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Manila says Filipino workers' ban in Kuwait 'long overdue'

Govt regrets Duterte's remarks • Envoy awaiting instructions

By Ben Garcia and Agencies

MANILA: President Rodrigo Duterte has banned Philippine citizens from travelling to Kuwait to work following reports of widespread abuse and exploitation, his spokesman confirmed yesterday. Duterte ordered the ban after reports emerged about the deaths of several Filipinas in the state, his spokesman Harry Roque said. "In line with his presidential pronouncement, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello has ordered the suspension of the deployment of workers to Kuwait," Roque told reporters. "There is really excessive suffering over there," Roque said, adding that the ban was "long overdue".

Kuwait expressed surprise at the move and said it was in touch with Manila to try to resolve the issue. An estimated 10 million Filipinos work overseas and the money they send home is a major pillar of the Philippine economy. It was not immediately clear how long the ban, which does not affect workers already in Kuwait, would last. There are more than 250,000 Filipinos in Kuwait, the Philippine foreign ministry estimates, most working as domestic helpers.

Speaking to Kuwait Times on Friday, Philippines Ambassador to Kuwait Renato Villa said he is awaiting instructions from Manila regarding the ban. "The news was released by the media and we have no official instructions yet. If that's the order from the president and the department of labor and employment, we will comply," he said.

He noted that in June last year, he had sent a letter to Kuwait's interior ministry stressing some points, com-

ments and opinions by a team of observers that visited Kuwait, but failed to get a response. "We followed up in August, but got no reply. Perhaps now, after the ban, they'll notice it. We are hoping for their positive appreciation of the note," Villa said.

Asked if the ban would be applied to all Filipino workers, Villa said he is sure that it will only be applied to domestic helpers as they are the most vulnerable. "I think it will only be applied to household service workers. We have been trying our best to make the Kuwaiti authorities sign a memorandum of agreement, and hopefully they'll settle this issue with us soon."

In his speech before overseas workers on Thursday, Duterte said he would urge the Kuwaiti government to act against the abuses. "My advice is, we talk to them, state the truth and just tell them that it's not acceptable anymore. Either we impose a total ban or we can have (disagreements)," Duterte said. "I do not want a quarrel with Kuwait. I respect their leaders, but they have to do something about this," he added.

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed "surprise and sorrow" over Duterte's remarks, saying that legal proceedings had been taken in the cases of the four domestic workers mentioned by the president. "We have begun immediate contacts with Filipino authorities to examine the extent of this statement and to try to refute the erroneous information that came in it," state news agency KUNA quoted Jarallah as saying. Kuwait enjoys "a bright image over its treatment of expatriate workers and has laws that preserve their rights and organize their relations with employers," he added.



MANILA: Residents rest on a wooden bridge over a garbage-filled waterway on Jan 17, 2018. - AFP

Kuwait has faced criticism in the past over its "kafala" system for foreign workers which has been likened to a form of bonded labor or even slavery. The

kafala system prevents workers from moving to a new job before their contracts end without their boss's consent, resulting in a wide range of abuses.

MoI gets access to addicts' info; foreign missions only by Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: Laboratories of the interior ministry will have digital access to labs of the addiction treatment center and the health ministry for securing data of patients' blood samples. The automated system linking the computer systems of the three entities' laboratories has been set up for the first time in Kuwait, said Du'aa Al-Khaldi, director of the medical laboratory services department, in a statement yesterday. The electronic linkup is designed to avert "manipulation of the addicts' (blood) samples," she explained.

Separately, an official foreign ministry source said yesterday all staff at the ministry are Kuwaiti citizens and are solely tasked with missions abroad. The source, in a statement, was reacting to a report published by a local newspaper in the context of replies by Deputy Prime and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah to an

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Turkey launches offensive against Syria Kurd militia

HASSA, Turkey: Turkey yesterday launched a new air and ground operation to oust a Kurdish militia from its northern Syrian enclave, defying US warnings that the action risked further destabilizing the area after almost seven years of civil war. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had repeatedly vowed that Turkey would root out the "nests of terror" in Syria of the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia which Turkey deems a terror organization.

The launch came despite warnings that the operation could be militarily tough against an already battle-hardened foe and complicate relations with both Washington and Moscow. The foreign ministry of Russia, whose opinion is seen as crucial in determining how far the operation goes, said it had received the news of the campaign with concern and urged restraint. Turkey's army said operation "Olive Branch" began at 1400 GMT and was aimed at the YPG and Islamic State (IS) militants. Among the targets in hit in air and artillery strikes was the YPG-held Minnigh military airport, which lies north of Aleppo, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. It said 108 targets were hit, with the casualties all Kurdish militants.

An AFP correspondent on the Turkish side of the



TALL MALID, Syria: Turkish-backed fighters from the Free Syrian Army fire towards Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) positions in the village of Um Al-Hosh in the area of Afrin yesterday. - AFP

border saw two war planes launch air strikes inside Syrian territory, sending huge white plumes of smoke up into the early evening sky. Units of pro-Ankara rebels known by Turkey as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) also began moving into the Afrin area of Syria which is controlled by the YPG, Anadolu said. There were no initial reports of Turkish ground troops crossing the border. Erdogan said that after Afrin, the forces would also

seek to oust the YPG from Manbij, a town to the east that the Kurdish militia also holds.

In a delicate diplomatic situation, the top diplomats of Russia, Iran and the United States in Ankara were invited to the foreign ministry to receive a briefing on the operation, the ministry said. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu held telephone talks with US

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US govt shuts down as Trump feuds with Dems

WASHINGTON: The second year of Donald Trump's presidency began yesterday with the US government in shutdown mode while lawmakers gathered in hopes of finding a compromise that would fund federal agencies. For the first time since Oct 2013 - when a similar stand-off that lasted 16 days kept only essential agency operations running - federal workers were being told to stay at home or in some cases to work without pay until new funding is approved.

Facing a political crisis that could have an impact on November's congressional elections, the Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives were holding rare weekend sessions yesterday. But House Republicans, who gathered for closed meeting before their open session, were taking a hard line against Democrats, which could point to the possibility of a prolonged standoff. The government had been running on three consecutive temporary funding bills since the new fiscal year began in October.

One senior House Republican, Greg Walden, told reporters the government would have to be reopened



WASHINGTON: Capitol Hill is seen against a blue sky while the government begins a shutdown yesterday. - AFP

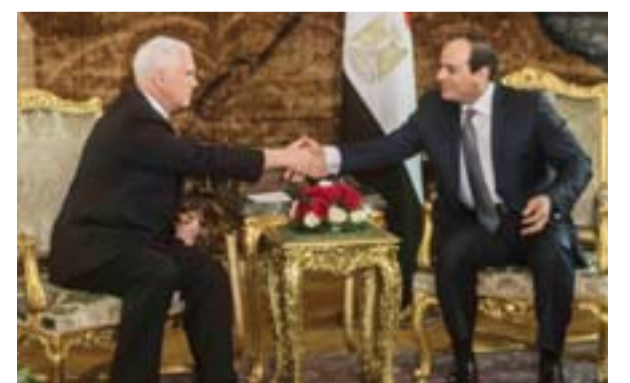
before discussions could advance on immigration - a main sticking point that led to the impasse. Democrats' demand of securing permanent legal protections for 700,000 young, undocumented immigrants as a condition for new government funding, Walden said, was "hostage taking in its worse form". Democrats counter that they have been pleading with Republicans for months to approve the immigration measure as a stand-alone bill and were rebuffed.

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Pence meets Sisi amid Arab anger over Jerusalem

CAIRO: US Vice President Mike Pence met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday as he began a delayed Middle East tour overshadowed by Arab anger over Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Controversy over President Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem had led to the cancellation of a number of planned meetings ahead of the trip originally scheduled for December.

While the deadly protests that erupted at the time have subsided, concerns are mounting over the future of the UN aid agency for Palestinians after Washington froze tens of millions of dollars of funding. The Palestinian leadership, already furious over the Jerusalem decision, has denounced the US administration and had already refused to meet Pence in December. A coalition of Arab parties in the Israeli parliament said yesterday it would boycott a speech by Pence tomorrow, calling him "dangerous and messianic". Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip, said that the vice president was "not welcome" in the region.



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) welcomes US Vice President Mike Pence at the Presidential Palace in the capital yesterday. - AFP

Pence, who is accompanied by his wife Karen on the trip, held talks with former army chief Sisi in Cairo that were expected to focus on US aid and security, including an insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula. After dinner he will travel to Amman for a one-on-one meeting with King Abdullah II today before heading to Israel for the final leg of the tour. Pence went ahead with the trip - which had been pushed back in December as a crunch tax vote

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Local

Over 40,000 people visited Kuwait Aviation Show 2018

Two terminals will be ready within six months



KUWAIT: Pictures taken from a tour at the Kuwait Aviation Show 2018. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Aviation Show 2018 concluded yesterday with great success and many deals signed. According to the organizers, over 40,000 people visited the four-day show, in which 144 international and local companies including 57 aircraft participated. "Visitors enjoyed the shows presented by the airplanes of the Kuwait air force, Solo Turk, Saudi Falcon and others. I was surprised when I saw people in Subhan watching the aerial displays," head of the organizing committee Ahmed Behbehani said during a press conference yesterday.



Show to be held every two years

Huge number

The Kuwait Aviation Show will be held every two years. "The event was also successful due to the cooperation of various authorities including the ministry of defense, ministry of interior, Amiri Diwan, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, ministry of information and the great support of the media," he added.

Organizing committee consultant Captain Abdullah Bastaki noted that the huge number of companies that participated in this event signifies their trust and interest in the Kuwaiti market. "The aviation industry in Kuwait has witnessed great development with mega projects worth over KD 25 billion. Within six months, two terminals will be ready - the supporting terminal (T4) and the Jazeera terminal, which will provide for a large increase in capacity, which shows the interest of our government in the aviation field," he said.

The aviation sector is the main engine for development in any country. "GCC airports and national carriers are examples, as their growth rates are the highest in the world except for the Far East, where the population is very high. In Kuwait for instance, Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways registered growth of over 20 percent. Also, the civil aviation sector is growing by 10 percent, although the international rate is around 5 percent," stressed Bastaki.

"The new aircraft coming to Kuwait will boost the economy. It's not only about purchasing the aircraft, but also the aftersales service. This show energized

other sectors in Kuwait too, such as hotels, malls and others that witnessed an increase of visitors from abroad," he explained.

Two years

Tareq Bastaki, General Coordinator of the Kuwait Aviation Show, stated that preparations for the show took more than two years. "We travelled and participated in various international aviation fairs in Dubai, France and others. We received positive feedback from participants, and over 50 percent of them assured us that they will be participating in the next Kuwait Aviation Show that will be held in 2020," he noted. "This event is considered a major event. A few mistakes took place, but it's acceptable as this is our first experience. The airshow had an educational aspect - to make people aware of what an aviation fair is. From next week, we will begin working on the 2020 show," he added.

"This is the first aviation show organized by a private company in the world. Participants are usually wary of participating in private events and only trust government ones. We appreciate the trust of



Ahmed Behbehani



Captain Abdullah Bastaki



Tareq Bastaki

our government in this event and their support. Organizing an aviation show is very costly, especially as the insurance and fuel costs have to be paid in advance," said Abdullah Bastaki.

The sponsorship of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was also behind the success of this event. "Attendance was beyond my expectations as all invitees accepted the invitation and we even had to print 300 additional invitations. We had the idea of organizing this show about 25 years ago, but we didn't find a suitable location for it. Also, the organizers are from Kuwait, and proved that their work is of an international standard," stressed Behbehani.

Limak commends Kuwait's efforts to organize aviation show

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Aviation Show 2018 concluded yesterday at Kuwait International Airport with over 125 local and international civil and military aviation companies participating. The four-day event aimed to place Kuwait as a top contender in the Middle East's aviation sector through attracting foreign investors.

On the sidelines of the airshow, Kuwait Times spoke with Limak Construction to learn more about their activity in the country. "We are participating today to present our company as a part of the aviation industry in Kuwait. We feel that we are one of Kuwait, and this is why we are one of the main sponsors of the show. We have a good background in such events in which we have participated for years," said Haldun Firat Kokturk, Global Head of Airports at Limak.

He commended the great effort by Kuwait to organize the aviation show. "I think in the coming years, the Kuwait Aviation Show will be one of the most attractive shows in the world. The GCC aviation industry has shown impressive and consistent growth, outperforming most other regional markets around the globe."

Kokturk said the Limak booth allowed visitors to experience a 3D view of the new airport the company is building in Kuwait. He said the airport project is Limak's first and largest project in Kuwait, but vowed it will not be the last. "We aim to expand our projects in Kuwait, and have a farsighted vision of upcoming contracts with the Kuwaiti government, which shows total support. When we see an opportunity, we will go for it," he said.

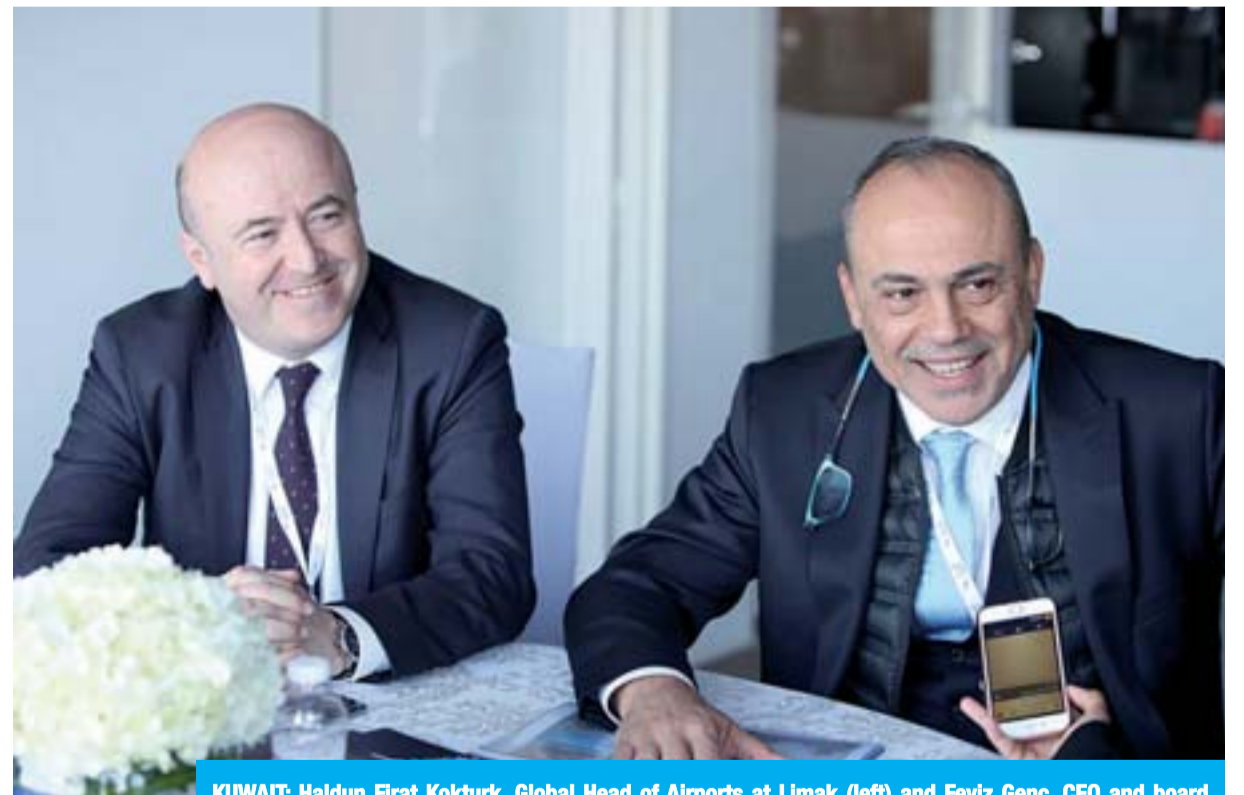
Kokturk said Limak Construction was established in 1976, and its activities include construction, tourism, cement, infrastructure and energy investments, energy contracting, aviation and food. "Limak Construction has successfully completed many major projects including airports, ports, dams, irrigation systems, highways, hydroelectric power plants, industrial plants, oil and gas pipelines and building complexes, hotels and resorts. It is ranked among the world's largest international construction companies by the Engineering News Record magazine. Limak is currently executing Istanbul's new airport project and Dakar's Blaise-Diagne International Airport, among the many projects currently being undertaken," he said.

Four projects

About Limak's projects in Kuwait, Feyiz Genc, CEO and board member at Limak, told Kuwait Times that the company has four projects with the Kuwaiti government including the Kuwait international Airport project. Genc said Limak has completed a housing project with 5,000 flats in West Abdullah Mubarak for the housing ministry. "We completed the project two months before the deadline. We were recently awarded a new project for 3,000 flats by the housing ministry," he revealed. Genc noted that Limak is also working on the Infectious Diseases Hospital project. "We are planning to stay here permanently, not temporarily. We want to expand in Kuwait and worldwide too. Limak is always there to complete any impossible mission," he stressed.

Richard Meredith, Project Director of the Kuwait International Airport terminal project, noted that the first stage of the new terminal is British-designed, with a capacity of 13 million passengers annually. Additions to be made later can expand it to accommodate 25 million passengers.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Al-Omar, council for



KUWAIT: Haldun Firat Kokturk, Global Head of Airports at Limak (left) and Feyiz Genc, CEO and board member at Limak speak to Kuwait Times. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Limak Construction's board of directors, spoke about Limak's social responsibility in Kuwait. "Extending beyond construction, Limak looks at its projects as opportunities to invest in the communities. In the fall of 2017, Limak officially completed its first edition of the 'Kuwait Engineer Girls' program, which involved the training of 35 undergraduate female Kuwait University engineers over the course of a semester."

'Kuwait Engineer Girls'

Modeled after a successful program launched in 2015 by Limak in Turkey, the 'Kuwait Engineer Girls' program is a joint project implemented through a partnership between Kuwait University, Turkey's Bogazici University and Limak Construction Kuwait. The program aims to equip young female engineers with the tools necessary to compete and succeed in

the future workplace and help them envision their future careers in engineering.

The program consists of 12 courses taken over 200 training hours delivered by professors and specialists from Bogazici University and Limak. Upon completion of the program, graduates receive a Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) management and leadership certificate recognized in over 100 countries worldwide and three semester credit hours from Kuwait University.

Recently graduating from the program, the young female professionals along with their peers at Kuwait University were invited to a supplementary trip to Turkey in Jan 2018, where they experienced hands-on training and were taught about Limak's state-of-the-art mega-projects, including Istanbul's new airport, which is slated to be the largest in the world.

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Local

local spotlight

Philippines bans workers



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Filipino domestic workers are very popular in Kuwait. Therefore, any official statement regarding preventing these workers from coming to Kuwait is important news for the local community. It should force officials to take into account the reasons behind such a decision.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has banned workers from coming to Kuwait, claiming there were some cases of sexual abuse and suicide, adding that he had discussed the issue with his foreign minister and wants to raise it with the Kuwaiti government. "My advice is we talk to them, state the truth and just tell them that it's not acceptable anymore. Either we impose a total ban or we have a correction," he said.

I personally found the statement worthwhile. The president is the head of the state and he is defending the rights of his citizens, and this is a good thing. In fact, this is the normal duty of every president to ensure the safe living conditions of his citizens abroad. There are about 250,000 Filipinos in Kuwait, according to the Philippine foreign ministry. Filipinos in Kuwait constitute the third largest community in Kuwait, after Indians and Egyptians.

The Philippine labor minister said on Friday that his country has suspended sending workers to Kuwait in anticipation of an investigation into the causes of the death of some six or seven Filipino workers. The statement, of course, caused concern for the Kuwaiti side. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed regret and surprise at the statement by the Philippine president on the status of his country's workers in Kuwait. "We immediately contacted the Philippine authorities to find out the truth and to refute the false information," he said.

My personal opinion as a Kuwaiti citizen is that I see that the number of maids in Kuwait, whether from the Philippines or other countries, is too large. I consider it excessive, especially among wealthy families. The condition of the maids needs a general review to ensure strict enforcement of laws. We need to understand and accept that there is a culture issue here and that what is granted or denied in the Philippines may or not be acceptable here. The sponsor must fully agree to respect the worker's rights. Most of the problems are due to differences in cultures, failure to receive salaries and violence, whether verbal or physical.

I know very well that the Philippine Embassy is making a great effort to protect its citizens from abuse in cooperation with the Kuwaiti government. Naturally, with the large numbers of workers, problems may arise that may be isolated, but could spark anger on the Philippine street and spark demands to withdraw Filipino workers from Kuwait.

I know that human rights reports, whether by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or the US State Department often contain embarrassing information about the conditions of domestic workers in Gulf countries. These reports morally pressure these governments to adjust their employment conditions, but also force many countries to legislate new laws to protect the rights of workers.

I remember in 2006 there was a good project under the name of 'Falcon'. It was a guide to the most important information needed by workers in Kuwait and was printed in nine languages under the patronage of embassies such as those of the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, especially since these countries are major sources of expatriate labor. These initiatives are important in informing domestic helpers of their rights and how to deal with abusive situations such as violence from others.

I think the problem of domestic labor in Kuwait does not need more laws, but tightening of control and accountability for any negligence in the conditions of domestic workers. It is not a matter of ignoring the matter and considering it to be an individual case. Rather, it is necessary to identify the causes of the problem and prevent future cases from happening. I expect that the suspension from the Philippines will be temporary to clear the situation, as this is the right of the state and should not be taken with surprise or sensitively.

Piece fell from power grid, no injuries

KUWAIT: A metal piece from a power grid tower next to the Sixth Ring Road has fallen on the road but no one was hurt, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation said Friday, adding that it would investigate the matter. The metal piece used for protection and installed under the power grid cables had fallen due to strong wind and unstable weather condition, Authority Director General Engineer Ahmad Al-Hassan said. He explained that this metal piece was placed under the high-voltage cables for safety purposes. Hassan confirmed no one was hurt and parts scattered on the road due to the accident were removed. The authority, he asserted, told the contractor on importance of abiding by safety regulations. — KUNA

Police probe domestic helper's assault case

Airport officer helped passenger evade travel ban

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Detectives are investigating a video in which a woman orders her children to beat an Asian maid, ignoring her pleas and cries. A clip that went viral on social media shows the woman asking the domestic helper to close the door so that the shoes can hit the target, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The video received a barrage of criticism from citizens and expats, who sympathized with the helper.

Airport officer arrested

Airport detectives arrested a citizen named Fahd Hamad Zayed who works at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Airport passport department after he helped an Egyptian named Mahmoud Abdelaziz Hashim leave the country despite a travel ban imposed on him. Zayed confessed to receiving KD 700 for allowing the expat to leave. He was sent to the public prosecution.

Drug possession

Highway traffic police stopped a car that was moving from one lane to another in a suspicious manner. Police found the driver is a 32-year-old Kuwaiti, who was not able to control the car. Police searched the person on the passenger's seat; a 31-year-old Kuwaiti. They found suspicious substance with them. The driver also attempted to escape and fiercely resisted police.

Electronic passport

The Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said citizens who need an electronic passport can access the ministry's website at www.moi.gov.kw and apply for an appointment to obtain the passport,

as well as details of the place, date and time of the appointment. He said the website was upgraded to reduce crowds and make things easier for applicants.

Salmiya fire

Salmiya and Bidaa fire stations battled a blaze in a women's tailoring shop in the basement of a Salmiya building. Firemen evacuated the building and prevented the fire from spreading.

Policeman attacked

Two citizens and a Saudi were sent to concerned authorities for attacking a policeman and damaging state property. A statement from the interior ministry said the policeman spotted the first suspect driving a car recklessly without license plates, and during an attempt to stop him, he rammed the patrol car. The second and third suspects then arrived in another car and attacked the policeman. Separately, four persons were arrested in Sabahiya for attacking policemen, resulting in injuries on both sides. A policeman was taken to hospital for treatment.

Attacker arrested

A Kuwaiti youth who attacked a traffic police officer in Sulaibiya was arrested at the orders of Maj Gen Ibrahim Al-Tarrah. A video clip showed the reckless driver attacking and beating the officer. Another person - a bedoon - who helped the suspect was also arrested.

Smuggling foiled

An Asian man was sent to concerned authorities for attempting to smuggle around 4.350 kg of marijuana. Officers discovered strange objects in his luggage, so it was physically searched and the drugs were found.



KUWAIT: Firefighters battle a blaze reported in Salmiya.

Dr Mutairi wins World Health Academy award



Dr Nawaf Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT: Professor Dr Nawaf Al-Mutairi won recently the World Health Academy award a pioneer and contributor to the enrichment of the scientific community with many researchers in the health field. It was also given in recognition of his international achievements, scientific researches and world studies in the same field. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Dr Mutairi for winning the award, hailing his efforts in health research and patents. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also sent similar cables to Dr Mutairi.

Recruitment fees for Sri Lankan maids unchanged: Durra

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Al-Durra Domestic Help Company said it is committed to the fee rate of hiring domestic helper from Sri Lanka at KD 960 without any change. The government-owned firm made this statement in reaction to reports suggesting that recruitment fees could increase following the Philippines' decision to stop sending its workers to Kuwait.

Iraq conference

US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman said US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will participate in the Iraq rebuilding conference on Feb 12, which will be preceded with a 74-country ministerial meeting to fight terrorism. The official opening of the conference will be on Feb 14 in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Iraqi Premier Haider Al-Abadi.

Borrowing ceiling

Chairman of the parliamentary budget and financial disclosure committee Adnan Abdulsamad said the committee met with the Audit Bureau to discuss its report on the state's financial status for the fiscal year 2016/2017, which is being prepared periodically as commissioned by the National Assembly since 1996. He said the data is confidential, but its general features will be presented to raise the borrowing ceiling to KD 25 billion during 20 years, with a grace period to repay it that could reach 30 years.

Despite the general reserve becoming profitable in this fiscal year after a loss in the previous year, total financial reserves dropped from the previous year due to the continued financing of the budget for the fourth year over the fall in oil prices, in addition to the large financial withdrawals the government made.

The available liquidity in the general reserve and in current accounts and deposits whose finances are used as ready cash to feed the state's general budget is still at good levels. It is expected that the need to use these funds will reduce due to the relatively good rise of oil prices lately - reaching more than \$60 - especially since the state's general budget for fiscal year 2017/2018 is based on a price of \$45 per barrel.

The way the general reserve of the state is being managed should be reviewed, since the Audit Bureau pointed out in its report said financial solvency is not enough. Profits from both real estate and investments from which the general reserve is made are not keeping up with the major withdrawals, making all current accounts and deposits prone to drop largely due to financing the budget. The report showed the rise of government commitments at a large percentage during one financial year due to the expansion of issuing local and international bonds, to a point where these commitments are very close to the total value of government assets in the state's general reserve, which if it surpasses, will be the start of a general reserve deficit.

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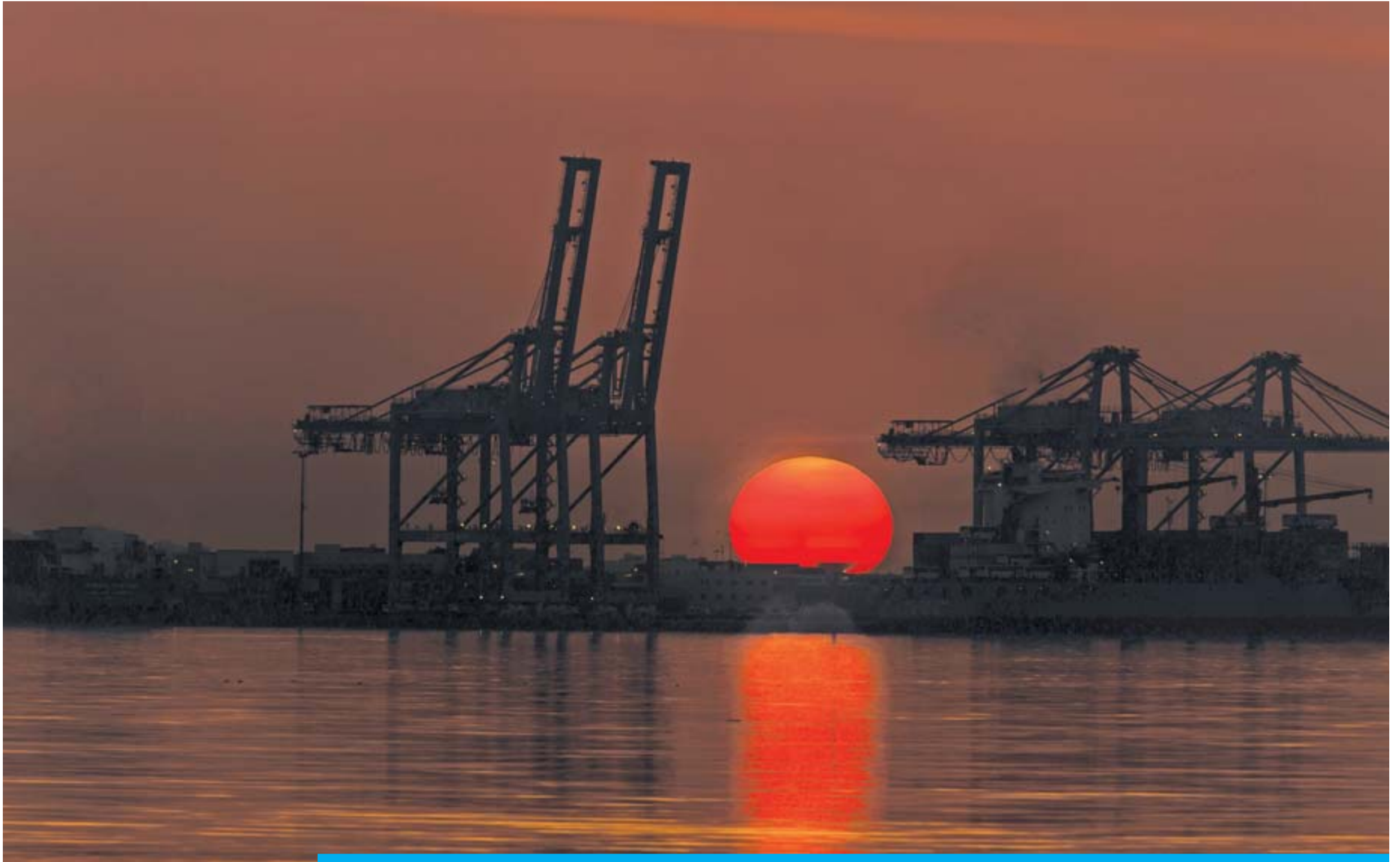
* Kuwait Times employees, spouses and their second-degree relatives also cannot participate.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Sunset captured at Shuwaikh Port. — KUNA

Kuwait calls for regional coordination to restore peace in Afghanistan

Kuwait backs UN efforts to build WMD-free world: Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

NEW YORK: Kuwait called for boosting regional coordination coupled with a greater UN role to bring about peace and security in Afghanistan in line with UN resolutions 2344 (2017). Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, addressing a UN Security Council session on preserving international peace and security on Friday, said the session underlined importance of regional partnerships to boost security and development in Afghanistan.

The session was about building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The session was held under presidency of Kazakhstan, reflecting the keenness of the Central Asian countries in the stability in Afghanistan, and restoration of peace and security, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled.

He underlined importance of implementing a long-term development plan in Afghanistan, which included an economic and political plan fully integrated with neighboring countries. Cooperation with neighboring countries is key to boost stability and prosperity, and sustainable peace in Afghanistan, he added.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who commended the UNSC members' recent visit to Afghanistan, appreciated the UN Assistant Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Kuwait, he said, fully support the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' call to work on preventing threats against Afghanistan and Central Asia, as well as including conflict prevention in the UN regional mechanism. He underlined importance of the preventive diplomacy to guarantee long-term stability, security and development.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the UN regional center for preventive diplomacy in Central Asia was an example of political contribution in Afghanistan, which has been suffering from unstable security and political conditions since four decades, thus undermining the economic and humanitarian situation, regional and international peace and security. Deteriorating security affected economic growth and humanitarian conditions, where 3.3 million people need urgent relief supplies, millions were either homeless, refugee or displaced, unemployment reaching 25 percent and 40 percent of the population live under poverty line, said the Kuwaiti official.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed concern over the threats posed by the terrorist and extremist groups, calling on all countries to implement counter-terrorism UN resolutions as well as boost regional cooperation against terrorists and drug traffickers. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, meanwhile, welcomed the Central Asian countries' efforts in non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Kuwait's top diplomat said military solutions to conflict were

fruitless, so peace and diplomatic solutions were most appropriate.

Kuwait's delegation to the UNSC session included Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's permanent ambassador to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen.

WMD disarmament

On Thursday, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to the efforts aiming to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Kuwait attaches great importance to the issues of WMD disarmament and non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, he said in a speech to the UN Security Council meeting on the theme of 'non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures.'

He commended the selection of this theme for the first UNSC open high-level session this year, which signaled the collective will of the Council members to free the world of the WMD. On behalf of the government and people of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev on taking over the UNSC presidency for this month.

"I would like to renew Kuwait's firm stance on the protection of the world peace and security, notably the issue of WMD nonproliferation and disarmament. 'I'd like also to seize this chance to reaffirm Kuwait's commitment to the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as the outcomes of the review conferences of the parties to the NPT, held in 1995, 2000 and 2010,' he pointed out.

He stressed the need of complete denuclearization of the world as early as possible, highlighting the leading role of the nuclear powers in this regard based on Article 6 of the NPT. "The Treaty remains to be the cornerstone of the world security and basis of the current framework of WMD non-proliferation and disarmament," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stated.

"When we talk about the initiatives to declare nuclear weapon-free zones, we have to recall the threats posed to, and challenges facing, these endeavors in the Middle East. Regrettably, the region is one of the most outstanding examples of threats to



NEW YORK: Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attends a UN Security Council session on preserving international peace and security. — KUNA

the nonproliferation system given the selective attitude of the UNSC towards this issue," he noted. "It comes as no surprise that countries



Deteriorating security affected economic growth, humanitarian conditions

of the region, particularly the Arab ones, witness unprecedented level of disappointment due to repeated failure to realize the consen-

sus on declaring the region a nuclear free areas as stated in the 1995 NPT review conference and the plan of action adopted in the 2010 conference. The declarations of the two conferences continue to be in force and the responsibility to implement them must be shouldered by all state parties to the NPT, particularly the nuclear powers," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled went on. He voiced hope that today's discussions would highlight the UNSC seriousness in addressing the risks of WMD, the preventive measures stipulated in the Resolution 1540 for 2004, and the possible responses to future emergencies.

He reminded that the unanimously-adopted UNSC Resolution 2325 of 2016 recognized the proliferation of WMD, including the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, poses a grave threat to peace and security around the globe. The document also charted a roadmap for action through 2021, he stated.

He renewed condemnation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, citing the relevant reports by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-UN Joint Mission. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed support for the efforts of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to verify the use of chemical weapons in the Arab country. He thanked the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on "the invaluable briefing" to the UNSC on this theme earlier today.

In his statement to the UNSC, the UN chief called for comprehensive political solutions that include dialogue and negotiation to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts. Guterres expressed his belief that UN can play a central role in assisting its Member States to develop, augment and support confidence-building measures and that its position as an "honest broker" allows it to serve as a venue in which all parties can engage in dialogue. — KUNA

Local

The current state of our educational system

By Salman Al-Mutawa

This is an analysis of the current education system. The information in this editorial relates to education systems in the Middle East and the West. The bulk of the analysis presented is based on multiple personal interviews I have conducted over the past few years and direct observation over the past six as a product of this system.

Background

The current system of education around the world is outdated. Fact of the matter is, landline phones disappeared for a reason: wireless communication. Similarly, the methods we have for education are the equivalent of landline phones, doomed to either hold us back, or become obsolete when a new wave of education takes the world by storm. The technological revolution brought by programming and the internet has completely changed the way the world operates.

Historically, we observe two shifts in the methods of education. The first method of education that we know of is mentorship. Impractical for the masses, but highly effective for individuals, this method of education then evolved into schools and universities. As this form of education evolved, it gained more structure, giving the most effective form of education for the zeitgeist. To this day, top universities continue to be highly successful in creating technological innovations that lead the world towards the next step in each respective field.

In comes the Industrial Revolution, the game changes. Create, replicate, and optimize becomes the most effective way to push the world forward. As a result, humans structure education around factories and companies, creating a one-size-fits-all system of education and work that does marvels for the industries in the 20th century.

Next comes the technological revolution, the game changes again. The system however, does not. As a result, we see large numbers of bright young men and women who, to the naked eye, seem lazy and entitled. The first victim of these new outputs are corporations, who now have to figure out a way to utilize these unmotivated, distracted individuals and make them productive. "For some reason, they do not have the same work ethic we did. We were not like this when we were their age," is a statement I have heard from multiple senior level managers. What is the underlying reason behind this effect and whose fault is it? This generation has been trained for a system and a way of life that is now obsolete. The world changed too much too quickly during the internet revolution, it fundamentally changed the driving forces of the younger generation. And what got hurt the most during this change? The learning and education system.

Analysis

Most students who underperform, underperform due to three main reasons:

- 1) The student does not care.
- 2) The student does not believe they can learn the subject as well as others.
- 3) The student does not know how to learn.

Substitute the word student with employee, and you now see the plight of many of today's managers and CEOs.

I remember a lesson we were taught in school, about how flexible a new tree sprout is. If the sprout is not bound to a stick, it will not grow straight, and it will be extremely difficult to achieve its proper form when it matures. It is ironic, I believe, that the ones who have the power to point

the tree sprouts in the right direction, end up tying the sticks to face all the wrong directions. Our teachers, through no fault of their own, raised us with a result-based system that had structure in everything except the two quintessential aspects of any educational institution: learning and motivation.

There is no learning without motivation

So what is learning how to learn? Learning how to learn is teaching all students multiple tools and techniques developed specifically to expedite and instill the information being absorbed by the student. Education is driven by industry. The cookie cutter, one fits all approach was perfect for the growth of the industrial revolution and late 20th century industries. However, it would be naive to assume that the same system would work post the information revolution that we are living in today. You cannot kick a ball when the wind is blowing east, then expect it to produce the same result when the wind blows west. The internet revolution is the wind blowing west.

What now?

Around 96 percent of all fortune 500 companies lost market share in the past year. Why? They approached 2017 with a 2005 plan of action. Over the past 15 years a sprout of new learning has taken over the modern industry in the west. Multi-million dollar companies are now learning that in order to make the post baby-boomer generation productive, they must invest in the person in addition to the person's finances.

This has come hand-in-hand with expedited personal growth and learning, pioneered by the likes of the following: Tony Robbins, Simon Sinek, Jim Kwik, Tom Bilyeu, Timothy Ferris, Gary Vaynerchuck, and countless others. These individuals, through research and trial, invented methods of teaching and learning that can literally compress six to 10 months of standard education into less than a week, without exaggeration. Through the understanding and use of practical psychology and scientific research, they are now creating the bedrock of the 'millennial' citizen/worker. The American government education system (for higher education) is slowly catching on, but at a painstakingly slow pace. American industries are slowly being revolutionized as they realize that these methods are more effective to produce more wealth, financial and educational.

In regards to Kuwait

Returning to our current education system, I must be fair and state that we do know of some methods that work better than others for teaching. For example, we know that given a small enough group, projects teach better than exams.

If you ask students whether they would prefer a project over an exam, they will always choose a project given that the material has been taught well. Otherwise, students will choose an exam because it is easier to cheat. Cheating is a symptom, not a disease. Students prefer projects over written exams because they are a merit based challenge, not a memory based one. Stress in our current exam weeks is a result of merit based tests for memory based subjects, or vice-versa.

If you are not convinced, try teaching a class of young boys or young girls about soccer using a whiteboard inside a classroom, and then test them without allowing them to play the game. And yet, in our current school system in Kuwait, we are expected to learn and appreciate Arabic

will explain to them a week's worth of material in one hour!

Why does this work? The reason lies within understanding the student and the teacher:

- 1) Motivation: the student is afraid of failure and is motivated to learn. They start caring. The teacher is motivated by the quick cash and reputation, they start caring. A good reputation means more money.
- 2) Belief they can learn: the student deludes him or herself into thinking that the tutor is the savior, because the tutor was able to "save" my friend "Najla" or "Aziz" from failing. And Najla and Aziz "were both able to do well on the exam, therefore I must be able to do well on the exam".

But what about the students who find a tutor, yet still fail? This brings me to point #3: they do not know how to learn.

I spent my first year in college taking foundational engineering subjects. My best friend Ibrahim and I would spend one hour studying for a calculus class, which took three hours for others to do. We all got the same grades, approximately. Why?



Technological revolution changed how the world operates

poetry without being instructed to create our own?

This disconnect creates a disease in the system. A symptom of this disease is the tutoring epidemic we see every finals period. Kuwaiti students who had months to learn the subject hire a tutor a week or two before the exam to learn the entire course



material in that short time period. Surprisingly, or maybe rather unsurprisingly, they are able to do it. What does it mean when four months of instructing is compressed into two weeks?

This indicates an immense issue with

Because, in the case of mathematics, Ibrahim and I had figured out by ourselves which tools to use to get the most effective outcome with the shortest amount of time, namely, ignoring the professor during class and using that time to watch a 10 minute video on how to solve exactly what it took the professor two days to explain. Those who paid attention in class had a harder time studying, because the professor was inefficient, and the book mediocre. They did not know they could find great examples online, or even worse, they knew, but wholeheartedly believed that tutoring was their savior (from their habits in Kuwait) that they opted for tutoring all throughout college.

So what is the solution? From my experience as a new-er generation student -who is currently ignoring that is his master's degree professor's lecture- that the solution is twofold: top-down and bottom up.

Top down: a complete restructuring of the educational syllabi of the subjects taught in school, with a focus on practical and applied methods, coupled with the important theories that they are based on.

This restructuring must be created by only the best in the world in their respective fields. To clarify, I do not state this as a flowery solution. I mean it, through and through. The people in charge of the curriculums must consult the best educators in the world find the best and most effective methods, and not waste the energy of students and teachers in non-effective endeavors. The advantage of consulting the best in the world is the ability to utilize their foresight to build a dynamic system.

Bottom-up: a complete training program for instructors (in addition to the current system) focused solely on using practical psychology, neurolinguistics programming, and memory optimizing methods. Teach the teachers how to learn, teach them how to recognize what is missing using proven scientific methods that are universal to every culture and ethnicity, teach them how to

convince students who are convinced that they cannot learn this subject that they are wrong. Again, this is not flower petal talk, these methods exist and are being employed by new-age US corporations and entertainers. If you think back to any instructor you admire, you will notice three traits that made him or her that way: credibility, certainty, and mastery. These traits can be instilled in our teachers, but they must be trained by the best or it will not work. To ensure a positive reaction from teachers, an increase in pay must be in order, coupled with more difficult acceptance requirements for those who seek a teaching profession. There is no doubt that the current benefits and easier application requirements (compared to STEM majors) has allowed many unqualified individuals into the educational system.

So where is the education system now? Government schools teach mathematics using Indian numerals, yet Kuwait university teaches mathematics in Arabic numerals. We have work to do.

Next article, effective vs non effective teachers: motivation, credibility, and certainty.



Salman Al-Mutawa



A tutor can explain a week's worth of material in an hour

motivation, which points toward instructors/teachers who are untrained in motivating their students to learn, or even worse, are unmotivated themselves. I personally know of many students, some of which are close friends, who do not pay attention in class because they know that during the year they can hire a tutor that

KFH takes part in Motor Show ribbon cutting

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) took part in the Motor Show 2018 ribbon cutting ceremony held at 360 Mall in the framework of its strategic partnership for the fourth year in a row. Deputy Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah cut the ribbon marking the opening of the exhibition for the period between January 18th -27th. Present at the event were officials from KFH in addition to a number of officials from different ministries, and representatives of car dealerships and international auto factories.

KFH participation comes from its endeavors to offer customers and visitors a vast and comprehensive array of financing solutions especially that KFH enjoys a proven track record of success in the activity of car financing in collaboration with car dealerships.

Over 40 years in the auto market, KFH, thanks to its extensive experience and distinguished relationships with customers and suppliers, and the long track record of achievements, managed to develop strategic relationships with all car suppliers in Kuwait. KFH's car showrooms have become a major destination for people who wish

to own a car. At Shuwaikh showroom, KFH encompasses over 20 brands and 80 makes of cars under one umbrella which gives customers the opportunity to choose and compare between cars of their interest. KFH spares no efforts in strengthening its role in the auto market by revitalizing the market, increasing sales and addressing the requirements of customers and suppliers. The Kuwait Motor Show 2018 is Kuwait's only motor show displaying more than 100 cars by authorized dealerships in Kuwait. The show is bringing the newest releases of 2018 to the public under one roof.



KUWAIT: Deputy Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah visits KFH's booth.



Officials cut the ribbon for the Motor Show 2018.

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Name controversy splits Macedonia between patriotism and pragmatism

In DR Congo, cost of funerals a crippling burden for bereaved

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ARLINGTON, VA: US President Donald Trump speaks to the media after arriving for a meeting at the Pentagon, on Thursday in Arlington, Virginia. Also pictured are Vice President Mike Pence (center), and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis (left). —AFP

US faces 'growing threats' from Russia, China

Mattis: American military's advantages have eroded in recent years

WASHINGTON: Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday that America is facing "growing threats" from China and Russia, and warned that the US military's advantages have eroded in recent years.

Mattis's assessment came as he unveiled the Pentagon's vision for the future detailed in a document called the national defense strategy. "We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia, nations that seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models," Mattis said. "Our military is still strong, yet our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare—air, land, sea, space and cyberspace—and is continually eroding," he added.

President Donald Trump and his administration worry that the vast US military force is feeling the effects of years of budget shortfalls and atrophy, and needs a full reboot to restore it to an idealized strength.

Blueprint for the future

Part wish list, part blueprint for the coming years, the Pentagon's national defense strategy seeks to increase the size of the military, improve its readiness and work with allies—all while operating across multiple theaters including in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

"This strategy establishes my intent to pursue urgent change at significant scale," Mattis wrote in the intro-

duction to the strategy.

"We must use creative approaches, make sustained investment and be disciplined in execution to field a Joint Force fit for our time, one that competes, deters and wins in this increasingly complex security environment."

The announcement sparked a backlash from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who branded the new US strategy as "confrontational."

"It is regrettable that instead of having a normal dialogue, instead of using the basis of international law, the US is indeed striving to prove their leadership through such confrontational strategies and concepts," Lavrov told a news conference at the United Nations.

Elbridge Colby, the US deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy and force development, told reporters that Mattis's strategy seeks to deal with the "erosion" of America's military advantage.

"What it is recognizing is that China and Russia in particular have been assiduously working over a number of years to develop their military capabilities to challenge our military advantages," he said.

South China Sea threat

The new defense strategy follows on from Trump's national security strategy that he released last month

which, similarly, highlights the role of China and Russia in the global security environment.

"China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea," Mattis wrote.

"Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations and pursues veto power over the economic, diplomatic and security decisions of its neighbors," he added, while also pointing a finger at Iran and North Korea for their threats to peace.

The two countries reacted furiously to Trump's security strategy, with Beijing accusing Washington of having a "Cold War mentality" while Moscow denounced its "imperialist character."

Trump's security strategy contrasts with the friendly nature of his first state visit to Beijing in November, when he received a lavish welcome and repeatedly praised President Xi Jinping.

One of the biggest criticisms inside the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill is that the US military is suffering from a lack of readiness, where troops and gear are not getting the training or maintenance they need.

Mattis said the United States must be ready to fight a war. "The surest way to prevent war is to be prepared to win one," he said. "Doing so requires a competitive approach to force development and a consistent, mul-

tiyear investment to restore war fighting readiness and field a lethal force."

Pressure on European allies

Mattis's strategy also calls for greater coordination with allies, who Trump on the campaign trail lambasted for not doing enough to share the burden of defending the post-World War II order.

"We expect European allies to fulfill their commitments to increase defense and modernization spending to bolster the alliance in the face of our shared security concerns," Mattis said, in reference to NATO countries paying more into their defense budgets.

Republican Senator John McCain, who chairs the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee that helps oversee the Pentagon, welcomed Mattis's strategy for getting "the big decisions right."

"A new era of great power competition has emerged, and this strategy prioritizes that reality," he said in a statement.

The document makes no mention of climate change, which under former

president Barack Obama was recognized as a national security threat. Trump has claimed climate change is a hoax and pulled the US out of the historic climate accords in Paris. —AFP

UK teen gained access to CIA chief's accounts

LONDON: A British teenager managed to access the communications accounts of top US intelligence and security officials including the then CIA chief John Brennan, a London court heard Friday. Kane Gamble, now 18, was aged 15 and 16 when, from his bedroom in Coalville, central England, he managed to impersonate his targets to gain highly sensitive information.

"Kane Gamble gained access to the communications accounts of some very high-ranking US intelligence officials and government employees," prosecutor John Lloyd-Jones told England's Old Bailey central criminal court. "He also gained access to US law enforcement and intelligence agency networks." Gamble has admitted 10 offences against the computer misuse act, between June 2015 and February 2016, and is awaiting sentencing.

The court heard how the teenager founded the group Crackas With Attitude (CWA), who used "social engineering"—manipulating call centres and help desks into divulging confidential information—which they then exploited. Gamble impersonated Brennan in calls to the telecommunications companies Verizon and AOL, although in one attempt, he stumbled on a question about Brennan's first pet.

Several sensitive documents were reportedly obtained from Brennan's private email inbox and Gamble managed to get information about military and intelligence operations in Iran and Afghanistan. "It also seems he was able to successfully access Mr Brennan's iCloud account," the prosecutor said. Gamble called AOL and initiated a password reset, and took control of Brennan's wife's iPad.

'I own you'

Gamble also targeted the then US secretary of homeland security Jeh Johnson and made calls to his phone number. He left Johnson's wife a voicemail saying "Am I scaring you?" and managed to get a message to appear on the family television saying: "I own you". Other targets included the then US president Barack Obama's deputy national security adviser Avril Haines, his senior science and technology adviser John Holdren, and FBI special agent Amy Hess.

Gamble gained extensive unauthorised access to the US Department of Justice network and was able to access court case files, including on the Deepwater oil spill. The British teenager gave some of the material he managed to access to WikiLeaks and boasted that he had a list of all Homeland Security employees.

Clashing autism reports

The court heard from consultant forensic psychiatrist Dr Steffan Davies, whose assessment was that Gamble did not have a full understanding of the impact of what he was doing, due to autism. "I'm very clear that he has an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)," he said. "He spent most of his life in his bedroom on the internet and that is where he is getting his cues from. He has a very black and white understanding of what was happening, seeing it more as a video game with goodies and baddies. He was trying to right what he saw as an injustice." However, another expert, Dr Philip Joseph, said he doubted Gamble was autistic.

"He's at the mild end (of the spectrum), if he's on it at all," he said. "If he had that condition, it doesn't explain why he committed these offences." Gamble was arrested at his home on February 9 last year at the request of the FBI. He claimed he was motivated to act out of support for the Palestinians, and due to the United States "killing innocent civilians", the prosecutor said. Wearing a black jacket, he spoke only to confirm his name, mumbling "yes", and sat in the court next to his mother. He will be sentenced at a date yet to be fixed. —AFP

Tripoli airport reopens after fighting suspended flights



TRIPOLI: Passengers disembark from their plane after landing at Mitiga airport a few days after militiamen attacked it in an attempt to free colleagues held at a jail there, on the outskirts of the Libyan capital Tripoli yesterday. —AFP

TRIPOLI: The airport serving the Libyan capital resumed flights yesterday following a five-day suspension after deadly clashes around the facility that also damaged planes on the tarmac. Lotfi Khalil, the director general of Mitiga airport on the eastern outskirts of Tripoli, said services resumed with Buraq Air flying to the eastern city of Tobruk and Libyan Airlines leaving for Tunis. One local carrier, state-owned Afriqiyah Airways, however, has yet to resume operations because its planes were damaged in Monday's fighting in which at least 20 people were killed, he told AFP.

Since the closure, flights had been diverted to Misrata, a city 200 kilometers (120 miles) east of the capital. Mitiga airport, a former military air base, was evacuated on Monday

after militiamen attacked it in an attempt to free detainees at a jail there. The health ministry of Libya's UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) said 20 people were killed and 63 wounded in the violence.

The GNA condemned what it called a "premeditated" attack by gunmen trying to free "terrorists" belonging to the Islamic State jihadist group and Al-Qaeda.

Mitiga has been a civilian airport since Tripoli's main international airport was badly damaged in fighting between rival militias in mid-2014. Libya has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed long-time president Muammar Gaddafi, with rival authorities and militias battling for control of its oil riches. —AFP

International

In Russia, Trump euphoria leaves a lasting hangover

‘Actions of the current administration in line with Obama’s’

MOSCOW: A year ago, Russian nationalists partied in central Moscow to celebrate Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45th president of the United States. Euphoria has given way to dismay as the man they expected to end US sanctions against Russia reluctantly reinforced the penalties and allegations of Russian interference in the US election, denied by Moscow, eroded political ties.

Some Russians even say it might have been better if Hillary Clinton, long portrayed as rabidly anti-Russian, had won the presidency. "Under a Clinton administration ... we could have maintained some kind of contacts and dialogue, at least in the arms control sphere. Now, that's all gone," said Valery Garbuzov, director of the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in Moscow, which advises the government on foreign policy.

Before he was elected, Trump's talk of wanting better relations with Moscow and praise for President Vladimir Putin delighted Russian officials, who had watched ties with the administration of Barack Obama sink to a post-Cold War low. News of Trump's White House win was greeted by applause in the Russian lower house of parliament and the head of the Kremlin-backed RT TV channel, Margarita Simonyan, said she felt like driving around Moscow with a US flag.

Simonyan now spends much of her time assailing the US authorities, accusing them of shutting down free speech there by designating her channel as "a foreign agent." Tsargrad, the nationalist TV channel that broadcast the main Russian Trump inauguration party at Moscow's Soviet-era post office, accused Trump this week of criticizing Russia over North Korea to distract from his own problems at home.

With the US Congress continuing investigations into

alleged collusion between Trump and Russia and the administration working on lawmakers' demand for more punitive measures, the Kremlin's frustration is palpable. While Putin met Trump twice last year, officials here say they are unaware of any plans for a bilateral summit and Moscow tried and failed to set up a formal meeting between Putin and Trump at an APEC summit in November.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov listed US-Russia relations as among the biggest disappointments of 2017. The US Treasury Department is due to publish a report before the end of this month naming wealthy Russians close to Putin or the authorities, something Russian officials fear is a prelude to extending a list of sanctioned people and entities. Russian officials say they expect at least another six US government reports this year that may result in new US action against Russia's energy and financial sectors as well as media, and a possible ban on the purchase of Russian Treasury bonds.

"(US) sanctions policy is designed to turn Russia into a toxic asset so that any investor will think 10 times before deciding to enter the Russian market," said Ivan Timofeev, a sanctions expert at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), a think-tank close to the Russian Foreign Ministry. Russia's scope to defend itself from new sanctions was "extremely limited," he said.

'Tougher than Obama'

Putin has put a brave face on worsening US-Russia relations, using his annual news conference in December to say he thought ties would eventually recover, while praising Trump for his economic achievements. But though Russian officials say they believe Trump's stated desire to improve ties with Moscow is sincere, they portray him as a



HAMBURG: This file photo taken on July 7, 2017 shows US President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin shaking hands during a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit. —AFP

lame duck president when it comes to making Russia policy, neutered by his domestic political opponents.

The result, they complain, is that US-Russia ties are actually worse in some ways than under Obama and that high-level contacts are virtually non-existent. "Unfortunately the actions of the current administration are in line with Obama's, despite the line of president Trump during his election campaign. In certain areas, they are even more assertive," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told his annual news conference this month.

Both Trump and Putin may say they want better ties, officials say, but day-to-day relations between the two

countries are locked in a downward spiral with no Cold War-style communications channels to help tamp down tensions. Russian efforts to persuade Trump to hand it back two diplomatic properties in the United States seized under the Obama administration have come to nothing, prompting Moscow to respond by seizing US property in Russia. Putin last year ordered the US Embassy in Russia to shed half its staff. The Trump administration has also upped pressure on Russia over Ukraine, going further than Obama by authorizing the supply of new weapons to Kiev, which is locked in a war with pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. —Reuters



The Kremlin's frustration is palpable

Pope to visit Peru region hit by floods

TRUJILLO: Pope Francis was set yesterday to hold a huge outdoor mass in a coastal region of Peru struggling to rebuild in the wake of devastating floods last year. His visit to Trujillo province, some 560 kilometers north of Lima, will be a change of pace after a politically charged first day in the Latin American country where he railed against "great business interests" for endangering the Amazon and its tribes.

The mass will take place on a wide swath of beach able to accommodate 500,000 people, in the historic town of Huanchaco popular with surfers and known for its distinctive reed watercraft known as "caballitos de totora." Many had already begun gathering there Friday night in anticipation of the pontiff, despite persistent drizzle. He will then go to the town's poor "Buenos Aires" neighborhood which was especially hard hit by flooding last April.

More than 130 people were killed across Peru in heavy rains, floods and landslides fuelled by the El Nino weather phenomenon between January and April 2017, which also left at least 300,000 homeless. The leader of the Catholic church will later preside over a ceremony in the town square before some 35,000 followers and meet with members of the clergy. "We are waiting to see if the Pope brings blessings and can fix everything we have lost", said resident Lidia Garcia.

On Friday, he had sounded a stark warning about the future of the rainforest and tribe members, saying they had "never been so threatened." Bare-chested tribesmen, their bodies painted and their heads crowned with colorful feathers, danced and sang for the pope when he



HUANCHACO: Faithfuls gather to wait for the arrival of Pope Francis at the beach resort town of Huanchaco - northwest of the Peruvian city of Trujillo - where he will officiate an open-air mass. —AFP

arrived in the Peruvian city of Puerto Maldonado. Thousands of indigenous people had traveled to meet the pontiff from throughout the Amazon basin region of Peru, Brazil and Bolivia.

Pope Francis, 81, arrived Thursday afternoon in Peru, the second and last leg of a week-long South American visit. During the first part of his visit, in Chile, Francis highlighted the plight of vulnerable immigrants, offered an apology to victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests,

prayed with survivors of Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship, and called for protection of Chile's persecuted indigenous communities. Before his visit to Chile, the US-based NGO Bishop Accountability said that almost 80 members of the Roman Catholic clergy had been accused of sexually abusing children in Chile since 2000. At the pope's first public mass in Santiago on Tuesday, he faced protests over the church's handling of decades of sexual abuse. —AFP

What actually closes in a US govt shutdown?

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of thousands of US government defense workers, park rangers and business regulators could be temporarily out of work if Congress fails to pass a budget before a midnight Friday deadline. But the looming government shutdown due to lack of funding—which would be the second in five years—does not mean every office closes its doors.

Vital services will still be provided by law enforcement, immigration officers, the central bank, veterans' hospitals and the military. During the two-week shutdown in October 2013, around 800,000 workers were furloughed. This time, about 850,000 workers, out of a total 3.5 million, could be told to stay home—without pay—until Congress reaches an agreement, the American Federation of Government Employees estimates. The following is a rundown of who is and isn't affected in a government shutdown:

Defense, security and borders

The 1.5 million uniformed members of the US military, mostly in the Defense Department but also 40,000 with the Department of Homeland Security, will remain at work. "All military personnel performing active duty will continue in a normal duty status," the Pentagon ordered Thursday. But a large number of civilians

in both departments, including about three-fourths of the roughly 740,000 civilians who work for the Pentagon, will stay home.

That will slow many operations, and could impact the huge defense private sector, which depends on Pentagon contracts.

Officials of the Customs and Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and US Citizenship and Immigration Services will remain on the job checking and processing people entering the country by land, sea and air.

Key government operations

The White House, Congress, federal courts and the Veterans Administration will all continue to operate. The US Postal Service will continue to deliver the mail. The investigation by special prosecutor Robert Mueller into possible collusion between Russians and President Donald Trump's election campaign will remain active.

Washington

The US capital is funded by the federal budget, which could have affected some services, but Mayor Muriel Bowser said Friday that all city employees will report to work and no services will be interrupted. "I want to be perfectly clear that Washington, DC is open. DC government will continue to provide services to our residents," she said. Bowser also said that the city will pick up trash at the multiple national park properties around the city while park employees are furloughed.

Travel, parks and museums

The Federal Aviation Administration,



WASHINGTON DC: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) leaves from the senate floor on Capitol Hill. —AFP

which oversees air traffic control, will remain at work, and airports will remain open for travelers. According to tentative plans, national parks and museums will remain open, but some public employees at the parks could be furloughed while private contractors, who supply food and other services, will maintain operations.

Health and public services

Disease monitoring and prevention will slow. About 61 percent of the staff of the Centers for Disease Control will be furloughed, according to The Washington

Post, and much of the research-focused National Institutes of Health will be shuttered. Other agencies will largely shut down, including the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Education, the Commerce Department, the Labor Department, and the Environmental Protection Agency. That means people and businesses will not get documents and permissions processed, contractors will have difficulty moving ahead on their projects, and disaster relief will slow. —AFP

In year of drama, Pence advances conservative agenda

WASHINGTON: In the run-up to President Donald Trump's decision last month to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Vice President Mike Pence, a conservative Christian who had long advocated for the move, did something he does only selectively: speak up. As intelligence and diplomatic officials warned against the change, Pence made a forceful "closing argument" in favor of it at a White House Situation Room meeting, leading a group that included senior adviser Jared Kushner and US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, a senior administration official said.

Pence helped persuade Trump to fulfill a campaign promise and upend long-standing US policy by declaring he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, over objections from Arab nations and many Western allies. In a year marked by chaos and infighting in Trump's White House, Pence has been one of the most effective administration officials in advancing his own policy goals. His behind-the-scenes influence - described in interviews with more than two dozen conservative activists, lawmakers and administration officials - adds another dimension to a man often ridiculed for his public obsequiousness to his boss.

'Religious liberty'

As Pence has put his stamp on policy, he has strengthened his ties with conservative activists, donors and lawmakers - alliances that would serve him well should he decide to launch his own presidential bid in the future. But while he is a darling of conservative Republicans, Pence is often to the right of mainstream America on social issues like gay rights. In 2015, as governor of Indiana, he was forced to revise a state "religious liberty" law he had signed which opponents say allowed discrimination against gays.

Pence, who leaves on Friday for a trip to Egypt, Jordan and Israel, has made a mark on domestic policy as vice president. The former congressman staunchly opposes abortion rights and passionately supports de-regulation of business and shrinking the size of government. While heading up the presidential transition a year ago, he placed several advocates who oppose abortion rights in key positions at the Health and Human Services department.

HHS has made several decisions that have advanced the social conservative agenda, including broadening exemptions for employers who cite religious or moral reasons for refusing to cover birth control. Pence led the charge for reinstating the so-called Mexico City policy that requires foreign non-governmental organizations that receive US funding to vow to not discuss or perform abortions. The policy expanded under the Trump administration to apply to the majority of US global health assistance, which totals more than \$8 billion.

For months, Pence has pushed for redirecting aid money from the United Nations to the US Agency for International Development so it can be directed to Christians in the Middle East. Earlier this month, USAID, citing Pence's remarks, said it renegotiated the terms of an agreement so that \$5 million will go to addressing the needs of "vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities" in Iraq. Pence has also been central to the administration's legislative efforts, including the tax cuts passed last year. Several conservative activists said he helped generate momentum by bringing in conservative groups to get their input and support. Early last year, when thousands of activists began arriving in the US capital for the annual "March for Life" anti-abortion rights event Trump, then a Washington novice, asked Pence about it. The vice president described its importance in marking the anniversary of the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. —Reuters

International

In DR Congo, cost of funerals a crippling burden for bereaved

A nightmarish vicious circle for the poorest families

KINSHASA: In Kinshasa, perhaps just one thing beats the cost of living—and that's the cost of being dead. Since the start of the year, funerals have become a common sight in the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital, the tragic outcome of floods, cholera and political violence. But for many bereaved, the loss of a loved-one also comes with the dread of the astronomical bill—as much as a year's wages—for saying farewell to them.

The morgue, the wake, the burial, catering for mourners and receiving far-flung relatives... put this lot together, and the bill typically tops up to around \$2,500 dollars (2,000 euros). By way of comparison, a supermarket employee in Kinshasa earns between \$100 and \$150 a month, while the average civil service wage is about \$200 a month. The grieving family of Jose Fataki, the humble driver of a motorcycle taxi, has been faced with a heavy burden after he was killed on the sidelines of a protest march on December 31.

The dead man's nephew, lawyer Eric Fataki, said relatives raised the equivalent of \$620 to pay for the body to be prepared and laid out for mourners in a canvas marquee next to a public hall. In an adjoining area, Martine Mujinga watched over the body of her deceased sister Julie, whose life was claimed by illness. "The hall cost us \$520," Mujinga said. "The state takes a share of \$20 for every wake" in a public hall, the manager of a venue in the poor Matete district of Kinshasa told AFP.

As hundreds of wakes are held every day in the city of some 10 million people, there are rich rewards for venues that are transformed into temporary funeral parlors. "In Kinshasa, there are more than 800 registered halls," according to the provincial minister of finance, Guy Matondo. Such premises also frequently serve for more cheerful activities, such as weddings, concerts and conferences.



The dread of the astronomical bill

Vicious circle of costs

The bill to pay due respect to the dead starts at the morgue. Benoit Kulube, a retired government worker, said he had to pay more than \$100 to preserve the body of his 17-year-old son, a victim of the cholera outbreak in Kinshasa, made worse by flooding in unsanitary districts. For the poorest families, a nightmarish vicious circle begins—they need to pay to keep the body in the morgue while trying to raise enough money for the funeral.

As the clock ticks, many turn in desperation to relatives who live and work in the European diaspora, if there are any. To have his son embalmed, currently a trendy practice in Kinshasa, Kulube paid a further \$50. Then there was his expenditure for new clothes for the body. Next comes the choice of coffin. The cheapest models sell for about \$250, while a luxury casket can cost more than \$1,000.

Jose Fataki's family bought a coffin worth \$700. "This was thanks to assistance from Kinshasa civic authorities, the church and contributions from family members," Eric explained. But the bill continues to rise. Transporting the body from the morgue to the funeral parlor and then on to the cemetery can cost anything between \$100 and \$500. Retired civil servant Kulube chose to rent an ordinary vehicle for \$22, rather than pay for a hearse, which was "beyond the reach" of his budget.

At funerals that draw a large number of mourners, families also rent buses to transport members of the clan and friends from the funeral parlour to the cemetery. During the wake and the days leading up to the burial, sometimes later, the family of the deceased is expected to feed all the guests. "This is the custom," Kulube said. "They (the guests) also chip in financially."



KINSHASA: This file photo taken on January 11, 2018 shows Family members reacting over their relatives' coffin after it arrived from the morgue. —AFP

Funerals before medical care?

But there are unwelcome intruders who read the funeral announcements of the day and then show up to tuck into the food and drink. "Most of those who come never knew the deceased closely or distantly," writer Tsitenghe Lubabu raged on the website of news magazine Jeune Afrique. "For them, there is no shame in pinching from the plates, whatever the circumstances," he wrote.

Burial doesn't come cheap either. A plot in the cemetery costs \$150, with \$100 more for the gravediggers and

a compulsory tax of 15,000 francs (\$10) payable to the Republican Guard, said Kulube, who was planning to bury his son. In many western countries, many funeral parlors offer no-frills options, including an environmentally-friendly wicker casket. But this thinking has a very long way to go in DR Congo, "where people save money to pay for lavish funerals rather than subscribe to medical care," said social historian Zacharie Bababaswe. A first step would be to launch a debate about cremation, "although though this is liable to shock many Congolese people," he said. —AFP

News in brief

Rohingya slams refugee return

YANGON: Rohingya militants yesterday hit out at a repatriation plan for refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar set to begin next week, saying it aims to trap the Muslim minority in long-term camps while their ancestral lands are seized. Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to send back around 750,000 refugees who arrived since October 2016 over the next two years, a process set to begin as early as Tuesday. But the deal has been pilloried by many Rohingya refugees who say they do not want to return to Rakhine after fleeing atrocities including murder, rape and arson attacks on their homes. Rights groups and the UN say any repatriations must be voluntary with safety assured in a state where communal hatred still runs sky high.

Staged shootout in Pakistan

KARACHI: Pakistani authorities yesterday suspended a senior police officer over the killing of a man in an alleged staged shootout that sparked anger and protests nationwide. Senior superintendent Rao Anwar and other officers last week killed at least four men during what they claimed was a raid on a suspected Taliban hideout in the port city of Karachi. Relatives of one of the dead men, who was identified as Nazeemullah Mehsud, 27, from South Waziristan tribal district, rejected the claims of militant links and said he was an aspiring model who arrived in Karachi in 2008 in search of job and had been running a shop in the city. The killing led to a national outcry after Mehsud's modeling pictures posted on social media went viral, triggering protest rallies in several cities.

China intercepts US warship

BEIJING: Beijing yesterday said it had dispatched a warship to drive away a US missile destroyer which had "violated" its sovereignty by sailing close to a shoal in the disputed South China Sea. The USS Hopper sailed within 12 nautical miles of Huangyan Island on the night of January 17 without alerting Beijing, the foreign ministry said, referring to the shoal by its Chinese name. Also known as Scarborough Shoal, the ring of reefs lies about 230 kilometers from the Philippines in the South China Sea, where Beijing's claims are hotly contested by other nations. The US vessel "violated China's sovereignty and security interests", and put the safety of nearby Chinese vessels "under grave threat", foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said. China's defense ministry said in a separate statement that a Chinese frigate "immediately took actions to identify and verify the US ship and drove it away by warning" it. The USS Hopper recently entered the US Navy's 7th Fleet area of operations, where the ship is on an "independent deployment", according to a statement released earlier this month on the Navy's website.

Heatwave pummels Australia

SYDNEY: Holidaymakers trapped by bushfire had to be rescued by boat from a national park south of Australia's largest city of Sydney and 200 people were evacuated by firefighters as a heatwave struck the eastern seaboard yesterday. Firefighters in the state of New South Wales said on Facebook they were escorting 200 people to safety from the Wattamolla area to Bundeeena as two fires raged south of Sydney on Saturday evening. The Rural Fire Service had earlier issued an emergency warning to visitors in the Royal National Park as the blaze threatened the main access road to a popular tourist spot called Wedding Cake Rock where people posted pictures of the billowing smoke to social media. "Beaches may offer safety," the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) said as aircraft water-bombers attempted to slow the fire and emergency warnings were sent to the mobile phones of all people in the area. —Agencies

Thai police arrest 'kingpin' of Asian wildlife trafficking

BANGKOK: Thai police have arrested an alleged kingpin in Asia's illegal trade in endangered species, dealing a blow to a family-run syndicate that smuggles elephant ivory, rhino horn and tiger parts to Chinese and Vietnamese dealers. Boonchai Bach, 40, a Vietnamese national with Thai citizenship, was arrested on Friday evening over the smuggling of 14 rhino horns worth around \$1 million from Africa to Thailand.

His downfall follows the December 12 arrest of Nikorn Wongprachan, a Thai National Parks and Wildlife Conservation official, at Bangkok's main airport as he attempted to smuggle the rhino horn from the quarantine section to a nearby apartment. The horn was smuggled into Bangkok by a Chinese man who was arrested a day before on arrival from Johannesburg, South Africa. The police sting led to Boonchai, who financed the network.

"This is a major smuggling syndicate and Boonchai is a ringleader," General Chalermkiat Srivorakan, deputy national police chief, told reporters Saturday

after the suspect arrived at Suvarnabhumi airport ahead of his remand. "Boonchai admitted he was involved," Chalermkiat said, adding he faces up to four years in jail for smuggling parts of protected animals.

For years Boonchai and the Bach family are believed to have operated with impunity from Nakhon Phanom in northeast Thailand, bordering Laos-linching players in a multi-million-dollar trade in illegal wildlife.

The town is a pivot point in Asia's wildlife trafficking chain, in part because it is the narrowest neck of land for smuggled goods to transit through Thailand, into Laos and onto Vietnam, a major market for animal parts used in traditional medicine.

Freeland, a counter-trafficking organization which works closely with Thai police, said the Bach family are part of a sprawling Southeast Asian crime organization dubbed "Hydra". The Bachs have "long run the international supply chain of illicit wildlife from Asia and Africa to major dealers in Laos, Vietnam and China," Freeland said in statement following the announcement of Boonchai's arrest.

They are believed to work alongside Vixay Keosavang, a Laotian dubbed "the Pablo Escobar of animal trafficking", who orchestrates a major wildlife trafficking ring from the Communist state, bribing officials to allow him to operate. Laos has



BANGKOK: Boonchai Bach (C), an alleged Kingpin in Asia's illegal trade in endangered species is handed by Thai policemen in Bangkok after his arrest. —AFP

long been a top transit hub for smuggling wildlife products, with widespread corruption and weak law enforcement allowing the criminal activity to flourish. China and Vietnam are among the world's biggest markets for parts from endangered or protected species including tigers, ele-

phants, rhino and pangolins. The traditional medicine market flourishes despite the total lack of scientific evidence as to their efficacy and government campaigns to end the trade. —AFP

Four killed as India, Pakistan trade fire on border

SRINAGAR: Tensions escalated in Kashmir yesterday as a soldier and three civilians were killed in cross-border firing by the Indian and Pakistani armies, officials from the two countries said. The latest wave of violence this week has left at least 21 dead, including soldiers, suspected militants and civilians on both sides of the heavily-militarised border that divides the disputed Himalayan region.

Indian Army spokesman Colonel N.N. Joshi said one of their soldiers was killed Saturday by Pakistani fire in Poonch sector along the de facto border, the Line of Control (LoC). Two civilians, including a 15-year-old boy, were killed in a separate cross border assault along a stretch of uncontested frontier between Kashmir and the Pakistani province of Punjab, director general of police Shesh Paul Vaid told AFP.

Across the border, Pakistan's foreign office in a statement said Saturday a 60-year-old civilian was killed and two others including a six-year-old were injured in firing by Indian soldiers. Four civilians had died in the firing during the previous two days, the statement added. Both sides regularly trade fire along the border, parts of which are disputed, and civilian casualties are common. But this



Indian villagers run following shelling across the India-Pakistan border in Jhora village about 37km from Jammu. —AFP

week has been particularly bloody. Pakistan said four of its soldiers were killed in Indian firing on Monday. Earlier this week Indian soldiers also killed five suspected militants who they said were trying to infiltrate from Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The latest deaths come a day after two Indian soldiers and two civilians were killed Friday when mortars fired by Pakistani soldiers landed

in populated areas along the border in RS Pura area. India and Pakistan on Friday summoned each other's diplomats to register protests over the killings with both accusing the other of initiating the cross-border fire. The bitter rivals fought two of their wars over control of Kashmir, which has been divided between the nuclear-armed neighbors since partition in 1947. —AFP

S Africa's ANC may force Zuma to quit

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) declined to comment yesterday on a report its executive planned to force Jacob Zuma to quit as president, as its leaders gather to outline the party's program for the coming year. Broadcaster eNCA said the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) had resolved the previous day to ask Zuma - whose presidency has been tainted by a series of corruption allegations - to resign.

If he refused, he would be forced to step down by the party's six-strong leadership group, the channel said, without naming its sources. An anonymous member of the newly-elected NEC - which met for the first time under new ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday and Friday - was quoted by online news site News24 as saying the decision to force Zuma to resign had been unanimous.

eNCA also said authorities would within 24 hours name a new head of troubled power utility Eskom, which has been at the heart of allegations of illegality and undue influence in awarding tenders to the Gupta family, friends of Zuma. Zuma, whose second term is due to run until 2019, has denied any wrongdoing, as have the Guptas. The NEC made no mention of Zuma's possible early exit in a statement it issued after the first two days of what is a four-day meeting. Asked about the reports that Zuma would be asked to resign, an ANC spokeswoman said: "We can't confirm rumours of things that we don't know. The NEC has issued a statement on the totality of discussions yesterday."

Zuma retains the support of one part of the ANC leadership, but many others in the party argue that he has tarnished the image of Africa's oldest liberation movement. While he has been in office, the economy has also slowed to a near-standstill. Ramaphosa succeeded Zuma as ANC head last month, making him likely to replace Zuma as the country's next president. The party's Secretary-General Ace Magashule said on Thursday that Zuma's early removal as head of state was not on the agenda of the NEC meeting, which runs until today. —Reuters

International

Name controversy splits Macedonia between patriotism and pragmatism

A tug-of-love over a 2,400-year-old ruler

SKOPJE: When Macedonia declared independence in 1991, the new country chose a name that evoked the past glories of its most famous claimed son, Alexander the Great. But nearly three decades on, the decision to use the name of the ancient kingdom ruled by a general who once conquered half of known civilization is hampering the fledgling nation's place in the modern world. Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic home to some 2.2 million people, has fought since its inception with neighboring Greece over the name it shares with a northern Greek province.

Many Greeks fear the use of the name suggests Skopje may harbor territorial ambitions. What started as a tug-of-love over a 2,400-year-old ruler—a source of great pride for both nations—has morphed into a charged political dispute holding back Skopje's efforts to join the European Union and NATO. Athens, a member of both, has so far blocked the bids over the name issue.

“There is no other way to join NATO without solving the name issue,” the military alliance's chief Jens Stoltenberg said this week on a visit to the Macedonian capital. Known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) at the United Nations, the country elected a new government last year offering some hope of a breakthrough. Replacing a nationalist, right-wing administration, the new ruling Social Democrats re-launched talks with Athens in a bid to settle the dispute. This week a UN envoy said he was “very hopeful” that a solution was in reach, while Macedonia's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev said the row could be ended “by the end of the first quarter of 2018.” But Macedonians themselves are split over whether changing the name of their homeland is too high a price to pay to join the world's largest single market and defense alliance.

“There is no other way to join NATO

Upper Macedonia?

Macedonia's ethnic Albanian minority has applauded moves towards a compromise. But other Macedonians, mainly ethnic Slavs, are less enthusiastic. “I'm Macedonian! How can something like this (the country's name) be changed?” said Done Stojanoski, a retired shopkeeper. “Why don't they change the name of Americans?” the 67-year-old added. As Greek nationalist groups mobilise for mass demonstrations this weekend, a raft of not particularly catchy alternative names is circulating.

These include: Upper Macedonia, Northern Macedonia, New Macedonia or Macedonia-Skopje. “No, no!” said Zlatko Andreevski, a 32-year-old farmer from the central town of Prilep. “What would I call myself, northern-Macedonian? It doesn't suit me.” Public

opinion is hard to accurately gauge but a survey carried out in June 2016 showed that more than a third of Macedonians want to join both the EU and NATO. However nearly 65 percent of those polled were against changing Macedonia's name. Liljana Stoilova, a 43-year-old vegetable farmer, would accept being a citizen of “Northern Macedonia as long as we remain Macedonians and our language remains Macedonian.”

Pragmatism over patriotism

But in a nation experiencing a mass exodus of young professionals and with an average monthly salary of 350 euros (\$430), pragmatism among some Macedonians comes before patriotism. Accepting the name change “would give us priority to enter both



SKOPJE: A picture taken on July 23, 2012 shows a bronze statue of Alexander the Great, officially named 'Warrior on a Horse', in Skopje's central Macedonia Square. — AFP

NATO and EU. Politicians have to settle this,” said Gani Rahman, 49, an ethnic Albanian waiter. It is not clear how a name change would work in practice though.

One outstanding issue is whether the new name would be used internationally or just domestically, and in official correspondence or not. Another is the amount of facilities and landmarks named after Alexander the Great. Nano Ruzin, a political scientist who served as Macedonia's ambassador to NATO, said Skopje's international airport would probably

need renaming after any deal. “Some changes are necessary from an aesthetic point of view,” he said, including several neo-classical monuments in the capital. Ali Amethi, a former leader of an ethnic Albanian political party said some monuments would need removing entirely.

While he is in favor of a name change he believes there should be some red lines. “For Albanians, the names of the Slav Republic or the National Republic of Macedonia would be unacceptable,” he said. — AFP

Assad regime to promote Syria as 'tourist' destination

MADRID: It is over a year since Bashar Al-Assad's regime, with the help of Russian air strikes and barrel bombs, pounded the rebel-held east of Aleppo into submission. Buildings were flattened, those who survived were left terrorized, hungry and filled with despair, and the stench of dead bodies rose up from the rubble as families searched for their loved ones.

Now, having largely destroyed the city it sought to control, the Assad regime wants the world to visit what remains: as a tourist destination. This week the Syrian government is advertising Aleppo, along with other destinations in Syria, at the Fitur International Tourism Trade Fair in Madrid, “promoting” the country's attractions to the world. It is the first time Syria has attended the trade fair since 2011, before the war broke out.

Along with the ruins of Aleppo, it also encourages people to visit the ancient Roman-era ruins of Palmyra, the UNESCO-listed archaeological site which was twice controlled by the Islamic State (IS) group. IS fighters blew up some of the temples and burial towers before being forced out of the city for the final time last year by Syrian government forces and their Russian backers.

“This year is the time to rebuild Syria and our economy,” Bassam Barsik, director of marketing at the Syrian Ministry of Tourism, told AFP. Barsik said 1.3 million foreign visitors travelled to Syria last year, although that figure includes those who came from neighboring Lebanon for only one day. “We're targeting two million visitors this year,” he said.

He argued that religious destinations, such as the historic Christian town of Maaloula, one of the last places on earth where Aramaic is still spoken, are still a draw to



ARBIN: Syrian children look at a building that was damaged in a missile attack on the rebel-held besieged town of Arbin, in the eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital. — AFP

tourists. Damascus, Tartus, Latakia and the historic Crusader castle of Krak des Chevaliers close to the border with Lebanon, although damaged by bombing, are other possible attractions. “In 2017, the army controlled much of the country, and that was a big help to promote

Syria abroad and attract tourist groups again,” said Barsik. Most countries advise citizens against all travel to Syria. The war has displaced millions of people and is estimated to have claimed the lives of at least 340,000 people since 2011. — AFP

ized inmates, which has been sent to the justice minister, a source within the prison service said.

Radicalization risks

Earlier Friday there were scuffles at Fleury-Merogis as guards protested the string of attacks that have focused a spotlight on security problems and radicalization behind bars in France. Outside the entrance to the prison—Europe's largest, with more than 4,300 inmates—around 150 striking guards had set up a barricade of burning tires and wooden pallets to prevent their colleagues from getting to work, an AFP correspondent said.

Riot police quickly broke through the picket line, firing tear gas to disperse the demonstrators and allow their colleagues to get inside. “The CRS (riot police) charged and fired tear gas at us but we tried to resist,” a 28-year-old guard, who gave his name only as Sacha said. On Thursday, security reinforcements had to be brought in to help after more than 100 prisoners refused to return to their cells following their midday walk in the yard, France's prison administration service said.

Other attacks in recent days included an assault by an inmate under surveillance for extremist views, who punched a female guard in the face at Tarascon prison near Marseille. On Monday, a convict considered at risk of “radicalization” at the Mont-de-Marsan prison in southwest France attacked guards as he resisted a search. French guards have long complained of low pay, insufficient staffing and overcrowding—the Fresnes prison near Paris is currently at 200 percent capacity. And they increasingly warn they are endangered by inmates under the sway of Islamic extremists.

The prisons administration agency said nearly half of France's 188 detention facilities had been affected by the strike action Thursday. President Emmanuel Macron has promised to outline plans for an overhaul of the prisons system by the end of February, expected to include facility renovations and expansions to house an additional 15,000 inmates. On Friday, France faced calls by several member nations of the UN's Human Rights Council to address the situation. “It's true, much more remains to be done, prisons are suffering from persistent overcrowding,” the head of the French delegation said at a council working session. — AFP

Inmate attack fuels French prison strikes

PARIS: French police fired tear gas to break up a picket line of striking prison guards at Europe's biggest jail on Friday, as a fresh assault by inmates on staff at a facility in Corsica fuelled demands for better security. The scuffles at the huge Fleury-Merogis prison just south of Paris came as unions were pressing a fourth day of strikes across France sparked by a string of attacks on guards.

The latest came in Borgo on the island of Corsica on Friday when three inmates, including one under surveillance for Islamic radicalisation, attacked two guards with a knife. One of the guards was seriously wounded in the throat but neither was in a life-threatening condition, said public prosecutor Caroline Tharot. A police operation was under way to apprehend the inmate suspected of wielding the weapon after he barricaded himself in a cell, according to a source close to the inquiry.

The inmate was detained on charges unrelated to terrorism, but wiretaps had suggested he had been radicalized, the source said. It was the latest in a series of attacks on guards. On January 11, German convict Christian Ganczarski, a former top Al-Qaeda militant, attacked three officers with scissors and a razor blade at a high-security prison in northern France. Two other attacks followed in less than a week, prompting guards to launch a nationwide strike calling for improved security at often overcrowded prisons.

Prison authorities said the strikes were affecting 80 of France's 188 facilities. The Corsica attack led union officials to call off talks they had been holding with the justice ministry since Tuesday. But union officials and prison authorities have drawn up a draft agreement, including proposals to better protect guards and deal with radical-

Macron boosts Merkel ahead of coalition vote

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday that his ambitious EU plans to reform the European Union need German backing, as Chancellor Angela Merkel gears up for a crucial vote on forming a new coalition government. “Our ambition cannot come to fruition alone,” Macron told a joint press conference with Merkel before talks in Paris. “It needs to come together with Germany's ambition.”

Merkel's immediate focus is domestic, with her political future on the line after more than 12 years in power. On Sunday, some 600 delegates from Germany's Social Democrat (SPD) party will be asked to give the green light to a preliminary coalition agreement reached with her conservatives last week. “I am confident of the path ahead and I believe that at the SPD congress many will be open to the coalition negotiations,” Merkel told reporters in Paris. “But the decision is for the Social Democrats in Germany alone.”

At Merkel's meeting with Macron, which appeared aimed at giving her a boost, the German leader said a “stable German government” was crucial for the EU to move forward with its reform agenda. In November, she was left considerably weakened after her first attempt to form a new coalition government collapsed when the pro-business FDP party walked out.

She then turned to the SPD, her outgoing governing partners with whom she hopes to form another grand coalition. Macron, who is driving attempts to reform the EU in the wake of Britain's decision to leave the bloc, refused to be drawn into trying to predict the outcome of Sunday's vote, saying it could be “counterproductive”.

But he stressed the pro-European credentials of the SPD and said the coalition blueprint showed “true European ambition”. “The chancellor has ambitions for Europe, SPD leaders have shown they have ambitions for Europe, and the coalition outline has them too,” Macron said. — AFP

News in brief

Iraq parliament postpones vote

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament failed yesterday to approve May 12 as the election date, as suggested by the government, as Sunni and Kurdish lawmakers demanded a delay to allow hundreds of thousands of war-displaced people to return home. Shiite politicians, including Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, insist on holding the election as planned on May 12, saying a delay would be against the constitution. Speaking after yesterday's session in Baghdad, Parliamentary Speaker Salim Al-Jabouri, a Sunni, expressed hope that parliament would be able to vote on an election date by Monday, state TV reported. Abadi is seeking re-election, building on a surge in his popularity among Iraq's majority Shi'ite Arab community after leading the three-year fight against Islamic State militants, supported by a US-led coalition. “Postponing the elections would set a dangerous precedent, undermining the constitution and damaging Iraq's long-term democratic development,” the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad said in a statement on Thursday.

Indonesian hostages freed

JOLO: Two Indonesian fishermen have been released by Islamic militants after more than a year in captivity in the southern Philippines, police said yesterday. There were no official comments on the physical condition of the two who were snatched from their fishing vessel in the waters between the southern Philippines and Malaysia in November 2016, a police statement said. The two were reportedly turned over by a “concerned citizen” late Thursday to a former governor on the southern island of Jolo, a longtime haunt of the Abu Sayyaf extremist group, some of whose members have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, the statement added. The ex-governor called the police who picked up the two. Officials would not say if ransom, a frequent motive for such abductions, was paid in this case. The Abu Sayyaf is a loose network of militants formed in the 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network, and has earned millions of dollars from banditry and kidnappings-for-ransom, often targeting foreigners.

Seven Niger troops killed

NIAMEY: At least seven Niger soldiers were killed and more than a dozen others wounded this week in an attack by suspected Boko Haram militants in the country's southeast, the government said on Friday. “The provisional toll for the cowardly terror attack on Wednesday night in Toummour is seven dead, seventeen wounded and one soldier missing,” said a cabinet statement. Toummour is located in the Diffa administrative region, which lies on the border with Nigeria and Chad. It has suffered a string of deadly Boko Haram attacks since February 2015, although the area has been relatively calm in recent months. Last week, the United Nations said there had been a sharp fall in the number of Niger civilians kidnapped, killed or wounded by Boko Haram last year, citing an overall toll of 141 compared with 227 a year earlier. It did not detail the number of military casualties.

Hostages freed in Nigeria

KADUNA: Two Americans and two Canadians have been freed after being kidnapped in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna, a police spokesman said on Saturday. Kidnapping, usually for ransom, is common in parts of Nigeria, though abductors usually target other Nigerians. However, the kidnapping of foreigners is not uncommon. The Americans and Canadians were ambushed by unknown gunmen on Wednesday while travelling from the town of Kafanchan in Kaduna state to the capital, Abuja. Kafanchan is more than three hours' drive northeast of Abuja. Mukhtar Aliyu, a spokesman for Kaduna state police, said they were freed on Friday. “It was the efforts of the police, through the directive of the inspector general of police, that yielded their release last night,” he said. Aliyu said no ransom was paid. The road connecting Abuja and Kaduna has long been targeted by kidnappers.

Analysis

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In Istanbul, 'toxic' transformation divides neighbors

With the clank and clatter of construction vehicles and clouds of concrete dust, a walk through Istanbul's Fikirtepe district is a shock to the senses. A few kilometers from the Bosphorus shore, Fikirtepe is home to one of the most notorious gentrification projects in Turkey's biggest city. Formerly a working class quarter of shabby apartment buildings and unkempt gardens on twisting, hilly streets, over the past few years the neighborhood's modest housing has been mostly levelled and replaced by luxury residential high-rises.

In 2010, the then-mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbas, announced that a citywide urban transformation effort would begin with Fikirtepe. Demolitions began in 2012 and are ongoing. Critics of the project say a zoning plan granted contractors free rein to divvy up the neighbourhood plot by plot. Today, the skyline is dominated by tall, flashy edifices as dozens of construction companies build towering apartment blocks for wealthy buyers. Some Fikirtepe residents feel like they've struck gold, as they sell their run-down apartments in return for flats in the brand new blocks. But others are frustrated over stalled negotiations between contractors and residents.

Cetin Er, who runs a second-hand furniture store and has lived in the neighborhood all of his life, is among those happy with the transformation. "I'm very pleased. Why wouldn't be I be? Our previous homes weren't in a livable condition, and if a fire broke out, fire trucks would not be able to enter our streets," Er said of the old Fikirtepe. Er signed off the rights to one his properties in exchange for a brand new flat in one of the shiny apartment towers that he says is on the verge of completion. "It's as if the people of Fikirtepe have won the lottery," he said.

Others don't feel so lucky. Fahrettin Canbas, a shopkeeper and 40-year resident of Fikirtepe, is among those nervously waiting for the spoils he was promised. Four years ago, Canbas sold the deed to his small shop and his home in the same building to a contractor, and most of his neighbors have followed suit. But since a minority of property owners on the plot have yet to come to an agreement with the contractor, his building stands ominously surrounded by other new construction projects that are continuing full speed ahead.

No Action

"On the other side of the street the basic structures have been completed, but here, there's no action," Canbas said. To make matters worse, a makeshift cement factory chugs along directly across the street, spewing choking dust into the air so Canbas can no longer open the windows in his flat. "Look at that counter, I just wiped it off this morning," he said, gesturing toward a dust-covered section of his shop, where he sells cigarettes, beer and snacks.

He insists that although the factory's presence in a residential area is illegal, and has called municipal authorities repeatedly, and nothing has been done. The Thomson Reuters Foundation contacted several departments of the municipal authority seeking comment about the redevelopment, but none responded. It's not just Canbas' street that has been choked with dust. In July, Aykurt Nuhoglu, the mayor of Kadikoy - the district in which Fikirtepe lies - announced that municipal testing of the area indicated that particle pollution levels in Fikirtepe had reached hazardous levels as a result of the heavy construction.

The polluted air, combined with the unsettling sight of abandoned buildings, makes walking through the neighborhood an eerie experience. "There are projects that have been completed, and there are some areas that have been turned into abandoned zones. The reason for this is because some of the homeowners aren't finding the contractor's offer to be sufficient," said Nazan Gurkan, the muhtar, or head of neighborhood affairs, of Merdivenkyo, a next door quarter of which a part falls into the transformation zone.

Anguish

Some residents within a given parcel of land want to sell their property while others refuse. This has created a number of tracts where occupied homes remain side-by-side those that have been demolished in part or in whole, giving the area a bombed-out appearance. Some of these vacant buildings are being squatted in by homeless Syrian refugees, Gurkan said. Residents have also complained of impostor contractors purchasing properties only to sell them to actual contractors at a profit. "The urban transformation in the area has resulted in serious anguish. From the beginning I have been opposed to this plan," Gurkan added.

Some residents who signed away their property in exchange for a luxury flat plan to cash in and move elsewhere. On the other hand, Cetin Er, the furniture store owner, said he's not going anywhere and plans to live in his new apartment once it is finished. "Since we were born and raised here, we're not thinking about leaving. Our jobs are here and our kids go to school here," Er said. But the massive redevelopment of Fikirtepe has changed the neighborhood beyond recognition - and fractured its community. "Everyone's gone. Relationships between neighbors and families alike have been destroyed. Is this transformation?" asked Gurkan. —Reuters

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION
CUTS AID TO PALESTINIANS
BY MORE THAN HALF...

Could Taliban finally return to talks?

Exploratory meetings in Pakistan between a high-level Taliban delegation and a representative of a prominent Afghan politician have fuelled speculation of a revival of long-stalled talks on ending Afghanistan's 16-year war that kills thousands each year. Similar hopes have repeatedly been dashed since the first direct talks between the Western-backed Afghan government and the Taliban broke down almost as soon as they began in the Pakistani hill station of Murree, outside Islamabad, in 2015.

But US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley's remarks this week that talks were closer than ever - coming after Monday's unofficial meeting in Islamabad - have renewed interest in a process that had seemed completely stalled. A statement from the Russian foreign ministry on Wednesday called for urgent direct talks between the Taliban and the government, adding that Russia, which has maintained contacts with the insurgent movement, could host them.

"I think something is cooking," said Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar, a senior adviser to Afghanistan's High Peace Council, which was established to oversee the peace process. "The situation around us in Afghanistan is developing in such a way that we need peace even more today than we did yesterday." Low-level contacts between the Afghan government, international groups including the UN and groups close to the Taliban have continued even as the insurgency has escalated over the past three years.

But progress has always been blocked by the deep mistrust between the government and the Taliban, as well as uncertainty about the position of neighbors including Pakistan, which Afghanistan has long accused of aiding the insurgents. Pakistan rejects accusations that it sponsors the Taliban, pointing to the heavy casualty toll military violence has inflicted on its citizens as well as the efforts it has made to fight radical groups on its territory.

Still, many in Afghanistan argue that Pakistan, which

has come under heavy pressure from Washington, is simply encouraging hopes of progress in order to buy time. One senior government official in Kabul, noted that speculation about peace talks regularly surfaces in the winter, while the Taliban regroup ahead of its spring offensive. "None of these meetings or talks about talks will help achieve peace," he said.

Pakistan's foreign office spokesman Mohammad Faisal declined to comment on Afghan accusations that Pakistan may have pushed recent meetings to deflect US pressure, but he added Islamabad was in favor of a political solution to the long war. "A stable and prosperous Afghanistan is our aim, he said. "And we would wish that we would

President Donald Trump, the United States has stepped up its assistance to Afghan security forces, particularly through air strikes, with the aim of preventing any Taliban military victory and forcing the insurgents to accept peace talks. "The US policy in Afghanistan is working," Haley told reporters. "We're closer to talks with the Taliban and the peace process than we've seen before."

The Taliban itself, which controls or disputes government control over more than a third of the country, says it wants a peaceful solution but says negotiations would depend on international troops leaving Afghanistan. "Islamic Emirate has a clear agenda for peace in Afghanistan and that is the end of invasion and an overall Islamic regime," its spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement this week.

According to sources in the Taliban and an Afghan political party, a delegation from the movement's political office in Qatar visited Islamabad for exploratory talks with Afghan politician Pir Hamid Gilani. A senior Taliban official based near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border said on Friday that the insurgents were "defining a new peace strategy" after the Islamabad meeting, which he described as the "most serious contacts since Murree".

The movement's spokesman denied any involvement in a separate meeting in Turkey that included figures linked to a breakaway Taliban faction and a representative of Hizb-i Islami, a party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former Taliban ally who came over to the government side last year. Even if contacts are at no more than "pre-negotiation" stage, where the two sides try to establish the basis for talks, considerable obstacles remain.

The government in Kabul is deeply divided, with increasing hostility between rival ethnic and party groups that will make it difficult to establish a unified negotiating stance. The Taliban has its own divisions and the ability of its leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada to command the affiliated Haqqani network, blamed for major attacks on civilian targets in cities such as Kabul, may be tested. —Reuters

“ I think something is cooking ”

arrive at the through negotiations, a talks-based process.”

‘US Policy Working’

The UN Security Council held a debate on Afghanistan's future on Friday following a visit to Kabul by council members this week, and was expected to call for a stronger regional partnership between Afghanistan and Central Asian neighbors. It is the latest in a series of steps aimed at building agreement among Afghanistan's neighbors.

Under a new strategy announced last year by US

Shady triangle:
Southeast
Asia's illegal
fuel market

An alleged oil heist in Singapore that has already led to 20 arrests, the seizure of at least one tanker and allegations that thieves siphoned thousands of tonnes of fuel from Shell's biggest refinery is shining a spotlight on an illegal trade worth tens of billions of dollars worldwide. Working routes in a triangle of sea anchored by Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore and encompassing the oil facilities of Malaysia, the smugglers take advantage of a difficult-to-patrol sea and enticing black market prices, experts say.

The suspects in the latest case are accused of stealing oil from Royal Dutch Shell's Pulau Bukom refinery, often during business hours, and distributing it around the region. Several of the men charged worked for Shell. Employees of a major Singaporean fuel trading company and a London-listed business that inspects and certifies cargoes have also been charged. "Siphoning off fuel is a common thing in Southeast Asia. There is a huge black market for it," said Ben Stewart, commercial manager of the shipping security firm Maritime Asset Security and Training, which has helped authorities in the region fight fuel theft and smuggling.

Singapore is by far the world's biggest ship refuelling port, and Southeast Asia's petroleum refining hub. Hundreds of vessels pass through the small city-state's waters every day. Security officers say the sheer amount of traffic makes checking every ship impossible, opening the door to illegal trade. In most cases, oil is discreetly siphoned from legal storage tanks and sold into the black market. But there have also been thefts at sea and even hijack-

ings of entire ships to steal their fuel.

Data from the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), based in Singapore, shows more than half of the serious shipping incidents reported in the past year have occurred off the east coast of the Malaysian peninsula. Some officials put the value of the illegal trade in Southeast Asia at \$2 billion to \$3 billion per year. But Yousuf Malik, principal at security consultancy Defence IQ, estimated about 3 percent of Southeast Asia's consumed fuel is sourced illegally, worth \$10 billion a year.

"The scale of the illegal oil trade varies with oil prices - when oil prices are high, so is the level of smuggling," said Praipol Koomsup, former Thai vice minister of energy and professor at Thammasat University. Crude oil prices have risen by more than 50 percent since mid-2017 to about \$70 per barrel, the highest level in over three years. That increases the black market demand in poorer Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam and Thailand. "Smuggled oil has been known to be sold to factories for industrial use, or unnamed roadside oil stations. Regular citizens and fishermen are involved in the smuggling," Koomsup said.

Open Sea Fuel Stations

Several fuel traders told Reuters that the illegal sale of fuel is common enough that companies plan for losses of 0.2-0.4 percent of ordered cargo volumes. Stewart said one common method of theft involves a simple fudging of paperwork at sea: captains overstate how much fuel their ship is using, then sell the excess. Sometimes entire ships are captured for their fuel cargo. When fuel is stolen on such a large scale, it tends to be transferred to other ships at sea.

Legal ship-to-ship transfers frequently happen between oil tankers in registered zones. In the South China Sea, however, illegal traders use purpose-built ships - with some even disguised as fishing trawlers - to take in and distribute fuel. According to ReCAAP, the waters around the remote Natuna Islands,



Suspects (front and background center, in white) to be charged in court in the Shell Bukom fuel theft case arrive in a police van at the state court in Singapore on Jan 13, 2018. —AFP

which sit between peninsular Malaysia and Borneo but belong to Indonesia, are a hot spot for piracy and illegal fuel transfers. The Atlantic Council, a policy research group, said many of the region's illegal fuel operations had links to organized crime. Police in Thailand and Vietnam said most illegal fuel comes into the country by sea, usually transported on mid-size trawlers in unmarked drums. Smaller vessels then bring the fuel ashore for sale on the street. "The coasts of Thailand and Vietnam are vast, and its cities big. To catch or even trace the illegal fuel in this area is virtually impossible. That's why it happens," said one security source, speaking on the condition of anonymity as he was not cleared to talk to media about contraband operations.

The Bukom Heist

Bukom, just south of Singapore, is an island serving just one purpose: 1.5 sq km of tropical land devoted to the biggest petroleum refinery owned by Anglo-Dutch Shell. It can process 500,000 barrels of crude oil per day. As global

markets were gearing up for a new year in early January, Singapore authorities conducted coordinated raids across the city-state, arresting 20, charging 14 Singaporean and Vietnamese men, and seizing millions of dollars in cash. They even confiscated an oil tanker.

At the heart of the police operations is Bukom, where suspects, including current and former Shell employees, are accused of stealing oil worth millions of dollars in the past six months. Singapore's biggest marine fuel supplier, Sentek, last weekend saw its marketing and operations manager, as well as a cargo officer, charged in connection with the case. Another person charged works for Intertek in Singapore, a British-listed company specializing in quality and quantity assurance, including for fuel products.

In a statement to Reuters, Shell said, "Fuel theft is an industry problem globally and not something that anyone can solve on their own." The company added that it was working with governments and ReCAAP to address the issue. —Reuters

News

US govt shuts down as Trump...

Continued from Page 1

One idea being floated by Republicans was to renew government funding through Feb 8 to end the shutdown, while working to resolve other issues, ranging from immigration, military and non-military spending levels, disaster relief and some healthcare issues.

The partial government shutdown was triggered at midnight on Friday when the Senate failed to agree to a House-passed bill to fund the government through Feb 16. It lacked immigration measures that Democrats insisted upon and also drew some Republican opposition. Despite tough words from some House Republicans, others were providing conflicting messages. Marc Short, the White House legislative affairs director, told reporters on Capitol Hill: "We are anxious to get a resolution on DACA."

He was referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that former President Barack Obama created and Trump ended in September. It was providing protection from deportation for the illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children and now known as "Dreamers". Moderate Republican Representative Charlie Dent predicted the government shutdown will end only when bipartisan legislation is allowed to advance in Congress, even if it angers conservatives. "That's the price of leadership," he said.

The shutdown began a year to the day after Trump was sworn in as president. His inability to cut a deal despite having a Republican majority in both houses of Congress marks arguably the most debilitating setback for his administration. In Twitter posts early yesterday, Trump blamed Democratic lawmakers. "This is the One Year Anniversary of my Presidency and the Democrats wanted to give me a nice present," he said. "Democrats are far more concerned with illegal immigrants than they are with

our great military or safety at our dangerous southern border," he said. "They could have easily made a deal but decided to play shutdown politics instead."

Trump said the shutdown showed the need to win more Republican seats in 2018 mid-term elections. "We can then be even tougher on Crime (and Border), and even better to our Military & Veterans!" he said. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi laid blame on Republicans in a floor speech yesterday. "Despite controlling the House, the Senate and the White House the Republicans were so incompetent, so negligent that they couldn't get it together to keep government open," Pelosi said.

There had been modest hope on Friday when Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer went to the White House to talk with Trump. One person familiar with the events said the two men agreed to seek a grand deal in which Democrats would win protections from deportation for some 700,000 "Dreamers" and Trump would get more money for a border wall and tighter security to stem illegal immigration from Mexico. Despite frantic meetings that ran through midnight, a deal could not be reached.

In a statement issued minutes before Friday's midnight deadline for a funding deal, Trump's White House said: "We will not negotiate the status of unlawful immigrants while Democrats hold our lawful citizens hostage over their reckless demands." The reference to "unlawful immigrants" was in stark contrast to earlier statements, including one in September in which Trump proclaimed, "We love the Dreamers." Democrats and many Republicans want to provide permanent legal status leading to citizenship for Dreamers.

The immediate impact of the government shutdown was eased somewhat by its timing, starting on a weekend when most government employees normally do not work anyway. The Defense Department said its combat operations in Afghanistan and other military activities would continue, while federal law enforcement officers also would remain on duty. The State Department warned that it could have problems processing passports. — Reuters

from sisterly Arab states; who are assigned to perform legal consultative missions, the official source said. Only (Kuwaiti) diplomats and administrative staff are tasked with missions abroad as part of their work, he reiterated.

As for KFAED, chaired by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, it is an independent authority. The fund's operations in aid beneficiary states require multiple travels by its technical team, which includes experts and advisors in engineering, economics and laws. The technical staff conducts some 23 missions abroad annually, in addition to other tasks by follow-up teams. Up to 61 per cent of the technical team members are Kuwaitis.

Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad had also warned on Thursday that the Syrian air force could destroy any Turkish warplanes used in the new offensive. But Cavusoglu told the 24 TV broadcaster that Turkey was informing Damascus in writing about its operations, in a rare contact between two governments who have been at odds since the civil war began. Turkey from Aug 2016 to March 2017 pushed into Syria in its more than half-year Euphrates Shield operation in an area to the east of Afrin against both YPG and IS.

Analysts say that crucial for any major new ground operation will be approval from Moscow which has a military presence in the area and a cordial relationship with the YPG. Russia is an ally of the Assad regime which Turkey has opposed since the onset of the war. But both Ankara and Moscow, as well as Tehran, have worked closely on a peace process in the last year. "Moscow is concerned at this news. We call on the opposing parties to show restraint," the Russian foreign ministry said. But the Russian defense ministry said its troops were withdrawing from the Afrin area to prevent any "provocation" and ensure the security of its troops.

With conspicuous timing, Akar and Turkey's spy chief Hakan Fidan were in Moscow on Thursday for talks on Syria. "A full Turkish air and ground offensive will not take place without Moscow's blessing," said Anthony Skinner, director MENA at global risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an umbrella grouping composed mainly of YPG, said in a statement the Turkish operation threatened to "breathe new life" into IS and said it has "no choice but to defend ourselves and our people". — AFP



NEW YORK: People gather near Central Park before the beginning of the Women's March yesterday. — AFP

Women march as Trump term enters 2nd year

WASHINGTON: Thousands of protesters turned out across the nation for the second Women's March yesterday, marking the first anniversary of President Donald Trump's inauguration with rallies aimed at channeling female activism into political gains in elections this year. The coordinated rallies in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and about 250 other cities are a reprise of the mass protests that marked the beginning of Trump's presidency. Sister rallies were also planned in Britain, Japan and other countries.

"We will make our message heard at the polls this fall," Emily Patton, a rally organizer, told thousands of demonstrators at the Reflecting Pool on Washington's National Mall. "That is why we are urging people to register to vote today." The rallies also come during what has been seen as a pivotal year for women's rights with the #MeToo and #TimesUp social media effort against sexual harassment and abuse that was born out of a string of scandals in Hollywood, Washington and elsewhere.

The Washington rally featured Democratic politicians from neighboring Virginia, including Senator Tim Kaine, who blamed Trump and Republicans for the shutdown of the government yesterday. "The Trump shutdown is due to the inability of the Republican Party to do basic governing, like making a budget," he said to cheers.

Many of the protesters wore pink knit "pussy hats", which were created for last year's march as a reference to a comment made by Trump about female genitalia. The caps quickly became a symbol of women's empowerment and

opposition to the new president in the early days of his administration. "We want to continue the fight to resist this president and the policies we're against," said Sara Piper, 59, a geologist from Reston, Virginia. Some critics said this year's march lacked a focus. Targeting an issue such as immigration would have greater impact, said Shikha Dalmia, a senior analyst at the Reason Foundation, a libertarian think tank. "Beating the feminist drum just seems to me beside the point. Maybe they are trying to cast as wide a net as possible," Dalmia said by telephone.

One of the biggest marches is expected in New York, where 37,000 people had signed up on the march's Facebook page. But the number of participants in this year's rallies is likely to fall well short of the estimated 5 million who marched on Jan 21, 2017, and made that one of the largest mass protests in US history.

In Chicago, thousands of mostly female marchers gathered ahead of a rally in Grant Park, carrying signs that read "Strong women raising strong women" and "You can't cure stupid but you can vote it out." Michelle Saunders, 41, a software saleswoman from Des Plaines, Illinois, came to the rally with her 14-year-old daughter Bailey. They attended last year's march and anticipated that the crowd this year would not match the 250,000 that attended last year, but for them the message is just as strong. "A smaller crowd will not mean people are any less angry," Michelle Saunders said. "We are unhappy with the current administration and what it stands for and want our voices to be heard."

Since last year's march, women have become more vocal and that is a positive sign, said Cathy Mutz, 63, a retired nurse from Chanahan, Illinois. "I think change will come from the midterm elections," she said. Organizers hope to build on the energy felt by Trump opponents after his surprise election victory in 2016 and channel it into gains for progressive candidates in November's midterm elections, using the theme "Power to the Polls." — Reuters

Mol gets access to addicts' info...

Continued from Page 1

MP's query and the latter's statement that the foreign ministry has dispatched expatriate personnel abroad on missions for the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

The ministry's entire staff - including diplomats and administrative personnel - are citizens; except for two

Turkey launches offensive against...

Continued from Page 1

counterpart Rex Tillerson while Turkey's top general Hulusi Akar informed his American and Russian counterparts. Russia said its Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also held talks with Tillerson.

Turkey accuses the YPG of being the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which has waged a rebellion in the Turkish southeast for more than three decades and is regarded as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies. But the YPG has been the key ally of Turkey's fellow NATO member the United States in the fight against IS militants, playing a key role in pushing the extremists out of their Syrian strongholds.

A senior US State Department official said on Friday that Washington did not believe "a military operation... serves the cause of regional stability." Erdogan had reacted furiously this week to an announcement of plans to create a US-backed 30,000-strong border security force in northern Syria composed partly of YPG fighters, describing it as an "army of terror". Tillerson later said the "entire situation has been misportrayed, mis-described", admitting "we owe them (Turkey) an explanation. "We don't care what they say," Erdogan spat back. "They will learn how wrong it is to trust a terror organization."

Pence meets Sisi amid Arab anger...

Continued from Page 1

loomed on Capitol Hill - despite the federal government shutdown looming over Washington.

The leaders of both Egypt and Jordan, the only Arab states that have peace treaties with Israel, would be key players if US mediators ever manage to get a revived Israeli-Palestinian peace process off the ground, as Trump says he wants. They are also key intelligence-sharing and security partners in America's various covert and overt battles against Islamist extremism in the region, and Egypt is a major recipient of aid to help it buy advanced US military hardware.

Sisi, one of Trump's closest allies in the region, had urged the US president before his Jerusalem declaration "not to complicate the situation in the region by taking measures that jeopardize the chances of peace in the Middle East". Egypt's top Muslim cleric and the head of its Coptic Church had both cancelled meetings with Pence in December in protest at the Jerusalem decision.

After Jordan - the custodian of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem - Pence will head to Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tomorrow. He will also deliver a speech to parliament and meet President Reuven Rivlin during the two-day visit. Pence can expect a warm welcome after Trump's decision on Jerusalem, which

Israelis and Palestinians alike interpreted as Washington taking Israel's side in the dispute over the city.

Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 and later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognised by the international community. Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its united capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern sector as the capital of their future state. The international community considers east Jerusalem illegally occupied by Israel and currently all countries have their embassies in the commercial capital Tel Aviv.

The State Department has begun to plan the sensitive move of the American embassy to Jerusalem, a process that US diplomats say may take years to complete. This week reports surfaced that Washington may temporarily designate the US consulate general in Jerusalem as the embassy while the search for a secure and practical site for a long-term mission continues. This could prove just as controversial as building a new embassy, however, as the building currently serves as the US mission to the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. It also sits astride the "Green Line" that divides Jerusalem.

A senior State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has yet to make a decision on either a permanent or interim location for the mission. "That is a process that takes, anywhere in the world, time. Time for appropriate design, time for execution. It is a matter of years and not weeks or months," he said. Pence - himself a devout Christian - will visit the Western Wall, one of the holiest sites of Judaism in Jerusalem's Old City, and pay his respects at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial. — AFP

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Sports

Kyle Lowry scores 24 points as Raptors take care of Spurs at home

Grizzlies win third straight with a 106-88 win over Kings

LOS ANGELES: Kyle Lowry scored 24 points and DeMar DeRozan added 21 as the Toronto Raptors defeated the San Antonio Spurs 86-83 in a defensive battle on Friday at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto. Toronto led just 70-69 with 6:53 to play but ran away with a 10-2 run over the ensuing four and a half minutes to build enough of a cushion to hold off the Spurs' late surge, which included a last-second missed shot by Bryn Forbes that could have tied the game. The Raptors outshot San Antonio 40 percent-33.3 percent and outlasted the Spurs despite being outrebounded 55-50. Jonas Valanciunas scored 15 points and took 12 rebounds for the Raptors, who won their second straight game. It was Toronto's lowest-scoring game of the season; the Raptors average more than 112 points per game. LaMarcus Aldridge led San Antonio with 17 points and 13 rebounds while Pau Gasol added 15 points and nine rebounds for the Spurs, who played without injured forwards Kawhi Leonard and Rudy Gay and injured guard Manu Ginobili.

KNICKS 117, JAZZ 115

Tim Hardaway, Jr. scored 31 points and went 6-of-7 from 3-point range to lead New York to a win at Utah. Courtney Lee and Kristaps Porzingis each chipped in 18 points for the Knicks. New York won for just the third time in 10 games in January.

LAKERS 99, PACERS 86

Jordan Clarkson scored 16 of his season-high 33 points in the final quarter to lead Los Angeles to a 99-86 victory over Indiana at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Clarkson was 14-of-19 shooting and also contributed seven rebounds and seven assists while falling two points shy of his career high. Julius Randle added 14 points and Kyle Kuzma scored 13 as the Lakers won for the fifth time in the past seven games.

NETS 101, HEAT 95

DeMarre Carroll scored a season-high 26 points as

Brooklyn, which trailed by 16 in the third quarter, rallied to defeat Miami at Barclays Center. The Heat were led by center Hassan Whiteside, who had 22 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks. Point guard Goran Dragic added 17 points. Brooklyn cooled off a Miami team that, even with the loss, has won eight of its last 10 games overall and eight of its last 11 on the road.

GRIZZLIES 106, KINGS 88

Reserve Ben McLemore had 12 of his season-high 21 points in the fourth quarter and Dillon Brooks scored 22 points as Memphis spoiled Zach Randolph's return in a victory over Sacramento at the FedEx Center. Tyreke Evans added 14 points and Andrew Harrison had 12 for the Grizzlies, who won their third straight game while sending the Kings to their seventh straight loss. Former Memphis fixture Randolph had four points and six rebounds in 19 minutes, and he received a pregame bear hug from former front-court mate Marc Gasol in his first game in Memphis since signing a two-year, \$24 million free-agent deal with the Kings in the offseason.

WIZARDS 122, PISTONS 112

Kelly Oubre and Bradley Beal scored 26 points apiece and Washington handed Detroit its fourth consecutive loss. John Wall scored all of his 16 points for the visitors in the second half and had 11 assists for Washington, which scored 76 second-half points. Otto Porter also supplied 16 points, while Markieff Morris tossed in 13 and Marcin Gortat added 10.

SUNS 108, NUGGETS 100

Guard Devin Booker scored 30 points and TJ Warren added 25 points in Phoenix's victory over Denver at the Pepsi Center in Denver. Reserves Josh Jackson and Isaiah Canaan had 16 points apiece and Canaan made a season-high four 3-pointers for the Suns, who broke a three-game losing streak. — Reuters



Washington hand Detroit its fourth loss



DETROIT: John Wall #2 of the Washington Wizards handles the ball against the Detroit Pistons on Friday at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Utah 115, New York 117; Detroit 112, Washington 122; LA Lakers 99, Indiana 86; Brooklyn 101, Miami 95; Denver 100, Phoenix 108; Memphis 106, Sacramento 88; Toronto 86, San Antonio 83.

Eastern Conference				GB	Western Conference				
W	L	PCT							
Boston	34	12	73.9	-	Golden State	37	9	80.4	-
Toronto	31	13	70.5	2	Houston	31	12	72.1	4.5
Cleveland	27	17	61.4	6	San Antonio	30	17	63.8	7.5
Miami	26	19	57.8	7.5	Minnesota	29	18	61.7	8.5
Washington	26	20	56.5	8	Oklahoma City	25	20	55.6	11.5
Milwaukee	23	21	52.3	10	Portland	24	21	53.3	12.5
Indiana	24	22	52.2	10	New Orleans	23	21	52.3	13
Philadelphia	21	20	51.2	10.5	LA Clippers	23	21	52.3	13
Detroit	22	22	50.0	11	Denver	23	23	50.0	14
New York	21	25	45.7	13	Utah	18	27	40.0	18.5
Charlotte	18	25	41.9	14.5	Phoenix	17	29	37.0	20
Chicago	17	28	37.8	16.5	Memphis	16	28	36.4	20
Brooklyn	17	29	37.0	17	LA Lakers	16	29	35.6	20.5
Atlanta	13	31	29.5	20	Dallas	15	30	33.3	21.5
Orlando	13	32	28.9	20.5	Sacramento	13	32	28.9	23.5



CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Winner Lindsey Vonn from the USA celebrates during the podium ceremony of the FIS Alpine World Cup Women's Downhill yesterday in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italian Alps. — AFP

Vonn oldest downhill winner in Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: US skier Lindsey Vonn made history yesterday by becoming the oldest winner of a women's World Cup downhill race in Cortina d'Ampezzo, racking up her 79th World Cup career victory aged 33.

Vonn, who came second in Friday's first run, blazed down her favourite Olympia delle Tofane course in 1min 36.48sec to beat Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather by 0.92sec with another American, Jacqueline Wiles third at 0.98. It was Vonn's 12th World Cup win in the Italian dolomites-six in downhill and six in Super-G-and 40th of her career in downhill.

'FEELS LIKE IT'S 2004'

It also saw her overtake Elisabeth Goergl as the oldest winner of a women's World Cup downhill-the Austrian was 32 years and 325 days old when she won in Altenmarkt in 2014 while Vonn turned 33 in October last year. "Mentally I feel like it's the first podium I got back in 2004," said Vonn. "I have the same motivation, drive, excitement, the only thing that has changed is my body is not as good as it was but that doesn't mean I can't still win. "I just takes more energy and motivation to hold it together. I'll keep going as long as my old knee holds out."

It was the 2010 Olympic downhill champion's second win of the season

after the Super-G in Val d'Isere last month, as she builds momentum towards the Pyeongchang Games.

And Vonn has a chance to add to her tally in Cortina in today's Super-G. "When she's here, she's almost impossible to beat," said Weirather, who claimed her fifth podium of the season. Vonn lost on Friday when an error cost her victory to Sofia Goggia of Italy. But she made no mistake yesterday.

"It was good clean skiing today. A beautiful day, normal perfect Cortina sunshine," said Vonn after her 20th podium finish in the Italian resort, second only to her 25 in Lake Louise.

She also hailed the progress made by her protégée, 25-year-old Wiles. "For me it was really special also to have Jacqueline on the podium too," she added. "I supported her when she didn't have the money to continue in the World Cup and she's part of my foundation."

Vonn, the first skier to record a World Cup win in 15th consecutive years, is closing in on the all-time World Cup record of 86 victories held by Ingemar Stenmark between 1974 and 1989. But she said her mind was more on the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics that begin on February 9.

"My focus is so much on the Olympics I haven't been thinking of it this season," she said. "It's nice to get closer to that record. After the Olympics I'll try and get closer to that record and hopefully have more wins before I retire."

Goggia failed in her bid for a third straight downhill win as she tumbled on the first part of the run, but she still holds top spot in the overall downhill standings. Mikaela Shiffrin, the overall World Cup leader, was third on Friday and trailed in seventh position 24 hours later, 1.45sec behind Vonn. — AFP

Kitzbuehel sun shines on Germany's Thomas Dressen

KITZBUEHEL: Germany's Thomas Dressen took advantage of the sun peaking through the Tyrolean clouds to upstage a host of more experienced racers with a shock victory in the men's World Cup downhill in Kitzbuehel yesterday. Widely regarded as the most testing speed event on the World Cup circuit, overcast conditions created bad visibility to make the 3.3km-long Streif run even more challenging. But Dressen, starting with bib number 19, benefited from a rare clearing of the low cloud cover to streak home in 1min 56.15sec ahead of Switzerland's Beat Feuz (1:56.35) and Austrian Hannes Reichelt (1:56.56).

It was the 24-year-old's maiden World Cup victory, his previous best a third place in the Beaver Creek downhill in December. "When I came through to the finish, I couldn't believe it, I thought they were kidding me. It's a surprise for me, too," said Dressen, whose helmet is emblazoned with the number 44, in memory of his father's initials.

Dirk Dressen was one of nine killed in the Austrian resort of Soelden in September 2005 when a helicopter transporting building materials dropped a concrete block on a cable car line.

Dressen also became the first German to win the Kitzbuehel downhill since Sepp Ferstl in 1979 and the country's first World Cup downhill winner since Max Rauffer in Val Gardena in 2004. "He had the sun and he was brutal," Feuz lamented. The victory was perfect timing for



KITZBUEHEL: (L to R) Second placed Beat Feuz of Switzerland, winner Thomas Dressen of Germany and third placed Hannes Reichelt of Austria celebrate on the podium after winning the men's downhill event at the FIS Alpine World Cup in Kitzbuehel, Austria yesterday. — AFP

Germany ahead of next month's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, notably in the absence of slalom star Felix Neureuther through injury. The hosting of Kitzbuehel's famed, white-knuckled downhill was particularly poignant after the start of the ski year was marred by the deaths on North American slopes of France's David Poisson and German teenager Max Burkhardt.

The Hahnenkamm mountain has been the scene of many a gruesome crash. Sliding bodies, flailing skis and helicopter evacuations have become a regular feature and in recent times, Switzerland's Daniel Albrecht and Austrian Hans Grugger had crashes which brought premature ends to their careers.

This time, no helicopters were required although a handful of skiers came a cropper. Experienced Italian Christof Innerhofer and France's Johan Clarey, third last year, were both

forced into dramatic starfish stances after losing control on the penultimate gate.

Both managed to ski down unaided after being helped out of the safety netting, with the 50,000-strong crowd respectfully silent until the racer was back on his feet. A raised pole in recognition from the felled skier was greeted by raucous applause followed by deafening roars for the next competitor's breath-taking descent into what becomes a voyeuristic, gladiatorial insight into the draw of the ultimate alpine skiing test.

Feuz, starting in number seven, had taken the lead from frontrunner Reichelt, winner in 2014, and it seemed as if the victory might have been his given the failure of big names packed in the opening 10 starters to threaten his time.

Austrians Matthias Mayer, the reigning Olympic downhill champion, and Vincent Kriechmayr both made major mistakes coming into the bottom of the course. — AFP

Record-breaking French duo win fourth Euro title

MOSCOW: Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron broke their own world record score to claim a fourth straight European ice dance title in Moscow yesterday. The all-conquering French duo blitzed the Russian-led opposition with a perfect free dance routine.

That earned them a score of 121.87 points for a 203.16 total to cement their claims on next month's Olympic title. Papadakis, 22, and Cizeron, 23, who were the first to smash through the 200-point barrier earlier this season, clinched gold at the Megasport Palace with a 16 point margin over home hopes Ekaterina Bobrova and Dmitri Soloviev (187.13).

Another Russian couple, Alexandra Stepanova and Ivan Burkin, took bronze on 184.86. The all-conquering French winners, world champions in 2015 and 2016, had set up their latest success with an accomplished short programme routine on Friday. The 2018 European Championships will conclude later with the women's free skating. — AFP



MOSCOW: Gold medallists Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron of France celebrate on the podium after the ice dance free dance at the ISU European Figure Skating Championships in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

Sports

FedExpress steams on as Sharapova grinds to halt

Djokovic downplays injury as he powers on

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic kept up their relentless march towards a semi-final meeting at the Australian Open yesterday as Maria Sharapova suffered a crushing defeat by Angelique Kerber. The two greats of the game—who have won 11 Australian Opens between them could meet in the last four if they maintain their winning ways. Defending champion Federer was never troubled by France's Richard Gasquet, who has failed to take a set off him since 2011, as he steamed into the last 16 with a 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 win.

"The second set was tight, the match was close and I had to focus to the very end," said the Swiss 19-time Grand Slam winner, who next plays little-known Hungarian Marton Fucsovics for a place in the quarter-finals. He added: "So far, so good."

Djokovic was equally convincing in his 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 rout of Spanish 21st seed Albert Ramos-Vinolas, although there was concern when he sought a medical timeout for treatment to his lower back. "It was straight sets but I had to earn my points," insisted the Serb, who is on his way back after six months out with right elbow trouble. "Obviously for me it's taking it one match at a time but I have to be more humble with my expectations as I haven't played in the last six months." He next plays South Korea's Chung Hyeon, who shocked fourth seed Alexander Zverev.

With the temperatures a manageable 26 Celsius (79 Fahrenheit) at Melbourne Park after two days of oven-like conditions, Zverev was beaten in five sets. He has been hailed as the leader of the tennis new guard but has now failed to go beyond the fourth round in 11

Grand Slams, admitting he has "some figuring out to do". In a glamour evening tie, Sharapova was no match for Kerber, flopping 6-1, 6-3. They pair are both 30, former world number ones and were the only two Australian Open winners left in the women's draw, but there was only one player in it.

"This court is special for me and I was trying to enjoy every point," Kerber said of Rod Laver Arena, where she beat Serena Williams in the 2016 final. Kerber is in scintillating form, having won the lead-up Sydney International, and will face Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei for a place in the quarter-finals.

For Sharapova, who is looking to rediscover her best on her way back from a 15-month drugs ban, it is back to the drawing board. "I think there are a lot of things that I need to get better at and improve on," she admitted.

“This court is special for me and I was trying to enjoy every point”

TOOK ITS TOLL

World number one Simona Halep is lucky to be still in contention after surviving three match points in a titanic struggle against 76th-ranked American Lauren Davis. She looked out for the count at one point but finally got over the line 4-6, 6-4, 15-13 in a gruelling 3hr 44min epic that took its toll. "I'm almost dead," the tenacious Romanian said after the incredible battle, in which Davis lost a toenail and Halep served for the match four times. The former quarter-finalist will now play Naomi Osaka after the Japanese star beat Australia's Ashleigh Barty.

Sixth seed Karolina Pliskova also had a tough test, beating fellow Czech Lucie Safarova 7-6 (8/6), 7-5. In contrast, US Open finalist Madison Keys was in fine



MELBOURNE: Russia's Maria Sharapova hits a return against Germany's Angelique Kerber during their women's singles third round match on day six of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

touch as she benefits from the guidance of former great Lindsay Davenport. Flying under the radar, the 17th seed has surrendered just 16 games on her way to the fourth round after beating Romania's Ana Bogdan 6-3, 6-4. She will next face French eighth seed Caroline Garcia, who

was too strong for Belarussian Alaksandra Sasnovich. Among the men through was Austrian fifth seed Dominic Thiem and veteran Tomas Berdych, along with American Tenny's Sandgren, who had never won a Grand Slam match before this year's Australian Open.—AFP

Indian duo Paes and Raja stun former champions

MELBOURNE: Indian doubles great Leander Paes has had 119 playing partners in his 27-year career and it appears his latest union could be a profitable one after he and compatriot Purav Raja knocked out former champions Jamie Murray and Bruno Soares yesterday.

Paes, 44, and Raja saved a match point in a near three-hour thriller before winning 7-6(3) 5-7 7-6(6). Journeyman Raja, who only took up tennis properly aged 17, was approached last year by Paes, who has won 18 grand slam doubles titles including the mixed event, and they joined forces for the U.S. Open where they lost in the second round.

After working together in the off-sea-

son, however, Paes, the oldest man left in the tournament, is happy with his choice. Raja, 32, saved a match point at 6-5 in the tiebreak with a sensational reflex volley and then sealed victory over Briton Murray and Brazilian Soares with a backhand winner, to the delight of the Indians in the crowd. "I think we earned some street cred today as a pair, we were playing grand slam champions today and they kept on showing their class," Paes said. "The way Purav played at the end, people have seen me do that, but he earned street cred today in the locker room." Asked whether it would be a long-term arrangement, Paes said: "Come back to me in six months." Raja, whose has earned only \$380,000 as a professional and is ranked 68th in doubles, said his skills may not be the usual kind seen on Tour but his silky shots were certainly effective.

"I don't bomb the serve down at 200kph but I like to... catch players in my web," the Millfield School-educated Mumbai resident told Reuters. "I like to put my style out there and believe in what I do." — Reuters



Leander Paes

Olympic gymnastics star Raisman demands probe of Nassar abuse

CHICAGO: Olympic gymnastics superstar Aly Raisman on Friday faced down disgraced national team doctor Larry Nassar in court, calling him "sick" and demanding an independent probe to find out how he was apparently able to abuse dozens of young girls for years with impunity.

Raisman's statement came on day four of searing testimony from dozens of Nassar's victims at his sentencing hearing, shortly after teammate Jordyn Wieber publicly revealed for the first time that she had been abused by Nassar.

"You are so sick. I can't even comprehend how angry I feel when I think of you," Raisman, now 23, told the court in Michigan, where Nassar has pleaded guilty to 10 counts of criminal sexual conduct. He faces life in prison. "You took advantage of our passions and our dreams," she added.

"We need an independent investigation of exactly what happened, what went wrong, and how it can be avoided for the future. Only then can we know what changes are needed. Only then can we believe such changes are real."

Raisman, Wieber and two other members of the so-called "Fierce Five" 2012 gold medal-winning squad—Gabby Douglas and McKayla Maroney—have all said Nassar molested them in the guise of medical treatment. Olympians Simone Biles, the reigning all-around champion from the Rio Games in 2016, and Jamie Dantzscher, who competed in Sydney in 2000 and took home a bronze medal, have also revealed that they were abused.

A noticeably nervous Wieber said Nassar first molested her when she was 14. "I thought that training for the Olympics would be the hardest thing that I would ever have to do. But, in fact, the hardest thing I ever had to do is process that I am a victim of Larry

Nassar," said Wieber, who is now 22.

She said Nassar had unfettered access to gymnasts—he was the only male allowed at the national team training camp in Texas and was sometimes left unaccompanied in their hotel rooms.

But the athletes did not question the abuse, she said, because of his stellar reputation in the gymnastics world as a "miracle worker."

"I even talked to my teammates Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney about this treatment, and how uncomfortable it made us feel. None of us really understood it," Wieber said. "USA Gymnastics is accountable. The US Olympic Committee is accountable."

'I HAVE NO WORDS'

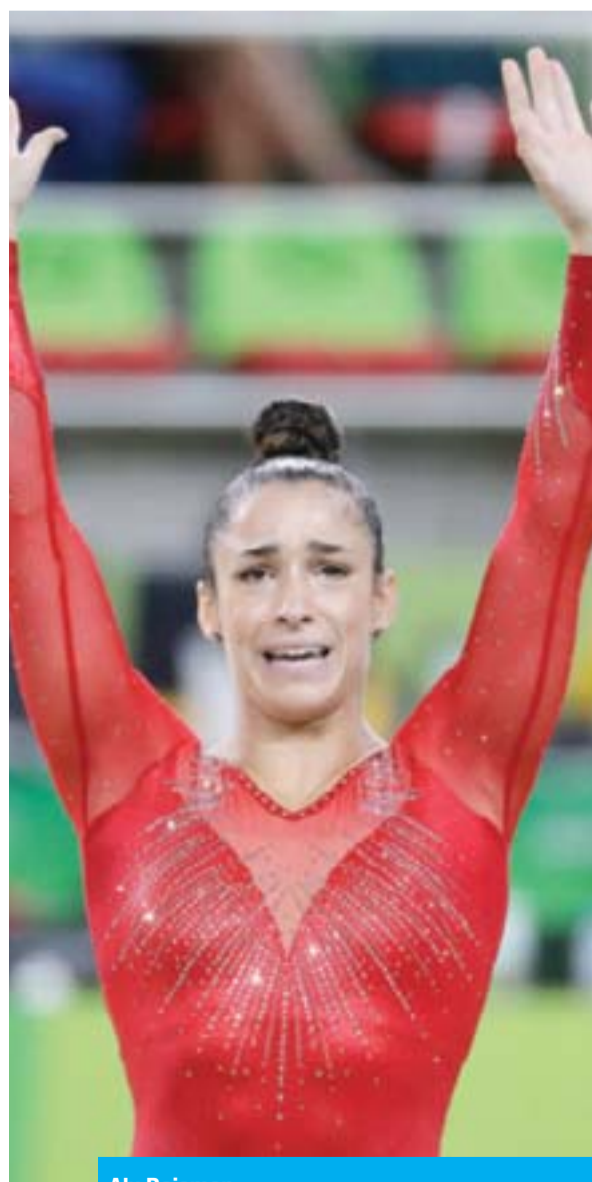
Even though the 54-year-old Nassar only pleaded guilty to 10 counts, the Michigan judge has offered dozens of women the chance to confront him face-to-face by delivering victim impact statements before his sentencing. More than 100 victims have come forward with accounts of abuse, including Nassar's onetime family babysitter and athletes in several women's sports programs at Michigan State University, where Nassar worked. Under mounting pressure, USA Gymnastics announced Thursday it would cut ties with the Karolyi Ranch, a longtime training center for elite athletes in Huntsville, Texas—where Biles says she was abused by Nassar. But Raisman said Friday: "USA Gymnastics neglected to mention that they had athletes training there the day they released the statement," prompting disbelief from the presiding judge. "I didn't know there were still people there," said Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Rosemarie Aquilina. "I have no words for that."

UNIVERSITY UNDER FIRE

Victims also criticized Michigan State University, Nassar's employer until September 2016, for not stopping him sooner. The university's board of trustees acknowledged the criticism Friday, asking Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette to conduct an outside review of its actions.

"We are making this request because we believe your review may be needed to answer the public's questions concerning MSU's handling of the Nassar situation," the trustees said in a letter to Schuette.

"These questions grew louder this week with the victim impact statements." It was not clear if Nassar's



Aly Raisman

sentencing on the abuse charges would wrap up on Friday or continue into tomorrow. He already faces 60 years in prison after also pleading guilty to child pornography charges. — AFP

Jaguars confident but Patriots on verge of Super Bowl return

NEW YORK: Defending NFL champion New England's quest for a third Super Bowl title in four seasons is only two wins from completion, but the upstart Jacksonville Jaguars aren't going down quietly. Today's winner will face the National Conference champion, either the Minnesota Vikings or Philadelphia Eagles, in Super Bowl 52 on February 4 at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Patriots bid for their eighth trip to the championship spectacle in 17 seasons on Sunday at home against the Jaguars, who upset Pittsburgh last weekend and already have dreams of taking home the title next month. "We're going to the Super Bowl and we're going to win," Jaguars cornerback Jalen Ramsey told a fan rally in Florida last weekend. But that's going to require Jacksonville getting past the Patriots first, and New England quarterback Tom Brady, who could become the first six-time Super Bowl champion, warns that big talk must be backed up on the field.

"What I've learned for a long time is it's how you play, it's not what you say," Brady said in his weekly radio appearance. "The game is going to be decided by who plays the best, not who hypes the best or speaks the best. He's a really good player. I've watched a ton of film on him. He has a lot of strengths. He's obviously very confident. That's reflected in how he plays. I am more concerned about how he plays opposed to what he says." Brady suffered a right hand injury and had a limited workout session Wednesday, but Jaguars coach Doug Marrone dismissed any notion the 40-year-old Patriots star would be hampered on Sunday.

"I'm sure he could probably throw left-handed if he has a problem with his right hand and throw just as well," Marrone said.

'BE HUMBLE OR BE HUMBLER'

Brady, who will play in his seventh consecutive conference final and 12th overall, faces a stingy Jaguars defensive unit that was the NFL's best against the pass in search of his 27th playoff victory. "It's the best team we are facing all year coming up," said the Patriots' Rob Gronkowski, who led all NFL tight ends with 1,084 receiving yards. "We have to be prepared. It is going to be a big, tough challenge, for sure." Brady called the Jaguars the "toughest" foe the Patriots have faced, but Jacksonville linebacker Telvin Smith dismissed the praise on Twitter, saying, "Bruh this the oldest trick...pump us up in the media but in the buildin I know what's really been said. Respect."

Still, it's Ramsey's Super Bowl guarantee for the Jaguars that figures to provide motivation for the Patriots. "If you're going to make a statement like that, you better be able to back it up," Patriots defensive tackle Adam Butler said. "Be humble or be humbled." Patriots coach Bill Belichick appreciates Jacksonville defenders who managed 55 sacks, NFL second-best totals of 21 interceptions and 33 takeaways and seven defensive touchdowns this season. "We're going to have to play our best game of the year," Belichick said. The Jaguars are one game from the Super Bowl for the third time in their history, losing to the Patriots in the 1996 season and to Tennessee in the 1999 campaign. They are 1-11 all-time against New England, the lone win coming in a January 1999 home playoff contest.—AFP

Sports

North to send 22 athletes to Olympics in South Korea

Bach hosted closed-door talks with leaders of Olympic committees

LAUSANNE: North Korea will send 22 athletes to next month's Winter Games in the South, the International Olympic Committee said yesterday, approving a landmark deal between two nations still officially at war.

South Korea had hoped that the Games which begin in Pyeongchang on February 9 could help ease the crisis on the peninsula that surged to new heights in recent months over the North's nuclear and missile and programme. In a surprise New Year's announcement, the leader of Stalinist North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, indicated he was open to sending a delegation to Pyeongchang.

North and South then reached a deal on a set of momentous compromises, including having delegations from both countries march together at the opening ceremony and the formation of a unified women's hockey team.

But Seoul and Pyongyang still needed approval from

the IOC, as the pact required the suspension of some basic Olympic rules. IOC president Thomas Bach gave that approval yesterday, following closed-door talks with the leaders of the Olympic committees from both Koreas, Pyeongchang 2018 organisers, and senior government officials from the two countries.

"Let us not forget that such an agreement would have seemed impossible only a few weeks ago", Bach said, in an apparent reference to the feverish tension triggered last year by the North's repeated missile tests. The final deal cleared 22 North Korean athletes to compete in three sports and a total of five disciplines. Those include figure skating, short-track speed skating, cross-country skiing and Alpine skiing, as well as hockey. In approving the joint hockey team, IOC brass overruled concerns raised by some hockey federations over fairness. At the opening ceremony, the joint delegation

"will be led into the Olympic stadium by the Korean unification flag" carried together by athlete from each country, the IOC said.

A special unity uniform will be created for the event. As no North Korean athlete had technically qualified for Pyeongchang, yesterday's announcement required extending qualification deadlines in the sports concerned.

Bach acknowledged that "exceptional decisions" were required to get the deal done and thanked the skiing, skating and ice hockey governing bodies for their "enthusiastic participation".

“Today marks a milestone on a long journey”

”

'MILESTONE'

"Today marks a milestone on a long journey," Bach said. "The Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang are hopefully opening the door to a brighter future on the Korean peninsula, and inviting the world to join in a celebration of hope," he added.

North Korea has taken part in seven of the last 12 Winter Olympics, most recently in Vancouver 2010.

But the North boycotted the 1988 Games in Seoul, so its presence in Pyeongchang—just 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of the demilitarised zone that divides the Koreas—has been seen as a significant, if not stunning, diplomatic coup. North and South Korea remain technically at war since the Korean war ended with armistice, not a peace treaty, in 1953.

An IOC spokesperson confirmed that the North Korean athletes will stay in the Olympic village, quashing speculation that they may have chosen to sleep on a boat to avoid residing on Southern soil. Regardless of where its athletes sleep, the North is unlikely to pose a significant threat in competition, as the country has only won two medals in the history of the Winter



LAUSANNE: (From L) Pyeongchang 2018 Olympics (POCOG) President Lee Hee-beom, North Korea's Sports Minister and Olympic Committee president Kim Il Guk, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, South Korean Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Do Jong-hwan, Swedish IOC member Gunilla Lindberg and South Korea's National Olympic Committee President Lee Kee-heung pose during a signing ceremony at the Olympic Museum. — AFP

Games, in 1964 and 1992, both for speedskating.

UN SANCTIONS

North Korea will also send 24 officials and 21 media representatives to Pyeongchang, all whom will receive IOC accreditation, Bach said.

Separately, the North has said it will send 550-member delegation to the Games, including cheerleaders, performers and other cultural envoys.

Seoul and the IOC will have to ensure that while accommodating the North and ensuring that the so-called "peace Olympics" pass off smoothly, they do not violate United Nations sanctions.

Security Council measures currently prohibit cash transfers to the North, while the UN has also drawn up a blacklist of officials tied to the Stalinist Pyongyang regime, individuals whose presence at the Games will create potential stumbling blocks. — AFP

Ill Lloris a worry for Spurs ahead of Saints clash

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur could be without France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris when manager Mauricio Pochettino takes the London side to his former club Southampton in the Premier League today. Lloris missed training on Friday due to illness and Pochettino said: "I don't know about Hugo. It's difficult to say, we need to wait and assess him. I think it is flu or a virus. Everyone with this weather will struggle a bit."

Better news for Spurs fans came when Pochettino confirmed Toby Alderweireld will return to training. The Belgian defender has been out since November with a hamstring problem and Spurs are already targeting next week's FA Cup fourth-round match with Newport County as a possible comeback date.

"Regarding Toby hopefully he can integrate some exercise with the group on Saturday," Pochettino said. "We are going to have a very busy period and we need all the squad available to play."

"If all is well he will do the warm-up with the team and will be integrated gradually with the group. He will be ready as soon as possible. "Maybe he will play in the FA Cup, we will have all the week and we will see if he is in good position to play." It is five years to the week since the Argentinian took over at St Mary's in 2013, before leading Southampton for 18 months. "It's always special, I had an amazing time, one-and-a-half years, it was amazing for us and our families," he recalled.

'OPENED THE DOOR'

"Today five years ago was our debut against Everton and we only knew one or two words of English. "Southampton opened the door in England for us. That is so important for me, I'm so proud. I've had a few lessons, not too much."

"I was in the dark before personally talking Spanish, now knowing English it is amazing, I am looking at a different perspective. "I'm so proud to be part of the history of Southampton, it means a lot. A lot of people love us and we love them."

Spurs are in the hunt for a Champions League place but Southampton are woefully out of form, sitting just one point and one place outside the bottom three. Their manager Mauricio Pellegrino has admitted the club missed out on signing their former youth star Theo Walcott, who joined Everton from Arsenal instead.

"That is part of the market," he said. "The market has got offers and demands. "I think we did everything to try to bring this player here but we have to accept that. It's part of our job." He added: "We have got another option and we have to continue with our job. "Sometimes we expect this and we have to be prepared for this because it's part of the market." —AFP

Smashing world record the easy part for Coleman

LOS ANGELES: Setting the 60 metres world record of 6.37 seconds turned out to be just part of the challenge for American Christian Coleman. With no drug testing at the Clemson (South Carolina) Invitational on Friday, the world 100 metres silver medallist drove what seemed like halfway to Atlanta, Georgia, two hours away, to meet up with testers, provide a required sample and fill out the necessary paperwork to help ratify the record. "The race took six seconds but we have been at it for six hours to get the testing done," Coleman's agent Emanuel Hudson told Reuters after shepherding the process through several phone calls and even live social media from his California office. Part of the problem was not only finding a drug tester, but ensuring the proper forms for a world record were available. Coleman, who was days away from his second birthday when compatriot Maurice Greene set the previous 60 metres world record of 6.39 seconds in 1998, said the extra time was worth it since without the drug test there would be no record.

"It has been a pretty good day for me," the sprinter told Reuters, still going strong more than two hours after midnight. "I always knew the sky was the limit as far as the potential I have." Having the same agent as Greene, the two have chatted from time to time and Coleman said: "...I told him I was coming for his record. He said he believed I had the capabilities."

BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

Coleman had a breakthrough campaign in 2017, with the year's fastest 100 metres, 9.82 seconds, at the U.S. collegiate championships before beating world record holder

Usain Bolt for the 100 metres silver at London's world championships. Now the 21-year-old has captured the indoor world record in his first meeting of 2018. "I just came into the season wanting to push myself to new heights," said the former University of Tennessee sprinter who turned professional in June. "People turn professional and they are not running as fast as they did in college because it is a lot different, but I wanted to make sure that I didn't have that kind of transition and always stayed on top." Neither Coleman nor coach Tim Hall had expected what transpired on Friday. Training had been going well, and a speedy 6.47 seconds, the top time in the world, in the preliminaries had set the two thinking maybe something special was possible in the final.

Mentally Coleman also knew he was stronger than last season. "Last year I wanted to be great so bad sometimes I would overwork. I would do workouts that weren't part of the regime. "I realised this season I had to work smarter, not harder."

DIFFERENT FEELING

Starting has also been a point of emphasis, and the Georgia native got out so fast on Friday, "it felt a little different," he said. "It didn't necessarily feel that great - I felt I could have got more out of it but when you are doing something different you obviously don't always feel comfortable." He will next compete in the Boston Indoor Grand Prix on Feb. 10, then go for US and world indoor titles, the latter scheduled for early March in Birmingham, England. "It (the world championships) is something I had my mind set on coming into the season because I think in big races is where I excel the most," Coleman said. While many had thought Canada's Andre De Grasse and South African world 400 metres record holder Wayde Van Niekerk would be the next great sprinters with Bolt's retirement, Coleman had other ideas. "I knew potentially I could be the 'next guy'," he said. Success at the 2017 London worlds solidified that feeling. "If I can handle the type of pressure and that kind of competition, I am ready to take on the world," he said. — Reuters



Christian Coleman

Bailey shines as Leverkusen climb to second

BERLIN: Jamaica winger Leon Bailey produced a superb back-heeled goal in a dazzling display as Bayer Leverkusen went third in the Bundesliga with a 4-1 win at Hoffenheim yesterday. The 20-year-old showed why Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal are reportedly chasing him with an audacious back-heeled shot, which beat several defenders on 43 minutes at Hoffenheim.

He then wrong-footed his marker and swung in a cross from the left wing to Lars Bender who set up Austrian defensive midfielder Julian Baumgartlinger on 52 minutes. Bailey again caused more misery in Hoffenheim's ranks by providing the final pass for Argentina striker Lucas Alario before Adam Szalai grabbed a late goal for Hoffenheim.

The win allowed Leverkusen to snatch second from RB Leipzig and get back to winning ways after last weekend's home defeat to leaders Bayern Munich, who host strugglers Werder Bremen on Sunday with a 13-point lead.

RB Leipzig dropped to third after a shock 2-1 defeat at gritty Freiburg, who are unbeaten in their last seven games and moved seven points clear of the relegation

zone. The visitors had goals by Kevin Kampl and Bruma disallowed before Germany striker Timo Werner finally gave Leipzig a 66th-minute lead.

The game turned in four minutes when Janik Haberer smashed home Freiburg's equaliser, then 21-year-old defender Robert Koch headed the winner from a corner. Borussia Muenchengladbach are up to fourth after a Matthias Ginter header and tremendous Thorgan Hazard strike, following a superb run, sealed their 2-0 win at home to Augsburg. Borussia Dortmund are fifth after Friday's 1-1 draw with Hertha Berlin. Star striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was again dropped from Dortmund's starting line-up and Borussia confirmed on Saturday they have had contact with Arsenal about a possible transfer.

Stuttgart goalkeeper Ron-Robert Zieler dented his hopes of a Germany recall for March's friendlies against Spain and Brazil with two howling errors in the 3-2 defeat at Mainz yesterday. Hosts Mainz gifted Stuttgart the opening goal when Alexander Hack turned the ball into his own net on 19 minutes. Mainz replied with three unanswered goals as Japan striker Yoshinori Muto stabbed the ball home from close range at the second attempt just before the break, then his shot dipped under the diving Zieler.

Zeiler was also at fault for Mainz's third goal when he allowed Gerrit Holtmann's shot to roll away from him and into the net on 64 minutes before Stuttgart defender Daniel Ginczek made it 3-2 with a late



SINSHEIM: Hoffenheim's Czech defender Pavel Kaderabek (L) and Leverkusen's Argentinean forward Lucas Alario vie for the ball during the German First division Bundesliga football match TSG 1899 Hoffenheim vs Bayer 04 Leverkusen in Sinsheim, southwestern Germany, yesterday. —AFP

header. The win means Mainz trade places with Stuttgart just above the relegation zone. Eintracht Frankfurt moved up to seventh after their 3-1 win at ten-man Wolfsburg, who had striker Landry Dimata

sent off for two yellow cards. Sebastian Haller, who scored for the third game running, Timothy Chandler and Luka Jovic scored Frankfurt's goals while Maximilian Arnold hit Wolfsburg's consolation. — AFP

Sports

Hazard nets double as Chelsea ease to victory at Brighton

Hazard strike was the 100th league goal of his career

BRIGHTON: Eden Hazard scored his 100th career league goal when he struck in the third minute for Chelsea in their Premier League clash with Brighton yesterday and solved Chelsea's recent scoring problems in their first victory this year conjuring two goals in a 4-0 win away to Brighton and Hove Albion yesterday.

Two goals in the opening six minutes at the Amex Stadium-Hazard's opener followed by a Willian strike-put the Blues in control, with Hazard adding the London side's third goal in the 77th minute before Victor Moses wrapped up the win two minutes from time. This success moved Antonio Conte's reigning Premier League champions above Liverpool and into third place, 48 hours before the Reds travel to Swansea. The margin of victory was tough on Brighton who were unable to improve on a run that has now brought the Seagulls just one win in 13 games.

Conte's hand had been forced by the midweek dismissals of Alvaro Morata and Pedro in the FA Cup replay with Norwich City-Chelsea eventually progressed into the fourth round after a penalty shoot-out-which meant both players were suspended for the trip to the south coast.

As a result, Chelsea coach Conte had little option but to start with a front three led by Michy Batshuayi flanked by Hazard and Willian. Brighton's starting line-up was much more of a surprise with manager Chris Hughton unexpectedly opting for a back three while omitting club captain Bruno Saltor and last season's Championship player of the year, Anthony Knockaert.

ALBION DEFENCE GOES AWOL

But if Hughton's intention were to bolster Brighton's defence, his plans backfired disastrously in the opening six minutes when Chelsea, who have struggled in front of

goal in recent weeks, twice carved open a reconfigured backline. Conte's side took full advantage of Brighton's willingness to sit back and created a passing move that released Moses. When the wing-back pulled the ball back from the byline, Hazard benefited from a deflection off Dale Stephens and Lewis Dunk's slip before placing his shot beyond goalkeeper Mat Ryan.

There was even worse to come for Brighton fewer than three minutes later when Dunk's misplaced pass handed Chelsea possession near the halfway line. Willian collected the loose ball, found Hazard, and continued his run towards the edge of the box where he collected a return after neat flicks from Hazard and Batshuayi before firing past Ryan.

The Seagulls were shell-shocked and the game appeared to be effectively over but, to their credit, Brighton recovered and responded positively as they began to build-up momentum. Nevertheless, their efforts to work their way back into the match were undone both by poor finishing and referee Jon Moss's decision to reject two strong penalty appeals.

Brighton's first claim came in the 16th minute when Chelsea keeper Willy Caballero-Thibaut Courtois was ruled out with an ankle problem — weakly palmed a cross away and appeared to trip Ezequiel Schelotto as he attempted to recover from his mistake.

Then 20 minutes later, Albion wing-back Schelotto again burst into the area before going down under a challenge from Tiemoue Bakayoko. With Tomer Hemed and Markus Suttner both wasting good headed chances, Brighton's hopes dimmed, particularly as Hazard looked threatening every time he pressed forward. The pattern was maintained after the break with Albion's Davey Propper heading against the bar four minutes into the second half before Ryan kept Brighton



BRIGHTON: Chelsea's Belgian midfielder Eden Hazard (L) rides a tackle by Brighton's English midfielder Dale Stephens during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Chelsea at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England yesterday. —AFP

in the match by pushing Willian's free-kick onto the post and away to safety.

Hazard finally killed off the game in the 77th minute after running from deep before slotting home the third

with a delightful shot back across the retreating cover. Moses rounded off a convincing victory when he got on the end of substitute Charly Musonda's excellent long ball to make it 4-0. —AFP

No Sanchez? No problem as Arsenal rout Palace

LONDON: Arsenal proved they can thrive without Alexis Sanchez as the rampant Gunners scored four times in the first 22 minutes of their 4-1 victory over hapless Crystal Palace yesterday. With Sanchez left out of the squad as his blockbuster move to Manchester United inches closer, Arsene Wenger's side gave an emphatic response to suggestions the Chile forward's imminent departure would wreck their already rocky season.

The Gunners ended a five-match winless run in all competitions and tasted victory for the first time in 2018 thanks to their incredible goal blitz at the Emirates Stadium.

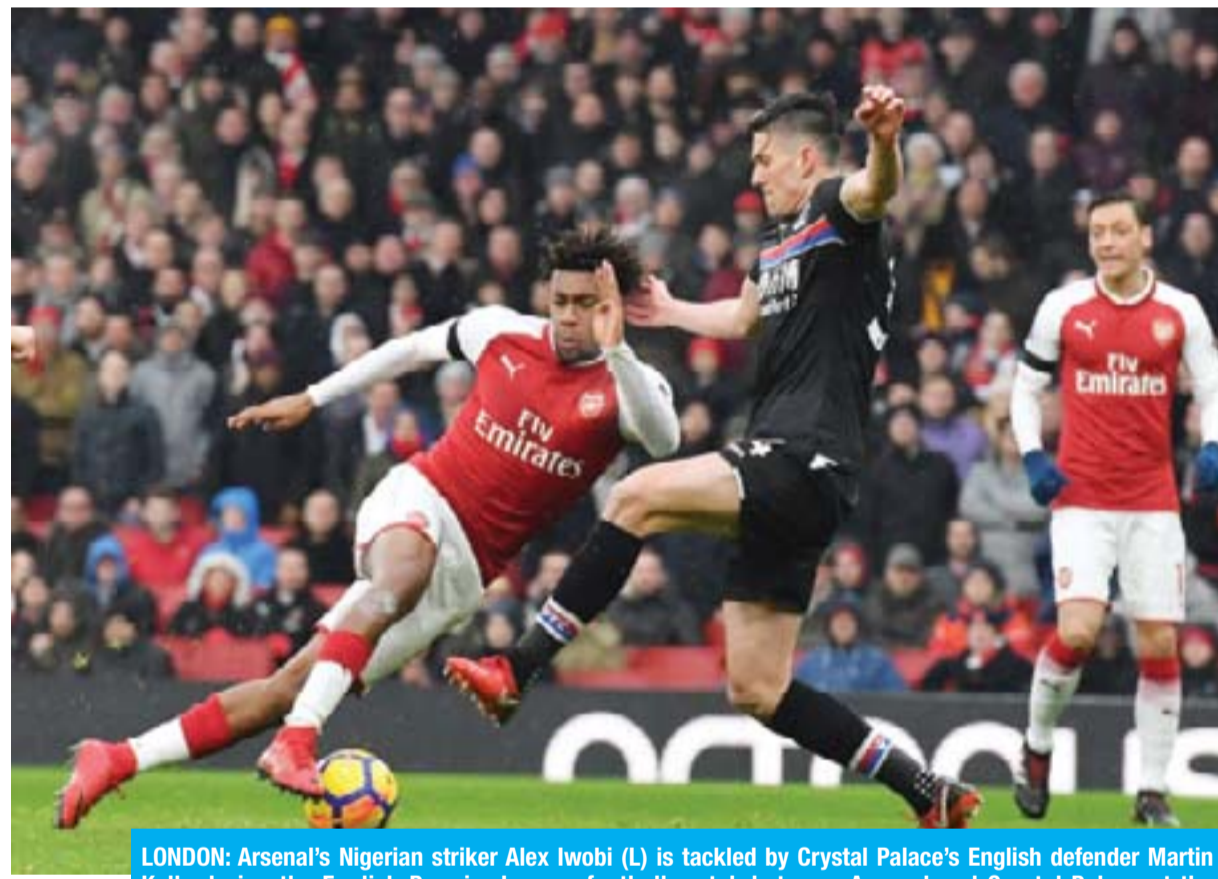
Their first win since Sanchez helped them beat Palace on December 28 was never in doubt after Alex Iwobi, stepping in for Sanchez, opened the scoring. Nacho Monreal and Laurent Koscielny struck to put Arsenal three up in 13 minutes before Alexandre Lacazette netted to end his goal drought.

As Sanchez prepares to seal a £30 million switch that will reportedly see United midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan move to Arsenal as part of the deal, and possibly also prompt Wenger to sign Borussia Dortmund striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, this was a well-timed reminder that the Gunners still have some talent in reserve.

CONFIDENCE RESTORED

It was also vital to Arsenal's chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League as they move within five points of fourth-placed Liverpool. After so much angst this season, it was a rare uplifting day for Wenger, who had made four changes to the side that lost at Bournemouth last Sunday, with Mesut Ozil back after a knee problem that has sidelined him since January 3.

With t-shirts bearing Sanchez's face being sold at half-time outside the Emirates, it appeared Arsenal fans were ready to move on from their unsettled star. And Sanchez's soon to be former team-mates didn't seem fazed by his impending exit either as they raced into a sixth-minute lead.



LONDON: Arsenal's Nigerian striker Alex Iwobi (L) is tackled by Crystal Palace's English defender Martin Kelly during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. —AFP

Iwobi won a corner with a fierce shot that Wayne Hennessey pushed away. From the resulting set-piece, Monreal powered past Palace's sloppy marking to head home from close-range.

After spluttering badly in recent weeks Arsenal were sweeping forward with real purpose and doubled their lead in the 10th minute. This time it was young winger Iwobi who provided the finishing touch with a clinical close-range finish from Monreal's cross.

Palace were in complete disarray and Wenger's men punished more woeful defending to make it three in the 13th minute. Monreal alertly hooked the ball into the six-yard box after Palace failed to deal with a cross and Koscielny was on hand to prod home for the French defender's first goal of the season.

It was the first time a Premier League team had scored three goals in the first 13 minutes since Arsenal against Newcastle in 2011. With confidence fully restored after so many setbacks of late, Arsenal took their frustrations out on Palace and even out-of-form Lacazette got in on the act in the 22nd minute.

Jack Wilshere teed up Ozil and his sublime back-heel sent France striker Lacazette clear to slot home his first goal in his last 10 appearances. Monreal limped off with a knock before the interval, but Arsenal were in such command that Wenger could afford to send on 18-year-old forward Reiss Nelson for his Premier League debut in the second half. Luka Milivojevic swivelled to drive in Palace's consolation in the 78th minute, but the damage was long since done. —AFP

Everton's McCarthy suffers broken leg in West Brom draw

LONDON: Everton substitute Oumar Niasse scored with his first touch to salvage a 1-1 draw against West Bromwich Albion but yesterday's game was overshadowed when the their Ireland midfielder James McCarthy suffered a suspected broken leg in the second half.

West Brom went ahead when Jay Rodriguez slotted the ball past goalkeeper Jordan Pickford in the seventh minute after Polish midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak struck a sublime pass in behind the defence with the outside of his right foot.

Things went from bad to worse for Everton, who fielded new signing Theo Walcott from Arsenal, when 27-year-old McCarthy sustained a serious leg injury after the interval as he tried to prevent West Brom's Salomon Rondon from shooting. McCarthy, whose season has been blighted by injury, was replaced by Wayne Rooney and taken to hospital before Senegalese substitute Niasse came on to volley the equaliser in the 70th for mid-table Everton, leaving West Brom second bottom. —Reuters



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Southampton v Tottenham Hotspur	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 2
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Deportivo Alaves v Leganes	14:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna	18:15	beIN SPORTS HD 1
Real Sociedad v Celta de Vigo	20:30	beIN SPORTS HD 1
Real Betis v Barcelona	22:45	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Italian Calcio League		
Atalanta v Napoli	14:30	beIN SPORTS HD 4
Bologna v Benevento	17:00	beIN SPORTS HD 7
Lazio v Chievo Verona	17:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4
Udinese Calcio v spal	17:00	beIN SPORTS
Hellas Verona v Crotona	17:00	beIN SPORTS
Sampdoria v Fiorentina	17:00	beIN SPORTS HD 9
Sassuolo Calcio v Torino	17:00	beIN SPORTS
Cagliari Calcio v Milan	20:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4
Internazionale Milano v Roma	22:45	beIN SPORTS HD 4
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
Bayern Munich v Werder Bremen	17:30	beIN SPORTS HD 5
Schalke v Hannover	20:00	beIN SPORTS HD 5
FRENCH LEAGUE		
Nice v Saint Etienne	17:00	beIN SPORTS HD 1
Monaco v Metz	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6
Olympique Lyonnais v Paris Saint-Germain	23:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6

Vardy penalty, Mahrez strike help Leicester beat Watford

LEICESTER CITY: A well-taken first-half penalty from striker Jamie Vardy and an injury-time goal from midfielder Riyad Mahrez gave Leicester City a 2-0 win over Watford in an entertaining Premier League game yesterday.

Vardy, who was brought down in the Watford box as he looked to skip past Malian defender Molla Wague, picked himself up to neatly place his shot past goalkeeper Orestis Karnezis and give his side the lead in the 39th minute. Mahrez then slotted past Karnezis, who replaced the injured Heurlho Gomes, in the first minute of added time as Watford pushed bodies forward in search of an elusive equaliser. Watford's best chance fell to substitute Andre Gray in the 74th minute but the striker's fierce shot from inside the box was blocked by Leicester defender Harry Maguire. — Reuters

Leaping Lambert gets Stoke crowd off their feet

HUDDERSFIELD TOWN: Paul Lambert provided as big a spectacle off the pitch as his new Stoke City side produced on it, leaping off the ground and punching the air during the 2-0 Premier League win over Huddersfield Town yesterday. In fact, energy crackled though every part of the best365 stadium where a record crowd welcomed the new regime with huge enthusiasm. Not every Stoke fan supported the Scot's appointment, apparently as third-choice successor to previous manager Mark Hughes. But by the end of an emotional day, his name echoed round the ground as a side who have under-performed all season suddenly rediscovered the lost art of winning.

Afterwards, Lambert looked almost embarrassed when asked about his over-exuberant celebration of each Stoke goal. "You wonder why you come back into it sometimes but that's the

way I am," said Lambert, who had been out of football since leaving Wolverhampton Wanderers eight months ago.

"I was enjoying my life last weekend and then you come back into this. But I wouldn't change it for the world. The players were the main factor. Them and the supporters. I guess it is why I came back in."

The effusive Lambert has sometimes been accused of talking a better game than he has delivered as manager, but Stoke looked invigorated by his presence. With a fit-again Ryan Shawcross restored to defence and Charlie Adam running midfield, Stoke had the energy, aggression and invention to provide the sort of football Hughes had been demanding in the weeks before his dismissal.

"I thought we were outstanding from the off," said Lambert. "The tempo, the atmosphere in the stadium... "I thought the link-up play and cut back was excellent for the first goal and it was great inter-play with a brilliant finish for the second. "There's a lot of quality. We shouldn't be in the position we're in. Mark Hughes did a fantastic job here for four years, Tony (Pulis) before him." However, this result confined those names to history: Stoke supporters left the ground with real hope that their season has turned. — Reuters

13 FedExpress steams on as Sharapova grinds to halt



14 North to send 22 athletes to Olympics in South Korea



15 Hazard nets double as Chelsea ease to victory at Brighton



Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero heads the opening goal of the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Newcastle United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on January 20, 2018.

Aguero treble reboots City's title charge

Manchester City are again 12 points clear

MANCHESTER: It was back to thrilling business as usual for Manchester City yesterday as Sergio Aguero's hat-trick helped the Premier League leaders to a 3-1 victory over abject Newcastle United at the Etihad Stadium.

Pep Guardiola demanded a response from his table-toppers following the 4-3 loss to Liverpool last Sunday that ended their unbeaten start to the league season. The City manager got just that as the hosts dominated, despite Newcastle making it interesting for a while in the second half thanks to Jacob Murphy's fine finish.

City are again 12 points clear of second-placed Manchester United thanks to a ruthless performance capped by the brilliant Aguero, their all-time leading scorer, whose 11th hat-trick for the club took his tally for the season to 22 goals.

Newcastle's supporters must look at City and wonder how close they are to getting their own rich new owners after a week in which a potential takeover of the club by British businesswoman Amanda Staveley was branded "frustrating and a complete waste of time" by owner Mike Ashley.

With Newcastle suffering from a lack of investment and hovering at the wrong end of the table, this contest was never going to be a comfortable one for Rafa Benitez's vis-

itors, especially as the gifted David Silva returned for City after overcoming a stomach complaint. Yet Newcastle still looked sharper at the start as Christian Atsu snatched at a great chance just 90 seconds in, failing to connect properly when well positioned on the penalty spot. City then began to dictate the match and John Stones went close for the hosts, poking just wide after an intelligent ball from Silva inside the area. City remained on top, with Silva, Oleksandr Zinchenko and Kevin De Bruyne posing problems for Newcastle.

After 16 minutes, Leroy Sane had a glorious chance to open the scoring as he squirmed through the area before Javier Manquillo's last-ditch tackle. A minute later, City were denied what seemed a good goal as Raheem Sterling swept home following a ball from Silva at the back post. But Sterling was adjudged to be offside, although replays suggested he was not.

The speed with which City, and Silva, had broken was ominous for Newcastle. To their credit, Newcastle kept the game scoreless until they succumbed 11 minutes before the break. As City continued to pour forward, De Bruyne delivered a fine cross from the left and Aguero got the faintest of touches to a header that slid past Karl Darlow into the far corner. — AFP

Kuwait football chief welcomes FIFA re-entry

KUWAIT CITY: The newly-elected head of the Kuwait Football Association has welcomed the appointment of a FIFA "normalisation" committee to oversee the county's re-entry into the global body—after a 2015 suspension.

"Kuwaitis were very happy when the ban was lifted," said KFA chief Ahmad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah yesterday. "The general assembly (of local clubs) chose us ... but as I've previously mentioned, we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the ban not to be imposed again." Sabah said - appearing to raise the possibility of his own resignation if required by the oversight committee.

The appointment of the normalisation committee, announced Friday, follows the lifting of Kuwait's suspension for political meddling in the sport on December 5. The committee mandate, according to a FIFA statement, is "to run the KFA's daily affairs; to review the KFA statutes and ensure their compliance... [and] to organise and conduct elections of a new KFA board of directors on the basis of the new, revised KFA statutes, which should take place no later than 20 May 2018".

World sports bodies led by FIFA and the International Olympic Committee suspended Kuwait in October 2015 for the second time since 2010 over alleged government meddling in sport. The suspensions meant Kuwait missed out on the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup and the 2019 Asian Cup, and before that the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. In early December, the Kuwaiti parliament passed a new law in line with FIFA's requirements. Analysts say the crisis in Kuwaiti sports was the result of a power struggle within the ruling elite. — AFP

Martial strikes as United await Sanchez arrival

BURNLEY: Anthony Martial proved the match-winner for Manchester United as Jose Mourinho took time off from his high-profile pursuit of Alexis Sanchez to mastermind a 1-0 victory at Burnley in the Premier League yesterday.

The Frenchman scored in his third consecutive Premier League game for United—the first time he has accomplished that feat—on a day when the pending arrival of Sanchez from Arsenal was still very much the centre of conversation.

The Chilean forward is expected to complete that move, with Henrikh Mkhitaryan moving in the opposite direction, this week and he will join a United team still entertaining hopes of catching Manchester City at the top of the league table after this victory.

United took the lead after 54 minutes with a goal that owed everything to Romelu Lukaku's strength and persistence as he won an apparently lost cause in midfield. Lukaku shrugged aside Phil Bardsley in a challenge and won the chase to the loose ball before delivering a magnificent 30-yard pass for Martial, unmarked in the area, who finished clinically with an unstoppable, 15-yard right-foot strike.

It was the start of a far more entertaining second half than the first had been and the hosts might actually have equalised within two minutes, following a foul on the edge of the United area by Juan Mata on Ashley Barnes.

Johann Berg Gudmundsson delivered a skilful free-kick which clipped the United crossbar on its way over. Gudmundsson was also in the thick of the action moments later when he met Charlie Taylor's cross with a header which struck defender Chris Smalling and led to unsuccessful appeals for a penalty.

There were half chances for Paul Pogba and Lukaku and the unusual sight of Mourinho literally picking up Jesse Lingard and encouraging him to play on after being fouled by Steven Defour in front of the United bench.

Mourinho's sense of urgency was justified with a dangerous set-piece header from Ben Mee being tipped over by David De Gea. Defour also set up an opening for Barnes which the forward headed wide while United's wastefulness continued when Lingard dithered and saw an effort blocked by Mee after a swift counter and Martial was denied in the closing minutes by home goalkeeper Nick Pope.

In a first half lacking any real clear-cut chances, the first, and best, had fallen to Burnley with just five minutes gone but James Tarkowski headed down and wide from a free-kick.

It took until the 41st minute for United to seriously threaten when Ashley Young, recalled in place of Luke Shaw, beat Bardsley and advanced into the home area before curling a shot just beyond the far post. Young's chip into the area found Pogba who lobbed the ball, first-time, over the goal and Pogba sent Martial away for a shot which was well blocked from a promising position.

On the stroke of half-time, Pogba again set up an opening for Martial with the winger this time placing a shot wide of Pope's left-hand post from just inside the area. — AFP



BURNLEY: Manchester United's French striker Anthony Martial has an unsuccessful shot during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Manchester United at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England yesterday. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2018

19 Kuwait's Jazeera Airways embarks on new journey to Ahmedabad**21** Al-Babtain and Total celebrate their leading position in Kuwait**22** Facebook to ask 2 billion users to rank 'trust' in news sources

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan balloon vendor looks on as he waits for customers alongside a street in Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday. — AFP

US to overtake Saudi as oil producer

IEA sees 2018 record-setting year for US

NEW YORK: The United States is set to overtake Saudi Arabia as the world's number two oil producer after Russia this year, as shale companies, attracted by rising prices, ramp up drilling, the International Energy Agency said on Friday.

"This year promises to be a record-setting one for the US," the IEA wrote in its monthly market report. Crude production of 9.9 million barrels per day (bpd) in the US was now at the highest level in nearly 50 years, "putting it neck-and-neck with Saudi Arabia, the world's second largest crude producer after Russia," the IEA said.

"Relentless growth should see the US hit historic highs above 10 million bpd, overtaking Saudi Arabia and rivalling Russia during the course of 2018 — provided OPEC/non-OPEC restraints remain in place," it said. A global supply glut pushed oil prices as low as \$30 per barrel at the start of 2016.

But producing nations—both inside and outside the OPEC oil cartel—struck a deal at the end of 2016 to cut back production and drive prices higher. Geopolitical tensions and a reduction in oil stocks have also con-

tributed to the recovery. Crude recently rose above \$70 per barrel for the first time since 2014 after OPEC and non-OPEC countries agreed to extend their combined cutbacks until the end of this year. Rising prices have, in turn, made it more attractive for shale companies to increase drilling. And since the United States is not a party to the deal, its shale production can continue uninhibited.

"US growth in 2017 beat all expectations ... as the shale industry bounced back, profiting from cost cuts, (and) stepped up drilling activity," the IEA said. "Explosive growth in the US and substantial gains in Canada and Brazil will far outweigh potentially steep declines in Venezuela and Mexico," it said.

"The big 2018 supply story is unfolding fast in the Americas," the IEA said.

Shale production is controversial, because in order to extract oil and gas, a high-pressure mixture of water, sand and chemicals is blasted deep underground to release hydrocarbons trapped between layers of rock. And environmentalists argue that the process—known as fracking, or hydraulic fracturing technology—may contaminate ground water and even cause small earthquakes.

Market nearly balanced

Regarding OPEC output, the IEA said that there was "no clear sign yet of OPEC turning up the taps to cool down oil's rally". In its own monthly market report

published on Thursday, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries had said that the global oil market was moving closer to reaching a healthy balance between supply and demand.

The IEA, which advises advanced market economies on energy policy, said that there was 95-percent compliance by OPEC countries with the agreed cuts.

In the first annual decline since 2013, total oil production from the group's 14 members fell from 39.6 million bpd to 39.2 million bpd, it said. And while "supply discipline from the non-OPEC camp has been less rigorous, 82 percent for 2017," it was "nonetheless strong," the agency said.

At the same time, the increase in US production offset roughly 60 percent of the realized cuts, the IEA said. The impact of the reduction was further blunted by a rebound in output from Libya and Nigeria, excluded from the cuts. The IEA calculated that the global oil supply eased by 405,000 bpd to 97.7 million bpd in December, but this was due mostly to unplanned outages in the North Sea and lower Venezuelan output, the IEA said. — AFP



Russia remains No 1 crude oil producer for now

Zain showcases its latest services and solutions for SMEs

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the launch of its new campaign "Your Path to Success" for small and medium enterprises, through which it offers various packages, features and solutions to facilitate and enrich the business market.

Zain is fully aware of the important role of small and medium enterprises in achieving economic and social development, which is a major part of the country's production channels. Zain revealed in a press statement that the new services provide many advantages that suit the needs of small and medium enterprises owners. Including postpaid voice and Internet packages with devices, international and roaming features, Hosted Collaboration Solution powered by Cisco, Wireless Fixed Broadband powered by Mada, and Google Street View.

Zain mentioned that small and medium enterprise owners can choose from a wide

range of postpaid voice packages that offer free calling within the company, easy control of the company's expenses with the hybrid feature, international and roaming services, as well as access to the latest smart devices, including Samsung DeX, which offers the advantages of the desktop computer through selected Samsung devices with freedom of movement. As well as offering postpaid data packages with Internet devices and smart tablets.

Zain added that small and medium sized enterprises owners can now connect through the unified voice communications (Hosted Collaboration Solution) which enables voice and video communications via cloud based services, enhanced communications and interactions between employees with flexibility and ease through Cisco's industry-leading devices.

The company also stated that it offers the Wireless Fixed Broadband Service, a Point to Multipoint (P2MP) internet connectivity solution for Business & Enterprise customers, which is one of the most popular approaches of wireless communications for companies with multiple destinations and locations.

As well as providing a virtual tour of business locations through Google Street View, with 360-degree panoramic images stitched together, allowing customers to easily take a virtual tour, doubling interest



and visits to the company.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in supporting the small and medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), especially that Zain is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. The new campaign mainly aims at encouraging Small and Medium Enterprises to enhance their businesses by bringing them together with the biggest service provider in Kuwait under one roof.

S&P raises rating on Greek debt on improved outlook

WASHINGTON: S&P Global Ratings on Friday raised the rating on Greek government debt by a notch citing the improved outlook for the crisis-stricken country's finances and economic growth.

The rating on Athens' long-term debt was improved to "B" from "B-" with a positive outlook, which means the ratings agency could raise the grade further in the next year.

"The upgrade reflects Greece's steadily improving general government finances and its gradually recovering economic prospects," S&P said in a statement.

The agency notes the government had budget surpluses in 2016 and 2017 and "the economy exited a multi-year recession last year." S&P projects Greece will see its economy grow two percent this year.

However, the agency cautioned that it could revise the outlook "if there are large policy shifts that reverse the reform process, or if growth outcomes are significantly weaker than we expect."

Eurozone finance ministers on Monday are expected to ratify an accord to release the latest installment of its third rescue program for Greece, which runs to August 2018.

By the end of September 2017, Greece had received over 221 billion euros from European institutions and a further 11.5 billion from the IMF. In July, Greece made a symbolic return to debt markets after a three-year hiatus, selling three billion euros' worth of five-year bonds at 4.625 percent, lower than its previous outing in 2014. S&P said it could upgrade the Greek debt rating if the country exits the rescue program with enough funds to service its debts. — AFP

Business

Kuwait's Jazeera Airways embarks on new journey to Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad second of three new routes to India

AHMEDABAD: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, recently inaugurated flights into Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad and held a press conference in Ahmedabad on January 18, in front of travel agents and media partners to announce its direct flights.

Ahmedabad is the second of three new routes currently planned in to India, following the launch of flights to Hyderabad in November 2017. The first direct flight to Kochi also commenced yesterday at 12:45pm from Kuwait and arrived at 20:10 pm.

Flight J9 604 departed January 17th at 00:05am from Kuwait International Airport and landed in Ahmedabad at 06:00 am in the morning. The return flight J9 605 departed Ahmedabad at 06:45 am and arrived in Kuwait at 08:45am local time. Flights will operate initially three days a week on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. The CEO of Jazeera Airways, Rohit

Ramachandran, commented "We are delighted to continue our expansion into India with flights into Ahmedabad, an important economic and industrial hub, bringing more choice to Indian travelers, connecting them to Kuwait and across the Middle East - to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. This new service will address the increased travel demands for travel between India and Kuwait providing direct connections for those visiting friends and relatives as well as business travelers".

Jazeera Airways has built a reputation in Kuwait and the Gulf as a low-cost champion, offering great value fares combined with unique service offerings such as the innovative Park & Fly facility at Kuwait International airport. The airline will move into its own new terminal early this year providing passengers with an improved experience when travelling in and out of Kuwait, or transiting through.

Jazeera was also recognized for On-Time-Performance



AHMEDABAD: Andrew Ward (left) and Manoj Gangal address a press conference.

by the world's leading air travel intelligence company, OAG and for best value flights and service in the region winning the 'Low Cost Airline of the Year' Award at the 2017 Aviation Business Awards.

Manoj K Gangal, Ahmedabad Airport Director, Airport Authority of India said, "We predict this is vital for both the brand and our state, as Jazeera Airways extends its services to accommodate the 8th busiest airport in India. We welcome Jazeera Airways to our thriving hub and look forward to connecting our travelers to the wider



Middle Eastern region - Kuwait, Bahrain, Jeddah, Riyadh, Dubai and more.

Flying to over 20 destinations across the Middle East, Europe and India, Jazeera Airways operates a reliable fleet of 8 Airbus A320 aircrafts with new cabin interiors. Passengers can also enjoy a baggage allowance of 30kg for Economy class and 50kg for Business class. Travelers can start booking flights now via Jazeera's website - Jazeeraairways.com, through the Jazeera app, or from all travel agents.



Direct flight to Kochi also commences

France to host 140 foreign CEOs for pre-Davos summit

PARIS: Nearly 140 chief executives from companies around the world will gather at the Versailles Palace outside Paris tomorrow, as the French government steps up its efforts to attract more foreign investors.

President Emmanuel Macron orchestrated what is being billed as an "attractiveness summit" as executives converge for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, next week.

A handful of economic accords are to be announced, including a major investment in "traditional industry" and two in "high-tech and artificial intelligence", an official in the president's office said.

"We are going to take advantage of the fact that on their way to Davos, corporate leaders are coming to Europe and can make a stop in Paris," the official said, asking not to be named.

The 40-year-old French leader has introduced a series of business-friendly reforms since taking power in May, including loosening labour laws and cutting taxes, and is aiming to slash unemployment from 9.7 percent to 7.0 percent by 2022.

The session will begin with a lunch with Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, fol-

lowed by sessions with government ministers and prominent figures including the mathematician Cedric Villani, who became an MP last year as part of Macron's Republic On The Move (LREM) party.

Macron will cap the event with a closed-door speech and dinner. "The president had a quiet straightforward goal, that an 'attractiveness summit' doesn't make any sense unless it comes with concrete projects," the source said. About ten projects are currently being negotiated, the source added. "The important thing for us, beyond explanations, is to show projects that will make them want to invest in France." Roughly half of the participants will come from European companies, including Bosch, SAP, Novartis and Rolls-Royce.

About 25 percent will come from American groups, and the remainder from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The bosses of JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, HSBC and Bank of America are expected to attend, while China's Alibaba will be represented by its deputy CEO.

Some 3,000 participants are expected to head to Swiss Alps for the 48th Davos conference that opens Tuesday. — AFP

Syed Shah Nawaz wins KD 4,000 in Burgan Bank's value account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced Syed Shah Nawaz as the winner of the Value Account KD 4000 draw. The winner expressed his excitement of winning the cash prize of KD 4,000.

Dedicated to offer the best in-class services, Burgan Bank's Value Account presents customers with exceptional features which were specifically designed to suit the needs of expatriates living in Kuwait. Account holders will be able to enjoy matchless benefits that include receiving a free credit card for one year, application for a loan, in addition to a chance to enter the quarterly draw to win KD 4000 as well as other discounts from selected merchant stores.

Burgan Bank will continue presenting exclusive services and draws with an aim of exceeding customers' expectations while



offering them chances to win valuable cash prizes all year round.

Opening a Value account is simple, interested Individuals with salaries starting from KD 150 and above are eligible to open a

Value Account. To do so, customers are required to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or simply call the bank's Call Center 1804080, or log on the bank's website www.burgan.com for more information.

Gambians enjoy freedom post-Jammeh, but criticize economy

BANJUL, Gambia: A year ago, Gambians wept for joy as Yahya Jammeh went into exile, bringing the curtain down on a brutal 22-year rule. Today, many say freedom of speech in this small west African state is a right they cherish under President Adama Barrow's administration. "There is a democracy, everybody feels free. Disappearances without a trace all that's over now," said teacher Kalipha Dampah, referring to the dreaded work of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the "Junglers," as Jammeh's death squad was called.

But The Gambia's faltering economy has barely improved and tensions over mass unemployment are rising. Today, many are now asking when the better days they were promised will come. "Food prices are still the same, salaries have not increased, the health sector is a shambles, the education sector is a farce," Ismaila Ceesay, a professor of political science at the University of The Gambia, stated bluntly in an AFP interview. In terms of the economy, he argued, Barrow's government is simply "following and inheriting the ideas of Yahya Jammeh," albeit minus the state of terror. The new government lacks a coherent vision for transforming a country heavily dependent on seasonal tourism and agriculture, he charged.

'No water, no light'

In his New Year's address, Barrow said progress had been made, but also pointed to the entrenched problems he inherited. "Our coffers not only (have been) emptied, but we are (also) loaded with huge debt," he said.

"The country has debts of more than a billion US dollars (820 million euros), which is a staggering 120 percent of debt to GDP," he said. "This is equivalent to each household owing about \$4,500." Despite this burden, The Gambia now has more than four months rather than under one month of import cover, the cost of government borrowing has fallen sharply, inflation has started to decline and growth this year is expected to reach 3.8 percent, compared to 2.2 percent in 2016, he said. In the run-down streets, though, frustrations run deep. "In the cold season we can still have no water or electricity," Mati Gomez, a market seller, told AFP.

Another area of concern lies in the ranks of military and former military who may still have ties with Jammeh-era figures. A dozen mutinous soldiers are currently on trial over an attempted coup

in July after months being held without charge, and a regional troop deployment still has a mandate to protect the population while domestic security forces are reformed. Colonel Magatte Ndiaye, the commander of the contingent authorized by the West African political body ECOWAS, said army deserters were now increasingly joining criminal gangs along the border with Senegal. "These people are involved in illegal activities. We have reports that they are deeply involved in timber smuggling and the traffic of marijuana and this is a threat to The Gambia," he told AFP.

Laws and justice

As a sign of the changed times, there is a push for the new freedoms to be enshrined in law, and for justice to redress the crimes of the past. Journalists who once wrote anonymously or self-censored for fear of joining dozens of colleagues who did jail time under Jammeh are now leading the push to reform Draconian libel and sedition laws. Saikou Jammeh, secretary general of The Gambia Press Union, told AFP the organization was "working to reform the media laws and bring them in line with international standards," specifically targeting legislation used to "stifle dissent". Several victims of mistreatment during the Jammeh era and the families of dozens of people forcibly disappeared, thrown into wells or buried in shallow graves, want Jammeh himself to face justice.

Reed Brody, a human rights lawyer who successfully helped build the case against Chadian dictator Hissene Habre, said the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission and testimony from victims' groups was slowly progressing. "We're talking to victims but also to people who used to work for Jammeh and we know a lot more today about what went on, and about Jammeh's role, than we did a year ago," he said. Jammeh, who fled to Equatorial Guinea, is suspected of having pocketed \$50 million, in addition to committing human rights abuses.

Interviewed this week by the French radio station RFI and the TV station France 24, Equatorial Guinea's president, Teodoro Obiang, said that if a request for Jammeh's extradition were made, he would examine it. But he seemed to sound a negative tone about the likely outcome. "Prosecuting someone who has taken the decision to leave power may perhaps be a poor political concept," said Obiang, an authoritarian who has ruled the oil-rich nation since 1979. — AFP

Fitch lifts Spanish credit rating on rosier economy

WASHINGTON: Fitch ratings agency on Friday upgraded Spain's sovereign debt rating, pointing to the country's growing economy and improving fiscal health. The economic impact of the Catalonia region's effort to declare independence last month have been "limited" so far but

Trump and 'Davos Man': Best of enemies

PARIS: A compelling clash of cultures will unfold in the vertiginous Swiss Alps this week as Donald Trump, just over 12 months into his high-wire presidency, confronts the cheerleaders of globalization in Davos.

Having whipped up working-class resentment of the global elite to devastating effect en route to the White House, the US president's "America First" vision will run headlong into the haughty ambition of the World Economic Forum (WEF) to map out "a shared future in a fractured world".

The 2017 gathering ended on the same day as Trump was inaugurated, and many of the discussions during the week dwelt anxiously on what his presidency would portend. China's President Xi Jinping, the star turn in Davos last year, exploited such misgivings to stake out an alternative vision for the international economy with China playing a lead role in both trade and fighting climate change.

A year on, Trump will be closing the conference with a speech next Friday.

He faced a budget mess at home, where the US government officially shut down on Saturday after lawmakers failed to agree a stop-gap spending deal. The president is relishing his role as apostate-in-chief bent on demolishing the pieties held dear by the WEF, which is drawing some 70 other leaders along with thousands of delegates from the worlds of industry, finance and show business, plus protesters opposed to the US president.

The property mogul's final election campaign

the political standoff will weigh on growth, the agency said.

Fitch raised Spain's long-term debt rating one notch to "A-" with a stable outlook.

Spain was downgraded in 2012 by all major ratings agencies amid fears Madrid could require a bailout due to the weakness of its banks. Fitch said Friday that Spain was enjoying the fruits of an economic recovery, with the economy likely having expanded by an average of 3.3 percent between 2015 and 2017. "Events around the Catalonia government's declaration of independence have underscored political risk but the economic impact has so far been limited," the agency said.

Catalonia accounts for 20 percent of Spanish

advertisement of November 2016 made the distinction brutally clear, casting himself as the defender of hard-working Americans against "global special interests", over images of Davos perennials such as financier George Soros and Goldman Sachs chief Lloyd Blankfein. Both are Jewish, and the ad was assailed as anti-semitic by critics.

Best behavior?

So why consort in the Swiss Alps with people who are hate figures to his political base? In a recent interview with The Wall Street Journal, Trump said part of his motivation in becoming the first US president to attend Davos since Bill Clinton in 2000 was to be an unabashed "cheerleader for the country". Trump also pointed to quickening US economic growth and a roaring stock market as reasons to cheer when he and a large part of his cabinet join leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Michel Temer in Switzerland.

Tomorrow, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will present in Davos an updated overview of the global economy, which is indeed expanding at a broad and healthy clip. But ahead of the meetings, a WEF survey of nearly 1,000 experts and decision-makers underlined growing anxiety about the risks of environmental disaster and armed conflict—not least involving North Korea and the United States, after months of bellicose rhetoric from Trump.

Douglas Rediker, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington who was appointed by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama to the IMF's executive board, said there was no way to reconcile the WEF's globalist outlook and the Trump dogma.

"It will be a jarring visit even if the president is on his best diplomatic behaviour. And that's a big if," Rediker said.

Davos Woman

Trump will be running up against internation-

GDP and growth there is estimated to have slowed by two-tenths to 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2017.

The central government deficit is likely to hit its 3.1 percent target this year, down from 4.5 percent in 2016. The unemployment rate in November was down two percentage points from a year earlier to 16.7 percent. Since 2015, banking sector debt has fallen 25 percentage points to 159.9 percent of GDP.

"The Spanish banking sector's overall credit fundamentals have steadily improved over the last two years," Fitch said, noting that the share of non-performing loans and foreclosed assets were still elevated but had fallen from 11 percent to 10 percent in the year ending in June. — AFP

alist foils in Davos this week such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Macron, who has subverted one of the US president's signature lines with his own motto of "Make our planet great again".

The White House said he plans to meet Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May, days after he cancelled a planned trip to London that had cast further doubt on the strength of the vaunted trans-Atlantic "special relationship".

The organizers, mindful of the globe-trotting but all-male caricature of "Davos Man", are also keen to extol their efforts to promote representation by women, as sexual harassment and the gender pay gap move up the political agenda worldwide.

"Davos Women" will account for 21 percent of the total number of delegates this year, the highest ever proportion, if still relatively meager. They include IMF chief Christine Lagarde, IBM head Ginni Rometty and screen star Cate Blanchett. Cue another clash of visions given the presence of Trump, whose election campaign in 2016 was nearly upended late on by a leaked recording in which he boasted of groping women. And there will be no shortage of movers and shakers from Africa in attendance, should the president wish to explain his recent reported dismissal of countries across Africa as "sxxxxxxx".

The politicians will join the chiefs of some 1,900 companies to debate a panoply of issues such as the future of work in an age of automation and artificial intelligence, tackling "the next pandemic", and leveraging the potential of virtual currencies. Yet there is no escaping the long shadow cast over the event by Trump, as the convention-shredding president bids to make good on his Davos-baiting promises. WEF founder Klaus Schwab is not giving up hope.

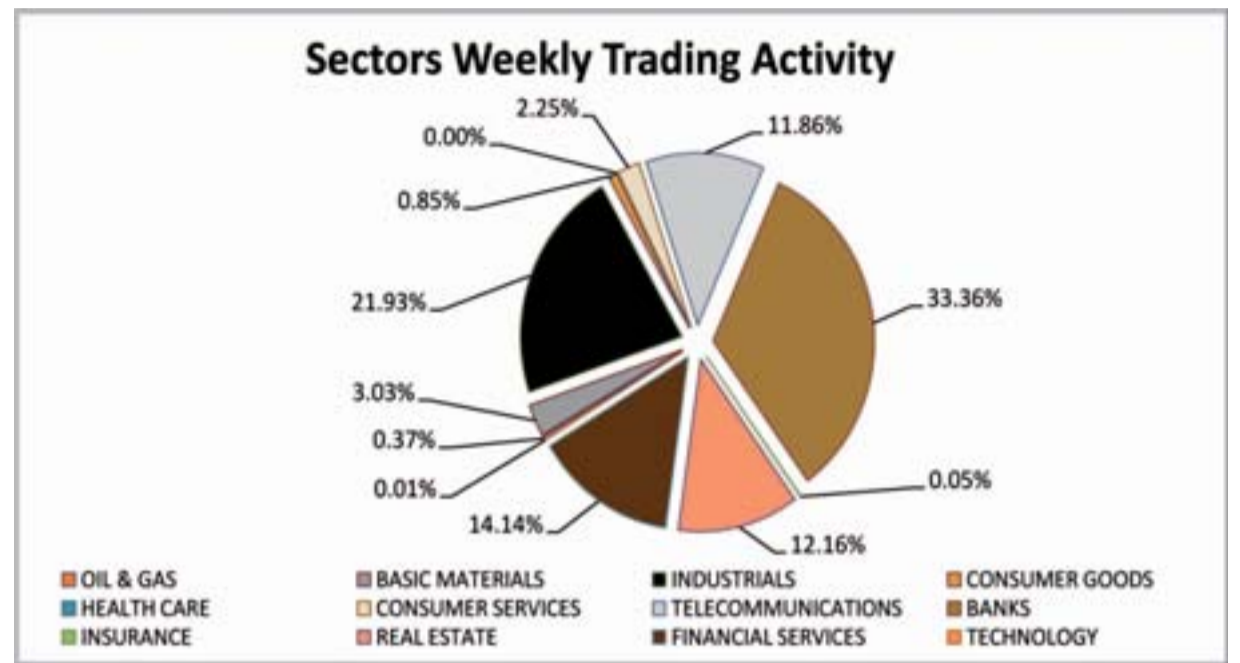
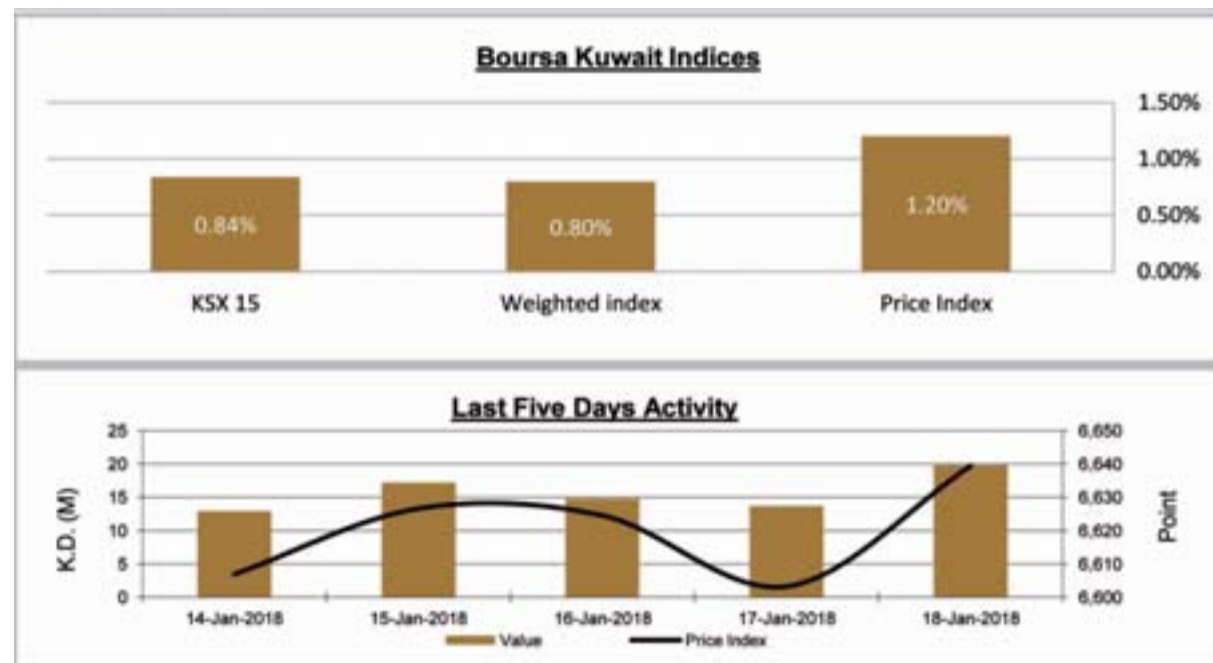
"No country alone, no stakeholder alone, no individual alone, can solve the issues on the global agenda. No issue can be solved in an isolated way," he said. — AFP

Business

Bayan weekly market report

Boursa Kuwait continues to rally on bullish sentiment

Three indices record gains in third week of the year



Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
OIL & GAS	7,207,661	1.05%	289,050	0.37%
BASIC MATERIALS	6,488,901	0.94%	2,376,182	3.03%
INDUSTRIALS	158,796,276	23.06%	17,194,787	21.93%
CONSUMER GOODS	5,779,010	0.84%	663,253	0.85%
HEALTH CARE	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
CONSUMER SERVICES	15,848,755	2.30%	1,762,121	2.25%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	24,120,778	3.50%	9,294,878	11.86%
BANKS	122,345,865	17.77%	26,152,969	33.36%
INSURANCE	345,279	0.05%	40,587	0.05%
REAL ESTATE	185,614,484	26.96%	9,529,773	12.16%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	161,977,793	23.52%	11,085,384	14.14%
TECHNOLOGY	46,010	0.01%	6,419	0.01%

Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	995.38	972.81	2.32%	3.30%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,312.38	1,302.10	0.79%	4.62%
INDUSTRIALS	1,874.35	1,871.12	0.17%	1.90%
CONSUMER GOODS	811.50	817.27	-0.71%	-1.33%
HEALTH CARE	1,510.51	1,510.51	0.00%	0.00%
CONSUMER SERVICES	931.17	903.27	3.09%	3.33%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	574.02	572.11	0.33%	2.80%
BANKS	961.74	955.74	0.63%	5.38%
INSURANCE	1,031.97	1,026.19	0.56%	-6.70%
REAL ESTATE	997.95	977.14	2.13%	6.95%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	651.44	640.06	1.78%	5.26%
TECHNOLOGY	480.48	495.83	-3.10%	0.40%

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait ended last week in the green zone. The Price Index closed at 6,639.38 points, up by 1.20 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index increased by 0.80 percent after closing at 419.11 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 966.69 points up by 0.84 percent. Furthermore, the week's average daily turnover increased by 21.28 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 15.68 million, whereas trading volume average was 137.71 million shares, recording an increase of 31.78 percent.

The Boursa continued its upward direction that it initiated the current year with, as its three indices were able to continue recording gains in the third week of the year in light of the out-performance of the purchasing powers over the selling pressures that were present, amid the traders' watch for the listed companies annual results for the financial year ended on 31 December 2017. The Boursa realized such gains despite the presence of the profit collection operations during some daily sessions of the week, where the red color appeared on the Boursa indices more than once during some sessions, however the market overlook such operations and was able to end the week's trading in the green zone.

In addition, the Boursa realized during the last week market gains above KD 195 million, as its market capitalization reached by the end of the week KD 28.09 billion, up by 0.70 percent compared to its level in the previous week, where it was KD 27.89 billion. Also, the market gains since the beginning of 2018 reached more than KD 1.15 billion, up by 4.26 percent compared to its value at last trading day of the last year, where it reached then KD 26.94 billion. (Note: The market capitalization for the listed companies in the Regular Market is calculated based on the average number of outstanding shares as per the latest available official financial statements).

Boursa Kuwait initiated its first sessions of the last week with relatively good gains for its three indices, especially the Price Index which was the best performer compared to its peers, the Weighted and KSX-15. Such performance came in light of a noticeable increased trading levels in the market, especially the trading value that recorded a growth of around 39 percent compared to the previous session. While on the second session, the Boursa indices continued realizing growth to its three indices, amid a continued increase in the trading value to reach KD 17.22 million, up by around 33 percent compared to the first session of the week, which came in light of the continued purchasing trend during this period, amid concentration on the purchasing opera-

tions on the leading and heavy stocks.

The Boursa witnessed on Tuesday's and Wednesday's session a trend of selling for profit collection operations and included many stocks that were previously traded, especially the ones witnessed different increases in the previous sessions, which was reflected on the three indices performance and pushed it to close in the red zone. On the end of week session, the market was able to return to the green zone once again, as its three indices recorded some gains by the end of the session, especially the Price Index, which benefited from the random purchasing operations and the quick speculations that concentrated on some small-cap stocks.

Sectors' Indices

Nine of Boursa Kuwait's sectors ended last week in the green zone, two recorded declines, whereas the Health Care sector's index closed with no change from the week before. Last week's highest gainer was the Consumer Services sector, achieving 3.09 percent growth rate as its index closed at 931.17 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Oil & Gas sector's index closed at 995.38 points recording 2.32 percent increase. The Real Estate sector came in third as its index achieved 2.13 percent growth, ending the week at 997.95 points. On the other hand, the Technology sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 3.10 percent to end the week's activity at 480.48 points. The Consumer Goods sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 0.71 percent, closing at 811.50 points.

Sectors' Activity

The Real Estate sector dominated a total trade volume of around 185.61 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 26.96 percent of the total market trading volume. The Financial Services sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 23.52 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 161.98 million shares.

On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value: with a turnover of around KD 26.15 million or 33.36 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Industrial sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 17.19 million representing 21.93 percent of the total market trading value. —Prepared by: Studies & Research Department - Bayan Investment Co.



Real estate sector dominates trading volume

S&P 500, Nasdaq end at records despite US shutdown risk

NEW YORK: The S&P 500 and Nasdaq finished at records Friday as Wall Street investors shrugged off worries about a US government shutdown amid partisan bickering in Washington.

The broad-based S&P 500 finished up 0.4 percent to 2,810.30, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index gained 0.6 percent to 7,336.38. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also rose, gaining 0.2 percent to finish the week at 26,071.72, but that was below the close Wednesday, when all three indices ended at records. Congressional Democratic leaders met with President Donald Trump at the White House early Friday afternoon to try to avert a shutdown as a midnight deadline loomed for the Republican-

controlled Senate to approve a new funding bill. Stocks pulled back on Thursday as the finger-pointing between Democrats and Republicans intensified over the impasse, but investors appeared to be less perturbed on Friday.

"The market realizes it's a short-term thing and we're not going to stay shut down forever," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist of TD Ameritrade. "To the market, it's not changing the value of any stocks." Rather, investors are fixated much more on corporate earnings reports, which have been good so far, Kinahan said. However, he notes the bulk of major companies have yet to report.

In earnings news, IBM fell 4.0 percent despite posting a year-over-year quarterly revenue increase for the first time in nearly six years. Analysts expressed disappointment that gains in some of IBM's major growth businesses weren't more robust. American Express, another Dow component, lost 1.8 percent after announcing it would suspend its share buyback program due to a hefty one-time charge connected to US tax reform that reduced the financial company's capital ratios.

Consumer stocks were a strong category, with Procter & Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive both rising about one per-

cent. Home improvement retailers Home Depot and Lowe's gained 1.5 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively. Nike was the biggest gainer in the Dow, surging nearly five percent following an upgrade by Wedbush Securities.

Analysts say a government shutdown could damage the economy, particularly sectors that do extensive business with the government and especially if it is prolonged.

But most market watchers do not expect that to happen. "I think the politicians themselves realize it's probably not in anybody's interest to have this be a long-term shutdown," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist of TD Ameritrade. "The market realizes it's a short-term thing and we're not going to stay shut down forever."

Kinahan said investors are fixated much more on corporate earnings reports, which have been good so far, although the bulk of major companies have yet to report.

Fitch Ratings said a shutdown in itself would not impact the US government's top rating, but could further destabilize budget policymaking and "lead to brinkmanship" over raising the debt level before the US Treasury runs out of extraordinary measures to pay the government's bills in March or April.

Boursa Kuwait Indices				
		Price Index	Weighted index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	6,639.38	419.11	966.69
	Previous week	6,560.63	415.80	958.66
	Change (Point)	78.75	3.31	8.03
	Change (%)	1.20%	0.80%	0.84%
Annual	Last year	6,408.01	401.42	914.87
	Change (Point)	231.37	17.69	51.82
	Change (%)	3.61%	4.41%	5.66%

MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	688,570,812	522,511,846	31.78%
Value (K.D)	78,395,403	64,640,225	21.28%
Deals	24,395	18,447	32.24%

MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)				
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
	28,087,200,024	27,891,120,063	0.70%	4.26%

TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
KGL	123.00	62.90	60.1	95.55%
TAMKEEN	28.50	21.00	7.5	35.71%
REMAL	51.60	38.50	13.1	34.03%
LOGISTICS	59.00	48.60	10.4	21.40%
JIYAD	116.00	96.50	19.5	20.21%

TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
FTI	57.10	64.00	-6.9	-10.78%
SALBOOKH	53.50	59.40	-5.9	-9.93%
OSOUL	50.00	55.00	-5.0	-9.09%
ASC	140.00	152.00	-12.0	-7.89%
ABK	317.00	340.00	-23.0	-6.76%



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor at the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange on Friday in New York. —AFP

Business

Al-Babtain and Total celebrate their leading position in Kuwait

350 top lubricant dealers attend annual dealer meet



KUWAIT: More than 350 top lubricant dealers attended the Al-Babtain Group and Total Marketing Middle East (TMME) event to celebrate the outstanding performance of the Total brand in Kuwait. The event was chaired by Mohamed Shalaby, Group Chief Operating Officer, Al-Babtain Group and Thibaud De-Lisle, Managing Director Total MME along with senior executives from both partners.

In this grand event held at The Regency Hotel, Al-Babtain Group in collaboration with Total recognized and awarded the top performing retail customers for their significant contributions in 2017. The event was also the perfect platform to introduce the new range of Total Quartz

synthetic engine oils to the Kuwait market. "We thank Total for their excellent partnership with us for many years and consider them as strategic partner. This relation can only grow because of the mutual understanding to increase our presence in Kuwait and create this great place of customers. We hope that Total will even grow further in Kuwait," said Mohamed Shalaby, Group Chief Operating Officer, Al-Babtain Group.

"Total has significantly progressed in the Middle East region. We currently hold a dominant position in many markets. With a consistent growth over the past seven years, Al-Babtain Group has been our long lasting partner in Kuwait and is part of the 2017 success, this year being

one of the best for Total in Kuwait", said Thibaud De-Lisle, Managing Director of Total Marketing Middle East.

Also, the 2018 plan was revealed during the event which received overwhelmed response from the customers. Indeed, today, Total through Al-Babtain Group, is a major player in the lubricant retail market and has a strong presence in the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) with Total being the preferred lubricant supplier for Nissan, Infiniti, Renault, Citroen, KIA, Daihatsu cars in Kuwait, besides partnership with Volvo trucks and TATA trucks. This annual dealer meet was also the occasion to introduce the new range of Total synthetic engine oils for Kuwait market. Total Quartz 9000 Energy 0w-40, Total

Quartz 9000 Future FG5 0W-20, Total Quartz 9000 Future FGC 5W30 and Total Quartz Racing 10W60. These engine oils have been developed keeping in mind that the latest OEM requirements and meet the highest and most stringent requirements of the modern day engines. This range provides the latest technology available for owners of German, European, American, Japanese and Korean car manufacturers.

Notably, Total is one of key partners in Kuwait and together Al-Babtain and Total have crossed many milestones. In 2017 Al-Babtain and Total have managed to consolidate their position in Kuwait and they are confident of growing it in 2018 as well.

Ahli United Bank holds employee honoring ceremony

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held its annual honoring Ceremony on 16 January 2018, to recognize its dedicated employees for the year 2017 in the presence of the Bank's management and staff. The event, which was held at Sheraton Hotel, Kuwait honored employees who have spent over 30 years serving the Bank, recognized individuals and business units having received prestigious international awards in 2017, and also honored outstanding employees who have excelled in service quality in the branch network, customer service center and other departments. Moreover, the event included further interactive activities, competitions, and valuable prizes were handed to participating employees.

On this occasion, Richard Groves, AUB's Chief Executive Officer, said: "The Bank is delighted to host such an event, and on a regular basis. It is a priority for management to recognize the very valuable contributions that so many people make in many different and varied ways. Being able to present awards to staff who have served over 30 years is just one indicator, proving their loyalty to the Bank and that they have been able to thrive in a positive working environment."

Throughout his speech, Groves further extended his gratitude and appreciation to all the outstanding employees who have contributed to the Bank's progress and achieved success. He was also impressed to see the very high level of engagement from all the organizers and those staff attending.

Naqeb Amin, AUB's General Manager Human Resources, stressed, "Ahli United Bank is one of the most recognized financial institutions in the region. It cares about honoring its employees. This comes as an assurance from the Bank's management to emphasize the significance of enhancing the sense of engagement of every employee at the Bank and appreciating all their efforts whether big or small." Sahar Dashti, AUB's Assistant General Manager Complaints and Customer Protection, expressed her pride and delight in the excellence of the Bank's staff in customer service



AUB executive management honoring Abdullah Jaragh, one of the Bank's oldest staff members.

Dashti added that AUB continues to drive a special program that caters to quality of service and customer care, in a way that makes the staff distinguished by providing a high quality level of service. She added, "Honesty, efficiency, swiftness, accuracy in work, proper greetings and maintaining customers' confidentiality are factors that embody the overall elements of quality personal banking services. We recognized those factors in our staff at the event though a number of service excellence awards."



Richard Groves giving his speech during the ceremony



Naqeb Amin speaking during the ceremony

Ooredoo's 'Shamel Home' compliments the lifestyle of its customers

KUWAIT: Ooredoo's Shamel Home is a comprehensive plan that offers customers with fixed and mobile benefits in addition to online digital entertainment content from beIN, OSN and STARZPLAY.

As part of this plan, customers can benefit from high-speed internet up to 10 Mbps at home with unlimited capacity courtesy of FASTelco, a company owned by ooredoo Kuwait. On their mobile lines they can enjoy 100 GB internet that can be shared with four additional SIM cards which are considered add-ons and customers can choose how many they want to add upon their discretion to suit their family. Customers will also enjoy 1500 local minutes. Additionally, customers can choose between beIN's beIN CONNECT, OSN's WAVO or STARZPLAY, for digital services. They can get 2 years of digital content subscription with WAVO, which includes a comprehensive range of entertainment, movies, series and sports programs as well as 21 live TV channels, STARZPLAY, which has 10,000+ Hours of blockbuster Hollywood movies, latest series, Arabic shows, Bollywood, children's entertainment, and one year of digital content from beIN CONNECT to watch live streaming of the biggest sports events. The content can be streamed through the service providers' websites and their apps for smart devices, including smart TVs, smartphones and tablets. It is worth mentioning that customers can choose from a diverse portfolio of devices which include handsets, tablets, and gaming consoles.

Pioneering digitalization

Shamel Home is an important step from ooredoo towards embracing digitalization, especially as digital



entertainment content witness substantial growth and demand in the region due to the rising popularity of smart devices. The move comes in tandem with the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging, ooredoo Kuwait is committed to providing customers with services and plans that meet customers' expectations and complements their lifestyle and mode of usage of the internet at home and on the go. This is vital to embrace this transformation of telecommunication and the role it plays in people's everyday life: it is no longer exclusive to making phone calls on mobile devices."

ooredoo is proud to be partnering with reputable service providers such as STARZPLAY, a content provider that garnered substantial following in a short period of time, in addition to WAVO, the all-new online and mobile app entertainment platform of OSN, the region's leading entertainment network, which offers exclusive content from the likes of HBO and Disney and exclusive sporting events such as the UFC and IPL and beIN CONNECT, the renowned sports entertainment provider in the region that offers exclusive international events such as the Champions League.

Iconic Camry is world's favorite mid-size sedan

KUWAIT: Since its debut in 1982 and subsequent evolution over six generations, Camry has come to be embraced by people for its excellent performance, ride quality and its reliability.

Toyota Camry was introduced in 1993 in the Gulf and continues to be the strongest and the most preferred sedan. Around the world, Camry has established a reputation for value. It's simply outstanding in every way with the highest market share of the medium-size market in the GCC. The drivers of Camry are loyal they know quality and they buy it again and again.

The car has established an unshakeable presence in the standard mid-size sedan market - both in the Middle East and around the globe - selling more than 15 million units worldwide.

Toyota Camry blends an evolution of the car's values - such as comfort, efficiency, reliability and safety - with a more appealing design and engaging driving experience.

Incorporating Toyota's development philosophy of Quality, Durability and Reliability, Camry highly complements the new design direction that has led Toyota to develop cars with dynamic and exciting exterior designs while increasing the "Waku-Doki" fun to drive quotient. This has also resulted in a quantum jump in customer satisfaction while giving customers the peace of mind of Toyota ownership.

Thanks to customers in the region for their loyalty and support over the years. Every new model of Camry is Toyota's way of repaying their trust by making a truly special vehicle for them.

World's Favorite Sedan / **سيارة السيدان المفضلة في العالم**

1983-1986, 1987-1991, 1992-1996, 1997-2001, 2002-2006, 2007-2011, 2012-2015, 2016-2017

Technology

Facebook to ask 2 billion users to rank 'trust' in news sources

Effort to combat spread of misinformation on the social network

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook announced on Friday it will ask its two billion users to rank their trust in news sources, in its latest attempt to combat the spread of misinformation on the social network.

The change comes as the online giant seeks to address charges that it has failed—along with Google and Twitter—to prevent the spread of bogus news, most strikingly ahead of the 2016 US presidential election. In a Facebook post, co-founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said the network would seek to “prioritize news that is trustworthy, informative, and local.”

“There’s too much sensationalism, misinformation and polarization in the world today,” Zuckerberg said. “Social media enables people to spread information faster than ever before, and if we don’t specifically tackle these problems, then we end up amplifying them.” The new “trusted sources” ranking, which starts next week, would aim to “make sure the news you see is high quality” and “helps build a sense of common ground” rather than sow division, Zuckerberg said.

To do so, he said, Facebook decided to rely on member surveys as the most “objective” way to rank trust in news sources. “We could try to make that decision ourselves, but that’s not something we’re comfortable with,” Zuckerberg said. “We considered asking outside experts, which would take the decision out of our hands but would likely not solve the objectivity problem.”

The new ranking system, he said, would hopefully separate news organizations that are only trusted by their readers or watchers, from ones that are broadly trusted across society. “This update will not change the amount of news you see on Facebook,” he said. “It will only shift the

balance of news you see towards sources that are determined to be trusted by the community.”

Friends get priority

The latest move comes a week after Facebook announced a major update to its user feed that highlights what friends and family share on the network, over advertisements, celebrity and media posts. The company cast the change as part of a refocus on “community”—prioritizing social interactions and relationships—while acknowledging it would likely result in people spending less time on the platform.

“For some time, we have argued that Facebook should give priority to news from trusted sources,” David Chavern, head of industry group News Media Alliance, said in a statement.

“This would be positive for consumers, as well as help to address ‘fake news’ issues.” The group will watch how the Facebook ranking changes are implemented and whether they deliver on the social network’s stated goals, according to Chavern.

“My hope is that this update about trusted news and last week’s update about meaningful interactions will help make time on Facebook time well spent,” Zuckerberg said.

Known for annual personal goals ranging from killing his own food to learning Chinese, Zuckerberg’s stated mission for this year is to “fix” the social network. He plans to target abuse and hate, and interference by nation states.

Brexit vote

Meanwhile, British lawmakers probing possible Russian interference in the Brexit referendum revealed this week that Facebook agreed to broaden its own investigation into fake news around the vote, after the social media plat-



This file photo shows a smartphone being operated in front of GAFA logos (acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon web giants) as background in HédÉ-Bazouges, western France. —AFP



Facebook to broaden probe into fake news

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Brexit vote

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form’s initial efforts drew criticism. The House of Commons’ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee said Simon Milner, the tech titan’s head of policy in Britain, had vowed the company would now search for “clusters engaged in coordinated activity around the Brexit referendum” that appeared to have originated in Russia. Milner said it may take several weeks to produce results. The

commitment follows demands from MPs for Facebook and Twitter to provide further information on alleged Russian social media meddling in the run-up to the June 2016 referendum. Executives from the platforms, as well as from Google, are due to give evidence to the parliamentary inquiry in February, when MPs will visit America for the occasion.—AFP

Instagram, Google+ join EU group fighting hate speech

BRUSSELS: Facebook’s Instagram and the Google+ social network have agreed to join an EU-sponsored group of US internet giants to combat online extremism, EU officials said Friday.

EU officials added that the existing members—YouTube, Microsoft, Twitter and Facebook—have made progress toward meeting the code of conduct they signed up to in May 2016, promising to look at suspicious content within 24 hours and remove illegal material.

“Instagram has decided to join forces in the fight against illegal online hate speech and will now also apply the code of conduct,” EU Justice and Consumer Affairs Commissioner Vera Jourova told reporters. “And this morning I also received the message that Google+ is joining,” she added.

The EU joined forces with US-based internet firms nearly two years ago amid growing alarm in Europe over the use of social media as a recruiting tool, especially by the Islamic State group.

Jourova said Friday she would continue having the industry regulate itself under the code of conduct after hailing progress among the internet firms to remove threatening material.

The commission said IT firms removed 70 percent of the illegal speech notified to them in the last few months, compared to 59 percent before May 2017, and 28 percent in the months after the code of conduct was launched.

Jourova also said Facebook had hired 3,500 new staff to fight online hate speech on top of the 4,500 existing employees.

She added that IT firms have also strengthened cooperation with civil society organisations, including training, to better detect and report suspected cases of hate speech.

“Having these quite positive results of this third assessment, I will be stronger in promoting my view that we should continue the way of doing this through the code of conduct method,” Jourova said before meeting EU ministers of justice next week in Sofia. The leaders of EU states last year urged internet firms to do their utmost to combat online extremism or face the possibility of legislation if the industry self-regulation fails. The Commission is the executive and regulatory arm of the 28-nation EU.—AFP



Google, Tencent eye collaboration on new technologies

Internet titans Google and Tencent on Friday signalled possible future collaboration on developing new technologies as the US and Chinese firms announced a long-term patent-sharing agreement.

The companies gave no details on the scope or nature of the potential cooperation but said in a joint statement that they “are open to deeper collaboration in the future on innovative new technologies”.

“By working together on agreements such as this, tech companies can focus on building better products and services for their users,” Google’s head of patents, Mike Lee, was quoted saying.

Sam Xu, head of intellectual property at Tencent, added that the patent agreement would “advance the collaboration between two leading technology companies”. California-based Google already has similar cross-licensing tie-ups with Samsung, LG and others, which are typical industry arrangements between corporations designed to minimize patent infringements.

But any cooperation between the US search giant and China’s all-conquering tech leader—the world’s second- and fifth-largest companies by market value, according to Bloomberg News—is bound to generate buzz in the IT world. Google effectively withdrew its search engine from China’s heavily controlled internet landscape in 2010 in a row over censorship and cyber-attacks, and many of its services remain blocked.

But there have been hints of a thaw in relations.

Chinese internet regulators recently allowed access to

Amazon boosts Prime fees for US subscribers

NEW YORK: Online giant Amazon on Friday hiked the price of its Prime service for US monthly subscribers which includes access to streaming video and other perks. The new fee will be \$12.99 a month, up from \$10.99, but customers may also opt for an annual membership of \$99, which is unchanged. Prime, a major growth driver for Amazon, includes its growing video service but also offers free delivery for

many items as well as music streaming, photo storage and other benefits.

For US customers only seeking Amazon video, the cost will be \$8.99 a month.

Amazon launched Prime in 2016, with the video service competing against rivals like Netflix, which recently raised its basic prime by one dollar to \$10.99 a month. Hulu, the number three streaming video provider in the United States, costs \$7.99 a month, with an ad-free option at \$11.99.

Amazon has not revealed details on the number of Prime subscribers but a report by Consumer Intelligence Research Partners (CIRP) estimated it had 90 million in the United States as of September.

Amazon has also been expanding Prime, called Premium in some countries, to other markets around the world.—AFP

Twitter says Russia-linked accounts more

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter on Friday said the number of Russia-linked accounts firing off tweets evidently aimed at the US election in 2016 was more widespread than initially determined.

The social media company found, and shuttered, an additional 1,062 accounts associated with the Internet Research Agency, considered a “troll farm” connected to the Russian government, Twitter said in an update posted online. Along with Google and Facebook, Twitter has been

criticized for allowing the spread of bogus news—some of which was directed by Russia—ahead of the 2016 US election and in other countries.

Twitter also said it is emailing notifications to almost 670,000 people in the US who followed, retweeted, or “liked” posts from any of those suspect accounts during the election period.

“Any such activity represents a challenge to democratic societies everywhere, and we’re committed to continuing to work on this important issue,” Twitter said in the update. For the 10-week time span investigated prior to the November, 2016 election, Twitter identified a total of 3,814 Internet Research Agency-linked accounts, according to the San Francisco-based company.

Those accounts posted 175,993 tweets, approximately 8.4 percent of which were election related, Twitter said.—AFP

Booby-trapped messaging apps used for spying: Researchers

SAN FRANCISCO: An espionage campaign using malware-infected messaging apps has been stealing smartphone data from activists, soldiers, lawyers, journalists and others in more than 20 countries, researchers said in a report Thursday.

A report authored by digital rights group Electronic Frontier Foundation and mobile security firm Lookout detailed discovery of “a prolific actor” with nation-state capabilities “exploiting targets globally across multiple platforms.”

Desktop computers were also targeted, but getting into data-rich mobile devices was a primary objective, according to the report. With fake versions of secure messaging services like WhatsApp and Signal, the scheme has enabled attackers to take pictures, capture audio, pinpoint locations, and mine handsets for private data.

EFF and Lookout researchers dubbed the threat “Dark Caracal.” People in the US, Canada, Germany, Lebanon, and France have been hit by Dark Caracal, according to EFF director of cybersecurity Eva Galperin.

“This is a very large, global campaign, focused on mobile devices,” Galperin said. “Mobile is the future of spying,

WeChat messaging platform and is the country’s leader in social media and gaming.

It is pushing to build up its entertainment and gaming businesses and has signalled plans to buy studios, expand into content creation and diversify overseas.—AFP

because phones are full of so much data about a person’s day-to-day life.” Hundreds of gigabytes of data have been taken from thousands of victims in more than 21 countries, according to Lookout and the EFF.

There were indications that Dark Caracal might be an infrastructure hosting a number of widespread, global cyberespionage campaigns, some of which date back years, the report said.

Because the apps fool people into thinking they are legitimate, users give them access to cameras, microphones and data. “All Dark Caracal needed was application permissions that users themselves granted when they downloaded the apps, not realizing that they contained malware,” said EFF staff technologist Cooper Quintin.

“This research shows it’s not difficult to create a strategy allowing people and governments spy on targets around the world.”

Researchers reported that they tracked Dark Caracal to a building in Beirut belonging to the Lebanese General Security Directorate.

Analysis showed that devices of military personnel, businesses, journalists, lawyers, educators, and medical professionals have been compromised, according to the report.

“Not only was Dark Caracal able to cast its net wide, it was also able to gain deep insight into each of the victim’s lives,” the report concluded. Cyber security professionals consistently warn people to be wary when downloading software, avoiding programs shared through links or email and instead relying on trusted sources.—AFP

Health

Dutch shocked by call to ban electric pulse fishing in EU

The death knell for some of the Dutch fishing fleet

SCHEVENINGEN: The black clouds hanging over the boats in Dutch ports Friday were not the remnants of wild winter gales, but harbingers of another devastating storm brewing for Dutch fishermen. On Tuesday, the European Parliament struck what may prove to be the death knell for some of the Dutch fishing fleet by demanding a ban on electric pulse fishing.

For the Dutch, who invented this experimental method of trawling the North Sea for fish, the decision came as a bombshell, spelling likely catastrophe. In the northern village of Urk, Andries de Boer, a third generation fisherman, said he like many others now faced an uncertain future after investing heavily to equip their boats with the technology. On the western coast, in the bustling port of Scheveningen near The Hague, his colleague Anton Dekker said he was "bewildered and extremely disappointed" by "this injustice". Standing among the nets on his boat, his gaze was lost on the horizon as his crew prepared to head out into the cold North Sea for four days.

'It's electrifying'

Pulse fishing involves dragging electrically charged lines just above the seafloor to shock marine life up from low-lying positions into trawling nets. EU rules allow member states to equip up to five percent of their fleets with electrodes, and the method has been adopted in particular by Dutch vessels fishing for sole. Some 84 Dutch boats use the practice, alongside just three Belgian vessels, representing 0.1 percent of the total European fishing fleet.

"Sole is a fish which hides under 10 centimetres of sand during the day. By sending out these little electric pulses, they come out of the sand and bingo, they're in the net," said Dekker. "When you've been working for years to improve the environment and CO2 emissions, to catch fewer unwanted or small fish, and you've reached your goal-which is what we believe-to then see it reduced to nothing, is terrible," said de Boer bitterly.

In Urk, a 10th century village which used to be an island in Flevoland, fishermen have spent hundreds of thousands of euros after having won the go-ahead from the EU on an experimental basis. But MEPs voted on Tuesday by 402 members to 232 in favour of the ban, while 40 abstained. "It is a wonderful victory against a



A fisherman on the Dutch fishing boat TX-38 Branding IV prepares the electric pulse fishing nets during departure from the harbour of Den Helder. —AFP

terribly harmful kind of fishing," said Yannick Jadot, a French member of the Greens party, who took part in the campaign against the practice.

But Pim Visser, the head of the Dutch fisherman's organisation VisNed, said the campaign had been based on "half-truths, non-facts, insinuations and allegations". "It's a scandal, and a blow," he said, denying Jadot's accusations by insisting there was no terrible environmental harm. On the contrary, the Dutch fishermen said: "The seabed is less disturbed" than by more traditional methods of fishing for sole. There is "no scientific basis for saying that electric fishing is not good," he added.

'Bruised fish'

Researcher Adriaan Rijnsdorp, from the University of Wageningen, agreed. He is due to complete a study of the environmental effects next year. "It's a very

promising technique, which is important for limiting the damage which fishing inflicts on the ecosystem," he told the NOS public broadcaster. But the row has increasingly pitted the Netherlands against France-particularly after 200 top European chefs pledged to stop sourcing seafood obtained through electric pulse fishing.

"We refuse to work with seafood coming from a fishing method that condemns our future and that of the ocean," the chefs said in a text written by two-star Michelin chef Christopher Coutanceau. They alleged that electric trawlers "produce catches of poor quality, fish which underwent stress and are often marked by post-electrocution bruises." "It is impossible to work with such low-quality products." "Nonsense," shot back Visser, insisting the Dutch were selling high-quality fish, and pointing to the beloved French delicacy of foie-gras, most often produced by force-feeding poultry to fatten their livers. —AFP

Haiti's cholera epidemic could end this year: UN

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Haiti's killer cholera epidemic could be over this year, the United Nations children's fund said on Friday, as the number of cases declines following the world's most virulent outbreak in modern times. Roughly 100 suspected cases were recorded in January, which is the lowest level since the epidemic began in October 2010, and there was no explosion of cases last year even during the rainy season.

"It's possible to eliminate cholera this year," said Marc Vincent, UNICEF's representative in the impoverished Caribbean nation. "It's now or never and it's an opportunity that should not be missed," he told AFP. About 10,000 people have died since the epidemic began. It was introduced by infected Nepalese UN peacekeepers sent to Haiti after the country's devastating 2010 earthquake. "We have asked the government to gather all partners to see how we could really benefit from this historic moment to reach elimination," Vincent said, expressing hope for a rapid response from Haitian authorities.

During the epidemic Haiti has recorded more than 800,000 cases of cholera, an acute diarrheal infection caused by contaminated food or water. Haiti's poor sanitation helped the disease spread. Even now, more than half of rural residents lack access to potable water and only one-quarter of Haitians have access to toilets. Vincent praised the work of Haitian rapid response teams fighting the disease and "who are committed because they want to eliminate cholera themselves. They do that for their children, for their community." But funding of these local efforts is only assured for the next six months. —AFP

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What's On

LOYAC, Babson College renew their agreement

Promoting social responsibility among young people

By Faten Omar

LOYAC held a press conference recently in Qibilyah School in Kuwait City to announce collaborating with Babson College to implement the 'KON' social entrepreneurship program to promote social responsibility among young people and to allocate and devise solutions that address integral communal issues.

Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Founder and Chairperson at LOYAC, said that LOYAC will renew their agreement of collaboration with Babson College, one of the most reputable universities in the world which specialized in business and entrepreneurship education. As per the agreement, Babson College will continue sponsoring LOYAC's youth initiative program of social entrepreneurship for young people between the ages of 12 to 16.

"In the past two years, the social entrepreneurship program achieved great success with an annual increase of 100 percent in the number of students during the second phase of the program in 2017," she noted.

Saqqaf pointed out that the initiative is a six-week program of four hours per day for

four days a week. It ensures that the youth learn about social responsibility and are able to find solutions to the most pressing challenges faced within the community. "The program also instills in the hearts of our young people the importance of humanity and working with one another to seek mutual benefits and to convey that collective public interest is interwoven with our personal interest," she added. The students also acquire 21st century entrepreneurial skill sets, including critical thinking, financial analysis, teamwork, marketing, communications, and presentation skills."

She stressed that the agreement with Babson College includes advancing and further developing the Babson curriculum "which we have taught over the past two years, and includes retaining the program's trainers to further advance and develop their training and mentoring tools and capabilities."

"We are adopting Babson's experiential learning model, and that is what distinguishes the program from other programs," she indicated. "Our trainers are trained to deliver the program in an interactive way; hence, the number of students

for the trainer is a ratio of one trainer to five interns. It will raise the cost of the program and the cost of preparing the students. So far, the program has not received sponsorship; however, we are committed to providing the best for our children with minimal registration fee for the program. We are also investing in our trainers who are attending state of the art TOT (train of trainer) workshops conducted in Kuwait by Babson College, as they have implemented the curriculum in a creative way to those young adults."

She added that the long-term impact of the program is greater and more inclusive as the youth fulfill their roles toward the society, which achieves LOYAC's vision of having enlightened youth who are able to spread peace and prosperity in the society by the values such programs instill.

Saqqaf expressed her appreciation to the Senior Director of Babson Executive Education Vinod Radhakeesoon, who has been very cooperative over the past two years. "I would also like to thank the center of continuing education at American University of Kuwait for hosting the program," she said.



Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Founder and Chairperson at LOYAC (right) and Senior Director of Babson Executive Education Vinod Radhakeesoon sign the agreement. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Meanwhile, Radhakeesoon said that Babson college is committed to the development of Kuwaiti youth, where it has a social values aimed to achieve. "We still

communicate with the winners of the last project. We are the first institution to start such program with early age and we are doing great for the third year," he said.

MahaQuizzer 2018 on 26th January

NITCAA, the alumni association of NIT Calicut announces the 6th edition of MahaQuizzer Kuwait. MahaQuizzer is an annual event researched and conceived by the KQA (Karnataka Quiz Association) and conducted by NITCAA and attracts the who's who of Indian

quizzing. The solo written quiz debuted internationally for the first time in Kuwait in 2013, and has been an annual event ever since. The 2018 edition of the event will be held on 26th January 2018 at the following venues:

Salmiya - Indian Public School
Ahmadi - FAIPS (DPS)
Jleeb Shyukh - United India School

Free Registrations are open at: <http://nitcaakuwait.org/mahaquizzer>. Anyone residing in Kuwait and born on or before 1st January 2008 can participate in the event irrespective of nationality. Last date for registration is January 22.

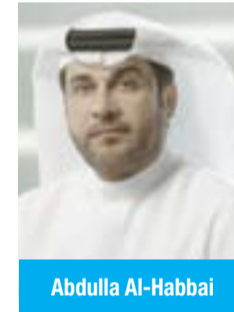
Jumeirah announces new CEO

Jumeirah, the global luxury hotel company and a member of Dubai Holding, announced the appointment of Jose Silva as the new Chief Executive Officer. Silva brings over 35 years' experience in the hospitality industry, including almost 25 years with Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. In his last role, he was Regional Vice President overseeing France, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal as well as General Manager of the highly acclaimed Hotel George V in Paris. He is regarded by the industry as an innovative mind and a hotelier who is consistently redefining the new norm of luxury.

Among his recent accomplishments is the repositioning of the Hotel George V, consistently recognized as one of the best hotels in



Jose Silva



Abdulla Al-Habbai

the world. Silva managed to take this iconic landmark hotel to even greater heights by introducing the first 5-Michelin-star European Hotel including a complete reinvention of the Hotel's architectural identity. Silva was awarded "Hotelier of Year" in 2016 by Virtuoso - "Best of the Best."

As Chief Executive Officer of Jumeirah, Silva will be responsible for its international expansion, continue to elevate the brand and its growing portfolio building on the Company's extraordinary success over the years.

Abdulla Al-Habbai, Chairman of Dubai

Holding commented: "We are determined to continue developing Jumeirah into a globally recognised national champion: setting new industry benchmarks for world class service and quality. Silva has had a distinguished career in hospitality with some of the world's leading brands. I am confident his passion for designing unique guest experiences and driving innovation in the sector will build on Jumeirah's strong growth, as we continue to enter new markets and open new hotels both at home and abroad."

Jose Silva, Chief Executive Officer, Jumeirah, said: "I have always admired Jumeirah for its "dare to be different" culture and its forward-looking vision. I am honored to have been appointed and fully committed to leading the business and the brand into its next level of growth. Jumeirah is one of Dubai's most iconic brands and a symbol of the Emirate." Jumeirah operates a world-class portfolio of hotels and resorts including the flagship Burj Al-Arab Jumeirah. Jumeirah manages 19 properties around the world with 25 properties under development.

Hindi Diwas celebrations at Bhavans Kuwait



Hindi is a rich language spoken by almost half a billion people across the globe. Hindi is the lingua franca of India. This amazing Indo-European language is the second largest language in the world. It takes pride in being the mother tongue of 180 million people and the second language of 300 million people.

Indian Educational School, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kuwait, the flagbearer of authentic Indian culture across the Middle East region and elsewhere celebrates the true spirit of 'Hindi Diwas' every year. The Hindi Diwas Celebration of this year was held on January 14, 2018 in the IES school auditorium.

The Department of Hindi organized many cultural events as part of the celebrations. An Interschool 'Nukkat Natak' (Street Play) contest was indeed the icing on the cake. Eminent writer Dr Navneeth Gandhi and Sapna Joshi, HoD, Hindi, Kuwait Indian School were the chief guests as well as the adjudicators of the interschool contests. The program began with the lighting of the lamp. The ceremonious lamp was lit by all the invited dignitaries.

Very many school teams partook in the Nukkat Natak competition. The theme of the contest was 'Kahin kho na jaye bachpan.' (Childhood). The Street Play team of Delhi Public School, Kuwait was adjudged to be the best. The team that represented the host school was

declared as the first runner up and the team that represented the United Indian School was declared as the second runner up of the Nukkat Natak Competition.

In the sub-junior category, Ammar Yusuf of Indian Community School, (ICSK) Junior won the first place in the Story Telling competition. The second and the third prizes were bagged by Ruth Ann Joby of ICSK Amman and Amairah Sharma of IES respectively. In the junior category, Aman Baig of Learners Own Academy won the first prize. The second and the third prizes were won by Maryam Chorghay of ICSK and Priyati Alkesh of Smart Indian School. A puppet show and a dance by Devi Nandana and Harichandana added spice to the Hindi Diwas celebrations of Indian Educational School.

'Hum honge kamyab,' the Hindi version of the world famous marching song 'We Shall Overcome' was sung by the students of IES amid thunderous applause. The audience joined the kids merrily and the song was on everyone's lips even after the exodus from the school auditorium.

The prizes were given away by the guests amid applause of appreciation. Swarna Saini, Faculty Head, Hindi delivered the welcome address. Vandana, a member of the Hindi faculty proposed the vote of thanks.

Indian Lawyers' Forum conducted legal seminar

Indian Lawyers' Forum Kuwait, the Association of Indian Law Graduates and Lawyers in Kuwait conducted an in-house legal seminar and get together recently in Mangaf. The function was presided over by the President of Indian Lawyers' Forum, Advisor Thomas Panicker. In his address the President welcomed all members to the Seminar and highlighted the importance of conducting Legal Seminars to impart legal knowledge.

President highlighted the activities of 'Indian Lawyers' Forum'. He described all the legal aids the FORUM has rendered in the recent past. He said the forum is very successful in providing a platform for the Indian lawyers in Kuwait to meet and interact with each other. He observed that the forum enjoys the membership of Indian lawyers who are working for high profile legal firms/corporations and holding key legal positions in various companies in Kuwait. The forum is well equipped to deal with any sort of legal and business consultations pertaining to Kuwait

Well-known Indian expat Panicker given farewell

Aravindaksha Panicker, a well-known Indian social worker who has completed more than four decades of service in Kuwait, was given a rousing farewell by Vasudaiva Kudumbagom (VKS), Kuwait on Friday. He has been working with Kuwait Industrial Bank. Panicker, a founder member of Vasudaiva Kudumba Samithi (universal family) is a staunch believer of Indian culture and has devoted more than 26 years of his service in Kuwait in inculcating the values of this tradition here.

The farewell function was held at NAFO



as well as India.

In the Legal discussion followed, the subject was presented by Advisor Jeseena Bashir. Rent and labor laws of Kuwait were the main subjects for discussion. Advisor Thomas Stephen, Advisor Priya Sasi and other Advocates also participated in the legal discussion.

Advisor Thomas Stephen Advisor Lalgi George, Advisor Ratna Kumar and Advisor Jamshad presented legal subjects for discus-

sion. Recent development in Indian Supreme Court also was a subject of discussion.

Advocate Mohammed Bashir, made the welcome speech. He said Forum is ready to cooperate with any association in Kuwait which intends to conduct legal seminar for its members and the public. Advisor Suresh Pulickkal, General Secretary of the Forum presented the details of forthcoming activities of the Forum and also proposed vote of thanks.



Recreation Hall Salmiya. The inaugural speech was delivered by Krishna K Pillai. Anil Attuva anchored the program. Panicker was adorned with a ponnada by Rajashekharan Nair and Mohan T. He was presented a memento by Rajan Menon and Vijayan Nair in the presence of all the members who were assembled. On behalf of Sevadarsan Salmiya unit,

Mahadevan and Narendran presented a memento. Felicitation speeches were given by 16 members of VKS, Sevadarsan Salmiya unit and Samadarsan including five lady members. In his reply, Aravindaksha Panicker emphasized the importance of daily prayers and adaptation of punctuality in daily life. Anil Attuva proposed a vote of thanks.

TV



01:15 Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders
02:45 Nick Of Time
04:25 Age Of Tomorrow
06:00 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Swamp Brothers
02:13 Swamp Brothers
02:40 Swamp Brothers
03:08 Swamp Brothers
03:35 Swamp Brothers



23:55 Untamed & Uncut
00:00 Death In Paradise
01:00 Gunpowder
01:55 New Tricks
02:45 Casualty



23:30 Eastenders
00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Homicide Hunter
02:00 My Haunted House
03:00 The Haunting Of...



00:05 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
00:30 Bo Burnham: Words Words Words
01:20 Idiotsitter
01:45 Graves

17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
18:35 Lip Sync Battle
19:00 Lip Sync Battle



00:30 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
01:20 Ecopolis
02:00 Ecopolis
03:00 Ecopolis
03:50 Kids Do The Craziest Things

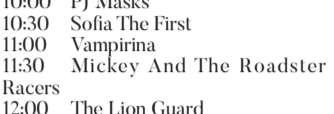


00:50 Kindred Spirits
01:45 A Haunting
02:40 The Boston Strangler
04:30 Baby Vanished: People Magazine Investigates



00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:00 Binny And The Ghost
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive



00:00 Man Fire Food
00:30 Man Fire Food
01:00 Restaurant Impossible
02:00 Mystery Diners



00:15 X-Ray Mega Airport
01:05 Abandoned Engineering
01:50 Yukon Men
02:35 Yukon Men



06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Marvel's Spider-Man
07:15 Marvel's Spider-Man



00:00 The Platinum Life
00:55 The Platinum Life
01:50 El News
02:50 WAGS

Kardashian
12:25 Revenge Body With Khloe
Kardashian
13:20 Revenge Body With Khloe
Kardashian



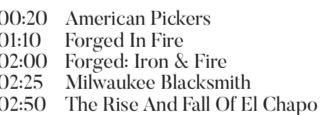
00:00 Man Fire Food
00:30 Man Fire Food
01:00 Restaurant Impossible
02:00 Mystery Diners



00:10 Coronation Street
00:35 Coronation Street
01:00 Paul O'Grady's Animal Orphans



01:00 The Colour Of War
02:00 Bible Secrets Revealed
03:00 Ancient Aliens
03:50 Ancient Aliens



00:20 American Pickers
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 Forged: Iron & Fire
02:25 Milwaukee Blacksmith



00:15 Wait
00:45 What's For Sale?
01:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet



00:10 The Indestructibles
00:35 The Indestructibles
01:00 Yukon Gold
02:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South



00:20 The World's Most Wanted Leopard
01:00 Animal ER
02:00 My Dog Ate What?



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Sanjay And Craig

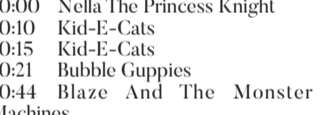
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers



01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:46 The Day Henry Met



00:10 The Indestructibles
00:35 The Indestructibles
01:00 Yukon Gold
02:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South



00:20 The World's Most Wanted Leopard
01:00 Animal ER
02:00 My Dog Ate What?



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Sanjay And Craig

10:00 Amila's Secret
11:15 Mia And The Migoo
12:55 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest



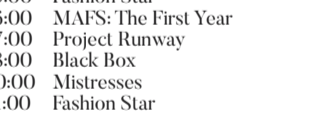
00:15 The Big Lebowski
02:15 Dan In Real Life
03:55 I'll See You In My Dreams
05:35 Baby Mama



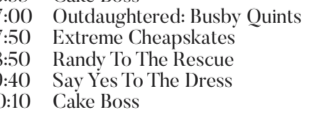
00:40 Da Vinci's Machines
01:30 Da Vinci's Machines
02:20 Da Vinci's Machines
03:10 Da Vinci's Machines



00:15 The Machinist
02:00 Broken English
03:45 Chicago
05:45 Half Light



00:00 Devious Maids
02:00 Mistresses
03:00 Project Runway
04:00 MAFS: The First Year

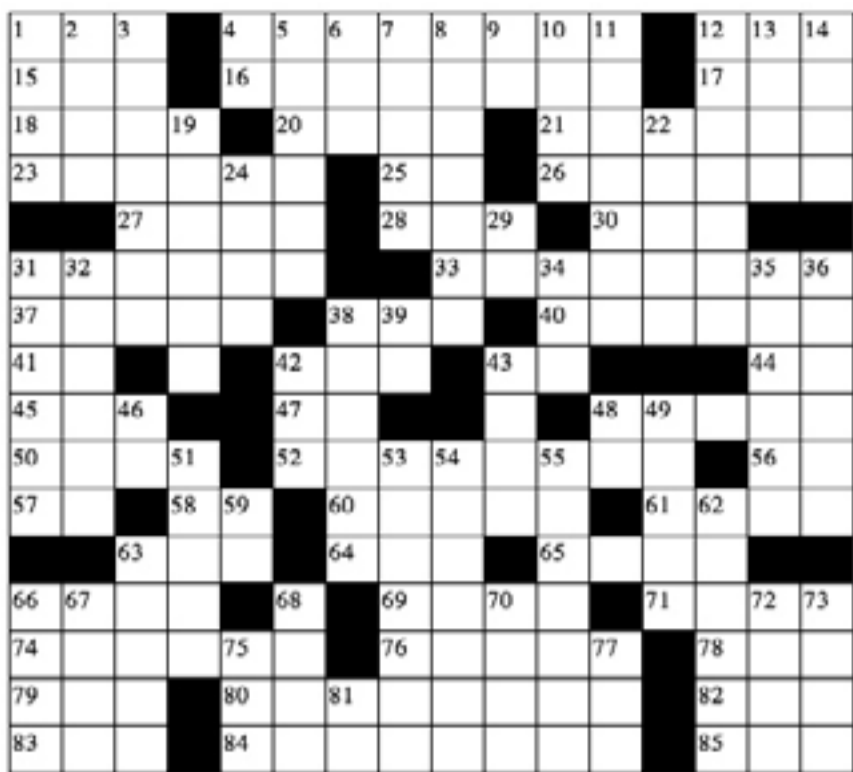


00:20 Dr Christian Will See You Now
01:05 What Have I Got?
01:27 What Have I Got?
01:50 Katie Price: My Crazy Life



00:00 Ghost Hunters International
02:00 When Ghosts Attack
03:00 Expedition Unknown

CROSSWORD 1814



ACROSS

1. Czechoslovakian religious reformer who anticipated the Reformation.
4. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
12. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
15. A transuranic element.
16. Island in West Indies.
17. Of or relating to a member of the Buddhist people inhabiting the Mekong river in Laos and Thailand.
18. The act of scanning.
20. Type genus of the Apidae.
21. Render verbally, "recite a poem".
23. A member of an aboriginal people living in the hills in southeastern India.
25. 1/1000 gram.
26. Something that baffles understanding and cannot be explained.
27. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
28. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
30. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
31. Fruit or seed of the cowpea plant.
33. A stock or supply of foods.
37. English economist (born in Austria) noted for work on the optimum allocation of resources (1899-1992).
40. The 3 goddesses of fate or destiny.
41. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
44. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
45. A reproach for some lapse or misdeed.
47. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
50. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
52. Tastelessly showy.
56. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
57. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
58. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
60. The qualities of a hero or heroine.
61. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
64. Used of a single unit or thing.
65. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
66. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
69. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
71. A rounded thickly curled hairdo.
74. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
76. Squash bugs.
78. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
79. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
80. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
82. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
83. An ugly evil-looking old woman.

DOWN

1. Material consisting of seed coverings and small pieces of stem or leaves that have been separated from the seeds.
2. Beyond what is natural.
3. Filled with shade.
4. A heavy precious metallic element.
5. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
6. A small drink of liquor.
7. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
8. Suggest fear or doubt.
9. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
10. The work of caring for or attending to someone or something.
11. African antelopes.
12. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
13. Any of various aromatic resinous substances used for healing and soothing.
14. A cord fastened around the neck with an ornamental clasp and worn as a necktie.
19. (of fabrics) Having soft nap produced by brushing.
22. A town twenty miles east of Rome (Tibur is the ancient name).
24. A person with an unusual or odd personality.
29. Being one more than fifty.
32. A city of southeastern Mexico.
34. An accountant certified by the state.
35. A lake in northwestern Russia north of St. Petersburg.
36. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
38. A clear liquid secreted into the mouth by the salivary glands and mucous glands of the mouth.
39. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
42. A flexible container with a single opening.
43. A Spanish river.
46. (chemistry) P(otential of) H(ydrogen).
48. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
49. Jordan's port.
51. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
53. A Chadic language spoken in the Mandara mountains in Cameroon.
54. A preparation used in cleaning something.
55. Tick lacking a dorsal shield and having mouth parts on the under side of the head.
59. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
62. Mar or spoil the appearance of.
63. A constitutional monarchy in northern Europe on the western side of the Scandinavian Peninsula.
67. A quantity of no importance.
68. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
70. Capital city of the Apulia region on the Adriatic coast.
72. A sudden short attack.
73. Toward the mouth or oral region.
75. Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
84. Freetail bats.
85. A doctor's degree in education.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you are drawn to balance and justice in your chaotic environment. You respect authority and responsibility. You eagerly face difficulties as you see these as rich with instructions for living life to the fullest. A nice person will speak to you about the successful, beautiful life you have created. You will come across very nicely in speaking situations; people will be interested in what you have to say. Your concepts and theories will be prevalent in your thoughts. Your day may not go as smoothly as you planned; bite your tongue and keep your temper in check. Take a break and enjoy a short trip to the museum or take in a movie. All in all, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel on an especially difficult project, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you long to go where you have not gone before; new project and ideas would be most welcome at this time. Social issues captivate your interest and concern as you wonder what you could do to help. You could discover simple solutions to ordinary issues that would make your life easier. Perhaps a getaway or a visit to the park could lessen tensions. The same old things become monotonous and cause you to be irritable; break away from old habits and ways. You will spend time with someone special; this will recharge and refresh your weary mind and spirit. You could be called on to lead a new group. While you desire to affect change on a very large scale, pace yourself... Remember, change is coming to you, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you will be drawn to self-care; your research will show you the way. Verbal skills will cover all the bases for you today at work and home. Through great effort you have a clear comprehension of your inner workings and motivations; you could share that knowledge and how to attain it. You are put on a pedestal for your leadership qualities when dealing with groups. If you are in advertising or public relations you will succeed due to knowing what consumers and audiences seek at this time. Correct judgments relating to other people will be at the fore just now. Someone could purposely irritate you; hold your temper and see through them. You enjoy laughter and refreshment of spirit tonight with close friends that get you, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you could long to find encouragement from a surprising source. You may come to the aid of someone who is also able to help you; a joint venture could be in the works. You may find a means to earn good money using a liberating business plan with very unusual products; your open-minded attitude will be a perfect fit for this. Here is the time to plan for a quick getaway that will refresh and invigorate you and someone you care for. This cycle finds you articulate and influential when you speak to groups or individuals of any age, race or culture; push away any blockages or potential pitfalls by focusing on your goals and how to reach them. Do something spur of the moment tonight for dinner with those who are like-minded, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you may struggle with approaching a situation that could be explosive. Getting your career to go in the direction you desire will prove problematic; leave this to another day. You will have no trouble thinking as though you are free to go as high as you wish; it's figuring out how that's the problem. If you feel blocked by others just keep your opinions and plans to yourself until the right time comes and never fear, the right time will come. Your happiest time is spent at home doing what you want to do. You may be putting a puzzle together or reading a new book. Whatever you choose to do just know that making choices to entertain and stimulate your mind will help you in reaching a place of rest you need very much right now broad-minded leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, it is strongly indicated that you should delay purchasing expensive items; you don't have the necessary means to honestly evaluate monetary values today. You are in a negative mood and could find yourself being insulting to others; perhaps taking care of those duties you can do alone is called for. Someone will give an unfair critique of something you did at work; consider that this person could simply be jealous. You may want to reassess a friendship or perhaps a job offer. You may feel strong emotions inwardly and they will be clearly expressed in your face and body language. A new way to avoid a certain problem could occur to you later today. This afternoon you may be quite pleased about some cosmetic changes around your home, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, not every day can run smoothly or even resemble sanity; stay focused on what you need to get done and it will be accomplished. Events could cause severe changes in direction; go with the flow or you could be left behind. You may feel overwhelmed and irritated with everyone around you at work or at home. You may pour your energy into getting things straightened out around the house or office. Continue to work through tricky issues in your head until you can relate them to others clearly. Look at all you have accumulated and give thanks that you listened and learned when given the opportunity; a relative or friend, would love to hear from you. You may feel a deep desire to be thanked and held in high esteem for all you contribute, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you could feel as though you are trying to run through deep water; the harder you try the wearier you become. Take this time to go inward and to look at your motives and your means to get where you want to be. You could start the day with simple projects such as painting the walls, rearranging your schedule or even researching a website. Try to understand that important lessons come to us disguised as problems. You could be approached about a new business or job venture; this could be something you thought about long ago. This could seem to be a very boring day with zero excitement. Welcome your alone time this evening and sleep well, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, thinks click today at work as a new project begins; you are right on the money with suggestions and methods, smooth day indicated. You could be summoned by a supervisor or boss to explain exactly how you came to your impressive productive conclusions. Your thinking is clear for any project you may care to attempt. You could feel overwhelmed with gratitude for your blessings and the work ethic that created them; work like it all depends on your efforts and trust like it all depends on the creator's miracles, it works every time. Your chart indicates that abundance will be manifested in your life this year. You could work with others to create something special for the community or state to help others, perhaps animals, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, there is nothing but work on your mind today. The group looks to you for leadership when a new situation arises. Your thoughts and plans are organized without issue and everyone is on board with the direction you take. Even success brings stress; take a moment for a nice cup of coffee or tea in early afternoon and breathe. Watch your pocketbook; now is not the time to overdo when it comes to finances or alcohol. Try to calm your mind in creative ways, you could respond well to a movie, book or museum tour. You may feel a bit emotional this evening when thinking about those you love; you are a treasured member of the family or group. Someone contacts you tonight for input on a very personal issue, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you find that today was made for you to express yourself, and this means at home or work. Your unique perspective could prove just the ticket for a hard to finish project. Patience is called for now. Pressing your agenda forward could backfire. You could feel like raging against the way things are unfolding now. Your thinking is not what your superiors want to hear now. This new cycle will lead you to look at your life and choices. You might make a special effort to learn more about your ancestors. Some things seem very difficult but know this is but a phase in your life and nothing permanent. There is always a bit of rain before the sun shines; look for the rainbows! This evening will be spent with someone you love, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, the heavens open up and pour mystical energy into your world; this will be persistent throughout the new phase your sun sign has entered. Love could grow between you and a lover or child. Intuition and dreams color your thoughts and actions as you move toward making decisions regarding tender issues; remember you're not the only one involved. Your ability to assess situations will be sharp and just if you put your personal wants and opinions to the back and let your inborn sense of fairness prevail. Enjoy a pet later this afternoon. Plans for the weekend will unfold flawlessly and cost much less than you thought. Sex and romance could be the best way to go this evening; your mate loves you! Something you wished for could appear, pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

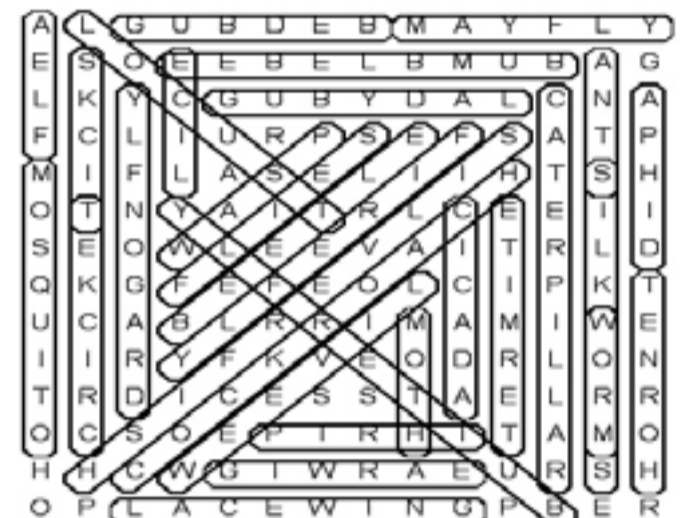
John Wayne Movies

Find and circle all of the John Wayne movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a John Wayne quotation.



- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| ALAMO, The | COWBOYS, The | JET PILOT | RIO LOBO |
| ARIZONA | DAKOTA | LONGEST TRAIL, The | SEA CHASE, The |
| BABY FACE | DAWN RIDER, The | DECEIVER, The | SEARCHERS, The |
| BIG SNAKE | DESSERT TRAIL, The | DESERT TRAIL, The | SHOOTIST, The |
| BIG TRAIL, The | EL DORADO | MCQ | SPOILERS, The |
| BLOOD ALLEY | FLYING TIGERS | NEW FRONTIER | STAGECOACH |
| BLUE STEEL | FORT APACHE | NIGHT RIDERS, The | STAR KICKER, The |
| BRANNAGAN | GREEN BERTS, The | PITTSBURGH | TRUE GAIT |
| CHESM | HATAJI | QUICK MAN, The | TYCOON |
| CIRCUS WORLD | HELL FIGHTERS | RANGE FEUD | UNDEFEATED, The |
| CONANEROS, The | HONDO | RIO RIVER | WAR WAGON, The |
| CONFLICT | IN HARMS WAY | RIO BRAVO | WESTWARD HO |
| CONQUEROR, The | | RIO GRANDE | |

Insects



- | | | |
|-------------|----------|------------|
| ANTS | EARWIG | MOSQUITO |
| APHID | FIREFLY | MOTH |
| BEDBUG | FLEA | SILKWORM |
| BEETLE | FLIES | SILVERFISH |
| BUMBLEBEE | HORNET | TERMITE |
| BUTTERFLY | LACEWING | THRIP |
| CATERPILLAR | LADYBUG | TICKS |
| CICADA | LICE | WASP |
| COCKROACH | LOCUST | WEEVIL |
| CRICKET | MAYFLY | WORMS |
| DRAGONFLY | | |

The hidden message is: GRASSHOPPER

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle | Gossip

Hemsworth and Damon's wives have matching tattoos

Elsa Pataky has revealed that she and Luciana Damon have become so close after meeting through their husbands that they recently decided to get the same inking. She told PEOPLE: "The [Damon] came here for Christmas and we were all together and it was a really inspirational time. We created a lot of things and a lot of ideas. A few friends, we got together and we felt like we had to have something to remind us of those great moments we stayed together, and we decided to get a little tattoo [of three dots on their pinkies] all together and we say 'We'll have to do one every year.'" Spanish model and actress Elsa, 41, also loves that she and Luciana can speak Spanish together. She said: "Matt [is an amazing dad and an amazing person, he's so easy. And his wife is Argentinian so we speak Spanish. So for me it's a relief, yes, somebody I can speak Spanish with! We've become very good friends." And Elsa loves spending time with the Damons because they can do lots of family friendly things. She explained: "Chris has been a big fan of Matt Damon, me too, and then when I met his wife I'm even more a fan of his wife."

Sale price for Tom Petty's house drops
Rihanna reportedly moving to London

The 'I Won't Back Down' hitmaker put his Thousand Oaks property on the market for \$5.985 million just a few months before he passed away in October at the age of 66 but it has now been relisted with a price of \$5.495 million. TMZ reports the 5,300 square foot property has three bedrooms and three bathrooms and is just nine miles from Malibu. Meanwhile, Tom's family recently revealed he died from an accidental drug overdose. The family said in a statement, posted to Tom's official website: "Unfortunately, Tom's body suffered from many serious ailments including emphysema, knee problems and most significantly a fractured hip. Despite this painful injury he insisted on keeping his commitment to his fans and he toured for 53 dates with a fractured hip and, as he did, it worsened to a more serious injury. "On the day he died he was informed his hip had graduated to a full on break and it is our feeling that the pain was simply unbearable and was the cause for his over use of medication." After Tom's passing, touching tributes poured in, with pop megastar Taylor Swift claiming she "idolised" the musician. She said: "To me, Tom Petty represented a kind of songwriting I idolised: complex simplicity. It said so much in the lyrics, the concepts, the stories, the message, the nuances ... but always brought you back to a hook that got stuck in everyone's head. He motivated thousands of guitarists to learn to play just because they wanted to be able to play 'Free Fallin'. Count me as one of them."



The 'Work' hitmaker is "done" with living in Los Angeles and her partner Hassan Jameel already spends a lot of time in the UK, so she's keen to make it their "base" when she isn't working. A source said: "The move has a lot to do with Hassan, because it's where they love to meet for romantic breaks and he's in London so much, he practically lives there himself already. "But aside from romantic reasons, it's also making sense to Rihanna from a business perspective. "She loves British culture and feels done with the fakeness of Hollywood. For her, the ideal situation would be to divide her time between Europe and her base, and she's very keen for London to be their base." And the 29-year-old star won't be short of friends in London if she does make the move, but the big factor for her is that she can be much more anonymous in the UK than she is in the US. The source told LOOK magazine: "She does have friends in LA, but she's become very close to Cara Delevingne and has been pals with Naomi Campbell for quite a while now. "What Rihanna loves about London is the anonymity. She can put on a woolly hat and jump on the tube. "Rihanna has always been down-to-earth and the idea of being able to live less like a celebrity and more like a normal person is seriously appealing to her." Rihanna already owns an apartment in the city, but is planning to sell up for something more private where she can spend quality time with Hassan, 29.

Ewan McGregor has filed for divorce

The 46-year-old actor split from his wife of 22 years, Eve Mavrakis, last year and in his court documents he cited "irreconcilable differences" as the reason for the breakdown of the marriage, TMZ reports. Ewan has asked for joint custody of their children, Clara, 21, Jamyan, 16, Esther, 15 and Anouk, six but in Eve's response to his petition, she has asked for sole custody with visitation for Ewan. The pair announced their split in October last year but court documents show the date of their separation as May 28th 2017. Meanwhile, Eve, 51, recently admitted she was not impressed with her estranged husband's Golden Globes speech, where he thanked both her and his current girlfriend. Ewan started dating his ' Fargo ' co-star Mary Elizabeth Winstead last year and Eve was unhappy after Ewan mentioned both women when he won the award for Best Actor in a Limited Series. He said: "I want to take a moment to say thank you to Eve. Who always stood by me for 22 years. To my four children, Clara, Ester, Jamyan and Anouk, I love you. "There would be no Ray without Mary Elizabeth Winstead. So thank you very much." However, the speech left Eve upset and she told the Daily Mail: "No, I did not like his speech." When asked, why not, she added: "For the same reasons you are here asking me about it. I am not going to say any more." A source told the paper: "Ewan and Eve were a very affectionate and loving couple, but it all changed over the summer. It was very abrupt. "He came back from ' Fargo ' and it was clear he and Mary had become close. He insisted that nothing physical happened between them and Eve accepted that. "They tried to make their marriage work after he told her, but about a month later it was clear Ewan had made his decision."



Faris puts home on the market

The pair - who have son Jack, five, together - filed for divorce in December and Anna, 41, has now listed her three-bedroom, three-bathroom Hollywood Hills home for \$2.5 million. Trulia reports. The single-story Nicholas Canyon home was built in 1950 and sits on an acre of land. Anna initially lived in the house with her first husband Ben Idra, before they divorced in 2008. She and Chris also own a 4,700-square-foot home across the street, which they bought in 2013 for \$3.3 million. Anna and Chris filed for divorce in December after calling time on their relationship five months prior, with both parties citing "irreconcilable differences" as the reason for their breakup. In both papers, the date of separation for the former couple - who got married in July 2009 - was listed as July 13, 2017. The pair are understood to be seeking joint legal and physical custody of their child. A source previously said: "They have a prenup. [In mirroring divorce documents,] they are both asking for joint custody of 5-year-old [son] Jack. We're told the property settlement agreement is almost completely worked out." Fans were hoping that the former couple would get back together, but hearts shattered across the world when Anna was spotted on a dinner date with her new boyfriend, cinematographer, Michael Barrett back in September. The pair met on the set of her new movie 'Overboard' and have so far showed no desire to hide their new relationship from eagle-eyed fans and her ex-husband. Anna split from Chris over summer but she is adamant they are still "great friends".



Darren Criss is engaged



The former 'Glee' star proposed to his longtime love Mia Swier after seven years of dating and took to Instagram to share the happy news. Posting a picture of them together, he wrote: "Mia and I have had seven and a half years of fun, wacky, wonderful, CRAZY adventures together. And I'm happy to announce that we're kicking those adventures up a notch. We're goin' for it. To boldly go where neither of us have gone before. Engage." Along with joy in his personal life, Darren is also enjoying success in his professional life and he is currently playing serial killer Andrew Cunanan in the 'American Crime Story' franchise, 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace'. And he revealed that he and series creator Ryan Murphy have been talking about the role for years. He said: "My reaction was, I'd be thrilled to do this. I thought it was something he forgot about and was just spitballing. But he stuck to his word, and I'm so glad he finally decided to do this." Darren added that he wasn't worried about playing a serial killer as it was no greater challenge than any other character. Speaking on Variety's 'Remote Controlled', podcast, he said: "People always think that's some sort of departure, and while I understand that curiosity, I can't help but feel that same curiosity would be present if I had started with something like this, and this is what you knew me for. People forget that actors are actors, and we depart for a living."

Daniel Kaluuya experiences racism 'every day'

The 28-year-old actor ignored director Jordan Peele's advice to study horror movies when he worked on 'Get Out' - in which he played Chris, an African American who accompanied his white girlfriend to meet her parents - and instead drew on incidents from his own life. He said: "I lived it. I live it. I live this. I just read the script, so it was in me. "I go through racism every day. Every day someone says some sick stuff. "Racism's horrifying. People end up dead, mothers lose their kids. This s**t's f***ed up. "You have all these experiences and you have to keep going for your dreams, but you're carrying this." Despite his success, the former 'Skins' star insisted his life can be "tough" just because of his background. He said: "This industry's hard. The world is hard. Being young and black is tough. You can't complain about it, so you need a safe place to moan. "When I need a reality check, I call my mum. She gives me the realness and says, 'You were born in England, shut up.' " And Daniel is amazed he's landed a role in upcoming Marvel blockbuster 'Black Panther' but insists he won't let it change who he is. He told Britain's ELLE magazine: "I'm in a Marvel film? Holy f**k... This is a brother from Camden Town. It just doesn't compute because I know my life. "All my boys say to me, 'Yo, you don't understand what's about to happen. After 'Black Panther' you can't get a bus anymore.' But I'm still going to get the bus." Hollywood has been hit with a wave of sexual misconduct scandals in recent months, but the 'Black Mirror' actor insists he wasn't "shocked" by the harassment allegations and only hopes things will change now they have been made public. He said: "A lot of men are raised in a mad way. I'd be lying to you if I said I was shocked. Everyone knows. Everyone knows."



Lifestyle | Features

Kylie's social media blackout isn't 'permanent'

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star is set to welcome her first child, a baby with her partner Travis Scott, into the world and is enjoying her time away from the spotlight whilst she prepares for the baby's arrival. A source said: "Kylie has been chilling at home for the most part and just living her best life. She has really enjoyed this time away from the spotlight. It's the first time she can remember in her entire life not being followed by cameras and she's just trying to enjoy this privacy. She's definitely not going to deny that she's had a baby, or continue to evade questions about it all. "This isn't a permanent thing. As soon as the baby is born, she will make an announcement and introduce the baby to

her fans. She will also address the fact that she went "dark" on social media and in the public." And the 20-year-old television personality reportedly can't wait to share her journey through motherhood with her fans. The insider added to Entertainment Tonight: "Yes, she will release a photo and yes, she will acknowledge the baby. She's excited to continue to be her authentic self, and that will soon mean being a mother and sharing that with her fans." Kylie is said to have already baby-proofed her house to make sure everything is ready for the arrival of her little one.



Liam Neeson uses his senior person's railcard

The 65-year-old actor is among the most recognizable faces in the movie business, but he has no qualms about using his discount card. The Academy Award-winning star - who celebrates his birthday on June 7 - shared: "The last time I was on a train, I was going from Paddington down to Penzance. I have a senior railcard - so I get a big discount, which meant I was able to travel first class. It was terrific." The Northern Irish star has been eligible for a senior person's railcard since he turned 60, and Liam has been keen to take advantage of the discount over the last few years. Despite this, Liam revealed

that he's rarely been recognized during his travels in the UK. The 'Taken' actor told the Daily Mail newspaper: "I rarely get noticed on the train. If I think there's going to be a crowd, I just pull my baseball cap down a little bit and put my head in a book or a paper." Even though he now qualifies for a senior person's railcard, Liam recently revealed that he still feels as though he's just 40 years old. Liam feels great for his age, and thinks he's "very lucky and very blessed" to still feel 15 years younger than he actually is.



Olivia Culpo has fulfilled a long-held ambition

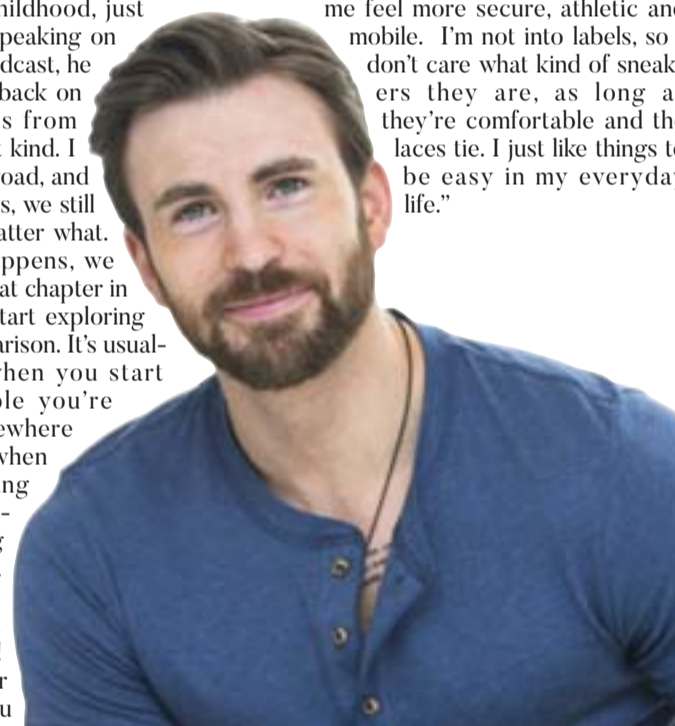
The 25-year-old beauty has taken to her Instagram account to reveal her pride at posing as one of the iconic magazine's rookie models, and to post an image from the photoshoot. Alongside the flattering picture of her in a black bathing costume, Olivia wrote: "Today has been an absolute dream come true!!! I can't believe I am a 2018 sports illustrated rookie! This has been a goal of mine for my entire career and it is something that I have worked towards for years. I can't wait for you all to see the final product from this shoot - It is unlike any other project. Today truly reminded me that hard work and perseverance can pay off in such a huge way. (sic)" Olivia's Instagram post comes shortly she revealed she considers herself to be an "overdresser". The brunette beauty admitted she much prefers to go over the top with her outfits than to be "underdressed", because she "feels strange" if she is at a bash and looks "too casual". Olivia - who previously dated singer Nick Jonas for two years - said: "I personally tend to be an overdresser rather than an underdresser in general. But that's mainly because I love clothes and I love putting together an interesting look. "At a party, it can also feel strange when you're too casual. If you're really stuck, ask the host what they're wearing and follow that lead."



Chris Evans feels like he's 'pulling a fast one over on people'

The 'Captain America: Civil War' star says he looks really "rough" in the morning and doesn't live up to his sex symbol status. He said: "Oh, man! Goodness ... I still feel like I'm just trying to pull a fast one over on people. You don't know what I look like first thing in the morning! It's rough!" And Chris admits he had a "tough" childhood, just like everyone else. Speaking on the Thirst Aid Kit podcast, he added: "If you look back on some of my photos from childhood, it was not kind. I had a really bumpy road, and I think like most of us, we still feel like that - no matter what. No matter what happens, we kind of connect to that chapter in life when you first start exploring the feelings of comparison. It's usually connected to when you start noticing the people you're attracted to - somewhere around 9, 10, 11 - when you first start coming into your own sexuality and start seeing how you stack up. That was probably one of the roughest chapters of my life! And so I think - for most people - you

kind of stay in that suspended state." Meanwhile, Chris previously insisted he is not a "walk-around-naked" type of man. He said: "I'm definitely not a walk-around-naked person, don't even like shaving. I'm not a barefoot type of guy. My favorite article of clothing is a good pair of sneakers. Solid footwear makes me feel more secure, athletic and mobile. I'm not into labels, so I don't care what kind of sneakers they are, as long as they're comfortable and the laces tie. I just like things to be easy in my everyday life."



Underwood 'good to go' after having metal plate fitting

The 'Before He Cheats' hitmaker injured her wrist badly when she fell on some steps at her home back in November but she says she is doing much better now. Giving fans on Instagram an update, she wrote alongside her X-ray: "Last check up on the old wrist this morning!! Thanks, Dr. Wurth and my PT angel, Renee, a.k.a. "Bulldog" for fixing me up!!! I'm good to go! (sic)" At the time, Carrie's representative revealed the singer has broken her wrist after a "hard fall" and was recuperating at home with her husband by her side. They said in a statement: "On Friday night, Carrie Underwood took a hard fall on some steps outside her home. While there were no life-threatening injuries, she was taken to the hospital to be treated. She sustained multiple injuries including a broken wrist and some cuts and abrasions from the fall. "Fisher was able to make it back into town that night to be with her and she was released from the hospital.

Her recovery will take some time and she appreciates all prayers and well wishes." A few days later Carrie said she is "doing great" after having surgery on her wrist. Taking to Twitter, she wrote: "I just wanted let everyone know that I'm doing great. Had surgery on my wrist yesterday & all went well ... even though I'll be setting off airport metal detectors from now on ... I'm so thankful for the doctors, nurses, family & friends who've been taking such great care of me. (sic)" Carrie also revealed she had injured her face too. She said: "In addition to breaking my wrist, I somehow managed to injure my face as well. I'll spare you the gruesome details, but when I came out of surgery the night of my fall, the doctor told Mike [Fisher, Carrie's husband] that he had put between 40 and 50 stitches in." — Bangshowbiz



Lorde thinks #MeToo has made men 're-examine' themselves

The 'Green Light' hitmaker is so glad something is "happening" in the showbiz industry and people are becoming more aware of things like misogynistic biases or the understanding of consent. She said: "What is really interesting and important about this moment is that every man I know is having to check himself - having to be aware of his misogynistic biases, having to re-examine his understanding of consent. I think that is so overdue and so vital. It's the kind of thing that only comes about when people are brave enough to share and really bring these dudes down. I think every woman is like, 'Oh, my God, it's happening.'" And the 21-year-old singer also highlighted the "luxury" white people have been given

to have their voices heard, something which she says was "eloquently" addressed at by Gabrielle Union. She added to Billboard magazine: "A really important thing, that Gabrielle Union addressed eloquently, is that we can't forget that white voices are given their moment much more willingly than voices of colour. It's so important to realise that people of colour weren't afforded this luxury of having everybody listen always. But for me, it feels like one of those things where there's this chasm that opens and it's never going to close. You don't get to un-have this moment. This is forever, and the way this trickles down to everyone's lives is a permanent thing."

Lovato won't be 'food shaming' herself any more

The 'Confident' hitmaker has given up dieting and wants to encourage fans to love themselves for who they are. She wrote on Twitter: "Feeling gross today at a photo shoot but I'm choosing to accept what I see because I love myself for who I am and your love and support gets me through moments like this, if you're struggling as well, don't forget.. if I can do it, you can too! ... No longer depriving myself of treats (in moderation) and I'm not gonna lie, I put on a couple lbs since I've given up dieting BUT I've given up the chronic stress of what I eat because I don't want to set that example for my fans. No more food shaming myself!! (sic)" Meanwhile, Demi previously revealed she wants her swimsuit pictures to inspire her fans. She said:

"I've been working on myself for the past year, more so than I've ever worked on myself. I've surrendered to the process of just learning to love yourself and I think it shows through my pictures. I post more bathing suit pictures online. I want to show my fans that it's possible that they can get to that self love too. "I've taken away the power from the negative comments and the haters by not listening to them. If I do see [negativity], I just feel sorry for them because who leaves a negative comment on somebody's profile on the internet? You have to be kind of sad to do that so I've taken away the power and it feels great. I posted [the picture] because I look so happy."



Female official Sherpa from Nepal scales to new heights

First woman to earn prestigious international qualification

When Dawa Yangzum Sherpa first set her sights on being a mountain guide, she was told it was no job for a girl. Now she has proved her doubters wrong, becoming Nepal's first woman to earn a prestigious international qualification. Last month, the 27-year-old completed a rigorous course run by the Swiss-based International Federation of Mountain Guides, often described as a PhD in mountaineering.

“My passion was to be outdoors, to climb”

The prestigious qualification has been awarded to around 6,000 people worldwide and just 50 men in Nepal, despite climbing being a major revenue earner for the impoverished country. Sherpa belongs to the Himalayan ethnic group that has become synonymous with mountain guiding thanks to their reputation for being strong climbers with a natural tolerance for the lack of oxygen at high altitudes. But in Nepal-home to eight of the world's highest mountains-climbing remains a man's job.

“This is a challenging field, even more so if you are a girl. There were people who said this is not a girl's job, that I won't get work or (asked) what

will I do if I have kids,” Sherpa said. Mountaineering is the lifeblood of Sherpa's home village in Rolwaling valley, which neighbors Mount Everest, and scores of its residents have summited the 8,848-metre peak. “I knew what I wanted to do. My passion was to be outdoors, to climb. And my family did not discourage me,” Sherpa told AFP.

At 17, Sherpa was already guiding tourists on trekking routes, and soon after that scaled her first mountain, Nepal's 5,500-metre Yala Peak. American climber David Gottlieb, who works with US-based expedition operator Alpine Ascents International, remembers Sherpa showing great promise when he roped her in for an ice-climbing trip in the Rolwaling Valley. “It is something else to see that great a promise of ability in a craft that not everybody is good at. And she displayed that immediately,” Gottlieb said.

‘Like an addiction’

After racking up a number of summits of smaller mountains, in 2012 Sherpa was selected to join an expedition organized by National Geographic to the world's highest peak. “Everest used to be my aim. I used to think that once I scale Everest it will be enough. But climbing is like an addiction. The more I climbed, the more I wanted to climb,” she said. It was after returning from that successful summit that she signed up to become a certified mountain guide. In 2014, she was part of the first Nepali women's team to scale Pakistan's K2, considered one of the world's toughest climbs. Last year, she attempted to climb the world's third highest peak, Kangchenjunga on the Nepal-India border, but bad weather forced her to turn back before the summit.

“She was already moving forward to become



This photo taken on January 4, 2018 shows Nepali mountain guide Dawa Yangzum Sherpa posing with a mountaineering certificate in Kathmandu.



Dawa Yangzum Sherpa examining climbing gear in Kathmandu.— AFP photos

one of the top women mountaineers not just in Nepal but in the world, but this certificate will open many new opportunities for her,” said Sunar Bahadur Gurung, President of the Nepal National Mountain Guides Association. “Dawa is very capable but is also extremely determined.” Sherpa is planning to guide a team to North America's highest peak Denali

with Alpine Ascents International this June, and will then return home to Nepal where she also works as an instructor at two climbing

schools. She hopes that she is just the first of many women from Nepal who will look to the fabled peaks of the Himalayas for a career. “I didn't have anyone to look up to and sometimes doubted if I could do it,” she said. “But hopefully my small success will inspire other girls to follow their dreams.” — AFP



Cast and crew attend the world premiere “Three Identical Strangers” during the Sundance Film Festival on January 19, 2018 in Park City, Utah.— AFP

Sundance debuts dark tale of triplets split at birth

If it were a conspiracy thriller it would be dismissed as far-fetched, but Tim Wardell's astonishing story of triplets separated at birth and reunited by pure chance is all too real. His debut feature documentary “Three Identical Strangers,” which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on Friday, introduces Bobby Shafan, Eddy Galland and David Kellman, who had no idea they were triplets until the age of 19. But don't expect “The Parent Trap,” for this altogether darker film shows how the trio's joyous reunion set in motion a chain of events that unearthed a conspiracy that went far beyond their own lives.

The amazing saga began in 1980 when Shafan enrolled at Sullivan County Community College, a two-hour drive north of New York, and was told he had a double called Eddy Galland, who had just quit. Shafan tracked down Galland and, sure enough, they were stunned to find they looked exactly alike, and had the same birthday, interests, voices, mannerisms and even hands. The chance reunion of twins separated at birth was enough to make the front pages of the local tabloids but the coverage unearthed a far more intriguing story.

Kellman was reading about the newly-acquainted brothers and realized he, too, looked exactly like them, shared their birthday and was also adopted. The men hit it off immediately, moving in together, transferring to the same degree course in international marketing. The public lapped up their inspiring story and they became celebrities in the Manhattan club scene, even making cameo appearances in Madonna's first major movie, “Desperately Seeking Susan.”

‘Complete surrealism’

“The initial meeting was just complete surrealism. These things that were happening were just so unreal that they were almost dreamlike,” Shafan told AFP. “But then once we got together there was a joy that I had never experienced in my life and it lasted a really long time.” They opened a restaurant-Triplets-selling Eastern European fare and had a ball in the early days, but eventually tempers began to fray as arguments flared over work responsibilities.

Wardle uses a mix of reenactments and interviews with Shafan and Kellman, now 56, to deliver the first bombshell—a disillusioned Shafan quitting the business. Then the story takes a tragic turn as it is revealed that Galland had become increasingly depressed and unstable, eventually taking his own life at the age of 33.

The mystery around their infancy—why they knew nothing about each other despite growing up within a 100-mile radius—took another twist as journalist and writer Lawrence Wright made a stunning discovery. The triplets, it turned out, were among a number of identical siblings split up as part of a dark 1960s “nature versus nurture” social experiment led by psychoanalyst Peter Neubauer of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services in Manhattan.

Visits by researchers throughout their childhoods were explained away as a “child development study” when in reality Neubauer was scrutinizing the brothers' personalities and relationships with their very diverse adoptive families. “We really didn't understand just how egregiously these people behaved,” said Kellman, who told AFP all six adoptive parents were angered that they too had been kept in the dark. “As we got older, got married, became parents ourselves, we realized how impactful it was.”

‘Victims, not participants’

Wardle, who came across the story while scouting for new documentary ideas and has spent five years on the film, describes the story as “one of most extraordinary” he'd ever heard. “Right from the off they are very characterful, warm people but there was also a degree of mistrust, which I completely understand,” he told AFP. “When you hear the full depth of their story and what has happened to them it's quite understandable that they'd be a bit wary of people.”

The Jewish Board finally agreed to give the surviving brothers access to 100,000 pages of heavily-redacted notes on their evaluations after filming was completed. But these were far from a formal research paper and included no explanation as to what Neubauer was doing and why, or what his researchers had learned. Kellman went on running the restaurant for another five years but with Shafan out of the picture and Eddy no longer alive, the venture rather lost its luster.

He went on to work as an insurance consultant while Shafan became an attorney. No one has ever apologized to Shafan or Kellman, and the Jewish Board declined to take part in the documentary. A spokeswoman told AFP it was “committed to providing identified Neubauer study participants access to their records in a timely and transparent manner.” —AFP

Trashy literature? No such thing for Turkey's garbage collectors

Many would prefer probably not to dwell on what becomes of books thrown into the rubbish bin when their onetime reader declutters their shelves. In the Turkish capital Ankara, however, discarded books need not necessarily end up heading for a papery oblivion. Instead, a surprising life after death is now in store for them thanks to a rather unconventional library.

A group of the city's rubbish collectors has set up the library boasting thousands of works that would otherwise have been swallowed up by landfill. The books had been left out on residential streets together with other refuse for collection, sparking the idea to recycle them for a whole new readership. Opened more than seven months ago by one district's garbage collectors and their manager, the library is housed in a disused brick factory that was already serving as a base for the workers.

The once decaying plant, abandoned 20 years ago, is now a thriving space where staff can spend their break perusing the shelves stacked with some 4,750 books. Originally intended just for the refuse workers and their families so they could borrow books for up to 15 days, it is now open to the public too, said Emiralı Urtekin, the site's manager, whose office is equipped with other rescued items like magazines and a typewriter.

There are another nearly 1,500 books yet to be placed on the shelves as more are rescued and now donated, he added. No book goes to waste, with some of the non-usable books employed as shelves for the others. The renovated building—where even copper pipes find a use as lights — is also home to a barber's shop, cafeteria, social area and offices for administrative staff.

‘Encourage new ideas’

The books have so far been sorted into 17 categories, and counting, ranging from romance novels, economics textbooks, thrillers and children's fiction. The library boasts a variety of works by top foreign and Turkish authors, including JK Rowling, Charles Dickens, JRR Tolkien, Orhan Pamuk and “Fifty Shades of Grey” author EL James.

It's accessible 24 hours a day for the refuse workers and has its own librarian, paid by the municipality: 20-year-old Eray Yilmaz. Up until now Yilmaz said a total of 147 books had been borrowed from the library, whose members can potentially include the up to 700 rubbish collectors working for the Cankaya district. According to

the municipality, the new service is the only kind of library in the district open to the public.

“Reading books develops a person's intelligence, encourages new ideas... and here we introduce those new ideas from books to people,” enthused Yilmaz. “This is something that makes a person beyond happy. I take books to my mother too.” Malik Ercan, one of several disabled staff members, said he took books home to his wife and child and that the library was drawing those outside of the city as well.

“Recently I showed my cousin around who had come from (the central Turkish province of) Sivas. They had heard about it in the news. They wanted to see it. “More friends are calling and saying they want to see it after seeing the news. ‘let us see it... it's very different’, they say,” added Ercan, who has been working for the municipality for two and a half years.

New lease on life

The library has received plenty of local and international attention, leading to the arrival of more books and not just from rubbish bins. People from other Turkish cities now even pay the postal costs to send books to the library, Urtekin said, while refuse collectors continue to gather unwanted books on their daily rounds. “We're getting many visits from members of the public but also donations. They say: ‘This is such a good project, we want to support it as well.’” Urtekin said. “We have given a new lease of life to those books that have been thrown away... and the books are available for free.”

Although there are no plans to expand the current space, the library has sparked further projects for discarded books. The manager told AFP that later in the year they will create a mobile library and visit some Ankara schools every 15 days so more children have access. It will serve schools without libraries or with a limited choice on their shelves.

Students will also benefit during the visits from musical performances by “Tin Group”—made up of 11 workers using broken rubbish containers and discarded metal objects. The group started around the same time as the library opened, Urtekin said. “We are happy,” the manager said. “It has given us a different identity.” — AFP



Garbage collectors read books in a library created by the municipal employees by collecting throw-out books at the Cankaya district of Ankara.— AFP photos





Models present the creations of Maison Margiela during the men's Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection. — AFP photos



Models present the creations of Dries Van Noten during the men's Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection. — AFP



GALLIANO BARES HIS SCARS IN RETURN TO PARIS MEN'S CATWALK

John Galliano made a regal comeback to the Paris men's catwalk Friday with his first men's show for Margiela since he took over the brand three years ago. With minions in white coats ushering fashionistas to their places, he chose the Turenne gallery in the Invalides, the enormous military hospital that Louis XIV built for the veterans of his campaigns, for his return. The location could not have been more apt for the British-born designer who has been in the wars since he was fired by Dior in 2012, after drunkenly insulting patrons of a Paris bar with a volley of anti-Semitic slurs.

A fresco of the Sun King—a dead ringer for Galliano in his pomp at Dior laying down the law looked down on the catwalk. And that is exactly what Galliano did with his collection, which mixed streaks of wild creativity with the label's austere elegance. The creator claimed to be feeling much “freer” these days after an extended and very public penance. Given the bandages motif and recurring skull caps, he is still walking the road to repentance.

But you cannot keep genius of Galliano's dimensions down for long, and his 30-odd looks fizzed with ideas, including a series of sandals inspired by orthopaedic fracture boots. Man bags that doubled as comfort pillows spoke too of a certain suffering. But that was more than blown away by the elan with which he dissected and recut the

trench coat—one of his fetish garments—into new, surprising and more often than not, wearable forms.

Van Noten's tartan trews

The dull old duffel coat also got a wow-factor reboot. And what with all his transparent pilot hats and parachute bags, he seemed to be channelling the spirit of German artist and Luftwaffe rear-gunner Joseph Beuys, whose career was kickstarted by surviving a calamitous crash and burn. Galliano cut his flights of fancy with a series of exquisitely cut double-breasted suits and jackets in the Margiela tradition—most memorably in shiny mothball-blue—matching them with cowboy boots. There was even a pair of cowboy boot slippers. The back of one natty grey Mackintosh was decorated with what he called “a synergistic glyph, a new symbol imbued with a positive message for the house.”

Galliano did not come out for the traditional bow-observing the practice of the house's secretive founder Martin Margiela, fashion's man of mystery—nor would he give any post-show interviews. Instead he let the clothes speak for him. Dries Van Noten, the soft-spoken Belgian King of Prints, has a seat in the same elevated circle of the modern fashion pantheon as the flamboyant extrovert Galliano, even if he is not as well known.

The Belgian master's big idea for next win-

ter is a marbling technique normally used for paper which he used with typically sparing elegance throughout his collection, but which he let run riot in a sub collection of shiny-length parka coats. Van Noten, who comes from a line of Antwerp tailors, went strong on tartan and Prince of Wales check for trousers and suits, and more strikingly still in Stewart tartan coats which he combined with fur and crocheted collars.

This was the Bay City Rollers rethought by one of the greatest designers on the planet, and his black and blue velvet bomber jackets with showers of copper floral embroidery are likely to push credit cards to their limit. The cowboy shirt and jacket was also sleekly rehabilitated from the bottom drawer of fashion oblivion, and turned up memorably under a knee-length Crombie-style coat with snakeskin boots.

Paris' anglophile moment was further fed by British heritage brand Mackintosh, which showed a series of much more subdued looks loosely inspired by 1950s Blighty, including fake fur plus fours. Berluti rounded the day off with a superbly smooth and suave collection from its Colombian designer Haider Ackermann, slick with soft leather jackets and overcoats and silky sheen suits. — AFP

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2018



An employee of NTV news, walks down the stairs in a newsroom of Kenyan 'Nation Media Group' (NMG) in Nairobi. — AFP

'Pope' of French cuisine Paul Bocuse dies age 91

Paul Bocuse, one of the greatest French chefs of all time, died yesterday aged 91 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Dubbed the "pope" of French cuisine, Bocuse helped shake up the food world in the 1970s with the Nouvelle Cuisine revolution and create the idea of the celebrity chef. French President Emmanuel Macron led the tributes, calling him a "mythic figure who transformed French cuisine. Chefs are crying in their kitchens across France."

“ One of the greatest figures of French gastronomy ”

"He was one of the greatest figures of French gastronomy, the General Charles de Gaulle of cuisine," said French food critic Francois Simon, comparing him to France's wartime savior and dominant postwar leader. A giant in a nation that prides itself as the beating heart of gastronomy, Bocuse was France's only chef to keep the Michelin food bible's coveted three-star rating through more than four decades.

The heart of his empire, L'Auberge de Collonges au Mont D'Or, his father's village inn near Lyon in food-obsessed southeastern France, earned three stars in 1965, and never lost a single one. "Monsieur Paul," as he was known, was named "chef of the century" by Michelin's rival guide, the Gault-Millau in 1989, and again by The Culinary Institute of America in 2011. A great upholder of tradition as well as an innovator, several of his trademark dishes at the Auberge remained unchanged for decades including the black truffle soup he created for French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing in 1975, who named him a commander of the Legion of Honor.

Lover of food

Born into a family of cooks since 1765, Bocuse began his apprenticeship at the age of 16 and came to epitomize a certain type of French epicurean—a lover of fine wine, food and women. He slept in the same room where he was born, and managed to maintain a relationship with his wife Raymonde and at least two lovers. "I love women and we live too long these days to spend one's entire life with just one," Bocuse told the Daily Telegraph in 2005.

Polygamy was part of his huge appetite for life, he insisted. Married to Raymonde since 1946, he also shared his life with Raymonne — with whom he had a son—and Patricia, who looked after his image for the last 40 years. With the Gault-Millau guide, Bocuse became a driving force behind the Nouvelle Cuisine in the 1970s, sweeping away the rich and heavy sauces of yesteryear in favor of super-fresh ingredients and sleek aesthetics.

The term was invented by Gault-Millau to describe food Bocuse helped prepare for the maiden flight of the Concorde airliner in 1969. Slashing cooking times, paring down menus and paying new attention to health, Nouvelle Cuisine was a craze that fizzled out but left a lasting legacy. Personally, Bocuse preferred to eat more hearty traditional fare. "I love butter, cream and wine," he said, "not



A mural of French chef Paul Bocuse painted on the side of a building in Lyon.

little peas cut into four."

And he drew the line at some of Nouvelle Cuisine's excesses, shunning its extreme minimalism. Even so, the movement's insistence on the freshest of ingredients and the introduction of technology into the kitchen helped pave the way for the "chemistry set cuisine" which now dominates fine dining. "It was a real revolution," said Simon. "They coined a concept that came at exactly the right moment—at a time when gastronomy was a bit dull and heavy and not sexy at all." "Bocuse is respected for the fact he kept things in proportion," said France-based critic Rosa Jackson.

Great showman

"Good cooking for me is when you lift up the lid and it smells delicious, and you reach for a second helping," Bocuse wrote a few years before his illness struck. His status as the giant of haute cuisine owed as much to his showmanship and pioneering business sense as it did to his culinary genius.

"His cuisine was built around the classic French repertoire," said Simon. "But people came for the emotion, for his banter, his personality, his sense of humor." "He wasn't

a pain in the arse—unlike some who reckon they are great chefs. And he always played the part, greeting people with a smile. "And he taught his colleagues how to get people talking about you," paving the way for today's celebrity chefs, Simon said. "Chefs had a completely ridiculous image back then," he said. "The cook was seen as a simpleton slaving away backstage in a greasy kitchen, who would emerge at midnight smelling of fish."

In 1965, Bocuse left his kitchen for Japan, the first of many trips to promote French culinary know-how around the world. "He's been hugely influential. He trained a lot of chefs, including from Japan," said Jackson. From his travels he picked up a flair for marketing, going on to launch an international range of Bocuse branded products and a successful chain of open-plan brasseries, setting up catering schools and competitions. He also gave his name to the world's top international cookery competition, the annual "Bocuse d'Or". In 2007, more than 80 top chefs flew to France from around the world to celebrate his 81st birthday and his legacy. — AFP



This file photo taken on January 24, 2007 shows French Chef Paul Bocuse posing during the international culinary competition of the Bocuse d'Or.



French chef Olivier Cauvin, (5thL), alongside chef Paul Bocuse (C), Sergio Remolina, (3rdR) from the Culinary Institute of America poses in l'Aubergede Pont de Collonges kitchen, during a culinary work shop, November 09, 2012, in Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or.



This file photo taken on February 25, 1975 shows French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing (R) awarding French Chef Paul Bocuse with the Legion d'Honneur at the Elysee Palace in Paris. — AFP photos