resident envoy to the Vatican. —KUNA

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has praised His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his paramount role in promoting peace and dialogue and co-existence among nations of the globe.

The Pope expressed good wishes to the Amir and the Kuwaiti people during a meeting with ambassadors to the Vatican, said Badr Al-Tunaib, Kuwait's Ambassador to Switzerland and non-resident envoy to the Vatican.

Ambassador Tunaib said he conveyed to Pope Francis greetings from His Highness the Amir on Christmas and the New Year, hoping 2018 would witness peace across the world. The envoy added that the Pope requested that he relay his sincere gratitude and heart-felt greetings to His Highness the Amir, lauding Sheikh Sabah's pioneering role and relentless efforts for promoting dialogue to resolve conflicts, also underscoring Sheikh Sabah's sponsorship of humanitarian activities, his service for boosting peace and co-existence among the nations.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Tunaib underscored the Pope's efforts for promoting solidarity among peoples of the world, depicting heavenly messages that denounce hatred. He also lauded the Pope's recent speech on human rights charter as an indispensable basis for international relations. Moreover, the Kuwaiti envoy hailed the Vatican's unwavering stance rejecting any act desecrating Jerusalem's sanctity, as stipulated by relevant UN resolutions. —KUNA

Amir receives message from Somali president



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Somali Minister of Planning Jamal Mohamed Hassan. —KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has received a message from Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo on means of beefing up bilateral relations at various levels.

The message was handed over to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah by the visiting Somali Minister of Planning, Jamal Mohamed Hassan. —KUNA

Kuwait denies reported transfer of heads of diplomatic missions



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. —KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry categorically denied as "false" social media reports about transfer of heads of diplomatic missions. The "repetition of these false information causes an embarrassment with capitals of countries being reported, as well as confusion and violation of norms followed in such affair," Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said on Tuesday. He denied the reports which included names

of heads of diplomatic missions as well as capitals they were transferred to. Jarallah said social media users should report correct information, otherwise the foreign ministry would be forced to take legal action against "whoever publish these false information deliberately."

In other news, Jarallah held talks yesterday with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman, focus-



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Tarek Elkouny.

ing on bilateral ties and current events from around the world. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Foreign Minister for the Affairs of the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for North and South American Affairs Reem Al-Khaled. Jarallah also met Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Tarek Elkouny, discussing his country's relations with the Arab world's most populous nation. —KUNA

Local

Kuwait unemployment rate remains at 2.2 percent

Males' unemployment down; females' up

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A survey by the Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau showed the unemployment rate in Kuwait was 2.2 percent during the fiscal year 2016-2017, the same as the previous year. According to the survey, unemployment amongst male citizens dropped from 1.2 percent in 2015-2016 to only 0.9 percent in 2016-2017. Meanwhile, the study showed that unemployment amongst female citizens increased to 5.8 percent compared to 4.4 percent in the previous year.

KD 536 million
Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) Undersecretary Awatif Al-Ghunaim stressed that the ministry is awaiting the Finance Ministry's approval of its 2018-2019 budget of KD 536 million, which had been requested to help cover the cost of MPW projects this year. Ghunaim added that the requested budget only covers MPW projects of maintenance, sewerage, construction and major projects excluding roadwork, which has been put under the jurisdiction of the newly established road authority with a totally separate budget.

Ghunaim said MPW considered cancelling or suspending some projects because the budget allocated by the finance ministry was not enough, although some of these projects are listed in the state's development plan. She added that MPW will execute projects depending on the availability of funds and in collabora-

tion and under the supervision of the Central Tenders Committee (CTC), the State Audit Bureau and the Finance Ministry.

Mobile trucks

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) set Jan 31, 2018 to start implementing ministerial decision number 693/2017 pertaining regulating the use of mobile trucks for commercial purposes. But relevant sources said MoCI is still contacting relevant government bodies to determine the mechanism of licensing these trucks and the locations they would be allowed to operate in.

The sources added that MoCI sent a letter to the finance ministry's state property department requesting its view about the places where those trucks would be allowed to operate. They added that several similar letters were also sent to a number of other government bodies including Kuwait Municipality and Public Authority of Industry (PAI). "The core of operating these trucks lies in allocating certain spots where license owners can operate, and a delay in determining these places will delay the project," the sources underlined, noting that MoCI will have to find a transparent system to distribute these trucks' parking and operation spots - at least in government-owned locations - in order to avoid 'wasta' (connections) in distribution and eventually 'killing' the spirit of competitiveness amongst entrepreneurs and licensees, who are mostly youth or retirees.

Notably, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan issued a ministerial decision last week amending the mobile truck resolution to allow entrepreneurs to run two trucks, and retirees one truck, instead

of only one truck per company in the original version. The amendments also stated that licensees would be allowed to hire four Kuwaitis to operate the truck instead of two, and maintained the total number of non-Kuwaiti workers at two per truck.



'Public Works' eyes KD 536 million budget

tion and under the supervision of the Central Tenders Committee (CTC), the State Audit Bureau and the Finance Ministry.

Kuwaiti security chief, NATO official discuss cooperation



KUWAIT: Chief of Kuwait's National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah meets with the Dean of the NATO Defense College and retired Brigadier General Frantisek Micanek. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Chief of Kuwait's National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with the Dean of the NATO Defense College and retired Brigadier General Frantisek Micanek, focusing on strategies to develop closer ties.

The encounter between the two officials also touched on issues of mutual concern, read a statement by the security apparatus. The meeting was attended by the security apparatus' head of information management, Sheikh Fawaz Al-Sabah, and the manager of the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) regional center, Fawaz Al-Othman. — KUNA

Ahmadi Governor meets French Ambassador



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with the French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways of boosting cooperation in several fields between the two countries.

Kuwait condemns attacks on UN in DRC



NEW YORK: Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a UN Security Council session on the situation in the Congo. — KUNA

NEW YORK: Kuwait Tuesday condemned repeated attacks against UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the latest was an armed assault that took place last month.

The latest attack killed 15 UN peacekeepers and wounded around 53 others, Kuwait permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi said during a UN Security Council session on the situation in DRC on Tuesday. He called on the Congolese government to arrest the attackers and bring them to justice. Furthermore, he commended MONUSCO which has been operating amidst unstable security conditions.

Otaibi said they followed with concern the demonstrations that took place late last year, which hampered presidential elections, killing and injuring many people while more than 140 persons were arrested. He expressed concern over the growing number of displaced persons, a matter that would undermine stability of DRC and neighboring countries. Otaibi also thanked regional organizations in the DRC who were working hard to maintain security and political stability in the country. The State of Kuwait, as chairman of DRC Sanctions Committee, is ready to provide all facilities to bring about success for an investigation mission in DRC. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City landmarks seen from the Jaber Causeway, which is currently under construction. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KFH participates in 33rd Engineering Design Fair

Bank sponsored over 40 students' graduation projects



KUWAIT: KFH representatives are seen with the graduation projects' owners.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 33rd Engineering Design Fair held at Crowne Plaza to demonstrate engineering students' designs. The bank's participation stems from its endeavors to support students and encourage their academic and scientific innovations, and in line with the social

responsibility the bank assumes towards the youth and students.

KFH sponsored over 40 graduation projects that included nearly 180 College of Engineering and Petroleum students, batch 2017-2018. The projects were demonstrated at the engineering exhibition that

was held in the presence of Director of the Kuwait University Dr Hussein Al-Ansari and The College of Engineering and Petroleum Dean Dr Abdullatif Alkhelaifi who applauded KFH's participation in the event which symbolizes the role of the private sector in shouldering its social responsibilities towards the soci-

ety, not to mention underscoring KFH's leading role in such events that involve distinguished students.

KFH spares no efforts in supporting the students and the youth as it firmly believes that the students are the real assets of Kuwait, and that they will be the pillars of the development process in the country.

KAMCO raises awareness about head, neck cancer

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, organized a head and neck cancer awareness campaign in collaboration with Cancer Awareness Nation (CAN). The awareness campaign consisted of daily facts and prevention tips sent to employees, blood sugar level and blood pressure checkups, informative lecture held at Al-Shaheed Tower and a press conference organized by CAN.

KAMCO launched the awareness campaign to further educate employees regarding the various head and neck cancer diseases, which included a highly informative awareness session in collaboration with Cancer Awareness Nation (CAN) and in cooperation with Al Borg Medical Laboratories and SebaMed. Working as a head and neck cancer specialist, Dr Yaseen delivered an informative session that featured

tips on disease diagnosis and prevention health measures, followed by an open Q&A session. Other participating companies offered free blood glucose and blood pressure checkups to the attendees as well as health and skin care products. To further highlight the issue to the local community, KAMCO took part in the press conference hosted by CAN aimed to increase awareness of the issue at hand.

Faisal Hasan, Chief Business Development Officer of KAMCO, highlighted the importance of educating the public regarding various diseases such as cancer of the head and neck. Considering that head and neck cancer can be curable if detected at an early stage, it is vital to seek medical attention if any of the symptoms appear.

Hasan added, "We appreciate the support and collaborative efforts put forth by CAN in helping us organize this informative event for our employees. These initiatives fall in line with KAMCO's corporate social responsibility initiative that focuses primarily on health, education and the environment to benefit our society. We will continue to organize and host more informative and interactive events that benefit and educate our employees and attending members of the community."



KUWAIT: Participants pose for a group photo during the event.



Finding their voice, Indian girls testify against abusers

German AfD hardens radical, anti-Muslim course



CALIFORNIA: Mud fills the interior of a car destroyed in a rain-driven mudslide in a neighborhood under mandatory evacuation in Burbank, California. Mudslides unleashed by a ferocious storm demolished homes in southern California. —AFP

Mudslides, boulders kill 15 in California

Residents in Santa Barbara County ordered to evacuate

LOS ANGELES: Mudslides, boulders and tons of debris killed at least 15 people yesterday in communities along California's scenic coastline ravaged by a series of intense wildfires that burned off protective vegetation last month. Heavy downpours struck before dawn on Tuesday after thousands of residents in Santa Barbara County along the Pacific coast north of Los Angeles were ordered to evacuate or urged to do so voluntarily, some of them for a second time since December. But only 10 to 15 percent complied with mandatory orders, said Amber Anderson, a spokeswoman for the Santa Barbara County Fire Department.

Emergency workers using search dogs and helicopters rescued dozens of people stranded in mud-coated rubble in the normally pristine area, sandwiched between the ocean and the sprawling Los Padres National Forest, about 110 miles north of Los Angeles. The upscale communities of Montecito and Carpinteria, just outside the city of Santa Barbara, were hardest hit. The mudslides toppled trees, demolished cars and covered blocks of quiet residential neighborhoods with a thick layer of mud, blocking Highway 101, a major north-south route along the coast.

"The best way I can describe it is, it looked like a

World War One battlefield," Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown said at a news conference. The death toll could rise, with rescue workers still picking through dozens of damaged and demolished homes in the search for survivors, Brown said. At one point on Tuesday, at least two dozen people were missing, but Brown said later in the day that it was not clear how many had been located. About 300 people were stranded in a canyon. Local officials, using borrowed helicopters from the US Coast Guard, were working to airlift them out, Brown said.

Thigh-high mud
 The number of fatalities surpassed the death toll from a California mudslide on Jan 10, 2005, when 10 people were killed as a hillside gave way in the town of La Conchita, less than 20 miles south of the latest disaster. The threat of mudslides had

prompted the county to order 7,000 residents to leave their homes ahead of a powerful rainstorm and to urge 23,000 others to evacuate voluntarily.

The mudslides swept through both the mandatory evacuation zones and areas where people were urged to voluntarily leave, Brown said. Brown, in response to questions of why some places were not part of the mandatory evacuation zone, said it was not possible "in a situation like this to define to the house or to the block or to the neighborhood" where a mudslide might occur. The county set up an evacuation shelter at Santa Barbara City College, where some people showed up drenched in mud, and also provided a place for people to take their animals.

Last month's wildfires, the largest in California his-

tory, left the area vulnerable to mudslides. The fires burned away grass and shrubs that hold the soil in place and also baked a waxy layer into the earth that prevents water from sinking deeply into the ground. Some local residents had to flee their homes due to the fires last month and again this week because of the rains. Among them was Colin Funk, 42, who sat up watching mud and debris approaching his Montecito house overnight and fled on Tuesday morning with his wife and three young children as thigh-high mud approached the front doorway.

"We started looking around and that's when we saw parts of roofs and there was a body against our next door neighbor's car," Funk, who works as a financial adviser, said by telephone. "I feel lucky," Funk said. "Some people lost their lives in my neighborhood." Television personality Ellen DeGeneres, who is among a coterie of celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Rob Lowe who own homes in the upscale community of Montecito, posted a photo on Twitter of a roadway choked with mud and brown water. "This is not a river," DeGeneres wrote on Twitter. "This is the 101 freeway in my neighborhood right now. Montecito needs your love and support." — Reuters



Rescue workers still searching for survivors

IS operates in Kabul under the noses of Afghan, US forces

KABUL: Middle-class Afghans turned jihadists have assisted the Islamic State group's expansion from its stronghold in Afghanistan's restive east to Kabul, analysts say, helping to make the capital one of the deadliest places in the country. IS has claimed nearly 20 attacks across Kabul in 18 months, with cells including students, professors and shopkeepers evading Afghan and US security forces to bring carnage to the highly fortified city. It is an alarming development for Kabul's war-weary civilians and beleaguered security forces, who are already struggling to beat back the resurgent Taliban, as well as for the US counter-terrorism mission in Afghanistan.

"This is not just a group that has a rural bastion in eastern Afghanistan it is staging high-casualty, high-visibility attacks in the nation's capital and I think that's something to be worried about," said analyst Michael Kugelman of the Wilson Center in Washington. The Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K), the Middle East group's affiliate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, emerged in the region in 2014, largely made up of disaffected fighters from the Taliban and other jihadist groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia.



KABUL: Afghan security personnel investigate the site of the January 4 suicide attack in Kabul. — AFP

It claimed its first attack in Kabul in the summer of 2016. Since then the Sunni group has struck at security forces and Shiites with increasing frequency, helped by its growing network in the capital. There is no shortage of recruits, analysts say. IS has successfully tapped a rich vein of extremism in Afghanistan that has existed for decades and crosses socio-economic groups-fanned by growing internet access among urban youth. "We are talking about a generation which has been desensitized to different types of violence and violent extremism," said Borhan Osman, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group. "It should not come as a surprise that some of the youth inculcated in the ideology of jihadism embrace the next ver-

sion of jihadism, the most violent one."

Members and supporters of IS cells in Kabul hide in the open, living with their families and going to classes or work every day, Osman said. The militants meet at night to discuss jihad, or holy war, and plot attacks on targets in the city they know well-enough to adapt to changes, such as tightened security in the wake of a massive truck bomb in May that killed around 150 people. "It's an adaptive structure reacting to the counter-measures," a Western diplomat said. "From May to December what we have seen is different types of attacks, smaller attacks that are getting through." An Afghan security source previously told AFP that "20 or more" IS-K cells were operating in the city. — AFP

Russian 'werewolf' policeman on trial for 59 murders

MOSCOW: A Russian ex-policeman convicted of killing 22 women went on trial yesterday for a further 59 murders, in a case that could make him Russia's most prolific serial killer in recent history. Mikhail Popkov, 53, appeared in court in the Siberian city of Irkutsk after confessing to 59 additional murders and one attempted killing between 1992 and 2010, Interfax news agency reported. He is already serving a life sentence for raping and killing 22 women, and the attempted murder of two more.

Popkov killed his victims after offering the women rides late at night, sometimes in a police car, while he was off-duty around his hometown of Angarsk close to Irkutsk. He has been nicknamed "the werewolf" and the "Angarsk maniac" by Russian media. If convicted of 81 murders, he would exceed the total of notorious figures

such as the "chessboard killer" Alexander Pichushkin, who killed 48, and Andrei Chikatilo, convicted of 52 Soviet-era murders. Yesterday's first full hearing saw prosecutors read out the accusations against Popkov. The hearing was closed to media to avoid making public details of his alleged sexual attacks on victims, Interfax news agency reported.

Popkov has called himself a "cleaner" who was purging his city of prostitutes, according to reports. In an interview with Meduza news site in December, he said he used a hammer or axe to kill victims and after his first crime felt little fear of discovery. He said he gave women lifts and targeted those who were drunk or living in a way he saw as immoral. The crimes were committed during Popkov's career as a policeman and after he retired in 1998. Popkov was only caught in 2012 after investigators re-examined the cases and carried out DNA testing of residents, focusing on those who drove a make of car whose tracks had been found at crime scenes.

Popkov later went with investigators to the crime scenes and showed them where the bodies were buried. Investigator Yevgeny Karchevsky, who worked on the case, told Meduza: "His diagnosis is homicidal maniac, that is he has an uncontrollable desire to commit murders." — AFP

International

Explosion on Iranian oil tanker forces rescue team to retreat

Fire rages for the 4th day; 31 mariners still missing

BEIJING: Rescue crews were forced to retreat from a stricken Iranian oil tanker in the East China Sea yesterday following an explosion on the ship as a fire raged for a fourth day after a dramatic collision. The blast happened on board the tanker in the afternoon after rescue crews were dousing the ship with foam in an attempt to put out the fire, China's Transport Ministry (MOT) said in a statement yesterday. The cause and damage to the tanker from the incident were not clear. The ship was carrying condensate, a highly flammable ultra-light crude, to deliver to South Korea when it collided with a Chinese freight ship on Saturday.

Dozens of rescue boats from China and South Korea have been battling strong winds, high waves and poisonous fumes to comb a 900-square-nautical-mile area for 31 missing sailors and tame the fire, amid growing concerns the listing ship may explode or sink. Iran's Navy joined the effort yesterday, a government official said, according to the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).

The lashing winds are expected to ease today, the MOT said. The tanker Sanchi (IMO:9356608), run by Iran's top oil shipping operator, National Iranian Tanker Co, collided on Saturday with the CF Crystal (IMO:9497050), carrying grain from the United States, about 160 nautical miles (300 km) off China's coast near Shanghai. The Sanchi was carrying 136,000 tons of condensate, equivalent to about 1 million barrels and worth some \$60 million.

The Chinese government said late on Tuesday it had not found a "large-scale" oil leak, and the condensate was burning off or evaporating so quickly that it would leave little residue - less than 1 percent - within five hours of a spill. That reduces the chances of a crude-style oil slick. Iranian officials said there was still a chance of finding survivors among the 31 remaining crew, who are all Iranian nationals except for two Bangladeshi citizens.

The body of a crew member was found on Monday in the water near the tanker. "If the crew have been able to reach (...) some place like the engine room, then the chances of their rescue are high," said Hassan Qashqavi, a senior Iranian foreign ministry official,

according to ISNA. "But if, God forbid, they have been caught up in explosions because of flames inside the ship, then the chance of their rescue is small."

Vulnerable to break-up

Authorities and environmentalists worry though the ship is increasingly vulnerable to breaking up and sinking the longer the blaze rages. Still, the ultra light crude is highly volatile when exposed to air and water. South Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries warned yesterday the tanker could burn for up to one month, potentially expelling the tanker's bunker fuel, or the heavy fuel oil that powers a ship's engines and contaminating the waters. "We believe flames would last for two weeks or a month considering previous cases of oil tank accidents," said Park Sung-dong, an official at the ministry.

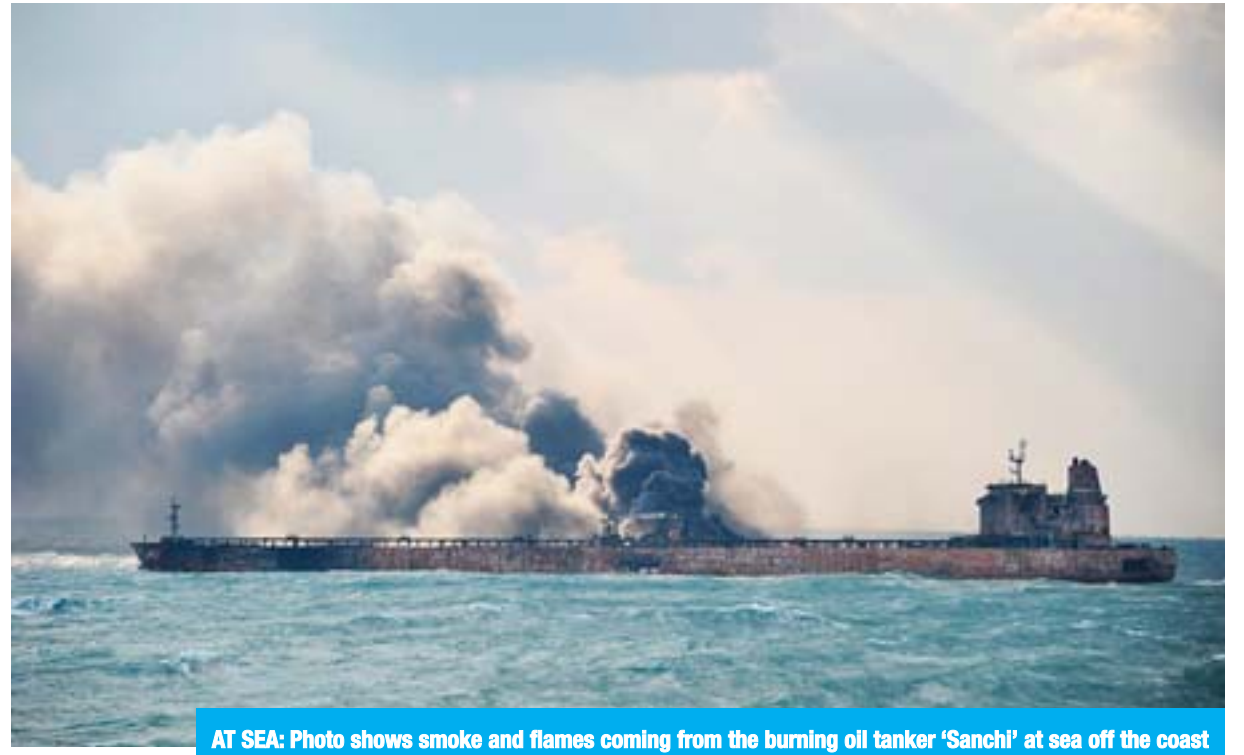
Bunker fuel is the dirtiest kind of oil, extremely toxic when spilled, though much less explosive. Fuel oil is relatively easy to contain because volumes are lower and its viscosity means it's easier to extract from water, but even small volumes can hurt marine life. "The problem is the ship's heavy bunker fuel," said

Chauncey Naylor, a US-based director of emergency response and training at Tyco Corp's oil-fire specialists Williams Fire & Hazard Control, which is not involved in the clean-up. "It burns real slow and it's heavy and will lay on the ocean and on any twisted metal and create heavy smoke. It's the stuff that spills and gets on birds."

The Zhoushan fishing ground where the collision occurred is known as one of the biggest in the East China Sea, particularly for mackerel and croaker, according to Greenpeace. In 2016, the catch from the East China Sea was 5.18 million tons, making it China's largest fishing ground. A Suezmax tanker can hold a maximum of 5,000 tons of bunker fuel to keep it running. The Sanchi may have been carrying about 1,000 tons by the time it hit the grain freighter, according to bunker fuel traders' estimates. Park said it's unlikely the oil will spread to South Korea at the moment because the tanker has moved 100 kilometers to the southeast. —Reuters



Fears grow the oil tanker may break up or sink



AT SEA: Photo shows smoke and flames coming from the burning oil tanker 'Sanchi' at sea off the coast of eastern China. —AFP

New Iran drug law saves thousands from the noose

TEHRAN: Thousands on death row for drug crimes in Iran will escape hanging as a new softened anti-narcotics law is enforced, local media reported yesterday. Judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani on Tuesday ordered judges to halt death sentences for concerned convicts and review their cases, the judiciary's Mizanonline news agency said. The new law retroactively "clarifies the fate of some 5,000 sentenced to

death for drug trafficking", the Iran daily newspaper quoted Larijani as saying in a directive. Most convicts will see their death sentences commuted to jail terms of between 25 to 30 years, he said.

Iran does not provide official figures on executions, but human rights group Amnesty International says it was the world's second top executioner in 2016 after China, with most of its hangings related to drug trafficking. Parliament passed the amended drug law in August after years of internal debate between police, the judiciary and lawmakers. The new law raises the amounts that can trigger the death penalty from 30 grams to two kilos for the production and distribution of chemical substances such as heroin, cocaine and amphetamines. For natural substances such as opium and marijuana, the levels have been raised from five to 50 kilos. —AFP

Troops on manhunt for attackers who shot Israeli settler

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces set up roadblocks and deployed around a major Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank yesterday in a manhunt for attackers who shot dead an Israeli settler. Raziel Shevah, a 35-year-old rabbi, was killed late Tuesday while driving near the wildcat settlement where he lived, Havat Gilad near the northern West Bank city of Nablus. Some 22 gunshots were found in his car, Israel's army radio reported. The gunshots reportedly came from a passing vehicle.

"Entrances and exits to and from the villages surrounding Nablus will be possible only after security checks," the military said in a statement. "The review of the incident is ongoing. Based on situation assessments, it was decided to reinforce the area with additional forces." The area frequently sees tensions between hardline Israeli settlers and Palestinians. Palestinian security sources said they were not aware of any arrests yet, but added that Israeli settlers in the area had thrown stones at Palestinian cars.

Military chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot visited the site of the shooting yesterday. Shevah was being buried at the wildcat settlement yesterday—the first person to be buried there at the wish of his family. Israeli officials strongly denounced the attack, including those calling for punitive measures against Palestinians, such as the demolition of the homes of the attackers. Hamas, the Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip, welcomed the attack. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said he ordered his staff to look into how Havat Gilad could



HAVAT GILAD: Israeli mourners attend the funeral of 35-year-old rabbi Raziel Shevah in the West Bank wildcat settlement of Havat Gilad near the northern West Bank city of Nablus yesterday. —AFP

be legalized as a settlement.

All Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are seen as illegal under international law and major obstacles to peace as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state. Israel however differentiates between settlements it has approved and those it has not. Those without approval are referred to as outposts and are typically populated by hardline religious nationalists who see the entire West Bank as part of Israel. Past attempts by Israeli authorities to evacuate Havat Gilad have led to clashes with settlers there. Some 50 families currently live in Havat Gilad. Sporadic unrest has occurred since US President Donald Trump provoked Palestinian anger by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital on December 6. —AFP

Turkey to complete wall on Iran border by spring next year

ANKARA: Turkey has completed more than half of a 144 km (90 mile) wall on its border with Iran and will finish it next spring, the firm building the barrier said, as Ankara secures its frontiers from smuggling, illegal immigration and militant infiltration. State housing developer TOKI, better known for low-cost, high-rise apartment blocks in Turkey's major cities, has also been building a wall on the border with northern Syria where Kurdish fighters and hardline Sunni jihadis hold territory.

"We started this (Iran wall) in the summer, but the season is very short here. Currently, 80 km of this 144 km has been completed, and when seasonal weather conditions permit, God willing, we will have finished by next spring," TOKI President Ergun Turan said. President Tayyip Erdogan said last year Turkey would build walls along its border with Iraq and part of the border with Iran similar to the nearly completed one on its longest border, with Syria.

The wall with Iran, which will stretch along the northern third of Turkey's Iranian frontier, aims to prevent smuggling

and infiltration by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, Turkish officials have said. Since the construction of the wall along the Syrian border, militants from Islamic State and other groups have also tried to use smuggling routes through Iran into Turkey, they said. In an interview late on Tuesday, Turan said all but a small portion of the wall along the 911 km border with Syria had been finished, despite falling behind schedule because of the weather and security concerns.

"All but 25-30 km have been completed, including the road... We can say it is at 98 percent," Turan said, referring to the security roads TOKI is building alongside the walls. The agency is also playing a leading role in government efforts to rebuild parts of southeastern Turkey, which has been damaged by the heavy fighting between the military and Kurdish militants since the collapse of a ceasefire in 2015. Ergun said TOKI were building 25,000 housing units in the region's worst-hit areas, and added the agency aimed to deliver 20,000 of those homes by the end of the year.

TOKI will also construct "industry sites" in three provinces, Ergun said. He said tenders would be held for the three projects, in Aksaray, Bolu and Diyarbakir, by the end of January, totaling up to 1 billion lira (\$263 million). Overall, Ergun said he expected TOKI to build between 60,000 and 65,000 housing units in Turkey this year, after having built 65,000 and 60,000 in 2016 and 2017 respectively, and around 820,000 since 2003. —Reuters

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International

Moon credits Trump for North-South Korea talks

Denuclearization 'core stance' that can never be forfeited

SEOUL: South Korean President Moon Jae-in credited US President Donald Trump yesterday for helping to spark the first inter-Korean talks in more than two years, and warned that Pyongyang would face stronger sanctions if provocations continued. The talks were held on Tuesday on the South Korean side of the demilitarized zone, which has divided the two Koreas since 1953, after a prolonged period of tension on the Korean peninsula over the North's missile and nuclear programs.

North Korea ramped up its missile launches last year and also conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test, resulting in stronger international sanctions. Tuesday's talks, the first since December 2015, were held to resolve problems, revive military consultations, and avert accidental conflict. "I think President Trump deserves big credit for bringing about the inter-Korean talks," Moon told reporters at his New Year's news conference. "It could be a resulting work of the US-led sanctions and pressure." Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un exchanged threats and insults over the past year, raising fears of a new war on the peninsula.

Washington had raised concerns that the overtures by North Korea could drive a wedge between it and Seoul, but Moon said his government did not differ with the United States on how to respond to the threats posed by Pyongyang. "The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula the two Koreas agreed upon jointly (in the past) is our basic stance that will never be given up," he said. "I'm open

to any form of meeting, including a summit (with North Korea), under right conditions," he said. "Having said that, the purpose of it shouldn't be talks for the sake of talks."

However, Pyongyang said it would not discuss its nuclear weapons with Seoul because they were only aimed at the United States, not its "brethren" in South Korea, nor Russia or China, showing that a diplomatic breakthrough remained far off. Washington still welcomed Tuesday's talks as a first step to solving the North Korean nuclear crisis. The US State Department said it would be interested in joining future talks, with the aim of denuclearizing the North. The two Koreas agreed to hold multiple talks on a number of issues, including between military officials from both sides, and Pyongyang said it would send a large delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Moon also said his government would continue working towards recovering the honor and dignity of former "comfort women", a euphemism for girls and women forced to work in Japan's wartime brothels. However, he also said historical issues should be separated from bilateral efforts with Japan to safeguard peace on the Korean peninsula. "It's very important we keep a good relationship with Japan," Moon said. On Tuesday, South Korea said it would not seek to renegotiate a 2015 deal with Japan despite determining that the agreement was not enough to fundamentally resolve the divisive issue, and called for Japan to take more steps to help the women.—Reuters



South Korea warns over provocations



SEOUL: A live broadcast showing South Korea's President Moon Jae-in delivering his New Year's address is displayed on television screens for sale at an electronics mall in Seoul yesterday.—AFP

News in brief

'Dead prisoner' wakes up

MADRID: Spanish morgue workers were given a major fright when a prisoner who had been declared dead after an apparent suicide attempt woke up just as they prepared to perform an autopsy, authorities said yesterday. In jail near Oviedo in northern Spain, the man, whom Spain's prison authority refused to identify, was found unconscious around 8am on Sunday and three doctors "found he presented no signs of life," a spokeswoman said. According to Spanish media, the man is called Gonzalo Montoya, he is 29 and is in prison for stealing scrap metal. He was taken to Oviedo's forensic medicine institute and woke up just as doctors were about to perform his autopsy, said his father Jose Carlos Montoya. "He realized they were taking him out of the cover to put him on the table and do an autopsy," he told reporters, adding his son had been unconscious after swallowing pills in an attempted suicide.

Woman bit rapist's penis

JOHANNESBURG: A woman in South Africa bit the penis of a man who raped her in front of her five-year-old child, police said yesterday as they searched for the "severely injured" attacker. The pregnant woman was hitch-hiking with her child in the northeastern province of Mpumalanga on Monday when two men gave her a lift, pointed a gun at her and drove their car into bushes. "One of the men forcefully raped her at knifepoint in front of her child", Mpumalanga police said in a statement. "During the process, the woman managed to bite the private part of the man who ran away," it added. The police called for medical clinics in the area to contact them if they treated a man with "severely injured" private parts. The penis was not completely severed. The woman, who was three months pregnant, was attacked outside the small town of White River. More than 100 rapes are reported to police every day in South Africa, though the number of rapes is thought to be far higher.

War graves unearthed

TALLINN: Building workers at a construction site close the Estonian capital Tallinn have discovered the unmarked graves of an estimated one hundred German soldiers who died during World War Two. The previously unknown individual graves were found near the Baltic coast near a German military cemetery. They are thought to be an undocumented section of the larger burial site. "The builders stopped their work when they discovered the remains, and the situation is being looked into," Arnold Unt of the Estonian War Museum told public broadcaster ERR. Several battles were fought between Soviet troops and retreating Nazi Germany forces on Estonian territory during the war. Every year the remains of combatants from both sides are found in unmarked graves and are exhumed and reburied in military cemeteries.

Journalist escapes plot

SLAMABAD: A Pakistani journalist known for criticizing the powerful military said he had escaped an abduction attempt after being assaulted by armed men in Islamabad yesterday, in the latest case involving forced disappearances in the turbulent country. Taha Siddiqui, who won France's highest journalism award the Albert Londres prize in 2014, said he was attacked by up to a dozen men en route to the airport in Rawalpindi but managed to escape before being kidnapped, suffering minor injuries during the scuffle. "Safe and with police now. Looking for support in any way possible #StopEnforcedDisappearances," wrote Siddiqui in a tweet posted on a fellow journalist's account. Siddiqui, the Pakistani bureau chief of Indian television channel WION and who has reported for France 24, had previously complained of being harassed by authorities for publishing bold critiques of the country's security establishment.

German AfD hardens anti-Muslim course

BERLIN: The Alternative for Germany party started the year by railing against "barbaric, Muslim, gang-raping hordes", ending months of relative post-election calm and any remaining doubt about its hardening far-right course. If the AfD had been at pains to portray itself as a patriotic conservative force after the September 24 polls, the latest slur signaled that an extremist faction is winning the battle for control, say political scientists.

"The radical course has been cemented," said Hajo Funke of Berlin's Free University, adding that the AfD was now openly reaching out to the right-wing extremist fringe, including neo-Nazis and white-pride Identitarians. Funke said the former anti-euro party had steadily radicalized, purged its more moderate figures, built bridges to groups such as the anti-Islam Pegida street movement, and had never publicly expelled a far-right member. While the AfD's declared enemy, Chancellor Angela Merkel, has been struggling to form a new government with the Social Democrats, the AfD has barely been out of the headlines in recent weeks.

In a familiar pattern, its provocations have been followed by vague apologies but also complaints about "political correctness" and censorship by a liberal media and political "thought police". Meanwhile, long-unthinkable content has appeared on social media despite tough new rules against online hate speech. Days ago, said Funke and news reports, an AfD local politician in Berlin's multicultural Neukoelln district, Franziska Lorenz-Hoffmann, briefly posted a Nazi-era propaganda poster on Facebook that warned the "German woman" to "keep your blood pure".

'Groping migrant mobs'

AFD deputy leader Beatrix von Storch started 2018 by attacking police in the western city of Cologne for tweeting in Arabic, as well as in German, English and French, on New Year's Eve. "What the hell is going on with this country?" she wrote. "Did you mean to placate the barbaric, Muslim, gang-raping hordes of men?"

The comment pointed to mass sexual assaults there in 2016 by mostly North African men whom the far-right labeled "rapefugees". The inflammatory tweet was quickly taken down, while Cologne police filed a criminal complaint. AfD parliamentary group leader Alice Weidel

Germans outraged as a church makes way for coal mine

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The demolition of a historic German church to clear the way for the expansion of an open-cast mine this week has outraged locals and environmentalists, as politicians moot giving up their own clean energy targets. Built in large part by local people and consecrated in 1891, St Lambertus church in Immerath, North Rhine-Westphalia state, was ripped down by diggers hydraulic arms on Monday and Tuesday, leaving a heap of rubble where the neo-Roman nave and twin towers once stood.

Police brought in reinforcements Monday to manage a crowd of protesters who held up the demolition for five hours, local newspaper Rheinische Post reported. Those who destroy culture destroy people too, a banner held up by Greenpeace demonstrators read. Immerath and its church have been doomed since 2013, when Germany's constitutional court found that there was an overwhelming public interest in allowing energy firm RWE to expand its near-

by Garzweiler open-cast brown coal mine. Almost all the 900 villagers have long since quit their homes, among a total of 7,900 people from the region making way for the mine, while the Catholic church was deconsecrated in preparation for its destruction.

The demolition has drawn attention to the nation's mining of brown coal, as calls grow to reduce greenhouse emissions by ending use of the cheap but polluting fuel. Germany has massively expanded renewable energy in recent years, part of its energy transition away from fossil fuels and nuclear power. Environmentalists point out that at times of peak production energy firms now pay neighboring countries to take surpluses generated from coal off their hands. But power companies argue they need coal capacity as a stopgap for times when output from solar and wind is low.

Meanwhile, politicians are loath to impose an end to coal, an industry that still employed almost 20,000 miners in 2015 according to official figures. As the towers fell in Immerath, talks between Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and their historic rivals the Social Democrats were getting underway on renewing a left-right grand coalition that has ruled since 2013. One of the first proposals to leak from the talks was giv-



BERLIN: Beatrix von Storch, leadership member of Germany's hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, takes a picture in front of AfD's Alexander Gauland in Berlin.—AFP

chimed in with a "solidarity tweet" about "marauding, groping migrant mobs". And AfD chairman Alexander Gauland charged that the new online "censorship law" amounted to "Stasi (secret police) methods" from the former communist East Germany, a region which is today the party's heartland.

Another tweet, from AfD lawmaker Jens Maier's account, defamed tennis legend Boris Becker's adult son Noah as "a little half-negro". The tweet was deleted, and Maier apologized while insisting it was written by a staff member who no longer worked for him. The party's leadership warned Maier to take greater care in managing his employees. Noah Becker filed a criminal complaint and his father demanded "consequences" in an article for a Sunday newspaper. "That's what they always do in the AfD, that's their trick: put something out there, then distance yourself from it," Becker charged.

The AfD, formed in 2013 as an anti-euro party, two years later shifted course to capitalize on fears about a mass influx of more than one million asylum seekers to Germany, while demanding "Merkel must go". It won almost 13 percent of the vote on September 24, the strongest showing

for a far-right party in the post-war era. There has been no sign of voters deserting the AfD after using it to register discontent with the leftward drift of Merkel's Christian Democrats at the election, as some political observers had speculated.

A new poll this week by Spiegel Online gave it 14.7 percent support. In a country that has long struggled to deal with its collective guilt over the Nazi era and the Holocaust, the taboo-breaking new extremists have reawakened deep fears about rising xenophobia and race hate. Berlin daily Tagesspiegel said "the worst thing is that, the more AfD officials say such things, the more quickly they become normal."

The outrage wears off, and at some point there will no longer be an outcry," Robert Vehrkampf of think-tank the Bertelsmann Foundation called the AfD a generally right-wing populist party that "breaks taboos in a calculated way to reach right-wing extremist voters". Funke said the recent headline tweets "did not happen because someone's computer mouse slipped, they were calculated". "Their idea is we unleash the aggression, we want to integrate the far-right, the neo-Nazis, into our party."—AFP



ERKELENZ, Germany: St Lambertus Church in Erkelenz-Immerath, western Germany, is being demolished in order to make possible brown coal surface mining.—AFP

ing on Germany's 2020 goal of cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent compared with 1990s level. Who is fighting for an exit from coal or a real reduction in CO2 emissions? No-one that I know of, prominent Greens party figure Robert Habeck told news agency DPA.—AFP

International

Finding their voice, Indian girls, women testify against abusers

Indian rape survivors still subjected to intrusive, illegal tests

VIJAYWADA: This year, Pinki, the lead singer of a rock band in southern India, wants to learn to play the guitar. She wants to "strum the guitar like a boy" on stage and use music to forget her journey from a brothel to the band that is hired to perform at weddings and parties, the 19-year-old said. Her new year's resolution comes a year after an Indian court convicted 40 people of buying and selling girls in the southern state of Karnataka - among them Pinki's own abusers.

Thanks to her testimony, the woman who trafficked her from her home into prostitution and the man who owned the brothel in the town of Ballari where she worked for eight months before she was rescued, were found guilty. "They should have got life instead of the 10 years imprisonment," she said, sitting on her bed, guitar in hand and a teddy bear beside her, in her village home in Andhra Pradesh. "But I don't want to think about it. I want to think about music instead and my boyfriend, who I hope to marry later this year."

A thousand miles away, in the eastern city of Kolkata, another 19-year-old looks forward to 2018. As she prepares for her high school leaving exams, she is looking at colleges where she can study philosophy. The girls were barely into their teens when they were rescued by police from the Ballari brothel in 2013. But they were unable to forget the past while they waited for four years to recall the painful details of rape and abuse in court - to finally see their exploiters convicted. Now both are planning their futures.

Looking back

In 2013, police raided several brothels in Ballari in Karnataka, rescuing 43 women, including 21 children, and

seizing evidence including cash and account ledgers. Both the teenagers were among the rescued, seven of whom were from Bangladesh and the rest were from Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Karnataka and Odisha. After her rescue, Pinki was placed at a home run by anti-trafficking charity Prajwala, where the Ballari survivors were asked if they were willing to testify against their traffickers. "A big part of rehabilitation is closure and testifying is part of closure," said Sunitha Krishnan, the founder of Prajwala. "We don't tell them to forget what has happened but to recover and resolve the memory instead." Prajwala estimates that 200,000 women and children are forced into prostitution through threat and coercion every year. Of an estimated 20 million commercial sex workers in India, 16 million women and girls are victims of sex trafficking, say campaign and support groups working in India.



Police raid several brothels, rescuing women, children

stated that victim identification and protection in India is "inadequate and inconsistent". "The government sometimes penalized victims through arrests for crimes committed as a result of being subjected to human trafficking," the report states, pointing to disproportionately low conviction rates relative to the scale of trafficking. According to Indian government data, less than half of the more than 8,000 human trafficking cases reported in 2016 were filed in court by the police and the conviction rate in cases that did go to trial was 28 percent. "The thought of standing up to the brothel owners and identifying the traffickers and brothel owner was very, very scary," said Pinki, who goes by an alias. "But I kept thinking that no one else should be in this

situation. That gave me some courage to stand in court." Hiding herself in a burqa, she travelled twice to the court in Ballari to testify. Sitting in the same room as her abusers, separated only by a curtain, made her fearful, she recalled.

Witness box

The odds, campaigners say, are pitted against trafficking survivors who decide to take their cases to court, with threats and intimidation from traffickers common. The 2017 Trafficking in Persons report by the US State Department

Intrusive, illegal tests

Rape survivors in India continue to be subjected to intrusive tests that the government and courts banned years ago, campaigners said yesterday. The Supreme Court ruled in 2013 that the "two-finger test", which involves a doctor inserting

fingers into the vagina to determine if the victim is sexually active, violated the right to privacy. The government in 2014 issued fresh guidelines that did away with the practice, which is primarily a virginity test, saying it "had no bearing on a case of sexual violence".

The guidelines also directed investigators to focus more on victim and witness testimonies, rather than relying on physical examinations to check for injuries to the genital area. Yet, the two-finger test continues to be performed, victim testimonies are given little weight and investigators are "preoccupied with genital injuries", said more than 50 activists and experts in a letter to India's health ministry.

Intrusive, illegal tests "The absence of injuries is frequently equated with the absence of assault and denies their rights and autonomy," said the letter, which was shared with the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The government introduced reforms after the fatal gang rape of a woman on a bus in Delhi in 2012, which sparked domestic and international outrage. Campaigners hoped that new guidelines would improve conviction rates by shifting the focus to testimonies rather than humiliating and ineffective medical tests.

However, the letter states that just a handful of states have issued orders to implement the guidelines, and that only a few urban healthcare facilities in those states are following them. "(According to) the traditional form of examination, a majority of survivors would have not been raped," said Padma Deosthali, a signatory who was key consultant to the government's 2014 reforms. The southern state of Kerala has issued its own version of the guidelines, which includes the two-finger test, said the letter which was sent to the health ministry last week.—Agencies

Nepali woman suffocates, dies in 'menstruation hut'

KATHMANDU: A young Nepali woman has died of suspected smoke inhalation while she was banished to a shed for menstruating under an ancient tradition banned more than a decade ago, police said yesterday. Many communities in Nepal view menstruating women as impure and in some remote areas they are forced to sleep in a hut away from the home, a practice known as chhaupadi. Gauri Bayak, 21, was found dead by her neighbors inside a smoke-filled hut on Monday morning in a village in the western district of Achham.

"She had lit a fire to keep herself warm and we suspect she suffocated and died of smoke inhalation," local police chief Dadhi Ram Neupane said. Police are waiting for the results of a postmortem to confirm the cause of death. Chhaupadi is linked to Hinduism and considers women untouchable when they menstruate, as well as after childbirth. Barred from touching food, religious icons, cattle and men, they are banished from the home and forced to sleep in basic huts.

The practice was banned in 2005 but is still followed in parts of Nepal, particularly in remote western regions. Last year a teenager died after being bitten by a snake while sleeping in a shed and in 2016 two women died in separate incidents while following the ritual. Last year Nepal passed a new law criminalizing chhaupadi. It will come into effect in August, when anyone forcing a woman to follow the custom faces a three-month jail sentence and a 3,000 rupee (\$30) fine. Manju Mahat, a district women's rights official, said chhaupadi was "a clear violation of our human rights" and urged women's families to "take responsibility and stop this practice".—AFP

Mosul old heart in ruins months after IS ousted

MOSUL: Along the waterfront of the Euphrates River in Iraq's war-torn Mosul, gaping holes in hotel walls reveal little but enormous heaps of rubble. Six months since Iraqi forces seized the country's second city from Islamic State group jihadists, human remains still rot in front of the Al-Nuri mosque. The building, denuded of its iconic minaret and largely reduced to ruins by the fighting, was the site of the only known public appearance by IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi following the group's declaration of a "caliphate" in 2014.

Mosul residents have gone from euphoria at the city's "liberation" after three years of jihadist rule to uncertainty. The few souls who venture into the debris-strewn alleyways say their future is precarious. Iraqi forces defeated IS in Mosul in July 2017 after months of intense urban battles that reduced the historic Old City to ruins. Pounded by international coalition air strikes and constant shell fire by the jihadists, most of Mosul's residents fled.

Some never made it out. Asma Mohammed's father and husband were killed in an air strike then hurriedly buried, like several of their neighbors, in improvised cemeteries on a vacant strip of land. Mohammed said the strike missed its target, hitting civilians rather than jihadists occupying the nearby buildings. Iraqi authorities "say they need to investigate before issuing death certificates", she said, sitting in her modest Old City house, itself damaged during the violence. She is one of many Mosul residents who count family members among those killed in air strikes.

The United States-led coalition against IS in Syria and Iraq has admitted to killing 817 civilians over three years of battling the group. But according to sources in Mosul, some 2,000 civilians were killed in coalition air strikes and fighting in the city alone. Since her parents died, Asma and her two children have survived day-to-day on donations from friends and neighbors. When she thinks of the future, she begins to cry.

Only one other family has returned to this part of the Old City—that of Ansam Anwar, 30, who headed back just days ago with her husband and their five children. In small white-washed rooms around the inner courtyard of their house, the cold is biting. The utilities have been cut off and electricity meters torn from the walls. Ansam's husband, a laborer, has yet to find work in the largely deserted Old City. "There is still no water or electricity, my children are still deprived of school.—AFP

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Cracks in Russia, Iran alliance open options for Trump

Iran and Russia have made no secret of their mutual desire to sideline the United States in the Middle East. "Our cooperation can isolate America," Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Vladimir Putin during the Russian president's recent visit to Tehran. Putin, for his part, has praised the Moscow-Tehran relationship as "very productive".

Certainly the alliance has paid dividends in Syria, where the Moscow-Tehran military collaboration turned the tide of the war in favor of their mutual ally Bashar al-Assad and compelled the United States to abandon its goal of forcing Assad from power. Nevertheless, while Washington should certainly be wary of the Russian-Iranian relationship, it is less a strategic alliance than a marriage of convenience - and one whose cracks are already showing. In Syria, the ousting of Islamic State seems to have underscored important differences in the goals and tactics of Putin and Khamenei. Moscow's ultimate objectives include preventing regime change, promoting Russian influence in the Middle East and keeping its military bases in Syria.

Achieving these aims, Putin hopes, may lead to diplomatic gains in the West and encourage the United States to recognize Russia as an equal. However, while Moscow considers Assad to be Syria's legitimate leader, Putin's main interest lies in preserving and strengthening Syrian state institutions rather than Assad personally; the Russians have even suggested to their Western counterparts that Moscow would accept Assad's departure as long as it occurred as part of an overall peace process.

The Iranians, by contrast, consider Assad's departure a "red line" and believe that keeping the Syrian leader in power remains crucial to two of its key objectives. The first is to maintain its ability to supply its longtime Shiite proxy Hezbollah with weaponry while building a "Sunni-free" Shiite land corridor from Iran to the Mediterranean - a development Iran fears a new government would not permit.

Second, Iran believes that its presence in Syria is critical to Tehran's ability to pressure Israel. Iran wants to retain the ability to strike at the Jewish state from both Lebanon and Syria, hence Iran's determination to maintain non-state Shiite proxy militias in Syria. Iran's hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) wants to turn these proxies into an institutionalized political and military force similar to Hezbollah in Lebanon - a measure that conflicts with Russia's desire to build up the capabilities of the Syrian state and reduce Syria's dependence on Iran.

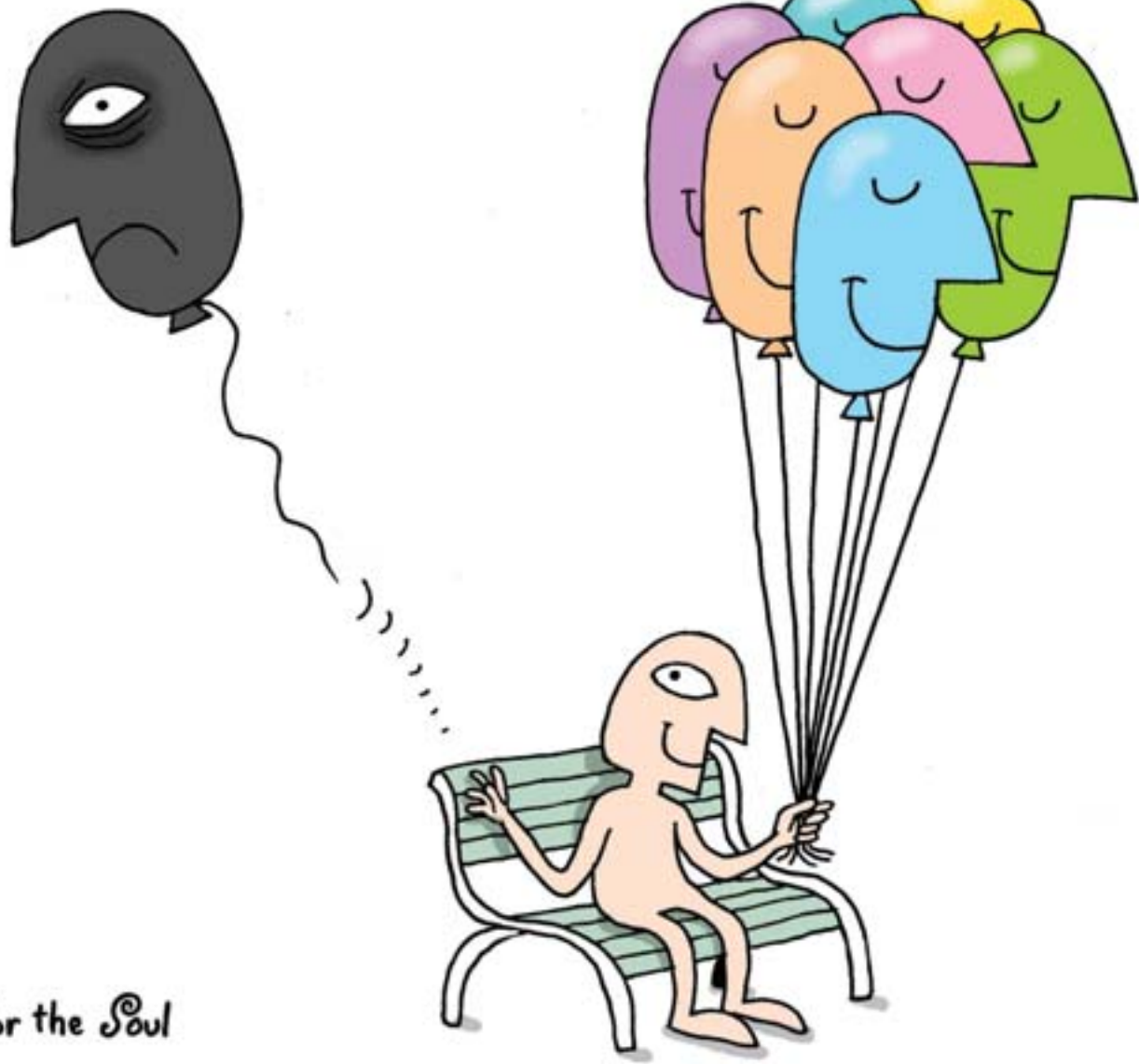
As diplomatic negotiations over Syria's future heat up, the differences between Russian and Iranian goals there threaten to intensify. Iran in particular believes that Russia's willingness to work with countries like Turkey could undermine Iranian interests in Syria. Iran's leaders are also concerned about Putin's relationship with Donald Trump; reports from Iranian media suggest that Tehran was angry about Putin's decision to brief the US president about Moscow's objectives ahead of last November's Sochi summit between Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

'Dogma of Flexibility'

Russia's willingness to work with multiple partners in Syria is emblematic of Russia's broader approach to the Middle East, which a leading Russian analyst describes as the "dogma of flexibility" - something in accord with Putin's transactional approach to foreign policy. One example of this is Moscow's desire to maintain a good relationship with Saudi Arabia. Putin believes Russian-Saudi cooperation is needed to limit oil production and prop up prices, which he needs to meet his twin objectives of building up Russia's military while also strengthening the Russian state internally. The problem for Putin is that Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia are locked in a bitter competition for influence across the Middle East, so Iran naturally resents the Kremlin's rapprochement after years of tension between Moscow and Riyadh.

Under Putin's leadership, Russia has also developed the best relationship it has ever had with Israel. Putin has visited Israel twice - the first Russian leader ever to do so - and has hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu multiple times to discuss Israel's interests in Syria. Putin reportedly enjoys good personal chemistry with Netanyahu and has instructed both Assad and Hezbollah not to retaliate against Israeli strikes in Syria. Putin even seeks a deal that would prevent foreign powers from using Syria as a base for attacking a neighboring state, which is directly at odds with Iran's objective of using Syria as a platform to pressure Israel's northern border. However, given the deep Israeli-Iranian hostility, it's clear that Moscow's good relationship with the Jewish state could exacerbate underlying tensions in the Russian-Iranian relationship.

Exacerbating underlying Russian-Iranian tensions is a long-time historical mistrust between the two countries. Russian-Persian conflicts in the 18th and 19th centuries resulted in Moscow's seizure of the Caucasus - a loss which reverberates in the Iranian psyche even today. After Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, the relationship between the two sides was similarly tense, most notably because Russia favored Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war - a conflict that cost Iran approximately one million lives. —Reuters



Cartoon for the Soul

Indian women stake claims in collectives

Fed up with local officials denying their demand for land, 40 women decided to form a collective and simply start farming a plot near their village of Pallur, in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu. The women are Dalits, a social caste that has traditionally suffered discrimination. Indian laws ban the persecution of Dalits, and states including Tamil Nadu have passed legislation to make them eligible for land distribution. However, prejudice against Dalits persists and officials routinely refuse to provide them with farmland. About two-thirds remain landless.

"We have worked as farm laborers most of our lives - why can't we own land?" asked Shakila Kalaiselvan, leader of the women's collective. Members of the group faced additional discrimination due to their gender. Despite laws granting equal inheritance rights, women own just 13 percent of land in India although they do about two-thirds of all farm work.

A year ago, they took over an unused 2.5-acre plot, which was dry and overgrown with weeds. Even though it was common land owned by the state, they faced strong resistance as they cleared it to grow beans, corn and millet. "The higher-caste men opposed it, but we did not give in," Kalaiselvan told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We should have at least 40 acres for 40 women, but this is a start. We can be independent, earn the respect of the community."

Across India, women are increasingly taking the law into their own hands when local officials and male community leaders prevent them from obtaining land legally, activists say. "These women cannot buy or inherit land, and they have not got any land from the government, so what is the option?" asked Fatima Burnad, founder of the Society for Rural Education and Development. "I tell them, occupy land where you can - like the Occupy Wall Street movement, it is an act of resistance," said Burnad, whose organization supports the Pallur collective with the loan of a tractor and training in organic farming techniques.

Challenge of turning thaw into detente

A day of smiles and jokes at the first inter-Korean talks in two years quickly evaporated Tuesday night when the North's chief negotiator threatened to walk out after the South Korean side brought up Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. "We had started in a good spirit but this came to an icy mood," North Korea's lead delegate Ri Son Gwon complained in closing remarks. His rebuke highlights the challenges that lie ahead for Seoul after the 11 hours of talks yielded agreements to hold military talks and facilitate North Korea's participation in next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in attained his immediate goal of getting North Korea to participate in the games - and reducing the chance its leader Kim Jong Un would disrupt the event with another missile or nuclear test. But turning the winter thaw into a longer-term detente will be far more daunting. To do so, Moon must navigate a volatile mix of mutually exclusive policies, including North Korea's stance that its nuclear arsenal is non-negotiable and Washington's equally strident insistence that complete denuclearization is the only acceptable outcome.

Seoul has proposed that the two Koreas make a show of unity by marching together at the Pyeongchang Olympics. The last time they did that was in January 2007 at the Asian Winter Games in Changchun, China, just three months after North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. The first UN sanctions against Pyongyang followed that nuclear test and over the next 12 years, international sanctions ramped up along

with North Korea's increasingly sophisticated missile and nuclear tests, a cycle that has left Pyongyang increasingly isolated. Along the way, six-country talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear program became moribund.

Participation in the Olympics would help ease the North's isolation. And Pyongyang may hope South Korea could resume desperately needed economic aid at some point. Moon, after all, was once an advocate of former president Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" of reconciliation with the North.

'Larger Issues'

Ri said he would not discuss North Korea's nuclear weapons program with the South because its nuclear bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) are aimed "thoroughly" at the United States, not at its "brethren" in the South. Seoul believes improved inter-Korean ties and a series of steps agreed on Tuesday could pave the way for discussion of a "fundamental resolution" of the nuclear issue in the future, the South's unification ministry said on Wednesday.

But the two Koreas can do little themselves about denuclearization "without having the United States on board," said Hwang In-sung, secretary-general of the secretariat of the presidential National Unification Advisory Council in Seoul. South Korea should not repeat past failures where seemingly vigorous talks fell apart and ties froze in a flash, he said. "Given the mistrust and high bars set up by both North Korea and the US, we will need to drive the experience from Pyeongchang when it's over, in a way that contributes to the opening of nuclear negotiations", Hwang told Reuters. The two Koreas initiated sports diplomacy in 1957 in an effort to form a unified team for the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. That effort, however, ended in failure. —Reuters

Politically Empowered

More than half of India's 1.3 billion population depends on land for a living. Conflicts have increased over the past two decades as land is increasingly sought for industrial use and development projects in a rapidly growing economy. In response to shrinking farmland combined with increased demand, a handful of states have adopted collective farming models for women and Dalits. Perhaps the most successful of these is in the small southern state of Kerala, where a government initiative has benefited tens of thousands of women.



Dalits have traditionally suffered discrimination

Kudumbashree, which the government launched in 1998, gives cheap loans to women's groups, enabling them to lease private land. As of March 2017, about 300,000 women were farming more than 51,000 hectares of land in collectives, according to Kudumbashree. They grow rice, pineapple and other crops, helped by state benefits such as insurance. The model has lasted because "these farms have higher productivity than individual farms, which means higher incomes for the women," said Dimple Abraham, a research associate at the Centre for Women's Development Studies think tank. The women have also become politically engaged, with more than 11,000 members of

Kudumbashree contesting village council elections in recent years. Nearly half won, she said.

Reduce Vulnerability

In nearby Andhra Pradesh state, the government leases 3-5 acres of land to collectives of five to 10 women each, and gives cheap loans for other livelihood options such as poultry and goat rearing. The government of Tamil Nadu is encouraging small farmers to pool their lands and form collectives in order to reduce their vulnerability to drought and unseasonal rain, and price swings. A pilot of 2,000 collectives of about 100 farmers each is being launched, and the scheme will eventually benefit about 4 million farmers, according to the 2017-18 budget. In the western state of Punjab, where a feudal system has denied Dalits their right to a third of village common farmland - more than 50,000 acres - Dalits have formed collectives over the past decade. Many of the collectives are led by women, and they have taken over more than 200 acres of land, often clashing violently with high-caste landlords, said Ish Mishra, a political science professor at Delhi University. "The movement is led by educated Dalit youth, who know they have been cheated of land that is rightfully theirs," he said.

Constant Struggle

In Pallur, a second collective of 40 women plans to clear another 2.5 acres of common land, according to Kalaiselvan. In the meantime, the group she leads is fighting a bureaucratic battle with the local revenue office to obtain a title for joint ownership of its land. The revenue officer did not return calls seeking comment. "It's a constant struggle; it doesn't stop with getting the land. They have to go against their husbands, the landlords," said Burnad, of the Society for Rural Education and Development. "But all Dalits, especially the women, must own some land," she said. "That is how they will be empowered, and challenge the caste bias, and they can do this better as a collective." —Reuters

Olympic deal will do little to disarm N Korea

An agreement for North Korea to send athletes to the Winter Olympics in the South signals a step change in relations, analysts say, but will do little to curb Pyongyang's nuclear capabilities. The North and South on Tuesday held their first official dialogue in more than two years, agreeing that Pyongyang would send a large delegation to next month's Winter Olympics and promising further high-level talks. The meeting came after months of confrontation over North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, with both parties seeking to dial down tensions. "Both sides wanted to win and they got it," said John Delury, a professor at Seoul's Yonsei University.

Seoul and Olympic organisers have been keen for Pyongyang - which boycotted the 1988 Summer Games in South Korea's capital - to take part in what they have repeatedly proclaimed as a "peace Olympics" in Pyeongchang. But the North gave no sign it would do so until leader Kim Jong-Un's New Year speech. It pursued its banned weapons programs in defiance of United Nations sanctions, launched missiles it says are capable of reaching the US, and staged its sixth and most powerful nuclear test.

North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Games is a tacit guarantee that it will refrain from such provocations during February and March, when the Olympics and Paralympics are held. Seoul and Washington also agreed earlier to delay their annual joint military drills - which Pyongyang views as rehearsals for an invasion - until after the events. Go Myong-Hyun, an analyst at the Seoul-

based Asan Institute of Policy Studies, said North Korea secured so-called "strategic composure" - shelter from a possible US military strike which has repeatedly been described as an "option on the table" by Trump administration officials. "Washington can't take any military action against the North during inter-Korean talks because it doesn't want to be blamed for any hiccups," Go said.

But what happens when the lights are turned off at Pyeongchang and geopolitics returns to normal on the peninsula? "Whether this opening can be exploited to promote peace and security beyond the term of the Olympics games themselves... remains to be seen," wrote Scott Snyder of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Square One

Despite a handful of agreements reached Tuesday, North Korea made no promises on its nuclear and missile programs and its chief delegate lashed out when the issue was raised. Ri Son-Gwon told South Korean journalists that denuclearization was not an issue for the two Koreas to discuss, saying: "The target of all our nuclear and hydrogen bombs and ICBMs and all other sophisticated weapons is the US." There were "many problems" to settle between the two sides, he added, warning of "unexpected obstacles" down the road. "(You've) got to have a longer game plan and that needs to be happening right now because otherwise, once the Olympics ends, we're right back to square one," said Delury. Otherwise, "we're back to, week by week, a missile test in North Korea, a tweet from the White House and situation getting worse and worse."

Analysts say South Korea could find itself in a tight spot, sandwiched between its desire to improve ties with Pyongyang and to work with Washington to denuclearize the North. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: A man photographs a display designed to help people visualize the concept of Nano Cell technology inside LG Super UHD TV Nano Cell Displays at CES on Tuesday. — AFP (See Page 22)

Fears of abuse as Kenya to lift...

Continued from Page 1

be charged with absconding if they flee. Kenya signed bilateral labor agreements with Qatar and Saudi Arabia in November, pledging the security of Kenyan migrant workers in the two states, and issued licenses to 29 recruitment agencies in Kenya. All agencies had lost their licenses in the 2014 crackdown. Rights groups praised the move. "It is a step in the right direction as it indicates a serious commitment by Saudi to enforce and protect the human and labor rights of Kenyans working in the country," said Jacqueline Munyaka, a Nairobi-based lawyer and labor expert.

Registered agencies must have a physical office and submit quarterly reports to the government on their overseas migrants, labor minister Phyllis Kandie said while unveiling the names of the newly accredited agencies. She said the agencies also have to pay a security bond of 500,000 to 1.5 million Kenya shillings (\$4,852 to \$14,556) for the government to repatriate workers in emergencies. "The ministry (of labor) is helping us understand the new regulations and why it is important that we observe them," said Suzan Ngosho, who works for Derimel Recruiting Agency, one of the

licensed firms.

But further measures are needed to protect migrants, said Rothna Begum, a women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. "The authorities must set out more protections, including ensuring rights-based pre-departure training in which they are taught their rights and where to access help and language skills to help them communicate," she said. "Kenya should also ensure that their embassies provide shelter to fleeing domestic workers so they are not forced to remain with abusive employers." Another good idea would be to introduce standard contracts with Middle Eastern countries, including a minimum wage, and guarantees that the host country will inform Kenyan embassies when its workers seek help or have been arrested, she said.

Others fear the problem runs much deeper. "If you are signing deals with governments that have very recently been involved in forms of slavery, it is hard to get leadership and responsibility from them," said George Kegoro, head of Kenya Human Rights Commission, a lobby group. "This is the problem of culture; these countries have a history of slavery. The mistreatment you hear about migrant workers in these states is an offshoot of the culture. This will be hard to change." For Wairimu, the solution is closer to home. "My hope is that the government will create job opportunities so that we can come back home - because our security can never be guaranteed as long as we are in a stranger's house," she said. — Reuters

Turkey tensions with US, Iran...

Continued from Page 1

"Iran and Russia should fulfill their responsibility. If you are guarantors - and you (Iran and Russia) are - they should stop the regime," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the official Anadolu news agency. Cavusoglu said 95 percent of the violations in Idlib were carried out by the regime and the groups backing the regime. Idlib province is almost entirely controlled by anti-government forces that are dominated by a jihadist outfit known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) consisting mostly of former fighters from the Al-Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Ankara has supported the anti-Assad opposition throughout the almost seven-year Syrian civil war while Russia and Iran have backed President Bashar Al-Assad. However, despite the differences, Turkey had teamed up with the two other powers in a bid to bring a lasting peace to Syria, even though analysts have long warned the three-way alliance is highly brittle. In the biggest public flare-up of tensions with Moscow and Tehran in months, Ankara summoned the Russian and Iranian ambassadors over the Idlib bombing.

Assad's forces have upped efforts in the last days to impose control over Idlib and the Eastern Ghouta enclave near Damascus, the two last rebel bastions in Syria. But in the meantime, Russia is hoping to hold a Syria peace congress in Sochi on Jan 29-30 with the particular aim of setting up a new constitution for post-war Syria. But Turkey says it will boycott any talks involving the YPG, which controls much of northeast Syria.

A previous attempt in November to convene talks in Sochi failed due to disagreements between the prospective participants, in particular Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "We have said we will not be in any environment... where the YPG is present," said Cavusoglu. A Turkish foreign ministry official told AFP that Ankara's attendance at the talks had not been decided. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday "intense contacts" were in progress between Russia, Iran and Turkey in order to draw up the list of participants.

With Iran and Russia themselves not always seeing eye to eye, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held talks yesterday in Moscow with Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif. Both men emphasized the importance of the Sochi talks, with Zarif saying "we want to move together in the same direction". "Sochi has failed to land twice and there is still not a lot of clarity about who will go," said one European diplomat, asking not to be named. "There is a risk it will involve the wrong people at the wrong time," the diplomat added.

Aron Lund, a fellow with The Century Foundation, said: "Russian attempts to smuggle PKK-linked Kurdish groups into the Sochi talks are going to provoke Erdogan, and so he'll push all the buttons he can to stop that". Alexei Malashenko, Research Director of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, said that Russia, Turkey and Iran all had different interests in the Syria conflict. "Yet all three have an interest in a consensus. So they are damned to a consensus," Malashenko, one of the leading Russian experts on the Middle East, told AFP.

Russia is also angered by attacks on the Russian naval base of Tartous and its air base at Hmeimim in Syria last week by drones which Moscow says were sent from Idlib province. — Agencies

Panel to amend charter over jailed...

Continued from Page 1

The lower court had acquitted all the 70 defendants, but the appeals court passed harsh sentences, sending 67 of them to jail including three MPs and several former lawmakers.

MPs yesterday criticized the government and the interior ministry in particular for taking action against the two MPs while they enjoyed parliamentary immunity. They insisted that the two should not have been sent to jail without a final court ruling by the court of cassation. The government however said it had no hand in the issue as it was asked by the judicial authority to arrest the convicts and jail them based on the court ruling, insisting that MPs are treated like common people after they have been stripped off their immunity.

Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri clashed with Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem after Muwaizri vowed to complain to the International Parliamentary Union for jailing the lawmakers. Muwaizri stressed that all the procedures taken by the government in this case are wrong and that the jailing of the two MPs is a violation of the constitution. Several MPs called for referring the entire

issue to the constitutional court to decide whether MPs can be sent to jail or not. But the Assembly finally settled to amend the internal charter.

Opposition MPs also called on the interior minister to take action against jail officials who allegedly mistreated some of the prisoners and stressed they will discuss the allegations at the human rights committee. Several MPs insisted during the debate that those who stormed the Assembly are honest nationalists who took the action while protesting against corruption, but added that it was a mistake to storm the building.

In the other case, the Assembly agreed to send back a controversial bill on early retirement to a committee for further studies, which will estimate the cost of the measure to reduce the retirement age. The bill stipulates reducing the retirement age for Kuwaiti male employees to 50 years and women after 20 years of service. The government said the law is too costly and will disrupt future payments to pensioners.

Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said that the payment to pensioners surged from just KD 212 million 25 years ago to as much as KD 2.2 billion in 2016. He said that the age reduction will cost the state around KD 3.5 billion, reminding that the lowest retirement age in the world is 60 years for men and 55 for women. Head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said studies by the Audit Bureau show that it is better for the country to reduce the retirement age. The Assembly will meet again on Jan 23.

200 held, dozens hurt in fresh...

Continued from Page 1

The recent unrest started with peaceful protests against the austerity measures last week, but escalated into clashes with police in the night of Monday to Tuesday. Activists have called for a massive demonstration tomorrow against the austerity measures, which are expected to increase the cost of living. They have called for the revision of the legislation behind the VAT and social contribution hikes, as well as better welfare for struggling families.

"There are acts of looting and robbery but also a political message from a section of the population that has nothing to lose and feels ignored" seven years after a revolution demanding work and dignity, said political scientist Selim Kharrat. He said that many public build-

ings have been targeted while the government has "taken a pretty strong stance against the protesters". The powerful UGTT trade union said young unemployed Tunisians had legitimate demands but condemned the "violence and looting", calling for peaceful protests.

Tunisia's economy has struggled since the 2011 revolution, which was fuelled by unemployment and graft. Protests are common in the North African state in the month of January, when Tunisians mark the anniversary of the revolt that unseated dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. January 2016 saw the biggest wave of public discontent since the uprising as the death of an unemployed protester in Kasserine sparked days of unrest. In December, unemployed protesters and activists marched through the streets of Sidi Bouzid, angry over the lack of jobs and opportunities that continue to plague residents. The revolution in Tunisia began in the town in Dec 2010 after street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire and later died in a protest over unemployment and police harassment that spiralled into Ben Ali's overthrow. — AFP



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Sports

Croatia face rivals Serbia in tense EHF Euro 2018 opener

Explosive clash of the 16-team tournament

ZAGREB: European handball championship (EHF Euro 2018) hosts Croatia take on neighbours and bitter Balkan rivals Serbia with passion already running high ahead of the potentially explosive clash in the opening round of the 16-team tournament on Friday. Former Olympic and world champions Croatia are aiming to add the only title missing from their trophy cabinet and judging by the build-up to their match with underdogs Serbia, there will be no love lost when they lock horns in Split's Spaladium Arena.

Former Croatia coach Slavko Goluzza, who was in charge when Serbia beat their old foes in the 2012 tournament's semi-final in Belgrade, made it clear the Serbians should not expect a red-carpet reception.

"We certainly won't applaud them on the terraces but I don't expect anyone to hurl coins or plastic bottles as was the case in Belgrade," Goluzza told the regional NI television. "I am sure the players too don't see this match like any other, they are very emotional but they will need to control their emotions on the court."

Centre back Stefan Vujic, who will make his competitive debut for Serbia against his native Croatia after changing allegiance in November, also expects a hostile atmosphere. "There will probably be insults from the terraces but I will not pay any attention to that," said

“
I am sure the home fans will not invade court to attack us”

the 26-year old from Rijeka, who joined the Serbians after failing to break through as a regular starter for Croatia. "I am sure the home fans will not invade the court to attack us amid the tight security and they will certainly do themselves no favours if they cause trouble." The other Group A fixture offers another mouth-watering clash with pride and bragging rights at stake, albeit devoid of such tension, as Sweden take on Iceland in a Scandinavian derby.

Group B also kicks off on Friday as world champions France start their campaign with a tricky game against Norway, aiming to retrieve the title they have won three times and relinquished to Germany in the 2016 tournament. The French, who also have six world and two Olympic titles, should have a relatively easy task of advancing to the second

group stage as their preliminary pool also includes rank outsiders Belarus and Austria. Germany play Montenegro in Group C on Saturday, when Group D heavyweights Spain and Denmark, the Olympic champions, meet the Czech Republic and Hungary respectively. The top three teams from each preliminary pool will qualify for the second group stage. The top two from the newly-formed two sections of six will advance to the semi-finals. — Reuters



File photo shows Croatian handball team in action.

Copenhagen steers toward Formula One race in 2020

COPENHAGEN: Formula One drivers could be racing over bridges and around the streets of inner Copenhagen by 2020 under advanced plans presented to the sport's owners by a Danish consortium. Formula One chairman Chase Carey discussed the proposal with the city's mayor and the Nordic country's business minister during a visit to Copenhagen yesterday. "We're excited about the opportunity to explore a potential race here in Denmark... I think Copenhagen represents the type of location that we think can really provide a great platform," Carey told journalists, but said no final decision had yet been made.

Liberty Media, Formula One's new American owners, have big plans to reshape the sport and are targeting new venues in key markets, including the United States and Asia. A Copenhagen race would open the gates to the rest of Scandinavia, said the consortium behind the initiative, which is led by former minister Helge Sander and Lars Seier Christensen, co-founder and former CEO of online trading platform provider Saxo Bank.

"They don't just see it as Copenhagen but as all of Scandinavia which is a potential market for them," Christensen told a press briefing ahead of Carey's visit. The estimated budget is 300-500 million Danish krone (\$48-80 million) per race while the expected income from spectators including tickets is seen at 1-2 billion Danish krone (\$160-320 million), Christensen said. Kevin Magnussen, who races for the US-owned Haas team, is the only Danish Formula one driver and has a big following in the country. "Scandinavia has been a great part of our sport and having local drivers is always a plus," Carey said.

He added that the bridges and water in Copenhagen would provide great television pictures. TV is crucial to Formula One which had a cumulative television audience of 1.4 billion for all F1 programmes broadcast in the top 20 markets last year. A key hurdle will be to get approval from the city council for the 4.6 kilometre long route through the old city centre, where an estimated 107,000 spectators could be seated.

Copenhagen is usually promoted as a 'bicycle heaven' with around 150,000 people cycling to work every day. Denmark has never hosted a Formula One race and the only one ever held in the Nordics was the Swedish Grand Prix at Anderstorp, which fell off the calendar in 1978 after the death of local heroes Ronnie Peterson and Gunnar Nilsson that year. — Reuters

Loeb's Dakar dream flounders in the dunes

AREQUIPA: Sebastian Loeb was forced to pull out of the Dakar Rally after injury to his co-driver in a disastrous fifth stage yesterday. The Peugeot driver's hopes of winning his first Dakar title at the third attempt appeared encouraging after he climbed to second in the standings with success in Tuesday's fourth stage.

But the nine-time world rally champion's Dakar dream was left in tatters after his car twice ran into sand trouble on the run from San Juan de Marcona to Arequipa in Peru. Loeb's car became stuck in sand

KSF launch courses for referees in shotgun and rifle

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi opened the Shotgun and Rifle referees courses, organized by Kuwait Shooting Federation (KSF) under the Umbrella of International Shooting Federation (ISSF). The courses are within the preparations for the start of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Seventh International Shooting Grand Prix.

Al-Osaimi welcomed International Lecturer, Member of ISF Technical Committee, President of Egypt and African Shooting Federation Hazim Hosny, as well as 38 participants from Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait.

He also welcomed ISSF technical committee member Loannis Heracleous who lectured on shotgun license (B) referees. The shotgun course has 35 referees from Bahrain, Lebanon, Mongolia and Kuwait.

Al-Osaimi urged all participating referees to take advantage and benefit from the courses being held

Amir Khan to return to ring

LONDON: Former welterweight world champion Amir Khan will end a near two year hiatus from the sport with a bout in Liverpool on April 21 against an unnamed opponent he announced yesterday. The 31-year-old whose most recent activity was spent on a reality TV programme in the jungle-made the announcement alongside British boxing promoter Eddie Hearn with whom he has signed a three fight deal. The 2004 Olympic lightweight silver medalist's last outing was back in May 2016 when he stepped up to middleweight to face Mexico's star pugilist Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez and was knocked out in the sixth round.

Khan said his ambition is to taste what it is like to be world champion again having been the unified welterweight world champion-holding the WBA belt from 2009-12 and the IBF version in 2011. "I'm determined to win another World Championship and I'm confident I've got the right team behind me to help me do so," said Khan at a press conference in London.

"I've been out of the ring for too long, and I'm desperate to make up for lost time, starting in April," Hearn said it was great to have Khan back fighting in England-his last fight on home turf was beating Julio Diaz in 2013 — and pledged to bring him top names as opponents.

"The plan is to box in April and then again in August or September in preparation for a super fight in Winter

twice, with a truck having to help him out of a sand hole, costing him almost three hours. But it was an injury suffered by co-driver Daniel Elena as they descended a dune that forced Loeb to bring a premature end to his 2018 Dakar. "He screams as soon as I go over 30 km/h, I can't see how we can go on like this", explained Loeb.

He added later: "It went badly, the dunes are too soft, we did not see the hole, we hit it hard ... It's over, Daniel is bad, but he'll be okay. It's so soft, without the (assistance) truck, we wouldn't have got out," Loeb told France Television.

After his fourth stage win Loeb was placed seven minutes second to defending champion Stephane Peterhansel in another Peugeot. Loeb's defection followed on from that earlier yesterday of Andre Villas-Boas, the former Chelsea and Tottenham manager who had to pull out with a bad back, his Toyota team reported. — AFP



Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi (second left) announces the start of the Shotgun and Rifle referees courses.

under the umbrella of ISSF which qualifies them to receive an international referee license and can represent their countries in any events sponsored by the ISSF. Al-Osaimi said Kuwait Shooting Federation does not spare any effort to present the best and meet the needs of its shooters and administrators in order to maintain the achievements already made and keep

Kuwait's name in prominence. International lecturer Hazim Hosny thanked President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, and Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi for their efforts and support in service of the sport of shooting in Arabia and Asia. He said he is happy to be in Kuwait, the pioneer in the sport of shooting at many levels.



Amir Khan

2018," said Hearn. "The target is to provide him with the biggest fights possible with a mouth-watering list of names including the likes of Manny Pacquiao, Kell

Brook, Keith Thurman and Errol Spence. "I'm excited to get started and looking forward to a huge night of boxing on April 21." —AFP



SAN JUAN DE MARCONA: Peugeot's French driver Sebastian Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena of Monaco compete during the Stage 4 of the 2018 Dakar Rally in and around San Juan de Marcona, Peru. — AFP

Sports

Adventurous Chongi dreams of 'rock n roll' ski-cross

Events like ski cross would attract more young people like him

SOFIA: Bulgaria's former Alpine skier Nikola Chongarov 'Chongi' came out of retirement to pursue another Olympic dream, this time in ski cross, a relatively new discipline he believes is more aligned with his rock 'n' roll style.

Chongi, an adventurous music-lover, decided to hang up his skis after competing in five Alpine skiing events at the 2014 Games in Sochi, where he bore the Balkan country's flag during the opening ceremony, only to rediscover his passion for skiing a couple of years later.

"There is nothing like Olympic Games, it happens only once every four years and it's really amazing," Chongi told Reuters. "I spent 20 incredible days in Sochi, you meet all these athletes and immerse in an incredible atmosphere. So, I'm doing my very best to compete at the (2018) Games in South Korea." The Bulgarian ski federation, however, could not provide enough money and Chongi turned to crowd-funding, fixing his eyes on becoming the first Bulgarian athlete to compete in the timed racing event, which is often considered part of freestyle skiing because it incorporates similar terrain features.

Chongi has to overcome a number of difficulties on his path to South Korea - "the toughest fight of his career". Yet the obstacles have had a positive effect on his morale and even increased his determination.

To save money, Chongi did not hire a coach and travelled by car more than 2,600 km to Sweden to compete in a World Cup ski cross event. In order to be guaranteed qualification for Pyeongchang, Chongi needs a place inside the top 32 of the world rankings.

"I travel alone, I train alone and I'm even preparing the ski myself," the 28-year-old said. "Sometimes, it's very difficult and it takes a lot of time. It takes sweat, hard work and sacrifice to achieve the goal. And the goal is the Olympics."

CRAZY IDEA

Such is his passion for skiing in South Korea, Chongi, who formed a rock band last year, said he would gladly write a song on his guitar for someone who helps him in his brave attempt to raise money.

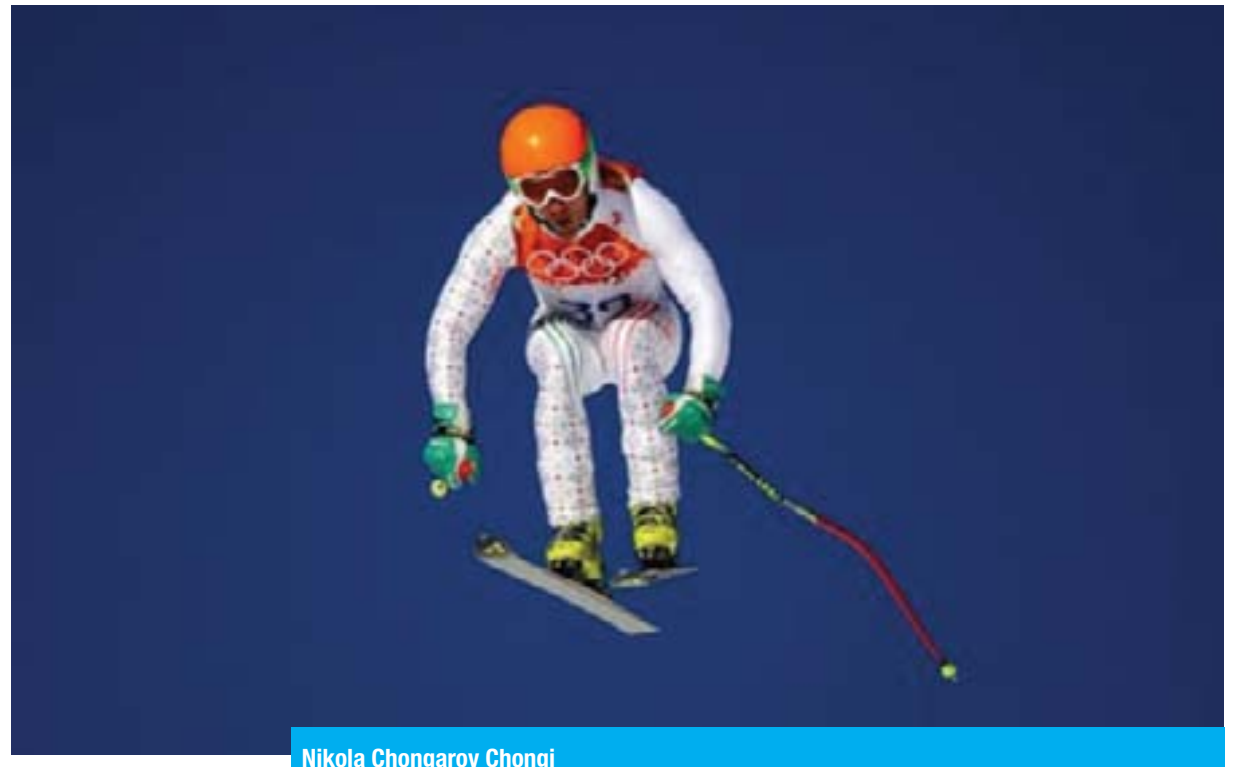
"I know I'm crazy, the idea (to compete in Pyeongchang) is crazy but ski cross is also crazy," Chongi said. "The crazier something seems, the more I believe it is possible."

With some of the traditional winter sports audience ageing, Chongi believes that events like ski cross would attract more young and eccentric people like him.

"I want to compete in a discipline, which is much closer to my rock 'n' roll nature. The ski cross is much more risky and dynamic and it's interesting to watch. Ski cross is the discipline that suits my style."

Chongi, who holds a leadership and management degree, started skiing when he was three-years-old, though he experienced his first downhill a year earlier, peeking out of the backpack of his dad - a former volleyball player.

"He's quite a character. Chongi has quite constructive thinking and always has his own point of view and it helps him in sport," Vladislav, the drummer of Chongi's rock band Chongi & The Smokers, told



Nikola Chongarov Chongi

Reuters ahead of the band's live performance in the southern city of Plovdiv.

The concept for ski cross originated in the late 1980s when sports marketer Jim Essick wanted to create an event which would make ski racing more exciting for spectators, similar to motocross, where four skiers would race head-to-head on a course, rather than one at a time against the clock.

Bulgaria is not normally associated with success in

winter sports with Ekaterina Dafovska still the country's only winter Olympic champion after winning the women's biathlon 15-km event in Nagano in 1998. However, many believe that Bulgaria's capital Sofia, located at the foot of the Vitosha mountain, could host a Winter Olympics. The Black Sea state failed in bids to host one of the world's biggest multi-sports events in 1992, 1994 and more recently 2014 but the ambition remains.—Reuters

Shiffrin wins fifth World Cup race in a row

FLACHAU: American sensation Mikaela Shiffrin charged to a remarkable eighth win in nine World Cup races as she powered to victory in Tuesday's floodlit slalom in Flachau. The 22-year-old, the reigning Olympic and three-time world slalom champion, trailed Austria's Bernadette Schild by 0.37sec after the first run but set a blistering pace second time down to claim a fifth win in a row.

Shiffrin, who will head to the Winter Olympics as a heavy gold medal favourite, clocked a combined time of 1min 50.86sec to soar to 1,381 points atop the overall standings after her 41st World Cup triumph. "I was really looking for speed on the second run. I gave everything and had nothing to lose," said Shiffrin, who won in Flachau for the third time—after victories in 2013 and 2014.

"I wanted to ski freely. After last year (a third-place finish) I was a bit disappointed." Schild (+0.94sec) took second for her first podium finish since a November slalom in Killington, while Sweden's Frida Hansdotter (+1.43sec) came third, two days after finishing runner-up to Shiffrin at Kranjska Gora. Shiffrin drew level with Austrian great Annemarie Moser-Proell, who earned 41



FLACHAU: Mikaela Shiffrin of the USA competes during the first run at the ladies world cup slalom in Flachau, Austria, on Tuesday, — AFP

of her 62 World Cup wins before the age of 23, and will have several chances to better that mark before her birthday on March 13. By comparison Lindsey Vonn, the women's record-holder with 78 career victories, only won seven World Cup races prior to her 23rd

birthday.

Shiffrin will have to wait though after confirming she will skip the two speed events on the programme this weekend at another Austrian resort, Bad Kleinkirchheim.—AFP

White confident of legacy regardless of Pyeongchang result

LONDON: There are very few winter Olympians who have transcended their sport quite like the pioneering American Shaun White, a two-time halfpipe gold medal winner widely regarded as the greatest competitive snowboarder in history.

White is also one of the largest personalities on the circuit with an extensive portfolio of achievements away from the snow, including playing guitar in a band, appearing in several movies and even having two video games named after him.

The 31-year-old's high profile meant his failure to secure a halfpipe podium spot in Sochi four years ago reverberated around the world. According to Facebook, White was the most talked about athlete at the 2014 Games across its platforms.

The American regards that as the "worst thing I could have imagined", yet in an interview with Reuters, White says he is now in a "better headspace" after rebuilding his coaching team, changing his training regime and clearing his mind since Russia.

Speaking about his feelings after that last run in Sochi, White believes the performance did not reflect on who he was as a rider at the time. "I just sat there and all I had was my thoughts. First of all, what was bothering me? And what was bothering me was that I had been in this sport for my entire life," White told Reuters after last month's US Olympic qualifier in Breckenridge. "You win things and then you are expected to do it year after year, again and again, but it didn't have the same feeling as the first time," he added. "I was missing time at home, missing my family, missing being with my dog. Doing normal things. I then decided to start doing all the things I wanted to but didn't have the time... which made me feel great."

"When I felt great, I thought about snowboarding



Shaun White

because that makes me feel great too. I was getting back to being excited about just riding and doing new tricks." White credits his new support team, which includes Olympic bronze medallist Jarret "JJ" Thomas and young rider Toby Miller, with making his time on the road fun again. "You have both ends of the spectrum: you have a 17-year-old who is in love with the sport and loves travelling, being on the road, and then you have JJ who is like the veteran, even more than myself. It is a nice complementary situation," White said.

OLYMPIC LEGACY

White was speaking after a mixed performance at the Dew Tour event in Breckenridge in mid-December, where he finished 14th in qualifying and failed to make the final. The event was the second of four qualifiers to

determine the US snowboarding team in Pyeongchang. A win would have almost guaranteed White a spot but he does have two further chances to qualify later in January. White admits that after Sochi he thought his legacy had been tarnished and all his previous achievements had been erased. Yet his time away from the sport has given him a fresh perspective.

"I came home and people were still saying I was the champ, you are still the man, you can't take away what you have done. That gave me a lot of comfort in myself," he admitted.

"I think that was when I realised that you can't take away all the awards and all the things I have done." White, who will be competing in his fourth games should he qualify for Pyeongchang, says the part of his career he was most proud of is that winning and competing never changed who he was.—Reuters

Father's sacrifice helps Kim become snowboard star

LONDON: Chloe Kim has the chance to become the youngest female snowboarder to win Olympic gold when the 2018 Pyeongchang Games kick off in South Korea next month and the American teen says she owes much of her success to her dedicated dad.

Kim met the qualifying standards for Sochi four years ago but was deemed too young to compete. She shrugged off that disappointment to claim her first X Games silver medal the same year aged 13.

Kim went on to become the first athlete to win three X Games gold medals under the age of 16 and won two golds at the 2016 Winter Youth Olympics in Lillehammer, where she was also her nation's flag bearer at the opening ceremony.

Kim is also the first female athlete to land back-to-back 1080s and score a perfect 100, according to US Ski and Snowboard. Kim, who will not turn 18 until two months after February's Games, qualified for Team USA with a podium finish at the Olympic qualifier in Colorado on Dec. 15.

If being an Olympic favourite was not enough pressure for a 17-year-old to handle, Kim's Korean heritage means there will be two nations counting on her to win gold in Pyeongchang. With family still living in South Korea, Kim knows she can expect plenty of attention from the host nation at the Feb. 9-25 Games. Born in California, she says she identifies more with American culture but is proud of her Korean heritage and tries to visit her family once a year.

"My grandmother lives in Korea and I love her. She is the cutest little old lady I have ever seen in my life," she said at the Team USA Media Summit in September.

OLYMPIC FEVER

As Olympic fever takes hold in South Korea, Kim says she has been overwhelmed by the support she received on previous visits to the country. "It was really crazy, I had a real paparazzi moment there. It was kind of cool, I felt like Kim Kardashian," said Kim.

"I was doing something where I got to ride with young Korean riders and it kind of freaked me out. I have never had that many cameras around me before. I look up and there's like 25 cameras around me and I straight up ran away I was so scared."

Kim says she is "obsessed" with snowboarding and credits her father's determination with getting her to the Olympics. Her father, Kim Jong-jin, first encouraged her to get on a snowboard aged four and later gave up his job to focus on his daughter's budding snowboarding career.

"Obviously when I was eight I didn't know what they were doing. I was like, why is dad home more?" she said. "Now that I think about it, I think it was a really bold move and I can't believe my mum was okay with it. I think that's so cool. My dad is a very dedicated, determined person; once he sees something he wants he has to get it. "I'm not saying he forced me to snowboard, I genuinely love snowboarding so it was nice he was that determined to bring me to the Olympics."—Reuters

Sports

Rabada set to wait for opening chance despite rapid rise

Steyn's injury means burden will be greater on Rabada

CAPE TOWN: The world's top Test bowler Kagiso Rabada says it is his ambition to open the bowling for South Africa, but he will likely have to wait for his chance ahead of the second Test against India starting in Pretoria on Saturday.

Rabada's thrilling display of fast bowling helped South Africa to a 72-run victory in the first Test at Newlands, and catapulted the young firebrand to the summit of the International Cricket Council's Test rankings. He dislodged England's Jimmy Anderson, a man 13 years his senior, with match figures of 5-75 that only tell half the story of a display brimming with pace, aggression and control.

"Our bowling attack is very skilled, as we have seen in the past and in the last game. It feels great to be playing alongside these veterans," Rabada told reporters yesterday.

"I just bowl wherever the team wants me to bowl, but obviously I would like to open. It is very tough at the moment, though, because there are two very good bowlers doing that. I just like to do whatever the team requires me to do and set my own aspirations aside."

Since the start of 2016 he has taken 108 Test wickets at an average of 21.34 and has a career strike-rate of

39.2 that is better than veterans Dale Steyn, Vernon Philander and Morne Morkel. Despite his form, Rabada was the fourth bowler used by South African captain Faf du Plessis in the first innings against India, a bow to his team mates' seniority.

The 22-year-old has long been thought of as a special talent, particularly in his homeland where the desire for role-models for young black cricketers burns strong. But few thought he would deliver so much, so soon. There are many who believe he can still get quicker, adding further to his considerable weaponry. "I don't know how fast I can get. Sometimes I don't think the speed gun is telling the truth to be honest. I can feel when I'm bowling quick and when I'm not," he added.

The loss of Steyn to another injury setback means the burden will be greater on Rabada this season, with two more home Tests to come against India and then four Tests against the visiting Australians.

"I need to do more, I am always striving for perfection, even though you will never reach it," he said. "There is always something else you can work on and that is what I have done in my career so far. There is always a problem!" — Reuters



CAPE TOWN: File photo shows South Africa bowler Kagiso Rabada celebrates dismissing India bowler Wriddhiman Saha during day four of the First Test between South Africa and India in Cape Town. — AFP

“Our bowling attack is very skilled

”

Irish to host giants India in T20 matches

DUBLIN: Ireland will play 2007 World Twenty20 champions India in two T20 internationals in Dublin in June, Cricket Ireland announced yesterday. Both games will be played in the Dublin suburb of Malahide, with the first encounter scheduled for June 27 and the second match two days later on Friday, June 29.

It will be the first time that the sides have met on Irish soil since they played an ODI in Belfast back in 2007. The games will be the first T20 internationals for Ireland head coach Graham Ford, and the South African is relishing the prospect of pitting his wits against such high profile opposition.

"It's fantastic news for the lads and fans alike," said Ford, who only took the reins of the Irish side last month. "The matches will of course be a huge challenge for the team, but what an opportunity for everyone to showcase their talents in front of a huge audience, both at the games and live on television," added the 57-year-old former South Africa head coach.

Ford, who has also coached Sri Lanka, said there was a potentially rich reward awaiting anyone who impressed. "I'm sure the players will respond positively to the occasion with the added incentive of knowing eye-catching displays could result in a possible IPL contract," said Ford.

"We haven't played our best cricket in the format in recent years which is reflected in the rankings, but what better time to start climbing the ladder again. We have a number of players ideally suited to the short-form and on home soil it's a great opportunity to cause a shock or two," added Ford. — AFP

Pakistan recall Shehzad, ignore Kamran for NZ T20

KARACH: Pakistan yesterday recalled Ahmed Shehzad for their three-match Twenty20 series against New Zealand later this month, but selectors ignored Kamran Akmal despite his recent form in domestic matches.

The 26-year-old Shehzad was dropped for the third and final Twenty20 against Sri Lanka in Lahore late last November, but his recent form and youth helped him regain his place. But Kamran, 35, was not so lucky, despite being the highest run scorer in National Twenty20 with 432 runs last November. He smashed a double century in a domestic One-Day Cup match last week.

All-rounder Imad Wasim, who missed the current one-day international (ODI) series against New Zealand, will also miss the T20s due to a knee injury, said chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq. "Wasim has yet to recover from his knee injury, and was told to continue his rehabilitation at the academy in Lahore. Sohaib Maqsood was not considered for selection due to a back injury and will undergo rehabilitation," said Inzamam.

Pakistan are currently two down in the five-match ODI series in New Zealand, with the third match in Dunedin on Saturday. Sarfraz Ahmed will lead the T20 side. The first match is in Wellington on January 22, followed by Auckland on January 25 and Mount Maunganui on January 28.

Squad: Sarfraz Ahmed (captain), Fakhar Zaman, Ahmed Shehzad, Babar Azam, Shoaib Malik, Harris Sohail, Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Nawaz, Shadab Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Aamer Yamin, Mohammad Amir, Hasan Ali, Runman Raees, Umar Amin. — AFP

Root likely to be fit for opening ODI

MELBOURNE: England Test captain Joe Root is expected to be fit for Sunday's one-day series opener against Australia in Melbourne as he continues to recover from the illness that saw him treated in hospital during the fifth Ashes Test.

The 27-year-old returned to training yesterday after receiving treatment for gastroenteritis, which forced him to retire hurt on the final day in the Sydney defeat that gave Australia a 4-0 test series triumph.

"He's obviously a lot better than he was on Monday," England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler was quoted saying by the Australian Associated Press. "He's up and about so I think a few more days and his bug should have gone. He's a huge part of our side so we're desperate for him to be fit and well. I'm sure he will rest up and try and get his energy back."

Ahead of a busy international schedule, including home Test matches against India and Pakistan, England coach Trevor Bayliss has urged Root to skip the 2018 Indian Premier League. Root, however, remains keen to play in limited overs competitions to prepare himself for the next year's 50-over World Cup in England.

"We had that discussion a few days ago, I suggested to him that he shouldn't play, that he should have a break," Bayliss was quoted as saying by British media on Tuesday. "He feels that whenever he's had a break in the last couple of years, it's always been a T20 series.

Focused Patriots 'ignore the noise' ahead of Titans clash

LOS ANGELES: The New England Patriots are no stranger to controversy and on Tuesday the players said they would not let a reports of internal turmoil within the organization distract them from their quest to repeat as Super Bowl champions.

A report last week said there was a rift between Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, coach Bill Belichick and owner Robert Kraft but tight end Rob Gronkowski said he and team mates were not losing any sleep over it ahead of their playoff opener on Saturday.

"The reputation that coach tries to get us to have is just ignore the noise. Ignore the noise from the outside and I feel like that's what myself, a lot of other players have been doing," tight end Rob Gronkowski told reporters.

"You've just got to keep ignoring the noise and just keep our focus on what we've been doing all year and that's preparing hard, studying our opponent, getting ready mentally and physically for the big game."

Brady, Belichick and Kraft later issued a joint statement flatly denying the ESPN report. The Patriots, who last year won their second Super Bowl title in three seasons, had a first-round bye after finishing atop the AFC and will host the Tennessee Titans on Saturday in the divisional round of the playoffs.

"The intensity has been high every single week all year long," said Gronkowski. "You've just got to keep on continuing that, keep on preparing how we have been and get ready for the big game." Few NFL teams have faced controversy over recent years to the extent of the Patriots, and none have enjoyed their level of success.

Just last season, the Patriots overcame the NFL's four-game suspension of Brady stemming from a plot to deflate footballs used in the AFC title game two years prior. In 2015, they blocked out the noise over 'Deflategate' to beat the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl. In 2013 they dealt with the arrest and subsequent murder conviction of tight end Aaron Hernandez. Six



SYDNEY: File photo of England batsman Joe Root drives a ball from Australia's attack on the final day of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match at the SCG in Sydney. — AFP

He wants to play in 50-over World Cups and T20 World Cups. "He thinks if he keeps missing all the T20 cricket he's just going to fall behind and not be up to speed when those come along. There are difficult deci-

sions to make." England are scheduled to play five one-day internationals against Australia followed by a Twenty20 tri-series with the hosts and New Zealand which starts on Feb. 3. — Reuters



FOXBORO: File photo shows LeSean McCoy #25 of the Buffalo Bills runs with the ball against the New England Patriots at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, Massachusetts. — AFP

years before that, Belichick was fined \$500,000 and the Patriots lost a first-round draft pick after an investigation found New England had videotaped an opponent's signals on the sidelines in what became known as 'Spygate.'

Beyond all that, they have navigated through the mundane ups-and-downs of injuries and bad calls, reaching 11 AFC title games in the Brady-Belichick era practicing the Patriot Way of stressing personal accountability and a business-like approach.

Defensive back Devin McCourty, who has been a team captain since 2011, said the Patriots were not going to be motivated by the report but were fuelled by a desire to claim the franchise's sixth Super Bowl title.

"I mean, I don't care about it and I think a lot of guys don't really care about what goes on outside and who writes what and if we suck, if we're great - it doesn't matter," said McCourty. "So, I just think guys are motivated by playing for each other, their families more than an ESPN article." — Reuters

Sports

Aguero to Man City's rescue against valiant Bristol City

Season's giantkillers have eliminated four Premier League sides

MANCHESTER: A goal in stoppage time by Sergio Aguero saved Manchester City's blushes as it was enough to secure a 2-1 win over second-tier Bristol City in their League Cup semi-final first leg clash on Tuesday. The Argentinian's 19th goal of the season and a fine effort by Belgian international Kevin De Bruyne cancelled out Bobby Reid's first-half penalty to give the hosts a club record-equalling 16th successive home win. However Bristol City, this season's giantkillers who have eliminated four Premier League sides including holders Manchester United, gave their 8,000 travelling fans the highest away attendance at the Etihad Stadium in its 15-year history-much to cheer.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola sportingly congratulated his Bristol City counterpart Lee Johnson at the end. "We created a lot of chances and that's why we win in the end, but today we knew we are not going to finish our job—that will have to happen away in Bristol when we travel there," the Spaniard told the BBC.

"They were really good, so we tried so hard, all the players tried and we're really happy," added the 46-year-old, who has lost five of his last six semi-finals including City's last domestic loss to Arsenal in last season's FA Cup. Johnson, who last season received a death threat and had to move house as a result after Bristol City lost eight matches in a row, said he was proud of his players.

"They can't be disappointed as we are still in the tie," he told Sky Sports. "They have shown the world we are good footballers." Manchester City went close

to breaking the deadlock on the quarter-hour mark when a flowing move concluded with Bernardo Silva's goal-bound shot taking a deflection off a Bristol City defender.

STONES UPENDS REID

The visitors, though, were not in the least intimidated and went close themselves immediately afterwards, Claudio Bravo saving Joe Bryan's long-range shot. Bristol City—appearing in their first major semi-final in 29 years—were more than holding their own but a poor clearance saw De Bruyne force a good one-handed save from Frank Fielding as the hosts pressed for the opener.

The hosts turned the screw as the half progressed forcing a series of corners but without the end reward. However, it was Manchester City who cracked in the 43rd minute as the shaky Eliaquim Mangala was dispossessed and John Stones made a rash challenge on Reid to concede a penalty.

Reid dusted himself off and although Bravo guessed the right way and got his fingers to the penalty, he was unable to prevent it going into the net for the scorer's 14th goal of the season.

Aden Flint ensured the Championship side went into the break 1-0 up when he produced a superb header to clear over his own bar as Raheem Sterling's shot looked destined to bring the sides level.

However, there was nothing the visitors could do about the equaliser in the 55th minute. De Bruyne surged forward playing it to Sterling who laid it back to him and



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (C) jumps to score their late winning goal during the English League Cup semi-final first leg football match between Manchester City and Bristol City at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England. — AFP

the Belgian rifled the ball into the net to provoke a sigh of relief from players and home fans alike. Guardiola decided to send on his only out-and-out striker Aguero

for Yaya Toure with 20 minutes remaining and the club's record goalscorer did not disappoint, firing in the winner for a barely deserved victory. — AFP

“We created a lot of chances and that's why we win in the end”

Everton owner says Lukaku exit swayed by 'voodoo message'

LONDON: Everton majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri says that the club's former striker Romelu Lukaku turned down a big offer to stay in Merseyside on the advice of a "voodoo message" that was passed on to him by the player's mother.

The 24-year-old's prolific form garnered interest from top clubs in England after the Belgian international scored 25 goals in 37 league appearances last season. Lukaku was initially expected to return to his former club Chelsea but the 24-year-old instead sealed a move to Manchester United in July, and Moshiri says Everton offered everything they could in an effort to hold on to their main goal threat.

"With Romelu, I wasted two summers trying to keep him," Moshiri said during Everton's annual general meeting on Tuesday. "The first summer, I spent almost three months, and we managed to keep him for another year. Last summer, we offered him a better deal than Chelsea and he just didn't want to stay... If I tell you what we offered, you won't believe it. His agent went to Finch Farm to sign the contract. Then somehow during the meeting, Romelu called his mother and said she was on a pilgrimage to Africa and had seen some sort of voodoo that said he had to sign for Chelsea.

"What can you do? He'd gone to Los Angeles and wouldn't come back, his brain had gone." Lukaku is United's leading scorer this season with 10 goals in 21 league games, helping lead Jose Mourinho's side up to second in the standings. Everton were also unsuccessful



OLD TRAFFORD: Manchester United's Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku (L) scores their second goal during the English FA Cup third round football match. — AFP

in retaining midfielder Ross Barkley at Goodison Park with the England international swapping Merseyside for champions Chelsea last week. "I didn't spend as much time to keep Ross as I did Rom (Lukaku)," Moshiri

added. Everton, who were knocked out of the FA Cup by city rivals Liverpool last Friday, are ninth in the standings and travel to fifth-placed Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday. — Reuters

Liverpool's 'Flying Pig' Lawrence dies

LONDON: Goalkeeper Tommy Lawrence, part of the first great Liverpool side under Bill Shankly, has died aged 77, the club announced yesterday. Lawrence, affectionately known as 'The Flying Pig' for his acrobatic saves despite being of portly build, was a member of the side that won two league titles in 1964 and 1966, not missing a match in the latter campaign.

He also won the FA Cup in 1965. Capped three times by Scotland, Lawrence only missed four league matches from 1963 to 1969. He conceded only 24 goals in the 1968/69 season, which was a record for the lowest conceded at the time in the old First Division.

However, the emergence of Ray Clemence in the late 1960s heralded the end of his tenure as first choice, and after being dropped for an FA Cup tie in the 1970/71 season he left for nearby Tranmere Rovers, managed by his former Liverpool team-mate Ron Yeats.

He made a total of 390 appearances for Liverpool. Lawrence finished his playing career at non-league Chorley. After hanging up his boots, he returned to the same factory he had worked in



Tommy Lawrence

prior to playing for Liverpool, remaining there until he retired.

Roy Evans, the former Liverpool coach and manager who was a player during Lawrence's time at the club, paid tribute to the "gentleman" dubbed one of football's first sweeper-keepers. "He actually worked it out for himself that if we were going to push further up the pitch and close people down, Tommy was alive and alert to that," Evans told Liverpoolfc.com "Tommy was an underrated goalkeeper in many ways. He had the nickname 'The Flying Pig' but Tommy was a really good goalkeeper and his positional sense was great. He was a guy who was so humble and he didn't think of himself as better than anybody else." —AFP

Man Utd to raise price of Sevilla fans' tickets

BARCELONA: Manchester United have raised ticket prices for Sevilla fans by 35 pounds (\$47) for the Champions League last 16 tie at Old Trafford to subsidise the cost of their supporters' trip to Spain for the first leg. Sevilla are charging Man United fans between 89 and 133 pounds to watch the game at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan on Feb. 21, which the English club considered excessive. In an email to ticket holders for that game, United explained they would be refunding them 35 pounds, which is the difference between the 89 pound ticket price and the 54 pound priced Liverpool supporters were charged by Sevilla during the group stage of the competition.

"In this instance we believe that our travelling supporters are unfairly being subjected to increased/excessive ticket prices from the host club," read Manchester United's message, sent yesterday. "This has been raised with Sevilla, and internally, but ultimately

Sevilla have not agreed to significantly lower the price of tickets for our fans to what we view as a reasonable level. "Therefore we have taken the difficult decision to charge Sevilla fans for the return leg at Old Trafford the same amount as our fans have been charged for the away fixture.

"We have decided to increase the ticket prices for Sevilla fans for the game at Old Trafford, and use this increase to subsidise our fans, as we want this to act as a deterrent to future opponents who look to increase ticket prices for our travelling supporters."

Manchester United said they would donate any additional revenue gained to the club's charity foundation. A source close to Sevilla told Reuters the Spanish club would pay the difference in cost for their fans between the initial prices and the new price, as well as reporting United to UEFA.

"Right now everything is hypothetical as United have not informed the club officially of the price rise," added the source. "Sevilla will demand through UEFA that United comply to the ticketing rules that tickets for home and away fans have a similar price for similar categories.

"Sevilla will inform UEFA that United have not complied with the rule that away teams are offered 5 per cent of the capacity in tickets, only offering 4.1 per cent." — Reuters

Lemar helps Monaco beat rivals Nice in League Cup quarters

NICE: Thomas Lemar scored as Monaco beat Cote d'Azur rivals Nice 2-1 at the Allianz Riviera on Tuesday to reach the French League Cup semi-finals. Lemar, who has been heavily linked with a move to England, nodded Monaco into an early lead, before Alassane Plea equalised after a video review. Monaco moved back in front before half-time through 21-year-old Adama Diakhaby and Leonardo Jardim's French champions held on with the aid of a terrible miss by Nice midfielder Pierre Lees-Melou. "This victory was deserved and it is very important for our fans," said Monaco coach Jardim after his side's sixth straight win. "Diakhaby is progressing, even if he's not doing everything right, he's young and we believe in him."

The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) is being used for the rest of the competition as a test ahead of its expected arrival in Ligue 1 next season, having been used in the promotion/relegation play-off last year.

"It's good, we're losing two or three minutes in the whole game," Jardim said. "Errors will decrease, not totally, but by 80 percent." The hosts were given a blow before kick-off as the in-form Mario Balotelli failed to regain fitness in time after suffering with glute pain. Monaco made a fast start and took the lead in only the third minute, as Lemar found space to head in Keita Balde's cross from close range to score his third goal of an injury-hit season and send out a message to potential suitors at Arsenal and Liverpool. The 22-year-old drilled into the roof of the net 10 minutes later, only to be denied a second goal by the linesman's flag for offside. Nice levelled against the run of play in the 18th minute as Plea ran onto Allan Saint-Maximin's pass and slotted past Diego Benaglio at the Monaco goalkeeper's near post. The referee checked with VAR for offside, but replays showed that Plea had timed his run to perfection before grabbing his 10th goal of the campaign. The visitors continued to be the better side, though, and they retook the lead as forward Diakhaby sent a half-volley flying into the corner from another excellent Balde delivery.

Nice threw bodies forwards in the second half without creating many clear-cut chances, but Lees-Melou should have equalised when he headed wide with the goal gaping from only three yards out.

Runaway Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain, who have won four straight League Cups, will look to extend their incredible 34-match winning streak in domestic cup games at Amiens. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPAIN COPA DEL REY	
Sevilla v Cadiz beIN SPORTS	21:30
Levante v Espanyol beIN SPORTS	21:30
Barcelona v Celta de Vigo beIN SPORTS	23:30

12 Loeb's Dakar dream flounders in the dunes



14 Rabada set to wait for opening chance despite rapid rise



15 Agüero to Man City's rescue against valiant Bristol City



MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a return during his match against Dominic Thiem of Austria at Kooyong Classic tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Djokovic back with a bang at Kooyong

Muguruza pulls out of Sydney after win

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic made a resounding return yesterday after six months out with an elbow injury, declaring he felt "great" after beating world number five Dominic Thiem 6-1, 6-4 at the Kooyong Classic. The Serbian 12-time Grand Slam winner was in good form, and full of optimism, after his first competitive outing since losing a Wimbledon quarter-final to Tomas Berdych last July. "I feel great, I was eager to get onto the court," he said after playing with a flesh-coloured sleeve on his right arm.

"I had a great opponent, it was a test for me to see where I am, how the work we did pays off on court. It worked pretty well." The former world number one, who will be chasing a record seventh Australian Open crown next week, had pulled out of a warm-up tournament in Abu Dhabi, raising concerns over whether he would be fit enough to play at Melbourne Park.

"There was a doubt, especially after I pulled out of the first week of the year," he admitted. "I personally didn't know what's going to happen. We did some treatment and obviously gave it a lot of thought," Djokovic said. "Luckily... I'm here and so I'm hoping in the next four, five days everything will go well and I'll

be ready for the Open." While pleased with his progress, Djokovic—who has dropped to 14 in the world rankings—admitted he still had work to do ahead of the opening Grand Slam of the year.

"I don't want to be over-confident, but I'm very, very happy with how it went today," added the 30-year-old. "I don't say I'm at 100 percent, I can only say that when I get the feel of a tournament. Ideally I would have had another tournament before the start of the Open, but it was not meant to be. "I'll take whatever I can—one or two matches here will be good preparation."

Meanwhile, Spain's world number three Garbine Muguruza was forced out of the Sydney International with an injury following her win over Kiki Bertens yesterday.

A week after retiring from the Brisbane International with cramps, leading Australian Open contender Muguruza had an early medical timeout for a thigh injury before beating Bertens 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

But the win came at a cost. The Wimbledon champion later announced she would be pulling out of the tournament, handing Australian Daria Gavrilova direct passage to the semi-finals. Muguruza's decision comes less than a week out from the Australian Open in Melbourne.

Thiem, who only arrived in Melbourne on Monday night from Doha after four days in bed with a virus, presented only a minimal challenge to the recharged Serb.

"I'm free of fever and healthy again," the Austrian said. "I'm still jet-lagged and was slow at the beginning

of the match. I'll sleep, eat and train and not do too much. I'll be fine for the Open." Australian Matthew Ebden, back on court after an injury-marred 2017, defeated Marin Cilic 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-5 in another match at the exhibition tournament.

World number six Cilic won the opener but found his game not quite up to competitive level as Ebden sneaked out the second set and then won a tight third. Cilic, last year's losing Wimbledon finalist against Roger Federer, heads into his final practice days for the Australian Open content with his form. "The most important thing is to feel the conditions, to get comfortable," he said. "It's important to find a good rhythm. "Overall, I'm quite happy with my level. I was feeling the ball well and hitting cleanly from both sides."

Former Australian Open finalist Marcos Baghdatis of Cyprus beat US Open runner-up Kevin Anderson 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. In a women's tuneup, Hopman Cup winner Belinda Bencic beat 16-year-old Wang Xinyu of China 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

"It was tough... with the wind," the Swiss said. "She's a big hitter and there were not many rallies. You had to play the court and try to hit hard." — AFP



Novak chasing record seventh Australian Open crown

Trail Blazers silence Thunder while Heat edge Raptors

LOS ANGELES: C.J. McCollum scored 27 points and passed off seven assists to lead the Portland Trail Blazers over Oklahoma City 117-106 in an NBA matchup Tuesday. Shabazz Napier added 21 points and Bosnian big man Jusuf Nurkic had 20 for the Trail Blazers (22-18), who edged ahead of the host Thunder (22-19) for fifth place in the Western Conference.

Damian Lillard missed his second game in a row with a strained right calf, Napier starting in his place. "That was a big win. It was for fifth place," McCollum said. "Damian will be coming back any day now. We've got to keep the ship

afloat until he gets back."

McCollum sparked a Portland surge in the third quarter that kept Oklahoma City at bay the rest of the way. "I just try to play at my pace, let the game come to me and when I have to take a big shot I'm not afraid of it," McCollum said. "Guys did a great job of setting me screens and I was able to get to the middle." Russell Westbrook and Paul George each had 22 points to lead the Thunder, with Westbrook adding game highs of 12 assists and nine rebounds, while Carmelo Anthony contributed 19 points and New Zealand center Steven Adams had 16 in a losing cause.

In a thriller at Toronto, Miami's Wayne Ellington scored inside with 0.3 of a second remaining to give the Heat a 90-89 victory. Back-to-back baskets by DeMar DeRozan gave the host Raptors an 87-86 edge with two minutes to play, but Miami's Goran Dragic answered on a driving layup with 19 seconds remaining to lift the Heat ahead 88-87.

But DeRozan, who led the Raptors with 25 points, wasn't finished yet. He answered by tipping in his own miss with three seconds remaining to

put the Raptors in front again, setting up Ellington's clutch heroics.

Slovenian guard Dragic led Miami with 24 points and 12 rebounds while Ellington had 15 points off the bench. Heat reserve Bam Adebayo added 16 and Hassan Whiteside had 13 points and 15 rebounds.

Spanish forward Serge Ibaka of Toronto and Miami forward James Johnson were ejected for throwing punches at each other during a third-quarter altercation that began when the two began wrestling with each other. The Raptors fell to 28-11, second in the Eastern Conference and three games behind Boston, while Miami climbed to 23-17, matching Washington for fourth in the East. German star Dirk Nowitzki and Dennis Smith Jr each scored 20 points to power the Dallas Mavericks over visiting Orlando 114-99. Nowitzki played in his 1,435th NBA game, all with the Mavericks, moving past Karl Malone into second on the all-time list of most games with one club, just 69 games behind John Stockton's record. Malone and Stockton set their marks with the Utah Jazz. — AFP



OKLAHOMA CITY: Shabazz Napier #6 of the Portland Trail Blazers shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2018

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Indian children buy balloons from a street vendor in Jalandhar yesterday. — AFP

Aramco securing cheap loans before IPO

Banks to accept slim returns in hope of more work

DUBAI: Saudi Aramco is working to secure billions of dollars in cheap loans from banks seeking to strengthen their ties with the oil giant before its stock listing, banking and export credit agency (ECA) sources said. Citigroup (Citi), Standard Chartered and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation were advising on the transactions, which two sources said could raise at least \$5 billion to \$6 billion, all with ECA-backing.

The bid to raise funds is the latest indication of Saudi Arabia's push to ensure what could be the world's biggest initial public offering (IPO) goes ahead in 2018, despite market speculation that sale plans might be delayed or even shelved. The loans will offer slim returns - probably less than 1 percent a year - but the sources said the banks hoped to position themselves for more work as the kingdom proceeds with selling up to 5 percent of Aramco in an IPO that could value the firm at \$2 trillion.

For its part, Aramco wants to leverage its balance sheet before the IPO, after which it could face higher costs

because, once listed, it would cease to be a solely state-owned entity benefiting from cheap funds available to



Race to borrow seen as sign IPO still on track

sovereign borrowers.

ECAs offer loan guarantees and sometimes financing to

help remove political and other risks facing exporters, encouraging trade and lowering the costs of international business.

"There's momentum for Aramco to tap this form of financing. If they did it after the IPO, they'd have to pay more," one banker said. Citi was advising Aramco for loans backed by British and US. ECAs, Standard Chartered was advising on ECA funding from continental Europe and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation was advising on transactions backed by Asian ECAs, the sources said.

The bank mandates expire in 2018, one of the sources said. Citi and Standard Chartered declined to comment. Aramco and Sumitomo Mitsui did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The sources said it was difficult to establish Aramco's precise needs due to its extensive spending plans and because the loans would finance both new and existing contracts.

Aramco has already obtained a \$2 billion loan guaran-

teed by the UK Export Finance agency (UKEF). Citi had a lead role on that transaction. It was now looking at deals which could involve the South Korean and Japanese ECAs, and at least one more deal that could involve a European ECA, the sources said. Each of these new loans was likely to be in the range of \$2 billion dollars, the sources added.

The ECA-backed loans would typically come with tenors of up to 10 years at interest rates generally below 1 percent a year, two banking sources said.

Such low costs were determined by the credit quality of the borrower, a sovereign entity, and the structure of ECA-backed deals in which the agencies take part of the risk. But it also indicated the readiness of banks to accept lower returns ahead of the IPO, the sources said. Saudi Aramco has invited banks pitching for roles in its stock market listing, including Citi and Goldman Sachs, to meetings in the kingdom in coming weeks to make their case, banking sources told Reuters this month. —Reuters

Oman inks oil and gas deal with Lebanese company

MUSCAT: Oman has signed a deal for oil and gas exploration with a Lebanese company, one month after Lebanon approved its first offshore energy exploration, state media said yesterday. Beirut-based Petroleb would drill exploratory wells to assess oil reserves in the Al-Alif concession area of southern Oman, inland from the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian borders, said the official ONA news agency. Oman aims to "increase oil reserves and raise production rates in the sultanate" and discover new fields, the oil and gas ministry's director of planning and research Saleh bin Ali Anbouri said in a statement carried by ONA. Like other energy-rich Gulf states, Oman was hit hard by the slump in oil prices since mid-2014 and joined an agreement by oil producers to cut output in a bid to shore up prices.

Revenues are up three percent from last year at an estimated at \$24.7 billion. Spending, however, is projected at \$32.5 billion, seven percent higher than last year, according to the finance ministry. The deal with Petroleb is small by regional standards, with an estimated investment value of \$20 million for Oman in the first three-year phase and between \$20 and \$40 million in the second phase. Lebanon last month approved a bid for offshore oil and gas exploration off its own Mediterranean coast—a vision for years hampered by political instability and domestic wrangling. That deal was awarded to the only bidder, an international consortium including France's Total and Russia's Novatek. —AFP

Unregulated UK company draws Asian investors

LONDON/ABU DHABI: Financial.org, a UK company that describes itself as an education business and sponsors a Formula One team, is managing hundreds of thousands of dollars for Asian investors even though it is not licensed to engage in financial transactions, according to 17 people who say they have invested through the firm.

The 17 people, from China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the UAE, told Reuters they had each given between \$3,000 and \$400,000 to Financial.org to invest.

"I have doubled my investments," said Azmi Tumpang, a former construction worker from Malaysia outside a gala dinner organized by Financial.org on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in late November. Most of the people said their money had been invested in US blue-chip stocks and that they had made a profit. Reuters was unable to verify whether the share transactions took place.

Financial.org is not on a publicly available list of companies authorized and regulated by Britain's financial regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), to buy and sell stocks or bonds for clients. Offering investment services without regulatory permission is a criminal offence in Britain.

Financial.org, which has an office in London's Canary Wharf, declined to comment on whether it acted as an investment firm. The company signed up two years ago with the UK's official company regis-

ter as a real estate business, according to filings. The UK registrar of companies, Companies House, said it was preparing to strike off the firm on Jan. 23 because it had never filed accounts. If a company is struck off, it cannot continue to trade legally and its assets pass to the state.

UK-registered companies must by law be authorized and regulated by the FCA if they deal in securities such as shares and bonds for clients, even if the investors are outside Britain. Under FCA rules, this applies both to principals - parties investing on behalf of clients, and agents - firms including brokers that arrange for investments to take place.

The FCA declined to comment about whether Financial.org was operating illegally. The regulator has previously warned of the dangers of investing through firms it has not authorized, as no independent checks have been made on their businesses. It said it had received reports of more than 8,000 cases of unauthorized businesses in the last financial year.

On the home page of its website, Financial.org says it is an education platform, providing "financial knowledge and skills". "We do not deal with securities and receive any financial benefits from financial products and service providers," it says. However, elsewhere on its site, it also says it "helps members to manage and oversee their investments" and "provides self-directed investors with broker-age services".

Investor alert

The Monetary Authority of Singapore last March placed Financial.org on an investor alert list of "unregulated persons who, based on information received by MAS, may have been wrongly perceived as being licensed or authorized by MAS", its website says. The authority said investors should

"exercise caution" when dealing with companies on the list.

Malaysia's Securities Commission also placed Financial.org on a list of "unauthorized websites/investment products/companies/individuals" last year, according to its website.

The MAS and Malaysian commission both declined to comment on Financial.org and why they had placed it on alert lists. Financial.org declined to comment on the two regulators' warnings.

The company has been a sponsor of British Formula One team Williams since May 2016, and its logo appears on the Williams Mercedes FW38 cars and team strips. Williams declined to comment. Most of the 17 people who spoke to Reuters said they had come into contact with Financial.org through referrals from acquaintances, often via social media. Six said they had received commissions from Financial.org for referring others.

Five of the people detailed how they made investments. They said they deposited money into the bank account of a third party, usually the person who referred them, who then transferred the funds to a Financial.org investment account. The investors said they accessed their Financial.org account with a members-only area in Financial.org's website. Thirteen said they had withdrawn money regularly.

Tumpang said he had invested \$30,000 through Financial.org over the last two years. Mohamad Mohamed Nordin, another Malaysian investor, said he had invested \$400,000. Vietnamese investor Albert Anthony, a fashion business manager, provided a screenshot of his account page which showed he had invested \$100,000. Shella Vinarevi, from Indonesia, said the minimum investment for Financial.org was \$3,000, which she had made. —Reuters

World crude oil markets extend positive momentum into 2018

Renewal of OPEC agreement bolsters investor bullishness

KUWAIT: 2018 has commenced with oil prices at their highest level in more than three years. Both Brent crude, the international benchmark, and West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the US marker, reached levels last Thursday not seen since December 2014—\$68 per barrel (bbl) and \$62/bbl, respectively. The two crude markers gained 18 percent (Brent) and 12.5 percent (WTI) in 2017, which, in Brent's case, was its best annual performance since 2011. WTI, meanwhile, continues to trade at a discount to Brent that is not far off the two-year high spread of \$7 that was recorded last September; the higher Brent-WTI price spread of 2017 has facilitated record US crude exports to international markets after the forty-year moratorium was lifted in late 2015.

Oil prices have been helped in recent weeks by the protests in Iran, the Islamic Republic's most serious since 2009, which has once again re-emphasized the geopolitical risk premium that oil market participants have regularly commanded through the years, and the closure of the Forties pipeline in the North Sea, a key conduit for dated Brent crude. But it is the extension of the OPEC production cut agreement to the end of 2018 that has been the overriding stimulus for the market's bullishness.

OPEC's return to supply management

OPEC, for its part, is entitled to view 2017 with some satisfaction, perhaps even as a watershed year for the fourteen-member group in terms of proactive supply management. By inking a supply cut agreement in one of the most testing and volatile periods in recent times, not only did OPEC confound the critics and naysayers who had long reckoned that the organization's best days were in the past, but it managed to pull it off with a degree of internal unity, discipline and cooperation (especially with oil producers from outside the group) hitherto unheard of.

Compliance among the twelve OPEC members subject to production quotas averaged 97.4 percent over the eleven months of 2017 for which data is available, a very respectable achievement. Indeed, with OPEC aggregate output declining to 32.4 million barrels per day (mb/d) in November, a drop of 130,000 b/d after Saudi Arabia, Angola and Venezuela recorded slightly lower production, compliance reached a record 120 percent in the month.

And the results speak for themselves: oil prices are currently ranging 50 percent above their 2017-low last June; physical markets have visibly tightened, with oil supply undershooting oil demand in every quarter of 2017, thanks to OPEC/non-OPEC's withdrawal of a combined 1.8 mb/d of crude from the markets; and OECD crude and petroleum product stocks have declined to within 100 million barrels of OPEC's five-year rolling average target, having been more than 337 million barrels above the target only fifteen months before.

Of course, in its efforts to rein in a three-and-a-half-year old supply glut, OPEC has been aided by stronger global crude demand growth (+1.5 mb/d in 2017), especially from emerging markets such as China, and a clutch of supply outages, especially among its own members. Libya and Nigeria, for example, have found their efforts to realize sizable output gains hampered by persistent terror attacks on their oil infrastructure, while Venezuela has had to grapple with structurally declining oil production because of cash-flow constraints and chronic underinvestment. Add in some Middle East geopolitical risk to the mix—most recently concerning Iran—and price pressures are firmly on the upside. Indeed, \$60 appears to be the new price floor.

In futures markets, investor bullishness has been evident in the record net long positions being claimed by hedge funds. The shape of the Brent crude forward curve

Chart 2: Brent-WTI spread and US crude oil exports

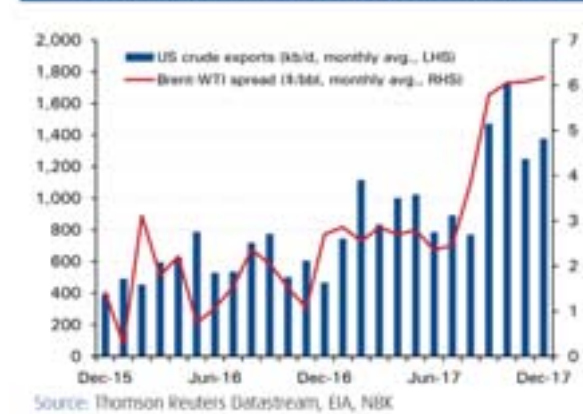
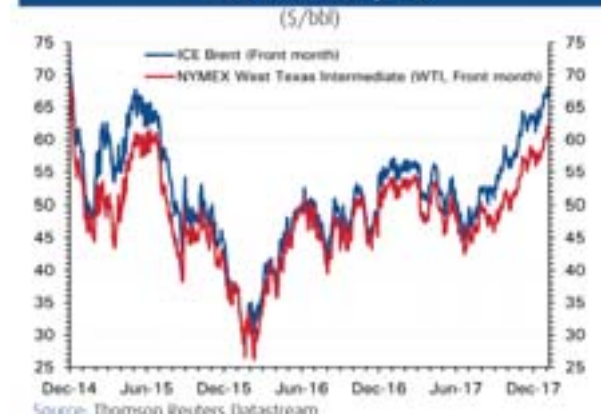


Chart 1: Crude oil prices (\$/bbl)



is also instructive: 2017 was the first year since 2014 in which near-term prices were higher than longer-term prices, a structure known as backwardation. Buyers are placing a premium on contracts for immediate delivery rather than contracts for later delivery that would also involve them incurring additional storage costs.

But with global demand and supply expected to roughly balance in 2018, scope for further stock draws is limited. OPEC recognizes that there is little room for complacency this year, however. With demand growth set to decelerate to 1.3 mb/d from 1.5 mb/d in 2017 and non-OPEC supply growth, led by surging US shale production, expected to more than double to 1.6 mb/d this year from 0.6 mb/d in 2017, the scope for continued stock drawdowns appears limited. Indeed, the International Energy Agency (IEA) projects an average global stock increase of 0.2 mb/d in the first half of

2018 followed by a roughly equal decrease in the second half of the year.

Emerging as a significant spoiler in the outlook for 2018 is, of course, US crude production. And here the IEA, not wanting to be caught flat-footed, has revised up its forecast for US output once again. The agency sees growth of 870,000 b/d in 2018, more than double 2017's estimate of 390,000 b/d. This would contribute more than 75 percent of total non-OPEC supply growth in 2018. US crude output reached 9.78 mb/d at end-2017 and has already surpassed its all-time record of 9.64 mb/d (year-average) set in 1970.

For OPEC, 2018 could shape up to be another important year. Again, much will depend on the group's ability to capitalize on the prevalent bullish sentiment through its own production-cutting efforts and manage the challenge posed by burgeoning US supply in particular.

UK business minister meets Peugeot CEO after Vauxhall plant job cuts

LONDON: Britain's business minister Greg Clark is meeting Peugeot Chief Executive Carlos Tavares on Wednesday in Paris to discuss the firm's Vauxhall car plant, a source told Reuters after the firm announced job cuts, raising concerns about the site's future. Peugeot-maker PSA bought General Motors' loss-making European arm, which operates as Opel on the continent and Vauxhall in Britain, last year and has been pursuing a restructuring plan to return it to profitability.

The French group said in October it would cut 400 jobs at its Ellesmere Port site and on Monday announced a further 250 losses, reducing the workforce by a third to make it more efficient, renewing workers' fears about the future. The source familiar with the matter said Clark and Tavares would discuss a number of issues and yesterday's face-to-face had been planned for some time. "The meeting has been in the diary for a while," the source said. A PSA spokesman confirmed that the meeting was taking place. "Business as usual. Carlos Tavares meets quiet often members of government where the Group operates," he said by email. The firm is due to decide as soon as this year whether to build new cars at the site, in the latest test of Britain's ability to attract investment as it leaves the European Union.

The head of Britain's biggest trade union Len McCluskey is also due to meet Tavares this month and warned that any plans to close the firm's Vauxhall car plant in northern England will cost it sales in Opel-Vauxhall's largest market. "I'm going to France in the next fortnight to meet with Carlos Tavares to tell him that we will not allow PSA to close a healthy UK plant," McCluskey said on Twitter.

"I will make it crystal clear to the PSA boss Carlos Tavares that if there is any attempt to close the Ellesmere Port Vauxhall plant we will make sure their market in the UK is finished for good," he said.

Opel-Vauxhall sold nearly 290,000 vehicles in Britain in 2016 compared with 260,000 in Germany. Peugeot, which is also cutting hours for workers at Opel, has said the job losses at Ellesmere Port are needed to boost efficiency at the plant by reducing it to one shift. Britain's car industry body said last week that 2017 sales across the sector recorded their biggest drop since 2009, blaming plans to increase a levy on new diesel cars and weakening consumer confidence in the wake of Brexit. — Reuters

UK supermarket Sainsbury's lifts outlook after bumper Christmas

LONDON: British supermarket chain Sainsbury's hiked its profits outlook yesterday after logging record sales over the Christmas holiday period. Total sales grew 1.2 percent in the group's third quarter—or 15 weeks to January 6 — compared with a year earlier, Sainsbury's said in a trading update.

The London-listed company also expects to achieve further cost-savings from its 2016 acquisition of catalogue chain Argos. Sainsbury's added that full-year underlying profit before tax was now expected to be "moderately ahead" of expectations.

Analysts had predicted underlying earnings of £559 million (\$757 million, 634 million euros), according to consensus forecasts published last week. "We're pleased with our performance across the group this quarter," said Chief Executive Mike Coupe. "We had a strong Christmas week, with record sales, over 340,000



LONDON: A woman loads goods into her car after shopping at a branch of Sainsbury's supermarket in west London, on Tuesday. — AFP

online grocery orders and stellar growth in Argos fast-track delivery and collection. " Online sales

meanwhile accounted for one fifth of the group's total sales during the period. —AFP

Norway wealth fund wants to invest in unlisted groups

OSLO: Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the largest in the world worth more than \$1 trillion, wants to be able to invest in companies that are not listed

on the stock market, it said in a letter published yesterday. Intended to finance Norway's welfare state when the country's oil runs dry, 65.9 percent of the fund is currently invested in equities, 31.6 percent in bonds and 2.5 percent in real estate.

The Norwegian central bank, in charge of managing the fund, is always on the look-out for ways of diversifying its investments and maximizing its profits. In the letter to the finance ministry, the bank recommended investing in unlisted groups, citing historical data which suggested they could

offer a "slightly higher" return than listed companies. The number of listed companies appears to have declined in recent decades, the bank argued, pointing to a nearly 50-percent drop in the number of American companies listed in the United States since 1996.

In practice, the bank recommended starting with investing in or alongside private equity funds. It is now up to the finance ministry to review the recommendation before submitting a proposal to the parliament, which has the final say. —AFP

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
Bahraini 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
Europe		
British Pound	0.403253	0.410753
Czech Korune	0.006098	0.015398
Danish Krone	0.044370	0.049370
Euro	0.355169	0.362669
Georgian Lari	0.115835	0.115835
Hungarian 0.001074	0.001264	
Norwegian Krone	0.033231	0.038431
Romanian Leu	0.060667	0.077517
Russian ruble	0.005302	0.005302
Slovakia	0.009009	0.019009
Swedish Krona	0.032668	0.037668
Swiss Franc	0.300812	0.311812
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.228029	0.240029
New Zealand Dollar	0.210249	0.219749
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.237010	0.246010
US Dollars	0.298350	0.302770
US Dollars Mint	0.298850	0.302770
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003287	0.003871

Chinese Yuan	0.044923	0.048423
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036575	0.039325
Indian Rupee	0.004156	0.004797
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002607	0.002787
Korean Won	0.000272	0.000287
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071817	0.077817
Nepalese Rupee	0.003018	0.003188
Pakistan Rupee	0.002561	0.002851
Philippine Peso	0.005956	0.006256
Singapore Dollar	0.220878	0.230878
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001735	0.002315
Taiwan	0.010082	0.010262
Thai Baht	0.009045	0.009595
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.795580	0.804080
Egyptian Pound	0.014717	0.020435
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000185	0.000245
Jordanian Dinar	0.421976	0.430976
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000150	0.000250
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022096	0.046096
Omani Riyal	0.779266	0.784946
Qatar Riyal	0.078786	0.083726
Saudi Riyal	0.079567	0.080867
Syrian Pound	0.001282	0.001502
Tunisian Dinar	0.117414	0.125414
Turkish Lira	0.075425	0.085725
UAE Dirhams	0.080921	0.082621
Yemeni Riyal	0.000983	0.001063

Business

World Bank upgrades global growth forecasts as recovery strengthens

Growth expected to hit 3.1% this year, and 3.0% in 2019

WASHINGTON: For the first time in many years, the World Bank's outlook for the global economy is better than expected rather than worse, with all regions seeing improved growth, according to its latest forecast released on Tuesday. However, the bank warns that countries must make investments to improve their growth prospects, and the time to do that is before the next economic crisis hits, as it inevitably will.

"The big story is a good story. Global growth stronger than what we expected," World Bank economist Ayhan Kose told AFP, noting that all the forecasts are better than those in the June edition of the Global Economic Prospects report. Kose, who heads the World Bank's Development Prospects Group—which twice a year prepares the global economic forecasts—notes that the world is seeing "highly synchronized" economic expansion across regions.

That includes solid growth in the "big three" advanced economies—the United States, the eurozone and Japan—and improvements in the important emerging market economies.

In addition, large commodity exporting economies like Russia and Brazil—that were struggling and saw their economies contract in 2016—recovered last year.

Higher growth

Since the last forecast in June, the World Bank has upgraded nearly all of its forecasts, with global economic growth now expected to rise to 3.0 percent for 2017, three-tenths of a point higher than the prior estimate. Growth is expected to hit 3.1 percent this year, and 3.0 percent in 2019. The biggest gains are in advanced economies, which were revised up four-tenths for 2017 and 2018, to 2.3 percent and 2.2 percent, respectively. But for 2019 and 2020, those economies are seen slowing to 1.9 percent and 1.7

percent, the report said. Euro area growth was revised up 0.7 points to 2.4 percent in 2017, and another 0.6 points to 2.1 percent for 2018. The United States saw a smaller upgrade to 2.3 percent last year and 2.2 percent this year, while Japan rebounded to 1.7 percent in 2017 and an expected 1.3 percent this year. The report raised its forecast for China in 2017 by three-tenths to 6.8 percent, and sees 6.4 percent GDP expansion this year.

'Downside risks'

The efforts by central banks to keep interest rates low has helped stabilize the global economy and fueled the recovery, Kose said in an interview. However, "downside risks continue dominating the outlook," he cautioned. He warned that "history will repeat itself," and like all recoveries, "this expansion will end at some point."

Risks include rising debt levels, which are more concerning given that central banks are beginning to raise interest rates and could do so more quickly if the recovery starts to ignite inflation, Kose said.

Another risk are the "escalating trade restrictions." While Kose did not specifically name the United States, President Donald Trump has taken a very aggressive stance on trade policy.

The Republican has targeted China, hitting Beijing with numerous trade complaints, and sought to renegotiate free trade agreements, including the NAFTA pact with Canada and Mexico.

Investment needed

The World Bank said its report was "a clarion call for public action" to prevent growth from slowing.

Kose said increasing the ability of countries to grow faster is "the single most important issue for the global economy." The World Bank recommends a



NEW YORK: People walk past an ATM machine logo near Penn Station on Tuesday in New York. —AFP

combination of improvements in education and health systems; high-quality investment; and labor and business reforms that together "could yield substantial long-run growth dividends and thus contribute to poverty reduction."

Removing obstacles to getting women into the workforce is a key component for many countries, Kose said. Potential growth was 2.5 percent from 2013 to 2017, 0.6 percentage points below its average a

decade ago, with an even steeper decline in emerging market and developing countries, the bank said.

That decline is expected to widen further without investment. "To arrest and possibly reverse this decline in potential growth, emerging market and developing economies need to accelerate investment in both physical and human capital," the World Bank said. "Today, the costs of neglecting these principles have gone sky-high." —AFP

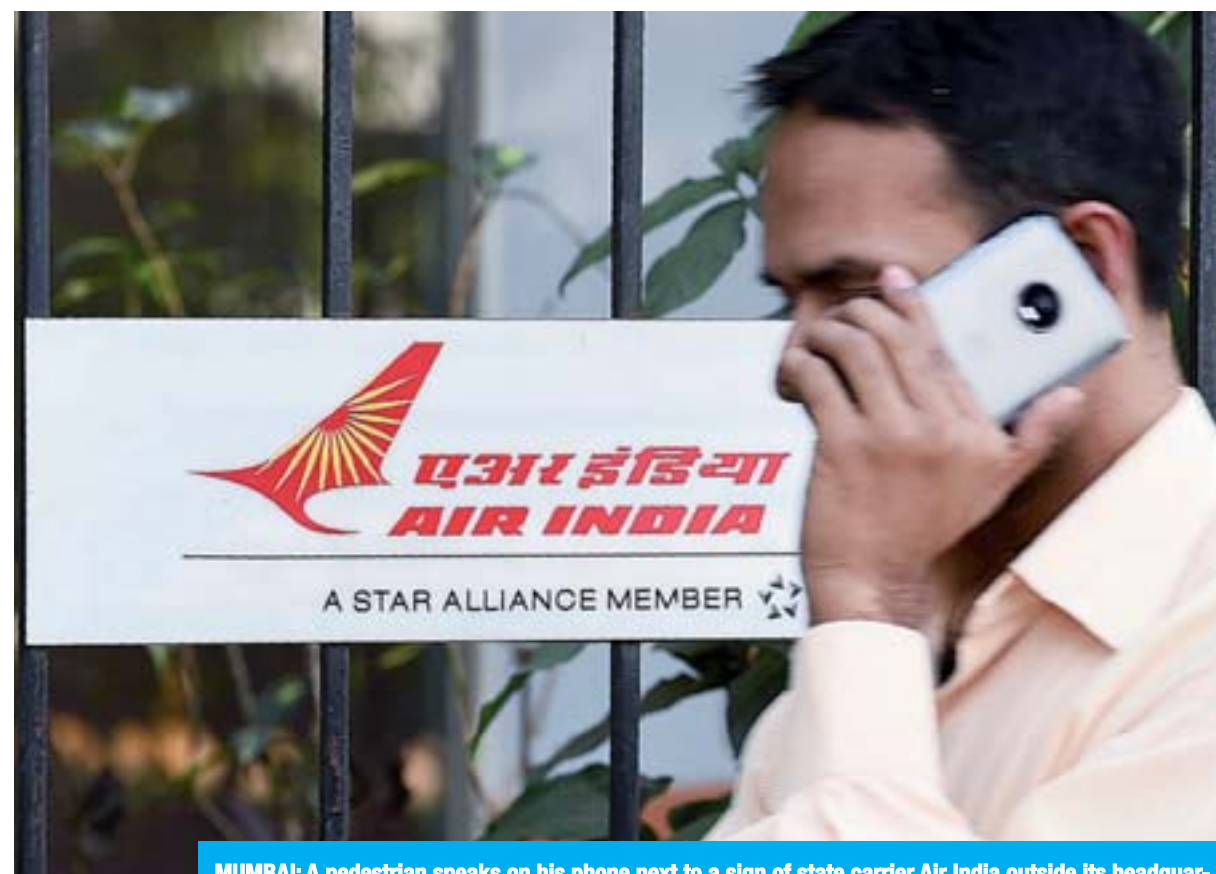
India allows 49% foreign investment in state-run airline

NEW DELHI: Foreign airlines will be able to buy up to 49 percent of Air India under new rules approved by the government yesterday to boost the debt-laden flag carrier.

Once the country's monopoly airline, Air India has slowly lost market share to new low-cost private players in one of the world's fastest-growing airline markets. The government said last June it was open to selling a stake in the state-owned airline, which has developed a reputation for delays, cancellations and poor service. Yesterday the cabinet rubber-stamped plans to allow foreign airlines to invest up to 49 percent in Air India, subject to government approval. That was part of a series of moves to relax restrictions on foreign investment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing government has sought to encourage foreign companies to invest in India since coming to power in 2014.

The cabinet also cleared plans to automatically allow 100 percent foreign investment in single-brand retailers. Previously, this required special government approval.

Air India ran losses for nearly a decade after a botched merger in 2007 and has debts of around \$7.67 billion according to government figures. It has received a \$5.8 billion in bailout funds from the government but still needs more working capital to turn it around.



MUMBAI: A pedestrian speaks on his phone next to a sign of state carrier Air India outside its headquarters in Mumbai yesterday. —AFP

India has the world's fastest growing passenger airline industry, expanding at an annual rate of around 20 percent. Experts say India's aviation sec-

tor holds vast untapped potential, with just 100 million of its 1.2 billion people taking to the skies in 2016. —AFP

Macron urges European unity to face rising China

BEIJING: French President Emmanuel Macron pleaded yesterday for European unity in the face of China's growing economic power as he wrapped up a visit to Beijing with several business deals.

Macron, who has become the leading voice of the European Union, endorsed President Xi Jinping's massive \$1 trillion programme to revive ancient Silk Road trading routes during his three-day trip.

But the French leader also warned Europeans to stay on guard to protect strategic sectors as China makes inroads through the project, known in Beijing as One Belt One Road, which seeks to build rail, maritime and road links from Asia to Europe and Africa.

"We must come up with a common position at the European level" regarding the Silk Road, Macron told a press conference.

"We can't disregard this initiative. It would mean dealing with its consequences and would be a profound strategic mistake," he said, while noting that Europeans are

divided about the Silk Road revival. "Some countries are much more open to Chinese interests, sometimes at the cost of a European interest. We can't blame them for that because we have forced very tough privatizations on them," Macron said.

Greece, for example, has sold the port of Piraeus to China and is a major recipient of Chinese largesse. In June, Athens blocked an EU declaration condemning Chinese human rights abuses. But "China cannot respect a continent where some member states open every door, where it is easy to buy essential infrastructure. So when France or Europe defends its strategic sectors, it's good for us and for dialogue," Macron said. The French leader has staked a claim as the EU's most prominent leader as Britain prepares to exit the bloc next year and German Chancellor Angela Merkel is embroiled in post-election coalition talks.

Human rights brushed aside

While he pressed France's concerns about its trade deficit with China, Macron came away with the last minute announcement of a Chinese commitment to buy 184 single-aisle A320 planes from European aviation giant Airbus. The value of the deal was not immediately disclosed, but at list prices for the single-aisle planes it could total at least \$18 billion.

Airbus had already announced on Tuesday an agreement to increase production of the A320 in China.



BEIJING: French President Emmanuel Macron shakes hands with high school students of the French international school Charles de Gaulle of Beijing during a visit to the China Academy of Space Technology yesterday. —AFP

Other business deals were made during the visit, including one for French state energy giant Areva to help build a nuclear spent fuel reprocessing plant in China. In another breakthrough, China agreed to lift an embargo on French beef within six months.

Macron and Xi also saw eye-to-eye on the battle against climate change, with both voicing their commitment to the Paris accord in the face of US President Donald Trump's

pledge to withdraw from the pact. But the French leader defended his decision to avoid condemning China's

human rights record in public, adding he and his Chinese counterpart had discussed the issue behind closed doors. "I can entertain myself by giving China lessons while talking to the French media," he said. "It has been done before. It doesn't produce any results." —AFP

German union IG Metall to step up strike action

FRANKFURT: Powerful German union IG Metall said it would step up industrial action ahead of a round of negotiations with employers as it pushes for higher wages and the right to shorter hours for 3.9 million German workers. "We have started with warning strikes and will widen them in the coming days," IG Metall chief Joerg Hofmann told German daily Passauer Neue Presse in an interview published yesterday.

In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia alone, the industrial heartland of Germany, more than 20,000 workers at companies including industrial group Thyssenkrupp and automotive supplier Benteler have been called on to strike yesterday, according to a spokesman for IG Metall.

To the south in Bavaria, rallies are planned at firms including engineering group Siemens.

Around 80,000 German industrial workers have taken action since the start of last week in support of IG Metall's wage claims, and further walkouts have been announced for today.

With the economy in robust health and unemployment at record lows, the country's biggest union is demanding an inflation-busting 6 percent pay hike this year. It has also called for a right to reduce weekly hours to 28 from 35 and return to full-time employment after two years for shift workers and those who need to care for children or elderly relatives.

Employers have so far offered 2 percent plus a one-off 200 euro (\$239) payment in the first quarter and have rejected demands for a shorter work week unless hours could be increased temporarily as well.

Social responsibility

Under the current proposal, companies would need to hire part-time workers to make up for those who cut their hours, the head of regional employers' group Nordmetall said in an interview.

"Where am I supposed to find them when there's a lack of skilled workers?" Nico Fickinger asked on German radio station NDR Info. The union has meanwhile made it clear it is drawing a line in the sand regarding the right to shorter working hours, saying employers had a social responsibility to contribute to issues related to health and family.

Hofmann told Passauer Neue Presse that the additional cost to employers could be around 1 percent of overall wage costs. Talks between unions and employers' associations are set for Thursday in the southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, where Volkswagen's Porsche, Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler and automotive suppliers including Bosch are based.

Next door in Bavaria, home to companies such premium carmaker BMW and truck maker MAN, negotiations will resume on Jan. 15, and to the north in North Rhine-Westphalia on Jan. 18. —Reuters

Business

US stocks fall as bond yields jump

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks retreated early yesterday as worries about rising interest rates threatened to end the market's nearly unbroken streak of new records in 2018.

About 15 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had fallen to 25,296.92, down 0.4 percent from Tuesday's record close. The broad-based S&P 500 also 0.4 percent to 2,740.97, as did the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index which was down to 7,132.74.

All three indices finished at records on Tuesday, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq hitting all-time highs for the sixth straight day. Analysts cited reports suggesting China could curtail its US Treasury purchases as a catalyst for Wednesday's spike in yields on US debt. And with the Federal Reserve expected to raise the benchmark interest rate three times this year as the economy strengthens, higher rates are a worry for stock markets because they can draw funds out of equities and into bonds, and because higher lending prices can crimp economic activity.

But some analysts have been warning that stocks

were unlikely to continue to rise steadily, particularly during earnings season for US companies. The pullback due to higher rates is "an important development that bears close watching, yet let's not forget either that the stock market is overdue for a pullback of some kind after launching out of the gate in 2018," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

US airline shares rose after American Airlines and United Continental reported better-than-expected financial performance during the key holiday season.

Dollar slumps

The dollar slumped yesterday following a report that China may slow or halt its purchases of US government bonds, with Wall Street stocks also opening lower. Bloomberg News reported that officials reviewing China's foreign-exchange holdings have recommended slowing or halting purchases of US Treasuries, citing people familiar with the matter. The dollar tumbled against the euro, which shot up above \$1.20, and against the yen. "If the reports turn out to be true and China no longer sees Treasuries as an attractive option, the reper-

cussions could be significant as the country is one of the biggest holders of US debt," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at currency trading firm OANDA.

Fewer Chinese purchases of US bonds would likely see interest rates paid to attract buyers climb higher, and thus the US Federal Reserve would have less need to hike rates.

"The tightening effect of such measures would likely have an impact on how many times the Federal Reserve raises interest rates this year, which is why we've seen a corresponding drop in the dollar," said Erlam. Wall Street stocks, after closing at record highs on Tuesday, fell at the open. The Dow shed 0.3 percent in the first minute of trading.

Meanwhile in Europe, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index hit a record intra-day high of 7,756.11 points. Later around 1330 GMT, it was up 0.1 percent at 7,741.11.

In the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 dropped 1.0 percent and the Paris CAC 40 shed 0.4 percent. Elsewhere, a rally across Asia that welcomed in 2018 looked to have run out of steam with most markets slip-

ping into the red on profit-taking, but Hong Kong rose for a 12th day as share prices in energy groups climbed against a backdrop of firming oil prices.

Hong Kong's main stocks index is now less than 900 points off its record high of 31,958.41 hit in October 2007. Shanghai finished up 0.2 percent, a ninth straight advance, but Tokyo ended 0.3 percent down.

Firm oil prices

Despite the losses on broader markets, energy firms stood out as oil mostly pushed higher. Crude has more than doubled from its lows below \$30 in early 2016, supported by an output freeze deal between OPEC and Russia and, recently, tensions in the oil-rich Middle East. Market-watchers say unrest in key producer Iran could dent the country's capacity, while others point out that any suppression of protests by Tehran could also lead Trump to reimpose export sanctions.

Oil futures have won support this week also from data showing a huge drop in US stockpiles as a big freeze in the northeast of the country fans demand for heating fuel. —AFP

National Bank of Kuwait		البنك الوطني						
Financial Markets		NBK						
Daily Report		At 02:00 PM Previous Day						
Global Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Dow Jones	25,283.00	25,385.80	102.80	▲	0.41	2.70		
NASDAQ	7,157.39	7,163.58	6.19	▲	0.09	3.77		
S&P 500	2,747.71	2,751.29	3.58	▲	0.13	2.92		
Financial Times	7,731.02	7,719.46	-11.56	▼	-0.15	0.41		
DAX	13,385.59	13,254.12	-131.47	▼	-0.98	2.60		
CAC 40	5,523.94	5,490.60	-33.34	▼	-0.60	3.35		
Swiss	9,611.61	9,535.20	-76.41	▼	-0.79	1.63		
Nikkei 225	23,849.99	23,788.20	-61.79	▼	-0.26	4.50		
Topix	1,889.29	1,892.11	2.82	▲	0.15	4.10		
Hang Seng	31,011.41	31,073.72	62.31	▲	0.20	3.86		
Straits Times	3,524.65	3,520.45	-4.20	▼	-0.12	3.45		
MENA Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Kuwait	6,518.99	6,525.23	6.24	▲	0.10	1.70		
Saudi Arabia	7,290.96	7,296.82	5.86	▲	0.08	0.89		
Dubai	3,503.44	3,499.36	-4.08	▼	-0.12	3.96		
Abu Dhabi	4,593.11	4,579.74	-13.37	▼	-0.29	4.43		
Bahrain	1,315.17	1,317.81	2.65	▲	0.20	-1.24		
Qatar	9,002.46	9,048.17	45.71	▲	0.51	5.62		
Oman	5,106.28	5,099.53	-6.75	▼	-0.13	0.14		
Lebanon	1,160.16	1,154.16	-6.00	▼	-0.52	1.01		
Jordan	2,120.80	2,121.02	0.22	▲	0.01	-0.28		
Egypt	15,159.37	15,201.77	42.40	▲	0.28	0.93		
Morocco	12,504.46	12,548.23	43.77	▲	0.35	1.29		
Tunisia	6,268.78	6,237.69	-31.09	▼	-0.50	-0.21		
Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.3187	3.2987	2.7473	2.4332	3.2195	367.28	4.1941
Saudi Riyal	0.08118		0.2678	0.2230	0.1975	0.2614	29.81	0.3405
US Dollar	0.30315	3.7344		0.8328	0.7376	0.9760	111.34	1.2715
Euro	0.36399	4.4839	1.2007		0.8859	1.1721	133.72	1.5270
Sterling Pound	0.41098	5.0627	1.3557	1.1288		1.3236	150.97	1.7243
Swiss Franc	0.31060	3.8262	1.0246	0.8532	0.7555		114.10	1.3027
Japanese Yen	0.00272	0.0335	0.0090	0.0075	0.0066	0.0088		0.0114
Australian Dollar	0.23843	2.9371	0.7865	0.6549	0.5799	0.7676	87.57	
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30315	3.7344	0.3742	3.6270	0.3835	3.6571	17.6300
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2987		12.3187	1.2343	11.9644	1.2649	12.0637	58.1560
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08118		0.1002	0.9712	0.1027	0.9793	4.7210
Bahraini Dinar	2.6725	0.81017	9.9802		9.6932	1.0248	9.7736	47.1164
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08358	1.0296	0.1032		0.1057	1.0083	4.8608
Omani Riyal	2.6079	0.79059	9.7389	0.9758	9.4589		9.5374	45.9773
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08289	1.0211	0.1023	0.9918	0.1049		4.8208
Egyptian Pound	0.0567	0.01720	0.2118	0.0212	0.2057	0.0217	0.2074	
Global Interest Rates								
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year			
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.38	1.69	1.88	2.06	2.38			
US Dollar	1.46	1.55	1.70	1.86	2.14			
Euro	-0.42	-0.40	-0.38	-0.32	-0.25			
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.49	0.52	0.57	0.77			
Swiss Franc	-0.79	-0.79	-0.73	-0.64	-0.52			
Australian Dollar	1.58	1.70	1.69	1.70	1.77			
Japanese Yen	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	0.03	0.12			
Global Bond Yields								
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year				
United States	1.97	2.34	2.58	2.93				
Europe	-0.63	-0.20	0.47	1.32				
United Kingdom	0.52	0.79	1.29	1.83				
Commodities								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Kuwait Oil	65.10	66.14	1.04	▲	1.60	2.50		
Brent	69.92	70.75	0.83	▲	1.19	4.06		
West Texas	62.97	62.87	-0.10	▼	-0.16	3.99		
Gold	1312.58	1325.02	12.44	▲	0.95	0.76		
Silver	16.95	17.18	0.23	▲	1.33	0.01		

China factory gate inflation slows to 13-month low

BEIJING: China's factory inflation slowed to a 13-month low in December, official data showed yesterday, a sign of continued fragility in the world's second-largest economy.

The producer price index (PPI) — an important barometer of the industrial sector which measures the cost of goods at the factory gate — rose 4.9 percent year-on-year in December, its lowest rate since November 2016, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

This marked a sharp slowdown from the 5.8 percent year-on-year rise in November and 6.9 percent rise in October, but was slightly higher than the 4.8 percent increase forecast by a Bloomberg News survey of economists. NBS analyst Sheng Guoqing said the drop was due to declines in five major industries: oil and natural gas mining, ferrous metal smelting, oil processing, non-ferrous metal smelting, and coal mining.

A further decline in the PPI-highly correlated with earnings growth among indebted industrial firms — would "push the People's (central) Bank to ease monetary policy over the course of this year," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, analyst at Capital Economics, in a note.

But David Qu of ANZ Research said he expected producer prices to hold up, since "China's capacity reduction program for steel and coal will likely be completed



BEIJING: A man with a child carries bags of vegetables as he walks through a market after shopping in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

in 2018 and extended to other sectors."

Meanwhile, the consumer price index (CPI) — a main gauge of retail inflation — rose 1.8 percent year-on-year, up from 1.7 percent in November and just below the Bloomberg forecast of 1.9 percent. Month-on-month, the CPI rose 0.3 percent, which the NBS's Sheng attributed to the rising prices of fresh foods like fruit and eggs and energy such as gas and diesel during a period of cold weather.

"We expect food prices to continue to push up consumer price inflation during the coming months," said Evans-Pritchard. Moderate inflation can be a boon to consumption as it pushes buyers to act before prices go up, while falling prices encourage shoppers to delay purchases and companies to put off investment, both of which can hurt growth.

Raymond Yeung, chief greater China economist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group, told Bloomberg News that he expected the PPI to rise by 4.8 percent in 2018, and for the CPI to pick up in January.

"Given the cold weather in the recent weeks, energy prices are supportive... China's inflation outlook will pick up gradually," he said. Full-year data from the NBS showed a 6.3 percent rise in the PPI, ending a five-year decline, and a 1.6 percent rise in the CPI for 2017.

The latter figure falls well within government targets, as Chinese policymakers said in March that they hoped to keep retail inflation for the year at around 3 percent. Food prices marked their first decline since 2003 in 2017, falling 1.4 percent. —AFP

26 new winners included 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 yesterday. 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 traveling, 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 Saud Humoud Al-Mutairi.

25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Amshah Rahaim Theiban Al-Shamari, Waleed Hasan Awadh Mohammad, Nawal Mubarak Saad Al Azmi, Amal Hamad Khalaf Alfuraih Al Daihani, Abbas Ali Rajab Al Khabbaz,



Jameelah Hanania Enestas, Adel Ali Al Azmi, Zainab Abdulqader Esmail, Yasmin Abbas Bahay, Thuwaini Shaker Al Meshaleh, Fatema Faleh Baroun, Hussain Ali Al Sanea, Zainab Qali Nourouz, Ali Hasan Ali Mohammad, Husni Abbas A Wahab, Saleh Abdalrab Bin Najj, Wajeeh Haleem Jerjes, Abdullatef Salah Al Ateeqi, Sayedali Mahdi Ali, Sameera Ebrahim Ali, Nazeeha Shaikh A.Husain, A.Qassim A.Ghaffar Mohammed, Muneera Sayed Sabt, Khadija Abdulla Hasan and Ebrahim Baba Jan.

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.

UK trade deficit worsens, sparking new Brexit concern

LONDON: Britain's trade deficit has risen to a five-month high, official data showed yesterday sparking concern over looming Brexit talks. The deficit in goods and services, the gap between exports and imports, widened in November by \$0.5 billion to a five-month high of £2.8 billion, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. However, the ONS also revealed that industrial output rebounded 0.4 percent in November compared with activity in October, aided by a strong energy sector.

Meanwhile this year, divorce talks between Britain and the European Union are set to move on to trade, transition arrangements and security, as London prepares to leave the bloc in March 2019. "This trade data won't exactly help UK plc in negotiations with Europe, as we begin crucial trade talks in earnest this year and with the Brexit deadline looming large," said Jacob Deppe, head of trading at online trading platform Infinox. "Further negative trade balances will undoubtedly be used by Brexiters to justify the need to strike new trading relationships around the world. "But in reality they only help to highlight the weaknesses within the UK economy, which are bound to be exploited in negotiations both with Europe and other potential trading partners post-Brexit." —AFP

US import prices post smallest gain in five months

WASHINGTON: US import prices recorded their smallest increase in five months in December and underlying imported price pressures were muted amid declining costs for food and consumer goods.

The Labor Department said yesterday import prices edged up 0.1 percent last month after an upwardly revised 0.8 percent rise in November. That was the smallest gain since July and was well below economists' expectations for a 0.5 percent increase. Import prices were previously reported to have increased 0.7 percent in November. In the 12 months through December, prices increased 3.0 percent, slowing from November's 3.3 percent jump. They rose 3.0 percent in 2017, the biggest calendar year increase since 2011, after advancing 1.9 percent in 2016.

Business

NBK runs largest network of NBK Tap & Pay enabled POS terminals

Bank has over 6,900 POS terminals out of 11,200 existing ones

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to introduce innovative payment solutions through the NBK Tap & Pay, available for wristbands and stickers, placing it as one of the most advanced non-traditional payment technologies in Kuwait and the Gulf, giving customers the ability to pay with a simple tap at POS terminals.

With the largest network NBK Tap & Pay terminals in Kuwait comprising of 6,900 terminals, NBK allows users to pay with a tap by using the wristband, sticker, credit or debit cards, or pre-paid cards to make secure payments at restaurants and retail stores, adapting to the lifestyle of customers.

Sanad Al-Shatti, Senior Manager-Products, Consumer Banking Group at NBK said: "NBK Tap & Pay service has seen an unprecedented response from youth as it suits their lifestyle, and saves them time and effort by using an innovative service that is designed with the latest banking technology and highest standards of safety and privacy."

Al-Shatti added: "The service enables customers to let go of their money wallet and other banking cards thanks to a secure and easy-to-use payment solution that utilizes NBK Tap &

Pay wristband and sticker. The new service complies with international security standards, further strengthening the Bank's position as one of the 50 most secure banks in the world."

Al-Shatti also said that the NFC technology in the wristband and sticker allows customers to



Service that meets the lifestyle of the youth

easily make payments for daily purchases that do not exceed KID10 by simply tapping them to the NBK Tap & Pay enabled POS terminals, without the need to enter a PIN code or sign a receipt. As for payments ranging from KID10 and KID100, customers can use the NBK Tap & Pay service by tapping the POS terminal and entering their PIN Code.

He continued saying that customers receive points to their NBK rewards program when using the NBK Tap & Pay wristband, sticker and cards at more than 700 participating stores. NBK's online and mobile services also allow customers to complete their banking transactions in the place and time that suits their needs.

The NBK Tap & Pay service comes as part of NBK's continued efforts to provide customers with the best international banking products and services, using the latest technology and offering a superior banking experience without compromising on the security of customer's accounts and the confidentiality of their information.

Al-Shatti added that NBK cards also provide free travel insurance, covering a total value of US\$1 million as part of the Bank's endeavors to provide convenience and safety to its customers when travelling.

He pointed out that customers are always notified by SMS of changes to their bank account or credit card, and are immediately answered to through the NBK WhatsApp service. Free international call service is also offered through the Bank's telephone service to eight



countries, in addition to ATMs, cash deposits and other banking products and services. Award-winning NBK is committed to developing products and services that suit the different

lifestyles of customers for the present and the future. For more information about the NBK Tap & Pay and the Bank's innovative products and services, please visit NBK.com.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds makes historic gain with 200 showrooms globally



KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the BIG 5 jewelry retailers globally, is opening 11 new showrooms across six countries in one single day - Friday, January 12, 2018 - including eight in the Gulf region, taking the total number of outlets to 208 spread across nine countries.

This is for the first time that an Indian jewelry retailer has been opening such a large number of showrooms spread across six nations in a single day. The new showrooms would be located in Al-Khail Mall, Al-Hazana Lulu, Al-Buhaira Lulu, Sahara Centre, Ajman City Centre in the UAE, Mall of Qatar, Lagoona Mall in Qatar, Muscat City Centre in Oman, AMK Hub in Singapore, Ampang Mall in Malaysia, and Warrangal in Telangana, India.

"The opening of 11 showrooms in a single day across six countries reflects our strong conviction and confidence in the overall growth of the gold and diamond sector, despite challenging circumstances in certain markets. We are getting wide acceptance in the global market place. This is also one of the reasons we are expanding our global presence. Our core business values such as adherence to transparency, honesty, quality along with our value added services, product designs that suited to every class of customers' taste cutting across age group are the key factors that give us global acceptance.

"MP Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group, told the media at a packed press conference in Dubai. Currently, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has 197 showrooms of which 90 showrooms are in India and other 107 showrooms abroad. The rapid expansion of showrooms across geographies is part of the Group's strategy to fast expand its global footprint. In FY2017 alone, Malabar Group has opened 27 showrooms across nations.

"Despite the bull-run of crypto-currency, introduction of GST in India and VAT in UAE and Saudi Arabia, we believe that the gold and

diamond trade will sustain growth in the long run and will remain as the best commodity for investment and as a saving instrument in addition to being used as jewelry. As consumers adjust to the new tax regimes in different countries, we believe, the market will record stronger growth as people adjust their budgets for ornaments," added Abdul Salam KP, Group Executive Director of Malabar Group.

"In 2018, we will be opening more showrooms as well as manufacturing units. This will fuel our vision to become the top jewelry retailer in the world," Shamlal Ahammed, Managing Director of Malabar Gold & Diamonds' International Operations, said. "In 2018, we will be expanding into new horizons, marking our presence in countries such as the US, Sri Lanka, Brunei, and Bangladesh. As part of its global expansion plans, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will be opening another 50 showrooms in this year in different formats in various countries."

It has decided to organize a grand ceremony at Lulu Al Hazana in Sharjah to celebrate crossing the milestone of 200 showrooms globally.

The upcoming showrooms of the group are at Mannarkad (Kerala), Abbasiya (Kuwait), Himayat Nagar (Hyderabad), Kondapur (Hyderabad), Mall of Travancore (Kerala), Noida (UP), South Extension (Delhi), Vashi (Mumbai), Ludhiana (Punjab), Rajkot (Gujarat) and Karim Nagar (Telangana).

In India, the company currently operates manufacturing units in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Bengal and in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE.

Asher O, Managing Director - India Operations of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said, "The group is planning to set up more showrooms as well as manufacturing units in the country, eventually generating more employment opportunities and enhancing initiatives like 'Make in India' being implemented by the government of India.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Ranjan Kumar Garg as the lucky winner of the Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win a Nissan Patrol SUV every month. With every KD 10 available in the account, the customer receives one chance to enter the draw.

The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest



by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified fund-

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

GCC markets outlook remains muted mainly due to adjustments to low oil price

KUWAIT: Marmore MENA Intelligence, a subsidiary of Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz", recently released its outlook on GCC Stock & Debt Markets for the full year of 2018. In this research report, Marmore analyses the performance of GCC stock & debt markets in 2017 and provides an outlook for 2018 based on economic factors, corporate earnings potential, valuation attraction, market liquidity and financing needs, for each individual country.

Despite the strengthening global economy, the 2018 outlook for the GCC region remains muted mainly owing to the adjustments to the low oil price. While we continue to be negative on Qatar and Bahrain, we remain neutral on all other GCC markets. Among the evaluation factors, market liquidity is the weakest link for all GCC markets with multi year lows. Efforts to prop up liquidity has failed so far. The spill-overs from the low oil price environment and resulting fiscal adjustments continue to weigh down the non-oil growth in the region. Though the oil price recovered during 2017, the fiscal consolidation efforts and subdued business sentiment, sovereign ratings downgrade, along with increasing geopolitical risk on account of Qatar's diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain and Saudi Arabia corruption purge in the region were some of the major themes that influenced the regional economies and stock market performance in 2017.

Kuwait - Neutral

Kuwait turned out to be the star performer in the region, with Kuwait Price Index closing 11.5% up, while Kuwait Weighted Index gained 5.6% during 2017. The market enjoyed its strong performance in the first half of the year, in anticipation of the country's elevation to secondary emerging market in FTSE Russell's indexes. Additionally, private consumption started recovering in 2017, resulting in improved confidence. The same has reflected in the 9-month corporate earnings which increased by 16 percent to \$4.5 billion in 2017 compared to \$3.8 billion in 2016.

In terms of valuation, Kuwait is trading at a Price-to-Earnings (P/E) ratio of 15.2 only lower to Saudi Arabia in the region. Kuwait has been enjoying a multi-year high level of

participation from the foreign institutions and GCC investors. This we believe could have led to some overheating of the Kuwaiti market resulting in high valuation.

Kuwait announced its entry into the international bond market scene in 2017 with two bond offerings and priced them competitively against other GCC sovereigns. Kuwait's issuance came in two tranches - a \$3.5 billion, 5-year tranche priced at 75 basis points (bps) over equivalent US treasuries and a \$4.5 billion, 10-year tranche priced at 100 bps over US treasuries.

Saudi Arabia - Neutral

During 2017, the market rose marginally by 0.2 percent to close at 7,226, compared to the gain of 4.4 percent during 2016. This lackluster performance materialized despite elevated oil prices. Crude oil benchmark, IPE Brent rose by



17.7 percent in 2017. Sectorial heavy weights such as energy and telecom remained in the red registering declines of around 14 percent and 15 percent, respectively, while banks remained in the positive territory at 8.2 percent in 2017. Profitability edged higher in the Q3, 2017 rising by around 19 percent Y/Y and 28 percent Q/Q for Saudi corporates, making it the highest quarterly earnings since Q2 2014. Optimism on Saudi Arabian stocks was high ahead of the decision by index providers, MSCI and FTSE, regarding the inclusion of KSA market into emerging markets index. However, Saudi Arabia failed to accomplish the same. MSCI is to consider adding Saudi Arabia to key index during 2019. Saudi Arabia continued to lead the way for IPO activity in the region, with an increasing number of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) being listed. Including both Tadawul and Parallel Market (NOMU), there were 18 IPOs, raising approximately USD 1.2bn in 2017.

Saudi Arabia's 2018 budget may be its largest ever, as the Kingdom is prepared to increase spending to record levels next year

to USD 261 billion. However, the positive outcome of the spending would largely depend on the quality of spending. Despite the expansionary spending the economy is expected to grow at a slower pace. The introduction of VAT is expected to have inflationary effect on the economy and consumption could take a hit, affecting the earnings potential of the companies. Moreover, in terms of valuation, the current support provided by domestic institutional investors backed by Public Investment Fund, has held the market from receding. We opine, the current valuation of the Saudi Arabia market is at premium and doesn't reflect the investor sentiment, given the uncertain growth outlook.

Out of the six GCC nations, Saudi Arabia undoubtedly has issued the most number of debt issues in 2017 totaling \$12.5 billion on the international market. Saudi Arabian authorities have hinted that they plan to raise most of their funds through the domestic route and only the remainder from international issuances. These debt issuances are expected to keep at bay the extreme draw-downs on the government's foreign reserves; it fell by almost 29 percent in 2016 but looks to be on stabilizing path in 2017 with the international issuances.

UAE - Neutral

In 2017, Dubai and Abu Dhabi stock markets lost 4.6 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively. Almost all sector indices on Abu Dhabi and Dubai closed negatively with the exception of banking, services and insurance indices in Dubai, which were marginally positive. Consumer staples, telecommunications and real estate & construction sector indices across Dubai and Abu Dhabi were the top decliners during 2017.

For the nine months of 2017, corporate earnings were up by 2 percent compared to the nine months in 2016. In 2018, UAE's GDP growth is expected to recover marginally, supported largely by the growth in the non-hydrocarbon sector. The expected improvement in oil prices and its positive effects on the sentiment and financial conditions, dampen the negative effects of fiscal consolidation. Moreover, the megaproject implementation speeds ahead of Dubai's hosting of Expo 2020.

Implementation of VAT is not expected to adversely affect growth, but will increase revenues by 1 percent of GDP (according to the Minister of Economy). These challenges are expected to restrain the corporate profitability. Though the UAE markets are relatively cheap and are currently trading at a discount to both EM and MENA, we believe there is absence of catalysts for the market.

Technology

With new pricey electric car, Fisker eyes major comeback

'A new take on the future of a luxury sedan'

LAS VEGAS: Henrik Fisker unveiled his \$129,000 electric luxury car Tuesday, in a rebooted effort by the renowned auto designer to take on Tesla and other luxury automakers. The Fisker EMotion, which made its debut at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, is part of a comeback effort for Henrik Fisker, a former BMW and Aston Martin designer whose first venture was halted in 2013 after selling only a few thousand vehicles.

This time, the company Fisker Inc. is pulling out all the stops for the vehicle, designed with butterfly doors and a sleek sports-car look, semi-autonomous driving, and a range of some 400 miles on a single charge. The car, which is still two years from deliveries, "is a new take on the future of a luxury sedan," Fisker told AFP on the CES show floor. Fisker said the features such as the extended driving range "will make even people sitting on the fence (about electric cars) look at it."

The new effort nonetheless faces an uphill battle in an industry where Tesla is showing rapid growth and other rivals from major automakers to startups—including one other making a debut at the tech show—are producing new electric cars. Fisker is also working on its own battery technology aimed at improving range and speeding the charging time. He hopes to have a charging system that can enable an extra 125 miles in nine min-

utes. The company is also working on a solid state battery that Fisker maintained could achieve a full charge in one minute.

Taking on Tesla

Like Tesla, Fisker is also working on a more affordable vehicle that would be priced around \$40,000 after the Emotion. And it has designed a self-driving shuttle bus called the Orbit that could also launch in the next few years. Partnering with Fisker is California-based technology firm Quanergy, which is developing the LIDAR used for autonomous driving.

The Emotion uses five LIDAR sensors integrated into the body and "it's the only LIDAR with no moving parts," said Quanergy CEO Louay Eldada. The launch by Fisker's new company comes after a high-profile bankruptcy by Fisker Automotive. Before launching his own venture and the Fisker Karma, Fisker designed vehicles including the BMW Z8 and Aston Martin DB89.

Other firms at CES appear to be making a play for Tesla clients with electric vehicles with autonomous capabilities. China-based startup Byton announced this week it planned to launch a \$45,000 electric car featuring a "digital" lounge with a panoramic display acting as a hub for navigation, entertainment and even monitoring the health of its occupants. Last year, Chinese-backed



LAS VEGAS: Henrik Fisker, founder, Chairman and CEO of Fisker Inc., speaks next to a Fisker EMotion all-electric vehicle that uses LIDAR technology at CES. — AFP

Faraday Future unveiled its premium electric vehicle but since then have offered few clues on its availability.

Still, Tesla remains a target for both established automakers and startups. "In my opinion Tesla is vulnerable," said Jack Gold, an analyst who follows the tech sector and who was attending CES. In addition to the companies presenting at CES, Gold said, there are

a number of other Chinese firms which could use the shift in consumer trends to break into new markets. "I think it's a big opening for the Chinese. And the Chinese government is subsidizing them." The electronics show is often used to debut new automotive technology even though it takes place just days ahead of the big Detroit auto show. — AFP



Pulling out all the stops

Automotive. Before launching his own venture and the Fisker Karma, Fisker designed vehicles including the BMW Z8 and Aston Martin DB89.

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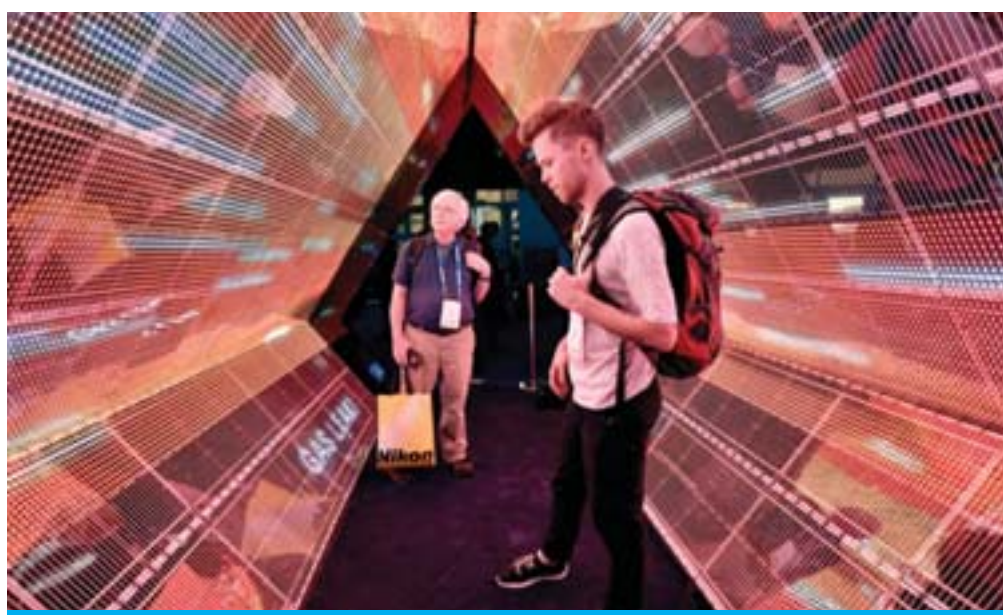
Cloud companies consider Intel rivals after flaws found

SAN FRANCISCO: Some of Intel Corp's data center customers, whose thousands of computers run cloud networks, are exploring using microchips from the market leader's rivals to build new infrastructure after the discovery of security flaws affecting most chips. Whether Intel sees a slew of defectors or is forced to offer discounts, the company could take a hit to one of its fastest growing business units. Intel chips back 98 percent of data center operations, according to industry consultancy IDC.

Security researchers last week disclosed flaws, dubbed Meltdown and Spectre, that could allow hackers to steal passwords or encryption keys on most types of computers, phones and cloud-based servers. Microsoft Corp said on Tuesday the patches necessary to secure the threats could have a significant performance impact on servers.

Intel will help customers find the best approach in terms of security, performance and compatibility, it said in a statement on Tuesday. "For many customers, the performance element is foremost, and we are sharply focused on doing all we can to ensure that we meet their expectations." Alternatives include Advanced Micro Devices, which shares with Intel a chip architecture called x86, or chips based on technology from ARM Holdings or graphics processing chips, which were developed for different tasks than Intel and AMD's central processing units, or CPUs.

For Gleb Budman's company, San Mateo-based online storage firm Backblaze, building with ARM chips would not be difficult. "If



LAS VEGAS: Attendees examine a 5G immersion display at the Intel booth during CES 2018 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. — AFP

ARM provides enough computing power at lower cost or lower power than x86, it would be a strong incentive for us to switch," said Budman. "If the fix for x86 results in a dramatically decreased level of performance, that might increasingly push in favor of switching to ARM."

'We're going to have to punish them'

Infinitely Virtual, a Los Angeles-based cloud computing vendor, is counting on Intel to replace equipment or offer a rebate to make up for the loss in computing power. Chief Executive Adam Stern said in an interview. "If Intel doesn't step up and do something to make this right then we're going to have to punish them in the marketplace by not purchasing their products," said Stern, whose company relies exclusively on Intel processors.

Cloud providers said swapping out previously installed Intel chips for rivals' would be

too complex, but moving forward they could expand their networks using alternatives. Moving from Intel to AMD is easiest since AMD and Intel chips share a common core technology called the x86 instruction set, they said. ARM-based chips lag the speed of Intel's x86 based chips for tasks such as searches, and software would have to be rewritten.

Nvidia Corp's so-called graphical processing units, or GPUs, are not a direct replacement for Intel's CPUs, but they are taking over the CPU's role for new types of work like image recognition and speech recognition. Major technology companies had been experimenting with Intel alternatives even before the security flaws were revealed. Last March, Microsoft committed to using ARM processors for its Azure cloud service, and in December, Microsoft Azure deployed Advanced Micro Devices processors in its data centers. — Reuters

so that consumers will be forced to replace them. It is decried by consumer groups as being unethical and is suspected of being particularly prevalent in the electronics industry, which produces mountains of unrecyclable waste each year. To tackle the problem, France passed landmark legislation in 2015 known as "Hamon's law" which made the practice illegal and-in theory-obliged retailers to say whether replacement parts were available.

The law, named after former Socialist minister Benoit Hamon, stipulates that a company found to be deliberately shortening the life of its products can be fined up to five percent of its annual sales while executives can face up to two years in jail. HOP praised the decision of French authorities to dig into Apple's practices. "It is the first criminal procedure in the world against a company on the basis of planned obsolescence," Emile Meunier, a lawyer for the group, told AFP.

'Wide-scale tax evasion'

Last month Apple confirmed what critics had suspected for years: that it intentionally slows performance of older iPhones as their batteries weaken with age. The company said this was to extend the performance of the phone, which uses less power when running at slower speeds, and was to prevent unexpect-

ed shutdowns due to a low battery charge. It denied incorporating planned obsolescence.

However in late December the company issued an apology for slowing older models and said it would discount replacement batteries for some handsets. "We know that some of you feel Apple has let you down. We apologize," Apple said in a message to customers on its website on December 28.

"We've always wanted our customers to be able to use their iPhones as long as possible. We're proud that Apple products are known for their durability, and for holding their value longer than our competitors' devices." Critics have accused Apple of nudging iPhone users to upgrade to newer models by letting them think it was the handsets that needed replacing, rather than just the battery.

HOP believes Apple could be liable for a fine in line with the value of all of its iPhone sales in France since Hamon's law came into force on August 17, 2015. The California-based group also faces a class-action suit in the United States. In another headache for Apple in France, the company announced last week that it has filed a lawsuit against the Attac activist group after about 100 of its supporters occupied the tech giant's flagship store in Paris last month, protesting alleged "wide-scale tax evasion" by the firm. — AFP

Foreo launches 'UFO' for easy beauty face masks

LAS VEGAS: Beauty startup Foreo is launching a "UFO" to make salon-style face mask treatments as much a part of people's days as brushing teeth. The young Swedish firm is giving visitors the full treatment with a glamour gadget that resembles a tiny alien spacecraft this week at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Face masks, which typically involve coating one's face with skin-loving lotions that work their magic while drying for 20 minutes or so, were among top search terms at Google last year. Foreo, which was founded in 2013 and boasts nearly a half-billion dollars in annual revenue, decided sheet masks were due for a make-over with some help from technology. "The sheet mask hasn't changed since ancient Egyptian times," Foreo spokeswoman Dawn Watt told AFP at a CES event. "This is the world's first smart mask." The puck-shaped device fits easily in the palm of a hand. Face mask ingredients are placed inside and activated by heating or cooling elements as the "UFO" glides about a face.

"When you are finished it is like you've had a full facial experience, but in only 90 seconds," Watt said. Foreo chief



LAS VEGAS: Foreo chief executive Paul Peros, at the International Consumer Electronics show in Las Vegas on January 8 2018, holds a "UFO" device designed to make beautifying face masks as quick and easy as brushing teeth. — AFP

executive Paul Peros was adamant that he used UFO, which the company said was a play on "Your Future Obsession," each morning and evening. "Of course my wife thinks my face is prettier," Peros quipped when asked. "Why else would I do it?" UFO models will be priced at \$179 and \$279 when they are released to the mass market in April, but can be bought at discount online at Kickstarter. Foreo also sells mask ingredients priced at \$10 for a seven treatment packets. Watt said the beauty industry is steadily merging with the tech world in a trend that is inevitable and "amazing." — AFP

Paris prosecutors probe Apple over 'planned obsolescence'

PARIS: Paris prosecutors have launched a probe of US tech giant Apple over suspected "planned obsolescence" in some of its iPhone models, a judicial source told AFP on Monday. It comes after a complaint by the association Stop Planned Obsolescence (HOP or Halte à l'Obsolescence Programmée) that followed Apple's admission last month that it intentionally slowed down older models of its iPhones over time.

The investigation into possible "planned obsolescence" or "fraud" was opened on Friday and is being led by anti-trust and consumer protection specialists in the French economy ministry, the source said. When contacted by AFP, Apple France gave no comment on the matter. Planned obsolescence is a widely criticised commercial practice in which manufacturers build in the expiry of their products

Travis the translator aims to make people understood

LAS VEGAS: Netherlands-based startup Travis is out to make people understood no matter what language they speak. Travis was at the Consumer Electronics Show here late Tuesday with a small device capable of translating conversations between people speaking different languages in real time. "Technology connects us as far as we are accessible to each other, but those true connections aren't going to happen until we all understand and are understood by each other," US Travis representative Robb Selander told AFP while demonstrating the gizmo at a CES event. "We are driven to break down language barriers."

Travis synchs to computing in the cloud to translate any combination of 80 languages, and a Travis foundation is working to 'digitize' lesser known lan-

guages in the world. "Once a language is digitized it can not only be used in translation technology like Travis but for education and preservation," said company international affairs manager Elissa Glorie. Digitizing languages also means that those who speak it could get better shots at reaping benefits of technology advances such as voice-commanded computers or virtual assistants, according to Glorie.

Travis was founded early last year and launched an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign in April that blew past the company's goal. More than 80,000 Travis translation devices priced at \$199 were pre-ordered, and most have been delivered, according to Selander. Google late last year hit the market with Pixel ear buds capable of real-time translation of conversations in 40 languages.

Pixel Buds infused with its digital assistant smarts were quickly branded an internet-Age version of the alien "Babel Fish" depicted in famed science fiction work "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." In the literature, inserting a Babel Fish in an ear enabled a person to understand anything spoken in any language. Pixel Buds work wirelessly with second-generation Pixel smartphones to handle real-time translations. — AFP

Health

Australia swelters through one of its hottest years on record

Climate change has pushed up land and sea temperatures

SYDNEY: Australia sweltered through its third-hottest year on record in 2017 despite the lack of a warming El Nino weather phenomenon, official figures showed yesterday. Seven of the vast continent's 10 warmest years have occurred since 2005, with only 2011 cooler than average, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) said in its annual climate statement.

"Despite the lack of an El Nino—which is normally associated with our hottest years — 2017 was still characterized by very warm temperatures," the weather bureau's climate monitoring chief Karl Braganza said in a statement.

"Both day- and night-time temperatures were warmer than average, particularly maximum temperatures, which were the second-warmest on record."

The data came ahead of the release of global mean temperatures by the World Meteorological Organization, with BOM projecting that 2017 was one of the world's three warmest years on record—and the hottest without an El Nino. El Nino occurs when trade winds that

circulate over waters in the tropical Pacific start to weaken and sea surface temperatures rise. Australia's annual mean temperature has increased by approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius



Only 2011 cooler than average

(2 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1910, with most of this warming occurring since 1950, the bureau added in its report.

Experts have also warned that climate change has pushed up land and sea temperatures, leading

to more extremely hot days and severe fire seasons. Last year, the national mean temperature was 0.95 degrees Celsius hotter than the 1961-1990 average. In 108 years of recorded temperatures, only 2013 and 2005 were warmer. The eastern states of New South Wales and Queensland were the hardest hit, recording their hottest year ever in 2017.

Some regions also had their driest months on record, including Victoria state in June, and New South Wales and vital river system the Murray-Darling Basin in September. But the last three months took a wetter turn, with above-average rainfall in many areas, Braganza added.

Meanwhile, oceans around Australia recorded temperatures "well above average" for the year. Prolonged high sea surface temperatures linked to climate change saw significant coral bleaching on the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef during early 2017. Australia is one of the world's worst per capita greenhouse gas polluters, due to its heavy use of coal-fired power. — AFP

Japan astronaut worried by space growth spurt

TOKYO: A Japanese astronaut has sparked hilarity back on Earth after he claimed to have grown nine centimeters in space, making him worried he would not squeeze into the capsule home. Norishige Kanai, who is aboard the International Space Station, tweeted: "We had our bodies measured after reaching space, and wow, wow, wow, I had actually grown by as much as 9 centimeters!" "I have grown like a plant in just

three weeks," he said, adding that he had not experienced a growth spurt like this since high school. "I'm a bit worried whether I'll fit in the Soyuz seat when I go back," he said, prompting tens of thousands of reactions on social media.

One Japanese Twitter user identified as @KakeruTokyo said: "Can somebody please take me to space? I want to grow taller (sobbing)." Another user, @junnua_pana6mana, tweeted: "Mr. Kanai, I envy you. I wonder if I could have had a different life if I were 10 centimeters taller?" Standing 1.80m tall on Earth, Kanai is already considerably taller than the average Japanese man, who is 1.71m in height according to the latest official statistics. Astronauts' spines can extend in the zero-gravity environment of space, making them slightly taller. This returns to normal when they go back to Earth and its gravitational field. — AFP



This NASA handout image obtained January 3, 2018 shows an illustration of a star behind a shattered comet, observations of the star KIC 8462852 by NASA's Kepler and Spitzer space telescopes suggest that its unusual light signals are likely from dusty comet fragments, which blocked the light of the star as they passed in front of it in 2011 and 2013. It's been called the "most mysterious star in the universe," bigger than the sun and yet brightening and dimming in an odd way that suggested to some an alien megastructure might be circling it. But a study out January 3, 2018, compiled by more than 100 scientists who have been observing the star, named KIC 8462852, puts the alien rumors to rest. — AFP

Transgenic cows produce 'safe' therapy for MERS

LONDON: Human antibodies made in genetically engineered cows have proved safe in an early stage clinical trial, US scientists said yesterday, and could be developed into a treatment for the fatal viral disease, MERS, MERS, or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, is a SARS-like viral infection first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012 that has caused deadly outbreaks in the Middle East as well as sporadic cases around the world.

Despite more than five years of waves of infection, no effective treatment or vaccine has been developed against MERS, which has a 35 percent case fatality rate and has so far killed at least 740 people worldwide. More than 80 percent of MERS cases have been reported in Saudi Arabia, according to the World Health Organization.

In research published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal on Wednesday, scientists found that human antibodies called SAB-301 generated in so-called transchromosomal cattle— animals with human DNA incorporated into their genome—were safe in healthy volunteers. The antibodies also persisted for more time than the MERS virus typically remains in the body, the study found, with antibodies still detected in bloodstream after 90 days. This points a way ahead for the antibodies—which offer immunity against an invading infection—to be tested in further trials in people

infected with MERS, the researchers said. "This is the first study to show the safety and immune effects of a potential treatment for MERS," said John Beigel at Leidos Biomedical Research, who co-lead the U.S. government-funded study. "The data from our study suggest that SAB-301 is safe, and further research into the treatment is warranted." The idea of using human antibodies has developed in recent years in a variety of severe and emerging diseases, including flu, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), MERS and Ebola. Blood plasma harvested from people whose immune systems have successfully fought the disease contains the right antibodies and can be given to other patients to help their immune systems fight the virus. But harvesting human plasma is not always easy or swift when a new disease emerges, so scientists turned to the idea of transchromosomal cattle as a way of manufacturing specific antibodies in larger amounts. — Reuters

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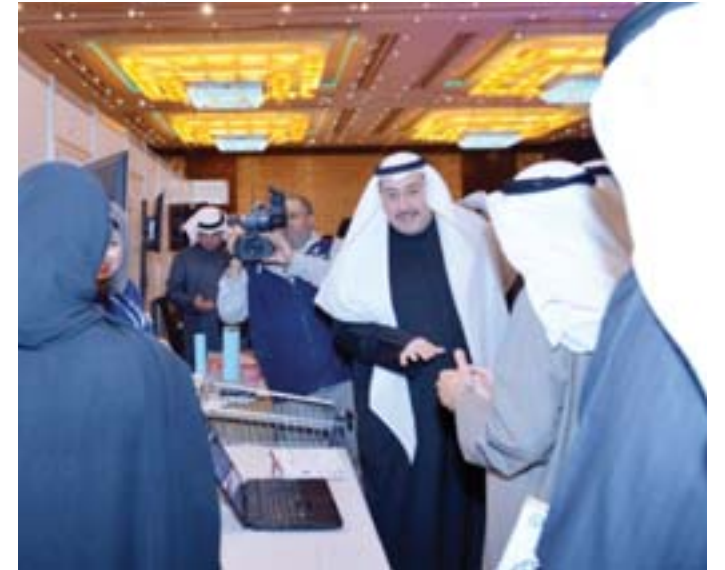
Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
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What's On

Importance of Kuwaiti youth projects



Farwaniya governor, Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah stressed the importance of supporting youth projects made by Kuwaiti students. He pointed out that the achievements and creations they make are even parallel to those made worldwide. Speaking while attending the engineering design exhibition of the college of oil and engineering students at the Crowne Plaza Hotel under the auspices of the minister of state for housing affairs and minister of state for services, Jenena Bosherhi, Al-Sabah said that the exhibition indicates Kuwait youth scientific and academic level.

PAAET training week continues



Activities of the first training week organized by the National Creativity and Entrepreneurship initiative and launched by PAAET in collaboration with MGRP continued for the third day at Ibn Al-Haitham Center stage. Two workshops were held on the third day. During the first workshop, the Dacum Company's instructor, Loulwa Al-Rabee'a spoke about the importance of encouragement, products and services quality and their role in winning clients' trust. The second workshop presented by Sana Al-Sulaiten tackled her own success story, her project, the obstacles she had faced and how she managed to overcome them.



ICSK Khaitan presents 'Namaste India-2018'

In an enthusiastically amplified milieu, the much-eagerly awaited first Noble Funfair, 'Namaste India-2018', was materialized proudly by ICSK Khaitan on 5th January, on the school premises resonating the magic spell of great Indian values and traditions and preserving the motto and aim 'Charity has no boundaries.'

Welcoming the guests with the majestic Bohra Band, the thematic ceremony sprightly commenced with an enthralling Veena performance followed by welcoming of the guests by the Vice Principal, Ravi Ayanoli. The ravishing invocation dance performed by ICSK students was spectacular. In his presidential address, Principal Gangadhar Shirsath, exemplifying essence of the funfair in an elegant Maharashtrian attire, introduced and illustrated its noble motto of Namaste India-2018 to the public.

The chief guest of the day, Raj Gopal Singh, Charge d' Affaires and Appellate Authority, Embassy of India to Kuwait, appreciated the whole-hearted commitment of the entire school for the philanthropic endeavors behind the great event. The guest of honor of the noble event Major General (Retd.) Mahmoud Ibrahim Al-Tabbakh, lauded immensely the considerable effort of the school to provide a helping hand for the marginalized students of the Institution throughout the year.

The inaugural ceremony witnessed for one more mile stone in the historic journey of ICSK; the beta launching of ICSK Cloud, a new software developed for the user-friendly, easy and fast access of the academic affairs by students, parents and teachers of ICSK. Carnival souvenir was officially released and releasing of the doves and balloons symbolically marked the inauguration of the funfair. The occasion had graced the imperial presence of Chairman Shaik Abdul Rahiman, Vice Chairman, Vinukumar Nair and Secretary Azharuddin Amer Mohammed along with principals Rajesh Nair, ICSK Amman and Sherly Dennis, ICSK Junior and vice principals of all branches of ICSK.

Different corners of the campus pulsed with World currency expo show, planetarium show, games by Kids' village, horse riding,



Shobha's mini Indian Bazar, etc. The literary scholars from Writers Forum Kuwait conducted the Hindi poetry recitation and Mushaira, popular Telugu comedians Raghava and Sudhakar made their fans to laugh their heads off during the stage show. Melodious songs by voice over specialist Dr Subhash and Shyamal were mesmerizing. The Funfair had something for people of all ages to enjoy in every way as they wish.

The musical extravaganza performed by very popular Indian youth band 'Samanwaya', rocked the campus with their fusion music. Talented artists and diversified

dance presentations by ICSK students and various organizations turned the day in to a memorable and enjoyable one. Variety of rides and games, face painting, street play, and crowd pulling flash mob added special attraction to the event. Various raffle draws with attractive and exciting prizes elevated the excitement of the people. Ethnic edible delights from Indian restaurants indeed filled all sensory perception of the crowd with gratification. The zeal and vibrancy showed by the people and visitors turned the Namaste India 2018 into an unforgettable event.



GUST faculty member awarded prestigious Carnegie Fellowship

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) announced yesterday that faculty member, Dr. Mariam Alkazemi, was one of two scholars to be awarded the prestigious Carnegie Fellowship in support of Arab-Region social science at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill this past fall semester. The purpose of the fellowship is to support Arab social scientific research in universities such as GUST, while also collaborating with Arab scholars at the UNC campus. Carnegie Fellow and Assistant Professor in the GUST Mass Communication and Media Department, Dr. Mariam Alkazemi, said, "It was an honor and a privilege to be awarded this fellowship and have the opportunity to learn from scholars from a wide range of disciplines at UNC. I look forward to a long-term productive research relationship with them."

During her stay at UNC, Dr Alkazemi was able to meet and interact with some of the world's leading scholars including Dr Charles Kurzman, whose criticisms of President Trump's Muslim ban policy appeared in national media outlets like the National Public Radio and Slate Magazine. Dr. Alkazemi also took classes with Dr Deen Freelon, whose work in big data and social media analysis has gained him international recognition for his application of computer science techniques to address questions related to the mass media. The fellowship was conducted under the mentorship of award-winning, international media researcher and educator, Dr. Debashis Aikat. Co-director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, Dr. Charles Kurzman, said, "The University of North Carolina was fortunate to have Dr Alkazemi visit this semester. Her active research agenda has enriched our campus and inspired colleagues."

As a fellow, Dr Alkazemi learned to use Python, a computer programming language, to enrich her research in social media analysis. She audited classes at both the School of Information and Library Sciences and the School of Media and Journalism at

UNC. Dr Alkazemi also visited the Middle East Studies Association to learn about social scientific research that specifically deals with the Middle East. Finally, Dr Alkazemi guest lectured for a course pertaining to global media at the School of Media and Journalism. The fellowship is in its fourth and final year, and was previously awarded to Dr. Omar Al Shehabi also of Gulf University for Science and Technology.

Fellowship mentor and Associate Professor at the UNC School of Media and Journalism, Dr Debashis Aikat, said, "The UNC Carnegie fellowship was a resounding testament to Dr Alkazemi's academic excellence, stellar teaching, innovative research, and enthusiasm as a media scholar. As a Carnegie fellow for five months, Dr Alkazemi approached her work with dedication, intelligence, and consistently researched topics that explore seminal aspects media scholarship. She is conscientious and hard working. Besides her aptitude for working with research data and her workplace success, she was a positive influence among her colleagues and in our academic community, and an ambassador of goodwill for GUST."

As part of her the program, Dr Alkazemi worked on a collaborative research project where data was gathered from both GUST and UNC to compare student social media practices. This project included Dr Debashis Aikat from UNC, and Dr Ali Al Kandari from GUST. Dr Alkazemi presented the progress made on this project to an audience of professors, staff, and graduate students at UNC. GUST, as an academic institution, is focused on ensuring the growth and development of its faculty research. In the last year alone, the College of Arts & Sciences has put out 81 of research, issued in world-renowned publications. The university encourages its professors to engage with local, regional, and international educators and institutions on collaborative research to further develop their knowledge and skill set, which is reflected in the quality of education for its students.



Happy birthday

Happy 7th Birthday to our sweet little princess Aliya! We wish you lifetime happiness and success in your life. God Bless, we love you. Love : daddy, mommy, Cia, Sean, family and friends.

TV



00:55 Allegiant
03:00 Armageddon America
04:40 Warcraft: The Beginning
06:40 Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace
09:00 Allegiant
11:05 The Core
13:20 Warcraft: The Beginning
15:25 Star Wars: Episode II - Attack Of The Clones
17:50 Captain America: The First Avenger
19:55 Captain America: Civil War
22:25 Under Siege 2



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Treachouse Masters
02:40 Biggest And Baddest
03:35 Swamp Brothers
04:00 Swamp Brothers
04:25 Tanked
05:15 Pet Nation Renovation
06:02 Wildest Latin America
06:49 Untamed & Uncut
07:36 Night
08:00 Night
08:25 Swamp Brothers
08:50 Swamp Brothers
09:15 Treachouse Masters
10:10 Biggest And Baddest
11:05 Wildest Latin America
12:00 Swamp Brothers
12:28 Swamp Brothers
12:55 Tanked
13:50 Pet Nation Renovation
14:45 Biggest And Baddest
15:40 Wildest Latin America
16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 Treachouse Masters
18:25 Whale Wars
19:20 Whale Wars
20:15 Biggest And Baddest
21:10 Swamp Brothers
21:38 Swamp Brothers
22:05 Whale Wars
23:00 Whale Wars
23:55 Wildest Latin America



00:05 Last Tango In Halifax: Christmas Special
01:00 Top Of The Lake
02:10 New Tricks
03:05 Doctors
03:35 Eastenders
04:05 Last Tango In Halifax: Christmas Special
05:05 New Tricks
06:00 Doctors
06:30 Eastenders
07:30 Dickensian
08:20 Stella
09:10 Agatha Raisin
10:00 Doctors
10:30 Eastenders
11:00 New Tricks
12:00 Dickensian
13:50 Stella
13:25 Agatha Raisin
14:25 Doctors
14:55 Eastenders
15:25 New Tricks
16:20 Dickensian
17:40 Stella
18:30 Eastenders
19:00 New Tricks
20:00 Benidorm
21:00 Holly City
22:00 New Tricks
23:00 Doctors



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



00:05 Workaholics
00:30 Broad City
00:55 Another Period
01:20 Another Period
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.0
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
04:15 Kroll Show
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 Important Things With Demitri Martin
05:30 Impractical Jokers
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:50 The Dude Perfect Show
07:15 The Dude Perfect Show
07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Kroll Show
09:45 Key And Peele
10:10 Important Things With Demitri Martin
10:35 The Jim Gaffigan Show
11:00 Impractical Jokers
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:15 Impractical Jokers
12:40 Friendszone
13:05 Friendszone
13:30 Important Things With Demitri Martin
13:55 Friends
14:20 Friends
14:45 Workaholics
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Kroll Show
16:00 Friendszone

16:30 Friendszone
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35 The Dude Perfect Show
19:00 The Dude Perfect Show
19:25 Impractical Jokers
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Nightcap
22:20 Graves
22:50 Detroiters
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



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



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



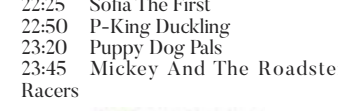
00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binnie And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binnie And The Ghost
03:30 Binnie And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binnie And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir

00:15 Evermoor Chronicles
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:45 Lollipop
20:15 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 Calimero
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 P-King Duckling
08:25 Jungle Junction
08:40 Special Agent Oso
09:00 Handy Manny
09:15 PJ Masks
09:30 Puppy Dog Pals
10:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:25 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
10:55 The Lion Guard
12:45 Sofia The First
13:35 PJ Masks
14:30 Doc McStuffins
14:55 P-King Duckling
15:20 Vampirina
15:45 Sofia The First
16:10 Puppy Dog Pals
16:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
17:50 Minnie's Bow-Toons
18:00 PJ Masks
18:25 Puppy Dog Pals
18:50 Sofia The First
19:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:45 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
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22:00 PJ Masks
22:25 Sofia The First
22:50 P-King Duckling
23:20 Puppy Dog Pals
23:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers

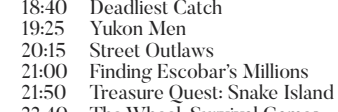
22:40 Evermoor Chronicles
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:45 Lollipop



00:15 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
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02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 Calimero
07:30 PJ Masks
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14:30 Doc McStuffins
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19:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:45 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 PJ Masks
22:25 Sofia The First
22:50 P-King Duckling
23:20 Puppy Dog Pals
23:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers



00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Gold Rush
01:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
02:35 Rebel Gold
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Extreme Collectors
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska: The Last Frontier
08:20 Extreme Collectors
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Gold Rush
10:45 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
11:30 Rebel Gold
12:20 Extreme Collectors
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Gold Rush
16:15 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
17:05 Rebel Gold
17:50 Alaska: The Last Frontier
18:40 Deadliest Catch
19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Finding Escobar's Millions
21:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:40 The Wheel Survival Games
23:30 Alaska: The Last Frontier



00:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
01:00 Ancient Impossible
02:00 Command Decisions
03:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
04:40 The Greeks
05:30 Stan Lee's Superhumans
06:20 Ancient Impossible
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Command Decisions
09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 The Greeks
12:00 America's Book Of Secrets
13:00 Ancient Impossible
14:00 Command Decisions
15:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 The Greeks
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Ancient Impossible
20:00 Command Decisions
20:30 Command Decisions
21:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Clash Of The Gods



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Restoration
02:50 Big Easy Motors
03:15 Car Hunters
03:40 Billion Dollar Wreck
03:50 Swamp People
06:00 Alone: Lost And Found
06:50 Forged In Fire
07:40 American Restoration
08:30 Big Easy Motors
08:55 Car Hunters
09:20 American Pickers
09:40 Ax Men
11:00 Forged In Fire
11:50 American Restoration
12:40 Big Easy Motors
13:05 Car Hunters
13:30 Swamp People
15:10 Alone: Lost And Found
16:00 Forged In Fire
16:50 American Restoration
17:40 Big Easy Motors
18:05 Car Hunters
18:30 Alone: Lost And Found
19:20 Forged In Fire
20:10 American Restoration
21:00 The Warfighters
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Alone: Lost And Found



00:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 El News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World

06:55 El News
07:10 So Cosmo
08:10 El News: Daily Pop
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 El News
12:15 WAGs LA
15:00 El News
15:15 El News: Daily Pop
16:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00 El News
20:00 WAGs LA
21:00 WAGs LA
23:00 El News
23:15 The Platinum Life



00:00 Chopped
01:00 Bakers vs. Fakers
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:25 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:50 Bake With Anna Olson
07:15 The Kitchen
08:05 The Pioneer Woman
08:55 Siba's Table
09:25 Siba's Table
09:55 Cooking For Real
10:25 Cooking For Real
10:55 The Kitchen
11:45 Cooking For Real
12:10 The Pioneer Woman
12:35 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Cooking For Real
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
20:00 Tia Mowry At Home
20:30 Tia Mowry At Home
21:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
21:30 The Big Eat - Middle East
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped



00:10 Chopping Block
01:00 Emeraldale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 Cash Trapped
03:25 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
04:25 Tutankhamun
05:15 Surprise Surprise
06:10 Chopping Block
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
09:05 Tutankhamun
10:00 Surprise Surprise
10:55 Chopping Block
11:50 Cash Trapped
12:45 Emeraldale
13:15 Coronation Street
14:15 Chopping Block
15:10 Cash Trapped
16:00 Catchphrase
16:55 Martin Clunes & A Lion Called Midge
17:50 Big Star's Little Star
18:45 Emeraldale
19:15 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Catchphrase
21:55 Martin Clunes & A Lion Called Midge
22:50 Emeraldale
23:15 Coronation Street



00:02 Bite, Sting, Kill
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Boss Croc
02:50 Safari Brothers
03:45 Strangepet Bird Alive
04:40 Super Squirrel
05:35 Boss Croc
06:30 Safari Brothers
07:25 Strangepet Bird Alive
08:20 Super Squirrel
09:15 Animal ER
10:10 Rescue Ink
11:05 Animal Fight Club
12:00 Incredible Fish
12:55 America's Deadliest Safari Brothers
14:45 World's Weirdest
15:40 Extreme Animal Babies
16:35 Animal ER
17:30 Rescue Ink
18:25 Animal Fight Club
19:20 World's Weirdest
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22:40 Animal Fight Club
23:30 Incredible Fish

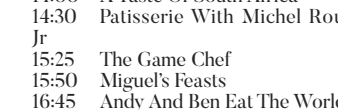


00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Wix Club
02:36 Wix Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Harvey Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Wix Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
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14:12 I Am Frankie
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19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Ride
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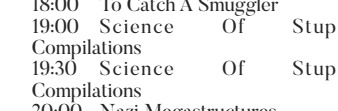


00:45 A Taste Of South Africa
01:10 What's For Sale?
01:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces

02:35 A Taste Of South Africa
03:30 Chef On The Road
04:25 Croatia's Finest
04:50 Migue'l's Feasts
05:45 Andy And Ben Eat The World
06:40 What's For Sale?
07:10 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
08:05 A Taste Of South Africa
08:30 A Taste Of South Africa
09:00 Chef On The Road
09:55 Croatia's Finest
10:20 Migue'l's Feasts
10:50 Migue'l's Feasts
11:15 Andy And Ben Eat The World
11:45 Andy And Ben Eat The World
12:10 What's For Sale?
12:40 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
13:35 A Taste Of South Africa
14:00 A Taste Of South Africa
14:30 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
15:25 The Game Chef
15:50 Migue'l's Feasts
16:45 Andy And Ben Eat The World
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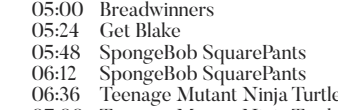
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01:00 Explorer XL
02:00 Titanic: Case Closed
04:00 Titanic: The Final Word
05:00 The Great Food Revolution
06:00 Live Free Or Die
07:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
07:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
08:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:00 The Great Food Revolution
10:00 Nazi Megastructures
12:00 To Catch A Smuggler
13:00 Lawless Island Alaska
14:00 Fish Tank Kings
15:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
15:30 Science Of Stupid Compilations
16:00 Nazi Megastructures
17:00 Supercar Megabuild
18:00 To Catch A Smuggler
19:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
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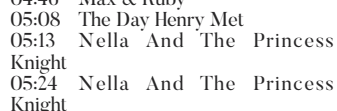
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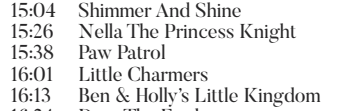
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01:01 Max & Ruby
01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:45 The Day Henry Met
01:50 The Day Henry Met
01:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:41 Zack & Quack
02:53 Kid-E-Cats
02:57 Kid-E-Cats
03:04 Shimmer And Shine
03:26 Nella The Princess Knight
03:38 Paw Patrol
04:00 Little Charmers
04:12 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
04:23 Dora The Explorer
04:46 Max & Ruby
05:08 The Day Henry Met
05:13 Nella And The Princess Knight
05:24 Nella And The Princess Knight
05:35 Shimmer And Shine
05:58 Wallykazam!
06:21 Zack & Quack
06:32 The Day Henry Met
06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
07:00 Rusty Rivets
07:13 Paw Patrol
07:37 Dora The Explorer
08:10 Kid-E-Cats
08:15 Kid-E-Cats
08:21 Bubble Guppies
08:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
09:07 Paw Patrol
09:30 Shimmer And Shine
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10:15 The Day Henry Met
10:22 Paw Patrol
10:45 Rusty Rivets
11:05 Wallykazam!
11:28 Bubble Guppies
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00:05 A Sunday Horse
02:45 Jem And The Holograms
04:45 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs
06:25 Deck The Halls
08:00 A Sunday Horse
09:50 Alpha Dogz: Pups United
11:25 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs
13:05 Capture The Flag
14:45 Scooby-Do! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon
16:10 Monte Carlo
18:00 Little Loopers
19:35 Lego DC Comics: Justice League Cosmic Clash
21:00 Capture The Flag
22:40 Scooby-Do! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon



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00:10 Bad Santa 2
01:50 There's Always Woodstock
03:35 Mr. Deeds
05:15 Christmas Eve
07:00 Kindergarten Cop 2
08:45 Summer Villa
10:20 Once I Was A Beehive
12:20 Yoga Hosers
13:50 Kindergarten Cop 2
15:35 Big Momma's House
17:20 The Gull's Trip
19:00 Barbershop: The Next Cut
21:00 My Super Ex-Girlfriend
22:40 Forgetting Sarah Marshall

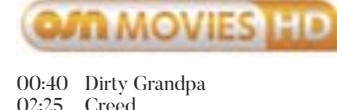


01:25 Taxi Driver
03:25 Lorenzo's Oil
05:50 African Safari
07:25 The Flying Scotsman
09:15 Lorenzo's Oil
11:40 The Benefactor
13:20 The Shamer's Daughter
15:05 East Side Sushi
17:05 Land Of Mine
19:05 Reds
22:25 JFK



01:05 Rainbow Valley Heroes
02:40 The Fairy Tales Tree
04:10 Mia And The Migoo
05:50 Elias And The Royal Yacht
07:15 Bums Tales
08:35 Free Birds
10:05 The Happy Cricket And The Giant Bugs
11:40 Moomin And Midsummer Madness
13:10 The Fairy Tales Tree
14:40 Mia And The Migoo
16:20 The Adventures Of Scooter

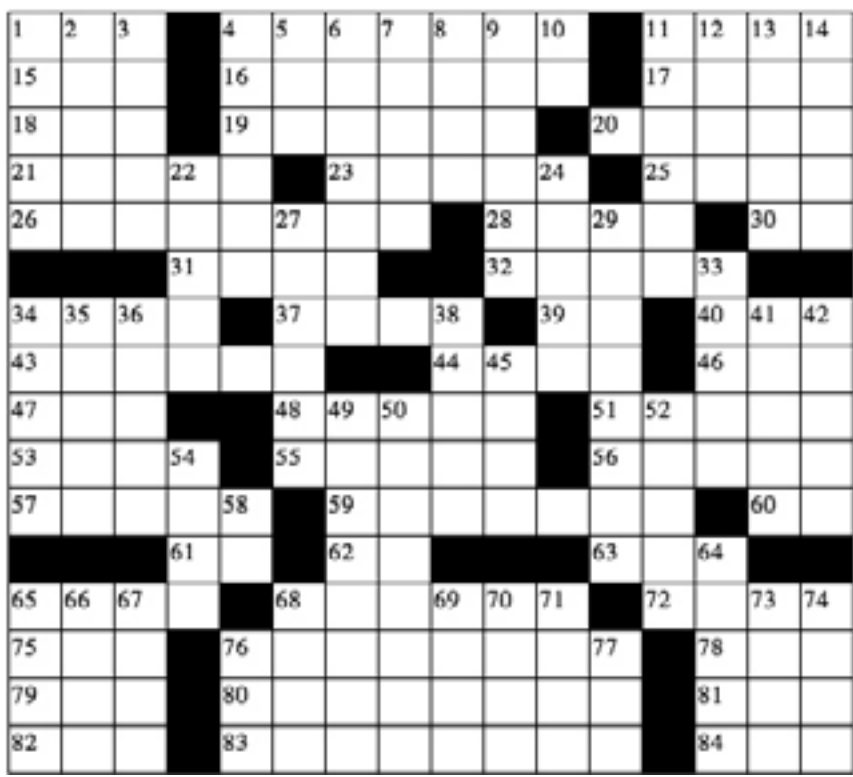
The Penguin
17:50 The Happy Cricket And The Giant Bugs
19:25 A.R.C.H.I.L.E.
20:55 Pacific Pirates
22:25 The Adventures Of Scooter
The Penguin
23:55 Free Birds



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Stars

CROSSWORD 1806



ACROSS

- Neckwear consisting of a long narrow piece of material worn (mostly by men) under a collar and tied in knot at the front.
- A file of memoranda or notices that remind of things to be done.
- Tropical Asian starlings.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- Egg-shaped terra-cotta wind instrument with a mouthpiece and finger holes.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- (in golf) The standard number of strokes set for each hole on a golf course, or for the entire course.
- Tending to undergo or resulting from mutation.
- Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
- An inclined surface or roadway that moves traffic from one level to another.
- Relating to or included in the zodiac.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
- (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
- The sacred city of Lamaisam.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- A member of the Semitic speaking people of northern Ethiopia.
- The basic unit of money in Ethiopia.
- A loud harsh or strident noise.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- Goods (or wreckage) on the sea bed that is attached to a buoy so that it can be recovered.
- Put out or expel from a place.
- (New Testament) Disciple of Jesus.
- Dried out by heat or excessive exposure to sunlight.
- Yellow-fever mosquitos.
- Remove from memory or existence.
- Unfasten or release from or as if from a hitch.
- A state in New England.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- 30 to 300 kilohertz.
- An ugly evil-looking old woman.
- A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
- Fallow deer.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- British informal term.
- A serve that strikes the net before falling into the receiver's court.
- Instrumentalities (tools or implements) made of metal.
- Being one more than two.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- Lily with small dull purple flowers of northwestern Europe and northwestern Asia.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.

DOWN

- A yellow quartz.
- Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
- Worn or shabby from overuse or (of pages) from having corners turned down.
- An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
- A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
- Chinese evergreen conifer discovered in 1955.
- A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
- Swedish soprano who toured the United States under the management of P.T. Barnum (1820-1887).
- Land received by fee tail v 1.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- A state in southeastern India on the Bay of Bengal (south of Andhra Pradesh).
- The content of cognition.
- (Sumerian) Goddess personifying the primeval sea.
- Make fit for, or change to suit a new purpose.
- Dry red table wine from the Rioja region of northern Spain.
- An avalanche volcanic water and mud down the slopes of a volcano.
- An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
- The range within which a voice can be heard.
- Having help.
- An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- An Indian tree of the family Combretaceae that is a source of timber and gum.
- Cause to be embarrassed.
- Chick-pea plant.
- The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
- The basic unit of money in Peru.
- A person who uses flattery.
- The piece of flint that provides the igniting spark in a flintlock weapon.
- A holy war by Muslims against unbelievers.
- A small island.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- Type genus of the Gavidae.
- In bed.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- (obstetrics) The number of live-born children a woman has delivered.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in Iowa and Minnesota and Missouri.
- An unforeseen obstacle.
- A man distinguished by exceptional courage and nobility and strength.
- A female domestic.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
- The habitation of wild animals.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you may find efforts being made in the areas of career and domestic life are getting you nowhere: the directions you have chosen don't seem to fit the situation just now. You find zero value in the suggestions or opinions of others at this time. Put your shopping plans on hold, when stress levels decrease you'll be a better shopper. You could receive quite the complement on a past project; perhaps you can do it again with a new client, just give it a good shot. Searching in the wrong places for answers will get old and you will change directions. This evening you might find a chance to unwind with those who share your interests or a hobby. Rest and reflect on your day and its difficulties: rest well in the knowledge that tomorrow will bring new vibes, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you may feel alienated and shunned today; opinions clash. You may find that you have lost the good will of members of the group. Perhaps particular source you rely on will dry up or even disappear. There could be confrontations today from a most surprising associate, someone who is usually on your side in the majority of matters. You will turn your focus to loved ones: those who have been with you for a very long time. It will seem important to be recognized for your contributions and loyalty. An opportunity to take a risk that could be especially gratifying: this could involve people, places or things. This evening go where the fun is with someone you trust, care for and enjoy, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, be watchful of letting yourself be led down the wrong path by supposed benevolent or religious ideals; you could make grave mistakes that could be long lasting. There could be a clash with a loved one regarding your opinion on a sensitive topic. You should cultivate a grateful attitude regarding your place in life. This cycle indicates that abundance will be realized: investments in real estate and finances could do very well. Someone may insist on changes that you are not willing to make. Take care! Understand that difficulties can be the best teachers if allowed. You could experience deep thoughts. Working toward growth and enlightenment will be easy to do. A meaningful discussion with a confidant will lift your spirits, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, this is a very good time to take a good, honest look deep inside: you will see where you've gone wrong and where you've gone right. You could be in tune with the energies of those you associate with. Take advantage of uniting energy: joining with others toward an important cause will create great results. You powers of persuasion are at the high just now as you are able to get your message across both verbally and via the written word. New ideas and methods may grow stronger at this time. Your own private affairs will take on the most important role; you will have much less interest in what others think as far as the public is concerned. It is possible for a move to a new home in the perfect location for you and your family, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you may be tempted to follow your wants and desires instead of looking at what you actually need: wants vs. Needs is always a tough thing to deal with. Life on earth demands that we grow and evolve but when we choose to ignore this we move further from our goals. If you become too distracted you could have a serious argument with someone close. You should be respectful of someone older than you that tends to be difficult. You value quality merchandise and may find yourself making large as well as small purchases tonight, especially after you see the post-holiday sales. You will make a difference in a group when you let them see what you have been working on to help them out. An open mind and an open heart will lead you into interesting places, leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, cleaning out and clearing energy is indicated strongly in your chart. You may want to separate yourself from others and just hide in your comfy little hole as you rearrange furniture or paint: turn that frown upside down, smile! You will probably experience extreme thoughts that take you by surprise but take a minute to look at them and figure out why they matter. Prepare to reorient your goals and direction through the next six months. Dissect the choices you have made in important areas, study them and be honest about your motives. Work hard to balance your energies: meditation and prayer are balms to the troubled mind and heart. You will find yourself called upon to untangle a sensitive situation for a friend, relative or co-worker, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, your thoughts and concerns shift to caring for and concentrating on others more than yourself. There could be an opportunity to go into business with someone; if so, make sure everything is on paper even if this is family or close friend! Your selflessness will be noticed and commented on. You seek justice and equality in some instances: listen very closely to what others tell you verbally or in texts or emails. Your interpersonal skills are at an all time high and will continue strongly into the new year. Someone has captured your attention in a very intimate way; you may feel helplessly compelled to speak to and spend time with this person. Don't let yourself become obsessed with other people to the point of forgetting your own well-being, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, your energy is boundless and you could feel as if nothing can stand in your way today. You are in the mood for love and you have something special in mind for later. You could have to work hard to get someone to buy in your latest strategy but in the end, you will win. Several projects will draw to a successful end and the crew could celebrate tonight with a few drinks. You will start something new, like a cooking or yoga class: good positive energy for whatever you choose. Your physical energies are extremely high and this could indicate exercise or sexual activity. A long walk by the lake or a quick car ride to a country restaurant will satisfy your need for a little break. Listen to a new album or watch an old movie tonight while you cuddle, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, there is a certain person who refuses to pay you the respect you are due. This person represents a point of irritation you have endured for quite a long time; just because you are related to someone doesn't mean you have to like them. No one can assign the right people to the right tasks as well as you. Your focus is on being where you want to be this time next year. Work matters more to you at this time than just about anything else; you are climbing out of a deep hole that you want never to return to. Perhaps you should look into some new healthcare coverage while the window is open for success in such dealings. You always land on your feet because of your common sense approach to life. Enjoy a kindness given you this evening, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, your mind is fuzzy regarding your work and how to move forward. Write down your goals and look at them each day. People seem to be on your side today; take advantage of smooth seas while they last. You may feel a need to daydream and wander off the path. This is not a good time to lose focus. Eat well and exercise throughout the day to stir your creative juices and relieve sluggishness. Later in the day you will be called on to make decisions about others. Energy levels will return before the end of the day and you may find yourself finishing up office work as well as domestic chores. The evening will culminate in warm feelings with good friends or family. A restful night will lead to a productive morning, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you have entered a phase of abundance and the finer things in life are on your short list of important belongings and goals. Make sure not to get carried away by success; someone is trying very hard to get your attention. You may go against the grain of a person that holds a position equal to yours but is not necessarily an ally or friend. Your desire to go out with friends could be met with disapproval: it will take strong effort to stay on the good side of this. A tendency to daydream could cause problems with a tough project today. Now is not the time to think grand thoughts: there's work to be done! Your way with words will smooth out any misunderstandings you may create. Smile and put your feet up tonight, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you will encounter multiple opportunities to try new products and remedies that appeal to you: essential oils or organic gardening could be indicated. A new tool for work will make your life much easier. Your mind will be open to absorb more learning: a return to school could be written in the stars or perhaps new software programs will be necessary at work. You think you can win where others can't and you may apply this confidence to your investments. A younger person or mate becomes the main focus of your thoughts and attention. You have a reputation for how well you do your job and will be told so. Do not become too frustrated if an older person has a change of mind after getting you deeply involved: it's part of the relationship process, pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Golf

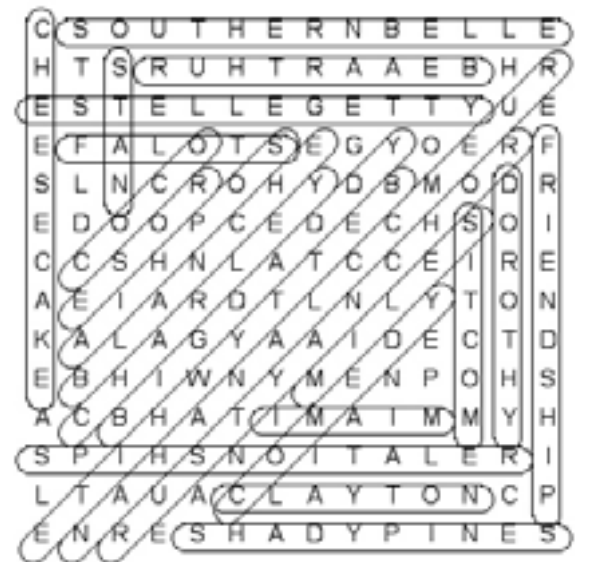
Find and circle all of the golf words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Mark Twain quotation.



- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| ALBATROSS | CLUBHOUSE | GREEN | ROUGH |
| APPROACH | CLUBS | GRIP | RULES |
| BACK NINE | CONDOR | GROSS SCORE | SHOT |
| BACKSPIN | COURSE | HANDICAP | SLICE |
| BALL | DIVOT | HOLE IN ONE | STROKE |
| BIRDIE | DRIVER | HOLES | SWING |
| BOGEY | DRIVING RANGE | HOOK | TEE OFF |
| BUNKER | EAGLE | IRON | TREES |
| CADDIE | FAIRWAY | NET SCORE | WATER HAZARD |
| CART | FLAGSTICK | PAR | WEDGE |
| CHIP | FORE | PUTTER | WOOD |

Yesterday's Solution

The Golden Girls



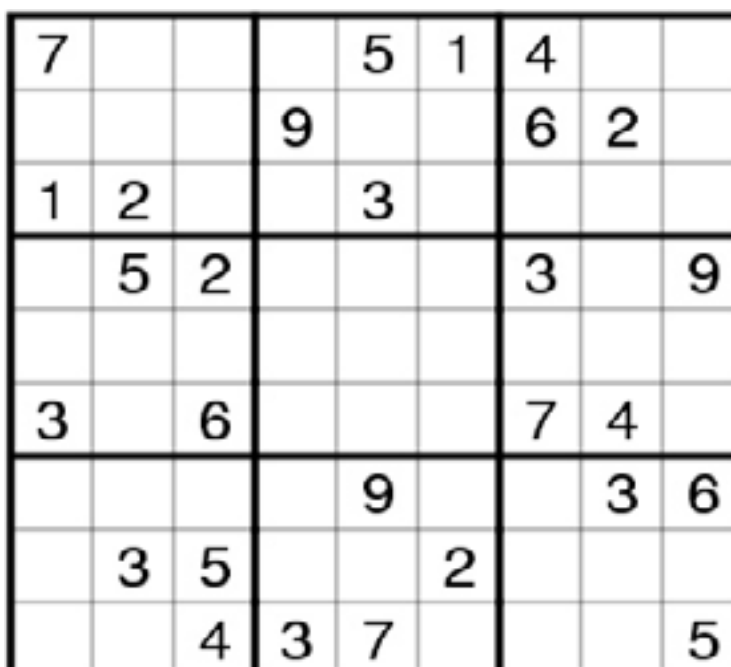
- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| BEA ARTHUR | COMEDY | RUE MCCLANAHAN |
| BETTY WHITE | DOROTHY | RUSTY ANCHOR |
| BIG DADDY | ESTELLE GETTY | SHADY PINES |
| BLANCHE | FRIENDSHIP | SITCOM |
| CHARLEY | MIAMI | SOPHIA |
| CHEESECAKE | MILES | SOUTHERN BELLE |
| CLAYTON | RELATIONSHIPS | ST OLAF |
| COCO | ROSE | STAN |

The hidden phrase is: THE GOLDEN PALACE

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Information

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 18 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART	10/01/2018 0000 UTC
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	12 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	05 °C		
ABDALY	21 °C	06 °C		
BUBYAN	22 °C	08 °C		
JAHRA	21 °C	08 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	19 °C	09 °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	13 °C		
NUWAISIB	21 °C	09 °C		
WAFRA	20 °C	08 °C		
SALMY	19 °C	05 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	01/11	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	20 °C	06 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	01/12	Fair	23 °C	07 °C	S-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Saturday	01/13	Warm	24 °C	07 °C	VRB	08 - 22 km/h
Sunday	01/14	Warm	25 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:55
Asr	14:48
Sunset	17:07
Isha	18:29

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	57 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	NW 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Airline	
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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

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

Automated enquiry
about the
Civil ID card is
1889988

EMERGENCY
112



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 11/1/2018				Departure Flights on Thursday 11/1/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
SAI	441	Lahore	00:15	JZR	528	Asyut	00:15
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
KAC	102	London	00:50	PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	MSC	412	Asyut	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05
THY	772	Ataturk, Istanbul	00:55	SAI	442	Lahore	01:15
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	JZR	502	Luxor	01:30
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	JZR	1540	Cairo	01:40
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	JZR	142	Doha	01:45
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:15	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	KAC	351	Kochi	03:05
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05
QTR	1090	Doha	04:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	544	Cairo	04:25	QTR	1091	Doha	05:05
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	KAC	203	Lahore	05:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	KAC	205	Islamabad	05:20
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:05
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
KAC	358	Kochi	05:40	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	JZR	902	Baku	07:50
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	KAC	413	Bangkok	08:10
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40
QTR	8511	Doha	07:35	BAW	156	London	08:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	KAC	613	Bahrain	08:55
JZR	503	Luxor	07:45	KAC	117	New York	09:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	QTR	8512	Doha	09:05
JZR	1541	Cairo	08:20	JZR	238	Amman	09:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	JZR	534	Cairo	09:10
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	KAC	101	London	09:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	741	Dammam	09:45
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
WAN	342	Sohag	10:15	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:00
FEG	933	Sohag	10:30	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	KAC	617	Doha	10:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
NIA	161	Cairo	11:35	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	ZAV	4101	IOA	11:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	IRA	672	Ahwaz	11:10
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	FEG	932	Alexandria	11:30
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	JZR	786	Riyadh	11:55
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
KAC	792	Madinah	13:20	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
JZR	903	Baku	13:30	MSC	404	Asyut	12:15
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40				
PAL	668	Manila	14:00				



Willie Nelson sparks health concern after axing gig mid-set

Willie Nelson has postponed several concerts after falling ill with flu. The 84-year-old singer reportedly rushed off stage after appearing to struggle with his breathing and having a coughing fit whilst midway through his show at the Harrah's Resort SoCal casino, in San Diego on Saturday. The country icon's 26-year-old son Lukas Autry Nelson issued a statement on his father's condition on Tuesday, where he revealed he would have to postpone further gigs, including planned performances at the McCallum Theater in Palm Springs and the Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas this

month. He wrote on Twitter: "Apologies all, Dad has the flu so we cancelled this week's gigs in Cali and Vegas. If you have tickets, please contact the venue for a refund and we hope to see you on the road again soon (sic)" A representative for the 'On the Road Again' hitmaker revealed to The San Diego Union Tribune newspaper that Willie would not be performing the concerts he had scheduled for January, in order to recover. The Grammy-winning star is expected to return to the stage on February 7, at the Macon City Auditorium, Georgia. Ticketmaster revealed that they would issue refunds to

those who had purchased tickets. It's not the first time Willie has battled with his breathing, in 2017 he was forced to axe his Salt Lake City show due to suffering with respiratory issues, caused by the altitude. At the time, he said in a statement: "This is Willie. I am very sorry to have to cut the Salt Lake City performance short tonight. The altitude just got to me. I am feeling a lot better now and headed for lower ground." Earlier in the year, the 'Whiskey River' star missed out on a number of concerts due to ill health.

Liam Gallagher: Oasis shouldn't have split

Liam Gallagher and his brother Noel Gallagher had "worse" bust-ups than the one that resulted in the end of Oasis. The Britpop group's former frontman insists that the 'Supersonic' group should never have split up after a concert in Paris in August 2009, which saw guitarist Noel walk out on his bandmates after his younger sibling swung his guitar around his head. Speaking on Australia's Nova FM, he admitted: "We should never have split up - that's the only thing. "He was going on like I'd killed his cat or something ... we'd had worst arguments, you know what I mean? I think he just wanted out." The 45-year-old rocker - who has revived the rock 'n' roll scene with his debut solo LP 'As You Were' - thinks the reason the 'Holy Mountain' hitmaker isn't interested in reuniting the 'Some Might Say' group again, is because he "hasn't got it in him", and would much prefer to perform stripped back solo sets. Asked about the chances of them ending their long-running feud to reunite, Liam said: "I'd love it mate ... but I don't think [Noel's] got it in him. "I don't think he's got any rock and roll in him anymore, and that's not me digging ... I think that's the reason he didn't want to get the band back, he likes to roll his sleeves up, get a shirt on, play an acoustic set." Noel announced he'd quit the band by releasing a statement after the backstage fight at the Paris gig, which read: "It's with some sadness and great relief to tell you that I quit Oasis tonight. "People will write and say what they like, but I simply could not go on working with Liam a day longer." Meanwhile, Liam recently declared that his "truce", which he called with his sibling - who he's been engaged in a high-profile feud since Noel quit Oasis, but has been heightened with Liam's recent Twitter tirades against him - before Christmas, was no more, after the 50-year-old star knocked musicians who use "an army" of songwriters. Replying to a fan who wrote: "What about the truce (sic)", Liam - who worked with the likes of Andrew Wyatt and Michael Tighe on his record - replied: "screw the truce (sic)".

Foo Fighters to perform at BRITs

Foo Fighters will make their live debut at the BRIT Awards next month. The US rockers have picked up four gongs from the prestigious event over the years - three for International Group in 2008, 2012 and 2015, and Best International Album for 2008's 'Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace' - but have never performed before, and can't wait to play at London's The O2 on



February 21. Sharing their excitement about getting to add the milestone to their history, the 'Sky Is A Neighbourhood' group's frontman Dave Grohl wrote on their Twitter: "How the hell have we never played at #BRITs before!?!?! We've had a ton of firsts over in the UK...you guys have always been so good to us. Why not add 2018 BRIT awards to the list?!?!? Let's make some noise. See you there, Dave (sic)" It comes after a stellar 2017 for the 'Best Of You' stars, which saw the band headline Glastonbury, open their own temporary pub in London and sell-out their UK arena tour. BRITs chairman & CEO and chairman of Sony Music UK & Ireland Jason Hley said: "Anyone who was lucky enough to witness one of their shows on the recent sold-out UK tour, or their set at Glastonbury - which was undoubtedly one of the best performances the festival has ever seen and a night that will be talked about forever - will know why Foo Fighters are the biggest and most exciting rock band in the world. "Quite remarkably they have never performed at The BRITs, so I am over the moon to confirm a massive BRITs exclusive to have them grace our stage." Foo Fighters join previously confirmed performers, Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran, Stormzy and Dua Lipa in taking to the stage for what looks set to be a show-stopping show. The Mastercard-sponsored ceremony will see British comedian Jack Whitehall host. On Saturday the awards will kick off with the nominations launch show, 'The BRITs Are Coming 2018', which will once again be hosted by Emma Willis, and will air on UK TV channel ITV from 5.45pm. Liam Payne, Jorja Smith, Paloma Faith, Clean Bandit and J Hus will perform.



Celine Dion cancels Las Vegas show

Celine Dion was forced to cancel her show on Tuesday while recovering from "inflammation of the throat". The 49-year-old singer axed her show on Saturday at Caesars Palace due to the illness and was told by medics she needs a bit more time to recuperate before taking to the stage again to had to call off her latest performance as well. A statement on her Facebook page read: "Celine is recovering from inflammation of the throat and her doctor has instructed her to take one more day of rest in order to fully recover." But she is hoping to resume her performances at the legendary music venue on Friday. A message posted on her Twitter account yesterday read: "TONIGHT'S SHOW CANCELLED. We regret to inform you that tonight's performance of 'Celine' at @ColosseumCP has been cancelled. Celine is on doctor's orders to take tonight to rest. Celine is expected to resume performances at The Colosseum as scheduled on Friday, Jan. 12. - TC (sic)" This comes after the 'My Heart Will Go On' hitmaker invited a female fan on stage during her performance at the Palace last Friday only for the supporter to wrap her leg around the star and start humping her. Celine said afterwards: "Let me tell you something. I'm glad you came up onstage tonight. "I'm glad that ... I thought you just wanted to come closer to me. But you know what, I'm glad you came closer to me." She then started singing: "I love you, you love me." Security rushed to Celine's aid but she asked them to stop and told the woman it was "OK" and that the guards were her "friends". Lady Gaga will also start a Las Vegas residency later this year, and Celine is keen to duet with her fellow Sin City singer. She recently said: "Oh don't get me started now. I would love that. I love her so much. I can't wait. Come on, Lady Gaga, we're waiting for you."

John tips Cabello for big things in 2018

Sir Elton John is a huge fan of Camila Cabello. The 70-year-old music legend has tipped the former Fifth Harmony star to have an "amazing year" following the success of her chart-topping song 'Havana' and with the release of her hotly-anticipated self-titled debut solo LP, which is released on Friday. The 'Tiny Dancer' hitmaker heaped praise on the 20-year-old beauty, calling her "gorgeous" and complimenting her "great attitude". He said: "Camila Cabello just had the huge hit with 'Havana', I think she's going to have an amazing year because she's just so gorgeous and so much fun and she's got a great voice and she has great attitude." Elton says if he ever got the chance to meet Camila, he'd be sure to tell her how much her music makes him "smile" and want to dance. Speaking on his Apple Beats 1 Radio show, Elton said: "I think 2018's going to be an amazing year for her. I have never met her. Never spoken to her, never, but I just love her. If I spoke to her I would just say, 'Congratulations, you make me happy. Your records make me smile.' "I just love that attitude, there's a vibrance here that makes me feel good. It makes me want to get up and dance." And the 'Rocket Man' star is in luck, as the 'Crying in the Club' singer previously admitted that after originally thinking the album would be full of "sad songs", she has now found it to be more upbeat than she expected. She said: "At first I thought it was gonna be, like, a sad-song album. Then the more I got into the year, it just was better. I felt way happier. I feel that it has a good balance of the emo and the happy."



RADIOHEAD DENY SUING LANA DEL REY

Radiohead have denied they are suing Lana Del Rey. The 'Born To Die' singer has claimed the band are seeking 100 per cent of the publishing rights to her track 'Get Free' due to its similarities to their 1993 hit 'Creep' and that she was facing a legal battle. But a spokesperson for the band - fronted by Thom Yorke - from Warner/Chappell has issued a statement to Pitchfork insisting that while "discussions" have taken place, there is no lawsuit. The statement said: "As Radiohead's music publisher, it's true that we've been in discussions since August of last year with Lana Del Rey's representatives. It's clear that the verses of 'Get Free' use musical elements found in the verses of 'Creep' and we've requested that this be acknowledged in favour of all writers of 'Creep'. To set the record straight, no lawsuit has been issued and Radiohead have not said they "will only accept 100%" of the publishing of 'Get Free'." Lana, 32, had tweeted: "It's true about the lawsuit. Although I know my song wasn't inspired by Creep, Radiohead feel it was and want 100% of the publishing - I offered up to 40 over the last few months but they will only accept 100. Their lawyers have been relentless, so we will deal with it in court. (sic)" The track on her latest album, 'Lust For

Life', is currently credited to Lana, Kieron Menzies and Rick Nowels. Lana, who has just begun her world 'LA To The Moon Tour', told a crowd in Denver in the US earlier this week: "I just want to say that I do have a particular song that Radiohead wants 100% of my publishing for, and actually the only reason why I mention it is I wanted to let you know ... that regardless of what happens in court, the sentiment I wrote in that song, which was my statement song for the record, my personal manifesto, my motto manifesto." The 'Video Games' star has postponed her Kansas City concert after falling ill with flu. The 'Born To Die' hitmaker was due to perform at the Sprint Center on Tuesday but took to Twitter to inform her 8.29 million followers that she won't be recommencing the run until Thursday in Chicago, to give her time to recover. But Lana has reassured her fans that promoters are doing all they can to "make up the date". She wrote: "Kansas City, Missouri, I'm so sorry to have to cancel the show tomorrow but I've come down with the flu so I'll be resuming the tour in Chicago. We will try and find a makeup date - and refunds are available at point of purchase. (sic)".



Lifestyle | Gossip

CHRIS HEMSWORTH SAYS THOR'S EYEPATCH IS CGI



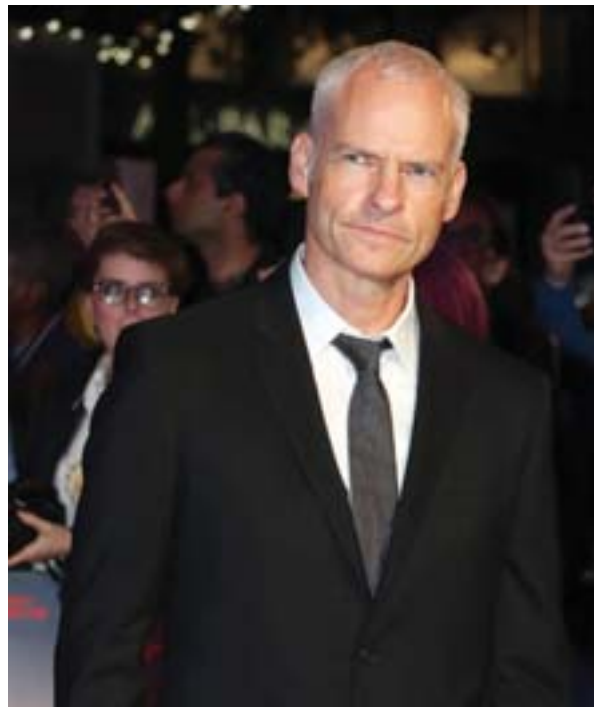
Chris Hemsworth revealed Thor's eyepatch is actually CGI. The 34-year-old actor has portrayed the Norse God of Thunder in five movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and during the climactic battle in the third standalone movie, 'Thor: Ragnarok', his eye is ripped out by his sister Hela - played by Cate Blanchett. However, Hemsworth revealed the eyepatch kept falling off while filming 'Avengers: Infinity War' and eventually it was decided to use CGI instead. Speaking to CinemaBlend, Hemsworth said: "It was ... yeah, I remember being ... with the eyepatch, the story unrolling, 'Yeah, cool, this is interesting.' And then the day that we put the eyepatch on I was like, 'This is ridiculous.' The thing kept falling off, and we didn't have the thing [gestures an eye-

patch strap]. So it became a CG eyepatch, which I was stoked about. But I'm happy with that trade [for the wig]. It has its downsides. But the upside is that it's an hour less in hair and makeup without the wig on. It's a CGI one. Just four little dots on my face! Done." At the end of the third movie the titular character finds his home world of Asgard in ruins, and life isn't set to get any easier for the character in the upcoming Marvel comics ensemble movie either. Anthony and Joe Russo, who are directing 'Avengers: Infinity War', have announced the story picks up right where 'Thor: Ragnarok' left off, meaning the God of Thunder will still be picking up the pieces of his shattered home world. Asked which character he was looking forward to seeing on the big screen the most, Anthony

Russo, 44, said: "I'm going to pick Thor because Thor, we're picking up his story from the end of 'Thor: Ragnarok' and at the end of that film as any fan would know his home planet of Asgard is destroyed, and so the character is in new territory so to speak, because his past has been torn away from him to a degree." The filmmaker also compared Thor's storyline to that of fellow Marvel star Captain America, played by Chris Evans, in the Russo brothers' first movie for the franchise, 'Captain America: Winter Soldier'.

McDonagh understands Three Billboards backlash

Martin McDonagh understands the backlash of having a likeable racist police man in 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri'. The 47-year-old filmmaker helmed the new comedy/drama starring Frances McDormand, Woody Harrelson and Sam Rockwell - who plays the racist police officer Jason Dixon. And despite the film receiving critical acclaim, there has been a number of comments regarding Rockwell's likeable character but McDonagh said the film isn't "your typical Hollywood story about heroes and villains". Speaking to The Times newspaper, McDonagh said: "I understand what the backlash is about, the minor backlash that it's having in certain places. But I just feel that it doesn't really see the nuance of the story. This isn't your typical Hollywood story about heroes and villains. It's something a bit more messy and hopefully, more interesting." The film follows the months after the murder of teenager Angela (Kathryn Newton) and there is still no culprit. As a result, her mother Mildred Hayes (McDormand) makes a bold move by painting three signs leading into the town with controversial messages directed at police chief William Willoughby (Harrelson). When Willoughby's second-in-command Officer Jason Dixon (Rockwell) gets involved, the battle is only exacerbated. Both McDormand and Rockwell were nominated and won the Golden Globe for their roles in the movie and McDonagh admitted his lead actress was "the secret". He said: "Frances is the secret, to be honest. My other two films didn't have a woman at the centre. But it's not just



that it's a female lead, it's that it's such a strong one, and with such sadness to her backstory." Although not writing for a female character before in his previous films - 'In Bruges' and 'Seven Psychopaths' - McDonagh didn't find it difficult because he is a man. He said: "I don't think so. But I do think that you have to think outside your male brain when you're trying to write a really strong female character. If you've got empathy and humanity and some kind of skill then, hopefully, you'll be able to come up with someone like Mildred."

Christian Bale has regrets about Terminator Salvation

Christian Bale wishes he could have "reinvigorated" the 'Terminator' franchise. The 43-year-old actor starred as human race savior John Connor in 2009 movie 'Terminator Salvation', which was due to be the start of a fresh trilogy. However, the sci-fi movie received poor reviews despite grossing more than \$371 million worldwide and the proposed franchise was shelved. Bale spent up to eight hours a day with director McG when the film was being edited and he admits he has "enormous regrets" about the project. Speaking on the Happy Sad Confused Podcast, Bale said: "I wish we could have reinvigorated [the franchise]. And unfortunately, during production, you could tell that wasn't happening. It's a great shame. There's a perverse side to me, where people were telling me that, there's no way on God's Earth that I should take that role, and I was thinking the same thing. But when people started verbalizing that to me, I started to go, 'Oh really? All right, well watch this then.' So there was a little bit of that involved in the choice. Do you remember that scene with Linda Hamilton where she's going nuts in 'Terminator 2'? We said, we've got to channel that at some point in the film, and that was the scene in which we were channeling it. Great lesson for me of, no matter how much you lose yourself in a scene, you do not allow yourself to behave that way. And yeah, of course, I've got enormous regrets about it." James Cameron created the 'Terminator' franchise with his cult classic 1984 movie and followed it up with blockbuster 'Terminator 2: Judgment Day' - which when it was released in 1991 was the most expensive movie ever made. However, the director was not involved in 2003's 'Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines', 'Terminator



'Salvation' or 2015's 'Terminator Genisys'. And recently a new 'Terminator' was revealed to be in the works with Arnold Schwarzenegger returning as the titular character - a T-800 killer cyborg - and Hamilton reprising her role as Sarah Connor. Plot details are being kept under wraps but Tim Miller and Cameron are reportedly treating the film as a direct sequel to 'T2: Judgment Day'. In the original 1984 movie, Schwarzenegger played the villain but in the sequel his character was the hero.

Woody Harrelson wasn't a big fan of Star Wars

Woody Harrelson wasn't "fanatical" about 'Star Wars' before accepting a role in the upcoming Han Solo spin-off movie. The 56-year-old actor plays mysterious character Beckett in 'Solo: A Star Wars Story' and when he first began filming he was shocked by the levels of secrecy on set as he wasn't familiar with the obsessed fandom that surrounds the franchise. Speaking to the Metro newspaper, Harrelson said: "I wasn't fanatical but I did like 'Star Wars'. And I thought it was cool to get to be a part of it. But I've never seen a more secretive group on my life. Literally, you can't say anything. Instead of a script you get an

encrypted e-reader. And off the set you cover yourself with a cloak because they don't want your outfit to be seen in case a drone flies over." The movie - which has been helmed by Oscar winner Ron Howard - will focus on a younger version of the titular character Han Solo, with Alden Ehrenreich taking over the iconic role from Harrison Ford. Han and Chewbacca will be seen first meeting Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover) and they will also encounter Harrelson's alter ego, who is believed to be a mentor to young Han who guides him on his journey to becoming an intergalactic criminal. Harrelson can currently be seen starring alongside Frances

McDormand and Sam Rockwell in Martin McDonagh's new movie 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri'. The film has received universal critical acclaim and both McDormand and Rockwell won a Golden Globe for their performance in the black comedy. But Harrelson said he never puts any thought into accolades when making a film he just wants to do the best job he can. He said: "I don't even put one moment of thought into that. All you can really hope for is that you make a great movie. The odds are stacked against you. So many things have got to converge to make it happen. After that you've got no control."



Oldman wants to work with Streep

Gary Oldman would love to work with Meryl Streep. The 59-year-old actor has starred alongside many greats of the screen over the course of his illustrious career, including Christian Bale in 'The Dark Knight' trilogy, Bruce Willis in 'The Fifth Element' and Sir Anthony Hopkins in 'Hannibal' as well as the plethora of stars in the 'Harry Potter' movies, but Oldman still has a list of actors and directors he would love to work with and Streep is at the top. In an interview with the Metro newspaper, Oldman said: "There are a few people on the list. I'd like to work with Meryl [Streep]. Never worked with [Martin

Scorsese." Oldman can currently be seen alongside Kristin Scott Thomas and Lily James in 'The Darkest Hour' as World War II British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and at the weekend he won the Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture, Drama prize at the Golden Globes and he has also been nominated for the Leading Actor gong at this year's BAFTA Film Awards. He said: "It's not something I think about. Understanding [why] is the booby prize. Don't even waste your energy trying." 'The Darkest Hour' - which was helmed by Joe Wright - tells the story at the beginning of World War II as within days of becoming Prime Minister, Churchill must face one of his most turbulent and defining moments of the conflict: exploring a negotiated peace treaty with Nazi Germany, which could guarantee Britain's independence and that of the Commonwealth. As the Nazi forces roll across Western Europe and the threat of invasion of the UK, Churchill must resist attempts by his own political party and an initially sceptical King George VI, to stand firm against the dangers facing his country and not buckle to the Nazis. Although the iconic Prime Minister has been played before by the likes of Robert Hardy, Albert Finney and Richard Burton, Oldman admitted he was in "good hands" with filmmaker Wright. He said: "I knew I was in good hands with Joe and then going back to the source material ... it's trying to put all that noise away and looking at the man. And what's the worst that could happen? They're not going to shoot me."



Millie Bobby Brown to star in Enola Holmes film series

Millie Bobby Brown is to star in and produce a new Sherlock Holmes film franchise. The 'Stranger Things' actress has penned a deal with Legendary Entertainment to appear in a host of movies based on Nancy Springer's young adult fiction book series 'The Enola Holmes Mysteries'. According to Deadline, Brown, 13, has developed a relationship with Legendary after recently filming her role of Madison Russell in forthcoming movie 'Godzilla: King of the Monsters'. 'The Enola Holmes Mysteries' tells the story of the titular younger sister of Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes who is also a successful detective. There are six novels in the series, 'The Case of the Missing Marquess', 'The Case of the Left-Handed Lady', 'The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets', 'The Case of the Peculiar Pink Fan', 'The Case of the Cryptic Crinoline' and 'The Case of the Gypsy Goodbye'. Brown - who is most famous for her role as 'Eleven' in 'Stranger Things' - recently admitted she is "excited" about making her big screen debut in the upcoming 'Godzilla' movie, which is slated for a March 2019 release. She said: "It's my first movie. I'm really excited and that's really all I can say, but it's going to be great! I just had a really incredible connection with the director [Michael Dougherty]. I had a great meeting with him and you know, I just really love him." Brown is deaf in one ear, but she recently admitted it doesn't put her off doing her secondary passion, singing. She

said: "I just started to sing, and if I sound bad I don't care, because I'm just doing what I love. You don't have to be good at singing. You don't have to be good at dancing or acting. If you like to do it, if you genuinely enjoy doing it, then do it. No one should stop you."



Deadpool's Tim Miller developing Kitty Pryde movie



'Deadpool' director Tim Miller is working on 'X-Men' spin-off movie 'Kitty Pryde'. A solo film about the feisty mutant, also known as Shadowcat, is currently in development at 20th Century Fox, sources have told Collider. Kitty Pryde was last seen played by Ellen Page in 'X-Men: Days Of Future Past' and has up to now been a side-kick character in the 'X-Men' movies and Marvel comics. Kitty's powers include a phasing ability with objects and people, as well as disrupting electrical fields and levitation. The project is still in the early stages, with director Miller also busy helming a new 'Terminator' film and producing the upcoming 'Sonic the Hedgehog' movie. But if the 'Kitty Pryde' film does make it to the big screen it will add pace to the growing trend for female-led superhero motion pictures which is starting to emerge, with the likes of 'X-Men: Dark Phoenix' starring Sophie Turner. The 'Kitty Pryde' project is not thought to be near the casting stages yet, and as a spin-off movie, with a possible origins plotline, it may be that Ellen - who has taken the role on twice, including in 'X-Men: The Last Stand' - does not return to play the character. 'A History of Violence' actress Sumela Kay played Kitty in the original 'X-Men' movie, and the role was taken on by Inconceivable's Katie Stuart in 'X2' in 2003. — Bang Showbiz

The Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound



This picture made with a fisheye lens yesterday, shows the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in Jerusalem's Old City, following renovation work carried out by the Waqf, a Jordanian-backed body that oversees Muslim religious sites in Jerusalem.



Crescent ornaments that used to sit atop the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, on display at the Islamic Museum at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Muslim worshippers praying at the Mihrab, a niche in a wall indicating the direction of the Kaaba in Makkah, inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Mural mosaic decoration inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in Jerusalem's Old City.



The decorated interior of the golden dome inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Mosaic decoration and Arabic calligraphy inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



A rose window inside the Al-Aqsa mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



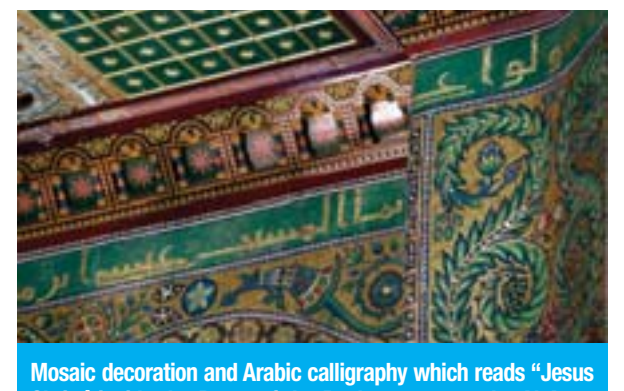
A general view from inside the Al-Aqsa mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Picture shows the Foundation Stone inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



The decorated interior of the golden dome inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Mosaic decoration and Arabic calligraphy which reads "Jesus Christ" inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound. — AFP photos

VAN CLEEF & ARPELS CELEBRATES WITH AN ENCHANTING EVENT: DIAMOND BREEZE

Van Cleef & Arpels celebrates the holiday season with an enchanting event: Diamond Breeze. The event which started from mid-November 2017 and still continue to mid-January 2018. This year's edition showcases pieces adorned only with diamonds - among them new Lotus creations and the sparkling flowers of the Frivole collection. Evoking the beauty of a snow-covered nature, openwork pendants, earrings and Between the Finger(tm) Rings glisten in a gentle wintry atmosphere.

Poetry of winter

From Van Cleef & Arpels' boutiques to the website and social networks, Diamond Breeze opens the gates of a fairyland fringed with sparkling snow. Nature - a cherished theme for Van Cleef & Arpels - seems to come to life against a crystalline backdrop, where flora and fauna come together to reveal the creations. While the website takes on the colors of the event, a video released by the Maison recounts the touching journey of a ladybug and a

delightful baby bird (of the Shima Enaga species). The joyful pair explore the Diamond Breeze selection in a game of hide and seek between branches and snowy peaks. To offer an augmented reality experience, the Maison's five emblematic boutiques will be equipped with an interactive mirror. On the social networks, clients will be able to share their 10-second video recreating the atmosphere of Diamond Breeze.

Delicate Lotus flowers

A symbol of beauty, purity and self-fulfillment, the lotus flower reflects the harmonious universe of Van Cleef & Arpels. Within the Lotus collection, it blossoms in hitherto unseen form, with an intricate openwork motif and exquisitely delicate proportions. A bracelet - newly added to the range - earrings and a pendant in white gold trace a glittering diamond corolla against the skin. Slightly inclined petals are superimposed on two levels, creating an effect of relief and movement. To coincide with Diamond Breeze, the Maison is also presenting a

redesigned version of its emblematic Lotus Between the Finger Ring. This transformable creation offers a pure and slender aesthetic, with a smooth hoop and pronounced openwork to optimize the circulation of light. Enlacing the finger, the ring slides open to embrace the hand with its two leaves and flower in full bloom.

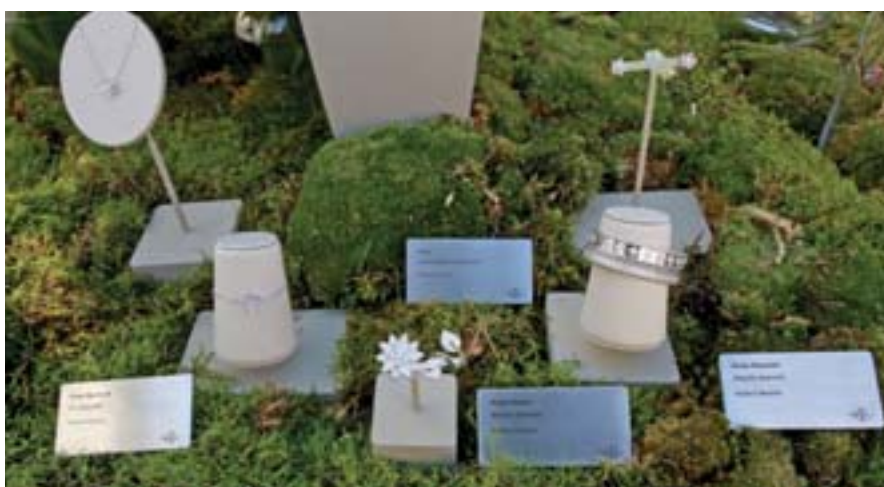
Sparkling Frivole creations

The luminous style of the Frivole collection lends itself to the festive season: diamonds and white gold light up the skin with their precious brilliance. From the ring and necklace to the earrings and pendant, each creation unfurls heartshaped petals around one to three central stones. Openwork and carefully polished filets - evoking veins on the front and back - are among the details that embody the Maison's savoirfaire, artfully deployed to highlight the overall brilliance. Accentuating the interplay of reflections, an intricate paving of bead-set round diamonds lends a shimmer to the surfaces' graphic lines. The models include both solitary flowers and bouquets, each

one shimmering in a vibrant ode to the beauty of nature.

The dazzle of Van Cleef & Arpels' diamonds

Throughout its history, the Maison has been renowned for its jewelry expertise and its stringent criteria for selecting stones that elicit a unique emotion. Enthralled by the natural beauty of diamonds, it has always showcased them in timeless pieces known as "white jewelry", combining the gems' radiance with that of white gold or platinum. Highlighted by this interplay of materials, they reveal their full luminosity. In keeping with this tradition, Van Cleef & Arpels selects diamonds of the highest quality for its creations. The same meticulous attention is paid to central stones and paved surfaces alike: rated D, E or F for color and IF to VVS2 for clarity, the diamonds complement one another to endow the creations with an exceptional intensity.



Photos show the new collection of Van Cleef & Arpels during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Tenning Ngom (right) sifts millet in Niakhar, Senegal. — AFP photos



Packages of arraw millet, a product of the women's association, are pictured in Niakhar, Senegal.



Tenning Ngom (right) sifts millet in Niakhar, Senegal.

IN RURAL SENEGAL, SEEDS OF HOPE FOR WORKING WOMEN



Members of the women's association chant and dance during a meeting in Niakhar, Senegal.



Cake and pastry made with arraw millet that is produced by the women's association, are laid out on a table in Niakhar, Senegal.



One of the members of the women's association presents their product, packages of arraw millet, in Niakhar, Senegal.

In Nganda, a rural community in remote Senegal close to the Gambian border, restaurant owner Aissatou Tisse is carving out a reputation for tasty homemade, locally grown food. About 100 kilometers (60 miles) away in the village of Niakhar, handicapped Daba Dione feeds her family by raising chickens on a modest smallholding. Thanks to a training course in veterinary health, she is routinely consulted by neighbors about their own poultry. "Today, I've even forgotten the difficulties of the past," Dione told AFP. The two have benefited from schemes that seek both to support women's empowerment and fight poverty in rural Africa, where male dominance, backbreaking labor and misery go hand in hand.

'Enormous need of women'

"We have an enormous need of women... We're up against the ageing of those who hold land and the phenomenon of migration among men," said Khadija Doucoure, a specialist handling gender and youth issues in west Africa for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). "It should be normal for (women) to have access, like men do, to financial resources, fertilizers, and to be present in decision-making bodies for product marketing," Doucoure said. UN agencies like IFAD and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), both based in Rome, manage projects to help empower rural women, who account for at least 43 percent of agricultural laborers worldwide, according to an FAO report.

Such women bear responsibility for childcare and household tasks, as well as working the fields, yet enjoy only "limited access to land, credit, information and technologies," IFAD noted in a recent report. In west and central Africa, IFAD runs 55 projects that feature gender equality as a goal. Between 2010 and 2015, its projects "reached a total of 139 million people, of whom 43.2 million saw an increase in farm income," while others built up larger cattle herds or poultry stocks, the agency said. The support "lifted 24 million people out of poverty", added the document, which pointed out that helping women is "an efficient means of reducing chronic infantile malnutrition. Women are more inclined than men to spend their revenue on food and education."

'Dakar is a risk'

Nevertheless, independent analyst Jean-Christophe Debar warned of broader risks if institutional donors like the FAO and the World Bank concentrate unduly on women because of perceived hardships. "I'm worried about trendy effects: what we need most is a rural economy that works for everyone." "We should not give the impression that it's enough to focus on women for everything to go well," said Debar, head of the think tank foundation FARM. "The two main problems in Africa are access to the means of production (land, seeds, fertilizer) and access to the market, with the possibility of selling the harvest at a rewarding price."

In Nganda, where some families cannot afford all the

food they need, IFAD has financed farm support programs jointly with the Senegalese state since 2012. Villagers are given seeds adapted to survive in drought conditions and also get basic agronomic training in soil management. Tisse works only with local produce, she told AFP in her small Nganda restaurant where she provided a glass of ruby red bissap, a popular drink made from dried hibiscus leaves.

"We have been able to buy our sheep and horses and we have launched into the production of (groundnut) oil,"

TODAY, I'VE EVEN FORGOTTEN THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PAST



Daba Dione works in her pen in Niakhar, Senegal.

said the young woman, who was forced to leave school early after her parents died. Until recently, jobless men in the district would head off to the capital and never come back, Tisse said. "Women went too, to be domestic employees. Dakar is a risk for us." "This is a dry area where the soil has not been worked for several generations, since the majority of young people leave for Dakar



Restaurateur Aissatou Cisse speaks during an interview with AFP in Nganda, some 200kms south-east of Dakar.

or further afield," said Mame Birame Sene, the head of Nganda's cultural and sporting association, which has turned into an agricultural cooperative.

'I've paid it all back'

Until the funding scheme began, "we had problems meeting our needs, but now we're cultivating 200 hectares (almost 500 acres) and we run our own business," Tisse said. She has deliberately hired a team exclusively made up of women. "With men around, we would not have been able to engage in food processing nor the restaurant business," she said. "And I pay everybody!" But she takes her greatest pride from being chosen as "godmother" to the local football club. Such a position for a woman was hitherto unimaginable in the dusty backwater. Tisse bubbles with more plans, including a shop for local produce and a restaurant in Dakar on the same select basis as her business in the village. "We've already spotted the place, we just need to settle the deal."

In Nganda, increased crop production has enabled women to make the most of a bumper harvest by preparing bags of sankhal (processed crushed millet) for desserts, typically with milk, and arraw (rolled flour pellets) for porridge. By pooling their earnings, the women have set up a bank and lend themselves money for their individual projects at a fixed interest rate of 10 percent. Tenning Ngom, 27, has been a beneficiary. "My work for the collective is to sieve millet after the harvest. I work from November to February." For the rest of the year, Ngom runs a roadside catering concern started when the women's group lent her money. "My first loan dates from 2015," she said. "I've paid it all back." — AFP

London prepares to sparkle with Lumiere festival

London's streets from the West End to Westminster are to be flooded with the light from 50 art installations this month, in an event officials hope will bring millions of visitors to the British capital. Lumiere London, organized by the culture charity Artichoke, is returning to the city two years after its launch, running from January 18 to 21, organizers said in a statement on Tuesday. Some streets will be pedestrianized for the occasion of "an extraordinary and immersive nocturnal art exhibition of light and sound," organizers said.

St James's Churchyard in Piccadilly will host an installation entitled "My Light is Your Light"—a tribute to Syrian refugees created by Alaa Minawi, who worked for three years as an interpreter for refugees. On the South Bank of the River Thames, visitors will see images of dancers projected onto a dance studio and a series of 40 glowing gates along the waterfront.

There will also be a canopy of luminous spheres floating above Trafalgar Square and a psychedelic installation above the Oxford

Circus road junction. Lumiere London is seen as a way of showing off the capital's rich cultural life and drawing tourists during a traditionally quiet season. Mayor Sadiq Khan said he was expecting millions of extra visitors and voiced hope that it would "transform the city and offer new perspectives on the capital's iconic architecture, streets and landmarks". — AFP



This file photo shows IFO by French artist Jacques Rival on show as part of the lumiere light festival in London. — AFP

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2018



A picture taken yesterday, shows the decorated interior of the golden dome inside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in Jerusalem's Old City, following renovation work carried out by the Waqf, a Jordanian-backed body that oversees Muslim religious sites in Jerusalem. — AFP (For more pictures see Page 30)

Trump on Oprah: She won't run in 2020 but I'd win anyway

US President Donald Trump weighed in Tuesday on fevered speculation about a potential 2020 White House bid by Oprah Winfrey, saying she probably would not run against him, but if she did, he would win. "I'll beat Oprah," Trump said of the Oscar-nominated actress and talk show host. "I like Oprah," he said, noting that he had appeared on her long-running afternoon program. "I know her very well," he said, before adding: "I don't think she's going to run."

Winfrey's rousing speech at Sunday's Golden Globes Awards ceremony ignited speculation that the billionaire talk show queen is harboring Oval Office ambitions. Some Democrats—still reeling from Hillary Clinton's shock loss to Trump in 2016—have embraced the idea of having their own celebrity candidate. But there is little indication that the 63-year-old actually wants the job. "I don't think at this point she is actually considering

it," said Winfrey's best friend Gayle King, who is also a television personality. King suggested, however, that the actress was "intrigued" by the idea of running. "I also know, after years of watching the Oprah show, you always have the right to change your mind," she said.

Focused on Trump's re-election

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders was also drawn into the speculation on Tuesday about a potential Winfrey candidacy. Asked by a reporter whether she had any advice for an "outsider" considering a White House run, Sanders said: "I'm not going to focus on anyone's campaign other than President Trump's re-election." "I'm sure if she decides to run, which I think the president states he doesn't feel she will, I'm sure she'll have help with that," Sanders added. Sanders was also asked whether she believed Winfrey was qualified to run for president.

"Look, I disagree very much on her policies," the spokeswoman said. "Is she a successful individual? Absolutely. "But in terms of where she stands on a number of positions, I would find a lot of problems with that," Sanders said. "But that would be something she would have to determine and lay out if she made a decision to run." Sanders was also questioned about a tweet from Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump praising Winfrey's Golden Globes speech. "Just saw @Oprah's empowering & inspiring speech at last night's #GoldenGlobes," Ivanka Trump tweeted Monday night. "Let's all come together, women & men, & say #TIMESUP #UNITED," she said in a reference to the campaign to end sexual harassment. Sanders said the message from the White House is that "everyone should come together." — AFP



Oprah Winfrey

Bizarre News

Duck learns to waddle with fake foot

A duck has learnt to waddle after it was given a prosthetic leg. The happy-go-lucky bird was found without a webbed foot shortly after it was born after a turtle seemingly gnawed at his limb but the precious eight-month-old Indian runner duck named Peg has been given a new lease of life after teenage students at Armored High School in Arkansas used a 3D printer to create a new lower leg. The duck's owner Patsy Smith told TV station KAIT: "I was just elated. And it's been a wonderful learning experience. "The very first model, it was not very good, but that was what we were learning. And so from where it is now it is a completely different process. Not only is it heartwarming, but it's exciting. "I'm just so grateful that there are people that truly care, and they've gone out of their way to do everything they can to make it as comfortable for the duck." The school's lab director Alicia Bell said it took around 30 attempts before pupils created a model that was appropriate for Peg and his leg.



Man gets head stuck in prison cell

A suspect burst into tears after he got his head wedged between the bars of his cell. A man got himself in a fluster in at a police station in China after he rammed his head through the iron bars to shout at officers before realizing he was stuck. Two policemen tried to pull the bars apart in order to push the man's head back through but it wasn't successful and the suspect - whose name isn't known - breaks down in tears as an onlooker filmed the incident on their mobile phone. An officer then tried to push his head back through but he screamed: "Don't push, it hurts!" before he begins to shout at them for holding an "innocent" man "unfairly." His anger then increases and he begins to shout names at the officers but they don't retaliate and continue to push his head back through the bars. The footage ends there but, according to Chinese media, the man was eventually freed, although it's not known whether he suffered any injuries.



Human Cannonball coming to Bestival

A cannonball firing humans will be a new attraction at Bestival this year. The music extravaganza, which takes place at Lulworth Estate in Dorset, South West England from August 2 to 5, has a theme of Circus, so it's the perfect way to entertain the crowds with the family entertainment shows celebrating 250 years in business in London, with the anniversary of Philip Astley's first circus performance at Westminster Bridge. Bestival ringmaster Rob da Bank said: "in my other life as Ringmaster Robby I'm pretty darn excited about having a Human Cannonball flying across the Lulworth Estate in August. Rodrigo is the best in the business and will not disappoint. Watch ya heads!" The Human Cannonball, Rodrigo Pérez said: "Firing yourself out of an enormous cannon takes a man of a high calibre. Luckily, I'm a cannonball kind of guy. Come and be amazed as I shoot through the sky, flying over your crazy, smiling faces." Rodrigo



Pérez is one of the world's most-acclaimed proponents of the art. He'll be fired from the barrel of a custom-built cannon, which sees him fly up to 25 meters through the air.

Teacher left shocked after quizzing class to a riddle

A teacher was left stunned after his class gave him a depressing answer to his riddle. Bret Turner, who teaches first grade in California, asked the riddle: "I am the beginning of everything, the end of everywhere. I'm the beginning of eternity, the end of time & space. What am I?" Before giving the answer, which is "e", his students replied "death" which led to an "awed, somber, reflective hush" over his class. Bret was so moved by their response, he posted the riddle on Twitter and wrote: "The first guess from one of my 1st graders was 'death' and such an awed, somber, reflective hush fell over the class that I didn't want to tell them that actually the answer is the letter e, which just seemed so banal in the moment (sic)". — Bang Showbiz

